

CLOCK AND WATCH

The rhythm of life in Tanebar-Evav (Kei Islands,
Moluccas, Eastern Indonesia)*

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ABSTRACT. In the society of Tanebar-Evav, which is located on a small island to the southwest of the Kei archipelago, Southeast Moluccas, as in many other societies in the Lesser Sunda Islands, a sophisticated system of counting months has been developed that combines lunar cycles with the agricultural cycle, including movements and landmarks in the space of and around the island, in its marine territory. The different space-times are organized hierarchically and fix the relationships between houses and villagers under the guidance of the ‘elders’, who are responsible for the village governance. What is specific about Tanebar-Evav society is the asymmetry that exists between the cycle of the seasons and the ‘watch’ or ‘lookout’ of the Guardians of the Land which ritually marks the major event, the cultivation of millet, during about eight months of the year. In this regard, ritual sequences are all spatial-temporal markers. Methodologically, the analysis examines the vocabulary used for the different ways of evoking the past, present and future, night and day, the sun, the phases and positions of the moon and the seasons. This highlights what may appear to be incongruities or contradictions, particularly in relation to orientations, duration, the succession of generations in relation to the ancestors and the role of the elders at the front of the sailing boat keeping a lookout to avoid the risks to the society as a whole. Above all, these inconsistencies make it comparatively difficult to conceptualize different perceptions of time. The analysis refers to a number of social anthropologists who have addressed the concept of ‘time’ and its use in different types of society and relies on their suggestions.

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In English, the two terms in the title of this paper, ‘clock’ and ‘watch’, being very close to each other in meaning bear investigation. The first meaning of the nominal form of ‘watch’ is ‘observe attentively’ or ‘guard’, directly implying a certain ‘vigilance’ or the act of ‘monitoring’. In its verbal form, the villagers of Tanebar-Evav say it means ‘to watch with attention, to monitor, to take care of, to observe’. Only one of the meanings of ‘watch’ is necessary to establish a distinction between it and ‘clock’, one that involves abandoning the idea of ‘watch’ as a measure of time and instead focusing on it as ‘looking after’ or ‘caring for’. Watches are actions carried out over a certain period of time, which are not necessarily recorded or measured, unlike the clock whose hands repeatedly revolve, to end up in the same place. This notion of ‘watch’ will prove important when, in a comparative perspective, the greatest difficulty consists in shedding the usual notions for evoking time.

A shift did occur from ‘watch’, in which the idea of measuring time is vague, to the notions of clock, pendulum and chronometer, in which it is stronger. A clock makes a noise, and rings, like a bell, to mark the passing hours. A watch is different from a clock in that it must be ‘looked at’ rather than ‘listened to’.¹ This idea of counterpoising clocks and watches came to me while reading Nancy Munn’s article, “The cultural anthropology of time: a critical essay” (1992), which I quote at length. In it she not only evokes ‘the cosmo-political significance of changing calendars’,² but also discusses the regulation of working hours in the nineteenth century (the commodification of time), which

illustrates control over timing as a mode of governance grounding the person and daily activity in a wider world order [...] the development of standard time with its increased emphasis on clocks and watches substituted industrial and scientific authorities linked with ‘efficiency and convenience’ for ‘religious guidelines for dividing up the day’ that were grounded in the ‘natural law’ of ‘God’. [As a result], [...] human authority merges with the clock’s [...] [and] clock time is thus concretized in experience reaching [...] into the body to fuse with body time and space [...] people are ongoingly articulated through this temporalization into a wider politico-cosmic order, a world time of particular values and powers (Munn 1992:110–111).

¹ ‘A watch differs from a clock in needing to be “watched” instead of listened to’ (Skeat 1911:94). And also: *montre* (clock dial) *vient de “montrer”* (to show). For ‘clock’, Skeat has ‘make a noise, ring, to sound a bell’ (1911:94).

² For example, during the French Revolution the decimal system defined a ‘new’ world ‘grounding calendric time in another vision of the socio-cosmic foundation of political power’ (Munn 1992:110).

It is commonly said that rulers are the masters of clocks and calendars. If Western societies are paced by the striking clocks of the various authorities (factories, companies, schools), other societies use the term ‘watch’ as villagers do during their agricultural activities: they watch over the plants and the land they care for like guardians. Their time is therefore punctuated by these acts and the watches that intersperse them, and not by the clock. Originally, a clock was a sundial which relied exclusively on the sun for the unfolding of time. A watch is more versatile, as these social acts impose a form of ‘look-out’ over the environment, the people and their relationships.³

Besides putting in context the time of the clock, Nancy Munn’s reflections emphasize the imprint of time on the human body through the ‘unimpeachable authority of factory bells [...] segmenting bodies into spatial-temporal units’.⁴ A power is thus conferred by controlling time and calendars, as emphasized by Alfred Gell (1992) and Maurice Bloch (1977), among others. Inspired by Nancy Munn’s analysis, how can we not contrast these Western variations on time, which are linked to forms of authority or power, with the unfolding of activities in a society that is still largely rhythmmed not only by the succession of the stars but also by its traditions? This is a society that is configured according to a system of representations expressed in its language, regardless of the status attributed to the term ‘representations’.⁵ The Tanebar-Evav society in the Kei archipelago of the Southeast Moluccas is one such society,⁶ as are many others in Eastern Indonesia. To understand the difference from how time is counted in Western societies, a distinction will be made in this analysis between mundane and ceremonial activities.

³ See also Bourdieu: ‘Free from the concern for schedules, and ignoring the tyranny of the clock [...] the peasant works without haste [...] [t]he alarm clock and the watch [...] do not regulate the whole of life’ (1963:58).

⁴ Munn (1992:112), citing Foucault (1979:54).

⁵ See Gell’s discussion of Durkheim’s sociological approach to time as a collective representation (1992:109), Bloch’s opposition between universal time and ritual time (1977), or Munn’s proposal to consider the movement of time as the movement of daily activities in addition to the socio-cosmic process (1992).

⁶ Tanebar-Evav (or Tanimbar-Kei in Indonesian) is the name of an island with a single village of the same name, located in the southwest of the Kei archipelago, in the Southeast Moluccas (Eastern Indonesia). The village is divided into upper and lower: the lower village opens on to a wide bay, dry at low tide, and is enclosed by an old stone wall with two openings or ‘gates’. The wall is a site for rituals (Barraud 2017).

TEMPORAL SPACES OR WHAT ORIENTATION TO GIVE TO DAILY ACTIVITIES

A discussion on temporality in Southeast Asian societies must begin by evoking space. All the villages in the Kei archipelago refer to an ancient, fortified village (*oho tom*, literally, 'history village' in Keiese), generally located by coastal villagers somewhere high in the forest. According to legend, it is a place surrounded by walls with openings and a ladder giving entry, all bearing specific names remembered today only by the oldest inhabitants. The word 'tom' can be associated with 'tuar tom', 'true, ancient', reinforcing its authenticity. This same expression also qualifies the house in the village from which wives come, the house that shows the way.⁷ Thus, there is a certain temporal depth in this expression, indicating the passing of generations, if not a historicity in the word 'tuar' beyond its founding concept.

On Tanebar-Evay, a small hill in the centre of the village called Vu'ar Masbait (Mount Masbait),⁸ to which agrarian rituals to do with millet cultivation are dedicated, is considered to be the foundation of what can be called history (with a lower case 'h') consisting of the stories, tales or myths summarized in the term 'tom'.⁹ In the tales themselves, 'tom' also appears with the meaning 'once upon a time'. Another word used to express this idea is 'itin', the foot of a tree and the foundation of things, of 'true' traditions (*adat*) as well as the base of genealogies.¹⁰ The horizon itself, seen as 'the foot of the sky' ('lan itin'), also refers to the ancestral myths. All this expresses verticality and upward growth as linked to history. 'Itin' is also associated with a figurative form meaning 'foundation' that is used with 'tom' in the expression 'itin tom ngān formas' ('the foundation of history, branches, roots'). 'Formas', like 'tom', evokes history and traditions.

⁷ As in many Eastern Indonesian societies, the word for 'house' designates both a place of habitation and a social group. See Barraud (1979:283). The house from which for generations the women have preferentially been taken in marriage is called 'mang oho tuar tom' (literally, 'the people of the village of the true foundation of history'), or alternatively 'itin' (the foot of the tree).

⁸ This hill figuratively 'contains' all its living and dead inhabitants, its deities, the island's territory and the surrounding sea including reefs, shallows and the deep waters of the open sea.

