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The Legend of *Lamòling*: Unwritten Memories and Diachronic Toponymy through the Lens of an Abui Myth

Abstract: This paper reconstructs a number of Abui (Papuan) place names and micro-toponyms from the coastal area of Alor (South-East Indonesia) through the analysis of a legend centered on two gods from the Abui traditional religion, ending with the replacement of the first deity with the second one. The myth appears as diachronically ‘multi-layered’, from ancestral times to the arrival of Christianity in Alor, with the consequent identification of the ‘bad’ (or ‘weaker’) god as a demon and, then, as the devil. The story allows the etymological explanation of the meaning of around eight place names (toponyms and micro-toponyms), drawing a map of that ‘mythological’ space and landscape that is real and still attested, existing, known, and recognized by Abui native-speakers. The etymological and historical / diachronic analysis of place names, in this context, is fruitful not only in the reconstruction of their origins and in map-tracking, but it also involves an anthropological study of cultural aspects of oral tradition in the Abui religion. The story documented in this paper is considered true and not a legend by the Abui people and all the place names in this story known and accepted by the Abui people according to the parts they play in the legend. These place names and micro-toponyms, therefore, have a relevance that goes beyond their etymological reconstruction, allowing important insights in the fields of anthropology and history of culture and a close association between diachronic toponomastics and anthropological linguistics.

Key Words: Coastal Abui Place Names; Coastal Micro-Toponomastics in Alor; *Lamòling*; Toponyms in Oral Legends and Myths; Diachronic Toponomastics, Anthropological Linguistics

1. Introduction

This paper presents a preliminary reconstruction of an original Abui oral myth, the *Lamòling* legend, in which the narrative plot is inextricably linked to place names and micro-toponyms really attested and still existing in the Abui territory on the island of Alor (South-East Indonesia) shown in Figure 1.

The story shows different diachronic ‘layers’, requiring a ‘stratigraphic’ analysis of the mythical tale. In the presumably most ancient version of the legend, *Lamòling* appears as a Dionysiac and Promethean deity, able to be the closest god for the humans and, at the same time, a trickster and a terrible and instinctual punisher (Otto 1933; Kerényi 1976; Détienne 1986, 1998; Kott 1987) conversely, in the more recent versions, elaborated after the arrival of the Portuguese and Dutch missionaries in Alor and the introduction of Christianity on the island, *Lamòling* is represented as the fierce enemy of (the Christian) God, *Lahatàla*: the devil. It is not a coincidence that, nowadays, in the Abui language, the generic (and general) Abui name for ‘God’ (the Christian God) is *Lahatàla* (derived from the legend and passed to indicate not a ‘spiritual god’, but the ‘one and true God’). This remark completes the path of the ‘stratigraphy’ of the *Lamòling* story, with the identification of the ‘other God’, *Lahatàla*, with God, the ‘one and true God’ of Christianity. Before Christianity, the dichotomy between *Lamòling* and *Lahatàla* could have been comparable with the one between two ancient Greek

1 deities, *Dionysus* and *Apollo*. With the ‘arrival’ of Christianity, they became, instead, (the
2 Christian) God and the devil. It is useful here to point out that in the fact the name *Lahatàla* is
3 derived from the name of the Muslim God, *Allah*. This should be due, as will be discussed
4 later, to cultural influences from a Muslim community living in the South-Western territories of
5 Alor, who also spoke Arabic and were able to read the *Koran* in Arabic. The reference to *Allah*
6 is not directly linked to the Muslim religion, in this context, but, of course, to the fact that *Allah*
7 is another ‘one and only’ god, representing a monotheistic religion (the religion of *Lahatàla*),
8 against the animistic and polytheistic religion of *Lamòling* and his servants (and also the
9 religion characterized by the dichotomy *Lamòling* - *Lahatàla*).

10 The local explanation for the name of *Lamòling* (presumably very ancient and
11 indigenous) has, as highlighted above, shown some semantic changes over time. From ‘god’
12 (probably the original or the more important god of the Abui people in the ancient Abui religion)
13 to ‘demon’ – in the unequal dichotomy with *Lahatàla*, the ‘other spiritual god’ –, to ‘devil’, with
14 the identification with the most relevant enemy of the God of Christianity and with the parallel
15 assumption of *Lahatàla* (the ‘other spiritual god’) as the ‘only and true Christian God’.

16 The Abui nowadays believe that the *Lamòling* story is a true story and a historical
17 event that happened just before the arrival of the Portuguese and Dutch colonizers (and, with
18 them, the missionaries and Christianity). According to them, *Lamòling* is real and still exists,
19 living in the neighbouring region of *Pakulàng Hièng*.

20 The aim of this paper is to offer a basic source for further investigations on this
21 unpublished myth, especially under a cultural-anthropological and comparative religion focus.

22 The legend reconstructed in this paper has never been collected and transcribed
23 before, being an oral tale passed down generation-by-generation among the Abui people. It is
24 part of the Abui cultural heritage of traditional stories and myths witnessing the oral
25 transmission of the identity and ‘micro-history’ of that community over centuries.

