

The Morbid Nexus: Reciprocity and Sorcery in Rural East Java

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For the past few decades, the idea that witchcraft and sorcery are closely linked with the experience of capitalism has proven captivating. Leading international anthropologists, such as the Comaroffs, Geschiere, Ong and Taussig have argued for the modernity of the supernatural. They have demonstrated that, instead of declining in the modern period, beliefs and practices associated with evil spirits and magic are regularly invoked to explain the experience of capitalism. As useful as this approach is, focusing on capitalism's connection with evil spirits and magic does not necessarily imply a break from the classical anthropological accounts of reciprocity. In Banyuwangi, a district of Java, Indonesia, harmful magic is deeply embedded in reciprocity and local relationships as much as in relationships of capitalism. In other words, these classical accounts of intimate ties between harmful magic and reciprocity can be usefully married with the ideas of the modernity of the supernatural.

Keywords: Capitalism, reciprocity, magic, sorcery, witchcraft

The tensions attendant upon this state of antagonistic cooperation are hypertrophied by...emotional inbreeding...The result is a strong tendency toward involvement in a morbid nexus of emotional sensitivities from which there is little escape.

Kluckhohn, *Navaho Witchcraft*.

In the far east of Indonesia's most populous island, Java, is the district of Banyuwangi (Fig. 1). The majority of its 1.4 million inhabitants are from the Osing ethnic group, with large minorities of Javanese and Madurese also residing in the district. Surrounding waters provide Banyuwangi with one of Indonesia's most productive fishing harbours, while its vast stretches of rice paddies have earned Banyuwangi the reputation of a 'rice basket'. However, there is another product for which the district has achieved some notoriety—sorcery.

In 2001–2, I undertook fieldwork in Tegalgaring, one of Banyuwangi's 167 or so villages. Believing that 'sorcerers' lived among them, local people had taken actions against 'sorcerers,' including attacking and even killing them. Aside from numerous non-fatal attacks, seven or so had been killed around the village in the decades prior to my fieldwork. I lived among 'sorcerers,' attackers of 'sorcerers,' and families of victims of these attacks, studying cases of perceived sorcery and recriminations for it. I use quotation marks in the previous sentence, and throughout, not because I wish to question the reality of sorcery, but rather to indicate that while the majority of local

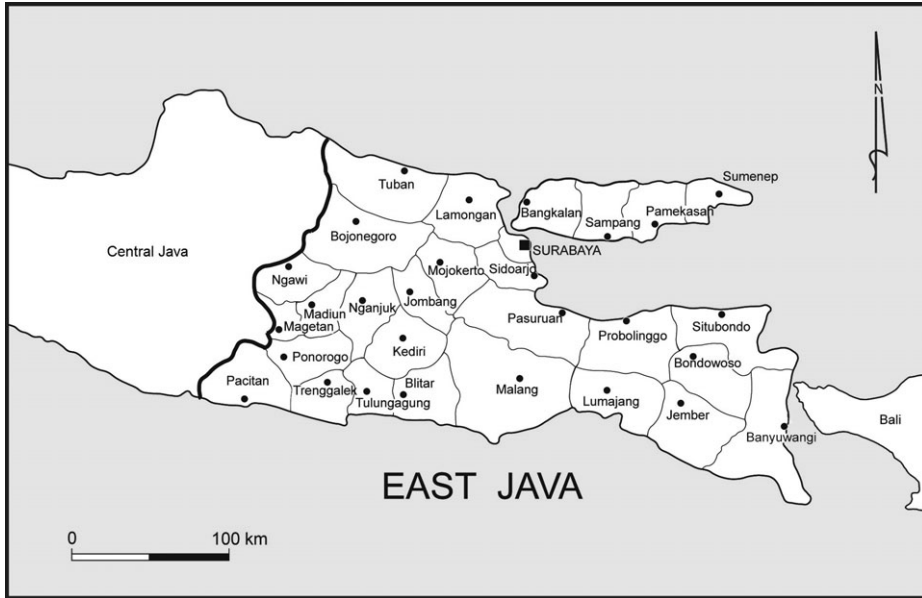


Figure 1 Map of East Java. Banyuwangi District can be found in the far east.

residents might agree with identification, for all intents and purposes, those accused of sorcery do not self-identify.

One non-fatal attack was recalled by Suprpto, a local retired soldier. When I interviewed him at his home in 2001, he recalled that, in the 1980s, he had been posted elsewhere. Upon taking leave and returning to Tegalaring, he discovered that his relative, Kusno, aged 11 years, was the victim of sorcery. According to Kusno's mother, the culprit was Kusno's own uncle, the 'sorcerer' Hadiri. Local residents knew Hadiri was a sorcerer. They had forced him to undertake a 'shrouded oath' around 1960; dressed in a shroud normally used for corpses, he had taken an oath that he would not ensorcell people again. Two decades later, it seemed that he was still up to his old ways. Hadiri had given Kusno lanseh fruit (*duku*). Following this, Kusno became sick with a swollen stomach. On hearing about this, Suprpto went to Kusno's mother's house, and Hadiri was also called there. According to Suprpto, Hadiri admitted his sorcery. (I was not told why Hadiri would have victimised his own nephew—it seemed not to require explanation, but was rather the kind of thing a sorcerer did and would still do). Suprpto was enraged and struck Hadiri. Following this incident, Suprpto returned to duty, Kusno died from his swollen stomach, and Hadiri never returned, eventually dying at a relative's house in another village. In this case, relatives who provide sustenance and sociality to each other in the everyday give-and-take of life also suspect each other in relationships sometimes tinged with violence, both supernatural as well as physical.

Anthropologists are accustomed to thinking of economic relations among kin in small-scale societies as reinforcing good social relations. Sahlins (1972: 193–94)

characterized such relations as ‘generalized reciprocity’—where giving is almost altruistic and ‘the expectation of reciprocation is indefinite’, as for example when a mother gives her young child shoes. For the ‘people of the household, the camp, hamlet, or village’, he postulated, ‘compassion is required, inasmuch as interaction is intense and peaceable solidarity essential’ (Sahlins 1972: 198).

