Bodily Becomings: An Ethnographic Exploration from the Top of the Coconut Tree

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ABSTRACT

This thesis explores how physical and social bodies are configured in some small villages on Wawonii, Southeast Sulawesi, Indonesia. Wawonii is a relatively isolated island with a population of about 30,000 people, most of whom are Muslim. Beliefs in ancestral spirits and the ability to send and receive forms of magic are also common. Rice, coffee and coconut farming, as well as small-scale fishing, are the main sources of income and sustenance for Wawonii people.

In my work, the multiple potentialities of the body in processes of birth, illness and death are explored with reference to theories of ‘becoming’, embodiment and the ‘ontological turn’ in anthropology. Physical and social bodies are understood as Deleuzian ‘events’ which develop and disintegrate in their interactions with other ‘events’ such as illness, aging, circumcision, pregnancy, menstruation and death. Further, the effects of liminality upon bodies and the measures taken to erase unwanted liminal states are explored.

Dynamic ‘events’ such as temperature, wind, language and magical and religious beliefs are also discussed in terms of their effects on bodies. Within my work, I put forward a reflexive constructivist approach to knowledge, reality and being in the body. I argue that within all social bodies, myth lies at the core of what is taken to be ‘the real’. Similarly, on Wawonii, what constitutes ‘the real’ has consequences for the stability and health of individual physical bodies. Within both physical and social bodies, ‘the real’ is constantly in the process of ‘becoming’. As this process unfolds, questions problematizing the issue of bodily boundaries begin to emerge. One response to these indeterminate and often messy processes is the enforcement of ‘biopower’ in the form of ritual. Rituals examined within my work include circumcision, merarane (post-birth roasting) and healing practices. The final chapter looks at
how the limits of social and physical bodies are (de-)constructed through mortuary rituals, dreams of the dead and experiences of soul loss.

This thesis is based on 12 months of ethnographic fieldwork comprised of over 200 interviews, participant observation and action-based research.
‘A book has neither object nor subject; it is made of variously formed matters, and very different dates and speeds. To attribute the book to a subject is to overlook this working of matters, and the exteriority of their relations. It is to fabricate a beneficent God to explain geological movements. In a book, as in all things, there are lines of articulation or segmentarity, strata and territories; but also lines of flight, movements of deterritorialization and destratification. Comparative rates of flow on these lines produce phenomena of relative slowness and viscosity, or, on the contrary, of acceleration and rupture. All this, lines and measurable speeds, constitutes an assemblage. A book is an assemblage of this kind and as such, it is unattributable (…) there is no difference between what a book talks about and how it is made. Therefore a book also has no object. As an assemblage, a book has only itself, in connection with other assemblages and in relation to other bodies without organs. We will never ask what a book means as signifier or signified; we will not look for anything to understand in it. We will ask what it functions with, in connection with what other things it does or does not transmit intensities, in which other multiplicities its own are inserted and metamorphosed, and with what bodies without organs it makes its own converge.’

Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari

*A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia.*
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PREFACE

Questions

Everything starts with a question.

Some questions require answers while the purpose of others is to make an opening, to clear the way for other questions. Some questions can be asked, others cannot. In fieldwork, we learn that while a questioner may think a question can be asked, the listener may not. Questions range from the perfectly acceptable to the utterly taboo. Between (but also within) cultural groups, this range within the mind of the questioner may only approximately correspond with the range in the mind of the answerer.


Why anthropology?

It feels as though my journey towards this PhD began long before I entered university. One of my earliest memories involves a migrant bear (both real and imaginary) in a duffle coat with a marmalade sandwich under his hat ‘in case of emergency’. I had been given a large compendium of Michael Bond’s Paddington stories for my 5th birthday. Like Paddington standing on the station, suitcase in hand, with a sign saying ‘Please look after this bear. Thank you.’ I turned up alone and unannounced on Wawonii in 2011 and again in 2012 hoping to find ‘my’ family. And just like Mr and Mrs Brown, my Bapak and Ibu took me in, looked after me and did their best to soften my foray into the unknown. Like me, Paddington was the ultimate outsider.

‘I’ll never be like other people, but that’s alright, because I’m a bear’ writes Bond.
One after another, Paddington’s stories document his attempts to adapt to this strange new British world. He stands on the table to eat. He falls into a cup of tea. He makes a mess. Like an anthropologist,

‘Paddington kept one eye out of the window in case he missed anything. With his other eye, he carefully examined Mr and Mrs Brown and Judy.’

Another stark childhood memory: watching ‘The World Around Us’ every Sunday at 7:30pm. Mondays at school: entertaining my classmates with stories of the latest exotic location I would be off to when I was ‘big’. The first time I recall being made aware of what ‘Asia’ was: around the time of my Paddington obsession, I also read a story about a Chinese girl who lived on the banks of the Yangtze River and looked after water buffaloes. ‘Yangtze’: at school, I squeezed this exotic word into sentence after sentence, just to hear it roll off my tongue. It entered the growing list of destinations for when I was ‘big’.

As a 12-year-old, I discovered that one of the more interesting things on offer at high school was the possibility to leave Australian shores, bound for the sorts of thrilling places (the Himalayas, European castles, abandoned islands…) which had been vividly alive in my imagination since Paddington and ‘The World Around Us’ had entered my life. It was even possible to make such an exodus before you were properly ‘big’. In my first year of high school, a woman from a company offering student exchanges came to speak at assembly. For the next four years, I nagged my mother mercilessly until finally, at the age of 16, I won a Rotary Youth Exchange Scholarship to go to Germany. Located in the Harz mountains, Bad Lauterberg was just the beginning. I reached Indonesia for the first time as a 23-year-old. Unlike most Australians, I arrived not in Bali, but Batam. I spent a year teaching English in Palembang where I first saw water buffaloes, and not the Yangtze but the Musi. I distinctly remember the thoughts that occurred to me again and again as my friends and I drove through small rural villages in the Sumatran interior on weekend trips: ‘What would it be like to actually live here?
What are these peoples’ lives really like?’ A few years after Palembang, I was back in Australia studying Asian Studies and Anthropology, preparing to find an answer to that question. That year, on the day I turned 26, Clifford Geertz died. Exactly three years later, so did Claude Lévi-Strauss.

In my experience, we operate as individual beings making conscious decisions only on the most superficial level. Like the heart beating without the mind ordering it to do so, on a deeper level, certain dynamics are already flowing, beyond our conscious control, and these throbbing rhythms guide our movements as we go out into the world. Decisions are made, conscious or otherwise, which take us deeper, to the place that was always there, coming home to ourselves, or further, to a place that alienates us, messes things up, renders us unknown to ourselves. Whether by experience, emotion or intellect, recurring questions are etched into the pathways of our lives, difficult questions that defy definitive answers, requiring instead the willingness to embark on journeys without destinations. We collide with the world, sink into it, flow within its flows until the two are indistinguishable. As Lévi-Strauss wrote in *Tristes Tropiques* (1973):

I am the place in which something has occurred.

Anthropology chose me. Something occurred. The questions flow on.
CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION

It was a hard thing to undo this knot

It was a hard thing to undo this knot.

The rainbow shines, but only in the thought

Of him that looks. Yet not in that alone,

For who makes rainbows by invention?

And many standing round a waterfall

See one bow each, yet not the same to all,

But each a hand’s breadth further than the next.

The sun on falling waters writes the text

Which yet is in the eye or in the thought.

It was a hard thing to undo this knot.

- Gerard Manley Hopkins

A few days after Lebaran\(^1\) in mid-2012, I tottered along a teetering plank onto a creaking blue and white boat clunking up against the rusty wharf in Kendari, Southeast Sulawesi. Sitting between the motorbikes and the fat sacks of BULOG\(^2\) rice, crunching the boiled corn I’d bought

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\(^1\) ‘Lebaran’ and ‘Idul Fitri’ are the Indonesian terms for the Eid al-Fitr (Arabic) holiday which is held directly after Ramadan (the fasting month) ends. While ‘Idul Fitri’ derives directly from ‘Eid al-Fitr’, ‘lebar’ means ‘finished’ in Javanese and ‘abundance’ in Sundanese. ‘Lebaran’ therefore signifies the closing of Ramadan with abundant feasts.

\(^2\) BULOG (Badan Urusan Logistik – Bureau of Logistics) is the government-run organisation which regulates the distribution and pricing of food staples such as rice. BULOG rice, which is generally of poor quality, is an essential part of the diets of impoverished people, particularly in remote parts of Indonesia like Wawonii. Ironically, many of these people (most of my respondents, for example) spend much of their time harvesting higher quality rice, which is then sold at local markets or exported.
from the 10-year-old Muna girl in Kendari harbour, I was embarking on fieldwork, off to ‘undo my knot’.³

Or so I thought. During the next 12 months, and the period following it, I was to learn that not all knots can be undone. In fact, my knot, whether ‘in the eye or in the thought’, was about to get much more knotted.

Squashed between the BULOG rice and the motorbikes, I did not know then that the knot I thought I had come to unravel would become entangled again and again by events such as the emergence of a King named Kobimoa and his wife, Queen Watendilaki, from the same dark sea at which I was gazing. Please note: ‘events’, not ‘accounts of events’. The distinction is an important one. Later in this chapter I will unravel the relevance of this point, which underlies the philosophical direction of my work. But, firstly, let me speak of King Kobimoa, Queen Watendilaki and Wawonii’s first coconut tree.

About eight months into my fieldwork, I was in Unaaha, which was at that time the seat of local government and the capital of Konawe district, to which Wawonii belonged.⁴ I was perched on an old, lumpy couch in Pak Irham’s⁵ living room. Pak Irham and his wife were civil servants, with three children. In his mid-40s, Pak Irham was a ‘Komutata’ (Bahasa Wawoni) – a descendant of the former royal family.⁶ He was eager to explain to me the great story of Wawonii’s origins. Afterwards, he laid his motivations bare: he sought internet fame. As the foreign ‘expert’ with access to the necessary technology (he’d been very pleased to see me

³ Extending the metaphor from literature to anthropology, a symposium titled ‘Anthropological Knots’ was hosted by the Department of Social Research at the University of Helsinki on January 15th, 2014. Focusing on ‘the ties that bind anthropology together with itself and with the wider context in which anthropology has been practised in recent years’, it featured prominent anthropologists such as Marilyn Strathern, David Graeber, Michael Carrithers and Chris Gregory. Later chapters draw on some of the papers which emerged from this symposium <https://www.haujournal.org/index.php/hau/announcement/view/7>.

⁴ Wawonii was granted its own ‘district’ status in 2014. Langara, the largest town on the island, was named the capital of this new district, which was called ‘Kabupaten Konawe Kepulauan’ (Konawe Archipelago District).

⁵ ‘Pak Irham’, like all the names of people from Wawonii and Kendari used in this thesis, is a pseudonym. Most of the pseudonyms of Wawonii people in this thesis also follow the teknonym pattern, which is widespread not only in Wawonii, but in Indonesia in general.

⁶ ‘Komutiti’ is the Bahasa Wawonii term for a female descendent of royalty.
getting out my recorder before he spoke), I was expected to be the vehicle for the realisation of his dreams. Perhaps in Pak Irham’s mind, internet fame is the modern equivalent of royal glory. Pak Irham lit a cigarette and leaned forward, legs splayed, hands on knees. It was a powerful bodily gesture to begin a powerful story.

In the beginning, there was no king on Wawonii. Then one day, the Wawonii people decided they must have one. They said, ‘Tomorrow we will hold an election to decide who will be king.’ There were many preparations to be made for the following day. Some people went to the forest to collect vegetables, others went fishing. A man named La’ Tungga was fishing at the sea until night fell. He didn’t catch any fish. Instead, he caught a golden vessel which resembled sago. La’ Tungga went home and hung the golden vessel in his house. La’ Tungga had seven brothers who all wanted to be king. While they were arguing over who would be given the honour, a voice was heard coming from inside the golden vessel La’ Tungga had hung up. A child named Kobimoa emerged from the golden vessel. La’ Tungga told Kobimoa the election was to be held the following day.

‘There’s no need to argue! I am the king here! My name is Kobimoa because this place is called Kobimoa!’ said Kobimoa.

At that time, Wawonii was indeed called Kobimoa.7

The vessel fell to the ground.

Since Kobimoa had proclaimed himself king, the election the following day was cancelled.

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7 Whether this was the result of Kobimoa’s pronouncement, or Kobimoa was thus named after the island, was unclear. In this story, as in many of the conversations I had with Wawonii people, the specific order of events seemed unimportant. Sometimes things happened simultaneously, and when people mixed up the order of events, or contradicted an earlier telling of the same events, this was typically treated with indifference. What was important was that certain things happened, not specifically when they occurred, or what occurred before what.
But Kobimoa was only one year and one month old. So, he did not become king immediately, but was taken instead to Tangkumbuno to be looked after. Upon arriving at Tangkumbuno, which was inland from the northeastern part of the island where Kobimoa had first come ashore, the first coconut tree on the island appeared. It had four fronds and grew on Waworete Mountain, which was above Tangkumbuno. Because the appearance of this tree had coincided with his arrival, Kobimoa decided to re-name the island ‘Wawonii’. In Wawonii language, ‘wawo’ means ‘on top of’ and ‘ni’i’ means ‘coconut tree’.⁸

There was peace on Wawonii. Kobimoa became an adult and, as predicted, took on the title of king. Kobimoa’s queen was named Watendilaki. Watendilaki also came from the sea, from inside a yellow bamboo vessel.⁹ Some fishermen in Lansilowo, a village on the central north coast of Wawonii, had dragged her in in their fishing nets one day. Upon emerging from her bamboo vessel, Watendilaki announced to the local villagers that she was Kobimoa’s wife. She said they had already been promised to each other by their parents and by nature. Before surfacing, they had already been married in the sea. Kobimoa and Watendilaki were supernatural people (manusia-manusia ajaib). They had a son named La’boi. La’boi had a son named La’muo. La’muo had a son named Kosa. Kobimoa was not a Muslim. Manuambo, the fourth king of Wawonii, was the first Wawonii king to become Muslim.

Pak Irham said Kobimoa was approximately one hundred years old when he died. He had lived from the first to the third century.

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⁸ Similarly, in Tolaki language, ‘coconut tree’ is ‘oni’i’.
⁹ Tales of origin in which mythical figures or ancestors emerge from the sea are not uncommon. See also Malinowski (1948, p. 89).
[T]he demonstrable fictionality of fiction does nothing to lessen its power, especially if you call it the truth.

- The Power of the Pen, Salman Rushdie

How was I to deal with King Kobimoa and Queen Watendilaki? Of course, this was only one of many conversations I had with Wawonii people in which myth and memory, stories¹⁰ and magic were deeply entwined in each other. While Pak Irham and countless other Wawonii people saw that ‘[t]he rainbow shines’, I saw nothing. These were not simple village fairy tales, they were the vibrant and vital strands with which Wawonii people weave their realities. But what was real, and how was I to know?¹¹ I had some options. I could dismiss such things as myths of an ‘enchanted’ people (Weber 1971, p. 270). I could take up Turner’s (1967) symbolic method, or use Geertz’s (1973) interpretive approach. Culture-as-text, another strategy deployed by Geertz (1973, p. 452) and others, or functionalism or cognitivism, or a mixture of these, were also possibilities.

Writing off representation

These methods of ‘representation’ have been found – rightfully, I would argue – to be not so much ‘writing up’ as ‘writing off’ (Tyler 1987). Since ‘[m]astery is no longer possible’, it is the task of the ‘naked’ anthropologist ‘to stop yet another defensive appropriation of the unfamiliar by means of an “explanation”’ (Taussig 1993, p. 237). Instead, by adopting ‘a willingness to suspend the confines of ‘rational’ Enlightenment thinking’ (Hendry 2007, p. 599), an anthropological journey may begin. Recent moves in this direction include the

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¹⁰ ‘Ceritanya begini…’ (‘The story [goes] like this…’) was typically how Wawonii people commenced the retelling of stories such as the Kobimoa and Watendilaki legend.

¹¹ This is a common quandary which must be acknowledged by anthropologists. ‘The major problem with my questions was that the pilgrims to whom I spoke did not necessarily “know” in the sense in which I wanted to know’ (Dubisch 1995, p. 104).
development of the ‘fractiverse’ and ‘multiply enacted realities’ (Law 2015) and the ‘pluriverse’ (Escobar 2011). These are, of course, only some of many possible beginnings.

With reference to Evans-Pritchard’s Nuer-twins-as-birds dilemma, Martin Holbraad (2010) argues for a radical alternative way of thinking about alterity. Evans-Pritchards’ birds were my marine royalty. Holbraad’s way out of the labyrinth is the ‘ontological take’ (2010).

It is worth quoting Holbraad at length to elucidate exactly what is meant by this.

Our apparent disagreement with the Nuer about the nature of twins may just as well be due to a misunderstanding. The Nuer may appear to be asserting that twins are birds but may in fact be saying something quite different – something we fail to grasp, not because it contradicts what we assume to be true about twins, but rather because it goes beyond our own assumptions (…) The Nuer, in other words, may be talking past us rather than against us. Of course, to entertain such a possibility takes a degree of humility. The suggestion that the Nuer (or anyone else) might talk or act in ways we might be unable to understand presupposes that our repertoire of concepts might in some way be inadequate to the task (Holbraad 2010, p. 184).

Holbraad goes on to make the case for an ontological rather than a culturalist approach since it,

…gets us out of the absurd position of thinking that what makes ethnographic subjects most interesting is that they get stuff wrong. Rather, on this account, the fact that the people we study may say or do things that to us appear as wrong just indicates that we have reached the limits of our own conceptual repertoire (…) The anthropological task, then, is not to account for why ethnographic data are as they are, but rather to understand what they are - instead of explanation or interpretation, what is called for is conceptualization (…) such a task effectively inverts the very project of anthropological analysis. Rather than use our own analytical concepts to
make sense of a given ethnography (explanation, interpretation), we use ethnography to rethink our analytical concepts’ (Holbraad 2010, p. 184).

In challenging my ideas of what was and was not possible, the apparent emergence of Wawonii royalty from beneath the sea called into question my conceptual framework, and the limits of my skills of analysis.

**Thesis aims**

- To explore the social, biological and belief-based networks within which Wawonii bodies materialize.
- To re-frame social and biological bodies as dynamic assemblages which generate multiple forms of knowledge derived from experience, memory, storytelling and sensation.
- To add to the richness of anthropological research by drawing on sources beyond anthropology – literature, philosophy, history – where linkages between theoretical work within these disciplines and my ethnographic work appear.
- To question claims to ‘knowledge’ derived from ethnography.
- To argue for a more multi-dimensional and self-reflexive perspective within anthropology.

**Paradoxical events**

Earlier, I described the telling of the story of Wawonii royalty as an ‘event’ rather than an ‘account of an event’. In claiming this, I attempt to nudge ‘speech’ a little closer to ‘action’, as J.L Austin did in his development of performative utterances and speech act theory in *How to Do Things with Words* (1976). Indeed, in Wawonii, ‘the world is a conversation; it is not the object of (…) conversation’ (Ingold 2018, p. 169). Elsewhere, narration of this sort has been
termed ‘culture philosophy’.

Instead of being easily-dismissed stories, events are things which exist. Being both complex and subject to flux, events are necessarily comprised of ambiguity, paradox and uncertainty. They are frequently ‘disruptive’ and therefore subjected to forces of containment such as the law or appeals to ‘tradition’ (Pemberton 1994, p. 18).

Wawonii people were not concerned with ironing contradictions out of events. Within this thesis, I present what I encountered as contradictions, exploring rather than erasing the more tangled aspects of Wawonii life. I acknowledge that events such as stories which are both real (in their effects) and mythical (in their actuality), must be explored on the basis of being both ‘problematic and problematizing’ (Deleuze 1990, p. 54). The existential element in which language is a form of action and action is both paradoxical and associated with the fragmented subject is the element from which the ontological task within anthropology springs. As Deleuze (1990, p. 3) writes,

> [P]ersonal uncertainty is not a doubt foreign to what is happening, but rather an objective structure of the event itself, insofar as it moves in two directions at once, and insofar as it fragments the subject following this double direction. Paradox is initially that which destroys good sense as the only direction, but it is also that which destroys common sense as the assignation of fixed identities.

The ethnographic segments in my work show how paradox, contradiction and temporal uncertainty were basic elements of my interactions with Wawonii people. My respondents generally practised methods of thought and speech other than the cause-and-effect logic I was used to. Working out how to write about these practices in a manner which a) did not simply disregard, ignore or undermine Wawonii peoples’ realities and communicative forms and, b) was acceptable to the academy was an enormous intellectual challenge. By reading Deleuze

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12 ‘Culture philosophy consists of the beliefs, practices and myths, taboos and general values of a people which govern their everyday life and are usually expressed and stored in oral vocabulary of the people’ (Oruka ed. 1990, p. 6).
and exploring narrative ethnographic and ontological anthropological approaches, I managed to get beyond my initial frustration.

**Bringing events into being**

Although they were busy people with full time jobs and other engagements, Pak Irham (and to a much lesser extent, his family) spoke with me almost to the point of exhaustion. Earlier, Pak Irham’s driver had picked me up at Kendari Harbour. When I arrived at Pak Irham’s house in Unaaha it was approximately 3pm. We sat out the front of his house and with the words, ‘*Ceritanya begini*’ (‘The story [goes] like this’), Pak Irham’s narrative (encompassing myth, magic, fact, gossip and many blurred spaces between these categories) began. He barely stopped speaking (even during dinner) until at midnight, wiping his eyes, sighing and smoking his last cigarette, he declared it time to sleep. The following day, after breakfast, we continued. Pak Irham talked almost uninterruptedly for about six hours. He showed me slightly crumpled black and white photos of his royal ancestors, including his grandfather, Haji Muhammad Gazali Taslim, the last King (‘*Lakino*’) of Wawonii. In the afternoon, we drove back to Kendari. Pak Irham was leaving for North Konawe, where he had to work the following day, and I was returning to Wawonii. Apart from the temptations of potential internet fame, why was it important for Pak Irham to exhaust himself telling me – whom he had only met once before, at a large funeral in Wawonii – these stories?

As he spoke, Pak Irham brought King Kobimoa, Queen Watendilaki and the events surrounding them into being. Far from being characters and events isolated in time, they were intimately connected to Pak Irham’s own constructed sense of social, historical and cultural identity. By bringing them to life, Pak Irham brought himself (as a man with a specific cultural heritage in which his social identity was based) into being. This sense of self was not only simultaneously imagined and real, it was real *because it was imagined*. History swelled up and
surged forth as his articulations became increasingly animated and as he slapped his knees and gurgled big belly-guffaws. Sitting around him, his delicate daughter and older brother occasionally murmured in agreement or interjected, fine-tuning the edges of the ‘far-out’ reality Pak Irham was forging (Holbraad 2010, p. 191; Geertz 1988, p.6).

**Sensuous projections**

In exploring bodies from a particular cultural perspective, I heed Jackson’s (2013, p. 52) reminder that the definition of ‘culture’ originally ‘grounded notions of bodily activity in a social and material environment’. In the Middle Ages, the eighteenth century and then in the early half of the twentieth century, definitions of ‘culture’ became radically detached from the body (Jackson 2013, p. 52). In the late twentieth century, the ‘culture effect’, in which culture became ‘the production of a knowledge’ turned political, becoming devoted to recovering the horizons of its power by containing that which would appear otherwise. (Pemberton 1994, p. 9)

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13 In Java, as in much of Indonesia, subjectivity and ‘culture’ continue to be understood as deeply enmeshed in the material and spiritual aspects of the surrounding environment. 'Nature is an expression of the ultimate power, which determines his life. In it, he is exposed to the incalculable power of the divine, which the Javanese term alam gaib (mysterious world) (...) For the Javanese, therefore, the empirical world is very closely bound to the meta-empirical world (alam gaib). They permeate each other (...) “empirical” experiences of the Javanese are never only empirical; the meta-empirical, fear instilling and fascinating world of the numinous dimension is the content of experience itself” (Magnis-Suseno 1997, p. 88).
Apart from the body, questions of knowledge, reality and being which lie at the heart of the anthropological endeavour link it to other endeavours, such as philosophy, literature and even physics. Productive dialogue between these endeavours is a mechanism of invigoration aimed at stirring up dormant elements within each individual discipline.

Fieldwork is a type of sensuous projection in which one projects not only one’s knowledge – or what one thinks counts as knowledge – but also one’s body and being into a particular space and time. The difficulties of knowledge, reality and being emerge within the body of the ethnographer, where they germinate until the ethnographer can find an adequate way of translating them into a coherent language. In this sense, ethnography is initially a form of bodily knowledge before it becomes other forms of knowledge. Indeed, I argue that this is the path traversed by all processes of knowledge formation, integration, re-formation and disintegration. The body is the threshold which knowledge enters and never quite escapes.

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14 ‘By “body” I understand a concrete, material, animate organization of flesh, organs, nerves, and skeletal structure, which are given a unity, cohesiveness, and form through the psychical and social inscription of the body’s surface. The body is, so to speak, organically, biologically “incomplete”; it is indeterminate, amorphous, a series of uncoordinated potentialities that require social triggering, ordering, and long-term “administration.” The body becomes a human body, a body that coincides with the “shape” and space of a psyche, a body that defines the limits of experience and subjectivity only through the intervention of the (m)other and, ultimately, the Other (the language- and rule-governed social order). Among the key structuring principles of this produced body is its inscription and coding by (familially ordered) sexual desires (i.e., the desire of/ for the other), which produce (and ultimately repress) the infant’s bodily zones, orifices, and organs as libidinal sources; its inscription by a set of socially-coded meanings and significances (both for the subject and for others), making the body a meaningful, “readable,” depth entity; its production and development through various regimes of discipline and training, including the coordination and integration of its bodily functions so that not only can it undertake general social tasks, but also become part of a social network, linked to other bodies and objects’ (Grosz 1995, p. 104).

15 These four - the body, knowledge, reality and being – merge within the Indonesian concept of ‘ilmu’ and Javanese ‘ngelmu’. Particularly according to ngelmu, it is (…) the whole body, and all organs within it, rather than just the mind that ‘knows’ (Stange 1984, p. 114).

16 See, for example, Chapter Three ‘Reality and Knowledge Considered as Process’ in Wholeness and the Implicate Order (Bohm 1980).

17 ‘Bodily knowledge’ is not limited to ethnography. In philosophy, Feuerbach (1986, p. 51) argues the case for reality and truth manifesting primarily in the body: ‘The real in its reality or taken as real is the real as an object of the senses; it is the sensuous. Truth, reality and sensation are identical. Only a sensuous being is a true and real being. Only through the senses, and not through thought for itself, is an object given in a true sense. The object that is given in thought or that is identical with thought is only idea. Namely, a real object is given to me only where a being that affects me is given to me and where my self-activity – when I start from the viewpoint of thought – finds its boundary or resistance in the activity of another being.’

18 In Java, the Dewaruci story in the Mahabharata echoes this perspective. Dewaruci is a miniature incarnation of a God which resembles Bima. Bima enters Dewaruci’s left ear. Within Dewaruci’s body, which is an inverted
Although awareness signifies an engagement with the mind, as this engagement occurs, knowledge simultaneously remains grounded in the body. We subvert ‘theories of culture in which mind/ subject/ culture are deployed in parallel with and in contrast to body/ object/ biology’ (Csordas 1994, p. 9) by understanding the body as both the source and generator of ‘bodily knowledge’. Embodiment is the theory of this bodily knowledge. Embodiment is body-as-verb. As a verb, the body becomes a process, an event. This embodied subject is always incomplete, fragmented, in disarray. In the positive sense of this disorder, ‘the body is not merely matter but a continual and incessant materializing of possibilities’ (Butler 1988, p. 521). As Deleuze argues, these processes of materialization take place at ‘intersecting lines of force’ within and between subjects ‘where matter and force are not separable’ (Davies 2011, p. 31).

I embark on this journey not by asking what we can know about Wawonii. Rather, my aim is to explore how dynamic networks develop from relationships which necessarily involve bodies. The Wawonii terms for ‘body’ are tubung and wutong. These are clearly distinct from mia, which means ‘person’ (male or female) in Wawonii language. Below are some of the most common terms I heard which related to bodies.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English</th>
<th>Bahasa Wawonii</th>
<th>Bahasa Indonesia</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>My body</td>
<td>Tubungku/ Wutongku</td>
<td>Tubuhku/ badanku</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

version of the outside world, Bima realizes divine unity and ultimate power. Exiting Dewaruci’s body, he becomes ruler of the world. ‘Only he who can penetrate through the outer world into the inner world can discover true reality. In vain did Bima search for the waters of life on mountains and at the bottom of the ocean. He found it only when he stepped into his own batin (…) The recognition of the unity of God and man is the high point of spiritual progress in Javanese mysticism. Because Bima perceives this unity, he has obtained the water of life (…) This perception is, firstly, an act of knowledge (kawruh). However, this knowledge is more than a simple act of getting to know something. It is an event that changes a person inwardly, that gives his existence a new, deeper dimension which will become from then on his lasting reality.’ (Magnis Suseno 1997, p. 117 - 121).

19 For example, cells are ‘interdependent with all that is around them. The cells of the body have their own knowledge. The heart knows how to beat without the individual paying attention to it’ (Davies 2011, p. 37).
20 ‘In English, the differences between things and actions are clearly, if not always logically, distinguished, but a great number of Chinese words do duty for both nouns and verbs – so that one who thinks in Chinese has little difficulty in seeing that objects are also events, that our world is a collection of processes rather than entities’ (Watts 1957, p. 5).
21 Indonesian: tubuh and badan. Tolaki language: wotolu.
22 Indonesian: orang. Tolaki language: to ono.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English</th>
<th>Tshiluba</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>My body is sick</td>
<td>Mahakio tubungku</td>
<td>Badan saya sakit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My body is hot</td>
<td>Mokulao tubungku</td>
<td>Badan saya panas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My body is cold</td>
<td>Momapuho tubungku</td>
<td>Badan saya dingin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Circumcision</td>
<td>Memangkilo</td>
<td>Sunat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pregnant woman</td>
<td>Tina metia</td>
<td>Ibu hamil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To give birth</td>
<td>Bamokohina</td>
<td>Melahirkan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Person</td>
<td>Mia</td>
<td>Orang</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>He/she/they</td>
<td>Nade</td>
<td>Dia/merika</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You</td>
<td>Ikoho</td>
<td>Kamu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>Kude</td>
<td>Saya</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Old person</td>
<td>Mia motua</td>
<td>Orang tua</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Young person</td>
<td>Mia mongura</td>
<td>Orang muda</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Widow</td>
<td>Iaro</td>
<td>Janda</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Widower</td>
<td>Lakiwa</td>
<td>Duda</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To lie down</td>
<td>Koledo</td>
<td>Baring</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To get/wake up</td>
<td>Wangu</td>
<td>Bangun</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To sleep</td>
<td>Moturi</td>
<td>Tidur</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To be tired/sleepy</td>
<td>Mokotundu</td>
<td>Mengantuk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To live (somewhere)</td>
<td>Moia</td>
<td>Tinggal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To go</td>
<td>Mako</td>
<td>Pergi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To sit</td>
<td>Totoro</td>
<td>Duduk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To live/be alive</td>
<td>Tora</td>
<td>Hidup</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To die/be dead</td>
<td>Mate</td>
<td>Mati</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heavy</td>
<td>Mobea</td>
<td>Berat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small</td>
<td>Mehewu</td>
<td>Kecil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Big</td>
<td>Owose</td>
<td>Besar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Short</td>
<td>Opudu</td>
<td>Pendek</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beautiful</td>
<td>Momahé</td>
<td>Cantik</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bad/ugly</td>
<td>Mosao</td>
<td>Jelek</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These bodies, and thus the networks of which they are a part, form assemblages, a term which I discuss below. The instability of these networks is shown in their susceptibility to the effects of flux, growth and deterioration affected by time (aging, death); other bodies (touch, illness, reproduction) and place (effects of weather, available nourishment and protection). This thesis endeavours to demonstrate that these relationships are not, however, contained within a materialist framework of finitude. Wawonii people circumvent such confinement in practices such as communication with spirits, ancestors and deceased relatives who appear in dreams. As this thesis shows, despite illness and death, the extinguished body does not imply the extinction of these relationships, networks, linkages. The dynamics underlying these networks
are both animated by, and themselves generate, knowledges derived from bodily experiences, sensations, memories and myths. Following Deleuze, rather than being bodies that are different, these are bodies which are becoming different; a key marker of differentiation rather than diversity (Ingold 2018, p. 162).

Dynamic mythologies, constructed realities

In my ethnography, I adopt a reflexive constructivist approach to questions of knowledge, reality and being, as they are experienced and constituted by the body. Here, I take up Bourdieu’s perspectivist social constructivism as illuminated by Ghassan Hage (2013, p. 86):

[...]

In my work, I refute the sort of intellectual or rhetorical moves that would position Wawonii as a ‘great enchanted garden’ (Weber 1971, p. 270) by virtue of the magic, sorcery and spirits that shape Wawonii peoples’ lives. Since the realities of Wawonii people are tenuously constituted by repeated acts and events, of which speech23 is one, they are both radically productive and radically malleable. To choke these dynamic realities in the enchanted/disenchanted binary or to deploy some sort of bland cross-cultural comparison24 would not only be to misrepresent them, but also to co-opt them within frameworks of knowledge-construction (comparative methodologies) easily understood in universities but unreflective of the Wawonii practices which are inherent in the production of such knowledge. Being intimately connected to practice and place, these are still-expanding rather than already-

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23 The anthropological history of speech or speaking as ‘a mode of action’ stretches back at least as far as Malinowski (1948, p. 250).

24 Ingold (2000, p. 185) makes a similar argument regarding so-called ‘local’ and ‘modern’ forms of ‘traditional knowledge’ among the Sami in Finland.
constricted realities. As Ingold and Kurttila (2000, p. 194) argue, ‘knowledge’ is generated through

‘perception and action (…) dispositions and sensibilities established in the course of a lifetime of practice and training in an environment. Here the person is conceived not as a substantive entity, but rather as a locus of growth and development within a field of relationships.’

My position is that mythologies (as forms of practice) underpin the realities of all relationships and environments.25 Just as we are all ‘religious’ in the sense that Alain Badiou26 deploys the term, so too are we all of our own mythological making. In this construction, myth is not opposed to reality, but lies instead at its core. Time, for example, is a culturally and socially constructed myth which no one understands but is nevertheless real. Even within a particular culture or society, time is

an extraordinarily complex term which functions simultaneously as singular, unified, and whole, as well as in specific fragments and multiplicitous proliferation.

There is one and only one time, but there are also numerous times: a duration for each thing or movement, which melds with a global or collective time (Grosz 1999, p. 17).

In Java, for example, Anderson (1990, p. 34) makes the point that, rather than being a ‘linear movement through time’, history is experienced ‘as a series of recurrent cycles’.27 As

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25 Apart from the use of ‘primitive’, I concur with Malinowski that ‘myth’ is a fundamental part of ‘culture’. ‘Myth fulfills in primitive culture an indispensable function: it expresses, enhances, and codifies belief; it safeguards and enforces morality; it vouches for the efficiency of ritual and contains practical rules for the guidance of man. Myth is thus a vital ingredient of human civilization; it is not an idle tale, but a hard-worked active force; it is not an intellectual explanation or an artistic imagery, but a pragmatic charter of primitive faith and moral wisdom’ (Malinowski 1948, p. 79).