26 The aim of the present paper, therefore, is also to safeguard this really significant
27 (and endangered) part of the Abui tradition and oral culture.

28 Abui (ISO 639-3: abz; Glottolog: abui1241) is a Papuan language (Trans-New Guinea
29 family, Alor-Pantar sub-family) spoken approximately by 17,000 speakers in the central part of
30 Alor, South-East Indonesia, Timor area (Author 2007; Klamer 2014). The native name of the
31 language is *Abui tangà*, literally meaning ‘mountain language’. The Alor-Pantar languages are
32 a family of clearly related Papuan languages spoken on islands of the Alor archipelago
33 (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Map of the distribution of the Alor-Pantar languages of the Alor archipelago, South-East Indonesia, Timor area (Adapted from Schapper and Huber 2012, p.372)

This oral myth is quite significant since it includes a relevant part of the Abui coastal toponymy and micro-toponomastics of Alor and because of the elements of the religious identity of the Abui people.

This report on this traditional oral story analyzes the Abui legend:

- in diachrony, with a focus on the different versions / layers of the mythical tale;
- in language description, with a focus on the Abui language and culture.

2. Hermeneutic Approach

This paper is configured as a preliminary reconstruction of the *Lamòling* myth, which gives an explanation of a part of the Abui toponymy and micro-toponomastics and some insights into the social and religious relations among the Papuan people in Alor.

Moreover, at the anthropological-linguistic level, it is possible to sketch a 'stratigraphy' of the myth highlighting different diachronic stages in the composition process of the Abui story, from an animistic and, then, polytheistic 'layer' to the change in people's mentality due to the arrival of Christianity in Indonesia and, specifically, to Alor.

The analysis of this Abui myth allows, at the historical-linguistic level, the collection and etymological reconstruction of place names and micro-toponyms still attested in Alor and known by the indigenous inhabitants. It is impossible to explain the etymology of those toponyms without the story, since the traditional tale is the etymological foundation of their ancestral meaning, connected with the remote cultural identity of the Abui people and with their 'History / Memory of the Soul' (the 'history' they 'feel' as true and belonging to them, which is not the real evenemential history, but the 'meta-history' depicted by their traditional myths and legends) (Author 2011).

The *Lamòling* story is still believed, by the Abui people, to be (their) real history and its plot has unconsciously merged, over centuries, different diachronic stages in order to

1 become a 'consistent' and 'coherent' tale explaining the genesis of important Abui villages,
2 the meaning of specific Abui traditions, and the change in the religion of the Abui community
3 with the passage from animistic and, then, polytheistic rituals to Christianity.

4 The *Lamòling* story represents, therefore, what we could call 'meta-history' before –
5 or, better, besides – the properly called History, depicted through Abui culture and traditions.
6 Macro-history gets its 'Abui interpretation' meeting the 'micro-history' of a little Papuan
7 community in Alor, generating a foundation myth at the basis of Abui cultural identity.

8 Schematically, it is possible to highlight some significant features that appear in the
9 *Lamòling* story:

- 10 • it consistently links complex diachronic levels and chronological stages in the making
11 of the plot, to make it coherent within itself;
- 12 • it developed diachronically according to different cultural systems and influences (from
13 original Papuan traditions to a standardized Christian 'frame'), merged and
14 chronologically 'leveled';
- 15 • it is characterized by the presence of real Abui place names and micro-toponyms still
16 existing, attested, known, and shared by the local people in Alor, founding their
17 etymology (Author et al. 2015) and establishing the origins of social and religious
18 relations among the Abui people (for example, through the explanation of atavistic
19 rituals);
- 20 • it allows an investigation of the deep perceptions of their (Abui) own 'micro-history' (or
21 'meta-history'), origins, culture, traditions, and spirituality.

23 3. Stratigraphy of the Abui Religion and Micro-Toponymy

24 The *Lamòling* myth is all 'played' on the dichotomy opposing the ancient, primordial
25 (and probably 'aboriginal' / 'epichoric') god (trickster and friend of the Abui people) *Lamòling*
26 to the 'new' god (ultimately, the God of Christianity) *Lahatàla*.

27 The original core of the story can be identified, therefore, in the part inherent in
28 *Lamòling* itself and in his friendly relationship with the Abui people. A more recent 'layer' of
29 the tale, conversely, is the one that introduces *Lahatàla* in the context of the Abui community.
30 The two gods 'cohabit' for a while, till the moment in which *Lahatàla* supplants *Lamòling*. This
31 part of the myth represents the introduction and the spread of Christianity among the Abui
32 people, with the arrival of Portuguese and Dutch colonizers and missionaries, starting from
33 the XVI century (see Aritonang and Steenbrink 2008, especially Chapter 4).

34 The two ritual and ceremonial houses still visitable in the center of the Abui *Takpàla*
35 village represent this epochal change in local beliefs. They are called *Kolwât*, 'the dark house',
36 and *Kanurwât*, 'the bright house'. They represent (native speakers are all in agreement on
37 this) two different stages in the Abui 'micro-history' (or 'meta-history'), 1) 'the darkness of the
38 past', when people were 'blind' wandering among animistic and polytheistic cults, and 2) the
39 'light of current times' (from the arrival of Portuguese and Dutch missionaries), with the
40 introduction of Christianity and the revelation of the 'only and true God'.