The corollary of this is that capitalist relations are thought to be characterized by greed, self-interest, and ruthless speculation. Indeed, the preeminent anthropological studies of witchcraft in the 1980s and 1990s argued for what could be called the ‘modernity of the supernatural’. This is the idea that spirits, witches, and sorcerers using supernatural malfeasance to their own gain, and the suffering they create, provides an accurate idiom for understanding the machinations of capitalism.

Connecting supernatural beliefs and practices with modernity, globalization, and capitalism, the works of Comaroffs, Geschiere, Ong and, particularly, Taussig are, for good reason, regarded as ‘classics’. In this article, I attempt to take up their challenge of investigating interactions of the global and the local, but I do this without privileging global capitalism as the dominant active force in such engagements. In particular, I demonstrate that, as one anonymous reviewer of this article suggested, alongside connections with capitalism, there are also close links between specific perceived cases of black (or ‘evil’) magic and reciprocity. To do this, I first describe the connections of magic with reciprocity and then with capital. Following this, I discuss capitalist and reciprocal elements in Banyuwangi’s economy. I then argue that sorcery is more closely related to the reciprocal economy. I suggest the suspicion between friends, neighbours, and family might also be connected with other ‘non-economic’ features in ‘small-scale’ aspects of social life. In spite of the importance of globalisation and capitalism, I conclude that local social forces and reciprocity are equally important factors in sorcery suspicions. We need to attend as much to local reciprocity as to global capitalism in understanding sorcery accusations in rural Banyuwangi.

MAGIC AND RECIPROCITY

Harmful magic is closely related to what anthropology takes to be classic reciprocal relationships—*hau* and *Kula*. *Hau* has been made famous through Mauss’s *The Gift*. In this work, Mauss argues that, through gift giving, bonds are created between people. Reciprocating gifts is obligatory. This obligation can be understood in relation to the Māori concept of *hau* provided by the Māori sage, Tamati Ranaipiri. Understood simply, when I receive a gift, I also receive a spirit or *hau* along with it. If I reciprocate the gift, the *hau* will return to the original giver. If I do not reciprocate the gift, the *hau* will stay with me and ‘serious harm might befall me, even death’ (Mauss 1990: 14). Additionally, Firth argued that ‘in the event of a failure to reciprocate. . .the established procedure of retribution. . .was. . .witchcraft’ initiated by the gift giver (Sahlins 1972: 154). However, Sahlins questions Firth’s interpretation, maintaining that the point of *hau* is simply ‘that one man’s gift should not be another man’s capital’

(Sahlins 1972: 160). So all I can maintain here is, to the extent that Mauss and Firth are correct, *hau* seems to be tied up with supernatural harm.

It is also possible that the *Kula*, the famous trade in necklaces and armbands between islands in the Trobriand archipelago, provides an example of the connection between harmful magic and reciprocal economies. Malinowski describes *Kula* as being suffused in magic, which is used by *Kula* participants to get the upper-hand in their trading relationships (Malinowski 1922: 74). The magic of *Kula* includes 'numerous rites and spells, all of which act directly on the mind...of one's partner, and make him soft, unsteady in mind and eager to give *Kula* gifts' (Malinowski 1922: 100). Another spell creates 'a state of agitation' in one's trading partner 'which will prompt him to be generous in the *Kula*' (Malinowski 1922: 203). Finally, there is a spell which 'seduces the mind' of the partner and 'makes him silly, and thus amenable to persuasion' (Malinowski 1922: 361). It is unclear from Malinowski's account, but it seems to follow that one would also expect the sorcery of one's trading partner; Malinowski (1922: 92) writes 'In the olden days...the partner was the main guarantee of safety' though he comments that 'nowadays' a 'fear of foreign sorcery' 'besets' *Kula* participants. As depicted in the film '*Kula: Ring of Power*' (Balson 1992), the necklaces and armbands themselves seem to be associated with powerful and harmful magic, which can injure or kill those without sufficient strength. Granted, *Kula* concerns ritualized transactions between partners who, though having life-long links of trust (and it would seem suspicion), often live in other communities or islands. By contrast, in this article I am concerned with relationships between people who not only live in the same community, but often in neighbouring, if not the same, houses. Nevertheless, the *Kula* does demonstrate the close association of reciprocity and harmful magic.

This association between black magic and reciprocity shows up in more recent research. Rupert Stasch's (2001) research on the Korowai shows how bereaved survivors of a 'witchcraft' victim ambush and kill the alleged witch outright or by transferring the witch to a third group of people who would assemble to execute and eat the witch. The consumers of the witch 'transfer' the witch back by hosting a sago-grub feast and providing brides. The violence of killing and eating the witch transforms the witch's violence into something positive though a form of reciprocal exchange. Having considered how the supernatural connects with the reciprocal economy, I will look at the connection with capitalism.

CAPITALISM, INDETERMINACY, AND WITCHCRAFT

The idea of the modernity of the supernatural, that supernatural beliefs, practices and events have been stimulated, rather than diminished, by modernity, represents a profound insight. In this limited space, I cannot do justice to the variety of such a diverse set of writings. Nor can I do justice to their pioneering arguments, except to point out ways in which they have demonstrated the modernity of the supernatural and its relationship with capital.

As anthropological research has stressed, uncertainty and danger should not be interpreted as antithetical to capitalist investment and 'growth'. Rather risk is a crucial element in finance. There would be no market for certain financial 'products' or 'instruments'—such insurance, futures, options and the like—without risk. More generally, it is as much perceptions of risk as reward which enable the growth of the 'market' (Maurer 2002; Zaloom 2004). Marx (1976: 165) once commented on the mysterious and transcendental nature of commodities, which 'appear as autonomous figures endowed with a life of their own, which enter into relations both with each other and with the human race'. To explain mysteries and vagaries of boom and bust, of risk and reward, surely as miraculous as the commodity itself, it is thus not surprising, as recent writings have demonstrated, that in many societies people have turned to the supernatural for explanation.

