

Ethnoarchaeology of funeral practices: Aspects of the management of current dolmens and collective tombs in the tribal societies of Sumba Island (Indonesia)

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Abstract

This paper presents the first results of an ethnoarchaeological project on the Indonesian island of Sumba, focusing on the study of the practice of collective burials. The aim is to develop reference models that can be used in our studies of European Neolithic societies. As with any ethnoarchaeological approach, the aim is not to provide ready-made solutions, but to enrich the range of possible hypotheses. Three aspects are given special attention in this article: First, the existence of “dolmen pools”, i.e. groups of dolmens used simultaneously by the same social group, second, the interpretation of “gaps” in the use of particular megalithic tombs, and third, the contribution of the Sumba data to the understanding of kinship relationships as provided by palaeogenetics. For each of these aspects, we show which social logic the occupation or non-occupation of the dolmens follows. In this way, the “dolmen pool” model can also help in the interpretation of Neolithic burial practices in megalithic graves, which are difficult to explain with the current interpretative approaches.

Zusammenfassung

Dieser Aufsatz präsentiert erste Ergebnisse eines ethnoarchäologischen Projekts auf der indonesischen Insel Sumba, das sich auf die Untersuchung der Praxis des Kollektivgrabes konzentriert. Ziel ist es, Referenzmodelle zu entwickeln, die für unsere Studien der europäischen neolithischen Gesellschaften verwendet werden können. Wie bei jedem ethnoarchäologischen Ansatz geht es nicht darum, fertige Lösungen zu liefern, sondern das Spektrum möglicher Hypothesen zu bereichern. Drei Aspekten wird in diesem Artikel besondere Aufmerksamkeit gewidmet: 1. die Existenz von “Dolmenpools”, d.h. Gruppen von Dolmen, die gleichzeitig von derselben sozialen Gruppe verwendet werden; 2. die Interpretation von Lücken in der Nutzung von bestimmten Megalithgräbern; 3. der Beitrag der Sumba-Daten zum Verständnis von Verwandtschaftsbeziehungen, wie sie die Paläogenetik liefert. Für jeden dieser Aspekte zeigen wir auf, welcher sozialen Logik die Belegung bzw. Nicht-Belegung der Dolmen folgt. Damit kann das “Dolmenpool”-Modell auch bei der Interpretation neolithischer Bestattungspraktiken in Megalithgräbern helfen, die mit den gängigen Deutungsansätzen schwer erklärbar sind.

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Introduction

Since 2015, the Indonesian island of Sumba has been the subject of three ethnoarchaeological projects initiated by the University of Strasbourg. The most recent one that is centred on the study of the practice of collective burials – i.e. graves containing the remains of individuals from several generations inhumed successively – is led by the authors of this article. Its objectives are to study the functioning of the collective tomb within a living society.

Collective burials documented in ethnohistory are extremely variable in characteristics and usage. What they all have in common is that they are used repeatedly and are intended to gather dead persons deposited on several occasions. At the time they are established, they are planned to receive more dead people later, who in principle are not all dead yet. The other essential common property of collective burials is that in all documented cases they are used by kin groups: They gather people that are related by consanguinity, affinity or adoption. In archaeology, the recognition of collective burials relies on archaeothanatological arguments: A grave is termed 'collective' whenever it is possible to demonstrate that all the individuals have not been deposited at one time – which amounts to saying that the grave was used on several occasions (Boulestin/Courtaud forthcoming).

Unlike studies in the collective practices of past societies, the study of living societies requires an extensive understanding of the social and religious background and on knowledge of the subjective experience of the individuals involved. The aim is to develop reference models that further our understanding of European Neolithic societies. As in any ethnoarchaeological approach, the aim is not to provide ready-made solutions, but to enrich the spectrum of hypotheses through the study of societies, in this case pre-state societies, whose functioning is assumed to be structurally close to that of societies in European prehistory. Three aspects will be discussed in this article: (1) the existence of pools of dolmens used simultaneously by the same lineage, (2) the interpretation of chronological gaps in the use of monuments, and (3) the contribution of the Sumbanese model presented in this article to the understanding of kinship links in ancient monuments as revealed by paleogenetics.

The ethnology of traditional societies on Sumba Island has been the subject of a series of works. The main studies were published between 1980 and 2000¹. Even if they do not cover the entire island, they form a solid base upon which the ethnoarchaeological projects carried out in the 2000s and 2010s have been able to build their investigations. The pioneer in this field is R. Adams (2007; 2009; 2010; 2016; Adams/Kusumawati 2010), who was mainly interested in the question of megalithic practices. The issue of the social background of megalithic practices has also been addressed by M. Wunderlich (2019) and C. Jeunesse (2019). They were also the first to present ambitious comparisons between the models developed on the basis of the data collected in Sumba and archaeological data in order to gain a better understanding of certain aspects of the societies of European prehistory.

The topic of collective burial practices – which should not be confused with that of megalithic practices – has so far stirred little ethnoarchaeological interest. The most recent studies (with bibliographies) are those of P. Couderc (2018) on the Uut Danum of Borneo and of M. Parker Pearson and D. Regnier (2018) on the case of Madagascar. Concerning Sumba, two of the authors of this article have published a first paper about collective graves with a general overview accompanied by a comparison with the practices of the Toraja from the island of Sulawesi (Jeunesse/Denaire 2018).

1 Forth 1981; Hoskins 1986; 1989; Needham 1987; Kuipers 1990; Geirnaert-Martin 1992; Gunawan 2000.



Fig. 1. Location of the island of Sumba within Southeast Asia (Graphics: A. Denaire, after https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Indonesia_location_map.svg).

