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Gravemarkers and the repression of sexual symbolism: The case of two Philippine-Borneo Moslem societies

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GRAVEMARKERS AND THE REPRESSION 
OF SEXUAL SYMBOLISM: 
THE CASE OF TWO PHILIPPINE-BORNEO 
MOSLEM SOCIETIES

Thus alongside of taboos that exactly correspond to rules of holiness, protecting the inviolability of idols and sanctuaries, priests and chiefs, and generally of all persons and things pertaining to the gods and their worship, we find another kind of taboo which in the Semitic field has its parallel in rules of uncleanness.

William Robertson Smith: Religion of the Semites.

We are concerned in this essay first with a concrete ethno-graphic problem involving the denial of obvious sexual symbolism in the mortuary art of two Southeast Asian Moslem peoples, and second with certain broader problems concerning the relationship between the holy and the unclean, a topic which has fascinated anthropologists and psychologists alike since it was first raised by Robertson Smith. A discussion of the theoretical issues may be left until after we have first outlined the ethnographic problem and the distribution of the phenomenon in question.

*Mortuary Art and Practice among the Tausug and Bajau Laut.*

The Tausug and the Bajau Laut are two of several Moslem groups that occupy the islands of the Sulu Archipelago and the adjacent coastline of northern Borneo. The Tausug number about 300,000 persons and are the only ethnic group present on the island of Jolo. Prior to 1915 the sultanate at Jolo was the most powerful and centralized indigenous political system in the Philippines, and while today the Tausug are officially part of the Philippine Republic, the central government has never had more than nominal control over the interior parts of the island. Tausug are rice farmers and fishermen, live in dispersed
household clusters, have a generally bilateral kinship system with some patrilineal and patrifilial tendencies of Islamic origin and have a distinct cultural focus on law, politics and warfare. They have been Muslims since at least the 15th century and follow the Shafi’ite school of law. The Bajau Laut are a much smaller group, numbering little more than 12,000 persons, and constitute a distinctive subelement of a larger Samalan-speaking population. They subsist exclusively by fishing and, with the exception of cemeteries, are generally without land or other forms of property ashore. Local communities consist either of pilehouse villages or of groups of boat-living families who regularly moor their houseboats together at the same permanent or seasonal anchorage site and are found chiefly near the low islands of the Sulu Archipelago, close to areas of stranded reef and coral suitable for intensive fishing. Unlike the Tausug, the Bajau Laut are without any form of overall political identity and local communities have traditionally come under the protection of neighboring shore groups. The latter regard the Bajau Laut as being non-Moslem, and though most Bajau Laut deny that this is the case, they are much less orthodox than any of their Tausug or Samalan neighbors.

The mortuary rituals of the two groups reflect this difference. For the Bajau Laut the body of the dead is regarded as potentially polluting and dangerous, a notion not shared by the Tausug, and while the death rites in both societies are meant to prepare the dead for heaven, they have in the case of the Bajau Laut the added burden of first transforming the body from a polluting object to one which is ritually neutral in order to prepare it for its ultimate sanctification.

With this exception, the mortuary rituals of the two groups are basically similar and follow in each case the broad outlines of Islamic practice, although local custom (adat) figures importantly as well. A body is prepared for burial by detailed rites of purification in which attention is given to minute detail and formula. A final prayer is given and the Koran is read over the body before burial and, in the case of the Tausug, for several nights thereafter. The body is borne to the cemetery among the Tausug on a bamboo stretcher and buried in both societies with its head toward the west on a shelf which has been dug inward from a hole prepared in the earth. In the case of the Bajau Laut the Koran is read over the body before its burial and again before a feast provided by the kinsmen of the dead for those who assisted

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1 See the article on “Djinaza” in Kramers and Gibb (1961) for a general description, and Juynboll (1925: 161-165) for Indonesia.
in the burial or attended as guests immediately afterwards. As a rule, Bajau Laut cemeteries are located away from the homes of the living, usually on a separate island, to which the body is carried by boat. Once ashore, the corpse is held while the immediate survivors pass back and forth beneath it in order to mark the severance of all earthly ties between themselves and the dead.