Taussig's (1977) 'The Genesis of Capitalism amongst a South American Peasantry' analyses the development of capitalism and the dispossession of land in terms of harmful magic and evil spirits. Colombian peasants understand the functioning of capital as, among other things, the work of the devil. These peasants 'commonly' think that they can baptize money so that it becomes interest-bearing capital. This illicit use of religion and magic explains the 'growth' of capital; money creating money. It contrasts with the idea, which one might find, for instance, in the *New York Times*, that the 'growth' of capital is a natural quality of money in itself. The peasants also think they can increase their labour output through a contract with the devil. If one makes a contract with the devil, the wages one obtains, as a result, are infertile; they do not 'grow'. They must be spent immediately but not on 'productive' capital. The Colombian peasants' occult beliefs thus provide a critical idiom for understanding capitalism. According to Taussig, they see capitalism as it actually is—neither good nor self-evident, but rather unnatural, unreal, supernatural, evil, and immoral. In other words, capital increases through devious and destructive means, so witchcraft, being similarly insidious, provides a perfect way to comprehend the workings of capitalism.

Several other authors have similarly highlighted the modernity of supernatural beliefs. The Comaroffs critique the idea that, as the world modernizes, magic beliefs and ritual decline. Ritual and witchcraft, they assert, are creative, transformative, or subversive. Witchcraft beliefs, in particular, have been strengthened by the introduction of market economies and 'embody all the contradictions of the experience of modernity itself' (Comaroff and Comaroff 1993: 29). Similarly, Geschiere, who coined the concept 'modernity of witchcraft', on which I have based the term 'modernity of the supernatural', also offers a counterpoint to the grand evolutionary theories of increasing secularization. He maintains that people interpret modern processes of change in terms of witchcraft. Far from being 'traditional,' witchcraft discourses 'fuse' the local and the global (Geschiere 1998: 811, 816). Geschiere (2001: 44) also asserts that witchcraft is closely associated with new forms of wealth and modernity. Another researcher, Aihwa Ong has argued that evil spirits contextualize the experience of capitalism for Malay female factory workers. As she evocatively notes, evil spirits hover over Malay women's passage from rural peasant to factory worker. She maintains that

spirit possession is a 'protest against the loss of humanity' as a result of working in a factory (Ong 1987: 8). Thus, as Sutcliffe (2011) argues, magic and occultism have always been deeply related with rationalism and capitalism. In this way, various authors have argued that witchcraft and evil spirits contextualize the experience of capitalism and modernity.

As with all theoretical approaches, we would expect exceptions. One such exception is provided by Eves' analysis of sorcery among the Lelet of New Ireland in Papua New Guinea. There sorcery predated modernity and capitalism, and there is no simple connection between new forms of wealth and general ideas about sorcery. Similarly, in his research in the pilgrimage city of Benares in India, Parry (1989: 65) found an apparent 'inversion of the attitudes of the Cauca peasantry'; namely gifts 'embody evil and danger' whereas commerce and the market 'are generally seen in a much more benevolent light'. Put simply, in these societies, it is reciprocity and not capitalism which is associated with evil, danger, and witchcraft.

At the same time, like good theoretical approaches, the modernity of the supernatural idea has provided us with means to explain phenomena beyond that which the theories were originally invoked to describe. Connecting black magic, capital and (post)modernity helps in comprehending, for example, a 1947 witch finding movement among the Nyanja in Malawi. As described by Marwick:

The general opinion among the Nyanja informants is that witchcraft is on the increase; and they certainly believe that it operates especially in the new situations arising from modern social changes e.g. in quarrels between mother's brothers and sister's sons over ownership of cattle bought with wages earned by the latter at the labour centres [and] the fact that the...poison ordeal...has been suppressed by the Europeans (Marwick 1950: 102–103).

Generally, in contemporary PNG, Forsyth (2006: 16) reports:

a good deal of evidence that the expression of the beliefs has changed as a response to modernity and in particular the new inequalities that have arisen with incorporation into cash and market economies.

Closer to my fieldwork location, the modernity of the supernatural idea also helps explain *tuyul*. As described by Geertz (1960: 17) in *The Religion of Java*, these are spirit familiars who appear like children and can be 'sent out to steal money' for their owners. He refers to three people who allegedly used sorcery to sacrifice 'either a close relative or a friend' to obtain a *tuyul* (Geertz 1960: 21–22). All three appear to have been involved in the capitalist economy—'a wealthy butcher, a very nouveau riche woman textile trader' and a pilgrim [*haji*] 'businessman'.

A story from my own fieldwork also illuminates the connection between magic beliefs and capitalism. Haryadi was an elderly friend of mine who frequently accompanied me when I visited other villages and I often visited him at home. Once, when I asked him about his life, he regaled me with stories of his youth, which must have been the 1960s or 1970s, when as, a fake shaman, he travelled west

duping naïve people through a simple and apparently supernatural get-rich-quick scheme. He had a box in which people placed Rp10,000, and the next day it became Rp20,000. After developing trust, the gullible victim would place larger amounts in the box, leaving my confidence trickster friend to abscond overnight. Here again the ‘modernity of the supernatural’ is useful in interpreting the events my friend recalled. The victims associated the magical properties of the box with an investment return; money ‘growing’ from money. Clearly, the theoretical approach under consideration is useful for interpreting such phenomena and the phenomena I will describe below.

