

## the headhunter as hero: local traditions and their reinterpretation in national history

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When I first visited the 12 villages of Balaghar, high on a cliff overlooking the sea at the western tip of the Indonesian island of Sumba, I was shown a series of altars connected with the traditional division of ritual tasks. My guide, a local schoolteacher, showed me first the center of calendrical ceremonies, then the altar for agricultural offerings, and finally a skull tree in his own ancestral village, Kaha Katoda, telling me that it was famous because it was founded by “heroes” (Ind. *pahlawan*). And what, I asked, did it mean to be a hero?

“Heroes take heads,” I was told, “and bring them into the village to hang on the forked branches of the skull tree. It is their privilege to hang the hair of the victims in the right front corner of the house, to boil the flesh from the skulls, and to store them in their lineage houses.”

“Could other people also go to war to seek heads?” I asked.

“They must obtain permission from my ancestors, and they must bring the heads to us. The Indonesian government has recognized the people of these villages as heroes, and named the local junior high school after one of them because he fought against the Dutch. This tradition (Ind. *tradisi*) has been made into history (Ind. *sejarah*).”

Several aspects of this dialogue struck me immediately, and form the basis of the argument developed in this paper: the specific meaning given to the Indonesian term “hero,” the linkage to the legitimating power of the Indonesian government, and the notion that “history” had somehow been created in the process of labeling headhunters as “heroes” and honoring them as resistance fighters. I decided to explore the original logic that divided authority between ancestral villages, giving Kaha Katoda control over the rites of warfare and headhunting, in order to investigate the transformation in this relation later produced by the struggle against a colonial power. In the process, I discovered that many people were interested in discussing the role of headhunters as heroes, but for varying reasons: Some wanted to place Sumba within a nationalist history of Indonesia; others wanted to settle old grievances about that division of authority, or to correct “misinterpretations” of their ancestor’s exploits.

“History” was evoked as an authoritative discourse that emerged at a specific point in time, and confirmed the prerogatives and status of a particular descent line. The headhunter became the protagonist of the new genre called “history,” and in the process instantiated a type of heroic action that linked local ritual divisions to nationalist ideology and a series of more encompassing, cumulative changes that transformed the entire archipelago. The search for and

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*After independence, a search for national heroes in the Indonesian struggle against colonialism drew attention to Wona Kaka, a Sumbanese headhunter who raided Dutch forces in 1911. Praised by some as the first figure in a common national history, he is also used as a champion of local tradition who resists integration into the “imagined community” of the Indonesian state. Controversy over efforts to “call back his soul” from Java shows the ideological bases of the construction of history and clashes between nationalism and opposition to outside control. [history, headhunting, colonialism, nationalist ideology, mythology, Indonesia]*

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creation of national heroes was related to wider policies to assert a common "history" that "happened" throughout the archipelago. It provoked a reaction from local traditionalists, who responded with efforts to reclaim specific ancestors as local spokesmen, not national figures, and the epitome of a regional tradition of resistance to centralized control.

This reflection on the interpretation and reinterpretation of events at the beginning of this century on this isolated Indonesian island uses oral traditions, government documents, and interviews with eyewitnesses and others to probe the problem of the creation of "history" and of the "hero" in an indigenous system where such concepts were not yet familiar.<sup>2</sup> Wona Kaka, the ancestor "recognized" by the Indonesian government as a national hero, was the leader of a series of raids against Dutch forces, ritually sanctioned as a form of headhunting. Although he did not in fact take Dutch heads, his authority to wage war was traced to the presence of the skull tree altar in his village. In modern written sources, Wona Kaka is presented as an anticolonial freedom fighter, a national hero on the model of the Javanese Prince Diponegoro, Imam Bondjol, Teuku Umar, and other 19th-century leaders of rebellions against the Dutch. He is even associated with the messianism and millenarianism that characterized peasant protest movements during the period of Dutch colonial hegemony, and continues in contemporary religious movements focusing on the coming of the Ratu Adil or "Just King" (Kartodirjo 1972). His descendants in remote villages have shown considerable ambivalence about this new renown, and tried to reclaim a more recognizable local identity for him through rituals to "call back his soul" from its exile on Java and bring it to rest in his native Sumba.

The story of Wona Kaka contains several ironic paradoxes: It shows how a warrior in the indigenous tradition can come to be seen as a "hero" and symbol of a whole nation's resistance; it shows how the life of a man who resisted outside control by the Dutch is made into a rallying point for greater control of the area by Indonesian national officials; and it shows how each culture has its own models of creating heroes and leaders, which may cause important problems in the translation of these models in new contexts.

It has been argued (by Anderson 1983 and others) that one of the dimensions of new nationalist movements is the manipulation of history, and in particular the creation of the "imagined community" of a limited and sovereign political entity. Gellner has argued most forcefully that "nationalism is not the awakening of nations to self-consciousness: it invents nations where they do not exist" (Gellner 1964). Part of the process of inventing nations is also inventing national history, and in Indonesia (as in many other emerging Third World nations), history has been "invented" and "imagined" as primarily a struggle against colonial powers. Borrowing from a Western tradition of seeing history as made mainly by great men at great battles, Indonesian ideologists have tried to "find" heroes of their anticolonial struggle in obscure, distant locations all over the archipelago. This search is part of a more or less conscious process of creating an Indonesian history that treats the archipelago as a single moral community, and that argues that history repeats itself all over the thousands of islands in many of the same ways.

In making this argument, writers and inventors of national history have come into a conflict with anthropologists, who prefer to explore the ways that different cultures formulate their own historicities. While anthropologists stress the variation in concepts of temporality, the processes of change over time, and the logic with which these are apprehended (Sahlins 1985; Valeri 1981, 1987), locally produced versions of a new national "history" deliberately homogenize regional differences, stressing surface similarities and making the slogan "unity out of diversity" into a program for the cultural domination of smaller ethnic groups. An anthropological interpretation must therefore try to understand the dynamics that bring together local traditions and nationalist ideology, and probe how "history" is given a special meaning in this ethnographic context. In many ways, the anachronistic appropriation of local leaders and their elevation to the status of "national heroes of the colonial resistance" both honors and finally betrays the local traditions that they represent. Their transformation into heroes of the "invented tradition" born of modern nationalism may distort popular sentiment or indigenous mythologies (Hobs-

bawm and Ranger 1983). Wona Kaka's descendants have tried to reassert some measure of regional autonomy through a pagan ceremony to return the lost Kodi headhunter to his family grave site, and these efforts can be interpreted as showing an awareness of this betrayal.

The argument has five parts: (1) Wona Kaka as Headhunter: Oppositions before History, (2) From Headhunter to Regional Resistance Fighter, (3) From Regional Resistance to National History, (4) Local Reactions: Calling Back the Soul, and (5) Conclusions: The Hero Created by History.