Immediately after the burial is complete, the religious official (fakil, for the Tausug; imam for the Bajau Laut) in charge reads an appropriate prayer in Arabic (duaqa tulkin in this instance) whose whole purpose is to awaken the dead and to inform him that he is not simply dreaming but is genuinely dead and must accept his new status. The Bajau Laut follow this with a plea, addressed in Bajau, that he not molest or attempt to entice away the living. Water 2 is then poured over the grave in order to “bathe the dead” and “cool the body off” (on the assumption, according to Tausug informants, that it is burning in hell). The Bajau Laut add that the water is also meant as provisions (lutuq) for the use of the soul on its journey to heaven. The Tausug grave is decorated with an odiferous inflorescence of young palm tree (bagay-bay), a quasi-holy plant used in other rituals as well. Perfume is also occasionally sprinkled on the grave.

For the Tausug, calendrical renewal rituals are performed each year in the month prior to Ramadan in the mosque as a special prayer for the dead, and following this ceremony (nispuq) the community communally cleans the entire cemetery sometime before the end of the month. The dead souls are said to come to earth at this time from wherever they may be and remain through the following month of Ramadan (bulan puasa). There are no comparable renewal rituals performed by the Bajau Laut, although the souls may visit the survivors, coming usually in dreams, in order to request ceremonial food offerings (omakan semanggat, literally “soul feasts”).

Among the Tausug there are three classes of graves: kubul, a term for the graves of all non-titled persons; tulab, a term for the graves of datus (including the sultan) or aristocrats; and tampat (Malay kramat), a term for the graves of Sháírif (salip). Tampat in particular are said to be ritually powerful and saturated with God’s blessing (barakat), and are typically marked by white coverings. Offerings of gifts or money are sometimes made at these graves in order to insure

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2 The water contains a small piece of sandlewood (sandana - Santalum album album) to impart a sweet smell.
health or good fortune. Among the Bajau Laut all graves are basically similar, reflecting the more egalitarian nature of Bajau Laut society, and all are termed *kubul*.

All graves are marked in both societies at the head (to the north) with a wooden or stone gravemarker (*sunduk*, Tausug; *senduk*, Bajau Laut). Tausug graves are usually a few feet from each other and are outlined by a slightly raised section of earth held in place by small rocks. In contrast, the Bajau Laut normally bury a number of bodies together in the same grave plot. These plots are usually enclosed with a rectangular frame made of wooden planks and are sometimes covered by an open-sided shelter (*lumaq-lumaq*). Gravemarkers are always differentiated according to sex. The male markers are columnar and straight and quite often show very obvious phallic symbolism and rounded acorn- or cone-like tops. The female markers are flat, tend to be wider at the base than at the top (female hips?), and show a tendency to use triangular (pubic?) design motifs. There is considerable variation in these basic patterns, however (see plates), and with both groups notable local and regional differences exist, although the underlying sexual dichotomy remains evident.

Markers vary in height from one to three feet. Smaller markers are used for children, with the size of the markers giving a rough indication of the age of the child at death. Nearly all Bajau Laut, and many Tausug, gravemarkers have incised surface decorations (*ukkil*) which lack conscious iconic significance, and profile design (*anggit*) which, on the male markers, consist of roundish or raised geometric patterns extending around the entire post.

The simplest markers that still maintain the basic male-female distinction consist of undecorated stone or wooden slabs for females and long, undecorated pointed stones or simple wooden posts for males. Since World War II a "modern" style of markers has emerged which is made of cement and colored paint.

Cemeteries are not particularly dangerous places in Tausug belief nor are they considered as abodes for the spirits of the dead. There is nothing that can accurately be called 'fear of the dead', although a vague feeling exists that if the proper rituals are not performed the dead will curse the living. In contrast, the Bajau Laut feel intensely threatened by death and perform a series of ritual acts at every stage of the death rites meant to set the dead apart and prevent them from doing harm to the living. The corpse itself is a source of ritual danger. From the moment death occurs until the body is finally buried, the
whole community is in a state of ritual jeopardy and all activity, such as boat building or fishing, is ordinarily suspended until a gong is sounded signifying that the body has been removed from the village and taken to the cemetery. Even then the danger remains until the death rites are completed. After burial and the mourners have returned to the village the soul of the dead is exorcised from a piece of the cloth used to shroud the body and is again commanded to take leave of the community and accept its status among the dead.

