NARRATING THE GATE AND THE PATH

Place and Precedence in South West Timor

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This thesis is the original work of the author except where otherwise acknowledged.

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To my parents
ABSTRACT

The purpose of this thesis is to explore the historical and cultural dimensions of contemporary settlement patterns in the southern central highlands of West Timor. The Atoin meto people of this region are subsistent agriculturalists who live out their lives in the restricted world of household and hamlet. Social networks within and between hamlets are organised on the basis of dispersed clan group affiliations and marriage alliance.

Knowledge of the past is recorded and expressed through an oral narrative tradition which provides a legitimating discourse for establishing claims in the present. In this thesis I draw on one exemplary oral narrative from the prominent clan group Nabuasa. This provides a basis for reconstructing the former political order in the study area of southern Amanuban. The analysis of the narrative reveals that the Nabuasa clan came to occupy the central position of an autonomous political system founded on an expansionary cult of warfare and headhunting.

The history of twentieth century southern Amanuban has been one of diverse change. I argue, however, that Atoin meto communities maintain an orientation to the political order of the past and the central Nabuasa position within it. The legacy of this orientation may be observed in the patterns of land tenure, marriage alliance, and the system of localised political authority. These practical concerns are symbolised and represented through an inherited corpus of metaphorical idioms expressed in a pervasive dyadic form. These recurrent metaphors of life, such as gate and path, trunk and tip, female and male, and inside and outside, express cultural notions of relative precedence and social continuity. In these and other ways the present is constituted in terms of the past. Social reproduction is ordered by a system of asymmetrically structured social relations, articulated by a complex of gift exchange and legitimated and framed by recourse to historical precedent.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Ethnographic fieldwork is by nature a collaborative exercise, a work of interpretation based on experience in a particular time and place. In the course of fieldwork and writing I have been assisted by many people.

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NOTE ON ORTHOGRAPHY

The Timorese language discussed in this thesis is referred to by the generic term *uab meto* (lit. indigenous speech). It is the numerically dominant indigenous language of West Timor. Within this broad classification however there are a number of regional dialects which are nevertheless mutually intelligible. In the study area of the thesis a dialect known as *uab banamas* (Amanuban speech) is spoken.

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In accordance with the system of spelling adopted by Middelkoop and Schulte Nordholt I have omitted the use of accents for certain indigenous words in the thesis. Their pronunciation is based on the following principles

a/ All stems in the language consist of two syllables with the stress falling on the first syllable. If the second syllable ends in the letter [e] or [a], the [e] of the first syllable is always short and does not require a grave accent. Words such as *mate* (green), *pena* (maize) and *bena* (flat) are examples.

b/ If the second syllable ends in an [i] or [u] , then the [e] of the first syllable is long and does not need to be indicated by an acute accent, e.g. *peti* (box, coffin) *menu* (bitter).
One of the common patterns of *uab meto* is the use of metathesis in the spoken form. In this way the word *fafi* (pig) becomes *faif*, as in *faif ana* (piglet), or for example the word *neno* (day) becomes *neon*, as in *neon mese* (monday). Metathesized forms are only applied in conjunction with a qualifying term.

In the formation of negatives, use is made of the discontinuous negative marker *kahaf*. On its own the word *kahaf* simply means ‘no’. When used to negate verbs, adjectives or simple nouns, the term *kahaf* is split and added as a prefix and suffix to the word to be negated. So for example the word *leko* means ‘good’. In its negative form, not good, the term becomes *kalekofa*. In this case the end syllable is metathesized to *fa* because it follows the vowel.
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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

This thesis is the product of some 32 months of residence on the island of Timor in Indonesia between 1984 and 1987. During that time I was employed as an anthropologist attached to a joint Indonesian-Australian agricultural development project located in southern central highlands of West Timor.

Timor, particularly the interior of the western half of the island, has for some time been recognised as one of the poorest regions of Indonesia. Rising population levels combined with a voracious slash and burn agricultural regime have resulted in the increasing impoverishment of the indigenous rural populations. Thirty years ago the Dutch Geographer, Ormeling clearly articulated the issues constraining the development of the island. In his study, entitled ‘The Timor Problem’, he highlighted the degradation of the environment through deforestation and soil erosion, the problem of low agrarian production, and the shortages of potable water supplies for the human population (1957:241).

In recent years the recognition of these problems has prompted a significant development effort in Timor and the neighbouring islands of eastern Indonesia. Large amounts of money and resources have been channelled into the region through the National Government and a wide range of foreign aid agencies in the interest of promoting sustained economic development. Yet despite these efforts, observable change in existing land use practices and increases in per capita income remain slight, and the landscape is littered with the broken and abandoned remnants of once promising development projects.

The apparent inability of local populations to improve their economic circumstances has compounded the widespread ethnic stereotype of Timorese as
inherently backward and resistant to change. Fox (1988:259) has shown how this stereotype has its origins as far back as the eighteenth century in the writings of Dutch Colonial officers frustrated in their efforts to integrate Timorese society under administrative authority.

In my own experience of working in Timorese communities, I frequently came across this form of stereotyping. Over time I formed an impression of a marked disjunction between higher levels of Government and the 'development' policies and programs initiated from central agencies, and the hundreds of small indigenous Timorese communities who were the recipients of this development. The participation of the latter took the form of a reluctant, albeit obedient, acceptance rather than a positive collaboration. The fact that the language of development and government was Bahasa Indonesia, which is generally understood but is not the language of everyday communication in the village, also contributed to this reluctance. As a result, it seemed to me that there existed a considerable gulf of understanding between the aspirations of Government on one hand, and marginalised rural Timorese society on the other.

It was therefore apparent in the context of my own work on the agricultural project that it was necessary to develop an understanding of Timorese society in its own terms. For the project to achieve its development objectives, which included improved cropping techniques, livestock and pasture control, and the management of small scale earthern dam water resources, an understanding of Timorese attitudes and social organisation was essential. Consequently, much of my ongoing investigations in and around the project area were directed toward learning what the Timorese themselves considered important and, in the process, promoting opportunities for the integration of their concerns and practical experience in the development planning process.

The focus of this thesis reflects the results of my studies into contemporary social practice and the indigenous principles of order and tradition which underpin social organisation. My concern is less with the pragmatics and politics of the development process per se than it is with analysing the ways in which mountain Timorese society is reproduced in the context of rapid social and economic change.
The initial focus for the project activities was concentrated in four villages (Desa) in a region known as southern Amanuban. However, as the scope of project investigations widened to include other villages within this region and outside it, the nature of my own fieldwork became, of necessity, somewhat peripatetic. Over time I developed an extended network of personal relationships with Timorese farmers and became familiar with a large number of widely dispersed Timorese settlements.

In retrospect, this approach had its disadvantages. I was unable to spend an extended period of residence in one selected settlement after the fashion of much classical anthropological fieldwork. This tended to limit my particularistic understanding of the rhythm of social life in one social context. On the other hand, social life in West Timor is also predicated upon movement. The circumstances of slash and burn agriculture and the dispersed settlement pattern of residence ensures that people move frequently between different localities for longer or shorter periods of time. My own mobility enabled me to pursue some of these lines of connectedness and over time I developed a perspective on the intricate ties which bind individuals and groups to one another within and across social domains.

One of the significant themes to emerge from the study of the social networks of people in southern Amanuban is the importance attached to names. Names provide keys to social understanding. They give meaning to social life and create indices for the orientation of individuals and groups within the territory they occupy and the social context in which they find themselves. In the natural environment, southern Amanuban is conceptually mapped and classified with a bewildering complexity of named places. Each place carries the story of its naming. Any locality, and the prominent natural features which define it, encodes through its names the echo of past events and the experiences of the people who came before. In this way place names provide a link which connects individuals and groups to their ancestral origins and the historical processes by which they came to establish claims upon the land they now occupy. Names of places and names of people are inextricably woven together. All people in southern Amanuban, for instance, carry a name which locates their ancestral
origins. These places are usually associated with the massive limestone outcrops (fatu)\(^2\) which are found throughout Timor. One’s fatun or ‘rock name’ evokes a direct and unbroken link with the earliest remembered ancestor.

The social identity of individuals is also marked by a variety of other names. The most important of these are termed kanaf. The kanaf identifies a name group or clan and each individual is affiliated to one such group. The transmission of the kanaf passes from a father to his children and Timorese say that all individuals ‘carry their group name on their heads’. Maintaining the reputation of the kanaf and reproducing the name group through children are vital motives in social life.

Another aspect of every kanaf in the region is the non-localised pattern of their distribution. Segments of kanaf groupings are widely distributed among the hundreds of small settlements. In my attempts to interpret the nature of the relationships both within and between these kanaf groupings, two features became apparent. The first is a general point found throughout the more westerly villages of southern Amanuban. Many groups claimed to have settled the region within the last 50 years or so, and none extended their claims of settlement beyond five generations. The fact that the area contains relatively extensive tracts of under-utilized arable forest land adds weight to the idea that this region of southern Amanuban is a kind of frontier settlement area for migrating groups and individuals. During my own period of residence, the settlement of new immigrant households into the area was a continuing feature of social life.

The majority of settlers locate their former settlements in the east and specifically to the villages of Lasi and Olais on the eastern border area of southern Amanuban. They usually cite the problems of overpopulation and difficulties in deriving a livelihood from the soil as the main reasons for their migration. Their migrations are commonly expressed in terms of the metaphor of movement from the thin or confined lands (ma'lenat), to those that are broad and wide (manuan). The term ma’lenat expresses a general cultural idiom associated with hunger and crowding, often leading to the outbreak of disputes and schism.
At the same time, their migration did not result in the complete severance of ties with their former territory. On the contrary, a dense network of ongoing social alliances ensures that the two areas are closely interconnected. Throughout the year a regular stream of people and produce move across the region linking east with west.

The second feature is the greater social and political weighting accorded some groups over others. This is often couched in terms of how recently a particular kanaf segment has settled in the area. Certain groups are considered prior settlers (ahunut) in relation to the generally more numerous households and groups who came later (amunit). This tends to be translated into differential access to political authority and land resources at the local level. In each settlement within southern Amanuban - which may range from a fenced compound comprising several houses to one with 40 distinct dwellings - one kanaf segment will be acknowledged as the primary group and associated with the earliest origins of the settlement. However, the name which was generally held in the highest esteem across the region of southern Amanuban as a whole, is that of Nabuasa. All communities within the area accept the traditional political pre-eminence of this name group. This is evident in at least two important ways. Firstly, many of the older settled communities recognise that their claims to arable forest land derive from a former Nabuasa permission or direction to settle the area. Secondly, many of the elected village headmen throughout southern Amanuban are either named Nabuasa or trace an affinal alliance to the Nabuasa name group (kanaf). In other words, there exists an evident continuity between the traditions of the past and the contemporary patterns of social and governmental authority. This is perhaps not altogether surprising. However, given the degree of symbolic elaboration of the past within Atoin meto contemporary contexts, it seems to me that an understanding of the Timorese perceptions of their past can provide important insights into the present configuration of both settlement pattern and cultural practice.

The principle way in which the Timorese and specifically the Atoin meto people of southern Amanuban record the past is through a tradition of orally transmitted narratives. In my efforts to clarify the central position accorded the
Nabuasa kanaf, I began collecting a series of narratives and tales about the past from different knowledgeable speakers in the various villages and communities within the region. In response to my queries I was often directed to various old men in different villages who were said 'to know the past' or held the authority to 'speak the past'. Frequently however, their contributions, whether by design or through imperfect memory, seemed fragmentary and partial. It was not until I recorded the performance of an oral narrative in May 1985 from an old Nabuasa ritual chanter in the village of Lasi that a clearer picture began to emerge.

In the style of canonical parallelism characteristic of formal speech in West Timor, the narrative related the historical journey of the Nabuasa ancestors. The narrator referred to his knowledge as au enok ma au lanak (my gate and my path). Objectively this was expressed and conveyed through a complicated series of sequentially named places and groups. More than this, however, the narrative represented a coherent and authoritative perception of the past and seemed to imply the existence of an indigenous model of political process and organisation.

At the time I saw the evidence of the narrative as an important piece of the jigsaw puzzle of meanings about the Atoin meto which I was attempting to draw together. Still, much of the sense of the narrative remained elusive and unclear, expressed as it was in a metaphorical and elliptical style of speaking. It was not until more than a year later, after further research and the gathering of exegetical commentaries, that I came to understand the narrative, and a number of related additions to it, as a form of political charter. The narrative was clearly a statement of a claim which held a wide appeal across the region.

It is this understanding which forms the basis for the following discussion. I argue that, in southern Amanuban, it is ultimately the shared consensus over the legitimacy of the Nabuasa narrative of the past, and the implications which flow from it, which underlie the social order of contemporary life in the area. As an indigenous model, its importance lies both in the substantive information it contains about a particular sociohistorical context, and in the cultural principles upon which it is constructed and developed.
Social reproduction can be articulated through two key principles that both define the context of social practice and order the social relations between people. These principles are those of place and precedence. Another way to express this is that Atoin meto society is ordered by a system of asymmetrically structured social relations which are legitimated and framed by recourse to historical precedent.

In developing the theme of place and precedence in southern Amanuban, one of the objectives of this thesis is to clarify the nature of the processes and political strategies which inform the practice of expansion and migration. To do so, it is first necessary to discuss the historical antecedents of present day settlement.

It is apparent from the existing records of the colonial past that the Atoin meto people as a whole have been pursuing a gradual yet persistent expansion from the densely settled eastern heartlands to the relatively underpopulated forests and grasslands to the west. Fox (1988:267-269) has argued recently that this historical expansion of the Atoin meto, now the most populous ethnic group in Timor, was fuelled by the introduction of maize, during the late seventeenth century. This in effect increased the carrying capacity of the land and enabled the Atoin meto to flourish. It also brought the formerly scattered mountain populations into conflict with one another with the result that expansionist policies were pursued under the guise of warfare. To the victor went the spoils, including access to new land and important economic resources such as sandalwood and beeswax as well as vassal populations who supplied tribute to the political centre.

During the nineteenth century in particular, warfare and its principle expression, headhunting, emerged as the primary means for expansion. In presenting the Nabuasa narrative of the past I seek to show how the successful strategy of warfare and expropriation of land and labour resources were the principal means which enabled the Nabuasa clan and its allies to become the dominant political force within the territory of southern Amanuban. An analysis of the reconstructed political organisation of the Nabuasa domain, based on their oral tradition, provides insights into both the nature of traditional attitudes towards political structure and the
significance of the twin concepts of place and precedence. The indigenous model of political history is seen to be culturally ordered at the same time as the cultural model of the past is historically informed.

This forms the background to a description of contemporary social organisation in Southern Amanuban with particular emphasis on the character of settlement formation and migration strategies. Here I focus on a number of key aspects of social life: political authority at the local level, the control of land and the question of labour and marriage alliance. These issues are seen to be closely interrelated and provide avenues for the negotiation of status and prestige at the local level. In examining several case study settlements within the region, my intention is to show how the analytical notions of place and precedence help to explain the dynamics of settlement organisation and development.

It is apparent, however, that contemporary West Timor has undergone dramatic and significant transformation since the nineteenth century. In the early twentieth century, the Dutch colonial government, for so long confined to the western tip of Timor, led a series of successful campaigns to pacify the interior. In so doing, the autonomy of the indigenous Atoin meto domains of the interior was irrevocably compromised. The intricately complex indigenous political systems were restructured, the excesses of warfare and headhunting were suppressed and a process of Christian missionization was intensified.

The intervening years led to the incorporation of West Timor into the modern Indonesian State, and with it the creation of new administrative systems of government. Today, the process of Christianization is virtually complete, and economic development programs in the form of schools, bridge and road building, irrigation systems, population migration and resettlement patterns have exposed the interior to far reaching economic and political change.

To a significant degree, the mountain populations of West Timor find themselves in a world very different from that of their ancestors. This was brought home to me very clearly during a visit to the old Nabuasa settlement site in the village
of Oe Peliki. As I listened to an old man describe the significance of the former structures which now lay in ruins overgrown with vegetation, the choir from the nearby Pentecostal church service filled the air with the hymns of a new religion.

Yet, as the linguist de Saussure once noted, 'What predominates in all change is the persistence of the old substance; disregard for the past is only relative. That is why the principle of change is based on the principle of continuity' (1959:74). So, it is all the more interesting therefore that, in spite of these evident transformations in the twentieth century, indigenous cultural models of the past and the legacy of the political order centred on the Nabuasa clan continue to provide many of the parameters for social practice in southern Amanuban. This is exemplified by the indigenous notion of atolan (order). Concerns of atolan lie at the heart of Atoin meto ethnic identity. It is expressed in all domains of social life; from material concerns such as the construction of the house, agricultural practices and the process of life cycle rituals, to styles of speaking in everyday life and the range of idioms and metaphors by which they classify and represent the social world. In the final part of the thesis I examine the continuing importance of atolan in the comparative context of social change.

**Anthropology in Timor**

This thesis is directed towards an understanding of social and political life in West Timor. It is presented as a contribution to the ethnography of Timor and to the study of symbolic classification within the context of eastern Indonesia.

The impetus for the comparative study of eastern Indonesian societies had its origins with the publication in 1935 of a doctoral thesis by the Dutch scholar F.A.E. van Wouden. The work was later published in an English translation under the title, *Types of Social Structure in Eastern Indonesia* (1968).

Based on a close examination of the then limited and fragmentary literature, van Wouden identified a series of structural elements which he regarded as common to the societies of the region. He argued that a system of asymmetrical connubium
(cross-cousin marriage in its exclusive or restricted form) represented a 'pivot' for the organisation of clan systems in social life. Furthermore, he postulated that marriage, as a system of social categories, served as a model for an 'all embracing classification' in which cosmos and human society were organised in the same way (1968:2). Myth, ritual and social forms were representations of an essential unity expressed through the systematic application of dualistic and tripartite principles.

The identification of this cultural core of common elements within eastern Indonesia prompted J.P.B de Josselin de Jong, then Professor of Anthropology at Leiden University and supervisor of van Wouden's thesis, to characterize the region as a 'field of ethnological study'. In this concept he recognized the opportunity to test theoretical ideas about social organisation against empirical data across a 'mutually interpretive context' in which differing shades of cultural emphasis could be compared within a general homogeneity of cultural form.

In recent decades the societies of eastern Indonesia, comprising the Lesser Sunda islands and southern Moluccas, have been the subject of a growing number of ethnographic studies. The majority of researchers acknowledge the pioneering contribution of van Wouden's insights and have tended to direct their attentions to issues of marriage alliance and exchange, social and symbolic classification, ritual and myth [see Fox ed. 1980 and 1988 for examples].

At the same time, the results of more intensive ethnographic enquiry, of a kind van Wouden himself called for at the conclusion of his book, have revealed considerably more complexity and variation than van Wouden initially conceived. Notwithstanding the remarkable similarities between the many societies in the region, it has become apparent that the significant differences can no longer be accommodated within the van Wouden formal model with its pre-defined structural core of cross-cousin marriage, clan system and socio-cosmic dualism. This has given way to a closer examination of the indigenous social categories in their own terms and a focus on the relative emphasis of what Fox (1980:333) has termed 'metaphors for living which are encoded in a pervasive dyadic form'. The weighting and significance
accorded such concepts as younger/elder, female/male, or the house as a metaphor of
social enclosure, and the use of botanical idioms in social classification, now offer a
more subtle interpretative basis for comparative understanding. It is within the context
of this emergent thematic approach that the following thesis is situated.

Timor and specifically the Atoni meto people of West Timor have been the
subject of several detailed ethnographic studies. Of these, the work of C. Cunningham
(1962) and H.G. Schulte Nordholt (1966,1971) are prominent examples of attempts to
interpret the structural features of Atoni meto society as an interconnected whole.5
Both have acknowledged the contribution to their work of the remarkable Dutch
Missionary P Middelkoop, who spent over thirty years in West Timor and developed a
deep and sympathetic understanding of the Atoni meto people.6 My own
understanding of the region has been assisted greatly by the observations and analyses
in these earlier works.

In their ethnographic portrayals, both Cunningham and Schulte Nordholt have
focussed their analyses to a significant degree upon the former political domain of
Insana in north central Timor. As a consequence, Insana has come to be seen as the
archetypal model of former indigenous political structures among the Atoni meto. Part
of the reason for this is the remarkable consensus throughout the domain concerning
the conceptual structures that informed political life in the past. Cunningham,
explaining his decision to focus on Insana, wrote that, ‘despite the short duration of
my work there...I found the informants in Insana particularly able at describing the
traditional polity as a system’ (1962:53). He attributed this to the fact that Insana was
still an integrated princedom led by an active and accepted ruler.

Schulte Nordholt, as a former Dutch colonial Controleur (administrator) in
Insana both before and after the Second World War, was also particularly well placed
to consider the political order within the territory. He played an instrumental part in
the conduct of political negotiations at the time, and was clearly struck by the
remarkable persistence and stability of the political structure.

The model which both ethnographers identified was one based on a traditional
concept of ritual communication for describing the state. In this conception, the
territory was composed of four political sub domains (actually double pairs) surrounding a sacred fifth ruling centre to which harvest tribute was directed. The ruling centre was conceived of as a dual sovereignty whereby the ruling Lord (Atupas one who sleeps) was conceptually female and his ritual authority was of a religious nature supported by the physical power he could exercise through a central masculine or executive counterpart.

Figure 1: Conceptual model of Insana:

![Diagram of Conceptual Model of Insana](after:Schulte Nordholt 1980:240)

This dual character of the centre was replicated at the higher level of the polity itself, conceived of as a female half associated with the west and north, and a male half in the east and south. Each half was also differentiated into conceptual units of male and female double pairs. The schematic model Figure 1 summarizes a dense configuration of politico-religious relationships replicated at each quarter of the princedom to which named clans were affiliated (see Schulte Nordholt 1971:229-231 and Cunningham 1962:152-154).

Even today, despite the dissolution of the old Swapraja system and the absence of any traditional ruler, there are still many people who are capable of reproducing the
conceptual model of the traditional polity\(^7\) and in practical terms, the central ritual Lord (\textit{Atupas}) still receives annual harvest gifts, albeit in a modified form, thereby confirming the ancient relationships upon which the political order was based.

While I do not intend to dispute the validity or accuracy of this indigenous model of political structure in Insana in the following thesis, the extent to which it may be taken as a typical model of political order among the Atoin meto is at issue. In the first place, it is clear that the reconstructed representation of Insana is one predicated upon maintenance and stability. Schulte Nordholt said as much when he wrote (1971:228) that Insana was unique in that permanent disruptive divisions did not take place [my emphasis]. But the historical reality is that prior to the twentieth century, the political climate for the majority of Atoin meto populations was one based upon division and fission into smaller disparate units, interspersed with brief periods of order and integration. It was clearly not one of coherence and maintenance of the status quo and in this respect Insana was unusual, if not indeed unique.

At various points both Cunningham and Schulte Nordholt acknowledged this feature in relation to other political structures. Schulte Nordholt has written, 'the ruler is the unifying force but the urge for superiority on the part of the constituent subsections is sometimes so strong that unity breaks down' (1971:449). At another point he noted, 'in our analysis of the various princedoms we discovered that they were prone to scission' (1971:384). However, it is nowhere entirely clear in the discussion of such processes, what form this breakdown or scission could take. We learn little about the implications of political fission in terms of the ritual ties of community that integrated the political organisation. This is why the following focus on southern Amanuban is important. What is known about that area, and the larger domain of Amanuban itself, points to a far less integrated internal coherence and one prone to persistent internal division. Indeed, it is probably valid to speculate that the most unified period of Amanuban politics occured only after Dutch intervention in the early twentieth century.

One of the central aims of the thesis is to explore some of these dimensions of Amanuban politics in the past by focussing on the example of southern Amanuban and
the Nabuasa clan. My contention is that through the study of southern Amanuban we gain an alternative comparative perspective on the practical processes of Atoin meto politics, one which perhaps more readily reflects the reality of political uncertainty and widespread warfare that characterised pre-twentieth century West Timor. The important theme which emerges is the inherent contingent character of indigenous political models which reflects adaptive responses to changing circumstances in culturally specific ways.

Order of Chapter Presentation

In chapter two of the thesis I present an overview of social and economic life in south west Timor. I discuss how the majority of Timorese farming communities continue to pursue strategies of subsistence in the context of an emergent cash economy. The Indonesian government administrative system is seen to have a strong and persuasive influence at the village level.

Chapter three provides an introduction to the historical context of the study area. Here I draw on the colonial record of Dutch and Portuguese experience and some of the indigenous political myths of the region to present an outline of pre-twentieth century Amanuban. This serves as a basis for presenting the narrative of the past according to Nabuasa in Chapter four.

Chapters five and six expand on the narrative imagery of the Nabuasa past, and offer an analysis and a possible reconstruction of the development of the independent polity implied in the narrative. The conceptual ordering of the polity is expressed in two stages of expansion which reflect indigenous notions of political structure.

In chapter seven I turn to a discussion of the processes of settlement formation in contemporary southern Amanuban. Here I show the significance of the important themes of place and precedence in the development of the community. Issues of political authority, marriage alliance and land tenure are seen to be interdependent aspects of an ongoing complex of gift exchange.

Chapter eight offers an examination of the significant rituals of the house and household in southern Amanuban. My purpose is to highlight the common themes
which integrate these ritual practices within the broader context of Atoin meto culture. In the discussion I seek to highlight the significance of indigenous metaphors and the application of complementary dualism as a mode of representation which grounds contemporary practice in the ancestral experience of the past. A number of general comments and conclusions to the thesis are presented in chapter nine.

Thus, the order of procedure in the thesis is one that shifts from the general to the specific; from the past to the present, and from the macro-political perspective to that of the hamlet and household. The study presents the principles upon which society is founded, and the dynamic and pragmatic attitudes and practices by which social life is reproduced and modified.
CHAPTER TWO

THE ETHNOGRAPHIC SETTING

Introduction

Timor is located in the Lesser Sunda chain of islands at the eastern extremity of the Indonesian Archipelago. The interior of the island is extremely rugged and mountainous, dominated by a series of dissected mountain chains which rise along the central axis. Interspersed throughout the highland regions are rolling plateau areas and steeply incised water courses and river valleys. Geologically, the island is highly complex, with broad belts of uplifted limestone marl and marine deposits overlaying a dominant base material of scaly cracking clays. The vegetation reflects this diversity, ranging from complex evergreen and deciduous monsoon forests, through dense stands of Gewang palm (*Corypha elata*) and white eucalypt (*Eucalyptus alba*) forests reminiscent of northern Australia. In the more open savannah areas acacia woodland and grasslands predominate.

The monsoonal climatic pattern is one of the principle influences on the environment in Timor, and is characterised by a short intense wet season followed by an extended period of seasonal drought. During the wet season the western monsoon brings heavy rains, generally of short duration and often associated with severe soil erosion and flash flooding. In contrast, during the dry season from May to December, there is little or no rain except in a few topographically favourable locations. Dry winds from the Australian continent blow continuously, rivers slow to a trickle and may even dry up completely, and the landscape, bleached by the sun, becomes increasingly sparse and dusty.

The population of Timor is ethnically complex and diverse. In the eastern half of the island, Austronesian and non-Austronesian language speakers are divided into
some fourteen language groups (Traube 1986:24). In the west, four indigenous societies are recognized, all speaking variants of Austronesian languages. The Tetum and Bunaq peoples occupy the central lowlands and mountains immediately west of the East Timor border. In the far west of Timor and on the adjacent island of Semau, there are remnant populations of Helong people. The subject of this thesis and the most populous ethnic group, numbering over 750,000 people, call themselves the Atoin meto. They occupy the hinterland and mountains of West Timor.

In addition to the indigenous groups on the island, significant numbers of immigrant populations are also established. The most prominent of these include ethnic Chinese and people from the neighbouring islands of Savu, Flores, Sumba and Roti. Rotinese farming communities in particular have lived in Timor since the early nineteenth century and are well established in the western hinterland and coastal settlements.

Administration and Government

The eastern Lesser Sunda Islands are known as Nusa Tenggara Timur and today form one of the 27 provinces of Indonesia. Kupang, the fast developing administrative capital of the province is located on the western tip of Timor overlooking a broad shallow bay.

The whole of the province is subdivided into a second tier of government which is termed the Kabupaten, meaning Regency. This follows the pattern established throughout Indonesia to create an administrative homogeneity. In West Timor there are four such Kabupaten: Kupang, Timor Tengah Selatan (TTS South Central Timor), Timor Tengah Utara (TTU North Central Timor) and Belu.

Southern Amanuban, which represents the regional focus for this thesis, forms part of Kabupaten Timor Tengah Selatan. This division is itself based on the former Dutch administrative subdivision (onderafdeeling) of Zuid Midden Timor. It combines the three former self governing Atoin meto political domains (Swapraja) of Amanatun, Molo and Amanuban.
One of the present aims of government at the Kabupaten level is to establish a common administrative system which integrates the entire region. Age-old differences still influence the relations between the three domains, despite government efforts to break down the historical and political barriers that separate them. One of the principal reasons for the location of what has become the present Kabupaten capital, Soe, was to defuse hostilities between Amanuban and Molo during the early part of the century. The border area between eastern Amanuban and northern Amanatun has also experienced hostilities which erupted into civil war in 1956 until order was restored by units of the National Army (Cunningham 1962:39). Today relations are still strained and characterised by mutual distrust and animosity.

Map 1: West Timor.

Map 1 shows the boundaries of the indigenous political domains, or Rajadoms of West Timor at the time of their dissolution during the early 1960's. These political units were in part the result of Dutch intervention in the interior during the early part of the century, and are also a reflection of the existing pattern of political formation at
the time. The modern Kabupaten boundaries closely follow the former borders between domains. Although predominantly Atoin meto in ethnic origin, the old domain of Ambenu, which borders on the north coast of Timor, forms part of East Timor (Timor Timur) province for historical reasons.

Below the level of the Kabupaten is a further administrative subdistrict called the Kecamatan. In the late 1960’s, the former Rajadom of Amanuban was divided into four Kecamatan, each administered by a centrally appointed representative known as a Camat. This was in part a rationalization of the former political division of the Rajadom into seven Kefettoran. The modern Kecamatan of southern Amanuban represents an amalgam of two Kefettoran; a core group of 13 villages with a current (1985) population of some 22,589 people, formerly known as Kefettoran Noebeba, and a second division of 11 villages formerly known as Kefettoran Noemuke. The ethnographic focus for this thesis is the old region of Noebeba, which is named after a small river of the same name on the eastern border.

Map 2: Southern Amanuban villages- formerly Noebeba.
The village or Desa is the effective primary unit of administration at the local level. Current (1985) population figures for the region are presented in Table 1. The concept of the Desa was borrowed from Java and introduced into West Timor during the 1960’s. Unlike the Javanese Desa however, the term does not define a corporate and localised settlement unit in West Timor, but is essentially an administrative unit which covers a variable number of dispersed hamlet settlements. There is no clear centre to an Atoin meto village although numerous attempts are made to create a focus for villager participation.

Table 1: Population of southern Amanuban

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Village</th>
<th>Population</th>
<th>No. of Households</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lasi</td>
<td>2567</td>
<td>447</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Olais</td>
<td>1059</td>
<td>231</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oe Peliki</td>
<td>2224</td>
<td>512</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fatutnana</td>
<td>817</td>
<td>163</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Naip</td>
<td>712</td>
<td>157</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oe Baki</td>
<td>1278</td>
<td>243</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teas</td>
<td>1472</td>
<td>342</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oe Ekam</td>
<td>2132</td>
<td>503</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mio</td>
<td>1532</td>
<td>386</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Polo</td>
<td>5585</td>
<td>1241</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kiubaat</td>
<td>1234</td>
<td>260</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linamnutu</td>
<td>1235</td>
<td>293</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oe Kiu</td>
<td>842</td>
<td>178</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total 22,589 4956

The idea of a centralised village complex (kompleks desa) has been introduced from the central Government in recent years, with limited success. This involves selecting a site for housing the main elected officials of the village and promoting infrastructural development around the complex. Often these tend to take on an abandoned look as they become merely formal meeting places for visiting dignitaries or officials, while the village staff continue to live in their own settlements elsewhere.

The dispersed settlement pattern of Atoin meto villages reflects historical and ecological choices. In the past, settlement sites were chosen for their defensive
potential in the face of threats of warfare and attack by enemy groups. In addition, the existence of many natural springs, which emerge at the interface between limestone and clay formations, have also long been favoured as settlement sites for Atoin meto shifting agriculturalists. This has meant that villages tend to cover extensive areas of secondary forest and savannah woodland, in order to incorporate a sufficient population for administrative purposes. It is not uncommon for some villages to extend over 30 sq km, and to be comprised of up to a dozen small constituent hamlets scattered over the territory. In such circumstances the administration of government can be slow and uncoordinated, especially as communications are usually only possible by horseback or on foot. In response to this, the central government, in the name of development (pembangunan), urges the concentration of disparate settlements into larger units to facilitate the extension of Government programs to villagers. It is perhaps testimony to the success of the Indonesian government in this regard that virtually all people of the hinterland are now included within the administrative framework of the village.

For the majority of people, the village headman (Kepala Desa) is the principal representative of government at the local level. These men are elected every five years and may wield considerable authority within their area of jurisdiction. They are responsible for implementing government policy at the local level, for collecting the yearly taxes (pajak), and for the adjudication and resolution of disputes within their domain. Generally speaking, the village headman maintains a persuasive voice in all matters concerning the village and commands significant respect. As in other areas of Indonesia, the term Bapak Desa (father of the village) is used in Timor to emphasize the relationship of the headman to his people.

Supporting the Kepala Desa are a number of administrative officials and representatives of the various communities that constitute the village. They are collectively responsible for ensuring that government policies are implemented at the local level. The lowest level of formal government is called the Rukun Tetangga (RT), a term drawn from Javanese and means 'harmonious neighbourhood'. In southern Amanuban this unit usually constitutes one or two hamlets of up to 40 households.
The official administrative structure in the village is underpinned by a largely unacknowledged informal system of traditional authority. The most influential figures in this area are the older men and, to some extent, women who trace affiliation to the founding families of the territory. They are known collectively as the amnasi' (old fathers), and continue to influence the considerations affecting the life of the village. Thus, it is common for the elected village headman to be closely related to the leading traditional family groups within the village. This means that often it is possible for authority vested in the government position of Kepala Desa, to coincide with traditionally based authority. In such cases, it is usually the power of the amnasi', who as leaders of their respective name groups, can direct the vote to influence the outcome. Their role is therefore most important as a source of continuity with the past and, at the same time, as a basis for the integration of the new. Without the support of the amnasi' the effectiveness of Government administration at the village level can be seriously weakened and political divisions and factionalism may quickly emerge.

Agriculture and the Domestic Economy

The majority of people in southern Amanuban are smallhold farmers who live out their lives in the context of the localised hamlet and to the rhythm of the agricultural cycle with its wet and dry monsoons. The wet season is a closed introspective period when families concentrate their labour in the food gardens which must supply their needs in the coming year. During these months between December and March, travel and social contacts tend to be restricted. Heavy rains and flash flooding severely limit road transport and communications. In marked contrast to the dust and bareness of the dry season proper, the profusion of vegetative regrowth in the wet season appears to camouflage the mountain settlements and adds to the impression of introspection during this period.

In contrast, the dry season represents a kind of opening out of society. This period corresponds to increased social contacts outside the hamlet. People are on the move visiting relatives in neighbouring villages to attend weddings and reaffirm
alliances, trading livestock and other produce, repaying some debts and incurring others. Most people still travel by foot carrying their goods or leading a loaded pack horse. Transport by truck is a modern feature. Town-based Colt Diesel trucks, overloaded with trade produce and people, belching smoke and oil, ply the mountain backroads between markets.

The dry season is also a time when government sponsored labour projects are pursued and taxes collected. Village projects include road repairs and construction, housing projects for village staff and Government agricultural extension workers, church construction, and collective fencing projects for livestock management, among others. Women are encouraged to attend sewing classes or post-natal care programs sponsored by the government. Some programs offer small financial compensation, others require the ‘voluntary’ labour of the villagers (termed gotong rovong) usually on a hamlet by hamlet basis. In these and other ways the farmers of southern Amanuban are tied into the wider Indonesian state and participate dutifully in the centrally planned infrastructural development of their region.

However, for the majority of people despite the concerns which draw them away temporarily, the hamlet forms the focus for social and economic life. Towards the end of the dry season attention turns once again to the fields and preparation begins for the next season’s cultivation.

In order to provide something of the texture and complexity of contemporary hamlet life, it may be useful to examine the everyday activities of farmers more closely. By way of introduction to the main themes which inform social life in southern Amanuban, I focus on the activities of Atoni Meto households in a typical mountain hamlet in southern Amanuban during the late dry season. The account is a generalised one to the extent that it draws on the experiences of many households which are combined into a typical portrait.
The most common form of residential pattern within the hamlet is the single household made up of parents and their children. This forms the primary production unit in the domestic economy, oriented to the cultivation of an annual food crop which provides the year’s staple food supply. Small scale animal husbandry, particularly domestic pigs and Bali Banteng cattle, provide supplementary income and a valuable store of capital. In the last 15 to 20 years, the cultivation of wet rice has also emerged as a feature of economic life. Some farmers utilize the fertile alluvial soils adjacent to river systems for this purpose. Much of southern Amanuban is mountainous, however, and the majority of hamlet communities do not have access to sufficient flat alluvial soils. This means that wet rice farming is restricted to certain areas and not all communities can benefit from the high yields which can be obtained. Wet rice cultivation is usually restricted to one cropping season in the late wet season when the possibility of flooding, which may seriously damage irrigation channels, has diminished. However, in some more favourable areas of alluvial floodplain, double and triple cropping of rice is possible.

All communities in the region participate in dryland cropping activities. The season begins around September or October when the initial work of clearing the selected sites is undertaken. Most farmers seek to prepare at least one new garden (lene) every year, in addition to their house gardens which are cultivated perennially. They may also reopen a cropping area used in the previous year. As a result, cropping sites can be widely dispersed and even located in different village areas. Most new fields are developed out of secondary bush land (mnuke), which has lain fallow for a number of years. The usual measure of suitability is the extent of timber regrowth on the former garden, but 10 years is usually the minimum fallow time required. Primary forest (nasi) is rapidly disappearing from the landscape as a result, in part, of increasing population pressure on arable land, but also because the sanctions against entering and utilizing the deep forests have diminished with the decline in traditional authority structures and the former religion.
Gardening strategies reflect the diversification of risk. Taking advantage of different soil types and sequential planting times reduces the chance of total crop failure. However, it also increases the work requirements for the household, both in terms of fencing and supervision of the maturing crop. Weed infestation and incursions by domesticated or wild animals can significantly reduce yields or wipe them out altogether. It is for this reason that labour is one of the critical issues for Atoin me to farmers. The ability to mobilize networks of kin is an important feature of social life. During the wet season many families are divided for weeks at a time, as their members elect to concentrate on different garden areas.

During the late dry season, the felled timber and secondary bush is left to dry before being thoroughly burnt off. Atoin me to believe a hot burn is essential to the successful production of the crop. Burning is conducted in the late afternoon and evening when the winds die down. Often a group of closely related men and boys will combine their efforts to ensure that fires do not get out of control. Such collective work activities are invariably accompanied by a meal provided by the main cultivator of the field in payment for the services of his kinsmen.

One of the principal time consuming activities for farmer households is the construction of a perimeter fence around the field. This task is usually undertaken by men. Heavy timbers are laid lengthwise around the field and a latticework of smaller branches and logs is built up to form a dense wooden barrier against livestock. Due to the heavy labour input required, up to 40 man-days for one hectare of land, fencing is rarely completed in time for the onset of the monsoon. This may delay planting until well into the wet season.

In order to offset the work of fencing, farmers will often pursue reciprocal labour arrangements with neighbours and kinsmen. Small informal groups will work together at a number of field sites on the fencing work. The rhythm of work is punctuated with numerous stoppages to chew betel nut and recuperate in the shade.

Gardens are planted following the first few soaking rains, which close up the cracks in the parched soil. Due to the notoriously variable onset of the monsoon, much
attention is paid to determining the appropriate time to plant. Frequently, early rains are not sustained and the germinated seedlings may wither in the ground when no further falls are forthcoming.\textsuperscript{9}

House gardens are generally cultivated first as they provide the first fruits of agriculture in the coming months. They are planted with a diverse range of cultigens including, fast maturing varieties of maize (60-70 days), sorghum, millet, various kinds of beans, pumpkins, papaya, melons and cassava. Tree crops, such as coconuts and mango, are also planted around the house. These areas tend to be supervised by women who spend relatively more time than men in and around the house area.

By contrast, field gardens are planted primarily with maize which supplies the bulk of the food to be stored and consumed in the ensuing year, although there is often some intercropping with pumpkin, bean or pigeon pea. Planting is usually a woman’s task in this part of Timor. They carry an iron dibble stick (\textit{pali}) which is used to create planting holes, randomly spaced about a metre apart. Conventionally, four to five seeds are dropped into the holes and trodden over with soil. Decreased yields due to overcrowding are offset by the greater number of plants cultivated.

Weeding the maturing crops is a constant time consuming task for the household. Farmers attempt to weed the fields twice in the season but this is often an optimistic goal. Weeding is undertaken by all members of the household using the traditional hooked knife (\textit{tofa}), or the long bladed machete (\textit{benas}). Weed infestation can markedly reduce the effective yield of dryland crops if left unattended. Thus, during the height of the wet season households disperse into the garden areas and many weeks may be spent in the fields away from the hamlet proper.

The new harvest begins in February and continues through to April. The early maturing varieties of maize are taken from the house gardens as needed. By this time, most of the supplies from the previous season have been depleted and general nutrition levels among householders have reached a low point. Traditionally, the young maize is roasted and fed to children. The field gardens are harvested later. At each garden site, the household gathers to harvest the maize and prepare it for
transport back to the settlement. The maize is tied into bundles of eight cobs, which are referred to as *aisat mese*. Twenty of these bundles are tied together into what are termed ‘horses’ of maize (*bikaes mese*). A farmer then calculates his yield in terms of how many ‘horses’ of maize have been harvested. Between eighty to one hundred ‘horses’ of maize are considered adequate to sustain an average household through the year. More often this is not achieved and lean yields only offer the bleak promise of food shortages later in the year.

To supplement the staple maize crop, bananas, cassava and sweet potatoes are widely cultivated and households always have recourse to the secondary life sustaining foods such as tubers from the forests, as well as a sago porridge produced from the pith of the Gewang palm. Scrub fowl and other game, such as feral pigs, deer and wild cattle, are also hunted with dogs in forested areas.

Harvest activities are completed when the new crops have been brought to the hamlet and stored in the loft of the house (*panat*), where the smoke and heat of the hearth fire helps to protect the harvest from rot and infestation by rats and weevils. Longer maturing crops such as cassava and pigeon pea are left standing in the fields to be harvested at a later time after which the field sites are generally abandoned to the dry season.

**Rituals of Agriculture**

For centuries, agriculture and specifically the cultivation of dryland rice (*aen meto*) and maize (*pena*) were intimately tied to the indigenous religion and the spiritual realm, which was believed to influence the outcome of cultivation practices. Religious concerns are still important in agriculture but the emphasis has now shifted to Christian beliefs and worship. Christian prayer and communal worship accompany all the major stages in the cultivation process and take the form of requesting assistance from God (*Uis Neno*).

The major Christian ceremonies which accompany agriculture revolve around planting and harvesting. However, private prayers are usually conducted at each stage
of cultivation from the first clearing of the garden and the burning of the fields through fencing, weeding and private requests for rain.

Immediately prior to planting, all members of the church community, which may include the population of one or more hamlet settlements, bring small baskets (ok beti) of the planting seed to be blessed at the church. The emphasis these days is on the maize crop which is universally regarded as the most important crop. Dryland rice has now almost disappeared as an important foodstuff, having been replaced by the more productive, if less tasty, wet rice varieties. People will sometimes express the notion that if the maize crop is successful then all will be well. These prayers are regarded as 'opening' the cropping season; onena soetan (opening prayer) or onen senat (planting prayers).

During the season, if the rains are poor and the crops are considered endangered, formal prayers for rain (onen ulan) will be made through the church. Such prayers are usually completed with the sharing of a meal among the participants. These events echo the past in a symbolic way. Formerly, ritual rainmakers (a'na amnes) were highly regarded for their capacity to influence the season through prayer and sacrifice. Today the presence of such individuals may still be requested to add weight to the Christian prayers.

Immediately prior to harvesting, the community will gather again at the church to seek spiritual assistance in bringing in the crops. Each household will bring a bundled tie of the first fruits of maize to the church. Usually eight cobs attached to their shortened stalks are piled in front of the church altar as offerings. The 'prayers for the new' (onen feu) mark the symbolic beginnings of the harvest which will provide sustenance for the community.

Closing or covering prayers (toeb onen) are held following the completion of the main harvest. Each year, the congregation will offer their labour to cultivate gardens for the church (len kle). This produce is harvested and may be auctioned (lelan) along with individual offerings of private crops to provide funds for the development of the church and assistance to the church leaders for their work during the year.
Subsistence and the Cash Economy

Atoin meto farmers enter the cash economy, in part because of the inability of households to grow their own food requirements. Rice, for example, can only be cultivated in small quantities by the majority of households, and therefore must be bought at local weekly markets. In addition, all households require a variety of small goods to supplement their diet and maintain a certain standard of domestic life. Usually families will buy small quantities of kerosene for lamps, salt, soap, sugar, betel nut and chewing tobacco, as well as manufactured items such as clothing for children attending school, and the cotton thread which women fashion into woven textiles and cloths. By and large, it is women who control the finances of the household. Men are typically thought to be irresponsible with money or, as one woman expressed it to me, men with money are like plants with 'no sprout, no growing tip' (kama u kama tunaf).

There are a variety of sources for cash income. They include seasonal sales of forest products such as palm sugar and wild honey, and timber for firewood and building materials. During September and October, a seasonal source of income for many households is the collection and sale of tamarind pulp (kiu) to town based Chinese traders. In the mountains to the east, the longer wet season offers opportunities for the small scale cash cropping of coriander (kone) and garlic (pio muti).

One of the primary income sources, however, is livestock which represents the stored wealth of Atoin meto households. Chickens and the eggs they produce are important for their easy convertibility into cash at markets. Bali cattle and, to a lesser extent, domesticated pigs are sold as needed to provide for larger expenditure items such as school fees for older children in district and provincial capitals and for housing improvements. The increasing acceptance of concrete houses with corrugated iron roofing is testimony to the importance people now place on this development. Most individuals seek to assemble enough capital to afford these modern houses.
Cattle, like pigs, are allowed to range freely and management techniques are minimal. While this reduces labour input, the lack of supervision may result in stock losses through injury and the potential for animals to wander into food cropping areas, which may result in a costly dispute with the owner of the field. The common practice is to brand the animals with name group markings (malak) and to round cattle up from time to time in crude stockyards (o'of). Owners use carved wooden whistles (feke) to call their animals in the evening. An alternative strategy, and one used by owners with few head of cattle, is to tether the animals and cut and carry fodder for them. This avoids the problem of theft or disputes over animal incursions, but does involve considerably more work. Children in the household will often spend part of the day hauling green fodder and water for the cattle. The advantage of tethered animals is a marked increase in weight gain, particularly during the dry season when natural feed conditions deteriorate. This becomes an important consideration when a farmer plans to sell an animal or offer it in the context of the presentation of bridewealth. In this region, sales are made on a needs basis through local middlemen (kaki tangan) who buy for Chinese traders intending to fatten cattle for export to markets in Java.

Participation in the cash economy however, has not led to a loosening of the social networks that bind people to one another. This is expressed in the commitment to a strong barter economy which underlies the cash economy. Money, for instance, is used in formal or ceremonial contexts as a form of gift or prestation. Throughout the year, and particularly during the dry season when social interaction increases between hamlets, social relations are given tangible form through the reciprocal exchange of gifts and the manipulation of social capital. Formally, these are enacted at such events as weddings, funerals, childbirth and house building ceremonies, and collective labour projects in the fields. No formal gathering is complete without the provision of cooked meat and rice (sisi maka).

Informal sharing of produce between neighbours and kin is also common and forms one of the underlying idioms of alliance and exchange. In this context, the giving and receiving of fresh and smoked meat constitutes a major exchange item.
Meat distribution arises from several causes. Pigs or cattle found in crop gardens may be slaughtered and the meat divided between the owner of the garden and the owner of the animal. Alternatively, game from the forests may be hunted and the meat distributed among a network of closely related households. Gift exchange creates a wide number of interrelated debt relations, which serves implicitly to redistribute food surpluses and spread the benefits of good fortune among the wider kin group.

Despite the emergent strength of the cash economy, most rural communities in southern Amanuban remain firmly grounded in subsistence. Most of the products and implements used in everyday activities are fashioned from the natural and cultivated resources which surround the settlement. These include a diverse range of items such as grass thatch, bamboo and timber for housing, medicines, rope and twine as well as many types of hand woven palm baskets, containers and mats and the hand dyed and woven cotton cloths (ma’u) and sarong (tais) worn as clothing.

In summary, it is clear that the contemporary world of the Atoin meto, is one which reflects adaptation to far reaching forces of social change. That the communities of southern Amanuban have managed to incorporate change, without losing a strong sense of what it is to be Atoin meto is testimony to the underlying persistence of traditional patterns of belief. This is most clearly apparent in the propensity for people to cast the processes of contemporary social life in terms of enduring cultural idioms. Social change may be understood, not as a recent phenomenon which has burst upon the social landscape and subverted traditional society but rather, as an integral element of social reproduction. It is the consequence of interaction between a system of cultural assumptions embodied in the shared conventions of individuals, and the ambiguities and possibilities which arise from contingent circumstance. In the following chapters my purpose is to explore the historical dimensions of Atoin meto sociality with a view to articulating some of the constitutive indigenous elements by which social life is conceived and ordered.
CHAPTER THREE

AMANUBAN IN THE PAST

Introduction

During the nineteenth century the kingdom of Amanuban became one of the largest single political domains in Timor to be recognised by the Dutch Colonial Government. At the height of its power the mountainous territory sprawled over some 2500 sq kms of monsoon forest and savannah woodland. The political fortunes of the Nabuasa clan and the development of southern Amanuban were inextricably linked to and indeed reflected in the emergence of Amanuban as a regional power. The object of this chapter is to develop an historical and regional view of the particular political and cultural context which made this possible.

There are two general sources of information on the past in Timor. The first is the recorded myths of the oral tradition of indigenous Timor. The limitations of these sources, for the historian, are those common to most mythical tales including the ambiguity of the narrative, the absence of true chronology and the tendency to collapse time into a single dimension of the past. Nevertheless, in the absence of alternative records in many cases, they provide the only authoritative sources of information on the ancient political structures of the island.

The second source of information comprises the documented historical records which in this case represent the views of Portuguese and Dutch traders and officials in the region during the last three centuries. One of the limitations of these written records, however, is their fragmentary nature. Despite the Dutch mania for detail prior to the twentieth century there were few systematic attempts to understand and record the internal political organisation of the indigenous Timorese domains. This applies even more so to the Portuguese. The evidence that is available provides informative if
partial accounts of the political strategies and events which coloured the character of social life in the interior of Timor in former times. These limitations are not surprising given that the Dutch, in particular, faced considerable difficulties travelling in the interior of Timor due to the generally hostile relations which prevailed between them and the indigenous populations during much of their residence on the island. As a result, much of the Dutch literature expresses the common colonial sentiment that the interior populations were barbaric and bloodthirsty and in dire need of the civilising influences of 'good' government and Christianity.

The following perspective on Amanuban is derived from an examination of both these sources. The result is not an exhaustive account of the history of Amanuban, nor of the colonial experience in the region, but one which provides a context for understanding something of the historical antecedents of one Atoin meto domain.

The Colonial Encounter

One of the earliest references to provide historical evidence for the existence of the state of Amanuban is recorded in the Corpus Diplomaticum, a series of documented treaties ratified between the Dutch and indigenous rulers in the East Indies. It claims that the trader Crijn van Ramburgh representing the Dutch East Indies company (VOC) contracted a trading agreement with Amanoebang on 15 March 1616 (1907:119-121). We learn nothing about the political organisation of the state of Amanuban from this reference; nevertheless the date is important because it marks one of the early formal links between European traders and the indigenous 'states' of West Timor. The early seventeenth century is also a useful starting point for discussion because it represents the establishment of European colonialism in Timor and the emergence of foreign forces which came to have a dramatic influence on the development of the island for the next 250 years.

What brought the Dutch and earlier the Portuguese to the region was a trading interest in high quality white sandalwood (Santalum album L.) produced in great
quantity on Timor. Timor, however, had been a centre for trade in sandalwood for centuries prior to this. One Chinese report of the Ming dynasty published in 1436 makes mention of twelve ports on Timor where the perfumed wood could be obtained (Groeneveldt 1880:117).

The Portuguese first established a base in the region on the island of Solor in 1562. This was later fortified for protection against Moslem pirates from the Celebes and Java. In time the settlement developed its own unique character. Its residents comprised Dominican monks, Portuguese sailors and soldiers, as well as their mestizo Christian offspring and native converts. When the Dutch laid seige to the fort at Solor in 1613, they allowed the occupants safe retreat to Larantuka on the nearby island of Flores. From this base the motley collection of refugees were able to pursue their sandalwood trading activities and they developed into powerful opponents of the Dutch East Indies Company. It was here that they became known as the Topasses, or more derisively by the Dutch, as the Black Portuguese (zwarte portuguesezen). Throughout the seventeenth century the Topasses gradually strengthened their hand in the region. In 1629 they were assisted by the defection to their ranks of the commander of the Dutch controlled Fort Henricus at Solor. This man, named Jan de Hornay, was by all accounts a very capable leader despite being an inveterate drunkard (Boxer 1948:177). The extent of Topass power in the region was evident when they captured a Dutch yacht and its entire crew off the coast of southern Timor in 1630 (Schulte Nordholt 1971:166)

In 1642, in response to an attack on coastal settlements by the Moslem ruler of Tallo (South Sulawesi), the Portuguese undertook their first military expedition into the interior of Timor. This action had significant consequences for the future of the indigenous Timorese states.

Control of Timor at the time was exerted from the interior of the island by what native tradition identifies as the loosely federated empire of the Belu and Atoin meto peoples. The ritual and political centre of this empire was known as Waiwiko Wehale, situated on the Besikama plain of southern Belu. It was ruled by the ritual
lord Nai Bot (lit. great Lord), also called the Maromak oan (lit. child of god). He represented the sacred centre of the domain and was concerned primarily with agricultural rites and the regulation of the rains. The confederation was controlled by two main executive rulers known as Liurai (meaning above or superior to [liu], the earth [rai]). The most senior Nai Malaka ruled in the Tetun/Belu region while Nai Sonbai his younger brother reputedly ruled over much of the Atoin meto peoples of West Timor. Both took the title of Emperor for their respective domains. One of their activities was to ensure a continuing flow of tribute from vassal states towards the ritual centre (Francillon 1967:24-26).

It is difficult to know the extent and organisation of this ‘empire’. Timorese myths remain the most authoritative source of information. Schulte Nordholt argues that the evidence supports the conclusion that there was at one time a measure of unity (1971:162, see also Boxer 1948:192). Others dismiss this as a fiction of Portuguese and Dutch historiography (Forman 1977:100). Whatever the historical reality, the Portuguese military expedition in May 1642, comprising 150 musketeers and 3 Dominican priests and aided by people from the native domains of Ambenu and Amanuban, marched across Timor to Wehale and razed the settlement (Leitao 1948:189). This action had a significant symbolic importance. It marked the destruction of the mythical ‘empire’ and completely undermined the moral authority of the Wehale centre.

Upon learning of the destruction of Wehale, many leaders of the vassal domains celebrated the victory and pledged allegiance to the Portuguese (Leitao 1948:207). Any unity which may have existed prior to 1642 began to dissolve into smaller, mutually antagonistic polities and petty chiefdoms. The Black Portuguese exploited this situation and forced alliances with many of the nominal rulers of these small states in West Timor.

The Dutch made their first visit to Timor in 1613 following their capture of the fort at Solor. They arrived in Kupang in the far west of the island and were peacefully welcomed. Here they sought trading agreements with a number of local rulers to
supply sandalwood. A permanent base, however, was not established in Kupang until forty years later in 1653, when the Dutch seized the abandoned Portuguese garrison there and renamed it Fort Concordia.

In the early years the Dutch, so it was said, controlled little more territory than that within the range of their cannon at Fort Concordia (Boxer 1948:193). However they moved quickly to forge treaties with the small political domains that ringed the Bay of Kupang: Kupang, Sonbai, Amabi, Taebenu and Amfoan. They were known as the ‘five loyal allies’ (Fox 1977:67).

In 1656 following a period of truce between the rival groups, the Dutch under the leadership of one Arnoldus de Vlamingh van Oudshoon mounted a major military attack on the Black Portuguese and their native allies. They engaged the enemy in Amarasi south of Kupang. But far from securing Dutch power in the area and avenging past Dutch defeats, de Vlamingh was forced to withdraw in confusion with the loss of 170 European soldiers (Boxer 1947:6, Schulte Nordholt 1971:171). From this point on the Black Portuguese were able to secure their control over the interior of Timor for the next 100 years. The Dutch could not be forced out of their stronghold in Kupang but neither could they make inroads into the hinterland.

In 1673 the Portuguese established a permanent port at Lifao (present day Oe Kussi) on the north coast of West Timor. This became a thriving entrepot for the sandalwood trade, and was regularly visited by Indonesian and Chinese traders as well as Portuguese from Macau and Goa. Dampier who visited the port on his journey to New Holland in 1699, reported that:

...in March each year about twenty junks used to arrive loaded with coarse rice, tea, iron, porcelain, silk and gold, to set out once again loaded with sandalwood, gold, beeswax and slaves. (Dampier 1703:161-162).

The control of most of this trade from the interior was by now in the hands of the two leading families of the Black Portuguese, the Da Costas and the De Hornays. While they acknowledged the nominal suzerainty of the Portuguese crown, they had refused to accept any attempts by the governments of Goa (India) and Macau to
control them. Antonio de Hornay, the Eurasian son of the defector Jan de Hornay, became the uncrowned King of Timor until his death in 1695, amassing great wealth in the process (Boxer 1948:181, Leitao 1948:246-247). By the end of the year 1700, his eventual successor, Domingos da Costa, had extended his control over the whole of Timor save for Kupang and its immediate surrounds. Dampier neatly summarized the situation:

The Portuguese vaunt highly their strength here, and that they are able at pleasure to rout the Dutch, if they had had the authority so to do from the King of Portugal...They have no forts but depend on their alliance with the natives: And indeed they are already so mixt that it is hard to distinguish whether they are Portuguese or Indians" (1703:171).

The strategy of forging alliances with native rulers through marriage was an extremely successful one for the Black Portuguese. It enabled them and their offspring to assume the position of rulers themselves in time. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries the rulers of native domains of west Timor proliferated with names such as Da Costa, Fernandes, Caceres, De Hornay and so on (De Matos 1974:145, Leitao 1952:44). During this period Amanuban appears to have maintained close relations with the Portuguese and accepted Roman Catholicism to a significant degree (Leitao 1948:188, De Matos 1974:53).

During the eighteenth century the Portuguese government in Goa, sometimes referred to as the white Portuguese (blanke portugeezen, see de Roo van Alderwerelt 1904:199), attempted to wrest control of Timor away from the Black Portuguese. They met with fierce resistance and numerous appointed Governors of the territory were either killed in uprisings or forced to make hasty departures. Eventually in 1769 another beleaguered Portuguese governor in Lifao moved his entire garrison to Dili in East Timor far from the region of Topass or Black Portuguese control (Boxer 1947:13).

The power of the Topasses in West Timor continued to develop during the first half of the eighteenth century. During this period they directed their efforts at securing the overlordship of the Timorese population. Initially, they met with some resistance
from the indigenous populations of the interior including Amanuban (Leitao 1948:150). Generally, however, their power went largely unchallenged until 1749, when a decisive battle was fought at Penfui on the outskirts of Kupang. In that year a large Topass army led by Lieutenant-General Gasper da Costa attempted to rid the island of the Dutch once and for all. Among the ranks were many Timorese allied to the Topass leadership. These included groups from the native domains of Amakono, Ambenu, Belu and Amanatun. One report also mentions that the Tenente de Provincia, Pasqual da Costa, and the Sargento Mor de Provincia, Amaro da Costa, also accompanied them (Boxer 1947:14). Provincia here refers to the domain of Amanuban. Hence it would appear that during this period the Topasses had succeeded in supplanting the native rulers of Amanuban. This notion is supported by the report that in 1749 the King of Amanuban, one Don Miguel Fernando de Consecao, had come to Kupang seeking Dutch aid accompanied with six of his heads (Schulte Nordholt 1971:177). Apparently the ruler had fallen out with the Topasses at this time although he was clearly one of their number. The point of interest is the military system implicit in the report. Positions of Lieutenant (tenente) and ‘native’ sergeant (sargento mor) clearly indicate that Amanuban was at this time under Portuguese control. This system of ranks was introduced in 1702 by the Portuguese governor of Lifao in return for swearing formal fealty to the Portuguese crown (Boxer 1947:9). There is however, little information available to clarify the extent of this development nor its operational role in the domain, as it was not reported by later Dutch visitors to the region.

The battle which raged all day at Penfui resulted somewhat surprisingly in an historic victory for the outnumbered Dutch-led forces. Haga (1882) reports that thousands of Topass troops and their Timorese allies were killed in the confrontation including their leader Gasper Da Costa. This marked a turning point in the balance of power in Timor. The Topasses were not destroyed, as they were still able to force the Portuguese crown to move operations to Dili in East Timor twenty years later, but their power was seriously reduced and their sphere of influence was restricted to north central Timor.
The Dutch took advantage of their new power and set about securing agreements with the Timorese rulers of the interior and those of the neighbouring islands. These were ratified in the treaty of 1756, under the Commissaris Paravicini. Among the ten signatories to the treaty from the Timorese-speaking areas was one Don Louis, the Raja of Amanuban. As in other domains the use of Portuguese names reveals that much of the interior had belonged to the sphere of influence of the Topasses. From this time, however, it is clear that Amanuban regained a degree of independence and the traditional system of rule was reinstated. This was encouraged through the Dutch policy of indirect rule. Unlike the Topasses, who sought to infiltrate Timorese political systems and ultimately subvert them by supplanting the rulers, Dutch rule tended to be characterised by a policy of non-interference, allowing the small self-governing (zelfstandig) states of the interior to remain without precise clarification but also without challenge (Fox: 1977:72). This enabled many of the indigenous traditional princedoms to recover their power to some extent.

In Amanuban Raja Louis became the first ‘Emperor’ (Kaizer) of the domain. He was a powerful figure in the polity and managed to achieve a significant degree of unity and peace over the domain. For this reason he was given the title Ta mes pah (we make the land one) (Schulte Nordholt 1971:310) or ek pah (to enclose the land) in reference to his success at securing the borders of Amanuban from enemy incursions. Müller reports that during the eighteenth century the Dutch maintained amicable relations with Amanuban (Müller 1857:215). In this period, however, an internal power struggle erupted between the sons of the Ruler. According to Heijmering, in the late eighteenth century, the elder brother Raja Kobis was dethroned by his younger brother Tobani and was forced to seek protection under the Dutch along with a contingent of subjects who had remained loyal (1847:53, see also Veth 1855:86). But these troubles do not appear to have disrupted the general accord with the Dutch and many of the separatist groups were reincorporated under Tobani in the late eighteenth century (de Roo van Alderwerelt 1904:213).

In the early nineteenth century, however, relations between the Dutch and Amanuban deteriorated. In 1807 a dispute arose between the Kobis and his brother the
ruler of Amanuban over the murder of one of the subjects of the ruler (see B...D 1852:223). As a consequence Amanuban attacked the settlement of Babau near Kupang killing many of its inhabitants and making off with a large herd of buffalo. At the same time the interior of Timor once again became embroiled in conflict as minor wars and skirmishes flared and festered throughout the territory. Amanuban in the early nineteenth century became warlike, anti-Dutch and expansionist. Supported by a secret trade in firearms and gunpowder, marauding horsemen from Amanuban conducted a series of punitive raids outside their territory. They appear to have been largely motivated by greed for spoils and the desire to weaken their enemies to the north west and south. During 1822 they set out on a campaign with 500-600 horsemen (Müller 1857:218) and frequently made deep incursions into the territory surrounding Kupang nominally under the administrative control of the Dutch. These military exploits were characterised by wholesale looting and slaughter. Women and girls were often taken captive as slaves, men had their heads cut off, and their settlements were burnt to the ground. Other prized plunder were buffaloes, horses and firearms (Müller 1857:216).

In response to the violent behavior of Amanuban the British Resident in Kupang, Burn, and later his Dutch successor, Hazaart, undertook a series of military expeditions into the interior in an attempt to punish Amanuban and quell the disturbances. Beginning in 1814 under Burn until the final expedition in 1822, the expeditions fought a number of battles but were ultimately ineffective and the Dutch were forced to retreat once again to the surrounds of Kupang.  

Under the rule of a second Raja Louis during the 1820's, the success of Amanuban in repelling the Dutch and maintaining their independence against surrounding territories earned them the reputation of being 'invincible' [onnverwinnelijk] (Francis 1838:358). This was probably the highpoint of 19th century unity in Amanuban, which partly explains why a period of peace descended over the interior. As reports of violent attacks declined and hostilities ceased (Müller 1857:217), by 1831 Francis could report that there was peace throughout the island (Francis 1838:53).
The peace however appears to have been shortlived. By 1847 the Dutch forces in Kupang were forced to respond to increasing attacks on settlements around the Bay by raiders from a re-emergent domain of Sonnebai (D.1850:156-8). In addition Amanuban began to be wracked by fierce internal political struggles. These divisions had emerged during the period of peace when the authority of the Raja weakened and a proliferation of local claimants to power had sought to fill the resultant vacuum. This developed into civil war within the domain.

It is at this point that the Nabuasa clan comes to prominence. By a fortuitous coincidence of history, the central Nabuasa settlement (Lasi) was actually visited by an anonymous Dutch traveller who ventured into Amanuban in 1849. His observations are uniquely pertinent to a perspective on the position of Nabuasa within Amanuban at the time and worth quoting at length. He writes:

Amanuban used to be a single state and one Raja, who lived at Niki Niki, had uncontested power. Several times this state has had hostilities with the Dutch authorities....The last expedition took place under the resident Hazaart, and was not successful. Since that time there have been splitting tendencies within the domain itself. From time to time some Fettors and Temukungs (indigenous headmen) who are not satisfied with the erratic authority of the Raja have split away and have attempted to become independent. It has come about that Amanuban has split into two parts. One part which is administered and taxed by the Raja of Niki Niki and the under-regents who remain faithful to him, and another part under the headmanship of the people who split away and have become autonomous and more or less independent. They are continuously in a state of warfare with the Raja of Niki Niki and his minor regents and they are also fighting amongst themselves (D 1850:166).

