THE POTENT DEAD

ANCESTORS, SAINTS AND HEROES IN CONTEMPORARY INDONESIA

EDITED BY HENRI CHAMBERT-LOIR and ANTHONY REID

ROUTLEDGE

ASAA SOUTHEAST ASIA PUBLICATIONS SERIES

ASIAN STUDIES ASSOCIATION OF AUSTRALIA
Southeast Asia Publications Series

THE POTENT DEAD

ASIAN STUDIES ASSOCIATION OF AUSTRALIA
Southeast Asia Publications Series

Titles in print

The Challenge of Sustainable Forests: Forest Resource Policy in Malaysia, 1970–1995, F.M. Cooke

Fragments of the Present: Searching for Modernity in Vietnam's South, Philip Taylor

The Emergence of a National Economy: An Economic History of Indonesia, 1800–2000, Howard Dick, Vincent J.H. Houben, J. Thomas Lindblad, Thee Kian Wie

Power and Prowess: The Origins of Brooke Kingship in Sarawak, J.H. Walker

The Riddle of Malaysian Capitalism: Rent seekers or real capitalists? Peter Searle

The Seen and Unseen Worlds in Java, 1726–1749: History, Literature and Islam in the Court of Pakubuwana II, M.C. Ricklefs

War, Nationalism and Peasants: The Situation in Java, 1942–1945, Shigeru Sato

Writing a New Society: Social Change through the Novel in Malay, Virginia Matheson Hooker

Editorial Committee

Professor Virginia Hooker (Editor)
Australian National University

Dr Tony Day

Dr Jane Drakard
Monash University

Professor Anthony Milner
Australian National University

Professor Rey Ileto
Australian National University
National University of Singapore

Professor Lenore Manderson
University of Melbourne

Professor Anthony Reid
University of California, Los Angeles

Professor Carl Thayer
University of Hawaii

Professor Barbara Andaya
University of Hawaii

Dr Howard Dick
University of Melbourne

Professor Kevin Hewison
City University of Hong Kong

Professor Graeme Hugo
University of Adelaide

Professor John Ingleson
University of New South Wales

Dr Milton Osborne

Dr Krishna Sen
Murdoch University

Dr John Butcher
Griffith University

THE POTENT DEAD

Ancestors, saints and heroes in contemporary Indonesia

Edited by
Henri Chambert-Loir
and Anthony Reid

LONDON AND NEW YORK

First published 2002 by Allen & Unwin

Published 2020 by Routledge
2 Park Square, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon OX14 4RN
605 Third Avenue, New York, NY 10017

Routledge is an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group, an informa business

Copyright © this collection Henri Chambert-Loir and Anthony Reid, 2002
Copyright of individual pieces remains with the authors

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reprinted or reproduced or utilised in any form or by any electronic, mechanical, or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publishers.

Notice:
Product or corporate names may be trademarks or registered trademarks, and are used only for identification and explanation without intent to infringe.

National Library of Australia Cataloguing-in-Publication entry:

The potent dead: ancestors, saints and heroes in
contemporary Indonesia.

Bibliography.
Includes index.
ISBN 1 86508 739 4.

1. Dead. 2. Death. 3. Ethnology—Indonesia 4. Ancestor worship—Indonesia. I. Chambert-Loir, Henri. II. Reid, Anthony, 1939-.

393.09598

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

The potent dead: ancestors, saints, and heroes in contemporary Indonesia / edited by
Henri Chambert-Loir and Anthony Reid.
p. cm. — (Southeast Asia publications series)
Includes bibliographical references and index.
ISBN 0-8248-2555-1 (alk. paper)
1. Funeral rites and ceremonies—Indonesia. 2. Ancestor worship—Indonesia.
3. Cemeteries—Indonesia. 4. Death—Symbolic aspects—Indonesia.
5. Indonesia—Religious life and customs. 6. Indonesia—Social life and customs.
I. Chambert-Loir, Henri. II. Reid, Anthony, 1939- III. Series

GT3280.A2 P68 2002
291.2'13—dc21 2001057018

Set in 10/11 Times by Midland Typesetters, Maryborough, Victoria

ISBN-13: 9781865087399 (pbk)

Contents

Maps and illustrations vii
List of contributors ix
Preface xiii
Introduction by *Henri Chambert-Loir and Anthony Reid* xv

1 Castrated dead: the making of un-ancestors among the Aoheng, and some considerations on death and ancestors in Borneo
Bernard Sellato 1
2 How to hold a *tiwah*: the potency of the dead and deathways among Ngaju Dayaks
Anne Schiller 17
3 Witnessing the creation of ancestors in Laboya (West Sumba, Eastern Indonesia)
Danielle C. Geirnaert 32
4 Reciprocity, death and the regeneration of life and plants in Nusa Penida (Bali)
Rodolfo A. Giambelli 48
5 Remembering our dead: the care of the ancestors in Tana Toraja
Elizabeth Coville 69
6 Island of the Dead. Why do Bataks erect *tugu*?
Anthony Reid 88
7 Modernising sacred sites in South Sumatra: Islamisation of Gumai ancestral places
Minako Sakai 103
8 Ancestors' blood: genealogical memory, genealogical amnesia and hierarchy among the Bugis
Christian Pelras 117
9 Saints and ancestors: the cult of Muslim saints in Java
Henri Chambert-Loir 132