1 *Kolwàt* shows still, in its decorations, the pattern of a snake, primordial chthonic deity
2 hypostasis of *Lamòling* (who, during a ritual called *karilik hè hàk*, ‘offer to the big old stones’ –
3 that gives the name to the related place, *Karilik* –, joined the Abui people in the ceremony,
4 appearing in the shape of a snake). *Kanurwàt*, conversely, is deeply characterized by a white
5 geometric pattern, representing the ineffable and bright nature of *Lahatàla*, the Christian God
6 in Abui culture. In the Abui language, indeed, the name *Lahatàla* is currently used to indicate
7 the Christian God. However, the name is connected with the Muslim God name, *Allah*, not
8 because of a direct relationship with Islam, but due to the influence on Abui religious
9 language of an Islamic community still attested in the South-Western territory of Alor
10 Rodemeier 2010). Currently, the name *Lahatàla* is not a synonym or local variant for the Abui
11 word for “God”, but it is exactly the word “God” in the Abui ‘contemporary lexicon’, while, in
12 the past, it should have been ‘only’ the name of the deity complementary and, then, opposed
13 to *Lamòling*.

Figure 2. The two Abui ritual and ceremonial houses, *Kolwàt* and *Kanurwàt* (Author)

4. Data Collection

The legend was recorded and reconstructed during fieldwork conducted by the authors in Alor (June 01, 2015 - June 10, 2015). The Abui villages involved in this linguistic investigation are *Takalelàng* and *Takpàla*, located in the Northern coastal area of Alor.

Two Abui native-speakers from *Takalelàng* recounted the story over a period of several recording sessions. At first separately, then the two storytellers subsequently repeated their versions in a common recording session. The two versions (both during the separate sessions and in the common session) substantially converge in the same version.

5. A Story by the Abui People

1 This is the story of the god *Lamòling* and the place names linked to the mythical
2 events leading to his separation from the (Abui) humankind.

3 In *Takpàla* village (located on the hill above the village of *Takalelàng*), there are two
4 ritual and ceremonial houses. They are decorated according to a specific religious Abui
5 iconography. The two houses are the expression of a kind of art, in Abui culture, that could be
6 called 'architectural art'. One is painted with motif developed on a white / whitish background,
7 the other one is dark, with black as a predominant chromatic nuance. According to the native-
8 speakers, the 'black house' represents the darkness derived from the absence of Christianity
9 ('the lack of the light of a right belief'), which to them is now the 'true religion'. The 'whitish'
10 house is the architectural metaphor of the progress in history of humankind and of the light
11 brought to the Abui people by the 'new religion'.

12 The two houses themselves define and symbolically 'substantiate' two different
13 places (intended as two 'metaphorical spatial areas', since they are very close to each other)
14 and have two different names, *Kolwàt*, the 'dark' one (*kolwàt* means 'dark', in Abui), and
15 *Kanurwàt*, the 'white' one (*kanurwàt* means 'now', 'nowadays', in Abui). The names highlight
16 the perception, by the Abui people, of the two houses as two (ideally) different places, even if
17 they are just a few meters distant from each other, symbolizing the development and the
18 evolution of Abui history ('micro-history' or 'meta-history'). They indicate, indeed, two different
19 stages in the Abui 'mythical chronology', representing the passage from a specific ('dark') 'era'
20 of (Abui) humankind to another ('bright') one.

21 The Abui interpretation of the 'whitish house' metaphorical meaning is *ex post facto*,
22 at least partially, since native-speakers affirm it already existed (as well as the 'black house')
23 before the arrival of Christianity in Alor. Nevertheless, this is not a 'non-sense' or an
24 anachronism, since the 'light' symbolized by the 'white house' indicated, originally, the
25 'liberation' of the Abui people from the 'friendship' of / with a demon, *Lamòling* and, therefore,
26 the passage to a 'less dark' religion and, then, to the 'true religion'. *Lamòling* was a god. He
27 became a demon.

28 The two houses were (and, sometimes, are still) the 'theatre' of a specific ritual. The
29 Abui name of the ceremony is *karilik hè hàk* (shortened to *karilik*), meaning 'offer to the big
30 old stones'. There are three flat stones, in front of them, positioned upright on an altar in front
31 of the two houses. Before the ceremony, the Abui people bring cooked rice to the stones. The
32 rice is placed on a table and offered, symbolically, to the three stones. People attending the
33 ritual are then able to eat the rice. Eating it, according to the Abui belief, they establish a
34 connection with the god. At first sharing the rice was meant to establish a connection with the
35 god *Lamòling*. Later, after the arrival of Christianity in Alor, they offered the rice to *Lahatàla*,
36 intended as the Christian God – opposed to the demon *Lamòling*.