Traditional societies on Sumba Island²

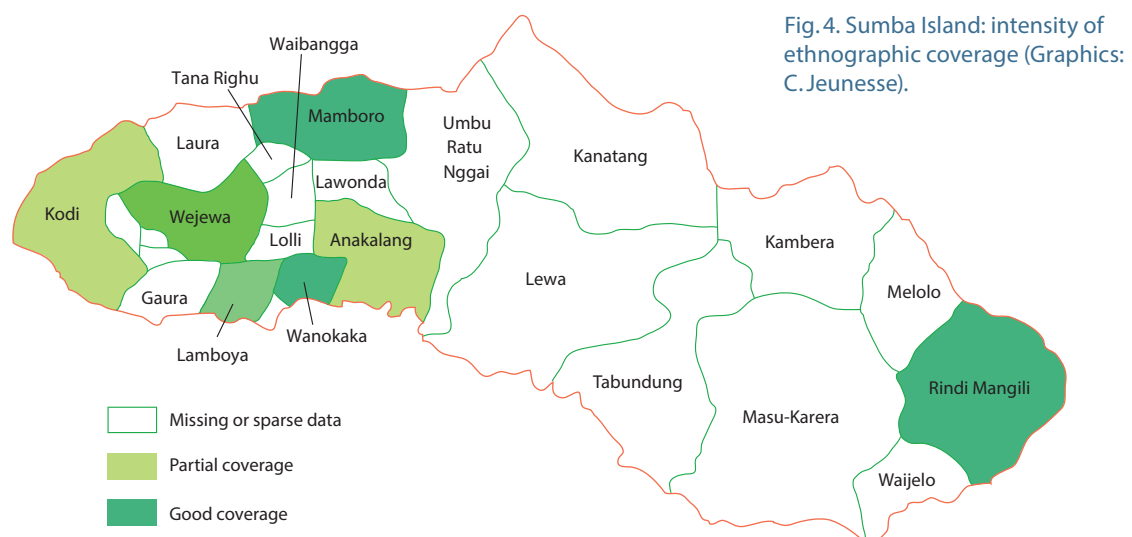
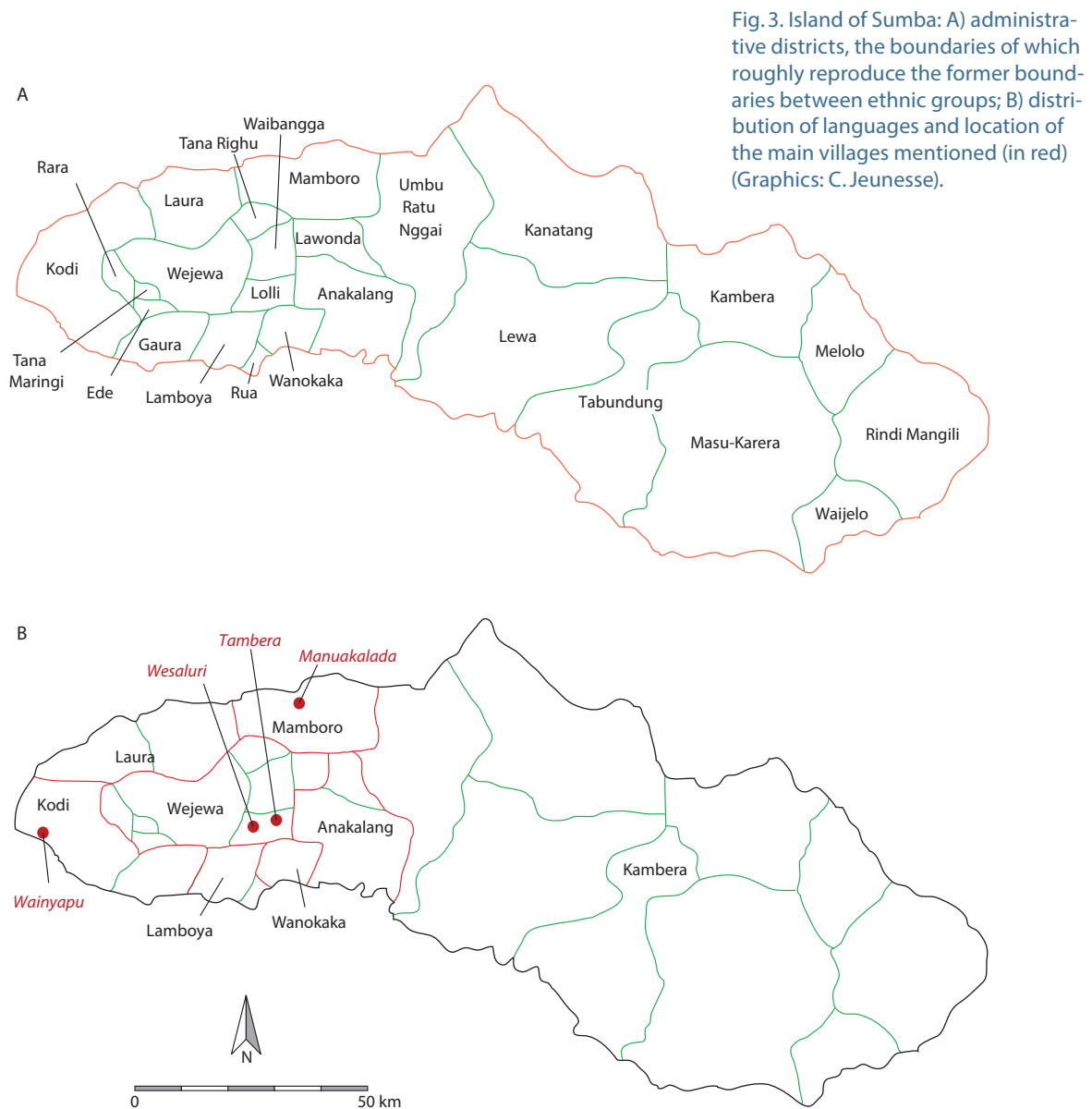
The island of Sumba is part of the string of small Sunda Islands that occupy the south-eastern part of the Indonesian archipelago (Fig. 1). It was first selected because it is the last place in the world where societies have remained largely faithful to the traditions of the “hill tribes” of Southeast Asia. They still routinely build dolmen-like megalithic monuments used to house collective burials (Fig. 2). It is a world in transformation, but one in which village tribal societies have preserved remnants of their past splendour, maintaining and at the same time avoiding relationships with contemporary Indonesian society.



Fig. 2. Dolmen under construction in Wainyapu (Kodi) in 2017 (Photo: C. Jeunesse).

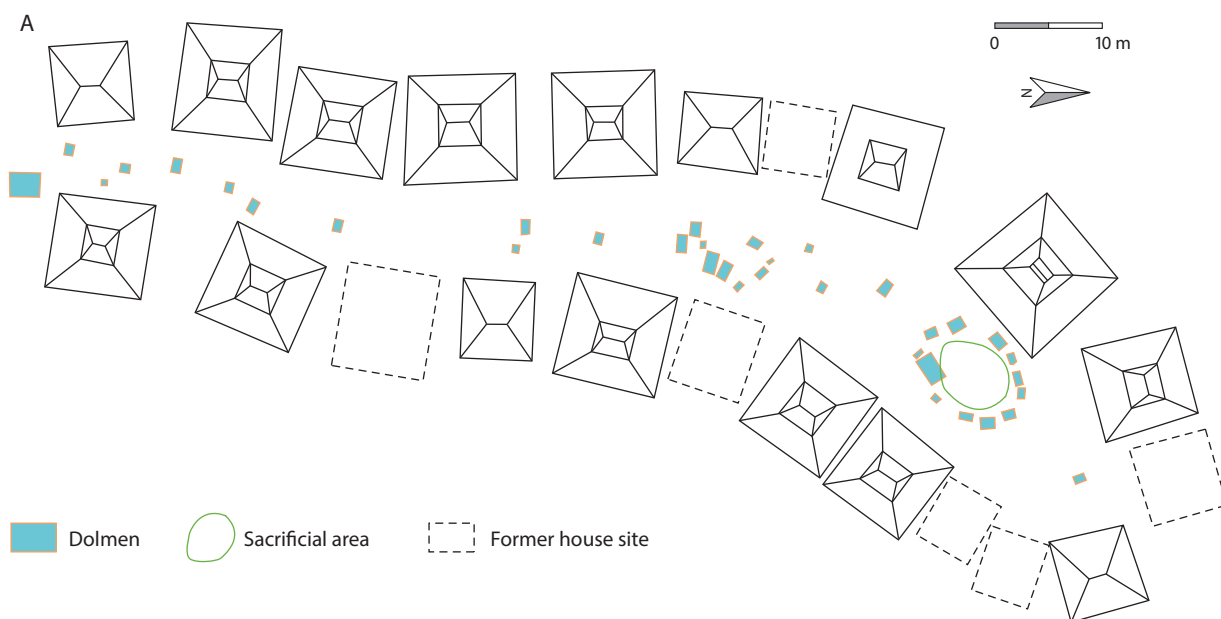
About the size of Corsica, the island hosts 24 different ethnic groups speaking nine languages, all belonging to the Austronesian language family, some of which are subdivided into several dialects (Fig. 3). Its ethnological coverage is still very incomplete, with a fairly well explored area in the west and a large eastern half where only one ethnic group has been studied in depth (Fig. 4). Our observations cover several ethnic groups, the main one represented by the Lolli, located in the centre of the western half of the island.

² For a more complete overview, see Jeunesse 2016.



One of the island's assets is the at least partial preservation of the animistic religious background. Known as *marapu*, the local religion is part of the so-called "hierarchical" or "transcendental" animism typical of the non-state, rice-growing societies of Southeast Asia (Århem 2016). The relationship with the spirits of the ancestors and sacrifice play a central role. Domestic animals (horse, buffalo, pig, chicken, dog) are bred for exclusively ceremonial purposes and considered as ritual goods. The animals are viewed as the common property of the living and the spirits of the ancestors of the lineage (Jeunesse/Denaire 2017). Funerals are the scene of often spectacular slaughters intended mainly to transfer the livestock that the ancestor will need to hold his rank in the world of the dead.

Fig. 5. Village of Tamera (Lolli): A) distribution of houses and dolmens, the latter are scattered throughout the village, with a particular concentration around the sacrificial area; B) sacrificial area surrounded by a circle of dolmens, with the origin houses of the lineages forming a second, outer circle (unknown village, Wanokaka district) (Graphics and photo: C. Jeunesse).



Even if they also exist outside the villages, in rice fields or near grazing areas, dolmens are mostly implanted within the villages, in front of the main house of the lineage (Fig. 5A). The combination of a subcircular sacrificial area surrounded by two concentric circles made up, respectively, of the main origin houses and the dolmens associated with them, recurs quite frequently in the villages of the western part of the island (Fig. 5B). The remains of the deceased are divided between the dolmen, which houses the bones, and the attic (also called “tower”) of the ancestors’ house, which serves as a dwelling for the ancestors’ spirits.