⁹ The Mount Masbait is linked to the existence of the first houses and inhabitants of the village, who, according to their own account, were natives of the island itself as opposed to foreigners who were integrated later. It is also the site where a mythical tree appeared bearing, like fruits, the precious goods used in exchanges, such as canoes, gongs, plates and jewels.

¹⁰ Ancestors are at the base of the tree, descendants above.

'Itin' is often referred to at weddings in the phrase 'itin kân' ('the base of the stem'), as one must know and be clear about where one's origins lie. In the case of disputes, one must know about the origin of a house, its members and the land that was allocated to it. Hence the importance of the idea of 'authenticity' in local stories. The centre of all things is represented on the vertical spatial map by the tangible locus of the village centre on the mountain and on the temporal map as 'the foot', 'the foundation', 'the true one'.¹¹ The island, village and society are therefore identified with a kind of metonymy in which the whole relates to each of its parts. As we shall see, the identification with the mountain, vertical space and the 'foot' or 'foundation' is also at the heart of ritual activities during the agrarian cycle. Between verticality and horizontality, the opposites 'in front of' ('u') and 'behind' ('mur') are applicable to space as well as to time (as a locution). In space, with a point of reference, the opposite terms 'u' and 'mur' mean 'before/front' and 'back/behind'. They are used, for example, to describe the bow and stern of a sailboat and with reference to a house, the village or the island.¹² The back is also qualified by the term 'mirin', which means 'the back' of a body, although it is also used to talk about the forest in relation to the village, the sea in relation to the island and the outside of the house in relation to its entrance, thus varying according to the point of reference.

These opposing spatial qualifiers, 'u' and 'mur', are also used to describe temporal positions. Referring no longer to a fixed point as in space but to a period of time, a sequence or series, such as the passage of generations, the ancient dead (*tuv har u*) are 'before/in front' compared to the recent dead, who are considered 'behind' ('tuv har mur', or 'nit' in general).¹³ In the framework of the temporality of the sequence of generations, there is noth-

¹¹ 'True' here means 'conforming', 'authentic', 'certain', 'recognized by all'; it is not a reference to veracity or historical truth.

¹² 'Some things, like people and cars, have inherent front and back, while others, like trees, do not' (Lakoff and Johnson 1980:42).

¹³ In his dictionary, Henricus Geurtjens (1921:15) suggests that 'har' comes from the Malay 'hari', meaning 'day', and 'har oe' (old spelling from Dutch 'oe/u') or 'ded oe', meaning 'formerly'. 'Tuv' also means 'of the same generation', or the distance between two generations in the sense of two things linked to each other, as in 'u tatuv o'o' ('I am the same age as you'). This idea of the absence of space in a relationship is found in expressions with 'teran' ('together'), such as 'tuv teran' or 'tuv har' ('friend, companion'), or in 'tev teran' ('to repeat, to speak without interruption'). On the other hand, the Tanebar-Evav say 'dar u' and 'dar mur' for a distance of more than two generations. 'Tuv' is also the name of the price to be paid to the family of the victim of a murder. 'Tuvan' means 'to close'. This idea of 'juncture' can be found in relation to the sequences of time in Kédang (Barnes 1974:141). Barnes evokes the idea of segments of bamboo that are united by a

ing incongruous about placing the recent dead ‘behind’; this does not imply ‘behind oneself’ but instead behind ‘those who follow first’. One must then conceive of the two terms ‘u’ and ‘mur’ as meaning ‘before/after’: the reference is not to the person speaking, but to past time itself, when the recent dead come ‘behind’ the ancient dead in a series without reference point. And logically, in the succession of ages, the term ‘mur’ (‘back, behind’) also qualifies what is ‘to come’: ‘na’a mur’ means ‘later’, what comes after (thus ‘behind’ the present time) or ‘subsequent’ as in ‘batang na’a mur’ (‘beware of what may come later’).¹⁴ A speaker describing a person younger than himself says that the latter is ‘famur’ (‘recent’), ‘vavetak’ (‘he has just come’ – because he comes after or behind) or ‘vavetak idean’ (‘just yesterday’).¹⁵

In a vertical perspective, the ancestors are at the bottom, like the foot of the tree, the foundation, the base, the root – and the descendants at the top. However, looked at horizontally, the ancestors are in front. Like the lookouts on a sailboat, the ancestors open the way, they precede others, as the prow splits the sea before the stern does so. As already mentioned, it is necessary to note here the importance of the relation to the body, that is, to the spatial reference points which mark or refer to the body as a measure.¹⁶

More horizontal still, like the advancing sailboat, are the expressions of duration for long or momentary time periods or epochs, the instant when an action is accomplished, anteriority, simultaneity and posteriority.¹⁷ In the succession of events or actions over time, the general term ‘tevat’ (‘moment, when’) indicates ‘at the time of’ and ‘long ago’ (‘tevat lalan’); ‘vetak’ indicates a short moment in the near past that ‘just happened’, as well as ‘just now’,

joint. This same idea of ‘joint’ is used in Rindi (Forth 1982:234) to express the relations between generations.

¹⁴ There is this same conceptual difficulty in English, as Lakoff and Johnson note in a passage about time in their book “Metaphors we live by” (1980). Time, in English, is structured by the metaphor ‘time is an object in motion. And the future is conceived as moving towards us’ (1980:43).

¹⁵ See Janet Hoskins: ‘An overlap of spatial and directional terms in the vocabulary does order “before” and “after” as “in front of” and “behind”. [...] Generations that follow in time come “behind” (*ba muri*) and follow the preceding one in space’ (1994:65). Other similarities between Tanebar-Evav and Hoskins’ account of Kodi are the counting of nights and days (Hoskins 1994:64), the opposition of wet and dry seasons (1994:76), silence during the ‘bitter months’ of the cultivation of rice (1994:144), the immobility of the priest (1994:147) and the return of the lost soul of the rice crop (1994:152). See also the discussion the control of time (1994:356–359), and socially constructed time being enacted in ritual performances (1994:365).

¹⁶ These aspects are developed by Munn and Bourdieu and discussed by Gell.

¹⁷ In dictionaries, these terms are often linked to working time and wages.

while 'tevat vavetak' designates a short period of time and is also applied for a moment in the near past or for a short moment which is going to happen very soon. For 'just yesterday' and 'just tomorrow' the terms 'idean vavetak' and 'meran' are used.

To express duration, one can say, 'the time has come', or 'tevat yoan' (literally, 'the right time'), or 'the time that has not yet come' ('tevat hob') with a qualifier of duration: short, distant, or near. This term is equivalent to 'har', noted above, to speak of the ancient (*har'u*) and recent dead (*bar mur*). Associated with it are the expressions 'at what time' ('haran be'), 'in the past' or 'in the future'; also 'haran yi'i' ('at this very moment' or 'just now' or 'a moment ago' or 'today'); and 'ilang', equivalent to 'tevat vavetak' ('period of time already passed/just now/past'), as well as 'long ago' ('mananat') and 'formerly' ('lalan'). Particularly striking is the systematic response to the question 'Did you do this?' or 'Did you go to [...]?' with 'not yet' ('hob'). Possibly, then, this is 'an event "to come" in the present, forthcoming (a potentiality) rather than an indeterminate possibility' (Bourdieu 1963:61–62).¹⁸

To designate the elders of houses (using the metaphor of those who guide the sailboat), people use 'nvar u' (those who 'carry forward' and watch for obstacles ['lookouts']), as also the role of the mother's brother at the wedding of his sister's daughter in initiating an exchange. Elders have a high status as 'noble' when compared with 'commoners'; the elders are also called 'mel' which means simultaneously 'the right side' and 'to grow vertically'. Possibly the fact that they are at the front of the sailboat and open the way to avoid dangerous reefs gives them not only a high status, but also a specific relationship to temporality (here horizontal and vertical). Perhaps this is somewhat comparable to Christian Pelras' remark (2002:123–125) on Bugis society in Sulawesi, in which he demonstrates that the temporal dimension is linked to nobility (in accordance with genealogies and the inheritance of birth rights and political offices), while the discontinuous spatial dimension is inscribed for the commoners, who do not have long genealogies, but do have vast matrimonial networks extending well beyond Bugis territory.¹⁹

¹⁸ One wonders if this can be compared with the remarks of Bourdieu when he discusses the notion of 'potentialities, as distinct from possibilities', and expresses the attitude of the Algerian peasant towards his future activities by the idea of 'forthcoming'. He explains: 'The "forthcoming" is the concrete horizon of the present [...] in contrast to the impersonal future, the realm of abstract and indeterminate possibilities' (Bourdieu 1963:61–62).

