

A Domain United, A Domain Divided

An Ethnographic Study of Social Relations and Social Change among the People of Landu, East Rote, Eastern Indonesia

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This thesis is based solely on the research of the author,
except where otherwise indicated in the text.

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To my late father

ABSTRACT

Landu is one of the eighteen domains (*nusak*) in the old political system on Rote Island, Eastern Indonesia. In 1756 Landu suffered tragic destruction by the Dutch and as a consequence the people of Landu were taken into slavery and exiled to Batavia. The area became an almost empty land. Gradually over time, people from the neighboring domains migrated to Landu with most new settlers occupying the eastern and western parts of the domain. This study, based on fieldwork conducted in the three villages of Sotimori, Bolatena and Daiama, offers an ethnographic study of Landu, in which I discuss the dynamics of social relations and social change among the newcomers (*lahenda manamai*) in relation to those who claim to be original inhabitants (*lahenda maulu*).

The study begins with an assessment of the historical data on the emptying of Landu and its re-settlement. Further analysis focuses on clans as the basis for the reproduction of the social identity in Landu. Many clans have parallel names with clans in neighbouring domains, especially for the people who live in the villages in the eastern and western parts of Landu. Contemporary patterns of settlement, clanship, language and livelihood are significant in marking the distinctiveness of social groups. For the newcomers, the construction of their identity is related to unequal power relations. The superior power of the centre of the domain and its traditional political structure generate the sentiment that differentiates between outsiders and the insiders.

An analysis of the ritual language as spoken in Landu develops ideas of Rotenese cosmology. The importance of agriculture rituals and the myths which focus on the origin of millet (*bete*), have a special association with Landu, particularly with the coastal settlement of Maeoe in Daiama village because this is considered the sacred site where food first came to the earth. The life cycle rituals from pregnancy to death convey the idea of transition and incorporation. Together, these rituals have a significant position in shaping local patterns of social relations and figure prominently within the broader context of the life cycle of Landu as a domain. Christianity, or more specifically Protestantism, has been a unifying force in Landu, but following recent developments it has become an element that divides people of Landu into several denominations, thus further broadening social demarcation among the population.

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NOTE ON ORTHOGRAPHY

Ringgou dialect has five vowels: /a/, /e/, /i/, /o/, /u/ and twelve consonants: /b/, /d/, /f/, /h/, /k/, /l/, /m/, /n/, /p/, /r/, /s/, /t/. Diphthongs are: /ae/, /ai/, /ao/, /au/, /ei/, /ea/, /eo/, /oa/, /oe/, /ia/, /ui/, /ua/, /oa/, /ou/. Diphthongs can also stand alone and form words such as: *ae* (climb) *ai* (fire, wood), *ao* (body, lime for chewing), *au* (I), *ei* (feet), *oe* (water), *ua* (I eat) and *oa* (clouds). Moreover, there are three conjugations in Ringgou dialect for drink (*inu*), eat (*ua*) and go (*lao*).

| <i>Inu</i> | <i>Ua</i> | <i>Lao/u</i> |
|--|---|---|
| <i>inu</i> : I drink <i>minu</i> : you drink <i>tinu</i> : we drink. | <i>au ua</i> : I eat <i>na</i> : he/she eat <i>mai ta</i> : we eat/ an invitation <i>ami mia so</i> : we eat/ask permission <i>ara ra</i> : they eat. | <i>au lao/au u</i> : I go <i>mai teu leo</i> : let us go <i>mu leo</i> : you go |

Variation of dialects in East Rote are recognized within the three *nusak* of Ringgu/Landu, Bilba and Oepao. Some differences between them are shown in the Table below:

| Ringgou and Landu | Bilba | Oepao | Meaning |
|-------------------------------|----------------------|-----------------|----------------|
| <i>Dara</i> or <i>ndara</i> | <i>Lala</i> | <i>Rara</i> | Horse |
| <i>Dindi</i> | <i>Dini</i> | <i>Diri</i> | Wall |
| <i>Hundi</i> | <i>Huni</i> | <i>Huri</i> | Banana |
| <i>Lafatende</i> | <i>Lafatene</i> | <i>Lafatere</i> | Cloth |
| <i>Lahenda</i> | <i>Dahena</i> | <i>Dahera</i> | Human |
| <i>Laka</i> | <i>Langa</i> | <i>Raka</i> | Head |
| <i>Ralu</i> | <i>Lalu</i> | <i>Laru</i> | Local beer |
| <i>Relu</i> | <i>Lelu</i> | <i>Leru</i> | To look |
| <i>Ri-na</i> or <i>ndi-na</i> | <i>Li-lia/ li-na</i> | <i>Ri- na</i> | Over there |
| <i>Tende</i> | <i>Tene</i> | <i>Tere</i> | Hip |

Unlike the rest of Landu, people at Daiama speak in Ringgou dialect. People of Sotimori told me that language differences prove that the people of Daiama are the newcomers, the outsiders. The primary difference is between consonant /R/ for Daiama/Ringgou and /ND/ for Sotimori and Bolatena/Landu. Some examples of this difference are given in the Table below.

| Landu (Sotimori & Bolatena) | Ringgou (Daiama) | Meaning |
|--|-------------------------|-------------------|
| <i>Fandu</i> | <i>Ru</i> | Stars |
| <i>Mando</i> | <i>Maro</i> | Passing through |
| <i>Ndoto</i> | <i>Roto</i> | Arbila bean |
| <i>Ndi na</i> | <i>Ri na</i> | There |
| <i>Ndai</i> | <i>Rai</i> | Fishing scoop-net |
| <i>Ndui</i> | <i>Rui</i> | Scoop |

In addition, there are some variations between the lexical items in the three villages in Landu. The variation applies to the same object or action such as:

| Landu (Sotimori & Bolatena) | Ringgou (Daiama) | Meaning |
|--|-----------------------------|--------------------------|
| <i>Tudi</i> | <i>Dope</i> | Knife |
| <i>Silaka</i> | <i>Bo'a</i> | Small basket |
| <i>Sada</i> | <i>Ladi</i> | Palm tree tapping |
| <i>Tamute</i> | <i>Bisu</i> | Abscess/wound |
| <i>Hapo</i> | <i>Bau ina</i> | Big |
| <i>Haru</i> | <i>Epo tua</i> | Mix rice with palm sugar |
| <i>Kukute</i> | <i>Ei dodole dui</i> | Shin bone/marrow |
| <i>Dimoko</i> | <i>Ei buku</i> | Ankle |
| <i>Sidi</i> | <i>Lafa tende</i> | Sarong |
| <i>Afe</i> | <i>Foa</i> | Wake up |
| <i>Sioa</i> | <i>Oa</i> | Clouds |
| <i>Ko'u</i> | <i>O'u</i> | Fishing spear |
| <i>Pua'as</i> | <i>Puka</i> | Net |
| <i>Makiu</i> | <i>Ma iu</i> | Dark |
| <i>Dedefe</i> | <i>Niru</i> | Flat basket to winnow |
| <i>Kani</i> | <i>Ni</i> | Crab |
| <i>Ai ka</i> | <i>Namahana</i> | Get angry |
| <i>Masisi</i> | <i>Ma oe</i> | Get wet |
| <i>A'a ina</i> | <i>Ina bau ina</i> | Older sister |

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