### **Wona Kaka as headhunter: oppositions before history**

When Dutch troops entered Sumba in 1909 to begin "pacification," the island had never been under the domination of a foreign power, and the many districts of the western part of the island had no centralized polities or rulers. Traditional domains such as Kodi (est. pop. 25,000 at that time) corresponded to language groups, and formed a single ceremonial entity for calendrical rites to welcome the swarming of the sea worms in February and promote agricultural fertility. The supreme ritual office was that of Rato Nale, priest of the sea worms, who "measured the months and counted the years" for these ceremonies, as well as inaugurating the season of "bitter months" when the crops could not be consumed, and the shift to the "bland months" of harvest and feasting.

The life-promoting rites of the "harvest of life" (*deke a mopiro*) were anchored in a single central village and associated with passive, ascribed authority, while the complex of war rites opposed to them as the "harvest of death" (*deke a mate*) was scattered throughout peripheral villages that had achieved the right to have a skull tree altar through their deeds of daring. A diarchic division opposed the unmoving authority of the "source" villages to the active, shifting accomplishments of more mobile executors.

The Kodinese took heads from the highland peoples of Weyewa, Rara, and Gaura, but not from their neighbors along the coastal region. The enmity between lowlander and highlander was given no historical explanation or justification. It was seen as preceding history: the Kodinese describe it as "as old as the enmity between cat and mouse," knowing no beginning and no end. The cycle of raiding and revenge which bound highlander and lowlander together in a deadly reciprocity was described as resembling the long-burning coals of ironwood and tamarind (*api kyomi, api kyaha*), which can never be extinguished. In contrast, even murderous feuds that may erupt between Kodi clans were described as shorter-term flare-ups, like fires in the elephant grass or undergrowth (*api ngingyo, api kahumbu*). Within the same language or dialect group, feuds could be resolved through negotiation and a payment of blood compensation (*tapo*) in horses, buffalo, and gold. Outside these boundaries, the ancestral spirits demanded a more exacting revenge.

Heads were taken only as the "replacement of throats cut, share of limbs twisted in anger" (*koko ngole helu, kalengga langa mbanu*). No new raid could be undertaken without a specific mandate from the ancestors. The grief and passion of the community had to be expressed in signs of spiritual anger: in the language used in divinations before a raid, the skull tree itself was said to "boil with heat," the stone circle that surrounded it was supposed to "steam with anger" (*ryawako katoda, wyuhuka kalele*). The memory of an unavenged death could cause fevers, fires, and other misfortunes to afflict the village until its members were willing to take up arms to seek a replacement for the head taken. The implements set aside for boiling the captured heads to remove the flesh were anthropomorphized into greedy spirits that were also hungry and asked to be fed:

Our throats are not yet quenched  
Says the ladle that isn't satisfied  
Our bellies are not yet full  
Says the pot that isn't content

*Njana maghana pango a kokoma  
Wena a kacoinja magholi  
Njana mbanu pango a kambuna  
Wena a kambelainja mbanu*

A divination was held whenever the headhunting implements were found to exhibit this "heat," and diviners used a spear intermediary to question the spirits about the reason for their anger. If a headhunting raid was asked for, a chicken had to be sacrificed to "raise up" (*manu kede*) the warriors to leave on the raid, and auguries read in the chicken's entrails predicted the success or failure of the raid.

Headhunting was deliberately ritualized: done only in large war parties, riding horses decorated with fine red cloth and jingling bells, the aim of the headhunter was to "dazzle" his opponent and hence unnerve him. The splendor of the hunter of human heads was deliberately contrasted to the simplicity required of the hunter of wild animals, who could wear no finery or gold ornaments and had to move in silence and secrecy through the forest.

The Sumbanese had had many centuries of contact with foreign traders, and had exported horses, cloth, and slaves in return for gold, metal, beads, gongs, and weapons. Some sources (Needham 1982) have suggested that the number of regional raids increased in the 19th century because of the high demand for Sumbanese slaves from Endehnese and Arab traders, who then sold them to the Dutch. But at the time that Dutch colonial administrators tried to gain control of the island, one of their first goals was to put an end to regional warfare, and in particular to the three main obstacles to "pacification": headhunting, the slave trade, and the plundering of foreign ships. The people from each domain were told to choose a leader who would negotiate a peace treaty with the Dutch forces and this leader would receive the gold staff of the *raja's* office.

In Kodi, a meeting of clan elders was held in 1909 in the central ceremonial village of Tossi, home of the sea worm ceremony, and Rato Loghe Kanduyo was designated to receive the gold staff (*ketengo a toko*). He was a direct descendant not of the high priest of the sea worms (Rato Mangilo, the elder brother who "counted the months and measured the years"), but of his younger brother Rato Pokilo, a famous warrior whose eloquence and fierceness earned him the title "the dog with the black tongue, the horse with an erect tail" (*bangga mete lama, ndara ndende kiku*). Although not a headhunter himself, Rato Pokilo had planted the skull tree in other villages, and had the role of an active executor of ancestral law, rather than its sacred source (Hoskins 1987c).

Dutch forces set up headquarters near the river, and asked the local ruler to provide laborers for the construction of a bridge. The forced labor brought allegations that members of noble houses were beaten by Dutch soldiers and made to work like slaves, and that some of the soldiers tried to entice local women to sleep with them. Tila Gheda, the wife of a nobleman from the headhunting village of Bondokodi, claimed that she was raped along with her slave girl by the Dutch commander, showing her husband gold coins that she said she had been given to secure her silence. Immediately, her husband and two of his clansmen from Bondokodi ambushed three of the Dutch soldiers, killed them, and stole their rifles. Although they could have severed the heads of their victims and brought them home to their village, it was not the heads that they took into their cult houses but the rifles, which were placed in the sacred right front house-corner (the *mata marapu* or "source of spirits") while they sent word to the Kodi *raja* of the reasons for their actions.

Dutch forces retaliated before Kodi leaders could assemble. They stormed into Tossi, the *raja's* own ancestral village, and burned it to the ground, destroying the center of calendrical rituals for the whole region and killing several older inhabitants in the blaze. The *raja* and his family took refuge in a garden hamlet and called an emergency meeting to determine how to respond to this attack. A delegation was sent out to Bongu, home of the famous warrior Wona Kaka, asking him to lead a war party. The hero, already famous for taking Weyewa heads on raids to the highlands, refused their pleas three times. Only when the rifles captured from the Dutch and stored in the headhunting house of Bondo Kodi were brought to him and ceremonially presented did he accept. He had learned to use an air gun in a neighboring region and

thus had an idea of how to fire this new kind of firearm. This skill was given a new ritual and almost magical dimension by the Kodi treatment of guns.

Many of the taboos that traditionally applied to severed human heads were transferred to the guns: they could not be brought into any of the villages associated with life-promoting rites, and had to be stored as ritual objects in the cult houses associated with warfare. Their capture allowed the Kodinese to envisage warfare against a new sort of enemy, the one designated the “foreign mother, stranger father, foreigner with bound buttocks, stranger with clipped hair, white man with cat eyes, yellow fur on the snout” (*inya dawa, bapa dimya, dawa kalambe kere, dimya klippye longge, kaka mata wodo, ryara wulu ngora*). The strangeness of the new adversary could only be assailed by expropriating his own weapons.