26 In reference to Levinas, Badiou (2001, p. 23) writes ‘To make of ethics the ultimate name of the religious as such (i.e. of that which relates [re-lie] to the Other under the ineffable authority of the Altogether-Other) is to distance it still more completely from all that can be gathered under the name of ‘philosophy’ (…) [E]very effort to turn ethics into the principle of thought and action is essentially religious.’

27 Beyond Java, the cyclic construction of time has been identified within Indian and Ancient Greek cultures. Whether or not within such a model events are reversible remains inconclusive. However, ‘as the image of a cycle indicates, a future event is also a past event, which renders history meaningless’ (Eds. Fraser, Lawrence and Haber 1986, p. 109).
with Pak Irham’s self-construction through myth and language, time is not only simultaneously imagined and real, it is real because it is imagined. We make it ‘real’ via a form of construction, or measurement, that is useful to us according to the location we find ourselves in. Concepts of location are also forms of measurement. We assume that what can be measured must be real even when this measurement, which may be arbitrary, has in a sense sprung out of nowhere by being created purely by individual or (most commonly) collective bodies. What can be measured can be measured differently by different people at different times. Calendars are constructed in various ways depending on the purposes they serve in the societies which have constructed them – the Gregorian calendar is not equivalent to the Javanese calendar or the Islamic calendar, for example. As St. Augustine articulated, however, before it is calculated in calendar form, time is measured internally. It is therefore intimately related to the senses and the body (Lawrence 1986, p. 26).28

To cope with existences they themselves have put together,29 ‘people of all societies construct their own ‘great enchanted garden[s]’ (Weber 1971, p. 270). Conjured up within the context of cultural and religious fictions, conceptions of time are useful specifically for the purposes of the conjurers. Different cultural and religious fictions inevitably produce different temporal models. For example, St. Augustine makes a direct link between the Judeo-Christian linear construction of time and Christ’s redemption. This narrative, within which events occur only once, implies that associated temporal conceptions must also be non-repetitive (Fraser, Lawrence & Haber 1986, p. 109).

Not only do we believe in conventional mythologies such as time, but we routinely engage in forms of apotropaic magic, such as crossing fingers for good luck, defacing the

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28 For example, within Mahayana Buddhism, time is linked to the body in the Kalachakra, ‘the Buddha’s supreme emanation’ and ‘the personification of the “Wheel of Time”’ (Jackson 1985, p. 2).
29 Tetsuro (1961, p. 9) refers to this dynamic aspect of existence, which links individuals with their environments, as ‘negative activity’.
posters of politicians we dislike or knocking on wood to ward off misfortune. The ‘great enchanted garden[s]’ (Weber 1971, p. 270) people have constructed are pragmatic and existential survival strategies. They provide both a means of existing and a meaningful existence.

Social reality is, therefore, a collectively agreed upon set of mythologies which serve pragmatic purposes for particular groups of people at particular points in time. These mythologies, and the practices which they perpetuate and from which they are comprised, conspire to form that elusive thing known as ‘culture’. Processes of culture-making are made up of creative acts by which we come to know the ‘real constructed reality’ in which we live (Hage 2013, p. 86).

**Encounters with multiple realities**

Particularly in ethnographies which investigate magic, sorcery and the spirit world, questions of knowledge, being and reality, which underlie the anthropological endeavour, must be worked through. By ‘worked through’ I do not mean ‘undoing the knot’, as I had initially thought on the creaking blue and white boat. Whereas some anthropologists search for ‘answers’, clutching at the sturdy ground for certainty, in my experience, ethnography is often unsteady, precarious, teetering on the fringes of the familiar and the arcane. It is also characterised by extended periods of physical and intellectual discomfort. Unlike philosophy, it is through immersion (to some degree) in ‘the field’, in other words via empirical research, that anthropology struggles with epistemological and ontological questions. The production of knowledge, and the nodes where knowledges intersect, are thereby socially and culturally contextualized. Projection is the subtle background to the empiricism which produces this knowledge.

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30 This is not to imply that these are straightforward cause-and-effect acts. Nevertheless, they are repeated acts (whether ironic or otherwise), which indicates that they have origins and effects, however obscure.
Before we can address aspects of cultural and social worlds, we need to decide upon an approach towards what constitutes reality, and how this reality can be known.\textsuperscript{31} Within a postcolonial context, this is an inherently political task (Ingold 2018; Law 2015).

Every act of representation is an act of political repression (…). Actually, this is a double substitution/repression since the voice of the other is represented in the letter of the representer. The movement from the oral to the literary in the “write-up” is both re-presentation and re-pression (Tyler 1987, p. 338).

In their attempts to contain the unknown within already-established (and therefore known) frameworks, some anthropologists begin with the idea that there is a single reality and a multitude of views, beliefs and practices which fit into the broad category of ‘culture’. This is not my position. Instead, I take the view that ethnography involves encounters with a multitude of macro- and micro-realities based on practices. The macro-level consists of the realities (such as the ones described in Pak Irham’s narrative) known and experienced by Wawonii people but unknown and unexperienced by me. On the micro-level is the ‘sensorial reality’, which ‘is always the fusion of a multiplicity of realities produced by the encounter of the world with each of the senses’ (Hage 2013, p. 88). Critically, both macro- and micro-realities are encountered, enacted and replicated via practices. Thus, ‘different realities are enacted in different practices’ (italics in original) (Law 2015, p. 130). Furthermore, ‘the enactment of reality in practice makes it possible to ethnographically explore the body multiple’ (Mol 2002, p. ix). Within my work, ‘practice’ encompasses not just work, festivals and visible behavioural patterns, but also belief. Through practices, bodies undergo processes of becoming yet the things a body can and cannot do are also circumscribed by practices. This

\textsuperscript{31} In his study of \textit{rasa} in Java, Stange (1984, p. 134) for example, argues that it is inadequate to ‘read cultural systems as primarily consisting of different ideological glosses on the same ‘reality’’. Instead, different realities can be understood by directing attention towards ‘different cognitive functions’ and ‘intuitive dimensions of knowing and interaction’ (Stange 1984, p. 134).
is the ‘doing within undergoing’ dynamic Ingold (2018, p. 166) detects within Deleuze’s work on immanence.

**Tensions in translation**

*There is always a binary machine which governs the distribution of roles and which means that all the answers must go through preformed questions, since the questions are already worked out on the basis of the answers assumed to be probable according to the dominant meanings. Thus a grille is constituted such that everything which does not pass through the grille cannot be materially understood (...) we have lost in advance. Even when we are speaking for ourselves, we always speak in the place of someone else who will not be able to speak.*

*(Deleuze & Parnet 1987, p. 20)*

One of the tensions at the heart of conventional anthropological practices is that the anthropologist is expected to translate the ‘know how’ of the village into the ‘know that’ of the academy (Ryle 2009).32 The interstices of these two methods for constructing reality are rarely acknowledged, rarely discussed, rarely problematized. Instead, they are glossed over, denied or ignored. Worse, the mythology that ‘know that’ is superior to ‘know how’ goes unquestioned. The prestige of the university and the status accorded those with PhDs is grounded in the endurance of such myths. ‘Know that’ is neither superior nor inferior to ‘know how’. Instead, these two point in different directions, they cannot simply be merged into one another. Anthropology as a ‘decoding operation’ is a misguided endeavour (Bourdieu 1977, p. 1). ‘Know how’ and ‘know that’ cannot be easily translated into each other because they have

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32 Barasa (1999, p.20), however, argues that the two need not be opposed. Within ‘sage philosophy’, which ‘entails cross-fertilisation of knowledge between the campus philosopher and the village sage’, they are integrated.
fundamentally different relationships to time and power. Contained within the confines of already-established knowledge, ‘know that’ brings the past into the present. The restrictions of language reduce the unknowable to the knowable within the ‘know that’ framework. This sort of reduction often turns into unintended distortion as unruly words are forced to co-operate, to fit within the frame.

I was looking for the essence of what I was observing in words, for it was through words that I would explain my observations not only to myself but also to others. Yet I came to realize that this “verbocentric” emphasis was leading me astray and contributing to my frustration. It was leading me to intellectualize and rationalize something that was neither intellectual nor rational. (Dubisch 1995, p. 104)

‘Know how’ knowledge, on the hand, is a practical method of working through the present in order to get to the future. An investigation of the gaps between ‘know how’ and ‘know that’ (Ryle 2009) is a political endeavour. Translation or mediation between these methods of encountering the real may not be possible. Law (2015, p. 128), for example, argues that, faced with multiple realities (as opposed to multiple views of a single reality),

There is no ‘overarching’. Instead, there are contingent, more or less local and practical engagements.

The abstract, text-based category of ‘know that’ has historically been, and continues to be, accorded greater social status and prestige than the category of material, practice-based ‘know how’ (Ryle 2009). Levi-Strauss (1961, p. 293) made this point in his work among the Nambikwara when he reflected, ‘The primary function of writing (…) is to facilitate the enslavement of other human beings’.33 Continuing the push to disrupt the signifier, Edward Said (1979, p. 80) exposed the questionable entanglements between writing and power by

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33 In response to the denigration of African oral cultures, philosopher Henry Odera Oruka went, tape recorder in hand, on an ethnographic journey through the villages of Kenya to record and analyse the wisdom of the sages. Sage Philosophy (1990), in which Oruka argues that the oral tradition of philosophy stretches back to Plato’s time, was the result.
arguing that ‘representation itself has been characterized as keeping the subordinate subordinate, the inferior inferior’. From its beginnings in colonial times, much of anthropology has perpetuated the ideological myth that ‘know that’ knowledge is ‘real’ knowledge, while the ‘natives’ are engaging in ‘local practices’ or, worse, ‘superstition’. As Pramoedya Ananta Toer wrote in *Child of All Nations* (1975, p. 76):

*Europeans make fun of the native rulers of Java who use superstition to control their own people, and who are thereby spared the expense of hiring police forces to defend their interests. The Powerful Goddess of the South Java Seas is a glorious creation of Java whose purpose is to help preserve the authority of the native kings of Java. But Europe too maintains superstitions – the superstition of the magnificence of science and learning. This superstition prevents the conquered peoples from seeing the true face of Europe, the true nature of the Europe that uses that science and learning.*

While the armchair anthropologist occupied the space of (high status) observation, the subjects of the anthropologists’ gaze were engaged in (low status) methods of embodied, action-based knowledge production. This sort of binary view harks back to Cartesian dualism in which the body is the inferior servant of the mind. In a study of embodied knowledge, it is important to make this point explicit. My work attempts to project itself away from these murky spaces from which anthropology emerged. However, it is important to heed Ann Stoler’s (2008, p. 3) insightful point that ‘…pursuits of exploitation and enlightenment are not mutually exclusive but deeply entangled projects.’

Attention to the difference between ‘know how’ and ‘know that’ is particularly important for a study of embodied knowledge. ‘Know how’ derives from bodily sensations (sight, smell, sound, touch, taste) and bodily actions. Much of the ‘know how’ I discuss in this thesis derives from my corporeal experiences of fieldwork – sloshing about in muddy rice
fields, carrying corpses towards graves, hacking coconuts to be made into copra. Epistemologies of the village are based largely on ‘know how’, or ‘engaged knowledge’ (Sartre 1993, p. 308), in other words a combination of knowledge and practice. These epistemologies, being ‘engaged’, are both productive and responsive. ‘Know how’ is taught by example rather than language and learned by doing rather than thinking. Therefore,

It becomes urgent to inquire about the practices that enact Other multiple-world realities. (Law 2015, p. 128)

In these settings, for both practical and political reasons, anthropologists must necessarily take up an action-centred form of anthropology: more participant, less observer.35

**Embodied knowledge**

The body is the basic instrument with which people in Wawonii and elsewhere construct reality. This is an instrument constantly making, unmaking and remaking itself. As Judith Butler (1993, p. 10) contends, ‘there is no reference to a pure body which is not at the same time a further formation of that body’. These are processes of knowledge-forming. Embodied knowledge is everyday knowledge. It is the predominant method of knowing the self and the other, the environment and the event not as given, but as generative. ‘Embodiment’ and ‘the embodied self’ have therefore been taken up as a useful theoretical framework not only within anthropology, but also philosophy, gender studies, performance studies and so on (Csordas 1994; Grosz 1994; Lyon and Barbalet 1994; Reischer and Koo 2004; Ahmed 2004; Joyce 2005). A framework of embodied knowledge refutes the position that the body is confined to being a passive surface subject to the demands of various forms of power (Foucault, 1980). Instead, an embodied knowledge encompasses

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34 In doing so, anthropologists join those using actor network theory and working within feminist technoscience studies (Law 2015, p. 129).

35 In this way, we may avoid an objectivist rendering of “culture” (…) as a *map* (Bourdieu 1977, p. 2).
a body in situation. Therefore there is not, for example, first a body and later action.

(Sartre 1993, p. 344)

As Chapter Three shows, this ‘situation’ is characterised by specific power dynamics within which the body becomes a dynamic force among other dynamic forces. Foucault’s ‘biopower’ operates within these sites of contestation.\(^\text{36}\) Reality and knowledge are understood via the senses, via bodily practices and experiences. As ‘real constructions’, ‘social realities’ proceed from an encounter with multiple potentialities of the body and the multiple potentialities of the surrounding environment. (Hage 2013, p. 88)

Space and time escape us, but our bodies are always there, always acting, always doing something.

**Doing, telling, assembling**

My fieldwork, however, was not only about ‘doing’, it was also about ‘telling’. Mornings were spent ‘doing’ – washing clothes, planting rice, repairing roofs, cooking, collecting cashews, picking peppercorns – while afternoons were spent ‘telling’. After a nap during the hottest part of the day, women would sit on their doorsteps or under trees and chat with me and with each other. Most of my interviews were done at this time. My interviews became assemblages where narrative, gossip, truth, fiction, fact, myth, history, opinion and desire overlapped. Fieldwork notes were a pastiche of all these things, tinged with my subjectivity, my perspectives, desires and prejudices. The Deleuzean ‘assemblage’ is a concept I use throughout my work as a way of emphasising multiplicity over duality, and openness over hermetically sealed totalities (Legg 2011). Assemblages (bodies, societies, families, conversations and so on) are ‘wholes

\(^\text{36}\) For example, in Java, biopower arises from the *alus* imperative directed at the *priyayi*. ‘The first object of refinement is the natural aspect of man himself, that is, his or her body. The human body is made *alus* in particular through the art of the dance (*joged*)’ (Magnis Suseno 1997, p. 128).
characterized by *relations of exteriority*’ (DeLanda 2006, p. 10). They are potent multiplicities, working ‘in relation to other assemblages’ (Marks 1998, p. 49). The assemblage concept will be explored further in the following chapters.

The body itself is a multiplicity of competing and conflicting sources which, through the domination of one or a few, comes to have a perspective and a position, one among a number of competing, or complementary, perspectives vying for ascendancy (Grosz 1994, p. 128).

Multiplicities are made up of other multiplicities whose intensities and volatilities are variable.37 Defining the body as a multiplicity is a method of carving out the political and ethical space in which the body exists. Within this space, the demands of normativity, hierarchy and representation are rejected (Grosz 1994, p.22).

**Spaces in-between: fieldwork and beyond**

Although in parts they contained facts and information, neither my interviews nor my fieldwork notes were factual recordings of information. Instead, they moved back and forth between the general and the particular, the analytical and the emotional, the historical and the contemporary and so on. Fieldwork was – rightly – a process of having some of my own intellectual and existential certainties thrown into disarray and partially abandoned. It soon became clear to me that

[i]t is no longer possible to see fieldwork as merely gathering data through cumulative experience. It is unruly, conflict ridden, and always problematic (Van Maanen 2011, p. 139).

As I became enmeshed in the realities of Wawonii people, a series of opening practices were generated. Fieldwork was simultaneously a running-away-from and a running-towards.

37 Badiou’s arguments regarding truth and ontology rest on arguments grounded in multiplicity (Badiou 1988, p. 94; Meillassoux 2011, p. 2).
Transfigured between these dual tensions was my own dissolution via disillusion into ‘the mastery of non-mastery’ (Taussig 2015).

Having completed fieldwork in Wawonii, I was expected to make a seamless transition from the ‘know how’ of the village to the ‘know that’ of the university. But this was treacherous territory, and my knot was about to get much more knotted. Within a social framework where ‘know how’ is predominant, significance – formed primarily through action rather than language – takes precedence over signification. The ‘know that’ economy of academic work rests on the production and circulation of particular types of information; although we may concede that this information is subjective, the ethnographer is expected to be able to winnow out ‘reality’ from ‘fiction’, ‘truth’ from ‘magic’. Much of what we are told by people in the field, however, is told in story form. It contains varying degrees of truth, magic, fact, belief and other aspects which both convey and create particular realities. Herein lies one of the prevailing predicaments of anthropology: these realities are rarely amenable to our anthropological concepts. The anthropologist must then decide which tools to discard, adjust or retain.

**Interacting, re-formulating, becoming**

It is impossible to know how much ‘know how’ can be translated into ‘know that’ and how much slips through the cracks in between. That is not the task of this thesis. This thesis is not an exercise in translation, representation or explanation. I aim to avoid the tendency for anthropologists to deploy their work only as illustrative cases for philosophical trends or concepts since this threatens to make anthropology into a sterile intellectual exercise (Borneman & Hammoudi 2009, p. 17).

Instead, as an incomplete fragmentation, my work is both the product of interactions and an assemblage of stories derived from experience. It is a transitory configuration – a
productive cross-fertilization of different experiences construed within spatial and materialist realms.

One way or another, people of all cultures are concerned with questions about the body, knowledge and language because these questions lie at the heart of what it means to be human. These are lived questions, universal questions; they stretch across time, space and culture. For example, an understanding of embodiment is shown in the Asaro aphorism, ‘Knowledge is only rumour until it is in the muscle’. Echoing the Asaro people, academics far removed from the humid altitudes of Papua have developed theories of ‘know how’ (Ryle 2009), phenomenology (Merleau-Ponty 1962) and embodiment (Csordas 1994; Grosz 1994; Lyon and Barbalet 1994; Reischer and Koo 2004; Ahmed 2004; Joyce 2005).

The urgency of these questions, as they are repeated throughout time and space, is an indication of their fundamental importance. These are processes of re-formulating and re-living answers to the enquiry of what it is to be a body which both contains and produces knowledge and acts via language. Since these questions are universal, this thesis does not confine itself to a reliance upon anthropological theory combined with empirical research alone. Instead, it includes perspectives from a wide range of endeavours – philosophy, art, literature and so on. The material ways in which stages of becoming are produced emerges at the intersection of these endeavours and experiences. In paying attention to ‘becoming’, my work begins with phenomenological experiences of Wawonii people and proceeds in the direction of what Deleuze and Guattari term ‘lines of flight’ (Deleuze & Guattari 1987). As Sartre argues in Being and Nothingness (1993), the concept of ‘flight’ is directly related to the interconnectedness between the self and the Other.

The shock of the encounter with the Other is for me a revelation in emptiness of the existence of my body outside as an in-itself for the Other. Thus my body is not

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38 The Asaro are an ethnic group living in both Papua New Guinea and Indonesian Papua.

39 ‘ligne de fuite’. ‘Fuite’ also means leaking, fleeing or escaping (Deleuze & Guattari 1987, vi).
given merely as that which is purely and simply lived; rather this “lived experience” becomes – in and through the contingent, absolute fact of the Other’s existence – extended outside in a dimension of flight which escapes me. (Sartre 1993, p. 352)

In taking up Sartre’s call for attention to the dynamic possibilities of the body embarking on ‘lines of flight’, Deleuze and Guattari emphasize vitalism over structure, transitory multiplicities over stable hierarchies, and ‘becoming’ over representation. As dynamic connections are made between entities, assemblages come into being and the singularity of each is affected by the possibilities of the others which it encounters. Insofar as they affect the body, these ‘connections’ and ‘assemblages’ are both social and biological.

We may still speak of atoms; the atom may even retain its individuality for our mind which isolates it; but the solidity and the inertia of the atom dissolve either into movements or into lines of force whose reciprocal solidarity brings back to us universal continuity. [italics added] (Bergson 2004, p. 265)

These sorts of theoretical moves are not limited to the work of twentieth century European philosophers. In elaborating on Javanese concepts and practices of bodily power absorption, Anderson (1990, p. 29) writes:

The essential characteristic of this combination of opposites is not their merging but their dynamic simultaneous incorporation within a single entity (italics added).

In my work, I treat the rural community I lived and worked in on the north coast of Wawonii as a social assemblage with leakages which link it to other assemblages. Physical bodies are assemblages of practices and beliefs derived from biology, culture and history. Insofar as they are affixed to other assemblages, from which they also have the potential to detach themselves, they cannot be conceived of as individual.40 In the connections between

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40 The Javanese term ‘sreg’ expresses a similar ‘world view’: ‘For the Javanese the meaning of their world-view lies in its pragmatic value: through it he seeks to attain a certain psychological condition, namely that of inner peace, composedness, and balance of mind. One’s view of the world and one’s conduct in it, cannot, therefore, be differentiated adequately. The correctness of Javanese descriptive beliefs is measured by their ability to
know-how and know-that knowledge passed from generation to generation, highly complex assemblages are formed. Language-based assemblages also emerge, multiply and disintegrate as information is shared, instructions are given, gossip spreads, emotions are expressed and myths circulate.

**Productive descriptions**

My aim is not to treat the language-based components of this assemblage – interviews, conversations, stories – simply as codes carrying evidence or information which requires deciphering. This would be to ignore or disregard the fact that methods of speaking, speech practices, are socially and culturally constituted activities containing varying degrees of force.41 As the ethnographic sections throughout my work show, much of what people say in Wawonii (at least in their interactions with me) defies categories such as ‘codes’, ‘evidence’ or ‘information’. Not only did absences, gaps and ruptures exist in my fieldwork interactions, but they fundamentally defined the work which followed from these interactions. This work is therefore an assemblage, a mosaic, a stitching-together of my subjectivity, experience and action with the subjectivities, experiences and actions of the Wawonii people with whom I lived between 2012 - 2013. In fact, it is more than this. Since the past lives on into the present, this synergy encompasses our genealogical, social and cultural histories. An intricate lacing together of present interactions and present assemblages with past interactions and past assemblages makes the separation of these categories impossible. These interactions, contribute to this inner state and to be incorporated into a harmonious unity of experience, whether they fit with each other (sreg). This “fitting together” means the absence of inner tension and upset’ (Magnis-Suseno 1997, p. 85).

41 In Java, for example, ‘[w]ords are held to cloud meaning as much as reveal it; they are the lair forms in which we cast, never directly but always obliquely, our inner feelings. Words taken literally or impressionistically lead not to knowledge but to the poisoning of the spirit’ (Geertz 1960, p. 281).
dynamics, in-between places, are precisely the spaces where knowledge-assemblages are generated and may be traced. This thesis is one such tracing.

Neither my father nor grandfather could put dates to their stories. Not because they had forgotten or were confused; the past was simply the past.

- A Bend in the River, V.S Naipaul

As we saw in Pak Irham’s monologue, knowledge-assemblages formed through language-production raise questions regarding ‘myth’ and ‘reality’. Derrida (2000, p. 56) frames the porosity between these two in terms of ‘fiction’ and ‘testimony’:

the meshes of the net formed by the limits between fiction and testimony (…) are also interior each to the other. The net’s texture remains loose, unstable, permeable.

In the act of telling stories of magic and history, Wawonii people were weaving their own vibrant, vivid ‘nets’ from strands of myth and reality. Narratives such as Pak Irham’s may be usefully called ‘productive descriptions’ since they are simultaneously the passive reiteration (description) of stories passed from generation to generation or village to village, yet with each re-telling (production) the story potentially takes on a new metamorphosis.

As these productive descriptions traverse the border between the spoken and the written in my work, they are reincarnated yet again. In according primacy to the ‘social being of truth’ (Taussig 1991, p. xiii) contained in these productive descriptions, I align myself with Deleuze and before him Polish author Witold Gombrowicz, who made space for the ‘ill-formed’ and ‘incomplete’ to speak, arguing that

[t]o write is certainly not to impose a form (of expression) on the matter of lived experience (…) Writing is a question of becoming, always incomplete, always in

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42 ‘In order to know objects, the subject must act upon them, and therefore transform them: he must displace, connect, combine, take apart and reassemble them. From the most elementary sensory-motor actions to the most sophisticated intellectual operations, which are interiorized actions, carried out mentally, … knowledge is constantly linked with actions or operations, that is, with transformations… Knowledge, then, at its origin, neither arises from objects nor from the subject, but from interactions… between the subject and those objects’ (Piaget 1970, p. 704 in Turiel 1983, p. 9).
the midst of being formed, and goes beyond the matter of any liveable or lived experience (Deleuze, Smith & Greco 1997).

As I make this move, I distance myself from oppressive forms of writing as representation identified by Levi-Strauss (1961, p. 293) and Said (1979, p. 80). Added to this, I argue, in Wawonii and other cultures where ‘know how’ is the dominant form of knowledge, ‘telling’ is also ‘a question of becoming, always incomplete, always in the midst of being formed’ (Deleuze, Smith & Greco 1997). Being constituted by such dynamism, these language-assemblages escape conventional categorisation frameworks. In the formation of subjectivity through the enactment of ritual,43 ‘telling’ is an embodied act.44

Unlike in writing, language in the form of ‘telling’ becomes the link between disembodied thought and the body (Protevi J. 1999, p. 590). Following the link between ‘telling’ and the body is the link between the body and the environment which sustains and defines it. This environment is material, temporal and spatial. As Sartre explains in Being and Nothingness (1993, p. 344):

The body is the totality of meaningful relations to the world. In this sense it is defined also by reference to the air which it breathes, to the water which it drinks, to the food which it eats.

In deploying a reflexive approach, I consider not only questions related to embodied knowledges of Wawonii people, but also the sort of embodied knowledges Wawonii taught me.

43 The Indonesian word upacara (ritual) has only described particular practices and behaviours since the early twentieth century. Earlier, this term referred to ‘an object or objects (royal regalia)’ (Pemberton 1994, p. 15). In Indonesia, ritual processes are frequently manipulated by the ruling class as ‘form[s] of power’ (Pemberton 1994, p. 37). Here we see that the status of the term is neither neutral, fixed, nor ahistorical.

44 ‘The meaning of a word is not mysteriously contained in it but is rather an active effect of the sound uttered within a context of situation. The utterance of sound is a significant act indispensable in all forms of human concerted action. It is a type of behavior strictly comparable to the handling of a tool, the wielding of a weapon, the performance of a ritual or the concluding of a contract. The use of words is in all these forms of human activity an indispensable correlate of manual and bodily behavior’ (Malinowski 1931, p. 622).
Within this narrative ethnography, I explore how social, biological and mythical bodies develop over time as they are constantly re-defined by the following events: birth, circumcision, menstruation, menopause, illness and death. These bodily spaces are all understood to be transitory, dynamic, in flux. Drawing on Deleuzean theory, this thesis treats both social and biological bodies themselves as processes of ‘becoming’.

The following chapter introduces Wawonii. In this chapter, I discuss the historical and mythological events considered important by Wawonii people as told to me by them. Within this discussion, it becomes clear that ideas of power, knowledge and reality are configured in ways which sometimes challenged me as an ethnographer and an outsider. There is, for example, the appearance of a ‘real’ magical island, Wawonii Number Two, which emerges periodically from the depths of the ocean. Wawonii’s status as a somewhat remote island where stories of sea spirits circulate, and people depend on boats for access to resources and information from the rest of the country, is also explored. Finally, this chapter discusses the economic, social and historical importance of coconuts.

Chapter Three begins with a narrative ethnographic account of a mass circumcision involving most of the boys aged between nine and twelve in the village where I was based. It questions both the meanings and uses of violence. The performative power of language in circumcision practices is also discussed. This chapter frames the notion of power in relation to circumcised bodies as a means to separate or join; as a ‘power-between’.

Chapter Four focuses on the embodied relations of power and disempowerment enabled by stigmatizing ‘female’ (menstrual, post-partum and reproductive) blood. The bodily rituals described in Chapter Four show how peripheral, untamed or uninitiated bodies signify points
of weakness, potential rupture, decay or dissemination. Being associated with pollution, they represent danger and must therefore be policed.

Similarly, Chapter Five explores potential threats towards biological and social bodies from ‘angin’, or ‘wind’. Certain bodies, or parts of bodies, are vulnerable to attacks from others, which are conveyed via certain types of wind. Such wind is associated with specific temperatures, times and environments.

In Chapter Six, energy and heat/coolness\(^\text{45}\) are discussed in relation to memory, illness and death. Social and biological bodies are treated both by Wawonii people and within my work as sites of transformation. Within the ‘events’ which influence the body (temperature and energy being two of these), suffering links both living and non-living bodies. Insofar as they are affected by excessive heat or coldness, bodies appear within this chapter as the places cohabited by the animated forces of construction and disintegration.

The bodies explored in Chapter Seven are encountered in spaces of liminality. Dreams, invulnerability to pernicious forms of magic and the tensions observed within gendered space and time (such as the time for the young woman between getting pregnant and getting married)\(^\text{46}\) are explored in terms of their liminality. This chapter shows how, within liminal spaces, reality itself is problematized. Liminal spaces are social spaces. They may threaten to become spaces of abjection. Yet, they are also defined by the potential for growth, ambiguity and curiosity. As an ethnographer, the spaces I occupied in Wawonii during fieldwork were undoubtedly liminal.

Chapter Eight construes death as an intense form of becoming. The cultural, social and religious practices which integrate death within the historical ‘bodies’ of the family and village are analysed in this chapter. The relationships between death and Islam, soul loss, dreams and

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\(^{45}\) As Chapter Six shows, concepts of heat and coolness in Wawonii (and throughout much of Asia) extend beyond temperature.

\(^{46}\) This is the order of these events in the Wawonii example explored in Chapter Seven. In my experience, most Wawonii people, and Indonesians more broadly, are married before pregnancy occurs.
mortuary rites are also explored. Responses to death are seen in peoples’ practices and their words. Wawonii funerals are understood as landscapes within which bodily knowledges are contested during times of uncertainty.

Chapter Nine concludes my thesis by briefly discussing a few of the remaining ‘why?’ questions. A summary and some final points are given. Following this is a short appendix of the most common questions Wawonii people asked me.
CHAPTER TWO
WAHONII

“But I don’t want to go among mad people,” Alice remarked.

“Oh, you can’t help that,” said the Cat: “we’re all mad here. I’m mad. You’re mad.”

“How do you know I’m mad?” said Alice.

“You must be,” said the Cat, “or you wouldn’t have come here.”

- Alice in Wonderland, Lewis Carroll

Arrival

I’d been told the ‘speedboat’ boat to Wawonii left at 9am. Or sometimes 10am. Or sometimes a bit later. It was 8:45am and I was standing in the heat and muck at Kendari port with my old ojek driver telling me it had already left. The speedboat was speedier than I’d anticipated. My ojek driver shouted to some other men in Bahasa Muna, a language I didn’t understand. Many of the people working at this port – from the young girls selling boiled corn to the old men carrying furniture, food and fuel onto ostentatiously-painted boats – were from Muna Island, a place where unemployment and poverty were even more dire than in Kendari.

The men gesticulated towards the white, rusty ferry lurching in the port. The ojek driver took off as soon as I’d paid him and the three Muna men grabbed my bags and we rushed towards the clunking old ferry. On board, I sat upstairs, outside.

47 Kapal cepat
48 In Dutch, English and Indonesian records, Wawonii has also been spelt ‘Wowoni’ and ‘Wowonii’.
49 Motorbike taxi
Some women with brightly-lipsticked mouths asked me if I wanted to go to Langara. I said I was going to Labeau.

‘You’ll have to take an ojek from Langara to Labeau. The road is really bad. You should have taken the speedboat,’ they told me, before offering me some of their boiled corn.

I asked the women when the ferry was leaving. As soon as the words were out of my mouth I knew the question was a stupid one.

‘Soon,’ they said.

In Sulawesi, there are three times: ‘soon’, ‘before’ and ‘later’.

I slouched on the metal bench. Later, as the old ferry lurched out of the harbor past the Pertamina plant and through the thick, oily water, I went downstairs.

I stood outside talking to some Wawonii people returning home. Two of the men were the heads of East Sea Wawonii and South Wawonii sub-districts. I mentioned my research. They said they hoped that the government would take notice of my work and allocate more funding for health in Wawonii. Later they gave me their phone numbers and told me I could stay with them if I came to their sub-district.

We stood between two big green trucks and piles of 50kg sacks of rice. There were three types of rice: low-grade BULOG rice (‘RASKIN’, the men told me) which

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50 The state-owned oil and gas company.
51 By ‘Wawonii people’, I mean those who live on Wawonii, regarding the island as their home. This includes both ethnic Wawonii people, and those who have a different ethnic background. Apart from ethnic Wawonii people, who make up most of the island’s population, other ethnicities found on Wawonii include the Bugis, Bajo, Menui, Muna, Buton, Tolaki, Tolaki Kulissusu, Javanese and Balinese. Intermarriage between these groups is common. None of my respondents cited examples of inter-ethnic conflict. Most of the Javanese and Balinese came to Wawonii as part of the transmigration program begun under Suharto. Other ethnicities came to Wawonii because of marriage or trade. The Bugis community in Wawonii is heavily involved in the boat-building trade, for example. Most of the Bajo people, on the other hand, trade fish and other sea products with people from surrounding islands. Because of intermarriage and poorly-kept government records, reliable statistics for the populations of different ethnic groups on Wawonii are unavailable.
52 Kecamatan Wawonii Timur Laut and Kecamatan Wawonii Selatan.
53 ‘RASKIN’ derives from ‘Beras untuk Keluarga Miskin’, or ‘Rice for poor families’. This government program, originally called ‘Operasi Pasar Khusus Beras’ (OPS), meaning ‘Market program/ operation specially
sells for Rp. 3000 – Rp. 3500/ litre, yellow sacks of medium quality rice for Rp. 6500/ litre and high quality rice$^{54}$ for Rp. 10 000/ litre. The men sprawled themselves over the sacks of rice in the sun.$^{55}$ Rice is taken every day to Wawonii because the rice farming on Wawonii is not efficient enough, they said. The green trucks beside the sacks of rice were carrying steel rods which the men told me would be used for building bridges on Wawonii. I walked around the boat, looking at the other things that were being taken to the island.$^{56}$ I saw boxes of matches, many different types of snacks, boxes of noodles, eggs, green bean cakes, bananas, cooking oil, petrol, chocolate, drinking water, vitamin C drink powder, lollipops, white flour, Balinese cakes, tofu, tea, big bundles of carrots, corn, juice, peanuts, motorbikes, plastic cups, water dispensers, soy sauce, rice cookers, dvd players, motorbike tyres and inner tubes. Beside the stairs there were about fifty boxes stacked up. They were blank. Pak Idham, one of the sub-district heads, told me they were full of Topi Bintang, a type of alcohol which has a strength of 17.5% and sells in Wawonii for Rp. 35 000/ litre. He said he used to drink it when he was younger. He told me it’s very popular among men$^{57}$ on Wawonii, particularly those living in Lampiapi, who have a reputation for getting drunk and fighting.