10 The Tembayat hill: clergy and royal power in Central Java from the 15th to the 17th century
Claude Guillot, (translated by Jean Couteau) 141
11 Interpreting the historical significance of tombs and chronicles in contemporary Java
James J. Fox 160
12 The role of a Javanese burial ground in local government
George Quinn 173
13 'National ancestors': the ritual construction of nationhood
Klaus H. Schreiner 183

Notes 205
Bibliography 220
Index 237

Maps and illustrations

Maps

Map 1	Indonesian Borneo (Kalimantan)	3
Map 2	Bali administrative divisions (Kabupaten), with Nusa Penida	49
Map 3	South Sulawesi: Toraja and Bugis	72
Map 4	Sumatra: Toba Batak and Gumai	89
Map 5	Research sites in South Sumatra	104
Map 6	Java	134

Illustrations

Figure 2.1	The *sangkaraya* is erected to begin the Ngaju *tiwah* ceremony	24
Figure 2.2	Ngaju preparing the bones of the dead for interment	25
Figure 2.3	The senior government official plays his part in the *tiwah*	30
Figure 3.1	Traditional Sumba village of Wujimate	34
Figure 3.2	Descendants of Raja Laboya (West Sumba)	39
Figure 3.3	Layout of houses and graves	40
Figure 3.4	New tomb built for Hoga Bora in front of his house	41
Figure 4.1	Collective washing of the ancestor's bones after exhumation: Pendukaha Kelod, Nusa Penida, 1990	55
Figure 4.2	The *sanggah kemulan* during a family festival, at Karangdawa, Nusa Penida	62
Figure 6.1	Simarmata *tugu* in the shape of a lighthouse, northern Samosir	90
Figure 6.2	Manihuruk tugu, built 1993 to house the bones of hundreds of descendants	91
Figure 6.3	1940s cement grave and 1980s *tugu* in northern Samosir	98
Figure 7.1	Renovation of an ancestral grave in Lubuk Raman village	110
Figure 8.1	The fake grave of Pua Sanro at Wotu in Luwu	128
Figure 10.1	Entrance to the mausoleum of Kajoran	142

Figure 11.1 Genealogy of Ki Ageng Giring 168
Figure 11.2 The tombs of Senopati and his Mataram ancestors at Pasareyan Kota Gede 170
Figure 12.1 The mausoleum of Jaka Kaiman, founder of Banyumas 176
Figure 12.2 Jaka Kaiman's tomb 178
Figure 12.3 Actors portraying Jaka Kaiman and his wife in the 1994 procession 179
Figure 12.4 Portraits of previous *bupatis* paraded through the streets of Purwokerto 179
Figure 13.1 The national monument at Taman Makam Pahlawan Nasional, with the tomb of the 'unknown hero' 191
Figure 13.2 The 'monument to sacred Pancasila', featuring statues of the seven slain generals 196

List of contributors

HENRI CHAMBERT-LOIR is a senior research fellow at the Ecole Française d'Extrême-Orient, Paris, and represented that institute in Jakarta over 15 years from the 1970s to 1990s. He has published a number of editions of Malay literary and historical texts, as well as essays on Malay traditional and Indonesian modern literature. He also edited (with Claude Guillot) *Le Culte des Saints dans le Monde Musulman* (Paris, 1995) and wrote (with Claude Guillot), 'Pèlerinage aux neuf saints de Java' in Mohammad Ali Amir-Moezzi (ed.), *Lieux d'Islam: Cultes et Cultures de l'Afrique à Java* (Paris, 1996).

ANTHONY REID is now Professor of History and Director of the Center for Southeast Asian Studies at UCLA, Los Angeles, USA. Until 1999 he was at the Research School of Pacific Studies at the Australian National University. His books include *Southeast Asia in the Age of Commerce, c.1450–1680* (2 vols, Yale U. Press, 1988–93) and *The Blood of the People: Revolution and the End of Traditional Rule in Northern Sumatra* (Oxford University Press, 1979).

ELIZABETH COVILLE is an Adjunct Assistant Professor in the Anthropology Department at Hamline University in St Paul, Minnesota, USA. She has published 'Centripetal ritual in a decentered world: changing Maro performances in Tana Toraja' in Susan Russell and Clark Cunningham, (eds), *Changing Lives, Changing Rites* (CSSEAS, University of Michigan, 1989).

JAMES J. FOX is Director of the Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies at the Australian National University. His recent publications on Java include 'Ziarah visits to the tombs of the Wali' in M.C. Ricklefs (ed.),

Islam in the Indonesian Social Context (Clayton, 1991), 'Sunan Kalijaga and the Rise of Mataram' in P. Riddell and A. Street, (eds), *Islam: Essays on Scripture, Thought and Society* (Brill, 1997), and 'Wali' in J.J. Fox (ed.), *Religion and Ritual*, Indonesian Heritage Encyclopedia (Singapore, 1998).

DANIELLE C. GEIRNAERT studied social anthropology in the Netherlands and is now Professor of Anthropology at the University of Paris X, France. Her publications include *The Woven Land of Laboya: Cosmic Ideas and Values in West Sumba (Eastern Indonesia)* (Leiden, 1992) and 'In honour of the seaworms in West Sumba' in Signe Howell (ed.), *For the Sake of our Future: Sacrificing in Eastern Indonesia* (Leiden, 1996).

RODOLFO A. GIAMBELLI currently works as a Social Forestry and Rural Development Consultant. His publications include 'The coconut, the body and the human being. Metaphors of life and growth in Nusa Penida and Bali' in: L. Rival (ed.), *The Social Life of Trees* (Berg, Oxford, 1998) and 'Working the land. Babad as forest clearing and the analogy between land and human fertility in Nusa Penida (Bali)' in *BKI* 153, iii (1999). Dr Giambelli can be contacted at: pretiwi@attglobal.net

CLAUDE GUILLOT is Directeur de Recherche at the CNRS and Directeur d'Etudes at the Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales in Paris. In collaboration with Henri Chambert-Loir, he edited *Le Culte des Saints dans le Monde Musulman* (Paris, 1995).