The Dutch commander fled to the other side of the river, where he and his troops sought refuge with the *subraja* of Bangedo, a rival district, which also spoke the Kodi language but frequently opposed the coalition centered around Tossi in local feuds. Rato Tende, the leader of the village of Parona Baroro, offered the Dutch forces his protection, and thereby opened up the situation to two different possible resolutions: a payment of blood compensation could be negotiated, if the Dutch were assimilated to the status of his fictive kin, and hence Kodinese, or the conflict could escalate to one of perpetual raiding and even civil war, if they were interpreted as the equivalents of traditional headhunting enemies.

Anticipating the first solution, intermediaries came to set a date for a negotiation, and Rato Loghe traveled to Rato Tende’s clan village, bringing gifts of horses, buffalo, and gold for an initial payment. On arrival, however, he was pulled from his horse, beaten severely, and bound underneath the floor boards of the house like a slave or war captive. After several days, he and his followers were marched 80 kilometers to the Dutch fortress in Memboro, where after several weeks he died of dysentery and exhaustion.

The Dutch punishment of the first Kodi *raja* turned the whole population of greater Kodi against them, and for the next three years raids and large armed battles against the Dutch forces continued. Wona Kaka recruited warriors from all the villages of the greater Kodi valley, hiding in small hamlets in the interior where they were fed and housed by the local people. Casualties during those years were much heavier than they had ever been under traditional intermittent headhunting raids. Some Kodinese from Bangedo fought briefly for the Dutch forces (cf. Hoskins 1985), and were killed as traitors by others, their deaths lamented in dirges that also note their kinship bonds. A famous battlefield was renamed “the place where many people died” (*hamate tou danga*), and almost every clan village set aside a special area outside its gates for those who died a violent “hot” death and could not be brought inside the circle of ancestral tombs.

Finally, the Dutch ordered all the people dispersed through the fertile interior to move to their ancestral villages along the coast, where they could be better supervised. Gardens had to be left behind, and Dutch soldiers burned them to prevent rebel forces from harvesting the young corn and tubers. Most of the rice harvest was completely lost, as fields were choked by weeds and neglect. Hardship and hunger soon translated into popular pressure for a negotiated settlement. A Dutch civilian named Theedens, who had taken seven Sumbanese wives, was the intermediary who promised personal safety to Wona Kaka and his men if they would surrender.

When they finally agreed, a ceremony was held on the hill facing Bondokodi, a place renamed the “cliff where the shields were burned, the incline where the spears were surrendered” (*tanjulla tunu tonda, tawada waro nambu*). Their gallantry was praised by a famed orator, Ndengi Wyanda, whose words have been preserved within oral tradition:

They fought at the last mangata bush, I say to you	<i>Woloni tanduko mangata we do monaka</i>
But the weapon was no longer sharp	<i>Ta na wuli wyalikya a lakiya</i>
The knife of the small horse	<i>A kioto ana ndara</i>
They made a final try in the elephant grass, I say to you	<i>Rawini eloko kapumbuna we do monaka</i>

But the staff of the sword broke	<i>Ta na mbata walikya a kendana</i>
As iron which has grown brittle	<i>A bahi wara wutu</i>
Because they looked down into rivers that were empty of shrimp	<i>Torona ba na tingeroka a limbu njaingo kurana</i>
The mouth of the hunting net fell open	<i>Na tawewaka a ghobana pokato kalola</i>
Because they looked up at the betel palm that had no fruit	<i>Torona ba na tangeraka a labba njaingo wuna</i>
The rope of the mousetrap grew slack	<i>A makuna a katedeho marengga</i>

Exhausted by the long struggle, Wona Kaka and his band were finally betrayed by the Dutch. They were not physically harmed, but they received a punishment almost worse than death. They were sent into exile on a great white ship, which came to pick them up in the harbor at Bondo Kodi and carried them off to Java for many years. Wona Kaka himself was never to return. Haghu Ndari, a fellow clansman from Bongu, did eventually come back to Sumba after 15 years away. But the spirit of armed resistance to the Dutch colonial power was effectively broken.

Several analytical questions emerge from this account: (1) Why were Dutch heads not taken, since the task of waging war was delegated to members of a headhunting clan? (2) How were the events of Wona Kaka's time used to create a sense of regional unity that emerged only through this resistance movement? and (3) How has local identification of headhunters and heroes effected the transformation of these events into an anticolonialist "history"? Answering these questions demands further explanation of the historical context in which new forms of opposition took shape.

### **from headhunter to regional resistance fighter**

Dutch forces received a relatively warm welcome when they came bearing a gold staff of office, which they planned to bestow upon the local leader chosen as *raja* by a Kodi council of elders. As long as they remained trading partners who recognized local leaders and contributed to the sacred patrimony of Kodi villages, Europeans did not threaten the coherence of local categories. Earlier heroes had courted the favor of foreign powers and used objects acquired from them to prove their mastery of leadership qualities. When, in contrast to earlier foreign powers, they tried to control local affairs, they were perceived as enemies rather than sources of power and authority. A new kind of hero was needed to challenge and oppose them, one who would draw on a larger regional base and create a new form of resistance.

The Dutch could not be assimilated to the traditional category of enemy, the highland people, because of differences in both their technology of warfare and the rules of combat they observed. Headhunting was the closest model that the Kodinese had for organized warfare, but it was not appropriate for foreigners who did not fight by the same rules. Kodi headhunting was a form of killing that was nonrandom and nonpassionate. Its motivation in the emotions of revenge had to be ritually and culturally processed to achieve success. A rule of reciprocity was implicit in its logic: heads were taken only to avenge earlier beheadings, and since the Dutch did not take Kodi heads, there was no reason to take theirs. However, these categories were not so clear at the time. One man in the village of Bondokodi told me that his grandfather had in fact cut off a Dutch soldier's head "out of rage" at the loss of his brother—but had then shamefacedly left the head beside the body because he realized that it could not be properly consecrated. Another informant told me that they must have held a divination in the cult house associated with the skull tree after the first killings to ask the ancestors whether or not heads should be taken. He supposed that the ancestral spirits had forbidden them from doing so, saying that "a foreign head could never cool the anger created by the loss of a Sumbanese."

Members of headhunting villages traditionally avenged deaths among their close kin and affines. Wona Kaka had a reason to fight on behalf of the men from Bondokodi who first killed the Dutch soldiers, because his mother had come from their village. He addressed them as his

“steps and doorway” (*lete binye*), the source of his own life and home of his mother’s brother. But he was not asked to lead a war party by members of his mother’s village. He was asked to do so by the first Kodi *raja*, who wanted to avenge the members of Tossi who had died in fires set by the Dutch soldiers.