Having temporarily analysed the way the supernatural can connect with both reciprocity and capitalism, it is important to put the two together. The modernity of the supernatural researchers (perhaps with the exception of Taussig) have insisted that the global and the local cannot be neatly delineated and that witchcraft is not about modernity as such (and only modernity). Rather, they have focused on the changes on local relations wrought by capitalism and modernity. Nevertheless, it is important not to lose sight of reciprocity. We can enrich the local nuance especially by focusing on reciprocity and how it interacts with global forces such as capitalism. Indeed, that is maybe what anthropologists can do best. As Stewart and Strathern (2004) have demonstrated, it is useful to focus on both local and macro-historical forces in understanding witchcraft and sorcery. Thus, in the following I will argue that both capitalist and reciprocal elements are important in analysing sorcery in rural Banyuwangi. To make this argument, I first outline the political economy of Banyuwangi.

CAPITALISM AND MODERNITY IN BANYUWANGI

A simple, but misleading, summary of the Banyuwangi’s economic history would hold that the traditional, reciprocal economy modernized and rationalized into a modern capitalist system. For a good part of the twentieth century, a theory of ‘modernization’ had dominated anthropology. Following the work of Weber, Durkheim and Tonnies, the general idea was that, with time, traditional societies with reciprocal economies would rationalize and become modern societies with capitalist economies. However, since the 1980s anthropology has strenuously critiqued this idea. Firstly, it has been argued that beliefs and practices thought of as ‘tradition’ were in fact invented in the modern and globalized period. In other words, it is possible that that much of what is considered to be ‘traditional’ is in fact an invented product of modernization (Hobswam and Ranger 1983; Kahn 2001: 655–656). Secondly, economic modernization in the West was closely linked to its colonization of ‘the rest’. As Wolf (1982) and Mintz (1986) have argued, the West and the ‘rest’ have both ‘modernized’ together. They have contended that a distinction between a modern (Western) world and a traditional (Third/developing) world is meaningless. Thirdly, ‘modern’ and ‘traditional’ economies have been inextricably linked. In nineteenth century Java, for example, a cash export economy ‘piggybacked’ on a subsistence economy (Geertz 1963). Thus, if

recent contributions regarding economy and history have anything to show us, it is that distinguishing 'modern' and 'traditional' can be fraught.

As might be expected, rural Banyuwangi, like other areas of Java is not a quaintly traditional world. Since Independence, local people have, as in many other areas of Indonesia, responded positively to the state's attempts at nation-building. The state has become increasingly bureaucratized and involved in daily life. From the 1970s, the Islamic revival, or *dakwah*, had a profound effect. As a result, a nationalist Islamic culture was established whereby for many young people, an orthodox but tolerant, less-syncretised form of Islam was equated with nationalist principles and with being modern (Hefner 1987). For many, this Islam was the only way of being modern, Muslim, and nationalist. People identify with Indonesian nation and Islam as much or more than the local village and its increasingly forgotten spirits. In 2001–2002, when I conducted research, mobile phones and internet cafes were widespread in the district towns; and now they are even widespread in the villages. Thus, local residents are actively involved in a 'modern' world in their own way.

Capitalist principles underlie many aspects of Banyuwangi's economy. Agriculture is the major economic sector and can be divided into upland and lowland production. The estate (or plantation) monoculture, which was introduced by the Dutch colonizers, still characterizes upland agriculture. Coffee continues to be a major plantation crop, along with rubber, cocoa, cloves, and kapok, some of which can also be found in lowland areas. Nevertheless, most lowland agriculture is either irrigated rice-paddy or dry/unirrigated gardens. A study by Fox (1993) found that, by Javanese standards, land is concentrated in the hands of a few. In general, there are very few peasants, in the sense of people subsisting on a small plot of land that they own or control. Although the comparatively high concentration of land control might suggest a polarization of wealth, Banyuwangi seems to be less afflicted by poverty than most other districts in East Java (Badan Pusat Statistik 2001). This suggests that the effect of the concentration of land control is offset by activity in other economic sectors, including fishing, small-scale retailing of goods by petty-trading, and a large home-industry producing wooden products for the local and Balinese markets. The beaches of Kuta and Legian, the international tourist destinations of Bali, are only hours away by ferry and bus. And there, many local people seek a livelihood, which, through work in construction, hospitality, prostitution and theft, connects them to the global tourist market. These changes have impacted on reciprocal relations in Banyuwangi.

RECIPROCITY IN BANYUWANGI

My introduction to reciprocity in Tegalgaring occurred immediately after I arrived in the village for the first time. I purchased a little sachet of laundry liquid from a small shop down the lane, borrowed a bucket, and began washing my clothes out the back of my house. My pragmatic, can-do measures would surely impress my family and neighbours, I thought. But this was not exactly the impression I made. Washing the clothes of the wealthier family I stayed with was the work of two neighbouring women

—I was doing these women out of a job. It happened more quickly and with far less input than I would have liked, but somehow or other arrangements were made, and it transpired that my neighbours would do the washing. As a ‘fair’ employer, I insisted that I would pay them according to a rational system of, for example, 3,000 rupiah for washing and ironing a shirt. This apparently would not do either, and broke down within a couple of weeks. As a concession to me, I was, however, allowed to pay them a monthly honorarium. Getting such a great deal, as I calculated it, I was left surprised and humbled by the kindness of the Indonesian people. But the real nature of the arrangement only became apparent after months of fieldwork, when the daughter of one of the washing women needed a doctor. It was incumbent upon me to drive both to the subdistrict town to a doctor, Dr. Nyoman, and pay for the consultation and the medicine. Later, when the washing woman’s daughter was to be sent to the city, I paid for the transport and for some accommodation. In retrospect, I realize that, while I was busy ordering and understanding them, they were also ordering and understanding me; as it should be. I am sure from the insults ‘*pelit*’ (‘stingy’) and ‘*na gut*’ (‘no good’) I never got to the bottom of who I should be or how I should act. Nevertheless, it appears that, in spite of my protestations, my capitalist employment regime had been forestalled and another kind of relationship, based on reciprocity had been created. I was a patron and they were my clients.