¹⁹ On this point, one can also refer to Timo Kaartinen's article on the frontiers of humanity, where he examines the notions of space and time in relation to those of spirits. He

In Tanebar-Evav in the Kei archipelago, as far as nobles are concerned, in addition to the temporal genealogical depth of the origin of the houses, it is necessary to add the horizontality of the forward spatial movement that would characterize the nobles: like the ancestors, they are in front, they watch over and guide the sailboat. Apart from these vertical and horizontal linear spaces, repetitive moments such as a succession of days can be expressed spatially, without evoking a cycle.²⁰ As in Sumba, ‘when periods of several days are counted, they are generally counted as nights’ (Hoskins 1994:64) rather than days; nights are counted with the particularity of including in the definition of a day the night that precedes it (the evening before). When today one says ‘tonight’ (*ide*) or ‘the night before today’s day’ (*de yi’i*), this designates the evening before the ‘today’ being talked about.

Nights are counted, before and after, with a system that is also a measure of length: the fathom (*rev*),²¹ repeated three or more times. Without specifying whether it is night or day, one can say ‘yesterday’, ‘the day before yesterday’, or ‘tomorrow’, ‘the day after tomorrow’. One can specify the idea of evening (*ide*) and yesterday (*idean*) using ‘de rev ruan’ (literally, ‘evening two nights [*rev*] ago’), ‘de rev toḷon’ (literally, ‘evening three nights [*rev*] ago’) or ‘de idean’ (‘last night’). For the future, one counts only the number of *rev*: ‘tomorrow’ (*meran*), but ‘the day after tomorrow’ (*rev ru* [two *rev*]), ‘two days after tomorrow’ (*rev tel* [three *rev*]), or by adding the term ‘ide’ (‘evening’), ‘de meran’ (‘tomorrow evening’) or ‘de rev ru’ (‘the day after tomorrow evening’). This is a sequence of ‘before’ and ‘after’, day or evening, that is described by a particular number of fathoms which could logically be infinite. However, it is always spatial measures that express this counting of days (what in Western society one would call a temporal count). Within

discusses the relationship to travel and interaction with strangers, which gives a certain prestige to the elders of the houses, pointing out that ‘[t]heir authority rests on being able to look at society from the outsider’s perspective [...]. It is through them that elements of the outside world, such as disembodied soul-particles and free spirits, are integrated in the center of social space’ (2016:228). Comparatively, for Pelras, among the Bugis, notions of time and space are articulated around the opposition noble/non-noble (2002:123–125), as are ‘historical narratives’ in Roti (Fox 1979:10–25).

²⁰ See the discussion on the difference between the idea of a cycle versus linearity in Barnes (1974:140–142), as well as on Edmund Leach’s view of time as a discontinuous repetition of contrasts (1961:134).

²¹ This measure of length is used in all contexts, such as the construction of houses and boats. See also de Coppet (1970) for a revealing example of the fathom as a measure of space, time and money on Malaita, Solomon Islands.

such a system, there are no names for days, weeks or hours other than those introduced from Indonesian language.²²

SOCIO-COSMIC FLOW OR THE ORIENTATION OF ORDINARY LIFE

The rotation of the stars is common knowledge in Tanebar-Evav, since everyone knows (or knew) the position of the moon in its sequence of lunations (the place in the sky where it appears at sunset, as determined by the morphology of the island).²³ Agricultural activities are modelled on this pattern, if not fixed by it. Rituals accompany each phase of these activities without one being able to speak of a 'ritual calendar' matching time periods and rituals term by term.²⁴

What are the principal reference points?²⁵ The most obvious one is the variation in monsoons. Two terms, 'yàt tumur' and 'yàt varat', refer to the East and West monsoons respectively, though the custom is to say 'tumur' (for the East monsoon) and 'varat' (for the West monsoon) to refer to the change in winds. The term 'yàt' also refers to a space, the forest left untended for a long time, the great forest, as opposed to land left a fallow or a coppice. The term

²² What is interesting here is that a measure of time, the hour, can also be a measure of space. P.Y. Manguin, in a note on the origin of the word 'jam' ('hour' in Indonesian), writes that, 'in its usual sense, the term *zām* indicates in fact, on board ships, the watches that divide the duration of day and night into eight [...] that is, three hours. The duration of a journey at sea was thus indicated [...]: 'there are so many *zām* of route' (Manguin 1979:97–98; italics in the original). By extension, the term may sometimes have been used to designate a unit of length. The *zām* is then a measure of the distance covered by a ship in one watch.

²³ This refers to the time of my different field trips over a period of forty years, the latest in 2013.

²⁴ This raises the question of the power to control time, discussed by Gell (1992; Part III, and especially chapters 29 and 30) and Munn. A quote by Munn (1992:110), referring to another quote by Rickie Burman on Simbo in the Solomon Islands, according to which the calendar keeper's manipulations of bracelets and coconut shells to define lunar cycles 'regulated the very motion of time' (Burman 1981:259), raises the question of whether it is possible to consider the 'motion of time', which the bracelets and coconuts control, in the same way as the movement of the daily activities of the people, in addition to that of the cosmic process. In Tanebar-Evav there is no calendar keeper, but as will be shown there is a long process of decisions being made by the elders and officiants throughout the rituals. This also raises the possibility of speaking of control or power.

²⁵ Throughout this section, I will refer to Robert H. Barnes' book (1974) on the domain of Kédang, Lembata Island, east of Flores Island in Eastern Indonesia, which is remarkably informative on questions of cosmological phenomena, as well as on the annual cycle with its seasonal stages.

'yàt' can also express age, as in the question 'yàt fir' ('How old are you?', literally, 'How many *yàt* do you have?'). As the forest and recent plots of fallow land are cleared in a different location on the island at each new period of cultivation, one can trace time by counting the movements relative to shifting cultivation on the island territory in sequence: thus, for example, one can determine the 'age' of a child by the place being cultivated at the time of his or her birth, thus drawing on a limited list of place names to recall the past. 'Yàt' in association with another word is used to define society: 'yàt-haratur' ('everyone'). Finally, the word 'yàt' also indicates the time of day, as in 'smer yàt' ('very early in the morning'). This term thus designates both broad time periods – those of the monsoons, but not specific seasonal events²⁶ – and spaces. There is no term conceptualizing what is usually called the lunar cycle, but information on successive lunations is available and specific.²⁷

As the stars, constellations and moon appear each night at a different location in the night sky, their 'path' goes from west to east during a lunation. The moon's position when it rises changes each night: initially it appears in the west, eventually becoming invisible in the east at the end of the lunation. Each successive night, the moon rises a little more to the eastward, but during the same night, the path observed is of course from east to west.²⁸ In Tanebar-Evav, moon nights in the same lunation are counted from the first moment the moon appears in the evening in the west, continuing through its appearance each successive night higher and higher in the sky following the path from west to east, and ends the day when it appears at the end of the night in the east.

The cosmological computation of time is established by the lunations in conjunction with the constellation of Scorpio. Here, the constellation of the Pleiades is only mentioned infrequently, unlike in most societies in Eastern Indonesia.²⁹ The conjunction is expressed as follows: Scorpio 'eats' the moon (or the reverse). Barnes alludes to this possibility of 'eating' or 'biting' Antares (the main star of the constellation of Scorpio) when he translates the term for 'month of May' as 'pulaq-lemé ka' (literally, 'the fifteenth stage of the rising moon'), 'ka' meaning to eat or bite and also being a measurement,

²⁶ This can be further contrasted with the 'annual' calendar outlined in Barnes (1974:126–136) which is ordered according to 'natural' signs (rains, winds), phases of crop growth and the term for 'year' ('tun'), which does not indicate a season.

²⁷ See table of lunations, at end.

²⁸ All this is easily observable on an island south of the equator where the sky is not flooded with night lighting, given the absence of electricity.

²⁹ See Barnes (1974) and Rappoport (2021:167–195).

but he does not confirm this suggestion.³⁰ In Tanebar-Evav, although lunations are not numbered, all successive ones are named and described almost always relating the conjunction of the moon according to its age – counting the number of nights from its appearance, first night, second etc. until the twenty-fifth night, etc. to the new moon – with Scorpio's position, its head and tail being described as leaning, plunging, etc. This is true even when this constellation disappears around April; it is then 'below', and on the seventh night, 'Scorpio eats the moon inside the earth'.