The legitimacy of the first *raja* was established by the same course of events that created Wona Kaka as a regional resistance leader. After stabbing the Dutch soldiers, warriors from Bondokodi ran to Tossi so that the Dutch-appointed *raja* could serve as an intermediary to negotiate a payment of blood compensation. They treated his position as that of a mediator, not a ruler. But the Dutch colonial government had created the office of *raja* as head of a polity, and decided to hold him responsible for the actions of his “subjects.” Thus, their retaliatory raid on Tossi established new lines of opposition by punishing a ruler for actions taken without his knowledge. The *raja*’s subsequent efforts to bring a payment to Dutch forces were answered with cruelty and a “lesson” that cost Loghe Kanduyo his life. It was not until he had died for them that Kodinese came to regard the *raja* as their true representative. His request for revenge, made through the gift of rifles to Wona Kaka, came to assume the grander dimensions of a mandate for organizing a large-scale regional resistance.

The problem of the ritual significance of Wona Kaka’s war party thus has more than a macabre fascination. In an initial political transformation, the first Kodi *raja* was posthumously recognized as speaking for the region as whole. In a second transformation that followed it, new rules for warfare were developed, which bound all Kodinese to oppose foreign invaders. The delegation of power from Tossi to the headhunting villages that carried out the raids took on a new sense: Without the sanction of the ceremonial center, Wona Kaka’s resistance would have fallen into the category of local feuding. Antagonism between greater Kodi and Bangedo could have been played up to turn the situation into one of civil war. But the Dutch commander *made himself* into the enemy of the whole region by refusing to negotiate with his own appointed ruler. By assuming a regional political unity that did not exist before his own actions, he created a ruler who would suffer for the rebelliousness of his people and a hero who could oppose outside invaders from a large popular base.

Wona Kaka’s acceptance of the gift of the captured rifles is now interpreted by Kodi commentators as accepting a mandate to lead a region-wide resistance movement. His willingness to fulfill an unprecedented historical role is explained through the magical power of the rifles and the influence of the skull tree altar. His descendants in Bongu told me, “If he had not already felt the heat of his ancestors within him, he would not have dared to hold the Dutch weapons.” Yet they continue to identify him as a headhunter (*tou deke kataku, tou la katoda*), emphasizing the gory details of earlier raids rather than playing them down, as others have in regions where headhunting once flourished and has now been suppressed (Rosaldo 1980). The reason for this emphasis, I suggest, is a curious intersection between Kodi martial traditions and a new kind of nationalist rhetoric.

### **from regional resistance to national history**

Wona Kaka’s power to effect changes as an individual who played a role in Sumbanese events ended with his exile. He was never heard from again. But his importance as a symbol of other events over which he had no control was only beginning.

The rise of Indonesian nationalism in the early 20th century was associated with the spread of a written Indonesian language, developed from trade Malay, and its use in schools and religious evangelization (Anderson 1983). Through reading standardized textbooks and sharing a common heritage of colonial conquest, Indonesians as far removed as Sumatra and Ambon began to feel that they shared a common universe of experience. Even from remote islands such as Sumba, the sons of noble families would be sent to school on Java, where they were taught

to see the territory of the Dutch East Indies as a natural political unity inhabited by “natives” (Dutch *inlanders*) who formed a homogeneous category within the hierarchy of colonial society.

Political movements came relatively slowly to Sumba, but a regional chapter of nationalist students from the Timor area did form in Java (Fox 1977:180), and the idea of an independent Indonesian state was familiar to many Sumbanese leaders in the 1930s. Japanese forces tried to play upon these aspirations when they invaded the island in 1942, but their occupation placed such a heavy burden on local inhabitants that most heartily agreed that the Dutch had been better. The Japanese were not as fully mythologized as the first white invaders. Although often condemned for their brutality, they were not given special ritual names, and no mystical qualities were attributed to their weapons.

At the end of the Japanese occupation, Sumbanese government leaders supported demands for immediate independence (Kapita 1977). This was achieved bloodlessly on this isolated island. The shift to independent rule was in fact accomplished with little more than a switching of flags in the regency capital of Waingapu. The ease of the changeover in Sumba contrasted sharply with much more violent and drawn out conflicts elsewhere, and the increasing use of the terms of “struggle” (Ind. *perjuangan*) to describe anticolonialism and resistance to foreign domination. Perhaps the emphasis on earlier “heroes” of anticolonial struggle on Sumba stemmed from a need to find evidence of an armed struggle against the Dutch, for struggle conspicuously did *not* occur at the time of independence. Legitimation for the “Sumbanese independence struggle” was sought in an earlier, if less appropriate, time of violence and unrest.

Efforts to find heroes of national independence (Ind. *pahlawan nasional*) began shortly after 1949. The first written documentation of Wona Kaka’s life, besides brief mention in a Dutch administrator’s report (Couvreur 1915), comes from the Kodi administrator of the postcolonial period (Horo 1952). Horo’s account was written partly to legitimate his own position as a local leader who had served the Dutch as a colonial *raja*, later administered the whole island during the Japanese occupation, and finally authorized the first raising of the Indonesian flag. He wanted to show his respect for Rato Loghe, his predecessor whose quarrel with the Dutch led to death in prison, and at the same time to endorse the colonial system of choosing local leaders from amongst prominent elders, and elevating their position into that of hereditary rulers.

Horo’s version of Wona Kaka’s “life story” presents him as a brave warrior who defended the prerogatives of the first Kodi *raja*. Instead of emphasizing the oral tradition of the rape accusation that triggered the first attack on Dutch soldiers, he lists a series of insults to the authority of the first *raja*, and a contemptuous gesture made by the Dutch lieutenant when Rato Loghe complained of the rigors of forced labor on the bridge. The story becomes more a drama of violations of a sacred ruler than territorial invasion. Its narrative organization follows the format of military histories of the independence struggle on Java, detailing battles and losses and naming those Kodinese who are known to have died from each village. No mention is made of the fact that Rangka Baki, Horo’s own ancestral village, is located in Bangedo and its members were among those who originally supported the Dutch forces and held Rato Loghe captive under one of their lineage houses. More importantly, no mention is made of the fact that the office of *raja* did not exist before the colonial period. After the death of the first Kodi *raja*, he was replaced by his sister’s son, Ndera Wulla, also from the village of Tossi. But when the second *raja* died without leaving any direct descendants, the Dutch colonial administration chose H. R. Horo, his assistant from the rival district of Bangedo, as a successor. Thus references to insults inflicted on the “sacred power of the traditional ruler” (Ind. *kesaktian raja*) borrow an idiom of divine kingship from other parts of Indonesia, and apply it to a region that had no centralized leader. Despite its linguistic and ceremonial definition as a domain, Kodi’s constitution as an independent polity was as “imaginary” as historical fictions that first linked Indonesians into a single national community.



The development of regional identities in relation to a national center involved a continuing process of identifying local heroes and communicating this to higher authorities. Copies of Horo's manuscript were sent to Jakarta for a "cataloging" of national heroes in government archives. The first junior high school built in Kodi was named in 1975 after Wona Kaka. This prompted the principal of the new school to write his own biography of the hero (Gheda Kaka 1979). In a style flavored with nationalist rhetoric and feelings of suffering and injustice at the hands of the Dutch, Wona Kaka is described as opposing "three hundred and fifty years of colonial subjugation" of Indonesians in the Netherlands East Indies. The colonial presence in Sumba lasted less than three decades, so identification with the longer period of colonial control in Java is somewhat misplaced.