Thus, market-based elements of the economy (such as purchasing clothes, plastic buckets, laundry liquid) coexist with reciprocity in the everyday economy based among family, neighbours, and acquaintances. These people buy, sell, borrow, lend, give, and take from each other throughout the day. Rendering assistance is expected, and so is requesting it—one should involve others in an activity (such as burning leaves and rubbish in the yard), even if it might have been completed (according to ‘rationalist’ standards of ‘efficiency’) without their assistance. A nephew who borrows from his aunt is expected to return the egg, shovel, motorcycle, tape, or money that he borrowed. But he is also expected to return the favour and help out when the aunt requires assistance, at the aunt’s daughter’s wedding, for example. Obligations, rather than market forces, define these relationships (Parry 1989: 64). But, unlike a ‘pure’ capitalist transaction, in this economy the relationship between aunt and nephew is thereby reinforced. Through it tighter bonds are engendered. For ease, I will call these relationships ‘reciprocal’.

Probably the most famous example of reciprocity that comes to us from the island of Java is the ritual meals known, thanks in large part to Geertz (1960), in the anthropological literature as ‘*slametan*’. These ritual meals actually have a variety of names conforming to the area and the type event that is being commemorated. In a typical *slametan* in Banyuwangi, for example, a host invites family, neighbours, and friends to commemorate a child’s birthday, to ensure the successful sale of land, or to farewell a nephew visiting from the city, among other things. The host’s and guests’ wives prepare the meal. In the evening, the husbands gather at the host’s house, prayers are offered, and the food is consumed by the guests. One day when my neighbours held a ritual meal, a female cousin

from the west side of the village came to help with the preparations. A few months later, as I recall, my neighbours went to help with, and partake in, the circumcision celebrations of a boy from the cousin's household (along with weddings, circumcisions are the largest ritual events, attracting hundreds of guests over 2 days). I remember it felt a little uncanny for me to see this family I had spent so much time with with next door, operating the stoves and helping out in another house for the 2 days of the celebrations. Social, spiritual, and emotional aspects of the everyday economy are realized in these *slametan*, so it is not surprising that they are a central element of social and religious life for the people of rural Banyuwangi, as they were throughout rural Java (Koentjaraningrat 1985; Woodward 1988; Beatty 1999; Lont 2005: 64). Reciprocity is thus ritualised in the form of *slametan*.

Reciprocal elements operate in many other contexts. On agricultural plots (*sawah* or *kebun*), where there are endless chores, small and large, to attend to, one turns to family, neighbours, and acquaintances. Jay (1969: 223) notes that 'Neighbors, as those who are nearby and therefore able to give immediate aid and support, are recognized as dominant on the occasion of a funeral'. Similarly, Warren (1993: 16) highlights the importance of neighbours in Balinese society, citing a Balinese informant who explained:

The principle of the neighbourhood is most important. Family is the second principle. Why are neighbours more important. . .? If we have a sudden disaster, it won't be kin that will know first. The first to know will be my neighbour. If I'm suddenly sick, certainly I would call a neighbour first.

These people can also be relied on to search for a missing child or to help care for the elderly. When the mother of my neighbour died, neighbours, family, and friends held the customary vigil, helped prepare the corpse, carry it to the cemetery, and dig the grave. Kith and kin also assume the responsibility for the punishing of wrongdoing in their midst (which will be discussed below in relation to the problem of sorcery). These rights (to be helped) and responsibilities (to help) are probably best explained as reciprocity.

Where one party is perceived to have access to greater material capital or social networks, the reciprocity might take the form of a patron-client relationship. In many contemporary Southeast Asian contexts, institutions can operate without clientelistic reciprocity. For example, states and corporations can sometimes exert power without recourse to patrimony. Nevertheless, the patron-client or patrimonial relationship is common throughout Southeast Asia (Wertheim 1969; Steinberg 1987: 18; Parker 2003: 71). This can be seen in many aspects of everyday life in Banyuwangi. Being wealthy pilgrims, my host-parents were patrons. Their clients, drawn from family, neighbours, and acquaintances, looked after the rice-fields, washed clothes, chopped tobacco, harvested soy plants, ran errands, did odd-jobs, and so on for them. Payment for these services was rarely direct. Rather, when they needed money or help for a

son's circumcision ceremony, an advance on a motorcycle, an introduction or recommendation, and so on, the clients could count on their patrons' assistance (Fig. 2).

Like capitalist relations, reciprocity is characterized by self-interest, but this is limited by personal obligation. Salisbury maintains that reciprocal relations:

involve a continual struggle to obtain as much advantage over an 'opponent' as possible, short of breaking off the relation and establishing new relationships with another partner (Salisbury 1968: 480).

Nevertheless, the *laissez faire* principle by which one can pick and choose and more freely establish and terminate relations with transaction partners does not apply here. In reciprocal transactions, you might prefer one patron or client, or one neighbour, family member, or relative over another, but to be social means you are obliged employ, lend, and so on among these people. For example, in an urban village (*kampung*) in Java, Lont (2005: 171) noted that people approach family, friends, and neighbours for loans, and among these groups 'it is difficult to deny a person a favour'. At the same time, these lenders 'recalled in disgust the occasions on which they had been stupid enough to lend a neighbour some money', because that money is sometimes not repaid (Lont 2005: 164). Thus, the relationships are as binding as they are frustrating.

The reciprocal relationships are more than mere economic partnerships. They are 'multiplex' (Gluckman 1955: 19) and integrate people socially and emotionally (Foster 1961: 1174; Mauss 1990). To the extent that 'village community' exists, it consists mainly in overlapping circles of neighbours, in conjunction with the family and acquaintances of these neighbours. These people are at least partly responsible for health, education, aged care, welfare, employment and other economic functions. Thus, while certain elements of the local economy could be characterized as capitalist others could be viewed as reciprocal.



Figure 2 Neighbouring women harvesting soy beans destined for market.