CHRISTIAN PELRAS recently retired from his position of senior research fellow at CNRS (1964–99), during which time he directed the research teams DEVI and LASEMA. His publications in English include *The Bugis* (Blackwell, 1996) and 'Religion, tradition and the dynamics of Islamisation in South Sulawesi' in Alijah Gordon (ed.), *The Propagation of Islam in the Indonesian-Malay Archipelago* (Kuala Lumpur: Malaysian Sociological Research Institute, 2001).

GEORGE QUINN is Head of the Southeast Asia Centre in the Faculty of Asian Studies at the Australian National University. He is author of *The Novel in Javanese* (KITLV Press, 1992), *The Learner's Dictionary of Today's Indonesian* (Allen & Unwin, 2000) and an English translation of Anak Agung Panji Tisna's novel as *The Rape of Sukreni* (Lontar, 1998).

ANNE SCHILLER is Associate Professor of Anthropology at North Carolina State University. Her publications include *Small Sacrifices: Religious Change and Cultural Identity Among the Ngaju of Indonesia* (Oxford, 1997) and 'Talking heads: capturing Dayak deathways on film' in *American Ethnologist* 28(1), 32–55 (2001).

MINAKO SAKAI is currently the program co-ordinator and lecturer in Indonesian Language and Culture, University College, the University of New South Wales. She is the editor of *Beyond Jakarta: Regional Autonomy and Local Societies in Indonesia* (Crawford House, in press) and author of the forthcoming *The Nut Cannot Forget Its Shell: Ritual Practice and Identity of the Gumai of South Sumatra*.

KLAUS H. SCHREINER is currently head of the European Liaison Office of INFID (International NGO Forum on Indonesia), but previously was lecturer in Southeast Asian Studies at the University of Frankfurt. His publications include *Politischer Heldenkult in Indonesien. Tradition und Moderne Praxis* (Berlin, 1995), 'The making of national heroes. Guided democracy to New Order, 1959–1992' in Henk Schulte Nordholt (ed.), *Outward Appearances: Dressing State and Society in Indonesia* (Leiden, 1997) and, as editor, *Islam in Asiën* (Unkel, 2001).

BERNARD SELLATO has been working in and on Borneo since 1973. He is the author of *Nomades et Sédentarisation à Bornéo* (1989), *Hornbill and Dragon. Arts and Culture of Borneo* (1989, 1992), *Nomads of the Borneo Rainforest* (1994), and *Borneo. People of the Rainforest* (a CD-ROM, 1998). He now heads the Institute for Research on Southeast Asia (CNRS) in Marseille, France.

Taylor & Francis
Taylor & Francis Group
http://taylorandfrancis.com

Preface

Death is the central fact of life—the source of our most extravagant hopes and fears. Religious and ritual activity has always sought to cope with it by regulating the most important of life's passages, channelling the spiritual forces it unleashes, and allowing the living to grieve and move on. No substantial part of the human family has given richer examples than the Austronesians (of whom Indonesians form the current majority) of these processes at work. At least since Arnold van Gennep a century ago the preoccupation of Austronesians with death ritual has provided the most important field for ethnographic exploration and theoretical speculation.

None of the authors in this book, however, set out to study this phenomenon as such. Yet each of us, whether anthropologist, historian or literary scholar, has been struck by the continuing importance of the recently dead for our Indonesian friends and informants.

When Henri Chambert-Loir was able to take a few months away from his duties in Jakarta to become a Visiting Fellow at the ANU, therefore, it seemed to us both that we should use the opportunity for a workshop on this topic. Henri had long been concerned with the kramats of Java and the role they play in pilgrimage, an interest he shared with George Quinn and James Fox at ANU. I had recently returned from fieldwork among the Toba and Karo Batak, still puzzling about their attitude to the dead.

Chambert-Loir, Reid, Fox, Quinn and Sakai were able to participate in this workshop, and became interested enough in the phenomenon to wish to pursue it further. Gradually the net widened to scholars working in other parts of Indonesia. Henri was able to extend it to a Francophone circle of scholars whose work is not always sufficiently appreciated by Anglophones. We are grateful especially to those who were willing to contribute to the volume despite not having been part of the initial excitement.

The editors thank Clare Guenther, Jude Shanahan, Wendy Mukherjee and Linda Poskitt for their help in getting these papers into a uniform format and ironing out many wrinkles, Barbara Andaya for helpful comments, and the RSPAS Cartography Unit for drawing some of the maps.

Anthony Reid
Henri Chambert-Loir

Introduction

Henri Chambert-Loir and Anthony Reid

Frankly, there is an impression among the public that the President spends more time visiting the tombs of old figures than living people.

— NU cleric Attabik Ali, quoted *Jakarta Post* 16.6.2001

Abdurrahman Wahid, the first democratically elected President of the world's fourth most populous country, made many decisions in a way that puzzled not only analysts but his own close followers. One of the most damaging moves in the first year of his presidency, for example, was to sack two unusually competent economic ministers of Vice-President Megawati's PDIP party, whose presence had been part of the careful political compromise that had brought him to power. According to a report in Indonesia's most respected news magazine, *Tempo*, this decision was taken immediately after someone told the President that a long-dead spiritual leader of Nahdatul Ulama, Wahid's own organisation, was unhappy that Wahid had not visited his tomb. The President mobilised three helicopters to rush him to the small East Java town of Situbondo, where he prayed before the tomb of this leader in a manner very familiar to traditionalist Javanese Muslims. He emerged from the tomb with new confidence and resolve, and announced the sacking of the ministers immediately thereafter (Quinn 2001).

