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REFERÊNCIA

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1. Reframing culture. Assembly of God cultural policies in Ussubemassu, Atauro¹

Kelly Silva²

Reframing culture. Assembly of God cultural policies in Ussubemassu, Atauro

The paper discusses the ways the Assembly of God has reframed people's engagement with typical institutions of Eastern Indonesia and such institutions themselves, in Ussubemassu/Beloi/Jerusalém, Ataúro. How the Christian search for equality challenges expectations of precedence among houses; the dissociation between culture and religion and the prevalence of the local institutional framework for negotiating people's material reproduction are the main issues the paper approaches.

Protestant Christianity. Missionization. Change. Equality. Eastern Indonesia.

Reenquadrando a cultura. Políticas culturais da Assembleia de Deus em Ussubemassu, Ataúro

O texto discute as formas como a Assembleia de Deus tem reestruturado o envolvimento das pessoas com instituições típicas da Indonésia Oriental e essas próprias instituições, em Ussubemassu/Beloi/Jerusalém, Ataúro. Como a busca cristã pela igualdade desafia as expectativas de precedência entre as casas; a dissociação entre cultura e religião e a prevalência do quadro institucional local para a negociação da reprodução material são as principais questões que o texto aborda.

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Testu ida-ne’e dada lia kona-ba oinsá mak “Assembleia de Deus” loke dalam atu ema hotu tutan malu ho instituisaun típika hosi Indonézia Orientál no instituisaun hirak ne’e rasik, iha Ussubemassu/Beloi/Jerusalém, Ataúru. Oinsá maka kristaun sira buka hetan moris hanesan ema hotu-hotu no hasouru susar hosi uma ida ba uma seluk; hakotu kultura no relijiaun no rai nafatin instituisaun lokál hodi hala’o negosiasaun ba reproduisaun materiál maka nu’udar kestaun prinsipál testu ida-ne’e hakerek.

Kristianizmu protestante. Misionasaun. Mudansa. Igualdade. Indonézia Orientál.

This paper discusses Assembly of God pastoral praxis in Atauro, on the basis of a 5 months fieldwork undertaken in Ussubamassu village (also called Beloi or Jerusalém) in 2019. It argues that Assembly of God’s pastoral praxis has effected at least three main transformations in the Ussubemassu people’s cosmology: 1. the decline of asymmetry and inequality as cultural values framing the relationships among houses (*lisan*); 2. the dissociation between *lulik* and *kultura* and 3. the Christianization of *kultura* and its use as a means for negotiating material reproduction exclusively.

On one hand, all of these hypotheses derive from dialogues with works which have identified the main institutions organizing social dynamics in Eastern Indonesia as a cultural region. These works allowed authors such as Van Woden, Fox (1980) and others to propose the very notion of Eastern Indonesia as a specific cultural region, characterized by the coexistence of the following institutions: 1. asymmetrical alliance between houses (or groups of origin) by means of marriage exchanges between fertility-givers and fertility takers, being the fertility-giver in a superior position before its fertility-taker; 2. diarchy of powers; 3. precedence; 4. binary ideology of classification; 5. membership to corporate groups as houses or groups of origin; 6. semantic parallelism in ritual parlance; 7. values of origin and ancestry.

So, I am supposing Atauro people’s social organization and cosmology have also been framed by these institutions across time and that part of them are being challenged by the Assembly of God’s pastoral projects.

On the other hand, I clarify that I understand *Kultura* as an emic signifier used to refer to practices and institutions perceived as indigenous, such as those which characterized Easter Indonesia as a cultural region or even those that are simply different from others (deemed foreign). Among many Catholic and also non-Christian people, *kultura* also entails mystical, supernatural contents as it is connected to worship practices involving ancestors and other spiritual beings, and

even what western cosmologies see as objects. In these cases, *kultura* is a synonym for *lulik*, a local category to the notion of sacred, amongst other potential meanings (cf. Bovensiepen, 2015 and Shepherd, 2019).

To support my hypothesis I organize this paper in three sections. The first presents fragments of the history of protestant missionary practices in Atauro and its expression in some phenomena occurring in the Island today. The connection between that past history and the present is explored by pointing out the search for equality as a foundation for collective interaction.

Hamos lulik (cleaning the sacred) is the subtitle of my second section, which discusses the dissociation of *kultura* from mystical practices and assumptions. To analyse such an issue I mobilize diverse phenomena: toponymy strategies of the Church, funerals and the Day of the Dead routines. Based on them I argue that the Assembly of God's pastoral project yields the Christianization of *kultura* institutional framework. In the final section, *Lisan* and material reproduction, I explore how *lisan* in Usubemassu has been transformed into a means strictly connected to material reproduction.