However, the concept of a 'dual' economy of separate export (capitalist) and subsistence (reciprocal) sectors as described by Furnivall (1944) and Geertz (1963) cannot be applied to contemporary Banyuwangi. Presuming a clear distinction between a capitalist and a reciprocal economy would make for a 'one-dimensional, overly comprehensive and extrahistorical' understanding of social phenomena (Ong 1987: 2). The most that could be said is that some areas of economic activity resemble one more than the other. At the same time, fluidity need not preclude categorization; it affects the boundedness of the categories, but not their existence (Greg Acciaioli, personal communication, 2012). This will become more clearly apparent in the discussion of the following section (Fig. 3).

DYNAMICS OF INTERACTION

Having statically analysed these elements, I now wish to show how they interact dynamically. In my neighbourhood, the owner of a small retail outlet (*warung*) who lived down the lane was obligated to share out her work, and employ people to look after her shop. She did not advertise positions, but rather was obligated to employ acquaintances, family and neighbours, who were also under some obligation to work for her. Similarly, when I paid my neighbour to repair my shirt or cut my hair, for example, it was difficult to distinguish the extent to which transactions were governed by principles of capitalism or reciprocity. How much of the interaction was determined by the social obligation to reciprocate? How much by market forces? It is difficult to ascertain.



Figure 3 Neighbouring women harvesting chili destined for market.

Danger and uncertainty characterize relationships between friends, neighbours and family in Tegalgarung. Risk emerges in some aspects of the reciprocal economy. If I put on a wedding for my daughter, the immediate cash donations from guests (stored in envelopes handed over as one enters the wedding venue) may not cover the cost. The promised entertainer, singing the popular *ndangdut*, from the city might fail to show, making me a laughing stock. To offset such uncertainty, there is also a market for certainty supplied by Muslim scholars (*kiai*) and shamans. For example, I got a local *kiai* to bless the car I had bought ‘instead of an insurance policy’, as my sociologist friend, Achmad Habib, visiting the village, quipped.

Reciprocal relations also have elements of uncertainty, emanating from time delay and accounting difficulties. The time delay can be expressed thus: I help you carry the rice sack, but you cannot reciprocate until I have a task which you might help me with. In ‘gift giving’ transactions, it is often proper to delay reciprocating; immediately ‘balancing’ or reciprocating is tantamount to ending the relationship. In this way, uncertainty, risk and delay are also important. Nevertheless, in the everyday give-and-take, it can allow for perceptions of swelling debts as one party awaits reciprocation.

The impossibility of accounting arises from the difficulty in measuring what has been given and thus what is owed. Wherever one party feels the other has ‘debt,’ arising inevitably is a difference of perception over how much is owed, the convenience of repayment, or even whether the ‘debt’ actually exists. For example, I borrowed a shovel from the back of my host-family’s shop. I was told later that the shovel in fact belonged to a neighbour whose little shop sells meatball soup (*bakso*). This neighbour felt I owed her something for ‘borrowing’ her shovel and for the concern I had caused her when it went ‘missing’. I felt that it was inadvertent, and in any case was a trifle, and so I was not beholden to her. Subsequently, she felt slighted when I did not buy *bakso* at her little stall. I was often privy to ‘secrets,’ in which informants complained about members of their family (amongst others) dealing behind their back or swindling them in relation to this everyday give-and-take.

Time delay and impossibility of accounting are experienced mainly as frustrating self-interest (Salisbury 1968: 480; Sullivan 1994: 89). Of course, a strategic use of reciprocity might see you extend a ‘favour’ or ‘gift’ to a boy who you think will one day become a village head who can bestow patronage upon you. This is roughly equivalent to buying a ‘future’. However, the uncertainty typically undermines reciprocal relations. Local residents in Tegalgarung undoubtedly idealize communal life. They would often tell me that one relies on neighbours—if a misfortune befell you who else would look after you? But what creates annoyance (and, to my mind, pathos) is that one of these people might be the cause of the misfortune in the first place. This kind of simmering dissatisfaction, which is part of the everyday experience of life, most often does not amount to anything. Nevertheless, as the following paragraphs show, they can sometimes lead to people being identified as sorcerers, and even being killed for it.

SORCERY IN BANYUWANGI

About 25 of Tegalaring's 5000 residents are believed to be sorcerers. They are thought to perform their evil magic secretly. This causes 'abnormal' misfortune for their victims. Fears centre on 'swollen stomach,' by which the stomach becomes enlarged like that of a heavily pregnant woman. As it happened, swollen stomachs only accounted for a minority of cases of 'sorcery' I researched. In practice, just about any other illness or misfortune can also be deemed 'abnormal' and thus attributed to sorcery (Fig. 4).

Sorcerers are accused 'after the fact'. Typically, people suffer a misfortune and feel that it is 'abnormal,' by which they mean 'caused by sorcery'. Victims then recall a person who they think dislikes them, typically a person with whom they have had an altercation. They infer that one offended party has sought redress through sorcery. Usually, the suspected person is already known as a 'sorcerer,' and a visit to a shaman (*dukun*) confirms the suspicion. The *dukun* also provides a direction from which the misfortune emanated, which coincides with the direction of the 'sorcerer's' house, the house in which he was born, his field—some connection is inevitably found. The suspicion that the person is a sorcerer then further spreads through gossip.

For their part, 'sorcerers' rarely, if ever, self-identify. If they are aware of the gossiped accusation, they probably disagree. Nevertheless, their neighbours, family, and friends believe that the sorcerers consciously attempt to conceal their evil practices, and must be stopped from causing misfortune and killing. Hence, the neighbours, family, and friends group together to take measures against the sorcerer among them. Such measures include the shrouded oath, stoning, banishment, and attacks. But the only truly effective measure is to kill the 'sorcerer'.