This change in status is only completed with the erection of the gravemarker. This completes the burial and symbolizes, and in both societies is believed to make possible, the final transition in ritual status from the living to that of the dead. Furthermore, placing the marker on the grave is, for the Bajau Laut, the last in a series of rites of separation focused on the dead. The marker is said to be 'just like the body' and placing it in the cemetery has the effect of removing the dead once and for all from the society of the living. At the same time the dead is made ritually 'dead' by the act and the body, now represented by the marker, is no longer considered to be a source of pollution.

Even so, in spite of the fact that the dead themselves are no longer a source of danger, they are apt to produce ghosts (panggua) who linger near the cemetery causing harm. As a result, cemeteries are generally avoided by the Bajau Laut, even during daylight hours.

Despite these differences, both people share the feeling that cemeteries are vaguely holy places; profane acts should not be performed in them and acts which are ritually polluting are specifically forbidden. For example, Tausug informants assert that the punishment for defecating or urinating near a grave is an instant and sure death. While the Bajau Laut are not so strict in this regard, the general feeling is that such acts should be avoided and, if committed, are likely to be punished by some kind of affliction.

The use of graves as a sanctuary and object of cult devotion is widespread in the Islamic world (Goldziher 1966), and the treatment of cemeteries described here is substantially within the range of variation possible within Islam. However, the use of ornamented grave markers is forbidden by Islamic Law, with the exception that a single piece of stone or wood may be used to mark the head of the grave (Kramers and Gibb 1961:90). Among both the Tausug and the Bajau Laut, as in many other parts of the Moslem world, the rule is not rigidly followed, and both assert that the placing of a marker is
necessary to identify the grave and permanently indicate the sex of the deceased.

The practice of erecting stone or wooden monuments of a vaguely phallic or pubic nature is well known in the ethnography and archaeology of insular Southeast Asia, and is sometimes associated with the survival of a so-called "megalithic" cultural complex. Furthermore, the indigenous art of Indonesia often shows common forms consisting of an essentially upright rigid figure without clearly differentiated limbs, but with a large head — a form which could easily be interpreted as a precursor of more obvious phallic motifs. In an early article Wilken (1912) discussed the distribution of phallic symbolism in Indonesia, assuming that it was largely of Hindu derivation, and that during the first fifteen centuries A.D. upright megaliths merged with or were superseded by "linga" symbols of Shiva.

Graves similar to those of the Bajau Laut and Tausug appear in the Celebes, with flat and upright forms used for females and males respectively, and similar "menhir-like" graves are common in other regions as well (see Bezemner 1917 for a general survey of mortuary art in the archipelago). Similarities may be noted for the Moslem Achenese (Hugronje 1906) who possess obelisk forms for men and flat stones for women. For the Malays Skeat (1900: 408) notes that "From observing a good many of these graveposts in different localities, I should be inclined to suppose that the gravepost used for men had been evolved from a phallic emblem whilst that used for women occasionally assumes a rude resemblance to a human being."

While general similarities and parallels can be found throughout Indonesia, very close, and in some cases identical, resemblances to Tausug and Bajau Laut markers can be located at various places along the coasts of Borneo and the western Celebes, most specifically among other coastal Moslem groups. Kennedy described the markers from west Borneo (Batu Lajang) in the following terms, which appear to be very similar to those of the Tausug and Bajau Laut:

When we got to the Kampung we went first to see the graves. Inside the large shed there seemed to be hundreds of them, spreading out from the great one of Abdul Rachman... this is really ornate, with wood carving on the head and foot parts... the whole thing is a built up wooden affair about four feet above ground and on this are placed elaborate raised reliefs, Arabic texts, I suppose, from the Koran... I asked how one could tell the male from the female. He said that the male had at head and foot a kind of acorn-like headed post, and I thought it certainly looked phallic. The female ones are carved and seemed to me to look like a conventionalized woman's head, but I am not sure... They are sized according to the size of the children there buried. (Kennedy 1955: 30-31)
In summary, it may be said that the use of genital symbolism on graves is widespread in the archipelago, taking the form of an explicit male-female distinction most specifically in the coastal Moslem cultures. It must be cautioned, however, that there is extreme variability in mortuary customs (see Harrisson 1962), even within a single culture. Among the Tausug, genital symbolism is more prevalent in some regions and several alternative patterns are recognized.