The leaders of this breakaway group are identified by 'D' as Naguasa, who in his words:

..used to be of the status of meo; that is the head and administrator of everything to do with warfare and the defense of the state. [But that now]... all those small states that have split away from the Raja in Niki Niki are more or less dependent on this meo. This happened because in time some of those Temukung and their people who were too weak to stand alone, have attached themselves to this Naguasa. In that way his village which was once small has grown in size and population. It is now the largest of all settlements in this region of Amanuban (D 1850:167).
These comments are revealing of the character of the internal politics of Amanuban at the time. 'D' clearly identifies the Naguasa clan, which must surely be Nabuasa, as a central figure in a loosely federated autonomous domain within the larger polity. There are also several aspects of this emergent political order which are pertinent to our study. Firstly, in the report 'D' estimates that the total population in the settlement area was as much as 3000 people. This compares with an earlier report from the Dutch Resident van den Dungen Gronovius who had made a short reconnoitre of Amanuban in the same year and estimated the population to be upwards of 12,000 in 78 hamlets (1849:64). Although 'D' is skeptical of the accuracy of van den Dungen Gronovius' figures, it is clear that the area had become a significant population centre particularly when the total population for Amanuban as a whole was probably less than 30,000 people at the time.\(^1\) One of the consequences of this burgeoning population growth was an increase in the prestige of the Nabuasa leadership. Van Lith, a Dutch Controleur of South Central Timor in the early twentieth century, noted that:

..the authority of the Raja diminished further as new clans which had been driven away from other places came to this region [lassie] and established themselves with the blessing of the 'monarch' [Nabuasa] (1921:77).

He compares the process of settlement to the Trojan horse strategy of ancient times, whereby new settlers under the protection of Nabuasa settled land ostensibly belonging to the Raja of Amanuban and then undertook war against him.

Secondly, it is evident that the shift toward autonomy from the Raja had enabled an increase in relative wealth for the population, much of which accrued to the Nabuasa clan. This was achieved through the trade of the principle economic resources, beeswax and white sandalwood. The Dutch traveller 'D' observed that:

..through this trade the population has become somewhat wealthy in a way one does not see in other parts of Timor. Men and women are richly decorated with silver rings and discs.... sandalwood is the most important form of income for the headmen. These goods must be
collected by the general population of which nine tenths is given to the heads (D. 1850:172).

The income from the trade of these resources could be used to provide, among other commodities, the principle means of warfare, namely breechloader rifles and gunpowder.

Finally, although it is nowhere clearly stated, the Nabuasa polity may have secured an alliance with the Dutch in Kupang by this time because of their mutual interest in opposing the intransigent Raja at Niki Niki. This is suggested in a remark from ‘D’ when he writes that:

..the meo Naguasa presented their party with a freshly smoked human head taken from the region of Nila Niki...[and had suggested that].. they take this head to Kupang and give it to the resident as the best proof of the righteousness of our bond with the Company. [my emphasis. Here ‘D’ notes that the Timorese use the old term of the Dutch East Indies Company, hit ena ama- our mother father] (D 1850:172).

These three issues outlined above are important when considering the perspective of the Nabuasa clan concerning their own historical position within the polity. It is sufficient at this stage to highlight the fact that the report of ‘D’ establishes the reality of an historical division within Amanuban during the middle of the nineteenth century and that the leadership of the independent polity was headed by the Nabuasa clan.13

From the middle of the nineteenth century internal conflicts seem to have dominated Amanuban politics until the turn of the twentieth century. In 1863 Zondervan was to comment that Amanuban was in a state of warfare both internally and with all of its neighbours (1888:139). However, the continuing state of intermittent warfare made it difficult for the Dutch to evaluate the shifting positions within the territory, and consequently the historical record remains sketchy and tempered by a general tendency to view the interior populations as wild and uncontrollable (see Zondervan 1888:139 and Kniphorst 1885:32).

This situation was to alter significantly by the turn of the century. In 1906 the Dutch Colonial Government firmly established its presence within Amanuban at the
request of the aged ruler Hau Sufa Le'u (Seo Bil Nope) from his residence at Niki Niki. At that time the ruler was waging an unsuccessful war with a rival claimant to power based in the mountains to the south (Babuin). The Nabuasa clan sided with this rival although it is apparent that their independent power was dissipating vis-à-vis the Ruler at Niki Niki. The Dutch took the opportunity to intervene and concluded an agreement with the Ruler Nope. This treaty was known as a ‘short declaration’ (korte verklaring) and in essence required Nope to acknowledge Dutch sovereignty over the territory. The Dutch in turn agreed not to interfere with the internal affairs of the district except for matters of peace-keeping and criminal law (see Francillon 1967:21). Following this the Dutch military set about securing peace throughout the war torn territory. The pax Nederlandica was achieved relatively quickly and without massed resistance.¹⁴ It was as if the elevation of the Niki Niki Raja to his central place within the domain of Amanuban supported by the coercive presence of the Dutch was sufficient to stifle resistance and to reunite the territory.

The early years of Dutch control, however, were not without controversy. Due to the incompetence and insensitivity of the first Dutch administrator, one Lieutenant Hoff, a rebellion at Niki Niki was violently suppressed. The confrontation was due in part to the attempts by Hoff to undermine the authority of Raja Nope. The uprising ended when the Raja with his family and entourage, died in a fiery mass suicide rather than endure the shame of the Dutch victory and overlordship (see Gramberg 1913, in Schulte Nordholt 1971:457).

Unwilling and unable to rule directly, the Dutch appointed Noni Nope as Raja of Amanuban. The aging ruler was related to the former Raja through a subsidiary line of the clan. In 1920, when Noni’s son Pae Nope succeeded him as Raja, the position of Nope as the single ruler over all of Amanuban was firmly in place. Pae Nope or Usi Pina (Lord of Brightness) established an authoritarian rule from Niki Niki which lasted for 35 years.

The position of the Raja was supported by the initial establishment of an administrative division of Amanuban into two Kefettoran, Noebunu and Noehonbet.
Each of these units was administered by a Fettor whose role was to ensure that the authority of the Raja was extended throughout the domain. Below the level of the Fettor were a large number of Temukung who were the appointed representatives for their districts and were responsible for adjudication of disputes and overseeing the government policies of the Raja. One of their principle tasks was to ensure the collection and presentation of annual taxes in the form of harvest tribute and corvee labour to the Raja in Niki Niki. By this process the wealth and prestige of the Nope family increased significantly. As an example of this harvest tribute (poni pah) an anonymous report of 1912 noted that in one settlement of 77 adult males, 6000 cobs of corn out of a harvested total of 16000 were offered in tribute. This bounty was later converted into other gifts (pigs, coral beads) so that the distribution in this case was in three equal parts; one to the village headman, one part to the district head, and the third part to the Raja (Schulte Nordholt 1971:360).

Towards the end of Dutch Colonial rule the number of Kefettoran was increased in response to rising population levels and in order to create a more effective administration. After the second world war there were seven such administrative units which were maintained until the creation of the modern Indonesian system that exists today (see chap 2). In this process of administrative partition, the Raja family increased their authority by placing younger sons into the position of Fettor. This was the case in Kefettoran Noebeba, the heartland of the Nabuasa clan, where under the authority of the Raja Nope, members of the Nabuasa group were restricted to the position of village head (Temukung). The political subjugation of Nabuasa under the authority of the Raja appeared to be complete. Old antagonisms did emerge in 1954 when the population of Noebeba refused to accept a Nope as Fettor and elected Ke Nabuasa in his place. His tenure however was brief and by 1960 the Indonesian Government had begun to replace the old patterns of authority and succession to public office.
The Emergence of Amanuban in Myth

One of the earliest myths of Amanuban was recorded by the clergyman Müller in 1829. According to him a Raja Abineno of the western domain of Amarasi once had a young Rotinese slave. The slave robbed him of his gold and silver valuables and fled eastwards to Amanuban. At night he lit a fire on a high cliff and when people came to look they saw a youth as radiant as gold. They believed he had been sent by the deity Usi Neno to be their ruler (Müller 1857:214). Encoded within this myth is the widespread Atoin meto theme of the ruler who comes from the outside and appears impoverished, before revealing himself through cunning or trickery to be the rightful ruler of the autochthonous people.

Since Müller's work a number of different versions of the Amanuban myth have been recorded. These include those from the resident Dutch administrators (Controleur) Venema (1916), van Lith (1921), Reijntjes (1948), as well as the missionary Kruyt (1923), the Indonesian ethnohistorian Parera (1971) and myself (1985 and 1986). All derive from the perspective of the Raja centre. Despite a number of differences in elaboration and detail these later versions agree on a number of main points and may be thought of as variants on a theme. At the same time the variation between the examples make it difficult to present a single coherent version of the myth. All reveal partial representations of the past in an attempt to preserve coherence and continuity. Consequently I propose to present one recent version of the oral tradition and note differences from earlier texts where they occur.

In this version, which I recorded in the old centre of Niki Niki, it is stated that a man named Olak Mali from the island of Roti lived for a time as a goatherder for the Lord Abineno in Amarasi. Following a dispute in Amarasi, Olak Mali with his friend Sopo Bilas, later identified as Isu, travelled east to Amanatun, one of the ancient domains of West Timor. Here they were captured by subjects of the Raja Banunaek, but were later offered two women, Bi Muke and Bi Sanu, in marriage. The child of Olak Mali and Bi Sanu was named Inu, who became known as Nakamnanu.
Later Olak Mali and Isu travelled to Tunbesi and lived there with buffalo herders. At the time Tunbesi was the centre of a small independent political domain dominated by four clans: Tenis, Nubatonis, Asbanu and Nomnafa. Of these Nubatonis was the most senior and named the territory Amanuban. Other versions place Nubatonis as the central ruler surrounded by four clans: Tenis, Nomnafa, Asbanu and Puai. Still others state that there were twelve clans on the mountain; Tenis, Nubatonis, Asbanu and Nomnafa: Puai, Fina, Sae, and Bao::Alunpah, Aleupah, Aoetpah and Ataupah. The last four are said to be part of the same ‘trunk’ of origin (uf mese) as Nubatonis. Their names refer to their capacity to defend the realm against outside attack (see Venema 1916:42). All agree, however, that Nubatonis was the central ruling clan.

At the time, Nubatonis was trading sandalwood and beeswax with the black Portuguese of Noilmuti (a domain to the north and one of the bases for the Da Costa group). Olak Mali and Isu were astute traders themselves and with their knowledge of Malay, were able to obtain much better prices for the commodities. From this rivalry a dispute developed which led to Olak Mali becoming Ruler at the expense of Nubatonis. The challenge to the rule of Nubatonis is recorded as a series of tests or feats between the two rivals.

The most renowned test involved a competition using banana stems. Nubatonis suggested they both plant part of the banana and the one that grew most quickly would signal who was the rightful ruler. Nubatonis planted a growing tip, while Olak Mali planted a piece of trunk. When they returned four nights later to evaluate the results, the stem of Nubatoni’s banana was wilted and dry, while that of Olak Mali was green and growing strongly.

As a result of his loss Nubatonis surrendered his authority as Raja of Amanuban to Olak Mali saying "I take out my tongue, and take out my jaw and give [them] to Olak Mali" (Au lol man, letu suin ma fe neo Olak mali). In other words, he gave up his right to speak and make decisions as the ruler of Amanuban. In so doing the stranger Olak Mali became King of Amanuban and took the name of Nuban.
Having secured the position of ruler over the clans at Tunbesi, the ruler set about increasing his territory by engaging in wars of expansion. The first wars identified by oral tradition were directed to the north east at the people of Kesnai. The Kesnai people are mentioned in the myths of Amanatun and Sonbai and represent one of the ancient names of Timor. In the confrontation Kesnai were defeated and driven out towards Belu in the east.23

Attention then turned towards the west and wars were conducted against Nai Djabi who was said to control the land from Niki Niki to the Noemina. Djabi, like Kesnai, is associated with the ancient rulers of Timor. Djabi and his allies were forced back west of the Noemina (lit: sweet river) where an independent polity of Amabi was established.24

This in outline is the myth of the emergence of Amanuban as a power in the region. It provides a basis for the right of the Ruler Nuban (later called Nope) to rule, and suggests a general period for the arrival of the usurper King. One of the interesting aspects of this tradition, which also appears in the Parera version (1971), is the mention that the Ruling Nope line in Amanuban arrived at a time when the Portuguese were already trading in the interior. This suggests that the modern expansion of Amanuban occurred during the colonial period.

Political Organisation

Some of the most informative commentaries concerning the overall political organisation of Amanuban in the past come from descendants of the former Raja or people closely allied to the Nope clan. They believe that Nope has dominated Amanuban throughout its history. While not denying that uprisings and revolts have at times threatened their position, they claim to have maintained their pre-eminent place within the former domain. The Nope family put forward a concept of unbroken rule in Amanuban from their early ancestors. This view, which overlooks the Topass interregnum during the first part of the 18th century, is therefore one which expresses the orthodoxy of the rulers' perspective. It is one which was invoked by the former
Raja Pae Nope, in his long and authoritarian reign during the twentieth century (1915-1955) and was used to cement his authority as the legitimate ruler.

According to this dominant ideology of the past, the place of the ruler Nope is at the centre of the realm. This was initially the old centre of Tunbesi but was later moved to the stronghold of Niki Niki. The ruler is referred to as Usif (lord) or Uis amnanut— the high Lord. Here the ruler lives with his wives and children, slaves and retainers who populate the sonaf (‘palace’).

Following the treaty of Paravicini in 1756, the ruler took the title kesel from the European term Kaizer. Unlike the domain of Insana to the north or Wehale in Belu, in Amanuban there is no tradition of recognizing a ruling diarchy at the centre. There is no dual system of kingship with a ‘female’ ritual figure complemented by a more active ‘masculine’ counterpart: Nai Bot and the Liurai in Belu and the Atupas and the Kolnel in Insana. In Amanuban the ‘female’ ritual role of the ruler is not emphasized, nor is there a male counterpart at the centre. This meant that the Nope ruler was able to assume a more active position in the control and organisation of Amanuban. In other words, the Nope ruling centre was a unitary one with a dual function. That is, the ruler in principle controlled both the ritually sanctioned prosperity of the domain as well as the active governance of the people. The key aspect of this system was the flow of tribute to the centre. On the one hand, it represented the ‘ritual’ pact between the people and their King: in return for the harvest gifts the ruler guaranteed the continued prosperity of the domain through sacrifice and prayers. On the other hand, the delivery of harvest tribute was one of the principal symbols of political allegiance and domain unity. By withholding tribute to the centre an implicit state of opposition was created. Many of the minor wars that occurred in the nineteenth century concerned the failure of one group or another to deliver harvest tribute to the political centre. Conversely, in return for the gifts, a vassal group as a political ally could expect protection from enemy raids.

According to the Nope oral tradition, the ruler appointed four prominent clans to assist in governing the territory. These were known as Fina, Isu, Sae, and Baok. The
first of these Fina, is said to have been murdered at some point and the lineage driven off. At a later point Sae and Baok are said to have defected with a rival younger brother of the ruling line to the southern mountain stronghold of Babuin. From here they waged intermittent war with the ruling line. An escalation in these continuing hostilities with Babuin during the late nineteenth century caused the ruler Seo Bil Nope in 1906 to request Dutch assistance to quell the revolt. In the place of Sae and Baok the Raja elevated Nakamnanu. There are a number of tales relating the origins of Nakamnanu. One version has it that the ruler Nope took a wife from Belu named Te Saruk. She had very long hair and when her child was born he took his name from this feature: [nak] from nakfunu, meaning hair, and [mnanu] meaning long. The common feature of all these stories is that Nakamnanu is a child of the ruler. In other words, this group became merely an extension of the ruling family. Ideologically then the centre of Amanuban came to be composed of the Ruler Nope with two Usif, Isu and Nakamnanu, who operate as executive supporters and who divided the domain of Amanuban into two subterritories, later Kefettoran, over which they had jurisdiction: NoeBunu and Noehonbet.

The role of the Usif was to relate the orders of the Ruler to his allied groups and subjects. They acted as speakers, settlers of disputes, and as supervisors for the presentation of the annual harvest tribute to the centre. They were affiliated with the sonaf of the Raja and had no claims to land within the territory although they held administrative authority over the people. Their traditional role is encoded in the ritual phrase

| Apao sonaf       | Guardian of the palace,                  |
| Apao pano       | Guardian of the court                    |
| Apao eno        | Guardian of the gateway                  |
| Apao nesu       | Guardian of the fence                    |

During the nineteenth century the Usif remained strictly under the control of the Ruler Nope and had little effective authority independent from the Ruler.

When the Nope ancestor established his domain of Amanuban, the four great ‘fathers’ (ama naek) Tenis, Asbanu, Nomnafa, and Puai, were unable to secure a
strong place within it. This is in marked contrast to Insana where four *ama naek* controlled the land in the four great quarters of the domain and supervised the life cycle rituals of the *Atupas*. In Amanuban one of the early Rulers married a daughter of Nomnafa, but later chose to marry into the clan Nitbani. Initially located in Amanatun, part of the Nitbani group later settled in Amanuban. From that time the ruler Nope has always taken a Nitbani woman as his principal wife. It was believed that to do so would ensure the prosperity of the kingdom. The children of these marriages took the name Nope. Only they were allowed to use this name to avoid the possibility that children from subsequent marriages might challenge the rule. This strategy, while elevating the status of Nitbani, undermined that of the major ‘*amaf*’ who generally only ever held restricted localised status within the domain.

Below the two major *Usif* and the primary wife-giver Nitbani were the numerous prominent clan heads (*amaf*) who were affiliated to different subterritories throughout Amanuban. These major clans held localised authority over a wide number of lesser clans and name groups within their respective areas of influence. There does not appear to have been a fixed number of these clans, and indeed, their influence tended to wax and wane over time.

Four of these ‘*amaf*’ groups including Nitbani held a special title of *o’of* (corral) or *lopo naek* (great granary). These clans, Nitbani, Asbanu, Boimau and Faot are acknowledged as the heads of large name groups. Each is affiliated with a sub territory of the domain. The precise function of these groups as *lopo naek* remains unclear. However they all represent former strong allies of the central Ruler and maintained close marriage ties. All major *amaf* groups were expected to provide harvest tribute to the centre.

Supporting the continued unity and strength of the political domain were four warrior groups, termed the *meo naek* (lit:great cats), who were primarily responsible for the conduct of warfare. According to the ruling Nope view, originally there were two *meo* who are associated with the ‘eastern and western gates’ (*eno neonsaet, eno neontes*) of the domain. They were named Leo Banusu and Koen Bukai and were said
to be closely related to Nope. In time however they were replaced by a group of four clans who were universally recognized throughout Amanuban as the meo naek. In one myth related in southern Amanuban, the selection of the four meo of Amanuban occurred on the occasion of a huge feast, organised at the central palace of the Ruler Nope. The location is named as Klabe Tainlasi: Maunu Niki, suggesting that the appointment of the meo occurred once the ruler (Ta mes pah) had returned to Amanuban and established a new centre at Niki Niki during the eighteenth century. Other versions present these meo in the earlier period of the establishment of Amanuban. The main point is that these are the four clans who are universally associated with the role of meo naek in Amanuban up to the present day.

At the feast arranged by the Ruler, abundant supplies of rice, pork and fruit were laid out on a large bench. This formed the basis for a competition to determine who amongst the assembled warriors were the most exalted. The rules for the competition were that each contestant who came forward to take his share, had first to dance upon the bench and to take up the food using only his mouth.

The men who achieved this feat were named as Sole, Nome, Nabuasa, Teflopo and in recognition of this the Ruler Nope gave them each the title of meo and gave each special instruments of warfare- a rifle and a sword- saying that with these weapons they could be true to their titles of meo and that they could drive away outsiders who attempted to claim authority over Amanuban.31

It is from this time that the four meo naek were known as the ‘four bulls, the four males of Amanuban’ (Keus ha ma moen ha neo Banam). They were delegated the authority to expand the territory in order that the domain become wide and extensive but not slack and unruly in the process. Each meo was directed to defend one of the four ‘gates’ (eno) of the domain. From these points they directed the conduct of warfare and participated in raiding enemy settlements. The spoils of war were levied in tribute to the Ruler at the political centre of the domain.32

From the perspective of the centre, the function of these four meo in principle was merely to carry out the orders of the ruler and his Usif, Isu and Nakamnanu. Their
status was one of prominence because of their skills in warfare, but they were not ‘Lords’ (Usif), merely ‘commoner’ clans (toh). Their position depended on the continuing patronage of the central authority. But the recognition extended to the meo naek Nabuasa is only that of a military functionary acting on behalf of the Raja. Any greater influence on the political map of Amanuban if granted at all is relegated to an illegitimate aberration in the more or less continuous rule of the political centre.

In summary, the traditional political structure of Amanuban is represented from the centre as a domain in which the hierarchy is designed solely to serve the interests and prestige of the hereditary ruler. This ideological standpoint was consolidated and strengthened during the first half of the twentieth century with tacit Dutch support.

The point is, however, that while Amanuban has experienced periods of unity under the central Ruler Nope, the historical record reveals that this unity was frequently threatened. Reunited under the aggressive expansion of Raja Louis prior to 1825, Amanuban dissolved into competing claims and civil insurrection for the next 75 years. Hence for much of the nineteenth century Amanuban simply did not function as a coherent domain. Far from an orderly political system, the internal political order was in constant ferment during this period. The ruling ideology of political order failed to prevent disruptive tendencies within the domain and this opened the way for changes in the relationship between the political categories of the system. This is no more clearly apparent in the emergence of the meo naek Nabuasa as a rival claimant to leadership in the domain. The history of indigenous politics in nineteenth century Amanuban was largely bound up with this struggle. In the following chapter I turn to the Nabuasa testimony of the past. It offers a perspective which confronts the orthodoxy of the central ruler Nope, providing at the same time an insight into the dynamics of traditional Atoin meto politics and systems of social classification. The Nabuasa perspective which is initially that of the political periphery, provides an understanding of the role and social organisation of a meo warrior group. Such groups operated in variant form in all traditional Atoin meto domains in Timor. Finally this
testimony of the past also offers a case study of the way cultural categories of place and precedence are historically reproduced and redefined through circumstance.
CHAPTER FOUR

IMAGES OF A POLITICAL ORDER: THE NABUASA NARRATIVE

Introduction

In Amanuban the perspective on the past from the position of the central Raja is one of dominance and continuity of rule. It is clear, however, that major political disruptions occurred within the domain at different times. It is therefore not surprising that the position of unchallenged authority of the central power does not have unanimous support in Amanuban. Indeed there is a considerable lack of consensus. One of the factors that often mitigated against internal stability in the past was the very size of the domain itself.

An anecdote which expresses the difficulties inherent in ruling a domain the size of Amanuban was provided to me by the former Raja of Insana (Usi Taolin), who was related to the former Raja of Amanuban by marriage. He spoke of a conversation with the Raja Pae Nope (Usi Pina) who was comparing Insana unfavourably with Amanuban. Taolin replied "Yes Bae (affine), you are a great ruler with thousands of subjects and hundreds of herds of cattle. We in Insana have but few people and a handful of cattle. But," he continued, "whose cattle are tame?"

In other words, he was alluding to Amanuban's great size which always contained within it the propensity for internal dispute and the potential for disintegration into mutually antagonistic sub-domains.

In this and subsequent chapters I seek to develop a perspective on the past in Amanuban, or more specifically a part of Amanuban, which confronts the orthodoxy of the central perspective. This is the view maintained by the clan Nabuasa of south west Amanuban. I show that during the turbulent period of the nineteenth century the Nabuasa clan, although acknowledging their former role within the wider domain as a
_meo naek_, nevertheless distanced themselves from the centre and created a position of autonomy in a breakaway domain within the larger region of Amanuban. I argue that the Nabuasa perception of the past offers an insight into both the construction of an historical reality from the ‘insider’s viewpoint’ and an understanding of the process of traditional politics in an Atoni domain prior to the twentieth century. My purpose is not to reconstruct historical events as they may have occurred, nor to present a ‘history’ of the Nabuasa clan as such. Rather, I seek to highlight the ways by which the Atoin meto conceptualise and express images of political order in the past.

**Background to the Narrative**

Like Atoin meto society in general, the Nabuasa clan and the many groups who acknowledge a political alliance with them are strongly oriented to the past. Conceptions which are grounded in the past validate both the contemporary world of structured practice and provide a means of legitimation and interpretation for acting in the social world.

The reality of the past for the Atoin meto, however, only exists insofar as it is told or enacted by living members of society. For the purposes of this discussion the Atoni conception of the past can be interpreted in two general ways. The first may be termed tradition in the wider sense of the word. Atoni often express particular actions or processes in terms of acting in accordance with tradition. They use the word _atolan_, which can be translated as order, or _lais meto_, meaning traditional matters. Hence _lais meto_ and _atolan_ embody notions of the collectively shared knowledge about how one should act in the world. At a general level this knowledge stands as a given order and includes within its bounds all people who recognize themselves to be members of the ethnic group Atoin meto. However, just as dialectic differences distinguish Atoni groups in the central north of West Timor from those in the south or far west, so cultural practices vary with location and the emphasis they place on aspects of the wider tradition.

By and large, the knowledge of _atolan_ rests at the level of what might be described as unarticulated logic, frequently only surfacing or being verbalised in
ritual contexts or when it is clear that the social ‘order’ has been transgressed and a decision on some course of action is required. The knowledge of the *lais meto* or *atolan* naturally varies between individuals. Nevertheless, concerns of *atolan* are expressed in the strategies which preoccupy all people in the context of human endeavour and social interaction, from life cycle rituals and agricultural practice to house construction and conventional behavior. Disregard for the principles of *atolan* or *lais meto* carries with it degrees of spiritual and social sanction. This is often only identified retrospectively when reasons are sought for the outbreak of disputes, sickness or sudden death. Adherence to the traditional ‘order’ of social life is therefore a powerful constraint against radical individual nonconformity.

There are numerous examples which express these ideas. Reasons for difficulties or delays in childbirth for instance are usually found in what is termed *neketi* (to seek wrong behavior). In such cases the distressed mother is subjected to searching enquiries about her behavior and thoughts during the pregnancy until a transgression is discovered and absolved through prayer. The occasion of the sudden death of middle aged man was attributed to the incorrect construction of the roof spars in his house about which he had been warned and, having recognised, had neglected to correct in time. Elsewhere, a discovered adulterous liaison is punished with a heavy fine and expulsion from the settlement. All these responses represent expressions of the *lais meto*. My main point here is that the concerns of order and correct procedure derive their legitimacy in large part from the past: a lived expression of ancestral experience which informs and provides meaning to social life.

This perspective is supported by a second orientation to the past which I term the oral tradition of ritual or formal speaking. It is this aspect which forms the focus for the following discussion.

Culturally speaking, all Atoin meto seek to locate themselves within a particular conceptual context which serves to validate claims within a given area of territory and a given order of traditional political organisation. The vehicle which conveys this perspective is the knowledge and expression of oral narratives.
Community knowledge of the past is encoded through formal canonical chants. Among prominent named groups (*kanaf*), attempts are made to ensure that the specific narrative or narratives which relate the groups' past are guarded by at least a select few members. One of the important aspects of protecting the name of the group is the capacity to narrate the origins of the *kanaf*. The words of the past serve to situate the name group in the present. These words are usually carried by elder male members of the *kanaf* group who through circumstance and ability are able to reproduce them. The knowledge is then passed on to younger sons of the *kanaf* who show an aptitude for the ritual verse.2

One of the features of these narratives is that they express a sequence of events within a compressed time frame. The events are located or contextualised in the past without specifying when they took place. To be sure, the narratives and their style of presentation, form part of the 'tradition' of the Atoin meto peoples but, whereas the *atolan* or *lais meto* provide a general cultural orientation as a given inheritance from the past, the oral narratives express a specific record of the achievements of the past in particular geographical contexts. This is best signified by the use of multiple place names and, occasionally, named ancestral figures within the narratives.

In this chapter I have selected one such oral narrative among a number I recorded from leading members of the Nabuasa *kanaf* in southern Amanuban. The narrative is an exemplary one to the extent that it encapsulates the spirit of Nabuasa discourse and represents the most complete version of their past that I was able to obtain. The narrative was recorded from an elder of the Nabuasa clan, one Kolo Meo feto, during the dry season of 1985. He was reputed to be one of the few knowledgeable men in matters of the clan's past and was highly respected as a formal chanter of the ritual speech. Kolo lived in the mountain village of Lasi, in south west Amanuban, the most important area of Nabuasa influence. In the past he held the position of *Temukun naek* or political leader for the surrounding region which has now been administratively divided into a number of villages.

Although a member of the Nabuasa *kanaf*, the old man is known by the name *Meo feto*. This reflects his membership both to the Nabuasa title of *meo naek* (great
cat) in the traditional domain of Amanuban, as well as his affiliation through the female or *feto* line of the *kanaf* group. This occurred because his paternal grandmother gave birth to a son and remained unmarried. It followed that her son was incorporated into the Nabuasa name group rituals and took the name *Nabuasa feto* or *Meo feto*, as was customary. Thus Kolo follows his father's name in the *feto* or female line.3

His position in the social hierarchy of the dispersed clan is subordinate to the *mone* or male line of the Nabuasa group. However, this does not diminish his authority to speak nor the potential to assume leadership of the group. On the contrary, the authority to speak the past may be held within the *feto* or female line as a delegated right from the more senior male line.4

The language of the narrative is that of formal or ritual speech (*natoni*). This differs from ordinary speech (*uab meto*) in a number of important respects. While it utilizes much of the vocabulary of ordinary language the style of speaking is allusory and the meaning is often ambiguous.5 The language of *natoni* is metaphorical and poetic. The style of *natoni* is a form of canonical parallelism found in variable form throughout Indonesia. In other words, there is a pervasive tendency to speak in a series of dyadic or paired sets of phrases, which taken together, are generally synonymous in meaning and systematically, hence canonically, applied. (see Fox 1971 and Fox (ed.) 1988).

The word *natoni* is a generic term, which does not only apply to chanting of the narrative of the past. Rather, it denotes a general style of formal speech, having application in a variety of social and ritual contexts. Thus, for example, it is the correct and formal style of speaking at marriage exchanges and mortuary rituals, at formal hearings of land dispute and the clarification of rights or boundaries, and even the formal greeting of a visiting dignitary from the central government. All invocatory prayers were also expressed in this form in the past. The important feature is the formality of the social context in question. Ritual speech serves to mark off such events from the general stream of everyday social interaction.

The type of narrative provided by Kolo Meo feto, while reflecting this pattern and style of speech, is more strongly focused on the political issues of the past. It
carries a social weighting which is greater in its scope than that of more particularistic ceremonial circumstances. This distinction was expressed to me with the notion that one is dealing with sejala, which is a corruption of the Indonesian term for history (sejarah). In other contexts it is referred to as the lais nu'un (the matter of narrating) with the implication that it deals with the broad pattern of the past, or alternatively, as the uab uf (trunk speech) whereby the past is conceived of as a botanical metaphor of movement from trunk to tip. Thus the poetical style of the narratives are not merely concerned with elegance of speech but also with establishing an image of political and social order in the past. Implicitly the narratives express indigenous concepts of organisation and process, place and precedence.

The narrative was recorded under the large fig tree in the old settlement of Kolo Meo fetò's father, in the presence of a small number of agnatically related Nabuasa men from Lasi. This was the culmination of a number of meetings in which I expressed interest in hearing the 'matters of past' of the Nabuasa group. One of their stipulations had been that it was necessary to have several knowledgeable speakers present to provide clarification and possible additions to the words of Meo fetò. This required members of both fetò and mone lines of the Nabuasa kanaf to attend.

The recording was prefaced by a ritualistic sharing of palm gin undertaken, so it was said, to loosen the tongue and allow the formal words to flow freely. For, these words are held in high regard and not normally spoken loosely. They are conceived of as an inheritance from the ancestors and, as they derive from the past, they are imbued with the hidden power of ancestral sanction. Often chanters will revert to the first person when they speak, thereby identifying with the ancestors and the past events they recall. Hence to speak incorrectly or untruthfully is potentially dangerous. This is one of the reasons why relatively few individuals are competent authorities on speaking the past. Younger men who may have picked up a partial knowledge are often reluctant to speak for fear their words will not be correct, and will defer to a more senior authority. Moreover, to claim the knowledge of an older living relative is to usurp his authority and anticipate his death. Younger men may therefore deny
knowledge in deference to their older agnates. This applies especially to the past of a name-group other than one's own. To this extent the authority to relate the past and indeed, to define it in the present, is largely the prerogative of a relatively few old men.

The complete narrative of Kolo Meo feto conveys the general theme of the journey of the Nabuasa ancestors from an origin point outward both in time and space toward their destination. This he described in personal terms as his gate and his path. The episodic form of the narrative clearly relates a sequence of events although the substantive meaning and the story it tells is condensed into parallel or formulaic metaphorical images. The meaning of the narrative is at times obscure, referring to the events of the past more obliquely than explicitly in a time frame which is left open, unfixed and implicit.

Kolo Meo feto ends his narrative with the statement that this is the sum of his knowledge. As such, it is offered as a holistic presentation and specifically constituted to encompass the past of the Nabuasa group. Nevertheless it represents only one performance in a particular time and place, one version which, in its retelling, can be elaborated upon or further condensed depending on context, mood or inclination. Indeed, at a later meeting an additional narrative was offered to me which develops the detail of the Nabuasa past more fully.

Meo feto's narrative serves both as an explicit statement about the past and, through its phraseology, a form of verbal marking which anticipates or allows for more detailed exegesis. The events of the past, encoded in formal narrative form, are considered to be immutable but their verbal explication may be glossed or expanded; each phrase or set of phrases providing the key to significantly more exegetical comment or meaning. This became apparent to me during my attempts to interpret the meaning of the events and statements encoded in the narrative. The following presentation represents an initial key to understanding the Nabuasa view of the past. The notes and comments which accompany the text provide an introductory guide to a more detailed analysis of the political order which follows.
PLATE 1 Narrating the Gate and the Path

(Fox J.)
The narrative begins with the ancient place of origin, the 'trunk' (uf) of the Nabuasa clan. As a point of clarification, the use of the name Nabuasa in the narrative applies both to the named group as a whole and at times to the specific Nabuasa individual who heads the group. Use of the name by Atoin meto is equally ambiguous and unless specified the name Nabuasa refers to the name group (kanaf) in the discussion.

The Gate and the Path of Nabuasa

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Line</th>
<th>Line</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Afì neno unu</td>
<td>In the days of long ago</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>fai unut ne</td>
<td>and the ancient nights</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>hai nai' amtokom bi</td>
<td>our ancestors lived at</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>fatu Saenam am</td>
<td>the rock of Saenam and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Oe Saenam</td>
<td>the water of Saenam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>bi fatun</td>
<td>the rock name</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>tal fatun</td>
<td>the covering rock name</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Saenam am Oenam</td>
<td>Saenam and Oenam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Banam am Onam</td>
<td>Banam and Onam</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The narrative identifies the origins of Nabuasa with the great limestone outcrop called Saenam. In lines 4 and 5 the 'rock of Saenam' is paired with the 'water of Saenam'. Water and rock/earth form a key dyadic conceptual set which implies a settlement site. Saenam is located in present day Miamafö in the Mutis mountains region of central west Timor. All descendants of the Nabuasa clan are identified with this area by their fatun (their 'rock' name, rock of renown), namely, Saenamas.

The place of Saenam is associated (lines 8 and 9) with three other areas which are ritual names for the old central political domains of West Timor. They are Miamafö (Saenam), Molo (Oenam), Amanuban (Banam) and Amanatun (Onam). Classified together in this way they constitute a concept of completeness. The concept of four, or rather two dyadic sets, represents an important cultural model of unity, which finds expression in many areas of Atoin meto society.

In exegetical commentaries on the text it was explained that Saenam was at one time divided between two Lords: Usi Neontes (Western Lord) named as Kono; and Usi Neonsaet (Eastern Lord) known as Neno. The modern descendants of Nabuasa associate themselves with the latter Lord and claim an apical ancestor named
Ta mes Neno, meaning ‘to make the sky one’. His descendent is named Tmof Neno, which may be translated as ‘to fall from the sky’. It is therefore likely that these names probably have more to do with marking an ancient beginning than delineating real people. It is also possible that the term speaks of an external origin rather than an autochthonous one, although in the narrative there is no recognition given to a time prior to settlement in Saenam. Nabuasa is represented in the mould of the usurper king who arrives from the outside.

10 Es ne naek atoni as a man capable of extending the land and
11 atik paham extending the water
12 atik nifu travelling past
13 leuknan the slippery bamboo and
14 petu ini holain am the swollen stream
15 noe ini hokan to Amsam Noetasi
16 Amsam Noetasi Monam Salbetat
17 Monam Salbetat
18 Kantokombin am without staying and
19 kanam nonembin without remaining
20 tipuon [but] turning back
21 nao natuina returning from
22 funam insaenam the rising moon and
23 neno in saen the rising sun
24 li' on faineman bending back one way
25 tipuon fainem nao turning back the other, going (to) the Lords Sahan, Nokas,
26 Nasahan Nanokas Kenan, Nakaebunu
27 Nakenan NaiNakaebunu, Angkoko and Haemmanu
28 Na' angkoko Nahaemnanu
29 bi Tufé banoni in balan the place of Tufe Banoni
30 ma Fae banoni ne in balan and the place of Fae Banoni

Lines 10-12 reveal Nabuasa as the one concerned with warfare. The verb natik literally means to kick something, and is often used in association with expressions of warfare. Hence Nabuasa, as one who is atik pahl/atik nifu, is accorded the ability to expand the area through force or coercion.

This segment of the narrative expresses an initial expansion, whether by warfare or otherwise is unclear, southwards to the domain of Amanatun. This is apparent through the use of place and clan names associated with this mountainous region which borders on the south coast.

Discussions about this aspect of the narrative identify the ancestor as Koleo Neno, a lineal descendant of the ancestor Tmof neno. Koleo Neno is also associated
with the adoption of the name Nabuasa. This is said to derive from the sacred objects used in war. A term referred to generally in West Timor as the *le'u musu* (the *le'u* of enmity), which I will gloss at this point as ‘mystical power over warfare’.

The name of this particular *le'u musu* was *menu mafu na nabuasa* which has the meaning of bitter and disorientating. Hence, Koleo Neno became Koleo Nabuasa and wholly identified with the power that the *le'u* bestowed. To this day the name Nabuasa is referred to as a *le'u* name (*kan le'u*).15

Explanations for the origins of names in Timor, however, are never entirely clear cut. In pursuing the origins of the Nabuasa name I came across an alternative version by a man from the *kanaf* Sopaba, in which he claimed that Nabuasa’s original name was not Neno but Sopaba. According to him, at one time there were two brothers, Lon and Koleo Sopaba, who were travelling together in the Sonbai area of Molo when they chanced upon two people bathing at a stream. They fired upon them and Koleo’s bullet killed both of them with one shot. Lon Sopaba, the elder brother, was impressed by this prowess and said "*Ho matannes, ho es am sutae oef Nabuasa.* (Your eye is sharp, it is you who should carry the name Nabuasa)". Of himself he said, "*Au kenan san, au sutae oef Sopaba.* (I shot poorly I will carry the name Sopaba)".17 Thus according to Sopaba the two brother lines split, the elder remaining Sopaba, the younger, Nabuasa.

Nabuasa elders do not accept this story. Sopaba would have it that they are hiding their own name (*in natolo sin kanan*). It is interesting in this regard, that the two groups remain closely associated through marriage and political alliance (see following chapter).

Despite this divergence of views it is agreed that the identifiable ancestor is Koleo Nabuasa. The difference reflects the particular interests and political colouring of the past by separate clan groupings.

The narrative continues,

31 *Tiaman tokot nak*  
32 *pah i suis leuf am*  
33 *ma'len leuf*  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Line</th>
<th>Translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>31</td>
<td>Reaching there he said,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32</td>
<td>This land is very thin and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33</td>
<td>very confined.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Later we will eat badly and drink poorly.

So be it, we will go to the wide stile and
the wide gate that is the rock of Tumbesi and
the tree of Tumbesi.

If you expand the land extend the water,
the lord will honour you and call to you.
Younger brothers, children who follow
Continue so that you will be honoured and
you will be carried high.

In that way arising and coming to
the rock of Tumbesi and the tree of Tumbesi
In that way arising and arriving (at)
the settlement areas of Tenis, Nubatonis
Asbanu, Puay with Ataupah, Alunpah
Aleupah with Aoetpah.

They came out in greeting
not forbidding or rejecting
but receiving them well and accepting them properly.

United and sheltering as one and settling in and staying.

In lines 31-40 the narrative expresses one of the key motivating forces for the continuing migration of people in West Timor. This is conveyed by the notion of shifting from the narrow or confined lands (ma'lenat) to the wide and expansive regions (manuan). Implicit in the concept is a statement about population pressure. The lands are ‘confined’ or narrow because of human pressure on limited natural resources. Hence the attraction in the narrative for the ‘wide stile and wide gate’ of Tumbesi which, in this sense, are metaphors for the entrance to an open area with abundant resources. 18
Tumbesi (sometimes referred to as Tunbesi) is also characterised in terms of the rock (*fatu*) and the tree (*hau*). While this is a formulaic parallel expression of ritual speech, it alludes to a religious conception of place. Traditional Atoin meto religion can be termed the religion of the tree and rock (*hau le'u*, *faut le'u*). This notion will be further explored at a later point. It suffices to say here that Atoin meto conceived of a supreme deity with a dual aspect of authority over the sky (*neno*) and the earth (*pah*), which formed a spiritual unity of male and female elements. Sacrificial prayers were offered at an altar composed of a flat stone secured in the fork of an upright wooden post. Rock and tree therefore are complementary ideas and synonymous with marking a place of worship as well as symbolizing the unity of mother earth and father sky.

Lines 41-49 reveal that Koleo Nabuasa was not alone in his travels but accompanied by an unspecified number of allied groups. In this segment the ancestor urges his supporters to compete for a position of power in the new settlement area. The phrase *toh munim anam*, which I translate as 'children who follow', has the further connotation of descendants who carry the name into the future.

As a group they arrive in Tumbesi where they are welcomed by the resident groups. They represent those name groups (*kanaf*) identified in the previous chapter as the original inhabitants of the Amanuban centre. In the origin myths of Amanuban sketched earlier, it is Nubatonis who is accorded the early primary status at the centre before the arrival of their eventual usurper, the clan group Nope.
The above sequence records the arrival of Nope at the then political centre of Amanuban, and I interpret the placing of this narrative segment after the arrival of Nabuasa as an intentional marker of Nabuasa’s temporal precedence over Nope in Amanuban. Nope’s identification as the stranger king coming from the outside is consistent with the myths which unanimously identify his Rotinese origins. He lands on the south coast (Kolbano) and travels to Tumbesi along lines followed earlier by the Nabuasa group.

Here Tumbesi is identified as the top of a mountain, which is topographically correct, but the notion also encodes a concept of sociopolitical centrality and superordination. The highest authority conceptually is accorded the highest and most prominent place.

From this point the narrative records Nabuasa’s expansion out from Tumbesi to their stronghold settlement in Lasi.
In the above segment the narrative appears to speak of growing unrest in Tumbesi. Its precise meaning however is somewhat unclear. For example (lines 92-103) the narrator does not specify whose authority is strengthening in the area. It may concern an internal matter of dispute over authority or one of external threat to the cohesion of the emergent domain. In any event Nabuasa is invited to put forward his views on the matter. He responds in the style characteristic of a meo or soldier headhunter (lines 103-110). That is, to a meo, the question of dispute is one to be settled with arms and force. His role is to fight not to negotiate.

The response (lines 112-118) is met by anxiety from the resident Lords, who express their fear that Nabuasa may come to overrun the domain of Banam (Amanuban). Consequently he is directed to the periphery of the domain in order to claim that area in the name of the centre. In this we see the dual aspect of the meo naek, Nabuasa; at once a warrior for the centre (i.e. under their authority), expanding
its territory and defending its boundaries, but also dangerous and untrustworthy, an *atoin amaunut* who threatens the stability of the centre. This ambiguity of purpose and status lies at the heart of the position of the *meo naek* group within the polity and the subsequent relations between the political centre and its periphery.

Nabuasa agrees to expand into the region of *Bonak, Hau honi, Sasim, Oe Ekam*. These terms refer literally to the names of specific places but in fact designate a region of south west Amanuban. Two areas in particular are mentioned, *Kopusu Kotnana, Koaem Kotana*. The word *kot* (derived from Sanskrit by way of Malay) refers to a fort or walled stronghold. In the past much of the population were obliged to live in such compounds due to the prevalence of armed attack from opposing groups. Nabuasa is directed to overrun these enemy positions and their inhabitants who are identified as wild animals (see lines 132-134). The notion of ‘wild’ (*fui*) has the connotation of being outside society and political control, hence by definition enemies and potentially threatening.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Line</th>
<th>Translation</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>139</td>
<td><em>tok tokom binat</em></td>
<td>Waiting there</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>140</td>
<td><em>aimpin</em></td>
<td>fires burned</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>141</td>
<td><em>noka mabe</em></td>
<td>morning and evening,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>142</td>
<td><em>hunatan pit</em></td>
<td>grassland burned</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>143</td>
<td><em>noka mabe</em></td>
<td>morning and evening,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>144</td>
<td><em>ansae na’ko</em></td>
<td>coming up from</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>145</td>
<td><em>Nunputu Manenu</em></td>
<td>Nunputu Manenu.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>146</td>
<td><em>Kopusu Kotana in tuan es</em></td>
<td>The lords of Kopusu Kotana</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>147</td>
<td><em>NaJabi ma Lasi es le an</em></td>
<td>Jabi and Lasi, that is</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>148</td>
<td><em>Kenma’u Manobe</em></td>
<td>Kenmau, Manobe,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>149</td>
<td><em>Nafunan Haumeni</em></td>
<td>Funan, Haumeni.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>150</td>
<td><em>sin usif ha</em></td>
<td>They were the four <em>usif</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>151</td>
<td><em>anlisan sin ma</em></td>
<td>(Nabuasa) made them stupid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>152</td>
<td><em>in akal sin nek</em></td>
<td>and he deceived them with</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>153</td>
<td><em>upa snaenat kena lana</em></td>
<td>blank bullets.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>154</td>
<td><em>Kenma’u Manobe</em></td>
<td>Kenmau Manobe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>155</td>
<td><em>Funan Haumeni</em></td>
<td>Funan Haumeni</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>156</td>
<td><em>anfenam nananon neo</em></td>
<td>arose and fled to</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>157</td>
<td><em>Liliom Bakunase</em></td>
<td>Liliom Bakunase</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>158</td>
<td><em>Babaun Panmuti</em></td>
<td>Babau and Panmuti.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>159</td>
<td><em>Tan fainikan ma</em></td>
<td>The forgotten ax and the</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>160</td>
<td><em>am benikan</em></td>
<td>forgotten machete</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>161</td>
<td><em>bife puni tenu ma</em></td>
<td>were three women and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>162</td>
<td><em>Atoni naka nua</em></td>
<td>two men.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>163</td>
<td><em>sin antupan ma</em></td>
<td>Sleeping soundly and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>164</td>
<td><em>namaet sok es le</em></td>
<td>asleep like the dead, namely</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Leo Manobe and Heka Bin

Tenis, Tobe and Benu

becoming as the tame bird,
as the tame deer,
as the tame chicken,
as the tame pig.

This part of the narrative describes the successful assault on the enemy stronghold. The area is said to be under the authority of Jabi and Lasi, the latter probably an Amanuban term for Rasi. In the previous chapter Jabi was identified as the earlier resident in Amanuban prior to its modern expansion under Nope. In commentaries on the narrative, informants explained that Nabuasa exploited the overgrown grasslands and bush surrounding the stronghold at Lasi, tricking the inhabitants into thinking that a much larger force was attacking. The heat of the fires caused explosions from bursting bamboo and crackling timber which were construed as the sound of firearms. Nabuasa, as the deceiver, gained renown through this action.

Most of the inhabitants fled westward towards Kupang and presumably the protection of the Dutch forces stationed there. The phrase Liliom Bakunase Babau and Panmuti refer to place names in the vicinity of Kupang. The domains identified in Dutch maps of the early twentieth century as Amabi and Amarasi may be linked to the two authorities mentioned in the narrative.

The narrative also identifies a number of people who remained in the settlement who could not escape. They were 'tamed' by Nabuasa (lines 143-146) meaning they were incorporated into the new settlement established there under Nabuasa. This point marks what I interpret as the first stage of Nabuasa expansion. The continuing narrative would seem to refer to a later stage of development, once the Nabuasa group had established themselves in the new stronghold. In the presentation, however, there is no marking of this temporal gap.
Then sitting and thinking The lords have closed off
gunpowder of the east and bullets of the rising day
at the gate of Atapupu and
the stile of Atapupu, namely
the gun with hammer and
figwood stock
the sword with scabbard and
covered handle.

Our ancestor felt forced
and crowded
and [so] flattening the grass
by the Mina river
and crossing the Mina river
crouching in the narrow gate of the land
to Seki Neofna
Kenan and Oe Mofa
Arriving and speaking to
Jabi and Lasi, saying
I feel that the Lords,
the origin trunks have closed off
gunpowder of the east
bullets of the rising day.
In time I will be wholly eaten
and wholly drunk (consumed)
in the old settlement and
In this period it is apparent that the Nabuasa group is threatened with an armed enemy (possibly Nope) who have monopolised the flow of guns and ammunition from the north east. This is located at Atapupu, an independent Chinese port on the north coast of Timor near the present border with East Timor. As a warrior group Nabuasa are defenceless without weapons. It follows that they decide to seek assistance from the colonial authorities in Kupang via the mediation of the Lords Jabi and Lasi in the west.21

They travel in secrecy which is reflected in the line nok bibion paham eno, crouching in the narrow gate of the land. The phrase refers to following a dry creekbed, hidden from sight. In addition, the phrase nok bibion refers to a polite way of passing in front of seated company, stooping low with right arm outstretched and palm open. In other words, they pass through the area peacefully without molesting people in the area.

The places Seki, Neofna, Kenan and Oe Mofa are located on the plateau land west of the Mina river, presently designated as eastern Amarasi. Here they meet with Jabi and Lasi who agree to accompany them to the ‘lime house of Kupang and the stone house of Kupang’ (lines 210-211). This is clearly a reference to the Dutch. The stone house (uem fatu) represents an implicit contrast to the thatch houses characteristic of the interior. It is only in relatively recent times that stone (concrete)
houses have become widespread throughout Timor. Hence, at the time, the contrast of
the stone houses speaks of the foreign nature of the Dutch authorities who control
alternative supplies of guns and ammunition (212-213).

214 nut
215 kanpenif ma
216 kantetef
217 man simo lek leko ma
218 ntaima lek leko
219 nalai in noso in balan
220 ma in fanu in balan
221 man heka nae' man
222 ansao nae
223 nek pen pene ma besloit
224 tam akin suni ma
225 natua kenat es ne
226 ken nek besi
227 suni nak niti
228 Okat na Jabi na Lasi
229 na lekan Kenam Oe mofa
230 Sekima Soenam
231 nakam nak maut he
232 kalu ai noso alun nat pisu
233 ai fanu alun nat pisu
234 natimso' mekin mam
235 letu mekin
236 Esana makana sek okam
237 makana sen nakam es na
238 Kumlo meto es me
239 Lililom Bakunase
240 Babaunam Panmuti
241 Kumlo oe es
242 Bonak Hauhonit
243 Sasim OeEkam

Arriving there they were
not refused and
but received well and
entering the pocket of the trousers
and the pocket of the shirt,

and strengthened greatly and
made replete
with the flag and badge of office

The sword is sharp again
the guns replenished with
the gun with the iron heart
sword with covered handle.

Then (to) Jabi and Rasi
giving over Kenam Oe mofa
Seki and Soenam
and saying never mind;
if the pocket of your trousers were torn
or the pocket of your shirt was ripped
sew them up and
repair them.

In that way the names were harvested
and names were planted, so
Kumlo of the land became
Liliom Bakunase
Babau and Panmuti.
Kumlo of the sea became
Bonak Hauhonit
Sasi Oe Ekam.

Arriving in Kupang, the Nabuasa party was received by the Dutch authorities
and a pact or contract was apparently agreed upon. Nabuasa is said to 'enter the pocket
of the trousers and the shirt'. This is a metaphor for political alliance confirmed by the
following section (lines 221-227) where Nabuasa is presented with four symbols of
power; the flag (pen pene) and a badge of office besloit, a special gun and sword. It
is on the basis of this alliance that members of the Nabuasa kanaf claim independent
status in Amanuban.

Lines 236-243 are less clear. They appear to refer to a reordering of the
borders between the Nabuasa territory and domains further west. Nabuasa returns the
areas west of the Noemina (river) to Jabi and Lasi in compensation for their pact. The
treaty or pact between Nabuasa and the Dutch is treated in terms of a complementary
opposition between the *kumlol oe* and the *kumlol meto*. Opinion differs on the
meaning of these terms. Informants take them to be a corruption of the Malay term
(Komador laut- Commander of the Sea) in reference to Dutch origins, and
Commander of the ‘dry’ or land in respect of Nabuasa. The sense of the lines is
therefore, one of exchange and mutual alliance.

```
244 Ontakan malekan neno         Then they arranged a day
245 man malekan fai              and determined a night.
246 fain sopun mantia ma         The night to meet arrived and
247 neno sopun mantia            the day to meet arrived
248 lipat bnao mese              (when) a boat piled high (with guns)
249 ma fuaf bnao mese            and a ship full of bullets
250 man leuk nana                travelling past
251 snaen in tunan               the tip of the beach
252 ai nete in tunan             or the tip of the bridge
253 ai pulu inanan               or the inner island
254 tasi inanan                  the inner sea
255 neman haken bi Kolbano       Arriving, anchoring at Kolbano
256 ma Noe sufa                  and the Sufa river
257 Tam simo lek lekom           Entering and received with honour
258 naitima lek lekom            accepted properly
259 nek nini nak muti ma         with the white head of wax and
260 hau panmuti                  the white money wood (sandalwood)
```

This is a particularly vivid description of the arrival of a Dutch ship loaded
with weaponry, which arrived at the anchorage of Kolbano on the south coast of
Timor. This points to an outcome of the negotiations conducted in Kupang. Nabuasa
receives the weapons and exchanges them for beeswax and sandalwood, referred to as
‘the white head of wax and the white money wood’. These were two of the primary
export trade items for which Timor had long been famous. Apart from candle
manufacture in the nineteenth century, wax was used in the flourishing Batik cloth
industry of Java. Sandalwood was sought for perfumed articles and oil throughout
Asia and Europe. The formulaic pairing of these commodities in ritual speech
highlights the significance they once held to the indigenous economy. As a slightly
tangential comment, it is not accidental that the exchange items are white. Atoin meto
perceptions of the geopolitical history of Timor are strongly coloured with the
contrasting conceptions of white and black. When the Dutch arrived in Timor in the
seventeenth Century they were immediately identified as the *kaesmuti* (the white foreigners). The domains which aligned themselves with the Dutch marked this with the use of white representations of their allegiance. The central white bands in the woven textiles of Sonbai, and Amarasi still reflect this today. This was in contradistinction to the *kaesmetan* (the black foreigners) of Portuguese descent who came to dominate the interior of Timor during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. A link is also suggested with the ancient centre of pre-colonial power in Wehale (Central southern Timor) whose representational colour was black. Today remnants of the ‘black’ alliances of the past are found in domains such as Insana, Amanatun and Amanuban through traditional textile dyes. People of Amanuban also used to be called the *nis metan* (the black teeth) because of their practice of filing and blackening the teeth with betel nut juice. Thus, in the alliance with the Dutch, the narrative implies a number of these symbolic associations. Nabuasa receives a white flag from the Dutch and thereby affirms their ties with the ‘white’ power. Furthermore, the cultural association of white with masculinity was appropriate to a war leader like Nabuasa.

The narrative continues,

261 *he onam faniman*  
Then returning and
262 *tipuon afanfit*  
turning around going back
263 *neo kuan na*  
to the settlement
264 *ono lop fatu*  
of the stone Lopo
265 *ta hakeb uma fatu*  
to erect a stone house.
266 *tam hake*  
Entering and standing fast
267 *bi Supu ma faif nome*  
in Supu and Faif Nome
268 *ta Lasi ma Numfen*  
Lasi and Numfen.
269 *Nesim makluana ontakan*  
The surplus yield was
270 *batim mam bo*  
divided and distributed
271 *neo Nai boesannim*  
to the fifteen leaders
272 *ona tuek oe sinim*  
as their water container
273 *ma na ok bet sin*  
and their food basket.
274 *Es nanekan nahelam namepat*  
So that his heart became strong
275 *ten nahelam napep*  
again becoming firm

Having received the guns and ammunition they return to the stronghold settlement of Nabuasa in Lasi and build a stone house to store the weapons. The surplus guns are distributed to fifteen surrounding groups who clearly maintained an alliance with the Nabuasa group. Kolo Meo feto, the narrator, uses the metaphorical
image of a water container and food basket to describe this distribution. These articles are two of the means to sustain life and, therefore, are comparable to the guns and bullets which enable these groups to defend their settlements.

As a result of receiving the cache of weapons, Nabuasa is seen to have recovered from the threat imposed by the monopolisation of weapons from the east and now has the basis to continue fighting. The following segment of the narrative marks another episode of the past, one which follows from the replenished strength of the meo group. In it are a number of aspects which reveal traditional principles of warfare and political organisation.

276 NaKono NaOematan
277 NaBabu naBife
278 NaBoko NaB’ai
279 nahan nabeun
280 nenun nabeun
281 onam Soe’i noni Buniun
282 man Senani ma Nait noni
283 Kelnoni Buniun
284 tam senanima Nait noni

Kono and Oematan
Babu Bife
Boko Ba’i
eating continuously
increasing strength
namely in Soe’i noni, Buniun
Senani and Nait noni
Kelnoni, Buniun
Senani and Nait noni.

285 Nai Antoin anet ema
286 kanbak manlufut
287 kianon ma nainnon
288 ma nak: maut henati
289 namunit nati
290 au upat nait manesa
291 au afat nati
292 maklulu maba na

Nai Antoin was prepared,
not wasting time
jumping up and pressing forward
and saying, so be it,
in days to come
my bullets will reap a harvest
my yield will be
recognized and known.

293 Mbapan manlufut
294 man it hau inik nufan
295 inik nianam
296 man naom na sukat
297 ma napao neo
298 Molo Miomafo
299 Paeneno Oenam

Stamping the ground
and taking the bark wood
the heart wood
went to mark out
and defend against
Molo, Miomafo
Paeneno, Oenam.

300 Naikoet he naek fanu
301 naek upkenu es
302 bi tua mina bi Sin koneno
303 es, bi Belo bi Muit kase
304 bi Teuptah bi Oeknino
305 nok sal’am
306 Tukmetan Numetan
307 Tuk noni ma bi Koa

The high value of the war cry
the high price of the ammunition was
bi Tau Mina, bi Sin Koneno
bi Belo, bi Muit Kase
bi Teuptah, bi Oeknino
together with Sal’am
Tukmetan, Numetan
Tuknoni and Bi Koa.

308 hoe bae, muah mes mese
309 pah nuasin nifu nuasin
310 Nak; om nem es

"Hoi Cousin, you eat alone
in two lands, two water sources”
saying; how is it that
The names mentioned in the beginning of the preceding segment, namely, Kono Oematan, Babu Bife, Boko Ba’i, clearly refer to the traditional enemy domains to the north of Amanuban. Collectively they represent the sphere of influence of the Sonbai domain. They include the territory of Molo, under the executive rule of Oematan, and Miomafo, under the executive authority of the Lord Kono. The other four figures are the named clans surrounding the ritual authority Sonbai which held the titles of atoin amaf. Much of the warfare in central west Timor during the nineteenth century occurred between the important regions of Amanuban and Sonbai.

In the narrative, which expresses the manifest hostility between the two opposed realms, the enemy is seen to be plundering (‘eating’) areas within the Nabuasa sphere of influence. We also find (line 285) the first reference to a named Nabuasa figure, namely, Nai Antoin Nabuasa. According to the Nabuasa genealogies from several areas, Nai Antoin is a seventh generation ancestral figure. This places his leadership squarely in the middle of the nineteenth century and he may well be the individual who forged the alliance with the Dutch Colonial authorities. Under his leadership the group responds to the threat from outside by activating the war process. This is the meaning of the lines 293-297, which refer to the ritual ceremonies surrounding the beginnings of formal warfare. They include the formulation of the war cry (fanu) which encodes the basis of the dispute and the justification for seeking revenge. The names of the individuals mentioned (lines 302-307) I take to refer to the
individuals murdered in the process of war. However, the narrative is particularly ambiguous at this point and exegetical commentaries were inconclusive.

The Nabuasa group confront the enemy with their complaint. This is couched in the familiar cultural terms of this agricultural society. The enemy is said to ‘eat’ alone from the land and thereby deprive others of the use of the land resources necessary for shifting cultivation and extensive grazing of herds of buffalo. The terms bunu bi teno nenu Banam is the phrase used in ritual speech to identify Amanuban. All native groups from Amanuban still identify themselves as atoin Banam (people of Banam) in contrast to Sonbai areas for example which are termed in formal speech Paeneno Oenam Molo Miamafò.

The fighting that ensues culminates in the rout of the Sonbai forces, who flee to their mountain sanctuaries and enter a period of suffering and deprivation, ‘eating in misery and drinking with difficulty’. The next episode in the narrative then deals with the making of peace between the warring factions.

325 nait nan noni bo es
326 manfutem neo kenat nono
327 mese mansene ma nao neman
328 mantulu nao neman

Taking up ten silver coins
and tying them to a gun
placing them and advancing
offering them and advancing.

329 Nak; Hoe bae am keko ma
330 ma mukaima man ken hau letaf

Saying,"Hoi, cousin" and
signaling with his hand, and
unloading his gun with the letaf
wood stock.

331 noe haef
332 noe nakaf
333 es Benu Neonane
334 Sopaba Toislaka
335 he nasanu kena ma
336 natap suni

The foot of the river
the head of the river
namely, Benu, Neonane
Sopaba, Toislaka
put down their guns and
sheathed their swords.

337 Aut nusat naha sana tebem
338 mini sana tebem
339 maut henati asantakem

"I feel that you eat poorly
and drink truly badly.
So let my confession of wrong
doing be
in the flat lands and plains of
the grass of Bes ana and
the water of Bes ana".

340 bi naimnella ainkesi es
341 Hun bes ana ma
342 oe bes ana

343 Es an malekan fai
344 malekan neno
345 neno tam sopun
346 fat tam sopun
347 na ekam ma natefam

So they arranged a night
and determined a day.
The day of agreement came
the night of agreement arrived
to respond and meet
bi hun bes ana
oe bes ana
tam neonaet
in the grass of Bes ana
the water of Bes ana.
entering from the east
filling and adding
entering from the west
filling and adding
Then saying, "Hoi cousin,
let us not make peace cousin
with horses or
heirlooms and clan valuables
[because] maybe
the morning will be fine
but the evening disrupted
so let us make peace with
your harvest, your yield
Let us make peace with
your ritual group
your entrails.
Return go back
and speak
and discuss together with
Kaunkoko's Lords
and Bau'u's Lords
at the place of Sonbai
at the place of Naem".

Li'okam fain nematan
bela nekan ma
bela nekan
natam tite aim penam
tipuonam faineman
namentia nat nanon am
nakesion neo
Bonak Hauhoni
Sasi ma Oe Ekam,
na molok ai na uaban
man etun ai naton
na nekan na te atoni
Na Fasfua Sila ma
Na Tua Aot Beis
Turning and going back,
keeping in his heart and
holding in his heart
to reject and forbid.
Turning around going back,
arriving together and
side by side to
Bonak, Hauhoni
Sasi and OeEkam
to speak or to discuss
and to tell and inform
the matters of his heart to the men
Fasfuasila and
Tua Aot Beis.

nek noni panas mat mese
kaomam
etun naton ai
namolok am nak nane
aut ninat
Nenu Banam Bunu Biteno
tao nain sin laiskenu
Taking a silver coin
as a foundation for his
telling and informing or
his speaking and saying,
I feel that
Nenu Banam Bunu Biteno
truly accept their wrongdoing.

of at huk fai ana
Paeneno Oenam Molo Miomafo
na of at huku te huktan
ai heke tet hektan
We will stir early (to)
Paenano, Oenam, Molo, Miomafo,
to capture and truly capture
or to seize and truly seize.

Nai ne nahakeb
ne ni uaban
esan toko ai antef
The ancestors were agreed
in their discussion
namely, to sit and join
In this section the warfare between Nabuasa and the enemy is brought to an end. Of particular interest are the lines 331-336. The groups Benu, Neonane, Sopaba and Toislaka are identified as close allies of Nabuasa. Their role in the Nabuasa political system will be clarified in the following chapter. At this point it suffices to say that as ‘the head of the river, the foot of the river’ they act as warrior groups for the Nabuasa leadership and defend their political centre.

In the narrative the opposing groups agree to make peace at a neutral location. In this case the exchange of valuables and livestock is rejected in favour of what is termed ‘your harvest, your yield...your ritual group, your entrails (lines 362-365). The meaning of the metaphor is made explicit later in reference to the woman bi Soeb Neno, who is offered in marriage to one Sik Nope.

In this arrangement can be seen one of the traditional principles surrounding the conduct of warfare in West Timor. Warfare was pre-eminently a masculine pursuit.
associated with 'heated' states. Conversely, peace was formalised through 'cooling' rituals culminating in the exchange or offering of women in marriage to the opposing side. Hence it was said that in peace the land became woman (pah anfain bife) and was therefore associated once again with fertility and procreation.

In the narrative, although it is Nabuasa who receives the woman from the enemy group, she is offered to Sik Nope. Local exegetical commentaries identify Nope as the leader of a group allied to Nabuasa in the sub-domain nearby known as Basmuti (identified in the text as Usapi Leotae Fatu ma Basmuti). In presenting the woman to him Nabuasa became in effect a wife-giver to Nope and therefore socially superordinate. This was significant in political terms. In a later discussion the nature of this relationship will be clarified. Here I merely wish to highlight the importance of the marriage as a peace-making ceremony for warfare. This is the meaning of the phrase 'relating the way of the areca nut and the way of the betel pepper' (lines 414-417). Marriage in Amanuban generally is referred to as a prestation by the wife-taking group of the puahmnasi manumnasi (lit. the old areca nut, the old betel pepper). The prestations symbolise the notion of 'marrying' the two essential ingredients of the betel chew, where puah (areca) and manus (betel pepper) are marked as gender specific, that is, female and male respectively.

Line 427 represents the end of the warring episode in this text. The final section of the narrative (below) presents a further significant period of the Nabuasa image of the past. It expresses aspects of expansion and political organisation which follow the victory over the enemy in warfare.
They travelled past the bottle or the four sided glass jar. Until meeting Tefu tapping lontar or splitting gewang palm.