37 The offer to the stones (to the 'god of the stones', *Lamòling* at a first stage, then
38 *Lamòling* and *Lahatàla*, in a second stage, and *Lahatàla* in a final stage) was mainly meant to
39 establish a good relationship with the 'good god' (or with the 'two good gods') and to give
40 people (especially to the 'rice eaters') a good destiny in life. The stones are symbolic
41 'ownership' of the two Abui gods, *Lamòling* and *Lahatàla*. They are located in the *Takpàla*
42 village, but they do not belong to the Abui people. They are 'something extra-territorial'

1 coming directly from the two gods. The 'human owners' (who have a sort of 'usufruct' on them)
2 of the stones are the Abui clans.

3 Abui people nowadays cannot attest to the 'age' of this ritual, or to its 'chronological
4 stages'. However, according to different anthropological parallels, it could be considered very
5 old (Kerényi 1976, 1995; Lévy-Strauss 1979; Kott 1987. The Abui people report that, originally,
6 the ritual was devoted in its entirety only to the demon *Lamòling* and not to the 'good god'
7 *Lahatàla*, for the simple reason that, in that remote stage, *Lamòling* was not a demon, but a
8 'good god'. *Lamòling* would have been, therefore, the 'original lord' of the ritual, according to
9 the story provided by native-speakers, in a time where *Lahatàla* did not exist yet.

10 What is the link between the god (or demon?) *Lamòling* and the Abui people? First of
11 all, the definition "demon", for *Lamòling*, seems inappropriate. *Lamòling*, in the oral story told
12 by speakers, originally appears as a god, *in toto* equivalent to *Lahatàla* and 'more ancient' /
13 primordial. With the development of the Abui traditional religion, over centuries, *Lamòling* has
14 become part of a dichotomy opposing him to *Lahatàla*. Later, with the introduction of
15 Christianity in Alor, he has been compared with the devil of the *Bible* and *Gospels*, not quite
16 the *Satàn* of the *Bible* as that is quite different from the devil of Christian tradition, at least
17 starting from the Middle Ages (see Rudwind 1970; Forsyth 1987).

18 *Lamòling* was, originally, a god comparable to *Dionysus* or to *Prometheus* in ancient
19 Greek mythology or with other figures of 'freedom gods' (and 'tricksters') as, for example, *Loki*
20 in Old Norse tradition and *Kokopelli* in a number of native-American religions (Radin 1956;
21 Miceli 1984). A god linked to nature and to a vision of life favoring freedom against inhibitions
22 and dogmas. An anthropomorphous god friend of humans and very similar and close to them,
23 who is the *prótos euretés* of technological discoveries offered by him to the mortals,
24 introducing them to technology and to arts. As a primordial deity, nevertheless, he is also a
25 terrible and merciless god, instinctual punisher and trickster, being non-human and bringing
26 all the human instincts to the extreme (Meyer 2014).

27 According to the legend reported by Abui speakers, in ancient (mythical) times,
28 *Lamòling* and the Abui people lived together. *Lamòling* liked to live on Earth among humans
29 (he loved them) and to have relationships with them in the 'everyday life'. *Lamòling* danced
30 with them, shared his life with them, was helpful, taught them different arts (for example the
31 architectural technology), and was almost considered as a part of the 'Abui family'.

32 *Lamòling* and the Abui people had a specific ('sacred') place for their meetings,
33 especially for rituals. In those moments, *Lamòling* taught them important secrets for improving
34 their daily life and showed to be always benevolent. The name of the place is the same
35 denomination of the ceremony of 'rice-offer', *Karilik*. This could be the evidence of the fact
36 that the ritual is more ancient than the 'standardized description' by the Abui people and it
37 could be the confirmation of the hypothesis that the ritual and place were originally linked only
38 to *Lamòling*. After the traumatic breaking of their relationship with *Lamòling*, the mortals do
39 not pronounce his name anymore and not even the toponym that still exists and that still
40 survives in the name of the ritual. Abui people know its location, but they do not 'like' to
41 pronounce its name.

1 *Karilik*, as a place, was (and is) a part (external) of the *Takpàla* village. In the time of
2 the *Lamòling* expulsion, the Abui people devastated this area. Metaphorically and
3 symbolically, *Lamòling* had no more a place to meet the (Abui) humans and to live on Earth,
4 and he had to 'escape' in the Kabola territory, not far – in Northern Alor (Figure 1), on the
5 border with the Abui Northern villages – from the Abui area. The Abui people destroyed
6 *Karilik* on purpose, in order to expel *Lamòling* and to delete his memory (*damnatio memoriæ*).

7 Something considered 'unclear' by local people, since it is taboo happened that
8 caused the Abui people to break their relationship with *Lamòling*. According to the speakers
9 this 'something' showed the fierce nature of this ancient god. The Abui people are almost
10 unable to tell what, but it is quite clear that the reason for the cruel act by *Lamòling* was the
11 'introduction', in the Abui traditional religion, of the figure of the 'good god' *Lahatàla*. Before he
12 became complementary to *Lamòling* and, then, opposed to him, *Lahatàla* lived mainly in the
13 sky and, being a metaphysical god ('pure spirit'), did not meet the humans very frequently. He
14 was a good and generous god and appreciated by the people. The 'arrival' of *Lahatàla* was at
15 the origins of *Lamòling*'s jealousy.