Nocturnal communing with the spirits of the 'potent dead' was normal for Abdurrahman Wahid, and to his most passionate Javanese followers it demonstrated the authority and sanctity of a man supernaturally marked for leadership. It could be unsettling, however, to the many people in Indonesia and abroad who rightly saw Wahid as a great democrat who might secure an open, pluralist future for modern Indonesia. In May 2001, just before a crucial cabinet meeting he should have presided over, he left Jakarta at short notice on a special train. He headed for the small Central Java town of

Kroya, where he arrived after nightfall to pray at the tomb of Haji Muhammad Barokah, a locally revered Islamic leader. Reportedly he prayed for 15 minutes, both for the repose of Barokah's soul and for the salvation of the nation. Then he headed back to his train, returning at 3 am to a Jakarta whose busy politicians had begun to despair of him.

All Indonesians understand this behaviour, even if they do not approve of it. To some the dead saints have such power to guide the living that no leader would be safe without their blessing. Many, including normative Muslims, Christians or modernisers who deeply disapprove of such connections, believe that these powerful dead connect Indonesians to their local place and to their past, Almost all Indonesians have a respect for deceased ancestors and role models that to outsiders borders on the supernatural. This book explores the phenomenon across a broad spectrum of Indonesian societies.

INDONESIAN RELIGION

In historical terms, the universal religions penetrated the Indonesian archipelago with its established belief systems relatively late. Hinduism and Buddhism were introduced from India around the middle of the first millennium AD, and helped to stimulate the earliest kingdoms in Java and parts of Sumatra and Borneo. Islam began to spread around the 14th century, while Christianity did not arrive until the 16th. Local religions also faced a wide range of other influences, stimuli and coercions—the rise of polities with territorial claims over various part of the archipelago, the expansion of maritime communications, the use of Malay as a lingua franca for both trade and Islam, the colonial experience which united the whole archipelago under a government that claimed to be both Christian and rational, and the post-Independence development of education, mass media and state ideologies. Responses to these pressures spanned the whole spectrum, from enthusiastic conversion to firm resistance and reaction.

Despite these outside pressures a few indigenous religious systems gained official recognition, at the price of themselves changing in a modern direction. The Aluk To Dolo of the Toraja, the Agama Pemena of the Karo Batak and the Agama Kaharingan of the Ngaju Dayak (in 1969, 1977 and 1980 respectively) have been acknowledged by the Indonesian state as separate branches of the Hindu Dharma religion, alongside the long-recognised Hindus of Bali (Volkman 1987: 166; Steedly 1993: 69; see also Chapter 2). At the other end of the spectrum, many individuals and groups that had been part of the old belief system became uncompromising devotees of the universal religions, like the exemplary Muslim *santri* of Java, or the Salvation Army converts in Central Sulawesi described by Aragon (1987: 152–6).

Conversion, however, is a complex phenomenon, seldom obliterating what went before even when it claims to do so (see Hefner 1993). The

chapters in this volume repeatedly affirm the resilience of one trait that is common to almost all indigenous religions—namely, the worship of ancestors. This remains at the core of Indonesian praxis in all of the five universal, or scriptural, faiths recognised by the Indonesian government—Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam, Catholicism and Protestantism.

THE INDONESIAN NATION

According to official statistics, more than 85% of Indonesians are Muslim, giving it the largest Islamic population in the world. Catholic, Protestant, Hindu and Buddhist adherents are substantial minorities, each with over a million adherents.[1] This simplicity of categorisation is sanctioned by law. Nobody is an atheist, and a population of 200 million inhabitants is presumed to follow only these five religions. The rationalisation of political life during the 32-year regime of Soeharto (1966–98) helped legitimise this superficial simplicity. It recognised only three parties, required all mass organisations to accept the *Pancasila* as their 'sole foundation', and limited the two strong Islamic organisations, Nahdatul Ulama (Javanese/traditional) and Muhammadiyah (modernist), to religious activities. During Soeharto's New Order government the religious landscape seemed to require little attention, and the view that the five religions lived in relative harmony became basic to the government's portrayal of the Indonesian model of tolerance. Incidents that occurred with increasing frequency (cultural oppression of the Chinese, arson against churches, harassment of Catholic bodies) were systematically minimised in the media and their religious character denied. In the official credo, religion was immovable and unquestionable. Together with ethnicity (*Suku*), race (*Ras*) and 'intergroup relations' (*Antargolongan*), religion (*Agama*) remained one of the four taboos (*SARA*) of public discourse.

Accordingly, although worship of sacred graves is a phenomenon of immense importance throughout the country, especially in Java, involving thousands of sites and hundreds of thousands of pilgrims, it has been largely ignored by the national media. The Muslim community is divided about the legitimacy of such practices, and it is feared that open discussion could cause social unrest. Taking up an important but neglected topic, this book addresses the role of the 'potent dead': that is, it seeks to examine the power that certain dead—ancestors, saints and national heroes—exert over the living in contemporary religious thinking and practice in Indonesia.