Mnao presented food to Pae in Polo, Tibu, Luluf, Batam. Bena and Unmone. Whereas, Besi continued up to the mountain water and the mountain grassland (to) Talan, Na’u, Tunliu. Lopo, Puay honouring and feeding at the mountain water and the mountain grassland. So that in mentioning or in reference to them, it is said mountain water mountain grass plains water and plains grass.

The short and the long legged, travelled past Nitus and Oe han Filim and Oe Baki Putun and Oehue. Climbing to Oele and Nikani, the long legged one became as the old stallion which is stiff and tired as the old buffalo cow which is stiff and tired and assembled in Fatutnana.

So that Benu, Neonane Sopaba, Toislaka, in the middle of the high place the highest path or the highest earthen terrace, as the four bulls the four males with the great hearth wood and the great hearth stone united and as one whole taking pleasure in their land or their water (resources) in the future with the fathers or the supports, circling and meeting the liana that encloses in order to defend their land and defend their water.

This is the sum of my knowledge shining and glowing day.
In this the final segment of the narrative, the Nabuasa ancestor is seeking to ensure that the newly secured territory is made a permanent possession of the group. As much of the detailed meaning of this segment is left implicit, I intend to gloss this part of the discussion and leave the intricacies of the relations and organisation of the political order for the following chapter.

In the narrative four key leaders are identified as capable of securing the territory. The first two, Besi and Pae, settle the two areas associated with 'the mountain water, the mountain grass' and the 'plains water, the plains grass', respectively. In cultural terms Atoin meto often differentiate a given territory in terms of this complementary opposition of highland (*neten*) and plains (*mnella*). Together they constitute a notion of unity and completeness.

The figure Pae meaning 'hero' is allied to the two names Tefu and Manao. This is later expanded with the addition of two further allied groups. Besi (meaning iron or invulnerable) who travels to the mountain area is allied to five named groups in the narrative Talan, Nau, Tunliu, Lopo, Puai. However, it is readily agreed that the group Talan did not continue as a named *amaf* for long. Thus, the appropriate number of named allied groups always tends towards four.

Both leaders are also fed by their allies. The term *nahao am nafatin* (line 453) is used in ritual speech to refer to the presentation of harvest tribute to a central authority of a political unit or entity.

In addition to Besi and Pae, the Nabuasa ancestor identifies 'the short and the long legged' leaders to constitute a third centre in the expanded polity. Later only the 'long legged' leader is mentioned for reasons which will be explained directly.

Finally, the names of four figures identified earlier as 'the head of the river, the foot of the river', are invoked as the 'four bulls, the four males' (line 476) and surround their political leader, Nabuasa, who is conceived of as a great hearth. In this metaphor the political organisation created is compared to a house. It applies to the collective polity as a whole. House structures (*ume*) in Amanuban are built along strict structural rules. Two significant features in this context are the four main house pillars...
which support a conical frame roof structure, and the liana vines of the roof frame
which are covered in grass thatch. The narrator therefore implies that the expanded
political structure takes the form of one house. The amaf amaf (line 485) act as the
wooden support-posts and the liana-vine frame surrounding and protecting their leader
Nabuasa, who appears as the central hearth within the house. The image is therefore a
symbol for political unity based on the number five. In other words, a central figure
surrounded and supported by four complementary allies constituted as a double pair.
This fivefold configuration is a building block of political process and system.

Kolo Meo feto concludes his narrative of the past at this point. It ends not with
the present but at a time which might be considered as the high point of the Nabuasa
enterprise. Explicitly the text conveys the perspective of the unfolding and emergence
of a powerful centre supported and surrounded by a large number of political allies. It
is clear, however, that although the nature and organisation of this political system is
hinted at and expressed metaphorically, much of the detail of the system is left
implicit. The exercise in the following chapters is to lay out the political organisation
based on the data offered in the narrative, coupled with the detailed exegetical
commentaries provided by descendants of the Nabuasa clan.
CHAPTER FIVE

NABUASA: MEO NAEK OF AMANUBAN

Introduction

One of the persistent features in the narrative of Kolo Meo feto is the reliance on metaphorical and symbolic images to describe traditional aspects of political process and organisation. It is clear that what is expressed in the narrative, implicitly at least, is the outline of a system in which Nabuasa came to occupy the political centre. In discussing the character of that system, the following perspective represents the outcome of many hours of discussion about the past and the meaning embedded within the narrative, primarily with elders of the Nabuasa clan in the villages of Olais and Lasi, but with supporting exegesis from more distant kin and political allies throughout southern Amanuban. What emerged from these discussions was a vision of a political order. In the following chapter I seek to interpret some of the dimensions of this order using the narrative as a thematic guide and drawing upon elaborated points of detail to aid understanding. Once again, I am less concerned with reconstructing the past per se than I am with exploring the various indigenous schemes of classification which serve to structure the pattern of politics based in the past.

In the narrative of Kolo Meo feto, it is possible to identify three broad stages of political development. The first traces the migration of the Nabuasa clan from their origin ‘rock’(fatu) to the Amanuban centre at Tumbesi where, in recognition of their status as meo, they are directed to the periphery to extend the domain. There is an implicit acknowledgement in this phase that they were politically subordinate to the centre. The second stage is centred upon the Nabuasa group in the settlement area identified in the narrative as Kopusu Kotnana, Koaem Kotana. Here political dependence gives way to autonomy and the Nabuasa group is presented as acting
independently. This corresponds to a shift from periphery to centrality. The third stage involves a second period of expansion following the liberation of the land from the enemy and the desire to settle the region to ensure (*natau*) their claims. In this phase the names Besi and Pae are prominent and these individuals claim the region identified in formal speech as the ‘mountain grass, the mountain water, the plains grass, the plains water’. In this chapter I focus on the second of these stages beginning with the establishment of the Nabuasa clan in Sasi, Oe Ekam, Bonak, Hau Honit, having overun the forts of Kopusu Kotnana/Koaem Kotana.

The site which the Nabuasa group and its supporters selected for settlement was named Pupu tunan. The fort (*kot*) which Nabuasa established at the site was located on a narrow raised shelf of land that formed a ridgeline extending from the top of an imposing mountain. Access was via a pathway and the land fell away precipitously on three sides. Thus, in the manner of many older settlement sites in Timor, considerations of defence were paramount. Water resources and agricultural potential, although necessary, were nevertheless of secondary importance. By all accounts the settlement site was also located in the midst of a forest of Sandalwood, a product which formed the economic basis for the emergent power of the group. The orientation of Pupu was basically east west. The site hugged the western slope of the mountain called Lasi. The path to the east was called the *eno neonsaet* (the eastern gate/the sunrise gate). To the north-west the view stretched as far as the Mutis Mountains and the ‘seat’ of Sonbai. This was the *eno neontes* (the western gate/ the sunset gate).\(^1\) On the apex of Lasi it is possible to see the southern coast of Amarasi and the edge of Kupang bay in the south-west. The position was therefore imposing, one that also bespoke of the high social standing of the *meo* Nabuasa in the surrounding territory. The use of the name Pupu tunan in this context was not arbitrary. Conceptually, the phrase has the sense of being above: *pupu* can refer to the top of a thatched house, and *tunan* is a sprout or tip of a plant.

When informants speak of the *uab uf* (the origin speech) in terms of the political structure of the Nabuasa system, they do so in terms of its earliest complete
formation. This means that although there is a recognition that the development of the polity was gradual and piecemeal, it is nevertheless conventionally expressed as emerging complete at one time. This reflects a persistent characteristic of Atoin meto conceptions of politics, whereby political order is constantly superimposed on the flux of shifting alliance and contingent events.

**Conceptual Framework of the Polity**

In the organisation of the polity, the Nabuasa group is located at the centre of the political system both conceptually and spatially. Surrounding the centre were a series of named groups which were located in a protective ring around the meo naek. These groups (kanaf) constituted the principle political allies of the Nabuasa clan and held different political functions within the polity. There were certainly other groups resident within the domain and, as the historical record reveals, their number grew considerably during the nineteenth century, but in terms of the ‘origin speech’, the later settlers were collectively placed under more prominent named figures.

Nabuasa as the central figure in the polity is the pah tuaf (lord of the earth). This title was applied in an active political sense and refers specifically to the leader of the name group. The Nabuasa meo is said to natik pah / nasiken pah, meaning to ‘kick (extend) the land and seize the land’. Nabuasa assumed the role of actively governing the territory and laid claim to the territory by the authority vested in him by the Lords of Amanuban. It is through Nabuasa’s authority that individuals or migrant name groups (kanaf) were able to settle the land under the jurisdiction of the meo and draw sustenance from the land. Their rights to ‘eat’ from the land were nested in the authority of Nabuasa to grant settlement rights. Thus it was explained that the Nabuasa meo was the aneot ahafo / apaot apanat (the canopy and cover/ the defender and guardian). Symbolically, as one of the ‘four bulls and four males’ (keus ha ma moen ha) of Amanuban, the classification of the Nabuasa centre was male, an aspect which is important in later considerations of the overall conception of the polity.

As a perspective on the traditional role of the meo Nabuasa group the meo undertook to present dried and smoked human heads to the central Lord Nope in
recognition of Nope's principal position in the polity. This is expressed in ritual speech as:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{nua nanam sis mate} & \quad \text{hunting the fresh meat} \\
\text{hel nanam oin makuke} & \quad \text{tapping the easy honey} \\
\text{nekin tam neo sonaf} & \quad \text{taking and entering the palace} \\
\text{on a hau mana fati} & \quad \text{to offer and present to} \\
\text{Banamtuan} & \quad \text{the Lord of Banam.}
\end{align*}
\]

This prestation in essence took the form of severed human heads but as the formal phrases indicate, it may have also included products from the forests such as wild honey and game. It did not, however, include cultivated products of the garden which were inappropriate to a meo warrior. The meo was not a tiller of the soil but a man of war.

The cause of the dispute which led to the rupture of this traditional alliance was said to be related to a time when Nabuasa went hunting heads in the domain of Molo, at a time when the central ruler of Amanuban had concluded a peace treaty with the ruler there. The implied insult to the authority of the Nope centre resulted in a rift. A second version of the dispute, which may well be an elaboration of the first, tells of Nabuasa's presentation of human heads which had become rotten and maggot infested. The insulting prestation is known in formal terms as:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{sis apunut afot} & \quad \text{the rotten meat that stinks} \\
\text{oni akut akeut} & \quad \text{the honey of the cannibal cutter.}
\end{align*}
\]

From this point, the Nabuasa clan no longer undertook prestations to the centre and established its autonomous rule. The withholding from the centre of what the Atoin meto refer to as the ‘flowers of the land’ (pah in sufan) represented a definite statement of dissent and opposition. This was especially the case where the central ruler had limited power to enforce his due.

The shift to an autonomous position can be viewed as a logical development of the tendency inherent in the position of the meo naek, Nabuasa. This is a notion expressed to me as:
Nabuasa in fain meo
in fain asu
in apanat Nope mas
Nope kanaplenatfa Nabuasa

Nabuasa became a cat
He became a dog [of war]
He guarded Nope, but
Nope did not govern Nabuasa

The importance of this idea is that the meo group guarded the centre on their own terms. While acknowledging some sort of prior delegatory authority from the Nope centre, this authority was only as strong as the support it was accorded. If the support defected, the authority of the centre was exposed as an illusion with little inherent coercive capacity.

The Four Fathers: Benu, Neonane, Sopaba, Toislaka

The Nabuasa group which established itself at Lasi is said to have had four key supporters with the clan names Benu, Neonane, Sopaba, Toislaka. They may be referred to in ritual speech as the kelfa ma sbetaf, the nepat kilo tain aknobet. In literal translation this refers to the bamboo shoulder support for drawing water (nepat), to the sound of water being carried in buckets (kilo), to rope (tain) and to the sound of the traditional jews harp (aknobet). Collectively it refers to the role of the four kanaf in the polity as providers for Nabuasa both in terms of agricultural prestations and as the military basis for Nabuasa’s renowned prowess in warfare. In the latter context they were meo ana (the small cats). They were the primary soldiers for Nabuasa and fought under his name with the ritual protection Nabuasa offered through his control of the sacred le’u musu. These four figures are identified in the narrative during the war with the forces of Sonbai (see lines 331-336).

Another term associated with the groups Benu, Neonane, Sopaba, Toislaka, is the phrase amaf (fathers) or atoin amaf(lit. male fathers). These terms derive from their application in the context of name group organisation and marriage alliance. The leading male agnates of any name group are usually referred to as the amaf. In addition the atoin amaf are the wife-givers at a marriage, and specifically the new bride’s mother’s brother. Hence, the term in a political context implies a wife-giving role in relation to Nabuasa. An individual is said to be ‘shaded’ by his wife-givers who
oversee important life cycle rituals. Wife-givers command great respect from the men who marry daughters of their name group. However, it is apparent from the genealogies of the Nabuasa ancestors that the Nabuasa leadership did not create marriage alliances with all of the four groups he calls his Kelfa ma sbetaf.² Hence the term atoin amaf was to an important degree metaphorical and is more correctly understood in the sense of a political marriage in this context. For clearly the ‘fathers’ were not Nabuasa’s social superiors in the same way that a wife-giving affinal group is considered to be. What is highlighted in this perspective, I believe, is the essential complementarity of their respective roles.

In terms of the ‘fathers’ role as providers of agricultural produce, informants cite the ritual words:

Sin tof lene ma tol usif neki tobe ma taka faif peti ma flol pastele

They weed the garden and give tribute to their lord carrying the cover and rice basket cooked pig and steamed rice

In this aspect of their role they are gardeners for their ‘usif’ (lord) Nabuasa. Special garden areas and livestock were set aside for the production of this ceremonial food. It was said to have been presented as a cooked food prestation, one appropriate for a wife-giver to present to a wife-taker. The role of the amaf was to ‘feed’ the centre with cooked food. This kind of prestation is one normally offered from a social superior to a subordinate.

The place of the ‘fathers’ in the polity therefore appears ambiguous. In one view they are debased and made inferior as the carters of water and toilers for their leader in the gardens. On the other hand, they are the atoin amaf (male fathers), a position of high social standing and respect in marriage alliance terms. The ambiguity, however, is illusory. In following a cultural norm by humbling themselves (nabaun nok: ‘to make oneself small’) and bowing to Nabuasa, they increase his prestige. However, they are also acknowledged as vital to the continuing standing of the central group. Without their support, guidance and advice, Nabuasa has no basis in power. Their roles are therefore entirely complementary and recognised as such in the use of
the analogy of the house. In the narrative the amaf are compared to the four post supports (sukit) which carry the weight of the platform (panat) in the Atoin meto house. The analogy aptly expresses the nature of the relationship that forms the basic configuration of a political unit, namely, four groups enclosing and supporting a fifth in the centre.

The role of the four amaf as food producers for the Nabuasa centre is contrasted to their active role in the conceptual outside of the polity. During the period of significant sandalwood trading, for example, the amaf of Nabuasa were responsible for cutting and dressing the timber and transporting it by horse to Kupang where it was sold to Dutch traders. In this practice people recall payment scales of one ringgit (silver coin) per horse load (bikase mese). It is said that for their efforts, the amaf received the rights to the value of the trunk and roots of the sandalwood trees. A tribute payment to Nabuasa of the noni nakan (lit. head money) was given in recognition of Nabuasa’s status as the central authority.

In times of war, Benu, Neonane, Sopaba and Toislaka were the military personnel for Nabuasa. They acted as Nabuasa’s kana bonif (his ancestral name). This meant that it was their name which was spoken in ritual contexts to refer to Nabuasa. It is they who spoke for Nabuasa and they who acted for him. This is the implication of the reference in the Meo feto narrative to the four meo ana during the war with Sonbai. Warfare generally took the form of small-scale raiding of enemy settlement sites or unsuspecting travelling parties. The four meo for Nabuasa were expected to bring the severed human heads captured in warfare, to Nabuasa’s central place in Lasi. As the head of the community (kuan in a nakan), the meo naek Nabuasa received the heads of the enemy as his due tribute. His amaf would be content with looted items captured during the raiding. In ritual terms the severed human heads were termed sis makuke/ oin makuke (the easy meat/ the easy honey). According to one version of warfare, the human heads were given as a prestation at the time of the food prestations, in which case it is tempting to view the prestations of harvested crops and cooked or tame pigs, and those of human heads, as representing a complementary
opposition which combined products of the domesticated space inside the polity with those of the wild space, outside. Thus Benu, Neonane, Sopaba and Toislaka may be viewed as mediators of the boundary between the outside and the inside, the tame and the wild. As servants of their 'Lord', they are conceptually female and associated with the 'inside', but as 'dogs of war' (*asu makenat*), they are conceptually masculine and active on the outside.\(^5\) They are prominent both in the 'female' time of planting, nurturance which occurs during the wet season, an inactive immobile time, and also in the conceptually 'male' period of mobility, warfare and consumption during the dry season. The classificatory principles for defining the role of the *kanaf* groups Benu, Neonane, Sopaba and Toislaka were flexible and could be manipulated to serve the interests of the system in which they were a part.

In addition to the four core groups of Benu, Neonane, Sopaba and Toislaka, there were a number of other *kanaf* which were accorded political roles in the polity and designated by the term *amaf*. The groups *Sila* and *Nuban* held positions similar to the main *atoin amaf* to the extent that they were 'weeders of the garden' and provided food prestations to the centre. They were referred to be the phrase *tobe ma taka* (the food covers and rice baskets). However, they were distinguished as *amaf* of the inner circle, who served Nabuasa and supervised the organisation of the central fort at Pupu. They were said to 'sit in the settlement and guard the house' (*tokom bi kuan ma apao uma*) and did not actively participate in warfare and headhunting raids. According to one version it was they who received guests as well as the severed and smoked human head offerings collected in warfare on behalf of Nabuasa. It is in this sense that they are also described as the *asaha maus ma asnin kabin* (ones who convey the prestations and ones who carry the betel nut bag).

In terms of the immediate area surrounding the stronghold fort of Nabuasa, two groups were specifically assigned to defend the area and guard the 'gates' (*eno*) to the community. These were identified as Leo and Toislaka. The *kanaf* group of Toislaka therefore held an additional role as a specific named defender of Lasi. The conceptual opposition between the two defenders of the Lasi stronghold encoded
many aspects of the traditional collective attitude towards political organisation. At the top of the mountain (Lasi) stood Leo. This group was known as the *apao eno nakan* (guardian of the head gate). In this capacity Leo was entrusted to meet visitors and prospective new settlers who were presenting themselves to the *meo naek*, Nabuasa. Leo would accompany them down the narrow path to the central complex of the polity. The head gate was oriented to the east towards central Amanuban. Leo, although an *atoìn meo* (a headhunter), was not required to use violence in their role as one of the guardians of the gate (*apao eno*).

In contrast, Toislaka, whose residence was at the base of the mountain at the place called Bonsain, was the *apao eno hain* (the guardian of the foot gate). Toislaka’s duty was to watch over this western access to the centre to prevent intruders from attempting to gain access to Lasi from the west. Any person attempting to enter from this direction would be summarily executed. This was expressed to me in the following terms:

> Whosoever entered via the Panite gate would live. But those who came via the Bonsain gate would be executed/beheaded. If entering via the eastern gate, Nabuasa would receive and ‘place’ them, but the western gate was prohibited because it is the wide gate. If not forbidden, people could enter without the knowledge of Nabuasa and become enemies of Nabuasa again.6

In this opposition between the two guardians of the gateways to Lasi is encoded a holistic conception of the domain. The eastern gate associated with the rising sun and the sky is the gate of life. The western gate associated with the setting sun and the earth is the gate of death. The opposition is also marked by the contrast between the ‘wide’ gate, and the (implicit) ‘narrow’ gate. The movement of Atoin meto groups has, historically speaking, been one from the *ma’lenat* (narrow), to the *manuan* (wide/broad). This corresponds to a general orientation in which the flow of life is one from east to west. Thus the opposition of the gates in the Nabuasa polity sanctioned any attempt to reverse this historical movement with death. Attempting to enter Lasi from the open spaces, the underpopulated spaces to the populated or narrow spaces implied a threat which was summarily dealt with. This conceptual orientation is
also encompassed within a body symbolism of head and foot. Explicit in this conception is that Nabuasa resides at the navel (usan) of the polity, which is consistent with the location of the central Nabuasa settlement. This ordering of the polity finds analogy with the orientation of the graves of the dead. In former times graves were oriented along an east west axis with the head at the east and the foot to the west.7

Figure 2: Orientation of the Nabuasa political organisation above (tunan)  
[Diagram: LEO east =neonsaet head = nakan]

DEATH [mate]  ⟷  NABUASA  ⟷  LIFE [honis]

TOISLAKA  
West =neontes  
foot =hain  
[Diagram: below (et a pinar)]

It also helps to clarify the phrase presented in the oral narrative which identifies the ‘fathers’ as the head and foot of the river. This is a reference to the spatial orientation of the Nabuasa domain, and locates the protectors of Nabuasa between the head (source) and the foot (mouth) of the stream which marks the inner boundary of the Nabuasa centre.

Apart from the groups mentioned above, one other amaf group should also be mentioned. This was Saebani, who along with Sopaba acted as guardians of the Nabuasa Le’u musu. Their role is dealt with in a following section.

In summary, the role of the amaf is seen to be pivotal to the maintenance and success of the polity and the position of the meo group at the centre. They ‘feed’ their lord (Nabuasa) and fight his battles. They maintain the order of the polity and settle disputes in consultation with the meo. Through the marriage links that were forged with the centre, particularly by the amaf group Sopaba, they contribute to Nabuasa life-cycle rituals and provide political support for Nabuasa through their own authority
as heads of their own name groups (*kanaf*). They represent core support groups for Nabuasa.

**The Four Lords: Telnoni, Isu, Tenistuan, Ataupah**

The second group of political supporters of Nabuasa were termed the four Lords (*usif ha*). They are named Telnoni, Isu, Tenistuan and Ataupah. The period when these figures arrived in Lasi and the precise nature of their role remains somewhat puzzling to me, although they clearly reveal through their names a connection with the centre of Amanuban and the old ruling line of the *Usif Nope*, and they certainly settled in Lasi following the initial formation of the polity. Beyond this, however, the conflicting interpretations of different groups mean that a full understanding of the position of these figures is difficult to achieve.

In ritual speech the *uis ha ma moen ha* (the four lords and the four males) were called Telnoni, Koil abi: Fun sopo, Naim bil in a reference to their honourific titles (*akun*). They were said to gather together in Lasi (*nabua oke ambi lais*).

The four lords are also said to be of the same ‘trunk’ (*uf mese*) as the Nope clan of Amanuban. That is to say, they claim the same clan origins as Nope. This is problematic to the extent that the clan groups Tenistuan and Ataupah, in particular, are more often associated with the former ruling group, Nubatonis. It is worth pointing out, however, that this version was offered to me by members of the Nope family, who also claim that their ancestor had directed the four clans to settle in Lasi and to ‘strengthen the land’ (*hane nain*). By this claim, my informant meant that the four clans would strengthen the influence of the beleaguered Ruler Nope in the Nabuasa area. In contrast, the version I recorded from members of the Nabuasa clan claim that the four *usif* settled with the permission of the *meo* following factional disputes with the Nope centre. Their allegiance then was with Nabuasa, strengthening his hand and not that of Nope’s. The issue remains a moot point and reflects the uneasy relationship in matters of the past between the former Nope family and their *meo*, Nabuasa. The following discussion broadly follows the Nabuasa view of the relationship, one
supported by at least two of the *usif* groups (Ataupah and Tenistuan) whose allegiance remains with the collective perspective of the Nabuasa clan.\(^8\)

According to the oral history of the Nabuasa centre, Isu and Telnoni were contacted when Nabuasa conducted an expedition to Kupang to sell sandalwood and beeswax to the Dutch. They met at a place called Oni nama, present day Babau. The following segment which relates the arrival of the *usif* to Lasi was offered to me by the Nabuasa elder Kolo Meo feto as additional explanatory material to his earlier narrative.

Upon my ancestor's arrival, Telnoni had made a hut from the sandalwood and resided there. Isu had made a rope and tied it around his waist.\(^9\)

The implication of these comments are that the two men were destitute and living without proper shelter and suitable clothes. Nabuasa spoke with them and offered them a place within the territory he controlled. He then continued on his journey promising to return in ten days. This he did and conveyed Isu and Telnoni to a settlement known as Putun, within his territory. They then stayed there for some time before the ancestor Nabuasa said:

I have placed the *usif* on the outside. If the enemy comes with his meo without my knowledge, the *usif* will be consumed. Go and bring them to live here in Lilain. From that time Nabuasa and the *usif* assembled together in Lasi becoming as younger brothers and supports.\(^10\)

In this way the two *usif* came to live around the central place of Nabuasa. Ataupah and Tenistuan arrived sometime later.

Ataupah also entered via the great gate (the 'head' gate to Pupu). Tenistuan was caught and burnt with fire by the ancestor of the Lord Nope and came to 'extinguish the flames' in Oe nepa.\(^11\)

Nabuasa met with Tenistuan and promised to return in four nights to accompany him to Lasi.

After four nights had passed, Nabuasa directed his *atoin amaf* to come and place [Tenistuan] in Nakfunu [an area to the north of Lasi]. Nabuasa accepted these four strong men as his younger brothers.\(^12\)
It is evident in this perspective that the four Lords were refugees from the harsh rule of Usif Nope. They were offered an alliance with Nabuasa and the opportunity to live within the polity. The term oilfenu (younger sibling) implies both a closeness to Nabuasa as well as political subordination. As in the conventional relationship between brothers, the closeness of siblingship is nevertheless marked by asymmetry and latent competition. Fission within communities in the present day still frequently occurs at this juncture and disputes are common between brothers over questions of inheritance. The narrator completed his story with the ritual words:

\[
\begin{align*}
ma \ bian & \quad \text{And those who were separate} \\
nokam \ na \ talbok & \quad \text{became one, united} \\
ma \ suik \ man & \quad \text{and [were] raised up, and} \\
matolan & \quad \text{lifted to the shoulders} \\
nok \ sin \ kesu \ sin \ mone & \quad \text{of their bull, their male} \\
es \ a \ Nabuasa. & \quad \text{who is Nabuasa.}
\end{align*}
\]

These phrases imply that the four *usif* and Nabuasa held a special status within the polity as a collective ruling authority. Once again there is a fivefold pattern in which the Nabuasa group occupies a conceptually male centre.

The position of the four Lords in the domain was further strengthened when Nabuasa provided them with their own *atoin amaf* selected from various name groups (*kanaf*) which had settled in Lasi under the authority of Nabuasa. These ‘amaf’ groups were chosen because, it was said, ‘they were knowledgeable in making food gardens and tapping lontar palms’ (*sin antofan hinen lene ma anhelin tua’*). In other words they were suitable for the task of providing the Usif groups with tribute in the form of food prestation. Their role was identical to the *atoin amaf* of Nabuasa. Moreover, like the latter they also actively participated in warfare and headhunting raids even though their political masters, the four *usif* did not. These subsidiary name groups are recalled as follows:

1/ Telnoni : Benu, Lasboi, Lanu, Banfatin.
2/ Isu : Neonkeba, Nenoleku, Nuban, Nenohai
3/ Ataupah : Tanu, Noislaka, Neonleku, Bosoin
4/ Tenistuan : Tuna, Tapoin, Teflae, Kause
In this configuration, composed of four groups surrounding a fifth more senior group in the centre, the familiar pattern of the number five is reproduced. This configuration expresses a conception of unity in which the number five implies unity. What is particularly interesting about the formation of the Nabuasa polity is the apparent process by which the organisation was constructed. The four usif did not arrive simultaneously, but they were classified as a group of four and supported by further groupings of four times four ‘fathers’. There is a sense here of an adherence to a structural code. A code which ensures, if not practical cohesion or unity, at least the systematic basis for its expression.

Prayer and Politics: The Religious Basis of the Polity

One of the central features of the polity that developed around the Nabuasa clan was its establishment both as a political and religious system. It is possible to separate these two concepts analytically although in practice they were inextricably linked together. Political power was founded on and underpinned by an ongoing communication with the hidden world of the ancestors and deities. In particular, the exercise of political power was directed by the efficacy of the transcendental le'ū complex of Nabuasa. At the same time, the religious well-being of the community was based on the continuing political power and will of the Nabuasa leadership. That leadership was primarily directed at warfare. Nabuasa, as the meo naek or great cat, was a Warlord whose continuing source of authority was success in war.

The political entity that surrounded the Nabuasa kanaf in Lasi was both a political and a religious organisation. Just as the political objectives of Nabuasa were success in warfare with headhunting as its main expression, which thereby ensured the prosperity of those who lived under Nabuasa’s authority, so too were the religious goals of the system directed both at warfare and prosperity. The former was, in a sense, the precondition for the latter.

The maintenance of the organisation was underpinned by an ongoing communication with the hidden world of the deity and the spirits. This was achieved
at two levels. Firstly, the ritual application of the religious complex termed the *le'u musu* (hostility/enmity le'u) was significant. It was the belief in the invulnerability of the *le'u musu* power controlled by Nabuasa that constituted the foundation both of Nabuasa's success in warfare and the Nabuasa claim to legitimate leadership in the domain. Secondly, ritual control was also directed to the land to ensure continued prosperity and the production of staple food crops. The ritual authority for this latter aspect was held by a second important figure in the domain, named Nubatonis.

Nubatonis was known as the *a na'amnes* (he who carries the sacred rice). The primary responsibilities of Nubatonis were directed at the control of the life-giving monsoonal rains and the maintenance of ritual control over the land and the forests of the domain. Thus it is said that Nubatonis 'prayed for the land' (*onen pah*). Like Nabuasa, Nubatonis was also referred to as the *pah tuaf* (Lord of the earth). Their roles were complementary to the extent that Nabuasa maintained an executive authority over the people of the domain and held the rights to settle newcomers within his region of jurisdiction. Nubatonis maintained a ritual authority over the land and the fertility of the soil. Thus, in the dyadic form of ritual speech it is said that Nabuasa was *abain toh* (custodian of the people), while Nubatonis was *abain pah* (custodian of the land). It is also significant that in the conception of their relative position within the polity Nubatonis was said to be conceptually female in relation to Nabuasa and was politically subordinate to the *meo*. To an extent then the role of Nubatonis in the emergent polity surrounding Nabuasa, parallels the former role of the clan group as the ruler of Amanuban before the arrival of Nope. The fact the Nubatonis becomes the ritual Lord in Lasi may have represented an acknowledgment by Nabuasa of their old authority over the land.

According to Nabuasa informants, Nubatonis fled from Tumbesi following a land dispute with the installed *Usif Nope*, (*in nasikan pah*: he usurped the land). This man, one Seo Nubatonis, arrived in Lasi seeking the protection of the *meo* Nabuasa. At that time the leader of the Nabuasa clan in Lasi was said to be Nai Kabas Nabuasa, father of the ancestor *Antoin Nabuasa*, named in the Meo feto narrative. In order to
honour Nubatonis, who was part of the ancient ruling line of Amanuban, Nai Kabas. Nabuasa offered Nubatonis a woman in marriage, one bi Leno Nabuasa. From this point on a close political alliance was formed. It is said that Nabuasa spoke to Nubatonis saying that from this time:

\[
\text{Kaesam tek hit kanan} \quad \text{Do not mention our name} \\
\text{Atoin le'u es au,} \quad \text{I am the male le'u} \\
\text{Bife le'u es Nubatonis.} \quad \text{Nubatonis is the female le'u.}
\]

This expressed the asymmetrical yet complementary relationship of male and female between the two men. In Atoin meto marriage alliance terms, a wife-giving group is conceptually male with a relatively higher social status. Nubatonis, as the wife-taker of Nabuasa, married into the house of Nabuasa and was therefore conceptually female. At the same time the gender distinction of the le'u into male and female refers in the first place to the le'u musu of Nabuasa, a conceptually male power related to warfare and headhunting; and in the second place to the role of Nubatonis in praying for the land, a conceptually female sphere associated with fertility and nurturance. Nubatonis is offered residence in the polity and was said to be defended by two lesser kanaf groups appointed by Nabuasa, Tse and Toispae. They were said to act as the ‘cats and dogs’ of Nubatonis (Nubatonis in meo in asu) in a reference to their role as warriors and headhunters.

According to the Nabuasa collective view, Nubatonis received the authority to pray for the land and to guard the land (onen pah ma abain pah) from a man of the kanaf Bin. The origins of this figure are somewhat obscure, like much of the distant past. However, it is possible to piece together an interpretation based on the Nabuasa narrative and discussions with the descendants of the Bin kanaf themselves. When the meo naek Nabuasa attacked the stronghold of Na Jabi and Na Lasi, and took over the settlement of Lasi, a number of Jabi’s subjects remained. In the narratives are the lines (159-170):

\[
\text{Tan fainikan} \quad \text{The forgotten ax} \\
\text{ma benikan} \quad \text{and forgotten machete} \\
\text{bife puni tenu ma} \quad \text{three women and} \\
\text{Atoni naka nua} \quad \text{two men.}
\]
They slept soundly and slept like the dead namely Leo Manobe and Heka Bin. Tenis, Tobe and Benu becoming as the tame bird and the tame deer the tame chicken and the tame pig.

The significant name in this segment is Heka Bin. Members of the present day clan of Bin point to this ancestor as the principal ‘pah tuaf’ in the ritual sense, for the whole area that Nabuasa came to dominate. Their commentary related how Nubatonis received the right to become a na’amnes from Heka Bin who subsequently left the region and settled further west. The material evidence for the right to pray for the land (onen pah) was a collection of objects known as the metna koa. This consisted of a black cloth (hence metan/metna=black), and a small bamboo container (koa) used in sacred rice offerings, the le’u amnes. According to Bin informants, their ancestor divided his black cloth and granted half to Nubatonis as evidence of his new authority in the region. In support of this claim, I was shown the remnants of these ritual implements by a man of the Bin group. He claimed that Nabuasa was merely a ‘man warfare’ (atoin makenat) who had ‘hidden’ (natolo) the name of Bin and usurped his ancient authority. It is certainly true that the name of Bin, although acknowledged by the Nabuasa informants, does not play a significant role following the formation of the polity.

The primary role of Nubatonis was to manage the timing of the monsoonal rains in order to ensure the harvest of the life sustaining crops of maize and upland rice, pumpkin and beans among others. His role took the form of prayer at prominent locations around his area of jurisdiction. There were up to twenty separate locations reported. These were usually forested mountain tops and important water sources. These prayers were conducted twice a year; before planting the seed, an opening prayer (onenfini) and a ‘covering’ prayer following the harvest (toeb onen). This was a ritually sanctioned event which none should transgress. People from the hamlets within the territory would accompany the a na’amnes to the ceremonial site, bringing
sacrificial animals and maize, the maize heads trimmed and tied into bundles of eight, *aisat mese*. The responsibility for organising the procession was that of the respective name-group headmen in the different settlement sites.

The role of Nubatonis as *a na’amnes* was not, however, confined to prayer. As the guardian of the earth and its products, the *a na’amnes* also held an important responsibility in the agricultural management of the land. It was Nubatonis, through the delegation of the meo Nabuasa, who supervised the cultivation of garden land, and arbitrated land disputes in the first instance. When farmers wished to cultivate a new section of forest land they would request that right from the *a na’amnes*. They would be levied a tax of a silver coin (*noin solo es*) and one coral bead (*inu fua es*). This entitled them to cultivate the land for a period up to five years. The land would then revert to the custodianship of the *a na’amnes*, although the rights to utilise land rested with the respective headmen of settlements who had been granted rights to particular areas of forest land by authority of Nabuasa. The taxes were levied on all new garden areas and presented to Nabuasa as the primary authority in the area.

A further responsibility of the *a na’amnes* was the management of felling rights to certain trees, among which included sandalwood (*haumeni*), *Schleicheria oleosa* (*hau usapi*), and the bamboo species called *‘o’* which was cultivated to prevent erosion on the steep hillsides. Should individuals disregard these rules by cutting these species or by failing to plant a particular area they had begun to clear, ritual sacrifices would be required. The *a na’amnes* conducted a ‘cooling’ ritual on behalf of the offender, using the latter’s own animals in sacrifice.

The position of Nubatonis then was one of considerable authority and power. A rainmaker who was said to cover or shade the land and who presented a personal power which, by some accounts, was greatly feared.

The role of the *a na’amnes* is seen then to relate specifically to the ritual management of the land. This was achieved through the authority of the *le’u* complex, which was intimately connected to the power of the hidden world of ancestors, spirits
and the supreme being. This can be described as the ‘fertility le’u’ or le’u nono’ which existed in complementary opposition to the ‘enmity le’u’ (le’u musu) which governed warfare and headhunting. Hence, the le’u nono’ could not operate and was said to be sleeping when the le’u musu was invoked. The two spheres of the le’u represented aspects of dual classification in which the female categories of peace and coolness were contrasted to male categories of war and heat.

Under the ritual umbrella of Nubatonis as a na’amnes, all kanaf groups within the polity including Nabuasa, also maintained their own le’u nono’. The term nono’ means liana or forest vine and provides the metaphor of an enclosing fertility circle surrounding the members of a particular name group, comprising both living members and named ancestors. Each kanaf group maintained its own series of prayer rituals associated with agriculture and life cycle ceremonies of the name group.24

The le’u musu in contrast, was concerned with the conduct of war and primarily with the taking of human heads. It was pre-eminently a male preoccupation in which women were bystanders or victims. In this former period it was the Nabuasa clan which controlled the conduct of warfare from Lasi, and all residents depended on the efficacy of the Nabuasa le’u musu to ensure their safety from outside attack and when participating in the numerous headhunting raids. This was a key integrative aspect of the meo polity and enabled the Nabuasa clan to create a large number of dependent political supporters and allies. Their dependence was tied to a belief in the efficacy of the power of the Nabuasa le’u musu. Ownership of an uem le’u musu (enmity cult house) was evidence of a certain degree of political independence. To be ‘shaded’ or ‘covered’ by the enmity le’u of a political superior implied allegiance to that name group and the obligation to provide support both in terms of agricultural prestations and in warfare. Feuds and open warfare occurred between groups in Timor when this support was given to one political figure in favour of another.

In the Nabuasa polity around Lasi, the uem le’u musu of Nabuasa stood in the fort enclosure of Pupu. It was from here that the wars with Sonbai forces in the north and west were formulated and conducted. This is made explicit in the narrative from Kolo Meo feto in relation to the war with Molo Miomafo.
Although Nabuasa was the Tuaf or Lord of the le'u musu, according to informants, it was the families of two core political supporters who were said to guard the ritual and sacred objects. Two amaf groups in particular were identified with this role. They were the groups Sopaba and Saebani. In their capacity as guardians of the le'u musu, Sopaba and Saebani were referred to as meo feto (female meo) in relation to Nabuasa as the meo mone (male meo). The term meo feto is derived from their marriage links with Nabuasa. Since the earliest times, both the kanaf of Sopaba and Saebani have maintained a relationship with the Nabuasa kanaf which is described as baefeto-baemone. This is a relationship of marriage alliance which reflects asymmetry between affines. That is, as the wife-taker, Sopaba and his descendants are considered as categorically ‘female’ in respect to Nabuasa, who is ‘male’. This applies equally to Saebani, whose female ancestor is reckoned to be bi Koko Nabuasa, a sister of Koleo Mat Mese Nabuasa who is thought to have been the first meo naek in Amanuban. Evidence of the close relationship between Nabuasa, Sopaba and Saebani can be seen in the use of the name group horse brand markings that the groups use. These are termed malak and are still used today to identify ownership of horses and more recently cattle (Bali Banteng). Note that in these brands, it is the Nabuasa malak which is considered the source or trunk brand.

Figure 3: Brand markings (malak)

The Nabuasa cult house was a conical thatched structure supported by two pillars (ni le'u) and constructed with two doorways. It was used only for the ceremonies associated with warfare and only entered by select male members of the Nabuasa male line and the two guardians of Nabuasa’s le'u musu, Sopaba and Saebani, who held the title of apao le'u musu (guardians of the le'u musu). To this
extent then their designation as *meo feto* and as ‘female’ is consistent with their role as guardians of the house, just as women in everyday life are said to remain at home guarding the house. Indeed the explanation given to me was that ‘Sopaba and Saebani are female because they guard the *le'u* house.

Those particular individuals did not participate in actual headhunting raids, although other members of their name groups did. Their task was to assist in the preparatory rituals for war and the formulation of the war cry (*fanu mak ne*) which was believed to be essential for victory, as well as to defend the activated *le'u musu* from attack by possible enemies who sought to raid the settlement while the hunters were away.

The cult house held the ritually potent heirlooms that collectively made up the *le'u musu* of Nabuasa. Collectively referred to as *menu mafu na Nabuasa*, the sacred objects included swords, flintlock rifles, gunpowder, specific herbs and roots, and the special clothes and ornaments worn by the *meo*. These items were considered powerful in themselves, imbued as they were with the power of the sacred *le'u*.

Within the cult house, the sacred objects were divided and hung on two pillars. According to informants, Nabuasa divided his *le'u musu* between the two trusted supporters Sopaba and Saebani. Sopaba guarded that part of the *le'u musu* called the *le'u mone*, (male *le'u*) which was hung on the eastern pillar. Saebani guarded the *le'u bife* (the female *le'u*) which was hung on the western pillar. In ritual speech these two aspects of the *le'u* were termed as follows:

*le'u mone*: *hoen Nabuasa atel*omit atoin hum leko  
*le'u bife*: *hoen Saebani atel*omit bi fe hum leko

These phrases may be translated as ‘the slaves of Nabuasa, we like a fine faced man’; the slaves of Saebani, we like a fine faced woman’. The reference is to decapitated heads which formed the ritual offering to the *le'u*. Smoked and dried, the heads were stuck on poles surrounding the cult house or hung in the large banyan tree known as the *nunu nakaf* (the head tree), which was situated nearby. In this reference it is Nabuasa, not Sopaba, who is mentioned in the stanzas, although it was Sopaba
who was appointed guardian. This is, perhaps, tacit recognition of the common origins of these two name groups.

Both Sopaba and Saebani can be seen, therefore, to have played a pivotal role in the maintenance of the polity. It was their religious guardianship and knowledge of spells and ritual which provided the basis for the strength of the meo group in warfare and territorial expansionism.

The structure of the *uem le'u* house was completed with sixteen short pillars which supported the conical roof that reached almost to the ground. This is consistent with designs of other cult houses which are still found today in North Central Timor. At the top of the structure was the flag of Nabuasa, the *pen pen muti* (white flag), allegedly granted to the meo Nabuasa following a pact with the Dutch administration in Kupang. The flag was flown when the *le'u musu* had been invoked and warfare was in progress.27

By activating the power of the *le'u musu*, the ritual invocations effected a transformation of the world. A transition from the sphere or status of peace and conceptual coolness (*manikin*) to that of war and heated states (*maputu melala*: heat and flames). Heat is synonymous in this context with danger and uncertainty, and always requires ritual containment and manipulation which seeks to direct the potentially dangerous powers of heat towards a state of coolness and its association with fertility and prosperity. The logic of headhunting is to be sought in this cultural complex of ideas. Although at once the antithesis of well-being and fertility, the headhunting practice has as its goal an increase in the prosperity of the group.

Figure 4 summarises the principle named clan groups that held a distinguished status within the polity. The spatial arrangement of settlements around the central stronghold of Nabuasa is approximate only and does not neatly reflect the actual former pattern of settlement.
Figure 4: Conceptual Structure of the Nabuasa Polity

[East * Above * Head]

Eno Neonsaet/Panite

Leo
(Apao eno nakan)

Isu (Usif)  
Nuban, Nenohai  
Neonkeba, Lenama

Telnoni (Usif)  
Benu, Lasboi  
Lanu, Banfatin

Sopaba
Atoin amaf)
(Apao le’u mone)

Saebani
(Apao le’u bife)

Benu
(Atoin amaf)

NABUASA
(meo naek)
(Pah Tuaf)

Neonane
(Atoin amaf)

Nuban  
(tobe ma taka)

Sila

Nubatonis
(a na’amnes)

Ataupah (Usif)
Tanu, Noislaka  
Neonleku, Bosoin

Tenistuan (Usif)
Tuna, Tapoin  
Teflae, Kause

Toislaka
(Atoin amaf)
(Apao eno hain)

Eno Neontes/Bonsain

[West * below * foot]

Summary

In this chapter I have attempted to outline the political organisation of the Nabuasa domain which developed around the mountain of Lasi in the past. I have argued that it was established both as a political and religious system. Although piecemeal in its development the political organisation has been shown to encode a system of dual classification based on ideas of complementary opposition and
quadripartition. This was a system which sought to express unity and cohesion in what was in reality only a conglomeration of disparate groups, self-seeking and transitory. It represented a late expression of the ancient cultural concerns of the Atoin meto people about the nature of the social world and their attempts to regulate it. To this extent, it finds parallels in other reported political formations such as Insana in North Central Timor. One can agree with Schulte Nordholt when he writes:

The characteristic nature of structural totalities lies in their laws of composition. These tend by their very nature to systematize reality. As a result there is a constant dualism, or more correctly, bipolarity of characteristics in that structural totalities are always both in a state of development and in some sort of developed state (1971:12).

The reality of what Nabuasa informants recognise as the *uab uf* (origin speech) represents an attempt to express the mythical unity and coherence of the former political structure. The structure which is created fully complete through the narrators’ chant is nevertheless shown to be dynamic and emergent at the same time. This is seen both in the overall representation of the polity with its higher level divisions between the *meo*, the *usif*, *atoin amaf*, and *a na’amnes* as well as the religious differentiation in the roles of the *apao le’u musu*. But this can also be observed at the level of practice and orientation between and within groups whereby the particular classification of relationships such as female/male, inside/outside, younger/elder sibling is dependent on the perspective employed or the desired objective.

In the practical distinction between the *pah tuaf* of political power and the *pah tuaf* of ritual authority, we also find reflected an ancient and fundamental cultural conception of the nature of power, namely, that political strength is founded on a duality of the centre between male and female. In this case, however, it is the male aspect which is given precedence and a central priority in the structure. The *meo naek* Nabuasa stands on the periphery of Amanuban as one of the ‘four males, the four bulls’. The essential ‘masculinity’ of the *meo naek* Nabuasa results in the political centre of the domain becoming conceptually male. This is unlike other Atoin meto domains such as Insana (North Central Timor), for example, where the conceptually ‘female’ figure of the *Atupas* occupies the ritual centre. In this period Nabuasa was
active and mobile, unlike the 'ritual' lords of the centre in other domains who were conceptually immobile and female. It is sufficient at this stage to highlight this aspect of the meo political structure.
CHAPTER 6

NOEBEBA: A SECOND EXPANSION

Introduction

One of the consequences of disaffection from the central ruler of Amanuban in Niki Niki was an associated increase in warfare and mutual hostility. This is glimpsed in the historical accounts of the Dutch observers of the period. The starting point for this discussion is that part of the narrative where the Nabuasa ancestor recognized the development of a security threat.

The lords have closed off
the gunpowder of the east
the bullets of the rising day
In time I will be wholly eaten
and wholly drunk (consumed)
in the old settlement
the old place (lines 190-197)

As a consequence of this Nabuasa appears to have sought a treaty with the Dutch in the west in order to secure an alternative source of weapons to defend their position. The Dutch, whom we might suppose to have had their own political reasons for supporting an alliance, such as finding a way to break the resistance of Nope against the colonial forces, were therefore disposed to offer weapons to the Nabuasa group.

The warfare which ensued was directed at the Usif Nope. The anonymous Dutch traveller 'D' made this quite plain in his observations of the region in 1850. I also recorded the following comments from Nabuasa informants.

After Nabuasa had received the amunition, Lord Nope came with his people to loot the settlement. But Nabuasa drove them off, and they fled so fast that their heels hit the back of their necks as they dragged their guns behind them.
This image of complete disarray in the face of battle conveys the idea that Nabuasa was superior to the usif at Niki Niki by this time. Indeed it was a result of the warfare and the treaty with the Dutch that the Nabuasa group came to regard themselves as rulers in their own right and could make the claim that, at the time of the rift with the usif in Niki Niki, ‘Amanuban had two lords’ (*Banam in usif nua*).

The Nabuasa group also directed their war efforts to the traditional enemies in the north. Thus the narrative explains in some detail the warfare that ensued with the Lords Kono, Oematan, Babu, Bifel, Boko and Bai.

The second key theme in the Meo Feto narrative that complements the emphasis on warfare is the expansion of Nabuasa’s territory. This forms the third stage of the narrative. Two factors appear significant in this expansion. The first was the relative wealth generated within the political system in and around Lasi. This came from the trade of the principal resources, beeswax and sandalwood. A second circumstance which served to initiate further expansion was population growth. The emergent power of the Nabuasa group encouraged a considerable immigration of small groups of settlers to the mountain stronghold of Lasi. Escaping war and disruption in other areas of the region, they came via the eastern gate to the Nabuasa polity, the peoples gate (*toh eno*), the head gate (*eno nakan*). By expressing obeisance to the Meo Nabuasa, they were in turn allocated settlement sites in and around the central complex of the Nabuasa group. In addition to free settlers, the numbers were increased by young captives taken as slaves in warfare (*ate*). It was normal practice when raiding the settlement site of an enemy group to execute the adult men and women, but to capture the young boys and girls. They became slaves in the complex of the *meo*, taking the name of Nabuasa and doing the daily chores around the settlement such as collecting firewood, drawing water, preparing and serving food. One important consequence of the increased population, however, may well have been a corresponding pressure on the land resources surrounding the settlement area. In other words, the wide and expansive territory which had first prompted expansion to Lasi may have become confined (*ma lenat*) due to the pressure of new settlers. These
factors, combined with the realisation that the gains achieved through warfare may well have been threatened if the conquered lands were not settled by people allied to the Nabuasa centre, prompted a further expansion to the west.

The desire for further expansion is expressed in the narrative in the lines 428-439.

Then or ancestor thought and spoke
saying, this our land has been liberated and is empty.
Later in days to come
men will loot us again
and tame us again
better that
we determine again
or indicate again
so that [we] seize our land
or enter our land definitely.

The remainder of the narrative outlines the nature of this expansion, one which reflects a changing character of the conception of the Nabuasa domain. In the following discussion I develop the substantive aspects of the narrative which follow from the above lines and draw upon exegetical commentaries from authoritative members of the Nabuasa clan as well as speakers from allied groups who hold detailed knowledge of their own specific settlement areas. In developing the following perspective I have made extensive use of indigenous commentaries on the past from individuals living in the western villages of present day southern Amanuban. The result is a composite picture of the indigenous conceptual political organisation of the Nabuasa polity which emerged during a further expansionary phase.

The Creation of Noebeba

The only named ancestral figure in the Nabuasa narrative is Nai Antoin Nabuasa. He is mentioned in the latter part of the text in association with the war in the north against the people from the neighbouring domains of Molo and Miomafo. Within Lasi he is also credited with initiating a westward expansion into the thinly populated region.
According to the genealogical reckoning of Nabuasa elders Antoin Nabuasa had five sons. They came to play a key role in the establishment of the expanded political system. In figure 5 the main male line of the Nabuasa group is represented beginning with Koleo (Neno) Nabuasa, the first ancestor to take the le'u musu name of ‘Nabuasa’.

Antoin Nabuasa chose his son Lini to remain as the titular head of the group and therefore the polity in the older settlement site of Pupu in Lasi. Lini Nabuasa is referred to as the Meo uf (origin/ trunk Meo) or Meo tuaf (Meo Lord), and remained with the four central groups of amaf, Benu, Neonane, Sopaba, and Toislaka. The other sons migrated westwards to form subsidiary political units fashioned on the original political order of the ‘trunk’ settlement.

**Figure 5: Principal Male line of the Nabuasa kanaf**

```
Nai Koleo (Neno) Nabuasa
   |   |
Nai Koleo (Mat mese) Nabuasa (one eyed)  Nai Kabas Nabuasa
   |   |
Nai Antoin Nabuasa
   |
Lini (Meo uf) Manua (Meo O'of)  Sone (Meo Kole)  Liukole (Meo Pae)  Leno (Meo Besi)
   (Lasi)  (Oe Peliki)  (Polo)  (Oe Ekam)
```

Antoin directed two of his elder sons, Manua and Sone, to expand into the region on the southern side of the great mountain Bunuin. This area is located some 15km west of Lasi and became known as Oe Peliki. This region surrounds the settlement site identified in the narrative text as Fatutnana (line 470).

The two brothers are referred to in the narrative text as ‘Kole’ and ‘Haimnanu’, the short and long legged (meo). Evidently they were not considered capable of the
task of vigorously expanding the territory in a major way and were therefore offered a more protected region close to the centre. This is the sense of their characterisation in the narrative as the old stallion and old buffalo cow, tired and stiff (lines 457-461). They were therefore sent to protect the *O'o of mnasi ma Tilun mnasi* (the old corral and old stockyard). It is for this reason that Manua Nabuasa, the ‘long legged’ son, is also referred to as the *Meo O'o of meo* of the corral). There is no mention, however, of the fate of Sone Meo Kole the ‘short legged meo’. I was informed that this was because his line died out and only the line of the *Meo* Haimnanu has persisted in Oe Peliki.

In the narrative there is no mention of any political supporters for the two brothers. However, it is generally agreed, both in the territory of Oe Peliki and Lasi, that the Nabuasa leadership was supported by the *atoin amaf* groups of Seo, Lakapu, Tnu and Bamboi. It is clear that the number had to be four. Of these Seo became the ritual prayer leader for this subdivision of Oe Peliki and held the title of *a'na amnes*. This authority, which paralleled that of Nubatonis in Lasi, was delegated to him through the Nabuasa line.

The youngest and strongest of Antoin Nabuasa’s sons, Leno and Liukole Nabuasa, were ordered to take the lands further west to the river Noemina. They are identified in the narrative as Besi (Iron) and Pae (hero) respectively, and are said to have traveled together until reaching the territory named Polo, Tibu, Luluf, Batnam, Bena and Unmone. The highland settlement site named Polo became a new stronghold centre. However, the proximity of the site to the expansive alluvial plain *Bena* (flat), extending south and west to the mouth of the Mina river was also represented in the collective name of the territory.

The *Meo* Pae settled in this place with his principle *amaf* identified in the narrative as Tefu and Mnao. According to local consensus, however, they were later joined by two additional named groups Biaf and Kabnani, thereby creating a core political structure of four allied groups surrounding a Nabuasa centre. The first named ‘father’ group, as in Oe Peliki, performed the ceremonial and sacrificial functions of *a'na amnes*. 
Leno Nabuasa (Meo Besi), the younger sibling, continued on to the mountain settlement, Oe Ekam (Pandanas water) on the northern face of the Mountain Bunuin. Hence the ritual phrase which locates the site, Sasi ma Oe Ekam, Bunuin ma Fatumnaru.3 Knowledgeable elders in this area, however, agree that this move was partly motivated by a dispute which arose in Polo over the presentation of harvest tribute. Recognizing that a dual Nabuasa centre in Polo would inevitably create conflict, the younger brother Leno agreed to move on. In Oe Ekam, the Meo Besi gathered around him a number of trusted supporting groups, namely Talan, Nau, Tunliu, Lopo and Puai. In this case there were five named atoin amaf which were soon thereafter reduced to four, such that today, the name Talan is usually not mentioned in connection with the amaf of the Meo Besi.

From the perspective of the central or trunk community of Lasi these two outerlying subdivisions were conceived as complementing one another. In Oe Ekam it was explained to me that:

\[
\begin{align*}
  \text{Meo Pae in anleku mnella} & \quad \text{Meo Pae controlled the lowlands} \\
  \text{Meo Besi in anoen neten} & \quad \text{Meo Besi encompassed the highlands}
\end{align*}
\]

This represented the identical conception offered in the Meo Feto narrative where the two brothers, Besi and Pae, are contrasted as 'mountain water, mountain grass; plains water, plains grass' (lines:458-459).

In summary, the expansion of the older centre of Nabuasa authority and the creation of four divisions based around the authority of Nabuasa leadership constituted the core political unit of the expanded polity. It came to be referred to as Noebeba after the name of a river which flowed through the valley below the Nabuasa settlements at Lasi. This expanded polity was conceptualised as an \textit{O'of mese} or one corral, which expressed the conceptual unity of the expanded unit. The unity, however, was conceived dualistically in that the territory was differentiated between the 'inner stockyard' (\textit{O'of nanan}) comprising Lasi and Oe Peliki, and the 'outer stockyard' (\textit{O'of kotin}) comprising Oe Ekam and Polo. The more central or inner division was accorded a more senior, elder brother status and authority. Figure 6 offers
At the core of this expanded polity was a replication of the initial model: four groups of four ‘fathers’ surrounding four senior centres. At the same time it was conceptually dualistic in its classification, the one stockyard made up of two parts which expressed a political unity. There was, in addition, a second conceptual
division articulated between the two halves of the polity which corresponded to an inner female domain and an outer masculine domain. This emphasized the symbolic distinction of a female centre and a male periphery, often made in association with the house. This association represented an alternative concept of the ‘state’ although in this case the weighting was towards the elder-younger categorical distinction.4

The process by which these ‘younger brother’ units of the Nabuasa polity were constituted is instructive in terms of traditional Atoin meto notions about the nature of political authority and the particular form it took in southern Amanuban.

In the previous figure I have followed local exegesis in presenting the political order of the past as a coherent unity expressed in a pattern of dualistic classification and quadripartition. This is the indigenous model presented by Atoin meto themselves, which presents a structure formed in one unique way in the past.

However, it is equally apparent that considerable manoeuvering for positions of power was undertaken by the various participant groups. This suggests that the present day categorical clarity of form overlays and, to some extent masks, a significant political and historical struggle for power. A hint of the tension and turbulence of the period is evident when the two younger Nabuasa brothers disputed the rights to harvest tribute provided by their supporters.

The domain of the Meo Besi (Oe Ekam) is a good example of the process of the political formation of these subsidiary domains. In the expansion to Oe Ekam, it is evident that the land was not uninhabited. Small groups of people allied to Sonbai, whose base was in Bi Kauniki to the north, were utilizing the area for farming and hunting. Information regarding this period is drawn from discussions with descendents of the settlers of Oe Ekam. In ritual speech the following verse is recalled:

Safe ma Buki  
bonkam hauhoni  
bi Kase kuemnanu,  
ma auni haimnanu  
es natik pah  
ma natik nifu  
hen  
manua ma naik  
hen liu kol fui

Safe and Buki  
Bonak and Hauhoni  
the longlegged horse  
and long shafted spear,  
extended the land  
and extended the water  
in order that it would  
be wide and expansive  
He speared the wild birds
It is agreed by informants in Oe Ekam and Lasi that the initial four atoin amaf who stood as political supporters for Nabuasa in this initial period were the name groups Nau, Tunliu, Talan, and Neonsile (or Leumsile). Soon after, they were directed by Nabuasa in Lasi to settle the area. However, Talan and Neonsile were accused and found guilty of selling the prized racehorse of the Meo Besi to people of the Mela group in Molo (Mela being one of the Meo naek for Sonbai in Molo). They were then ordered back to Lasi and their place was taken by the relative newcomers, Lopo and Puai.

The origins of the two groups Lopo and Puai, like that of Nabuasa, are also related in formal oral narratives as a continuing movement from one settlement area to another. All the modern descendants of the two name groups identify their ancestor settlers in Oe Ekam as referent points to determine their place in that area.

One such narrative I recorded from a Puai man recounts the tale of one Neon Neonufa who left Bi Kauniki, the domain of Sonbai in present day Kecamatan Fatu Le'u, following a dispute there with the central ruler. He carried with him his le'u musu (sacred war objects) from which he took the name Lopo (lit. a four posted thatched granary). He travelled east and at length met with a man named Suma Puai who was living in the domain of Amanatun at the time. They chose to form an alliance sealed by marriage:

My ancestor Suma Puai took his sister Kut Puai to enter the house of Neon Lopo, so that the gun could be stored, the sword also hung up".5

The words refer both to the marriage and the creation of a political alliance which would provide the basis for mutual assistance in matters of warfare and security. In return Lopo sought a young woman from Bi Kauniki named (according to this explanation),6 bi Kon Fua, whom he presented to Suma Puai.7 She became an adopted child (an bakal) in his house. These two exchanges created a permanent alliance between the two groups which is acknowledged by their present day
descendants, who continue to describe their relationship with one another as *feto mone* (lit. female male). This is the accepted relationship between affines which encodes both an asymmetry between wife-takers (*feto*) and wife-givers (*mone*) but also implies a closeness suggesting the relationship between a married couple.

The two groups Lopo and Puai arrived in Lasi at the time when Lini Nabuasa had assumed the title of the meo uf. They were placed by Nabuasa in the area known as Oe Han, below the the mountain stronghold of Lasi, and later were directed to settle into the area of present day Oe Baki, with another group headed by the Nau *kanaf*. Here they cultivated the land and made special gardens (*etu*) for Nabuasa, presenting him with tribute in the form of:

- *ane kune mese* ceremonial basket of padi
- *faif kune mese* ceremonial basket of pork

In return Nabuasa in Lasi, who recognised them as particularly able fighters, presented them with gifts of rifles and swords:

- *kenat hau kme* Rifle with kme wood stock
- *nok suni nak besi* and iron handled sword
- *kenat na mam nunu* Rifle with fig wood stock
- *nok suni nak niti* and sword with covered handle.

These gifts were masculine symbols of the capacity to undertake warfare and headhunting and the two men were directed by Nabuasa to settle in the newly expanded western domains. Like him, it is reported that they settled initially in Polo, the sub-division of the *Meo* Pae. Also like the *Meo* Besi, it is said that disputes broke out there between the name groups. Lopo was suspected of sorcery and political intrigue. Tefu, one of the *atoin amaf* for the *Meo* Pae, accused him of being:

- *Atoin mafanu ma lasi* A man of war cry and dispute
- *ai matusa mnane* and scorcerer diviner
- *oni sin tua tun tuka* maybe they are the short lontar
- *ma tune tun tuka* and the short gewang palm
- *bia piteke* the legless buffalo,
- *bi kase biteke* the legless horse.
Although obscure in meaning, these lines imply that Lopo was considered dangerous and untrustworthy, acting against the social order. Moreover, like their political superior *Meo* Besi Nabuasa, Lopo and Puai moved to the new area of Oe Ekam, establishing with the groups Nau and Tunliu a formal polity in the expanded territory of Nabuasa. Oe Ekam, the domain of the *Meo* Besi, was therefore constituted with four groups classified as a double pair following the conceptual differentiation of the wider political unit of Noebeba. Moreover, Lopo and Puai, while characterised as *feto mone* (female male) in relation to each other, were nevertheless conceptually male in relation to the groups Nau and Tunliu, who were said to:

\[
\begin{align*}
fain & \quad \text{become} \\
bi \ fe \ ambi \ ume & \quad \text{women in the house,} \\
on \ a \ tut \ hais & \quad \text{servers of food} \\
fain \ on \ a & \quad \text{become} \\
teli \ ma \ sutae & \quad \text{the doorstep and mantle} \\
& \quad \text{[Of Nabuasa's 'house'].}
\end{align*}
\]

In other words they took the role of 'inner' guardians of the central authority. They did not conduct warfare in the conceptually 'male' sphere outside the domain. In contrast Lopo and Puai were *atoin makenat*/*atoin amaunut* (active headhunter soldiers and sorcerers). Their activities were directed to the 'masculine' outside and their role was that of *meo ana* (small meo) who fought for the meo Besi.

Furthermore, as in the central domain of Lasi, Oe Ekam was said to have two gates oriented to the east and west. The former was said to be the 'cool' gate (*eon manikin*), associated with allied groups. The latter was the 'hot' gate (*eon maputu*) and associated with the enemy and a threat to life.

**Expansion of the Allies**

The fundamental complementary opposition of female and male that characterised the internal structure of both the central and peripheral domains of the Nabuasa core group was also constituted in a wider federation in which Nabuasa formed the masculine superior half. Based on my research within the region of southern Amanuban as a whole, it is clear that the expansion of the main Nabuasa clan
was accompanied by an associated migration involving among others the *usif* groups that had been allowed to settle in Lasi.

In the formation of the Lasi polity, Nabuasa drew around them four *usif* groups, Isu, Telnoni, Ataupah and Tenistuan. Each was supported by their own group of four named political allies. During the second expansionary phase, Isu and Telnoni established themselves in the settlements of Taebesa and Ofu respectively. These areas lie immediately south of the mountain of Lasi. Tenistuan and Ataupah were directed (*in lek sin*) by the Nabuasa leadership to settle areas some distance away. It is quite possible that certain tensions were developing in the centre over the rights to particular subordinate name group's allegiance and agricultural tribute. The Ataupah *kanaf* with their supporters Tanu, Noislaka, Neonleku and Bosoin, travelled north and settled the area adjacent to the Baki river. Here they established a stronghold position with Ataupah and his immediate family surrounded by the *amaf* and a number of affiliated groups. Their position represented a forward defensive position for Lasi, as it looked over the extensive uninhabited grassland buffer zone between Lasi and the enemy lands (*pah musu*) further north. Ataupah remained a non-participant in warfare although he controlled his own minor *meo*. The new position offered a certain degree of independence for Ataupah although they still paid allegiance to Nabuasa and recognised their precedence within the expanded territory. This was expressed to me by members of the Ataupah group as Nabuasa's right to speak and wage war (*natoin ok am maken ok*). They accepted the Nabuasa narrative of the past and their dependent place within that perspective.

The Tenistuan *kanaf* shifted its settlement far to the west in the slopes south of the settlement of the Nabuasa, *Meo* Pae, in Polo. The new area was named Oe Kiu (lit:Tamarind water), a name which was said to have been brought with the new settlers. At this time the lines of the original four *amaf* (Tuna Tapoi Telnai Kause) had weakened and mostly died out, and in the expansion Tenistuan was accompanied by seven named groups. These were Kause mone, Kause feto, Neonbanu, Tse, Leobisa, Benu and Tasesab. The first two groups represented a split within the Kause *kanaf*
group, whereby the latter, Kause feto, traces a name group affiliation to a trunk female ancestor who remained unmarried in the same fashion as Kolo Meo feto, the narrator of the Nabuasa past.

Tenistuan divided this group into the conceptual categories of male (*mone*) and female (*feto*). The ‘male’ group included Benu and Tasesab, who functioned as meo headhunters in much the same way as Lopo and Puai in the domain of Oe Ekam. The *feto* category, which included the remaining named groups, acted as the guardians of the ‘house’ and those who cultivated the gardens for their political superior, Tenistuan. Collectively the *ama* are said to guard the enemy and cultivate the garden (*apao musu ma tof lene*). This pattern is therefore consistent with the system of classification in the wider domain.