16 In order to celebrate the friendship with the two gods, the Abui people organized a
17 party, with dances and food. Both *Lamòling* and *Lahatàla* were present, they shared the food
18 and drinks with the people and they danced with them.

19 *Lamòling* had almost always an anthropomorphous appearance, he was also able to
20 change himself into an animal or into whatever he wanted (he was surrounded by a number
21 of servants, minor deities, who had all his skills, but were characterized by weaker powers, if
22 compared with the god, always following him and his orders). He appeared as a primordial,
23 ancestral, atavistic, and archetypal god, very close to humans. *Lahatàla* was, instead, a 'pure
24 spirit' and a transcendental god, able, in any case, to enter the bodies of people in order to
25 spend time with humans and to talk with them. Probably during the party – or, maybe, before,
26 in a 'private communication' with the Abui people, *Lahatàla* entered the body of a woman,
27 called *Fikàr*, and told the people that *Lamòling* was not a good god and that the relationship
28 they had with him would have to be only temporary (and would have had to be 'terminated').
29 While the new relationship with him (*Lahatàla*) would be eternal, *Lahatàla* being the 'only and
30 true god'. According to *Lahatàla*, *Karilik* would have to become the place for ritual offers
31 exclusively to and for him. The story is vague on how, but *Lamòling* found out what *Lahatàla*
32 had told the Abui people.

33 As it is evident even in a preliminary analysis, there are many elements, in this part of
34 the story (and not only in this part), linked to the *Bible (Old Testament)*, to the symbology of
35 Christianity, and to the introduction of the Christian beliefs in the Abui area and in Alor (for a
36 detailed look at the introduction of Christianity in Indonesia see Schröter 2011).

37 *Lamòling* felt threatened by *Lahatàla* and was offended by the mortals. He
38 understood that the Abui people would follow *Lahatàla* and that his time among the humans
39 was ending. The Abui people were willing to change their religion according to *Lahatàla*'s
40 'instructions', but, well aware of their long and good relationship with *Lamòling*, decided to
41 invite him to the party.

1 *Lamòling* and *Lahatàla*, as mentioned, participated in the party in harmony and
2 friendship with each other and with the humans. After the party, though, a terrible event
3 happened. An Abui child was kidnapped by *Lamòling*, probably through his servants.
4 *Lamòling*, having been offended and abandoned, at least in his perception, was looking for
5 revenge. The Abui people did not realize who had committed this crime and, not expecting
6 anything bad from the ‘friend’ *Lamòling*, started to look for the child.

7 The mortals decided to go to look for the child on the coast. In order to descend from
8 *Takpàla* and *Takalelàng* to the sea, they had to pass through what was at that time a
9 nameless place somewhat down the mountainside. This place was used by *Lamòling* to rest,
10 alone or with the minor deities of his retinue, and to meet with humans in order to celebrate
11 some specific events and their friendship. The Abui people did not find the child. However,
12 coming back up the mountain, they met some of the servants of *Lamòling* who at that time
13 were assuming human appearances. These servants in a very friendly manner invited the
14 Abui to have dinner with them. The menu included meat, but it was a terrible and horrible
15 deception. The ‘meat’ the servants of *Lamòling* offered to the Abui people was the body of the
16 child, dissected in many parts, and, in the center of the table, was the head of the child.

17 The Abui people being mere mortals, surrounded by *Lamòling*’s minor deities, were
18 unable to do anything or to fight against them. They did not eat the meat and simply asked to
19 be able to carry the head and the body parts of the child to the village (*Takpàla*) to bury them
20 (with the excuse of eating them later with potato leaves). They were given the head and the
21 body parts and they took them back to their village.

22 From that moment, the place in which the *Lamòling* servants offered the horrible dinner
23 was called *Lamòling Bèaka* (‘bad *Lamòling*’, ‘*Lamòling* the evil’). Abui people even now are
24 still able to identify the place, located in an intermediate point between the *Takalelàng* village
25 and the sea, in the lower part of *Takpàla* and *Takalelàng* hill.

26 From that day, the Abui people prepared their revenge. They organized a party in
27 *Takpàla* a few days after the macabre ‘meal’ offered by *Lamòling* through his servants.
28 *Lamòling* was invited, with all his servants, who now could be referred to as ‘demons’. The
29 place, according to the speakers, is located not in the center of the village, but in an external
30 area closer to the top of the hill, still belonging, in any case, to the territory of *Takpàla*. The
31 Abui people made *Lamòling* and his demons eat a lot and they danced with them for days,
32 without rest. When *Lamòling* and the demons became tired, the Abui people offered them to
33 rest and to sleep in a house they had prepared for them. Falling asleep, *Lamòling*’s servants,
34 being anthropomorphous, recovered their original appearances of monstrous animals.
35 *Lamòling* was sleeping, maintaining, however, his human appearance. He was in fact
36 pretending to sleep, having perceived through his intuition that the humans were setting a trap.
37 Seeing that all of within the house were sleeping, the Abui people locked the door of the
38 house from the outside and, with *Lamòling* and his servants inside, they burned down the
39 place. All of *Lamòling*’s demons were burned and killed. *Lamòling*, though, changed himself
40 into a pregnant woman and was able to escape by hiding himself among the people in the
41 confusion caused by the fire.