The obvious genital symbolism of Tausug and Bajau Laut grave-makers constitutes the major problem of this paper, for the similarity of male and female markers to human genitalia is steadfastly denied by almost all informants. One old Tausug man did admit that the markers are images of sexual organs, pointing out that it is necessary in order to “tell the male graves from the female graves,” but other informants (including religious leaders) in both societies denied any affinity, either by dogmatic assertion or through argument that human genitalia differ in certain anatomical details from the markers and hence the latter cannot be interpreted as genital symbols. These denials tend to be rather extravagant and overdone, with a degree of incredulity which is unusual, suggesting repression or reaction-formation. Furthermore, there is no reason to believe in either case that informants are deliberately keeping the topic secret; they are otherwise willing to discuss sexual matters with little reservation. One young Tausug man laughingly admitted that a male marker might be interpreted as a phallus, but this was in reference to a marker which was not yet in place in the cemetery, and hence out of its ritual context.

It might be assumed that here we have a case of the “repression of sexual symbolism” so familiar from psychoanalyst’s couches. The matter is not quite so simple, however, because abundant ethnographic evidence can be produced to show that overt genital symbolism occurs in many cultures with complete awareness of its intended meaning (Leach 1957), and if sexuality need not automatically lead to repression, then we must be alert to the possibility that the repression of sexuality may be due to reasons other than that it is sexual. Logically — and we hope to show empirically as well — there are two distinct problems involved here: 1) why do these gravemarkers assume the particular form that they do, and 2) why is this meaning denied?

Our understanding of psychoanalytic theories of symbolism draws heavily from Ernest Jones’ well-known essay (Jones 1950) on the subject. The essential function of all forms of true symbolism is to overcome the inhibition that is hindering the free expression of a given
feeling-idea, the force derived from this being the effective cause of the symbolism. In this view symbols are not arbitrary, but stem from "the most primitive ideas imaginable" — ideas of birth, death, self, love, blood-relatives and so forth. The symbol is 1) a condensation of a larger idea, 2) a direct participant in the meaning of its referent, 3) spontaneously made in the human psyche, 4) not understood — the symbol-secret evokes surprise and shock when unmasked, and 5) a representation of a revelation to more primitive modes of thought. It is concerning the question of arbitrariness that the anthropologist and the psychoanalyst usually disagree; Schneider's (1968: 1) definition would perhaps be typical of many anthropologists: "By symbol I mean something which stands for something else, or some things else, where there is no necessary or intrinsic relationship between the symbol and that which it symbolizes." But as Jones points out it is necessary to distinguish between 1) the mere association of two ideas, and 2) the feeling that this association is singularly appropriate in any given instance. The former may be easy for the anthropologist to demonstrate, the latter is more difficult to explain.

We cannot presume to anticipate the entire manner in which a psychoanalyst might interpret Tausug and Bajau Laut mortuary art — undoubtedly there would be several interpretations depending on the analyst — but certain considerations seem to be especially pertinent. In the first place we may ask why it is that a severed human sexual organ is placed upon a grave? A not unreasonable interpretation might be that the loss of the loved one is compared to symbolic castration, and in this regard it should be noted that both societies use quasi-castration rituals in two other life-crisis situations: birth, in the form of a ritual cutting of the newborn infant's hair; and circumcision proper at adolescence. The psychoanalyst might say that the kinsmen of the deceased understand the loss of the loved one as a form of castration and in some sense demonstrate their love through the symbol. This is not as farfetched as it may appear, for it is precisely what the Tausug and Bajau Laut themselves say in a slightly different context. To the question of why they put the markers up the answer given is always: "First because we love the deceased, and second because it is necessary for each grave to be identified by sex." However, for the psychoanalyst the sexual aspects of the situation are assumed to express the real inner state of the person who puts the marker up, while for the anthropologist no such assumption is possible because he would be burdened with the necessity of proving it in every given instance.
It is sufficient to say that the gravemarker is an appropriate public symbol to communicate to the living that one loved the deceased. The marker is an assertion of what is supposed to be true (the love of the dead), not what is necessarily true.

Publicly the symbols also "mean" male and female. In societies like these where male-female differences are emphasized at every turn, especially in religious contexts, it is understandable that these differences should be extended to the dead. In the eschatology of both cultures the individual's sexual status is not eradicated at death, and to bury people in a manner which does not allow for the sex of the deceased to be identified is illogical with respect to both the nature of society and the view which both groups have of Islamic theology. The sexual distinction between markers thus reinforces the male-female dichotomy in social life generally, as carried over into the realm of the dead.