The emergence of four territories under the authority of the four *usif* clans created a loosely federated polity of eight core subsystems: four areas under the direct control of Nabuasa, namely, Lasi, Oe Peliki, Polo and Oe Ekam; and four areas nominally under the authority of the *usif* groups who nevertheless continued, to be closely associated with the Nabuasa centre and participated in warfare as allies. This configuration was described as *mina menu* (sweet bitter) where the *usif* groups were known as the *Usi mina* (sweet lords) and the Nabuasa domains as the *Usi menu* (the bitter lords). At some point however, the two *usif* of Isu and Telnoni are said to have distanced themselves from Nabuasa and, in their conceptual place, two further subdomains were elevated to fill their places: Teas to the north of Oe Baki, and Basmuti, a mountainous region to the immediate south west of Lasi under the leadership of the *kanaf* group Nope (also called Nuban or Banamtuan). They too were conceptualised as *mina* or sweet. In this way the conceptual division was maintained, but the names changed.

The distinction *mina menu*, which provided an alternative reference for the Nabuasa controlled federation of Noebeba, is also reducible to a *feto mone* distinction. Nabuasa is said to carry the *usif*, to act as their guardians and protectors. This was the basis of their contract and so is interpreted in female/male terms. Conceptually
therefore the wider polity was understood to represent a married household in a symbolic sense. Elaboration on the basic unit of social life in Timor, the house, is one that provides a rich source of metaphor for all political and social action.

The subdivision of Teas was the last area to be formally constituted in the Nabuasa extended polity. The name group ordered to settle the area by Lini Nabuasa was Abanat. Abanat was the name taken from the *le'u* used in relation to the creation and maintenance of large herds of buffalo. Unlike the three other *mina* (sweet) areas, however, Abanat did not carry the title *Usif*. In formal speech it is said that Abanat was directed to the periphery in order to

```
Aet pilun u fani  
ma aet so' it ma solo  
onat futun suan  
bi neo lana Teas ini  
na panat Teas  
onan apao  
hue sufan  
usaip sufan  
bi nepo kotin  
ma nenu kotin
```

take the head wrap  
and the silver head comb  
to tie the house post  
at the path of Teas  
the platform of Teas  
to guard  
the flowers of the *hue* tree  
the flowers of the *usapi* tree  
at the outside fence  
and the outside boundary

This referred to Abanat firstly as a guardian of the outer territory, the fence metaphor having the sense of boundary. It also highlighted the centralist perspective of power held by Nabuasa. Abanat guarded the entrance to the ‘domain’. Secondly, Abanat protected the products derived from the flowering trees *hue* (*Eucalyptus alba*) and *usapi* (*Schleichera oleosa*), namely wild bee hives. Each year Abanat would present to Nabuasa the head of the honey and the head of the wax (*oni nakan ma nini nakan*). This is the white wax ‘head’ produced by the bees which was a lucrative trade item.

The phrase also highlights the conceptual position of Nabuasa in the polity as the ‘head’. This type of prestation was appropriate to him. Abanat, like the four *usif* of Nabuasa, was given a certain degree of independence within its area of jurisdiction. As the designated *Pah tuaf* (Lord of the earth) in Teas, Abanat had the right to govern his ‘fathers’ (*plenkun in amfini*) who acted as political supporters and who ‘fed’ their centre with ceremonial prestations. They are named in the familiar fourfold
arrangement, namely, Fallo, Nubatonis, Beti and Selan. The main point was that, although acknowledging the prior place of Nabuasa in the political heirachy, Abanat maintained control over his area. It was this relationship that is classified as a female/male alliance (*feto mone*) in respect of Nabuasa.

In the case of Basmuti the alliance was construed in marriage terms. Basmuti, to the immediate southwest of Lasi, lay within Nabuasa's control for much of the nineteenth century. However, during the period of the narrative, it is apparent that a subsidiary line of the usif Nope in Niki Niki came to power there. This fact is recognized in the formal narratives of Nabuasa.

Map 4: Expanded domain of Noeheba

According to the Nabuasa account, the area which became Basmuti was settled at his bequest by the name groups Mnao feto, Biliu, Tse and Banfatin. When one
Taeni Banamtuan arrived from Niki Niki, Nabuasa offered him the control of the mountainous area to the south-west and the political support of the four ‘fathers’ mentioned above. The ritual phrase associated with this arrangement is expressed as:

- **Mnao feto Biliu**
- **Tse ma Banfatin**
- **on a besi bo es**
- **ma tofe bo es**
- **tut as tuak ini**
- **ma tobe tuak ini**

This represents the four amaf as the cultivators and ‘servers’ to the central ruling group. The group of four kanaf was also internally differentiated into a conceptually female side (Mnao feto, Biliu) who guarded Banamtuan, and a male side (Tse, Banfatin) whose role was to defend the area and participate in headhunting and warfare. In the narrative only the two prior groups are mentioned.

The relationship between Banamtuan (Basmuti) and Nabuasa is also couched in female/male terms. This originated at the time of a peace making ceremony with the enemy domain of Sonbai. In the narrative the Sonbai allies had been defeated. In accepting defeat it was agreed to present a woman to the victorious Nabuasa group as a symbol of their peaceful intentions. The Nabuasa leader of Lasi received this woman, one bi Soeb Neno, and in turn presented her as a wife to Sik Banamtuan (Nope), the son of Taeni Banamtuan mentioned earlier. In this way Banamtuan stood in a wife-taker relationship to Nabuasa. This alliance is expressed by the term feto mone, wherein the mone (male) wife-givers are superordinate.¹⁴

As in the case of the other categorically mina allied groups or subdivisions, Basmuti maintained a degree of independence from the centre which was nevertheless conditional on their continued support in times of warfare and security threat.

**Political Integration and Warfare**

The expansion of the Lasi centre established the political hegemony of the Nabuasa group over the region. This ultimately proved to be a double edged sword. Although it added to the prestige and protective support to which the the Nabuasa
group could lay claim, it also established the pre-conditions for dissent and eventual
dissolution of the 'federated' polity through the process of delegating the power to act
to subsidiary groups. This became more evident towards the end of the nineteenth
century. In the early period, however, the various subdivisions of the domain were not
autonomous entities, but merely extensions of the centre.

In this period, Lini Nabuasa, the *meo uf* (trunk/origin meo) was the dominant
leader. In drawing prestations and tribute from a wide number of politically
subordinate groups as well as his 'younger brother lines', he came to assume both the
material and symbolic trappings of overlordship.

By all accounts Lini Nabuasa was a grossly overweight man, one whose
appetite for food was only matched by his predilection for warfare and headhunting.
Unlike his forbears he did not participate directly in headhunting raids, a function he
delegated to his *atoin amaf*, Benu, Neonane, Sopaba and Toislaka. Instead he
remained within his walled compound at Pupu, exerting his influence through the
actions of his allies and political supporters. He did not speak directly at official
meetings, but delegated that function to his *aloe hanaf*, literally he who carries the
voice.15 This functionary is said to have been selected from the members of the *atoin
amaf* families. In this dominant representation of the meo uf, conceptually it could be
said that the 'masculine' meo had taken on a more 'feminine' aspect. He was said to
'sit and sleep' inside the house (domain).

To this extent the central figure of Nabuasa appeared like the rulers of
established domains to the north and east who were 'not permitted to be active and.
not allowed to leave the precincts of the palace; it was (their) duty to remain inside'
(Schulte Nordholt 1971:200). Schulte Nordholt also points out that

In the nineteenth century the ruling dynasty was mostly called
Taeboko...Its literal meaning is "big bellied" used especially with
reference to a pregnant woman. As the ruler is "feminine" (*feto*), the
name Taeboko is a symbol of fertility16. (1971:200).

In other words, Nabuasa, commensurate with his self appointed status of *Usif*
(lord) had come to symbolize the domain to which he laid claim. A domain which,
conceptually, remained faithful to persistent themes in Atoin meto statecraft. Symbolically, Lini Nabuasa took on many of the trappings of a female ritual centre thereby emphasising the centrality and superordination of his own position. At the same time he remained the leader of a meo polity, a pre-eminently masculine authority within the wider polity. This conceptual ambiguity of the central authority represents, I believe, a significant aspect of the desire for political legitimation by the Nabuasa clan. One argument might go as follows. The centre is ultimately female in Atoin meto cultural terms, and the meo is pre-eminently male. Hence in order to achieve legitimacy as a powerful centre in customary terms the Meo uf Nabuasa needed to appear conceptually female in a certain symbolic sense. The important issue here, however, was context. The categorising of Nabuasa as male or female in symbolic terms was very much dependent on the relative perspective and situation in question. The ability of the Nabuasa groups to manipulate the symbolic order of the polity may well have been an important factor in their success.¹⁷

These symbolic manifestations of power were supported by an order of integration which enabled the central area of Lasi to maintain control over outlying areas. There were two key aspects to this control. Firstly, Nabuasa maintained ultimate executive control over the land and the utilization rights to land resources. This control was not synonymous with ownership, but referred to the authority or the right to determine who could settle and cultivate particular tracts of forest. The expansion of the territory under Nabuasa control was a major result of the intractable warfare of the nineteenth century. However, control over land was only really meaningful in terms of the people who could utilize it and recognize Nabuasa as their benefactor. This seems to have been the rationale underlying the tacit encouragement of an immigration and resettlement of refugee groups from outside the domain. In this way the Nabuasa leadership maintained control over what was described as their silver and gold (muti ma natu), a reference to the people who sought land and settlement rights within the polity in return for continued political support.

This was one of the important consequences of the Nabuasa transition towards ‘independence’ from the Usif Nope in Niki Niki. The Nabuasa clan in effect
expropriated from the central authority of Amanuban the rights to allocate land to newcomers. In discussions with name group heads within the present day region of Southern Amanuban, resident groups still assign precedence to Nabuasa in matters of land rights. It was Nabuasa who directed their own ancestors to settle particular localities. This process was involved in the selection of the various *atoin amaf* for the sub-divisions, but it was also the case for all newcomer groups seeking a place to settle.

In receiving the rights to settle from the Nabuasa leader immigrant groups took on the responsibility for guardianship of that area. In so doing they claimed the status of *kua tuaf* (hamlet masters) under the general authority of the *pah tuaf* of the respective territories. Having initially sought permission from the *pah tuaf* all subsequent settlers into that area achieved rights of residence from the respective *kua tuaf*, usually through marriage into the community. Newcomers acknowledged the precedence of settlement by their wife-givers and thereby received rights to cultivate designated areas of land. Land claims in the region may therefore be regarded as ‘nested’ rights, the claims of each subsequent group resting on those that preceded it. The *Meo uf* Nabuasa of Lasi, in this period, was at the apex of this structure of precedence and all groups under its jurisdiction recognized this precedence and continued to ‘eat’ from the land on a usufructory basis.

In this way then, the central Nabuasa group in Lasi was able to utilize a form of indigenous patronage to settle successfully outlying and newly conquered areas. At the same time Nabuasa maintained a political supervision over the expanded domain through the management of a more or less continuous flow of tribute from the periphery to the centre.

A second key aspect of Nabuasa authority was control over ritual, especially the rituals of warfare, but also to a lesser extent over name group rituals. All name group rituals centred upon the *uem le’u nono* (the fertility cult house). Rituals associated with marriage and agriculture especially were a focus for collective activities at these centres. When the expansion of groups occurred from the Lasi
stronghold it was often the case that only part of any name group would move, leaving the classificatorily ‘elder’ brother part in Lasi.\textsuperscript{18} In the early years the new groups, including the Nabuasa younger brother clan segments, did not erect new cult houses in the frontier areas and were therefore required to return regularly to Lasi to participate in their life cycle group rituals. The central Nabuasa area was for many, therefore, both a political and spiritual source. This feature contributed to political cohesion in this turbulent period.

Of greater importance in this regard, however, was Nabuasa’s ritual control over warfare and headhunting matters. The \textit{le’u musu} was considered of vital importance to the success of any particular military exercise. In the early expansionary period the Nabuasa group in Lasi continued to prevail with this power. All subsidiary groups within the federated polity fought wars and skirmishes under the protective cover of this ‘hostility’ power. This is not to say that all feuding between such groups as the Sonbai peoples to the north or allies of the \textit{Usif} Nope in the east was undertaken with Nabuasa’s expressed authority. Ongoing border disputes and theft of buffaloes between neighbouring enemy groups could continue unresolved for years. However, in formally constituted periods of hostility where headhunting came to the forefront, to act without the protective cover of the Nabuasa \textit{le’u musu} would have been folly.

Warfare was initiated for a great number of reasons. Hostilities were undertaken as much in revenge for previous atrocities as to subdue recalcitrant neighbouring groups who had committed thefts, insults and other alleged misdeeds. The cause of Nabuasa’s ongoing hostilities with the \textit{Usif} Nope of Niki Niki was based on their refusal to acknowledge Nope’s political superiority and provide tribute to that centre. It is also apparent that behind many of the Nabuasa exploits was the desire to expand the territory to which they could claim overlordship. This included the people who resided within in it.

During this period of intense feuding in the south-west the Nabuasa centre came to control an extensive area of land. This was mainly achieved through small scale raiding forays into enemy territory rather than large scale warfare. The principle
objectives were to capture human heads and loot enemy strongholds, thereby subduing the people and causing them to retreat. Informants report wars with the domains of Tefnai and Benu to the north-west, raids against Amfoan and Takain in the far north, and hostilities towards Oe Menu, west of the Mina river in the domain of Amabi. In addition Middelkoop reports skirmishes against the people of Nai Faot, a prominent clan who remained allied to Nope (1963:177) and against Mollo (1963:215). Map 5 illustrates the approximate extent of these incursions by the Nabuasa group from their base in the expanded polity of Noebeba.

Due to the continuing hostilities, the Nabuasa domain must have remained on a war footing for extended periods and these hostilities undoubtedly preoccupied the time of many able bodied men. In part, the logistics of this exercise was made possible by the increasing number of new settlers who sought protection under the authority of the Nabuasa rule. In return for safe refuge they reciprocated with their allegiance and support to the central authority.

Map 5 Extent of Raiding by Nabuasa (nineteenth century)
In Atoin meto terms, however, success in warfare required more than just numbers. Ritual power was essential to the cause, and the protective power of the *le'u musu* controlled by the Nabuasa centre was a key aspect in the success of the polity. As an example of an actual headhunting raid where the *le'u musu* was invoked, I recorded the following commentary from a Nabuasa man, the present day custodian of the Nabuasa *le'u musu*.20

Formerly if my ancestors wished to attack a fort, a cannon would be tied in place in the direction of the house of the person to be executed...Calling the younger brothers, burning and noise... The younger brothers would catch their horses, and arrive at night... Arriving here [Lasi] and travelling to fight, assembling and going to attack Oe menu Takain...Arriving there, a wide path like here [Lasi], a trap was laid... while my ancestor’s younger brothers came behind...The residents slept soundly... They [the raiders] set fire to all the houses. Then they stood at the house gate, the enemy’s house and they were slaughtered completely...All the men were killed...the women captured and held...then, when they arose, the women were left behind. They carried off the young female children... taking four human heads from Oe Menu, which were carried to the river (near Lasi) where the brains were removed properly... then raised to dry [so that] clinging skin did not rot [and] roasted for up to one week with fine dry wood... Whoever wished to become *meo* was given the head and went outside the settlement and hid with the head each night making fire. When 10 men were ready to *nabuk* [they] entered the hamlet at one time ...Having attained *meohood* in this way [and] been made cool, they could re-enter [the community]. Each head from wheresoever was hung facing the direction of its land.

The story highlights a number of aspects of headhunting which characterised Atoin meto beliefs concerning the practice.21 In the account of the raid, the use of the muzzle loaded cannon (*ken uf* lit. trunk gun) was the primary method for informing the allies of the intention to conduct warfare. The noise of the cannon was compared to Nabuasa’s voice, said to carry throughout the domain of Noebeba. The right to speak is an important marker of rank and status and the implication is that Nabuasa’s voice held authority to demand allegiance and response from his political subordinates. There is no contradiction in this case with the earlier comments regarding the central Nabuasa ruler as one who was silent and only sat and slept. The point is that his authority to speak was expressed through delegation.
It is also recorded that the great Meo himself would select the participants for the hostilities to follow among those who assembled in the Lasi complex. They were provided with ammunition: *pius metan ma nen koa* (*pius metan*: the black cloth used to pack the guns, *koa*: a bamboo cylinder containing the precise amount of gunpowder required for one shot of the gun).

The chosen headhunters travelled under the protective spell of the Nabuasa *le'u musu*, a protective cover which was said to shade the participants providing them with invulnerability against attack and the ability to disorient the enemy. Thus, during the raid mentioned above, use was made of the *le'u* charged plants carried by the men to 'blow' the material in the direction of the enemy camp, thereby making them unaware of the approaching danger.22

The invocation of the *le'u musu* created a context of ritual heat. Both the participants and their community become 'heated' by these forces in their objective of seeking revenge or justice. That is why they and the severed heads they brought back had to be be ritually 'cooled' upon return. The 'heat' of their activity was inherently dangerous as it placed them and their community in touch with the spiritual influence of the hidden world.

In terms of political integration, it was the guardianship of these spirit forces and the symbolic control of prosperity through victory that provided the Nabuasa centre with the authority to command respect and allegiance from subordinate groups. The undoubted success they achieved increased the prestige accorded to the centre and added to the recognition that the *kanaf* of Nabuasa had a great name or reputation (*kana naek*) in the region.

Headhunting also served a variety of socio-economic goals. One of the important secondary functions was as a rite of passage for young men seeking to achieve the status of *meo* (headhunter). This was a prestigious marker of masculinity, strength and prowess, one which probably improved the chances for a young man of forming an advantageous marriage alliance.23

A further important factor in the headhunting culture was the opportunities it offered for accruing wealth, in the form of land, valuables and human slaves,
plundered from the enemy communities. Headhunting not only served to punish the enemy and overpower their own ritual protection; it presented opportunities for material gain through treachery.

Dissolution and Reincorporation within Amanuban

The narrator of the Nabuasa past, Kolo Meo feto, completed his account at the culmination of the second expansion of the Nabuasa polity of Noebeba. I have suggested that this represents the conceptual high point of the domain’s unity and coherence. Precisely when this conceptual unity of the federation began to break down is uncertain. However, it is clear that by the turn of the twentieth century, and especially following the Dutch intervention in the territory in 1906, the Nabuasa threat to the authority of the traditional central ruler of Amanuban was significantly weakened and any unified internal coherence within the emergent domain began to dissolve. When the Dutch soldiers (*kaesmuti*, lit. white foreigners) entered the region of Lasi to seek formal subjugation and enforce the *pax Nederlandica*, Safe Nabuasa, the eldest son of Lini Nabuasa, and by then the *Meo uf*, raised the white flag of Nabuasa and submitted without resistance. From that point, the Nabuasa clan and their allies in the various subdivisions of the region acknowledged both the legitimate authority of the Dutch administrative forces, and the reinstatement and reinforcement of Nope as Raja and the rightful ruler of all Amanuban. As a consequence the central Nabuasa domain of Lasi lost much of its dominance over the subordinate groups within Noebeba.

There were at least two possible reasons why this occurred with little resistance. Firstly, the presence of the Dutch military forces and the sanctions they could enforce through their superior weaponry significantly reduced the prevalence of headhunting and warfare in the interior. This meant that, over time, the uniting authority of the central Nabuasa control of the rituals of war, the *le’u musu*, weakened, and the initiation of hostilities devolved to the separate sub-divisions. One example of this was the outbreak of fighting between the populations of Oe Kiu under Tenistuan
and those of Polo under the Meo Pae Nabuasa. According to informants in Oe Kiu, a
dispute over land on the border between the two domains escalated into mutual
headhunting and resulted in the intervention of a contingent of Dutch forces to subdue
the feuding sides. The feud was compounded when a woman from Oe Kiu who had
married a Nabuasa man from Polo and had subsequently died in childbirth was
suspected of having been poisoned. Since that time the borders between the two areas
have remained firmly fixed and land is not shared between the two territories. A
second instance which expressed the relative independence of the peripheral areas was
the warfare that broke out between the Meo Besi Bota Nabuasa (Oe Ekam) and people
under the authority of the clan Faot, who had remained allied to the central ruler Nope
and had previously fought against the people of Noebeba (see Middelkoop 1963:177).
These hostilities also developed over issues of land along the Meto river to the west of
Oe Ekam. According to informants this fighting did not result in headhunting,
although many people were reportedly scalped (lef nakfunu). This warfare was
undertaken independently of the central Nabuasa settlements in Lasi and indicated a
degree of autonomy from that centre. Ultimately, the cessation of headhunting and
tribal warfare in the interior by the 1920s completely undermined the ritual basis for
the Nabuasa authority. In Atoin meto terms, 'the land had become woman' (pah
ansain bife) and ritually cool, which left the meo Nabuasa, the atoin makenat (man of
war) and custodian of the war ritual (le'u musu) without a defined role in traditional
terms. In other words, the Nabuasa clan lost much of its symbolic authority to
command allegiance and the political will to maintain an autonomous position.

A second important factor of Dutch intervention was that, in administrative
terms, each of the subdistricts that made up the federated Nabuasa polity was
considered equivalent in status and each was granted the position of Temukung besar,
under the Fettor Boi Isu (himself a descendant of the Usif Isu who had sought
protection under Nabuasa in the past). Each Temukung besar was then required to
provide taxes and tribute to the central ruler Raja Nope in Niki Niki. This undoubtedly
helped to break down the status differences between the various areas and the
precedence of the Nabuasa centre, while at the same time it increased the relative authority of the hereditary leaders in each of the subterritories. The ensuing history of southern Amanuban during the twentieth century has reflected the gradual erosion of Nabuasa influence within the region. The collective hegemonic power of the Nabuasa clan has dissipated under the progressive differentiation of the former Temukung into smaller, administratively self-contained village structures controlled by the apparatus of the central Indonesian Government.

In the contemporary environment an indigenous reflection of the decline of the power of the Meo Nabuasa is expressed in the widespread notion that the Nabuasa clan is hindered by their association with the barbarism of the past and the le'u musu cult. The fact that members of the Nabuasa kanaf continue to use their le'u name (kan le'u) is thought by many Christian people to impede their capacity to attain higher political office or positions of influence under the present government. One man explained this to me by suggesting that the 'blood of those who were murdered still claims the descendent of Nabuasa'. Thus informants say that by continuing to use the old name, Nabuasa descendants are still tied to the 'darkness' of the past. A similar kind of explanation was offered to me by a young Nabuasa man himself, who said that he had met with financial and personal difficulties which had forced him to abandon school. This he attributed to the wrongdoings associated with his le'u name. This general idea was also expressed in the 'cooling' ceremony conducted by the former Temukung Kolo Meo feto and his son at a small school in 1986. Prayers and a communal feast were enacted at the site in the western part of Lasi, which formed part of the old gateway (eno hain: foot gate) guarded by the kanaf group Toislaka. It was considered that an increase in illness among the children may have been linked to the lingering malevolent forces associated with headhunting at this site in the past.

Thus in these and other ways the overt standing and influence of the Nabuasa clan in the region is progressively in decline under the transformations of the twentieth century. However this should not be taken to mean that, in the contemporary context, the narrative of the past and the pattern of the former political order have become
merely the mythologised remnants of an idealised past and the privileged view of a handful of old men.

On the contrary, I would argue that the Nabuasa knowledge of the past, and that of their allies, continues to provide a legitimating context for contemporary social organisation and a variety of enduring themes of political and cultural order in southern Amanuban. While it is undeniable that far reaching change has occurred, in many respects the people of southern Amanuban are still dependent on the specific order of the past detailed in the above reconstruction.

There are two general ways in which this position can be discerned. In the first place, the indigenous political order of the past, although clearly one that can only be fully articulated by a restricted number of individuals, is nevertheless one that is adhered to in its general outline by the majority of the present population. Most individuals, for example, understand and can express the schematic outline of the traditional political structure of the territories in the form of the major name groups which surrounded each political centre. Beyond this they tend to defer to specialist ‘narrators of the past’ who are the custodians of more detailed knowledge of the former political system. Nevertheless, it is the belief in this knowledge and the order it presents that provides a continuing orientation for the existing pattern and development of contemporary settlement organisation. In essence I argue that one’s place or location, and the complex of claims held by the collectivity of any name group in the territory (now village), is legitimated through an order of what I term precedence (relative social position), which extends from the source groups who first laid claim to the territory to more recent immigrants. The ultimate source of claim is widely acknowledged to be Nabuasa and it is this enduring legacy of the past and the implications which follow from it that continues to underpin the social order in contemporary southern Amanuban. This theme is examined in detail in the following chapter. At this point it is sufficient to note that a strong continuity exists in the dominance of the Nabuasa kanaf, and other former allied groups, at the level of formal village authority structures. This can be seen in the data in table 2 which shows the
official headmen appointed to the position of *Temukung besar* in 1908 (data from Venema 1916) and the comparable positions of village headmen for the same areas in 1985.

Table 2: Headmen in southern Amanuban, past and present

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Temukung (1908)</th>
<th>Village Headmen (1985/6)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lasi</td>
<td>Safe Nabuasa</td>
<td>J Nabuasa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oe Peliki</td>
<td>Sane Nabuasa</td>
<td>D Nabuasa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oe Ekam</td>
<td>Bota Nabuasa</td>
<td>F Nabuasa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Polo</td>
<td>Suni Nabuasa</td>
<td>L Nabuasa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oe Baki</td>
<td>Seo Ataupah</td>
<td>Y Ataupah</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teas</td>
<td>Soe Selan 25</td>
<td>- Selan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oe Kiu</td>
<td>Tael Tenis</td>
<td>- Tenis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basmuti</td>
<td>Kolo Nuban</td>
<td>- Nuban/Nope</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is clear that despite the creation of a nominally democratic process for the election of village officials, the traditionally influential name groups in the respective areas have maintained their positions of centrality and dominance in the village structures. One of the persistent explanations I encountered for this maintenance of power at the local administrative level was that, as the traditional leaders of the territories, these name groups simply had the right to hold the position of village headmen. Moreover these rights were also thought to be sanctioned to the extent that individuals who attained the position without the support of the more traditionally central groups, would suffer misfortune. One example offered to me was that of the former village headman of Desa Polo, from the name group Biaf, who after several years in office became chronically ill and eventually relinquished his position to the former Nabuasa headman who currently holds the office. A number of men from the Nabuasa *kanaf* argued with conviction that this was confirmation of as the fact that, as one man put it, ‘all people eat from Nabuasa, and therefore Nabuasa should be positioned at the head’.

The second significant feature which unites past and present is the systematic application of a series of symbolic and metaphorical themes. These are reproduced in the binary and tripartite forms of complementary oppositions, and provide the
meaning structure to social forms. In the reconstruction of the political order expressed within the narrative form, it is apparent that a number of dual symbolic classificatory schemes underpin the conceptual framework of the formation. These are applied systematically in response to the requirements of the shifting circumstances of the period. In the two stage expansionary process that I have outlined the political and religious structures of order suggest that we are dealing with an indigenous model of society. It was a model which was both dynamic and emergent and one that relied heavily on the application of a limited number of dual concepts of complementary opposition to generate order in the flux of shifting alliances and political positions of the time.
CHAPTER SEVEN

COMMUNITY AND THE SOCIAL ORDER

Introduction

Social and economic life among rural Atoin meto populations is played out for the most part in the restricted world of hamlet and household. The hamlet (kuan) represents the primary and traditional unit of localised socio-political organisation. Formerly, the expansion and contraction of Atoin meto political domains depended on the fluctuating allegiance of large numbers of hamlet settlements. Today, the kuan still forms the basic social unit within the modern village (Desa), often classified administratively as a Rukun Tetangga (RT). Villages (Desa) are composed of clusters of dispersed hamlet settlements, which are linked, often rather tenuously, under the administrative umbrella of village government. Relations between separate hamlets extend across village boundaries and, depending upon historical factors, residents of one kuan may maintain stronger links with more distant hamlets than those in the immediate vicinity.

The kuan can be defined as a localised settlement composed of closely interrelated households (ume). The most common pattern of household formation is one comprising parents and their unmarried children. This is the minimal and core unit of social organisation in West Timor. In principle, a kuan could be defined as one household which constitutes a single discrete settlement. Practically, however, hamlet settlements may range up to 40 households or more. Larger settlements are a relatively modern feature which reflects the efforts on the part of Dutch colonial and later Indonesian government officials towards the consolidation of the dispersed settlement patterns into concentrated communities. In this process several hamlets may be grouped together under one administrative unit. Usually, however, the social boundaries which define them remain strongly demarcated.
Within the hamlet, households are linked together into a limited number of name groups (*kanaf*). All members of these groups share the same name which is derived predominantly through males from an apical or 'trunk' ancestor. In Amanuban, these groups tend to be dispersed over large areas and may or may not maintain ties with other members of the same *kanaf*. This is dependent on historical and geographical considerations. Name groups within the hamlet are therefore segments of wider, loosely federated kin affiliations or clans. They interact with other name groups through the mediation of affinal alliances which tend to extend outside the hamlet to neighbouring settlements and to areas many kilometres away. Interaction both within the community and within the wider social context is thus ordered and expressed through a network of kinship ties. It is through these intermeshing ties of agnation and affinity that differentiation emerges between individuals and groups within the community. Individual houses within the hamlet stand in relationships of social inequality or asymmetry with other houses. Relations of precedence emerge in the pattern of settlement formation and development of the hamlet over time. The object of this chapter is to articulate the systems of precedence which emerge and are reproduced within the hamlet. The themes presented in the discussion are the distilled conclusions drawn, primarily, from an examination of four case study settlements within the region of southern Amanuban. Each case study is discussed in detail in appendix A. Here, I will only refer to specific examples from the settlement studies. The four settlements represent different stages in the development cycle of a community. As such, they reveal a number of important variations on the theme of place and precedence as it occurs in the region. They were also selected for their association with the former political domain centred upon the Nabuasa clan. The origins of each settlement are intricately bound up with the enduring legacy of the Nabuasa past. Thus, the first hamlet, Oe le'u, in the village of Olais, represents the continuing source settlement of the central Nabuasa group *Meo uf*. Oe le'u incorporates the former stronghold site of Pupu tunan. The second example is the settlement of Banu in the village of Oe Baki. Banu is the central hamlet for the *kanaf*
group Ataupah which was acknowledged as one of the Usif groups which surrounded the Meo Naek Nabuasa in Lasi and later expanded into the area known as Oe Baki. Oe kabetesak, the third case study hamlet, is located in Mio village (formerly part of Oe Ekam), and is dominated by the *kanaf* group Puai. This name group formed one of the principle *atoin amaf* for the Nabuasa authority, Meo Besi. This study offers an example of community expansion through hamlet fission. Finally, the hamlet of Faut Bena, also in Desa Mio, represents an immigrant group who have settled in the region in recent years. Their situation might be described as one of place without precedence, to the extent that they cannot claim a prior relation with the more central political authorities. In the discussion that follows I present a somewhat idealised account of the processes of *kuan* formation and development. I seek to express some of the key underlying principles of social organisation found throughout southern Amanuban.

**The Basis of Community**

Historically, the process of establishing new hamlets and settlement areas in the region of southern Amanuban followed a pattern which was universally similar. This is a process of continuing westward migration, sometimes termed 'spontaneous migration', which continues to be expressed in the modern context with the tacit acknowledgement of the government administration that overlays traditional practice. I am not referring here to the compulsory resettlement programmes (*transmigrasi lokal*) which operate under government directive.

The first family or group to settle any particular locality (in living memory) claims authority over the surrounding forest lands. They assume the rights to cultivate the land and utilize its products. Historically, the right to settle and claim land resources derived from the expressed permission or directive of the political overlord in the wider region. In south-west Amanuban this tended to be either the Nabuasa clan head in his capacity as *pah tuaf* (Lord of the earth) or, during the twentieth century, Pae Nope, the raja of Amanuban. The settler's claims therefore were dependent on the continuing good will of these more powerful superiors. Today, new settlers will seek
permission to settle from the respective village headmen (Kepala Desa) who will present their request for land rights to the existing hamlet leaders and custodians of arable land in the village. Structurally, the process whereby immigrant groups are incorporated into contemporary society is very similar to the older pattern.

In settling an uninhabited area, the immigrant group took the title of kua tuaf or hamlet master. The oldest male member of the group becomes the effective headman of the hamlet and the senior authority over matters affecting the group and the surrounding territory. Further development of the new community occurs through natural increase and immigration.

The Atoin meto of southern Amanuban maintain an ideology which favours a strategy of reckoning name group affiliation through males combined with virilocal residence. They conceive of the name group in a botanical idiom whereby the founding ancestor is considered the trunk (uf) and his descendants are the small branches (tlaef), the tips (tunaf), or the flowers (sufan). The name group is therefore considered as a tree (hau uf mese-one tree trunk) in which there is an unbroken and organic link to the ancestral ‘trunk’ father. Trunk and tip (uf ma tunaf) stands as a primary metaphor for the reproduction of human life and the inherent unity of the ancestors and their offspring, the past and present. Great stress tends to be laid on the standing of the kanaf group name in the community and the wider social context. To bring one’s name into disrepute reflects badly upon the group as a whole.

Due to the importance attached to this social ideology, ideally, sons of the hamlet founder seek to bring their wives into the community to live. They have automatic access to land in the area while their children from the marriage, as members of their father’s name group, support the dominance of the kua tuaf group in the hamlet. Thus, one form of the kuan in southern Amanuban is a cluster of co-resident agnatic kin whose wives have married into the community. For many reasons, however, this ideal is not always attained and sons of the kanaf may well live uxorilocally for varying lengths of time. They maintain rights in the settlement of their father, particularly in the form of secondary forest land (mnuke) and productive tree
crops (*poan*), but their main affiliation is to their wife’s settlement and kin. Nevertheless, as a conventional cultural principle, and one that is frequently borne out in practice, it is widely accepted that women should move to their husband’s house and hamlet upon marriage.

Over time, new settlers are incorporated into the community. This may arise through the migration of more distantly related agnatic kinsmen or affinal relatives of the group, who utilise existing affiliations in order to take advantage of cropping or grazing land around the settlement. These same considerations may also draw unrelated outsiders into the area seeking settlement rights. They are referred to as wandering people (*atoin anao amnemat*), or stranger eyed people (*atoin mata teme*). Usually the clearest strategy and most common process for outsiders to integrate within the community is through marriage - specifically, through marriage with the women of the *kua tuaf* name group. In-marrying men are structurally subordinated to the authority of the *kua tuaf* and are obliged to give assistance and abide by their decisions. As wife-takers they are then collectively termed the ‘marrying people’ (*atoin asaot*) in opposition to the *kua tuaf* group.

In return for their political allegiance, the *atoin asaot* are able to gain access to forest and cropping land, nominally under the guardianship of the leading members of the *kua tuaf* group. There are no formal obligations attached to the usufruct rights to land and, over time, the claims may be institutionalised and come to be inherited by the sons of the in-marrying affines. At the same time in-marrying affines must continue to acknowledge the precedence, both temporal (as first settlers) and social (as wife-givers) of their *kua tuaf* name group in the settlement. It is said that they ‘eat’ from the land of their wife-givers. Their political position within the hamlet therefore is always a secondary one, although one that is not without influence. In time, the principal affines become advisors and decision makers with the *kua tuaf* group over matters affecting the settlement. They become known as the ‘fathers’ (*amnasi*) to the central name group and represent the authoritative speakers for their respective kin or name-group segments.
As the hamlet develops further, the various atoin asaot houses become in turn, wife-givers to new migrant men who settle in the hamlet with the permission of the kua tuaf group. The new settlers are then allied primarily, not with the kua tuaf, but with one of the atoin asaot houses. They may also utilize land controlled by the atoin asaot who claim those rights as part of their initial allotment from the kua tuaf group. The result is that factional alliances emerge in the hamlet which are internally ranked. As a general principle, the more recent the settler, the more subordinate his position in the social order. One measure of this process is that land rights in the hamlet are not clearly owned in the western sense. Rather they are nested in prior claims which have devolved from a higher authority. This is particularly the case for later settlers in a community who may only cultivate land by requesting the temporary usufruct right from one of the prior settler groups. While there is a tacit understanding that all households in the hamlet must be offered areas for cultivation and there are rarely formal obligations attached to these rights, the gift of land right implies a debt and later reciprocity in some form. Frequently, this is expressed through voluntary gifts of harvest produce or labour assistance in the food gardens of the senior land holder.

As the kua tuaf group by definition control the largest areas of land, it follows that they are able to subordinate greater numbers of people who ‘eat’ off their land. This in turn creates generalised relations of indebtedness to the kua tuaf and enables them to draw upon a wide network of human labour resources. To deny or reject the prior right of an earlier claimant is believed to open the possibility of supernatural sanction against the transgressor, not to mention the likelihood of strong censure or dispute by an opposing claimant. Disputes over land and the right to cultivate particular areas can become fertile grounds for conflict and discord, both within and between hamlet communities. Appendix A.2 offers an example of conflict within the hamlet.

In summary, within the hamlet a precedence emerges between the individual houses and the name groups that compose its population. In this sequential ordering, at the core is the founding group or its leading descendants. A hamlet can only
effectively have one *kua tuaf* group as a central authority. Within the *kua tuaf* group individual households may be differentiated into several or more lines. Typically, the leading house of the *kua tuaf* group is the eldest sibling of the eldest son of the founder. This line is classificatorily elder (*tataf*) in relation to younger sibling lines (*olif*). Thus, a man may be younger in years than another kinsman within the *kanaf* group, but still be accorded a higher seniority because in classificatory terms, he belongs to the ‘elder’ sibling descent line. The senior line traditionally inherits custodianship of the collective wealth of the *kanaf*. Disputes within the *kua tuaf* group may arise because of antagonism between households of elder and younger lines. In practice, decisions within the *kua tuaf kanaf* are usually arrived at by consensus between the older men of both elder and brother lines (see the study of *Oe kabesak*-Appendix A.3). Below this level are the households and name group segments which have married into the hamlet. They are loosely ranked according to the sequence of their marriages. The leader of each of these *atoin asaot* groups has direct authority over their children and the men who marry their daughters and granddaughters. Thus any one hamlet may have a number of named houses which make up the settlement. Most of these, however, have little independent authority or, as the Atoin meto might express it, only a small voice in the community. The authority to speak represents one of the key measures of status. Precedence then is fixed and ordered to a degree through the process or sequence of settlement. The cultural terms which define this pattern of precedence are those of earlier (*nahun*) and later (*namuni*), elder/younger, and as we shall see, male and female.

These terms of categorical asymmetry, however, are relative, not absolute and because of this, status within the broad terms of precedence of the hamlet is in some measure negotiable. There is always the possibility for manipulating the orientation of reciprocity and obligation and thereby improving one’s nominal standing within the ranking of the hamlet. Conceptually, this possibility is always present in the nature of what Fox has described as the recursive complementarity of the paired categories; that is to say, the way in which they may be applied successively in various contexts and
levels of signification (1983:21). This feature is nowhere more clearly seen than in the realm of marriage which represents the very medium of Atoin meto social relations and lies at the heart of the Atoni cultural rule of social asymmetry or precedence.

Marriage Alliance

Marriage, and by inference the new life that stems from it, forms the basis for the reproduction of the kanaf group and therefore the community. Marriage and, by definition, the alliance that is created between two name groups is a cultural imperative in Timor. Marriage alliance, however, requires a compromise. The convention of name group exogamy means that one may not marry another person who has the same name. This is tantamount to marrying one’s actual or classificatory sister, which amounts to incest. It is necessary, therefore, to exchange marriage partners with other name groups. In other words, the name group must lose its daughters and sisters in order to receive the women of other groups. This echoes Dumont’s observation of similar systems in India: there can be no kin without alliance and no alliance without kin (1953:37). In following this precept of marriage, the Atoin meto name group becomes both a wife-taker and wife-giver to other groups. This is a relationship of social unequals. Wife-givers in a real sense are the life-givers to their affines and therefore socially superior. This is expressed with the term en amahonit (mothers [and] fathers of life). Atoin meto deal with this cultural fact of life in a number of ways.

The distinction between wife-givers and wife-takers is one which pervades Atoin meto social life, encoding within it one of the key complementary oppositions of society.4 Wife-givers are categorically ‘male people’ (atoin amonet). They maintain a higher social status vis-à-vis their wife-takers who are classificatorily ‘female people’ (atoin amafet). Marriage is often described as lais mafet ma monet (the matter of female and male) which is a shorthand description for the opposing sets of affines. In this conventional symbolic classification, male (mone) is accorded a higher status than female (feto).
This classification of groups into male and female expresses the asymmetrical complementarity of the alliance relationship. At any one point in time all individuals are located within sets of ‘male’ and ‘female’ relationships with other groups. That is to say, all people recognize their immediate wife-givers on one hand and their wife-takers on the other. The conduct of social relations is carried out within this frame of orientation.

In Atoin meto kin terminology there are two principle pairs of reciprocal categories for the classification of affines in southern Amanuban. The first are the preceding generation who are called babaf. People may distinguish between babfeto (female) and babmone (male) affines. This terminology applies to both bride-taking and bride-giving groups. Hence, one’s mother’s brother and his wife as well as one’s father’s sister and her husband, are referred to as babaf. However, this classification includes all other people who trace a marriage alliance to the group and claim babaf status to ego. In the proximate younger generation, affines are termed nanef (a man’s sister’s daughter/ womans brother’s daughter) and moen feu (man’s sister’s son/ woman’s brother’s son). Where there has been no prior marriage between two families, a young man or woman who marries into the group will automatically be termed moen feu or nanef by affines of the preceding generation.

The second main reciprocal category are affines who belong to the same generation. They refer to each other as baef and also distinguish on the basis of gender; hence baefeto refers to a female cross-cousin and its counterpart, baemone, a male cross-cousin.

The logic of this type of kin terminology is that it is permissible, indeed prescribed, to marry either a matrilateral or patrilateral cross-cousin. There are no marriage categories other than baef. This notion is also expressed through the classification of younger generation affines as moen feu (lit: new husband) and nanef (one who is taken). Parallel cousins (FBD, MZD) are classified as sisters (fetof) and brothers (nauf); hence marriage is forbidden as incestuous (tama sna’o,lit. to enter same lontar palm fruit).
Figure 7: Summary of kin categories in southern Amanuban.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>beif</td>
<td>grandmother/ ancestress:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>naif</td>
<td>grandfather/ ancestor</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Agnates**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>amaf</td>
<td>F, FB, FFBS, males of kanaf in preceding generation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>enaf</td>
<td>M,MZ, FBW, female members of the kanaf married in.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ana</td>
<td>all members of the kanaf in lower generation (an mone: son, an feto: daughter).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>olif</td>
<td>younger brother used by elder brother and all male parallel cousins, younger sister used by elder sister and all female parallel cousins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tataf</td>
<td>elder brother, used by younger brother and all male parallel cousins elder sister, used by younger sister and all female parallel cousins.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nauf</td>
<td>brother (term used by sister) - Z, MZS, FBS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fetof</td>
<td>sister (term used by brother) - B, MZD, FBD</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Affines**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>mone-fe</td>
<td>husband and wife</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>babaf</td>
<td>MB, MBW, FZ, FZH, and all male member of mother’s kanaf in her generation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nanef</td>
<td>ZD (m.s), BD (w.s), and all married in women of the younger generation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>moen feu</td>
<td>ZS (m.s), BS (w.s), and all men who marry woman of the kanaf and belong to a younger generation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>baef</td>
<td>afffine of the same generation (baefeto = female)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>upuf</td>
<td>grandchild (usually not differentiated by gender or affinity)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In describing the reasons behind cultural proscriptions against fetof/nauf (brother/ sister) marriages, it is commonly explained that the children of two brothers share the same blood (nah mese) and the same flesh (nesa mese), which should not be intermingled. In these terms, blood is associated with the reproduction of the kanaf and is borne by agnation; or as it was expressed to me, ‘the blood goes with the name’ (nah in nao nok kanan). I note that this explanation is not an adequate one to explain the cultural prohibition on the marriage of the children of two sisters. According to the notion that blood follows the name, the children of two sisters would not share the same flesh and blood because they carry different names, the names of their fathers. I am unable to explain this incongruence, and can only speculate that in this case the flesh and blood association is simply transferred to these individuals because they are
classified as brother and sister, the point being that the emphasis here is on the name association rather than on blood and flesh.

Disapproval of fetofi nauf marriages is particularly strong when the parents are biological, rather than merely classificatory, brothers or sisters. Such a marriage union constitutes a disregard for the correct order of marriage and is believed to threaten the health and lives of the newly married couple or their future children. In the case study of Faut Bena (Appendix A.4) such a marriage is revealed as an exception to this widely practiced cultural rule.

The children of real or classificatory brother and sister, on the other hand, are favoured partners, a feature prescribed within the kin terminology system. This is illustrated below in diagrammatic form.

Figure 8: Prescribed marriage categories

\[
\begin{align*}
C &= A \\
A1 &= B \\
CA &= A1B
\end{align*}
\]

The children of the marriages of C and A, and A1 and B are prescribed marriage partners where (A) and (A1) are brother and sister. In classificatory terms, the female and male cross-cousins refer to each other as fe lanan (path of the wife) and moen lanan (path of the husband) respectively. Should they marry they refer to each other as fe (wife) and mone (husband) and all other cross-cousins revert to the category of baef.

The notion of marriage as a path (lanan) clearly expresses the cultural character of Atoni meto alliance. To marry is to open a path of alliance between another group. If there is no path, there is no formal relationship. The ‘path’ is a polysemic metaphor within social life and is constantly invoked to express notions of sociality and continuity. That marriage is indeed a path, is constantly reconfirmed by
the ongoing reciprocal obligations which bind the two groups and result in a continuing movement of people and goods between the allied households. The image is one which neatly reflects the physical distances created through the dispersed settlement patterns of Atoin meto society. In disputes, unless a ‘path’ is maintained between the quarrelling parties, there can be no basis for a resolution of the problem. Similarly, in death, the grieving household is obliged to inform its respective marriage allies who are separately identified as the ‘paths’ (lanan). The concept of the path links both affines and agnatic kin across space and time. The reader will recall that Kolo Meo feto expressed his narration of the Nabuasa past as ‘my gateway and my path’ (au enok ma au lanak).

Having created an alliance through marriage with another name group, it is highly desirable that the marriage path which unites the groups as affines be reconfirmed. Marriage serves to strengthen the ties which have grown slack within the alliance group.

We have seen however that the direction of marriage is important in terms of control over resources and political authority. It is also one of the significant elements of prestige. Wife-givers give life and the reproductive capacity for increasing the collectivity of their wife-taker’s name segment. Symbolically, this is conceived of as increasing the spirit (smanaf) of the name group comprising the living members and the ancestors who have come before. In return, wife-givers derive high status and authority over their immediate wife-receivers. This feature is expressed in the life time debt of reciprocal obligation, which encumbers the wife-taker, in the form of ritual and economic services. This is the reason why in practice, Atoin meto sometimes express a preference for marriage with the mother’s brother’s daughter (MBD) over that with the father’s sister’s daughter (FZD). In the first instance alliance continues in one direction; a gift of life from name group A to B is repeated in the next generation. In the second case, marriage with the father’s sister’s daughter reverses the relative status of the marrying groups. The FZD represents in effect a return gift from C to B.
It can be readily seen that marriage with the FZD results in the former wife-giver becoming, in the following generation, a wife-taker. In this case the authority of (B) over (C) is reduced. If the direction of marriage was to continue from the name group (C) to that of (B) in the subsequent generation, the status between the two affinal groups could be reversed. This may occur, if the first marriage which created the alliance was purposefully forgotten or overlooked. This is sometimes the basis for statements that marriage with the FZD, although quite acceptable according to marriage rules, is nevertheless less favoured, the reason being that it may undermine the precedence established by a wife-giver.

A further reason for avoiding marriage with the FZD includes the concern expressed that really, like a true sister, the FZD is too closely related to the patriline to make a wise marriage. One would be eating the blood of the *kanaf* and such a disruption of the order of things may have grave consequences. This is despite the fact that the woman in question belongs to another name group through marriage.

Having said this, one cannot merely assume a neat correspondance of practice and principle. Thus, the very marriage direction which is denigrated by some is accorded value by others. The issue turns upon where one stands in any line of precedence. One argument goes as follows; because marriage with the FZD represents a reversal of the direction of marriage alliance, this offers the opportunity for initial wife-takers to reclaim the marriage gifts presented originally for the mother of the bride. In addition, as wife-givers themselves, they now place their initial wife-givers
in their debt. In other words, the value accorded marriage with the cross-cousin depends on the relative status and intentions of the participants.

Generally speaking, I found that throughout southern Amanuban there was no clear preference in practice for MBD marriage, and the reversal implicit in FZD marriage did not carry a negative value. The most important marriage between two houses or kanaf groups is the first one that creates the alliance. This marriage establishes both the existence of alliance and the relative status between the respective groups. Subsequent marriages between the groups, be they patrilaterally or matrilaterally based, only serve to strengthen the tie between the two kanaf groups. In this way a network of interdependent ties is developed.

There is, however, an important qualification that should be made at this point. Marriage exchange and the alliances that develop through this process cannot be divorced from residence. One of the key foundations of the political seniority of the kua tuaf in any hamlet community is their status of wife-giver to men who marry into the settlement. However, this relationship between two kanaf segments is not by definition a permanent one. Over time, it is conceivable, and indeed likely, that as the members of each group increase in number, reverse exchanges of women will occur. This means that a number of households within the kua tuaf kanaf may represent wife-taker houses to an established atoin asaot kanaf. This would be the outcome, for instance, of a marriage between a FZD and MBS. If enough reverse marriages take place, it is theoretically possible for an atoin asaot kanaf to usurp the authority of an original kua tuaf kanaf. The result would be that the atoin asaot kanaf becomes the senior wife-giver to the original kua tuaf group. In my experience, however, this rarely occurs. In the first place, marriages within the kuan do not all carry the same political weighting. Recall that over time the senior kanaf group in the hamlet is differentiated into a number of distinct agnatically related limited lineages. The position of head of the hamlet is generally the prerogative of the senior ‘elder’ brother line. They carry the authority of the kua tuaf claim to seniority and precedence. Therefore, in order to maintain the status of kua tuaf it is only the senior or elder group who must guard
against marrying within the *kuan* to an established *atoin asaot* (wife-taker) *kanaf* group. Agnatic kinsmen of junior lines may well marry women from the *atoin asaot* groups without altering the primary precedence of their *kanaf* in the hamlet. In the latter case, wife-giving houses of an *atoin asaot* group are able to raise their status *vis-a-vis* the *kua tuaf*, but they would be unable to usurp the primary claims of precedence.

Thus, it is a general feature of hamlet social organisation in southern Amanuban that kinsmen of senior *kua tuaf* lines tend to marry women from outside the hamlet who are brought in to live. In this way they avoid the dilemma of having their immediate wife-giver, and therefore, social superior, as a co-resident ally in the hamlet. This then reduces the possibility of conflicts of authority in the hamlet and the concomitant and sometimes onerous obligations involved in co-residence with one’s wife-givers. This issue is examined in more detail in the case studies (Appendix A). In one case, that of Oe kabesak hamlet, the relationship between the two name groups Lopo and Puai reflects these considerations particularly well. The groups Lopo and Puai held prominent political positions in the former domain of the Nabuasa leader, *Meo* Besi. Today, they recognize a reciprocal relationship of wife-giver and wife-taker to one another. This is described as a relationship of *feto mone* (female male) and represents a process of ongoing intermarriage which is one of equality in sum but asymmetrically patterned at each level of marriage exchange. One of the important features of this relationship is that, despite close intermarriage, each name group maintains its position of *kua tuaf* in their respective hamlet settlements. If, for example, a Puai man were to marry a Lopo woman and live permanently where the Lopo group were *kua tuaf*, his position by definition is that of an in-marrying affine and therefore a subordinate one within the Lopo hamlet. Hence, senior agnates of the two *kanaf* groups - those who carry the authority of the *kuan* - may well marry women of the other *kanaf*, but they will try to ensure that their wife-givers live in a separate hamlet, thus ensuring that their position of *kua tuaf* in their own settlement is not compromised.
The issue which largely determines where a newly married couple live is that of bridewealth exchange. Until bridewealth is paid a man is usually required to reside in the hamlet of his wife-giver. This represents a *de facto* period of bride service in which the marrying man is subordinate to his wife's father and her brothers. Bridewealth exchange and the negotiations which accompany it, therefore, emerge as one of the key factors in the creation of status differences and residence choice. This issue is examined more fully in the following chapter and the appendix to this chapter.

In summary, the strategy of the *kua tuaf* group in maintaining a dominant position within the *kuan*, is one of the key features of settlement organisation and development. In practice, the relative dominance and number of *kua tuaf* members will vary from place to place, depending upon the specific historical development of the hamlet. The issue of determining which senior male of the *kanaf* group actually holds the primary authority in the hamlet is not simply one of derivation from the founding ancestor of residence. Other factors, such as age and recognized personal ability, inclination, and public support also play a part in defining which houses within the *kanaf* of the *kua tuaf* group hold seniority. Thus, for instance, the representatives of the classificatory elder line of the *kanaf* may be considered too young or insufficiently mature to represent the group. Alternatively, if the elder house of the *kanaf* produces daughters but no sons, logically a younger brother line can assume the responsibilities for leadership of the *kanaf* and the precedence of the *kuan* will shift to another segment of the senior clan.

A second factor which militates against an *atoin asaot* name group assuming the status and position of *kua tuaf* is simply the reluctance of the existing *kua tuaf* to relinquish the position. All individuals within the *kuan* have different degrees of vested interest in maintaining the status quo. A common outcome of conflict over political authority within the *kuan* is community fission, whereby one group with its allies may distance themselves from the other and change residence sites. A new *kuan* may be founded or those who split from the hamlet may activate alliance relationships elsewhere and gain access to a different settlement area. In such circumstances the
long term alliance between affines may be weakened but generally the obligations which bind the *kanaf* together through marriage and shared history will overcome the short term differences, and the relationship will be continued between the now distinct settlements (see Appendix A.3). Nevertheless, the ongoing obligations which bind the *atoin asaot* to the *kua tuaf* as co-residents may well be restricted to more formal ceremonial occasions. This of course depends on the nature of the conflict which caused the rift and the spatial distance which separates the two or more *kanaf* groups.

Disputes in southern Amanuban are an endemic feature of social life and arise from all manner of situations. Few, however, are serious enough to cause major ruptures in the social fabric. There is always a desire to seek containment and compromise to avoid bringing one’s name and that of the *kanaf* into disrepute. Disputes have no season, although a common divisive arena for conflict is that over land and rights to cultivate. Typically these emerge in the late dry season when new gardens are being cleared. During the wet season, animal incursions into cropping areas is another cause of sometime bitter disputes between affines and neighbours.

**Other Aspects of Affiliation**

The marriage process involves a transference of human life in both physical and spiritual terms from one name house group to another. This is stated explicitly to the extent that the name group which offers a woman in marriage is termed the ‘life givers’ (*en amahonit*- mother father of life). What is meant by this allusion to life-giving is not the bride as such, although her incorporation into the wife-taking group represents an additional soul (*smanaf*) to the *kanaf* but, rather, it is her reproductive potential which is emphasized. It is she who reproduces the name of the *kanaf* into which she marries. Thus one of the true markers of successful alliance is the arrival of the first child of the marriage (*li an ahunut*). In the past this child was often returned to the wife-giving group as a form of counter prestation for the mother. In such cases the return of the firstborn was an explicit return of ‘life’ to the wife-givers and the child would subsequently enter the ritual group of its mother. Formerly this gift would
always be accompanied by ritual prayers to the ancestors of the natal house informing them of the exchange.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>haim i ton ki</th>
<th>we inform you</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>henati hi mi hin</td>
<td>in order that you know</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>li ana le i</td>
<td>this child</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fain on a nesaf ma nah</td>
<td>returns as flesh and blood</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nako in enaf es nane</td>
<td>from her/his mother</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Return gifts of the first born child and his or her incorporation within the name group of the mother still occur occasionally today and may form part of the marriage negotiations, especially where the affinal groups live far apart.

A barren marriage is considered an unhappy state, one which has produced ‘no sprout, no growing tip’ (kama u kama tunaf) and the bridewealth and marriage exchange process may be discontinued in such cases. These households are also said to be empty (lumen) and looked upon with sympathy.16 In response to this state, a husband may sometimes seek to marry his wife’s younger sister in the hope of gaining children by her.17 Alternatively, the couple may foster children from their own sisters or other close relatives. Fostering is a very common practice in West Timor generally, and has to do with the ongoing interaction between households allied through marriage. Sharing of children provides another example of a means to keep the ‘path’ of alliance open between respective households. In the present context the practice of fostering may also be understood as a form of return gifting of life, albeit as a less formalised and more flexible arrangement than earlier practice (see Appendix A.2 for further discussion of this issue).

A further important aspect of affiliation to the name group is one based on an extension of the gender distinction between male and female. Earlier I mentioned the ongoing relationship between the two kanaf of Lopo and Puai, as one of ‘female and male’ (feto mone) in conceptual terms. This distinction is one which symbolizes the relative social importance attached to the gift of women in marriage. It is also a notion which implies a generalised concept of the gift which creates debt and the obligation to reciprocate. Formal exchange is always conceived of in asymmetric terms. The primary sense of the female/male pair, however, is that of the marital household and
by extension the kin groups which encompass the house and form its social context. The concept of *feto* (female) in marriage alliance terms encodes a perception of social subordination. But more than this, in a real sense, wife-takers are considered classificatory ‘female’ members of the wife-giving name group. In other words, the children of the woman given out in marriage are recognized as a product of her original *kanaf* group. This is expressed in the familiar botanical idiom whereby the progeny of a woman are said to be the ‘flowers’ (*sufan*) of the woman’s father’s ‘trunk’ name group. This is another sense in which ‘wife-givers’ are conceptually ‘life-givers’ to their wife-taking affines. It is also the reason why co-resident affines can describe themselves as ‘children’ of the *kua tuaf*.

In terms of name group affiliation, there are basically two ways in which the notion of *feto* (female), and by implication, *mone* (male), is applied in Atoin meto society. The first may be said to be associated with agnation, the second with alliance.

In the first case, when a woman of the *kanaf* becomes pregnant to a lover but refuses to identify him, or if the man absconds and cannot be located, then the children from such unions will use the term *feto* in their names. Atoin meto express these informal and unacknowledged unions as *kaib mesokan* (lit. marriage of the darkness), and refer to the offspring as the *koto ma boko* (beans and pumpkin). The children of such unions are affiliated with the name group of the woman’s father and her male agnatic kin. Male children take the *feto* appellant to the *kanaf* of their mother’s father, who represents the *mone* or male line of the *kanaf* group. The narrator of the Nabuasa past, Kolo Nabuasa *feto* (*Meo feto*) is a case in point. His grandmother (*be’if*) remained unmarried, and her son, the father of Kolo, took the name Tuan Nabuasa *feto*.

In time, the *feto* name is reproduced through further male offspring, for it is men that carry the name-group name, and the *feto* name becomes institutionalised as a de facto *kanaf*. Hence the process of reproducing the *feto* name is identical to any other *kanaf* except that members of a *feto kanaf* recognize a female trunk ancestor as their origin point of differentiation from the male line. Despite the separation of the
two lines in this process, members of the 'female' *kanaf* remain closely associated with their 'male' counterparts, represented by the initial woman's brothers and their children.

One factor in this is co-residence. However, in formal terms it means that the 'female' line still follows the ritual prescriptions of the wider *kanaf* group. This is because they both originate from the 'male' trunk of the *kanaf*. They would attend the ceremonies for roasting the first fruits of the harvest (*tun pena*) and in the past were protected by the ancestral power of the *le'u nono* cult. However, in general, they were accorded a lower or subordinate status and were usually not permitted to take a leading or custodian role in the formal rituals of the name group, except by delegation. At the same time, the recognition of the *feto* group as originating from a woman of the *kanaf* means that individuals from the *feto* and *mone* lines recognize each other as classificatory affines and therefore could intermarry. So for instance, a man named Nabuasa *feto* could marry a woman, named Nabuasa (*mone*), and the children of the marriage would then carry the *kanaf* name Nabuasa *feto*.

The main point here is that, according to conventional collective Atoin meto thought, a woman's children are considered conceptually female in relation to the woman's male agnatic kin. This is a principle which is carried over into the realm of marriage alliance and provides a further dimension to the social order of precedence created between different *kanaf* groups.

Ordinarily a man or woman will follow his/her father and take his name. In baptism (*antam oe*), for example, the child will be called by the father's name. This occurs irrespective of whether formal bridewealth exchanges between the marrying groups have been completed or not. So, for example, if a woman of the *kanaf* group Talan marries a man named Sopaba, then the children of the marriage take the name Sopaba. However, the uterine kin of the siblings, that is the mother's father and brothers of the Talan *kanaf*, may rightfully refer to the children of Sopaba as Talan *feto*. This name, however, exists only as an informal reference. It does not carry the status of a formal name group as above. Rather its use is dependent upon particular
contexts, such as, those where the Talan group may wish to stress their social superiority as wife-givers over the wife-taking Sopaba group. In such cases the use of the *feto* appellant serves to emphasize social subordination of the Sopaba household to Talan. Alternatively, the name may also be used to express a solidarity with affines in the midst of strangers. The use of a ‘female’ name is also particularly important when a man has not yet completed the bridewealth obligations that will enable his wife and by extension his children to be incorporated into his own name group. In such cases he will recognize his children to be ‘female’ members of his wife’s group. In this case the term has some enduring significance to the extent that the father has yet to acquire jural authority over his children and must acquiesce to his wife’s father’s decisions regarding their welfare. The children are really part of the mother’s name group and in ritual contexts will assemble as part of that group. Later, if the obligations associated with bridewealth are fulfilled, a man’s children may be incorporated into his own name group. However, this does not alter the fact that his children are always the product, in one sense, of his wife’s *kanaf* group.

A further aspect of this referential system of classifying the children of women given out in marriage is the extension of the *feto* concept over several generations. In continuing the above example, let us suppose that the Talan group represents a wife-taking household of the Lopo *kanaf*. In this case agnatic kin of the Lopo group may equally refer to the children of Sopaba as a *feto* affiliated member of their own name group. Hence, from their perspective the children of the Sopaba household may be referred to as Lop *feto*.21 Once again, this is a referential device which is sometimes expressed as a way to remember the affinal ties which bind groups together. Members of the Lopo group in this context are acknowledged as the ‘trunk fathers’ (*am uf*) or, in other words, the wife-givers of the wife-givers. They are therefore the source of life for their affine’s affines. In contrast, the children of the union between Talan and Sopaba are recognized as the small branches (*tlaef*) or the tip (*tunaf*) of this tree of alliance. Here then, the botanical metaphor of the tree is associated with alliance and strongly reflects the order of precedence which underlies the structure of Atoin meto
social organisation at the local level. The woman who marries in gives life to her husband's group in the form of children who carry his name.22

This is illustrated below in diagrammatic form.

Figure 10: The tree of alliance

△ Lopo

○ Lopo = △ Talan

△ Talan

○ Talan = Sopaba △

△ Sopaba Sopaba ○

[Talan feto/Lop feto]

The inference in this form of referential association with the wife-giving segment of the kanaf in southern Amanuban is the recognition of a latent system of maternal affiliation. One of the ways in which this system of affiliation is given tangible meaning is in one of the more highly valued kinds of marriages. It is one in which a woman's marriage is described as 'the return of the young banana, the young sugar cane' (seb nafani uik ana ma teuf ana). It represents the reaffirmation through marriage of an earlier alliance between two name groups and by inference their allies.

Atoin meto place great stress on the need to maintain marriage alliances over time. Neglecting or denying the obligations that bind allied groups results in the breakdown of formal ties between groups and the potential human resources that can be drawn upon for support. Hence when one group provides another with a wife and therefore the means to reproduce its name, this creates a primary alliance between the two groups. Over time, however, if this initial alliance is not reconfirmed through subsequent exchanges of women, it is possible that the initial link will be forgotten and with it the obligations which bind one group to another. Specific links between segments of a kanaf group are particularly susceptible to dissolution by the third or fourth generation following the initial marriage, especially if the groups in question live in different hamlets some distance apart. This then is the underlying rationale
behind the importance placed on the return of the *uik ana ma teuf ana*. The new bride represents a lineal descendant of a female ancestor given out in marriage to another name group and is conceptualised as a life giving product of the ‘cultivated garden’ sown by her female ancestor. She also represents another specific example of a return gift of life for the earlier woman who was lost to the name group.

There are a variety of ways of reckoning young women who may be classified as ‘the young banana/ the young sugar cane’. The common principle, however, in all cases is that the imputed relationship is traced through females. In the following example, drawn from the field area, the return marriage occurs in the second generation following the formation of the initial alliance.

*Figure 11: The return of the young banana and the young sugar cane*

In the figure 11 the name group Faot provides a woman to Abanat as a wife. This marriage produces a daughter who marries in turn into another name group (Kause). In this latter marriage, Kause acknowledges the Faot name-group segment as his wife-giver’s (Abanat) wife-giver. In the third generation the daughter of this union between Abanat and Kause marries back into the Faot name group. Her husband is the lineal grandson (*upuf*) of the original wife-giver to her mother’s father (Abanat). Conceptually, this return marriage represents the closure of a cycle of marriage exchanges and for that reason it is marked by the Atoin meto as significant and auspicious. The implication of this referential classification for the descendants of female members of the kanaf is that a matrilateral affiliation lies embedded in the essentially patrilineal ideology.23
Through marriage a set of relations is established in which the descendants of the woman of the \textit{kanaf} group who marries out are considered the ‘female’ products of that \textit{kanaf}. Furthermore, this is formalised through matrilateral reckoning where each generation of cross-sibling marriages establishes a new starting point for the formation of a female extension to the ‘male’ \textit{kanaf} group.

One of the features of this type of return exchange, however, is the inherent reversal of the direction of marriage created by the return of the \textit{uik ana ma teuf ana}. In the return marriage, the Kause house becomes a wife-giver to Faot at that level and in conceptual terms, Faot, as wife-taker, becomes subordinate to Kause. Ordinarily this is unproblematic because while Faot is wife-taker at one level, the \textit{kanaf} segment is a wife-giving group at a higher level. For not only are Faot the wife-givers to Abanat and therefore socially superordinate as ‘life’ givers, they are also the wife-givers of the wife-givers to Kause. In cultural terms they stand as the \textit{am uf} or the trunk fathers to the Kause daughter, who is referred to as the \textit{tlaef} or branch to use the indigenous botanical idiom. Faot is the trunk of life in this context. The completion of this marriage between Faot and the woman Kause represents a desired cultural goal of the unification of the trunk and tip of a series of alliance relationships. Another way to express this is that, through this type of delayed marriage exchange Atoin meto express the value of the reaffirmation of alliances made in the past. In all cases where alliances are reaffirmed, it is said that one marries ‘within the house’ (\textit{matsao ambi ume nanan}) or alternatively as a marriage which ‘strengthens the roof of the house’ (\textit{na li suaf am tak pani}). The latter phrase contains a complementary opposition of roof spar (\textit{suaf}) and the forest vines used to secure the roof thatch in place (\textit{tak pani}). The metaphor thereby conveys the image of two parts intrinsic to the roof which stabilize and support each other.\textsuperscript{24} This is explicitly contrasted to marriages with previously unaligned groups which are conceptualised as ‘outside marriages’ (\textit{na’ko kotin}), or in the expression of ritual speech that one must:

\begin{itemize}
\item \textit{lak noe} cross the river
\item \textit{ma sae bahan} and climb the fence
\item \textit{on a mafe bi mata teme} for a stranger eyed wife
\end{itemize}
The issue of whether one marries an outsider or marries within an existing alliance pattern is open to choice. There are no predetermined outcomes in Atoin meto marriage. Rather, whom one marries and where one resides are largely matters for negotiation. Each marriage offers opportunities and strategies which must be balanced against its disadvantages. Atoin meto pursue complementary strategies of creation and recreation of affinal ties. Just as it is politically advantageous to create new affinal links with previously unaligned groups and thereby develop a wide network of related allies, so there are advantages to reaffirming an old alliance in a marriage between two name groups. Marriage and the creation of affinal alliance represents an arena for political discourse. The political stakes are those of social status and authority at the local level.