Gheda Kaka's account begins in the middle of the struggle, and then moves backward and forward in time to provide details. Here is the rather florid opening passage:

Day after day, week after week, month after month, the blood was falling in great floods on our beloved homeland, from both the bullets of the White Armies and the waves of flames which swallowed up the houses and gardens of the local populace, since it was imagined that these could threaten the colonial system of control. The horrifying events and cruelty of the past months had made the members of Wona Kaka's resistance force all the more hot-livered and ready to fight [1979:1].

Using accounts of other heroes elsewhere in the archipelago as models, these Sumbanese writers wanted to create a local "history" in conformity with patterns of immortalizing resistance leaders with statues in public places, universities named after them, and official honors (Anderson 1978). Wona Kaka is made "Indonesian" by being identified as a "Sumbanese Diponegoro" (Horo 1952). This identification then becomes both a mode of legitimating a Kodi leader within the national context and an indirect avenue for assimilating Sumbanese models of leadership to Javanese ones.

Parallels between Wona Kaka's resistance and Diponegoro's were the anger at violations of local authority, the building of a series of "fortresses" throughout the interior to organize guerilla activity, and eventual betrayal by a promise of safety followed by imprisonment and exile.<sup>3</sup> But Diponegoro, a prince of the Jogjakarta royal house who led the Java War of 1825–30, was a very different figure from Wona Kaka, and his coming was associated with a very different mythical tradition. For centuries before his arrival, ancient Javanese stories had told of a "Just Ruler" (*ratu adil*), the renewer and maintainer of cosmic order, fusing Indic notions of successive cosmic periods with the Islamic belief in the coming of the Mahdi. Diponegoro himself had a religious vision that convinced him that he was the divinely appointed future king of Java and would be aided by the spiritual power of the earlier kingdom of Mataram and the goddess of the south seas (Ricklefs 1981:111). His actions initially revived this myth and, although his revolt failed, when independence did actually come a century later, Diponegoro was given a new place of importance in awakening the Indonesian nation to the struggle for national freedom and independence. A "new myth" of Diponegoro was born, no longer oriented toward a future seen as simply a repetition or partial restoration of the past, but shaped by interactions with the Western world and expectations of independent nationhood (Locher 1978:78).

Sumbanese heard of him through inspirational accounts of Indonesian leaders published since independence (Hadhi 1952), and especially through school textbooks (Notosusanto 1976) that highlighted the history of local resistance to colonialism. Both Horo and Kaka use the format of nationalist narratives, which describe Diponegoro's life, to praise Wona Kaka's rebellion. The capture of Dutch rifles is compared by Horo to taking possession of a Javanese sacred knife (*kris*), and the violation of Diponegoro's ancestral lands at Tegalrejo by construction of a railway is linked by Gheda Kaka to the construction of the bridge at Bondokodi.

While links between the two rebellions are based on some similarities, differences in time and circumstances are collapsed to promote the fiction of a single anticolonial history that was repeated in different places throughout the archipelago. Sumbanese chroniclers joined in the wider process of creating a new mythical pattern based on the modern notion of the hero. Some

early nationalist histories suggested that the 20th-century Indonesian independence movement was the revival of an ancient polity that had territorial and political viability as far back as the 14th-century kingdom of Majapahit (Hadhi 1952; Nichterlein 1974). Others followed the more moderate policy of tracing the beginnings of nationalism from 19th-century uprisings and revolutionary organizations (Sitorus 1951; Tirtoprodjo 1961) but still anachronistically described local rebellions as opposing the whole colonial system. A contemporary Indonesian commentator on this process ascribes the identification to “the impact of the historical attitude of Indonesian traditional culture” on students and the public.

This influence can be seen in the strong inclination to mythologize, the precipitous inclination to see relationships of moral significance between events that are not necessarily related at all. The popularity of pseudo-marxist teleology may be indicative of a predisposition rooted in traditional Indonesian culture towards deterministic or eschatological forms of the historical process [Soedjatmoko 1965:411].

His reference to “traditional culture,” however, has little to do with Sumbanese traditions of tribal warfare and headhunting. It refers instead to Javanese prophecies of a world renewer, whose concentration of mystical power can eventually turn around an unjust social order.

This idea of “Indonesian tradition” ignores certain crucial differences in indigenous notions of history, power, and authority. The Javanese polity has been described as centripetal, focusing on a “syncretic and absorptive center” (Anderson 1972:47) where power is concrete, homogeneous, constant in total quantity, and without moral implications (1972:8). Ascetic practices store and concentrate power in an individual for later use, but the rigors of self-denial are directly related to the creation of a “potent self” who will receive the delayed rewards of its sacrifice (Keeler 1987:45). The accumulation of power is stressed more than its exercise, but a single ruler can be both a “passive center” and an “active executor” at different moments in a temporal process. In contrast, Sumbanese diarchy emphasizes the structural separation of the unmoving authority from the military “master of force.”

Both asceticism and the mystical concentration of power in a single center are alien to the Sumbanese symbolic world. In sharp contrast to the centralized Javanese polity, those who legitimate power in Sumba do not exercise it. Instead, a division of powers opposes the priests of the “source villages” to the warriors at the periphery (Hoskins 1987c). The right to take up arms had to be ritually sanctioned by the sea worm priest of the calendar and the first *Kodi raja*, and the military commander could never be the same person as the priestly authority. The dispersion and delegation of powers from the source village did not weaken its influence, it displayed its diarchic form. A Java-centric interpretation of the political scene alters the structure of these power relations in an important way: Historical importance is galvanized into a single “hero” with mystical powers, rather than shared between different figures. Wona Kaka was only half of a symbolic polarity which also included *raja Loghe Karduyo*. The headhunter was not a hero who claimed his own spiritual power, but rather the master of force who served the supposedly immobile and constant source of ritual authority.

Written accounts, even by local chroniclers, tend to “Javanize” their portraits of local heroes because of the literary and narrative conventions that they follow. When Jakarta-based historians read such accounts as source materials for the construction of a national history made up of composite local histories, they are dealing with pieces of a jigsaw puzzle that have already been cut to more or less uniform size and dimensions. Center-periphery relations within the new nation-state are structured by a play of mirrors: Literate representatives of peripheral cultures in the outer islands (particularly those of relatively small scale) reinterpret their own traditions to fit a given narrative mold, and reflect back a version of historical events acceptable and familiar to the centralized power.

### **local reactions: calling back the soul**

Reactions to these developments among Wona Kaka’s clansmen and descendants have been ambivalent. While they are grateful for the attention he is receiving, they are embittered at what

they feel to be distortions of the events, and there is a feeling that he has somehow been “taken away” from them, in both a literal and a figurative sense. In the literal sense, it is believed that since he died in exile in Java, his soul has not been able to return to the ancestral village and is still wandering lost through the skies. It must be called back with a special ceremony to allow him to assume his proper position as an honored ancestor in the village.

In the figurative sense, Wona Kaka has been “taken away” from the local context because his memory has been invested with an ideological content taken from the nationalist movement. In this process, some of the ritual meaning given to the category of headhunters has been lost, and much of his peculiar historical position has been distorted to fit externally imposed categories.