'Sorcerers' have been killed sporadically in Banyuwangi, but at certain times, outbreaks have occurred. In 1998 Indonesia, economic crisis, mass protests and violence brought about the end of the authoritarian regime of President Soeharto after three decades of rule. Local residents in Banyuwangi interpreted the lack of police and army



Figure 4 Woman with an enlarged stomach (I am pictured taking notes in background).

response to demonstrations televised from the major cities as an ‘opportunity’ (*kesempatan*) to crack down on sorcerers (Herriman 2006, 2007). One of those killed in the ensuing violence was a ‘sorcerer’ named Ruslan. Ruslan had lived in Kedalaman village for over 30 years, after marrying a local woman. According to one man I interviewed, ever since Ruslan had moved, his neighbours suspected him because of ‘problems’. The man rhetorically explained:

What kinds of problems? He often made problems ‘watch out or you’ll get it’ and it turned out to be true. They got sick. . . He often seduced other people’s wives. But I don’t know about that. His peasant neighbours were all scared. They said he possessed harmful magic—he would take [irrigation] water—they were afraid of getting sick.

The case of Ruslan was taken up in a report by Indonesia’s largest Islamic organisation, the NU:

With the rumour of sorcery, the disappointment, hatred and revenge of some of the citizens of Kedalaman, Rogojampi, Banyuwangi were released with the taking of the victim Ruslan. Many of his neighbours desired to let out their hatred, which had been repressed for so long, onto Ruslan. ‘Every citizen who had a problem always ended in an unnatural death. There were some who went blind and then died, and there were some whose stomach bloated and then died’—says Pak Syawal Hanafi (45 years), a neighbour and friend of Ruslan (Lakpesdam-Nu 1998).

On Saturday night, Ruslan’s neighbours stoned his house. He was not present, and thinking that he was hiding in his well, they hurled stones into it. On Monday, local residents found him in another village. He was bound, put on a truck, and taken back to Kedalaman village, where he was stoned. Then he was dragged, possibly behind the truck. By this time many police had gathered, ‘but’, I was told, ‘they didn’t have the courage to stop it’.

How are we to understand such killings in Banyuwangi? Brown (2000: 15) stipulates that ‘A code of ethics among Banyuwangi [sorcerers] forbids them from using their magic against people in the same village’. And Wessing (1996: 270) finds that ‘the Southeast Asian data show the sorcerer to be perceived as some sort of outsider, either a member of another ethnic group or a marginal member of one’s society’. Perhaps in light of this, for Siegel (2001: 29) killings of sorcerers signal the ‘end of social reciprocity’.

On the other hand, there is good thing to see the killings tied up with reciprocity with those who are closest. Part of the reason for this comes from Siegel’s (2006) later work in which he seeks to justify a view of witchcraft that anthropology has ‘set aside if not explicitly disavowed’. This view is irreducible to any neat phrase, but it could be said that sorcery allows the articulation of the inexpressible. He alludes to the collapsing of a granary on an Azande as being ‘like the gift’—it comes from nowhere, and the witch ‘names the accident’. There is an ‘inability to integrate the voice of the witch’ (2006: 219) and ‘It is not the voice of the community but rather the expression of what the community fears set in a form of expression unavailable to them’ (2006: 218). The connection with gift-giving is also apparent in Retsikas’ study of an urban

village in Surabaya where local people 'look to their kin, neighbours, friends and colleagues for support and comfort', but, 'it is these same people who are also blamed' for sorcery' (Retsikas 2010: 474). Retsikas analyses this in terms of androgyny, but suggests that gift-giving is also relevant. The relationship of sorcery to reciprocity or gift-giving is an idea which can be more profitably pursued here.

RECIPROCITY AND SORCERY

We can see accusations of sorcery and subsequent killings closely related to relationships of reciprocity in several examples I have recorded from my fieldwork in 2001–2. In Tegalaring, Haryadi (the confidence trickster described above) took me to see an elderly friend of his named Turok. Turok recounted that sometime in the 1950s or 1960s (it was difficult for me to get more precise dates from elderly informants) his wife had been asked by Tajeri for some left-over cloth, but she refused. After this, Turok became sick. Turok 'knew' that Tajeri was a sorcerer 'according community information' and that Tajeri had caused his illness. He eventually took part in, and probably led, a violent attack on Tajeri.

In another case, Dr. Nyoman took me to a village near Tegalaring to visit a patient. She was dying from an enlarged stomach which she attributed to her sister-in-law. Her sister-in-law, a prostitute living next door, wanted to build a lane across the property of the dying woman to provide access for her customers. The dying woman denied her this access, and the result was an enlarged stomach. This was explained to me by Dr. Nyoman as ascites—the accumulation of fluid in the abdomen—usually caused by hepatitis. The dying woman ascribed her swollen stomach to sorcery.

In 2002, my host-father took me to meet a contact named Muklis in Penataban village, to the north of Banyuwangi city. Muklis related that a 'sorcerer' named Sukardi was said to have been seen naked at the back of his house. In one case, a woman named Ainah lent Sukardi 200rp—apparently an interest-free loan. Afterwards, Sukardi returned the money to Ainah, but also gave her what is euphemistically referred to as 'abnormal' illness. In 1998, Sukardi's neighbours gathered together to kill Sukardi, but he managed to escape.

I also had the opportunity to interview Misradin, a village official whose mother-in-law, Asemi, was suspected of being a sorcerer. Although he was jailed for the killing, he denied any role in it. Nevertheless, he maintains, Asemi was a sorcerer and in fact boasted that he had turned her over to the army on two occasions. Moreover, he told me, Asemi had been banished from the village twice. A case Misradin focused on was her using sorcery against his father (it appears that Misradin had married his cousin—not a typical marriage pattern in Banyuwangi). The problem seemed to be a debt:

Her older brother [Misradin's father] had a debt with Asemi, and then when she tried to collect there wasn't any money. Then her older brother had a dream that he was sprayed

with water, on Monday night. The next morning his stomach was enlarged. . . Many believed my father was the victim of sorcery.

Asemi was killed on September 27, 1998 by people Misradin identified as local residents ('*warga*').