In order to illustrate something of the significance of alliance in the local context, Table 3 shows the number of marriages recorded for the four case study settlements presented in Appendix A. The reaffirmation of alliance is represented as fe lanan moen lanan type marriages which are shown to account for between 25% and 40% of marriages contracted by members of the hamlets.

The data in column 4 reveal that only about half of these marriages constituted a renewal of the initial direction of the ‘flow of life’ from wife-giver to wife-taker. The remainder point to reversals in the direction of life exchanged between resident name groups. Another significant aspect of marriage exchange in the four case study settlements is the relatively high degree of kuan (hamlet) endogamy. Between 36.3% and 50% of the marriages recorded occurred between individuals who lived in the same hamlet. Many of these marriages ‘within the kuan’ (kuan nanan) fall into the category of ‘other’ marriage and represent unions between previously unaligned houses. This tendency towards hamlet endogamy is another important basis for the persistence of alliances over generations.25
Table 3: Marriage statistics in the case study settlements

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>hamlet</th>
<th>no. of marriages</th>
<th>fe lanan/moën lanan</th>
<th>[MBD/FZS] marriages</th>
<th>Other</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Oe le‘u</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>7 (30.3%)</td>
<td>[4] 17.4%</td>
<td>16 (69.7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Banu</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>12 (30.8%)</td>
<td>[5] 12.8%</td>
<td>27 (69.2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oe Kabesak</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>13 (39.4%)</td>
<td>[5] 15.2%</td>
<td>20 (60.6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fatu Bena</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>5 (27.7%)</td>
<td>[4] 22.2%</td>
<td>13 (72.3%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Conclusion

Recapitulating the main points of this chapter, I have discussed how precedence between houses and name groups is established through a temporal sequence of settlement in the hamlet. In this process, the first group to settle is accorded the status of kua tuaf and the custodianship of the surrounding forest lands. The right to settle any specific locality is granted from a higher political authority. I then outlined how marriage provides a crucial pivot in the creation of asymmetrical relationships in the context of the hamlet and extending outside it to neighbouring settlements. Marriage provides a medium for the transmission or devolution of usufructory rights to arable land from wife-givers to wife-takers, which is to say, from the kua tuaf to their atoin asaot. The result is that, in any hamlet in southern Amanuban, a loose ordering of the separate households is created in the settlement. Those who ‘come later’ (nem namuin) are placed in a politically dependant position vis-à-vis the more established groups, those who came before (nem nahun), and especially the kua tuaf name group. However, the particular ranked order thus created is not an inherently permanent feature of the social organisation. Each community represents a particular stage in a dynamic evolutionary process of change. Hence it is possible for a later in-marrying man to make a strategically favourable marriage, and thereby raise his social status and political authority within the hamlet. Equally, it is possible for the authority of the kua tuaf line within the hamlet to compromise its precedence and its claim to the central prominent position. This is the reason why much importance is placed on protecting one’s name and the associated claims that accompany it.
CHAPTER EIGHT

RITUALS OF THE HOUSE IN SOUTHERN AMANUBAN

Introduction

This chapter focuses on the core unit in Atoin meto society: the house. The house can be characterised in its basic sense as a unit of co-residence whose members share a common hearth. Commonly this takes the form of a nucleated family group of parents and their children. However, single member households or single parent households are also a normal feature of hamlet social organisation. Atoin meto express a reluctance for aged parents to live with their married children and this is borne out in practice. Instead, older people tend to live in separate dwellings close to their children’s houses and may be assisted in daily chores by young children from related houses.

In Atoin meto society the house represents a primary focus for the orientation of individuals in social life. The term ‘house’ (*ume*) should be understood as both a physical and social entity. As a physical structure and through its internal configuration the Atoin meto house communicates a complex array of symbolic and classificatory principles upon which the conduct of cultural life is ordered. House design follows a specific cultural pattern which may be varied only in accordance with the limits imposed by what the Atoin meto describe as *atolan* (order). To transgress or ignore the ordered pattern may threaten the well-being of the owner or occupant. The consequences of disregarding the correct order may be illness, misfortune or, in serious cases, death.

The house as a unit of social organisation forms a centre where the dynamics of social life are negotiated and played out. The house and household itself provide the focus for important life cycle rituals that accompany and mark out the development of
the individual and the family unit. It is therefore not surprising that the (concept of the) house \((ume)\) also serves as a common metaphor for distinguishing degrees of differentiation and social closure. A localised name group \((kanaf)\) may be said to act as one house in circumstances of collective action or representation. So, for instance, individuals will speak of keeping disputes among agnates ‘within the house’, and thereby avoiding the potential embarrassment of public acrimony and squabbling within the \(kanaf\) group. Certain types of marriage are said to ‘strengthen the roof of the house’. In other contexts the hamlet as a whole may be considered as one house under the authority of the \(kua tuaf\), in relation to the external social world. Furthermore, in the images of politics in the past the house metaphor could encompass the wider domain itself. Like the roof of the house which shades the living members within, the former role of the Nabuasa leadership was described in ritual speech as the \(aneot ahafo\/apaot apanat\) (the canopy and shade, the guardian and cover).

This chapter has a number of objectives. I seek at one level to articulate some of the social meanings embedded in the concept of the Atoin meto house.\(^1\) I then describe a number of significant stages in the development cycle of the household and the characteristic ways in which individual households interact with those of their neighbours, affines and kin. My aim is to express the significance of certain enduring conventional metaphors and principles of dual classification by which the Atoin meto structure and communicate shared cultural meanings.

**Order in the Atoin meto House**

The traditional style of the Atoin meto house has changed little over the centuries. It takes the form of a thatched conical structure \((ume \text{ \textit{kbubu}})\) built directly on the ground. Typically the \(ume \text{ \textit{kbubu}}\) (lit. round house) has no chimney or windows and access is through a small doorway \((\text{eno})\), no more than a metre high. Inside it is dark, smoky and blackened from soot [see plate 2].

The round house is constructed with two levels. The ground level forms the kitchen area and sleeping quarters for the family. Access to the loft \((panat)\) is by
means of a narrow ladder and small hatchway in the ceiling. Here the bulk of the household's foodstuffs are stored, as well as important valuables of the house and sometimes of the kanaf. The smoke from the hearth fire helps to reduce problems of fungal rot, weevil and rodent infestation in the stored cobs of maize and other grains.

In addition to the more traditional form of the house, common to all households in the region, a second house structure is also often erected. This is built immediately in front of the round house and is rectangular in shape. The construction of these houses has been an emergent trend during the last fifteen to twenty years, in large part through the efforts of the regional government. The round thatched houses are generally considered unhealthy and primitive in the collective government view. Indeed, I have heard the rectangular-frame houses described by government officials as 'healthy houses' (rumah sehat) in contrast to those in the traditional style.

The more modern types of structures are given a variety of names by the Atoin meto themselves, such as umen plenat (government houses) or uem kase (foreign house), which reflect their non-traditional character. The quality of the modern designs varies enormously, ranging from simple wooden-framed thatched houses with earthen floors to grander structures with concrete foundations and corrugated iron roofs (uem blek). The majority consist of two or three rooms, which are used to greet visitors and as additional sleeping quarters for guests. Often they are constructed in stages and progress as financial resources become available [plate 3].

In recent years the rectangular house styles have become more genuinely popular and their increasing number throughout the countryside attests to changing values in housing and in the use of cash income. At the same time these 'modern' house styles have not supplanted the more traditional conical structures, which are highly regarded for the warmth they provide in the cool nights of the dry season and as store houses for grain.

Regardless of the type of house, both are constructed with reference to what the Atoin meto describe as atolan (order). Culturally speaking, however, the most
PLATE 2 Traditional round house (*ume kbubu*)

PLATE 3 Modern-style house (*uem kase*)
important structure remains the *ume kbubu' and here greater attention is usually given to following the correct design. Modern house styles have been adapted to the older conceptions of order and certain variations have been incorporated that simplify the number of aspects which carry sanctions. In the following description I focus on the conical structure which contains the definitive aspects of order.

The orientation of the Atoin meto house is based on a three-level, concentric model of ordered space. The house is the centre and is referred to as *nanan, meaning inner or inside. This centre is conceived of as a female domain. In contrast, the area immediately surrounding the house and specifically in front of the door is termed *mone (outside/in front). This term is the same as that for ‘male’ and, while Atoin meto do not make this association explicit, the conceptual link between maleness and outside is clear enough. One conventional saying, for example, is that ‘a womans role is to guard the house and its contents’ (*bife apanat poni). Men, conversely, are said to organise the affairs outside and away from the domestic unit (*Atoni naim noni: A man seeks money/valuable goods). Beyond the houseyard and the surrounding fence (*bahan) which marks the effective boundary, everything is termed *kotin (behind/outside). In this conceptualisation, the inner female area is relatively superior and opposed to the outer ‘male’ area.2

These three conceptual markers of space are also relative terms which provide the basis for delineating degrees of inclusion and exclusion. So, for instance, within the modern rectangular house, the back rooms are termed *nanan in opposition to the front rooms where visitors are entertained, which are *mone; the house may be *nanan in respect to the hamlet, and the hamlet itself may be defined as *nanan in opposition to the village. The location of the house in conceptual space is therefore always relative to the orientation of the speaker and the kind of privileged distinction they wish to make.

The round house is basically a combination of two structural forms. Firstly, the base, is made up of a large platform supported by four wooden posts (*ni). Overlaying this structure is the conical thatched roof reaching almost to the ground. These
structures are built along principles of dualism and circularity. This is extended to the material items and their spatial orientation within the house.

The base structure of the house is a wooden platform which provides the internal support for the house and serves to mark off the internal space into a ground floor and the loft. When the ground has been roughly levelled, the four main pillars of the house are erected. These are termed the *ni enaf* (mother posts). The post nearest the door on the left side is called the *ni le'u* and is erected first. Formerly a flat prayer stone (*faut oklamnes*) was placed at the foot or base of this pillar, which represented the altar stone for communication and prayer to the ancestors. Today this is no longer used but the principle of the first pillar is maintained. The construction of the house is oriented to the position of this primary ‘mother post’. Formerly a second ritual post (*hau monef*) was erected outside the house and also used for offering sacrifice and prayers. This spatial distinction highlighted the significant dualism of male and female in society at the level of the house.

Figure 12 Diagram of the house.
At the 'heads' of these four internal house pillars, four V-shaped notches are made, which are referred to as the 'ears' of the posts (*nis luken*). They provide the support for two cross-beams (*tfa*) which are tied to the mother posts. In the construction of the traditional house, all joints are tied and no sections may be nailed. The two beams are oriented parallel to the centre line of the house running through the door to the hearth fire. Over the two *tfa* beams, four smaller cross-members are laid and secured. Called *nonof*, they link the four mother posts into one framework. Above the *nonof* and resting upon them are a series of wooden timbers (*nette nafo*) which serve as the base of the attic and complete the wooden platform structure. They may be covered later with split bamboo or palm fronds to provide a floor for the loft. In the construction, a small apperture (*eno*: door or gate), is left near the top of the *ni le'u* to provide access to the loft. A ladder (*elak*) provides access to the hatchway.

The second major structural form of the house is the roof. Like the platform, it too is constructed along specific parameters which constitute the correct order (*atolan*). The roof is conical in shape and is made up of a lattice of vertical spars (*suaf*) and lateral ties (*tak pani*) upon which the layers of thatched grass are tied.

In creating the roof, the vertical spars, commonly made of bamboo, intersect at the apex, where they are tied together. The roof spars are then secured over and around the wooden platform in an anti-clockwise process. Building 'to the right' is an aspect of the correct order of motion and one that is also followed when tying the thatch to the house frame. The appropriate number of roof spars is said to be 32, but I have also counted 34 and 36. The number should be even.

At the centre of the loft platform a central post may also be erected and secured at the apex, to provide additional support for the roof. This post (*paof*) is not found in all houses and appears to be a variant form of the Amanuban model. Around the central *paof* four smaller vertical timbers (*tufa*) are tied in. The harvested bundles of maize are stacked upon these five vertical timbers.

Around this roof frame, a series of lateral strips of bamboo are secured. They are known as the *tak pani* and provide the horizontal supports for the layers of thatch.
(unu) which are tied over the frame. For every layer of thatch, which should total 11 or 13, there should be two tak pani strips. At the apex of the house the thatch is tied into a bundled knot called a buit; the same name is used for the hair bun worn by women, and formerly by men as well.

In addition to the tak pani, a series of five forest liana vines are secured at specific levels of the roof. They enclose the structure from within and secure the lateral tension of the roof as well as linking the platform to the roof structure. At the base of the roof, two liana known as tnat oe (to receive water) encircle both the inside and outside. A second vine (neu kano) is positioned just above the level of the doorway. In the language of uab meto, the term neut here refers to the circular head cloth worn by women to carry pots on their heads. This reference is another example of the association of women and the house. Above the neu kano is a paired liana strip at the level of the ceiling platform. The is the neu(t) panat, which secures the platform to the roof structure. Two further liana above the floor of the loft are termed the oe nifu naek (the great water hole) and oe nifu ana (the small water hole) respectively. A bountiful harvest is achieved when the stored maize rises to the height of the oe nifu ana.

One of the clear symbolic meanings of the circling liana is the association it holds to the traditional notion of name-group fertility rituals. In the past, members of the household and those of the name group to which they belonged were believed to be enclosed and protected within the fertility cult sphere known as the le'u nono' (lit. liana le'u). This notion finds expression within the house as a symbolic structure of enclosure.

In addition to these structures, two more paired liana vines encircle the doorway (eno), which is built as part of the roof. These two liana are termed ne'u, which in this case is a directional term for south. This suggests that the traditional orientation of the doorway in the Atoin meto house should be towards the south.

The door is one of the key structures in the Atoin meto house. It is the threshold which divides domestic space from the outside. The inner domain of the
house is a private space and is reserved for the household members. Guests are invited inside only if they are close agnatic kin or affines. Otherwise, the appropriate place for guests is in front of the house in the conceptually ‘male’ area outside. Today this function is usually provided by the rectangular house in front of the round house. In the construction of the door, care must be taken to ensure that the roof spars are fitted either side of the doorway and may not overhang the door space; to do so is thought to endanger the well-being of the occupants. The door is also fitted with a threshold and lintel (*su tai ma teli*). In the door space a heavy timber door is fitted, which opens in a movement from right to left. The door is kept securely locked whenever the house is unoccupied.

Figure 13: Diagram of roof structure.

Within the house, the doorway to the loft marks off a spatial distinction of upper and lower spheres. Usually the supervision and control of the loft area is the responsibility of the woman of the house and other members of the house do not enter without her permission.

The arrangement of space at the ground level is also constrained by the prescriptions of *atolan*. The principle structures on the ground floor include the hearth
fire (tunaf balen), the fixed water jar (nai oe), and the serving and sleeping platforms (hala'), which are located in parallel to the centre line of the house from the doorway to the hearth fire. In addition, most houses maintain another smaller platform, known as a hal pika (plate platform), behind or adjacent to the hearth, where kitchen utensils are stored.

Figure 14: Ground floor view of the House.

The hearth is the symbolic core of the house and is located in the centre opposite the doorway. It is fashioned from three stones, one of which is pointed towards the door. The fired-clay water container is also positioned near the hearth and is replenished daily from local water sources.

The two platforms are constructed in an identical way to the house platform structure, except that the shorter posts of the platforms are termed ni ana (small, or child posts). One serves as a sleeping platform (hal tupa) and for use in birth rituals. This is conventionally situated on the left side of the house, which shelters it from the wind when the door is open. For this reason the hal seit may be classified as female.
and is usually only found in the houses of married couples. In many houses of single men there are no platforms and one must sit on the ground.

The second (male) platform, which is usually larger and referred to as the \textit{hala naek} (great platform), may be used both as a bed, as a place to serve food, and as a seat for affinal relatives or guests. In contemporary society this second platform has become optional with the development of the second house as an alternative meeting place. However, it is apparent from the internal configuration of the house that an implicit association is made between the back and the left side as a female space, and the front and the right side as a conceptual male space. This feature is mirrored in the symbolic order of the land.

The resultant order (\textit{atolan}) of the Atoin meto house constitutes a potent resource for the creation of symbolic associations and metaphorical images which are extended into the realm of social and political life. In this way the house provides an enduring complex of symbol and metaphor for the making and remaking of Atoin meto social meanings.

\textbf{Life Cycle Rituals of the Household}

I turn now to a discussion of the various stages in the developmental cycle of the house, beginning with the rituals of the house as a structure. The principal ritual for the construction of a new house consists of a simple cooling ceremony (\textit{ha niki}), which is designed to ensure that the occupants of the house are protected and will prosper. The construction of a house, and indeed any human disturbance or significant manipulation of the landscape, induces a state of 'heat' (\textit{maputu}) and ritual danger which, if left unattended or neglected, may lead to serious misfortune or illness for the individual or his family; hence the need to placate or cool the site through ritual. In conceptual terms, coolness is synonymous with well-being and fertility. The house-cooling ceremony usually involves a small feast sponsored by the owner and is presented to the close affinal and agnatic kin who assisted in its construction.\textsuperscript{9} The most important figures among the guests are the principal wife-givers, including the
wife’s parents and her mother’s brother (atoin amaf). An elder of the church (a’na smanaf) is also usually invited to perform a Christian prayer, and a meal of slaughtered goat or pig with boiled rice is presented. Ceremonial food in formal contexts should always take the form of sisi maka (meat, rice), as other foods, such as vegetables and tubers, are accorded lower prestige. In the past this ceremony represented an invocation to the ancestors as intermediaries between humanity and the deity Uis Pah/ Uis Neno, and the blood and entrails from the slaughtered animal were sacrificial food offerings accompanying the placing of the flat prayer stone (fa'ut oklamnes) within the house at the foot of the principal mother post (ni enaf, ni le’u). In the present Christian environment these aspects are considered to be symbolically incorporated within the prayers to God and generally are not manifested in the public arena. Privately, however, acknowledgement of the ancestors of the house and name group and their ‘shading’ role over the house is still maintained by older people who were raised in that tradition. So, for instance, if members of a household decide to build a new structure or upgrade its existing house with corrugated iron and concrete, they must first build concrete graves over their ancestors’ (nitu) grave site and inform them of their intentions.

The house-cooling ceremony enables its owners to take up residence. A period of settling in, however, is usually allowed for to be satisfied that the site chosen for the house is safe and agreeable. Unexplained sickness or the death of a small child within the house may be attributed to lingering malevolent influences from the past, which inhabit the site and thereby force its abandonment. In one case I know, for example, a number of selected house sites were rejected because it was considered that they lay across a ‘spirit path’ (pah in lanan). These ancient spirits associated with the earth (pah) are thought to cause death if confronted.

For a young married couple the construction of an independent dwelling is often the primary task following the marriage negotiations, especially where formal bridewealth payments are delayed and the groom agrees to spend a period of time in the hamlet of his wife’s parents. At other times a young man will have already erected a dwelling in anticipation of his impending marriage.
Usually, the traditional conical thatched house is built in the early years and a simple secondary shelter (uem isat) erected beside it to serve as a place to greet visitors and as a work area for blanket and palm-textile weaving. Today these rudimentary additional shelters are considered a precursor to the more permanent secondary rectangular house.

Childbirth

Childbirth is one of the key events in the life of the household and is surrounded by a series of ritual prescriptions designed to protect the newborn in its passage into the community. For, just as the arrival of the child is keenly awaited by maternal and paternal kin alike, it is also fraught with dangers which threaten the well being of mother and child.

Pregnancy is quickly recognised in the close interactive context of the hamlet. Pregnant women crave strongly flavoured and unusual foods in the months after conception and menstruation naturally ceases. Women undertake their normal activities during pregnancy and are active both in the house and in the fields. During these months the expectant mother seeks out the services of a traditional midwife (generic term atusit), usually her own mother, who is skilled in the knowledge of birth and provides counsel and reassurance to her daughter. This represents a tangible instance of life-giving services offered by wife-giving affines.

The womb is referred to as the an balen, which literally means ‘the child’s place’. Prior to birth, the gender of the foetus is determined. I know of several forms of reckoning: if the child is lying on the right side (ne’u) it is a boy, if on the left (li), a girl. Others seek confirmation in the duration of pregnancy: 9 months for girls, 10 months for boys. The atusit is also able to determine whether a potentially life-threatening breech birth is likely, and will manipulate the womb to ensure a head-first delivery.

Birth occurs on the earthen floor of the house (ume kbubu’). The pregnant woman gives birth either lying on a woven mat or squatting astride a flat stone. The atusit and close relatives attend. There are no restrictions on the presence of men.
Following the birth the umbilical cord (*usan*) is cut and tied. Traditionally a bamboo knife (*shut*) is used, although today the use of steel knives is also common. Atoni meto believe that if one were to watch the cutting of the umbilical cord, blindness would result. Hence, as the *atusit* prepares to sever the cord, she averts her eyes and informs others to do the same. It is normal practice to cut the cord some 10 cm (*klulu mese*) from the navel. The stump is then tied with a piece of palm leaf or a thread of spun cotton and left to wither and drop off.

As they wait for the afterbirth (*olin*), the small baby is wiped clean and made to cry by sharp sounds and movement. The placenta (*olin*) is explicitly associated here with the younger sibling (*olif*). The umbilical cord and placenta are carefully wrapped and buried in the floor of the house. Ostensibly this is done to avoid pigs or dogs disturbing the birth by-products.

Unfortunately, the birth process is often more complicated than this. Delays or difficulties in delivery of child or placenta all too frequently lead to death. Atoni meto usually attribute difficult births to transgressions or sins committed during pregnancy. In such cases people seek the reasons in bad behaviour or speech, which can be absolved through confession and prayer. This process is known as *neketi*. In one example I witnessed, a young woman with her first pregnancy had been in labour for several days. Each night her mother and close agnatic and affinal kin sat with her and conducted prolonged *neketi*, which she steadfastly denied. With growing alarm for her safety, the possibility of sorcery was mooted. This could take the form of a controlled spiritual attack (*nlef*) which directs a malevolent force at her (*atoni nlef kit*: people have directed *lef* at us).

Eventually however, on the point of exhaustion, the young woman confessed that some time earlier, following an argument with her husband, she had placed a Bible on her head, eaten some soil and prayed for her death and that of her child. When this confession emerged and a Christian prayer of absolution was offered, the baby was born soon after.

With the successful birth of the child, a series of ritual prescriptions are initiated. The mother and baby sit upon a bamboo platform within the house, known as
the roasting platform (*hal se’it*). Here they will remain, initially for four nights and days. Atoin meto believe this to be critical to the safety of mother and child. The hearth fire is stoked to increase the temperature of the house and hot coals are placed under the platform. This is one of the tasks taken up by the woman’s husband. The ‘roasting’ of the mother and newborn is an apt description because both sweat profusely during this period of seclusion. In the hot, dark and smoky hut, this period is clearly symbolic of the transition of the baby from the womb to the outside sphere of society.

In local exegesis, the purpose of heating or roasting in this instance is designed to remove the ‘dead blood’ (*nah maten*) also known as the white blood (*nah so muti*), which would otherwise spread through the mother’s body causing fever (*manin*) and infection.\(^{14}\) If the mother were to descend the platform during this first period her health and that of the child would be endangered. This prohibition is thus strictly followed.

Food restrictions also come into effect at this time. The new mother is allowed to eat only pounded and boiled maize and a limited number of vegetables such as rice, pumpkin and cassava leaves. Foods such as oily meats and food fried in coconut oil, chilli and beans are withheld. Pork should not be eaten for up to four months following birth. In addition to maize, the mother is offered warm water to drink and may chew betel nut to deter drowsiness. Maize is thought to assist in cleaning the mother’s breast milk. During the first four nights a wet nurse is commonly sought to feed the baby because the Atoin meto consider the mother’s first milk, the cholostrum to be dirty and harmful to the child. The dirty or ‘yellow’ milk (*sus molo*) is squeezed out to encourage the early appearance of the clean white milk (*sus muti*). Throughout this period a constant stream of visitors attend the mother and newborn, to assist with work in the house and to feed other guests, and to keep the mother and child company and check on progress.

During the first four nights the baby is referred to as the *boît me* (the red baby). It is given no name as this is a period when its life hangs in the balance. If the child
dies during the first four nights\textsuperscript{15} it is quickly buried with little formal ceremony, usually within the houseyard of the parents. An all-night vigil by agnates and close affinal kin is conducted out of respect for the dead child's soul. If the child survives these four nights, a name is sought from close ancestors of the couple. Frequently names are chosen from the grandparent generation (category \textit{beif\,naif}). To select the name of a living relative is avoided as it may be taken as wishing the person dead. These names are termed \textit{kan meto} (lit. indigenous name) or \textit{kan nitu} (ancestral spirit name) and are all pre-Christian in character. Following the granting of a \textit{kan meto}, parents watch to see if the child becomes sick or cries a lot. This may suggest that the initial name given was inappropriate and another would be sought. There is an old notion among Atoin meto that ancestral spirits seek out their new descendants in order that their name will be remembered. As one woman explained to me: "If the baby cries it is looking for a name so that the dead one will live again in the child" (\textit{Kalu nkae, in taim in kanan henati le mates na in monin fain es le ana le na}). Hence, if a baby responds favourably to a particular ancestral name, this will be adopted.

At the end of the first four nights the mother and child may descend the platform and wash for the first time in warm water. The mother is also able to venture outside for short periods and begin to take up some of the duties of the house, although the food restrictions continue to apply for varying lengths of time. This stage is marked with a communal meal and prayers known as the \textit{onen oe maputu ai melala} (prayer for the hot water and burning flames). This is specifically a reference to the ritual period of heat that the mother, and by inference her husband, has endured in childbirth. Many years later, when their daughters are married, the parents are referred to as the \textit{oe maputu ai melala} (hot water and burning flames) and offered marriage prestations in that name.

The ceremony following the four nights is a symbolic event which assists in the ritual cooling after the childbirth. I have also heard the process of cooling in this case used synonymously with a distinction between 'wild' (\textit{fui}) and 'tame' (\textit{aem}). While 'roasting' on the birth platform the mother is referred to as the \textit{oe fui} (wild
water). At the end of the four nights she becomes the *oe aem* (tame water). The application of these particular terms in this context highlights the mother and child’s ritual state of danger and separation from the everyday process of hamlet and household life. Metaphors of wild and heat, coolness and tame, are embedded in the collective cultural order of the social world and expressed in many contexts. Through ritual prescriptions and prayer the antipathy of the opposing realms is controlled and mediated to promote life and prevent death.

Following the four nights and days of roasting, however, the baby continues to remain in the house on the platform for another 40 nights following the birth. The mother remains close by and continues to rest on the platform for extended periods. After 40 nights the child is brought from the house and a small feast arranged to celebrate its entry into the community. This is normally attended by a limited group of affinal kin from the hamlet and surrounding area and includes members of the agnatic kin of the mother (her husband’s wife-givers). This event marks the end of the strict adherence to the various restrictions of birth. At this time the pile of white ash (*auf muti*) that has built up undisturbed under the roasting platform is carried out, accompanied by a prayer of the same name (*onen at kon afu*). Also at this time, although the date is variable, a baptism (*antam oe- enter water*) may be undertaken in which the child receives its formal Christian name. Either the parents or the local preacher will select a name from the Bible, usually one that corresponds in some fashion to the *kan meto* that the child has received. So, for instance, a female child named bi Kono will often be given the name Kornelia, Sone will become Soleman and Banu will often take the name Barnabas. Today, virtually all Atoin meto have a Christian name (*kanaslani* or *kanaknino* sanctified name) which becomes the name used in formal contexts such as school and in dealings with the government administration.

The process of childbirth I have outlined here is one which represents a type of transitional phase between the ritual process of pre-Christian and Christian times. The major difference between birth practices in the past and those today is one about
beliefs associated with the nature of birth. This is primarily a religious issue. Whereas today it is generally explained that children—new life—may be ultimately attributed to the Christian God’s divine will (smanaknino), formerly the procreative and protective spirit derived from the name group’s ancestors (nitumnasi). The ancestors provided a metaphysical bridge (nete) between the living and the hidden powers of the spirit world dominated by the deity Uis pahl/Uis neno (Lord of the earth and sky). The new child was considered a type of prestation (pulsak) from the dead to the living. Today, while Christianity in its various sectarian forms has been highly successful in usurping older patterns of worship, people are still reluctant to relinquish completely the customary practices associated with childbirth. To many it remains self-evident that noncompliance or flagrant disregard for the order of practices in society is folly and fraught with danger. Others more fully converted to the church are willing to bypass and simplify the former customary processes, particularly as this is often supported by the government and the church. The degree to which ritual prescriptions are maintained varies with individual households and the consensus of hamlet communities.

During my enquiries, it was evident that many older women in Southern Amanuban were still familiar with the former rituals of childbirth and practised them in their own pregnancies. It is instructive to look in more detail at what they say, as this provides additional insight into the cultural meanings of birth and the household.

Birth in the Past

Formerly the life of the new child and its mother was protected by the ritual power of the le’u fenu. This was a fertility power stored within a small thatched structure called the ‘fenu’ house (ume fenu) which provided the ritual focus for the forces of fertility and birth. Each kuan or residence group maintained an ume fenu, which was protected by the eldest woman in the group, (apao ume fenu). Within the cult house, an earthenware pot (nai fenu) filled with water was maintained along with various potent medicinal herbs and materials for use in birth ritual.17 The fact that
women controlled the birth ritual knowledge and that this was passed from mother to
daughter highlights another aspect of the life-giving authority of wife-giving affines
over their wife-takers. Women were and are the source of the reproduction of the
name group and therefore perform a mediating role between affines. A man is
beholden to his wife-givers because of the ritual knowledge and reproductive power
with which his wife is associated.

At the time of birth it was customary for close relatives of the household to
congregate at the house. The mother’s brother played a special role. He would stand at
the front of the house and call to his sister inside, who answered for her child. A series
of ritual exchanges followed which established the relationship of the new child to the
family. This required a recitation of all the named places with which this particular
kanaf segment was linked beginning with the clan’s origin rock, their rock of renown
(tal fatun). It culminated in the following exchange:

(Mother’s brother)  Ho nem ma me kau sa?
You arrive bringing what?
(Au ek ike ma suti"
I bring spindle and bowl
or alternatively
(Au ek benas ma tofa
I bring machete and weeding hook

The ritualised reply neatly summarised Atoin meto perceptions of gender roles in the
society. A girl is associated with the implements of cotton production and blanket
weaving. Her implicit future role is one of wife and mother attached to the house. A
boy is associated with the implements for working the field gardens in the realm
outside (kotin) the domestic sphere. These are still primary orientations and cultural
stereotypes expressed by Atoin meto farmers.

Following the first forty nights after birth, mother and child would emerge
from the house to meet the relatives who had assembled. This was accompanied by the
na poitan ritual (lit. going outside). For the ceremony, a corn mortar (esu) was fixed in
place with a number of maize seeds in the bowl. It was pounded four times with the
wooden pestle (hanu), and then pushed over allowing the maize to spill out onto the
ground. This was a graphic act to symbolise both the conception and birth event as
well as the descent from the roasting platform. There was also a clear sexual symbolism in the mortar and pestle encapsulated in the saying *bi fe in fain on a esu, Atoni in fain on a hanu* (the woman becomes a mortar, the man a pestle.) Thus the pounded spilt maize is in one sense the product of mortar and pestle and a type of agricultural harvest.\(^{18}\) Accompanying the new mother as she emerged in her best clothes from the hut of seclusion, was a young girl dressed in the costume of a *meo* (headhunter). She was said to be the guardian of the mother and was referred to as the *asnin kabin* (she who carries the betel nut). Her role, under the supervision of the new mother’s mother’s brother (*atoin amaf*), was to distribute betel nut gifts to all members of the name group who attended the ceremony. The *na poitan* ritual was concluded with feasting, dancing and much consumption of palm gin (*tuak muti*).\(^{19}\)

One of the final ceremonies attached to traditional beliefs in the birth process was that designed to ‘cool’ (*ha niki*) the child. In this ceremony the ‘ropes of heat’ (*tain maputu*) which had been attached to the child’s wrists, neck, waist and ankles would be cut away along with a lock of hair, and the *apao ume fenu* would sprinkle water from the *nai fenu* on the body of the child accompanied by incantations and prayers to the ancestors.\(^{20}\) Today this ceremonial cooling immediately after birth is equated with the modern baptismal ceremony (*antam oe*).

In the development of the Atoin meto household, children (*li ana*) are highly valued additions to the family. There is no marked preference for boys or girls among Atoin meto parents. Both are desired for the potential complementary benefits they provide. Boys, when they grow up, become partners with their parents in the arduous tasks of agriculture and, through marriage, will carry the name of the *kanaf* into the future. Girls assist in chores around the house and in the gardens, and help their mothers in the nurturance of younger siblings. In the future when they marry, they will bring bridewealth into the household. As a consequence, girls are tutored from an early age in the tasks associated with marriage and motherhood. In contemporary society all children are expected to attend the local primary schools (*sekolah dasar*). However, it is boys, not girls, who are usually encouraged to undertake higher levels
of schooling. Parents are often reluctant to finance their daughters through high school because of concern at the lack of supervision and the probability that marriage will intervene and restrict their career opportunities. Young men, by contrast, are thought to be better placed to earn incomes in the district towns and provide financial support for younger siblings and their parents.

**Circumcision and Teethfiling**

Apart from marriage, male circumcision and teethfiling are two of the few formal ceremonies undertaken to mark the status of adulthood in Atoin meto society. As children grow, there is a series of informal stages which express emergent adulthood, such as the decision to cultivate a separate garden or to construct a separate house. In addition, beginning the practice of habitual chewing of betel nut is a sign, particularly for girls, which represents their availability as a marriage partner. This is also associated, in contemporary society, with the formal ending of schooling and the possibility for young people to participate more actively in the decision-making processes in the community. But these stages represent relatively informal aspects of growth and developing maturity. They tend not to be signified with specific formal ceremonies. Circumcision and teethfiling, on the other hand, are still important traditional rituals which remain rites of passage among young adult men and, to a lesser extent, women, who only undertake teethfiling. Both continue to be widely practised according to the older tradition, despite the evident disapproval of many modern Christians in the region, who regard it as a legacy of the pagan past, though I have also met men who are simply afraid of undertaking the ordeal and have elected to avoid it. Still, for many, it is regarded as an important stage in the development of the individual.

Circumcision, known as *tfut uti ma keut uti*,²¹ among the Atoin meto is not undertaken primarily as a puberty rite.²² Generally speaking, it is sought by young men who are preparing for marriage, although it is not uncommon for married men to seek the operation.
The ritual for circumcision forms one part of a double ceremony which is complemented by teethfiling (tfonisik). The teethfiling ceremony is carried out in the dry season in opposition to the wet-season circumcisions. Filed upper teeth are the public demonstration of circumcision among men. The two rituals are thus complementary. Teethfiling is commonly practiced on girls and women and is often associated with marriage.

The reasons given for circumcision are usually presented in general terms of enhancing well-being and strength. 'It makes your face red (healthy), your body strong and improves your virility'. Uncircumcised men are said to have an offensive odour and to age faster.

In elaborating on the performative aspects of circumcision, I draw upon one representative case which I witnessed from the area. Here I offer a brief summary of the principal features of the ritual of initiation which, like those of the rituals of childbirth, are strongly prescribed in ritual to ensure success. In this example the initiate had been married for four years and still the couple had borne no children. He reasoned that circumcision would enable his wife to conceive by strengthening his own spirit (smanaf).

The ritual, which was carried out by an aged non-Christian, occurred in the month of February 1986. This was regarded as an auspicious time associated with the flowering of the maize stalks in the fields. The initiate and a small group of kinsmen including his sister’s husband (baef), who acted as the organiser of the ceremony, gathered at the back (kotin) of the old man’s house compound. A fee of one rooster and a small amount of money was agreed upon.

The circumcision proper induced a state of ritual heat in the initiate which was considered potentially threatening to close agnatic and affinal female relatives. Consequently the initiate was required to spend a period of seclusion away from the main settlement in a nearby field hut. During this period of eight nights (traditionally four nights is considered appropriate) the initiate subsisted on boiled maize and a limited selection of green vegetables. Twice a day he would wrap himself in a blanket
and squat astride a bamboo cylinder filled with water and herbs. Hot stones would be plunged into the water creating a scalding pungent steam. The process would be repeated until the heat became unbearable, whereupon he would hurry to a nearby stream and wash.

The second stage of the ritual seclusion required that the initiate have sexual intercourse in order to ‘cool’ his ritually heated status. These female sexual partners are generically termed *bi fe anpolin maputu* (the women who throw off the heat) and are often older widows who derive a livelihood through these ritual couplings. Known as ‘women who walk the path’ (*bife anao lanan*), these local prostitutes are contrasted to other women whose conceptual place is ‘in the house’ (*ambi ume nanan*). Customarily an initiate should ‘throw off the heat’ with four such women.

The period of ritual confinement and healing was completed when the initiate returned to the circumcisor with a second small rooster and some fresh coconuts. A small ceremony was conducted in which the initiate drank a mixture of coconut juice and blood in order to render himself fully ‘cool’ (*nasapu nalalien/ha niki nalalien*).

Having successfully cooled the heat of the circumcision, all ritual prescriptions were relaxed and the initiate could resume relations with his wife and family. During the dry season, some six months later, the initiate submitted to the teethfiling ordeal, which is the formal counterpart to circumcision, or, as one man explained to me, ‘if you cut below, you must also cut above’. This ritual does not carry the same sanctions as circumcision and the fact that many women also undergo teethfiling suggests that the ritual may represent more generalised notions of adult status. In the case of men, however, the presence of filed teeth is clearly a public or social marker of circumcision. Only circumcised men may have their teeth filed, and therefore, although the ritual for teethfiling is identical for men and women, it fulfills slightly different objectives. The practice of teethfiling is often explained in terms of its socialising or civilising function; long pointed teeth are associated with monkeys of the forest or dogs. In women, teethfiling is regarded as a means to enhance their appearance. It makes them pretty (*namas*).
Teethfiling ceremonies, known as *tfon nisik keut nisik*, are undertaken late in the dry season, in September or October. This period is associated with the disappearance of termites (*ane ane*). To file teeth during the period when they emerge from the ground is thought to result in the initiate's teeth falling out. There are no specialist teethfilers and most older experienced people may practise the skills. The teethfiling ritual is conducted as follows. A special stone (*aki*) is first placed on a small pile of grass (*hun*) or rice husk (*aen uk*) and left outside for four nights. This is explained as a measure to ensure that the dew falls upon the stone and the coldness can enter. Otherwise it is said that the stone will cause pain and not cut, and the initiate's teeth may also fall out.

The initiate then lies down, clenching a piece of wood between the teeth. The teeth are filed from the left to the right. First the face of the upper teeth and the cutting edges are filed flat, followed by the lower teeth. Then a knife is heated and sprinkled with specific herbs and the initiate is told to clench his or her teeth against the knife. This is to ensure that strength will return again to the teeth. Later a meal of pounded and fried corn is eaten, having been left to cool, and it is accompanied by Christian prayers to ensure good health and appearance.

In attempting to provide insights into the cultural basis for the practise of teethfiling and circumcision, it is clear that, like childbirth, these rituals effect transitions to different statuses, which are associated with well-being and prosperity. They are all circumscribed by notions of complementary opposition. In the case of circumcision, initiates travel outside their settlement for the ritual which is also conducted outside the immediate area of the house. In a symbolic sense the initiate is outside society during his ordeal. This aspect is highlighted during the period of ritual seclusion and heating. Implicit in this conceptual ordering is a key opposition of outside (*bi mone, bi kotin*) and inside (*nanan*). This is synonymous in this context with the categories of male and female. Circumcision is a wholly male preserve. There is no female circumcision. The initiate becomes heated and potentially life-threatening to women of the inside, symbolised by his wife and, by extension, all women in the


settlement. However, it is through women that the initiate is also able to ‘throw off the heat’ of circumcision and thereby become cool. The women in this case belong to the category of the outside, that is, to unrelated women and specifically women whom Atoin meto class as ‘women who walk the path’ (*bife anao lanan*). These women are conceptually opposed to the nurturant world of house and hearth as the conceptual inside is opposed to the outside. Finally, the ritual state of heat created by circumcision is also controlled through the process of steaming. Atoin meto describe this in terms synonymous with roasting (*se’it*), and we find here a further parallel with childbirth and the requirement to spend a period of seclusion on the ‘roasting platform’. These periods of ritual danger are contained through a process of heating or in this case, a kind of cooking, which can be considered a form of enculturation or domestication. Through the subsequent cooling process, the initiates are able to re-enter society and the social world of everyday life. The symbolic association of ‘roasting’ and well-being is a pervasive theme in Atoin meto society. It is one which is extended to the products of the agricultural harvest and the roasting of maize.27 It was also an underlying theme in the former practice of headhunting in which the severed human heads were roasted outside the community before their ritual incorporation within it.28 Finally, it is a theme still found expressed in childbirth roasting rituals in the contemporary context. Roasting is a process of transition and transformation whereby matter or being belonging to the conceptually ‘outside’ and the conceptually ‘wild’ may be converted into life-giving or life-sustaining entities associated with the ‘tame’ and the ‘inside’.

For the Atoin meto, the principles of complementary or dual opposition are more than a means of ordering the social and natural world. They are also a mechanism for ensuring, through human ritual action, continued and increased prosperity, well-being, fertility and ultimately, social reproduction. In short, they are the means of ensuring the reproduction of life in its various aspects.
One of the principle time-consuming activities for a household during the dry season is that associated with the organisation and conduct of marriage. In contemporary southern Amanuban society, marriage is a process which follows a number of structured patterns and stages. It forms a significant political exercise which either reaffirms or creates a lasting alliance between two households and two sets of name-group segments. As such, it involves a series of delicate negotiations which may lead to a permanent realignment in the social networks of the marrying groups. Every year all households will usually participate in at least one or two marriage exchanges.

In this section I seek to explain the character and process of marriage in contemporary southern Amanuban society. It should be understood, however, that just as the ideology of name group affiliation and alliance is conditioned and manipulated in practice, so the practical process of marriage varies from the ideal. Considerable flexibility is evident in the strategies for formalising marriage alliances.

In recent times Atoin meto marriage has undergone something of a transformation. Older people in the various communities in the area stress that the customary arrangements which constituted formal marriage unions in the past have undergone change since the second world war. Prior to this time, the majority of marriages were formalised by a largely symbolic ceremony known colloquially as *tua boit mese ma noin sol mese*. Literally this means a bottle of palm gin and one silver coin. The term is still used in contemporary times to refer to formal requests for assistance. Thus a person will present these gifts or their equivalent in a betel nut container to signify his respect as a prelude to a formal spoken request. In the marriage context these gifts were associated with the provision of a feast by the wife-taking group and marked by exchanges of cloth, clothing and other small tokens. Generally the costs involved with completing the marriage ceremony were relatively small.29

Far more important was the giving of the first child of the marriage to the wife’s family. This was conceptualised as a return gift of life to the wife-giving group
for the loss of their daughter in marriage. The implicit sense of the return prestation is that the primary definition of marriage was not the union of the couple *per se*, but the fruits of the union which created and completed the alliance. The botanical metaphor was consciously applied. The child would subsequently be raised as a member of the mother’s name group and use its name. This arrangement, while common, was not mandatory and turned upon issues of residence and kinship relatedness.

The important feature of marriage in this area in the past, and one which is still maintained in sentiment, is that marriage was not a matter of barter or trade for the woman in question. The reproductive powers of women were offered for the benefits they bestowed on both parties and not as a return for a brideprice (*belis*) payment which had the connotation of selling the women into marriage. People of Amanuban point to other areas of Timor, such as Amfoan to the north, Amarasi to the east and the Rotinese migrants, as examples of the latter practice.

Since the war certain changes have occurred which have altered the practice of ritual in marriage. The mass conversion to Christianity, particularly during the 1960s, has led to the incorporation of a Christian wedding into the marriage process. Termed *kaib nak nino* (sanctified marriage), this ceremony is now considered a necessary component of the formal marriage obligations. Nevertheless it has not become a universal practice and considerable variation exists between communities within the study area. Moreover, it is generally seen as an adjunct to the more traditional form of marriage and is conceptually distinct.

A second significant development has been the dramatic increase in the ownership of the Bali Banteng ‘cattle’ throughout the region. The Bali cattle (*bia molo*) were introduced onto the island by the Dutch in 1912, on a contract basis, and have since proved highly adaptable to Timor’s dry environment. Although initially ownership was dominated by the prominent traditional authorities, cattle numbers have grown to the extent that most people either own or have access to use of the animals. As such they have become an important part of the valuables exchanged in the marriage ceremonies. This has led to an increasing cost of completing marriage
exchanges in many cases. Despite this, most Atoin meto in southern Amanuban reject
the notion that more expensive gifts and expectations mean a shift towards brideprice.
In reality, marriage in Amanuban in the modern context maintains much of the spirit
of traditional exchange and incorporates many symbolic features of the past.

Most people in the study area express the expectation that the correct form of
marriage is one that is sah, meaning one in which all the formal ritual obligations have
been completed and, by inference, that the rights over the children of the union have
been transferred to the father and husband.30 This ideal process is carried out in four
general ceremonial meetings. Each of these ceremonies, however, involves a complex
of exchanges between the participating parties and the precise nature of the ritualised
exchanges and the type and quantity of the prestation is largely dependent on the
mutual decision of those involved. One of the main reasons for variation in marriage
ceremony is the relative distance, socially or geographically or both, between the
marrying groups. Generally speaking, the greater the distance the more formality and
 ceremony is required. This also applies when the marriage is a high-status one.
 Conversely, when marriage is between actual cross-cousins or between impoverished
groups, there may be little formality or ceremonial celebration.31 It is for this reason
that it is difficult to present a categorical set of rules concerning the ‘correct’
procedure for marriage. Certain ritual exchanges may be collapsed into one or
modified with the agreement of those involved. Nevertheless the broad principles are
generally agreed upon and the following discussion attempts to highlight these
features.

The formal request for the marriage of a woman and man is sometimes termed
na tam a toti bi sopo (to enter the request for the woman). This follows an informal
representation, often by letter, from the prospective husband or his proxy. If the
woman’s family agree to the proposal a formal meeting is arranged where the
principle wife-takers and wife-givers come together. If the request is denied the man
may decide to accept the decision and not pursue the matter. Alternatively, he may
seek to force a marriage by more manipulative, though tolerated, means (see
abduction).
Assuming agreement, however, the first formal meeting of the two groups represents a precursor to the formal wedding ceremony and forms a type of betrothal ceremony. Depending on the respective ages and the financial situation of the wife-takers, the date for the full wedding ceremony may be postponed for months or even years in some cases.

At this meeting, conducted at the house of the woman's parents, an agreement will be sought which is termed *na poni bunuk hau noh* (to hang the coconut curse). This phrase refers metaphorically to the older practice of attaching a palm-leaf sign around a tree or group of trees, accompanied by a curse (*bunuk*) against any potential thieves or transgressors on the property. This conception belongs to an ancient tradition of curse complex discussed more fully by Middlekoop (1960:46-65). In this context the implication of the ceremony is a curse surrounding the young couple so that no other suitor will try to interfere with the marriage plans. This theme is reiterated during the formal spoken exchanges between the opposing name groups, who are represented by spokesmen chosen for their skills in ritual speech (*natoni*).

Thus at one such meeting I attended the speaker expressed the idea that:

- **hit fain on a bunuk mese**
  - We become one curse

- **hit fain on a oe mese**
  - We become as one water

- **oe manik matani, oe mina**
  - truly cool water, sweet water

- **kaisa paik**
  - Do not use

- **oe menu ma oe tasi**
  - bitter water and salt water

In other words, the agreement to marry links both groups in a united cause and one that expresses their peaceful and honourable intentions (cool water, sweet water). Failure to remain faithful to this agreement would be like tasting the bitter and salty water, bringing discord and resentment.

A further expression of this concept is found in the phrase: don't let the pig grunt or the dog bark (*kaisa fafinius po, asu nakon*). This means that the household should be aware of other suitors who enter the houseyard to meet with the young woman, thereby causing the animals to become agitated.

These sentiments are accompanied by exchanges of gifts between the two groups. They are complementary prestations appropriate to their respective status.
Hence in the above meeting conceptually female gifts were presented by the wife-takers. They included a female cloth (*tais*) and shoulder wrap, silver coins, one live pig and a sack of dehusked rice (*amnes*). The wife-givers respond with conceptually male gifts of one large man’s cloth (*mau naek*), two smaller waist cloths (*mau ana*), a number of ‘male’ betel nut containers (*ok tuke*) and a tobacco purse (*oko skiki*). In addition, as the feast holders the prospective wife-givers undertake to feed their guests with cooked rice and pork. The ceremony is concluded with dancing and music. The female/male symbolism expressed through the exchanges reinforces the asymmetrical relationship created upon marriage whereby wife-givers are conceptually male and wife-takers female.\(^{32}\)

At a pre-arranged time, a second ceremony termed the *ta nais uab*, is held. This represents a confirmation of the betrothal designed to make the intention public. It is sometimes referred to in Bahasa Indonesian as *terang kampung* (lit: to make clear to the settlement), which expresses the public nature of the intention.\(^{33}\) Once again wife-takers (*atoin amafet*) and wife-givers (*atoni amonet*) come together and a series of exchanges are undertaken.

The ceremony is conceptualised in two parts: to light the fire and strengthen the letter of proposal (*pin ai ma mepan sulat*). The first is expressed as a prestation by the wife-takers of one head of cattle or a large pig, along with a large sack of rice. The reciprocal gift from the wife-givers forms the meal of pork and cooked rice that all will partake of. Symbolically, the two sides ‘feed’ each other and in so doing express one of the principle aspects of the obligations encoded in marriage alliance between two groups. The opposed gifts presented by respective sides - raw food for cooked - expresses the asymmetry between the marrying sides. The prestation of raw food denotes social subordination, just as the harvest gifts presented to rulers in the past expressed political subordination.

At this point in the negotiation process there is an explicit commitment made by both sides. Should either party decide to pull out of their obligations, certain fines would be demanded by the other. If, for example, the prospective wife-takers decide
against pursuing the marriage they would forego the gifts of livestock and cloth presented up to that point. Conversely, if the girl was found to have taken another lover, she would be considered to have broken the restriction placed upon her by the *na poni bunkum hau noh* agreement. In such cases a fine of about twice the value of the gifts presented would be demanded. This is expressed in terms of wiping away the embarrassment caused to the man and his group. The degree of fines and the animosity created in such a split will be tempered by the closeness of the parties involved. Thus in widely separated groups who had no former alliance ‘path’ connecting them, the fine demanded would be considerably higher, as would the possibility of a complete severence in relations.

The successful completion of the second stage of the marriage process enables preparations to be made for the principal gift exchanges that follow. The often protracted negotiations which establish the logistics and obligations required for the event are undertaken by representatives of the respective groups. They are called the *nete lanan* (bridge path). This expresses their role as people who bridge the distance between the two marrying groups, all marriages being conceptualised in terms of either creating or recreating a path between groups. These men play an important role as mediators and argue the case for their side. Their skills may result in reducing the ceremonial obligations and financial cost to the group they represent.

The third stage in the formal marriage process culminates in a major ritual meeting variously referred to as ‘to enter the betel nut basket’ (*ta tam oko on puah manus*), ‘to open the gate’ (*ta soetan eno*), or ‘to climb the stile (of the fence) and descend (*sae toi ma sanu se'et*). All these phrases refer to formal aspects of the ceremony in which the woman is publically united with her husband. Preparations for this event require considerable planning and organisation. This is a period when existing patterns of alliance are activated and obligations between kindred are drawn upon. Each principal group in the marriage receives assistance from their immediate affines in the way of services and prestations which will be offered at the ritual event. Thus, for example, the bride-taking household will invite its own wife-giving and
wife-taking affines to meet and discuss what is required on their part. These negotiations may be glossed as ‘increasing the betel nut’ (*nlel puah manus*) and may include offerings of cloth, food, labour services.34 Conversely, affines of the principal bride-givers will assist with additions to the *nablua bife* (lit. the woman’s belongings), which form a type of dowry for the bride. It includes money, cloth, and other woven textiles which the young bride has been producing in expectation of her marriage.

When the date for the ceremony arrives, the wife-takers and their affines assemble at a convenient location near the wife-giver’s house compound. Last minute arrangements are organised and messages carried back and forth between the spokesmen for the two sides. But eventually the wife-takers will be informed that all is in preparation for their arrival.

At an appointed time the wife-takers begin to move as a collective group towards the compound of the wife-givers. Usually this occurs late at night when the final arrangements have been agreed upon [see plate 4].35

Within the compound of the wife-givers, a symbolic representation of the bride has been prepared and stands in the central meeting area. It is termed the *siki* and, in the following instance, was constructed of a bamboo frame covered in cloths and betel nut containers. A sprouted coconut was placed in the centre of the structure as a clear representation of the fertility of the new wife.

As the wife-takers draw closer, members of the wife-giving group begin to dance what is termed the *sbo’t ma ek enollek na siki lae* (the dance to shut the gate//to close the *siki*). In this case it is only men who undertake this task. They are members of the mother’s brother’s (*atoin amaf*) side of the woman to be married. This dance symbolises their protective role toward their sister’s daughter [plate 5].

Shutting the gate refers to the structure fashioned from long coconut-palm fronds and covered with a large woven cloth. It can be seen in the background of plate 5. Called the *klibat klabat*, it is the gate through which the wife-takers will pass. Today this is only a symbolic gesture which nevertheless maintains a link to the turbulent past when people were forced to live in high walled strongholds because of the prevalence of warfare.
As the two sides draw closer and meet at the gate entrance, a lively mock confrontation begins which will continue in varying degrees of intensity throughout the ritual meeting. Fighting swords are drawn and threatening moves and stances are made, which recall more violent days of the past. Women dance among the men in a counterclockwise motion with cloths draped across their shoulders [plate 6].

The mock confrontation is accompanied by fast drumming and playing of the ceremonial gongs. This performance has a strong implicit meaning. For behind the aggressive display and subsequent extreme politeness expressed in ritual speech is the knowledge that one group is losing a child to the name group (kanaf) of another. The fact that this is a logical demand of marriage exogamy rules does not mask the reality that a woman is given over and, with her, part of the spirit collectivity (smanaf) of her name group. The performance highlights the inherent tension involved in the creation of a marriage alliance.

At the entrance to the compound an exchange of ritual speech is conducted. This forms the first stage of ritual exchange, and is known as na soetan eno (to open the gate). Spokesmen for the respective groups (amolok, auab) exchange greetings and determine the ‘price’ for opening the gate. This will have been determined prior to the event. It often amounts to a prestation of a male pig or one head of cattle. Sometimes the speaker will pledge the gift of livestock using a young areca nut (puah mate) to stand in its place.

An example of the type of exchange which takes place is provided below. It represents a segment of one variant form of the words spoken at the klibat klabat gateway. Each speaker is able to draw on a range of paired ritual verses to express his position and no two weddings are exactly the same.

**Wife-takers speech**

*Neon apinat neon aklahat ho ate hebaiseun*  
Shining day glowing day  
your slave lowers his head

*mutoti mutankau lek leko neo amahonit tuan atao banetuan maut he au hake tnan*  
Requesting asking you properly  
life-giving lord  
guardian lord  
Permit me to stand in the midst of you
By this speech the wife-taking group acknowledges that there has already been a joint agreement between the two groups and that they have come with the best intentions. The speaker for the wife-givers then conducts a reply in equally polite terms.

In this exchange of speeches the groups surrounding the speakers support the verses in a defined pattern of response. The extreme politeness of the exchange seen in the use of references to the exalted place of the other side, and the wife-takers referring to themselves as 'your slave' (ho ate), contrasts strongly with the combative, albeit mock, tension between the two groups.

Second speaker replies for wife-givers

neon apinat neon aklahat
baisenu teni
ma lonaene ten
ahabet nane
amnit nane
elan kaomfa ma otam kaomfa
mas au baisenu
ma lonane neo
au enahonit
ma au amahonit
taub lek leko
tataib lek lek
ambi sonaf inan

Shining day glowing day
lowering my head again
and cupping my hands again
that which stands
and that which is placed
has no meaning or object
but I lower my head
and cup my hands to
my mother of life
and my father of life
the proper surroundings
the proper assembly
in the palace
In accepting the wife-takers words of obeisance and respect, the gate is opened by pulling away the cloth blocking the entrance. The leader of the wife-taking group raises his arm and calls his group through and into the compound of the wife-givers (see man centre right, plate 7).

As the wife-takers enter the ‘first’ gate (eno hi mese) they carry with them a prestation which is ultimately offered to the parents of the bride. This is termed the ut leot which in this case comprised a bottle of palm gin, a basket of uncooked rice, and a boar (faif peti) carried trussed up on the shoulders of several young men. Atop the pig was a rooster decorated in red and silver cloth. Covering the palm gin is a carved male figure decorated with silver coins and chicken feathers. Clearly all these gifts are symbolically male in this ceremony and serve to complement the ‘female’ siki mentioned earlier as the representation of the female. In terms of custom it would be improper and discourteous to present female animals at this time [plate 8].
As the wife-taking group comes through the gate, a general melee ensues, with dancing and mock battle. The object is to exchange the complementary representations from the respective groups [see plate 9]. These, however, must be wrestled away from those who protect them. The wife-takers must break through the cordon of people surrounding the *siki* and lift it out of the wife-giver's grasp. They are said to 'uproot the *siki*' (*naboko siki*)\(^{40}\) [see plate 10]. Meanwhile some of the wife-givers attempt to wrest the reciprocal offerings from the wife-takers, who duck and weave around to avoid capture. Notably it is men who claim the pig prestation, and women, the palm gin and rice. It would not be appropriate for a man to attempt to steal the rice offering.

When this exchange has been effected, the guests and hosts retire to the covered seating area where they wait for the formal speeches and gift exchanges to occur. The groom is taken to the entrance of the house, where a second gate stands between the groom and his future wife. On payment of a gift, usually money these days, he is ushered into the house, where he is blindfolded. He is then confronted with a third door (*ke'an*) behind which his bride is waiting. Here a third payment is offered and, when he 'captures' his wife, they both are ushered out into the main area.

Outside under the thatched shelter erected for the guests, a series of formal exchanges takes place between the wife-givers and wife-takers. There is no strict rule governing the quantity of prestations presented. Much depends on the outcome of the negotiations prior to the event and the relative wealth of the participating groups. Generally speaking, however, the principal representatives of the wife-giver's group should be acknowledged. This is marked by the presentation of a series of large betel nut containers (*oko mama*), which are offered to the respective houses of the wife-givers. Collectively these gifts are termed the 'old areca nut, the old betel pepper' (*puahmnasi manumnasi*).\(^{41}\) Betel nut is a polysemous symbol of exchange, expressed constantly in the everyday interaction of social life but which reaches its most formal expression during the marriage ceremony.\(^{42}\)

Ideally the wedding gifts of the wife-takers are presented to four representatives of the wife-giving affines. The first betel basket is given to the parents
PLATE 4 Arrival of the wife-takers

PLATE 5 Shutting the gate/ closing the siki
PLATE 6 Meeting at the gate

PLATE 7 Entering the compound
PLATE 8 The marriage gifts

PLATE 9 Exchanging the gifts
PLATE 10 Uprooting the siki
of the bride. The bride’s father is called the *ama tunaf* (hearth father). Together the parents are identified as ‘the hot water, the burning fire’ (*oe maputu ai melala*). This is a reference to the suffering experienced during the birth of the bride and acknowledges the debt owed to them. The gift may include money, cloths for both parents and the earlier gifts of rice and pig. In cases where the bride has been fostered by another household, the foster parents will also receive a portion of the gifts. If the father of the bride had not completed his own bridewealth obligations, the gifts would rightfully belong to the brother of the bride’s mother (*atoin amaf*).

A second betel container is presented to the younger brothers of the bride’s father. They are termed the *ama nanaf* (inside fathers). The third betel container is presented to the bride’s mother’s eldest brother. He is referred to as the *atoin amaf* (lit. male father) and represents the principle wife-giver to the bride’s father. The fourth container is reserved for the ‘trunk father’ (*am uf*). Strictly speaking they represent the first identifiable wife-giver of the *atoin amaf* and maintains a distant yet influential voice over the conduct of the marriage. In practice, often the *atoin amaf* also represents the *am uf* group, as the earlier links may have lapsed. In all the weddings I witnessed, the gifts presented to these figures tended to be equivalent to but smaller in amount than those to the bride’s parents.

With the completion of the main prestations all people join in feasting and dancing. Wife-takers as the guests are fed first. As the ceremony draws to a close, the wife-takers may present a final prestation of food to their hosts. This is normally a gift of rice and livestock and is accepted by women and men from the wife-giver’s side. The gifts are stored away from the ground and scavenging dogs as the name of the ritual prestations suggest: *na saeba neo panat* ([gifts which we] raise up upon the platform).

In reciprocity, the wife-givers make a prestation of cooked food designed to ‘feed’ the wife-takers (*atoin amafet*) on their journey home. Called *tuek oe ma ok beti* (the bamboo water container and rice basket), the prestation often includes cooked rice, pork or beef, green coconuts, bananas and sugar cane.43 The young bride may leave with her new husband at this point.
The conduct of the marriage ceremony may also offer the opportunity to undertake a Christian wedding at this time. In contemporary life, most marriages are formalised through the church even where the more traditional ceremony has not been completed. This is partly dependent, however, on the commitment of the settlement elders to the Christian faith. In some less devout areas, many years may elapse before the formal Christian wedding is undertaken.

Today young couples may marry prior to the exchange of bridewealth. This is dependent on consensus between the families of the bride and groom. The choice to marry before the traditional ceremonies, however, may result in disputes as, technically, a woman may not be united with her new husband until the formal acceptance of the prestations constituting the *puahmnasi manumnasi*. To marry in church before she has been taken by her husband denigrates the significance of the older marriage custom some will say. On the other hand, conducting a Christian service in conjunction with the customary marriage exchanges allows for certain economies of finance and time. Thus the issue is open to negotiation.

The Christian service allows the young couple to dress in their finery and become the centre of attention in the wider ceremonial context in which they play minor public roles. Following the service they gather outside to be instructed on the correct behaviour in marriage (*simo fenekat*) by a church elder, and accept presents and gifts from well-wishers and relatives.

At an agreed upon time following the successful conclusion of the prestations culminating in the gifts of the *puahmnasi manumnasi*, the wife-giving affines are invited to reciprocate once again at a feast held at the house of the so-called ‘new’ husband (*moen feuf*). The nature of this final ritual meeting is conceived of as a journey to the settlement of the wife-takers. However it is often the case, especially in these times of larger settlements, that both groups form part of the same community. Nevertheless the expressions remain faithful to a time when family groups lived in discrete and separate hamlets.

This event is termed the *ike ma suti on ta naim na fani* (lit. the spindle and bowl, the water pot and plate). It refers explicitly to the gifts presented by the wife-
giving group to assist in the establishment of the young couple's new household. The phase evokes a number of associations which characterise traditional collective thought about marriage. The image of the *ike ma suti* is at one level female in character. It is only women who use these implements to fashion woven cotton textiles. It represents one of her traditional tasks in the marriage home. At another level of symbolism the two implements stand as complementary opposites. The conceptually male spindle is combined with the 'female' spinning bowl to create a strong thread: just as the marriage of this man and woman entwines the two groups in a strong alliance.

Until this ceremonial gift giving is completed, the new wife is prohibited from returning to her natal community or house. This is strictly adhered to as far as I could tell; transgression would threaten the health of the young couple or their offspring through undefined supernatural means.

When the preparations for bringing the *ike ma suti* are complete, the bride-giving group travels *en masse* to the household of their 'daughter'. This journey is said to 'erase the footsteps' (*nosen nobin*) of the new bride, who has gone to live with her husband. Following in her footsteps they erase the evidence of her departure. This is to avoid the possibility of malevolent spirits following her path to the new house and possibly bringing sickness or disaster upon the new marriage. Until the reciprocal ceremony is completed, the new bride remains vulnerable. It is therefore in the interests of all concerned to undertake this final series of prestations.

The nature of the prestations varies considerably between groups. Much depends on the relative wealth of the wife-givers and the level of prestations offered by their new wife-takers. While this represents an opportunity to express largess and thereby gain prestige, one must always be careful not to offend the other side through extravagant or parsimonious displays. Alleged insult and slights on character often result in dispute and acrimony leading to fines and long delays.

Gifts which form this part of the exchange may include rights to parcels of land, cattle, rights to particular tree crops (e.g. coconuts, areca or lontar), pillows and
cloths, and a range of kitchenware for the new couple such as cups, glasses, plates, baskets, pots, cutlery and table cloths. In all, the gifts represent a substantial contribution towards the settlement of the marriage and one that highlights the essential complementarity of the marriage ceremony. More than this, the final return gifts which seal the marriage ceremony do not constitute an ending of obligations but rather a beginning. Upon receipt of the *ike ma suti*, the new husband acknowledges his life long debt to his wife’s family. The Atoin meto have a saying that, from that point onwards, the *moen feu* should not arrive at the house of his *atoin amaf* or *am tunaf* with empty shoulder and empty hand (*kanemfa ben luman*/*kanemfa nim luman*). The wife-taker must always endeavour to provide support to his wife-givers upon request. This obligation is sanctioned in the belief that one’s wife-giver maintains the power of life and death over the wife-taker.44

In addition, the closing ceremony of marriage contains within it the transference of jural rights over the future children of the marriage to the husband and his name group. During the feasting rituals of the *ike ma suti* a secondary ceremony, termed *na sanut nono*’ or *kaus nono*, is completed. The *nono*’ or fertility rituals associated with the woman’s name group, which are said to be carried on the head, are taken down or ‘wiped clean’ and replaced by those of her husband. In other words, the new wife formally takes on the *kanaf* group name of her husband and, by inference, the ritual observances of his group.45 Today this is a largely symbolic exercise to the extent that these rituals are no longer publically performed in contemporary Protestant Christian society.46 The rights over children are nevertheless still transferred by this ceremony. This means, for example, that the father of the children controls their destiny instead of the mother’s father or brothers, and will claim marriage prestations and obligations in future years.