Wona Kaka’s descendants present his resistance as defending Kodi against outside invaders. As he had helped to fight Weyewa who wandered into Kodi lands, he also fought the Dutch who violated Kodi codes of honor. But his use as a symbol of anticolonial struggle is part of a campaign by the distant Indonesian state (also called the “foreign mother and stranger father,” as were the Dutch) to bring Sumbanese more fully under the control of national officials. Although their awareness of this paradox is indirect, it underlies the current movement to initiate a new ritual cycle which will result in the “calling back” of Wona Kaka’s soul and his reincorporation into traditional ritual life in the ancestral village of Bongu.

Some of the impetus for organizing this new ritual cycle has come from a situation of religious diversity. Kodi now has a substantial Christian minority, some 30 percent of the population, and there is much debate about the place of ancestral observances for Christian converts (Hoskins 1986, 1987a). The cult of Wona Kaka as a “historical figure,” an official “hero,” plays an interesting role in the series of debates currently being carried on about how he should be called back into the local community. Since he was sent into exile before any Kodinese had converted, even Christians agree that he must be called back with pagan ceremonial. Yet those civil servants who have converted are made increasingly uneasy by the implications of providing an official sanction for such ceremonies—and by the threat of legitimating implicit claims for local autonomy in this way.

In 1984 and 1985, several elders in Bongu agreed to discuss these plans with me, expressing both their fears and their hope for the impact of the ceremony.

“We cannot pronounce his ritual names now, because that would be already calling him. He would be sure to feel a twitch when his name was pronounced, and his spirit would be angry at us if we woke him up for no reason. We must wait until we have a consensus, until we are united in our efforts. The Christians will join us in calling him back, but only to give him a proper burial. They will not help us to sponsor larger feasts or to feed the skull tree, because they will say the days of headhunting are past. It is not something we can pass on to our descendants.

Yet the fierceness (*mbani*) that burns inside us is not simply the desire to take heads: It can also focus on new enemies. Many people are afraid of the people of our village, and they are afraid to bring back his soul among us. They say it will make us rise up again to defend insults to our honor. Our village itself will become ‘hot’ again, even without the smoking and burning of the skull tree inside it.”

The self-promotion of this passage does not conceal the threat created by returning Wona Kaka’s soul from exile: once he is again among his descendants, his rebellious spirit could infect them anew, especially since it would be legitimated with new ancestral authority.<sup>4</sup>

Rivalries between Bongu and Tossi also play on the balance between the obligations of the source (the passive authority of the *raja*) and the active executer (the headhunting clans). A popular song at the time of my fieldwork was presented as the farewell lament sung by Rehi Wyona, Wona Kaka’s second wife, as she saw her husband standing on the ship which would carry him into exile. Through references to current transformations, it poignantly regrets the loss of a local hero to overseas powers, and mocks recent reinterpretations of his deeds. Her lament is phrased in the conventional couplets of ritual speech (Hoskins 1987d), and uses poetic indirectness to conceal biting criticism of the nation state and local authorities:

Oh Wona Kaka Kodi  
 Because of them—  
 Father of the firm net,  
 Myangilo of the gold breastplate<sup>5</sup>  
 The children of Tossi of wide renown  
 Made you the spear they threw off  
 Because of them—  
 Mother of the heirloom jar  
 Byaraho the sitting ruler  
 The children of the golden kapok tree  
 Made you the sword they stabbed with  
 Because the yellow forelock burned with shame on  
 father  
 Because the foreign lime boat was profaned on  
 mother  
 Yours was the back burned by the sun  
 Yours was the hair loosened for combat  
 Now the spider omen dancing before my eyes  
 Now the dove striking its chest in sorrow  
 They come to take you in a rooster cage  
 They came to imprison you in a hen's nest  
 Shipping you off in the round hull of kapok wood  
 Hanging you up on top of the white hero's horse  
 Carrying you to the base of the watery horizon  
 Traveling to the end of the milky way  
 Crossing the wide seas  
 Plunging through the deepest ocean  
 I let my eyes wander up  
 To the river's edge where they hang nets  
 But I see only migrating birds  
 Who look down on the ocean's depths  
 I listen with my ears  
 To the incline of the muddy valley  
 But I see only spotted fowls  
 Below the land of groves  
 Let them return you with the river  
 To the land where your blood has spilled  
 To the land of the Kodi valley  
 Let them roll you with the tides  
 To the stones where your navel cord fell  
 To the stones of Kodi villages  
 To be greeted here by the mother holding a red bark  
 headcloth  
 To be greeted here by the father with a fine man's  
 loincloth  
 From Tossi of wide renown  
 From the golden kapok tree

*Wu Wano Kaka Kodi  
 Oha awa naka—  
 A bapa kareco londo  
 Myangilo la marangga  
 Ana tohi lendo ngara  
 Pa nambu tanggu gheghu ngummi  
 Oha awa naka—  
 A inya pandalu ndongo  
 Byaraho maboto  
 A ana wei marongo rara  
 Pa teko tonggu taba nggumi  
 Oro merina a hungga rangga rarana a bapana  
 Oro a kabana a tena kapu dawana a inyana  
 Watengoka kadengi diru lodo  
 Landa hangoka longge tembe keho  
 Henene na tanonokaka nggenge ura mata  
 Henene na kambakaka rowa taba ngahu  
 A mai jeke mangu keko nggumi kikya  
 A mai hyodo mangu rambe nggumi kikya  
 A woti wunikya ela tena mbolo rongo  
 A hali nggunikya ela ndara njelo kaka  
 La woti nggunikya ela kere wei langgara  
 La hali nggunikya ela hambali loko mbaku  
 Panggarongo loro wu mangadi  
 Tolekongo a limbu wu mandattu  
 Panara kongo matanggu wenggu  
 Yila kahiku lende dala  
 Dihikya ha limuho malando  
 Yila tarada limbu loro  
 Pa tokolongo tilunggu wenggu  
 Yila tawada punda rere  
 Dihikya a kahilye nggoko koko  
 Kawawa tana hembo  
 A konggolo kalunikya wango loko  
 Ela tana mbogho ruto mu  
 Ela tana mbali byapo  
 A walikyo kalumunikya mbanu nale  
 Ela watu mbupu lede mu  
 Ela watu kere napu  
 Yi dongga a inya na pandendengo rowa rara  
 Yi dongga a bapa na hamanggana hanggi ryundu  
 Wali tohi lendu ngara  
 Wali wei marongo rara*

The text ridicules foreign notions of heroes, speaking of the white ship of exile as “hanging him on top of the white hero’s horse”—using the conventional name of the heroic protagonists of Kodi epics. The singer reproaches the leaders of Tossi for not acting to return Wona Kaka from his exile. Once he had served for them, he should have been returned to a hero’s welcome—represented with the image of gifts of many fine clothes from the great mother/father village. Since none of this was forthcoming, the song implicitly attacks the authority of traditional leaders and pokes fun at efforts to fashion Wona Kaka as a “hero” without doing anything to help him or his descendants directly. Its singing is thus inscribed in a potentially volatile local context where the diarchic division of authority is being debated. Her search for him in the waters and valleys is partially a conventionalized expression of loss, but takes on an additional edge because it reflects a lack of recognition of the landscape around her: She says that this territory no longer appears as Wona Kaka’s own land, but as another one, where headhunters are made to serve new masters. From being the warrior delegated by Tossi to fight the invaders (“the spear they threw off, the sword they stabbed with”), he has become the “weapon” of a new set of

invaders who are in many ways more cruel and more subversive, because they identify themselves with a motivated misinterpretation of the content of local tradition.