While we may accept the necessity of placing a symbol on the grave to represent the sex of the deceased, a further problem must be answered: Why the particular form of the symbol in this instance? Presumably any symbol, even a totally arbitrary sign, might serve as well. For the Bajau Laut the answer seems to lie in the fact that the genitalia are regarded as potentially polluting in the same way as the body of the dead before its purification. Contacts with both are regulated by elaborate prescriptions. Furthermore, both are equally a source of ritual jeopardy and, in this sense, one is a particularly appropriate symbol of the other. Also it must be noted in this regard that there is an almost total absence of arbitrary visual imagery in both cultures. By arbitrary in this context we mean simply that the visual sign would tend to derive its meaning from what the mind knows rather than what the eye sees. Purely mentalistic visual symbols are totally absent from Tausug art, which is not highly developed in any event, and the few visual symbols recognized seem to derive their meaning from a natural visual association with the referent: Fire is a symbol of hell, a photograph is a symbol of a person, and so forth.

3 With the Bajau Laut this sexual dichotomy is also expressed by a flag flown from the boat carrying the body to the cemetery; when flown from the bow it indicates that the dead is a man, while when flown from the stern it indicates a woman. Also its size signifies the relative age of the dead.

4 There is an almost total lack of representational art, no doubt due to Islamic influence, although only a very few religious leaders are aware of any specific rule in this regard. The word for two-dimensional representational art (magdaraw) is derived from English and there does not seem to be a Tausug cognate.
Although the Bajau Laut have both a more developed artistic tradition, particularly in woodcarving, and a greater repertory of visual symbols to draw on, the same generalization, nevertheless, holds that these symbols are directly associated with the object symbolized and are never purely mentalistic. Furthermore, the most basic sexual symbols, that is, those that serve to ultimately separate maleness from femaleness, are the genitalia. It is the presence of male or female sexual organs which indicates the sex of the child in social terms — hermaphrodites are not socially recognized as a separate normal category, and, in the case of the Tausug, were previously killed.

In addition to communicating the sex of the deceased and symbolizing the love of his kinsmen, the marker also derives its meaning as we noted earlier, as a part of the total rites of transition from the living to the dead. It is said that the erection of the marker is necessary to “complete the burial,” that is, the complete transformation of the ritual status of the living into the dead is not possible without the marker.

For the Tausug, and to a larger, but lesser, extent with the Bajau Laut, the genitalia are the only available symbols which can be used to represent the male-female distinction on the grave. Furthermore they have an aura of sacredness about them, that is, they and their activities and functions are surrounded with ritual danger and potential impurity. But notice, however, that the sacredness of the genitalia derives from their status as objects of potential pollution; they are unclean but not holy. To summarize this line of argument: It is appropriate to place a sacred (non-profane) sexual image on the grave as a means of 1) symbolizing the sex of the deceased and representing his body, 2) symbolizing the love of the kinsmen for the deceased, and 3) assisting in the transfer of ritual status from living to dead. No other symbols are available for this task for the Tausug, while for the Bajau Laut others are available but none is as appropriate.

Many Tausug identify the sunduk as a substitute for the body of the deceased (magganti bəran): “When one sees the sunduk it is just like

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5 For example, Bajau Laut markers, unlike those of the Tausug, regularly make use of secondary sexual symbols, such as a comb motif to indicate that the deceased is a woman or a fez motif, in the form of a truncated cone at the top of the marker, to indicate a man, as well as other occasional representational elements suggesting body imagery or particular personal characteristics of the dead (see plate 1).

6 The reader should be reminded that an exclusive male-female dichotomy is not universal; some cultures do recognize a ‘third sex’, nor is the use of the genitalia as primary sexual markers universal (although widespread).
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seeing the real body.” Precisely the same thing is said by the Bajau Laut who further make explicit use of representational elements in the ornamentation of their markers that depict parts of the body, personal ornaments or articles of clothing. Given this bodily association, it is appropriate that the markers be differentiated by sex — a non-sexed body is unthinkable. And here again we find confirmation from psychoanalytic theory, for it is well known that the penis is often conceived of as a “little man” (Jones 1950) — both Tausug and Bajau Laut in fact use identical terms “head” and “body” to describe parts of the organ. On the one hand the analyst asserts that the penis may be taken as an image of the body, and on the other Tausug and Bajau Laut assert that phallic gravemarkers are intended to represent the dead. What are we to make of this?