These three terms require some clarification. The chapters examine ancestors, who may have survived in a Christian or Muslim form in the context of indigenous religious practices, as well as saints within the larger Islamic environment. In discussing the 'indigenous' (or 'traditional', 'ethnic', 'autochthonous', 'archaic') elements that survive in modern religions, however, we are not looking back at what such belief systems may have been but are focusing on this specific category of religious

phenomena in contemporary Indonesia. Ancestor or saint worship is never an isolated practice. It is but one of the many manifestations of a creed. Though the cult of the 'potent dead' is not in itself integral to any of the universal religions, it must be emphasised that (with one exception) the essays in this book deal with Muslim, Christian and Hindu societies. While the pilgrims who visit the Javanese sacred graves may direct their prayer to the local 'saint' rather than to God, their faith in Allah remains the pillar of their devotions.

In no society in Indonesia and in probably no society in the world is the worship of ancestors a religion of itself: it is only one part or one aspect of religion. Moreover, as Schärer (1963: 152) remarked about the Ngaju: 'We find no support in Dayak religion for the assumption that worship of the sacred dead is the beginning of religious development, and that from it first spirit-worship and then the worship of a God developed'. It is impossible to point to the 'source' of religious development, although the German and Dutch anthropologists who initiated research on indigenous religions (for references, see Stöhr 1968) were obsessed by origins. They conceived of religion as an essentially coherent and autonomous system derived from the knowledge of a unique God: 'The worship of the dead is based only on the conception of God and can only be understood in relation to it' (Schärer 1963: 153). As Stöhr himself succinctly put it: 'The principle [of a tribal religion] is the idea of God and creation' (Stöhr 1968: 173).

This approach was abandoned after World War II, with the result that contemporary scholarship displays a very different approach to such concepts as 'religion' and 'belief'. In speaking of the Kodi district in West Sumba, one anthropologist notes: 'We can see how the indigenous system of worship, initially defined as a system of practices and rules of ritual procedure, was later reinterpreted as a system of belief' (Hoskins 1987: 137).

Contrary to the 'religions of the Book', indigenous belief systems are not based on an elaborate body of doctrine from which all elements of religious life necessarily derive. They are composed of a multiplicity of disconnected elements, the coherence of which—the 'system'—is obscure. Many of them (Batak, Ngaju, Toraja, Sumba, etc.) incorporate rich cosmological, mythical and eschatological traditions. However, as they remain in the oral realm, these traditions are only partially codified and manifest multiple versions and variants, a characteristic that may have made them more permeable to outside influences. Even literate societies like the Batak and the Bugis did not produce any work that could have functioned as a religious code. The use of the term 'religion' in this context is justified by the overall importance of the supernatural in everyday life, not because indigenous religions deal with a supernatural or sacred sphere distinct from the natural or the secular. They encompass the totality of human activity, comprising the political and economic spheres as well as the spiritual one.

ANCESTORS

Ancestors, as we deal with them here, are involved in every activity of the living. The term 'ancestors' has two different meanings, an issue specifically addressed in Chapter 1. The first embraces all genealogical forebears, however distant; the second is the limited category of forebears regarded as more potent than others, whose prominence the living society acknowledges. It seems that most pre-Islamic societies in Indonesia (one exception is discussed below) were characterised by ancestor worship, or at least practised it. Surviving societies either worship all forebears in a collective way or venerate selected ancestors who have acquired superior status and are endowed with particular powers. The Nage of Flores make no distinction between forebears and ancestors (Forth 1998: 243), whereas Chapter 3 shows that the Laboya of Sumba attribute the status of *marapu* (ancestors) only to individuals who distinguished themselves while still alive. Because these exceptional individuals had some kind of power on earth (rank, wealth, progeniture), they now constitute an elite in the world of the dead. The most revered among them are the ancestors who founded a village, lineage or clan, whose legitimacy remains based on the memory of present occupants or members. Indeed, numerous communities have maintained a category of 'memory specialists' who are in charge of remembering the genealogical continuity linking present society to its origins. Such examples are seen in the *junkuk* and the *juru kunci*, cultural guardians whom Minako Sakai and James Fox discuss in relation to two different Muslim societies.[2]

In such societies it is common, though not universal, to exclude from this system people who died in a violent fashion or before due time ('the bad dead' in Schärer's terms), the influence of which is unanimously considered as harmful. The spirits of the bad dead are malicious and dangerous because their anti-natural death has automatically excluded them from the system of exchange that links the living and the dead. They do not dwell in the land of the dead.[3]

The conditions of the afterlife for the souls of the dead are conceived in great detail, but also in an infinity of variants from one community to another. The path that souls have to follow to reach their destination in the afterworld is usually long in time and space. At the moment of death, the soul separates from the body and is often transformed, either giving birth to one or two different souls or being replaced by one or several new souls. Stöhr (1968: 205–10) gives examples of a 'vital soul' and a new 'soul of the dead' in five different groups (Ngaju, Toba, Nias, Maanyan and Toraja), but these communities are probably too large to permit generalisations. Even within the Ngaju Dayaks variations are marked, so that the descriptions given by Stöhr, Weinstock (1987: 79–80) and (in Chapter 2) Anne Schiller are all somewhat different.

The ultimate destination of the souls is named, localised and often described with precision. The soul or souls usually travel to the land of the

dead under the guidance of ancestors already living there, or of special spirits, or of a mediating deity (Schärer 1963: 143; Stöhr 1968: 38, 207). Located far away, the land of the dead is sometimes associated with the group's legendary territorial origin. The route there is dangerous and can be reached only after a cycle of ceremonies. The land of the dead is represented as similar to that of the living: the dead have occupations resembling those of their descendants, but everything is reversed (day is night, right is left and so on).