Two women slouching on top of the sacks of rice made room for me to sit. They were both from Wawonii. One, Bu Hapsah, was a high school teacher. Bu Rabia, the other woman, was a copra farmer. Bu Rabia smiled instead of speaking. Bu Hapsah repeated the things I said for her in the Wawonii language. Bu Rabia has

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$^{54}$ Beras kepala kualitas bagus.
$^{55}$ Wawonii language: oleo; Indonesian: matahari.
$^{56}$ Wawonii language: pulo; Indonesian: pulau.
$^{57}$ Not all men, however, only ‘orang nakal’ (naughty people).
three children: two in Kendari at high school and Haluoleo University and one at primary school in Wawonii. She owns 300 coconut trees,\(^5\) and her parents own 200. Every three months the 500 coconut trees produce about 2.5 tons of copra. Bu Rabia said she sells the copra herself in Kendari to buyers from Surabaya. She does this three or four times each year. Now, the buyers from Surabaya pay about Rp. 35 000/ kg. The price fluctuates. She said that the amount of copra that can be extracted from coconut trees depends on the season and the quality of the fruit. At its best, 1.5 tons of copra can be extracted from 150 coconut trees.

As we talked, the ferry passed pearl and seaweed farms,\(^5\) Bajo men diving for sea cucumber\(^6\) and lop-sided old wooden boats going from Wawonii to Kendari. Silver flying fish leapt up in front of the ferry, out of the clutches of the spirits\(^6\) beneath the thick tongue of water. In the months to come, Wawonii people would relate stories of these spirits, of fearful captains and boats being turned back to Kendari, hindered from carrying on to Wawonii by shimmering female sea spirits. About halfway between Wawonii and Kendari, we passed a small island populated mainly by Bajo people. Men were out in small boats fishing.

A soldier in military uniform named Reza offered me a cigarette. Reza had been in the military for eight years. He was born in a village\(^6\) on the northeast coast of Wawonii. His family had sent him to high school in Kendari. After that his uncle, who was also in the military, had helped him enter the army. Reza had been

\(^5\) The *Cocos nucifera* (Latin), a member of the family *Arecaceae* (Latin), has important practical, ritual and symbolic uses throughout Southeast Asia (Giambelli 1998, p. 133).
\(^6\) People told me these belonged to local politicians in Kendari and businessmen from Surabaya.
\(^5\) Local explained that in Southeast Sulawesi, most of the sea cucumber is farmed around Muna Island.
\(^6\) Wawonii language: *kadadi*; Indonesian: *setan*. Both are general terms for malevolent spirits, rather than specific names.
\(^6\) Wawonii language: *kampo/desa*; Indonesian: *kampung/desa*.  

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deployed in Papua for a few years. He told me he was looking for a wife and gave me his phone number.

Arriving in Langara, the old iron ferry clunked against the rusty port. A large white phinisi boat and several smaller wooden boats were anchored nearby. On shore, people were clustered around the dock. Women carried baskets full of coconut and molasses-sugar cakes. Men were selling fish. Several young men on motorbikes awaited passengers. The wind was really cracking and the ferry slammed repeatedly against the dock, knocking some of the motorbikes at the front of the ferry over. Some women shouted. One woman told me the boat was probably being driven by a Kendari boy learning how to do the job. The government frequently put learner boat drivers on this route, she said. Unlike the boats going to Bau-Bau and Wakatobi, which took foreigners and tourists, this ferry almost never took anyone except locals. The government had decided this route was not an important one.

Once the whacking had eased off a bit, a plank was laid out and people made their way precariously off the boat.

**Placing Wawonii within a displaced ethnography**

Whether or not ritual is explicitly addressed within ethnography, ethnography itself is a ritual. Frequently, though, many of the ritual aspects it invokes – such as that of creating ‘sacralizing texts’ such as a thesis – are simply performed and presented rather than being interrogated or at least having their power and authority questioned (Muecke 1999, p. 7). Within anthropology, positivism, functionalism and structuralism have all submitted to this wilful avoidance of a critical approach.

This chapter is about a place in Southeast Sulawesi (currently) called Wawonii,
Kabupaten Konawe Kepulauan (Konawe Archipelago District). It once had a different name (Kobimoa) and fell within a different district (Konawe). Change, place and knowledge are intimately linked. They are some of the central pillars of my work. As cultural and social changes occur in Wawonii, the distinctions between the real, surreal and unreal blur. Having exhausted this process, the real is restored, taking on a new form.

This chapter explores how Wawonii people conceptualized ideas of knowledge, power and reality. It also looks at how these concepts were enacted in the practicalities of day to day living. Further, this chapter addresses mythological and historical events Wawonii people considered important; religion as praxis encompassing patterns of ritual and habit; language as a performative device; the economic, ritual and symbolic importance of coconuts; the boat trade and sea spirits. These were all repeated topics of conversation, brought up by Wawonii people of different generations, genders and family backgrounds. Clearly, they were things that mattered.

While some biological research has been done on Wawonii (Rahayu & Rugayah 2007) and the island has been mentioned in broader research about Sulawesi (Vosmaer, 1862; Noorduyn 1991; Velthoen 1997; Ananta, Arifin, Hasbullah, Handayani & Pramono 2015), as far as I am aware, no significant anthropological research has been carried out there. This thesis therefore aims to fill this gap in the anthropological and ethnographic work of Indonesia. Although this chapter is about place and knowledge, it is not simply about the knowledge of a place. Knowledge has no address; it is not buried on an island waiting for an ethnographer to come and dig it up. Whereas many types of local Wawonii knowledge are ‘about keeping things alive in their place’, ethnographic knowledge is fundamentally a way of practicing ‘displacement’ (Muecke 1999, p. 7). In other words, bringing knowledges out of the structures

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63 It is unclear why ‘archipelago’ has been used in the name of this district. The Wawonii people I spoke to told me that the only island in this district is Wawonii. Some people from North Wawonii said perhaps there were small islands off the south coast of Wawonii they did not know about that belonged to Wawonii. All of the sub-districts of Konawe Archipelago District are located on Wawonii.
in which they first appeared (songs, ancestral stories, theoretical texts etc.) and re-arranging them, allowing them to speak to each other, being attentive to the points which make a re-reading of each other possible. My work emphasises the dynamism of these knowledge-practices.

**Negotiating balance, adjusting apertures**

*The more attentively, fixedly, one observes a reality, the better that one sees that it does not correspond to people’s idea of it.*

- *The Curtain, Milan Kundera*

Much like braving the precarious plank between boat and port, an ethnographic journey is less a process of facile navigation from ignorance to knowledge than a series of moves which destabilise what the ethnographer had initially thought of as ‘knowledge’. Sooner or later, the ethnographer’s apertures need adjusting. Regardless of how well-prepared an ethnographer may consider themselves to be, ethnography always begins with ill-adjusted apertures. As the ethnographic journey unfolds and the ethnographer adjusts their apertures, what can be known slowly comes into focus. A perfectly-focused image is unattainable. The ethnographer starts to adjust during fieldwork and continues re-adjusting during the writing which follows the ethnographic stage. As the manipulator of the lens, the ethnographer is responsible for the construction which results from this series of adjustments. Negotiations between the ethnographer and ethnographic subjects develop as ethnographic subjects engage in processes of revealing and concealing; processes deeply embedded within each other.

These precarious adjustments are contained within the processes of knowledge formation, re-formation and de-formation. Having begun with abstract, theoretical knowledge,
in the field, ethnographers encounter many more layers of knowledge, where textured forms of apparently “magical” know-how knowledge blend into apparently “real” know-that knowledge until there is little point drawing lines between these categories, not least because the people we work with rarely do.

A precarious introduction

Surrounded by the Banda Sea, Wawonii is an island with an area of 867.58 km².64 It lies within the province of Southeast Sulawesi. Kendari, a city65 with a population of approximately half a million people (in 2013), is the capital city of this province.

Until 2013, Wawonii was part of Konawe district. The capital of Konawe is Unaaha. Most of the population of Konawe are Tolaki people who live on the mainland, in and around Kendari. The official population of Wawonii is 30 000 people. However, the head of the village where I lived66 in Wawonii explained that he and other village heads had reported more people in their villages than there actually were because officials from the Ministry of the Interior told them that Wawonii required a population of 30 000 before they would be eligible for district status. Actually, local people told me, there are only about 20 000 people living in Wawonii.

In 2013, Wawonii became its own district, ‘Konawe Archipelago District’.67 This area is divided into eight sub-districts (kecamatan): North Wawonii, East Coast Wawonii, East Wawonii, Southeast Wawonii, Central Wawonii, South Wawonii, West Wawonii and Wawonii. My research took place in North Wawonii, which consists of ten villages: Lansilowo, Bangun Mekar, Dongkalaea, Labeau, Mata Buranga, Noko, Mawa, Palingi, Waworope and Tombaone. These villages each contain between 200 and 500 inhabitants. Lansilowo, the capital of this sub-district, is the largest village, with approximately 1000 inhabitants.

64 <http://www.antarasultra.com/print/264343/wawonii-akan-jadi-pusat-industri-perikanan-sultra>
65 Kota in both Wawonii language and Indonesian.
66 ‘To live’ in Wawonii language: moia; Indonesian: tinggal.
67 Kabupaten Konawe Kepulauan
The capital of Konawe Archipelago District is Langara, the largest town on Wawonii. Langara falls within the sub-district of Langara Indah. Lamoluo, Langara Laut, Langara Iawawo and Wawolaa are the four villages which belong to this sub-district. Langara has been the centre of local government on Wawonii since 1962. Prior to 1962, Lampiapi, a smaller town in the mountains of Central Wawonii, was the most important town on the island. A descendent of the former royal family explained that this was because of the conflict brought to Wawonii from South Sulawesi by Kahar Muzakar’s DI/ TII troops. Lampiapi’s location was less vulnerable than that of Langara. In 1962, after the conflict had stopped, Rasifkende became the first sub-district head of Wawonii. His government decided that for practical and strategic reasons, Langara would be the seat of local government. Langara is on the western coast of Wawonii and therefore quicker and easier to reach from Kendari.

Women selling cakes in the local market differentiated Langara from other villages on Wawonii by describing it as ‘like the system of a city’. 70 They explained this in economic terms: people in Langara have money to buy goods at the markets. Everywhere else in Wawonii, people have very little money to buy things so goods such as fish or bananas are exchanged rather than sold. Products like cigarettes and sweets are ‘sold’ using credit that is rarely repaid. People commonly exchange labour-intensive favours – such as working on each other’s boats or splitting coconuts open for copra – when they cannot pay for goods. Most Wawonii people have relatives living in Kendari or working at one of the many mines in Southeast Sulawesi who send things their families need on one of the daily boats. These relatives also bring supplies for their families when they visit.

68 Darul Islam/ Tentara Islam Indonesi
69 Pak Camat
70 ‘sudah seperti sistem kota’
Official languages, whispered languages

Between sixty and eighty languages are spoken in Sulawesi (Noorduyn 1991, p. 1). On Wawonii, the local language\(^{71}\) is Bahasa Wawonii. While no comprehensive study of Bahasa Wawonii that I know of has been done, one grammatical study and a wordlist of Bahasa Wawonii vocabulary has been written (Noorduyn 1991, p. 117). Bahasa Wawonii is an Austronesian language. It is most closely related to the Tolaki, Menui, Kulususu, Bungku and Moronene languages. These languages are mutually comprehensible with Bahasa Wawonii. Of these, Bahasa Wawonii is most closely related to Kulususu, with some linguists considering them to be the same language (Noorduyn 1991, p.118).\(^{72}\)

Most people in Langara and North Wawonii can speak the national language, Bahasa Indonesia. Local people told me that in East Wawonii, Central Wawonii and Southeast Wawonii, fewer people speak the national language than in North Wawonii. Boat services from these areas to Kendari are less frequent and contact with people and places outside Wawonii is rarer. The communities in these areas are more ethnically homogenous, whereas in Langara and North Wawonii, ethnic Wawonii people live alongside people from Bugis, Butonese, Menui, Bajo and other ethnic groups.\(^{73}\) In Langara, people said that Bahasa Wawonii is used in the schools in East, Central and Southeast Wawonii, and, as a consequence, young people from those areas suffer because they cannot find employment later in Kendari, since they have not mastered the national language. There are slight variations between the Bahasa Wawonii used in the different parts of the island.

\(^{71}\) *bahasa daerah*

\(^{72}\) ‘Some linguistic experts maintain that they have their own language, the Wawonii or Kalisusu. However, others have shown that it is just a dialect of Tolaki’ (Ananta, Arifin, Hasbullah, Handayani, Pramono 2015, p. 35).

\(^{73}\) There is some disagreement as to whether Wawonii people make up their own ethnic group, or whether they are a component of the larger Tolaki ethnic group. Some Wawonii people I spoke with claimed Wawonii people were distinct from the Tolaki, while others said they were the same. Some people claimed both to be true. Although some demographers have classified Wawonii people as ‘a sub-ethnic group of Tolaki’ (Ananta, Arifin, Hasbullah, Handayani, Pramono 2015, p. 35), I treat Wawonii people as distinct from their mainland cousins because in conversations with Wawonii people, they most often differentiated between the two.
Bahasa Wawonii is used in ‘tiup-tiup’ treatment.\textsuperscript{74} During the tiup-tiup procedure, prayers or mantras from the ancestors are whispered, often over a glass of water.\textsuperscript{75} These are not prayers from the Qur’an, and no Arabic is used. Tiup-tiup is a performative utterance, containing authoritative capacities and acting with power (Austin 1962, p. 6).

Tiup-tiup treatment is commonly used when a person is ill or a woman is bleeding excessively following birth. When a local dukun bayi\textsuperscript{76} told me that the person performing tiup-tiup ‘recites/reads prayers or mantras from the ancestors,’\textsuperscript{77} she did not mean that a text had to be read out. It was considered more effective if the person read aloud without any text, as this would indicate that the knowledge of the prayers and mantras had been well embedded within the person’s mind, body and spirit. Both men and women were permitted to perform tiup-tiup. Some prayers or mantras only require one recitation, while others are repeated three times. People learn tiup-tiup from their parents. The dukun bayi reported that regular Bahasa Wawonii\textsuperscript{78} is used during tiup-tiup. In other parts of Eastern Indonesia, ancient, secret or ritual forms of language are used. For example, ritual languages (basa sangiang) and ancestral languages (li’i marapu) are used in ceremonies among the Ngaju Dayak and Sumbanese people (Fox 1988, p. 9; Kuipers 1990, p. 3). Rather than using ritual speech to convey authority during tiup-tiup ceremonies, Wawonii people appealing to forms of knowledge derived from ancestors\textsuperscript{79} use current forms of Bahasa Wawonii. The authority of this language form is created by secrecy and performance. Prayers and mantras are not allowed to be told to anyone who is not considered a ritual or religious expert. Chapter Five explores the specific ways in which Wawonii people deployed tiup-tiup as an important performative practice in the context

\textsuperscript{74} Derived from the Indonesian verb ‘meniup’, meaning ‘whisper’, ‘blow’ or ‘sweep’.
\textsuperscript{75} ‘Water’ in Wawonii language: baho; Indonesian: air.
\textsuperscript{76} A highly respected woman in her early fifties who was said to have special knowledge from the ancestors. As a dukun bayi, she looked after many women before, during and immediately following birth. She also performed tiup-tiup treatment, massage and other healing practices on villagers when they were ill.
\textsuperscript{77} ‘baca doa atau mantra dari nenek moyang dulu.’
\textsuperscript{78} ‘bahasa daerah biasa’
\textsuperscript{79} ‘nenek moyang dulu’
of perceived threats to physical and social bodies within the village. As Chapter Five shows, *tiup-tiup* is closely related to *angin*, or winds which may foreshadow ill health or bring evil spirits such as Kandoli and Parakka.

Indonesian is used in schools and when official visits are made by government officials. Sometimes it is also used between people of different ethnicities. In the village where I lived, for example, a Bajo woman married to a Wawonii man, although she could speak Bahasa Wawonii, preferred to use Bahasa Indonesia with other villagers. Because they do not want their children to be at a disadvantage in school, parents usually use Bahasa Indonesia at home with children under the age of about ten. With teenage children, Bahasa Wawonii is used. According to the official story, these people speaking these languages live on a single island named Wawonii. Wawonii people, however, have vivid stories of a second island they call Wawonii Number Two.

**Wawonii Number Two**

*Alice had got so much into the way of expecting nothing but out-of-the-way things to happen, that it seemed quite dull and stupid for life to go on in the common way.*

- *Alice in Wonderland, Lewis Carroll*

**Bapak Imran: An Historical Island**

I'm sitting beside Bapak Imran as he bangs a rod of iron into shape over a spluttering flame. In his mid-50s, Bapak Imran makes the fishgigs for some of the small villages on the northern coast of Wawonii. He points to Menui Island, visible from the beach we're sitting on.

'That's where it comes up, beside Menui Island. Wawonii Number Two is bigger than Menui. It's a historical island.' He tells me, pounding away. As he hammers
the glowing iron into shape, Bapak Imran tells me what he knows about Wawonii Number Two.

'During the G30S\textsuperscript{80} period, the PKI\textsuperscript{81} and the Indonesian military were fighting in Wawonii. Then Wawonii Number Two appeared for a whole day.' Bapak Imran says.

He tells me he last saw it appear when he was a teenager.

'We only see Wawonii Number Two if it is the fate of the descendents of the royal family to die soon,' he states.

There is a lot of gold on Wawonii Number Two, Bapak Imran tells me, but people cannot take it because they will drown when the island sinks again.\textsuperscript{82}

'In the future, the fate of Wawonii people will be good.' He says. 'If Wawonii people have a good fate, they will end up on Wawonii Number Two in the afterlife.'

How long does Wawonii Number Two remain above the water when it appears, I ask.

'It's not a set time. Sometimes for a few hours, sometimes almost a day, sometimes less,' he replies.

As he finishes one fishgig and starts another, Bapak Imran recalls seeing Wawonii Number Two a second time, a few years ago. Upon returning from a fishing trip to Seru, a Bugis man who had lived for many years on Wawonii, was sick. Shortly

\textsuperscript{80} G30S indicates ‘Gerakan 30 September’ or ‘The Movement of September 30th’. Along with ‘Gestapu’, this was the New Order term for the action on September 30\textsuperscript{th} and October 1\textsuperscript{st} 1965 in which six military generals were assassinated in Jakarta in an attempted putsch. Both terms linked the PKI (Indonesian Communist Party) and its supporters with the assassinations, and murderous acts in general (such as those committed by the Nazi Gestapo) (Roosa 2006, p. 29).

\textsuperscript{81} Partai Komunis Indonesia (Indonesian Communist Party).

\textsuperscript{82} Throughout this chapter, in Wawonii peoples’ accounts, gold is regularly linked with notions of powerful (divine, magical, royal, historical) people and places. These associations are found elsewhere in Indonesia, for example in the Javanese story of Pandan Arang. ‘Pandan Arang was a great lover of gold and jewels; in the department of worldly wealth, his ambitions knew no bounds. At least such was the case until Sunan Kalijaga, the most famous of the Nine Saints, visited Semarang. To demonstrate the relative value of wealth, Kalijaga pulled out a shovel, concentrated for a moment, and then got to work. Each shovelful of earth he overturned miraculously transformed itself into gold. Stunned by this act of power, Pandan Arang followed Kalijaga’s command, abandoned his wealth, and retired to Bayat for seclusion and meditation’ (Pemberton 1994, p. 281).
after returning, he died. In between his death and his burial, Wawonii Number Two appeared, an event which Bapak Imran links directly to the man's genealogy.

'Transcendence occurred because he was superior. He was a direct descendent of royalty, so Wawonii Number Two appeared,' Bapak Imran says.

**Ibu Anisa and Ibu Ririn: Piles of Gold as Big as Water Buffalos**

Ibu Anisa and Ibu Ririn are sisters. No one seems to know how old they are, a minor detail which makes them chuckle whenever I bring it up. During my time in Wawonii, they've told me all sorts of things about themselves - from detailed accounts of giving birth to the latest village gossip. But when I first mention Wawonii Number Two, they look shocked and tell me in hushed voices to go and ask one of the old men in the village.

It is not until a couple of weeks later sitting alone in her kitchen that Ibu Anisa is willing to open up (again, in a hushed voice) about the magical island. She tells me she saw Wawonii Number Two a long time ago. Shortly after it appeared, it sank back down under the water again.

'Usually Wawonii Number Two stays above water between half an hour and an hour, then it sinks again. We can't see the people on Wawonii Number Two or reach the island ourselves, it's too far away. People say that those who tried in the past always drowned. Benevolent djinns live there. Wawonii Number Two looks like Menui Island. It appears beside Menui. The story is that if it appears, it's a sign. My parents knew the story, but they're dead now.'

A few weeks later, sitting outside Ibu Anisa's house drinking coffee, I bring up the magical island again. The two women, whose hearing is on the decline, think I've said I've seen Wawonii Number Two.
'Has anyone been affected yet?' they ask, faces strained with consternation.

I explain that I haven't seen Wawonii Number Two. The sisters tell me once more that the island appears near Menui Island.

'All the people who live on Wawonii Number Two are Hajis and benevolent Islamic spirits. This is why Wawonii Number Two appears, sinks and appears again. It's powerful,' they say, eyes widening.

Whereas Bapak Imran talked about Wawonii Number Two appearing during times of conflict or between a death and a funeral, Ibu Anisa and Ibu Ririn tell me that the island appears when social relations on Wawonii are calm, and so too is the sea. Over the course of our conversation they emphasize several times that there must be a calm atmosphere in the village for Wawonii Number Two to appear. Natural landscapes are infused with the same social energy generated between people in these small villages on the north coast. Taken together, they are reflected in the spiritual energy associated with Wawonii Number Two.

Like Bapak Imran, Ibu Ririn and Ibu Anisa tell me that the appearance of Wawonii Number Two, particularly when accompanied by a wind, is a sign of approaching disaster.

'It's a code. It means that the king or the king's descendants will die,' Ibu Ririn says.

The women proceed to liken the appearance of Wawonii Number Two to the eruption of Mount Wawonkewatu, a volcano near Lansilowo, about 5km away from where the women live. This volcano also erupted to warn people of the impending death of royalty and their descendants.

'The eruption was a code, it was just like the appearance of Wawonii Number Two,' the women tell me.

Ibu Ririn tells me that since the eruption of Mount Wawonkewatu was a code, it was not the same as a real eruption that leaves victims behind. Mount Wawonkewatu's eruptions did not harm villagers because they were warnings. 'Usually two nights after an eruption there would be news that the king had died. But now that there's no more king on Wawonii, Mount Wawonkewatu doesn't erupt.'

Ibu Ririn and Ibu Anisa repeat that the eruption always preceded the death, that the sound of the eruption was the sign of a king’s impending death.

The symbolic links the women make between Wawonii and Wawonii Number Two continue.

'The gold on Wawonii Number Two is as big as the water buffalos in Waworope, a village about 10km away. No one can take the gold in Waworope. People guard it, so even if people go there to steal it, they won't succeed. If someone touches it, it disappears! People say there is so much gold there, the same size as a water buffalo, our ancestors told us about it.'

**Ibu Dita: A Sign, Not a Cause**

Ibu Dita squats on her kitchen floor. The fish her 15-year-old son brought in, still half-alive and thrusting around in the air about ten minutes ago, are crackling in the pan in front of her. Menui Island is faintly visible from Ibu Dita's kitchen. Born in Wawonii, Ibu Dita is a divorced mother of three children in her late 30s. Like others I've spoken to, the first thing Ibu Dita tells me about Wawonii Number Two is that it appears as a signal that a member of the royal family or one of their descendents will die. Ibu Dita herself is a distant descendent of royalty. Her older

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84 ‘Divorce’ in Wawonii language: *mompoea*; Indonesian: *cerai*. 

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brother was an 'opasu', an envoy of the last king, delivering messages between the royal family and the community.

Wawonii Number Two only appears momentarily, Ibu Dita says. She tells me she has seen Wawonii Number Two twice.

In contrast to Ibu Anisa and Ibu Ririn, Ibu Dita claims that when Wawonii Number Two appears, the waves become rough, and the wind is strong. This prevents people from reaching the island by boat.

Ibu Dita first saw Wawonii Number Two as a girl, with her grandmother. It was visible for about half an hour. Upon hearing that Wawonii Number Two had appeared, an elderly descendent of the royal family ran out of his house in Lansilowo, waving a broom around, shrieking, 'I am not a descendent of the royal family! I'm an ordinary man!' The man, a relative of Ibu Dita's, was afraid of being struck dead. Not long after that, he died.

Since then, some descendants of the royal family are too afraid to acknowledge their true genealogy, Ibu Dita tells me. They claim to be ordinary villagers instead. 'But the appearance of Wawonii Number Two is just a sign, not the cause, of a death.' Ibu Dita explains, taking the fried fish out of the boiling oil.

'Ve know that God makes Wawonii Number Two appear because God gives and takes everything away.' Ibu Dita says.

'Back in the time of our ancestors, people sent by the royal family walked across to Wawonii Number Two on a magic scarf on top of the water. Once there, they took the things needed by the royal family and returned to Wawonii with them. They were ordinary people, but they had special knowledge of the spiritual world. Now no one has this sort of knowledge. Before, older people taught it to their children

85 In Wawonii language, ‘Utusan’, also used in Wawonii, is the Indonesian term.
and grandchildren or they sent it to them in dreams. Knowledge of that sort isn't simply passed down through families, it has to be taught. But these days no one knows how to teach it anymore. There are many sorts of knowledge like that. We call it doti-doti.'

Ibu Dita tells me there are three large mountains on Wawonii Number Two.

'No one knows when it will appear, but it doesn't happen often. When it appears, people hear the sound of a gong, which scares descendants of the royal family.' she says.

Ibu Dita hands me a plate of fried fish and rice. It is time to eat.

**Ibu Ani and Bapak Ismail: The Destiny of Leaders**

Ibu Ani is an elderly widow who teaches local children to recite the Qur’an. Bapak Ismail, the headmaster at the local high school, is her son. We are sitting in Ibu Ani’s living room eating fried bananas on a hot afternoon. Ibu Ani returned from harvesting rice about an hour ago. Bapak Ismail arrives on his motorbike having just finished work.

Ibu Ani reacts somewhat like Ibu Anisa and Ibu Ririn when I first mention Wawonii Number Two. She looks slightly nervous and tells me to ask some of the old men in the village instead. She insists she's never seen Wawonii Number Two, tells me the important thing is to pray to God, and starts talking about something else.

Bapak Ismail, however, seems very happy to share all he knows about Wawonii Number Two with me.
When he was a boy, Bapak Ismail tells me, he saw Wawonii Number Two. Like the others in the village who have seen it, Bapak Ismail says it appeared beside Menui Island, which can be seen from his mother's house.

'Wawonii Number Two contains spiritual powers. I saw it rising slowly over there beside Menui when I was a boy. It usually appears when it's drizzling.'

Bapak Ismail echoes the views of others in the village. Wawonii Number Two is an historical island. God's power makes Wawonii Number Two appear. When it appears, it only stays above the water for a moment.

'When Wawonii Number Two appears, it's a sign or a warning. There are also other signs and warnings. For example, those relating to heat, natural signs, or social signs. There might be social unrest before Wawonii Number Two appears to alert people about an impending death or social conflict.'

Bapak Ismail explains an aspect of Wawonii Number Two I haven't yet encountered:

'Not everyone sees Wawonii Number Two when it rises out of the sea. There's a belief that people who've seen it are destined to become leaders. For example, I have seen Wawonii Number Two and now, as a headmaster, I am a leader of our community. Those who glimpse Wawonii Number Two are fortunate. But when Wawonii Number Two appears, kings and their descendants are also destined to die. So Wawonii Number Two brings good news and bad news.'

Bapak Ismail tells me that just after he saw Wawonii Number Two appear, there was a loud explosion from a cemetary in Langara. Both of these events were warning signs that shortly thereafter a member of the royal family would die.

'Then a young, unmarried girl named Rinkulele, a descendent of the royal family, suddenly died.' Bapak Ismail says, before excusing himself to take a nap.
Knowledge, Power, Reality

*I’m not strange, weird, off, nor crazy, my reality is just different from yours.*

- *Alice in Wonderland, Lewis Carroll*

As in other parts of Indonesia, magic is not just a method of interpretation, it is a powerful part of reality for Wawonii people. Sometimes, as in Ibu Dita’s account, it is closely linked with the power of God. Wawonii Number Two is widely agreed to be a supernatural messenger, a sign sent by God warning villagers of an approaching death. Here we see links to Javanese beliefs in social or political chaos being foreshadowed by volcanic eruptions, floods or other natural disasters.\(^{86}\) Indeed, as Ibu Anisa and Ibu Ririn explained, eruptions from Mount Wawonkewatu were interpreted in much the same way. Wawonii people clearly regard Wawonii Number Two as a source of great mystical and actual power.\(^ {87}\)

In accepting that there are multiple realities, the reality of Wawonii Number Two being among these, we must acknowledge that we cannot possibly know all realities. I have never seen Wawonii Number Two, and the things described by the men and women above have never been part of my reality. Since the anthropologist’s task – to explain the unknowable in terms of the known – is impossible, magic is required. The magic trick the university works on anthropologists is to convince them, via the might of anthropological theory and the history of the academy, that they are well-positioned to explain the realities of people such as these Wawonii villagers. Like every form of sorcery, this magical trope wields social and political power. Anthropologists have a long, questionable history of conducting the sorcery of self-

\(^{86}\) For example, the widely-held interpretation among the Javanese that Mount Merapi’s eruptions in 1994 signaled the downfall of the New Order regime (Dove 2007, p. 239).

\(^{87}\) Similarly, in Java, ‘spiritualizing nature, or making it *alus*’ is ‘*[t]*he correct relation of man [sic.] towards nature’ in a world where nature has life-enhancing or potentially devastating power over peoples’ lives (Magnis Suseno 1997, p. 127).
interest in their interactions with people in far-off places. From the early days of armchair anthropology, attempts to ‘explain’ the realities of people living ‘far-out lives’ in terms of academic theory have been at the basis of power structures which position the anthropologist as the ‘knower’ whose task it is to transform the exotic, ‘unknown’ native into a ‘knowable’ creature (Geertz 1988, p.6). Captured beneath the microscopic gaze of the academy, this exotic creature is ‘analysed’. Every time they wriggle beneath the spotlight, the anthropologist ascribes a meaning to the movement. This is known as ‘interpretation’. Conveniently for the anthropologist, they themselves are never made to wriggle beneath the glare. Despite making noises about ‘subjectivity’, the anthropologist essentially remains invisible. Theory becomes the incantation which justifies the anthropological endeavour. The idea that dialogues such as those concerning Wawonii Number Two must be ‘analysed’ in order to filter out fact from fiction is another much-loved strand of academic mythology. However, analysis is also a form of mythology. Unlike the descriptions of Wawonii Number Two, the mythology of analysis is backed by the Western academic canon. Simply because this canon bears a considerable degree of power does not mean that it can say something useful about Wawonii peoples’ realities. Instead, as they bring stories of ‘current history’ and ‘earlier history’ to life, Wawonii people themselves are both the creators and conveyors of their own worlds – powerful worlds in which islands rise up and down out of the sea, heralding portentous events.

**Earlier History, Current History**

*To articulate the past historically does not mean to recognize it “the way it really was”*  
*(Ranke). It means to seize hold of a memory as it flashes up at a moment of danger.*  
*Historical materialism wishes to retain that image of the past which unexpectedly appears to man singled out by history at a moment of danger.*

- On the Concept of History, Walter Benjamin
Older Wawonii people say that according to ‘earlier history’, Wawonii peoples’ ancestors were the Torete people, who came from an area just west of Kendari. Kulisusu people from northern Buton soon followed, and the two intermarried.

My Wawonii respondents explained the term Lakina/o to me. The last Lakina/o on Wawonii was Haji Muhammad Gazali. In Buton and Kaledupa, ‘Lakina’ is translated into Indonesian as ‘kepala wilayah’ or ‘regional head’. Among the Kulisusu people of North Buton, ‘lakino’ means ‘raja’ or ‘king’.

Haji Muhammad Gazali ruled between 1901 and 1904. He had four wives. His son Haji Muhammad Mahdi married Hajjah Yapis. Haji Muhammad Mahdi was considered a ‘religious leader’ His son, Pak Irham, related the ‘current history’ of his father’s family and the DI/TII conflict on Wawonii.

When the DI/TII soldiers entered Wawonii in early 1957, they intended to capture Haji Muhammad Mahdi because they believed he was powerful enough to influence Wawonii people and those living on the coast near Kendari to join the DI/TII. But Haji Muhammad Mahdi disagreed with forcing the type of Islam practised by the DI/TII on the people of Wawonii. He managed to escape before the DI/TII had a chance to capture him.

Later that year, however, the DI/TII invaders shot his wife and burnt his parents alive. They burnt down all the houses in Tangkumbuno, Ladianta and the rest of the villages in the northeastern corner of Wawonii where the royal family had lived.

People trying to escape their burning houses were shot. Haji Muhammad Mahdi’s

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88 Sejarah dulu
89 In our conversations, Wawonii people used the words ‘lakina’ and ‘lakino’ interchangeably.
90 ‘ahli ibadah, ahli agama’
91 Sejarah sekarang
sister ran into the forest and survived. The DI/ TII invaders continued burning down the villages in other parts of Wawonii as they searched for Haji Muhammad Mahdi. Haji Muhammad Mahdi fled to Kendari, where he went into hiding. He stayed there for about a year before returning to Wawonii in 1959. By that time, the DI/ TII had already reached Lampiapi. Haji Muhammad Mahdi gathered a group of Wawonii people to attack the DI/ TII and drive them out of Wawonii. Although it was Ramadhan, the people of Wawonii preferred to fight than continue suffering at the hands of the DI/ TII.

The villagers claimed they could defend themselves against the DI/ TII using magic. Haji Muhammad Mahdi told them they would die if they attempted this using their magic alone. Haji Muhammad Mahdi had a different type of ‘mystical inner power’ or ‘sixth sense’. Before going to fight, he knew who would be injured, and where. He told the villagers, who took the preventative measure of putting protective bandages on the areas where they would be wounded. Haji Muhammad Mahdi chose 60 villagers to join him in fighting the DI/ TII. Other Wawonii villagers went into hiding in the forests. Some of them used ‘magic which made them invisible.’

The villages were empty.

Haji Muhammad Mahdi and his 60 people set out from Ladianta, passing Lebo and Munse until they got to La’we, a village in the southern part of Wawonii, near Boboliho. In La’we they intended to capture a DI/ TII commander named Pacangapi. Pacangapi had married a Wawonii woman. When Haji Muhammad

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92 ‘ilmu kebatinan’
93 ‘indra keenam’
94 Among the Bugis, a person’s shadow, when ‘[b]eckoned, and properly subordinated to Allah,’ fulfills the requirement for protection by absorbing an attack, thus saving the physical body of the victim (Acciaioli 2004, p. 157).
95 ‘ada ilmu-ilmu tidak bisa dilihat orang’
Mahdi and his 60 villagers had reached Pacangapi’s house in La’we, they were too afraid to attack because they had heard that Pacangapi also possessed magical powers. Haji Muhammad Mahdi knocked on the door of his house and asked where Pacangapi was. Pacangapi’s wife told him Pacangapi had already gone into the mountains to escape.

Earlier, Pacangapi had run all the way to Boboliho, then to Bungkoro in the western part of Wawonii and continued until he had reached La’umpa, a village near Lampiapi. From La’umpa, he had travelled to Wungkolo. Haji Muhammad Mahdi and his 60 villagers followed him. That was on the 13th evening of Ramadhan at 3am.