The social organisation is based on a system of exogamous patrilineal and patrilocal clans subdivided into lineages composed of a variable number of households (Fig. 6). Of the five main types of traditional social organisation identified for the Southeast Asia-Melanesia area – namely the band (nomadic hunter-gatherers well represented, for example, in Borneo), the Melanesian big men/great men system, the tribe, the chiefdom and the state (Fig. 7) – two are represented on Sumba. In a dualism comparable to the well-known *gumsa–gumlao* opposition described by E. R. Leach (1954) for the Kachin of Burma, two configurations, broadly reflecting the classic opposition proposed by M. Sahlins (1963) between tribe and chiefdom, exist side by side on the island: In the west, segmented societies formed of politically

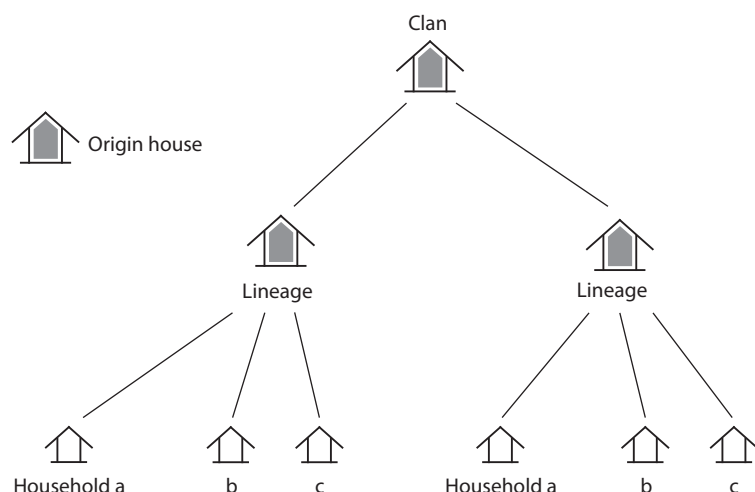
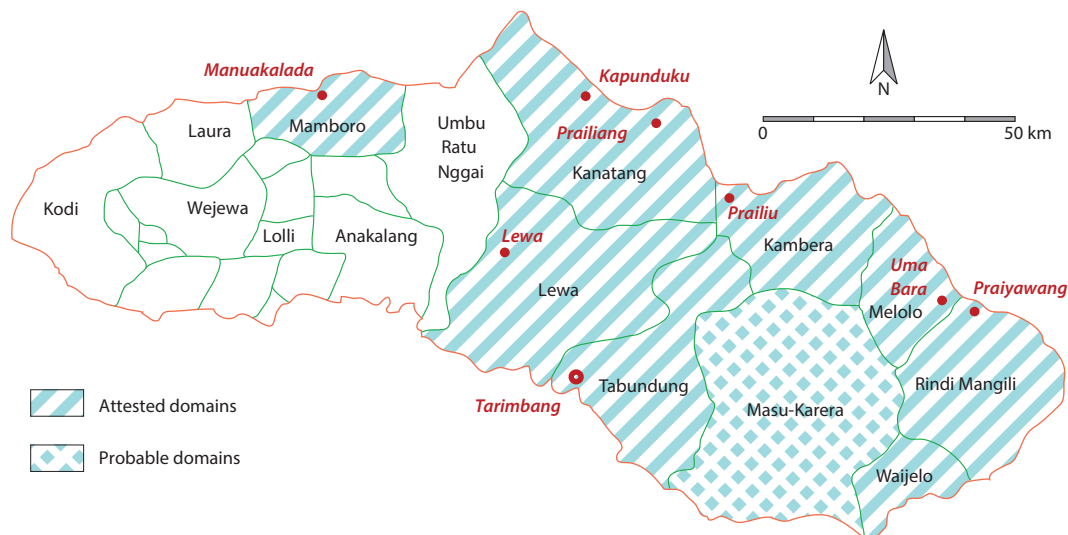


Fig. 6. Schematic representation of the three levels of the social “pyramid”. The relevant level for the management of dolmen “pools” is the lineage (Graphics: C. Jeunesse).

Big man societies	Segmentary societies (Tribe)	Stratified societies (Chiefdom)	Principalities (State)
Egalitarian	Segmentary society (politically independent descent groups) class society (3 levels) «ranked acephalous societies» (Schrauwers 2016)	Confederation of descent groups with a dominant DG class society (4 levels)	Confederation of confederations of descent groups class society (5 levels)
Achieved status	Ascribed status	Ascribed status	Ascribed status
Baruya Melpa (New Guinea)	Kodi (Sumba) Toraja (Sulawesi) Kachin (gumlao) (Burma) Konyak (thenkoh) (India)	Rindi (Sumba) Mamboro (Sumba) Kachin (gumsa) (Burma) Konyak (thendu) (India)	Makassar (Sulawesi) Bima (Sumbawa) Wajdo (Sulawesi) Shan (Burma)

Fig. 7. The two forms of social organisation represented on Sumba in their regional context (Southeast Asia and Melanesia). They are located between the “big men” societies and the small states, the latter mainly constituted by Muslim principalities (Graphics: C. Jeunesse).



autonomous clans and villages; in the north and east, stratified societies formed of clan confederations led by a dominant clan in which a 'king' (*raja*) is chosen, who has real political power over a territory comprised of a variable number of villages (Fig. 8). The territories concerned are referred to as 'domains' by ethnologists who have worked on Sumba. The concentration of power in these territories is reflected in the existence of capital villages founded by the royal lineages, where only members of the dominant clan and their slaves may settle. Some of these slaves are craftsmen, mainly goldsmiths and sculptors, attached to the royal household and responsible for making regalia and other objects whose use constitutes a royal privilege. This *ex nihilo* foundation of "princely residences" was an important step in the transition to stratification. The local practice of slavery goes back at least to the time of the first contacts with European travellers, the Portuguese, in the 16th century (Geirnaert-Martin 1992). Even though it no longer has any legal basis, of course, it still plays a very vivid role in mentalities and political life today. Massive in the stratified chiefdoms of East and North Sumba, where the royal lineages could own up to several hundred slaves, slavery was much more modest in the segmented societies of the west, being limited to a few individuals at most per household (Fig. 9).

To limit ourselves to the cases for which we had the opportunity to verify on-site observations, we cite the examples of Praiyawang (Rindi domain), Uma Bara (Melolo) and Prailiu (Kambera). The territories of the aristocratic domains vary in size. Their extension is not to be confused with that of ethnic groups. The modern administrative districts of East Sumba, where the majority of the aristocratic domains are concentrated, should be seen, in pre-colonial times, as mixed areas where the stratified small "kingdoms" cohabit with segmented "free" villages showing the same egalitarian organisation as in West Sumba (Jeunesse 2019). The existence of a comparable dualism within the same culture complex with, depending on the point of view, cohabitation or alternation of a democratic and an aristocratic form has been proposed for the Neolithic and the Metal Ages in Europe (Jeunesse 2017; 2018; 2019).

The two social systems are intersected by three superimposed classes – nobles, commoners and slaves – common to both – which, somewhat paradoxically, does not spoil the egalitarian character of the segmented societies in the western half of Sumba. Inhabitants live in villages of varying sizes managed by village councils. In the segmented societies, these councils summon the heads of the noble and commoner lineages. Decisions are made according to an egalitarian principle well summed up by the expression "one individual, one vote". In the stratified societies, the

Fig.8. Sumba Island. Distribution of areas in which a stratified social organisation prevails. Districts with aristocratic "domains" may be comprised of several such domains and at the same time contain independent villages with a segmented egalitarian social organisation (Graphics: C. Jeunesse).