The constellation of Scorpio is called by a double name, Yè-far. 'Yè' means 'shark', while 'far' stands for 'manta ray'. In texts, their two parts are often distinguished: the 'tail' or shark is up, and the head (the ray) is down, or vice versa. In the ray of the constellation, the star Antares (red) is considered the liver or heart: 'liver' is 'yatan', but it is often called 'vuan-yatan' ('heart-liver'). The last two stars of Scorpio's tail are considered a sharp thorn that can sting; they are like two eyes, the one on the right having the defect of a different brightness. When observed with the naked eye, Lesath (u), to the right, is less visible than Shaula (l), on the left.³¹ To the east first the ray appears, then the shark. To the west the shark's tail appears, but the ray already has its head in the sea agitating the sea water, so its spray spreads wide and there is wind and rain. However, when the heart of the ray 'goes down' into the water (*nsu tabat*), the sea is calm and there is no wind.³²

The full moon is positioned in a specific constellation each month. After a succession of twelve lunations, when the full moon misses slipping into position in the constellation linked to the lunation in question two or three times, an extra month is interposed to allow the next full moon to find its place. The year is thus divided into thirteen moons, which implies a deviation in the correspondence between the lunation and the periods of cultivation; the moon appears twice, at the beginning of the lunation on the first day, and then at the end on the twenty-ninth day, without changing its name. For example, in 1978 during the Farehe lunation (approximately October), on the first night there was a conjunction in the west, and on the

³⁰ Barnes is not convinced either when commenting on a passage from Arndt's book (1951:148) in which Arndt uses the word for 'eats one' (Barnes 1974:120, note 2).

³¹ Cf. Website Le Cosmographe, Portrait de la constellation du scorpion: Lesath (Upsilon Scorpii) is derived from the Arabic word 'las'a', meaning 'bite by a venomous animal', such as a ray which has thirteen spines and a long poisonous sting on the top of its tail, evoked in proverbs.

³² On websites on the Scorpio constellation, there are many drawings illustrating this configuration.

twenty-ninth night there was a new conjunction in the east, called Na'an fa ru ('She eats twice'). That year there were thirteen lunations, as astronomy websites would verify.

In Kédang, as noted by Barnes (1974:120), people do not pay attention to the conjunctions until the simultaneous rising of the full moon and Antares in the constellation Scorpio around May. According to Barnes, the passage of time during the rainy season is not counted in months, but by the sequence of named storms. The dry season is characterized by the number of the day when the moon comes into conjunction with Antares, a period when the months are numbered.³³ This means that the Kédangese have a calendar based on the sidereal year (Barnes 1974:118–119). In addition, the names of the 'time' periods have a direct relationship with agricultural activities, unlike Tanebar-Evav (see below).

In Tanebar-Evav, the lunation, like the moon, is called Vulcan. Twelve lunations follow one another, the first one mentioned, Urat, corresponding approximately to the month of March. Urat is followed by Vulcan, then Tinim'a, Hamyamin, Tumur vulan, Nga voho, Ngatuar, Farehe, Fani'i, Amamar and Toar, then finally Ta'urun. This formulation is accompanied by remarks for each lunation on whether or not the moon is in conjunction with Scorpio and on the number of nights before or after the conjunction. There is a very precise count of the number of nights since the new moon, its position in the sky when it appears, whether it is ascending or descending, and also the place on the island relative to which one can observe it appearing or disappearing.³⁴ Since the movement observed during a single night is from east to west, in this same lunation Scorpio, for example, appears in the east and goes to the west, where it is seen upside down at the end of the night. At the end, the constellation disappears into the sea (*na mam*) from the western horizon.

While Barnes' annual calendar is based on the alternating rainy and dry seasons, with names for each stage and details of natural phenomena and plant growth (Barnes 1974:129–135), in Tanebar-Evav the succession of lunations provides a framework (not a calendar) but only a few indications

³³ See Barnes (1974:117–123) for an excellent and enlightening description of the conjunctions with Antares throughout the dry season.

³⁴ For example, on the second night, the moon appears just above the mountain in the northeast; in the month of Urat, Scorpio 'eats' the moon on the seventh night; in Nga voho, on the seventh night, Scorpio is reversed; in Fani'i, on the first night, the moon 'eats' Scorpio (or the opposite, which proves that it is a conjunction); on the twenty-seventh night, the moon 'eats' Scorpio on the east side; in Amamar, on the twenty-third night at dawn, Scorpio appears or 'eats' on the east side.

of the stages of millet cultivation. There are additional details accompanying the description of the island's lunations (cf. table of lunations at end) about the winds, the state of the sea, the rain, the intensity of the sun, the extent of the tides and sometimes a forecast (good or bad) concerning marriages and the birth of children. The names of the lunations rarely give information about agricultural tasks, except for the lunations of clearing, ripening and harvesting.

The number of nights is also counted from the beginning of the new moon: first night, second night, third night, up to eleven nights. After the fourteenth night (about the middle of the lunation), when the moon is at its zenith (*vulan kolanit*), it immediately starts to 'descend' ('nra') to the east as it rises and is said to 'return eastward' ('nwelak'). Then it is dark for a longer period (*dedan baloat* [long night]) for sixteen nights, until the moon and the sun 'travel together' ('vulan ler', 'hirru den').³⁵ In addition to these sophisticated counts of the moon's spatial conjunction in the sky with certain constellations, there are details about the position of each new moon in relation to space and the orientation of the island. For example, at the beginning of Urat, the moon is said to descend from the eastern side of Iya'a mountain; the following month it is seen in the middle of the same mountain. There are qualifiers about the position of the moon in the sky during a lunation, such as 'it is the beginning of the new moon, but one does not see it yet' ('in mama' [literally, 'it arrives']). On the first night, the new moon 'surges' over the horizon (*nvot* or *nvot ngatil*); then it climbs (*rat*), then climbs higher (*karatat*). After rising, it is as if at an angle (*nbiar*). Once arrived at the zenith on the fourteenth night, it is considered 'nafru' or 'kolanit' (literally, 'middle of the sky'), then it leans or turns towards the east (*nwelak*), goes down (*nra*) and disappears (*nhirit*). On the fifteenth night, the moon rests on the mountain (an elevation in the forest to the east), and then begins what is called 'de baloat' ('the long nights') where the moon appears late in the evening for fourteen nights. On moonlit nights, 'the sky is clear', as at dawn (*lanit nbalan*).³⁶ The moon is tracked in two ways, temporally by the number of nights, and spatially by its positions on the territory.

³⁵ My personal data do not allow me to confirm that the conjunctions occur only on odd days, as in Kédang or Aceh, according to Snouck Hurgronje (1893), quoted by Barnes (1974:120).

³⁶ 'Halan' means 'light, clean, to be free/available, happy, to be pregnant with the first period not yet arrived', and also 'to see clearly' in another meaning.

What can be concluded from this fastidiously detailed enunciation of the lunations and their specificity? In Tanebar-Evav, as already mentioned, and surprising though it may seem, it is not the succession of lunations, however precise, against which the timings of cultivation and other activities are calculated. As in Rindi on eastern Sumba, ‘parts of the year are usually indicated instead with phrases that refer to annual activities or events other than those alluded to in some of the names given in the list of the months’.³⁷ The lunations are above all movements in the spatial dimensions of the sky and the earth related to the island’s configuration, like milestones or unchanging landmarks that drive the actions of humans. The moon and the constellations mark the sky every night. These movements, like those of winds, monsoons, tidal oscillations during each lunation, conjunctions, visible or not, and the position of the Pleiades constellation during these lunations, are so closely observed and monitored that anyone unversed in them might easily feel overwhelmed. It should be noted that several familiar southern hemisphere stars, whose names give indications of wind and rain, are used as bearings when sailing to other islands, although I have no precise information about their relationship to the moons. Finally, one additional measurement of movement might be added, namely that given by the terms describing boat speeds in relation to the sea, which are again orientations in space.

THE ‘WATCH’

This counting of lunations as an astronomical clock – unchanging, uncontrollable, incessant, repetitive – is answered by the ‘watch’ as ‘another timekeeper or measurement’ that is more random, partly dependent on the elements brought into play by the lunations, but without corresponding to them term by term. These elements are essentially the winds of the monsoon together with the rains that determine the linear movements on the territory. While recognizing the name of the lunation in which upcoming events take place, no use is made of the conjunctions of the moon and Scorpio to initiate activities. It is not this or that conjunction according to the above counts that serves as a basis for calculation, but the ‘right moment’ according to the

³⁷ Forth (1983:61). See also Forth (1982). See Bourdieu (1963) on the low degree of correspondence between the calendar and the execution of agricultural activities among the Kabyle of Algeria.

rains and winds. The only precision is that the clearing of land must take place after the full moon or after the new moon – that of Ngatuar (August–September)³⁸ at the moment when the wind begins to turn: thus, what is important is a combination of the wind and certain of the moon’s characteristics. The ‘elders’ of the houses gather for the first time on the veranda of the millet house (which is the ritual centre of agro-cultural activities) to perform the divination with the coconut that is intended to help decide both the location of the new gardens on the island and the number of days before the work of clearing (*stak*) is begun.³⁹ This act marks the beginning of the period in which a new millet garden is cultivated. Each sequence of work or ritual has a name: Ta stak (beginning of clearing), Ta fnge (clearing), Ta ót yaf (burning after divination), Ta her do’òt (asking for rain), Ta tuv (payment for killing small animals and burning trees during the clearing), Ta fwarut (sowing), Ta hol (visits to the gardens), Ta frengin (weeding), Ta stèè (hunting wild pigs [after a divination]) and Ta fdi’ar (harvesting).