Death provokes a rupture. The family of the deceased is excluded from the community. Family members embark on the period of mourning while the corpse begins to disintegrate. The soul wanders around the corpse or its former house in a state of distress, while the living are charged with pacifying it and preventing it from re-entering the corpse. The deceased is still a 'living dead'.

Funeral rites are extremely complex, even more diverse. A remarkable effort of synthesis was made by Robert Hertz in 1905–06, on the basis of data pertaining mainly to Borneo. A few years later (1909) Arnold van Gennep published his famous *Rites of Passage*, mainly drawing on material from Madagascar. Both studies (originally in French) appeared in English translation in 1960. Hertz concluded that death represents the most dangerous of all the metamorphoses through which a human life passes. The body is transformed through putrefaction, the soul wanders in expectation of its final abode, the relatives of the deceased are contaminated by the impurity of the corpse, the whole community is in a state of emergency. This situation prompts the performing of a double burial with a long transitory ('liminal' in van Gennep's terminology) period, which can last from a few months to 10 years. During the time required for its total decay the corpse is highly dangerous, as 'the evil power which resides in the corpse and which is linked with the smells must not be allowed to escape and strike the living' (Hertz 1960: 32). Siegel (1983: 8–9) has remarked on the terror caused by the smell of putrefaction in modern Javanese society, 'when the flesh of the corpse [has] not completely decayed'.[4] It is only when the flesh and the fluids have disappeared and the bones are perfectly dry that the pacified soul can reach its ultimate abode. During that transitory period it undergoes 'a kind of probation, during which it stays on earth in the proximity of the body, wandering in the forest or frequenting the places it inhabited while it was alive' (Hertz 1960: 34). It is liberated only through the secondary burial, a lavish ceremony that 'has three objects: to give burial to the remains of the deceased, to ensure the soul peace and access to the land of the dead, and finally to free the living from the obligations of mourning' (1960: 54). The mourning period can actually end much earlier through a far less important intermediary ritual, like the *tiwah* ceremony of the Ngaju to which Hertz referred and which is discussed in detail in Chapter 2. Even among the Nage in Flores there are still three burial rituals, although these are generally simplified (Forth 1998: 249–52).

The dead who have gained the status of ancestors are not the only entities with which the living maintain a relationship in the supernatural world, for it is also inhabited by a large number of spirits and gods. However, it seems that the souls of the dead have an autonomous existence, without direct contact with either gods or spirits. According to Weinstock (1987: 79–80), 'there are two parallel, and yet overlapping, realms of spirits in Kaharingan cosmology. One realm is that of spirits of the human soul, both of the living and of the dead, while the other realm is of spirits which are non-human'. These various categories of supernatural beings have specific powers, specific functions and specific relations with the living. The ancestors are not intercessors with any other category of spirits: they are worshipped for the protection and the benefits they can provide the living.[5]

As in Africa, however, use of the term 'worship' can be misleading (Uchendu 1981: 286). It has been remarked that 'lineages are communities of the living and the dead' or, in Schärer's terms, 'the total community comprises not only the living but also the dead' (1963: 142). The relationship between the living and the ancestors is one of reciprocity, interaction, 'exchange of services' (Hertz 1960: 61), 'one of the basic social relationships' (see Chapter 3). Ancestors are by definition benevolent: they protect their descendants, they guarantee their prosperity and guide them in all important actions of life, on condition that they are honoured and fed. If the living neglect their duties towards the ancestors, the latter will punish them by inflicting all kinds of calamities: illnesses, bad crops, accidents. This reciprocal relationship is not apparently governed by any moral considerations. Ancestors do not punish offences against any overarching ethical code; they seek retribution for any lack of proper attention to themselves. The relations between ancestors and the living are almost permanent: ancestors manifest themselves through their gifts or the signs of their wrath, and often appear in dreams. In return, they are invited to all the ceremonies of the living and are worshipped, collectively or individually, on many occasions.

This picture is so overwhelming that any counter-example appears to be merely an inconvenient exception. Nonetheless, Bernard Sellato's discussion (Chapter 1) of the central Borneo Aoheng, who do not recognise any ancestors, is unsettling—particularly as this 'exception' seems to extend to all the peoples of the Kayanic group. But this case presents the anthropologist with an unexpected touchstone: among the distinctive traits of Aoheng society, it is its rigid stratification, Sellato stresses, which makes recourse to ancestors unnecessary to status legitimacy and, thus, explains the Aohengs' neglect of ancestors. As 'status is not negotiable', a cult of the ancestors would not modify the social situation of either the living or the dead. On the other hand, other stratified societies in Indonesia do acknowledge ancestors. It is possible that the peculiar case of the Aoheng is related to their (former) nomadic condition.

SAINTS

Like ancestors, saints are humans who have successfully crossed the gap between the world and the afterworld. They are aware of the mystery of life and death, and are familiar with the supernatural forces that govern human life. As Christian Pelras puts it in Chapter 8, their graves 'are so to say an access gate to [the invisible, parallel] world'. The transition from ancestors to saints is actualised through mythical and legendary ancestors and cultural heroes. In two Muslim societies where genealogy as proof of the legitimacy of the social order is highly regarded (the Gumai in Sumatra and the Bugis in Sulawesi), the most revered 'ancestors' are beings who came down from heaven. In Chapter 9, Henri Chambert-Loir reviews the various categories of saints in Javanese society. Like 'ancestors', the term 'saints' is problematic, for the concept of sainthood (*walâya*) is extremely elaborate in Islam and should properly be restricted to a very few among those revered dead. Nonetheless, *walâya* and its derivatives are popularly used throughout the Muslim world, from Morocco to India, to designate all the dead revered on the site of sacred graves. Indeed, the worship of saints is so common that it can be regarded as a characteristic of Islamic praxis.