A

<i>Lineages</i>	<i>Number of slaves</i>	<i>Number of free members</i>
Uma Andungu	201	24
Uma Jangga	267	54
Uma Kopi	110	12
Uma Kudu	103	19
Uma Penji	478	12
Uma Wara	39	23
<i>Sum</i>	1198	134

B

East Weyewa district (573 households): (descendants of -)	
125 Nobles	22%
379 Commoners	66%
54 Slaves	9%
15 Priests	3%
<i>Free : 519</i>	<i>Slaves: 54</i>

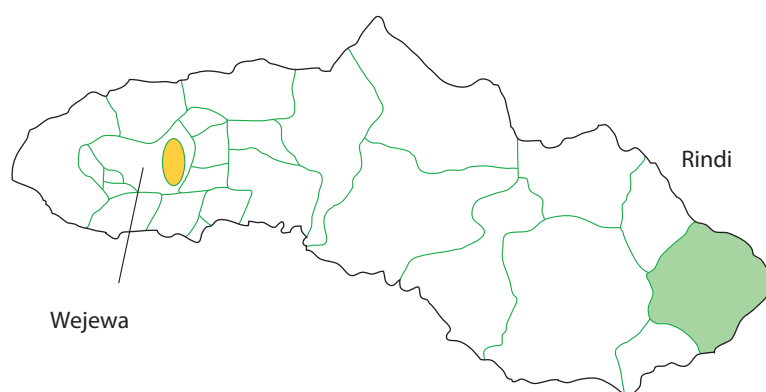


Fig. 9. Numbers of slave descendants in two Sumbanese societies studied in the mid-20th century: A) royal clan of the Rindi domain (stratified society); B) sample of 573 households in the eastern part of the Weyewa district (segmented egalitarian society). The contrast between the massive role of slavery in aristocratic domains and its quasi-anecdotal character in the context of segmentary societies in the west is noteworthy (A after Forth 1981, appendix 3; B after Kuiper 1990; graphics: C. Jeunesse).

upper group, i.e. the dominant clan, often represented in villages other than the capital village by one or two households, always has the final say. Apart from the capital villages of the domains, the villages are almost always multi-clan.

One of the features often overlooked by experts – on Sumba and in many other places – is indeed the non-territorial character of the clan. This is mainly due to the dispersal process generated by the passage of generations. Depending on the ethnic group, the office of head of lineage – which implies the use of the parents' house, which is at the same time the origin house – is passed on either to the eldest son (primogeniture) or to the youngest (ultimogeniture). The other male children must, once married, build their own house and find land to cultivate. Some will settle in their home village if it can accommodate new homes. Others will establish new settlements and clear plots of land for cultivation on the territories controlled by their clan. Finally, others will seek permission to move to another village where they will be welcomed by a lineage of their clan from a previous emigration or by another clan, normally a partner clan in the marriage system (usually the wife-giver). The re-occurrence of the process from generation to generation has led to a wide dispersal of clans within the territories of the ethnic groups. In the small village of Wesaluri (Lolli ethnic group), for example, by the time it had reached its maximum size (around 1960, with 16 occupied houses), the households were divided among six separate clans. The wide dispersion – over hundreds of square kilometres for the largest ethnic groups – of burials belonging to the same clan is an important consequence of this non-territorial nature of the clans.

The divisions induced by ethnic and linguistic fragmentation and by the cohabitation of the two forms of social organisation contrast with a fairly uniform material culture. Because of this high degree of homogeneity, in the context of a vanished society studied by archaeologists, the whole island would probably be subsumed under a single archaeological heading (which would then probably have been called “Sumbanian culture”). There are certainly differences, but they are secondary, similar to those that lead us in archaeology to subdivide a culture into regional ‘facies’. Some are directly related to the existence of the two social substrates. Others refer to the affirmation and display of ethnic identities. As we have seen during our fieldwork, some members of the segmented societies of the western part are, for example, still able to identify the ethnic origin of an *ikat* (traditional fabric) at first glance, mainly on the basis of the choice and stylistic treatment of motifs.

Methods

Grave data was collected in two Lolli villages, Wesaluri and Tambera. Such a collection begins with a census of the houses, including their clan and lineage affiliations, and continues with the study of the connections between the dolmens and the houses (Fig. 10). Then a systematic investigation, lineage by lineage, is conducted, this social formation being the relevant level for the study of the forms of management of the dolmens, and thus also of the collective tombs. The interlocutor is generally the head of the lineage, flanked or not by other inhabitants of the village, often traditional priests (*rato*) whose function implies a good mastery of genealogy.

The main lineage of Wesaluri, the one that founded the village in the second half of the 19th century, for example, controls six dolmens. Four are located in front of the veranda of the ancestors’ house (house B), occupied generation after generation by the head of the lineage, the other two are located outside the village in the rice fields, about 400 m linear distance from the house. Before going on to establish the biographies of the dolmens, it is necessary to get as precise an idea as possible of the genealogy of the lineage (Fig. 11). House B is the house of the village founder, Pale Poti 1. Our informant in the survey conducted in 2017 was his great-grandson, Toda Mogu Wole. Toda Mogu Wole died in 2018, leaving the chieftaincy to his youngest son, Lukas Lede Toda, according to the Lolli’s rule of ultimogeniture. It should be noted in passing that the first three lineage chiefs each had two wives.

Genealogy serves as a support for the construction of the dolmens’ biographies. Dolmen 7, one of the tombs managed by the founding lineage, houses the remains of seven individuals from four distinct generations and is still active (Fig. 12). It was built on the occasion of the death of the village founder’s second wife. Dolmen 6 (Fig. 13) was built on the occasion of the death of the second wife of Bura Sele, son of the founder and his successor as the head of lineage. It also contains the remains of seven individuals from four different generations. The fact that Dolmen 6 runs parallel to Dolmen 7 is obviously not without implications (see below).

This collection of dolmen biographies was carried out in 2017 and 2018 for all the dolmens in the village of Wesaluri, which will be our main source for this article. The evaluation of the data is still in progress and we limit ourselves here to summarizing our first observations.

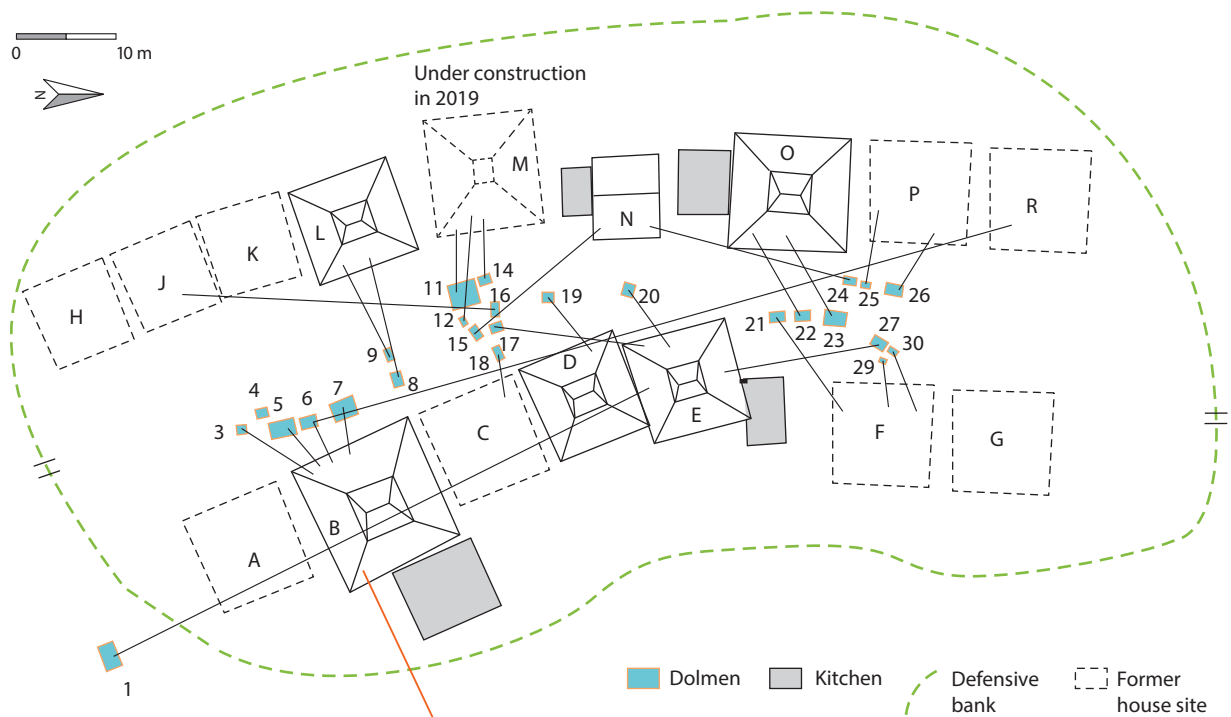


Fig. 10. Village of Wesaluri (Lolli). Aerial view and schematic plan of the situation in 2019, showing the connections between houses and dolmens (Graphics: C. Jeunesse; photo: F. Monna).