Protestantism and equality

At least three different missionary endeavours seem to have taken part in the plot of the Atauro people's adherence to Protestantism across the 20th century. An American missionary called Martin was active in the Island by 1930. There is no consensus about the denomination to which Martin was connected to. Some suggest he was at the service of the Baptist Church, others that he was a Lutheran missionary. They do not know anything else about him, apart from the fact that he was obliged to leave the Island after a short time there.

After WWII, Juliana and Franz Braz supposedly went to Atauro from Arlo. Durand (2004) reports that by the beginning of the 1960's, Juliana and Fraz led a community of 1350 people – almost 40% of the Atauro population at the time.

By sharing with me his knowledge about this community, one of the leading pastors of the Assembly of God in East Timor claimed the place where Juliana and Franz Braz lived and carried out their missionary work was called *Samarata*, an Indonesian language word that means "equals". After being obliged to move closer to Vila Maumeta by the Portuguese administration, they called the new place where they lived *Tetap Rata* which means "to make things flat". My interlocutor's recollection about Juliana and Franz actions highlights that the core of their work was to promote equality among people. They would have taught that there is no one better or higher than another, no one bigger than another. There should not

be anyone superior or inferior before anyone else or before God. Everyone would be equal and deserving of the same respect and treatment.

I came across this quest for equality on several occasions throughout my research in Atauro. I consider such anxiety to be an important challenge to the very institution of asymmetry and precedence (between houses) that is characteristic of Easter Indonesia. One of the most prominent examples of such anxiety presented itself to me in the “local law” for marriage negotiations of the Makadade suku, proposed in January 2014. The document set some rules regarding filiation, residency and material limits for negotiating rights in persons by means of marriage exchanges. Among the various articles that compose what is called “lei tradicional barlakeadu” one particular article stands out. After listing all the houses (*lisan*) existing in Makadade, the “lei tradicional barlakeadu” then proposes in article number 10:

About the classification and categorization of *lisan* in the Makadade suku:
The classification and category of the 17 *lisan* existing in Makadade suco is the same. There is no category or classification of *lisan* superior or inferior before any other (free translation by the author from the original text in Tétum language).

Different questions may be posed about the meaning of the content of this article. On this, I would like to share some considerations. Firstly, we know that laws are technologies of government and control (domestication). Secondly, Makadade is a suku where approximately 50% of people are Protestant and 50% are Catholic. Catholic Christianity has been much more tolerant to local values (such as inequality, and asymmetry) than Protestantism. Thirdly, *kultura* is an institutional framework whose *modus operandi* is marked by strong contestation, among other things because of its oral character. Considering all of these, the codification of the search for equality into law might mean that such is not really observed yet but it is a moral ideal to search for.

Another index of the way Protestant Christianity is changing the way people see inequality and asymmetry are some suggestions it presents about the making of gifts in marriage exchanges in Ussubemassu. According to Francisco, one of the elders from the village, the Assembleia de Deus (Assembly of God) suggests that marriage exchanges should not be managed as to exploit people, making them poorer. He said that *Kultura* should not make people poorer and that because everyone is codependent people know that if they exploit someone today they will be exploited by other ones tomorrow.

As it is known, one of the main expressions of asymmetry between wife-givers and wife-takers consists of the quality and quantity of money and goods exchanged in marriage exchanges and other life-cycle rituals. Wife/Fertility-givers are

superior in these relationships and as such are entitled to receive much more goods and money than to give them.

In fact, what is deemed as an excessive quantity (and quality) of goods employed in marriage exchanges in the main island of Timor-Leste is a phenomenon mobilized by Protestant Atauro residents to value their lifestyle and religion adherence. Broadly speaking, Protestant people in Ussubemassu are very proud of their asceticism and think about themselves and their life as much better than those existing in Dili, for instance.

Hamos lulik – towards the Christianization of kultura

At the very beginning of my research work in Atauro I was warned by local leaders that in villages like Ussubemassu, Akrema and Uaru Ana the *lulik* were all cleaned (*lulik hamos ona*). According to them, all people in the villages had converted to Assembleia de Deus Christianity and because of that they no longer believed in or had *lulik* anymore. They were saying they do not worship trees, stones, places, and that they also do not sacrifice to ancestors or to other supernatural beings. According to them all that exists in the world were Maromak's (understood by them as being the Christian God) creation, from whom all the power over the world emanates too.