Reaching Wungkolo, Haji Muhammad Mahdi asked the village head where Pacangapi and the DI/ TII soldiers were, and was told that they were in a village near the coast called La’mungumpa. La’mungumpa is near Lampiapi, which is further inland, in the mountains. Instead of taking the main road from Wungkolo to Lampiapi, Haji Muhammad Mahdi went via the small, secret routes in order to spy on Pacangapi and any DI/ TII he saw. Arriving in the mountains near Lampiapi, they spotted about 200 DI/ TII men. The leader of these men was not Pacangapi, but a man named Batira. Haji Muhammad Mahdi and his 60 villagers tied these men up. Upon Haji Muhammad Mahdi’s orders, one of his men, the designated ‘executioner’, cut off the heads of these DI/ TII. The bodies and heads of the DI/ TII were then buried in one mass grave. Throughout all of this, Haji Muhammad Mahdi’s men remained uninjured and untouched by bullets.

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96 Described as a ‘tukang potong’
‘because God decided to give them protection (…) the ones who were not shot had God’s blessing, God accepted their prayers, he accepted it when they said, don’t let me be hurt because I am defending the truth.’

By morning, the DI/ TII were defeated. The war between the DI/ TII and Wawonii villagers ended at 7am on the 13th day of Ramadhan, 1959.

Three days later, everyone in hiding in the forests went back to their villages. They began collecting the corpses of Wawonii people who had been killed by the DI/ TII. The bodies were all buried in one mass grave in Ladianta. Following this, TNI98 soldiers from Kendari came to Wawonii to re-establish order and investigate who had been at fault in the war.

Most of the DI/ TII soldiers who had entered Wawonii were Makassarese but there were also Bugis soldiers. Wawonii people also joined the DI/ TII. Most of the Wawonii people who joined the DI/ TII came from villages in the southwest, such as Bobolio, Lampiapi and La’we. They joined for economic reasons. They were poorer than Wawonii people in the northeast, where the royal family was based. This created jealousy. The DI/ TII gave Wawonii villagers who joined them clothing, food and other supplies. After the DI/ TII had been defeated, those Wawonii people who had joined them left Wawonii. Only after a long time when it was safe did some of them come back. Feelings of revenge99 remained, but no material retribution was taken on these people because they were family.100 Wawonii people do not consider this to be a war between the DI/ TII and Wawonii. Instead, they call it

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97 ‘karena keputusan Tuhan diberikan perlindungan kepada Tuhan … yang tidak tembus ya berkah dari Tuhan mungkin doanya diterima ya terhadap Tuhan toh ah diterima bahwa saya jangan celakan saya dengan mempertahankan kebenaran.’

98 Tentara Nasional Indonesia (Indonesian National Army)

99 ‘hanya dendam hati saja’

100 ‘karena dia pun bagaimana sekeluarga juga semua’
‘a real war, a blood war, it was a civil war, it wasn’t only the DI/ TII who killed and were killed, from different ethnic groups too, but there were also Wawonii people who killed and were killed.’

This period of Wawonii history was described as ‘current history’ whereas earlier invasions, such as those by the Tobelo ‘pirates’ are considered ‘earlier history’. Rather than possessing a ‘history in the sense of a set of texts setting out a linear chronology of events’, Wawonii people have ‘a sense of time, a sense of past events, and ways of connecting past events to ones taking place in the here and now’ (Muecke 1999, p. 5). Theirs is an ‘effective’ history characterised by ‘discontinuity’ which unfolds within and between multiple unstable bodies.

Religion: origins and orthopraxy

Almost all Wawonii inhabitants are Sunni Muslims, and most villages have at least one small mosque. Small groups of Hindu Balinese and Christians from West Nusa Tenggara were brought to Lampiapi in the 1980s under the national government’s transmigration program. During a year of fieldwork, however, I did not meet a single non-Muslim resident of Wawonii, nor did I see a single non-Islamic place of worship.

There are several different stories about how Islam came to Wawonii. Some local men claimed that La’ Embo was the first person to bring Islam to Wawonii. Others say that

101 ‘benar-benar perang betul, perang darah, perang saudara namanya bukan hanya DTI yang bunuh ah dibunuh dari suku lain tetapi ada juga orang Wawonii yang bunuh dan dibunuh.’
102 ‘bajak laut’
103 Velthoen (1997) describes pirate activities (including the Tobelo) in Sulawesi and other parts of Eastern Indonesia during the colonial period.
104 ‘History becomes “effective” to the degree that it introduces discontinuity into our very being – as it divides our emotions, dramatizes our instincts, multiplies our body and sets it against itself. “Effective” history deprives the self of the reassuring stability of life and nature and it will not permit itself to be transported by a voiceless obstinacy toward a millennial ending. It will uproot its traditional foundations and relentlessly disrupt its pretended continuity. This is because knowledge is not made for understanding; it is made for cutting’ (Foucault 1977, p. 154).
105 Also called ‘a son of Wawonii’ (‘putra Wawonii’).
Wawonii has always been Muslim, since the time of the ancestors.\footnote{sejak adanya pulau Wawonii sudah adanya orang sudah menganut agama Islam karena di Pulau Wawonii ini sudah dari nenek moyangnya...} A descendent of the royal family claimed that it was Manuwambu, the third king of Wawonii, who first converted to Islam, convincing local people to do the same. According to the imam in the village where I lived, Islam was first brought to Wawonii three centuries ago from Aceh.\footnote{The imam was the only person I encountered who made this claim. None of the research I have read has either supported or refuted this statement. In Wawonii and Indonesia more broadly, knowledge, particularly of religious, spiritual and belief-based practices, is commonly retained and passed on in the repetition of orally transmitted stories.} Before that, Buddhism had been the leading belief system in Wawonii.

The orthopraxic aspects of Islam are important in terms of the daily habits, practices and rituals which are enacted in the small Wawonii villages I got to know. These habits, practices and rituals bring particular forms of life into being, while foreclosing other possibilities. Islamic orthopraxy\footnote{For more on the orthopraxy/ orthodoxy dichotomy, see Geertz (1973, p. 177).} influences the social and cultural lives of people living in Wawonii. Within my work, I focus on Islam primarily as an orthopraxy.

**On top of the coconut palm**

Sailing towards Wawonii, the abundance of coconut palms on the island is unmistakable. The word ‘Wawonii’ comes from ‘wawo’, which, in the local language means ‘on top of’, and ‘ni’i’ which means ‘coconut palm’. The coconut palm is the central motif in the emblem of Konawe Archipelago District.

Coconut palms are an important part of the economy, ritual practices and mythological origins of Wawonii. This is also true of other ethnic groups in Indonesia, such as the Balinese (Giambelli 1998), Bajo (Stacey 1999), Tolaki and Wakaokili (Alesich 2007). The symbolic importance of the coconut is also found elsewhere in Indonesia. In the Bugis *samban* ritual, a coconut placed on the belly of a pregnant woman symbolises the importance of remembering
one’s origins (Kovnat 2010). Among the Butonese, the splitting of a coconut during the ndo ndo kunde’e ceremony symbolises birth (Southon 1995). Clusters of coconuts symbolise family connections in Toraja speech rituals (Fox 1988, p. 324). Coconuts are a prominent feature of the bera kokuru (‘to split a coconut’) name-giving ritual practised by the Rindi people of Sumba (Forth, 1983). In Bali, the Mesabatan Api ritual is held in Banjar Nagi, Gianyar, on Pengerupukan, which is the day before Balinese New Year, Nyepi. During this ritual, burning coconut husks are thrown at others in order to dispel evil from the participants’ bodies so that they may begin Nyepi peacefully. Northeast of Bali, on the island of Seram, Maluku, the local tale of origin tells of how the mythical ancestor Hainuwele, whose name means ‘frond of the coconut palm’, emerged from the first coconut palm that ever appeared on the island (Campbell 1960, p.174). In other parts of Asia, coconuts are also a central part of ritual symbology. It is not only among the Bugis, Butonese and Balinese people that coconuts represent family origins, fertility, and purification. In India, Hindu and Jain people also make these associations (Reynell 2006, p. 228).

**The earlier history of coconuts**

Pak Setyo, a descendent of the former Wawonii royal family, explained the place of coconuts in the ancestral stories about earlier Wawonii history and how the island came to be given this name.

According to earlier Wawonii history, the first deity or god\(^{109}\) to come to the island was La’ Tungga.\(^{110}\) La’ Tungga came from the sky\(^{111}\) with 70 people, his troops.\(^{112}\) He arrived in Tangkumbuno, which is just above the village of Ladianta, in the northeastern area of Wawonii. Out of his 70 troops, La’ Tungga chose seven to

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\(^{109}\) ‘khayangan, dewa’

\(^{110}\) Many Bugis names also begin with ‘La’.

\(^{111}\) Wawonii language: langi; Indonesian: langit.

\(^{112}\) ‘orang, pasukan’
become kings of Wawonii. The names of these seven were Batu, Kamina, Burane, Sangka, Menteh, Batu and Sigala. A vote was planned to decide who would be the first king of Wawonii. Before the vote however, they went down to the coast to find food and other supplies for the voting ceremony. La’ Tungga’s hobby was fishing. He went fishing in Ladianta, but instead of catching any fish all he caught was a small, empty tube-like vessel made of gold. He threw it back into the ocean and continued fishing. But La’ Tungga continued to catch the empty golden vessel. Finally, he decided to take the vessel home. At home, a community discussion\textsuperscript{113} took place to decide who would be king. The seven candidates all wanted to be king and they began to argue. La’ Tungga had tied the vessel to a tree. While the seven candidates were arguing, the vessel fell. The sound of a child’s voice was heard coming from inside the vessel. La’Tungga panicked and the seven candidates were afraid. The child inside the vessel said he would become king. La’Tungga cut the vessel open and a young boy emerged. This boy became the first king of Wawonii. As his feet touched the ground for the first time, the first coconut tree\textsuperscript{114} appeared. This happened in Waworete, a mountain in the northeastern part of Wawonii, not far from Tangkumbuno, where La’ Tungga had arrived. This coconut tree had seven branches. The people panicked and proclaimed the boy the king of Wawonii. The boy was called Kobimoa, which means ‘empty vessel’. The official, sacred name of Wawonii was also Kobimoa. In daily usage, however, the word ‘Wawonii’ was used, referring to how the first coconut tree, with seven branches, had appeared immediately following the boy’s emergence from the vessel. When sailors and fishermen from other islands stopped in Wawonii and asked what the name of the island was, people said ‘Wawonii’. That is how the island came to be

\textsuperscript{113} 'musyawarah' \\
\textsuperscript{114} 'ni'i'
known as Wawonii.\textsuperscript{115}

Whether or not these events actually took place, the links between coconuts and Wawonii’s earlier history and local identity and the economic and symbolic value of this fruit continue to be an important part of everyday life. Local people still talk about ‘branched’ coconut palms\textsuperscript{116} in northeastern Wawonii which are hundreds of years old and cannot be cut down because of their links to ancient royal power. These trees either have three\textsuperscript{117} or seven branches.\textsuperscript{118}

Several aspects of this story of earlier Wawonii history are found in similar stories in other parts of Indonesia. Close links between coconut trees and origin stories are found in Bali (Giambelli 1998, p. 140). In Tolaki legends of mythical origins, the ancestors, such as La’ Tungga, came from the sky. Furthermore, the legend of the seven sisters is an important part of Tolaki ancestral mythology (Alesich 2007, p. 15). The seven Minahasan clans are descended from the seven children (Tonsea, Tondano, Tombulu, Tombasso, Tontemboan, Toulour and Tomohon) of the original ancestral pair: Toar (the male sun ancestor) and Lumimu’ut (the female earth ancestor) (Haris, Martin, Saragih & Mahendra 2010). Among the Bajo, people are also believed to have descended from seven original ancestors: Mbo Janggo, Mbo Tambirah, Mbo Buburra, Mbo Marraki, Mbo Malummu, Mbo Dugah and Mbo Goyah (Stacey 1999, p. 68) The number seven appears in Makassarese and Javanese mythology, as the \textit{wali pitue} and \textit{wali songo}. In the \textit{tiwah} death ceremony performed by the Ngaju Dayak of Central Kalimantan, chants are uttered seven times and the ‘animate essence’ of scattered rice is believed to become transformed into seven messengers who travel to the upper world to appeal to the powerful ancestor of origin, \textit{Raja Duhung Mama Tandang Langkah Sawang Apang Bungai Sangiang}, for assistance in processing the souls of the deceased (Schiller 1997, p. 57, 51). The number

\textsuperscript{115}This story continues in greater detail in Chapter One.
\textsuperscript{116}‘pohon kelapa bercabang’
\textsuperscript{117}‘bercabang tiga’
\textsuperscript{118}‘bercabang tujuh’
seven has a prominent place in the Vedas. Furthermore, the Qur’an also mentions the number seven in verse Al-Mu’munun 23:17:

‘And we have created above you seven layered heavens, and never have we been of [our] creation unaware.’

Coconuts as brideprice

In Wawonii, coconut trees are indispensable as part of the brideprice system. A descendent of the former royal family described it in this way:

‘In former times there were regulations (...) Because it was the king’s decision that coconuts must be a part of brideprice since coconuts are a product of Wawonii…’

The brideprice ‘package’ usually consists of 20 – 30 coconut palms (or an equivalent sum of money), betel and areca nut, a 1-5g gold ring, a sarong, three sheets of white cloth and an official certificate of marriage. One respondent explained that the reason for this was,

‘because the ancestors used to do it also like this, so we have to as well.’

A brideprice ceremony is held. The prospective bridegroom’s family puts on special clothes and goes to the house of the prospective bride’s family with these things. They sit down

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119 The Vedas mention the seven auspicious mothers, sisters, male children, heroes, mouths, -toned people, mighty ones, holy singers, priests, hands, strong and youthful coursers, holy voices, songs, devotions, -headed hymn, communities, cows, tongues, currents, mother streams, mighty rivers, flowing rivers, strong floods, great floods, -tongued flames, great treasures, rich treasures, rays, lights of sacrifice, libations, spears, glories, splendours, places, pathways, regions, bay steeds, swift steeds, castles, -wheeled car, threads, autumn forts, guiding reins, tones, sages, elements. <http://www.cakravartin.com/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2008/08/vedas.pdf>. This list is not exhaustive.

120 ‘mahar’

121 Among the Sehariya people of Madhya Pradesh, India, offering a coconut and other items to the prospective bride confirms that dapa (brideprice) has been settled (Mann & Mann 1989, p. 61). In the Admiralty Islands of Papua New Guinea, before money replaced it, coconut oil formed a part of brideprice (Ohnemus 1998, p. 193).

122 ‘Itu dulu kan ada persyaratan (...) Karena itu keputusan dari raja bahwa mahar itu harus kelapa ah karena hasilnya Wawonii adalah kelapa...’

123 ‘karena leluhur dulu juga begitu, jadi harus kita.’
in two rows, each family facing the other. The parents of the bridegroom give the parents of the bride the brideprice. If this is accepted, it means the bride’s family welcomes the marriage and considers the amount of brideprice to be adequate. Warm water is then drunk, the betel and areca nut are shared, sweets are eaten and the wedding is discussed.

The whiteness of the betel and areca nut represents honesty and purity, and the roundness represents the common hopes of the two families which are now united for the future happiness of the couple. The common desire of the two families to prevent future conflict from occurring is thus vividly depicted in this pre-wedding ceremony. Wawonii people consistently emphasised the harmonious character of villages on their island compared to villages in other parts of Indonesia.

Community leaders and the local government decided that under normal circumstances, only 20 – 30 coconut palms should be given as brideprice. This means that ancestors and traditions are being respected, while at the same time not putting too heavy a burden on families, which is often the case elsewhere in Indonesia. The minimum number of coconut palms given as brideprice is ten. This is the custom when a man marries a widow. In former times, when royalty were being married, fifty coconut trees were given. These days, the maximum is one hundred, which is paid when a young man from a poor family wants to marry a woman with royal heritage. As with other ethnic groups in Sulawesi, such as the Bugis, the amount of brideprice paid is a reflection of the social rank of the bride (Bolyard Millar

124 Wawonii language: kawir; Indoensian: pesta kawin.
125 Indonesian : tokoh masyarakat.
126 For example in Sumba, where in 2006 the local government began limiting the number of water buffaloes allowed to be slaughtered at funerals, weddings and other ritual ceremonies. Whereas previously people had been allowed to slaughter as many water buffaloes and other animals as they could afford, the government made a regulation allowing them to slaughter a maximum of three per ritual. Some people responded by performing rituals in more hidden places (behind houses, in forests) and continuing to slaughter many more than three animals. Others supported the new measure, telling me when I travelled around Sumba in 2008, that these cultural traditions had made them poor and therefore had to be changed. In Tana Toraja, South Sulawesi, attempts at enforcing similar regulations have also been made. Like in Sumba, however, these regulations are frequently ignored. In 2013, for example, I witnessed the slaughtering of hundreds of water buffalo at a funeral held in Rantepao.
Regardless of the social rank of the people being married, however, the groom’s family bears most of the cost of the wedding ceremony. Wedding celebrations on Wawonii involve whole villages and last for one, two or three days, depending on the resources available. Compared to weddings and ritual events in other parts of Indonesia, these occasions are considered a small burden for the groom’s family.

If a family does not have coconut palms to give, money may be given instead. For the purposes of brideprice, one coconut palm is valued at Rp. 10 000 – Rp. 30 000. This is not considered the ‘price’ of a tree or an accurate reflection of its true economic value. The amount for one coconut tree should be no more than Rp. 30 000 because this is an adat ceremony, governed by culturally-sanctioned rules. Therefore, the trees are not being ‘sold’, they are being ‘given’. The land beneath the trees comes with them. Local people claimed that if the trees and land were sold on the open market, they could be sold for at least Rp. 500 000 per tree, but anyone trying to value them at that price for an adat ceremony, such as a wedding, would have to explain themselves to the devil in the afterlife.

At events such as the brideprice ceremony, the repetitive nature not only of individual and collective behaviour but also the treatment of the environment assists in generating the creation of social structures and moral categories. In the context of the brideprice ritual, treating the exchange of coconut trees as an economic transaction is an immoral act. These symbolic, value-laden structures and categories create the appearance of certainties which shelter vulnerable communities from the inherent fragilities of life in impoverished, isolated villages. Rituals are also necessary as existential structures linking Wawonii people with their ancestors and with systems of morality that prescribe socially acceptable ways of living. The social

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127 In other respects however, such as the ‘rankprice’ (sompa) and ‘spending money’ (dui menre) distinction, the Bugis brideprice system differs greatly from that found in Wawonii (Bolyard Millar 1989).

128 ‘Custom’, or in this context, ‘customary law’. As Pemberton (1994, p. 46) points out, the ‘law’ or ‘rules’ aspect of adat has a deeper historical grounding than retrospective ideas of ‘custom’.

129 iblis
continuity and stability over time that is created by repeated actions and repeated moral
categories is a common method in Indonesia for maintaining distinct social and ethnic
identities. ‘[C]ollective practice’ becomes ‘realized myth’ through the divisions of ‘time’
inherent in ceremony and ‘space’ or the surrounding environment (Bourdieu 1994, p.159). The
symbolic existence and practical function of temporal, spatial and moral structures is perhaps
more important than the reasoning behind them. When asked why widows received only ten
coconut trees as brideprice, people answered,

‘It has to be like that because the rules are like that’.

As has been well documented in other communities throughout Indonesia, wisdom is
frequently located in the past (earlier history, current history), with ancestors whose rules still
have a strong moral and social hold over communities today. A Wawonii man explained:

‘Dowry or brideprice means the reimbursement of a person’s self-worth. These are
rules from our ancestors or community leaders and people knowledgeable in
customary law.’

I asked about what happens to the money women are given if they aren’t given
coconut trees.

‘It depends on her. It’s her right,’ he said.

We talked a bit more. I asked him if it’s better to receive coconut trees or money. It was
better to receive coconut trees, he said.

130 ‘Harus begitu, karena aturan begitu’
131 ‘Mas kawin atau mahar artinya pengembalian harga diri. Ini kan aturan dari nenek moyang atau anu ketua
adat.’
132 ‘Ya terserah dia. Ini haknya dia.’
‘Because every three months there is produce from the trees. Money can disappear quickly.’

I asked some local women if there are any rules about what women are allowed to do with the coconut trees they receive as brideprice.

‘There aren’t any.’ They said.

So women could use the trees for copra, or use the fruit in food and to make coconut oil, or they could chop the trees down and use the land beneath it to build a house, I asked.

‘Yes, they can. They can. They can do anything.’ They told me.

Women who had married over thirty years ago showed me the coconut palms that had been part of the brideprice their husbands had given them when they got married. They were still using the coconuts from the trees for copra, for making coconut milk, coconut oil and other products.

The economic value of coconuts

Indonesia is the world’s leading coconut producer. Coconut palms and their products are important sources of income for many Indonesians. Over 90% of coconut plantations are cultivated by smallholder farmers throughout the country. In Sulawesi, coconut farming is most intensively practised in the north, particularly in the Minahasa District (Waney & Tujuwale 2002, p. 8; Anwar 2004, p. 136).

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133 Ya karena setiap tiga bulan ada hasil. Kalau uang, bisa cepat habis.’
134 ‘Tidak ada’
138 Coconut farming is a major source of revenue in North Sulawesi, for example (Waney & Tujuwale 2002, p. 4; Anwar 2004, p. 136).
As in North Sulawesi, in Wawonii, coconuts are used to make copra, as well as for daily consumption in food products. The shells are used as fuel for fires to cook, and are also made into bowls. The fronds of coconut palms are used to make roof and wall thatching, and coconut trees are an important part of the brideprice system. Many men and women on Wawonii are copra farmers. Wawonii people used to sell coconut oil in Kendari until the market was flooded with Bimoli cooking oil in the 1990s. In the mornings before the weather gets too hot, it is common to see women sitting outside their houses making coconut oil. In the afternoons, when men return from fishing in sampans, their catch is then fried in this oil.

The hulls of boats going from Wawonii to Kendari everyday are filled with sacks of copra. In 2012 – 2013, the price of copra fluctuated between Rp. 200 000/ 100 kg and Rp. 500 000/100 kg. At Rp. 200 000 – 300 000/ 100kg, Wawonii people keep their copra on Wawonii and wait until the price is at least Rp. 500 000/ 100kg. Rp. 700 000 – 900 000/ 100kg is considered a good price.

One woman, whose teenage son had been busy after school climbing up coconut palms and taking down 2000 coconuts over the previous few months, explained:

‘If the price is high it can reach Rp. 700 000 or Rp. 800 000, that’s good. If the price is Rp. 500 000 we can still sell the copra, but for Rp. 200 000 we can’t. That’s why we live like this.’

Everyone, from teenage boys to women in their eighties, is involved in making copra. Some older women who were letting their coconuts rot because the price was only Rp. 200 000/ 100 kg told me,

‘before, during the Soeharto period, the price of copra was good, sometimes Rp. 1

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139 This is also true of people on the Banggai Islands in Central Sulawesi and throughout North Sulawesi (Ember & Ember 2003, p. 898; Waney & Tujuwale 2002, p. 9).
140 A popular brand, commonly referred to simply as ‘Bimoli’.
141 Dug-out canoes, which usually only carried one, occasionally two, men.
142 ‘Kalau harga tinggi bisa sampai Rp. 700 000 atau Rp. 800 000, bagus itu. Kalau harga Rp. 500 000 masih bisa dijual tapi untuk Rp. 200 000 nggak bisa. Makanya kita hidup begini.’
million, or 900 000/ 100kg but now the price is no good, we have no hope, no prospects, that's what makes things difficult… the price of cashews is low… things are difficult for us here… there (in Australia) people use dollars… here, only civil servants have prospects, we don’t have any.”

A few months earlier, in September 2012, I had spoken to Irfan, a 31-year-old Wawonii copra farmer, on the Wawonii – Kendari boat. At that time, the price of copra was Rp. 500 000/100 kg. At that price, he was sending two tons of copra every three months to be sold in Kendari. He described his income from copra as ‘reasonably good’.  

In Kendari, copra is sold to middlemen who then sell it to traders in Surabaya. The amount of copra that can be extracted from coconut trees depends on the season and the quality of the fruit. At its best, one hundred coconut trees will produce approximately one ton of copra. During the wet season, the quality and amount of copra is at its highest.

**Dry season, wet season**

Wawonii people divide the seasons into the dry season and wet season. Dry season lasts from April to September and is also called the eastern [monsoon] season by local people since the wind blows from the east. This is said to be the season when the wind blows hardest and the sea swell is strongest. The quality and amount of copra produced on Wawonii is lowest during dry season and highest during wet season. October to March is the wet season, or the western monsoon season.

Small groups of Bajo people live in Wawonii and nearby islands. In the Bajo language, *musim timur* and *musim barat* are called *salatang* and *barra’* (Stacey 1999, p. 79). Although Wawonii people are not predominantly a sea-faring people like their Bajo, Butonese and Bugis

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143 ‘Dulu zaman Soeharto ada harga kopra kadang 1 juta, Rp. 900 000/ 100kg tapi sekarang tidak ada harga tidak ada harapan itu mi susahnya.. jambu [menthe] tidak ada harga... kita di sini susah... di sana daerah dolar... Sini hanya pegawai ada harapan kita nggak ada.’

144 ‘lumayan bagus’

145 *musim timur*

146 *musim barat*
neighbours, knowledge of the strength and direction of winds at certain times of year is still important for them. If the sea is too rough, men cannot go out in their sampans in the afternoons to catch fish for their families and Wawonii – Kendari boats are prevented from transporting people and goods.

Boats back and forth

Bapak Hengky, the Bugis man who lives down the road and owns the medium-sized wooden boat\textsuperscript{147} which goes back and forth between Labeau and Kendari, came into the kitchen. He sat down and chatted with me for about an hour. He told me about his trips to West Papua, Papua New Guinea and near the border with Australia. He said two of his brothers have sailed to Australia. One of them was caught by the authorities and sent back. He told me all about the rules there are in PNG for fishermen and the amounts of fish they’re allowed to catch. We talked about his four children. Three of them are married and the youngest one is finishing a degree in health in Kendari, at Haluoleo University. Bapak Hengky has many relatives in South Sulawesi, Papua and other parts of Eastern Indonesia. He said he owns four large boats, and he’s having another one made at the moment by a few Bugis workmen he employs here. When a boat has been built, Bapak Hengky uses it for two or three years on the Labeau – Kendari route while another one is being built, then he sells the used boat and uses the new one. He’s been doing this for years. People are already making offers on his Labeau – Kendari boat, he said. They range from Rp. 350 – 400 million rupiah. He said the engines alone cost Rp. 100 million. He buys them in Surabaya. Bapak Hengky explained that since the water isn’t rough now, his young nephews drive the boat back and forth. He’s busy

\textsuperscript{147} kapal kayu
with his clove trees, clearing the weeds and making sure the trees are healthy because they’re due to start bearing cloves in a few months.

To get to and from Kendari, most Wawonii people take medium-sized wooden boats which stop at the villages on the southern, northern and eastern coasts of the island. These wooden boats, called ‘kapal kayu’ by local people, are usually made by Bugis men who have married Wawonii women and lived in Wawonii since getting married. Capital to begin a boat-building business is often collected initially from relatives in South Sulawesi and later returned to them when the boat is sold or begins making a profit. Boat building gives these families a significantly more secure source of income than Wawonii farmers, who have to rely on weather conditions, the fluctuation of market prices in Kendari and a number of other variables when selling their crops. In comparison, the owners of the Wawonii – Kendari boats set fares at rates of their own choosing. When I arrived in 2012, the fare from Wawonii to Labeau, a village in the centre of the north coast, was Rp. 35 000. By 2014, this had increased to Rp. 50 000. Wawonii people had begun to grumble that Rp. 50 000 was too much for them to afford. The boats were less overcrowded than they had been in 2012. Like Bapak Hengky, most boat owners supplement their income with the crops they own. Clove crops are a particularly popular choice, as they fetch the highest price of all the crops grown in Wawonii. In 2013, 1kg of cloves sold for Rp. 130 000, whereas the same quantity of pepper fetched Rp. 115 000, or Rp. 100 000 for nutmeg petals. Boat owners generally employ male family members – sons, cousins, nephews – as crew. These boats are usually equipped with two petrol-powered engines and take upwards of three hours to reach Wawonii villages north and south of Langara. In the rainy season, this trip may take significantly longer, and in particularly bad weather boats may not be running at all. Boat-building families are economically better off than families who rely

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148 The other option is the smaller ‘speedboat’ mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, which runs daily between Kendari and Ladianta, on the northeast coast of Wawonii. It belongs to a group of men from Buton Island.
solely on farming to make a living. They also have connections to other parts of Sulawesi and Indonesia, which some farming families do not have. Bapak Hengky, for example, had relatives in South Sulawesi, West Papua and Maluku. He could afford to make trips to Makassar and send his children to university in Kendari. He also had two wives. Despite differences in ethnicities accompanying the differences in socioeconomic status, apart from occasional mild gossip no one I encountered ever claimed there had been resentment or discord between Wawonii people and Bugis people. These people lived, worked and socialised together.

Apart from the wooden boat, a large, old government-run ferry (the boat I had initially taken to Wawonii) operates between Kendari and Langara, Wawonii’s largest and westernmost town. This ferry has the capacity to carry one or two trucks, as well as motorbikes, wood, cables, oil, petrol, building supplies and other equipment. It runs once a day from Kendari to Langara, returning the following morning to Kendari. In 2012, the Kendari – Langara trip cost Rp. 20 000. This ferry is frequently out of use for weeks at a time, docked in the Kendari harbour being repaired. Local people told me the ferry had had many near-misses with larger boats because the government assigned young men still in training to drive this boat. It is through practices such as these – assigning underqualified, inexperienced people to be responsible for transporting people in potentially dangerous weather conditions – that Wawonii people are made aware of their peripheral status. More than once when I took the ferry to Langara in windy weather, the captains had trouble docking the boat in Langara as it pitched and thrust against the concrete wharf.

Sampans are made in Wawonii and sold on the islands of Wanci and Hoga in Wakatobi. Seeing men wading chest-deep in the rivers, pushing bundles of logs tied together through the water towards where the river meets the sea is a familiar sight in Wawonii. The logs are

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149 Velthoen (1997) provides more details on the history of Southeastern Sulawesi being regarded as peripheral during the colonial era.

150 Wawonii language: larola; Indonesian: sungai.
then hauled up onto the beach where groups of men carve sampan out of the tree trunks. On Wawonii, there is an abundance of trees whereas on the smaller islands which make up the Wakatobi archipelago, most of the trees have already been felled. Wawonii men sell sampan and bananas in Wakatobi. It takes these men between two days and a week to construct a sampan depending on how many men are working on it and the tools that are available to them. A group of three men from the village where I lived regularly used to take between thirty and forty sampan to Hoga Island, stay there for a week until they were all sold, and then return to Wawonii. The man living beside the house I lived in sailed with his cousins to Wanci Island once every two or three months to sell sampan and bananas. On the wooden boats used by locals, the Wawonii – Wanci trip takes approximately 12 hours. In 2012, a sampan on Wawonii sold for approximately Rp. 350 000. On Wanci, they sell for Rp. 800 000 – Rp. 1 million. My neighbour and his cousins took about a hundred sampan with them every time they sailed to Wanci. After about ten days, when the boats had all been sold, the men returned to Wawonii. These enterprising Wawonii men talked about the Australians they saw in Wakatobi and told me about symptoms of Australian women marrying Wakatobi men.

_Spirits beneath the swell_

*Life in the oceans must be sheer hell. A vast, merciless hell of permanent and immediate danger. So much of a hell that during evolution some species – including man – crawled, fled onto some small continents of solid land, where the Lessons of Darkness continue._

- _The Minnesota Declaration, Werner Herzog_

In many parts of Indonesia, there are close associations between boats, the sea and magic
spirits. Among the Bajo, ‘boat magic’\textsuperscript{151} is the esoteric knowledge used by boat crew to assuage sea spirits (Stacey 1999, p. 71). In Buton, a ritual expert\textsuperscript{152} who possesses knowledge of spirits is needed to drill the navel into the boat in order to ensure good fortune (Southon 1995). Off the south coast of Java, the mythical Goddess of the Southern Ocean, Nyai Roro Kidul, recruits fishermen to be her consorts beneath the ocean (Wessing 2010).

Wawonii people also talk about powerful spirits residing beneath the waves. Usually, these are said to be female spirits intent on bringing harm to people travelling to and from Wawonii. A Wawonii man living in Kendari told me about his experiences with the spirits that live in the Banda Sea around Wawonii.

Pak Umar and his family were taking one of the kapal kayu to Wawonii. When they were nearing Hari Island, which lies between Kendari and Wawonii, the captain turned the boat around and headed back to Kendari without an explanation. All the passengers were wondering what was happening. In Kendari, when the boat had been tied up, the captain apologized, claiming he had seen a spirit.\textsuperscript{153} He was scared that this spirit would cause the boat to sink or bring some other sort of harm to the boats and its passengers.\textsuperscript{154} The captain and passengers all prayed together. After 15 minutes in Kendari harbour, the captain sailed the boat to Wawonii, this time without any complications.

Several Wawonii villagers described another incident which happened in 2000 involving an evil female ghost\textsuperscript{155} from the sea that caused the Sagori boat to capsize.

The Sagori was a three-ton boat running between Kalimantan and West Papua, stopping along the coast of Sulawesi. It was a passenger boat but it also carried

\textsuperscript{151} Known in Indonesian as ‘ilmu perahu’ and in the Bajo language as ‘pangatonang lambo/ bidu’.
\textsuperscript{152} ‘pande’ or ‘bisa’ in Butonese language.
\textsuperscript{153} ‘orang ini bukan orangnya kita orangnya djinn tapi dia menyerupai manusia’.
\textsuperscript{154} ‘saya mau kasih turunembali karena kalau tadi kita lanjutkan mungkin kita akan tenggelam dan kita akan ada apa-apa’
\textsuperscript{155} ‘hantu, djinn laut’
goods. As it was passing the village of Munse on the northeast coast of Wawonii, it began to tip on one side. Reaching the nearby village of Lebo, the captain saw a female ghost who looked like a normal woman. She was standing in front of the ship on the water, causing the ship to lean to one side. The captain swore\textsuperscript{156} that this was what he saw. The ship had already passed safety tests so the captain was convinced that it was the evil powers of this female ghost causing the ship to tip. The ship then sank temporarily before emerging by itself where people collect meti-meti (a type of shellfish). No one on board the boat died because the people from Lebo village helped them out of the water.

People on Wawonii say that not just anyone can drive the boats\textsuperscript{157} between Wawonii and other islands. Only those who know the necessary mantra are qualified for this job. As in Pak Umar’s story, in times of trouble and before every departure, captains pray to ensure the safety of their passengers and crew members.\textsuperscript{158} Prudence when confronted with sea spirits and knowledge of the correct prayers are requirements of the job.

**Conclusion**

My encounter with Wawonii began at a precarious point of knowledge. Apparently objective introductory facts about this island and its people – such as population and how many Wawonii islands actually exist – start to wobble given the slightest nudge against experience. Power, knowledge and reality are all related to place in Wawonii. As in other parts of Indonesia,\textsuperscript{159} status is linked to the exchange of things such as coconut trees enacted within ritual. Embedded within place are material and magical links to current and earlier history.