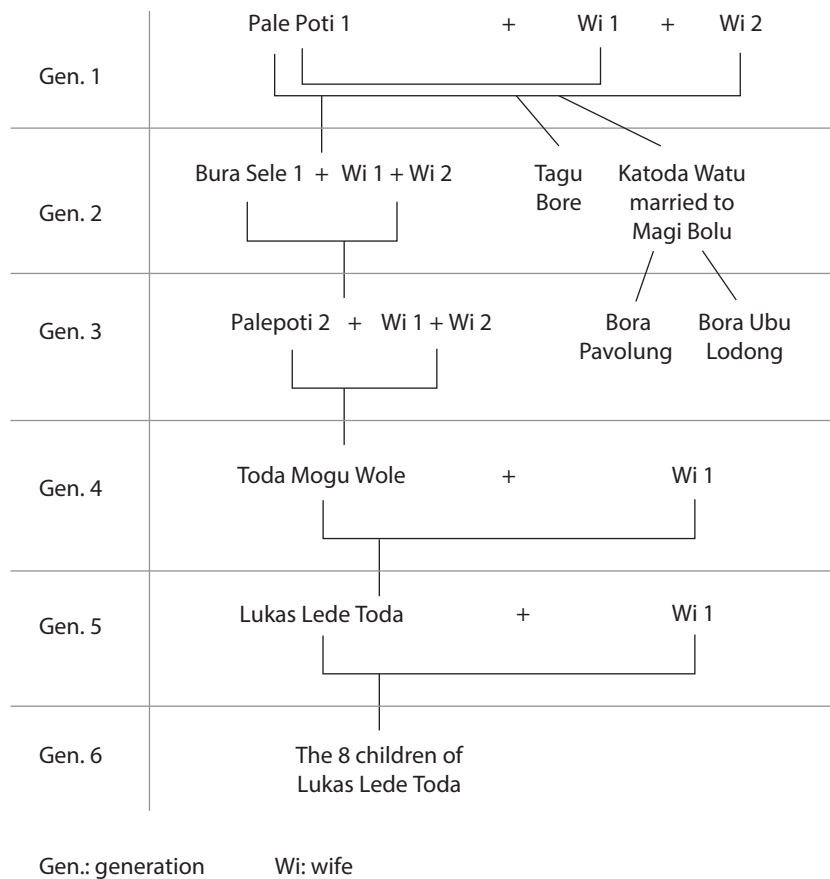


Fig. 11. Simplified genealogy of the founding lineage of the village of Wesaluri (Lolli) (Graphics: C. Jeunesse).

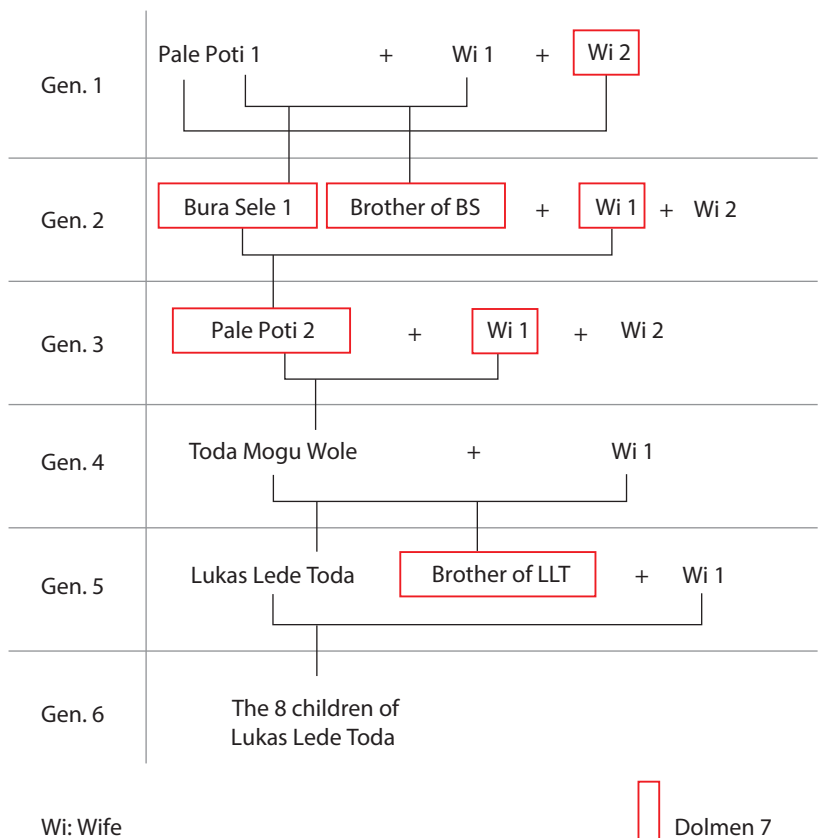


Fig. 12. Biography of Dolmen 7 from Wesaluri (Lolli) (Graphics: C. Jeunesse).

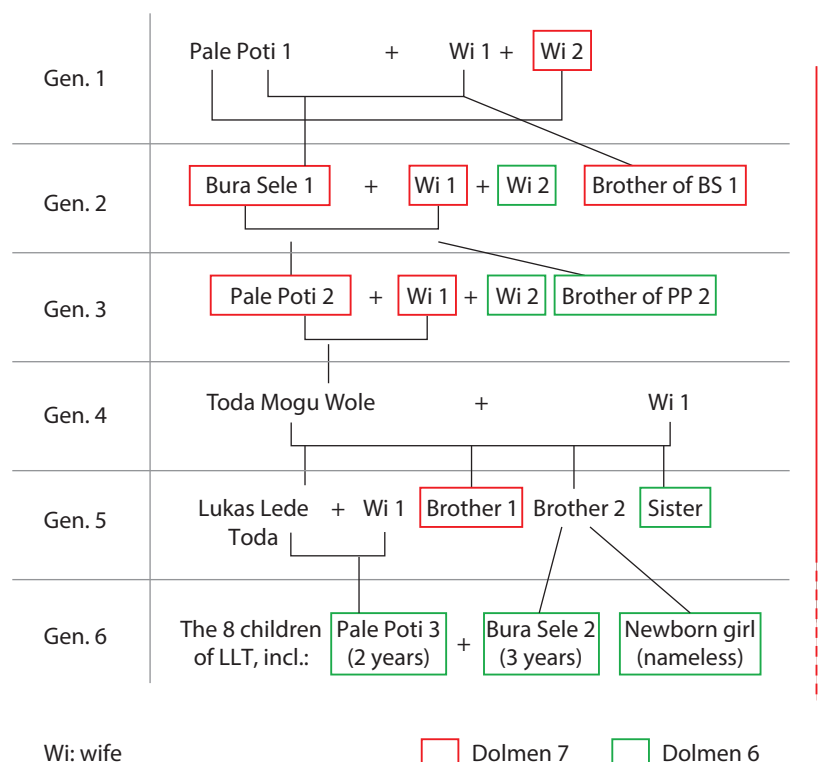


Fig. 13. Biographies of Dolmens 6 and 7 from Wesaluri (Lolli) (Graphics: C. Jeunesse).

Results

As mentioned in the introduction, we focus on three aspects in this paper: 1) the simultaneous use of several dolmens by the same reference group (i.e. the social unit that uses a dolmen or a group of dolmens, for Sumba the lineage), 2) the significance of the hiatuses that are regularly observed in dolmen biographies, and 3) the study of kinship ties within funerary assemblages.

Simultaneous use of several dolmens by one lineage

We have already mentioned an example where two different dolmens are used simultaneously by the same reference group (Fig. 13). Two is actually a minimum. At Wesaluri, for example, the most important dolmen pool, that of the founding lineage centred on house B, consists of six distinct dolmens, four of which are located in front of the house (Dolmens 3, 5, 6 and 7) and two in the rice field area. The oldest one, Dolmen 7 (Fig. 12), was built on the occasion of the death of the second wife of the village founder (see above). During generations 2 and 3, the heads of lineages and their respective first wives were deposited there. After a jump of one generation, finally, the body of a brother of the current lineage chief, Lukas Lede Toda, was buried in the dolmen. Because it contains the remains of two heads of lineage and is the oldest funerary monument in the village, it is the most important dolmen in the pool. This biography and its correlation with the genealogy of the lineage raises three questions to which we will return: Where are the founder of the lineage (and of the village) and his first wife buried? Where is the second wife of his immediate successor buried? Why is there a hiatus between generations 3 and 5?