Such an encapsulating process – by which local institutions are perceived as products of Christianity – also makes itself visible in the Assembly of God toponymy strategy for Atauro island.

For some decades now the Church has replaced local place names with names derived from biblical narratives. We have in the Island today a double-name system for various places. For the sake of brevity, I share here only the double-name system for the villages:

Local name	Christian name
Uaru Ana/Baru Ana	Jericó
Berau	Sileu
Bikeli	Belém
Makili	Damasko
Vila Maumeta	Canaã
Akrema	Sinai
Ussubemassu	Jerusalém

As I said elsewhere (Silva 2011, p. 158), Durkheim (2000) taught us that name places are parts of a cognitive system that guides people and allow them to recognize who they are in relation to others. Fox (1997), in his turn, pointed out that among Eastern Indonesian people there is a potential reversibility between genealogy and topogeny (1997: 12). So, to enunciate places in ritual contexts has the following functions: 1. to define origins and lines of precedence among related social groups; and 2. to provide a chronological succession of events so as to situate social actors in space and time. Additionally, we may remember the fact that some name places may be considered *lulik*, thus reminding people of a past consubstantiation between a place, a people, and other environment elements (Bovensiepen 2015).

If all of this were somehow at stake in places' local names in Atauro, replacing the local toponymy by a new and Christian one contributes to silence various local knowledge as well as the memory of facts which could hardly be included in Christian narratives coherently. To Christianize the name of the places also contribute to erase from them the supernatural powers to whom people endowed agency in the very process of place making. I see all these phenomena as playing a role in the purification plot enacted by the Assembly of God.

It is not by chance that the expression *cleaning the lulik* seems to express a process of sanitization, and purification (in Bruno Latour's sense), aimed at establishing the Christian God as the unique and exclusive supernatural source of agency. In other words, we are facing a claim about the monopolization of agency carved out in opposition to animistic and other ritual mystical practices which, on the other hand, attribute agency to words, objects, ancestors etc.

The material effects of these assumptions manifest themselves in the Day of the Dead. In strong contrast to what comes about in most of East Timor, the Day of the Dead in Ussubemassu is experienced as an ordinary day, without any kind of rituals. People claim that, on that particular day, they merely miss their deceased relatives or friends more than in other day. But there is no public function at the Church or any kind of public ritual in the cemetery to pay respect to the deceased. When I was in Ussubemassu I was expecting at least that people would clean the graves that day. But in fact, they did not it. Most people in Ussubemassu just followed their ordinary working routines during that day.

One year ago and even when drafting this very paper as a proposal I suggested that we are facing here a sort of secularization of *kultura* In Ussubemassu. I do not argue this anymore. It seems to me that we actually are before an attempt of encapsulating a local institution into a Christian metanarrative. In this plot, the Christian God acts as the origin of everything, including the ancestors and the *lisan*.

The Christian God is the unique supernatural being endowed with agency to act over the living³.

But the denial of *lulik* does not imply a rupture with other institutions that are typical of the region. On the contrary, the denial of a previous communion with ancestors and other supernatural beings did *not* imply people's disengagement with the *lisan*, the house. In fact, what seems to occur is rather a dissociation between the native categories of *lulik* and *kultura* – *lisan* is part of *kultura* – as to allow Ussubemassu people to resort to *kultura* to organize their collective and material life while adhering to Protestant Christianity at once and same time.

***Lisan* and material reproduction**

In Ussubemassu, the *lisan* (houses) have maintained its role as a key institution framing the following phenomena, at least: negotiations of rights in persons, land accesses, and conflict resolution. Between 8 and 9 houses make up of Ussubemassu community. They are: Ai Luli, Major, Koronel, Uhu Rala, Loro Piu, Aku Ai, Maseu, Tilman nai, and Maker. The centrality of the *lisan* (houses) in collective life in Ussubemassu firstly manifested itself to me during wedding rituals.

Everytime a house plans to take a woman in marriage, the house's men, both single and married, are summoned to present monetary contributions to this event. This is done months or even years before the wedding comes about so as to allow people to plan how they will organize their domestic finances so as to be able to contribute somehow. The money raised may be used to pay the costs involved in the wedding – be it those involved in the ceremony at the Church or the lunch offered to the marriage participants – or it may be used to produce the marriage gifts the groom's house will offer to the bride's house. All of these events are accurately designed by the Church and community leaders. Regarding this, it is important to know that the Assembly of God in Ussubemassu has a working group with the exclusive function of organizing parties, be them weddings, Christmas, pastoral activities, etc.