This ceremony marks the formal completion of the full marriage process, which ideally takes place over one or two years. Upon completion, the result is that the husband may now live with his wife in the settlement of his father. This ideal is frequently achieved and has the practical result that the new household now lives in a
separate settlement to the woman’s natal group. The bonds that link the wife-givers and wife-takers are not severed, but the husband need only show deference to his wife’s brothers or fathers when he visits his wife’s settlement. This is the politically desirable result for most Atoin meto men, but one which women may be reluctant to support because it would mean that they may have to leave their natal settlement. Frequently formal bridewealth ceremonies may be delayed. The standard Atoin meto reply to delays in payment is that:

\[
\text{lene fekana mahaf} \quad \text{the garden has not yet produced food}
\]
\[
\text{ma tua fekana oef} \quad \text{and the lontar is yet to produce sap}
\]

In other words, the new couple are still accumulating the means to complete their bridewealth obligations. In such cases the married couple may live for a time in the community of the bride’s father. In doing so, the new husband would be required to assist his immediate wife-givers with labour support. Women are often quite content with this arrangement as they are not forced to leave their family and close agnates. Rights over the children of the marriage will be also strongly influenced by the woman’s family at this time. The particular arrangement that is pursued is largely dependent on the nature of the relationship between the affinal groups and the particular residential pattern involved. If, for example, both wife-giver and wife-taker live in the same settlement, residence patterns will not alter, but the young husband will remain socially subordinate to his wife-giver. With the concentration of settlements in recent years, this latter feature is becoming more common.

**Alternative Strategies**

As in many societies, the patience demanded of young people to wait out the long period before they formally cohabit is sometimes overtaxed. Occasionally, as well, a man is refused permission to marry the woman of his choice. This may arise for a number of reasons: an old unresolved dispute, the marriage may mean an unfavourable reversal in the direction of alliance, the suitor may lack visible means to support the woman, or he may have a bad reputation within the community. Indeed,
there may be a myriad of reasons why a father and mother would be reluctant to accept the man’s request.

One course open to the young lovers at that point is an action termed *mnaenat*, literally abduction, but more akin to the notion of elopement as the young woman is usually a willing partner in the subterfuge. This is not a form of marriage, but rather a way to force the woman’s family to accept a de facto relationship.

The course of *mnaenat* proceeds in a culturally prescribed fashion. But while the action is condoned, it is nevertheless considered a somewhat shameful exercise and one that lowers the ‘name’ of the households involved and, by extension, the prestige of the young man’s *kanaf*. In contrast to negotiations for the formal conduct of marriage, which is said to occur ‘in the light of day’ (*nenepupu*), abduction always occurs at night. People will say, *sin nai nok fai mesokan*, they go in the dark night, alluding to their action, which is secretive and akin to that of thieves (*atoin abakat*).

To initiate the *mnaenat*, a young man will meet with his girlfriend, possibly accompanied by a brother or cousins, and together they will make their way back to his settlement. It is then customary for the young couple to remain secluded for 4 days and 4 nights before officially informing the woman’s father. Although it is rare for violence to occur following an abduction, tensions may run high and emotional outbursts may occur. In one case I followed, the young man brought his young woman to the house of his mother’s brother (*babaf*). He was afraid of the reaction of his father and sought sympathetic support initially. As it happened, his father was angry and later described their situation as *lais matane* (a weighty matter) by which they had now become thieves of a woman (*atoin abak bife*). Their theft inevitably caused some embarrassment to both sides. It was clear that her family would have ‘hot hearts and angry heads’ (*nekan maputu, nakan atoh*) and would have to be compensated in order to ‘cool’ their hearts and re-establish proper relations.

The period of seclusion of the couple has the effect of signalling that sexual relations have occurred, which means that the woman’s family is obliged to allow the union to continue. As one man described it, ‘when you mix honey and water in a
bottle, you cannot separate them again'. It is therefore in the best interests of both sides to arrive at some mutual agreement and settlement.

On the fourth or fifth day a delegation will be sent to the house of the woman’s father to inform him officially that the ‘abduction’ has taken place. A neutral party usually agrees to perform this function. At the same time the church elders and the village headman will be informed to avoid the possibility of serious disputation between communities or villages if the houses live some distance apart. When informing the woman’s family, words of conciliation are required. They seek to ‘wipe away the shame’ of the woman’s parents. The sense conveyed metaphorically is one of ‘uprighting the chairs that were knocked over during the theft of the girl’ (toko tafen ta fani). They will seek to agree on a date for a settlement of the dispute, which requires the abductors to pay a fine.

The fine is known as ek eno nuam tenu (to shut the two and three gates). This evokes the image of the young man stealing into the house and opening the doors of the house to seek out the young woman. The fact that they may have met and run off some distance from the house does not alter the expression of the violation.

Until the fine is paid, the young woman is not permitted to return to her parent’s house. Transgressions of this restriction are thought to threaten the health and life of the woman. This is one of the reasons why, ideally, settlement is usually conducted swiftly and successfully. Otherwise the woman’s family would have to live with their loss.

Atoin meto from this part of Amanuban often stress that it is the decision of the woman’s group which determines the size of the fine to be paid. However, this is largely a pretence and considerable bargaining may occur. Pleading poverty and inability to pay may succeed in reducing the level of the fine. There is no fixed settlement price. An amount of money, livestock, or cloth will usually suffice. With the completion of this obligation, the young couple are acknowledged as a focal point of alliance between the two groups. In order to marry, however, the formal ceremonial exchanges discussed earlier, or some variant on them, are still needed. In many cases
this may not occur for years and the couple are therefore married in all but name. They may establish a separate household together and raise a family.

Aside from the de facto ‘marriage’ created through mnaenat, there are several other ‘marriage’ options which individuals may adopt. These form a significant proportion of marriages for impoverished groups and those where, politically, there is little significance resting upon the marriage.

The first is termed to marry asu ma bibi (lit. dog and goat). The sense of the phrase is that the male suitor is caught in flagrante delicto, so to speak, by the family of the woman. This would be extended to an unplanned pregnancy where the father of the child is named and confesses. Alternatively a young couple will merely begin living together to signal their intention. Settlement members will nevertheless say that the man has been tied and hobbled (loki ma nake), like a dog which has been caught trying to steal a man’s goat. In such cases the young man is required to live in the settlement of the woman’s family under the authority of her father. This will continue until he has secured the means to undertake a formal marriage ceremony. In effect he often remains living uxorilocally and is obliged to assist his de facto wife-givers, when required. While this is certainly a less prestigious form of ‘marriage’ and the young man will not have a significant voice in community affairs, it offers opportunities to obtain rights to arable land. Young men who migrate into new areas or who have little access to land may adopt this strategy in order to marry and receive use rights to land from their ‘wife’s’ family. Once again, however, the father of children in this situation has limited claims on the direction of their lives.

Another alternative is termed to ‘marry in’ (kaib natam), which is opposed to the formal process of marrying out. Impoverished men may seek to marry into another house and kanaf group without the intention of completing bridewealth payments. In former times this meant the man’s full incorporation into his wife’s group to the extent of taking her kanaf group name and assuming its ritual prescriptions. He places himself in a weak position within the wider household but may benefit through access to use rights over land and the support of the wife’s kin group. This is a relatively
uncommon and ultimately disrespectful strategy to take, as a man effectively rejects
his own group name and may be said to act like a woman.

Death and Mortuary Ritual

If marriage may be said to represent a focus for the creation of new alliances
between households and the kanaf segments to which they belong, death within the
house forms another important focus for the activation and reaffirmation of alliance
ties. Death in southern Amanuban is marked by public expressions of grief and ritual
feasting in varying degrees of intensity. Death, like marriage, is a focus for group
interaction and reciprocal exchange. The rituals which surround death are, like all
other stages of the life cycle, conducted to effect a transition from one status to
another.

Like much of traditional life in southern Amanuban, however, the rituals of
Atoin meto death have undergone substantial transformation with the establishment of
Christianity as the dominant religious orientation. The former tradition, though
remembered well by many older people, is today regarded as a dark element of the
animistic past and generally unacceptable in the contemporary environment. Mortuary
rituals were probably most closely associated with ancestor beliefs which missionaries
and churchmen, particularly of the evangelical Protestant kind, have actively
attempted to suppress.

One of the principal consequences of change has been that contemporary
mortuary rituals are now considerably simplified. The ritual process, once associated
with the transition of the dead person to the ancestral realm of the spirits, has now
been collapsed into one or two gatherings where Christian prayers and communal
feasting are undertaken. The Indonesian Government has actively promoted this
development as a measure to counter what is perceived as the wasteful and largely
unproductive outlays involved in more traditional forms of mortuary practice. So, for
instance, the slaughter of many animals which used to accompany funeral feasts is
strongly discouraged, as is the practice of leaving a corpse lying in the house for many
days while waiting for the various related affinal and agnatic groups to arrive and offer condolences.

In the contemporary context, all human death is regarded, in one sense, as equally significant. The spirit of God (*smanaknino*) is thought to flow in the blood of all individuals and therefore each human death should be respected and honoured. However, aside from the personal grief, which will naturally vary with the degree of personal loss felt by relatives, it is always acknowledged that some deaths are more important than others. The death of a newborn child or an impoverished individual has less impact than the death of a highly respected ritual chanter or an authority figure with extensive social ties throughout the area. These differences are reflected in the size and extent of the funeral service which is undertaken. All funerals, however, tend to follow a broadly similar pattern.

In the event of death, a closely related kinsman assumes the role of organiser of the funeral. Known as the *fes tuaf* or *sus tuaf*, the identity of this individual depends on the person who dies. Thus, if an elderly man dies, his eldest son would normally assume the position. If a youth or child dies, the father would become *fes tuaf*. Usually, if a married woman dies, her husband will inform his wife's elder brother (*atoin amaf*) and both will share the responsibility for overseeing the funeral. The issue is open to a certain degree of negotiation and personal inclination.

The key role of the *fes tuaf* is to ensure that all the respective groups who trace close relations to the grieving household, be they agnatic or affinal, are informed of the death. This is described in terms of *ta poitan haif* (lit. to let out the feet) whereby young men are directed to carry the news of the death to the respective settlements of related kin and affines. The Atoin meto describe these groups as the related ‘paths’ (*lanan*) of the household, which may be widely separated over the territory depending on the personal history of the household. Some funerals may involve the attendance of a dozen or more *lanan*, each of which may comprise a number of distinct household groups. The important requirement, say the Atoin meto, is to inform the elders (*mnasi mnasi*) of both agnatic and affinal groups. In affinal terms, the *fes tuaf* will inform the
married sisters and daughters of the deceased, who represent the mediating links to separate affinal paths, and it is their responsibility to inform their own husband’s agnatic kin, who will each attend as a wife-taking path.

The relatives assemble at the house of the deceased, who is laid out on a platform within. A thatched marquee (neu’) is constructed immediately in front of the house, with seating arrangements for guests. As each lanan group arrives, led by the married sister or daughter of the kanaf group involved, there is a formal expression of grief accompanied by a general crying and wailing. This is often taken up by those inside the house as the guests enter the courtyard. Filing into the house, the members of the respective lanan offer their condolences and greet the gathered relatives with tearful intimacy. The grief has a certain ritual quality associated with it and, although not feigned, these expressions of loss soon quieten as the guests take their seats and converse quietly among themselves. The lamentations of those attending the deceased waxes and wanes with the arrival of new guests to the house.

Each lanan will bring what is termed the besi ma taka (the knife and rice basket). These usually comprise gifts of rice and livestock, although at present equivalent gifts of money or, alternatively, foodstuffs such as honey and coffee may be offered.

When all the respective lanan have assembled at the house of the deceased, the funeral proper may be carried out. Most communities in southern Amanuban maintain small cemeteries (kuan nitu) close to the settlement area where the deceased are said to ‘gather together’ (nitu nabuambin) in death.52

The corpse is wrapped in a large cloth and placed within a simple wooden coffin (pet nitu), often fashioned from the trunk of a lontar or gewang palm. These are sometimes decorated with painted Christian motifs. Conventionally, wife-giving affines and agnatic kin of the deceased participate in carrying the coffin to the grave site. The guests walk behind carrying stones which will be heaped upon the grave. In all the ceremonies I have witnessed in this area, Christian prayers are conducted by a local preacher at the grave site. He requests that the soul of the dead be accepted into
the realm of God’s divine domain. The coffin is lowered into the grave with the head facing west. In explanation, people remark that this is the correct orientation because, just as we enter the world head first, so we should leave the land of the living in this manner. Alternatively, I have heard it said that the feet are oriented to the east so that if the deceased were to sit up, it would be facing east and the rising sun. Still other people claim that the head should be oriented towards the ancient rock of kanaf origins (faut uf). The significant variation in orientation of graves in the district makes it difficult to say anything definite on this matter.

As in rituals of childbirth and marriage, the role of the mother’s brother (atoin amaf) is prominent in the mortuary ceremony. It is said that he has the right to ‘claim the head’ (in naeti nakaf) and to ‘request the return of the sweat’ (toit na fani haet) which alludes to the life-cycle duties he has performed for his sister’s house and that of her children. Often this amounts to the provision of a head of cattle and a gift of money.

In addition, the atoin amaf is also responsible for overseeing the distribution of meat and rice to the alliance paths who attended the ceremony. These distributions of freshly slaughtered livestock and cooked rice are known as the ok beti ma tuek oe (rice basket and bamboo water container). The implication is that the grieving household provides the means for the respective ‘paths’ to undertake their return journey. In reality, the prestations comprise baskets of cooked rice (poni es) and bundles of roasted meat (sisi pah es). In the distributions the atoin amaf is responsible for the division of the meat, and his wife (bifel atoin amaf) divides up the massed pile of cooked rice. The proportions given to the different ‘paths’ varies in relation to the size of the group and the type of prestation that is owed to them from previous mortuary distributions. The general view, however, as one man put it, is that ‘whether a lot or a little, all paths must receive something’. The distribution is given to the path groups as a collectivity. Later this is divided among the respective households who participated in the group.

The burial marks the end of the first formal stage of death. Some time later a second mortuary ritual is undertaken to construct a concrete grave over the burial site.
The timing of this event varies considerably from household to household. In some cases, in the interests of economy and efficiency, the concrete gravestone may be made at the time of burial. In other instances years may elapse. Cementing the grave represents a form of honouring the dead and can be motivated by the decision of the household to construct a larger modern house. It is believed by many people that, should a new house be constructed and the graves of the ancestors remain neglected and uncemented, misfortune and sickness could befall the house members. In this attitude, which is derided by more fervent Christians, who regard it as a remnant of ancestor worship, it is possible to observe the continuing significance of the hidden spirit world upon the living community.

Death in the Past

Although the former patterns of mortuary ritual are now rarely practised in traditional form in southern Amanuban, it is worth mentioning some of the important features of these ritual practices. They highlight key cultural and social concerns about the nature of death and the obligations of related households. These concerns are more muted in the contemporary context, but still provide much of the underlying motivation, upon which present practice is based.

One of the important distinctions made about death in former times was whether an individual died inside or outside the hamlet. Death which occurred outside the house and hamlet was considered a bad death and one which was conceptually threatening to the well-being of the members of the household and community. Outside deaths (maet mone) were considered ritually hot (maet maputu) in contrast to the conceptually 'cool' deaths of the inside (maet bi nanan). Deaths which occurred 'outside' were associated with violent or sudden fatalities and included such actions as murder, suicide (maetkukurun), falling from a palm tree or being gored by a buffalo and, during last century, death from headhunting. However, the primary consideration was that death occurred away from the locus of the household and the 'tame' (aem) realm of domesticated space and in the region designated as conceptually 'wild' (fui). One of
the other modes of classification of death was the distinction between ‘wild water’
death (oe fui) and ‘tame water’ death (oe aem).\textsuperscript{54} The deceased in such cases was also
referred to as the uik fuin ma teuffuin (the wild banana and wild sugar cane).

The important consequence of an ‘outside’ death was that the corpse was not
allowed to be brought into the community. Furthermore, it could only be attended to in
the first instance by ritual specialists (amnane) who were knowledgeable in spells and
the power of the le’u. Their task was to contain the spiritual potency of the corpse so
that no further harm could befall the community. In such cases, the mortuary rituals
were usually abbreviated and a speedy burial was conducted near to the site of the
death. The ritual involved digging up an immature banana stem and sugar cane (uik
tuna teme, teuf tuna teme) and planting them at the burial site of the outside death.

It was believed that in cases of ‘outside death’ the spirit or soul of the dead
person was thenceforth lost to the collectivity of the kanaf group to which it belonged.
Since each kanaf was associated with its own le’u nono’ (fertility sphere) that
encompassed the living members and the ancestors (nitu) of the hidden world, bad
deaths meant that the spirit (smanaf) of those individuals who died outside would
remain in a disconnected wandering state and could be harmful to living individuals
should they encounter them.\textsuperscript{55}

In contemporary society this distinction has lost much of its significance with
the adoption of Christianity. Today it is widely accepted that all individuals should be
accorded a Christian burial irrespective of where and how they died. This does not
mean, however, that the older beliefs have disappeared altogether. There is significant
variation in the degree to which individuals take the older pattern of ideas into
consideration. In areas where the older tradition persists more strongly, sudden death
is still distinguished ritually.

In 1985 I noted the case of a young man who fell to his death while attempting
to gather wild honey in the forest not far from the hamlet. His death was troubling to
the community because he had elected to rob the beehives without conducting the
appropriate ritual prayers associated with honey collection.\textsuperscript{56}
His immediate household and close relatives, however, were fervent Pentecostal Christians and decided to bring his broken body into the hamlet for burial. This was carried out and a Christian service and mortuary ceremony was held. Not everyone, however, was in agreement with this course of action and a number of older individuals expressed the opinion that the dead man (amates) should have been buried where he fell and a Christian cooling ceremony held to render his death and the site harmless. Their views were overruled. But I later spoke with a young man who was herding cattle in the area and he complained that since the death, he now had great difficulty in rounding up his herd and would hear them continually crying out in the forest. This he attributed to the continuing presence of the dead man’s spirit, which was still at large.57

In the past, the role of the mother’s brother (atoin amaf) was more prominent than it is today among Protestant Christian groups. His symbolic role as the life-giving affine and guardian of the life cycle rituals of his sister’s children was clearly expressed in his role in the burial. In the burial ceremony, as they carried the deceased to the grave, the atoin amaf took a position at the front or at the head. Before reaching the burial site, however, the affines who carried the deceased from behind would resist and attempt to stop the process. A ‘tug of war’ (ma jolon) over the deceased ensued, which inevitably ended in success for the wife-givers who would continue their journey to the grave. This ritual was explicitly symbolic of wrenching the deceased (amates) from the living community.58

A further aspect of death in the past was the existence of a practice known as natola (to honour), which contrasted with the relatively more common and straightforward burial practice of apul afu (lit. to close the ashes), in which the corpse was buried more or less immediately. In cases where a powerful political authority died, burial may have been delayed for some time, even years in special cases. This was directly related to the requirement for a large funeral feast and the need to organise and accommodate the large number of guests who would attend. Instead of burial, the corpse was placed in a wooden frame above the ground. A smouldering fire
was kept burning under the coffin and the corpse was slowly smoked and dried over time. The phrase used was *se’it*, which I have translated as ‘roasted’. I was informed that when the father of Kolo Meo feto (Nabuasa) died, his body was kept preserved in this way for one year. Throughout that period a large number of people kept ‘guard’ over the body and songs (*obet*) were sung each night at the site until his eventual burial.

One of the features which distinguishes death and mortuary rituals in the contemporary world from those of the past is the greater emphasis placed on death as a passage. Just as childbirth requires a period of ritually controlled stages before the new life enters the community, so death used to be marked by ritual processes of separation from the living. A major responsibility of the mother’s brother (*atoin amaf*) was to supervise the rites of separation between the dead and the living and thereby enable the living to come out of mourning. The timing of the ritual stages of death closely resembled those used in childbirth rituals.

Three nights after the burial of the deceased a small ceremony called *ta uki ta fenu* was carried out. A specialist diviner (*amnane*) would approach the burial site and begin to call the spirit of the deceased in ritual speech. He would call to the *fatun* (rock name) of the deceased and request its attendance. The attendant group of relatives would then seek a sign from the basket of cooked food placed on the grave. Changes or disturbances in the food signalled that the ancestral spirit was present and accepting the food offering. Alternatively, the appearance of a crow (*kol ka*) could also be taken as confirmation of the ancestor’s presence. At that point the family members would also begin eating as a commensal gesture to the spirit world.

Following this ceremony a large feast would be organised for the fortieth night after burial. All the respective agnatic and affinal ‘paths’ would attend with meat and rice offerings. The culminating point of this ritual was the construction of the circular stone grave (*baki naukae*), about a metre high, to mark the burial place.

The final stage of death was marked on the one-hundredth day following the death when a closing prayer was offered. This marked the formal completion of
mortuary requirements and ensured that the ancestral spirit was firmly established in its rightful place within the hidden world and the *nono'* fertility sphere of the name group. In this way the death of the old was intimately associated with the birth of the new.

**Conclusion**

I began this chapter by stating that the house and household represented a fundamental focus of activities from birth through death for the individual in Atoin meto society. It is the core unit of society both literally and symbolically in so far as it is often invoked metaphorically to differentiate between degrees of social enclosure. Above all, the house and its members represent an interactive centre for the maintenance and articulation of the ties of alliances which bind separate groups together.

The practical consequences of this social reality are found in the flow of reciprocal exchanges of gifts and services that must be maintained in the context of community. These obligations are based in turn on the social fact that all households are dependent for their development and continuity on the services of other households. In giving life through marriage, wife-givers also assume the responsibility for the life cycle of their wife-taking affines. But wife-givers are also wife-takers in turn, and it is through these complex webs of interdependence at the level of social practice that communities and households are created and reproduced. Communication through exchange is also articulated between the living and the dead. Life and death are reciprocal domains constituted asymmetrically and dualistically.
In the course of this thesis I have been concerned to investigate some of the definitive features of present-day settlement, migration patterns and cultural practice in south west Timor. I have argued that an understanding must begin with an examination of the historical antecedents of the contemporary social environment. This is because it is clear that the social order of present-day community structures is founded on and expressed through cultural idioms which derive from the past. Claims to land and social standing in the community are informed and legitimated through the customary knowledge inherited from ancestral experience. I have described this orientation as one in which social reproduction is realised through an interplay between notions of place and precedence. These social processes are embedded in and expressed through a complex of reciprocal gift exchange.

An analysis of the past, and specifically the version of the past constituted in ritual verse and expressed by members of the clan (*kanaf*) of Nabuasa in southern Amanuban, led me to propose the existence in the nineteenth century of an autonomous Atoin meto *meo* (headhunter) polity. Support for this view can be found in contemporary Dutch accounts of the period.

In the process of presenting the ritualised Nabuasa account of their past, I have argued that we are dealing with an indigenous model of political order, one which offers a variant theme of political process to that derived from the study of other domains in West Timor, particularly Insana and Beboki. For the purposes of my argument I have suggested that the significance of this perspective on political order lies less in the historical truth of the account than it does in the particular way it is encoded in narration. It is worthwhile summarising the principal features which emerged from this study.
Political process in southern Amanuban, although practically organised on the basis of asymmetry and close attention to differences in status, did not amount to a rigidly formalised system faithfully reproduced in an historical mould. The brief period within which the independent Nabuasa polity flourished and then contracted mitigated against any such long-term consolidation of political organisation. I have argued, on the contrary, that the Nabuasa political system was a dynamic one, open-ended and inherently unstable. The development of this independent system required constant redefinition to encompass an expanding territory and allied population. In this sense the political model which developed under the meo naek Nabuasa was essentially a contingent one, which reflected the widespread political uncertainty and warfare in the interior of West Timor during the nineteenth century. Nabuasa dominance of the political system was based both on a monopoly of the ritual means of warfare (le' u musu) and the authority to influence the conceptual order of the polity. So, for instance, political allies were organised around subsidiary centres in multiples of double pairs. The expansion of the federated polity was formulated in terms of the replication of a core model of quadripartition.

What generated this model within the Nabuasa polity was a flexible corpus of conventional metaphors, cast in a dualistic form and applied systematically to the flux of shifting social conditions. These images of political order were persuasive rhetorical tools which provided meaning structures in an otherwise fragmented environment of localised clan segments and household groups. The significance of these metaphors as authoritative images derived in large part from the fact that they were relative, not fixed, constructs, at once highly contextual and often ambiguous. There was always a strong sense of negotiability in the political order. It was this feature, I believe, which enabled the political system to expand and become increasingly differentiated and at the same time to acknowledge the continuing dominance of the Nabuasa centre.

The dynamic qualities of this model meant that the ruling Nabuasa house could occupy the navel (usan) of the polity and at the same time, but in different contexts,
also be conceived of as the head (*nakan*) of the body politic. Similarly, as one of the four bulls, the four males (*keus ha, moen ha*) of Amanuban, Nabuasa acted as a pre-eminent male figure, but at the same time could be described in conceptually female terms as the ‘great hearth wood, the great hearth stone’ (*tuna naek ma nuta naek*). Thus the Nabuasa leader was described as one who only ‘sat and slept’ like the categorical female ritual lords (*atupas*) of the eastern Atoin meto domains. This indeterminacy in the conceptual gender of the centre, I believe, was intentional or at least providential, because it served the political interests of the ruling group and suggested associations with the unified dualism of the supreme being (*Uis neno Uis Pah*) and the hidden realm of ancestral spirits (*ena ama*: mother father, *nai bei*: grandfather grandmother), both of which were conceived of in terms of complementary male and female elements.

From another perspective, the precedence of the Lasi political centre was expressed as the ‘elder brother’ in relation to the subsidiary ‘younger brother’ Nabuasa domains in the expanded polity. But, in turn, the four core Nabuasa centres of Noebeba were conceptually ‘male’ in relation to their four ‘female’ *usif* counterparts. In this latter configuration the federated domain was conceived of as one house, a superordinate inner domain contrasted to the subordinate outer political world. The image of the house is also replicated at the sub-domain level, where the four allies as the four posts support their central ‘covering’ Lord. The numbers four and five in different contexts always infer notions of unity and completeness. The integrative force inherent in these conventional idioms of political order and alliance provided fertile avenues for the articulation and exercise of political power. Relative context was and remains extremely important in the maintenance of alliance and in the formulation of asymmetric status distinctions.

The Nabuasa case study confirms one of the central tenets of Atoin meto politics: that the extent and development of a political system was dependent on the power accorded its centre. Power emanated from the centre and extended outwards at a diminishing rate until at some point it ceased to exert any influence at all, or rather,
the power of a rival centre was able to exert a more compelling influence.¹ In this system the more central the position objectively, the more powerful. But only up to a point, because the further away from the centre, the greater the capacity and opportunity to act independently. This was always the dilemma in traditional Amanuban politics. The greater the size of the polity the greater the likelihood, paradoxically, of its dissolution and dissipation into mutually antagonistic sub-domains. It is this which precipitated the formation of Noebeba as an independent *meo* (headhunter) polity detached from the ruling Nope clan centre at Niki Niki. This principle also explains the decline in power of the Nabuasa centre following intervention by the Dutch during the early twentieth century. As the moral force of Lasi weakened, the outlier sub-domains sought self-determination and equal standing.

The history of twentieth-century southern Amanuban has been one of diverse change. Throughout this period, however, I have argued that Atoin meto communities have only superficially relinquished their orientation to the former political system and to the inherited corpus of metaphorical idioms through which they reproduce their culture. I have shown that they continue to utilise this knowledge to interpret and organise experience in the contemporary world. In this way the present is still constituted in terms of the past and represents the culmination of a particular culture history formally expressed through a rich store of dyadically composed metaphors of life.

A number of these core metaphors continually recur in the unfolding of social life, especially in formalised ritual contexts of life-cycle transitions or the reaffirmation of political alliances. They might be considered metaphors of continuity which are embedded in ritual and practice within southern Amanuban culture. The notion of the gate (*eno*) and the path (*lanan*) is one polysemic example. The phrase evokes multiple associations in social life. The path is at once the historic journey of the ancestors and the personal journey of one's life. It is the defining image of a society based on shifting agriculture and is the linking (and often literal) metaphor of related hamlet communities. The notion of the path expresses the relationship between
affines through marriage exchange, mortuary rituals and the continuity of alliance. The number of affinal paths (lanan) of a name group is the measure of the density of its social network.

Complementing the notion of path is that of the gate. Gates represent boundaries in a variety of contexts. Gates (eno) to political domains, community settlements and houseyards are all thresholds which distinguish levels of social enclosure. Gates are markers of events and points of transition. They serve to limit and define the direction and extent of the connecting paths.

A second example of the multiple associations expressed through a core idiom is that of trunk and tip (uf ma tunaf). This botanical metaphor evokes an organic image of continuity, directedness, and an unfolding similar to that of the path. Like the image of the tree, social life has its source and its growing tip. Just as the ancestors are the ‘trunk’ of life for the kanaf and the children are the tip or flowers (sufan), so in marriage alliance it is the wife-giver’s wife-giver who is trunk or source of life (am uf) to their wife-taker’s wife-taker. Those who come first (ahunut) provide life to those who follow behind (amunit). This is the enveloping metaphor of the name group kanaf, the kuan (hamlet) embodying the kua tuaf and atoin asaot, and ultimately the wider social domain itself. Society is a tree which must be fertilized in order to grow. This is why a barren marriage is thought of as one with ‘no sprout and no growing tip’ (kama u kama tunaf).

In addition to these idioms of continuity are the range of complementary associations which serve to delineate relative precedence. In the process of mediation through reciprocal exchange or rites of transition they provide the conditions for ensuring life and prosperity. In the course of the thesis I have sought to highlight the significance of this mode of orientation in a wide range of social practices. Thus, we have seen the pervasive application of such distinctions as female and male (feto/ mone), inside and outside (nanan/ kotin), heated states and cool states (maputul/ manikin), head and foot (nakan/ hain), tame and wild (aem / fui) wide and confined (manuan/ ma’lenat), day and night (nenol/ fai) and right and left (ne’u/ li), to name but
a few of the more prominently expressed ideas. In illustrating the importance of these notions within social life, I have tended to highlight more formal ritual contexts where their usage is explicitly articulated.

Consciously applied and manipulated, this parallelism of order is an enduring feature of experience and one that provides the cultural resources for social reproduction. Their generative significance is expressed through a mediation of the contrasting pairs, as well as the associations that are suggested across the paired categories. Thus, for example, heated states, male categories and the conceptual outside are often collectively contrasted to cool states and female categories of the inside. But the use of variable emphasis, reversal and inversion of these associations can alter the symbolic significance of the relationships concerned. Social and ritual life is enacted through the creative mediation of these clusters of life-giving metaphors.

Expressive as they are in ritual or formal contexts, however, these complementary associations are also objectively evident in the lived-in world of everyday social life. The construction of the house, the casual exchange of betel nut and the conventional behaviour between kin and affines all embody aspects of a pervasive concern with dualism. It is only that here there is no conscious reflection upon the representations. They are merely part of lived experience, the way things are done.

In conclusion, I would only add that this perspective is one that offers optimism for the future. Atoin meto society has for years, even centuries, had to contend with subversive influence from foreign agencies, most of whom have denigrated and discriminated against indigenous beliefs and practice. It is a testimony to the resilience and adaptability of the Atoin meto people and the ways in which they seek to order the social world that their own distinctive cultural identity persists and remains strongly valued.
APPENDICES
APPENDIX A

CASE STUDIES IN COMMUNITY

Introduction

The four case studies presented in this appendix are drawn from the study area of southern Amanuban. They provide supporting evidence for the arguments put forward in chapter 7 of the thesis. Each settlement represents a different stage in the development cycle of hamlet communities. Together they provide a comparative insight into the range of factors which contribute to a profile of community in southwest Timor.

I have argued in chapter 7 that every hamlet in this part of Timor is structured according to certain principles of political and social order. I have characterised this as a consistent concern with rights of place and social precedence. To acknowledge precedence is to acknowledge differences in social authority. In the development of community the articulation of these social differences creates patterns of hierarchy in which one dominant clan segment (kua tuaf) coexists with a number of subordinate wife-taking (kanaf) segments and households. This hierarchy, however, is a dynamic and shifting order which must constantly be renewed and negotiated through time.

In the following discussion I try to demonstrate a number of distinctive aspects of the concepts of place and precedence as they occur in different communities. The studies might be characterised loosely in the following way. The settlement of Oe Le’u offers a glimpse of place with well ordered precedence. The hamlet of Banu highlights aspects of historical precedence and disputation. In the example of Oe Kabesa’ we can recognize the articulation of place and precedence in settlement structure and through migratory expansion. Finally Faut Bena, an immigrant group
with weak links to the surrounding established population, might be described as having place without precedence.

In the process of presenting these illustrative themes of social order I also discuss a number of issues which have not been developed significantly in the body of the thesis. These data provides something of the specific texture of social life in the different communities and should be read as supporting material for the argument developed in the thesis.

APPENDIX A.1: OE LE’U

The community of Oe Le’u, numbering 25 distinct households, represents the modern remnant of the once densely populated and fortified Nabuasa centre of Puputunan. It is an old settlement which has a stable population. Today little material evidence remains of the former power and wealth of the great Meo. The white Sandalwood forests which fuelled the wealth of the Nabuasa clan have been cleared. The population which clustered around the fortified centre, has dispersed. The cult house (uem le’u), once the religious source of power and headhunting magic, lies in ruins. Only the head tree (nunu nakaf), upon which were hung the severed and smoked heads of the enemy, stands in mute testimony to another time when the Nabuasa clan was the dominant power in the region.

The settlement of Oe Le’u forms one of the eight more or less equal hamlets or Rukun tetangga which comprise the village of Olais. The village was established in 1969 when the larger administrative unit of Lasi was divided in two. In 1985 its population stood at 1059 divided into 231 household units. Most of the descendants of the Nabuasa name group now either live in the village of Lasi or have migrated out and settled further to the west. Today, although separated administratively, there is no fixed border between the two villages. Indeed, when I visited the area in 1988 I was told of a recent aborted attempt by the sub-district government (Kecamatan) to determine the precise village borders. Nabuasa elders of Lasi were vocal in their opposition. They argued that the two villages were comprised of one Lord (usif
Nabuasa) and one people (*toh*) who shared land in both areas. To define a boundary was described in terms of cutting the head off the Nabuasa *kanaf*.

Oe Le'u is a typical dispersed settlement located high on the mountain ridges at the southern end of the village. In the early 1970s the government began urging resettlement along access roads in the village. This has meant that the majority of residents have now moved out of Pupu to live near the dirt track which carries the trucks of trade to and from wider markets. Motorised traffic, however, tends to be limited to a few months of the year as the steepness of the grade makes travel treacherous in all but the driest periods. The old centre of Pupu is still populated by six households of the hamlet who have refused to move.

Much of the mountain area surrounding the settlement is deforested and covered in short grass and shaly rock. These windy regions which once supported gardens and permanent forest now offer only limited grazing to the herds of cattle and horses of the village. Food gardens are restricted to the old settlement area of Pupu and the resettlement strip near the road which has been developed in the last decade or so. At over 800 metres above sea level, Oe le'u experiences cool nights and frequent warm mists. The elevation is also favourable for late season rains in May and June termed the cold rains (*ul manik*) which allow for the small scale cash cropping of garlic (*pio muti*) and coriander (*kone*). In recent years, attempts have also been made to increase plantings of the tree crop candlenut (*hau fenu*) for its cash and environmental benefits. These cash cropping alternatives, which remain at low levels of production, nevertheless help to alleviate the frequent food shortages that occur due to the uncertain and variable production of the staple crop maize. One of the perennial problems in the cultivation of maize in the area is the destructive winds which commonly occur on the point of seed setting in maturing plants. The combined effects of poor yields and population pressure on resources is a common reason given for migration out of the mountains. This is usually glossed over, in Atoin meto terms, as a case of the land becoming confined (*malenat*) and no longer being able to ‘feed’ its inhabitants.
Although the power of the Nabuasa clan has been dissipated and fragmented through the process of political change in this century, Nabuasa influence remains strong at the local level. Politically the Nabuasa name group hold a primary position within Oe le'u, particularly in a ritual sense, but also as elected government representatives. This authority is directly related to its former position of power in the area which still provides a basis for ordering different aspects of social organisation.³

In conceptual terms, the Nabuasa kanaf group and their allies in Oe Le'u are said to guard the old settlement site of Pupu. They protect the 'source kuan' (kua uf), in their capacity as the head of the kuan (kuan in a nakan). This expresses a notion that Pupu/Oe le'u is the oldest and most central settlement of the Nabuasa clan.⁴ All outlying communities are offspring or children of the central settlement, an aspect which is acknowledged throughout southern Amanuban. It is believed that to abandon the old site completely would invite, in a vague and unformulated way, dire consequences for the descendants of the Nabuasa ancestors. In doing so the clan would be rejecting or forgetting its origin, its source of life. Hence, the existence of Pupu as a living community has significant symbolic and sentimental importance.

The 'office' of guardian (apaot) of Pupu is the responsibility of L. Nabuasa. In classificatory terms he is the oldest living male member of the Nabuasa clan.⁵ This gives him considerable status both within Oe Le'u and among other Nabuasa settlements. In addition, his authority, which always remains informal or unofficial, is enhanced by his reputed knowledge of the hidden power of the spirit world. Despite his conversion to Catholicism in the late 1960's, he is the guardian of the Nabuasa clan's le'u musu  "I am the le'u" he told me one day and, although now nominally Christian,⁶ he is still held in some fear for his knowledge of the spells and substances of warfare. I was informed, for instance, that his eldest son had requested a series of protective objects from the le'u musu upon his departure to fight as a soldier in the war in East Timor.⁷

L. Nabuasa is also regarded for his rainmaking powers, knowledge which he shares with the former a na'amnes (ritual sacrificer) Nubatonis. Both are credited with
the ability to ‘pray for the land’ (onen pah) and manipulate the rains. The village headman commented to me that "they only had to shout at the sky and the rainclouds would appear. Without their presence the rains do not come". Hyperbole notwithstanding, the comment surprised me at the time, in what is manifestly a committed Christian community. That the headman can express such an idea testifies, I believe, to the continuing efficacy of the old order and complex of beliefs which remain elusive and hidden in the private frames of social practice and contemporary rationale.

All subsidiary groups within Oe Le’u recognize the political primacy of Nabuasa as their Usif (Lord). This can hardly be challenged within the kuan even in the contemporary Indonesian world where hereditary power and privilege is expressly denounced. Certainly the Nabuasa name is well represented in the heads of ten of the 25 households, and therefore has a strong presence as a kanaf group. But more importantly, the main reason for the allies’ expressed subordination to Nabuasa undoubtedly stems from their own structural/ historical position within a shared indigenous framework of political precedence. This is sustained through the implicit contractual obligations inherent within the land tenure system, on one hand, and the structure of continuing marriage alliance, on the other.

The ten Nabuasa households within Oe Le’u are all directly related to the ancestor Antoin Li Nabuasa. They form the core of the community. L. Nabuasa was the youngest son of Antoin Li, but as all his elder brothers are now deceased, it is he who carries the authority of his father.

The elected government representative for the community is B.F. Nabuasa, classificatory grandson of L. Nabuasa. He was selected to represent the wishes of the elders of the community. In the diagram below, I outline the ten Nabuasa households in Oe Le’u. The precedence of age at present is held by L. Nabuasa. This will shift to P. Nabuasa in due course as he is the son of Leno Nabuasa, the eldest son of Antoin Li. As an ‘elder’ brother line he has primary status within the group and must be deferred to according to etiquette.
Strictly speaking, all land within the settlement of Oe Le’u (and, for that matter in the villages of Olais and Lasi) is under the custodianship of Nabuasa. In the local area of Oe Le’u, primary claims to land rest with L. Nabuasa. In practice, rights to land are allocated among the separate houses within the Nabuasa name group, and amongst the prominent allied houses. While these rights may be inherited over time, it is always recognized that it is the Nabuasa name group which holds the prior claim. This is the reason why subordinate groups or households in the community sometimes offer harvest gifts to L. Nabuasa (*pah in sufān*: flowers of the land), particularly when a large yield is achieved. These gifts are presented in the form of tied bundles of maize. The prestations, however, are voluntary and there is no apparent prescribed regularity or scale of food gifts. Formal sharecropping arrangements are considered unacceptable between related houses. Instead, the person who maintains a use right to land, that is, he who ‘eats’ from the land, will simply offer a prestation after a successful harvest in acknowledgement of his debt to the ‘settlement lord’ (*kua tuaf*).

Figure 15: Nabuasa households (n=10)
More important than the number of Nabuasa households in the community, is the alliance relationships with other name groups (*kanaf*) and households in the settlement. Nabuasa is recognized as the ‘origin or trunk father’ (*am uf*) for all the families in the community. That is to say, the name group as a whole, but L. Nabuasa in particular, represents the primary wife-giver to all the other households. They acknowledge that the life of their house and that of their progeny derives from Nabuasa. There are two levels to this concept. The first is illustrated in the following diagram.

**Figure 16: Principal wife-takers to Nabuasa (n=6)**

![Diagram](image)

Figure 16 shows the relative order of wife-takers within the settlement. Note that the order of precedence shifts from eldest daughter to younger in the case of Nabuasa and from first wife-taker to the most recent. These are the five principal allies of Nabuasa within the settlement; that is to say, the men who married directly with Nabuasa women. All owe a debt of life to the Nabuasa name group.

In addition to these principal wife-taking houses there are nine other subordinate wife-takers who also recognize an affinal link to Nabuasa. They express this by saying that they have married the ‘flowers’ (*sufan*) of Nabuasa. This means the
offspring of Nabuasa women who have married into other name groups. Hence in the diagram below, The Banseli group recognizes Toispae, who is a primary wife-taker to Nabuasa, as its own immediate wife-giver in the settlement. The name group Sila is related to Banseli in the same way.

Figure 17: Subordinate wife-takers (n=7)

In this third figure the pattern of asymmetry between wife-giver and receiver is clearly marked. The numbers show the nominal kanaf ranking within this grouping. The Atoin meto express this (negotiated) precedence in terms of who holds the relative authority between households. They will say for instance that Nabuasa's people are Toispae (Nabuasa in toh Toispae), or that Banseli's people are Sila (Banseli in toh es Sila). They mean that Nabuasa and Banseli are wife-givers to Toispae and Sila respectively. This phrase expresses the life-giving/ wife-giving role of the former name group over the latter. The image is one which uses a political
metaphor whereby, an implicit association is made between wife-taker as toh (common people) to their wife-givers as Usif (Lord). This underlines the conventional relationship between affines. Wife-giving groups or houses are higher status life-givers to their dependent wife-takers.

The case of the Banseli group is a good example. The three resident Banseli households in Oe Le'u represent themselves as a subordinate group to the authority of Nabuasa. They use the term ‘Nabuasa’s people’ (in toh) in this context. K. Banseli, the eldest member of the group, calls L. Nabuasa ‘father’ (amaf) because he represents his wife-giver’s wife-giver (trunk father). According to Banseli, their ancestor arrived in Lasi from the domain of Amanatun following a dispute between brothers over the inheritance of their father’s estate. This ancestor, Kok le’u Banseli, appeared in the area when Antoin Nabuasa was the Meo Uf.10 He was apprehended by Sila and Nuban, who acted as the tribute receivers (tobe ma taka) in the Nabuasa centre, and was accused of stealing horses. The Meo Antoin Nabuasa accepted Banseli’s explanation, however, and instead of having him killed offered him a place in the centre (sonaf). He accepted and lived as a soldier (meo ana) fighting under the protection of the enmity cult power (le’u musu) of Nabuasa. The son of Kok le’u, Soni Banseli was later offered garden land by Nabuasa and became a farmer. It is the use rights to this land which K. Banseli now shares with his brother and sister.

In this summary narrative offered by K. Banseli, the inheritance of the past provides a continuing rationale for the ordering of present day relationships within the hamlet. Banseli is obligated to Nabuasa in a permanent relationship of inequality. They eat from the land of Nabuasa and marry the ‘flowers’ of Nabuasa’s tree of life, so to speak. This is the background or structure of the relationship between the Banseli and Nabuasa households. The same type of historically textured relationship also applies to the other name groups in the hamlet: Sila, mentioned earlier as one of the former tribute receivers for the Meo uf, or Toispae, who once performed the role of soldier protector for the ritual sacrificer Nubatonis (in meo in asu: ‘his cat his dog [of war]’). Thus, all members of the community concede the validity of the politico-
cultural order of the past in which Nabuasa was central and superior and their place was subordinate and in some sense peripheral. The political transformations of the twentieth century have not changed these fundamental relationships.

At the same time, contemporary practice is not an unalterable reproduction of the cultural categories and relationships of the past. Social life in the settlement, and the structural precedence of the relationships that have developed, and have been modified or adjusted to circumstances, are an integral part of the negotiability of social practice.

Status differentials are not based on simplistic single order determinants but upon more complex multivalent ties. The Toispae kanaf group, for instance, although the principal wife-takers to Nabuasa in the settlement, have also given women in marriage to Nabuasa men. Two of the daughters of the marriage between T. Toispae and Bi F. Nabuasa have married subsidiary houses of the Nabuasa name group in Oe Le'u. Namely Si. and La. Nabuasa. The latter are classificatory sons of L. Nabuasa and the marriage is of the type fe lanan moen lanan (MBS/FZD). In realising these marriages, the relative status differences between these Nabuasa households and the Toispae group has been reduced, accounting for the higher standing of Toispae in the community. Furthermore, the political centrality of the Nabuasa name group does not obviate their obligations to fulfil the bridewealth contracts with their own wife-givers. In one example I followed, A. Nabuasa (a son of L. Nabuasa) married a woman named Bi D. Kase. Her family had received women from the Nabuasa kanaf group in the past and, due to the existing close alliance between the houses, the couple were allowed to live in Olais despite the fact that bridewealth exchanges had not been completed. Part of the marriage agreement was that their second child should be given over to the Kase family to foster. However, due to a sudden illness the little boy died and the parents of Bi D. Kase then demanded the remaining daughter. A. and Bi D. were upset by this prospect and agreed instead to pay a significant compensation in addition to their bridewealth obligations, thereby going into debt in order to restore the relations between the two houses.
In many other ways too, the relative pattern of precedence in the community is subject to shifts and modifications which create a complex web of interdependent relationships that constitute the social context. Younger Nabuasa children defer to their elder wife-taking affines, significant cross-fostering of children between households modifies patterns of obligation, and individual skills and differences in economic fortunes provide avenues for status adjustments. Although elder households of the Nabuasa group have an advantage in that they control more extensive land areas and have access to large labour resources, the opportunity is open for more subordinate households to generate wealth through astute trading or good fortune. Nevertheless the framework, within which social practice is negotiated and played out, is located within a particular order of social precedence which is the legacy of a specific history and social system.
APPENDIX A.2: BANU

Introduction

The settlement of Banu forms one of the primary hamlets of the village of Oe Baki. Oe Baki lies immediately north and west of Lasi and shares a common border. The village is composed of extensive areas of rolling grassland savannah interspersed with thin stands of acacia and casuarina. In former times, this area formed a wide buffer zone between the Nabuasa polity in the southern mountains and the enemy lands of Sonbai to the north and west.

In 1985 the population of the village stood at 1278 people in 243 identified households. These were in turn divided into seven distinct hamlet clusters. The population is distributed into two main areas. One in the limestone mountain country in the north, and one area adjacent to the Baki river in the south and east, and the mountain ridges rising behind. Many of the settlers in the north have, in recent times, dispersed from the earlier southern settlements.

For years the villagers of Oe Baki have had a reputation as cattle rustlers and thieves; a claim strenuously denied by the residents but one which is held by outsiders who, until the early 1970s, avoided travelling through the village for fear of harassment. Until recently there was no road access to the village and all travel was undertaken on horseback or by foot.

The most prominent name group in Oe Baki is Ataupah. They have maintained headmanship over the area virtually uninterrupted since the last century. The core community for the Ataupah group is the settlement of Banu, situated on the steep slopes overlooking the Baki river.1
Banu in the Past

The name group Ataupah was one of the four Usif groups who surrounded the Nabuasa centre in Lasi in the nineteenth century. In discussions concerning their place in the Nabuasa polity they concur with the Nabuasa perspective and defer to their authority over matters of history. It is said that Nabuasa has the ‘right to speak and the right to wage war’ (natoin ok am maken ok). The relationship between Ataupah and Nabuasa is expressed to this day by the terms Usi mina (‘the sweet lord’: Ataupah) and Usi menu (‘the bitter lord’: Nabuasa), reflecting their complementary status as authority figures in the former system.

According to Ataupah, they were directed to settle Oe Baki by Nabuasa following a dispute over the receipt of harvest gifts. They were directed there to govern the then resident groups of Abanat and Tloen. According to the descendants of these two resident groups, Tloen is reputed to have named Oe Baki. An ancestor is said to have summoned spiritually potent water from the bed of the river and constructed a stone wall around it, hence the name Oe (water) Baki (stone wall). Tloen formed a political alliance with Abanat who was herding buffalo in the area and the two groups in turn became allied to Nabuasa and presented harvest tribute to him. Later the Nabuasa centre grew to fear Abanat as he was a ‘man of warfare’ (atoin makenat) and directed Ataupah to the area to maintain control.

Ataupah shifted to the settlement area with his traditional four amaf (fathers) groups Tanu, Noislaka, Neonleku, Bosoin. The figure identified with the development of the settlement of Banu was Kus Noni Ataupah. In this early period during the latter nineteenth century, Banu was composed of the core hamlet of Ataupah and his family surrounded by a number of small discrete hamlets which formed a defensive circle around Ataupah’s sonaf (central residence). When Seo Ataupah, the son of the first settler, took over the leadership, the influence of the original four amaf groups had declined. Through death and dispersal of their descendants, only the Tanu group remained. In their place the groups Tloen and Abanat were elevated to the position of atoin amaf. These two groups provided
support for the new Ataupah centre in the form of protection and tribute. Tloen held
the function of principal food supplier for Ataupah and did not actively participate in
warfare but remained in Oe Baki to 'guard the enmity power' (apao le'u musu) in
times of warfare. The ritual phrase which defined the role of Tloen is:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phrase</th>
<th>Translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>on a tof lene</td>
<td>As weeders of the garden</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>flol pastele ma</td>
<td>rice packets and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>faif peti</td>
<td>roasted pork prestation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>onhet hao fet nai</td>
<td>to feed the foremost women</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ma naim mnuke</td>
<td>and the lordly men.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The terms *flol pastele* and *faif peti* refer to two ways of preparing and
presenting tribute gifts. Both are cooked and wrapped in plaited lontar palm leaves.

When Oe Baki went to war, auguries and sacrificial offerings were offered at
the *uem leu* (cult house of enmity) in Ataupah's settlement. Abanat was the foremost
soldier group and although this group maintained an *uem le'u* separately, it was to
Ataupahs settlement that hunted human heads and the booty of war were brought. The
ritual phrase attached to Abanat reveals this contrasting role:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phrase</th>
<th>Translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>na haum na fati</td>
<td>To feed and offer gifts to</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fet nai ma naim mnuke</td>
<td>the foremost women and lordly men</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nek sis makuke</td>
<td>with easy meat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ma oin makuke</td>
<td>and easy honey.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The products that Abanat traditionally supplied are ambiguously stated. At one
level they refer explicitly to the human heads captured in raiding enemy positions.
Hence, this is analagous to Nabuasa's role in relation to the *Raja* of Amanuban. They
also, however, refer to goods and commodities (including female slaves : *ate*) looted
during their exploits. They are, therefore, 'easy' because they were acquired through
stealth and magical means. The human heads brought back by Abanat were
incorporated into the descent group rituals of Ataupah and placed in a large fig tree
near the natural spring of Banu (the *nunu nak noas*).

Tloen and Abanat then, stand as complementary pairs in the structure of Oe
Baki. Tloen as guardian of the 'house' is categorically feminine; Abanat who hunts
outside is categorically masculine. This symbolism was reinforced when the
respective prestations were offered at the sonaf of Ataupah. Tloen presented the offerings to a woman, Abanat presented to a man. Both were then passed on to Ataupah.

In terms of the wider territory, the two amaf groups were also given respective areas to guard. Tloen protected the area south of the river. Abanat controlled a much more extensive region to the north and west. To this extent the two groups occupy complementary places in the domain in which Abanat is associated with the masculine outer area and Tloen with the immobile inner female region.

In this period Ataupah maintained considerable autonomy from Nabuasa, although politically the two name groups remained aligned. The name group Neonbota, who functioned as ana'amnes for the Nabuasa centre, also maintained a ritual authority over Ataupah territory. Neonbota was the chief rainmaker for Banu and Oe Baki and offered sacrificial prayers at the outcrop above the Kae settlement known as kon le'u. At this site is a deep fissure in the rock (hence kona, meaning hole) which was thought to be a gateway for the earth spirits. Ataupah’s autonomy, however, was increased when a land dispute developed between the residents of Lasi and Banu. It resulted in the fixing of a border between the two political units which continues to this day. Older claims over the border have been relinquished.

During this period the main settlement area was centred around the Ataupah hamlet. It was a fortified settlement and was surrounded by the cactus naus (prickly pear), planted to form a defensive barrier. Access to the Ataupah sonaf was via two gateways. The opening to the south-east was used by the slave servants in the hamlet to gather firewood and water.

The second and main gateway oriented to the north west was a heavy wooden doorway which was secured at night. This gate (eno kona) was used by the two amaf groups, Tloen and Abanat, to deliver their respective harvest tribute.

By the turn of the twentieth century the population of the settlement around the core hamlet of Kae had grown to considerable size (kuan puknes). In addition, the uncontrolled spread of the prickly pear cactus had severely restricted the available
land. The result was that a significant portion of the population shifted to the alluvial land bordering the Baki river. In political terms the most important shift occurred within Ataupah’s own family. Seo Ataupah’s first wife, Bi Koen Neonane, along with her sons, Kanaf and Noh Ataupah, left the sonaf at Banu and established a new hamlet at Oe Baki near the large river.

This resulted in the creation of two ‘brother’ lines of Ataupah: an elder brother line (Uis naek: Great Lord) at Oe Baki, and a younger line (Usi Kliko: Minor Lord) remaining in Banu but later being directed to settle the northern mountain area of Oe Fui. The tribute centre, however, remained at Banu as long as Seo Ataupah survived. Banu was therefore known as the kuamnasi (old settlement), while Oe Baki was referred to as the kuan amaf (‘father’ settlement). This reflected the precedence of Banu over Oe Baki and later Oe Fui.

When the Dutch arrived in the area during the first decade of the twentieth century, Seo Ataupah became the first Temukun naek in 1908 for the region (see van Lith 1921). Since that time the village of Oe Baki has been formally under the control of the Ataupah family. Seo Ataupah was succeeded by his eldest son from his first marriage, K. Ataupah, to the present day Kepala Desa, the grandson of Seo Ataupah and the classificatory son of K. Ataupah. Following the Second World War, B. Ataupah (Usi kliko), the natural father of the present village headman, moved to the mountainous area in the north of Oe Baki. Here he established a new settlement of Oe Fui. During the 1950’s Banu and the settlement at Oe Baki became associated with the elder line of the Ataupah kanaf (Usi Naek), while Oe Fui and the new settlement were recognized as an Usi kliko area. In this period harvest tribute was offered separately by respective supporting amaf groups to the two brother lines.

Banu in the Present

The contemporary settlement of Banu is situated along a stony ridge above the former settlement site. It lies on an east-west axis, sloping towards the Baki river about one kilometre away. The residential shift to this site after World War II was
initially motivated because of severe erosion and land slumping around the old settlement area. In recent times, in response to government pressure, most of the remaining families have moved to the ridge to form a concentrated strip settlement.¹⁰

The settlement is bisected by a crude track that leads to the villages of Lasi and Basmuti in the mountains to the south. The track was constructed by the community to promote transport communication and facilitate visits by cattle and tamarind traders into the area.¹¹ This is possible for a number of months in the latter part of the year when the road is dry and the river low. Most of the time, however, travellers through Banu still pass on foot, horseback or the occasional motorbike.

In 1985 the community comprised 31 nucleated households. Surrounding the houseyards are wooden fences which mark out the house garden sites. In 1981, however, as part of a joint project with people from the adjacent village of Lasi, a timber fence was constructed to divide garden land from open grazing areas. This has meant that many of the house garden fences have fallen into disrepair.

On both sides of the ridge the remains of old garden fencelines blur the distinction between the settlement and the surrounding secondary forest and scrubland. The sketch map of Banu (Map 6) represents the community as it stood in early 1986. However the dynamics of communities such as this mean that changes to house and garden locations are quite likely to occur. Current residential patterns are semi-permanent only.

Banu is a closely related community in which lines of agnation and affinity provide the social context for community life. Dominating the community are four *kanaf* groups, which together comprise 23 of the 31 households. These include Ataupah (4 households), Tloen (8 households), Nesimnasi (4 households) and Lada (7 households). In traditional terms hamlet residents described these groups as the *usif* Ataupah with their three principal *amaf*.

The remaining households are composed of men who have married into, or sought sponsorship in, the community ultimately through Ataupah. They constitute subordinate houses in the heirachy, both in terms of numbers and social position.
In 1985 the elected official leader of the community in Banu was O. Ataupah, grandson of Seo Ataupah, and elder brother of the present village headman. He traced affiliation through the younger line of Ataupah (*Usi kliko*), and only assumed his position of community headman (*Kepala RK*), at the insistence of the members of the *Usi naek* line of Ataupah. The three other Ataupah households in Banu included L.
Ataupah and his married son N. Ataupah, as well as E. Ataupah, the aged and unmarried father's brother of O. Ataupah. In relation to the other kanaf groups in Banu, the Ataupah group maintain an historically privileged position, but one that is not unquestioned or absolute. Their position of political primacy must be reaffirmed and realised through appropriate behaviour and leadership. The status of Ataupah in Banu and Oe Baki as a whole rests upon their claims of legitimate historical precedence, on one hand, and their ability as a group to negotiate the constraints and exigencies of social life, on the other.

One of the main areas where status within the community is open to negotiation is marriage alliance and the dependent issue of residence. Following the Atoin meto cultural principle that giving a woman in marriage creates a relationship of social inequality for the wife-taker, the Ataupah group, and the senior line in particular, have attempted to ensure that they do not marry in a way which subordinates them socially within the community.

In the historical case of Seo Ataupah, for example, his two wives, Bi Kone Neonane and Bi Noas Nuban, both came from outside Oe Baki. This means that his immediate wife-givers could not diminish his authority within Oe Baki itself. His eldest son Kanaf Ataupah, who became Temukun naek following his father, married a woman from outside the village. The marriage of O. Ataupah to his MBD also followed this principle, although in this case his wife came from a different settlement in Oe Baki.

The practice of seeking marriage partners outside the settlement area does not preclude Ataupah men from taking wives from within Kae. Not all marriages carry the same political weighting. Hence, it is less important for younger sons to marry in politically advantageous ways, particularly in modern times when the independence of local authority structures has been eroded by Government. Nevertheless, the matter of marriage and the direction in which women are given remains an important strategy in community politics.

This can be seen in the case of the kanaf group Lada. For it is precisely the historical direction of marriage which subordinates the name group Lada to the senior
Ataupah group within the Banu community. The Lada clan have lived in the area since the last century. They trace their origins from the domain of Thermanu on the island of Roti. Consequently, despite their complete incorporation within the community and the absence of ties with other Rotinese groups they are still considered foreigners. For instance, their *akun* name is *kase*, meaning foreign, and married Lada men are often called *kasemnasi* in everyday interaction. This, however, has no derogatory connotations but merely acknowledges their foreign origins.

The first identified marriage between the groups Lada and Ataupah occurred when the Rotinese gun maker Tetu Lada married the daughter of Kus Noni Ataupah, one bi Klius Ataupah, and settled in the hamlet of Banu. By marrying this way, Lada became an *atoin asaot* (wife-taker) to Ataupah and received rights in arable land from the *kua tuaf* Kus Noni Ataupah. This relationship established an ongoing asymmetrical alliance between the two groups in which Lada is categorically ‘female’ in relation to Ataupah.

Since that first marriage the Lada group have prospered and grown to comprise nearly one quarter of the resident households in the community. Elder members of the Lada group along with prominent members of the three other major name groups form a type of informal council of elders in the settlement (*amnasi*': fathers) and collectively decide issues of community importance. Lada households once held the administrative role of *Lopo* under the *Temukun naek Ataupah* during Dutch Colonial rule and the *swapraja* system.

The relationship between Lada and Ataupah continues to be confirmed through marriage alliance although not always in the same direction. Lada has received women in marriage from the Ataupah *kanaf* in three cases within the community. They have also provided women as wives to Ataupah. These subsequent marriages take the form of cross-cousin unions and serve to strengthen the alliance without altering the relative status between the two *kanaf* groups. In the case of Lada and Ataupah, the most important union remains the first one which establishes the direction of marriage and, therefore, the relative status. The marriage of N. Ataupah with bi M. Lada raises the
status of Lada over Ataupah at this level, and reproduced the wife-taking role *vis-à-vis* Lada, of this younger brother line of Ataupah, but it does not alter the wider politico-historical relationship between the two name groups [see figure 19].

**Figure 19: Lada Ataupah marriages**

In the case of Nesimnasi, one of the senior groups in Banu, the relationship with Ataupah is primarily one of indirect subordination. An ancestor of Nesimnasi performed the role of a 'bridge path' (*nete lanan*) or mediator for the marriage between Seo Ataupah and his second wife Bi Noas Nuban.14 Because of the historical link Nesimnasi is referred to in ritual performance such as weddings as the *amnais eno* (lit. the elder who stands at the gate). At the time of the marriage of Seo Ataupah, Nesimnasi lived in the village of Lasi. When the son of Seo Ataupah (Sip) later married a woman from the Nesimnasi group (bi Bonak), a number of Nesimnasi agnates shifted to the hamlet site. Since this marriage, Nesimnasi has forged marriage
alliances with both Lada and Tloen in the community, but they have not reaffirmed the marriage alliance with Ataupah.

From the perspective of Banu as a whole, marriage alliance relations between the various named groups reveal considerable complexity and interrelatedness. Over time the hierarchy or asymmetry engendered by (the implications of) marriage direction become blurred, especially between the less senior lines of the name groups. It is difficult to rank the three amaf groups of the community in a descending order of status, nor would they ever see themselves in these terms. As members of named groups, they exchange women with each other and become in time wife-givers and wife-takers to each other. At this level the important issue is not precedence but interdependence. It is only at the level of individual marriages that asymmetry and social inequality is created. This is because there are complementary and competing strategies involved in marriage. Marriage strategies reflect the concerns of creating and reaffirming alliance paths in the interests of developing strong networks of kin. To this end people of Banu distinguish between two basic types of marriage. The first is a re-creation of a former alliance in which individuals are related in prescriptive categories of cross-cousin (fe lanan/ moen lanan). All the main name groups have married in this way in Banu, particularly Tloen and Lada. I recorded twelve marriages of this type, and of these, five unions represented a continuation of the direction of alliance (MBD/FZS), and seven marriages took the form of alliance direction reversals (FZD/MBS).

The majority of marriages, however, do not conform to this pattern and represent effectively new alliances. These unions are described as nait na'ko fatu es (from a different rock) or es at eskun, which can be glossed as 'a marriage of separate origins'. In contemporary Banu such unions have become more significant. In part this is due to the increased range of contacts that young people have with the wider world. But it is also related to the success of the Protestant church which discourages cross-cousin marriage because of its alleged incestuous connotations.

Cutting across this classification of marriage types is a second system of orientation based upon the kuan itself. Thus, residents distinguish between marriage
partners who come from inside the settlement (kuan nanan) and those who come from the outside (kuan kotin). Fully 18 marriages (of 36 identified) in Banu involved partners who both lived in the settlement at the time of marriage. This represents a high degree of settlement endogamy and highlights the value people place on intermarriage within existing or close alliance relationships. The significant feature in both marriage forms which represent endogamous unions (that is, cross-cousin marriage and marriage within the settlement) is the relatively low bridewealth cost involved. One of the advantages of co-residence or existing affinity is that the risks of marriage are relatively slight and mutual trust is more readily assumed. Outside marriages are more uncertain. By definition they imply the creation of a whole new set of affinal relationships and attendant responsibilities. Hence, such marriages result in more costly and extended bridewealth obligations. On the other hand, the creation of new alliances may offer true advantages in terms of political alliances with neighbouring communities. They also add to the depth of human resources that individuals may draw upon in times of need. This is particularly true for a politically important group whose authority is based on the number of allies who acknowledge support.

In summary, marriage patterns in Banu reflect complementary strategies of alliance. They combine aspects of endogamy and exogamy both at the level of the kin group and residence. The strength of the community is seen to rest on both the reaffirmation of alliance ties initiated in the past and the formation of new alliances which forge bonds of reciprocity and mutual social obligation in the wider region. Up to now, however, all identified marriages in Banu have been formed from within the traditional political region of southern Amanuban. People are still reluctant to marry across domains, in large part because of the difficulty and mistrust associated with the subsequent marriage negotiations.

Overlaying the cross-cutting ties of marriage in the community is the continuing political standing of the Ataupah name group. Although relatively few in number, they have the highest status and political authority. This is based on a shared
consensus about the past political order, as well as the maintenance of appropriate and advantageous marriage strategies.

The integrative power of kinship ties is also observed in a second aspect of alliance, that of fostering children. The importance of marriage lies as much in the formation of practical ties of obligation as it does in the creation of new life in the form of children. They are the visible evidence of successful marriage and provide the basis in one sense for the reproduction of the ancestors.

The sharing of children between related households is an important aspect both of agnation and affinal alliance. At the present time, a significant number of children (28) live in households other than those of their true parents. They are a source of enjoyment to their foster parents and in practical terms provide a good deal of labour for domestic activities such as gathering firewood, water and assisting in the management of farm animals.

Of the 28 children who fall into the category of foster child (an bakal), the majority (21) come from outside the settlement, but all are closely related to their foster parents. Twelve of the children live with their grandparents (beif, naif). People recognise the difficulty for aged relatives in accomplishing all the tasks required in deriving a livelihood. Young children are, therefore, often freely given over and may remain in the house of their grandparents until they are adults. It might be noted that the classificatory relationship between the child and the fostering elders may alter in practice. If the children are very young when taken in, they may refer to their fostering grandparents as ena (mother) and ama (father). The relationships between children and their grandparents are usually very close and indulgent.

Another prominent direction for the lending of children is between brothers. There are 7 cases of this. Both these directions of fostering represent ties of agnation from the male perspective.