The incorporation of data relating to Dolmen 6 (Fig. 13), located in the immediate vicinity, makes it possible to answer the second of these questions. Dolmen 6 was indeed built to house the remains of the second wife of Bura

Sele; it was subsequently used to bury the second wife of the third generation head of the lineage as well as members of the collateral branches of the lineage. A third tomb (Dolmen 3) was built during the first generation to house a brother of the chief of lineage (Fig. 14). At one time, the lineage used five dolmens simultaneously. The majority of the individuals buried in one of the dolmens lived in the ancestors' house (house B), but the dolmens also contain individuals from other houses belonging to the same lineage, for example, the second wife of the founder's son, for whom house "R" was built, located at the other end of the village (Fig. 10).

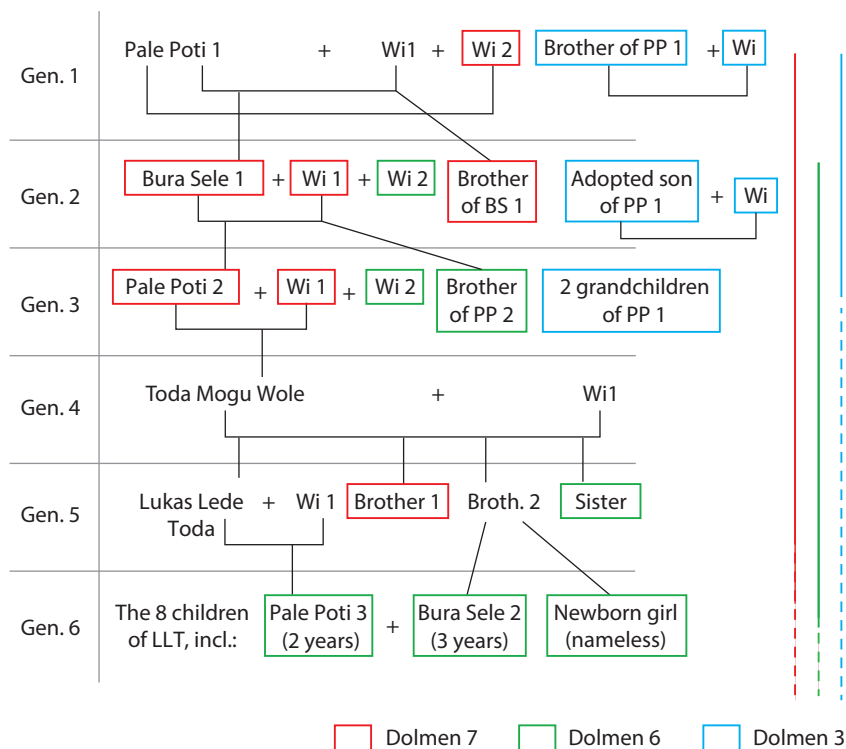


Fig. 14. Biographies of Dolmens 3, 6 and 7 from Wesaluri (Lolli) (Graphics: C. Jeunesse).

The reasons why lineages use several dolmens are in any case due to constraints, especially social ones, for which there is no reason to consider them *a priori* as specific to the recent or sub-recent Southeast Asian tribes and which can therefore help us in the interpretation of prehistoric dolmen clusters. We have identified four rules which govern the construction and occupation of dolmens within one pool and the sequence of burials within and between dolmens:

- 1) The first is the rule that two wives of the same husband should not be buried in the same monument.
- 2) The second is a matter of individual initiative and preferences: An individual who is prosperous enough to gather the considerable resources that are required for the construction may, in order to increase his prestige, choose to build a new dolmen even though several others are already available within his lineage.
- 3) The third stems from alliance strategies and, again, from social competition and prestige games: It is not uncommon for an individual to decide to build a new dolmen not in front of the origin house of his lineage, but in front of the origin house of his wife's lineage. As a "wife giver", this lineage automatically is in a position of symbolic and ritual superiority over the "wife taker" lineage. If, in addition, the "wife giver" lineage is both powerful and prosperous, it can be socially advantageous for this

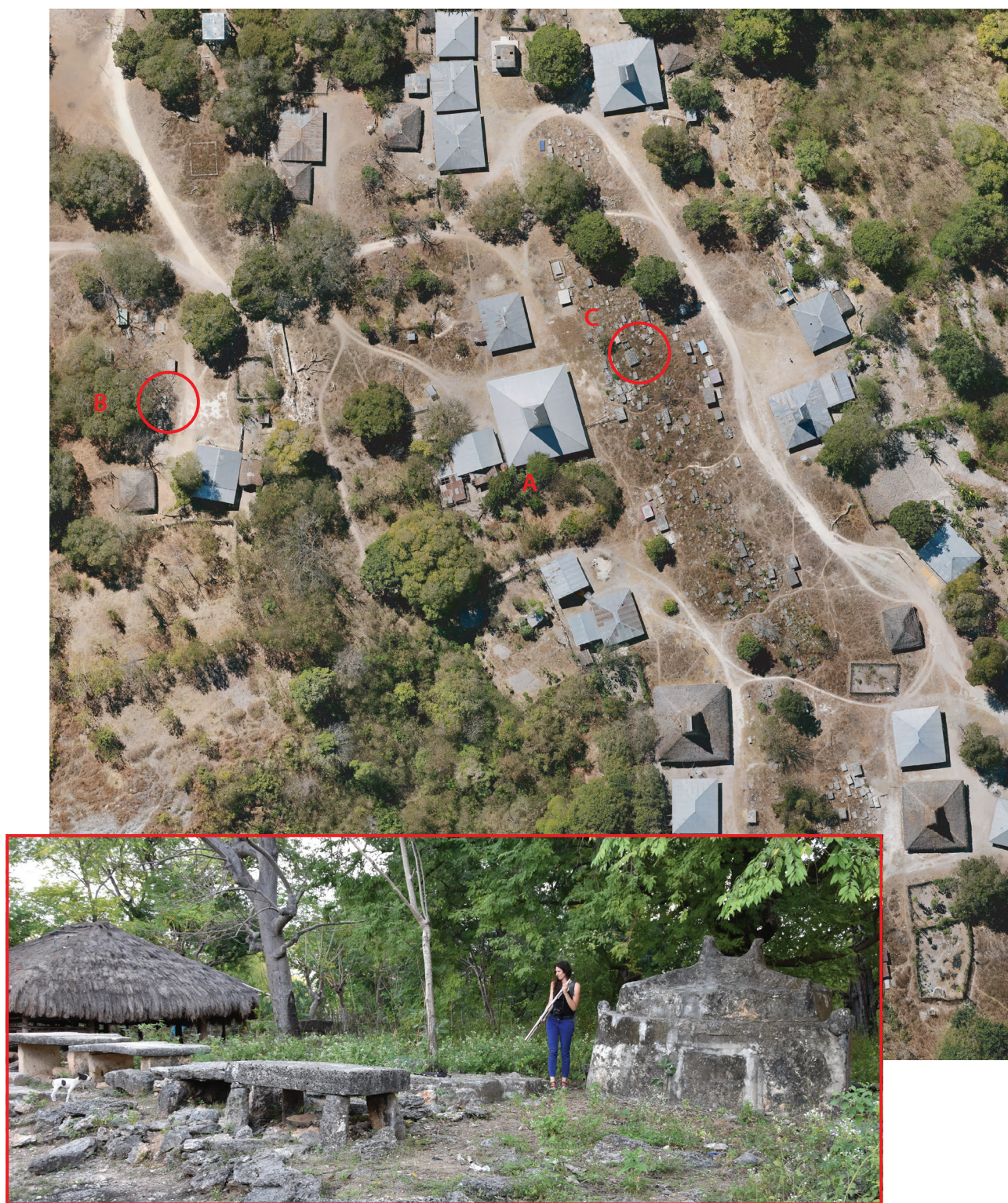
individual to build his dolmen in the “shadow” of this prestige. This is a singular case of “funerary matrilocality” in an otherwise patrilocal society. This “outsourced” dolmen is, at least initially, part of the pool of his lineage’s sponsor, even if it is located within a topographical group of monuments belonging to another lineage. One of the consequences of this configuration is that, singularly, one will find the remains of a married sister of one or more dead buried in the other dolmens of the group, a situation theoretically impossible within a purely patrilocal system.