Weddings in Ussubemassu entail three diverse transactions regarding the bride, which are openly announced by the MCs and are enacted by the representatives of the following institutions: the *lisan*, the church and the state. So, during the religious ceremony, the bride is formally transferred to its new cult commu-

3. Elsewhere (Silva 2013), I registered an opposed trend, based on research done with ritual mediators (*lia nain*) in marriage exchanges. In some marriage negotiations among Dili dwellers spoke persons attempt to encapsulate Christians values into local institutions

nity. The leader pastor of the village from where the bride comes from presents her to the community and leader pastor of the village where the wedding occurs. Ideally and very often this village is the very one from where the groom is. It seems to me that patrilocal residency is very much observed among Ussubemassu and all Protestant Atauro people. This is because there is no expectation among the bride's family and house to receive the bridewealth when the wedding ceremony occurs. Usually the bridewealth is offered years after the wedding, only after the couple is in condition to bring together the resources to that.

It is after lunch is served that the special ritual moment for transferring the rights in the bride among the *lisan* (houses) occurs. For that, the groom and the bride's house spokespersons are invited to the stage. Then, they greet and thank all the guests and all those involved in the wedding and declare that from that moment on the bride is part of the groom's house (*lisan*). In order to seal the event, the fertility-taker (the groom's house) offers gifts to the fertility-givers (the bride's house). Such gifts are also reciprocated by the fertility-givers. As proposed by Graeber (2016), such gift exchanges seem to be only the recognition that fertility-takers and fertility-givers are in an alliance relationship and so in mutual indebtedness.

The last transaction in women occurring in the wedding is the transfer of the name of the bride from her village of origin to the husband's village. This is done by the suku's chiefs of the bride and the groom's respective villages. So, the suku chief of the bride's village declares that by means of wedding the bride has become a resident of her husband's village. An official document is then given to the chief of the suku where the wedding happens.

As it is usual, during the funerals the houses manifest themselves again. During my fieldwork I lost one of my dearest interlocutors, Albertina Araújo. For her funeral, the meals provided to all the ones presented were prepared using animals and other resources provided by her husband's fertility-takers. But the role *lisan* played in this event was limited to that. There was no mention to any supernatural agent or fact related to her house of origin during the funeral services and all that was ritually said about her life and death inscribed her trajectory in Christian institutions.

Another realm in which the *lisan* keeps its governance power is land rights. In Ussubemassu, rights in land have been determined by the trajectory of the houses in the place, as it is usual all over the country. The house which owns the larger part of land in the Ussubemassu is Ai Luli whose unique descendent affirms it to be a trunk from Manroni houses. For instance, the place where Compass facilities are placed today is part of Ai Luli land as well as all land which goes from there till the airstrip, in Kampum Baru. Migrant (*laorai*) houses as the *lisan* Coro-

nel have also received lands in exchange for supporting the original dwellers in wars. This is the case of the *lisan Coronel*, who has rights in land in various parts of North Ussubemassu.

To sum it up, I take these facts as indexes of the role *lisan* continues to play as an institution framing material reproduction among Ussubemassu people.

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The classification and category of the 17 *lisan* existing in Makadade suku is the same. There is no category or classification of *lisan* superior or inferior before any other (free translation by the author from the original text in Tétum language).

Different questions may be posed about the meaning of the content of this article. On this, I would like to share some considerations. Firstly, we know that laws are technologies of government and control (domestication). Secondly, Makadade is a suku where approximately 50% of people are Protestant and 50% are Catholic. Catholic Christianity has been much more tolerant to local values (such as inequality, and asymmetry) than Protestantism. Thirdly, *kultura* is an institutional framework whose *modus operandi* is marked by strong contestation, among other things because of its oral character. Considering all of these, the codification of the search for equality into law might mean that such is not really observed yet but it is a moral ideal to search for.

Another index of the way Protestant Christianity is changing the way people see inequality and asymmetry are some suggestions it presents about the making of gifts in marriage exchanges in Ussubemassu. According to Francisco, one of the elders from the village, the Assembleia de Deus (Assembly of God) suggests that marriage exchanges should not be managed as to exploit people, making them poorer. He said that *Kultura* should not make people poorer and that because everyone is codependent people know that if they exploit someone today they will be exploited by other ones tomorrow.