Finally, I consider a case from Tegalaring with more capitalist overtones, although still firmly planted in the 'morbid nexus' of local relations. According to her younger brother, Hanifah had been accused of employing a sorcerer:

It all started like this. There was a conflict between Hanifah and her husband's younger brother, Saibudin. . . the conflict was about a rice mill. It had been built by two people: Hanifah's husband [and] Saibudin. . . they didn't greet each because they both wanted to take the rice mill. Then the younger brother [Saibudin] was sick and died. After the death, his wife went to a shaman who said that [Saibudin] had been the victim of sorcery from the east, and the culprit was a thin lady [Hanifah was thin and lived to the east].

Nothing came of this accusation, although Hanifah was still extremely uncomfortable with it when she discussed it with me years later in 2002. I could uncover no important pattern in regard to exactly who was borrowing or what happened with the loan. It merely seems that disputes over loans provide fertile grounds for sorcery accusation. Sorcery and recriminations for it occur in the context of the rights and responsibilities, and the concomitant tensions, associated with kinship, propinquity and reciprocity.

As Mauss (1990) suggests in his idea of total social phenomena, the economy of gifts incorporates moral or judicial elements. The violence against 'sorcerers' could be conceived of as an 'economy of justice'. Instead of a centralized economy where goods flow to a centre and are redistributed, goods and services flow horizontally among family, neighbours, and friends (Polanyi 1968). Similarly, instead of recourse to a 'higher' or central arbitrating authority (such as the courts), problems and conflicts are resolved horizontally, among kith and kin. The economy and the provision of justice are thus both based on local reciprocity.

This means that the 'sorcerer' killings should not be seen as directed outside the community or as a breakdown of reciprocity. My research indicates that 'sorcerers' come from within the community; they could be one's uncle, neighbour, brother-in-law, or friend (Herriman 2009). Moreover, sorcery and recrimination for it signal a continuation of social reciprocity. The in-group manifestation of 'sorcery' and reprisals for it are symptomatic of the strong communal bonds that exist in rural society in Banyuwangi. As Cribb (1990: 33) suggests, rather than seeing 'communal violence' in Indonesia as a 'breaking down of the social order', it could more profitably be understood as a 'reaffirmation of community standards'.

Hence, when a 'sorcerer' was killed, even if some family, friends, and neighbours grieved for the victim (and often there were few who did), they almost always seemed to be on speaking terms with the killers, who were, after all, drawn from other family, friends, and neighbours. This social pressure might explain why, in almost all cases, family members did not seek redress from, or revenge against, the killers of 'sorcerers'.

The relationships constructed from kinship, propinquity, and friendship are not only the organizing principles of social life, they are, at the same time, the basis of the identification and killing of ‘sorcerers’.

DISCUSSION

In connecting sorcery with reciprocity and capitalism, I need to make some caveats. Most people who are suspected as sorcerers are thought to have several or more victims—and different putative reasons were often proffered as to why the sorcerer victimized a person. In cases in which a dispute was followed by illness, the illness was liable to be ascribed to sorcery. Moreover, disputes did not always lie behind sorcery. Other reasons such as envy or jealousy, forlorn love, disagreements over a land sale, and so on were also cited as putative reasons for sorcery. The gripes and grumbles among these people pertained as much to someone’s sexual activities, drunken behaviour, and so on, as to what is owing or not. Furthermore, research participants often gave details of the illness induced by sorcery, and often mentioned disputes, but the actual detail of the disputes was lacking.

In Banyuwangi, people told me that sorcerers can get me anywhere; irrespective of distance, or, whether they even knew me. Contrasting this perception, my data showed that most victims of sorcery and attackers of sorcerers were connected as neighbours, family, and friends.

To understand why in Tegalgaring, those who are closest are the ones who you have the most to fear from, we can also turn profitably to ideas of reciprocity and strain. To explain the distrust and sorcery that occur among kith and kin, we could thus say that it occurs between those with whom one also has reciprocal relations, but these relations also have capitalist elements. Put another way, sorcery accusations can be linked to reciprocal and capitalist elements of economic relationships, but we should not privilege the capitalist elements. Seen from this perspective, it is thus not surprising that, like the *hau* and *kula*, the *slametan* might also be connected with sorcery. As Geertz (1960: 12) noted, those invited to a *slametan* live ‘within a short distance of one’s house’. These are the people with whom daily reciprocity takes place. Sorcery ‘attacks’ and retributions for them might be the ‘flipside’ of daily reciprocity described above and ritualized in the *slametan*.

CONCLUSION

As anthropologists we assume that even the best theories offer only a partial explanations (Clifford 1986). Paradoxically, in order to illuminate or focus on one phenomenon, it is necessary that other phenomena be obscured. We know that the intimate is tied up with the global (Besnier 2009), but local explanations and forces such as reciprocity tend to get lost in grand socio-historical schemes of world history and the spread of capitalism. So, if the earlier anthropologists (such as Malinowski, Geertz, Redfield) erred by disregarding these grand schemes, there is also a danger that in

focusing on the grand historical schemes (of Mintz, Wolf, Taussig), the local gets lost. An analysis of harmful magic and the economy suggests that there is a strong connection between the in-group manifestation of sorcery with both reciprocity and capitalism in rural Banyuwangi.

Local residents idealize village life as tolerant and peaceful. They also stress the importance of outwardly polite relations. However, simmering below this may be endless quibbling, dissatisfaction, jealousy, hatred, and even perceived cases of sorcery and recriminations for it. In certain cases, dissatisfaction with reciprocal arrangements contribute to this. It appeared to me that, in wishing to work in a factory or a company in Jakarta, some local residents aspired to capitalism. Part of the reason seemed to be the 'riches' this promised them. But it seemed that capitalism also offered them the chance to escape from the morbid nexus of friends, family and neighbours. So as much as it binds people together, the intensity of these reciprocal ties also alienates. Drawn out of the village and sucked back in, family, neighbours, and friends are suspended in an uneasy, and sometimes deadly, orbit.

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