\textsuperscript{156} ‘bersumpah-umpah’

\textsuperscript{157} ‘tidak sembarang orang bisa membawa kapal’

\textsuperscript{158} ‘tidak sembarang orang bawa kapal karena mengetahui yang begitu begitu pasti dia ketahui dia punya apa mantra-mantra… kapiennya pasti tahu… ya doa-doa sebelum berangkat… itu ya pasti nggak ada gangguan’

\textsuperscript{159} In Bali, for example, the possession of coconut trees is closely linked to social status (Giambelli 1998, p. 138).
Wawonii’s ‘branched’ coconut trees, spirits beneath the waves and Wawonii Number Two are some examples of these. While ‘place’ has been the centre of this chapter, the rest of this thesis focuses on power, knowledge and reality as they relate to bodies.
CHAPTER THREE
CIRCUMCISION

The notion of materiality is not limited to the texture of the skin but the
intertextuality of experience


Introduction

Circumcision is about many things. In a purely corporeal sense, circumcision is about skin. Nevertheless, skin cannot be reduced merely to its corporeality. What is done to skin in vastly different cultures, and at periods all throughout history, is powerful both in itself and insofar as these acts are forms of communication and power. Through practices of circumcision, tattooing, tanning, bleaching, piercing, cutting and moisturising, the multitude of meanings imbued in what we do with skin become strands in the social, cultural and religious dialogues which seep into each other over time.

This chapter begins with an overview which provides the context for how circumcision has developed and is practised today throughout the world. Moving on, circumcision in Islam and specifically the Wawonii villages where I conducted fieldwork is explored. Next, I present a narrative ethnographic account of a group circumcision of Wawonii boys aged 10 – 12 years old. Following a discussion of this event, I delve into the meanings and uses of violence in relation to circumcision, and the ways in which this violence is used to separate and integrate. The power of performative language in circumcision ceremonies is discussed before I explore how a ‘minor ethnography’ can be used in the development of bodily and embodied knowledge.
Further accounts of circumcisions in Wawonii villages are analysed. The rest of the chapter deals with Deleuzean and Foucauldian concepts of power and the implications these have for the body as a medium of culture which shifts between centres and peripheries as circumcision practices are performed.

Circumcision: an overview

Whether it is performed for cultural, religious or medical reasons, worldwide, ‘circumcision is the most common surgical procedure in boys’ (Bocquet, Chappuy, Lortat-Jacob, & Cheron, 2010, p. 359). Over 30% of the world’s population, including more than 130 million women and girls, are circumcised (Ladizinski, Rukhman & Lee 2014, p. 103; Kassamali 1998, p. 39; Johnsdotter 2011, p. 164). The oldest recorded evidence of male circumcision dates back to paintings from 2352 BC found in Egypt (Ladizinski, Rukhman & Lee 2014, p. 103; Bartels 2004, p. 395). Female circumcision ‘has been practised for more than 3000 years in some form or another, mainly in Africa’ (Bartels 2004, p. 396). Although it ‘preceded the founding of both Christianity and Islam’, female circumcision\(^{160}\) is practised among Christian and Muslim

\(^{160}\)The terms ‘circumcision’, ‘female genital cutting’, ‘female genital operations’, ‘female genital mutilation’ and ‘male genital mutilation’ (Black, Debelle, Gallard & Walder 1995, p. 1590; Capmak 2011, p. 169; Johnsdotter 2011, p. 163; Kassamali 1998, p. 39, 57; Bartels 2004, p. 393; Goldenstein 2014, p. 95; Wilken-Jensen 2004, p. 124; Hernlund & Shell-Duncan 2007, p. 1; Nkealah 2013, p. 222; Haworth, 2012; Khaja, Barkdull, Augustine & Cunningham 2009, p. 727; Menage 1993, p. 686; Wright 2012, p. 15; Robbins, 2011) are powerful sociopolitical terms whose meanings and usages are contested. For example, Kassamali (1998, p. 58) explicitly states that ‘as an African’ she finds the term ‘female genital cutting’ (FGC) preferable to ‘female genital mutilation’ (FGM) or ‘female circumcision’ because FGM is ‘derogatory and culture-laden’ and ‘female circumcision’ is ‘too euphemistic’. Bartels (2004, p. 398) gives a detailed discussion of the complexities of these terms. The term ‘female genital mutilation’, coined by Western feminists, has been widely used in the Western media and by NGOs since the World Health Organization took it on following the 1980 UN Women’s Conference in Copenhagen (Freedman 2002, p. 221). Although male circumcision is generally considered more acceptable, there are calls from some doctors and the general public to allow circumcision only for adult men whose consent is freely given or to ‘work towards a ban on male genital mutilation, except where strict clinical conditions for removal of the foreskin apply’ (Robbins, 2011; Menage 1993, p. 686). Black, Debelle, Gallard & Walder (1995, p. 1590) explain that, for girls, there are ‘three types of operation’, only one of which ‘can be correctly called circumcision’. The World Health Organisation identifies ‘four main types’ of ‘female genital mutilation’: ‘clitoridectomy’, ‘excision’, ‘infibulation’ and ‘other’ (http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs241/en/). According to Wilson (2008, p. 149), ‘male circumcision’, the most common form of male genital mutilation, is ‘the ablation of the entire foreskin’. The political and human rights issues arising from ‘circumcision’ or ‘genital mutilation’ are not the focus of this
communities in parts of Africa and Asia (Black, Debelle, Gallard & Walder 1995, p. 1590). Despite being contested, male circumcision is practised by some members of all the Abrahamic religions: Judaism, Christianity and Islam. It is referred to in the Old Testament in Genesis 17, 34 and Exodus 4.24-26 (Wyatt 2009, p. 405). The Torah specifically instructs men and boys to be circumcised. Circumcision is not directly referred to in the Qur’an. However, in Indonesia, circumcision was ‘introduced (…) in the name of Islam’ (Bartels 2004, p. 395). The place of circumcision within Islam is contested. Interpretations of what the Qur’an implies about this practice differ within Indonesia and indeed around the world. The substance of these interpretations and whether or not circumcision should be seen as an Islamic practice is not the focus of this chapter. Instead, this chapter takes a micro view based on a narrative ethnography of the social and cultural processes vivified on the surfaces of bodies during circumcision as it is practised in these small Wawonii villages. The ethnographic excerpts, or ‘impressionist tale[s]’ this chapter explores endeavour to illustrate the ‘experiential’, ‘emotional’ and ‘sensual’ aspects of circumcision as both a religious and a social practice (Dubisch 1995, p. 119).

In the Wawonii language, ‘memangkilo’ means ‘to circumcise’. ‘Menyunat’ is the Indonesian translation. In Java, the sunatan (circumcision) is usually accompanied by a slametan ceremony. In the Madurese language, ‘sunatan’ becomes ‘sonattan’. These terms derive from ‘sunnah’, which in Arabic, within the context of Islam, means ‘a path, a way, a

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161 This is true for both boys and girls, although there is a greater consensus that boys must be circumcised in order to perform ablutions and enter a mosque. Muslims against circumcision often cite the Qur’anic command, ‘Let there be no alteration in Allah’s creation (30:30)’ (Johnsdotter 2011, p. 165) whereas Muslims in support of (particularly male) circumcision cite three fundamental sections of Islamic law – the Sunnah (the Prophet Muhammad’s sayings), Ijma’ (the consensus by religious scholars) and Qiya (the legal reasoning based on the Qur’an) – ‘clearly state’ that male circumcision ‘is a tradition and ritual that should be performed and observed by Muslims’ (Johnsdotter 2011, p. 170).

162 ‘Such shall be the covenant between Me and you and your offspring to follow which you shall keep: every male among you shall be circumcised’ (Genesis 17:10).
manner of life’ as well as ‘all the traditions and practices’ of the prophets which ‘have become models to be followed’ by Muslims (Qazi, El-Dabbas 1979, p. 65). ‘Sunatan’ is also called ‘khitanan’ which means ‘a part that has been removed from male and female genital organs’. ‘Khitanan’ is both ‘an important religious practice’ and ‘politically associated with the sense of ‘to Islamize’ (Putranti, Faturochman, Darwin & Purwatiningsih, 2003). ‘Khitan’ is ‘one of the five practices considered part of fitra’ and ‘one of the four practices performed by the prophets’ (Cakmak 2011, p. 170). ‘Khina’ is synonymous with ‘khitna’. ‘Tetakan’ and ‘supitan’ are terms used in Yogyakarta to describe male genital cutting. These derive from Javanese terms for tools used to hit (tetak) or clamp (supit). ‘Tetesan’, which derives from the Javanese ‘tetes’ (Indonesian ‘tetas’) means ‘opening violently from inside’ and refers to female genital cutting (Putranti, Faturochman, Darwin & Purwatiningsih 2003).

**Narrative Ethnography Beneath the Quivering Flame**

*For it would seem – her case proved it – that we write, not with the fingers, but with the whole person. The nerve which controls the pen winds itself about every fibre of our being, threads the heart, pierces the liver.*

- *Orlando, Virginia Woolf*

One very hot afternoon in Wawonii, some women bustled me into the front room of a house in the village where I lived. A mass circumcision was underway. Boys from the village were being circumcised by provincial health department officials for free. As the guest of honour – a designation made by local women who frequently took it upon themselves to find things to entertain or impress me – I was granted a front-row position. Every visceral detail materialised
centimetres in front of me. The bustling women clutched my arms, jostling away anyone who attempted to get between me and the creaking tables where the boys were circumcised. What I scribbled down that evening, inhaling the black gasoline-smoke coming out of a rusty tin beneath the quivering flame, was a narrative ethnographic account.

The author of a narrative ethnography (...) deals with experiences, but along with these come ethnographic data, epistemological reflections on fieldwork participation, and cultural analysis. The world, in a narrative ethnography, is represented as perceived by a situated narrator, who is also present as a character in the story that reveals his own personality (...) narrative ethnographies focus not on the ethnographer herself, but rather on the character and process of the ethnographic dialogue or encounter. (Tedlock 1991, p.78).

The sensuous projections pulsating throughout the fieldwork experience come to the fore in narrative ethnography ‘that refuse[s] to stand still’ (Britzman 2000, p. 34). Although they are not the focus of these accounts, as in an ethnographic memoir, the author is explicitly visible in these accounts. Within the narrative ethnographic accounts in this chapter, it is clear that

   cultural description (...) can not erase the presence of and role played by emotion, presupposition, and artistry in ethnography. (Van Maanen 2011, p. 12)

As the author of a narrative ethnographic account becomes more visible, they abandon the appearance of occupying a purely perceptive-contemplative position. Ethnographers are never as removed from their subjects as an “objective” account would have it. Narrative ethnography can be partially considered as a continuation of Marx’s project to eclipse the purely contemplative realm advocated by Kant and others.

   The main defect of materialism until now (including in Feuerbach’s work) has been to conceive of subject-matter, reality, sensuousness, only in the form of an object
of perception-contemplation, not as sensuous-human activity, praxis; not subjectively. (Marx & Engels 1978, p. 5)\textsuperscript{163}

The sensations, projections and repulsions experienced in the body of the ethnographer spawn a perceptual-epistemological imbrication which develops in the writing process and evolves further as the ethnographic work deepens.\textsuperscript{164} This becomes what we call practice-based knowledge of a particular place and people. Within European philosophy, these sensate-perceptual processes have a bias towards the visual which stretches back to Plato and Aristotle (Ingold 2004, p. 330). As Fabian (2014, p. 106) writes

\begin{quote}
…the ability to “visualize” a culture or society almost becomes synonymous for understanding it (…) visualism (…) connote[s] a cultural, ideological bias toward vision as the “noblest sense” (…) the social sciences inherited that bias from rationalist thought (based on Descartes’ distinction of res cogitans and res extensa) and from the empiricists (see Hobbes’ fascination with geometry).
\end{quote}

Rather than equating a tendency towards visualism as the ‘natural’ way to understand a culture, it is important to interrogate the link between visualism and particular forms of cultural and political power. Furthermore, other sensuous ways of knowing must be acknowledged.

In discussing Walter Benjamin’s concept of the ‘state of siege’ where ‘order is frozen, yet disorder boils beneath the surface’, Michael Taussig (1992, p. 10) argues

\begin{quote}
To take social determination seriously means that one has to see oneself and one’s shared modes of understanding and communication included in that determining (…) this puts writing on a completely different plane than hitherto conceived. It
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{163} ‘Der Hauptmangel alles bisherigen Materialismus (der Feuerbachschen mit eingerechnet) ist, dass der Gegenstand, die Wirklichkeit, Sinnlichkeit nur unter der Form des Objekts oder der Anschauung gefasst wird; nicht aber als \textit{sinnlich menschliche Tätigkeit, Praxis}; nicht subjektiv’ Italics in original.

\textsuperscript{164} For example, consider anthropologist Jill Dubisch’s (1995, p. 102) efforts to understand a Greek shrine and its worshippers and to convey this understanding through her body (‘…the pain in my back…’) and feelings (‘despair’, ‘pain’).
calls for an understanding of the representation as contiguous with that being represented and not as suspended above and distanced from the represented – what Adorno referred to as Hegel’s programmatic idea – that knowing is giving oneself over to a phenomenon rather than thinking about it from above.

Embodied, ‘know how’ knowledge, Wawonii knowledge, is precisely the sort of knowledge Taussig advocates pursuing. In my narrative ethnography, I have attempted to explicate the knowledge which seeped into me via my body, via the material effects of Wawonii’s social and natural environments on me. This requires ‘radically rethink[ing] what it means to take an example or use some concrete event as illustration of an abstract idea’ (Taussig 1992, p.169). This chapter aims to firmly ground circumcision within the realm of the concrete, as a specific, embodied event with identifiable effects for the individuals and communities involved.

Narrative accounts such as those in this chapter show how the bodies of ethnographers undergo processes of becoming during fieldwork interactions. These interactions determine the potential parameters of knowledge-production. Geertz (1995, p. 44) conveys this process by inverting a common anthropological idiom:

You don’t exactly penetrate another culture, as the masculinist image would have it. You put yourself in its way and it bodies forth and enmeshes you.

Since the ethnographer’s body is located at the intersection between dynamic practices which produce embodied knowledge and later forms of textual knowledge production, the ‘ideology of the transcendental observer’ is no longer plausible (Behar 1996, p. 169).
A Wawonii circumcision-spectacle

*Like the grain set aside as seed corn, which will be kept in a state of separation, the young boy is symbolically torn from the female world by circumcision, a ceremony from which women are rigorously excluded, the function of which is to co-opt the boy into the world of men by means of an operation regarded as a second birth, a purely male event this time, one which, as the saying goes, “makes men.”*  

- Bourdieu (1977, p. 135)

Ibu Ratna and I entered the house. The room was full of people. It was noisy and hot and I was tired and hungry. People had come for the spectacle: the free circumcisions for the local boys. The penises of boys between the ages of nine and twelve were being cut on creaking wooden tables in the corner. On the tables were old rags, open packages of needles, bloody bandages, dirt and dust. The room smelled of fish, which was what usually went under the knife on these tables.

Ibu Ratna was a civil servant from the department of health in Unaaha who was in Wawonii for the afternoon to deliver free medication. Two of her colleagues, young men in their twenties, held blades and needles over the penises of the half-naked boys stretched out on the tables. Blood-smeared cotton wool was scattered on the creaking tables where the boys lay in sarongs. Ibu Ratna pushed me through the throng of people who’d gathered to watch. One of the blade-wielding colleagues from Unaaha laughed as he noticed me.

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165 Unaaha is located approximately 70km west of Kendari. As the capital of the Konawe district, local government is situated in Unaaha.
‘Is this a man or woman?’ He said to whoever felt like answering.

‘Hey! This is a woman! She’s got tits!’ Shouted Ibu Dina, a woman with whom I often sat drinking coffee in the afternoons.

He giggled and muttered something to himself while attempting to wipe blood off the blade he was holding on some already bloody cotton wool. I was too exhausted to be annoyed. It was the same old nonsense I’d heard time and time again. I was so used to having my gender called into question, it all just passed over me, evaporating in the surrounding heat. I had a vague feeling I should probably be horrified or at least stirred by what was being done to the boys on the tables that stunk of fish. Instead, I was sluggish, saturated in the mid-afternoon torpor, thought chugging along encumbered by a humidity so intense it seeped through to my nerves. Circumcision featured in a novel I’d read years ago – was it by Thiong’o or Achebe? I couldn’t remember. The relentless swelter bled memory dry. Thought was a stagnant haze. It’s all this heat, that’s why you hear the word ‘forget’ here all the time, I thought. That, and the punctured slumber that ensures you wake dull and drained.

I thought of the circumcision ‘ceremonies’ and ‘rituals’; the elaborate-sounding ‘rites of passage’ I’d read about in the anthropological literature before coming to Wawonii. This was no ‘ceremony’, I decided. The ceremonies – funerals, weddings, engagement ceremonies, hair-cutting ceremonies – I’d attended thus far on Wawonii had involved some type of structure, however loose, and moments (usually religious) of solemnity (along with the usual laughter).

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166 ‘Apa ini laki-laki atau perempuan?’

167 ‘Eh! Perempuan, ini! Ada susanya!’

168 Throughout Indonesia and Asia more generally.

169 ‘lupa’
This was something else. The boys were cut briskly, cotton wool dabbed on bleeding flesh, crying boys given pink lollipops and urged to pray. There were many boys to get through, and Ibu Ratna and her colleagues intended to be back on the boat to Kendari before sunset. No one wanted to spend a night on an island where nothing happened, a place routinely mocked by health department bureaucrats at their monthly meetings in Unaaha for its apparent backwardness.

Compared to the boredom by which afternoons in Wawonii were often characterised, the blunt cutting and bleeding of genitals was a real spectacle. In Kendari, you went to the cinema to be entertained by horror films in the afternoon. In Wawonii, it happened right before your eyes, for free. Well, not quite. The boys were certainly paying. They would continue to pay as they hobbled around gingerly, legs wide apart, barely able to walk over the coming days. Most of them would need time off school, some of them would end up at the clinic, presenting infected genitals to nurses. As with every spectacle in Wawonii, this one was noisy and exhausting and dirty. Children tripped over each other and the women prattled as the makeup they had applied (perhaps to show the bureaucrats from Unaaha that they were not in fact ‘backward’) dripped off their faces. The men were in a cluster at the doorway, smoking limp cigarettes and spitting and giggling whenever someone said something lewd, which was often.

In places where nothing happens, the bar for what counts as entertainment is set very low. This was not a ceremony. In theory, as Wawonii people had told me, it was an Islamic ritual, but in practice it was something for people to do, a way of avoiding boredom (at home) or exhaustion (in the fields).

However, the half-naked boys lined up waiting for their foreskin to be cut off were certainly not entertained. They were at the centre of the spectacle;
catalysts for the scurrilous banter going on around them. They were not entertained. Standing silent, sweating, they clutched their sarongs. They were untouched by the cacophony around them. The blade and the blood and mutilation of their own precious flesh was all they saw.

What they heard was not much better. Women – their mothers, aunts, teachers, neighbours – huddled together close to the dirty table muttering lewd comments that made the men giggle. Invariably, the comments were always about the size and shape of the boys’ penises. One was a sausage, another a banana. Whether the women pronounced them small or big, the result was the same: guffaws ensued, the men giggled, the slitting continued.

In normal day-to-day life it was the boys who were chastised by these women for saying things considered obscene, things alluding to sex-flesh usually kept hidden. Now the positions had been reversed; the hallmark of ritual in which taboo is set loose and the profane is permitted because the world has been turned upside down. I recalled the gunungan I had watched seesawing violently to and fro as I had dozed through nightlong wayang performances in East Java a few years earlier.

The boys sat on chairs or hovered in the doorway in their sarongs waiting for their turn. They were all silent, another reversal of the norm. Once on the table, they lifted up their sarongs, shut their eyes, and submitted to the blade. There were two young men performing the circumcision, one at each table. I recognized the

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170 Close links between Islamic rituals, bodily symbolism and bananas are also found among the Bugis of Lindu, Central Sulawesi, where ‘[c]ircumcised’ bananas’ are commonly used in ‘assalamakeng’ (Indonesian: keselamatan) rituals (Accciaioli 1990, p. 214).

171 The gunungan – or ‘Tree of Life’ – often appears at moments of change in wayang performances. When the gunungan sways back and forth, this indicates that the world has been thrown into turmoil, its ideal balance disturbed.
pudgy one in uniform, he was the nurse from the clinic in Langara. Ibu Ratna told me the other man was from the Department of Health in Unaaha.

Before commencing each circumcision, they looked downwards and whispered something I couldn’t quite make out because of the cacophony. Then they injected the boys’ penises with an anaesthetic, pulled the foreskin to the top and tried to cut it. Sometimes they had to hack away at the foreskin several times before it was properly severed. Blood dripping onto the table was wiped off with already-bloody cotton wool. Ibu Ratna sighed and stated the obvious: they had not brought enough supplies with them. The nurse from Unaaha was dexterous enough to wipe the blood, take a drag on his cigarette and entertain the crowd with lewd jokes at the same time. His gloves, the only pair he wore while I was there, were as filthy as the cotton-wool strewn around the creaking table.

When the boys began sobbing, two women beside the tables shouted at them to pray. As the boys rose from the tables with pain in their faces and between their legs, the same women thrust pink lollipops into their hands.

At one point, a boy halfway through his circumcision started shrieking. Blood squirted onto the shirt of the chain-smoking nurse as the boy jerked away from the blade. As if the solution to noise was more noise, the women simply hollered their orders to pray louder. The boy moved his hand towards his penis. One of the hollering women grabbed both his hands and held them above his head. The other woman held the boy’s shoulders down. They laughed. The boy wailed. The nurse simultaneously took a drag on his cigarette and a photo of the boy’s penis on his phone. Noticing my gaze, he said

\[172\] I asked some of the women later on what the men had been whispering. ‘Bismillahirrahmanirrahim’, they told me.
‘This is our research, you know!’

He laughed. Was he attempting to forge a connection between us over the boy’s genitals he’d just mutilated? Perhaps he wondered why I – the ‘official researcher’ – did not have my camera out.

I yawned.

Small children clamoured around the tables, watching eagerly, unaware that at some future point, their genitals may also be impaled beneath a blunt and bloody blade while others laugh, smoke, and make comments about sausages and bananas.

When the laceration was complete, the nurse took a well-earned drag on his cigarette and held the bloody foreskin up like a gruesome trophy for all to see. Predictably, giggling ensued. The nurse wiped the sweat off his forehead before wiping the blood off the boy’s penis and wrapping a bandage around it. The boy hobbled to his feet before the blood could be wiped from his thighs. He pushed awkwardly, legs wide apart, through the pack of squealing children and thudded onto a ripped couch, ignoring the woman who tried to thrust a lollipop into his hand. I asked Ibu Ratna if the boy’s parents were in the room. She said she did not know.

‘Hey! Come here!’ The nurse pointed at the next boy, who shuffled forward, head down, thin fingers clutching his sarong.

I yawned yet again. I was weary and hungry. I longed to be asleep, far away from this callous racket, this puerile din which fed off the boys’ bloody flesh and futile tears.

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173 ‘Ini kan risetnya kita!’

174 ‘Ayo! Sini!’
The thin-fingered boy was flat on the table. This one will be just like the last, I thought languidly. Far from being appalled, I was jaded. It was just another episode in the spectacle, like all the rest I had yawned through.

Showing that he was as dexterous as his chain-smoking colleague, the pudgy nurse lifted the boy’s sarong up past his hips with one hand and took a photo on his phone with the other.

Research was not over yet.

**Pragmatic violence within intersubjective relations**

*All encounters are configurate, not isolate.*

- *The Books in My Life, Henry Miller*

This narrative account of circumcisions in Wawonii will necessarily be filtered through the materiality and specific positioning of my body during fieldwork. Apart from being a sensate assemblage swept up in processes of knowledge-production, my body, as the nurse from Unaaha made so patently clear, was ‘transgressive’ (Biddle 1993, p. 193). I was simultaneously within and beyond the culture around me, and this was a direct consequence of having (and being) a particular body. Violence is a relational dynamic inherent in everyday practices which position bodies at various points between shifting centres and peripheries. Bodies and language are both caught up in, and generators of, violence.

Within the narrative ethnography above, violence transcends the blade cutting into limp flesh. What lies behind and beyond the physical infliction of violence are ‘the centripetal pulls of culture’ (Conquergood 1985, p. 2). The energetic metaphor around which cultures construct centres and peripheries and define them through practices such as circumcision are both arbitrary and subject to flux over time. This is not to say that Wawonii people unanimously
claimed that circumcision was a cultural practice. There was much contradiction and disagreement on this point. Many Wawonii people claimed that circumcision was both a cultural and a religious practice. Such ‘centripetal pulls of culture’ (Conquergood 1985, p. 2) are ultimately about practices which encompass both what people do and what they say.

Circumcision is practised within a specific cultural space. As with many social practices, cultural and religious forces, among others, define the space which makes this practice possible. Being dynamic, the outer limits of these spaces are defined by context and subject to flux. Violence is the dominant modality which enforces such outer limits in a given context. It is not necessarily physical, and it does not contain inherent moral characteristics until it is understood within a specific situation.

Every force is related to others and it either obeys or commands. What defines a body is this relation between dominant and dominated forces. Every relationship of forces constitutes a body – whether it is chemical, biological, social or political. Any two forces, being unequal, constitute a body as soon as they enter into a relationship. This is why the body is always the fruit of chance, in the Nietzschean sense, and appears as the most “astonishing” thing (…) Being composed of a plurality of irreducible forces the body is a multiple phenomenon, its unity is that of a multiple phenomenon, a “unity of domination”. (Deleuze 1983, p. 40)

Negotiating the practices which make up our everyday lives involves inflicting and withstanding different degrees of violence. People accept certain forms of violence in order to avoid others. Although these pragmatic strategies sometimes involve overt, visible forms of violence, these are by no means the limits of such action. Undergoing a momentary form of physical violence such as circumcision may be a pragmatic strategy to avoid greater and more consequential forms of violence: social stigma, being forbidden from entering a mosque or go
on the *hajj*, having prayers unheard and unanswered and having one’s place in the *umat*\textsuperscript{175} called into question. Since one’s positioning between centres and peripheries is jointly determined by one’s own behaviour and, importantly, by others in the community, it becomes a point of vulnerability which must be guarded through pragmatic action.

Apart from being a pragmatic strategy, circumcision in Wawonii is a prescribed social practice, a form of normative violence through which people gain access to religious and social power by being rendered powerless beneath the blade.\textsuperscript{176} Since it displays certain constructive aspects – linking Wawonii people to the *umat* and situating themselves within a common cultural history – circumcision is ‘violence as a means’.

All violence as a means is either law-making or law-preserving. (Benjamin 1979, p. 142)

Seen within this frame, violence is not merely about repression or destruction; it is also productive, it presupposes a certain type of intersubjective relation. While the ‘violence’ of circumcision is physical, the ‘making’ and ‘preserving’ of these intersubjective relations are social, cultural and religious. Although intersubjective, these relations are not based on equal exchanges, as they operate at different frequencies at different times, in different contexts.

As an expression of what Wawonii people understand to be religious authority, performative language – in this case ‘*Bismillahirrahmanirrahim*’ – is linked to the violence enacted in establishing social codes of authority during circumcision. ‘*Bismillahirrahmanirrahim*’ is the first word in the Qur’an. It means ‘In the name of God, the

\textsuperscript{175} The *umat*, from the Arabic word *‘umma*’ (nation, people), is ‘the universal community of the faithful to which every Muslim belongs.’ It is ‘[o]ne of the most powerful concepts in Islam’ (Jones 1984, p. 1). As of 2015, the *umat* consists of over 2 billion people worldwide.

\textsuperscript{176} ‘Discipline increases the forces of the body (in economic terms of utility) and diminishes these same forces (in political terms of obedience). In short, it dissociates power from the body; on the one hand, it turns it into an “aptitude,” a “capacity,” which it seeks to increase, on the other hand, it reverses the course of the energy, the power that might result from it, and turns it into a relation of strict subjection (…) disciplinary coercion establishes in the body the constricting link between an increased aptitude and an increased domination’ (Foucault 1984, p. 182).
compassionate, the merciful’ (Harris 1931, p. 272). Throughout the circumcisions I saw on that hot afternoon, the utterance of this phrase was the central ‘magical-juridical’ performative practice (Agamben 2005, p. 132).

[T]he closely-knit link between the sphere of the performative and the sphere of the law (...) The law [diritto] could be defined as the realm in which all language tends to assume a performative value. To do things with words could even be considered as a residue in language of a magical-juridical state of human existence, in which words and deeds, linguistic expression and real efficacy, coincide (...) What is essential here is not a relation of truth between words and things, but rather, the pure form of the relation between language and world, now generating linkages and real effects. Just as, in the state of exception, law suspends its own application in order to ground its enforcement in a normal case, so too in the performative does language suspend its own denotation only in order to establish links with things. (Agamben 2005, pp. 132-3)

As Wawonii people pointed out to me, a circumcised child enters the umat, thereby becoming linked with a greater community of Muslims. Circumcision thereby creates ‘linkages and real effects’ (Agamben 2005, p. 133). Both physically and figuratively, processes of separation and integration were being enacted as ‘Bismillahirrahmanirrahim’ was said and the boys were circumcised on the old table that stunk of fish. As they were dispossessed of their foreskin, the boys, deemed clean enough to perform ablutions and enter mosques to pray, secured their positions within the umat.

As Ngugi wa Thiong’o wrote, circumcision ‘kept people together’.
**Performative Language**

*The world is not what I think, but what I live through.*

- Merleau-Ponty (1962, p. xvii)

Within anthropological literature, both male and female forms of circumcision, from Durkheim’s turn-of-the-century accounts of Australian Aboriginals until today, have commonly been located within the realm of the ‘primitive’. Circumcision has been described as an ‘initiation celebration’, a ‘fundamental practice’, a ‘violent transformation’, ‘magical protection’, ‘a rite of purification and virilisation’ and a ‘major festival’ and ‘an ancient rite’ (Durkheim 1976, p. 283, 135; Bourdieu 1977, p. 127-8; Wyatt 2009, p. 46). These terms are all authoritative insofar as they carry the power of positionality. Apart from religious power, social practices or the sharpness of the blade piercing vulnerable skin, another important authoritative force in the practice of circumcision is speech.

‘*Bismillahirrahmanirrahim*’, whispered before each boy was circumcised, is authoritative insofar as it is a performative utterance, or language as action (Austin 1962, p. 6).\(^{177}\) Being not only performative but also linked to religious law, this utterance goes beyond simple ‘communication’ and becomes an essential part of the ‘encounter’ with power (Asad 2006, p. 212).\(^{178}\) Asad (2006, p. 212) reminds us of the dynamic interactions between language, modes of becoming, and bodies.

[O]ne must attend to language (…) as rooted in a somatic complex (hearing-feeling-seeing-remembering) and as involved in people’s making/remaking themselves or others over time. (Asad 2006, p. 212)

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\(^{177}\) Bakhtin (1993, p. 3) goes further than this, arguing that ‘thought (…) along with its content, is an act or deed that I perform’.

\(^{178}\) This ‘encounter’, being performative, ‘can never be either true or false’ (Agamben 2005, p. 132).
The ‘somatic complex’ – the performing of the circumcisions – in which the power of ‘Bismillahirrahmanirrahim’ is enacted, also draws on religion for its authority. In the Qur’an, ‘Bismillah’\(^{179}\) is found at the beginning of all Surah except for the Ninth Surah, ‘At-Tawbah’ (The Repentance), sometimes also referred to in the Hadith as ‘Surah al-Bara’ah’. In Indonesia, ‘Bismillahirrahmanirrahim’ is also said over animals before they are slaughtered, at the beginning of ablutions, before prayers and sometimes before eating or beginning a journey.\(^{180}\) Prominent Muslim figures such as H.R Ahmad and Ashhab Sunan advise Muslims to say ‘Bismillahirrahmanirrahim’ before all actions because those actions undertaken without saying this phrase will not receive God’s blessing (Muhaemin 2008, p. 33). ‘Bismillahirrahmanirrahim’ is also found at the beginning of documents containing or indicating legal and/ or religious power. For example, it should begin official court documents and letters from workplaces allowing employers to retain a percentage of an employee’s salary for the payment of shodaqoh, infaq or zakat.\(^{181}\) Another indication of the power of this phrase is its association with powerful divine figures. Appearing to the Prophet Muhammad, these were reportedly the first words uttered by the Angel Gabriel.\(^{182}\)

‘Bismillahirrahmanirrahim’, as it is said before the circumcisions are performed, and in its many other functions, is a performative utterance. What action does it perform? What forms of power are enacted as this term is said prior to circumcision in Wawonii?

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\(^{179}\) Local people explained that ‘Bismillah’ is sometimes written or pronounced in Indonesia and Malaysia as ‘Basmalah’. This does not change the meaning.

\(^{180}\) Wawonii people told me that the volume at which this term is said, and whether it is uttered by a man or woman, makes no difference to its efficacy.

\(^{181}\) These three Arabic terms are broadly understood as ‘almsgiving’ (Azra 2010, p. 110). In Indonesia, shodaqoh is defined as ‘charity’ (Qibtiyah 2012, p. 185). Setia (2013, p. 22) translates ‘infaq’ as ‘provisioning’ and Retsikas (2014, p. 337) gives a detailed explanation of how, in Indonesia, ‘zakat has been repositioned from an annual, obligatory ritual of worship to a fundamental instrument for achieving socio-economic justice’.

The performative functions of ‘Bismillahirrahmanirrahim’ are complex. Local people frequently told me that they had to say ‘Bismillahirrahmanirrahim’ because they had been told to do so by the Prophet Muhammad. Wawonii women explained that in the context of the circumcisions being performed, it had a twofold cleansing effect, it made the actions of the circumcisers pure, and afterwards the boys would be considered clean enough to perform ablutions and enter mosques to pray. Furthermore, it made the circumcisions legal, official, recognised in the eyes of God. ‘Bismillahirrahmanirrahim’ thereby strengthened the link between the circumcised boys, their religious community and the ultimate authority within that community: Allah. Many Wawonii people and Muslims in other parts of Indonesia told me circumcision signifies entry into the umat, meaning that this practice deepens social and spiritual ties with all Muslims. The boys I witnessed being circumcised therefore had potential access to forms of religious and social power they would otherwise not have had.

One Wawonii man, echoing a perspective I have heard many times throughout Indonesia, stated that being circumcised and being Muslim are synonymous.

‘If we don’t carry out the hair-cutting ritual and circumcision, it means we’re not Muslim [we haven’t entered Islam]… not just Wawonii, all Muslims…”

An older Wawonii man, to whom villagers often referred me when I asked them questions about spiritual and religious matters, told me that saying ‘Bismillahirrahmanirrahim’ was also necessary to receive God’s love and protection. For this reason, he stressed, people should say it every day, particularly when preparing for something potentially dangerous or risky. Even when one feels safe, he continued, ‘Bismillahirrahmanirrahim’ was still necessary.

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183 ‘Karena sudah ditentukan Nabi Muhammad ya Nabinya kita itu.’
184 A ‘condition that has to be met by Muslims before prayers is ‘taharah’, or ‘cleanliness’. Uncircumcised boys are generally considered not clean enough to enter mosque or perform the hajj, and their unclean status nullifies their prayers (Johnsdotter 2011, p. 170).
185 ‘Itu kita jalankan sebagai umat. Sama juga sunat. Kalau kita tidak potong rambut sama sunat berarti tidak masuk umat Islam… bukan hanya Wawonii, semua Muslim...’
to protect oneself and one’s family from the evil djinns which may be sent by one’s enemies.