As it is known, one of the main expressions of asymmetry between wife-givers and wife-takers consists of the quality and quantity of money and goods exchanged in marriage exchanges and other life-cycle rituals. Wife/Fertility-givers are

superior in these relationships and as such are entitled to receive much more goods and money than to give them.

In fact, what is deemed as an excessive quantity (and quality) of goods employed in marriage exchanges in the main island of Timor-Leste is a phenomenon mobilized by Protestant Atauro residents to value their lifestyle and religion adherence. Broadly speaking, Protestant people in Ussubemassu are very proud of their asceticism and think about themselves and their life as much better than those existing in Dili, for instance.

Hamos lulik – towards the Christianization of kultura

At the very beginning of my research work in Atauro I was warned by local leaders that in villages like Ussubemassu, Akrema and Uaru Ana the *lulik* were all cleaned (*lulik hamos ona*). According to them, all people in the villages had converted to Assembleia de Deus Christianity and because of that they no longer believed in or had *lulik* anymore. They were saying they do not worship trees, stones, places, and that they also do not sacrifice to ancestors or to other supernatural beings. According to them all that exists in the world were Maromak's (understood by them as being the Christian God) creation, from whom all the power over the world emanates too.

Such an encapsulating process – by which local institutions are perceived as products of Christianity – also makes itself visible in the Assembly of God toponymy strategy for Atauro island.

For some decades now the Church has replaced local place names with names derived from biblical narratives. We have in the Island today a double-name system for various places. For the sake of brevity, I share here only the double-name system for the villages:

Local name	Christian name
Uaru Ana/Baru Ana	Jericó
Berau	Sileu
Bikeli	Belém
Makili	Damasko
Vila Maumeta	Canaã
Akrema	Sinai
Ussubemassu	Jerusalém

As I said elsewhere (Silva 2011, p. 158), Durkheim (2000) taught us that name places are parts of a cognitive system that guides people and allow them to recognize who they are in relation to others. Fox (1997), in his turn, pointed out that among Eastern Indonesian people there is a potential reversibility between genealogy and topogeny (1997: 12). So, to enunciate places in ritual contexts has the following functions: 1. to define origins and lines of precedence among related social groups; and 2. to provide a chronological succession of events so as to situate social actors in space and time. Additionally, we may remember the fact that some name places may be considered *lulik*, thus reminding people of a past consubstantiation between a place, a people, and other environment elements (Bovensiepen 2015).

If all of this were somehow at stake in places' local names in Atauro, replacing the local toponymy by a new and Christian one contributes to silence various local knowledge as well as the memory of facts which could hardly be included in Christian narratives coherently. To Christianize the name of the places also contribute to erase from them the supernatural powers to whom people endowed agency in the very process of place making. I see all these phenomena as playing a role in the purification plot enacted by the Assembly of God.

It is not by chance that the expression *cleaning the lulik* seems to express a process of sanitization, and purification (in Bruno Latour's sense), aimed at establishing the Christian God as the unique and exclusive supernatural source of agency. In other words, we are facing a claim about the monopolization of agency carved out in opposition to animistic and other ritual mystical practices which, on the other hand, attribute agency to words, objects, ancestors etc.

The material effects of these assumptions manifest themselves in the Day of the Dead. In strong contrast to what comes about in most of East Timor, the Day of the Dead in Ussubemassu is experienced as an ordinary day, without any kind of rituals. People claim that, on that particular day, they merely miss their deceased relatives or friends more than in other day. But there is no public function at the Church or any kind of public ritual in the cemetery to pay respect to the deceased. When I was in Ussubemassu I was expecting at least that people would clean the graves that day. But in fact, they did not it. Most people in Ussubemassu just followed their ordinary working routines during that day.

One year ago and even when drafting this very paper as a proposal I suggested that we are facing here a sort of secularization of *kultura* In Ussubemassu. I do not argue this anymore. It seems to me that we actually are before an attempt of encapsulating a local institution into a Christian metanarrative. In this plot, the Christian God acts as the origin of everything, including the ancestors and the *lisan*.

The Christian God is the unique supernatural being endowed with agency to act over the living³.

But the denial of *lulik* does not imply a rupture with other institutions that are typical of the region. On the contrary, the denial of a previous communion with ancestors and other supernatural beings did *not* imply people's disengagement with the *lisan*, the house. In fact, what seems to occur is rather a dissociation between the native categories of *lulik* and *kultura* – *lisan* is part of *kultura* – as to allow Ussubemassu people to resort to *kultura* to organize their collective and material life while adhering to Protestant Christianity at once and same time.