- 4) In some ethnic groups of Sumba (but not among the Lolli), there is also what ethnologists have called the “generation jump” rule, which prohibits burying the adult members of two successive generations of the same family together, to avoid potential posthumous incestuous promiscuity. We will illustrate this rule on the basis of an example we have documented in the Mamboro ethnic group that settled on the north coast of the western half of the island. This group belongs to the group of stratified societies with dominant clan and royal lineage. The house of origin of the royal lineage, the political and ritual centre of the domain, is located in the village of Manuakalada, the capital village of the Mamboro ‘domain’. The stratified system has existed for at least eight generations, but the village is much older, so that its analysis is made more difficult by the superimposition of material remains from the “stratified” period and the “segmentary” period that preceded it. The royal lineage alternately uses two tombs, one located to the east of its house, not far from the veranda, and the other to the west, beyond the drystone wall that surrounds the village (Fig. 15A). Both are dolmens, but contrary to common usage (in Manuakalada as elsewhere on the island), their stone framework is hidden by a thick layer of mortar. The outer tomb is a particularly telling example of the standard configuration of a ‘royal’ cemetery, with the royal tomb in the centre and, on either side and in front, small dolmens and flat tombs covered with a slab that shelter the clients and slaves of the royal family (Fig. 15B). The alternating use of the two tombs, each hosting four royal couples, is a direct effect of the rule of generation jumping. Therefore, this rule necessarily implies the existence of a “pool” of simultaneously used monuments composed of at least two dolmens for each lineage.

Hiatuses in dolmen biographies

The royal tombs of Mamboro also illustrate the issue of hiatuses. This has been an issue with European Neolithic megalithic monuments since the means of dating became sufficiently precise. Previously, it was assumed that the collective tomb was used to house all the deceased of the reference group for a given period of time without interruption.

The case of Sumba sheds light on the potential causes of these gaps. Tomb 7 at Wesaluri has already confronted us with an example of a hiatus. Here, the head of the lineage of generation 4 and his wife are missing (Fig. 12), who could have been expected to comply with the choice of the two previous generations. The decision to be buried elsewhere was made by Toda Mogu Wole himself when his wife died in 2009. His motivation was twofold: Firstly, in accordance with Rule 2 (see above), to show off his prosperity and that of his lineage by building a new dolmen of respectable size and covered by a slab carved in the famous rock extracted from the Tarimbang quarry. This is located 65 km linear distance to the east, and the capstone cost him two buffaloes and three million Rupees. Secondly, to pay tribute to his wife, who was buried in 2010, to whom he had an attachment that went far beyond social conventions. He also decided, for this intimate reason, that the remains of his wife and himself would be left alone in this



dolmen, the content of which is therefore destined to remain limited to two individuals of the same generation. As Toda Mogu was a renowned traditional priest and particularly attached to the preservation of traditions, there is no reason to attribute this behaviour to any intrusion of modernity in funeral customs.

The two “extra-muros” tombs of House B in Wesaluri have already been mentioned. They are located in the middle of the rice fields, about 400 m from the house. Although they were built for two brothers belonging to a

Fig. 15. Royal village of Manuakalada (Mamboro). The overview shows the locations of the royal house (A) and the two royal tombs (B and C). Below: view of tomb B, a dolmen covered with a cement screed last restored in 1957 according to a traditional recipe. The last burial was in 1998 (Photos: F. Monna [above]; C. Jeunesse [below]).

lateral branch of the lineage (two grandsons of the founder), who are buried there with their wives, they are nevertheless the most spectacular among the six dolmens controlled by the lineage (Fig. 16). They illustrate the determination of members excluded from the succession to the position of head of the lineage to underline their independence (through the choice of the place) and, above all, their material prosperity through the construction of monuments that appear, in the context of West Sumba's societies with a democratic ethos, as particularly ostentatious³. The memorable celebrations, with the slaughter of a large number of buffaloes, which sanctioned their construction, gave the two dolmens a special status within the hierarchy of dolmens, each of which is given a name and has its own spirit. Although there is no prohibition against it, they have not been used since. The ongoing hiatus of two generations can be explained here, as attested by the living members of the lineage, by the status of the monuments: Their reopening to bury a new deceased person would require the prior sacrifice, for the benefit of the spirit of the dolmen, of an expensive buffalo of superior category with very long horns, an expense that would be added to those, already very high, directly related to the funeral. The spatial distance from the ancestors' home has, in all likelihood, also played a role in this potentially temporary "decommissioning".

Fig. 16. The two "extramural" tombs of the main lineage of the village of Weshaluri (in the background, on the wooded hill) in Lolli country. The small erected stones are used to raise the cover slab, the only way to access the burial chamber (Photo: C. Jeunesse).



Over the course of its history, the lineage has scattered outside the village. Some of the non-heir sons settled in other villages – especially, as noted above, those of wife-giver lineages – or established new settlements. Some of them have 'returned to the village' to be buried in the dolmens erected in front of house B; others, such as one of the elder brothers of Lukas Lede Toda, the current head of the lineage, are buried in dolmens erected in front of the house they built outside of the village. Like that of the

3 Paradoxically, it is also this ethos of prohibiting any discrimination between free adult men that makes this small manifestation of pride possible.

clan, the non-territorial nature of the lineage thus results in a geographical dispersion of the dead – and therefore of the dolmens related to the lineage – that goes far beyond the limits of the village.

We still have to answer the last of the three questions posed above relating to the absence, in the dolmens managed by the lineage, of the founder of the village and builder of the origin house and his first wife. It should be remembered that house B was, as well as dolmen 7, built for the benefit of the second wife of the founder. Since the founder's main residence remained the house he shared with his first wife, it is therefore in his village of origin, in front of his parents' house, that we should expect to find his burial place. This is, moreover, what our main informant spontaneously told us at first. However, further investigation revealed to us that his grave was actually located near another village, probably the village of origin of his first wife. What is important for our purposes is that a topographical link between a village and the grave of its founder is anything but obligatory on Sumba.

Kin relationships within funerary assemblages

The study of kinship ties in the dolmens of Wesaluri remains largely to be done. In this last part, we limit ourselves to a few general remarks intended to illustrate the complexity of the configurations encountered and the importance of the ethnoarchaeological model we try to elaborate within a more general reflection on the understanding of collective practice in the megalithic cultures of the European Neolithic, with a particular emphasis on the tricky interpretation of the results of palaeogenomic analyses. In a context where the identity of the deceased and their kinship ties are known, the ultimate objective will be to construct reference models that can be compared with the results of studies devoted to the Neolithic. For that, we focus on the limits of the current level of resolution of palaeogenomics, that is: mainly first and second degree relationships, although the most recent research is more optimistic and suggests the possibility of going beyond the second degree for well preserved samples (Monroy Kuhn et al. 2018; Orlando et al. 2021; Vai et al. 2020).

In the case of the pool managed by the founding lineage of Wesaluri, there are relationships between dolmens of first degree – father – child, mother – child, brothers and sisters, the latter only when they died before marriage which forces them to leave the lineage – and of second degree – grandparents–grandchildren, uncle/aunt–nephew/niece, half-brothers. These ties are preferentially male, the girls' fate being to marry outside the clan and be buried with their husbands. A father may, however, be buried with his daughter or a brother with his sister if she died before marriage or, as attested in Wesaluri, if she returned to her clan of origin and thus to her biological family after a divorce. The latter case is, however, rare because of the social and moral disapproval of divorce, reinforced by the practical problems generated by the restitution of the bride price that a breach of the matrimonial "contract" necessarily entails.

The simplest way to illustrate the complexity of kin relationships is a concrete example. For that, we focus on the woman for whom Wesaluri Dolmen 7 was built, in other words the second wife of the founder of the lineage (Fig. 17). This woman (indiv. A) necessarily comes from a clan that is not her husband's clan. Since none of the men in the dolmen in which she was inhumated descended from her in direct lineage, one would be led to think that she does not have any kin connection with any member of the collective grave. The matter is not so simple, however, because of the Lolli practice of preferential marriage with the matrilineal cross-cousin (daughter of the mother's brother, or MBD). If such a marriage is repeated in each generation, we may find a configuration where A is an aunt (second degree link)

of D but also, in the case that A is the sister of the chief's first wife, of B and C. According to the same logic, F could be one of her great-nieces. On the one hand, there are other possible configurations and, on the other, preferential marriage is by definition not compulsory. In fact, in the absence of a real cross-cousin available in the mother's lineage, one often either chooses a classificatory cross-cousin or looks for a spouse in another lineage, belonging or not to the mother's clan. Lineages can indeed have several matrimonial "wife-giver" partners. This is particularly the case for the most powerful lineages, for whom the demand for alliance through marriage is the strongest.