The cultivation period is opened by two ritual leaders or ‘Guardians of the Land’ (Tuan Tan),⁴⁰ belonging to the two houses dedicated to the cultivation and rituals for millet (the millet house). As if to testify to the importance of continuity, one of the two is in charge of three periods of cultivation in a row, then the other ‘replaces’ him (*nlalin*) for three periods, and then the first returns for another three. However, they always act together to perform the rituals, pronouncing the invocations together. This sequence ends with another large-scale ritual capping the ninth period,⁴¹ to induce, as in every cultivation period, the renewal of the ‘content’ of the mountain – the whole society of the living and the dead – which is the ultimate goal of the ritual. The Guardians of the Land make offerings to the Sun-Moon God, to Mother Earth, to the spirits (the two main ones being Guardians of the Village),

³⁸ See table of lunations, at end.

³⁹ The coconut is broken into two halves, of which the one showing the three ‘eyes’ is held in the hand. The fingers are positioned over the right, left and middle eyes leading to what are called ‘veins’ (protuberances running from top to bottom) whose spacing or grouping allows one to count the number of days before starting, as well as the place chosen for cultivation in relation to the previous year.

⁴⁰ This name comes from the Indonesian ‘Tuan Tanah’, usually translated as ‘Master of the Earth’. The translation ‘Guardian of the Land’ is more appropriate, since the idea of a ‘master’ implies that of ‘owner’ (see all dictionaries, for instance, Depdikbud [2008]), which is absolutely not the case, the idea of ‘property’ being foreign to this culture as to many others in the same region. See Barraud (2010).

⁴¹ This rite has not been performed for many years, so I have not seen it, but it was remembered well enough for the villagers to describe it to me in great detail.

to the dead, to those who have ‘disappeared’ in the forest (i.e. those who have not had a funeral) and to certain places named as the three capes of the island,⁴² to the three squares in the village and to the precious goods, some of them called ‘gold’ or ‘mas’, kept in three houses.⁴³ In addition, offerings are made in compensation for the ‘killing’ of animals and trees killed or burned during the clearing to prevent insects and vermin from invading the gardens. Finally, a ritual called *Sob mitu*, addressed to the god *Duad*, is performed for the success of millet. Each invocation includes a request to the god or one of the spirits (*mitu*) protecting places and homes to watch over (*batang*) the society and to go out into the surrounding world to look for luck, rain, the principles of life,⁴⁴ millet and wild pigs (i.e. to ‘open the reserves’ where the pigs are located so that they can enter the island). These requests are also made by the elders of the main houses who have connections with certain places in the territory of the island, notably through the ‘disappeared’. Thus, the island is drawn by incessant movements towards the sacrificial sites, as if they were landmarks or milestones of the unfolding of ritual within the cultivation period.

The same route and the same offerings and invocations are made by the two *Tuan Tan* at each divination preceding a step in cultivation, that is, before the burning and before the hunting of pigs. They also walk three times around the gardens for three days in a row after sowing to watch over them; it is said that they ‘look at the gardens’ (*ra li’ik ve’e*) or ‘visit the gardens’ (*ra hol*).⁴⁵ This intense ritual activity, this acceleration (one might almost say agitation) around the growth of the millet is paradoxically accompanied from the beginning of the process – that is, from the first divination concerning the gardens – by a decrease in noise and movements by all villagers.⁴⁶ It

⁴² This ritual, called *Tun wahan* or *Tul wahan* (*tul* means ‘to say’; *wahan* means ‘limit’ or ‘edge’), is held to inform the whole territory of the island, within its limits, of the beginning of the culture.

⁴³ This action is called ‘feeding gold’.

⁴⁴ Social anthropologists usually refer to ‘souls’, but the meaning of this term is problematic in this context.

⁴⁵ ‘Hol’ (‘to visit’) is also used in many other contexts such as *taf’hol* (‘to tell a story’) and *hol af* (‘to speak’). Visiting the sick, watching over the dead with singing and crying, visiting a woman after giving birth and bringing her gifts, all of these activities are called ‘hol’, which also means ‘to watch, to monitor’ (for example, a fire, something cooking or the young children).

⁴⁶ If these rituals are properly conducted by the two *Tuan Tan*, many villagers are involved in making offerings and weaving coconut-leaf baskets to carry the offerings and collect food, while others, mainly children, accompany the *Tuan Tan* to the forest to carry out the offerings.

is emphasized that noise is immediately forbidden in the upper village,⁴⁷ and the word for ‘millet’ must not be uttered. Thus, when ‘the right time’ (‘tevat yoan’)⁴⁸ until sufficiency (*nutun yoan*), or until the joint (*nutun kanutun*)⁴⁹ has arrived, with its accompanying decrease of noise in the village space, a lookout begins in the house which accommodates the collective granary, this being considered the centre of the millet ritual.

A first distinction is established between the interior of the village and the forest – that is, beyond the village walls – where silence spreads as the millet cultivation progresses, from the prohibition on going to the gardens to the prohibition on noise in the upper village (and especially on having big parties) to its culmination in total silence when all noise is forbidden during the pig hunt before the harvest and the village is emptied of its inhabitants. Throughout the course of cultivation, and during certain periods, other prohibitions (on the collection of wood or on certain foods, but especially on noise) are added. The millet must be looked after as if it were a child about to be born. From the time of the sowing, no one may enter the millet gardens, except the two Tuan Tan, who often literally ‘visit’ the gardens to check the state of growth. Based on the height of the weeds in the middle of the millet shoots, the Tuan Tan can declare that it is time for the gardeners to weed. As a sort of punctuation mark in the sequence, three or four days are given over to the gardeners to go and weed their own plots. Prohibitions on certain foods, sexual relations and bans on movements and noise, intensify until the end of the hunting period, in order to ‘watch over’ the millet.

A second distinction, that between the island and the outside world, is made at the heart of the ritual sequence, the pig hunt and over its entire duration of about four to seven days. The entire island is ‘closed’, ‘forbidden’ (‘nuhu yotót’) to any outside arrival by sea from the neighbouring islands. An

⁴⁷ One part of the village is built on top of a cliff, while the other part is down along the shore. In the upper village, most of the ritual takes place around certain houses dedicated to millet. Recently, the ‘speakers’ of the modern world having managed to make their way to the island: when a techno party takes place in the lower village, the sound of course rises. And the new custom of celebrating New Year with large amounts of alcohol also disturbs the imposed silence, as some of the villagers have remarked.

⁴⁸ In Burmese, the term for ‘moment’ also seems to convey the idea that it is time to do an action or activity, without a formal decision being necessary (Bénédicte Brac de la Perrière, personal communication).

⁴⁹ More than a countdown that would decide the beginning of the action, it is a moment reached, as if through a passage, underlined by the idea of a (well-fitting) ‘joint’ (‘kanutun’), or of interstices well adjusted to each other. See above (note 13) for other uses of the word ‘joint’.

announcement, another marker or milestone, is sent to all the neighbouring villages.

Then a third distinction is added at the announcement of the opening of the hunt ('the call'). This is yet another marker, to be announced as soon as the village itself has been emptied of its inhabitants – all the activities of the women and children take place outside the village walls – for the entire duration of the hunt being pursued by the men in the forest. The hunters themselves keep a total silence on the morning of the departure. The two Tuan Tan keep a lookout (*ra batang*) in the millet house together with the Guardian of the Spirit Adat, one of the two most important spirits in this society. The three guardians are confined to the millet house which is also the village's granary. The lookout requires stillness and silence to protect the millet as well as the hunters in the forest so that they are not injured by a pig. The emptied village must leave its gates wide open to allow the principles of life of the living, of the pigs, of the millet, of luck and of all good things to enter and penetrate the house of millet where the Tuan Tan 'keep watch'. When the hunt is over, the pigs are offered to the god Duad and to the spirits, and the island is reopened, at which point it is said that the tide is high and that the society has 'landed'.