Approximately one third of the fostered children (9) involve an exchange between brother and sister (feto/i nauj). In other words, these children in all cases were given over by a mother to her brother. Although reflecting the close ties between
brother and sister, the exchanges highlight the continuing importance of the role of mother's brother in his sister's life and the children she bears in marriage. Several of these exchanges were spoken of explicitly as part of the obligations of marriage. In the past, it was customary for a young couple to give over their first child to the wife's name group as a gift for the fertility she brought to a marriage. While this is no longer obligatory, the recognition of the implicit gift of the woman is still made. Today, wife-givers may still exert pressure to claim a child from their wife-takers (and their daughter) when the agreed-upon bridewealth has not been forthcoming.

Christianity and the Church

As in other communities in the wider region, Banu has no geographical centre. The church in the midst of the settlement therefore provides a common place not only for worship but also for the announcement of activities of common interest to the collectivety. The fact that the construction of the church was financed solely by the residents themselves is testimony to the persuasive strength of Protestant Christianity in the settlement. Most of the senior men in the settlement are also elders within the church, which supports the authoritative place of the religion in the minds of the people.

Today all residents adhere to Protestant Christianity which has a history in Banu of some 50 years. The Ataupah group, in particular, converted to the GMIT (Gereja Masehi Injil Timor) in the 1930's under the guidance of the revered Dutch missionary P. Middelkoop. At this time they would walk to the village of Oe Peliki, about 15kms to the west, in order to worship. The majority of residents, however, had entered the church by the end of the 1960s. Today all new marriages are formalised by a modern Christian wedding as a complement to the traditional ceremonies.

Adherence to Christianity has superficially transformed belief and practice in the settlement. People seek guidance in their lives from the Bible and the preacher's message. However, underlying the overt Christian sentiment is the continuing influence of a much older religion. Spirit forces, both beneficial and malevolent,
appear to wait in the wings of social life. This was expressed to me with the phrase -
kalu haim tek Uis Pah haim fua neo nitu: "if we mention the name of the Earth Deity
we will bring forth the ancestors". These concerns were made evident several years
ago when a ceremony was conducted at the Banu spring by a group of Christian
luminaries from the district capital of Soe. It was conducted in order to onan maet (lit.
to pray dead) the influence of the spring. This was conceived of as a 'cooling'
ceremony to extinguish the spiritual (heated) potency of the water source. A man
expressed this in terms of 'expelling the Earth Deity and the ancestral spirits to the
outside' (haim kotin fain on taka Uis Pah nok nitu). In other words they were
attempting to cut themselves off from the influence of the hidden world of the
ancestral religion.

A further example is that of the place called faut ma'lenat (lit. narrow rock)
which is situated in a nearby creek bed where two boulders constrict the channel of the
stream. This is considered a pah in toko (seat of the earth spirits) and is universally
avoided as it is thought to bring down sickness and death to people who pass by.
There are a number of identified sites around the settlement which are thought to be a
focus for such influences.

In addition to these rather overt links with the past, other patterns of
communal endeavour also reveal a continuity with older beliefs, albeit under the guise
of modernism. So, for example, when the monsoon rains fail to materialise and
concern arises over the future of the young crops, the community will congregate at
the old sacrificial site kon le'u to pray to God for rain. They take with them rice and
livestock which are consumed following the prayers. Although the 'ritual' meal at the
site is not expressly a sacrificial offering, the conceptual continuity is clearly evident.
In this case, the Christian God (Uis Neno) which was adapted from the ancient sky
deity of the same name is seen to have subsumed its counterpart Uis pah (the earth
deity) into a united godhead. Similarly, the community cemetery (kuan nitu), now
lying on sanctified ground, was the old site for burials in the past with the circular
stone graves which now lie amongst concrete headstones.
It is clear that Christianity is a powerful force within the community and one that serves to bring the households together in collective worship and understanding. At the same time it rests somewhat uneasily over a powerful and ancient belief system which has only been partially denied.

Land, Authority and Disputation

All residents in Banu derive their livelihood from the subsistence cropping of maize and secondary food crops combined with small-scale animal husbandry and trading. Situated on steeply sloping land composed of heavy clay soils and in a rain shadow area caused by the influence of the mountains to the south, dryland cropping in Banu is marginal at best. The marked variability of the wet monsoon often results in reduced yields. Complicating this scenario is the severe erosion of the top soil, caused in large part by deforestation and overgrazing from Bali cattle, which lead to decreased crop yields. Cropping techniques, as in the wider region, follow a pattern of slash-and-burn agriculture and several seasons of cultivation followed by a prolonged fallow. Fertile productive land in this context is therefore at a premium, particularly as applications of fertilizer or pesticides are generally not used.

Strictly speaking all arable land in the surrounding area (approx. 9 sq km) is under the authority of the Ataupah kanaf who are the kua tuaf (hamlet masters) for Kae. In practice, much of the land has now been distributed among the resident amaf groups that make up the settlement, especially Tloen, Lada and Nesimnasi. Each name group head has the responsibility to allocate land among its members. For the remaining families and those who have sought to settle in the community in more recent times, there are no firm rights to land. New settlers must request usufruct rights from one or more of the existing claimants. A man who marries into the community will seek cultivation rights from his immediate wife-giver. Usually, the head of the name group will ensure that land is made available for young men who marry into the community. These rights are normally free of formal obligations, although the in-marrying men will be expected to assist their affines when required.
Land for housing requires the agreement of the Ataupah elders who will grant rights to settle in perpetuity or for as long as the house site is occupied. O. Ataupah as the nominal head also maintained a veto power over the utilization of land under his jurisdiction. One example was offered of a young man from the Tloen group who had requested a use-right to land but had then failed to cultivate it over two seasons. Ataupah then revoked the use rights and in effect ordered him out of the hamlet.

People recognise the limitations of the resource base upon which they derive subsistence and this has led, perhaps inevitably, to a certain degree of emigration by younger people in search of opportunities elsewhere. Other hamlet areas within the village offer more scope for agriculture, and the sons of Banu can draw upon kinship ties in other settlements to sponsor their land requests. The growing interest in education is another reason for emigration. A number of young men from the hamlet have found employment in the district towns and no longer participate in farming activities in the settlement. This has helped to relieve pressure on the land resource base. But it has not lessened the importance of land to the community. For a people largely dependent on the products of cultivation for subsistence, land and the issue of land rights is a primary concern for the inhabitants. It is a source of life for the community, but also of disputation and disharmony. Disputes over land, borders and economically valuable trees are endemic to West Timor and form an integral part of rural life. Little has changed from earlier times in this respect. The main difference between land disputes of the past and those of today is the means used to resolve them. Even today the potential for violent confrontation is present and individuals may use the opportunity of a land dispute to vent their anger over other silent feuds. More commonly disputes tend to simmer unresolved over long periods leading to the breakdown in communication between disputants and a general souring of relationships between groups. Atoin meto describe disputes or strong disagreements by the generic term *lasi*. Thus, a dispute over land may be named as *lais nain* or, for example, *lais makatoan* (lit. the matters of angry words to the point where two parties refuse to discuss the issue). Disputes, particularly ones that divide communities, are of
considerable concern to the community members and great efforts will often be made to resolve the problem. Unresolved they can and do lead to the disintegration of the hamlet when one side and their allies move away from the settlement and thus withdraw from the authority of the *kua tuaf*. The process of disputation, therefore, can tell us much about the social alliance categories within the community and the relative power of different relationships.

Two examples of land dispute are offered below. They illustrate something of the scale of disputes at the community level. The first example concerned a relatively trivial dispute over cultivation rights which did not extend outside a limited family grouping. In 1986 a dispute arose between A. Nesimnasi of Banu and a relative, Nesimnasi feto, who lived in a hamlet in the adjacent village of Lasi. The Banu man accused Nesimnasi feto of clearing land to which he himself had claim. Nesimnasi feto denied the accusation and used his authority as a ritual speaker for the Nesimnasi clan to draw support for his position. Eventually a compromise was reached whereby both agreed to plant a portion of the field that had been cleared. A. Nesimnasi was privately unhappy with this outcome but accepted the desire of the majority to limit the extent of the dispute by keeping it 'within the house'. Elders within the *kanaf* group were reluctant to have the dispute taken to the heads of the respective hamlets or the village headmen because this would reflect badly on all of the Nesimnasi group. The notion that one must act to keep the 'house' in order is strong in Banu.

The second dispute, with far more serious implications, came to involve the whole community and the village headman. In 1986 a man named Bonat migrated from Lasi to live with his brother in Banu. F. Bonat, the father of the men, had married into the Tloen name group and lived uxorilokally with them. The new settler requested rights to cultivate land from O. Ataupah, which Ataupah granted in his capacity as appointed custodian of Ataupah lands and controller of the most extensive tracts of land in the settlement.

Late in the wet season the following year, a heated argument occurred between O. Ataupah and the newcomer Bonat. Ataupah reacted by reclaiming the cultivation
rights of Bonat. He then offered the matured unharvested crop to an affine living in the distant hamlet of Pius le’u. This action quickly escalated into a large dispute involving the whole community. Ataupah’s action of reclaiming his rights to the land meant that Bonat had no access to the crop. This action transgressed the old order which prohibits such changes during cropping, making the field dangerous in a ritual sense. Similarly, the individual who received the rights to the land was also afraid to harvest the crop because he feared that, in his words, "the land would open up and eat him". Consequently, the crop was abandoned and left for the pigs and cattle to consume. Understandably this caused significant resentment.

A second action which compounded the problem occurred when the village headman, Ataupah’s brother, was asked to attend a meeting in Banu to help resolve the dispute. At the meeting, M. Tloen stood and defended his baef (cross-cousin) Bonat. However, in the heat of argument the village headman stood up and struck Tloen on the face. This not only put the whole Tloen kanaf group offside, but the Lada group, as immediate wife-taking affines to Tloen, as well.

From that time the community has been divided. O. Ataupah was effectively ostracised. The community refused to follow his leadership or to include him in ceremonial events. As one man described to me, "in tok meskun" (he sits alone). There was also much talk among the residents of migrating out of the area. Bonat left the settlement and returned to Lasi with his wife. Both the Lada and Tloen groups voiced their concern about resettling within Oe Baki because the village remains under the jurisdiction of the Ataupah group. The head of the Tloen group threatened to migrate to his wife’s community, while the Lada group have talked of returning to Lasi and the ‘shelter’ of their ‘true lord’ (tuaf amneot) Nabuasa. In this they express the precedence of Nabuasa in their history and call into question the legitimacy of the authority of Ataupah.

This was the situation when I visited the settlement in December 1987. The dispute remained unresolved and my friends in the hamlet were reluctant to say much at all about the situation. Formal government had effectively broken down in the
community and the voice of the village headman had become ineffective. In organisational terms, the ‘fathers’ (amaf) of the hamlet (kuan) had withdrawn their support for the ‘Lord’ (Usif) Ataupah and effectively denied his authority in the hamlet.

When I returned one year later in 1988 the situation had deteriorated further. All the Lada households, with the exception of the elder men and women, had made good their threat and resettled further up the mountain within the village of Lasi. O. Ataupah, the former elected representative for the community had been so ostracised that he had resettled with his family on the other side of the village and was living somewhat forlornly in a hastily constructed traditional round house away from the main settlement area. A recent attempt to return to the hamlet to harvest his coconut trees had been met with an angry shower of stones from a former co-resident.18

As I attempted to uncover some of the developments that had occurred in my absence, it became clear that the heart of the issue was not merely the waste of an abandoned maize crop or the embarrassment of heated words, but rather that O. Ataupah, and later his brother, the headman, had transgressed their rightful authority in Banu. In essence, the dispute lay in the fact that as members of the ‘younger brother’ (Usi kliko) line of the Ataupah kanaf, they did not have the authority to act as the ‘elder brother’ (Usi naek) in Banu. This division of responsibilities had its origins years before when the elder and younger brother lines of the Ataupah kanaf were separated and each aligned with one area of jurisdiction and one set of supporting ‘fathers’ (amafini). O. Ataupah had been requested to fill the position of community headman because the potential ‘elder brother’ candidate was still too young, but this did not give him the right to act as he had done. This explanation appears to be one that gradually formed over time and eventually came to satisfy most of the residents of Banu and Oe Baki. It helped account for the considerable misfortune that had befallen O. Ataupah.

As a postscript to the dispute, which was still active in early 1989, I was informed by D.Atuapah, a respected member of the clan group who lives in the district
town of Soe, of his own attempts to mediate a solution. To understand his actions it is necessary to summarise the origins of the Lada group in Banu.

In the latter part of the nineteenth century, a Rotinese man named Tetu Lada was once settled on the Oe Sau plain east of Kupang. He was married and had two sons, one of whom travelled into the hinterland and lost contact with his father. Later it was rumoured that the lad was living in Lasi, and Tetu Lada came to the mountain stronghold of Nabuasa to seek him out. He subsequently remained in Lasi fashioning guns for Nabuasa and later moved to Banu when he married the sister of the Usif Ataupah. Here Lada had three sons whose descendants live in the area today. Tetu Lada, however, did not remain in Banu because of a dispute that arose with Ataupah. One time Ataupah offered Lada seven buffalo in exchange for a quantity of gold he had accumulated. Lada presented the gold but Ataupah did not honour his part of the deal. Lada subsequently abandoned the hamlet and returned to Oe Sau, where he died.

Now it happened that during the dry season of 1988, a group of Lada people arrived in Banu seeking news of their relatives there. To D. Ataupah this represented an opportunity to resolve the current dispute between Lada and Ataupah. Following a meeting between the Oe Sau Lada group (Lada naek; ‘elder Lada’), a number of Ataupah men and representatives of the Nabuasa clan, it was agreed that a journey be made to Oe Sau to repair the old grave of Tetu Lada. D. Ataupah described this action as a way to ‘remember the beginnings’ and apologise formally for the shabby treatment of the Lada ancestor.

In addition, he discussed with me his plans to ask the Lada households who had withdrawn to Lasi village to assist in a reciprocal ceremony near Banu settlement. Here they would repair the old crumbling graves of Tetu Lada’s wife Bi Klius Ataupah and her father Kus Noni Ataupah. In this way he hoped to bring the two groups together and resolve the acrimony which had come between them.

**Conclusion**

The settlement of Banu in the mountains of southern Amanuban is a community which lives with and through the legacy of the past. It is a legacy which
continues to influence the choices that individuals make in political, idealogical and economic terms. The subsistence agriculture of the past is largely re-created in the cultivation systems of the present day. Claims on land remain embedded in the historical process of settlement. Protestant Christianity is expressed in forms which resonate with more ancient belief systems about the nature of the spiritual world. In addition, the Ataupah group, once the unquestioned rulers of Oe Baki, still maintain their political centrality, both in the old settlement site of Banu and the wider village context. This occurs in a completely changed macropolitical environment where leaders are elected through secret ballot and social privilege can no longer be assumed.

The main reason why this is possible, it seems to me, is that change has occurred in the context of an enduring faith in the essential validity of customary ways of acting. All change is filtered through the indigenous complex of ideas associated with atolan (order). In Banu, part of that atolan is the historical leadership and duties of the Ataupah name group. If they do not ‘shelter’ or ‘shade’ the people who live within their domain according to the unwritten canons of atolan, discord (and the severing of social relations) will follow.
APPENDIX A.3: OE KABESA'

Introduction

The settlement of Oe Kabesa' forms one of the hamlets of the village of Mio in southern Amanuban. The village was created in 1968 when the larger administrative unit of Oe Ekam was divided into two parts. It extends over some 32 sq km of predominantly secondary forest, interspersed with savannah grasslands and acacia woodland. Bordered in the west by the Mina river and in the north by the Meto river, Mio is located on the western border of southern Amanuban.

The hamlet (kuan) of Oe Kabesa' (lit. Acacia water) is located in the mountainous north-eastern fringe of the village. It is sited in a sloping depression surrounded by a series of steep hills. The traditional focus for the community is the permanent spring of the same name which serves as the primary water source for the residents. Surrounding the spring are coconut and areca palms and since 1980, a small area (one hectare approximately) has been utilized for wet rice cultivation. The majority of residents rely upon the successful cultivation of annual maize and secondary food crops combined with small scale animal husbandry. Most of the surrounding bushland has been under cultivation at one time and there is limited opportunity for further extension of the community's land resource base. Extensive forested lands to the north east of the hamlet are now classed as protected areas by the Government, which has had the effect of rezoning land formerly cultivated by people in Oe Kabesa'.

In 1986 the population of the hamlet numbered 115 permanent inhabitants divided into 37 separate households. As a general comment, these households are linked agnatically into a limited number of name-group segments. The name groups are recognised by the shared use of a clan name (kanaf). These groups and the households which comprise them interact with other households and kanaf, through affinal alliances both within the hamlet and extending out to neighbouring hamlets in the wider region. Kinship forms the idiom of social interaction.
When I first visited Oe Kabesa' in 1984, the population of the hamlet was divided among a small number of fenced house clusters. Each residence group was connected by a series of footpaths which crisscrossed the area. At this time, however, changes to the older pattern of residence were beginning to emerge. As part of the Kabupaten-wide policy of encouraging relocation of settlements along arterial roads, the community had begun to develop an earthen roadway connecting the hamlet to the outside world. In addition, the residents were requested to relocate their houses along this road in a strip pattern. By 1986, the pattern of hamlet residence reflected a transitional amalgam of the old and new. The rough road, which was carved out of the bush, also connected Oe Kabesa' and the nearby small hamlet of Oe Mina, to the existing road in the valley. This allowed truck transport to visit the hamlet for the first time, and enabled the first construction of a private concrete house with a corrugated iron roof.\footnote{1}

Despite these trends, Oe Kabesa' remains relatively isolated. During the first wet season following construction, the road up the mountain was washed out by flooding, and when I left the area in 1987 no further vehicle transport could reach the settlement. Children still walk up to five kilometres to school and the residents must make the 18km weekly round trip to the nearest market for a range of domestic necessities. Communication with the village administration is slow and Oe Kabesa' as a whole receives only limited material benefit from village based government development programs.

In presenting this case study of Oe Kabesa' and its allies in related settlements within the local region, my purpose is to highlight historical aspects of social organisation in the context of community fission and migration within a localised area. In Oe Kabesa' I focus on the two principal organisational features of hamlet life, namely, residence and marriage alliance, and show that local authority structures are ordered historically by these factors. In so doing I seek to show how these two features of social organization articulate with social practice in a particular social context. Over time forces of fission and migration have resulted in the formation of subsidiary
hamlets in the area. I therefore include a brief description of the formative processes of these secondary hamlets to illustrate certain aspects of population migration within the region. The study of Oe Kabesa' shows how communities develop territorially over time.

**Historical Aspects of Settlement**

The core name group in Oe Kabesa', and the group that maintains a politically central position within the hamlet, is Puai. Members of the Puai group acknowledge strong and direct links with the former political system under Nabuasa rule. Their claims to the territory around Oe Kabesa' are expressed in terms of the delegated authority of the Nabuasa domain headman, *Meo Besi*. The Puai narratives of the past adhere closely to the representation of the expanded Nabuasa domain expressed in the recorded narrative offered by Kolo Meo feto. From the perspective of Oe Kabesa', the concerns with origins are situated in the context of the Nabuasa discourse. Their local authority is predicated on the continuing validity of the past political order.

In chapter six, I discussed the process of formation of the 'younger brother' Nabuasa domain of the *Meo Besi* (invulnerable *meo*). This was associated, in the Kolo Meo feto narrative, with the 'mountain grass, the mountain water' (*Oe neten ma hun neten*). The four political allies (*atoin amaf*) of the *Meo Besi* are named in formal speech as Lopo, Puai, Nau and Tunliu. It is they who established the Nabuasa presence in what became known as Oe Ekam. The Puai name group in Oe Ekam traces its origins from this initial Puai ancestor. He is identified as Suma Puai who created the initial alliance with the Lopo group who had fled from the Sonbai centre of Bi Kaunik.² Lopo and Puai were directed to the region of Oe Ekam to act as warriors and protectors of the new domain. In formal speech Lopo and Puai are accorded complementary roles within the domain:

- **Lopo napanta**
  - *na naon mnella*  
  - *napas noemina*
- **Puai apanat**
  - *a naon neten*
  - *naon antuan bi kniti*

Lopo guards
- the lowland path
- to the Mina river
Puai guards
- the mountain path
- becoming the Lord of Kniti
In this way, their role was to defend the domain from the threat of enemy incursions from the north and west. The two kanaf groups, Nau and Tunliu, protected the central stronghold of the Nabuasa Meo Besi which in classificatory terms made them ‘female’ in distinction to Lopo and Puai who were ‘male’. During this period of warfare, Suma Puai lived on the mountain at Oe Ekam near to the stronghold of the Meo Besi, Leno Nabuasa. His first son Bukes became the senior elder of the kanaf and guardian of the Puai cult rituals in Oe Ekam.

The modern origins of the settlement of Oe Kabesa’ began in the early decades of the twentieth century, soon after Dutch intervention in Amanuban. The reasons for establishing the hamlet at Oe Kabesa’ stemmed from the hostilities which developed along the Meto river in the valley floor below. This outbreak of warfare between allies of the Meo Besi, Bota Nabuasa (son of the initial Meo, Leno Nabuasa) and those of another major group of western Amanuban, Si Faot, has been mentioned earlier (chapter six). When the settlement of Oe Meo Besi near the banks of the Meto river was abandoned, part of the settlement shifted into the mountains and established Oe Kabesa’ and the neighbouring hamlet of Oe Mina.

The acknowledged first settlers of Oe Kabesa’ were Leno Puai followed by his classificatory brother Tau Puai. At much the same time, Oe Mina, less than one kilometre from Oe Kabesa’, was settled by Kuis Lopo, one of the sons of the original Lopo atoin amaf for Nabuasa in Oe Ekam. These three men are accepted by the respective residents of the two communities as the core founders of the settlements. They are the principal tuaf. As the first to settle Oe Kabesa’ under the governing political climate of the time, the Puai name group became the senior political authority over the site. This applied equally to Oe Mina where Lopo became kua tuaf. During the intervening years, despite the shifting alliances and residential patterns of subsequent settlers and descendants of the founders, this position of political primacy remains essentially unchallenged. This is translated in the modern context into a continuing authority over official elected positions of government as well as into a majority holding in claims to land in and around the settlement.
The two Puai agnates who founded Oe Kabesa', although sharing the same name (kanaf) and therefore adhering to the ritual and ancestral prescriptions of the Puai kanaf, nevertheless represented the origin points for two separate lineages. This is distinguished by the terms Puai molo (yellow Puai) and Puai metan (black Puai).

One common explanation for this classification, which is frequently found among other kanaf groups in Amanuban, is the skin colour distinction between the children of Suma Puai's two wives. The 'elder' line from his first wife, Kolo Banunaek were light skinned and were identified as molo. Those of his second wife Saka Metkono were darker, hence metan. The yellow/black distinction then refers to the elder/younger status between the two lines. Puai metan is a younger brother line, because it originates from the second wife, but, in classificatory terms, its senior representatives are genealogically elder. Puai molo is the elder brother line but generationally younger. The resultant structural ambiguity in this has nevertheless been resolved amicably on the whole. Both Puai lines are collectively accepted as kua tuaf and most formal decisions are developed on the basis of consensus. In Figure 20 the two Puai segments are represented. I include the initial affinal link with the Lopo clan and the descendant, Kuis Lopo who settled the nearby site of Oe Mina.

The diagram shows the male representative households of the Puai kanaf in Oe Kabesa'. In the contemporary context, active political authority is shared between N. Puai (metan) who holds the elected position of Kepala RK, or head of the community, while J. Puai (molo) is the lay head of the local GMIT (established Protestant) church in Oe Kabesa'. Their positions of authority are largely a product of their ascribed status as leading members of their respective agnatic lines from the founders of the settlement.

Social Alliance in Oe Kabesa'

I have discussed earlier how the process of marriage creates an asymmetrical relationship between wife-givers and their wife-takers. The giving of women in marriage between one household and another places the wife-taking house in a
structurally subordinate position. In formal contexts the house that receives a woman in marriage is obliged to acknowledge the life giving authority of their wife-givers.

Figure 20: Origins of Puai households in Oe Kabesa*

The old idea that a wife-giver holds the power of life and death over their wife-taker through the power of the curse still holds some currency, albeit to a lesser degree in the contemporary social context. The point is that a formal asymmetry is built into the marriage exchange, and this emerges in the respective rights and duties that related groups hold in relation to one another. Relative status differences based on marriage patterns are most clearly expressed in the context of formal or ritual situations. Wife-taking affines tend to defer to the political seniority of their wife-givers, and often only take a more active role in negotiations or decision making when asked to contribute. In the context of everyday interaction, the degree to which this formal asymmetry is invoked or alluded to is very much contingent upon situation and context. A whole range of mediating factors such as personal relationships,
indebtedness, relative age distinctions and personal temperament may come into play
and a significant degree of flexibility is always present in the pattern of marriage
alliance.6 Nevertheless, the existence of the marriage tie influences the kind of
obligations and degree of formal deference or familiarity shown to an affine. The
principle of asymmetry in Atoin meto marriage alliance becomes particularly
important when residence is brought into the equation. The relative status of one name
group segment over another in a specific local context, is very largely dependent on
the direction of marriage which formed the initial exchange. The first marriage is
pivotal in determining the relative status of two previously unrelated households. This
feature is quite evident in Oe Kabesa' where the primary wife-givers, which the Atoin
meto describe as the trunk fathers (am uf), are the Puai kanaf. In other words, the Puai
name group, as a collective entity, maintains its political authority based on
precedence of settlement and claims to land, through its additional authority as wife-
givers to other households and name group segments in the hamlet.

Certain qualifications to this should be added. In the formation of marriage
alliances within the settlement it is necessary to distinguish between marriage
exchange on one hand and marriage alliance on the other. The former represents an
instance of marriage between two households, the latter constitutes a long term
recognition of affiliation and reciprocal obligation between two name-group segments,
based on earlier marriages. This is an important distinction because the strength and
the relative status of alliance between name groups, or their localised segments within
the hamlet, is a function both of the number and direction of marriage exchanges that
have taken place over time. At a general level, the Puai name group maintains a
position of wife-giver to subsidiary name group segments in the hamlet, but at each
level of marriage exchange between households the relative asymmetry of the alliance
may be strengthened or weakened depending on whether women from wife-taker
groups marry Puai men of the hamlet. The point being that when a Puai man marries
the daughter of a former wife-taking affine within the hamlet, the latter becomes a
wife-giver to Puai in that instance. Thus between those two households, at least, the
relative status is reversed. At the level of the name group, however, the original alliance carries more weight, and the latter day wife-giver will acknowledge the political precedence of the Puai group. In this way, relative status between houses can shift. If, on the other hand, an initial wife-giver continues to provide women as wives to the initial wife-taking affinal group, the alliance relationship of wife-giver/ wife-taker is formally strengthened and the indebtedness of the wife-taker increased. These issues are as important in Oe Kabesa' as in any other settlement in the region, because they influence the character of social relationships in the hamlet and, therefore, the relative social standing of individuals. The fact that the majority of the recorded marriages of Puai men in Oe Kabesa' were concluded with women from outside the hamlet reflects the reluctance of becoming wife-takers to other households in the settlement. This does not mean that such marriages are proscribed, merely that for a *kua tuaf* name group segment it is generally not politically advantageous to marry within the hamlet. This, however, forms only one consideration in an individual's own personal decision to marry, and political difficulties in marrying in a certain way may be overridden. Atoin meto often comment that in these modern days, arranged marriages have given way to marriages of desire and love, and that parents have little control over their children in these matters. More importantly, marriage between allied name group segments is socially valued, whether it continues the direction of exchange or reverses it. It follows that the greater the number of marriage 'paths' that connect two name groups the stronger their collective presence in a local area or social domain, and the wider the effective human resource base created for collective action. Marriage is after all a social drama where 'ideal' patterns of exchange are negotiated and manipulated to satisfy the aspirations of those involved. Culturally valued marriage alliances may be important as considerations influencing choice, but they are not the only ones, nor are they valued to the same extent by all people.

In Oe Kabesa', these issues are quite apparent in the shifting patterns of marriage and alliance over time, and this can be illustrated by reference to a series of key marriage alliances within the settlement. One of the clearest examples of the
maintenance of an asymmetrically ordered alliance in Oe Kabesa' is that between Puai (molo) and the name group, Nubatonis.

Nearly thirty years ago S. Nubatonis from Oe Ekam, requested marriage with Bi Noni Puai, granddaughter of the early settler, Tau Puai. He elected to settle in the community and received the right to utilize arable forest land from his immediate wife-giver Esa Puai, father of his wife. This marriage placed him as an atoin asaot (in-marrying affine) to the Puai hamlet masters, and thereby aligned him politically to the Puai kanaf. He was offered a portion of land for his household use and settled on the ridge line some 150 metres from the main settlement cluster. Today his children have established households beside their father's compound and acknowledge that the land they occupy and cultivate originates from Puai molo. This means that technically they reside there with the permission of the kua tuaf, Puai.

A number of years ago, Nubatonis' eldest son followed his father's marriage path in marrying his mother's brother's daughter (Figure 21). The marriage of the sister's son with the brother's daughter enacted a preferred marriage exchange in Atoin meto social ideology. In this way, the asymmetric alliance between the two name groups confirmed Puai's precedence as the politically dominant affinal group.

Figure 21: Marriage links between Nubatonis and Puai in Oe Kabesa'.

As yet, the younger sons of Nubatonis have not married but, given that the alliance with Puai has now been strengthened through a second marriage, they are free
to marry outside the settlement and in so doing forge new links with other groups. The marriage of the son, though freely undertaken, expressed the social value inherent in ensuring that alliances once created, are maintained and reinforced. It highlights one of the common hopes of a man, that one of his daughters will marry his sister’s son.

A second major alliance block within the settlement is represented in the relationship between the *kanaf* Lasa and that of Puai *metan* and Lopo. This alliance has older roots than that of Nubatonis and the interrelationship between the various houses is more complex. The key marriage which established the relationship between Lasa and Puai occurred while the Puai name group still resided in Oe Ekam. Baok Lasa, who had originally arrived from the domain of Sonbai in Bi Kaunik, married the daughter of the ancestor Suma Puai. Their sons later lived in the settlement at Oe Meo Besi during the time of the war with Si Faot. Both then moved to Oe Kabesa’ and sought settlement rights under Leno Puai (*metan*) who had founded the settlement.

The sons of Baok Lasa then married two daughters of Nino Lopo, a brother of Kuis Lopo, founder of the nearby *kuan* of Oe Mina. Nino Lopo was an important ritual rainmaker (*a na’amnes*) for the area and was chiefly responsible for communal ceremonies and sacrifices in the settlement. He was recognised as a *mnane* (healer/diviner) who held ritual knowledge of curing and the spirit world. These marriages with the daughters of Lopo meant that Lasa became a wife-taker to both Puai and Lopo.

Among the members of the next generation who are now the contemporary residents in the settlement, Lasa marriages reflect the different strategies pursued in matters of alliance, and the continuing importance placed upon maintaining alliances. One Lasa son married another Puai woman and recreated the exchange undertaken by his grandfather (Baok Lasa) before him. This was a preferred marriage of the type involving *fe lanan* (path of the woman), *moen lanan* (path of the man: in this case, FMBSD/FFZSS). This also confirmed Puai authority as a wife-giver and reaffirmed the earlier marriage exchange in the same way as that of Nubatonis.

One of the Lasa daughters then married a Lopo man and in so doing reversed the earlier marriage direction from Lopo to Lasa. In this case E. Lasa married her
MBS, while Lopo married his FZD. The effect of this marriage was to raise the status of Lasa vis-à-vis Lopo who, in giving two daughters to Lasa in the previous generation had achieved a strong authority over Lasa. This situation is negatively valued from a man's point of view by Atoin meto when discussing marriage patterns, as it is said that the wife-givers have too great an authority. This marriage then, served at one level to redress the earlier imbalance.

Two other daughters of Aela Lasa forged new marriage paths with men who had migrated into the settlement and who continue to reside in the settlement. In this way, a systematic precedence was established in the settlement which developed from Puai at the centre and Lopo as the second wife-giver to Lasa, and then to the more recent settlers who have married women of the Lasa name group. These marriage exchanges are outlined in Figure 22.

Figure 22: Marriage links between Puai, Lopo and Lasa.
It would be possible to continue these examples from Oe Kabesa' to include all the households within the discussion. However, the added detail does not alter the conclusion that the Puai kanaf is regarded as central to Oe Kabesa', and the other 12 resident name-group segments are politically subordinate to varying degrees.9

The significance of these examples is that each minor name group segment is either a direct wife-taker to the Puai kanaf, or they have taken wives from Puai wife-takers (Puai in sufan: the flowers of Puai). In the latter case, the continuing importance of the position of Puai as a primary political authority and ‘trunk’ wife-giver in the settlement is also evident in the most recent marriage between the children of two minor houses in Oe Kabesa'. In 1985, I attended a marriage ceremony between a young man named Taneo and a young woman, Kabnani. Their respective fathers had settled uxorilocally within the settlement by marrying into established name-group segments. Taneo’s father allied himself through marriage to the Lasa group, while Kabnani married a Tse woman (see Figure 22).

During the wife-taker’s formal speech to the wife-giving representatives, the spokesman made a point of acknowledging the relationship between the two houses in terms of their origins and links with Puai in the past. The following segment of formal speech (natoni) reveals quite clearly that the significance of the origins of Puai and their links to Nabuasa are not faded remnants of a dimly remembered heroic past, but active concerns which continue to inform and underlie relationships in the present.

Wife-taker speech segment;

\[
\begin{align*}
&\textit{anfeto anmone} & \text{Daughter, son} \\
&\textit{naekabkit ma tefakit} & \text{join us and unite us} \\
&\textit{len makuke} & \text{(as) the young garden} \\
&\textit{mnuke makuke} & \text{the short fallowed field} \\
&\textit{ho benu ho bae} & \text{your friend, your affine} \\
&\textit{kankiso ma kanlinofa} & \text{does not look and stare} \\
&\textit{natuin} & \text{because} \\
&\textit{ka mata teme} & \text{(we) are not stranger eyed} \\
&\textit{ka ila teme} & \text{nor stranger faced} \\
&\textit{ho benu ho bae nako} & \text{your friend, your affine from} \\
&\textit{neno ahutut} & \text{the early days} \\
&\textit{fai ahutut} & \text{the early nights} \\
&Aubkuk am ataibkuk & \text{gathered together and united} \\
&\textit{bi Benu Neonane} & \text{in Benu, Neonane,} \\
&Sopaba Toislaka & \text{Sopaba, Toislaka.}
\end{align*}
\]
tahat kalekofa
ma tinut kalekofa
es tekan oke ma namnah
es upenit
Lopomnasi Puaimnasi
tua tunan alekot
snaufuan alekot
es an fenam neman
neo Buniun ma fatumnanu

Eating poorly
and drinking poorly
with empty stomach and hunger.
So that seeing
respected Lopo respected Puai
(like) a fine tipped lontar,
a fine fruited lontar
so arising and coming
to Buniun and Fatumnanu.

Note here that the speech was offered by the wife-taker spokesman, Lasa, who in this case was the mother’s brother of Taneo. In so doing, he acknowledged the subordinate political position of Taneo, firstly under Nabuasa, by reference to the four atoin amaf for the meo in Lasi, and secondly under Lopo and Puai, the two atoin amaf or political allies and supporters of the Nabuasa ruler Meo Besi in Oe Ekam. He also alluded to the fact that Taneo had migrated from Lasi where living became harsh and difficult and sought shelter under Lopo and Puai, who are likened to the male and female lontar palms, which provide sustenance to those who tap them.

The interesting aspect of this marriage is that, although the particular marriage exchange is taking place between two minor houses within the settlement, they nevertheless acknowledge the prior position of Lopo and Puai, both then as now.

In summary, I have tried to show in the above discussion that patterns of marriage exchange in Oe Kabesa’ are not the culmination of arbitrary unions between coresident households, but reflect cultural and political concerns which influence status and the persistence of local authority structures. The Puai name group is kua tuaf because Puai has been able to establish and maintain its precedence in the settlement. This is derived initially from their first settler status in Oe Kabesa’ and therefore their dominant claims to the surrounding arable land and, secondly, by sustaining a position of wife-giver to other households and name groups in the settlement. It is for these two reasons that we can speak of Oe Kabesa’ as a Puai settlement. It is also upon this historical foundation that the leading members of the Puai kanaf maintain their political authority within the hamlet in the context of social change. They achieve this, I believe, because cultural concepts of social and political organisation continue to be invoked as an effective and legitimate basis for ordering
Contemporary social practice. The dramatic social change of recent decades, such as the dissolution of the swapraja system and the widespread conversion to Christianity in the 1960s, which included the residents of Oe Kabesa', did not lead to a corresponding dissolution of the local level political order and its concomitant association with land tenure and marriage practices.

This is not to say that the relative order of social life in hamlets such as Oe Kabesa' is in some sense static, or that its members are unwilling to relinquish the traditions of the past. Rather, that social change and the external pressures to change are constantly interpreted and negotiated in terms of a cultural value system which is derived from the past. This was evident in the decision to relocate the settlement along the new track which connected Oe Kabesa' to Oe Mina and the settlements in the valley.

Relocating the Hamlet

The decision to relocate the hamlet was initiated from the higher levels of district government and promoted by N. Puai as the headman of the settlement. Immediately, it was clear that a degree of reluctance to the new initiative was felt by other residents who were obliged to accept the decisions of higher authorities and the decision of their own *kua tuaf*, but didn't want to move. A number of people, however, did begin to move and constructed new houses adjacent to the roadway. These were generally younger members of the community who were obliged to accept their elders' decision. Others however, particularly the older men and women, considered part of the new site to be unacceptable and even threatening to their well being and that of their families. This area was referred to as a 'spirit gateway' (pah eno, santuaf eno) which would surely endanger their residence there. In so doing they were referring to a link with pre-Christian belief and worship.

A number of people, including N. Puai, did not accept this argument as legitimate and argued that their Christian faith denied the existence of such malevolent spirit influences. The apparent anxiety expressed may have been more an attempt to
resist the move than a real fear of spirits. It was also revealing that among those who
did elect to build new houses along the road, few actually moved into them. A
distinction was made between the old houses near the spring, the *uem mul'it* (lit. house
of wealth or value) and the new rectangular houses or *ume plenat* (lit. government
houses). The inference here being that these new houses were in some ways mock
houses built to accord with government demands. While most residents expressed
their intention of moving into their new houses, there was no consensus on when this
would actually occur.

This example reveals several significant aspects of Atoin meto approaches to
change. Firstly, shifts in residence are generally not undertaken lightly. In a world
where spiritual sanctions may still emerge when the ‘order’ (*atolan*) of social life is
transgressed, people tend to take a wait and see attitude before committing themselves
to a particular course of action. Secondly, there always exists a degree of tension
between the directives of higher social authorities and the willingness of social
subordinates to carry them out. To this extent, disparities of power between a *kua tuaf*
group and their *atoin asaot* are never greater than the capacity of the senior group to
negotiate and sustain their social position. The Puai *kanaf* does not remain *kua tuaf*
simply because it claims the historical precedent to hold that status, but rather because
the other name groups within the hamlet support their right to hold that status. Where
that support is withdrawn disputes arise and may lead to one or more households
abandoning the hamlet and seeking a new settlement site.

**Community Fission and Migration: The Hamlets of Manumetan and Oe Sena**

One of the persistent themes in the historical development of Atoin meto
society has been the continued pattern of migration and expansion. This is the logical
consequence of a system of shifting cultivation combined with emergent population
pressure on existing resources. It is usually expressed in terms of restricted
opportunities to ‘feed’ from the land and forms the basis for the decision to move.
Very often one of the precipitating factors in the decision of one or more households
to shift residence and settle elsewhere is the outbreak of dispute and acrimony between groups. This may result from divisions over political authority within the senior name group of the community, such as when a ‘younger’ brother line of the main group disputes the elder brother line’s authority. Alternatively, relations between marriage allies may sour because of personal slights, dishonourable conduct or disputes over land claims or livestock ownership. In the longer term, if part of the community splits off to form a separate settlement, the geographical distance thus created may help to resolve the difficulties which precipitated the split, and relations will return to a more amicable footing. The development of Oe Kabesa’ settlement over time reflects some of these shifting patterns of alliance.

Following the Second World War, one of the younger sons of Tau Puai, the early settler in Oe Kabesa’, established a new settlement at a site some three kilometres to the south. This son, Nope naek Puai, requested the right to settle the uninhabited forest area from the then Raja of Amanuban, Pae Nope. The area offered good grazing land for his herds of buffalo, horses and Bali cattle.

The core community of the new settlement comprised the household of Nope naek Puai, with his wife bi L. Nabuasa, sister of the then Temukun naek for Oe Ekam, Leno Nabuasa (Meo Besi), and their children. The kuan of Manumetan was established around a small permanent spring on a rocky wooded ridge with a southern aspect to the broad Bena plain. By 1984, the hamlet had developed into a settlement of 18 houses. It developed in the familiar pattern of a central political core group comprising agnatic Puai men, supported by a series of political allies who made up the wife-taking affines. New houses were constructed along the ridgeline, each surrounded by a sturdy wooden fence designed to protect the garden areas from the destructive wanderings of domestic pigs.

In 1984 the Puai name group strength was five houses. The most senior in traditional terms was still the aged Nope naek Puai. His eldest living son, T. Puai had by then become one of the active senior authorities in the settlement. T. Puai’s married son, Te. Puai was the elected headman for the hamlet. A fourth house was headed by
J. Puai, the son of T. Puai’s elder brother Simson, who had died some years before. J Puai therefore held a particularly strong traditional claim to authority in the hamlet. The fifth house was that of S. Puai, younger brother of T. Puai, who had married Simson’s wife, bi R. Tse from Oe Mina, upon his brother’s death. All the remaining households within the settlement were headed by wife-taking affines, that is, men who had either married directly with daughters of the Puai name group or who had married the daughters, the ‘flowers’ of Puai women. In the botanic idiom of social order, the community formed a tree of alliance in which the Puai households formed the trunk and the wife-taking affines formed the tip. In Figure 23 the principal relationships between the Puai agnatic kin and the remaining resident households of the settlement are outlined.

Figure 23: Households in Manumetan
As the community developed, the forest land surrounding the settlement was gradually put under cultivation. Newcomers to the settlement, in particular the young men who married into the Puai *kanaf* group, received the rights to cultivate designated areas from the *kua tuaf*, Nope naek Puai. In addition, all households had access to an area of rice land which had been opened adjacent to the former Nabuasa settlement area, Oe Meo Besi, on the southern bank of the Meto river. These claims were traced from the former Puai alliance with the *Meo Besi*, Bota Nabuasa. In summary, the settlement of Manumetan reflected the general political structure of Atoin meto hamlets where precedence of settlement and the direction of marriage alliance creates a pattern of asymmetrically ordered households, in which subsidiary houses cluster around a politically dominant centre.

The structure of the hamlet, however, was to change dramatically by 1986. During the dry season of that year, fully half the households in the settlement abandoned their homes in Manumetan, and resettled in the savannah woodlands, half an hour's walk to the south west. The causes and process of this rearrangement were particularly revealing in terms of the changing nature of alliance between groups. There were two underlying motivations for the move. In the first place, the location of the settlement Manumetan was on the border of an extensive area of dry woodland that formed the site of the Indonesian Australian project mentioned in the introduction. The construction of a series of earthen dams, which supplied water within the area, had greatly increased the opportunities for grazing and settlement. One of the consequences of this trend had been the gradual increase in population of the immigrant settlement of Faut Bena (see following case study) within the area. This trend was observed with growing anxiety by residents of Manumetan who had never formally accepted the rights of the newcomers to settle in the region. As the Puai name group in conjunction with Lopo claimed historical guardianship of the area in question, they had requested permission from the project administration to settle within the project boundaries, and confirm their claims over the land through settlement. In addition, several members of Manumetan had been selected to receive
land title to an area of alluvial forest land within the area, as part of a pilot project to
develop new farming techniques.12

The opportunities opened up by the actions of the project became an important
consideration following the death in 1984 of the aged founder of Manumetan, Nope
naek Puai. As a consequence, the traditional authority in the hamlet fell to T. Puai as
the eldest Puai kinsman. In the process, however, a dispute developed over the rights
to the wealth accumulated by Nope naek Puai in his lifetime. Much of this inheritance,
particularly the rights to a number of mature, economically valuable trees (mango and
coconut), were claimed by T. Puai as a right accorded the eldest son. Heated
exchanges occurred between T. Puai and members of the affinal houses who accused
him of disregarding the needs of the ‘children’ of the hamlet. Eventually, despite the
attempts by T.Puai’s classificatory son, J. Puai, to mediate a compromise, eight of the
affinal kinsmen elected to leave the settlement and settle in the savannah country to
the south west. In explanation, it was stated that because Nope naek Puai was now
dead, there was no reason for them to stay in Manumetan. They were no longer ‘tied’
(\textit{mafut}) to the hamlet and could therefore express their antagonism towards T. Puai by
withdrawing their presence and support. What was also significant in this development
was the role of the daughters of Nope naek Puai who sided in favour of their husbands
and elected to join them in leaving the hamlet. As a consequence by 1986, the
population of Manumetan was reduced to eight households which included the four
agnatically related Puai kinsmen and their families.

In addition, four non-Puai households elected to remain in the settlement. L.
Tse, brother of S. Puai’s wife was closely aligned to J. Puai whom he had fostered as a
child. He told me that had J. Puai elected to accompany the others to the new area he
would have followed. Two other men, named Taosu and Biliu, were elders in the
small church near Manumetan and chose to remain. Biliu’s son, however, took the
opportunity to move and live on his father’s cropping land in the new area.

The division of Manumetan then had its origins in a complex set of changing
circumstances which culminated in the realignment of political alliances. The Puai
kanaf group in Manumetan retained its political status as kua tuaf, but lost its immediate authority over its wife-taking affines.

This did not result in a severing of relations between the various groups, but it did create a distance, both symbolically and literally, between Puai as a wife-giver, a source of life, and its wife-taking affines who received Puai women in marriage. The fact that the move represented an adjustment rather than a severance of ties was evident later that year when Sol. Puai metan of Oe Kabesa' died at an advanced age.13 The households of both Manumetan and the new settlement of Oe Senu attended the funeral ceremony as one representative group, one path (lanan), in order to express their grief.

The Hamlet of Oe Senu

The decision to abandon the settlement of Manumetan resulted in the establishment of a new kuan about half an hour's walk further south. It was named Oe Senu which linked it to the project constructed earthen dam of the same name. This reflected a common conventional method of naming a new settlement after the water source upon which it is dependent.

The new settlement represented a tightly knit community of households interrelated by marriage through the Puai name group, and specifically the daughters of the Puai kanaf. In addition to the core group of settlers from Manumetan, several other households also elected to participate in the formation of a new hamlet. These included two households from Oe Kabesa' settlement itself. Se. Puai and N. Lasa, who had married the daughters of a Puai woman, had elected to leave Oe Kabesa' in favour of the new site. Their move was explained as an opportunistic one, outward to the wide spaces (anpoi nao neo manuan). That is, they were seeking better opportunities for dryland cropping, as yields in Oe Kabesa' had been poor for several seasons. The most important additional households however, were those of the Nau name group, who had already lived for many years in the locality. A. Nau was married to An---Puai, the eldest daughter of the deceased Nope naek Puai and bi L. Nabuasa. He also
represented an elder brother segment of the Nau *kanaf* line and asserted his political precedence over P. Nau, who had moved into the area from Manumetan. For these two reasons, A. Nau became the formal leader of the new community. He took an active role in informing the village headman of the move and negotiating the establishment of the new houses. However, he continued to live separately in the low walled compound with his three married sons, some distance (300 m) from the new settlement site. By coincidence, his house compound was mid way between the new settlement of Oe Sena and that of the other immigrant community in the savannah woodland, Faut Bena, with whom A. Nau had an affinal link through the marriage of his daughter to the *kanaf* group Nenomnanu. This placed him in the role of mediator between the two communities, who were generally antagonistic toward each other (see following case study).

The new hamlet then was formed around the daughters of Nope naek Puai, and the daughters of bi Noni Puai *metan*. It is they who provided the integrating link which orders the relationships between the various households. In Figure 24 this pattern is outlined showing the affinal and agnatic links between the different households.

**Figure 24: Relationships between households in Oe Sena**
By the end of the dry season in 1986, there were 14 households which formed the emergent hamlet. The settlement spread over some 400 m through sloping acacia woodland terrain. During the dry season, a series of new conical thatched houses had been erected and work was underway on the completion of timber fences, which delineated each respective house garden site.

The land upon which they settled was formally regarded under the Indonesian administrative classification as tanah negara or state land. At that particular time the area was under the jurisdiction of the project which held a temporary management right. In Atoin meto terms, the land which was used for house sites was husona (grasslands) which by definition, had no active cultivation claims attached to it. The future of the settlement, however, is still uncertain. Lacking formal recognition within the village administrative structure and without formal title to the land, its long term future lies as much within the decisions of outside authorities and interests as it does with the ability of the residents to derive a living from their efforts. Nevertheless, the process of hamlet creation, in this instance, reveals another feature of the strategies and motivations which underlie migration and shifting patterns of residence in southern Amanuban. The relative speed and efficiency with which this move was achieved reveals that, despite trends towards more permanent dwellings and settlement patterns, Atoin meto maintain the capacity and willingness, under the appropriate circumstances, for shifting their residence and manipulating the patterns of alliance within which they live.
APPENDIX A.4: FAUT BENA

The hamlet of Faut Bena (lit. flat rock) is located in the dry savannah woodland country which formed part of the former domain of the Nabuasa leader *Meo* Besi. The location of the settlement is also known as Oe Noni, which refers to period when warfare and headhunting were prevalent. According to one tale, Leno Nabuasa, the original *Meo* Besi, and his allies were fleeing back to their settlement with a swag of severed enemy heads, captured from the northern territory of Sonbai. In the middle of the acacia woodland, the silver headpiece attached to his horse’s head fell into the grass and could not be found. Thus he named the place *Oef noni* (silver headpiece), to remember the place.¹ For many years the area was utilized for the hunting of deer and wild pig.

The first permanent settlement in the area did not occur however, until after the Japanese occupation of Timor in the Second World War.² One of the main reasons for this was the absence of fresh water in the area for most of the year. When N. Benu with his son F arrived in Oe Noni in search of grazing land for his buffalo and cattle, the only dry season water source (named *oe meo besi*) was over three kilometres away near the bank of the perennial river, the *Noemeto*. In Oe Noni, however, there was grazing land in abundance and in periods of extreme drought, the flat top acacia which dominate the area could be cut to provide a succulent supplementary fodder.

After a number of years living as an isolated household in the Oe Noni savannah land, the Benu group was joined by several other families who had migrated into the area seeking to exploit the grasslands. The principal groups, Nenomnanu and Tefnai, had come from the regions now known as Mnelalete and Nusa in Western Amanuban (*Kefettoran* Noemeto at this time). They migrated with their herds of cattle and buffalo because their home territory had become confined (*ma’lenat*) and that they no longer obtained sufficient yields from the land (*naim afen oken*).
Their migration was not an isolated event. Indeed, this period of post war government when the Indonesian administration was still rudimentary, appears to have been characterised by significant movements of peoples from the overpopulated heartlands. Other groups from the interior began occupying the fringes of the Bena plain to the south of Oe Noni and the Rotinese controlled areas to the north of the Noemeto (river).

The process of settlement formation in Faut Bena followed the general pattern discussed earlier whereby the original settler, Benu, was conceived of as the head of the community and supported by the two principal amaf or 'father' groups of Nenomnanu and Tefnai, in that order. The present settlement supports a growing population of some 57 individuals in 24 distinct households.

Unlike the previous case studies, however, the community of Faut Bena did not settle in unclaimed territory or empty forest, nor were they directed to settle an area by a political overlord. Instead, they entered an occupied territory which had an established hierarchy of claimants. Today, after more than 30 years of settlement, the people of Faut Bena are still considered newcomers (atoin anao amnemat) and remain only marginally integrated into the existing pattern of socio-political organisation. This makes the basis of their claim to territory quite different from the more established communities in the previous examples.

In the local political order, the area of Oe Noni falls under the custodianship of the two clans Lopo and Puai. The latter are associated as two of the principle amaf groups for the Meo Besi Nabuasa. When the Meo directed Lopo and Puai to settle near the borders of his territory, this included the savannah grasslands that extended to the Meto river. Traditionally, their role was to protect the territory from incursions by rival groups.

The establishment and subsequent development of Faut Bena occurred within this existing context, albeit modified by the Indonesian Government system introduced after the war. The new settlers were granted rights to utilize the resources of Oe Noni by the permission of the custodian groups. The process went as follows.
Prior to the arrival of Nenomnanu and Tefnai, a related name group, Selan, had sought to settle in the domain of the Meo Besi. A. Selan established a firm friendship with Neon Lopo of the settlement Baunkono. He was granted permission to settle in a place called Oe Nunu some four kilometres north of Oe Noni. It was this relationship which provided the ‘bridge’ for the groups Nenomnanu and Tefnai to seek grazing rights for their livestock, in the area. The process was also described in terms analogous to the construction of an Atoni garden fence in which Selan formed the sturdy base log *(tuin)* upon which subsequent timbers could be added. A. Selan later married his eldest daughter Bi A. to S. Lopo the son of Neon Lopo, in recognition of the strong ties between the two groups. In this way, he converted the relationship between himself and Lopo from that of fictive kinship (*benu bae*) to a formal marriage alliance (*bae tas tasa*).

In requesting the right to enter the area and utilize the resources, P. Nenomnanu and the Tefnai brothers presented the traditional offerings of palm wine and silver ringgit coin (*tua boit mese ma noin sol mese*) with betel nut. They accompanied this with a ritual request asking that they be permitted to remain as squatters on the land in order to raise their ‘chickens and pigs’. The latter reference is a ritual convention that one must humble oneself before the *kua tuaf* of the area. To speak of their buffalo and cattle at this point would have upset the necessary abasement required.

Lopo accepted their request in return for a continuing adjustment fee known as *oe hun* (lit. water grass). In other words, they would be permitted to remain as livestock herders in return for an annual payment of one animal. At the time the agreement to provide an animal, as an adjustment fee, was also extended to Leno Nabuasa (*Meo* Besi) the head of the KeTemukungan of Oe Ekam.

This amounted to the formal creation of the hamlet and the path that was opened by Benu, Nenomnanu and Tefnai paved the way for other groups to follow. There were, however, two important aspects of the agreement which have continued to influence the relations between the community of Faut Bena and the name groups
Lopo and Puai. In the first place, the newcomers Benu, Nenomnanu and Tefnai did not acknowledge the clan Puai when they sought the permission to enter the territory. As one Puai man said to me by way of explanation, "they do not remember those that went before and sweated over the land". Instead, their link remained solely with Lopo from Baunkono. As a result, a long standing disagreement came to exist between the residents of Faut Bena and the Puai dominated hamlets of Oe Kabesa’ and Manu Metan, six and three kilometres away respectively, to the north. This is still reflected in the general absence of mutual labour exchange and the frequency of disputes over the utilization of land between the different communities.

In addition to this long-standing problem, the early settlers of Faut Bena were only granted permission to herd livestock in the area, which is not synonymous with a settlement right. Thus in traditional terms, Lopo, the acknowledged lord (kua tuaf) for the Oe noni area, retains the right to withdraw his permission for the residents of Faut Bena to remain. This has significant implications both for the relationship between Lopo and the residents of Faut Bena, and the degree of attachment the residents of Faut Bena feel towards their hamlet. Complicating this scenario further has been the reordering of political administration within West Timor to reflect modern Indonesian aspirations. This latter aspect, in fact, has worked to the benefit of Faut Bena residents, in that traditional authority is tempered by the official government administration. The main point, however, is that, as an immigrant community, the residents of Faut Bena had to submit to the existing traditional political order which had its legitimating source in the organisational pattern of the Nabuasa polity. Their position politically is analogous to the status of an in-marrying affine (atoin asaot) who acknowledges a dependency on their wife-givers.

Internally, the development of Faut Bena tends toward the creation of an asymmetrically ordered kin network. In this regard it is similar to the examples offered in the previous case studies. Newcomers to the community (atoin amnemat) seek to create a formal tie to the groups that preceded them through marriage. In this way they become affines and therefore part of the mutually supporting collectivity of the
community. F.Benu is accorded prior status as an original settler in Oe Noni. Nenommanu follows as the principal wife-giver to Tefnai (see T. Nenomnanu). Tefnai in turn has given women, as wives, to subsidiary groups such as Sesfaot, and Selan, and more recently, Kabnani. To this extent the social status structure of Faut Bena does not differ significantly from other hamlets. The principal wife-giver in any local context maintains a superordinate status over its wife-takers, which is modified through the complex interplay of mediating factors such as relative age, ritual knowledge, marriage reversals and relative wealth distinctions. These mediating factors are sometimes expressed in terms of relative status or positional differences (tokon). Hence the term tokon amnanu (lit. high position).

One of the interesting and key features of marriage alliance within Faut Bena, however, is the importance placed upon maintaining and creating links with the original settlement areas in the east. At the same time there is an evident resistance to forging strong marriage links to hamlets in the surrounding area. This does not mean that there are prescriptions against marrying into the surrounding communities, because in several important cases this has occurred. Rather, marriage within particular sets of affines or co-residents is favoured over others. Some of these links are represented in Figure 25 which depicts the pattern of precedence among households of Faut Bena. Figure 25 highlights a number of important features about the community and the way individuals have married.

In the last two years each of the four marriages involving members of Faut Bena were endogamous unions. By this I mean marriages either between co-residents or affines. Indeed, there have been no marriage alliances created with groups outside the immediate sphere of Faut Bena and its natal communities for more than five years.

Several of these marriages are particularly interesting not the least because they represent apparent divergence from Atoin meto marriage conventions. It is well recognised for instance, and often commented upon, that the Tefnai name group prefer to marry each other instead of outside people.
The genealogical history of the Tefnai group reveals a significant number of marriages between the children of true brothers; that is, in their terms, brother/sister marriage (*feto* / *nauf*). This is clearly an incestuous form of marriage (*nasnao*) according to Atoin meto notions about whom one should marry. One man described the Tefnai group as akin to the goats, which are able to eat the poisonous leaves of the oleander bush with no ill affect. For their part, most of the members of the Tefnai group were unconcerned about the practice. In the most recent case, Bi J. Tefnai from Faut Bena became pregnant to her classificatory brother L. Tefnai, and left to live with him in Mnelalete. His father was reportedly upset about the union but others counselled him, arguing that there would be little achieved by forcing a separation. The idea being that if they marry 'within the [group] house', no side loses. One rationale for this type of marriage practice was said to be that the name group did not lose its bridewealth as it circulated within the group.10

A second example involves the marriage between the principal group Nenomnanu and a woman from the subordinate group, Nesimnasi. This marriage was in fact an example of direct or symmetrical exchange between the two groups, and for that reason was initially viewed with some apprehension. Initially, J. Nesimnasi had married the daughter of P. Nenomnanu and, lacking the means to fulfill his bridewealth obligations, had come to live uxorilocally in Faut Bena. His position as a wife-taker was clear. He was politically subordinated to his wife’s father in the community. However, when I. Nenomnanu, brother of J. Nesimnasi’s wife, eloped (*mnaenat*) with J’s sister Bi Jo. Nesimnasi, the respective positions of the two groups were reversed. Each group became a wife-giver and a wife-taker to the other. People say that the practical difficulty with this type of exchange, although quite possible in classificatory terms, is that there is no clear distinction between wife-giver and wife-taker. As it was described to me, "each side becomes an *usif* (lord) and can rightfully choose to ignore the request of the other".

Disapproval and initial anger over the impetuous action of I and Bi Jo, however, was not strong enough to disallow the union, particularly given that the
couple had already eloped. By formally assuaging the feelings of Bi Jo’s family through a ceremony where a fine was paid (*ek eno nuam teun*), the relations between the groups was put back in order. Thus, in a more circuitous way the union could be seen to ‘strengthened the roof of the [affinal] house’ (*na li suafam tak pani*). It reinforced the existing alliance between the two name groups and created a readjustment of the relative authority between Nenomnanu and Nesimnasi.

One of the significant aspects of this marriage for the purposes of our discussion is that I. Nenomnanu travelled to the natal village of J. Nesimnasi in order to find his partner. Following the creation of that union the younger brother of J. and Bi Jo. Nesimnasi has also settled in Faut Bena from his home settlement in the east, following the path trodden by his elder siblings. The point is that, although settled in Faut Bena in southern Amanuban and compelled to acknowledge the precedence of the clans in the surrounding area, the residents of Faut Bena look to their natal settlements in the neighbouring district for marriage partners, new settlers and many of the social networks which sustain social life. In direct contrast then to the community of Oe Le’u (first case study), which lies in the centre of its social world, Faut Bena represents a peripheral outlier to its central place. The residents are pioneers in an area where historically ties were weak and even marked by hostilities in the past. This point is reinforced through the continuing multiple economic ties which link Faut Bena with its origin communities. Most of the residents of Faut Bena retain rights to land and tree crops in their former settlements. Throughout the year there is a constant flow of people and goods between Faut Bena and the old settlements in the east. These visits range from the purely informal to matters of marriage, disputes, labour exchange and performance of rituals.

When the new settlers came into the region of Faut Bena with their herds of cattle and water buffalo, they came not as owners but principally as herders for the owners who remained in the natal settlements. Although today the residents of Faut Bena have built up small private herds of cattle the largest herds still belong to absentee owners. In 1985, of the nine households involved in this herding, two have herds that number more than 50 head of cattle.
The most significant aspect of the absentee owner/herder relationship is that it is based on affinal relationships. In nearly every case the owners are key members of wife-giving groups and, specifically, the herder's mother's brothers (*atoin amaf*). This has a number of important implications for members of Faut Bena and the status of their community in the district. Firstly, the arrangement provides economic benefits for both owner and herders (*abain bia*). Usually a herder will be granted a payment of one calf every two years for his herding services. If an animal goes lame and must be slaughtered, the herdsman is obliged to inform his maternal affine, who must be offered a share in the meat of the animal. More importantly, in economic terms, are the benefits to be gained from employing the cattle herds on the rice fields adjacent to the Meto river to the north. In this system, farmers pay to have cattle churn their flooded fields into a mud slurry. The quagmire is then shaped and finished off by hand. Contract prices for this service range up to Rp100,000 ($A 100) per hectare. Alternatively, sharecropping arrangements and other reciprocal services may be sought instead. In either case the benefits to cattle herders can form a significant proportion of an annual farm income, even when, in all such undertakings, the herder is obliged to share up to 50% of the contract income with the cattle owner.  

Important as they are however, the economic benefits which accrue to residents of Faut Bena through herding mainly serve to underline the significance of the affinal relationships involved. The tie that binds herders with the cattle owners is based on the life long obligations established between wife-takers and their wife-giving affines. Given that the principal groups in this joint arrangement are the senior households in the settlement, the basis of Faut Bena as a community, derives, in large part, from the authority of wife giving affines (*Atoin amonet*) to delegate the responsibility for herding cattle to their sister's children. This feature reinforces the enduring and multilayered ties between Faut Bena and its origin settlements in western Amanuban.

In summary, the settlement of Faut Bena can be seen as an example of the contemporary migration pattern in southern Amanuban. Having secured a residential
foothold in the new region, the community then develops its own dynamic. As it increases in population, the hamlet emerges as a logical destination and expansion point for members and relatives of resident *kanaf* groups, who migrate and convert kin ties into cropping and grazing rights. The reasons behind the initial push of settlers into the Faut Bena area were, after all, the increasing pressures on land resources in overpopulated natal districts. This pressure has only been exascerbated in the intervening years.

One of the consequences of this process in this case is the evident tension created between migrants and members of established hamlets in the surrounding hills. In objective terms an increasing population of newcomers (*atoin amnemat*) into the savannah woodlands represents direct competition over limited cropping and grazing lands. This emerges in the outbreak of disputes over land, in the increase of animal incursions into cropping fields, as well as a general reluctance to participate in mutual labour exchange or extensive gift exchange. Over time these symptoms of competition will probably increase in direct proportion to the rise in the rural population density.
NOTES TO CHAPTER ONE

1 Rosaldo has made a similar observation for the Ilongot of northern Luzon where 'events of the past are meticulously mapped onto the landscape not onto a calendar' (1980:47). Within eastern Indonesia, Kuipers has noted that in Sumba '.. the Weyewa establish their claims to the scarce land resources through periodically affirming their ritual relationships to the ancestral and autochthonous spirits inhabiting certain territories' (1982:36).

2 Throughout the thesis I adopt the approach of printing all Timorese words in italics, with the exception of place names and names of people.

3 Although literacy has become a modem feature of social life through the introduction of formal schooling for children since the 1950's, most adults over forty years of age are illiterate. Moreover, the narratives of the past are still just that, as there is no emergent practice of recording them in writing.

4 The Protestant preacher H. Groothuis is aknowledged as one of the first to translate the gospels and preach in the language of the Atoin meto prior to 1915 (Brookes 1980:72).

5 I also note the work of two Indonesian writers who have published ethnographic material on West Timor, namely A.D.M. Parera (1971) and Drs M. Widiyatmika (1985).

6 During his period of residence from 1922 until 1957, Middelkoop combined his missionary activities with detailed linguistic and ethnographic investigations. He published over thirty articles and books on West Timor and its people (see especially 1949, 1960, 1963 and 1969).

7 As an example, during a survey in 1985 in the old subterritory of Insana called Fafinesu, I sought the names of the traditional political figures identified as the apopet/anaet in that quarter of the former princedom. Cunningham had inadvertently not recorded these two names in the reconstruction of the Insana polity (see 1962:153). One ritual specialist, a man named M. Feo, was able to find the names, Nufa and Tania, by chanting all the traditional clans associated with that quarter of the princedom. The two clan names emerged in their appropriate place although he had not been able to remember them offhand. Overall his narrative closely resembled the political reconstruction presented by Cunningham and Schulte Nordholt.

NOTES TO CHAPTER TWO

1 The name used to designate the collective ethnicity of the society has been the subject of some debate. Dutch Colonial records usually refer to them as the Timorese, while most contemporary Indonesian reports and studies use the name Dawan, an exonymic name not usually used by the indigenous people themselves. The
ethnographer Cunningham (1962) settled on the phrase *Atoni pah meto* which he translated as ‘the people of the dry land’. In the present anthropological literature this has generally been abbreviated to the *Atoni* as a shorthand form. My own opinion is that this is inappropriate as the word *Atoni* merely refers to a male person and the people never use this singular term in a collective sense. In my experience the most commonly used expression is the phrase *Atoin meto* which utilizes the metathesized form of the word *Atoni*. The term *meto* in their language means both dry and indigenous depending on the context. It is often used, for instance, in distinction to *kase*, meaning foreign. The sense of the phrase *Atoin meto* therefore is simply indigenous people. While it is possible to translate the term *pah meto* as ‘the dry land’, the more appropriate translation I suggest would be ‘the native land’ or ‘the land to which the people belong’. In this context I also note the position of the ethnographer Hendrik Ataupah who argues that the correct name should be simply *Meto*. However, I prefer the term *Atoin meto* as it specifies a people as opposed to the generalised notion of things *meto*.