Introduced to Indonesia as a foreign phenomenon in the early time of Islamisation, saint worship naturally replaced or merged with pre-existing ancestor worship. That this shift had already occurred within the first generations of converts is suggested by the condemnation by an orthodox Javanese tract as early as the 16th century of those who 'put the saints above the prophets, or even above our Lord Muhammad' (Drewes 1978: 38–9; also Reid 1993: 164–73). There is an obvious continuum between ancestors and one large category of Javanese 'saints', that of village founders (*cikal bakal*). Like ancestors, the saints revered on the site of their graves are a source of protection, blessing and advice.

One of the many differences between saints and ancestors concerns their role in the social order, and specifically the issue of morality. Graves may be visited with trivial or even dubious aims,[6] but on the whole saint worship is associated with a respect for the laws of society and a craving for spiritual perfection. This makes it possible for the orthodox to say that the source of the saint's beneficence may be in the heart of the worshipper.

HEROES

'National Heroes' are historical characters from the past whom the state has institutionalised as 'fathers' and 'mothers' of the nation. The rituals (annual ceremonies, reburial, purification of the bones), the sites (exclusive cemeteries) and the atmosphere of sacredness nurtured by the government have engineered an effective cult of National Heroes. The Soeharto regime was particularly careful to select heroes from various periods and from all provinces, and to make participation in the nationalist or anticolonial

struggle the principal if not sole criterion for inclusion. In so doing, the government represented National Heroes as the founding ancestors of the whole nation, which is thereby united as a large family. National Heroes are undoubtedly potent dead. However, they cannot be equated with either ancestors or saints other than metaphorically. Only a few graves of National Heroes are individually revered, like those of Diponegoro, leader of Java's anti-Dutch rebellion of 1825–30, and Kartini, the young aristocrat whose published letters gave her the status of Indonesia's first feminist. Reverence for them has little to do with their nomination as 'heroes' by the Indonesian state.

National Heroes may best be regarded as a collective group of the dead whose potency was called into being by the state as an aspect of its legitimacy. In the past the graves of the most prestigious kings of the archipelago's varied monarchies were honoured by their reigning successors for similar reasons. Indonesia's inherent pluralism, however, made it essential that its pantheon be equally plural, with no ethnic group content until it too had been recognised by an officially designated hero.

CONVERSION AND THE POTENT DEAD

Ancestor rituals are observed in the indigenous religions still practised by people who have resisted incorporation into the universal religions (including many Ngaju, Toraja and Karo Batak, for example). These rituals and beliefs are also influential, albeit in a partial or modified form, among a far larger number of Indonesians who are already part of Islam or Christianity. The process of conversion is long and complex. Transformations caused by the impact of an external religion or ideology do not result in radical substitutions of practices and beliefs—rather in new formulations and interpretations. These come about as a result of progressive negotiation, of a continuing 'dialogue' (Hoskins 1987: 137), and of 'transactions with the dominant society' (Atkinson 1987: 173).

Conversion is partly a process of translation. The Christian missionaries who endeavoured to translate the Bible into the various languages of the archipelago were confronted with the difficulty of naming God. Their answer was often to give the name of the local superior divinity to the Christian God. (Stöhr 1968: 31, 88, 111 gives examples in Borneo, Nias and Mentawai, and Forth 1998: 19 in Flores.) By so doing they invested a new meaning in a name that already had its own signification. The ambivalence of this approach is illustrated by the opposite shift in meaning that had taken place, ages earlier, when the Ngaju and the Toba underwent the influence of Hindu, or Hindu-Javanese, religion. Do the Sanskritic names of some divinities point to imported gods or to new names given to indigenous gods?

Some similar creative acts of translation undoubtedly assisted the progress of Islam. *Sembahyang*, in particular, remains the most general and

popular word for prayer in Indonesia, including the prescribed Islamic prayer, although its origins must lie in the reverence (*sembah*) for gods and powerful spirits (*yang*) (Reid 1993: 168). Unfortunately we have few documents on the process of conversion to Islam in comparison with the numerous records left by Christian missionaries. Examples collected by Jones (1979), Ricklefs (1979) and Chambert-Loir (1985) in local literatures are legendary or mythical texts, which account for conversion as a political and social phenomenon but leave its spiritual and ritual aspects in the dark. What can we then say about earlier conversions to Hinduism or Buddhism? During the Hindu-Buddhist period prior to the arrival of Islam, the Javanese principalities of the 14th–16th centuries had their religious centres (*mandala, dharma*), some of which represented the sacred core of the kingdom. Claude Guillot's Chapter 10 is a pioneering study of the perceived need to convert one of those sacred centres before the kingdom itself could be brought into the new faith.

In Indonesian Muslim societies (we have to use a plural form, as the differences in regional practice are evident in the chapters below), rituals bear the mark of past transformations, either through reinterpretation (sacred graves are tolerated on the understanding that the intention of the pilgrims is to pray to God, not to the deceased) or through grafting onto new rituals (the Gumai perform their agricultural rituals during the two main Muslim yearly festivals). Similar phenomena are to be found in societies converted to Christianity. As Elizabeth Coville notes in Chapter 5, the Toraja effigies 'were not acceptable if they were considered to house the spirits of the dead, but they were permitted if they were considered to be a memorial to the dead'. Toba Batak funeral monuments (*tugu*) are considered by some as 'the Batak way of carrying out the Christian injunction to "honour thy father and mother"' (see Chapter 6).