Whatever the sophistication of some calendars, the device of the 'watch' is found to some extent at different phases of the crops or monsoons, with periods of calm, prohibitions and the expulsion of evil powers in other parts of Southeast Asia, though in less formal and shorter forms than in Tanebar-Evav and without being called a 'watch'. Barnes (1974:135–139) noted at the beginning of the rainy season in Kédang the cleaning of the springs, the cleaning of the village and the closing of the village gates. After planting the maize and ritually casting 'wrongdoings' into the sea, there follows a period of four days when noise is prohibited, with fines being levied for infractions. All this is related to the growth of the millet. Barnes notes that the prohibitions and quiet are very similar to the restrictions that follow the birth of a child, as in Kei (see below).

In eastern Sumba, in his count of lunations, Gregory Forth (1983:69) describes a dangerous, inauspicious period (one of illnesses and no marriage ceremonies, singing or dancing) which occurs at the end of the harvest from late May to early August and is marked by restrictions and silence.⁵⁰ He

⁵⁰ He adds that life-related ceremonies (pregnancies, births, young children) never take place during this period (Forth 1983:63), like the 'bad' moons for weddings and children on Tanebar-Evav, mentioned above, and the 'bitter months' on Kodi (Hoskins 1994:144).

refers in a note to various parts of eastern Sumba where the names for this period are marked by calm and prohibitions, as well as 'what is respected'. There are also transitional periods within a day, month and year viewed as a 'joint' (as in Tanebar-Evav), which are all considered subject to bad auspices and prohibitions. According to Jeanne Cuisinier, there are periods of calm, 'of abstinence', of the cessation of social activities and 'of the expulsion of evil powers' in the society of Savu, in the Lesser Sunda Islands, before the full moon preceding the spring equinox after the harvests and opening the season of festivals (November–December) (1956:115–116, 118). Thus, while the cultivation of millet in Tanebar-Evav is a time of intense ritual activity, at the same time, in stages, the decrease in daily activities intensifies in the immobility of the 'watch'.

CONTRASTS

There is a contrast here between on the one hand the intensification of work, accompanied in industrialized countries in the nineteenth century by the intensification of cadences, efficiency, noise on automatic factory lines and their imprint on the workers' bodies (Munn 1992:110–111) and on the other hand what happens in a society like Tanebar-Evav. Conversely in the latter, the intensification of the work in the gardens and in rituals is accompanied by a slowing down (of noise, of cadences) in order to 'take care' of the garden plots, of the people, of the pigs and of the island, as well as to bring about an abundant harvest, the proof of success. Considering the movements on the island (slowing down, calm, silence), they differ from those observed in a factory mixed with the constraints on the bodies: 'clock time is thus concretized in experience reaching [...] into the body' (Munn 1992:110).

The expected result in Tanebar-Evav is not a commercial profit; it is, however, about 'work' ('urat') as shown by the use of the term 'ni enan' for the 'result' of the effort or of 'activity', the 'price' or the 'value' to be received.⁵¹ Here, concerning the ritual, the effectiveness of the result (*enan*) is inversely proportional to the intensity of the 'watch': the calm, the absence of noise, the slowing down of all activities. The stated objective is also expressed by the phrase 'to do collective work' ('ót maren') for the King of Mount Masbaït

⁵¹ 'Enan' is the cost of any expenditure involved in activity, for example, in the question 'at what cost?' ('enan balbe?'). 'Enan' is the result of discussions in marriage exchanges, but also the price of what is bought in a commercial transaction.

(Rat Vu'ar Mas), or the contents of the mountain, that is to say, the whole society whose rebirth takes place after each new period of cultivation.⁵² The rebirth of the 'king' (a successful harvest) will thus glorify his name and that of the society. It is said that 'the society will have a name' recognized in the surrounding islands. The result means 'the good progress of the boat, with a good wind and a calm sea'.

The system of clocks, with their regular and equal measurement, is opposed to the irregular organization of watches, the 'lookouts' intended for the observation of the gardens, the growth of millet and the society's prosperity, maintaining silence and immobility for success. This reduction in noise and movement, especially for those responsible for conducting the ritual, is identical to that observed by a woman after giving birth: she remains confined to her house for two or three weeks, until the naming ceremony of the child (Barraud 1990). This begins by her going to bathe at the edge of the village, at the gate in the wall that closes off the bay.⁵³ The same type of lookout, carried out by a young boy and a little girl, takes place on the occasion of the first voyage of a sailboat to be sold in the surrounding islands: the boy leaves with the boat and remains seated 'to watch', while the girl remains confined in the house of the boat owner until the return of the travellers (on another sailboat).

The lookout for millet is a moment of silence, of attention, of concentration, which is opposed to the beating of clocks or the ringing of bells. This opposition between 'watch' and 'bell-ringing' is all the more remarkable, and rather ironic, in this village, which is closed in by a wall in the bay, which tinkles like a bell.⁵⁴ Beyond the wall, which marks the limit of the land of the ancestors, there is no ban on religion, and clocks and bells can ring.⁵⁵

This is to be understood in the context of the configuration of values. The continuity of society is based on this movement, in both directions, towards the territory of the island and the world beyond it. The aim of this movement is to bring from the surrounding world all the principles of life

⁵² Perhaps it would be possible here, following Gell (1992:Chapter 22), to speak of 'opportunity costs'.

⁵³ This wall is called 'lutur ngil rov oho', which translates as 'the wall that tinkles like a bell (at the approach of enemies or in the event of danger) and surrounds the village'. See footnote 6 and Barraud (2017).

⁵⁴ Today, the bell of the Protestant church, although located in the lower village, should not ring during the most intense moment of the ritual, the hunting period. This has caused a lot of tension between the villagers.

⁵⁵ See Barraud (2017) for the story of the construction of the wall as connected to the dismissal of foreign beliefs, which at that time meant Islam.

and to cast out into the world beyond the bad things, quarrels, offences. To make this possible, it is necessary to ‘suspend time’ through a ‘watch’. ‘Closing’ the island at the most intense moment of the ritual (pig-hunting) means suspending the movement of people and boats and complements the absence of noise. A clock is always in motion, but in a watch, there must be a cessation of both movement and noise (in our metaphor, the ticking of the clock).⁵⁶ A clock or calendar serves as a measure of time, whereas a watch only marks steps in the process of millet cultivation, and in this they are opposed. To ‘watch over’ is to ‘take care of’, ‘pay attention to’, ‘be concerned with’ (Barraud 2019).

Unlike the ineluctable movements of the moon and the constellations and unchanging return of the lunations that goes over people’s heads (literally and figuratively), the time of millet cultivation has a beginning and an end, while recurring at roughly the same periods each year. Possibly Barnes’ formula about the Kédang (see below) can be used here. He points out the imprecision of terms that can be translated as ‘another year’ or ‘another month’ and suggests analysing the calendar as a series of sequences that are supposed to return at approximately the same time every year, which he then describes as a cycle of events (‘cycle’ for him is not synonymous with ‘geometrical circle’): to return to the starting point, one must follow the sequence until it is complete without reversing its direction. Hence his presentation of time as ‘oriented, irreversible and repetitive’ (1974:127). Apart from the fact that the inhabitants of Tanebar-Evav do not really refer to the lunar calendar as described above to fix the agricultural and ritual sequences, the sequences are reproduced in an identical manner, lunar cycle after lunar cycle, and are, as Barnes has it, ‘oriented, irreversible and repetitive’.

However, in the absence of a ritual or non-ritual, agricultural, socio-cosmic calendar, the organization of agricultural and ritual activities – based almost independently on natural phenomena (lunation, constellation) – and the coordination of non-ritual or daily activities cannot be contrasted in terms of ‘seasonal activities’, nor an opposition between ‘ritual’ and ‘non-ritual’.⁵⁷ This view or type of opposition is not appropriate for Kei, where the

⁵⁶ One can compare this with the ‘stopping’ of social time, advocated by Leach, following Durkheim. Leach’s schema of a ritual sequence implies a stop with an inversion suggesting the image of a zig-zag. For details, see below.