2 Based on population figures from a Dutch census in 1908, the current population represents an average increase of over 600% in the intervening years. It is also interesting to note that the major increases in population, largely through recent immigration, have generally occurred in the western village areas of the old domain of Noebeba. In 1908 the area of Lasi and Oe Peliki comprised 56.3% of the total population; today the comparative areas comprise only 32.6% (Venema 1916).

Table 4: Population increase 1908/1985

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Temukung</th>
<th>Incorporating (1908)</th>
<th>Population to 1985</th>
<th>% Increase</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lasi</td>
<td>Olais</td>
<td>966</td>
<td>375</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oe Peliki</td>
<td>Fatutmana, Naip</td>
<td>1052</td>
<td>356</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oe Baki</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oe Ekam</td>
<td>Mio</td>
<td>451</td>
<td>801</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Polo</td>
<td>Kiubaat, Linamnutu</td>
<td>445</td>
<td>1800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teas</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>148</td>
<td>990</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oe Kiu</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>223</td>
<td>304</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The current villages have been created out of these former administrative divisions.

3 All Indonesian words in the thesis, as well as other foreign words, are underlined to distinguish them from the indigenous language of *uab meto*.

4 The amalgamation of small hamlets into larger contiguous units was initiated by the Dutch Colonial government prior to the Second World War, also in the name of development and security. This policy has been further developed in recent years.

5 This was not the case in the past when people could still live largely outside the control and knowledge of the government. Today there are still some seasonal settlers who drift between different communities and old people who refuse to leave their isolated settlements and who are neglected by village censuses or slip through the accounting procedures, but their numbers are few.

6 They are often referred to in Indonesian as the *Ketua adat* and are held to be knowledgeable in the customary ways of social practice. They command high respect from the households and alliance groups whom they represent.
7 In general terms Atoin meto farmers recognize four seasons.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Season Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>fauk nais</td>
<td>hot dry season (Jul-Nov)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ton mof</td>
<td>early rainy season (Nov-Jan)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oe fat</td>
<td>wet season proper (Jan-Mar)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ul manik</td>
<td>cool rains (Apr-Jun)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

8 Semi-permanent cultivation at the house site reflects the more stable residence patterns that have emerged since the end of the Second World War. Nutrient replenishment around the houses is achieved through tethering animals and by inputs from household refuse.

9 Atoin meto speak of seasons in terms of relative maturity. Successful early plantings represent a ton makuke (an easy or young year) in contrast to seasons of late plantings usually associated with lower yields as ton mnasi' (elder, mature years).

10 Simon Field (pers com) has calculated that one horse of maize represents approximately 11.7 kg or maize seed. During a survey in 1985, where a number of households harvest yields were monitored, production yields of maize ranged from 228 kg/ha to over 1700 kg/ha (cob weight). The latter was unusually high and may have reflected that this was a first year garden in a particularly fertile site.

11 Between 1982-1984, the Indonesian government confiscated all personal guns and rifles from the rural population. This significantly restricted opportunities for hunting feral pig and deer and appears to have resulted in a build up of population levels among these animals.

NOTES TO CHAPTER THREE

1 The editor of the Corpus Diplomaticum noted that this treaty may have followed an earlier one which the ruler of Amanuban had failed to honour (1907:120 FN).

2 The earliest reference I have found for Amanuban is one in 1585 concerning the establishment of the Captainship (Capitao) of Solor and Timor. This was a Portuguese administrative unit in which 'Amanubao' is mentioned (de Matos: 1974:54).

3 Boxer (1948:175) suggests that this term derives from the Hindustani word meaning 'hat', and referred to the distinctive headgear worn by the people of Larantuka settlement.

4 Two earlier attempts had been made in 1735 and 1745 (de Roo van Alderwerelt 1904:199).

5 See also Middelkoop for a modified version of this battle (1960:38-39).

6 The lack of Dutch interest in Timor was due in part to the decline of the sandalwood trade, which had passed into the hands of the Chinese, and the absence of any significant alternative exploitable resource. The desire to limit any opportunistic Portuguese ambitions in the area was the primary reason for maintaining a base on Timor (Fox 1977:73).

7 The actual year this occurred is unclear. Veth cites 1788 as the year while de Roo van Alderwerelt puts the time at 1771.
8 Although the Dutch were keen not to interfere in the internal politics of Timorese domains, in the interests of peace and no doubt their own safety, they attempted to forbid the trade in weapons (Müller 1857:97).

9 In preparing the bullets for this first major expedition in 1814, the building and with it the collected archives and historical sources for the region were burnt to the ground (Veth 1858:87).

10 Veth reports that by this time, in any case, the finances of the administration were severely depleted as a result of the punitive expeditions (1855:97).

11 Writing of this Ruler, Müller cannot understand why a man 'of whom we expected a lot' and who had spent much of his youth in Kupang as a member of the (Dutch) Reformed Church, should have become so antagonistic towards the Dutch (1857:215).

12 There is no reliable means to estimate the population at the time. This figure is based on the Dutch administrator (Controleur) Venema’s population estimates for Amanuban in 1916 as 29,909 people (Venema 1916:208).

13 van Wouden expressed the unlikely conjecture that ‘perhaps the author in question ‘D’ refers to a division into Amanuban and Amanatun’. He is apparently led to this conclusion mainly for the reason that the Dutch missionary ethnographer Kruyt ‘tells us nothing about any partition or fission in Amanuban (van Wouden 1968:56). Kruyt spent little time in Amanuban and was probably persuaded in his view by the position of the Ruling Nope line which has always attempted to play down any question of internal disunity.

14 A notable exception was the abortive raid at Kolbano on the south coast of Amanuban. A memorial at the site notes the death, on 26 Oct 1907, of all the armed company comprising a Dutch sergeant, his corporal and 14 Javanese soldiers. The memory of this event is told with pride by the Atoin meto of the area.

15 The myths that I collected closely resemble those of Parera which is understandable considering that his informant, the former Raja Kusa Nope, was the elder brother and father of two of my chief informants on this matter.

16 This is similar to the Müller myth. However unlike Müller’s version the Rotinese was not a slave. Schulte Nordholt rightly comments that Müller never visited Amanuban due to the continuing hostilities at the time. Hence his version is from someone who was probably hostile towards Amanuban. The slave attribution is therefore an insult (Schulte Nordholt 1971:308).

17 A second version I collected spoke of two women, bi Fnatun Banunaek and bi Tae Kolo. The Nope ancestor married the daughter of the ruler of Amanatun, Banunaek.

18 In the myth recorded by Parera a dispute arose in Amanuban over the insufficient amount of agricultural tribute presented to the centre by the Rotinese newcomers. They were then forced to flee to Amanuban because of this (1971:128).

19 Nubatonis is said to be a combination of the words Nuban and natoni (ritual speech). This refers to Nuban’s power and authority to speak and pray. Hence the clan is called Nubatonis.

20 One explanation I have heard for the name Olak Mali states that when the people of Nubatonis came to see the two strangers, Isu called to his friend in Malay ‘Ayo mari, orang datang’ (literally. Hoi, over here people are coming). Subsequently ‘Ayo mari’ has since been reproduced as ‘Olak Mali’. In the language of Amanuban [1] is always
used in place of [r]. I note also that van Wouden used the name Ulak Mali in connection with Amanuban (1968:119-120).

21 The telling of this competition is repeated in varying degrees of elaboration throughout Amanuban. One version which I recorded states that in fact the banana of Nubatonis was the one that sprouted but that Olak Mali secretly switched the two plantings and claimed the victory. This reflects the virtue accorded the use of deceit and trickery apparent in the myth. It is also a version which was offered by a member of the Nubatonis clan, implying of course that the rule of the newcomer was illegitimate. The same myth is reported for Theranu, a domain on the neighbouring island of Roti (Fox: pers com).

22 Much later the Ruling line Nuban took the name Nope. The word Nope means cloud and an explicit association is made with the supreme upper world deity of the Atoin meto, *Uis neno* (Lord of the sky). Nope the Raja was honoured as a divine being, the child of God (*neno ana*).

23 In Amanuban I found these wars to be associated with the ritual phrase *lub luba Makassa*, *tak taka Kesnai*. The first part means the banners of Makassar and possibly refers to the attack by the Kraeng of Talo (southern Sulawesi) on coastal settlements in Timor in 1640. It is unlikely that the wars against the ‘rice basket’ of Kesnai occurred at the same time particularly as the attack from the outside only affected the north coast. It is possible that the two events, which are both associated with the north, have been merged in the oral tradition. Schulte Nordholt notes that in Amanatun mention is made of the *pen pene Makassar, lub lubu Makassar*: the flags of Makassar, the banners of Makassar (1971:455).

24 The first reliable reference to Amabi is in 1659, six years after the Dutch had settled in Kupang. At the time Amabi was an ally of the Dutch East Indies Co. (see Daghregister 11 Feb 1659, in Schulte Nordholt 1971:320). This alliance may have been prompted by their defeat at the hands of Amanuban who were allied to the Portuguese at this time.

25 This remains a tentative conclusion given the significant changes that have occurred to Amanuban in the past and the degree of power achieved by the Rajas this century under Dutch supervision. On the other hand, there is no record of the Atupas which one might expect to find even if the position had declined in importance.

26 The disappearance of the Fina group is associated with the exodus of people from Amanuban under Black Portuguese oppression during the eighteenth century.

27 This is possibly associated with the separatist movement cited earlier in 1771 (de Roo van Alderwerelt 1904:213).

28 The term *Noe* means a river of substantial size. In the old conception of the polity, the relationship between the sub-territories and the ruler was analogous to that between the rivers and the sea.

29 Controleur van Lith made the comment that Isu and Nakammanu were really no more than intermediaries between the Ruler and his subjects. Their status was no higher than the most prominent *anaf* (name group head) (1921:72). It was only during the twentieth century, when the two *usif* were elevated to the title of *Fettor* (sub-district heads), that their power and influence developed.

30 In 1849 the Dutch Resident (Chief administrator) of Kupang, van den Dungen Gronovius, recorded twenty so called ‘Raja’ under the ‘Keizer Nai Bakkie Nope’ (1849:63). Included within this group were Nai Isu and Nai Nitbani who were not given any prominent status over the remainder.
31 The formal phrase used here is *Bunum bi teno Nenu Banam*, which is why people of Amanuban refer to themselves as *Atoin Banam* (people of Banam). The meaning of the phrase is somewhat obscure. The term *Bunum* refers to a form of curse, while *Nenu* has the dual sense of a whirlpool or a type of encircling. One explanation for the phrase is that at the time of the expansion of Amanuban under Nope, the former Lord Djabi (also Abi, hence Amabi) was forced out and was restricted to cycling the periphery of his old domain.

32 Here they were received by conceptually female counterparts of the male *meo*. These *meo feto* (female *meo*) named Banu, Tasesab, Kune and Saefatu belonged to the Ruler’s central court and performed the role of guardians.

NOTES TO CHAPTER FOUR

1 See section on childbirth in chapter eight for further clarification.

2 Many chanters disclaim that they learnt the verses through practice, but rather that the knowledge and their capacity to reproduce the chants came to them as a kind of inspirational gift.

3 Female progeny of the *feto* line do not take the *feto* addition to their name but would be referred to as Nabuasa only. This is because they take the name of their future husbands upon marriage (see chapter seven for clarification).

4 In these narratives it is only the senior line of the *kanaf* whose myth of origin is related.

5 There are also a variety of words which are only ever used in formal speech. They represent highly formalised and polite ways of expressing concepts or actions.

6 The terms *nu'un* or *nu'uf* are used in a variety of contexts to refer variously to high rock outcrops, clan origins and sacred/spirit places.

7 Fox has observed that ‘dyadic language is more than a means of special communication, it has become...the primary vehicle for the preservation and transmission of cultural knowledge (1988:2).

8 This idea has weakened with the spread of Christianity and the associated decline in the old religion. Many old chanters, however, are still reluctant to speak if they feel that the situation is inappropriate or may devalue their knowledge. Despite the spread of modernism, the old knowledge remains an important aspect and source of moral and social authority.

9 While some women become competent in ritual speech, the authority to relate the origins of the clan, or as it is sometimes said- to *natoni pah* (to speak the ritual knowledge of the earth), invariably rests with men.

10 This is the case for many Atoin meo themselves who may not understand the allusion embodied in a particular formal phrase.
11 This addition is incorporated in the discussion in the following chapter.

12 Goody has described a similar variation in oral narrative tradition as generative reconstruction. 'There is no one original version that can be compared or studied as a text. Hence successive performances may expand, contract or develop in a generative or creative way' (1987:189).

13 During the nineteenth century the Dutch Colonial government recognised Miamafu by the name Amakono.

14 Commonly in West Timor the usif were referred to as neno anan (child of God/ the heavens), which may have implied an external origin.

15 A version of this tale was told to me by the son of Kolo Meo feto, who claimed that earlier Kolo Neno used the le'u musu of the east which was called menu mauf fatum fu hau nafa (lit. bitter disorientating the blowing rock Nafa tree). However, he later discarded this le'u in favour of the le'u musu from the west and took the name Nabuasa.

16 The use of the name Nabuasa is also connected to line 13 in the narrative whereby the 'slippery bamboo' is associated with a story concerning the acquisition of the le'u musu. Because of this, the Nabuasa clan also acquired the ancestral name (akun) of Lak petu (Bamboo Laka).

17 This is a gloss of the term sutae oef which refers literally to the silver headpiece formerly associated with the kanaf group rituals (le'u nono').

18 The stil is a structure used to climb over fences surrounding houseyards. It is still a common feature of the rural landscape.

19 The couplet usim ma tuan and ama anena (lines 97-98) is instructive in terms of Atoin meto concepts of authority. Ama (father) and ena (mother) in ritual contexts refer to the collective body of the kanaf ancestors. In political terms the Dutch East India Company was also termed ena ama meaning 'parents' of the people (see chapter three:43).

20 See earlier note (294) concerning the use of 'l' in place of 'r' in the Amanuban dialect.

21 This implies that the relations between the two areas were probably peaceful by that time.

22 Besloit is derived from the Dutch word besluit meaning decision or resolution. This has been taken by the Atoin meto to refer to the small silver coloured badges showing the Dutch crown which were commonly granted to district headmen to show their official position.

23 It is more probable, however, that this is a rendition of the Portuguese military rank of Koumlol (see Middelkoop 1960:21).

24 See earlier reference to Nabuasa origins in Miamafu and to the position of Kono as the western Lord (Uis Neontes).

25 See Schulte Nordholt (1971:356) and Middelkoop (1963:165) for further discussion of this aspect.
NOTES TO CHAPTER FIVE

1 In the Atoin meto system of orientation north is called li (left) and south is ne’u (right). This implies an orientation based on the concept of an individual facing east and the rising sun.

2 It is possible however that a more ancient alliance relationship is referred to here, based on the mythical origin place of Saenam. This is especially the case for the name group Sopaba who clearly do intermarry with the Nabuasa kanaf.

3 In contemporary ritual contexts, such as the marriage of members of the Nabuasa kanaf, it is still these names which are spoken to refer to the Nabuasa group. They stand for Nabuasa.

4 This term also applies to the ‘wild’ products of the forest which are spoken of in the same terms. The collection of wild honey in particular, was very important to the local economy. The Nabuasa leadership claimed jurisdiction over trees where bees swarmed, and they received tribute in the form of the oni nakan (head of the honey) from the harvesters of the honey. The ‘head of the honey’ referred to the white wax head that is constructed by the bees in the high trees of the forest.

5 It is difficult to understand Cunningham’s statement that dogs are conceptually female because ‘they are viewed within the subordinate category often associated with women’(1962:400), given the unequivocal emphasis on masculinity in the above context. But this may be another aspect of the relative emphasis of symbolic representation which is often so dependent upon context.


7 Present day adherence to Christianity has resulted in a reversal of this orientation whereby the feet face the east. One explanation for this is that if the deceased were to ‘sit up’ they would be facing the east and the rising sun. I have also heard it said that because we bom and come into the world head first, so we should leave the world in death in this manner.

8 I was unable to discuss these issues with representatives of the Isu and Telnoni clans mentioned above. They no longer live in the area of Lasi and in the case of Telnoni, I could find no reliable chanter of the past.

9 Au Nai nut Telnoni ankean. Isu an hanek tani ma nafutu neo tnanan


11 Ataupah amsa onan antam nao neo haek. Tenis Tuan, Uis Nope Naif anheke ma anai putu. Okate neman ansifo ai ambi Oe Napa.

12 Fai ha namsoput, Nabuasa anlenu atoin amfenu, neman antoko ambi Nakfunu. Nabuasa nabai atoin haen le i on in olifenu.
13 Schulte Nordholt has noted that: 'Usually the number five is composed of four plus one, the fifth being the centre and symbolic of the unity of the whole' (1971:259). Elsewhere he comments that 'the phenomenon of a fifth being admitted as a superordinate centre...is seen to be one of the key principles influencing the political structure' (1971:189).

14 In the literature on the Atoin meto there is some debate over the term pah tuaf. In my experience the phrase may have a number of meanings. I agree with Middelkoop (1960:21) and Cunningham (1962:89) when they describe the pah tuaf as typically a type of earth spirit or devil which causes illness and death and is associated with guarding specific places. Hence, in southern Amanuban there are many places described as pah tokon (spirit place) or pah in lanan (spirit path). However, the phrase was also commonly used to refer to the Nabuasa kanaf and to Nubatonis in Lasi. Schulte Nordholt (1971:224) and Ormeling (1957:73) have suggested that this is a translation of the Indonesian term tuan tanah. I would argue, however, that the term pah tuaf is clearly an indigenous concept and is used in different ways to express an authoritative claim over a place, a territory or a population.

15 His choice was apparently based on the previously unacceptable marriage union between bi Leno and her classificatory brother Sani Nabuasa. This was an incestuous union considered potentially harmful to the well-being of the families involved.

16 In structural terms this represents a reversal of the more common relationship found in Timor, and indeed throughout Austronesia, whereby the male warrior from the conceptually outside, marries a woman from the autochthonous land-owning clan. I take this reversal to reflect the greater emphasis attached to the male principle in the Nabuasa polity.

17 The literal translation of the phrase kan kol fui is 'not wild bird' but the intention is clearly one of taming in this segment.

18 These objects had a practical significance in that during the main prayer ceremonies for rain, the black cloth was spread across the altar stone and rice from the bamboo cylinder provided the initial offering.

19 These are kept hidden mainly from the government and the church, and are still prized. L. Bin, the custodian of these ritual objects, stated that as they were from the time of enmity (afi pah musu) they remained ritually potent and 'heated'. Women were strictly forbidden to touch the metna koa as they could sicken and die.

20 The collection of these taxes was delegated to individuals who were termed the amnos inu (those who extract the beads).

21 During the twentieth century when the power of the Nope clan had been consolidated by the Dutch, these taxes were presented to the Raja Nope. They were termed the su balaf or poni pah.

22 This was an important tree for rituals of childbirth (see chapter eight).

23 In this position we find a correspondance with that of the a na'tobe (he who holds the sacrificial basket) of North Central Timor. Schulte Nordholt describes these figures as the major custodians of the land, having both a sacrificial and land disposal responsibility. The main difference between the two figures is that while the a na'tobe covered the well defined territory of one clan, the a na'amnes of the Nabuasa polity, and indeed all of Amanuban were the custodians of a well defined territorial unit comprising many different clan groupings. Where the a na'tobe was ultimately responsible to the amaf or the head of his kanaf, the a na'amnes was politically subordinate to the pah tuaf, in this case Nabuasa. It is also worth noting that
Middelkoop has identified these two phrases as a ritually expressed complementary pair (1960). In the contrast between Amanuban and Insana we appear to be dealing with a shift in emphasis placed on the ritual role.

24 There were a number of other le’u such as those for childbirth, textile manufacture and buffalo herding, but these can be subsumed under the category of the le’u nono’ for our purposes.

25 This was the son of the first Koleo Nabuasa, distinguished with the term Mat mese (the one eyed).

26 In the literature on headhunting in Timor there would appear to be some uncertainty over the relationship of meo feto and meo mone. Schulte Nordholt accepts that the term feto mone often implies an affinal link but asks why ‘there should always be meo feto and meo mone unless there is a fixed unilateral connubium between these groups’ (1971:342). In the Nabuasa case it is clear that this relationship if conceptually fixed. They remain meo feto and meo mone respectively because of the primary marriage alliance which saw Nabuasa give women in marriage to Sopaba and Saebani. It was quite possible to reverse the direction of marriage in practice and for one of the amaif groups give women to Nabuasa men, but this did not alter the asymmetry of the original relationship nor the categorical gender distinction between the respective groups.

27 The flag was incorporated into the design of the Nabuasa name group brand (malak) Hence, the name mal pen pene (flag brand).

NOTES TO CHAPTER SIX

1 The term Nai was an honourific title which can be translated as Lord but also has the connotation of masculinity such as in the polite term for men in Amanuban, naimnuke.

2 This site is currently located in present day Desa Kiubaat.

3 On the western face of the mountain Buniun is a massive Limestone outcrop which bears the name Fatumnanu (lit. high rock).

4 This is an example of what Fox has termed analogical crossover whereby the notion of elder (tataf), which is conceptually superior to the category of younger (olif), is here associated with a female category (feto) which is in turn usually subordinate to its male (mone) counterpart.

5 Au Nai Sum Puai naitnan fetof bi Kut Puai natama neo ume Na Neno Lopo henati kenat masnaita, suni amsa maponi.

6 Other versions of this tale apply different names to this woman and the relationship with Neonufa. However all versions are consistent on the main points.

7 The name group Puai has had a long history in Amanuban. The name is recited in the names of the settlers resident in Tunbesi and is said to be of the Usif Nope line. Formerly their name was Tuke, a name often associated with a younger brother line of the name group Nope. According to one explanation of the origins of Puai, I was told the story of a man named Alul Tuke, who found he had run out fire and went to the settlement of Nonmafa to steal a burning firestick. Picking up the smouldering branch he wrapped it in his cloth which subsequently caught fire. Nonnafa discovered this and referred to Tuke from then on as fu ai meaning to blow (fu) on fire (ai). Today this name, slightly altered, has become the official kanaf of the clan.
8 Probably *melia dubia* Cav. (Meyer, Drees E. 1950).

9 In ritual speech this was *mtiun eno mapnun eno, ta nek eno ma boife* in which the term *eno* means gateway and is a reference to a boundary or border position.

10 The case of Ataupah is elaborated upon in a later case study (see Appendix A.2).

11 There may well have been other alliances with neighbouring regions but here I am following the general order presented by my informants.

12 This is clearly a reference to the *le'u musu* of Nabuasa namely, *menu mafu na Nabuasa*.

13 I have been unable to clarify the reasons behind the loosening of alliance but it is quite likely to have been linked to a gradual shift towards autonomous positions pursued by the respective central clans of Isu and Telnoni.

14 The precise nature of the relationship between Nabuasa and Banamtuan (Nope) is still somewhat puzzling to me. One perspective from Niki Niki has it that Banamtuan, the younger brother of the Ruler Nope, came to Basmuti with a group of supporters. In formal speech the supporters were described as the *benas boes ma tofa boes* (the ten machetes and the ten weeding hooks). Their objective was allegedly to promote the Nope cause in the area and make Nabuasa aware of their bond to the central Nope line. Given the circumstances at the time this may be plausible. The interesting aspect, however, is that the opposing explanation also uses the same concept of the ten machetes and weeding hooks to describe the alliance group. This is an example of the absence of consensus between Nabuasa and Nope versions of the past.

15 The terms *mafefa* and *auab* were also used in this context.

16 Interestingly Lini Nabuasa is also referred to as the *Meo nak boko* (literally: the pumpkin head Meo). In this case, however, the term is a reference to the reported actions of people in Lasi when the great *Meo* died. They were said to have torn out their hair in collective demonstrations of grief.

17 In relation to the gender ambiguity of the Nabuasa centre at this stage Bourdieu has made the useful comment that 'because the meaning of a symbol is only ever fully determined in and through the actions it undergoes, the uncertainties of the interpretation simply reflect the uncertainties of the use that the agents themselves make of the symbol, so overdetermined as to be indeterminate' (1977:144).

18 In Atoin meto kinship reckoning birth order results in a series of elder/younger distinctions which are maintained over generations. The descendants of a younger sibling remain classificatorily ‘younger’ *vis-à-vis* their ‘elder’ agnatic kin.

19 In the past world of the Atoin meto where anyone outside the circle one recognised as kin was called an *abakat* (thief), the opportunities for gain through treachery were manifold. Present day informants in the area speak of a distinction between *mus fui* (wild enmity) and *mus aem* (tame enmity). The former was characterised by an intentional headhunting foray and killing. The phrase *nabeun amusu bi an kot nanaf* is used in this context, meaning to ‘overcome the enemy in their stronghold’. Alternatively tame enmity was directed at stealing and buffalo rustling in particular- *kana pe'fa kot mas neki muit* (not attacking the fort but taking away the animals). The distinction however was a relative one in that the threat of escalation of the conflict was everpresent. Tame enmity could become wild enmity. Either way the victors of the raids received the spoils and it is said that much of this was presented to the centre of the polity, to the *Meo naek* Lini Nabuasa.
20 I do not intend to analyse the ritual complex of headhunting in this thesis as the topic has been covered in varying degrees of completeness by a number of writers (see Heijmerring 1846, Middelkoop 1963, Schulte Nordholt 1971, Cunningham 1962, Carlson 1980 and McWilliam 1982). However it is instructive in terms of the thesis to outline the scope and importance of the practice to the ongoing maintenance of the Nabuasa polity.

21 In the literature on headhunting in Timor there is evident confusion over the place of the title *Meo* in society. In part this is due to the conflicting data on the subject. In the case of the Nabuasa polity it is clear that the term is both an hereditary name and a title achieved through induction into the *nabuk* ceremony where novices are initiated into 'meohood'. Schulte Nordholt has written that the title of *meo* was not an hereditary one (1971:344) but clearly, as one of the *Meo naek* in Amanuban, the Nabuasa name group was entitled to use the term *meo* as their name. Even today it is common for people to address members of the Nabuasa *kanaf* by this term. Members of the Nabuasa *kanaf* took this title irrespective of whether or not they had been initiated into the headhunting cult. I have already mentioned how members of the Nabuasa group, who trace their origins to a trunk female Nabuasa ancestor, take the name *Meo feto*. So for example Kolo Meo feto is still referred to by this name today. In addition, by marrying a woman of the Nabuasa name group, the term *meo feto* (female *meo*) was applied but this was primarily an honourary status. Subordinate groups in the polity could be termed *meo kliko* or *meo ana* (small *meo*) but this was not a term or personal address, nor an hereditary title. The *amaf* groups Lopo and Puai under the Nabuasa leader *Meo Besi*, represented this position.

22 Middelkoop has illustrated the use of the *le'u musu* (1963:110-113).

23 Schulte Nordholt reports that when the young new *meo* were brought in following their period of seclusion outside the community, they are led by a young virgin holding the leafy green end of a sugar cane (1971:353). In Atoin meto conceptions of marriage one of the metaphorical unions is that with the *uik ana* (young banana) and the *teuf ana* (young sugar cane). Thus, this symbolism in the headhunting rituals is probably an explicit reference to future marriage.

24 van Lith reported that from March 1910, 'Tenis in Oe Kiu was in a continuing state of hostility', which may well refer to this incident (1921:77).

25 By this stage Selan, one of the *atoin amaf* for Abanat in the domain of Teas, had usurped the latters position and had become the formal head of the area. One informant expressed the opinion that the premature deaths of a number of these usurper village headmen in Teas over the years showed clearly that Selan had no rightful claim to the position.

NOTES TO CHAPTER SEVEN

1 The term 'descendants' may be inappropriate in this case as the conceptual movement is upwards and out, rather than descending. However the term has a conventional meaning in English to describe human reproduction in the family or group and I use it in that sense.

2 Daughters infrequently inherit rights to the cropping land of their fathers. This only occurs when there are no male heirs in the immediate family.
3 Atoin meto generally eschew formal sharecropping arrangements especially between closely allied co-residents. I have however noted a number of cases involving payments between unrelated individuals. Temporary use rights for three or four years, referred to as ‘requesting the bean and pumpkin’ (*toit koto ma boko*), are sometimes paid for in harvest produce or livestock. It very much depends on the relationship between those involved.

4 As Atoin meto conceive of the ideal pattern of marriage as one in which women move between *kanaf* I have adopted the male centric terms of wife-giver and wife-taker. This is not to suggest that women play a purely passive role in the marriage process, but that the cultural order of marriage is formulated in male terms.

5 This applies throughout Amanuban and indeed for all Atoin meto people although the terminology varies in other areas (see Molo and Amfoa-Fischer 1957).

6 This terminology of marriage is common in many parts of the world and has been variously described as Dravidian (Dumont 1953, Yalman 1962), two section system (Cunningham 1967), prescriptive alliance or two line prescriptive terminology (Needham 1971) and rather misleadingly as bifurcate merging (see for example Fischer 1957).

7 Note that MZH is also referred to as *amaf* even though technically he is an affine. The logic of the terminology prescribes him as father as his children are brother and sister to ego.

8 In practice it is common for a man to refer to his elder brother’s wife as *tataf* and his younger brother’s wife as *olif*. This applies equally to women in reference to their sister’s husbands.

9 (m.s.)= man speaking, (w.s.)= woman speaking

10 I attempted with little success to clarify Atoin meto notions of blood. Most informants could express only very limited exegeses about the matter, and it is my impression that this concept is not a highly developed one in contemporary society. More emphasis is placed on the notion of incest as transgressing the correct order of marriage which threatens the health and well being of the couple and their offspring. I note that neither Schulte Nordholt (1971:112) nor Cunningham (1962:211, 237) develop the idea of blood beyond the general view that blood follows agnation and that members of the name group are one blood (*nah mese*). This is in contrast to other societies in eastern Indonesia where great emphasis is placed on the flow of blood in social alliance (for Flores, for example, see Lewis 1982).

11 Conventionally the relationship between *baef* is marked by informality and mutual assistance; a joking relationship. Fischer (citing Middelkoop) has commented in this regard that the term may be related to *ba’e* meaning to play (1957:28).

12 To this extent I differ from Schulte Nordholt (1971:112) who argues that the reversal of status explicit in FZD marriage means that it did not occur in traditional society. I believe that Schulte Nordholt himself focusses overly much on the ideologival level of marriage alliance rather than the practice. Strategies of marriage both today and in the past could well accommodate FZD marriage.

13 This kind of reverse exchange is expressed as *fe ut leot* (to give tribute) which represents a characteristic form of prestation from a subordinate group to a political superior.

14 The term *mone* is most commonly translated as husband but in the above sense the meaning is more correctly male.
15 Disputes in southern Amanuban are referred to by the generic term *lasi*. The word has two general meanings. One sense is simply a term for describing an issue. So for example, *lais kabin* can mean the ‘matter of marriage’, or *lais na teb teb* may be translated as ‘truly an important matter’. But in certain contexts it can also refer to antagonism or disharmony. Hence an argument might be described as *lais uab* (disputed words) or *lais makatoan* (the problem of angry words).

16 Migrant groups who lack affinal ties to the established communities are also described as having ‘no sprout or growing tip’. Like barren households they lack the fertile roots which enable them to prosper.

17 In cases where this form of marriage is practised there is normally no additional bridewealth payment required, although a series of formal marriage negotiations and feasting would generally be undertaken.

18 Daughters of such unions tend not to use the *feto* name as they take the name of their husband upon marriage and do not normally provide the basis for the reproduction of their own *kanaf* name. They are self-evidently ‘female’ members of the ‘male’ *kanaf* line. In such instances of the marriage of a *feto* daughter it is the representatives of the male (*mone*) line who publically receive the bridewealth which is later distributed to the bride’s mother.

19 The fact that the *feto* line is considered in many respects a separate *kanaf* is given tangible form in the contemporary practice of changing the name of the *kanaf* when it is considered to be deleterious to the well being of the group. During the mass conversions to Christianity, particularly during the 1960s, many *kanaf* groups elected to change their names *en masse*. A common explanation was a follows. When sickness or misfortune befell a significant number of *kanaf* members upon entering the Christian church, a common cause was thought to be the *kanaf* name which was associated with the excesses of the old religion. Sickness and death were divine retribution for the sins of the ancestors. Hence a new name would be sought. These names were usually derived from the past. One example is the case of the Lopo name group. This name was derived from the *le'u musu* used by the group in the period of warfare and headhunting. The senior members of the Lopo group, faced with unprecedented misfortune among the *kanaf*, decided to change their name to Neonufa. The name was believed to have been used before they took the *kan le'u* of Lopo. This was formally accepted and is used to this day. In this case however the *feto* line of the *kanaf* elected to maintain the former name of Lopfeto when the leading head of the group fell ill after temporarily adopting the name Neonufa. In this case Lopfeto considered themselves distinct in some significant respect.

20 The *mone* (male) designation is usually left implicit in the *kanaf* name.

21 This is the conventional way of expressing the name Lopo feto.

22 This aspect was more clearly apparent in the past when all children were born under the protective cover of the birth *le'u* (*le'u fenu*). In each hamlet the eldest woman of the community was the custodian of the *le'u fenu* which she brought with her from her agnatic kin group. This feature of social reproduction added a further dimension to the understanding that wife-givers were truly givers of life (see chapter eight for further discussion). It might also be noted that the importance of children to a marriage union is highlighted by the fact that an alliance may lapse or weaken in the event of a barren marriage.

23 This is not to suggest a type of formal double unilineal descent such as that supposed by van Wouden (1968:94). This was a conceptual marriage system whereby women circulated by marriage in only one direction between four descent groups, A-
B-C-D-A..., and in this way created a de facto matrilineal descent line. Schulte Nordholt rightfully argues (1971:123) that alliance among the Atoin meto does not and probably never was based on a unilateral circulating connubium composed of four groups. The data from southern Amanuban supports Schulte Nordholt's contention that one can only speak of an open asymmetrical system of marriage alliance.

24 The verb *na li* has the sense of bending back and tying in. This may be contrasted to the case of improper or disputed unions which are said to *tipu suaf am tak pani* where *tipu* means to bend back and snap. The inference being that the 'roof' of the house is thereby weakened through the union.

25 For comparative purposes I note another survey conducted of 148 randomly selected households in hamlets of the villages Oe Ekam, Mio and Polo where fully 53 households or 35.8% of the sample acknowledged marriages of the type known as *fe lanan ma moen lanan* which reaffirmed existing alliances.

NOTES TO CHAPTER EIGHT

1 Cunningham has previously explored the symbolic classification of the Atoin meto house (1962, 1964) and I do not intend to re-examine this ground in detail. However his studies have not included any discussion of the house in Amanuban and for that reason I include a brief discussion for comparative purposes. Despite certain stylistic differences, the data from southern Amanuban reveal a commonality with the general features of house design and construction found throughout Atoin meto society.

2 This classification is also expressed symbolically in the exchange of betel nut. Women use a small rectangular basket (*oko mama*) to offer betel nut and to store their chew. Men in contrast use either a carved or woven cylindrical container (*ok tuke*) for this purpose. Every house also maintains a large open betel basket which represents the house and is identical in form to the woman's betel container. It too is called the *oko mama*. The implication is that women are more strongly identified with the house.

3 The term *kano* is the traditional coconut spoon used in most kitchens. Hence the term implies that the liana is used as a place to store the long handled spoon.

4 Cunningham has noted by way of explanation that the sun should not enter the house, which should therefore not be oriented facing east or west (1962:342). In my experience houses tend to be variably sited and the very low doorways, often with overhanging thatch, mean that the sun is not able to penetrate the interior in any case. It is interesting in this regard that many of the newer style rectangular houses are also frequently not fitter with windows and, if they are the shutters are kept tightly closed.

5 In different contexts these terms mean ‘to carry on the head’ and ‘to stamp on’ respectively.

6 This is primarily to avoid the possibility of theft but may also be associated with the anxiety that potentially dangerous spirit influences may also enter and reside in the house.

7 If a further cooking space is required two stones are added which forms a fivefold pattern with one hearth stone in the centre. The central location of the hearth is said to be related to the need for the heat to rise evenly under the stored grain in the loft.

8 Some houses store additional water in clay pots outside the house in the branches of a post (*tol oe*). The semi porous characteristics of the pot enables the wind to keep the water cool.
9 One of the hazards of living in a wooded thatched structure is the potential for its destruction by fire. When this occurs the house site is considered 'hot' (maputu) and is abandoned. Some years will elapse before the site is considered 'cool' enough to reoccupy.

10 There are no strong restrictions associated with menstruation (napen funan: to get the month). Women are not regarded as particularly polluting at this time although there was a view put forward by a number of male informants that, through sexual intercourse menstrual blood could cause venereal disease- an affliction which is endemic in the region.

11 In the past the afterbirth was collected in a woven lontar palm basket (sokat) and hung in an usapi tree (schleicher a oleosa) where it would dry and disintegrate. Each name group within the community hung these baskets in a common tree symbolic of the botanical idiom by which agnation and alliance is conceived. Today at the insistence of the church this practice has been abandoned.

12 The use of this directed attack is thought to occur in various ways. Lefi forms part of the ritual knowledge of le'u and its use may be attributed to an otherwise inexplicable fire within a house (lef ai) or to the bite of an insect or snake which causes sudden death (lef kbiti, lef sau). To counter these attacks, where they can be identified in time, the 'hot le'u' (le'u maputu) is nullified by the application of 'cool le'u' (le'u manikin). This may take the form of various forest plants which are chewed and spat upon the afflicted area combined with the use of special prayers and massage.

13 The notion of neketi applies to many other areas of life where illness occurs. Indeed, in Atoin meto terms 'wrong' behavior is the principal cause of illness. Neglecting the ancestors, speaking rudely to one's elders and general transgressions of the cultural 'order' (atolan) may all result in sickness.

14 The idea of sweating out the bad blood forms part of the wider complex of beliefs about the nature of illness. Small children with fevers (manin) are usually wrapped tightly in cloths to encourage this sweating with the unfortunate occasional consequence that they may die from dehydration.

15 In attempting to guage the extent of mortality in childbirth I collected some statistics from four villages in southern Amanuban which are tabulated below. They cover the period from August 1984 to the end of July 1985. Note that the mother mortality figures are very high but consistent with my observations that this is the most common form of death among women of childbearing age.

Table 5: Statistics on childbirth and mortality rates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>village</th>
<th>no. of births</th>
<th>no. of infant deaths</th>
<th>no. of mother deaths</th>
<th>infant mortality per 1000</th>
<th>mother mortality per 1000</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Polo</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linamnutu</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>155</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oe Ekam</td>
<td>28*</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mio</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>136</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* The relatively low figure is accounted for by the successful family planning (KB) program which uses the three monthly contraceptive injection (Depo Praverio).
16 Traditional female names are identical to male names but were marked with the prefix [bi].

17 The uem fenu was built along the lines of the traditional house although on a smaller scale. Within the structure a sword (suin fenu) was placed in the loft as a symbolic object which guards the fenu. Sword and water pot represented a complementary opposition of male and female and was one which incorporated the distinction of above and below.

18 The link between childbirth and the agricultural harvest is one recognised and enacted by people in many societies. Among the Atoin meto the metaphor of harvesting and the process of birth also provide cultural resources for enduring symbolic representations. There are many examples one could point to; I will just mention two. At the time of the na poitan ritual, the young child was carried forward preceded by a representation of the fertility magic (le' u fenu) called the nunloe. This consisted of a bamboo stick with four leaves of a fig tree attached and a strip of woven gewang palm leaf fixed to the top. The loe was tied above the door of the house containing the hearth fire. The loe was described to me as the ‘soul of the child’ (li an smanaf). In a similar fashion in former agricultural rituals special cobs of maize taken from the gardens provided what was termed the ‘soul of the maize’ (pena smanaf). These were hung in the house under the loft and were thought to provide a ritual protection for the stored grain. The other obvious similarity is the roasting or smoking of both the maize crop and the mother and newborn child. Notions of roasting, a form of ritually controlled heating, are also evident in other domains of social life including circumcision, rituals for the first fruits of the harvest (tun pena), some mortuary ceremonies as well as during the period of tribal warfare when human heads were roasted over fires. All seem to express a common set of ideas concerning the protection of life giving elements of society. Roasting serves as a means of enculturation.

19 The association between childbirth and headhunting is particularly close in the ritual process of the respective practices. They both deal with notions of heating and cooling in remarkably similar ways. This association between childbirth and headhunting was also found in the domains of Belu in central Timor (see Gittinger 1979:3).

20 In the event of a twin birth (li an kuana) a special form of ritual takes place in which the birth order of the children is reversed and the second child, now called the elder sibling (tataf) is the first to be brought out of the house. Same sex twins are highly valued and are thought to be especially close so that if requested as foster children they will go together. Opposite sex twins were thought to be an aberration, particularly in former times, because of the incestuous connotations of their development. It was said that the female twin would have been neglected and allowed to perish. One woman I know survived this maltreatment whereupon her parents relented and accepted her.

21 Translated as ‘to tie the penis and to cut the penis’.

22 Schriff, cited in 1922, noted that all boys were circumcised during the years of puberty (12-15 years) in West Midden Timor (South Central Timor) (1922:43). In my experience in the contemporary social context, this is not a common practice and most initiates are older, post puberty.

23 In connection with this, Middelkoop noted that in circumcision the penis is described as nisin ma konin (the tooth and fang), and he relates this to the ritual expression 'the teeth are sharp' (nisin na'aiik) which was associated with headhunting in connection with the rape of women (1963:45).
24 Filing of teeth does appear to reduce what the Atoin meto consider to be, the unattractive lengthening of teeth in old age as a result of receding gums.

25 Translated as ‘to file the teeth and to cut the teeth’.

26 It was difficult to determine what these ingredients comprised as people are generally reluctant to reveal the names as the efficacy is thought to be bound up with the name.

27 In pragmatic terms the roasting of fresh meat over smouldering fires is the only method Atoin meto have of storing meat over a longer period.

28 Circumcision was formerly one of the important rites of passage undertaken prior to participating in headhunting raids.

29 This did not apply, however, to members of the Raja or other high status families. Their control over buffaloes in particular and the prestige involved in their marriages meant that considerably grander exchanges were usually involved. In addition informants also recall a type of marriage they termed meles, which had the practical outcome of ‘buying’ a wife. She was thenceforth wholly owned by her husband and severed all ties with her natal community. Indeed, Atoin meto speak of this type of marriage as nafeka nakan meaning ‘to sever the head’. Like victims of headhunting, these women were lost to their kin group.

30 This derives from the Indonesian word siah meaning correct or proper.

31 Yalman (1962,1967) recognised this feature in Sinhalese marriage practice. Like the Atoin meto, marriage terminology is of the Dravidian type. Yalman argues that there is little need for excessive pomp or ceremony for marriage with close cross-cousins because, structurally, nothing happens. The consequence of the marriage terminology is that ‘children fall into place in an orderly universe...nothing changes in kinship terminology’. Conversely new marriages between distant or non-kin must create or reorder the kinship relationships which are formed (1967:172).

32 This is despite the evident fact that wife-givers represent the woman to be married and wife-takers, the man.

33 This requirement of marriage was instigated at the insistence of the Dutch Colonial administration, prior to the Second World War, in an attempt to regulate marriage (Fox pers com.).

34 Formerly the wife-takers would provide all labour and the materials to provide the feast at the house of the bride. Today there is a degree of division of labour and the wife-givers may, for example, agree to supply the water for the feast if the other side prepares the cooking utensils and the canopy for the guests.

35 In the following example, however, due to a number of disputed decisions and an obstinate refusal to compromise, the ceremony was delayed until the early morning.

36 The round gongs present at all marriage ceremonies have a long history in Timor. Today they are bought from Rotinese or Ndaoanese craftsmen. Usually they form a set of four paired gongs or decreasing size. Almost invariably it is women who play the instruments using short sticks. One woman will play one set of gongs striking them in a rhythmic alternating motion. The music tends to wax and wane, rising to a crescendo of sound then softening and slowing before building up again. Drumming by men provides the rhythmic base to the music.

37 The offering of one or more areca nuts in this context is symbolic both of the productivity implied in the nut and as an appropriate ‘female’ prestation to the ‘male’
wife-givers. Areca nut and betel pepper represent a complementary opposition of female and male.

38 The speaker in this case neglected to provide the second part of the ritual couplet to this line, namely ma lonane (and cup my hands). This refers to the traditional form of speaking where the speaker will shield his breath with cupped hands.

39 Note here that association with the gifts formerly presented by the atoin amaf of a political unit as part of the tribute offered to the central Lord.

40 At another wedding I witnessed, the siki was made from a freshly cut sapling and decorated with fruit, cloth and betel nut baskets. It was 'planted ' in the ground and greased with oil to make it difficult for the wife-takers to wrench it out and claim it as theirs.

41 This phrase is in complementary opposition to the description of the gifts presented separately to the young bride which are referred to as the 'young areca nut, the young betel pepper' (puahmnuke manumnuke).

42 When people visit or meet one another, betel nut is exchanged as a preliminary courtesy before conversation or business begins. The first phrase someone will say may be something like 'Puah manus es i pah ' (Here is betel nut) as the offering is made. More usually one hears 'Au kan tulukitit, pah tuan' (I cannot help you [with betel nut] respected friend, or 'Au kan puah kif ahoit' (I have no areca nut to offer) by which they are obliquely asking you to provide it. In a thousand incidents everyday the exchange of betel nut reinforces the interdependent character of social life.

43 Although it is not explicitly stated, the latter gifts of bananas and sugar cane may well be associated with the return marriage, discussed in chapter seven, termed 'the return of the young banana and the young sugar cane' (seb nafani uik ana ma teuf ana). These gifts given out as the wife-takers depart with the daughter of the household, return again several generations later in the form of a woman of the original wife-taking group.

44 Atoin meto sometimes express their relationship with their wife's father as one of fear (namtau) and respect. To speak discourteously about one's father in law can result in sudden illness or misfortune.

45 Thenceforth she adds the name of her husband's name group to her own. For example, she becomes known as Johana Beis Nabuasa, where Beis is the name of her husband's kanaf group. A woman who is 'married' but whose bridewealth has not been paid completely will place her own kanaf name first in the following way, Johana Nabuasa Beis.

46 The kaus nono' ceremony is still carried out in other predominantly Catholic districts however, including Insana and Beboki in North Central Timor and in Amanatun where adherence to older religious forms tend to parallel Christian worship and remain distinct.

47 From the verb ta aenab to capture or abduct.

48 The sense of abduction however, does apply to the girl's parents and kin who lose their daughter without their permission.

49 The significant extent of mnaenat in the study area was revealed in a survey of 148 households randomly selected from the villages of Oe Ekam, Mio and Polo where fully 38 couples had based their 'marriage' on abduction (25.67%).
50 Probably from the Indonesian word *pesta* meaning a ceremonial feast.

51 Death within the settlement is frequently announced by blowing a buffalo horn (*tiup nafiri*) and its mournful sound informs all those within earshot.

52 Often however, in the case of the death of a child or a beloved relative, households may choose to bury them in the houseyard in order to remain close to them. Their graves become *faut toko* or ‘sitting stones’ for the members of the house.

53 In addition, I witnessed several mortuary distributions in which each ‘path’ group received a lontar leaf bucket of boiled offal and blood known as *leko*. This is only seen in Catholic areas.

54 I note, in this context, the association with the ritually dangerous period immediately following childbirth in which the new mother is considered to be ‘wild water’ and later becomes ‘tame’ when the period of ritual danger is passed.

55 Included in this category was the spirit form known as *bunti ana* which were spirits of women who had died in childbirth. This suggests that the reference to women as ‘wild water’, at the time of birth, places them conceptually outside society and everyday life at this time.

56 Honey and beeswax are ancient commodities on Timor which continue to have strong spirit associations. Wild bees, which build their honeycombs high in the trees of the forest, are thought to require prayer and formal entreaties before they give up their sticky yield. Formerly when honey was harvested, sacrifices were made at a ‘pressing’ stone (*faut tuin*) at the base of the tree and a ritual request was made to the four directions to ensure that the bees would return to the same place after their hives were robbed. Today, while sacrifices are no longer made, Christian prayers are usually offered at the site to ensure that the honey gatherers return safely and successfully from their task. In the above case, the young man failed to provide for any ritual protection.

57 I should note that this man was a Catholic who, from my observations, are considerably more willing to incorporate aspects of the old religion in their Christian belief. This example highlights the reality of contemporary social life which, while significantly transformed, is nevertheless firmly anchored in an older cultural complex of belief that has not been relinquished.

58 These rituals of death may still be encountered in parts of Amanuban and in North central Timor.

59 In former times the corpse would be simply bundled in a woven cloth and wrapped in a sleeping mat (*nahe*) for burial. Coffins were a later innovation associated with the modern introduction of Christianity.

NOTES TO CHAPTER NINE

1 In much the same manner as the exemplary centres of the classic Hinduized states throughout S.E.Asia (see Heine-Gelderen 1956 and Geertz 1980).
NOTES TO APPENDIX A

1 As far as possible I have tried to mask the identities of the people in the four case study settlements. In their interests I have also chosen fictitious names for the settlements.

NOTES TO APPENDIX A.1

2 The remaining stands of sandalwood are now the property of the Forestry Department (Kehutanan) which determines when and how much of the timber can be logged. Farmers receive payments of Rp150/kg ($A0.15) for supplying cut logs.

3 In the adjacent village of Lasi, the position of village headman has always been under the control of the Nabuasa leadership.

4 This is within southern Amanuban. In clan history terms the ancient limestone bluff of Saenam in contemporary Miamafo represents the conceptual source.

5 His widowed elder sister bi F Nabuasa lives at the old settlement site of Pupu. In terms of precedence, however, the village headman of the adjacent village of Lasi represents an elder brother line. He is the descendant of the first wife of the ancestor Lini Nabuasa and therefore has the rightful claim to headmanship in the local region.

6 During the 1960’s Lasi and a number of neighbouring villages gave strong support to the communist movement (PKI Partai Komunis Indonesia). In the resultant pressure to submit to Christianity which arose during the turmoil of the 1965 suppression of the PKI, the majority of the people on Oe Le’u chose Catholicism. They made this choice, I believe, because of the more sympathetic hearing accorded traditional religious beliefs within Catholicism. L Nabuasa was one of the last people to accept Christianity along with the old a na’amnes Nabatonis.

7 My efforts to clarify the nature of the Nabuasa le’u musu, still referred to as menu mafu na Nabuasa, met with little success. I believe this had much to do with the continuing potency of the le’u musu as a spiritual weapon for warfare and murder. L. Nabuasa described it as having a ‘high price’ (upna naek) attached to its use. By this he meant that it demanded a payment in human blood to be successful and therefore could not be used lightly. During one of our discussions he informed me, somewhat cryptically, that although the land was now ‘cool’ (pah manikin) and therefore at peace, if war did break out again he was prepared. To date he has not passed the knowledge of the spells and the le’u objects on to his sons, although he was reported to have provided his eldest son with certain protective spiritual devices during his service as a soldier in the war in East Timor.

8 I found it particularly difficult to determine the status of this statement. Most people explain rainmaking requests in terms of Christian belief and practice. But in the case above the power to call up rain, or the ability to ritually ‘cool’ a mountain spring that is thought to be causing sickness, is an aspect of an individual’s personal power and the authoritative knowledge of the hidden world rather than prayer per se. There are still a number of ritually potent sites in the area, marked by large trees with prayer stones secured at their base, which are occasionally used in dry seasons to offer prayers for rain.

9 li means ‘left’ in this context and was used to distinguish him from another Antoin born earlier.
10 According to genealogies of the Nabusa ancestral line, Antoin Nabusa is identified as the true father (amahonit) of Lini Nabusa which would place the story in the mid nineteenth century.

NOTES TO APPENDIX A.2

1 This river forms one of the tributaries of the Noemuke which drains into the Timor sea on the south coast.

2 Ataupah claim to be one of the four groups identified with Nubatonis at Tunbesi. These groups were Ataupah, Aoetpah, Aleupah and Alunpah. The name Ataupah means 'to stop the world with the heel of the foot'. This alludes to a former role as a warrior group for Nubatonis with whom they recognize a consanguineal tie. They are 'younger brothers' to Nubatonis and consider themselves to be uf mese, one origin with Nubatonis. Their role in the polity of Amanuban declined when Nope came to Power.

3 This is probably a corruption of the name Toislaka. To this day these four names are used in ritual speech to refer to Ataupah.

4 Sonaf is often translated as 'palace', although this is a rather grandiose title for the central dwelling.

5 The terms fet nai and naimnuke are terms of elaborate politeness in Amanuban when referring to men and women.

6 During the late nineteenth century the position of a na'amnes was shared between two name groups; Nubatonis who was responsible for the east and north and Neonbota for the west and south.

7 Only Ataupah and his family were allowed to use water from the natural spring named Banu. All other groups were made to draw water from a water source lower down the slope (simply called oe et a pinan: the lower water). It was believed that for subordinate groups to use water from Banu for domestic purposes would result in sickness and death. Organisational distinctions such as these served to emphasize Ataupah's status as higher and prior.

8 The Dutch Controleur Venema gives a total population for Oe Baki as 340 men women and children in his 1916 population estimates.

9 I speculate that the arrival of the cactus, presumably around the time of its appearance in Australia, allowed some groups of Timorese to seek settlement sites away from mountain peaks in valleys and more open terrain. The cactus was an eminently suitable form of protective barrier against attack by enemy groups. Like its counterpart in Australia, at some stage the prickly pear cactus was itself largely destroyed with the arrival of the cactoblastus insect.

10 Three families of the Tloen name group remain in their old settlement some distance away near the river. However, they form an integral part of the community through continuing marriage alliance.

11 Tamarind trees grow profusely around Banu and serve as a seasonal source of income for the residents in the dry season.
12 These women are identified as the point of differentiation for the two brother lines of Ataupah in Oe Baki. bi K Neonane is the mother of the Usi naek and bi N Nuban, the second wife of Seo Ataupah, is associated with the Usi kliko.

13 The position of Lopo is comparable to that of Kepala RK or community leader in the present administrative system. The term lopo actually refers to the fourposted thatched meeting houses and granaries still common in parts of West Timor. In the political sense it has the connotation of 'cover'. Lada therefore functions as a type of protective cover for a segment of the population and dealt with administrative matters of government.

14 See chapter eight for further discussion of this role.

15 Evangelical Church of Timor.

16 Due to the uncertainty of dryland cropping in Banu there is a strong reliance on alternative economic enterprise such as livestock production, especially cattle, seasonal tamarind trading and the lucrative, if declining, cottage industry manufacturing clay water pots (nai oe). The latter are fashioned from the extensive red and black clay deposits near the Baki river. Today the ubiquitous plastic bucket offers a cheap and durable alternative, which has reduced the market for fired clay pots, but they remain in demand as storage jars for water and indigo dyes used in the manufacture of hand crafted cotton textiles.

17 A man of the feto or female line of Nesimnasi.

18 This incident had been precipitated by an amorous indiscretion on the part of Ataupah’s foster son with the daughter of the aggrieved party, which had ended in acute embarrassment for the girl and her parents.

NOTES TO APPENDIX A.3

1 Some years earlier however, the Protestant church in the settlement was reconstructed using cement and iron roofing which was carried up the mountain by hand.

2 In chapter six I recounted the origin myth of the name Puai, members of which claim a trunk ancestor named Alul Tuke who stole fire from the name group Nomnafa and were subsequently given the name fu ai meaning to blow on fire. According to the oral tradition this ancestor had a son named Bukes who, in turn, had three children. They were named as Toh Puai who lived in Amanatun, Suma Puai who settled in Oe Ekam with the Meo besi, and bi Kut Puai who married Neon Lopo and created the first alliance between the groups Lopo and Puai.

3 This was not the first time Oe Kabesa’ had been settled. For near the limestone outcrop named kot (fort) above the spring are the remains of old gravesites. Contemporary residents claim that these graves belong to earlier settlers who fled the territory in the face of Nabuasa expansion. The area was apparently already deserted by the time the first Puai settler appeared. The series of grave stones (faut nitu) remain undisturbed by the current residents who are reluctant to tamper with them out of concern for the potential spiritual dangers which may still reside within them.

4 One difficulty with this explanation is that the eldest Puai brother line which lives in Oe Ekam proper, also traces its origin from Kolo Banuanaek and is considered to be Puai metan. I was not able to establish a clear and satisfactory explanation for this
apparent contradiction. The *molo metan* distinction may well have less to do with skin colour, and rather more with a much older ritual division of responsibility associated with warfare and the use of the *le'u musu*.

5 In 1988 J Puai was elected to the position of village headman in Mio.

6 In some respects the significance of status differences between affines is consciously understated in everyday life. This is most apparent in the stylised humility of public social relations exhibited by all residents. Humility (*na baun nok-* to make oneself small) is a social virtue expressed through polite speech, bowed head, formal exchange of betel nut and an avoidance of giving offence publically. In addition all people in Oe Kabesa’ employ what are termed *akun* names to each other. These are ancestral group names which are considered both familiar and polite. Thus for example, when referring to a Puai man, one would not ordinarily use a kin term such as *ama* (father) or *bae* (affine of same generation), but his *akun* Solé which is both respectful and at the same time (it seems to me) serves to mask individual status differences.

7 I noted fifteen marriages of Puai men (both *molo* and *metan*). Of these only two had married in the hamlet, both in the last twenty years.

8 See earlier discussion of the ‘return of the young banana and the young sugar cane’, as an example of the return marriage of the female descendant of a female ancestor who married out.

9 Oe Kabesa’ by household

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(Kua tuaf)</th>
<th>(Atoin asaot)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Puai 8</td>
<td>Lasa 5, Banu 2, Nubatonis 5,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lopo 2, Tobe 1, Tefu 6, Tse 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Kabnani 2, Timaubas 1, Benu 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Taneo 1, Bakmenos 1.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

10 I have heard it said that it is possible to tell if a place is a ‘spirit path’ or a ‘spirit place’ when you feel suddenly cold, disoriented or that there is an unsighted living presence near you.

11 Formerly when sacrificial rainmaking prayers were made on the hilltops surrounding the settlement, a link was also made to the spiritual centre of the domain in Oe Ekam. Thus in ritual speech this is sometimes referred to as

Kot ma Tua teta (Oe Kabesa’)
Buniun Fatummanu (Oe Ekam)

The line of sight between the mountain top, Kot in Oe Kabesa’ and the mountain top of Buniun, cut across the proposed settlement site.

12 This included the planting of the legume shrub *Leucaena* combined with a system of ongoing crop rotation.

13 Sol Puai was the last surviving son of the original founder Leno Puai (*metan*)

NOTES TO APPENDIX A.4

1 Many places in contemporary Timor express the turbulence of the past through their names. On the ridge above Òe Noni is the hamlet of Kelonakaf (literally: monkey
heads) which in truth refers to severed human heads which were lined up and dried over fires following a foray by Nabuasa into Amfoan. Similarly the hamlet of Tuk fenu, in the village of Oe Baki, has the literal meaning of 'many headless corpses'.

2 Scattered throughout the area is evidence of the former occupation by earlier settlers. The present Timorese disclaim any knowledge of who they were but these sites are most likely the remnants of the former population which was forced out in the face of Nabuasa expansion.

3 This migration may be related in part to the dramatic impact of Bali Banteng cattle, first imported into Timor in 1912 but having a greater impact after the 1930’s, which proved to be a prolific breeder and required large areas of grassland in which to thrive. In south central Timor the increase in cattle populations was proportional to the decline in the water buffalo numbers.

4 The relatively low household density reflects the high number of single member households (six bachelors).

5 The influence of the Meo Besi, represented in the Lopo and Paui clans, extended considerably further to the north and west than this. It was only during the war between Bota Nabuasa and Si Faot, in the early twentieth century, that the border was fixed at the Noemeto (river).

6 Grandson of the original Meo Besi settler, Leno Nabuasa.

7 In the genealogical diagram of households in Faut Bena, the Selan group is represented as a wife-taker group to Tefnai. In this case however, it is only M.Selan who lived for a period in Faut Bena. His father lives separately in Oe Nunu where Lopo is the kua tuaf for the hamlet. M.Selan has recently left the settlement of Faut Bena having completed his bridewealth obligations to the Tefnai name group.

8 This is related to the verb, to sit (ntok) and the noun for seat/sitting place (toko).

9 One marriage in particular, is important in this context. When N.Nenomnanu (daughter of P.) eloped with J Puai, a key figure in the Puai group, the ‘marriage’ raised the status of P Nenomnanu to that of wife-giver. In addition, as J Puai has not paid bridewealth, P Nenomnanu maintains the rights to the children of the marriage. Thus, while J Puai has a much stronger political standing in the village, which cannot be undermined by Nenomnanu, the complex relationship created by the marriage gives P Nenomnanu and, by extension, the residents of Faut Bena, a certain degree of political leverage vis-à-vis their political seniors.

10 It is true that some generations before the Tefnai clan lived under the rule of Sonbai in Amfoan where bridewealth payments are significantly more onerous. This provides some support for the explanation offered.

11 To this extent they do not differ from many other groups in the western region of southern Amanuban. There remains a strong and persistent complex of ties, both ritual and economic, between the newer settlements in the west and the source settlements in the mountains to the east.

12 Water buffalo herds (bia meto) have since been sold or have died out, and they have been wholly replaced by Bali Banteng cattle (bia molo).

13 In one example from Faut Bena, H. Tse in one season used 33 cattle belonging to his adoptive father’s maternal affine [FMBS], to secure over 70 blek (one blek represents the contents of a standard size biscuit tin which holds approximately 15 kgs), the equivalent of 1050 kgs of unhusked rice (ane), from contract puddling work.
In this case he agreed to accept part of the yield in place of a cash payment. Of this total, 300 kgs (20 blek) was presented to the owner of the cattle while the bulk of the grain was stored in his father’s house to supply their household needs.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>aem</th>
<th>tame</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>afu</td>
<td>dust, ash</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ahunut</td>
<td>one who comes before</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ai</td>
<td>fire</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>akun</td>
<td>ancestral clan name</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>amunit</td>
<td>one who follows behind</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>amnasi'</td>
<td>elder</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and'</td>
<td>child, small</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a na' amnes</td>
<td>ritual prayer leader</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ane</td>
<td>rice (padi)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>apanat</td>
<td>who covers, shades</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>apaot</td>
<td>guardian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>asu</td>
<td>dog</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ate</td>
<td>slave</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>atolan</td>
<td>order</td>
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<tr>
<td>atoni</td>
<td>man</td>
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<td>I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>auab</td>
<td>speaker</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| inu    | coral bead |
| ike    | spindle |
| kabin  | marriage |
| kahaf  | no |
| kaisa  | don’t (command) |
| kanaf  | name, name group |
| kanmeto | personal |
| kansasli | ancestor name |
| kase   | foreign |
| kenat  | gun, rifle |
| ketu   | to cut |
| kesu   | bull |
| kiso   | to see |
| kle    | church, week |
| kolo   | bird |
| kotin  | outside, behind |
| koto   | bean |
| kuan   | hamlet |
| kuamnasi | origin hamlet |

| baun   | small |
| besi   | knife, iron |
| benas  | machete |
| bia molo | Bali cattle |
| bia meto | buffalo |
| bikase | horse |
| bunuk  | curse |

| eno    | gate, door |
| elak   | ladder |

| fafi   | pig |
| fai    | night |
| fani   | ax |
| fatu   | stone, rock outcrop |
| fatun  | rock name |
| fe     | wife |
| feku   | cattle whistle |
| feto   | female |
| feu(f) | new |
| fui    | wild |
| funan  | moon, month |

| hala' | platform |
| hau   | tree, timber |
| hel   | to tap (palm) |
| hit   | we, you (formal) |
| ho(m) | you |
| honis | life |
| hun   | grass |

| laku   | tuber |
| lauk hau | cassava |
| lanan  | path |
| lasi   | dispute, issue |
| lelan  | auction |
| lene   | garden |
| leno   | lemon fruit |
| le'u   | medicine, spirit power |
| li     | north, left |
| luis   | cat |

| ma     | and (conj) |
| maet   | to die |
| manes  | (amates- corpse) |
| mafu   | drunk, disoriented |
| makenat | warfare |
| ma' lenat | confined |
| mamat  | betel nut |
| manas  | sun |
| manikin | cool |
| manu   | chicken |
| manuan | wide, expansive |
| manus  | betel pepper |
| maputu | heat |
| masi   | salt |
| mate   | blue/green |
| mii    | young, unripe |
| ma'u  | man's cloth            | oko  | woven basket         |
| me    | red                    | onen | prayer               |
| menas | sickness               | ote  | to behead            |
| menu  | bitter                 | oto  | auto, vehicle        |
| meo   | headhunter, cat        | ot kolo | lit. bird car: airplane |
| metan | black                  | mina | sweet                |
| meto  | dry, indigenous        | mnaenat | abduction, elopement |
| mnela | lowlands, plains       | mnuke | secondary bushland  |
| mnuke | secondary bushland     | molo | yellow               |
| mnanu | long, tall             | mone | husband, male        |
| muti  | white                  | mpanu | sweet               |
| naek  | large, great           | pae  | hero, brave          |
| nah   | blood                  | pah  | earth, land          |
| nahir | to know, understand    | pah  | earth spirit         |
| nai'  | clay pot               | pah tuaf | Lord of the earth  |
| nai   | lord                   | paku | lamp                 |
| nain  | soil, earth            | pena | maize                |
| nakan | head                   | pen pene | flag          |
| nao   | to go                  | petu | box                  |
| naplenat | to govern            | petnu |      |
| nasao | to marry               | petitu |      |
| nasbo' | to dance               | pet niu | coffin       |
| nasi  | primary forest         | pika | plate                |
| nasoetan | to open              | poi  | to exit, go out      |
| natik | to kick, to expand     | poni pah | harvest tribute |
| natam | to enter               | puah | areca nut            |
| ntoni | ritual speech          | sae  | to climb, ascend     |
| neonsaet | sunrise, east        | sanu | to descend           |
| neontes | sunset, west         | sebot | tobacco              |
| neten | highlands, mountains   | sek  | to harvest           |
| ne'u  | south, right           | sen  | to plant             |
| ni    | house post             | sin  | them (pronoun)       |
| ni enaf | mother post          | smanaf | soul, spirit        |
| nini  | beeswax               | sonaf | palace, court        |
| nitu  | ancestor spirit        | sulat | letter, book         |
| noe(1) | river                 | suni | sword                |
| nono' | liana, rituals of the  | susu | milk, breast         |
| nono  | name group             |      |                      |
| nope  | stream, creek          |      |                      |
| nuni  | taboo                  |      |                      |
| neketi | to determine wrong    |      |                      |
| ntup  | to sleep               |      |                      |
| nunu  | banyan tree            |      |                      |
| oe    | water                  |      |                      |
| oetene | cold                   |      |                      |
| oke   | all                    |      |                      |
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