1 According to one version of the story, it was after this event that *Lamòling* ‘escaped’
2 (voluntarily) to the Kabola territory.

3 The place of the Abui people’s vengeance is located, as pointed out above, in the
4 *Takpàla* area, but close to *Lù Melàng* (in Abui *lù* means ‘river’ and *melàng* means ‘village’), an
5 ancient abandoned village further up the mountain (some families in *Takpàla* and *Takalelàng*
6 are originally from *Lù Melàng*). According to a parallel version of the story, *Karilik* is
7 specifically located in the *Takpàla* territory, close to *Lù Melàng*, and when the Abui people
8 indicate the place, they turn themselves in the direction of *Lù Melàng*.

9 *Lamòling* escaped and/or decided to leave the Abui people, who are unable to explain
10 why he decided to retire in the Kabola territory, maybe – they say – because the Kabola
11 people also had a relationship with *Lamòling* or the Kabola territory enabled him to leave the
12 Abui villages without being too far from them (since the Kabola people live in a territory
13 neighboring the Abui area). This might be in memory of their ancient friendship or in order to
14 continue to threaten them. As far as the first explanation, it seems that the Kabola people
15 were also scared of *Lamòling* and they never go (still) in the place to where *Lamòling*
16 ‘escaped’. This would exclude the hypothesis of a ‘friendship’ between *Lamòling* and the
17 Kabola people. The place in which *Lamòling* is said to have ‘retreated’ to is called *Pakulàng*
18 *Hièng* (meaning, non-literally, but extensively, ‘bad place’) and is currently uninhabited (and
19 unanimously considered a ‘sinister place’). Both Abui and Kabola people think that *Lamòling*
20 still lives there. The Kabola people are not considered ‘bad’ by the Abui people, even if their
21 territory ‘hosts’ *Lamòling*. The Abui believe only the place is ‘bad’, and they do not consider
22 the Kabola ‘friends’ of *Lamòling*.

23 From that day the Abui people started to devote the ‘stones ritual’ exclusively to
24 *Lahatàla*.

25 After the ‘arrival’ of Christianity in Alor, the version of the final part of the *Lamòling*
26 story was changed slightly. From that moment, in the Abui people’s perception, *Lamòling* has
27 become no longer a god comparable (or complementary) to *Lahatàla*, but his name became
28 translatable, into English, as ‘devil’ (the devil of the medieval Christian tradition). The
29 dichotomy *Lamòling* - *Lahatàla* is no more represented as the ‘co-existence’ of two – possibly
30 ‘alternative’ – gods, but as the opposition between the Christian God and the devil. According
31 to that ‘revised’ version, *Lamòling* did not decide to go to *Pakulàng Hièng* following his
32 personal choice, but he was hurled there from the sky by *Lahatàla* (in this version already the
33 Christian God), sinking in the rock and remaining imprisoned there. The similarity of this
34 version of the story with the Christian story of *Lucifer* is evident, the most beautiful angel of
35 Heaven, who rebelled against God and was sunk by Him to the bottom of Hell.

36 The figures of *Prometheus* and *Lucifer* become archetypally overlapping in the
37 *Lamòling* character. The sharing of attributes between *Prometheus* and *Lucifer*, indeed, has
38 been already theorized by Raphael Judah Zwi Werblowsky in his celebrated work *Lucifer and*
39 *Prometheus* (published in 1952) (Stroumsa 1987).

40 41 **6. The dichotomy *Lamòling* - *Lahatàla***

As highlighted above, it is possible to establish a clear dichotomy, in the Abui story, between the two gods who act in the tale. This dichotomy represents:

1. The evolution of the *Lamòling* legend. It began from a possible original core focused on the figure of *Lamòling* as a 'Promethean' deity, friend of the mortals, trickster, and deeply connected with humans and their lives. It then came to a moment in time when *Lamòling* had to be necessarily replaced by the new god (the Christian God), spiritual, 'heavenly', and transcendent. This was in fact *Lahatàla*.
2. The passage from an animistic stage to a Christian one. The Abui religion and culture, was historically characterized by animistic and/or polytheistic (if we consider the 'servants' of *Lamòling* as deities) cults. The legend tells of the people's passage to a monotheistic creed, Christianity (emblemized by the figure of *Lahatàla*).
3. The effort, by Abui storytellers and spiritual leaders, to merge the two religious aspects of their history. The story unfolds through the animistic / polytheistic stage and the monotheistic one. The story told by the Abui people merge the two different diachronic layers, the original core on *Lamòling* and the new materials inherent in *Lahatàla*, in a coherent plot, in order to keep the story consistent in itself and to allow the myth to be an effective explanation of the Abui cultural identity and tradition.
4. The historical foundation of a number of local toponyms, with place names that have their denominations from the different parts of the story. The basis of these toponyms are related directly to the actions of the two gods as told in this story. The deep link between the *Lamòling* legend and local place names is especially emblematic in the toponymic dichotomy between the two houses, *Kolwàt*, the 'dark' one, connected with *Lamòling*, and *Kanurwàt*, the 'bright' one, linked to *Lahatàla*.