However, Dutch interference with indigenous religions was not limited to endeavours to convert. For reasons which could be moral (orgies in the Moluccas), economic (drastic diminution of cattle caused by the second burial feast) or hygienic (contact with corpses), the colonial government forbade a number of rituals and practices (Hertz 1960: 29; Stöhr 1968: 151; Weinstock 1987: 90). The political and economic evolution of local societies, by transforming social structure, also had an influence on religions. Education and the civil service provided new sources for the social status which always determined the rank of the living and subsequently the selection of ancestors among the dead.

These various interventions were radicalised by the Indonesian government. The majority of Indonesian societies were converted (most to Islam, some to Christianity or Hinduism) at the time of the country's independence in 1945, and the state ideology, by limiting the number of acknowledged religions, exerted new pressure on the as yet unconverted societies. As the state's hold on local administration was progressively intensified, the source of authority often switched to a new elite. In Bugis territory, for instance, the

worship of mythical founding ancestors started to decline when the nobility lost its traditional social function (see Chapter 8).

Many other factors linked to 'modernity' and 'development' have had an impact on rituals. The staging of spectacular rituals that tourism encouraged, especially among the Batak, Toraja and Balinese, has given rise to questions of authenticity and identity (see Volkman 1987: 165–7). Technical changes have also played a role in the evolution of rituals, which are intimately linked to the ecological milieu. Any innovation has the potential to upset the rhythm, tools and functions of agricultural life, as Forth (1998: 20) noted following the introduction of irrigated rice cultivation in Flores in the 1930s. Not only did the modification of the nature and rhythm of crops cause a modification of the rituals, but the buffaloes which were until then 'used only as sacrificial victims and marriage prestations' became draught animals with a new commercial value. In a similar manner, the transformations of the landscape—creation of roads, apparition of urban centers, increase of transportation and commerce, architectural evolution—have contributed to the modification of the context of ritual performance.

The variety of effects mirrored the diversity of causes. The Indonesian government not only required that each individual or community should adhere to one of the five acknowledged religions; it also, in the wake of the colonial government, imposed a new definition of religion (*agama*) independent of custom (*adat*) and culture (*kebudayaan*). Indigenous religions had not made any distinction between the religious and the secular, but appeared as a set of rules and procedures that governed all aspects of life in society. Confrontation with the national ideology imposed both a definition of religion in a restrictive way and a codification of religious beliefs. Atkinson (1987: 174–8) thus traces the Indonesian concept of *agama*, its (foreign) origin and the various influences it had undergone before it came to mean what she calls Indonesian 'civil religion'. It is noteworthy that Clifford Geertz's famous title, *The Religion of Java*, could not be translated into Indonesian as '*Agama orang Jawa*', because the scope of the book makes it closer to the concept of *budaya*, where '*Agama orang Jawa*' is simply Islam.[7]

Agama had to be made distinct from *adat*. If this process was disruptive, it was also an open door to negotiations. If *agama* was strictly limited, *adat* on the other hand was apt to accommodate a great part of traditional practice. Discussing the Toraja in the early century, Volkman (1987: 164) comments: 'One no longer had to renounce everything traditional in order to convert, since *adat*, being secular and social, was deemed acceptable. Only *aluk*, by definition heathen and religious, was threatening to the church and would be forbidden'. The result was thus a dichotomisation (*agama*/*adat*) of what used to be an overall system answering to all social needs.

Another transformation of indigenous religions brought by state authority and contact with world religions was the growing prominence of the

concept of religion as identity marker. Increasingly, religion had to conform to the definition of the group as perceived from outside. Coville and Schiller (see Chapter 2 and 5) both describe how local practice was moulded by the systematisation of regional models.

In this dynamic context, migration to the cities and shifts in authority in each community brought further changes. First, traditional definitions of social status were overturned: 'With the religious, political, and economic changes set in motion by the arrival of the Dutch, achieved status (education, Christianity, income) has challenged inherited rank as a source of prestige and success' (see Chapter 5). Geirnaert's Chapter 3 on Sumba similarly focuses on this switch of status sources. Second, the *perantau*, those people who have moved away from their home village to pursue a career and who usually return periodically with relatively high financial power, use the funerary rituals to affirm both their place in the community and their newly acquired status. Reid (Chapter 6) shows the competition among 'urban, affluent, Christian and educated' Tobak Bataks in erecting larger and larger monuments to the dead, while Volkman (1987: 165) talks about the 'inflation of rituals' organised by Toraja *perantau* on their return to their homeland.

The potent dead, as this book demonstrates, are omnipresent in modern Indonesia. Their interventionist role in the wellbeing of the living is part of the conceptual framework within which modern society has to be interpreted. Both Soekarno and Soeharto, the first and second presidents of the Indonesian republic, are known to have had a predilection for certain sacred graves, where they meditated in search of supernatural assistance. Since Soekarno's death in 1970, his grave has itself become one of the most important pilgrimage sites in Java. The modern avatars of ancestor worship have more than one link with politics. Indeed, Quinn's Chapter 12 demonstrates how the cult of a distant founding ancestor can be diverted to the benefit of current ideology. Observing the transformation of Indonesian religions in our own time helps us to understand earlier processes of conversion to Hinduism and Islam. The present informs the past as much as the past explains the present.