What is apparent here is that, as Leach (1957) noted in relation to hair symbolism, when the anthropologist sets out to discover what a symbol means in terms of its content in public communication he may often arrive at the same conclusions as the psychoanalyst in his study of purely private symbols. While the Tausug and Bajau Laut deny that the markers are sexual representation, they nevertheless assert that they represent the love that the kinsmen feel for the dead and this is not too different from what a psychoanalyst might say. Furthermore, the psychoanalyst may infer from private practice that there is a tendency for castration to be associated with death, while the anthropologist discovers, on the basis of evidence from several parts of the world, that genital symbols are widespread as gravemarkers. Again, what is the significance of this convergence? If we assume that there is some innate tendency in man to compare castration with death, this may explain the origin of this particular mortuary art in the remote past. If we ask, on the other hand, why individual Tausug and Bajau Laut do it today it is surely because custom requires that the sex of the deceased be indicated by a marker, and that it is necessary to make a symbolic statement of affection for the dead. It is not necessary for each individual to live anew the castration-death-anxiety syndrome in his own psyche; whether he does so or not is irrelevant for the public use of the symbol.

The Denial of Sexual Meaning.

We have seen that while the Tausug and Bajau Laut assert that the marker is a sign of the sex of the deceased, they both deny that its particular form has any overt sexual meaning. It may be useful to
explain this denial as a form of the repression of tabooed sexual objects, anxiety concerning castration, and so forth, on the level of private symbolism (the question of what the symbol does emotionally in the private feeling-states of the individual), but the level of public symbolism (what the symbol says to others) is another matter. In the first place we have noted that cemeteries and graves are generally regarded as belonging to the sphere of the holy; they are the abode of the dead, all of whom are destined to heaven. On the other hand we note that among both groups, and in Islam generally, sexual organs and functions are potentially polluting; hence, to admit that a genital symbol has been deliberately placed upon a grave is tantamount to admitting that something impure has entered the realm of the holy, not through accident, but by man’s own efforts, and this, we argue, is inconsistent with the general patterns found in ritual life. The denial does not occur because the markers are sexual, but because they are ritually incongruous in graveyards if their representational aspects were admitted.

It may be said that this simply begs the question as to why sexual organs and functions are considered polluting in the first place. This, however, is a problem which can only be answered historically. Being Moslems, the Tausug and Bajau Laut have access to a corpus of written rules prescribing certain ritual acts in connection with bodily functions and proscribing certain polluting objects. The origin of these ideas in the psyche of the Semites is surely irrelevant to the reason the Tausug and Bajau sustain these same patterns. For them, the performance of ablutions designed to remove ritual impurity after bodily functions is simply a magical act whose purpose is to prevent future misfortunes and contribute to the acquisition of religious merit. It is not an expressive (that is, "compulsive") act serving to release inner feelings.

One of the distinguishing features of "Semitic religion" (including Islam), as Robertson Smith first noticed, is the very clear distinction which is made between the realm of the holy and the realm of the unclean, both of which are set off from the profane world of everyday life. We need not concern ourselves here with his idea, later accepted by both Frazer and Freud, that the unclean represented a survival of an earlier primitive notion of the essential unity of the unclean and the holy (see Douglas 1968 and Steiner 1956 for a review of these problems). Smith simply misread Semitic belief in his implication that the monotheistic principle applied more specifically to the realm of the holy as distinguished from the unclean. On the contrary, the
is further differentiated into that which is holy and positively regarded by God (that is, "good") and that which is unclean and negatively regarded by God (that is, "bad"). Such objects or people are in the realm of the sacred (other-worldly, powerful, tabooed, abnormal) which is broadly associated with the omnipotent power of God as the source of the concept of the unclean.

A transition from the sacred into the realm of the unclean we may call pollution, and the reentry into the realm of the holy we may call purification. Similarly, transfer into the realm of the holy may be called sanctification, reentry into the realm of the unclean defilement. All of these processes, it should be remembered, are equally within the province of God (that is, "sacred").