***Lisan* and material reproduction**

In Ussubemassu, the *lisan* (houses) have maintained its role as a key institution framing the following phenomena, at least: negotiations of rights in persons, land accesses, and conflict resolution. Between 8 and 9 houses make up of Ussubemassu community. They are: Ai Luli, Major, Koronel, Uhu Rala, Loro Piu, Aku Ai, Maseu, Tilman nai, and Maker. The centrality of the *lisan* (houses) in collective life in Ussubemassu firstly manifested itself to me during wedding rituals.

Everytime a house plans to take a woman in marriage, the house's men, both single and married, are summoned to present monetary contributions to this event. This is done months or even years before the wedding comes about so as to allow people to plan how they will organize their domestic finances so as to be able to contribute somehow. The money raised may be used to pay the costs involved in the wedding – be it those involved in the ceremony at the Church or the lunch offered to the marriage participants – or it may be used to produce the marriage gifts the groom's house will offer to the bride's house. All of these events are accurately designed by the Church and community leaders. Regarding this, it is important to know that the Assembly of God in Ussubemassu has a working group with the exclusive function of organizing parties, be them weddings, Christmas, pastoral activities, etc.

Weddings in Ussubemassu entail three diverse transactions regarding the bride, which are openly announced by the MCs and are enacted by the representatives of the following institutions: the *lisan*, the church and the state. So, during the religious ceremony, the bride is formally transferred to its new cult commu-

3. Elsewhere (Silva 2013), I registered an opposed trend, based on research done with ritual mediators (*lia nain*) in marriage exchanges. In some marriage negotiations among Dili dwellers spoke persons attempt to encapsulate Christians values into local institutions

nity. The leader pastor of the village from where the bride comes from presents her to the community and leader pastor of the village where the wedding occurs. Ideally and very often this village is the very one from where the groom is. It seems to me that patrilocal residency is very much observed among Ussubemassu and all Protestant Atauro people. This is because there is no expectation among the bride's family and house to receive the bridewealth when the wedding ceremony occurs. Usually the bridewealth is offered years after the wedding, only after the couple is in condition to bring together the resources to that.

It is after lunch is served that the special ritual moment for transferring the rights in the bride among the *lisan* (houses) occurs. For that, the groom and the bride's house spokespersons are invited to the stage. Then, they greet and thank all the guests and all those involved in the wedding and declare that from that moment on the bride is part of the groom's house (*lisan*). In order to seal the event, the fertility-taker (the groom's house) offers gifts to the fertility-givers (the bride's house). Such gifts are also reciprocated by the fertility-givers. As proposed by Graeber (2016), such gift exchanges seem to be only the recognition that fertility-takers and fertility-givers are in an alliance relationship and so in mutual indebtedness.

The last transaction in women occurring in the wedding is the transfer of the name of the bride from her village of origin to the husband's village. This is done by the suku's chiefs of the bride and the groom's respective villages. So, the suku chief of the bride's village declares that by means of wedding the bride has become a resident of her husband's village. An official document is then given to the chief of the suku where the wedding happens.

As it is usual, during the funerals the houses manifest themselves again. During my fieldwork I lost one of my dearest interlocutors, Albertina Araújo. For her funeral, the meals provided to all the ones presented were prepared using animals and other resources provided by her husband's fertility-takers. But the role *lisan* played in this event was limited to that. There was no mention to any supernatural agent or fact related to her house of origin during the funeral services and all that was ritually said about her life and death inscribed her trajectory in Christian institutions.

Another realm in which the *lisan* keeps its governance power is land rights. In Ussubemassu, rights in land have been determined by the trajectory of the houses in the place, as it is usual all over the country. The house which owns the larger part of land in the Ussubemassu is Ai Luli whose unique descendent affirms it to be a trunk from Manroni houses. For instance, the place where Compass facilities are placed today is part of Ai Luli land as well as all land which goes from there till the airstrip, in Kampum Baru. Migrant (*laorai*) houses as the *lisan* Coro-

nel have also received lands in exchange for supporting the original dwellers in wars. This is the case of the *lisan Coronel*, who has rights in land in various parts of North Ussubemassu.

To sum it up, I take these facts as indexes of the role *lisan* continues to play as an institution framing material reproduction among Ussubemassu people.

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