A minor ethnography

Constructed as a ‘minor’ ethnography, I locate my work between ‘minor history’ and ‘minor literature’ (Stoler, 2008; Deleuze and Guattari 1986). As a narrative construction, this minor ethnography encompasses the ‘fiction of a culture’ (Firth 1989, p. xxxi). Insofar as it was sensate before becoming textual, this minor ethnography is similar to but distinct from ‘ethnographic fictions’ (Clifford 1986, p. 6). The six elements of ‘ethnographic fictions’ identified by Clifford (1986, p. 6) are contained within this minor ethnography. Added to this is an emphasis on embodied knowledge. Such knowledge, which emerges at the intersection of the body and spirit world, has been documented in other parts of Sulawesi, for example among the Bugis people. In the ‘Becoming Kebal’ ethnographic sections, Chapter Seven explores the relationships between embodied knowledge and protection in detail.

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186 **Known locally as doti-doti.**

187 This recommendation was reiterated by several older women in the village, one of whom taught me a prayer (which included three recitations of ‘Bismillahirrahmanirrahim’) to protect myself against Kandoli, an evil spirit who travels on the wind and typically attacks at dusk. ‘Saying ‘Bismillahirrahmanirrahim’ makes me feel calm,’ this woman told me, adding that she said it three times every night before she went to sleep to protect herself from malevolent spirits. Another Wawonii woman explained that by saying ‘Bismillahirrahmanirrahim’ before beginning an activity, God would take note of the good deeds a person did. In return, that person would receive many blessings. Presumably, protection from evil may be one of these.

188 ‘Ethnographic writing is determined in six ways: (1) contextually (it draws from and creates meaningful social milieu); (2) rhetorically (it uses and is used by expressive conventions); (3) institutionally (one writes within, and against, specific traditions, disciplines, audiences); (4) generically (an ethnography is usually distinguishable from a novel or a travel account); (5) politically (the authority to represent cultural realities is unequally shared and at times contested); (6) historically (all the above conventions and constraints are changing)’ (Clifford 1986, p. 6).

189 ‘Embodied knowledge’ here does not only refer to cognitive processes. Emotions are also deeply entwined with processes of embodiment which bring about knowledge (Niedenthal 2007, p. 1002).

190 ‘The knowledge of the poppo’ that is transmitted in the learning session is described as penetrating the self (alé) or body (wattakalé) of the learner without the recipient being aware (sadar) of what is happening. The knowledge of a parrakang may also be obtained in such unsuspecting fashion (…) Becoming a parrakang is a matter of the appropriate kind of knowledge entering one’s flesh, after which one cannot help but act as a witch of this sort’ (Acciaioli 2004, p. 154).
My pursuit of a ‘minor’ ethnography is aligned both with Ann Stoler’s conception of a ‘minor history’ and Deleuze and Guattari’s ‘minor literature’.

“[M]inor” histories should not be mistaken for trivial ones. Nor are they iconic, mere microcosms of events played out elsewhere on a larger central stage. Minor history, as I use it here, marks a differential political temper and a critical space. It attends to structures of feeling and force that in “major” history might be otherwise displaced. (italics added) (Stoler 2008, p. 7)

Stoler’s emphasis on ‘feeling’ and ‘force’ are particularly relevant to my project. Whereas Stoler treats these in structural terms, like Deleuze and Guattari, in my work I emphasise the dynamic potentialities of these as flows, intensities, impulses of becoming. Deleuze and Guattari (1986, p. 18) identify the three main characteristics of ‘minor literature’ thus:

[T]he deterritorialization of language, the connection of the individual to a political immediacy, and the collective assemblage of enunciation.

Within a ‘minor literature’, ‘everything takes on a collective value’ (Deleuze & Guattari 1986, p. 17). This is the element of Deleuze and Guattari’s theory which can be most rapidly transported into a ‘minor ethnography’ of the sort I am assembling. As with Stoler’s ‘minor history’, a ‘minor ethnography’ of the village is neither ‘trivial’, nor ‘iconic’. Critically, for my purposes, a ‘minor ethnography’ is characterised by both bodily and embodied knowledge in which ‘feeling and force’ rather than abstract or contemplative thought are predominant. Bodily knowledge is knowledge of the body while embodied knowledge is knowledge which accrues within and through the body. Embodied knowledge necessarily implies relations of power moving within and between subjects, as the ethnographic excerpts in this chapter show.¹⁹¹

¹⁹¹ ‘…power produces knowledge (…) power and knowledge directly imply one another (…) there is no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge, nor any knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute at the same time power relations.’ (Foucault 1984, p. 175).
ethnographic writing explores how my own embodied knowledge of Wawonii underwent processes of metamorphosis in which it was formed, re-formed and sometimes discarded. This is an approach in which sensory aspects (temperature, taste, touch, sound, smell, feeling, sight) of knowledge-development are explored rather than shunned in favour of an “objective” account minus the observer. In Wawonii as elsewhere, ‘knowledge’ is generated by the ‘immediate experience of sensory participation with human and non-human components of the dwelt-in world’ (Ingold & Kurttila 2000, p. 194). While all learning processes involve embodiment, the anthropological endeavour is shaped more than most by sensory responses to our environments. Far from being passive, these responses are themselves imbued with dynamics of power and violence. The power invested in sight, for example, although its links to thought and understanding have been naturalized in Western cultures, is not something common to all cultures. In fact, some have claimed that the hegemony of visualism, rather than being a ‘natural’ way of understanding the world through a specific hierarchy of the senses, is an ‘ideological aberration’ (Fabian 1991, p. 202). The development of this hierarchy itself is a culturally constructed product.

**Circumcision and Islamic Orthopraxy**

*They circumcised women, little girls, in Jesus’s time. Did he know? Did the subject anger or embarrass him? Did the early church erase the record? Jesus himself was circumcised; perhaps he thought only the cutting done to him was done to women, and therefore, since he survived, it was alright.*

- *Possessing the Secret of Joy, Alice Walker*

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192 This has occurred largely through the development of language. Phrases such as ‘I see’, which mean ‘I understand’ are so common and widespread they generally go unquestioned, which means that the normalisation of vision being synonymous with understanding or thought is achieved.
Below is an account of a conversation I had with Ibu Irma about her circumcision and the circumcisions of her children.

Ibu Irma squatted in the smoky kitchen, stirring the rice. I sat at the table breaking the long green beans, which Ibu was going to cook in coconut milk. Ibu Irma was 58 years old. She had five children – two girls and three boys – between the ages of 16 and 36. I asked Ibu Irma about her circumcision and the circumcisions of her children.

Her youngest son, the 16-year-old, had been circumcised in the village by a health official\textsuperscript{193} when he was eleven. It had cost Rp. 50 000. Her 25-year-old son had had a village circumcision.\textsuperscript{194} It had been done by an old Wawonii man from the village who had since died. Ibu said men must perform the circumcision for boys, and women for girls, because this was the rule, just like the rule that applied to washing the bodies of the dead. Ibu’s oldest daughter had been circumcised when she was four months old in Langara, the largest town on Wawonii, by an old woman, a local. Her second daughter, who was now 27 years old and married with a child of her own, had been circumcised in the village where the family lived by an old woman, a ritual specialist.\textsuperscript{195} She was circumcised before she was able to walk; she had been about five months old, Ibu Irma said. She emphasised the fact that in Wawonii, women could also become ritual specialists. Ibu explained that according to Wawonii custom, girls must be circumcised soon after they were born, but boys could be a bit older.\textsuperscript{196} During the circumcision ceremony for girls, which was often

\textsuperscript{193} ‘petugas kesehatan’
\textsuperscript{194} ‘sunat kampung’
\textsuperscript{195} ‘tokoh adat’
\textsuperscript{196} ‘Kalau perempuan kalau adatnya kita harus cepat-cepat disunat kalau laki-laki dia bisa besar sedikit.’
held during Ramadhan or the Idul Fitri holiday, prayers were said and the hair cutting ceremony could be held at the same time as the circumcision ceremony.\textsuperscript{197}

Ibu went on to describe her own circumcision. She had been ‘already big’, between eight and ten years old, and she still remembered it.\textsuperscript{198}

Ibu remembered the pain and the bleeding. According to Islam, according to the prophet, she said, blood had to exit the body.\textsuperscript{199} Ibu had been circumcised in Noko, the village where she was born, on the north coast of Wawonii. An old woman whose name she did not know had circumcised her. Many children had been circumcised along with her and a prayer ceremony had been held.\textsuperscript{200}

Putting the old aluminium bowl of boiled rice on the table, Ibu Irma laughed and said that she had talked enough, now it was time to eat.

Ibu Irma’s emphasis on adhering to religious rules indicates that she understands circumcision in terms of Islamic orthopraxy. The transmission of cultural and religious integrity through the practice of circumcision is deeply embedded with its ‘experiential’, ‘emotional’ and ‘sensual’ effects.

[R]eligion must be seen, at least in large part, as experiential and emotional, its essence apprehended sensually, and not always susceptible to being conveyed in words. (Dubisch 1995, p. 119)

As in an account of ‘minor literature’, in Ibu Irma’s account, we see how bodies, being a part of ‘everything’, ‘take on a collective value’ (Deleuze & Guattari 1986, p.

\textsuperscript{197}’Baca-baca... bulan puasa, waktu lebaran, begitu... potong rambut baru langsung saja dengan sunat.’

\textsuperscript{198}’Oh saya sudah besar mi seperti Timah saya sudah ingat mi itu... kira-kira delapan, sepuluh tahun... saya sudah ingat mi sampai sekarang waktu saya disunat...’

\textsuperscript{199}’Itu disunat itu asal dia keluar darah, kasih keluar darahnya supaya itu... menurut Islam begitu... kasih keluar darahnya sedikit... karena menurut dari nabi itu sunat nabi kita punya nabi...’

\textsuperscript{200}’Yo banyak, banyak... kalau dulu itu berkelompok baru kumpul semua anak-anaknya, disunat satu kali... ada juga acara do’a-do’a waktu itu.’
17). The collective referred to here is Wawonii village ‘culture’ in which ‘materiality (...) exceeds the concepts and beliefs that enter into it’ (Connolly 2002, p. 46). Here, circumcision is a social, moral and religious practice in which ‘subservience’, ‘forces of tradition’ and ‘the value of continuity with the past’ are paramount (Ilcan 1994, p. 58).

**Pragmatic alliances**

Circumcision was the central rite in the Gikuyu way of life (...) [it] was an important ritual to the tribe. It kept people together, bound the tribe. It was at the core of the social structure, and something that gave meaning to a man’s life. End the custom and the spiritual basis of the tribe’s cohesion and integration would be no more.

- *The River Between, Ngugi wa Thiong’o*

Circumcision is one dynamic within the structuring processes of collective identity which link this small village with others. These alliances, such as the link to the *umat*, are simultaneously creations of the collective imagination and concrete events. Their power is both mythical and pragmatic. Insofar as these linkages contribute to the construction of peoples’ social and religious realities, they are a part of Wawonii culture.

A Deleuzian approach favours the destitution of the liberal notion of the sovereign subject and consequently overcomes the dualism Self/ Other, Sameness/ Difference, which is intrinsic to that vision of the subject. Subjects are collective assemblages, that is to say they are dynamic, but framed: fields of force that aim at duration and affirmative self-realization. In order to fulfil them, they need to be drawn together along a line of composition. (Braidotti 2014, p. 173)
Circumcision is a part of this sketching process, this drawing together, which constructs the social within the individual and the individual within the social. These constructions persist through time to become ‘rituals’. Repetition and duration endow these practices with social power. Within these spaces, carnivalesque situations may arise, as in the circumcision practices above, in which roles are reversed and transformations occur.

**Peripheral bodies, bodies on the periphery**

The outer peripheries of both physical and social bodies are their most vulnerable parts. They must therefore be consolidated, defended. In the process of performing such a defence, acts of violence occur. The results of these acts fortify, re-form or de-form the peripheries of the bodies in question. This is how generation, regeneration and degeneration occur. Each body – from a single cellular body to a religious body as enormous as the *umat* – contains a multitude of other bodies constantly in flux, constantly performing small or significant acts of violence in pursuit of survival and expansion. This ‘violence’ is what Bergson (2004, p. 264) refers to as the ‘force’ between ‘matter’.201

The Wawonii people with whom I spoke with clearly saw the practice of circumcision as one condition of entry into the *umat*. In this small village, chatter was an important form of social currency. The concept of a public/ private divide, apart from being culturally and historically irrelevant, was made mostly impossible by mass social visibility. Once determined, the social requirements of this village – such as circumcision – were translated into forms of biopower (Cisney & Morar 2015, p. 1). The social requirement to be circumcised was closely associated with local conceptions of social, moral and religious belonging. In the practice of

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201 ‘[I]f there is a truth that science has placed beyond dispute, it is that of the reciprocal action of all parts of matter upon each other. Between the supposed molecules of bodies the forces of attraction and repulsion are at work (…) Something, then, exists between the atoms. It will be said that this something is no longer matter, but force’ (Bergson 2004, p. 264).
circumcision, definitions of the body as an ‘organic mosaic of biological entities’ and ‘a cornucopia of highly charged cycles of change’ (Taussig 1992, p. 86) are exceeded. Non-circumcised bodies are also ‘biological entities’ and ‘highly charged cycles of change’. Corporeality is the foundational structure which is exceeded in circumcision. Done in the prescribed manner, circumcision begins from corporeality as the grounding architecture of the body which makes possible the ensuing social, physical and religious transitions these boys will experience. However circumcision is defined, within this practice, ‘the body’ as ‘a medium of culture’ is being conceived (Biddle 1993, p. 186).

Circumcision is one of the ‘political technolog[ies] of the body’ in which it is ‘subjected’ within ‘a political field’ (Foucault 1984, p. 173). Religion, culture and politics are inscribed in the performance of this practice. The ‘microphysics of power’ which bind the umat, the village and the individual together are both real (insofar as they have tangible effects) and mythical (since their truth-value depends on faith for their efficacy) (Foucault 1984, p. 173).

[A] microphysics of power (…) presupposes that the power exercised on the body is conceived not as a property but as a strategy; that its effects of domination are attributed not to “appropriation,” but to dispositions, maneuvers, tactics, techniques, functionings; that one should decipher in it a network of relations, constantly in tension, in activity (…) In short, this power is exercised rather than possessed (…) Furthermore, this power is not exercised simply as an obligation or a prohibition on those who “do not have it”; it invests them, is transmitted by them and through them; it exerts pressure on them, just as they themselves, in their struggle against it, resist the grip it has on them. (Foucault 1984, p. 174)
The regulative potential of power-between

A reflexive position within a narrative ethnography opposes any claims to an ‘understanding’ of circumcision by ‘sanitizing the primitive, and drawing out its power without recognizing one’s own primitivity’ (Muecke 1999, p. 4). It is precisely this detached, ideological ‘sanitizing’ which Marx (1978, p. 5) condemns in his critique of previous forms of materialism, including Feuerbach’s. Bourdieu (2003, p. 286) castigates Lèvy-Bruhl in a similar vein. In my ethnography, I acknowledge the ‘primitive’ reverberations within my own reactions to the circumcisions I witnessed in Wawonii. This primitivity was filtered through my sensory responses not only to the circumcisions themselves but also to the people and the atmosphere surrounding them.

Circumcision is a powerful practice which separates and links. The sort of power-practices found within the acts of circumcising I saw correspond more closely with Deleuze’s ‘puissance’ and Foucault’s biopower than ‘pouvoir’.

Puissance refers to a range of potential. It has been defined by Deleuze as a “capacity for existence,” “a capacity to affect or be affected,” a capacity to multiply connections that may be realized by a given “body” to varying degrees in different situations. It may be thought of as a scale of intensity or a fullness of existence (…) it is used in the French translation of Nietzsche’s term “will to power” (…) puissance pertains to the virtual (the plane of consistency). (italics in original)
(Massumi 1987, p. xvii)

Like Deleuze, Derrida (2006, p. 83) retains the dynamic possibilities of ‘puissance’ in arguing, ‘…its “might” partakes of what in English is simply called “power,” electricity as power. The puisse is electrical: may, might, and power…’ Conversely, ‘pouvoir’ refers to
the actual (the plane of organization). The authors use *pouvoir* in a sense very close to Foucault’s, as an instituted and reproducible relation of force, a selective concretization of potential. (italics in original) (Massumi 1987, p. xvii)

‘Biopouvoir’ is the term Foucault uses for ‘biopower’. In Derrida, ‘pouvoir’ is distinguished from ‘puissance’ by being defined as ‘being able to’ (Derrida 2006, p. 70), which implies capability or potentiality over strength or power.

Circumcision in Wawonii is primarily an intersubjective, affective form of ‘power-between’ rather than a dominating, oppressive ‘power-against’ formulation. Even ‘power-against’ frameworks cannot exist in isolation; being bound to the thing they are against, they too are one half of a ‘power-between’ equation. Furthermore, the enactment of biopower within circumcision practices is significantly more complex than a simple argument claiming that those being circumcised are being oppressed at the hands of the religious authorities, or the nurses acting on their behalf. Writing about ‘religious disciplines (…) whose concern is precisely with bodily and mental suffering (…) one’s own and that of others’, Asad (2006, p. 221) asks:

If personal experience has to be subordinated to disciplinary tradition (trust placed in its techniques, emotional investments, judgements), does this subject the learner to another’s “transcendent” will? Is that transcendence (the attempt to overcome the limits of one’s ego) what secularists identify as “religion”? Do they reject transcendence because it frustrates the individual’s will? But what if it is one’s “free” will to cultivate the virtue of obedience?

Asad (2006, p. 211) investigates the ‘complicated relationship’ which ‘certainly involves coercive force’ between ‘*constitutive*’ (concept-based) and ‘*regulative*’ (practice-based) processes of religious power. The regulative function of biopower has the capacity to shape individual and collective subjectivities in relation to their environments. In Java, for
example, priyayi subjectivity is regulated by ‘order’ which ‘means formality of bearing, restraint of expression, and bodily self-discipline’ (Geertz 1969, p. 247). As an orthopraxy, Islam appropriates the regulative potential contained within circumcision practices.

Unless we view Islam in practice as well as in structure we cannot account for its relation to social organization or power, for the manner in which it both constitutes order and is in turn continuously regranted the authority to do so.

(Lambek 1990, p. 23)

Affect

*The nature of body or matter consists only in extension.*

-  *Complete Works Proposition Two, Part Two, Spinoza*

Affect is a specifically bodily way of being and becoming. Through the becoming process, forms of knowledge are created. Affect is not synonymous with emotion. Instead, emotion and affect – if affect is intensity – follow different logics and pertain to different orders. (Massumi 2002, p. 27)

As Massumi explains, affect was a concept explored by Spinoza and taken up later by Deleuze and Guattari, among others:

AFFECT/ AFFECTION: Neither word denotes a personal feeling (*sentiment* in Deleuze and Guattari). *L’affect* (Spinoza’s *affectus*) is an ability to affect and be affected. It is a prepersonal intensity corresponding to the passage from one experiential state of the body to another and implying an augmentation or diminution in that body’s capacity to act. *L’affectio* (Spinoza’s *affectio*) is each such state considered as an encounter between the affected body and a second,
affecting, body (with body taken in its broadest possible sense to include “mental” or ideal bodies). (Massumi 1987, p. xvi)

Affect produces certain processes of knowledge-formation. Not only did I have to witness the circumcisions myself, to get caught up in the thick of it in order to learn something, I also had to recognize that my responses to these circumcisions were conditioned by the conditions weighing on my own body. These responses influenced what I was able to know. The micro-processes of sweating, being exhausted, hungry, uncomfortable, lethargic and having the spotlight shone on my own ‘transgressive’ body nudged me towards a particular type of knowledge. The gulf between the accounts I’d read of circumcision and the understandings gleaned from my experiences on that hot afternoon was an indication of the power of affect on knowledge.

Anthropological accounts which do not go beyond describing circumcision as ‘tradition’, ‘ritual’, ‘ceremony’, and ‘rite of passage’ (Mbito & Malia, 2009; Ladizinski, Rukhman, & Lee 2014; Kepe, 2010; Bocquet, Chappuy, Lortat-Jacob & Cheron, 2010) neglect the possibility of exploring the ‘minor’ embodied processes which are fundamental parts of practices such as circumcision.

In Deleuze, puissance forms of power, and the potentiality these entail, are hitched to affect (Massumi 1987, p. xvii). Circumcision practices are affective ways of securing culturally and religiously defined futures in which people belong as active participants. Circumcision produces

an embodied and somewhat automatic “knowledge”’, an immediately ‘sensate’ knowledge of who one is and where one belongs. (Taussig 2007, p. 259)
As this chapter shows, in Wawonii, and indeed in Muslim communities more broadly, seen in the act of circumcision, these ‘who’ and ‘where’ questions are answered with one’s religious identity, which is embedded in the umat.

**Cutting along the outline of new social subjects**

*[W]e make ourselves according to the ideas we have of our possibilities.*

– *A Bend in the River, V.S Naipaul*

People from vastly different cultures, classes and intellectual perspectives speak back to one another through time as they question what lies behind the practices that create and destroy culture within individuals and the individual within culture. V.S Naipaul’s assertion above rings out in the echo of Sara Johnsdotter’s (2011, p. 166) words:

Mothers and other female relatives opt for female circumcision when it is seen as the best strategy to optimize a girl’s future opportunities.

Although I did not witness any female circumcisions, I discussed circumcision with women who had been through this practice and who had had their daughters circumcised. From these discussions, it became clear that older women saw the circumcision of their children as a way of ensuring their inclusion within the local community and the worldwide community of Muslims. Below is an account from my fieldwork.
I was sitting on a mat in Ibu Ante’s kitchen. As she prepared fish and rice, Ibu Ante explained the hair-cutting ceremony\textsuperscript{202} to me.

‘The hair-cutting ceremony is a religious ceremony, not a local custom. It’s the same for boys and girls, compulsory for Muslims.’\textsuperscript{203}

Ibu Ante insisted that there was a connection between the hair-cutting ceremony and circumcision. Her son, who was now 15 years old, had been circumcised at home by the head of the local clinic, Pak Akbar. It had cost Rp. 120 000. Her two younger daughters had been circumcised at home by her mother.

I asked if nurses ever performed the circumcision on girls. No, Ibu Ante said, she’d never heard of that in Wawonii. Her daughters, now five and seven, had been young\textsuperscript{204} when they had been circumcised. She said that female religious elders or experts\textsuperscript{205} were permitted to perform circumcisions on girls. Becoming circumcised made boys into Muslim men, she said.\textsuperscript{206} She explained that the Koran was read during the ceremony for both boys and girls. Girls should be circumcised between six and eight months of age, and at the very latest before they were two years old, before they ‘know anything.’\textsuperscript{207} The feeling of shame felt by boys and girls was not the same, Ibu Ante told me.\textsuperscript{208} Actually, girls were not cut, she said, instead they were just slightly injured until some blood appeared. The knife was wrapped in a white cloth and prayers for the girl’s safety and well-being on earth and in the

\textsuperscript{202}This ceremony is called ‘cukuran’ or ‘acara potong rambut’ in Wawonii and other parts of Indonesia.

\textsuperscript{203}‘Acara potong rambut... acara agama, bukan adat... laki-laki dan perempuan sama... wajib untuk orang Islam...’

\textsuperscript{204}‘anak-anak kecil’

\textsuperscript{205}‘ahli agama... tante-tante yang sudah mempelajari itu’

\textsuperscript{206}‘jadi dewasa, jadi orang Islam habis disunat’

\textsuperscript{207}‘untuk perempuan umur paling tua itu 2 tahun, harus disunat sebelum dia tahu apa-apa.’

\textsuperscript{208}‘rasa malanya perempuan dengan laki-laki tidak sama.’
afterlife, were uttered above it before the ceremony commenced.\textsuperscript{209} Ibu Ante insisted once more that circumcision and the hair cutting ceremony were not Wawonii custom but part of Islam.\textsuperscript{210} She told me that if a child dies before they had had these ceremonies, they would still enter heaven as pure souls\textsuperscript{211} if their parents were Muslims. Ibu Ante ended by describing Islam as a ‘heavy’ religion with many rules and prohibitions.\textsuperscript{212}

As in Ibu Irma’s account, Ibu Ante emphasised the regulatory function of Islam in the performance of circumcisions. Whether it is performed on girls or boys, insofar as it creates ‘new social subjects’, circumcision is a ‘collective enterprise’ which produces embodied forms of power (Braidotti 2014, p. 168). It is also a practice which ensures one is accepted by the powerful within one’s community, thereby avoiding having to defend oneself from the peripheral margins of the group.

It is particularly important not to confuse the concept of subjectivity with the notion of the individual or individualism: subjectivity is a socially mediated process of entitlements to and negotiations with power relations. Consequently, the formation and emergence of new social subjects is always a collective enterprise, ‘external’ to the individual self while it also mobilizes the self’s in-depth and singular structures (…) ‘subjectivity’ names the process that consists in stringing the reactive (\textit{potestas}) and the active instances of power (\textit{potentia}) together, under the fictional unity of a grammatical ‘I’. The subject is a process, made of constant shifts and negotiations between different levels of power and desire, that is to say,

\textsuperscript{209} ‘anak perempuan itu sebenarnya tidak dipotong... pisau dibungkus dengan kain apa putih... dibaca-baca dulu di atas pisau, terus dibikin sampai berdarah sedikit, tidak dipotong... kasih luka sedikit saja... dibacakan do'a selamat di bumi dan selamat di akhirat...’
\textsuperscript{210} ‘Sunat sama potong rambut bukan adat Wawonii tapi masalah agama Islam’
\textsuperscript{211} ‘pulang dalam keadaan bersih’
\textsuperscript{212} ‘Agama Islam berat, banyak ajaran, banyak larangan.’
entrapment and empowerment. Whatever semblance of unity there may be is no God-given essence, but rather the fictional choreography of many levels of a relational self into the socially operational self, within a monistic ontology. The implication is that what sustains the entire process of becoming-subject is the will-to-know, the desire to say, the desire to speak; it is a founding, primary, vital, necessary and therefore original desire to become (conatus). (Braidotti 2014, pp. 168-9)

Wawonii people talked quite openly about circumcision of both boys and girls. Women sometimes expressed the fear that circumcising girls at an age when they would feel shame would be harmful for them. Therefore, their daughters were circumcised when they were very young (usually under two years of age) and would thus have no memory of their circumcision. Shame associated with this practice would thereby be avoided. Close associations between shame, the female body and religion have a long, detailed history.

“Nyambura, I want to be circumcised.”

(…)

“Circumcised?” At last Nyambura found her voice.

“Yes.”

“But Father will not allow it. He will be very cross with you. And how can you think of it?” Nyambura could visualize Joshua’s fury if he heard of this.

“Besides,” she continued, “you are a Christian. You and I are now wise in the ways of the white people. Father has been teaching us what he learned at Siriana. And you know, the missionaries do not like the circumcision of girls. Father has been saying so. Besides, Jesus told us it was wrong and sinful.”

“I know. But I want to be circumcised.”

- The River Between, Ngugi wa Thion’o
Below is an excerpt from my fieldnotes about a conversation I had with Ibu Sala, a Wawonii woman, about circumcision.

Ibu Sala told me her newborn grandson was due to have a hair-cutting ceremony after the upcoming Idul Fitri. Further, she linked the haircutting and circumcision ceremonies, explaining that they were both necessary because of local custom. Girls should have their haircutting and circumcision ceremonies at about the same time, when they were very young, but boys could wait until they were older for the circumcision ceremony.213

Ibu Sala explained that a small knife was used on girls.214 She herself had been circumcised as a very young girl and could not remember the experience. People said that girls should be circumcised quickly, before they could think, so that they would not feel ashamed.215 Ibu Sala described Wawonii custom as being in accordance with religion.216 During the haircutting ceremony, prayers were said by prominent social and religious figures.217 Afterwards, people ate together.

Following Ibu Ante, in Ibu Sala’s story, the emotion associated with female circumcision is ‘shame’ or ‘shyness’ (malu). Circumcision should be performed earlier on girls than boys in order to avoid these emotions. The circumcision of boys was a spectacle in which people attempted to amuse each other with comments about ‘bananas’ and ‘sausages’. On the other hand, girls required protection not from the blade but from an awareness of ‘shame’. Having extracted shame from circumcision, violence became acceptable.

213 ‘...ada adat begitu, sama halnya disunat, selesai potong rambut langsung disunat kalau perempuan kalau laki-laki tidak nanti besar-besar tapi kalau perempuan itu ini malam umpananya potong rambut siangnya paling langsung disunat.’
214 ‘Biasa pisau tapi kecil seperti kecil sekali...’
215 ‘Masih kecil belum saya ingat itu masih kecil itu itu kalau perempuan cepat dikasih sunat karena sebelum ada pikiran begini begini supaya kemaluan kita yang...jangan sampai orang malu’
216 ‘Kita punya anu adat sesuai agama, kita punya adat begitu.’
217 ‘tokoh-tokoh masyarakat eh pegawai-pegawai masjid.’
Conclusion

This chapter has used a narrative ethnography to interrogate the place of violence, embodied knowledge and the place of the ethnographer in spaces where circumcisions take place. By intentionally hitching words such as ‘spectacle’ to the circumcisions I witnessed, and emphasizing the inversion of certain social norms, I have sought to bring forth the carnivalesque atmosphere of these practices. This chapter has endeavoured to display the complexities inherent in the emergence of violence, power and knowledge within Wawonii circumcision ceremonies. Such complexities have real social consequences in terms of whether a person is accepted within cultural and religious groups, or whether they are marginalized. The materialization of performative language within these practices has also been discussed. Emerging from beneath the blade, circumcised bodies avoid peripheral status, returning instead to communities – whether the village, the family or the umat – reconstituted by the relations of force by which they have been shaped.
CHAPTER FOUR

BLOOD

What is called “perception” is no longer a state of affairs but a state of the body as induced by another body, and “affection” is the passage of this state to another state as increase or decrease of potential – power through the action of other bodies.

Nothing is passive, but everything is interaction, even gravity.

– What is Philosophy?, Deleuze

Fluid conceptualizations

Concepts of blood are both embedded (within the social) and embodied (by individuals). Far from being simply one bodily fluid among many, in many cultural settings, blood is entangled within relations of power; ‘one of the fundamental values’, at once both ‘instrumental’, and functioning socially, within ‘the order of signs’ (Foucault 1978, p. 147).218 As this chapter shows, understandings of blood in Wawonii reflect those elsewhere, where linkages are made ‘between substances that flow within and between bodies and relations that are apprehended in terms of such flows’ (Carsten 2011, p. 30).

The Wawonii verb ‘to bleed’ is mebeli.219 As this chapter illustrates, in Wawonii, the appearance of blood subjects people – particularly women – to certain social laws, it threatens sometimes to disrupt the sovereignty of the body and it is conceived of in symbolic terms.220 Like the body itself, blood is a complex assemblage. What do we mean by this? Blood is a

218 For example, among the Bugis of Lindu, Central Sulawesi, blood, as one of the ‘basic elements’, is closely associated with fire, fever, the colour red, and offerings of red glutinous rice and the barangeng banana (Acciaioli 1990, p. 226).
219 Indonesian: berdarah.
220 Uncontrolled blood, often described as ‘dirty/ impure lumps’ of reproductive blood stuck within the female body, is often conceived of in the symbolic terms described by Mary Douglas (1996, p. 86): ‘…the social experience of disorder is expressed by powerfully efficacious symbols of impurity and danger.’
multiplicity of multiplicities. In various states, it can be both fluid and static, fatal and essential to life, self-producing and self-depleting. Blood is a constant becoming; it is both cause and effect. It constitutes a bodily force and must also withstand other bodily forces. It is active and reactive. As Carsten (2011, p. 28) argues, blood is both ‘substance and relationality’. Both conceptualizations of blood, and blood itself as a material substance, are convergent. This chapter specifically explores the qualitative aspects of reproductive blood. How can the reproductive blood of Wawonii women be conceptualized as an assemblage? And what are the consequences in terms of the territorialization (or deterritorialization, its opposite) of the body?

Blood depends on context for its conceptualization. In Wawonii, men’s blood is not the same as women’s blood. Blood lost due to an accident while working is not the same as blood lost due to menstruation or birth. Blood in certain situations is considered benign, while in others blood is considered dirty/impure, dangerous or powerful. Blood is sometimes associated with malevolent spirits, and other times is not. Blood is an index of balance within the body; too much (for example, in the uterus’ of post-partum women) and not enough (for example, in a person suffering from weakness, dizziness and lack of appetite – ‘sakit kurang darah’, or ‘lack of blood illness’) are both dangerous conditions.

A survey of the most innovative approaches in cultural anthropology over the past decades would probably take special note of ways in which discussions of the body and sexuality have been reframed with reference to the politics of representation, throwing into question once-classic definitions of taboo, pollution, and symbolic integrity. The difference between women and men has come to be seen as

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221 Among Khmer women, loss of blood during the delivery of a child is also linked to weakness (Montesanti 2011, p. 98).

222 This concept is found among other Indonesian people, such as the Sasak: ‘Excessive amounts of any kind of blood are dangerous, and these buildups must be dispersed in the body through massages and spells. If there is not enough (kurang) of any of these types of blood, the lack can be made up by boiling teas out of a like colour: a chip of a particular red wood to replenish red blood lost in hemorrhages and a chip of a particular white wood to replenish the lack of white blood signaled by fevers. The waters/ bloods must all be cukup (enough) for a body to be healthy’ (Hay 2001 p.77).
historically constructed (...) If bodies and persons are culturally made, rather than simply acknowledged, and if female reproductive fluids are themselves the product of a complex cultural process, then how are we to understand an apparent universal like menstruation, which takes so many diverse social forms? (Hoskins 2002, p. 299)

This chapter investigates Wawonii people’s ‘ontological take’ (Holbraad 2010) on menstrual, reproductive and post-partum blood in times of suffering or crisis. While conceptualizations of these types of blood – female blood – will both reflect and have implications for gender relations, as in some other parts of Indonesia, in Wawonii, blood in general is not considered ‘male’ or ‘female’.223

Incorporeal concepts, material consequences
This chapter explores how collective conceptualizations of the significance224 of blood are constructed. This is a constitutive exploration. It asks how these conceptualizations are constituted. These concepts, while themselves incorporeal, have material consequences for Wawonii people. This is particularly true for Wawonii women during processes of birth, menstruation and menopause.

Concepts are one of the ways in which the living address and attempt to deal with the chaos which surrounds them (other ways include the functive, which orders science, and percepts and affects, which organize the arts). (Grosz 2011, p. 78)

While blood may be defined in relatively indisputable terms according to its physical, chemical and functional properties, cultural concepts of blood are highly variable. They are, in other words, a part of the ‘chaos’ of everyday life. Blood – particularly when uncontrolled – is

223 In Sumba, ‘…blood is not regarded as either an exclusively masculine or feminine quality (...) the Rindi do not regard a person’s blood as deriving solely from his father or from his mother’ (Forth 1983, p. 661).
224 ‘Significance’ here is not to be confused with ‘representation’. Instead, starting from a point of ‘significance’, I examine the pragmatic capacity to act; to become important to certain people at certain times.
also part of this ‘chaos’. The ‘concepts’ of blood Wawonii people create are strategies for dealing with the physical and social impact of blood on their bodies. Different gendered and religious contexts create a vast array of conceptual differences in how blood is understood, and how it (and its depletion) affects both individual and social bodies.

This chapter focuses on what blood is for Wawonii people, how it has become this way, and how the conceptual frameworks within which blood in Wawonii is categorized have developed. As Holbraad (2010, p. 184) reminds us, the aims of ‘what’ questions, which begin with conceptualization, differ from the more the more interpretive or explanatory motivations of ‘why’ questions. Since they are grounded in ontological explorations, ‘what’ questions begin with the verb ‘to be’ – what is blood? – and move on to questions of becoming.