While regency-level government officials spoke favorably of subsidizing traditional rites to recall the soul of this lost hero (as they subsidize funerals of government officials), local leaders were much more cautious. They were nervous about mixing an ancestral ceremony with national propaganda efforts, especially concerning a rebel whose heritage could ignite a volatile political context of clashes between government authorities and the prime symbol of resistance to outside forces.

The stages of traditional ceremonies required are lengthy. First, the soul would have to be “found” and “summoned” in a *yaigho* ceremony, where the spirit of the drum is sent on a shamanistic journey to find the lost souls of the dead, who are held captive in the sky by the sun and moon (Hoskins 1987b). Once the soul returned, funeral sacrifices of buffalo would be needed to open up the stone sarcophagous prepared by his descendants and persuade him to enter it.

When a body is irrevocably lost (as in deaths through drowning), some of the person’s belongings may be placed in the grave to represent the corpse—most often, his betel pouch, accompanied by a weapon, headcloth, and some clothing. None of these has survived for Wona Kaka, but his descendants had two requests to make of me to acquire what they considered possible substitutes: The first would have been to look for his gun, which they thought had been sent back to Holland (where it was untraceable). The second was to make a special photographic copy of an old plate depicting a group of men in Kodi warrior dress, identified as the rebels who were sent into exile on the “great white ship” that sailed to Java in 1913. The plate was noticed by Lota Mahemba, a Bongu clansman who accompanied the Kodi *raja* to Java in the 1950s and saw it hanging in a hotel in Surabaya, identified only as “Sumbanese.” He was able to obtain the negative, which he brought back to Sumba, where, however, no one had the equipment to print it. The idea that a photograph can to a certain extent substitute for the corpse is a common one in other parts of Indonesia (Siegel 1985 discusses an application to Javanese mourning customs), but it also epitomized the ironies of the situation: If he is the one in the picture, Wona Kaka may have been the first Kodinese to be photographed, immortalized, and frozen into a glass plate image for Western eyes. But his physical reality—the bones that by rights should repose in the village center—is missing from his ancestral home. In order to reassume his proper position among his descendants, an image formed by foreign technology must be reintroduced into Kodi, ritually processed, and transformed from its alien substance into a local product. Only when the faded photograph has decayed within the traditional stone grave will Wona Kaka have really come home.

### **conclusions: the hero created by history**

The many versions of Wona Kaka’s life and deeds that have emerged over the past 60 years allow us to reflect on the meaning of their appropriation of the notion of “hero,” the extent to which heroes are seen as the appropriate actors in “history,” and the notion that individuals “make history” with an awareness of the consequences of their actions.

My initial discomfort at translating the term “headhunter” as “hero” stemmed from a concept of heroes as persons of unusual bravery, nobility, and accomplishment. I had used it to refer to the first generation of people to settle the Kodi region, whom I described as the “heroic ancestors” of present-day inhabitants (Hoskins 1987b). Consistent with a notion of heroes common since classical antiquity, these were men who often had superhuman courage, strength, and ability, and were favored by the gods, sometimes even serving as intermediaries between gods and men. While they included illustrious warriors, they also included a wily Trickster figure, the High Priest of calendrical rites, and the founders of the first ancestral villages. My

schoolteacher informant, however, classified such figures in Indonesian as *ketua kelompok* (elders of descent groups) and did not place them on the stage of history at all. The category of headhunters was, for him, historical because it has always been problematic in relations with outside forces. The first things prohibited by the Dutch after they took administrative control of the island in 1909 were headhunting, the slave trade, and the raiding of foreign ships. The headhunter therefore became the epitome of Kodi tradition, as it had been before the period of colonial control, and as it was later romantically portrayed in nationalist slogans of a “primitive village democracy.”

“History” (Ind. *sejarah*) was defined by its having been written down, recorded for an audience, and also by the idea of a tradition of illustrious examples. Wona Kaka was a hero because he could be compared to other heroes, because he instantiated a recognizable type. Also, “history” was made up of an accumulation of events, irreversible in the direction of their progress and not repeated at specific intervals. In contrast, most Kodinese were aware that the deeds of their ancestors were constantly repeated—in myth, folktales, and oral traditions, where the transfer of ritual powers from one district to another required the repetition of certain trials from the story of the heroic founder.

The Sumbanese focus on Wona Kaka as the first actor in the new heroic mold might appear to reflect their sharing the view of traditional society as “cold,” unheated by history, and thus unchanging (Lévi-Strauss 1966). By starting “history” with the colonial encounter, the Sumbanese do not deny earlier transformations of their society, but they assess their significance differently. History, in their usage, is not “about” the society it depicts, it is the process of that society’s emergent self-consciousness. Before the resistance against the Dutch, there were trade relations with European powers, local feuds and headhunting raids, myths and ancestors whose chronologies were uncertain. “History” began when regional autonomy was challenged, and the Kodinese became part of a larger world of interacting forces. It was not so much the presence of written documentation that made these events “historical,” but their consequences—the awareness of cultural identity through loss of autonomy.

In the early years of this century, Mauss noted that the concept of nation had “a negative content before anything else: often a rebellion against foreigners, a hatred of all others, even those who are not oppressors” (Mauss 1969[1920]:576).<sup>6</sup> Indonesian nationalism, like many others, had its genesis in an awareness of cultural difference and a realization of the asymmetries associated with colonial hegemony (Nawawi 1971). It was also, from the beginning, linked to a heroic tradition and a construction of individual actors that depended on Dutch intervention. Pluvier (1968) has analyzed how an image of the native as rebel was part of the polemical content of much Dutch colonial writing, and Vlekke argues that even Sukarno, leader of the Indonesian revolution, was a colonial creation: “Paradoxically, one could say that Mr. Sukarno owes his present high position to the attention given to him by the governor-general De Jonge, for his long terms of imprisonment and internment made him a hero in the eyes of his people” (Vlekke 1959:384).

The history of nationalism is related to the history of individualism, because the nation itself is conceived as an acting subject, a sentient being with certain rights to self-determination and self-rule. In creating themselves as a collective subject, Indonesians stress the deeds of a few extraordinary individuals as models for others and as imaginative vehicles for the nation’s subjectivity. Resink (1986) has noted that the notion of historical subjectivity is more accepted in “Indocentric” accounts of the colonial period, attributing this acceptance to the pluralist and syncretic character of the Indonesian population. It was the aim of the Kodinese “native intellectuals” who wrote the first accounts of Wona Kaka’s life to present him as a model for Kodi subjectivity, to create a hero who would embody the values and ideals of his people and would show how these agreed with the national goals of integration into the newly independent state.