Our only purpose in discussing this general model of ritual forms here is to stress a single fact: In no context is the realm of the holy ever deliberately mixed with the unclean, nor is a direct transformation between the two ever made. There are no rituals which transfer an object or person from the realm of the holy into the realm of the unclean, nor are there rituals which transfer an object or person from the realm of the unclean to the realm of the holy. Therefore, there are no rituals which permit the holy to be defiled or the unclean to be sanctified.

The corpus of ritual forms in Tausug and Bajau Laut religion includes both positive and negative elements. The sacred is the realm of the holy, which is positively regarded by God and associated with the omnipotent power of God. The unclean is the realm of the unclean, which is negatively regarded by God and associated with pollution and defilement. Ritual forms in Tausug and Bajau Laut religion include both sanctification and purification rituals, which are designed to maintain the separation between the sacred and the unclean. The sacred is not deliberately mixed with the unclean, and there are no rituals which directly transform the sacred into the unclean or vice versa.
object or person directly from the unclean into the holy or the reverse. There is never any use of polluting objects as elements in positive magic, such as, for example, would be the case if a pig's tooth were used as an amulet. Such direct transformations would be regarded by both groups as theologically untenable, not to say repugnant. Furthermore, to deliberately pollute (as distinguished from mere defilement) an object in a state of sanctity is extremely condemned, hence the notion that a man who urinates in a cemetery will surely die, or at least, in the case of the Bajau Laut, suffer some form of punishment. But it is precisely this kind of direct transformation which is implied by placing a sexual (genital) symbol in the graveyard: A direct transformation from the holy into the unclean.\(^7\)

The question is simply: What is being "repressed" — the "forbidden" sexuality itself, or the association of two incongruous ritual states? Instead of the refusal to recognize the sexual symbolism of the markers stemming directly from repressed libidinous drive, castration anxiety, or the like, it is possible the denial may reflect the incongruity of a potentially polluting object in a clean or holy context. Furthermore it is not possible to turn to other symbols of the male-female dichotomy because none, or at best only a few, exist in the two cultures described here. There is simply no other symbol as "natural" and readily available to these people as images of the differentiating organs themselves. In the case of the Tausug this is seemingly due to a general absence of visual imagery of any sort, while for the Bajau Laut the notion that the body of the dead is potentially polluting, as are the sexual organs, makes the latter the most fitting symbol available to represent the former. In either case, once having used them in this way it is necessary to deny the overt symbolism involved in order to be consistent with the tenets of Islam, although it is still quite possible that such symbols may be felt to be appropriate in purely private feeling states. The psychoanalyst might be able to give a reasonable interpretation of why these symbols are specifically genital, but not, in this instance at least, a convincing explanation of why they are "repressed".

One further speculation may be offered, in this case a historical query. It will be noted that while the general theme of phallic emblems is widespread in greater Indonesia, the particular association we have discussed in this essay seems restricted to the Moslems in the archipelago. Specifically, in the northern parts of Borneo and throughout Sulu

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\(^7\) Deliberate defilement of ritual status occurs in several contexts, for example, following a marriage ceremony or prayer.
Plate 1. Bajau Laut painted male marker with fez (Pulau Omadal, Sabah)

Plate 2. Bajau Laut female marker with 'jing' and 'arms' ending in hands just below the inscription.
there seems to be much greater similarity in grave markers among the various coastal Moslem peoples with each other than with any of the geographically adjacent pagan groups. Why this should be so is a problem. Since there is nothing in Islam which leads directly to genital symbolism, we are inclined to regard this as due rather to the fact that the proscription of representational art in Islam has led to a paucity of visual symbols in general, and visual sexual symbols in particular, forcing these cultures to turn (given the need for a male-female separation on graves) to the more "natural" representations of the genital organs themselves. The Bajau Laut, the less Islamized of the two groups described here, lend support to this view, in so far as the sexual dichotomy expressed by the gravemarkers is not dealt with exclusively in terms of genital symbolism but is conveyed by the use of additional visual symbols as well. Whatever the case, this development cannot be considered a spontaneous invention coming fully developed from the psyche of man; it was undoubtedly based, as the Bajau Laut again suggest, upon pre-Islamic models in the archipelago, possibly on notions attributing ritual pollution to death itself and ritual danger to the body of the dead. If this is true, we are presented with the irony of a "higher" Moslem people reverting to what 19th century anthropologists (and 20th century psychoanalysts) could only describe as a "primitive mode of thought".

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