Although conceptualization has more commonly been the domain of philosophy, whereas anthropology has more commonly been concerned with interpretation and explanation via a series of ‘why’ questions, exceptions to this pattern exist. In *Mimesis and Alterity: A Particular History of the Senses*, Michael Taussig (1993, p. 101), for example, asks what the Cuna people of Colombia regard ‘purpa’ to be. Rather than being ‘really’ blood and secondarily a representation of the soul or spirit, Taussig shows that within Cuna conceptualizations, *purpa* in fact, in its different constitutions, is the

…invisible replica of one’s body (…) soul or spirit; (…) menstrual blood (red purpa), semen (white purpa), shadow, photograph (face purpa), and speech (mouth purpa). (Taussig 1993, p. 101)

Echoing Taussig’s approach, in which ‘difference’ is ‘something that cannot be included’ (Law 2015, p. 128) in the category of ‘blood’, in his research with the Mbendjele, Lewis (2008, p. 297-8) begins by asking not what ‘ekila’ represents or symbolises, but what it is. This question is answered by drawing attention to ‘physique’, ‘movement’, ‘sensory
experiences’ ‘bodily maturation’ and ‘performance’. *Ekila* is found to be a complex cluster of misfortune-inducing taboos:

menstruation, blood (…) a hunter’s meat, animals’ power to harm humans, and particular dangers to human reproduction, production, health and sanity (Lewis 2008, p. 298).

Following Holbraad (2010, p. 184), and the self-reflexive ontological approach favoured by anthropologists such as Taussig and Lewis, this chapter asks how ‘our analytical concepts’ can be re-imagined by asking, situated within Wawonii peoples’ conceptualizations, what does blood become?

The rationalist (conceptual) and empiricist (time, place/ context) positions both contribute to an exploration of what blood is to people in the small Wawonii villages where my fieldwork was carried out. Further, this chapter draws attention to the poetics and politics of blood. It explores the polylogical exchanges between my own conceptual frameworks and those I encountered in Wawonii. As we will see, blood (particularly female blood) frequently finds itself located between concepts of danger, pollution, heat, weakness, myth and magic. Indeed, a certain magic is required to create the mythologies upon which conceptualizations of blood rest. These conceptualizations attend to anxieties related to health and the individual and social need to explain the body in times of potential crisis (birth, menstruation, illness). The ‘natural’ is thus infused with the ‘cultural’, resulting in what Donna Haraway calls ‘naturecultures’ (DeLanda 2012, p. 48). Furthermore, the ‘cultural’ implies a network of relations between and within the ‘natural’ and the ‘cultural’.

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225 In Indonesia, pregnant and post-partum Dayak and Banjar women are at risk of being attacked by the dangerous female spirits known as ‘Kuyang’ or ‘drinkers of blood’ (Tsing 1988, p. 836). Among the Luwu of South Sulawesi, the placenta is buried in a coconut shell along with ‘daung pallang’, a type of leaf which is also used in ceremonies to repel ‘jin pakkoni’ spirits which ‘lick up blood’ (Errington 1989, p. 38). Similarly, among Buli people, the smell of blood attracts witches (Bubandt 2004, p. 261).
An exploration of the significance of blood in Wawonii shows how the terms ‘nature’ and ‘culture’ are not conceived of separately. In her conceptualization, Gatens nudges ‘nature’ and ‘culture’ closer to a Deleuzean framework:

the incessant play between the two terms of a pair, say, nature and culture, is what constitutes our situation as always ambiguous, always involving a free ‘becoming,’ rather than mere ‘being’. (Gatens 2003, p. 282)

Insofar as ritual, although repeated, is never precisely the same, it is one method of ‘becoming’ (although scepticism guards against using the term ‘free’ too freely). In Wawonii, the mewowa and merarane rituals are two aspects of the village and cultural ‘law’ (Foucault 1978, p. 148) which has its effects on and in bodies.

*Mewowa and merarane: culture as activity (process) and law (structure)*

Culture means training and selection. Nietzsche calls the movement of culture the “morality of customs” (…) 1) That which is obeyed, in a people, race or class, is always historical, arbitrary, grotesque, stupid and limited; this usually represents the worst reactive forces. 2) But in the fact that something, no matter what it is, is obeyed, appears a principle which goes beyond peoples, races and classes. To obey the law because it is the law: the form of the law means that a certain activity, a certain active force, is exercised on man [sic], and given the task of training him [sic] (…) Every historical law is arbitrary, but what is not arbitrary, what is prehistoric and generic, is the law of obeying laws.

-Nietzsche and Philosophy, Deleuze

*Mewowa* and *merarane* are elements in the cultural ‘training’ of Wawonii women during and after birth. These are bahasa Wawonii terms which describe the activities women take up to
deal with birthing blood. In these contexts, blood is often synonymous with ‘kotoran’. Whether ‘kotoran’ was intended to mean ‘dirt’ (physical uncleanliness), ‘impurity’ (moral uncleanliness) or both, was not made explicit. I took ‘kotoran’ to be a combination of these meanings.

*Mewowa* describes the hot bath women are given following birth in order to expel post-partum blood. Terms in Indonesian glossed by local people to mean *mewowa* included *mandi air panas, mandi panas, terapi air panas, pakai air panas, obat air panas, dikasih panas* and *dikasih mandi pakai air masak*. *Merarane* is the act of women lying beside or above the kitchen fire for days, weeks or a full forty days after they have given birth. It is referred to in Indonesian as *baring di samping api, baring dekat api* or *baring-baring di atas api*. *Mewowa* and *merarane* are practices responding to events, bodily events, events exclusive to women’s bodies.

Both *mewowa* and *merarane* centre upon the transmission of heat (hot water and the heat from fires) from outside to inside the biological bodies of women who have just given birth. During *mewowa*, hot, sometimes near-boiling water is splashed over the woman's stomach and uterus area. This is intended to break up any internal blood clots and encourage and stagnant blood or ‘kotoran’ (dirt/ impurity) to be expelled from the woman's body. The purpose of *merarane* is fundamentally the same. Women should either lie beside or above the fire, usually in their kitchen or the kitchen of their mother's house. Some middle-aged women say they did *merarane* for a week or ten days and a minority – usually women who were now grandmothers – told me they had done it for the full forty days. Some women aged under forty years said they had never done *merarane*, while others said they'd done it for a few days, or a week, because their grandmothers had insisted on it. ‘It’ being local cultural law. Almost all the Wawonii women I spoke with who had given birth claimed to have practised *mewowa* at least once.

*Mewowa* and *merarane* are both forms of inherited convention which exert particular
cultural, physical and moral force over the women practising them. The acts of practicing *mewowa* and *merarane* legitimises these forces. In the practice of *mewowa*, the body has not only an epistemological but also a mnemonic function. The past is contracted into the present via the acts which make up *mewowa*. In recalling and continuing this inherited past through the practice of *mewowa*, Wawonii people construct for themselves a certain collective identity which forms part of ‘culture’. Adherence to practices such as *mewowa* is a part of the training required to claim this identity; assimilative activities and attitudes, which demand obedience, reward their adherents by aligning people and creating between them an identity greater than themselves.

In this interview, two women in their 50s, Ibu Nur and Ibu Lia, describe doing *merarane* when they had given birth. At that time, there were no nurses or medicines available. The daughter of Ibu Lia, Ibu Ririn, who is in her 20s and gave birth approximately a year before I arrived in Wawonii, did not do *merarane*. In an earlier conversation, I had understood that Ibu Lia had been sick and had headaches while practising *merarane*, but in this account she denies this.

Ibu Lia: We laid near the fire

Ibu Nur: We [laid there] for forty days

Brooke: How about Ibu Ririn?

Ibu Nur & Ibu Lia: No, because there's a nurse [now] but for us before there was no medicine

Brooke: Wasn't the fire too hot?

Ibu Nur: Oh, if [you’re talking about] heat, we were very hot
Ibu Lia: [We] used fire, hot water

Brooke: Why?

Ibu Lia: I was too shy\(^\text{226}\) to wash in the sea... I didn't know how to have a wash in hot water, we just went and laid beside the fire so it [blood] came out, straight out, that's what we're used to...

Brooke: The women here say...

Ibu Nur: Usually [it's] forty days...

Ibu Lia: Forty days for me

Ibu Nur: Forty days

Brooke: Ibu Lia, didn't you have a headache and become sick during the forty days?

Ibu Lia: No, I even felt happy. We felt good. We drank hot water, and ate hot things...

In Wawonii, potential anxiety surrounding reproductive blood seems to be assuaged by obeying the law; practising *mewowa* and *merarane*. Thus, women are able to feel ‘happy’ and ‘good’. Whether it is located within or outside post-partum women, the ritual activities required to deal with reproductive blood are an indication of its intensity.\(^\text{227}\)

‘Reproductive blood’ includes not only the blood expelled during and following pregnancy and the birthing process, but also menstrual blood and blood generally located within and around the uterus. Whether it is ‘blocked’ or ‘coagulated’ (as some Wawonii women

\(^{226}\) *Malu*

\(^{227}\) While in Wawonii, the anxiety around reproductive blood results in its conceptualization as an intensity, further east, in Buli, punishment is the operative category (Bubandt 2004, p. 252). Among the Banjar, fear and danger predominate (Tsing 1988, p. 836).
explained) within a woman’s reproductive organs or not, reproductive blood is an intense, and tension-inducing, fluid. This is not true of the blood which appears when someone cuts themselves while harvesting rice or scaling fish. The threats posed to bodily integrity by these acts appear minimal, they do not attract malevolent spirits, and are not considered ‘dirty’ or ‘impure’. Reproductive blood, however, is characterised by high intensities of all of these things. Reproductive blood itself is material. The intensity of reproductive blood is its incorporeal conceptualization. While energy is a property of material substances (such as blood), intensity is a characteristic of the abstract/incorporeal concept (Deleuze & Guattari 1994, p. 21). While the energy of non-reproductive blood may be equivalent to that of reproductive blood, a vast, culturally-constructed gap opens up between these categories when conceptualized in terms of ‘intensity’.

Reproductive blood, as an intensive fluid, is part of cultural narratives about the meanings of health, danger, maintaining dignity and carrying out a local practice under difficult circumstances. 'Malu' – shyness, embarrassment, shame – has the power to restrict women's movements in situations, such as those involving blood related to pregnancy or menstruation, not just in Wawonii but throughout Indonesia. As Browner and Sargent (1996, p. 219) contend,

'[h]uman reproduction is never entirely a biological affair; all societies shape their members' reproductive behavior (...) the way a society structures human reproductive behavior inevitably draws upon and reflects that society's core values and structural principles.'

However, within this argument lies the implicit assumption that ‘core values and structural principles’ are a part of ‘all societies’. I contend that Browner and Sargent (1996) are making the mistake here of projecting the notion of ‘core values and structural principles’ from within their own societies upon ‘all societies’. I take issue with the reification of ‘a society’ as
some sort of volitional mechanism capable not only of creating (structuring) things, but also of having ‘values’ and ‘principles’ as if it were an individual being with an individual will. In using ethnography to re-position problematic conceptualizations such as Browner and Sargent’s (1996) above within a self-reflexive framework, we can see that the equation has in fact been turned inside out.

One way out of the perennial problem of how much the individual shapes or is shaped by society is by adopting a materialist ontological approach which emphasises connection, intensity, cyborg-bodies, ‘grey analysis’, multiplicity, fluidity and the constant interaction between multiple individual bodies and clusters of bodies. Beginning at this starting point, the question is not framed in terms of two unequal forces opposing one another. Instead, the multitude of connections, intensities, pulsations, are recognised. The measurement of boundaries (which is required for the location of oppositional structures) is simultaneously the production of those boundaries (and the oppositional structures they produce).

In other parts of Indonesia and Southeast Asia, the idea that heat is required to expel blood following birth is also common. In Buli, the blood which flows out of women as they stand astride hot coals post-pregnancy is known as ‘raw blood’ (Bubandt 2004, p. 259). A Buli practice similar to merarane involves keeping newborn children close to the fire for months following birth so they are ‘cooked’ (Bubandt 2004, p. 259). In Cambodia, post-pregnancy roasting is practised for between three to seven days. Known as Ang Pleung, this practice is required to heat womens’ tendons and bones and ensure that blood inside the uterus does not clot (Montesanti 2011, p.96). As in Wawonii, a Khmer woman who does not bleed enough is said to be in danger. If women do not engage in Ang Pleung, the trapped blood inside them will put them at risk of developing ‘toas chamney (illness)’ (Montesanti 2011, p. 97). Furthermore, the ghost ‘Priey Krawlah Pleung’, attracted by the blood trapped in the woman’s uterus, will
come to eat this blood (White 2002, p. 243). Working with predominantly Hindu communities in Nepal and India, Reissland & Burghart (1987, p. 232) found pregnancy to be

A heating experience, due to the gradual accumulation of stale blood in the stomach-womb. Upon birth this blood is expelled, leaving mother and child in a cool, febrile state.

Knowledge of _mewowa_ and _merarane_ is a form of cultural capital for older Wawonii women. The practices of _Mewowa_ and _merarane_ are ways of creating something which forms part of local ‘culture’ by imbuing a certain structure or meaning upon bleeding bodies. Once a ‘structure’ has been created, anything – bleeding bodies, for example – beyond or outside of this ‘structure’ is opposed to it and may therefore be immediately identified with chaos, disorder and vulnerability. Anthropologists have a long history of constructing this sort of dichotomy before projecting it upon the societies in which they work. It is perhaps more helpful, however, to look at the practices and energies which inhabit the body and which the body also projects. These movements, and the points where they cluster together, becoming static, closed systems, are what Deleuze and Guattari refer to as deterritorializations (the former) and territorializations (the latter). Both physical and conceptual energies are used in movements of deterritorialization and stagnant states of lockdown by which acts of territorialization are recognized. These concepts are exemplified in the following conversation with Ibu Daria.

_Ibu Daria_

_The concept is an incorporeal, even though it is incarnated or effectuated in bodies._ (Deleuze & Guattari 1994, p. 21)
Ibu Daria sat slouched on a broken bamboo bench outside the empty primary school. As I walked up the only road in the village, she waved and told me to come and sit beside her. When she was in Wawonii, Ibu Daria spent much of the day slouched on this bench. While others were planting rice, picking beans or harvesting cashews, Ibu Daria slumped herself here, half-asleep, waiting to talk to anyone who walked by. In her early forties, Ibu Daria was now the director of a kindergarten in Kendari. She had been born in this village and returned to visit family a few times a year. Although she owned some rice fields and cashew trees, only her less prosperous relatives, who lived permanently in this village, did any of the agricultural work. Ibu Daria was very fat. She liked to talk about food, sickness and health. As I sat down beside her, she launched into an explanation of why she was being prevented from visiting the local dukun.228

I want to go to the dukun but I haven't had the opportunity yet because of the big lumps caused by the cyst in my womb, the dirty/ impure blood that hasn't been expelled, sticks like … sticks in my womb and hasn't been expelled until finally the fat sticks together forming a ball with the dirty/ impure blood... it coagulates you know... the blood... it sticks together, doesn't go out, the blood doesn't go out and after a while the fat sticks together in a lump, it's the dirty/ impure blood, that's why I don't menstruate anymore... it sticks together and after a while it gets bigger, I still eat a lot, my appetite is good... so after that people here warm themselves, we're given hot water... hot water, but the (person) who gives it to us doesn't feel (how hot it is) but we (do), we hohohoho!! Usually we hohohoho!! ...because of the hot water... my stomach was burning...229

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228 This was the same woman described as a ‘dukun bayi’ in Chapter Two. Apart from her responsibilities towards pregnant and post-partum women, she administered massage and tiup-tiup treatment to people with broken bones and other illnesses.

229 Saya ini mau ke dukun lagi tapi belum ada kesempatan karena itu itu benjolan-benjolan yang besar begini karena kista itu kan di kandungan kita, darah kotor yang tidak keluar tertempel seperti ... tertempel di
In Ibu Daria’s account, what is (this particular type of) blood? It is an impediment to action. It prevents Ibu Daria from visiting the dukun, as she would like to. It also prevents her from menstruating. It seems to have an agency all of its own, which is in conflict with Ibu Daria’s will. Ibu Daria objectifies this blood as being an antagonistic agent which comes from her body and operates within it. The anxiety surrounding the practices of merarane and mewowa is mirrored in Ibu Daria’s conceptualization of her reproductive blood, the ‘dirty/impure blood’ which ‘sticks together, doesn’t go out’. In emphasizing the ‘lumps’, ‘cyst’, ‘dirty/impure blood that (…) sticks’, ‘the fat [that] sticks together, forming a ball with the dirty/impure blood’ and the blood that ‘coagulates (…) sticks together’, Ibu Daria is describing the territorialisation of her body by these unwanted substances. Blood, as an assemblage made up of multiple minute substances engaged in constant interaction, undergoes a qualitative change as it becomes static. It becomes a disruptive assemblage. Ibu Daria rejects this qualitative change and therefore attempts to reverse it by having hot water poured on her stomach. In order to re-gain control over her body, she engages in a strategic attempt at deteritorialization.

The internal ‘dirty/impure blood’ stuck to the ‘fat’ is not only real (in Ibu Daria’s conceptualization), but also intense (in Ibu Daria’s experience). Ibu Daria’s anxiety was

\[kandungan\ kota\ tidak\ keluar\ akhirnya\ itu\ lemak\ dia\ ikut\ membungkus\ dengan\ kotoran\ darah\ ...\ membeku\ kan\ ...\ darah\ ...\ tertempel,\ tidak\ keluar\ setelah\ darah\ tidak\ keluar\ lama-kelamaan\ jadi\ itu\ anu\ lemak\ dia\ membungkus\ itu\ anu\ darah\ kotor\ tidak\ punya\ haid\ toh\ ...\ membungkus\ setelah\ itu\ lama-kelamaan\ dia\ akan\ membesar\ karena\ kalau\ makan\ dia\ agak\ baik\ tetap\ banyak\ ...\ jadi\ setelah\ itu\ kalau\ orang\ di\ sini\ kasih\ yang\ panas\ kalau\ dia\ kasih\ kita\ air\ panas...\ air\ panas\ tapi\ yang\ kasih\ kita\ tidak,\ dia\ tidak\ rasa\ tapi\ ya\ kita\ ini\ kita\ hohohoho!!\ Biasa\ kita\ hohohoho!!\ ...\ lantaran\ air\ panas\ ...\ terbakar\ peruku...\]

230 In stark contrast to Wawonii people, further east among the Buli, ‘[t]he containment of blood in the body is an index of fertility, while the appearance of blood is its negation, and associated with infertility and danger. This goes for menstrual blood as it does for blood in general’ (Bubandt 2004, p. 257). Like in Wawonii, in Lombok, ‘sakit daraq (blood sickness)’ occurs ‘if all the woman’s “dirty” blood does not come out’ (Hay 2001, p. 111).

231 This is remarkably similar to practices and beliefs among the Sasak of Lombok: ‘Movement, the fluidity of substances within the body, particularly water/ blood, is considered essential to being healthy (…) When fluidity is blocked or reduced (karang), that blockage is considered an illness’ (Hay 2001, p. 71). In Java, beliefs and practices related to the ‘water of life’ can be traced back to journeys undertaken by Bima, Indra and Bayu in the Mahabharata (Magnis Suseno 1997, p. 116).
conveyed in her rushed, high-pitched speech, and her repetition. How she arrived at her conceptualizations, and whether or not they are empirically correct, is unimportant. Her ‘big lumps’, ‘dirty/ impure blood’ and ‘cyst’, conceptualized at the sharp end of intensity, are anxiety-inducing. This is Ibu Daria’s experience. It is her reality. Since she cannot simply get rid of the anxiety she experiences, Ibu Daria conceptualizes it within a culturally familiar framework: blood associated with reproduction as a danger/ threat. Thus, she claims some small agency over an anxiety which otherwise threatens to overwhelm her. Ibu Daria’s ‘incorporeal’ conceptualizations are ‘incarnated’ and ‘effectuated’ in her (corporeal) body.

[T]he body – whether it be as organism, as character, or as tool – never appears to me without surroundings, and (...) the body must be determined in terms of these surroundings. (Sartre 1993, p. 351)

Later on, I asked Ibu Daria about the influence of nurses or dukun when a woman on Wawonii gives birth. In her reply, Ibu Daria characterised bodies and the blood flows within them using a metaphor common in the speech of Wawonii people, the coconut.

If we use a nurse, she will give medication and not long after that, the bleeding will stop. This blood must escape the body because it’s dirty/ impure, you know, if we wait for some time it will stop directly by itself, but using this medication makes the body withhold this dirt/ impurity, it doesn’t come out... it comes out quickly if we use hot water, you know, blood coagulates, the heat breaks it up, if there is oil in a bottle, have you ever seen cold oil in a bottle? Ah, it coagulates, coconut oil, it coagulates, doesn’t it? If heat is applied, it breaks up... that is what our blood is like.233

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232 Elsewhere, the concept of ‘flow’ has been used to metaphorically link blood with ghosts (Carsten 2011, p. 29).

233 '...kalau pakai bidan kapan kasih obat tidak lama berhenti darah... darah-darah ini harus keluar karena kotoran kan ada waktunya juga setelah itu langsung berhenti sendiri tapi kalau obat ini biasa menahan itu kotoran jangan dia keluar... cepat keluar kalau pakai air panas kan itu darah membeku itu dia hancurkan kan kan panas itu minyak minyak kalau dia tidur di botol pernah lihat mi itu minyak yang dingin di botol? Ah
Once again, Ibu Daria engages herself in a struggle to deterritorialize her inner organs from the coagulated blood. Medication from the nurses is a hindrance, as it keeps the blood trapped inside the body. The metaphoric link Ibu Daria makes between coconut oil and blood constitutes her engagement in a ‘semiotising practice’ (Roepstorff & Bubandt 2003, p. 26). Imagined in this way, her birthing blood and the bodily processes they impact become understandable and therefore known to her.

Again, the question: what is (this particular) blood? Ibu Daria’s unwanted blood is a problem to be solved; a dirty/ impure substance to be gotten rid of.234 Her body is simultaneously structured, contained, bottle-like and experiential, in flux, a process. While Ibu Daria experiences anxiety over uncontrollable bodily processes, she also uses hot water to assert her agency over the coagulated fluids. Her body is thus a multiplicity: ‘more than one and less than many.’ (Strathern 1991, p. 35)

Creating fluid boundaries

Concepts are ways of dealing with problems – ways of becoming. Concepts are not only theories, and while they may be abstract, they are also practical. Strategic acts – such as mewowa and merarane – may be understood also as conceptual practices. As Deleuze explains throughout ‘What Is A Concept?’, concepts are not representations or explanations, but creations. They have histories and intensities and are incarnated in bodies. Different practices which form the bases of different cultures produce different concepts.235 Practices unfold not only as products of thought, but as strategies of becoming – methods of materialization. As

membeku, minyak kelapa, pernah, membeku kan? Kalau dikasih panas kan hancur ... seperti mi itu darah kita...’

234 Unlike in Wawonii, in some other parts of Indonesia, expelled reproductive blood is conceptualized in positive terms. Among the Meratus of Kalimantan, “Blood” is the first element from which the fetus is said to develop (transformed from the ‘waters’ of the father, and, according to some, the mother); the blood expelled with the infant at birth becomes its guardian sibling, the favourite spirit familiar of shamans (…) (Tsing 1988, p. 836).

235 These practices of ‘training and selection’, which form the basis of cultures, are expressed in Nietzsche as the ‘morality of customs’ (Deleuze 1983, p. 133).
bodies materialize, they encounter other bodies in both physical and psychological senses and thus the question of boundaries arises. Like concepts, biological border-zones such as the skin (which nevertheless contain openings) are created. These are underpinned by psychological concepts of space and cultural concepts of the construction of the social – in other words, where the individual ends and the social begins. Cultural conceptualizations of the ‘buffered’ (“Western”, individualistic) self, for example, differ vastly from that of the ‘porous’ (“pre-modern”, enchanted) self (Taylor 2007, p. 38). The body is not only a cultural and social artefact, it is also physical, biological.

“The body” in this Deleuzian framework is not treated as a “thing-like” entity, as it is in many approaches to the sociology of the body. Rather, is viewed as both multiple (made up of many bodies) and fluid. Bodies from this perspective are not fixed, bounded entities. They exist only in connection with other bodies and “entities.” “Movement,” as Probyn notes, is a principle of “connection and contact” between bodies. (Thomas & Ahmed 2004, p. 18)

Like individual particles, bodies themselves, being simultaneously immersed in stages of becoming (both growth and decay) are indeterminate. In order to say that skin is the porous boundary through which blood leaks in exceptional or extreme circumstances, we first need to establish skin as a boundary. The leap from ‘skin’ to ‘boundary’ is a constructed one, one which has implications not only for what a body (as ‘container’) is, but also for what it can or should do (what it can or should contain, what can be discarded, and under what conditions).236

[A]n animal, a thing is never separable from its relations with the world. The interior is only a selected exterior, and the exterior, a projected interior. The speed

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236 Similarly, ‘[a]cademic’ bodies, or ‘fields are also historical individuals with contingent boundaries (…) We need to draw on the conceptual and empirical resources developed by all fields to enrich materialism and to prevent it from becoming a priori’ (DeLanda 2012, p. 40). In earlier work, Latour (1999, p. 274) neatly captures this hybrid-zone where dichotomizations between ‘fact’ and ‘fetish’ or the natural sciences and social sciences collapse by introducing the concept of ‘factish’. This term could be usefully applied to bodies.
and slowness of metabolisms, perceptions, actions and reactions, link together to constitute a particular individual in the world. (italics added) (Deleuze 1988, p. 125)

As she explained her anxieties around her cyst and the dirty/ impure blood within, Ibu Daria was not only mapping out the shifting boundaries of her body, she was creating these maps and boundaries as she spoke. The material-semiotic reality of her ever-increasing cyst was experienced as anxiety and conceptualized as intensity. The more Ibu Daria felt her boundaries shifting, the more she insisted on seeing the dukun.

[B]odies as objects of knowledge are material-semiotic generative nodes. Their boundaries materialize in social interaction. Boundaries are drawn by mapping practices; ‘objects’ do not pre-exist as such. Objects are boundary projects. But boundaries shift from within; boundaries are very tricky. What boundaries provisionally contain remains generative, productive of meanings and bodies. (Haraway 1988, p. 595)

In describing bodily boundaries during fieldwork, villagers explained that blood may circulate at a temperature and intensity considered normal (and therefore healthy). Alternatively, these flows may be hindered or sped up by lumps of tissue, fat, or excessive heat or coldness. These fluids are forms of energy which circulate through and beyond the skin. The skin itself is a porous boundary through which blood leaks, often uncontrolled and therefore threatening. The danger/ threat of blood lies in its transgression – its resistance to containment and its resistance to control even when it is contained (as in the example of Ibu Daria, whose dirty/ impure internal blood kept gathering, increasing, forming a large lump). In Ibu Daria’s account, it is not the threat that the blood in her womb will escape her body uncontrolled which creates anxiety, but the physical changing of matter from fluid to a solid lump.
Left uncontrolled, these fluids are potential causes of illness. They are therefore subjected to the regime of control of the body, or its technologization, developed by Foucault in his theory of biopower. Another method of control is the categorization of these fluids by local people as being either ‘clean’ or ‘dirty/ impure’.

Branding something such as blood as being ‘dirty/ impure’ or ‘polluting’ may simply be a way of expressing the concepts of fear and threat which are linked with blood. Blood may not literally be understood as ‘containing dirt/ impurities’ or ‘causing pollution’, although these words may be used. Not all blood, and not all ‘transgressive’ blood, is considered to be these things. Rather than being the blood itself, it is blood in a particular social, political and gendered context. Here, blood is part of a certain constellation, with which conceptualizations of ‘dirt/ impurity’ and ‘pollution’ are linked.

Which types of blood are categorised as ‘dirty/ impure’ or ‘polluting’? Unsurprisingly, the answer is almost without exception female menstrual blood, blood produced after or during pregnancy, or blood otherwise associated with reproduction or illnesses of the reproductive organs. During twelve months of fieldwork, not once did I hear male blood (of any kind) described as ‘kotoran’.

**Nurse Ati**

My Wawonii neighbours were a couple with five children. Their eldest daughter, Yenti, had been a sixteen-year-old in school uniform when I had arrived in mid-2013. Ten months later, she was heavily pregnant, and recently married. Instead of spending afternoons chasing schoolmates around the coconut palms behind her house, as she had done earlier, now the school uniform had been discarded and she spent all day washing clothes and doing other household chores with her mother’s friends and relatives. I had initially gotten to know her as a cheeky and playful teenager. Now she looked permanently bored and exhausted. Yenti’s
seventeen-year-old husband, once her classmate, had been sent to Kendari to complete his schooling after they had been married. He hadn’t come back to Wawonii. Yenti did not know if or when he would return.

In May 2014, Yenti gave birth to a boy. Nurse Ati, the local dukun and Yenti’s mother and two grandmothers were present. Nurse Ati told me that she had been primarily responsible for ensuring that Yenti’s birth went as smoothly as possible. The dukun massaged Yenti before and after the birth, while Yenti’s relatives prayed, encouraged her and brought her tea to drink.

I was in Kendari when the birth occurred, and when I returned to Wawonii a few days later, Nurse Ati explained the following to me:

Yenti is allowed to bathe in hot water, but she shouldn’t put hot water on the area I sewed up… I gave her several medications: antibiotics, pain killers… Her contractions were good so the blood came out well, none was left behind… later when I got there, Yenti was just doing mewowa, not merarane, the hot water was poured into a bottle and then poured on her stomach so that the blood would escape, Yenti’s blood was good, her dirty/impure blood was good, so it was good… it was good because after she’d given birth, big (lumps of) blood, like this, were already coming out, that’s good you know, that’s what has to escape, a lot of blood, like this… it all escaped at that time, so her stomach wasn’t too sick.

Nurse Ati describes the blood formed during and after Yenti’s pregnancy as both ‘dirty/impure’ (in substance) and ‘good’ (in process) since it is expelled from Yenti’s body in large quantities following birth. The similarity between Nurse Ati and Ibu Daria’s accounts is

237 ‘Yenti boleh mandi air panas, tapi kalau di bagian yang saya jahit jangan dulu dikasih dengan air panas... Ati kasih beberapa obat - antibiotik, peredaan nyeri... Dia... kontraksinya bagus jadi darahnya keluar bagus tidak ada yang tertinggal... Terus saya datang, Yenti nggak tinggal di samping api tapi pakai terapi air panas aja, air panas ditaruh di botol terus dikasih di perut biar darah mau keluar toh bagus hanya kalau Yenti kan darahnya, darah Kotornyga bagus dia, jadi bagus... bagus karena waktu habis melahirkan darah yang besar-besar kayak begini sudah keluar bagus kan itu yang harus keluar jadi darah yang besar-besar seperti begini... dia keluar semua pada saat itu jadi dia tidak terlalu sakit perutnya.’

238 This mirrors Hay’s (2001, p. 72) findings in Lombok: ‘All of the dirty blood must go out. Only then will she be healthy (after childbirth).’
remarkable. Although Ibu Daria’s account was not one of pregnancy, in both her and Ibu Ati’s experiences, ensuring that ‘dirty/ impure blood’ exited the body was necessary in order to avoid a ‘sick stomach’. Both women constructed their knowledge of reproductive blood-assemblages according to its territorializing effects. In Nurse Ati’s account, Yenti’s body was being deterritorialized from the ‘big lumps of blood’ escaping her body. This blood was therefore ‘good’. Here, the efficacy of mewowa is established via its (presumed) effects. Mewowa is ultimately a strategy to liberate a body incapable of otherwise transcending its territorialization via ‘big lumps of blood’.

Conclusion

In Wawonii, reproductive blood is an intense and tense-inducing fluid. Concepts of blood, its movements, effects, dangers and various forms of potential, are formed through the collective, intersubjective agreement of Wawonii villagers at particular points in time. Blood is a fluid laden with significance in specific contexts. This significance shifts as blood flows (or stagnates) within and beyond the biological body. Dealing with menstrual and post-partum blood, and blood associated with women more generally, requires strategies, concepts, practices, solutions such as mewowa and merarane. These could also be defined as solutions.

This chapter has shown how significant the concept of reproductive blood as dirt/ impurity is in Wawonii. Ibu Yenti and Ibu Daria, echoing other Wawonii women I spent time with, repeatedly characterised post-partum and reproductive blood as being ‘dirty/ impure’.

This is common elsewhere in Indonesia. The female body-as-container, threatened by the accumulation of this ‘dirt/ impurity’, must be heated in order to provoke the flow of dangerous

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239 Tsing (1988, p. 836), for example, discusses women’s ‘contaminating (…) dirty menstrual blood’ among the Banjar. However, unlike Banjar conceptualizations, which conceive of blood that has been expelled from the body as ‘contaminated’ (Tsing 1988, p. 836) both nurses and village women in Wawonii describe such blood as being ‘good’.

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blood out of the woman’s body. As a territorializing assemblage, blood provokes anxiety. Strategies involving heat are thus deployed to free the body from the territorializing grip of blood as a coagulated, ball-like substance.

Contained within Wawonii peoples’ conceptualizations of blood are implications for the body’s presumed boundaries, beyond which blood flows. Talk of boundaries and borders reminds us that bodies, like nations, are simultaneously ‘constructed, historical entities’ and ‘factually existing agents’ (Roepstorff & Bubandt 2003, p. 18).

This chapter has investigated embedded and embodied conceptualizations of blood. These conceptualizations have consequences for Wawonii people in terms of their anxiety around the qualitative constitution and location of blood. The different potentialities of reproductive blood are indexed primarily by whether it is stagnant or flowing. These potentialities make up a small part of the dynamic potentialities of the body in its interaction with external environmental potentialities.
CHAPTER FIVE

ANGIN

‘In front of us were... what were they? Ya Allah, the velocipede, the bicycle! There were four Europeans spread across the road holding each other’s shoulders. Each was slowly pedaling his own bicycle. I had seen these magical two-wheeled vehicles many times now. They looked so fragile, as if they could be taken apart, folded up, and thrown anywhere you liked with one hand. They looked thin and tall and frail.

The onlookers were astounded that the riders did not go flying onto the ground. The four Europeans seemed quite young. They raised their hands into the air – “no hands!” Now while their feet pedaled they all began to sing. And they didn’t fall! Once again Europe showed its magic.

Walking in front of the performing youths was a Mixed-Blood who shouted through a loudspeaker, in Malay: “This is what they call the keretaangin, sirs, the velocipede, the bicycle. Genuine German-made. Speedy, as fast as the wind. The Lord Wind gives his aid to the riders so they do not fall.’

- Child Of All Nations, Pramoedya Ananta Toer

Introduction

While the direct and most literal translation of ‘angin’ is ‘wind’, ‘angin’ in its full range of meanings encompasses much more than simply the physical movement of air. In Indonesia and Malaysia, particular types of angin, fused with ilmu, have the power to enter bodies.\textsuperscript{240} Angin

\textsuperscript{240} Among the Sasak of Lombok, ‘ilmu must enter (tume) a person to be potent (...) Papuq Isa told me that once the words entered (tume) me, I would never have to worry about when to use each one, that it would just come to me. Ilmu enters persons. It enters their hearts and stomachs and their wind (angin)’ (Hay 2001, p. 164).
is something which possesses one, or can be possessed and sent to others. It influences peoples’ physical, psychological and spiritual well-being. Wawonii people attribute moral powers to angin, thereby making a fetish out of it. Angin contains an interior which derives its power from its mystifying effect on Wawonii people. To talk about angin while ‘keeping magic out’ is to conjure a false sort of magic unknown to Wawonii people. It is also to commit oneself to practices of ‘epistemic violence’ in which ‘one explanation and narrative of reality’ becomes ‘the normative one’ (italics in original) (Spivak 1999, p. 267). Instead, this chapter traces the power of angin animated by desires cultivated within social practices and relationships throughout Wawonii.