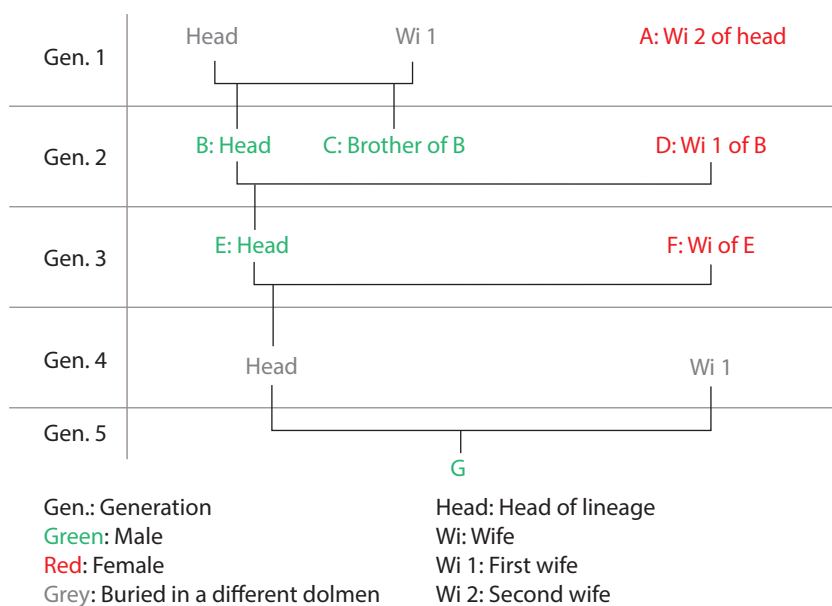


Fig. 17. Simplified biography of Dolmen 7 at Wesaluri (Lolli) (Graphics: C. Jeunesse).

Individual C of Dolmen 6 (Fig. 18), the second wife of the head of the lineage of generation 3, is in the same situation. The difficulty is compounded by the fact that the partner lineage is not always the same from one generation to the next, with the result that an assemblage comprised of three distinct generations of lineage heads and their respective wives could, at the extreme, deliver genetic material from four distinct clans: the one of the three men, on the one hand, and the three clans of each of their wives on the other. The fact that the men may each have other wives buried in one or more other dolmens makes things even more complex. The standard pattern, illustrated in the cases presented, is that the husband and his first wife are buried in one dolmen, and the second wife in a different dolmen. A possible practice of polygamy in an archaeological context that follows the pattern illustrated by the Lolli practices therefore has more impact at the pool scale than at the dolmen scale.

Another factor that may disrupt the conventional pattern of regular transfers of women with one or a limited number of "wife-giver" lineages is the practice of adoption. This may concern an individual or, a possibility rarely highlighted in the ethnographic literature, a group. Individual adoption generally involves male individuals who are integrated into the lineage to compensate for the absence of a male heir. Male heirs will be sought within the lineage or, if necessary, outside in another lineage of the clan. This could be either the son of a brother – the most frequent case – or a grandson, a case attested in Wesaluri. Two successive chiefs of lineage may therefore be linked by second-degree ties (uncle–nephew or grandfather–grandson). It also happens that, for the same reasons, a son-in-law is adopted, who will then become part of the adopter lineage and clan. The transmission of

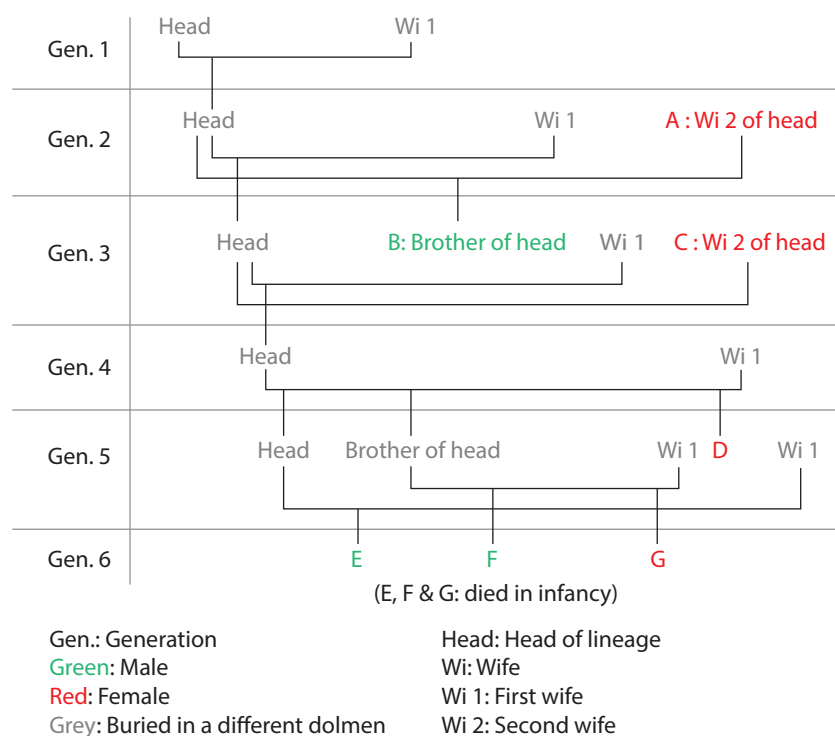


Fig. 18. Simplified biography of Dolmen 6 at Wesaluri (Lolli) (Graphics: C. Jeunesse).

the office of head of lineage will then take place between two individuals whose genetic links are very distant – through repeated alliances between their respective lineages – and thus probably undetectable or at least impossible to interpret accurately by current palaeogenomic methods.

The village of Wesaluri also provided a good example of group adoption. The members of the household of house J, located “across the street” from house B (Fig. 8) on a space that is now bare, were originally members of the Wejewu ethnic group, whose territory borders that of the Lolli to the west and north west. They were welcomed by Bura Sele, the second head of the founding lineage in order of succession, who allocated them a place within the village and a plot of cultivable land on condition that they joined his lineage through an adoption procedure. The persons concerned then simultaneously lost their ethnic and clan identities, a “sacrifice” necessary to obtain the right to settle in Lolli territory and, above all, to ensure their reproduction by entering the sphere of matrimonial exchanges specific to this ethnic group. As a result, men of this bloodline, belonging to another gene pool, are found in the tombs of the main lineage and women in the tombs of its partner lineages, i.e. the “wife-taker” lineages.

In summary, the dolmens belonging to the pool managed by the founding lineage of the Wesaluri village thus include: male adults from the lineage, male and female children from the lineage (the case of an adult woman returning after divorce was recorded in another lineage of the village), women from the three “wife-giver” lineages of as many different clans and individuals from the adopted Wejewu household. In the future, “repatriated” women and adopted males from other lineages of the same clan or from the “wife-taker” lineages in the case of the adoption of a son-in-law could theoretically be added. The large number of factors involved explains the existence of very different biographical profiles from one dolmen to the other, even if they belong to the same pool.

Conclusion

This system of pools of dolmens used simultaneously by the same reference group runs contrary to the scheme tacitly governing research on European Neolithic collective tombs. There, the different dolmens of the same complex presumed to belong to the same reference population are usually, but often implicitly considered as succeeding each other. Thus, the construction of a new dolmen is thought to be the consequence of the “decommissioning” of the “active” dolmen. Within this paradigm, in an archaeological context, two dolmens used simultaneously – if we have the means to suggest this by archaeological arguments, which is another matter – will automatically be attributed to two different reference groups. The pool system on Sumba obviously does not allow us to simply conclude that such a system also existed in the European Neolithic. However, it makes us attentive to a possibility that so far has been rarely (if ever) taken into account by the specialists of this period.

As a consequence of the use of “pools” of tombs and the existence of hiatuses, the analysis of an isolated dolmen on Sumba with archaeological methods would inevitably lead to an incomplete series. In one dolmen, we will never find all the deceased of the reference group (in our case the lineage) from a given time span. The reconstitution of a complete funerary population will therefore require all the dolmens of the pool, including possible “extra-muros” monuments and one or more dolmens built in other villages. The pool model thereby provides a convenient explanation for the “gaps” observed in Neolithic dolmens (Whittle 2018, 125), compared to the standard scheme of a dolmen used by a household that would bury all its members there. The pool model can also explain the inter-dolmen connections between monuments on the same site or on nearby sites, such as the one recently observed in a palaeogenomic study between two Irish dolmens (Sánchez-Quinto et al. 2019, 4). It can also provide an interpretation of “anomalies”, such as dolmens with a significant sex imbalance (ibid. 2), which are difficult to understand within more traditional interpretative scenarios.

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