The ambiguities surrounding the development of a nationalist historiography are evident to Indonesian historians themselves, who may participate rather reluctantly in the process of cre-

ating new national myths, from which confidence can be gained and moral sustenance drawn. As Soedjatmoko has noted:

The passage from a scientifically justifiable historical interpretation into a historical myth signifies the social process through which society at large takes possession of this image, digesting it, grossly simplifying it and thereby suiting it to its own often subconscious purposes. In a period of heightened self-assertion which nationalism constitutes, there is a great intensification and acceleration of this process of socialization of historical images and of this search for a new and significant relationship with the past and even for national self-justification through history. There is an acutely felt need to view history from a particular perspective which derives from an intensified expectation of the future [1965:405].

Myths such as the one that presented the Great Majapahit empire as the forerunner of Indonesian unity have been most influential when linked to a deterministic view that the historical process was guided by natural design: The uniqueness of the nation was stressed along with notions of a manifest destiny, and traits of the traditional agrarian regional cultures were elevated into immutable virtues.

Modern Indonesian notions of history are influenced by both the nationalist model of heroic resistance and an earlier (largely Javanese) tradition that emphasized mythic precedents for present actions. Messianic expectations, which surrounded Diponegoro's rebellion, were later partly converted into expectations concerning national independence. Retrospectively, Diponegoro, like Wona Kaka, has been given a place as one of the precursors of the struggle for national liberation. In a similar fashion, small-scale armed resistance in isolated parts of the archipelago has been reinterpreted as expressing a unified anticolonial struggle. More sophisticated local historians acknowledge that "Indonesian nationalism was not produced by the local struggles although it later fed on their memory" (Nawawi 1971:163). But the new "heroic tradition" uses the legitimating power of the past to link early opposition to Dutch forces to current loyalties to the nation as an imagined community.

If history is simply defined as public knowledge of the past, then its status as an artifact of cultural systems must establish a relationship between the present and the past. Myths, however, may simultaneously determine present, past, and future, because they refer to patterns described as everlasting. That a headhunter from a remote Indonesian island might be formed by "history" into a hero of the national resistance establishes the relationship between myth and history in an initially puzzling manner. I had expected the first lawgivers or priests to serve as the first heroes of Kodi "history," since they appear in the charter myths of the political order. But the crisis on which Indonesian historians have concentrated in creating their own history was not the creation of society, but rather the confrontation with a colonial power. The part of the past set aside and given a new meaning as history was not the mythic heritage most widely known or documented. It was, in this case, the part that contained a clear historical protagonist and a likely candidate for the preestablished type of the "hero."

The headhunter asked to use magical new weapons to attack Dutch colonial control was thus assimilated to the "heroes" that most Indonesian schoolchildren read about—guerilla fighters in the independence struggle. Traditional narratives and songs concerning his exploits were collected and recorded in Indonesian writings as "history." The rebel who opposed Dutch control has, with some irony, been used as a tool of a new kind of ideological control: the integration of distant regions into the nation state through assertions of a shared past.

## notes

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ymous *AE* reviewers for comments on earlier versions of the paper, originally presented in a panel on “The Ideological Constitution of Histories” at the 1986 AAA meetings in Philadelphia.

<sup>1</sup>The use of a Sanscritic term for “history” (*sejarah*), an academic subject associated with a long heritage of learning, contrasts with the Western European *tradisi*, which is given the somewhat less exalted sense of orally transmitted knowledge. The term for “hero” (*pahlawan*) is also Sanscritic, and thus linked to the prestige of Indic civilization, as represented in the ancient Javanese kingdoms, evoked in the first term. Local accounts only achieve legitimation as “history” once they are recorded within that discipline, which also assimilates them to its models.

<sup>2</sup>For this version of “the events,” I have relied mainly on written accounts by three Sumbanese authors (Kapita, Horo, and Gheda Kaka), supplemented by oral history—particularly two very long interviews with people who were witnesses to these events (Deta Lodo and Maru Mahemba), and many generalized discussions with others, including the authors of my written accounts. I have also read the report of the Dutch colonial administrator (Couvreur 1915), which does not contradict these accounts but is much sketchier than any of the Sumbanese versions. Some minor discrepancies occur between the different accounts, but when I brought them up to the authors they usually “compromised” on interpretations which would incorporate additions to their accounts. For the purposes of the present analysis, the discrepancies that I did observe are not especially significant. There were, however, *additions* to the accounts, having less to do with events than with interpretations and rhetoric, which I refer to critically in the later part of the paper.

<sup>3</sup>The choice of Diponegoro as the “model hero” for these Sumbanese accounts (instead of other figures like the Ambonese Pattimura or Minang Imam Bonjol) stems only partly from superficial resemblances in events, but also from the prestige of Javanese culture and its early identification as the outside power. The Sumbanese word which designates all those who come from outside the island (*dawa*) came originally from the term “Java,” and was applied to the Dutch conquerors (*inya, dawa, bapa dimya*, “foreign mother, stranger father”) as well as the Indonesian government. Both were identified primarily as outside powers who tried to gain control over the island, with little differentiation between the modern categories of colonizers and national leaders.

<sup>4</sup>Suggestions that hostility against the central government might find a new focus are also related to the specifics of party politics. The Indonesian Communist Party, (PKI) founded in 1924 and active until 1965, was instrumental in developing a nostalgic nationalism rooted in interpretations of former “heroes”: “The classless society was presented as a reincarnation of a romanticized Majapahit, seen as a great egalitarian age before the Dutch had come and, significantly, before Islam. The heroes of PKI were Diponegoro, Kyai Maja, and Sertot from the Java War. The messianic prophecies of the *Ratu Adil* (Just King) were also harnessed to PKI appeals” (Ricklefs 1981:166). Members of Bongu, Wona Kaka’s headhunting clan, had been active not in PKI (which hardly reached the western tip of Sumba), but in Sukarno’s original party (Partindo), and the Indonesian Democratic Party (PDI), and thus had been associated with Sukarno’s mystical populism and leftist sympathies. Awareness of the wider political context lies underneath the implied threat of the “resurgence” of the fierceness of this former headhunting clan.

<sup>5</sup>Her ironic invocation of the “praise names” of famous ancestors within Tossi underscores an argument that present-day descendants have not fulfilled their traditional roles. The “firm net” that once captured the moon from the heavens and the gold breastplate both suggest an unmoving authority, which would not bend to accommodate more recent foreign interlopers. The symbolism of an unchanging authority represented by metal objects in Sumbanese ritual verse is further explored in Hoskins (in press).

<sup>6</sup>My translation of Mauss’ original: “La notion de nation, c’est avant tout celle de nationalité, celle de nationalisme. Elle a un contenu négatif avant tout: la révolte contre l’étranger souvent, la haine qu’on garde contre tous, même quand ils n’oppriment pas” (1969 [1920]:576).

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