Lamòling is configurable as an ancient (plausibly aboriginal and epichoric) Abui god, friend of humankind, living with humans, having an anthropomorphous appearance, and supporting the Abui people.

Lamòling existed, in Abui culture, before *Lahatàla*, being a primordial deity and also, potentially (as ancestral deities in different religious traditions all over the world), a trickster and terrible punisher. He became, over time, after the introduction of *Lahatàla* in Abui culture, a demon and, with the 'arrival' of Christianity in Alor, the devil.

Lahatàla is, conversely, a 'younger' god in Abui culture, imagined as a 'pure spirit', good and merciful, able to enter human bodies in order to talk with people. His name, as mentioned, derives from the Muslim God's name, *Allah*, a 'monotheistic god'. He is the opposed god (but originally complementary) to *Lamòling* in the symbolic dichotomy highlighted above. He becomes, over time, the *Lamòling* 'contender' and, with the 'arrival' of Christianity, the 'only and true Christian God'.

Lamòling is an original local deity, god of freedom from inhibitions and dogmas, god of nature, *prótos euretés* of technological discoveries offered by him to the humans, instinctual trickster very skilled in arts. As an 'archetypal' figure, *Lamòling* is comparable, as mentioned, with *Dionysus* and *Prometheus*, *Loki*, and *Kokopelli*, respectively in Ancient Greek, Old Norse, and native-American traditions.

Lahatàla is a less ancient and (at least at a certain stage, after the introduction of Christianity in Alor) non-originally local god symbol of order and spirituality. As an 'archetypal' figure, as mentioned, he is comparable with *Apollo* in Ancient Greek mythology and, in Abui culture, he represents the *gestalt* of the Christian God.

The dichotomy *Lamòling* - *Lahatàla* could be effectively described by the notions of Dionysian and Apollonian, established by Friedrich Nietzsche in his work *The Birth of Tragedy*, published in 1872 (Porter 2000).

7. Summarizing the Stratigraphy of the Myth

As mentioned, the *Lamòling* story shows different diachronic stages, requiring a 'stratigraphy' of the traditional tale.

Analyzing the myth according to a 'cultural archaeology' approach, we can see that in the ancient version of the story, possibly identifiable as its original core, *Lamòling* appears as a Dionysiac deity, presumably the closest god for / to the humans and, at the same time, as a trickster and instinctual punisher. This 'portrait' makes the figure of the god comparable with *Kokopelli* (the native-American trickster, skilled in arts, and hiding various 'dark sides') and with *Dionysus*, the closest gods to the mortals, in Ancient Greek mythology, but the horrible and possibly irrational (since, being a god, he is 'beyond rationality') punisher protagonist of the Euripides' *Bacchae* (Franklin 2007). It is of extraordinary intensity the act in which Agave, driven into a frenzy by *Dionysus*, kills her son, Pentheus, cutting off his head and exposing it on a stick, without being able to see that the young man was not a mountain lion. *Dionysus*, the God of the Irrational, 'accomplishes' his task as a punisher without an apparent proportion between the 'crime' of the unlucky king and the punishment. *Dionysus*, however, is also the compassionate god saving Ariadne when Theseus abandoned her. The unpredictable god feels mercy for the forsaken girl, and makes her his wife, not a simple character among his followers. *Dionysus* is beyond everything that is rational, since Dionysus represents what is before (older than) the rational.

In the more recent versions, the 'Christian' ones, *Lamòling* is represented, conversely, as the fierce enemy of (the Christian) God (*Lahatàla*), and, consequently, as the devil of the medieval Christian tradition (as *Lucifer*).

The 'paths' of the two gods' names can be schematized in this way, according to at least three different diachronic stages in the story's development,

Lahatàla

↓

Originally a pure spiritual and transcendental god living in the sky, communicates with humankind and approaches humans by entering the bodies of people

↓

Good spiritual god opposed (in dichotomy) to the 'demon' *Lamòling*

↓

The 'only and true' God in Christian tradition

According to an anthropological and/or cultural analysis, it is also possible to highlight in this story some mythological archetypes. For instance, the fact that *Lamòling* and his servants offered the dissected parts of the body of the kidnapped child to the Abui people reminds us of the Greek myths of Atreus and Thyestes, Procne and Tereus, Lycaon, and other mythological tales widespread among aboriginal populations in Australia and New Zealand (Kerényi 1958; Jung and Kerényi 2001).

The myth of Atreus and Thyestes tells us that when Atreus learned of his brother's, Thyestes, and his wife's, Aerope, adultery, he killed Thyestes' sons and cooked them. He then tricked Thyestes into eating the flesh of his own sons.