⁵⁷ This remark concerns ‘ecological time’ in the sense of Evans-Pritchard, as discussed by Munn (1992:96). For Evans-Pritchard, the ritual/non-ritual opposition in seasonal events and in the relations between activities is the ‘movement of time’ (1940:96, 100, 102). Ecological time is identified primarily with concepts of time measurement that convey

succession of events, outside of lunar cycle, could be expressed instead in the terms analysed above, i.e., the passage from movement to stillness, from noise to silence – moments summarized by the term ‘watch over’ punctuated by the sequences of cultivation. Rather than a cycle, one could speak of a sinusoidal curve,⁵⁸ like the one followed by the constellation of Scorpio during the lunations, visible at the zenith and then disappearing under or ‘inside the earth’. It is the different moments on this curve that characterize the unfolding of activities, not some ritual/non-ritual opposition based on a calendar. Other types of opposition are also suggested, as for instance in Kodi: ‘The wet and dry seasons exist as simple opposites, the “repetition of repeated reversal” that Leach (1961) believed to be characteristic of the “primitive” conception of time’ (Hoskins 1993:76).

There is, however, a further contrast between these ‘simple opposites’ and the oppositions analysed in Tanebar-Evav: the opposition between the watch and the daily activities is asymmetrical. The watch is conducted by the Guardians of the Land, also called ‘captains at sea and captains on land’. This refers to their sailing the sailing-boat, their representing the society as a whole, and their position of lookouts for the safety of the boat during the boat’s journey, which give them a superior status (as mentioned already in

‘social activities’ or a ‘relationship between activities’. For lack of space, it is not possible to discuss here Bloch’s suggestions and the distinction he makes between ‘social structure’ and ‘ritual communication’ (1977:278–292).

⁵⁸ Barnes takes the notion of ‘wave’ to mean ‘thought expressed in terms of complementary opposites’ in his discussion of Leach’s suggestion to link to the word ‘time’ the ritual exchanges of a series of marriages – the identification of alternating generations (Radcliffe-Brown) and marriage as a symbol of alliance between otherwise opposing groups (Lévi-Strauss) – as possible metaphors for time and repetition (1974:141). For Leach (1961), in fact, these characteristic traits share with the concepts of time the fact that they can be represented as opposite pairs linked by a zig-zag pattern. He bases this idea on the fact that ‘in some primitive societies’, the temporal process is not perceived as a ‘succession of epochal durations’, but rather that time enters into experience as something discontinuous, a repetition of repeated reversals, a sequence of oscillations between opposite poles. He goes on to use a Durkheimian schema to show that it is a question of alternation between general types of behaviour, among which one of the phases – that of the reversal of roles – is a moment when ‘normal time has stopped [and] sacred time is played backwards’. I concur with this proposal of sequences here for Tanebar-Evav, which, however, I would call ‘suspended’ and not ‘stopped’, but not because of the inversion of roles. If there are indeed complementarities between the different social activities in Kei, it is not a system of complementary oppositions and ritual inversions. For Barnes, on the contrary, the social order in Kédang is a sound system based on a complementary opposition, and time is conceived as a repetition (of certain natural phenomena), resulting in irreversibility (Barnes 1974:142).

several parts of this paper) – hence the asymmetry of their relation to the crew. It is not a question of power but of hierarchy in the sense given to it by Louis Dumont (1986), with reference to a whole: the crew is subordinated to the ‘captains’ – they do not have the same status.⁵⁹ This is the way the ritual for the millet is conducted for the society as a whole, as described above, which gives asymmetry to the opposition, with a difference in value between its terms, and not simple opposites or complementary opposition.

FINAL STEPS

In these pages, I have suggested a working hypothesis in contrasting the rhythm of movements with the rhythm of the motionless ‘watch’ in order to transcribe certain facts linked to the unfolding of the life of the inhabitants of a small village. I have thus tried to answer the questions that anthropologists sometimes ask when confronted with the absence of calendars, lunation reckoning, recognized measures of time – hour, day, week, year – or, as in the present case, with the absence of correspondences between lunations and activities. The hypothesis is certainly not developed in the manner of the proposals made by those authors I have mentioned who have dealt with the anthropology of time: Gell, Munn, Bloch, Bourdieu, Leach, Forth, Cuisinier, or Barnes. My suggestions for comparison with regard to an elusive subject and my references to these authors are all avenues that call for further research.

In my section headings, I have distinguished on the one hand the temporal spaces which give their spatial framework to the activities, and on the other hand the socio-cosmic flow which orients life – that of the succession of nights and days and that of the lunations – which appears quite detached from the activities. I made this distinction in order to avoid systematically opposing what would be a ritual order to another non-ritual one. Such an opposition, ritual vs. non-ritual, does not allow us to understand ‘time’ better than the winds, tides or even the positions of the moon. The most difficult part of such an exercise is to avoid the words usually used to talk about time, including the category ‘time’ itself, or to evoke the perception of time without talking about ‘time’. The idea of time refers to something that is infused in Western societies culturally and philosophically, and it is difficult to

⁵⁹ See Dumont (1986:2, 227–228, 232).

detach oneself from it to understand the unfolding of activities – most often called ‘time’ – in other societies.

Marcel Granet, who has described Chinese thought with formidable precision, proposes a solution:

The notions to which the Chinese attribute a function of categories depend for the most part on the principles on which the organization of their society [...] is based; they represent a kind of institutional background of Chinese thought, and their analysis merges (as will be seen by example for ideas of Time, Space and even Number) with a study of social morphology (1934:23–24; translation Kasha Vande).

I have tried to examine these principles by recalling the framework in which the inhabitants of Tanebar-Evav recognize themselves as a society. These are the movements on the one hand and the watches on the other, which are indissolubly linked since the watch depends on the succession of the movements. They do not talk about the passing of time – they only repeat the gestures, words and movements of those who have preceded them on their land. In doing so, through their daily work, as well as through the sequences of ceremonies and their locations, the officiants who lead them, the participants, the invocations and the types of offerings, they refer explicitly (or not) to the events of the past, which are anchored on the territory of the island. However, above all, they watch over their future and that of their descendants.

This small society is not uninterested in its past and its future, despite the absence of great mythical narratives, kingdoms,⁶⁰ great cosmogonies, or historical and genealogical epics such as those found further west in Indonesia (from the Lesser Sunda Islands, such as in Louis Berthe’s “Bei Gua” [1972] among the Bunaq of Timor). There is no founding myth in Tanebar-Evav. However, evocations of the arrival of spirits and migrants, brief tales of inter-village warfare, tales of fantastic animals and an account of the encounter with Islam and the construction of a wall to prevent its penetration into the village three centuries ago are enough to place the inhabitants of Tanebar-Evav in a vast temporal world beyond themselves – one to which they appeal in order to glorify their name after a successful harvest. In terms of the Kei archipelago as a whole, only one unifying story, called a myth by the inhabitants of Kei, refers to a distant encounter with people from Bali.

⁶⁰ Although a King of Mount Masbaït has been mentioned, there is no mention of the existence of anything like a ‘kingdom’.

This led me to suggest that the dynamics of the society, and perhaps its specificity, are based on movements and displacements involving both the territory of the island and the surrounding temporal world. The sequences of activities are then like so many spatial marks and milestones of the past construction of the society and of its future. Compared to other societies in Eastern Indonesia, the forms differ. Among the Bunaq, the routes of the ancestors ensure linearity and continuity up to the living (Berthe 1972). The paths opened up by alliances in other societies, such as the Bugis, trace a path and a history reaching right up to the living (Pelras 2002). In Tanebar-Evav, the configuration is different. If there are paths, alliances, ritual displacements and movements on the territory of the island, they are not linear (nor circular, for that matter). They do not project a line leading from the past to the future, but rather constitute milestones in terrestrial and celestial space, a sort of pause allowing one to find one's bearings at any moment of daily or ritual activities. This is how irregularities or inconsistencies in relation to the lunations can make sense, only becoming significant in relation to the monsoons and the work in the gardens. Many authors express this as a contrast between a 'calendar' and practical activities. For the society of Tanebar-Evav, this knowledge of lunations is undoubtedly one of its anchoring points in the larger world of the Kei Islands and beyond, placing the specificity of movements in this territory, which differentiate it from other territories and societies, under a common sky.

Further east, in Melanesian societies,⁶¹ inconsistencies between the calculation of months and the seasons of cultivation are frequent. As a result, the question of control over time, in order to compensate for these inconsistencies, is a recurrent issue among the authors cited in this paper, and following it, that of control over power, notably in Gell's work (1992:314, 326). In Tanebar-Evav, the perception of time is linked to the stages of agricultural work that are punctuated by rituals conducted by those in charge of cultivation: the elders, the officiants of the houses. However, this does not give them power or control over time. The elders decide in different ways (divination, propitiatory ceremonies) on the beginning of the sequence, but not on its content. The sequence of activities is not subject to power but reflects, as Granet would say, 'the principles on which the organization of their society rests' (1934:23–24), that is, the configuration of its values.

⁶¹ See Burman (1981:251–268), Damon (1982:221–239) and many others referring to the work of Malinowski.

The emergence of a commercial culture approximately around 2005 and thus relatively recently has not overturned the hierarchy of values, but it has changed these relationships and rhythms somewhat by projecting money into the future, with a flow of money and consumer goods and increasingly frequent travels off the islands. Finally, the recent emergence of a new ‘religion’ (Agama Hindu or Hindu Dharma)⁶², in addition to those practised by around a third of villagers (Islam, Protestantism, Catholicism),⁶³ is questioning the past, introducing history and rewriting it. Its influence on traditional social relations is complex. As far as rituals are concerned, and as always with rituals, the society has at all times integrated elements from the outer world and will continue to do so.

In addition to the question of control and power, many other questions remain unanswered. I have tried to answer Gell when he asks ‘[h]ow the ethnographer identifies the “concept of time” in this or that culture’ (Gell 1992:315) and to the question whether this concept really exists everywhere. Gell goes on to say that ‘[t]ime anthropology consists of the development of means of representing [...] the manifold ways in which time becomes salient in human affairs’ (1992:315). Munn, for her part, at the end of her article, concludes with ‘a notion of “temporalization” that views time as a symbolic process continually being produced in everyday practices’ (1992:116). How is it possible, Gell (1992:326) continues, to detach oneself from the ‘heavy’ time of real-world events? Ritual representations of time do not provide a ‘world view’; they can only be coherent in their implicit relation to practice (Gell 1992:326). This is what I have tried to show.

The classic questions in the anthropology of time also concern the notions of duration, cyclicity or linearity that are so important in our own Western reflections on time. For Bloch, who seeks to decipher cognitive systems for example, the proof of a static or cyclical time comes from a special type of communication which can be described as ritual by contrast to contexts in which a notion of durational time is used for practical activities (agricultural and others) (1977:284, 285). For Forth, referring to Leach, there is no incompatibility between cyclical and linear representations of the notion of time (1983:76).

Another recurring question is whether it is rituals and representations that determine notions of time or rather a society’s practical activities. The challenge is to understand calendars as systems of knowledge and the pos-

⁶² See Barraud (2017).

⁶³ The others are following what is now called ‘adat laws’ (‘traditional laws’).

sibility of social change.⁶⁴ In his book “The anthropology of time” (1992), which amounts to a compendium, Gell examines the various analyses of time in anthropology, beginning with Durkheim and then drawing on psychology, linguistics, philosophy and the cognitive processes by which time is understood, which he then contrasts with practices.

Summarized above, all these questions are dealt with in the anthropology of time, without arriving at any propositions that could on the one hand encompass the question of time and on the other make explicit the differences between societies.⁶⁵

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⁶⁴ See Bourdieu (1963:71–72) and the remarks by Gell (1992:295–296).

⁶⁵ As far as differences between societies are concerned, a comparison of this kind has been attempted on the question of rituals in Eastern Indonesia. See Barraud and Platenkamp (1989, 1990).

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TABLE OF LUNATIONS

<i>Lunation name</i>	<i>Approximate monthly benchmarks</i>	<i>Translation</i>	<i>Villagers' comments (tides, sea state, rain, sun, crop state, wind)</i>	<i>Conjunction with the constellation Scorpio</i>	<i>Related events</i>
Urat	+/- March	'work', but also 'vein', 'artery', 'coconut vein'	The shoots have all emerged from the ground, the ears have several 'branches', the western monsoon is still a little active, there are two winds (the east and west winds are fighting each other). The evening tide is good.	On the fifth night, Scorpio appears at twilight in the sea, on the nineteenth night, it 'eats' in the east.	At night, inhabitants collect the elvers (young eel) that suddenly appear on the east coast during two or three nights (eaten after being cooked in a stone oven).
Vulan but	+/- April	(Name of the moon) (sticky winds)	The east wind starts, but the winds remain 'mixed', 'stuck' ('ra but'), the night's low tide is strong, that of the day is weak.	Scorpio is 'in' the earth, but it is said that on the ninth night, Scorpio 'eats' (conjunction with the moon) inside - 'inside the earth'.	Good moon for children and marriages
Tinim'a	+/- May		There is a lot of rain, everything is wet and mouldy, everything rots (wood, clothes).	Scorpio follows the same path as the moon (<i>yè-far den enmebe hov vulan</i>).	Bad moon for marriages

<i>Lunation name</i>	<i>Approximate monthly benchmarks</i>	<i>Translation</i>	<i>Villagers' comments (tides, sea state, rain, sun, crop state, wind)</i>	<i>Conjunction with the constellation Scorpio</i>	<i>Related events</i>
Hamyannin	+/- June		There is still some rain and rotting of the seeds of different kinds of peas that are in bloom; the inhabitants must sort out what is good and what is bad. The low tide of the day is weak, that of the night is strong.	Scorpio appears in the east on the fifteenth night of the moon.	This lunation is bad for children and for marriages.
Tumurvulan	+/- July	Moon 'East monsoon'	Sun. It is a good lunation, it is hot, it is the drought, too hot, the grains are dry and empty, it is the middle of the east monsoon. The low tide is strong but does not last long before the tide comes back.	On the seventh night, the moon is in conjunction with the tail of Scorpio, on the ninth night, Scorpio is in the middle of the sky.	Good lunation for marriages
Nga voho	+/- August	Good moon	There is a major low tide during the day, a high tide at night.	For seven nights, the tail of the Scorpion seems to be 'inside' the village, inverted in the sky, then retreats.	Good moon for marriages
Ngatuar	+/- September	<i>Tuar</i> , 'handle of the machete'	Sun. Hot, the wind is not strong, and the low tide of the evening is strong. The wind starts to turn.	Scorpio has its head down, so its tail appears higher.	The clearing of the gardens begins (<i>tuar, taktuar</i> , literally, 'we use the machete'). It must take place after the full moon or after the new moon.

<i>Lunation name</i>	<i>Approximate monthly benchmarks</i>	<i>Translation</i>	<i>Villagers' comments (tides, sea state, rain, sun, crop state, wind)</i>	<i>Conjunction with the constellation Scorpio</i>	<i>Related events</i>
Farehe	+/- October	<i>Lik-lak</i> , 'rubbish'	The winds sometimes argue, come from all sides (north, south, east, west), and are weak, but the sea is calm; at the new moon, the tide is low in the morning, at the end of the moon, the morning tide is high.	On the third night the moon and Scorpio are in conjunction. The Pleiades appear in the west (<i>ndat Kor</i> , 'arrive at Kor', visible at the north-western cape).	This is the period of burning the gardens.
Fani'i	+/- November		The rains begin to fall. After the first night of the new moon, the west wind arrives; it is a good lunation.	Although the 'heart-liver' of the ray (<i>far</i>) is descending, the shark (the tail of Scorpio) is yet to do so. The constellation is still seen in the west, but it has almost disappeared. At sunset, the Pleiades appear in the east.	It is the time of sowing: pea seeds are planted, then millet is sown (<i>nsavur yanan-warin</i> ['children']) 'to send on the flight' like the splashing of sea water by a sailboat. Protection by 'medicines' ('naban iroan') and rejection of bad things outside the island.
Amarar	+/- December		If it rains, the wind comes from the west, the sea is calm.	When the moon appears on the twenty-fifth night at dawn in the east, Scorpio is there.	'Food is white' ('bina rasmarar'). Millet has grown, becomes white because of the sun, corn is eaten, and what is sown grows or dies, depending on the sun.

<i>Lunation name</i>	<i>Ap-proximate monthly benchmarks</i>	<i>Translation</i>	<i>Villagers' comments (tides, sea state, rain, sun, crop state, wind)</i>	<i>Conjunction with the constellation Scorpio</i>	<i>Related events</i>
Toar	+/- January		It is a good lunation; the wind comes from the west. At dawn, the low tide is still strong. There are rains.	On the twenty-third night, Scorpio is either in the middle of the sky, or it has already descended. At sunset, the Pleiades are at the zenith.	The millet stalks multiply, several ears appear. The total ban on noise is placed in the square, where the house of the Guardians of the Land and the millet granary are located, after the first public announcement (<i>vo'o maroat</i>) before the pig hunting.
Ta'urun	+/- February		The evening low tide is strong, so on the seventeenth night, inhabitants will catch eels with sieves on the east coast.	In the middle of the night Scorpio is at the zenith, on the fifth night, conjunction in the southwest, and on the twenty-first night, conjunction in the east.	The grains (millet and other seeds) are ripe and quickly brought into the garden sheds (<i>ta uruk na'a sar</i>). It is a bad lunation; no marriages are possible and there are many disputes among the villagers.