In the story of Procne and Tereus, we read that Procne married Tereus, king of Thrace, and they had a son, Itys. At a later time, Tereus seduced Procne's sister Philomela and, to stop her from telling her sister, cut off her tongue. When Procne found out, she murdered her own son, Itys, and served his flesh for her husband to eat.

In a version of the Lycaon myth, the then king of Arcadia wanted to test if indeed Zeus was omniscient. So he killed and roasted his own son, Nyctimus, and served his flesh to Zeus to see if the god would know what the meat was. An enraged Zeus transformed Lycaon and his offspring into wolves and restored Nyctimus to life.

The 'meal of children' is also a recurrent topic in other Abui legends. Among others, it is possible to mention, as an example, the story of the seven children and the demi-god *Karfehawa*, who planned (unsuccessfully) to eat them (Author 2008).

8. 'Legendary Place Names' in Alor

As highlighted above, some Abui place names derive their direct origins (or, at least, the explanations of their origins and etymologies) from the *Lamòling* story. There are eight (toponyms and micro-toponyms).

The eight place names and micro-toponyms are:

- *Takalelàng*
- *Takpàla*
- *Kolwàt*

- *Kanurwàt*
- *Karilik*
- *Lamòling Bèaka*
- *Lù Melàng*
- *Pakulàng Hièng*.

These place names and micro-toponyms are characterized by the following common features:

- they are Abui place names and micro-toponyms all with etymological explanations derived from the *Lamòling* story;
- they are all real, still existing and attested, known, and recognized by Abui people;
- they are an integral part of the Alor landscape and of the 'ideal map' of the Abui world according to the Abui people and their perception of the territory;
- their stories are shared by all the Abui people (storytellers and audience);
- they are all linked to Abui traditions and culture and are part of the foundation of the Abui identity.

All these toponyms, as discussed above, get their etymological explanation from the *Lamòling* story. Among them, the place name *Lamòling Bèaka* shows to be a more significant one, since:

- it indicates the area of the horrible meal with the child's body, an area that did not yet have a name 'before' the legend and the terrible event;
- the name *Lamòling Bèaka*, indeed, has been given to the place by the Abui people after that brutal dinner (that they believe really happened), in order to link the area to that monstrous act (it means 'Bad Lamòling', 'Lamòling the evil');
- the Abui people still know and recognize the place *Lamòling Bèaka* (even if it is not a village) and are able to indicate its exact position;
- it is located in the *Takpàla* area and on *Takalelàng* hill, lower than the two villages, towards the seashore, and, therefore, it is a very relevant and symbolic place for the two Abui communities;
- the place, as the others highlighted above, derives its name from the *Lamòling* legend. The myth, therefore, is a foundation story not only in relation to Abui culture, but also in the context of Abui toponymy.

9. Conclusions

The *Lamòling* story is relevant not only for its cultural meaning and for the possible diachronic comparison with other mythologies and religions, in a sort of 'cultural archaeology', but also for the presence and description of the places that are the 'theatre' of those legendary events. In particular, as shown above, it is possible to identify all of those places (place names and micro-toponyms), still existing, documented, attested, recognized, and known by local Abui people. This helps in drawing the map of these Abui place names and in

connecting the toponyms with the history of indigenous people, not only the evenemential, 'real' history, but also the 'History and Memory of the Soul' of the Abui people, their deep perception of their own 'micro-history', origins, culture, traditions, and spirituality. Place names and micro-toponyms, according to this interpretation, are connected with the cultural roots of this Papuan population on the island of Alor and are part of the preservation and transmission, by the Abui people, of their stories and identity.

On closing, since it is a very significant fact in Historical Toponomastics, it can be useful to repeat that it is possible to list, in the *Lamòling* story, eight place names and micro-toponyms, all with consistent explanation / etymology for their denominations, coming directly from the legendary tale, place names still existing and attested, that are integral part of the Alor landscape and of the ideal map of the Abui world and traditions 'depicted' in the traditional Abui culture, *Takalelàng*, *Takpàla*, *Kolwàt*, *Kanurwàt*, *Karilik*, *Lamòling Bèaka*, *Lù Melàng*, *Pakulàng Hièng*. These local toponymy and micro-toponomastics have their roots in the most original and ancestral age of the Abui people, producing what we can define as 'meta-history', the history that Abui people feel is theirs and is 'true' before – or, better, besides – the properly called History.

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The Legend of *Lamòling*: Unwritten Memories and Diachronic Toponymy through the Lens of an Abui Myth

Highlights

- an original and unpublished foundation myth from a Papuan (Abui) context;
- 'stratigraphic' analysis of an Abui legend where animistic, polytheistic, and Christian elements diachronically converge;
- the myth gives Abui places their names, establishing local toponymy and micro-toponomastics;
- the etymological explanation of Abui toponyms and micro-toponyms is impossible without knowing (and interpreting) the story;
- Historical Toponomastics and Anthropological Linguistics are combined in the exegesis of this Abui foundation myth.

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