Mythical and etymological links between ‘wind’, ‘spirit’, ‘soul’ and ‘breath’ exist in many languages, including English (Forth 1989, p. 93). The Greek ‘pneuma’ and Hebrew ‘ruach’ both encompass ‘wind’, ‘breath’ and ‘spirit’ in their meanings. In the Toraja language of South Sulawesi, there are close connections between breath, emotions and temperature. These originate from the Toraja term for ‘breath’: penaa (Hollan 1988, p. 58). Further east, in Halmahera, among the Forest Tobelo and the people of Buli village, breath is one of four aspects of ‘nyawa’, the Indonesian term for ‘soul’ (Duncan 2003; Bubandt 2010). In Lande, South Buton, Southeast Sulawesi, exhalation/ejaculation during sex, which is conceptualized in terms of soul and breath, is attributed to men as the ultimate possessors of procreative capacities (Sonthon 1995). Angin as ‘breath’ is implicated in the material practices and conceptual understandings of life and death rituals in Indonesia. Among the Ngaju Dayak people, the breath of the basir (ritual specialist) and the tandak (codified phrases used in the

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241 ‘Someone with a “large” breath (kapua penaanna) feels healthy, energetic, proud; someone with a “choked” breath (pusa’ pennaana) feels dizzy, confused, bewildered […] Under normal, healthy circumstances, one’s breath is both “cool” (masakke) and “unchoked” – so that one feels alert, “conscious” (mengkilala), and aware of the implications of one’s actions. But when one is emotionally upset or distressed (or drunk, or “crazy” or possessed) one’s breath becomes “hot” (malassu penaanna) and “choked.”’ (Hollan 1988). Furthermore, among the Toraja, “[c]ommunity solidarity is expressed by the term misa penaa (one breath)” (Hollan 1992).

242 Nyawa, one of three vital aspects of a human being, may also refer to genitals in this part of Indonesia (Bubandt 2010).
Tiwah death ceremony) verses he chants guide souls to the correct bridge (jamban) leading to the upper world (Kuhnt-Saptodewo 1999, p. 22). On Sumba, Kodi understandings of breath, soul, life and death also merge:

*hamaghu*, cognate with the common Indonesian *semangat*, is a personal soul anchored to the top of the head at the forelock. It can be separated from the body in severe illness, and vanishes with breath at death. (Hoskins 1988, p. 826)

The cosmological legends of the Aoheng people living on the banks of the Mahakam river in East Kalimantan explain how soul, breath and conscience, which vanish at death, are linked:

The soul of a living person is called *berüon* – a term derived from *düo*, ‘two’ (...) hence a spiritual alter ego. The term *kesongan*, more physiological, refers to the breath, while *songan*, more abstract, is akin to the Western concept of ‘conscience’.

At death, the *berüon* disappears, while a spirit of the dead comes into existence. (Sellato 2002, p. 6)

A specifically gendered aspect to breath is found among the Huaulu people of Seram island, where the ‘first mother’ and the earth, which together are ‘corruptible’, are the sources of a child’s physical body, whereas

[t]he breath of life, “like a wind,” comes from the heavenly father. The female-created parts of human beings rot and decay, while the male-created breath leaves the body at death and disperses in the air. Male spirit is abstract and as powerful as the invisible winds that contain the animating breath of past generations. (Hoskins 2002; Valeri 1990, p. 263)

The generative capacities of wind in Huaulu are also found in the legends of people living in the Cenderawasih Bay in West Papua. These describe journeys by local men to Tidore, where magic wind (*airora*), which contains the power to make anything, is located (Timmer
2000, p. 50). Closer to Wawonii, in Buton, Southeast Sulawesi, powerful winds are linked more closely to generative capacities in terms of procreation, or ‘lust for a woman’ than the power to make objects (Southon 1995). Indeed, as this chapter shows, potent angin may be infused with desires of many types.

**Potency and porosity**

For us, the human body defines, by natural right, the space of origin and of distribution of disease: a space whose lines, volumes, surfaces, and routes, are laid down, in accordance with a now familiar geometry, by the anatomical atlas. But this order of the solid, visible body is only one way – in all likelihood neither the first, nor the most fundamental – in which one spatializes disease. There have been, and will be, other distributions of illness.

- *The Birth of the Clinic, Foucault*

In Wawonii, spiritual and material potency is variously performed, displaced or eclipsed via social practices and discourses around angin. The (dis-)figuration of porous physical and social bodies is another effect of angin and its movements.243 Angin comes not only from outside, as a force which enters the porous body at its vulnerable points, but also from within bodies.244 It thereby achieves what Deleuze calls the ‘interiority of immanence’ (Ingold 2018, p. 165) which ‘runs seamlessly into physicality, like the singular surface of a Möbius strip’. Angin is not only... 

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243 Similarly, in Bali, babai angin ‘can travel throughout the body’, causing pain and illness wherever they go. Medication and exorcism practises focus on halting these movements, thereby restoring health (Connor 1982, p. 785).

244 In Malay cosmology, the human body is linked to the universe via a series of associations that begin with the body and end with the four corners of the world. Wind, earth, fire and water are ‘symbolically associated with a particular sensory organ’. Wind is linked with the ears. Ears and other sensory organs are then associated ‘with one of the four archangels (Mikail, Jibrail, Israfil, Azrail), one of the four spirits that watches over us after we die (Chadi, Wadi, Mani, Manikam), and one of the four Caliphs (Omar, Ali, Osman, Abubakar). Each of these archangels, spirits, and Caliphs is also symbolically keyed to one of the four corners of the world, which is conceptualized as a square plane surrounded by water’ (Peletz 1988, p. 138).
about bodies (physical, social and so on), it is also about the spaces between bodies, the spaces in which relationships form and specifically the balance (or imbalance) by which those relationships are characterised. There are those with the power to harness angin for their own purposes, and there are those who fall victim to its power. Here, a clear active/passive binary appears to emerge. Ingold (2018, p. 166), however, offers a Deleuzean way out of this either/or via ‘interstitial differentiation’ in which

the doings of every particular life continually emerge and distinguish themselves from within the plane of immanence that is life itself. This is to frame doing within undergoing, and not the other way around. And it is to think of every doing not as self-initiated action but as a moment in the life of the soul.

Angin is associated not only with potency but also with spirits, ancestors and death. Although it may appear at any time, people usually talk about angin appearing at twilight or night time. ‘Angin malam’ is the subject not only of village gossip, but also ‘scientific studies’ which claim that it increases the danger of contracting respiratory illnesses such as pneumonia, asthma, illnesses associated with joints, illnesses spread by mosquitoes and upper respiratory illnesses. Angin is generally treated with fear and suspicion and associated with illness, malevolence and revenge. Angin is not merely a physical (weather) phenomenon or a metaphorical or conceptual device; instead, it is one of the protagonists in the ‘storied landscapes’ (Mulligan 2001, p. 19) by which Wawonii people are surrounded and through which they come to know and construct their worlds. Within these ‘storied landscapes’ (Mulligan 2001, p. 19), Wawonii people conceptualize angin in moral terms.

People in the villages on North Wawonii where I conducted my research create moral communities by invoking heterogeneous accounts of the enchanted worlds by which they are

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247 Further east, in Buru, angin appears as a punishment for breaking taboos (Dix Grimes 2006, p. 124).
surrounded. Everyday social practices within these communities feature the oral transmission of stories, many of which tell of *angin*. This does not mean that *angin* is merely fictive. Rather, it is a real source of individual and collective anxiety.\footnote{In Wawonii, it makes little sense to talk of ‘individual’ vs ‘collective’, ‘individual’ vs ‘social’ or even ‘the individual’. Throughout this thesis, my use of ‘individual’ is an interpretive and conceptual leap deployed to make understanding for non-Wawonii readers easier. ‘Individual’ is thus part of the fictive element of my work – an important point to remember.} *Angin* and the spirits it conveys threaten the integrity of the biological body and the unity of the social body. *Angin* derives its power from its magical powers and ephemeral qualities, which may rupture the peripheries set up to keep individual and social domains intact. Villagers recite mantras, verses from the Koran and words from the ancestors in an attempt to contain potentially malevolent transformations which may fray the seams of these domains. In reciting prayers, verses and mantras, Wawonii villagers are negotiating the terms of social order and individual health with *angin* and the threatening spirits it transports.

**Wind blowing between time and place**

*And the prophets shall become wind, and the word is not in them: thus it shall be done unto them.*

- *Jeremiah 5:13, King James Bible*

Wind deities have existed in many cultures. According to Ancient Greek, Roman, Norse and Aztec mythologies, multiple wind deities, at least one for each direction, had influence over people’s lives. The mythologies of cultures as diverse as the Slavs, Celts, Egyptians, Mesopotamians, Mayans, Iranians, Yoruba, Maoris, Japanese, Sami, Basque and Amerindians all mention at least one wind deity. Unsurprisingly, most of these wind deities are closely associated with energy (both good/productive and bad/destructive) and movement (from every direction). In Chinese mythology, the god and goddess of the wind are Fei Lian and Feng Li.
Wind is considered ‘a Yang phenomenon’ and the name given to ‘Wind nefarious’ which ‘attacks the body by penetrating the skin’ is ‘Feng Xie’ (Dashtdar, Dashtdar, Dashtdar, Kardi & Shirazi 2016, p. 294). Oya, the goddess of the wind in Yoruba mythology, is also a symbol of warriorhood and motherhood (Conner 2003, p.8). The chief Hindu wind god is Vayu, father of Hanuman. Vayu is characterized as ‘destructive’, ‘intemperate’ and ‘vindictive and violent’ (Sanyal 1997). In Vedic mythology, he created Sri Lanka by blowing the top of Mt Meru into the sea. Mythologies derived from the Indian subcontinent are not alone in making links between the wind and the emergence of islands. We also find these connections emerging in Wawonii as people talk about the past, present and future in mythological terms.

Wind-blown messages

For he commandeth, and raiseth the stormy wind, which lifteth up the waves thereof.

- Psalm 107:25, King James Bible

As outlined in the second chapter, angin features in re-tellings of how, why and when Wawonii Number Two surfaces. Bapak Imran emphasized the ‘strong winds’ which preceded the appearance of Wawonii Number Two and events associated with misfortune. In these stories, which are recalled by men and women of varying ages, wind is a ‘tanda’ (sign) and ‘kode’ (code), forecasting death and destruction. Its less esoteric functions include causing the waves to be so rough no one can reach Wawonii Number Two by boat. The winds linked to Wawonii Number Two are believed to be supernatural messengers sent to warn villagers of imminent death. This echoes Javanese beliefs in social or political chaos being preceded by extreme natural events such as very strong winds.
**Tiup-tiup and baca-baca**

Is value a particular state of mind? Or a form inhering in certain data of consciousness? My answer is: whatever one said to me I would reject it; not indeed because the explanation is false but because it is an explanation.

If anybody offers me a theory, I would say No, no, that doesn’t interest me. Even if the theory is true it is not what I seek....

Obviously, the essence of religion has nothing to do with the fact that speech occurs – or rather: if speech does occur this itself is a component of religious behaviour and not a theory. Therefore, nothing turns on whether the words are true, false, or nonsensical.

- *Wittgenstein’s Lecture on Ethics, Wittgenstein*

In Wawonii, bad winds which either represent or themselves bring illness and evil spirits provoke a significant amount of individual and collective fear. Certain types of angin act on Wawonii people in devastating ways, invading their bodies and causing illness and death. As a way of counteracting these powers, people should stay in their houses and recite Koranic or ancestral verses (‘tiup-tiup’ or ‘baca-baca’) when the wind is strong or when they hear sounds which indicate Kandoli or Parakka or another spirit is approaching via the wind.249

**Tiup-tiup or baca-baca** (terms used interchangeably in Wawonii) is a curing treatment via whispering found throughout Indonesia. This type of whispering conforms to performativist speech practices which are fundamental to healing methods found in other parts of Indonesia.250

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250 Among the Sasak of Lombok, for example, memory and repetition are fundamental elements in jampi (healing recitation) practices. Jampi ‘function within a performativist ideology in which language is “a means for ‘acting upon’ the world, and it is more concerned with the pragmatic functions of language than with semantic meanings”’ (Kang 2006:2)’ (Hay 2009). In Malaysia, words spoken during the Main Peteri ritual ‘have the power to heal’ (Laderman 1991, p. 297).
*Tiup-tiup* describes the process (repeated whispering and blowing upon an object), while *baca-baca* describes the essence (the Islamic prayers or words of the ancestors being repeated). Although repetition implies a form of ‘retelling’, as a performativist practice, *tiup-tiup/baca-baca* is not concerned with ‘mediat[ing] past knowledge with the present’ (Gadamer 1994, p. 390). Repeated whisperings here are intimately linked to the threat of assault by esoteric forms of power on the body. They are a method of counteracting these forces.\(^{251}\)

*Tiup-tiup* is practiced very quietly. The words being whispered are kept secret. Some Wawonii villagers told me they whispered verses from the Koran, others said they whispered words of the ancestors.\(^{252}\) No one, however, was prepared to tell me exactly what they said. During fieldwork, I saw *tiup-tiup* practiced about four or five times, and on each occasion the whisperer spoke so quietly no one could hear them. When I asked afterwards what had been whispered, people said that information was secret, or simply smiled and walked away. Conceptual links between secrecy – particularly secret words or verses – and esoteric forms of power are common throughout Indonesia.\(^{253}\)

In North Maluku, *tiup* (known also as *fiu-fiu*) is defined as sorcery. Here, the wind is essential as a mode of transport to send spells to an enemy ‘in whose body the spell will materialize as sharp or otherwise harmful objects’ (Bubandt 2014, p. 69). Among the Tobelo of Halmahera, *houru (obat)* functions in a similar way to ‘*tiup-tiup*’ or ‘*baca-baca*’ in Wawonii. *Houru* may ‘effect a change in wind’ (Taylor 1988). One type of *houru*, like *tiup-

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\(^{251}\) For example, in South Sulawesi, the Luwu people protect babies by reciting *baca-baca* in their ears and rubbing oil on vulnerable parts of their bodies such as the hands, feet, armpits, backbone, and behind the ears and knees. ‘[W]hispered spells’ are said over this oil before the rubbing practice begins (Errington 1989, p. 39).

\(^{252}\) Secrecy and repetition used in speech, whether of holy verses or ancestral words, is useful insofar as this ‘gives it the dignity and authority which in other cultures belong to the written word’ (Mitchell 1988, p. 73). Furthermore, since the words whispered are kept secret, those uttering them cannot be accused of being un-Islamic, of praying to an un-Islamic God or summoning non-Islamic spirits.

\(^{253}\) Among the Ngaju Dayak, for example, ‘*basa sangiang*’ is ‘a sacred language for rituals’ (Kuhnt-Saptodewo 1999, p. 3). The *tandak* name given to a person by a *basir* is considered not only sacred but also essential for guiding a deceased person to the next world. It must therefore be kept secret. ‘In contrast to one’s ordinary personal name, or that of one of his or her parents, it is important not to say one’s own *tandak* name aloud’ (Kuhnt-Saptodewo 1999, p. 19).
tiup, involves saying mantras (mataraa) and blowing over water which is then drunk by the ill person (Taylor 1988). In Luwu, South Sulawesi, baca-baca is whispered over the water into which a white cloth is dipped before being dabbed on a newborn baby’s head, mouth and chest for protection (Errington 1989, p. 38).

*Tiup-tiup* and *baca-baca* are regulative practices deployed as a way of interacting with, and ultimately gaining some control over, concealed forms of magic, and the *angin* which accompanies and enables them. As recursive practices, they underlie genealogical networks of power. This concealed power exceeds the individual within which it is contained and signifies the embeddedness of the seen unseen within the social. The importance of the words uttered during *tiup-tiup* and *baca-baca* is marked by their absence. Unlike ordinary speech, these words are powerful not in the sense of the instructive power of orders issued by an authoritative individual, but as an esoteric form of verbal power which exceeds both the individual and the society. These words are simultaneously there and not-there, a salient aspect of this power.

**Angin and pregnant bodies**

Both social bodies and individual physical bodies are threatened by the appearance of the wrong sorts of winds. In many parts of Southeast Asia, wind is something vulnerable bodies, such as the bodies of pregnant women, must be protected against. Wawonii women are particularly vulnerable to evil spirits or illness transmitted via the wind during pregnancy and immediately after birth. For this reason, they should avoid sitting in doorways through which the wind blows, or going out at night. Bajo, Bugis and Butonese women living or born in Wawonii also emphasised this point. The *dukun* in the village where my fieldwork took place explained her role to me:

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254 Similarly, in thirteenth century England, Catholic priests whispered recitations in Latin (a language the congregation generally did not understand), concealed behind a screen (Lynch 1992, p. 281). Combined, physical absence and an absence of understanding convey the impression of mysterious divine power.
‘The responsibility of the dukun is to look after the pregnant woman up until four days after she has given birth. The point is, I take care of everything during those four days. I bathe the woman with warm water. I make sure wind and tetanus don’t enter her. If they do, I call the doctor or nurse. Later I go home.’

The dukun’s duty is to seal the body of the post-partum woman off from potential external dangers. In this narrative, the body becomes the sort of entity described by de Certeau, for whom a subject’s flesh is transformed into a body organized, and hierarchized according to the requirements of a particular social and familial nexus. The body becomes a “text” and is fictionalized and positioned within myths and belief systems that form a culture’s social narratives and self-representations. (Grosz 1994 p. 119)

Theorists such as Deleuze, on the other hand, are more interested in the dynamic multitude of links between bodies, and the movements and configurations between these links. A Deleuzean perspective would be more interested in taking apart the relationship between the recently pregnant woman, the dukun and how the threat of wind influences this relationship. In this view, the dukun becomes the manager of the forces surrounding and threatening to impinge upon the woman’s body. The recently pregnant woman surrenders a degree of control over her body to the dukun in return for the sort of protection against wind-blown malevolent forces which, on Wawonii, only a dukun can provide. In Malaysia, ethnic Malay, Chinese and Indian women protect themselves against wind and coldness immediately following pregnancy.

Childbirth (...) depletes the mother of heat, blood and ‘air’ or vital breath, and renders her vulnerable to cold, wind, magic and disease. (Manderson 1981, p. 511)
Cold winds are also seen as a danger to pregnant women among the Cuna people of Panama and Colombia. The body of a pregnant woman may be penetrated by cold winds sent by Muu, the spirit of childbirth, in an effort by Muu to retain the child. Births are therefore assisted by chanting which causes the ‘dangerous high winds’ to become ‘gentle gold and silver breezes that accompany the baby’s birth as the chant comes to a close’ (Laderman 1987, p. 294).

Closer to Wawonii, in Luwu, South Sulawesi, newborns are at danger of being entered by angin (‘tama angin’) at the soft part of the skull (fontanel). To protect the baby, the fontanel should be covered (Errington 1989, p. 42). In Malaysian Chinese communities, wind (‘fung’) is described, after heat and coldness, as probably the most important causal explanation of illness among Malaysian Chinese. They believe that ‘wind’ is easier to prevent than to cure. Exposure to drafts (and nowadays to fans or airconditioning), drinking unboiled water, soda water or bathing in cold water are likely to result in ‘wind’. After childbirth a woman is especially susceptible to this condition because of blood loss and the notion that her ‘joints are open’. (Mo 1984, p. 148)

Unsurprisingly, wind is also perceived as a threat among recently pregnant Chinese women in Taiwan. During the month following childbirth, women are cautioned to avoid being ‘blown on by the wind’ (Steinberg 1996).

In Northern Thailand, wind illness is linked to temperature, eating habits and neglecting traditional practices. This form of wind illness takes on a moral dimension not seen in parts of Asia where avoidance of strong breezes is advised to maintain health. In Northern Thailand, wind illness instead seems to be a supernatural punishment for culturally incorrect behaviour. Muecke (1979, p. 270) found that ‘[w]rong menstrual wind illness’ (Lom phit duan) is
caused by her breach of Northern Thai postpartum customs, such that she smells a bad odour, eats wrong food, or bathes in cold water while observing the Northern Thai postpartum ritual month.

Manderson’s (1981) research in Malay villages describes practices protecting a woman who has recently given birth which very closely resemble the practice of *merarane* in Wawonii. ‘*Merarane*’ is the local term. Wawonii people also use the Indonesian terms ‘*bakar api*’, ‘*pasang api*’ and ‘*baring-baring samping api*’ to describe this practice. During *merarane*, women who have recently given birth lie beside or above a fire, usually in the back room of their house, which is the kitchen. As described in chapter four, the purpose of this practice is to dispel “dirty” blood from the woman’s body. Similarly, in Malay villages following birth, forty days of ‘puerperal roasting’ is required to guard against cold, windy conditions, considered dangerous (Manderson 1981, p. 511). ‘*Ganggang*’ is another practice used to prevent dangerous wind from entering a recently-pregnant woman’s body. During *ganggang*, mustard seed, fenugreek, and coriander are tied in a bag of cloth and boiled in bath water, then guava leaves are thrown in. This spicy water used for bathing serves to keep out the ‘wind’ and helps to heal the woman internally. (Manderson 1981, p. 512).

Apart from roasting, particular bathing practices, confining women to certain spaces, avoiding foods considered windy and balancing hot and cold energies are practices found throughout many parts of Asia to support the health of pregnant and post-partum women.  

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256 In the North Malaysian state of Kedah, women grind cinnamon bark and mix with water and apply to the forehead ‘to keep away wind and to avoid headaches from wind entering the temples’ (Manderson 1981, p. 512). Apart from this, women who have recently given birth are confined to rooms ‘well-sealed against draughts’ and ‘[f]oods described as ‘windy’, including cucurbits and tubers, were also generally avoided, although some women argued that the consumption of windy food forced the body to expel other wind or air within the body’ (Manderson 1981, p. 513). Other ‘windy foods including yam, taro, sweet potato, cassava, and jackfruit were occasionally considered taboo’ (Manderson 1981, p. 513). Although Wawonii people did not describe foods as having windy properties, in South India foods ‘classified as cold or windy (vayu)’ are also avoided for a month after giving birth (Manderson 1981, p. 514). Roasting above or beside a fireplace following birth is not practised by Chinese women in Malaysia, but foods and spices with hot properties such as turmeric and ginger are used for similar purposes. ‘Turmeric may be taken to expel wind and to tighten the uterine
**Angin and sorcery as causes of illness**

In much of Indonesia, and particularly in Java, nature is mysterious, frightening and repellant (...) It is a place of wilderness, disorder, and danger, full of unknown spirits. (Magnis Suseno 1997, p. 127)

As a natural element with the power to enter bodies from outside, *angin* possesses particular fear-provoking potential. In many parts of Southeast Asia, *angin* and spirits propelled by *angin* invade the physical bodies of both men and women at vulnerable points, creating illness, bewitchment or death. Connor (1982, p. 785) describes how, in Bali, small creatures known as ‘babai *angin*’ located ‘[b]eneath the jaw bone’ and ‘behind the armpit’ cause pain and illness and are only visible to ‘people with great magical powers (*sakti*)’.

Among the Banjar Muslim people of Kalimantan, ‘poisoned winds’ are greatly feared. ‘Lamah bulu’257 is a ‘condition that leaves one open’ to these winds (Tsing 1988). It is not the wind itself which is dangerous but the ‘wisah poisons’ which travel via these winds (Tsing 1988). These poisons are said to have no particular intended victim; they are released from magic oils whose potency is maintained by indulging their periodic but nonselective need to kill. Banjar describe oils of this sort as a Dayak specialty, although they tell of many Banjar who obtain them for their own use. These poisons strike those who are vulnerable. (Tsing 1988)

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257 Literally, ‘weak body hair’. This refers to the ‘yielding, porous skin’ of those who are struck down by poisoned winds, resulting in ‘wasting, weakness, fever and jaundice’ (Tsing 1988).
Apart from being ‘poisoned’, winds may also be ‘evil’ as shown in data gathered by Mo (1984) among Chinese Malay villagers. Lack of balance in these winds creates psychological problems among local people (Mo 1984). ‘[S]wellings’ and ‘elephantiasis’ are afflictions Malay people associate with the ‘wind’ found in cassava (Chen 1981, p. 127). Close associations between wind and malevolence are found also in Central Flores among the Nage people for whom ‘wado wa’ means ‘to change into wind’. Apart from meaning ‘wind’, ‘wa (...) also refers to the wild spiritual essence of a witch’ (Forth 1989, p. 93).

Furthermore,

Wado wa can therefore be glossed either as “a change in (of) the wind” or as “a change in, transformation of, spirit (wa)” (...) The category wa is also linked in several ways with animals. Thus the wa (spiritual essence) of a witch, when it leaves his or her body, can take the form of an animal in order to cause harm. (Forth 1989, p. 93)

In Wawonii, angin is generally believed to have negative effects on the body. Depending on the context, either the angin itself or the spirits or energy it conveys are understood as threats to the health and stability of biological bodies, both male and female.258 For these reasons, many Wawonii people, particularly older women, maintain that they are ‘takut angin’ (afraid of the wind). Some of the spirits (mahkluk gaib, doti)259 which travel via angin include Kandoli, Poppo’, Sama’oda and Lewe’olo. In both Indonesia and Malaysia, dukun or orang asli may be hired

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258 Similarly, in Java, ‘angin duduk stabil’ and ‘angin duduk tidak stabil’, which are basically different types of coronary heart disease, are greatly feared (http://anginduduk.org/).

259 As Ibu Dita explained in Chapter Two, ‘doti’ is the term for both sorcery and spirits in Wawonii. This term is used in similar ways in other parts of Eastern Indonesia, such as North Maluku (Bubandt 2014, p. 68). Among the Bugis of South Sulawesi, ‘doti’ is ‘the black magic whose intention is to specifically slay its victim (Acciaioli 2004, p. 156).
to create or harness malevolent winds or currents (*angin*), which are then sent in the direction of the targeted individual, who it is hoped will inhale them. (Peletz 1988, p. 140)

As a result, the victim of such sorcery will experience coughing, spitting blood, loss of appetite and weight and, in the worst cases, death. (Peletz 1988, p. 140)

Ibu Ririn, one of the oldest women in the village where I completed my fieldwork, explained how the spirit *Kandoli*, accompanied by *angin*, can take the form of a chicken which enters houses at night. I asked Ibu Ririn what the characteristics of *Kandoli* are.

‘*Kandoli* eats people… we are most afraid of chickens if someone is sick in the house and a chicken appears, it is *Kandoli*… Chickens rarely enter the house at night time, right? They don’t enter because they are sleeping or they’re in their chicken pens, but if no one is able to sleep at night time it’s very dangerous.’

Ibu Ririn went on to explain how people can protect themselves from this danger:

‘Recite this… here there are a lot of people who know how to do it, how to get rid (of something) by reciting verses… like the important ones from the Koran which will scare the chicken.’

I then asked Ibu Ririn whether the verses should simply be recited until the chicken leaves the house, or whether people should also chase the chicken out of the house, or even kill the chicken.

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260 ‘Sifatnya itu makan manusia... yang paling kita takuti itu ayam kapan ada yang sakit di dalam rumah dia muncul ayam itu sudah kandoli ... kan jarang ayam biasa masuk di rumah kalau malam nggak ada yang masuk karena dia tidur atau di kandang tapi kalau nanti malam datang tidak ada mi orang yang tidur semua itu bahaya sekali.’

261 ‘Baca-baca ini ... juga orang di sini banyak yang tahu itu usir baca ayat-ayat ... macam-macam yang penting ayat al Qur’an itu terus ayam takut...’
‘It’s dangerous to kill (the chicken)… then we will also be killed… usually you only see the chicken for a fleeting second, you don’t see it the way you see a normal chicken … only for a moment because of the wind, according to the story … an evil spirit. It’s an evil spirit. You rarely see such creatures, apart from those who… Those who know how to see supernatural creatures can see them…’

Within Ibu Ririn’s account, common connections between *angin*, malevolent spirits and night time are made. Just as *angin* may penetrate the porous and vulnerable body, making one sick or crazy, *Kandoli*, disguised as a chicken and recognised by its unusual behaviour, penetrates domestic boundaries, thereby putting vulnerable residents in danger. Here, and in the account below from Ibu Ani, *Kandoli* is conflated with a malevolent spirit. Both women explain that reciting verses from the Koran protects villagers from attacks by *Kandoli*.

**Magic riding upon angin**

*Faeries, come take me out of this dull world,*

*For I would ride with you upon the wind,*

*Run on the top of the dishevelled tide,*

*And dance upon the mountains like a flame.*

— *The Land of Heart’s Desire*, W.B. Yeats

Like Yeats’ ‘faeries’, in Wawonii, magic rides ‘upon the wind’. Many Wawonii people described *angin* in functional terms, as the predominant mechanism by which curses or malevolent desires were conveyed from someone with esoteric knowledge towards another. A

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262 *Bahaya kalau bunuh… kita terbunuh juga… biasa itu cuma sekejap mata kita lihat tidak bisa lihat kayak… ayam biasa… cuma sekejap saja karena itu istilahnya dia angin ceritanya… setan. Setannya. Kan jarang yang lihat mahkluk selain yang… kalau mereka tahu yang bisa melihat mahkluk gaib bisa saja…’
common way of deflecting this sorcery is by reciting verses from the Koran, particularly at twilight, or when one hears certain noises, such as those made by Kandoli. One Wawonii woman, Ibu Ani, described how, although Kandoli does not take on the chicken disguise, he/she is nevertheless an evil spirit associated with the wind, coming from the sky and causing illness due to excessive heat (fever).

Ibu Ani and I were sitting in her dark, well-swept kitchen. It was late in the afternoon and we had been chatting and drinking black coffee as we often did. Behind Ibu Ani’s house was the sea, beyond the door on the side was the estuary and the beginning of the river which carved through the lowlands and up into the hills in the centre of the island. I heard a rustling noise coming from outside, above the kitchen’s palm-thatched roof.

Brooke: What’s that we can hear?
Ibu Ani: That’s it!

Brooke: Kandoli?
Ibu Ani: Yes, if that’s Kandoli, usually that’s it if we get a fever…

Brooke: Is Kandoli coming?
Ibu Ani: Yes. Kandoli.

Brooke: What form does Kandoli take?
Ibu Ani: No, we can’t see it, it’s the wind.

Brooke: Wind?
Ibu Ani: Yes.

Brooke: Where does it come from?
Ibu Ani: From…

Brooke: Which direction?
Ibu Ani: Er there…
Brooke: From the sea, or?

Ibu Ani: Maybe from the sky.

Brooke: The sky is where Kandoli comes from?

Ibu Ani: Mmm. Kandoli’s coming. That’s why we read/ recite.263

Brooke: Why does Kandoli –

Ibu Ani: It’s a malevolent spirit!

Brooke: Really?

Ibu Ani: Terrifying!

Brooke: If it makes people sick –

Ibu Ani: Yes. It’s like this, if I didn’t see you as part of our family I wouldn’t tell you about it but I see you as one of us, you see, we have hearts.264

Brooke: Yes, that’s right.

Ibu Ani: Poor me, I don’t want to praise [myself] like this, by saying we have hearts, this is what my heart is like.

Brooke: Honest/ straightforward?265

Ibu Ani: Honest/ straightforward, nothing else, even if people are quiet, what is important is the heart.

Brooke: That’s right. That’s right, I agree.

Ibu Ani: Yes. What is important is the heart.

Associations between angin, spirits like Kandoli and other malevolent spirits came up regularly in conversations with older Wawonii women. In another one of our afternoon conversations, Ibu Ani explained:

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263 Baca-baca
264 Throughout this dialogue, Ibu Ani uses the word ‘hati’ (which translates literally as ‘liver’) to mean ‘heart’. As she said ‘hati’, she often patted her chest and also gestured towards my heart.
265 ‘Lurus’. In previous conversations, Ibu Ani had repeatedly used this word when referring to her heart and the hearts of Wawonii people in general.
Brooke: People here always say there are malevolent spirits here and there…

Ibu Ani: That’s different. Different. That’s wind,266 you know.

Brooke: Wind that brings malevolent spirits?

Ibu Ani: Yes! The one that brings malevolent spirits, that’s different…

Brooke: Where does the wind come from?

Ibu Ani: I don’t know.

Here, the wind, where it comes from, whether it conveys malevolent spirits or whether the malevolent spirits bring the wind or causes the wind to blow, are points of uncertainty. This is dangerous knowledge which may have destructive consequences for those who say too much about it. Similar accounts are found throughout Indonesia. In Java, ‘kiriman angin’ (a wind message/ missive) is a euphemism for conveying sorcery or sending an evil spell to harm someone (Wessing 2010, p. 60). Among the Taman Dayak people, who live on the banks of the upper Kapuas, Mendalam and Sibau rivers in West Kalimantan, spells called ‘pulung’, which cause a quick death, are ‘sent by the wind’ (Bernstein 1993, p. 6). Local people also call these spells ‘false wind’ or ‘man-made wind’, and say they are far more dangerous than natural wind, which can also bring disease (Bernstein 1993, p. 7).

‘Craziness illness’ sent on the wind

“It is good for a misfortune like this to happen once in a while,” he said,

“so that we can know the thoughts of our friends and neighbours. Unless the wind blows we do not see the fowl’s rump.”

- Arrow of God, Chinua Achebe

266 angin
Some months after the conversation with Ibu Ani above, I was in Kendari, sitting in the well-furnished living room of two brothers, both Hajis and descendants of the former Wawonii royal family, whom I had met at a recent Wawonii funeral. We were discussing spiritual, magical and religious matters. Both brothers were more forthcoming than Ibu Ani about the malevolent spirits conveyed by the wind in Wawonii. They described the evil spirits, or sources of magical/spiritual knowledge, *Sama’oda* and *Lewe’olo*, to me, making an oft-repeated connection between the stomach and general gut area,\(^{267}\) wind and illness-inducing spirits.

Haji P: There’s Sama’oda, Sama’oda illness.

Brooke: Sama’oda?

Haji P: Yes, it makes us go crazy.

Brooke: Oh I see.

Haji P: Yes, even making us go around naked.

Brooke: Really?

Haji P: Yes, but there’s an easy way to cure it.

Brooke: How is it cured?

Haji P: The Koran, whispering … even if seven people want to catch it, we can’t catch it.

Haji M: They/ It frequently run/ s amok.

Brooke: Frequently runs amok and…

Haji M: The illness increases.

Haji P: The place (where Sama’oda lives) is Labeau\(^{268}\)… many people with supernatural talents live in Labeau, it’s the centre (for this).

Brooke: The centre is there?

Haji P: Yes, that’s the centre.

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\(^{267}\) *Perut*

\(^{268}\) One of the main villages on the north coast of Wawonii where my fieldwork took place.
Brooke: What was the name of it just now?
Haji P: Sama’oda.
Brooke: Sama’oda.
Haji P: Yes, Sama’oda.
Brooke: Sama’oda, er…
Haji M: Craziness illness.
Brooke: Craziness illness?
Haji P: Yes, yes.
Brooke: Is this Sama’oda a supernatural being/ celestial creature?
Haji P: Yes, the one that enters.
Brooke: The one that enters?
Haji P: In our bodies.
Brooke: Is Sama’oda male or female?
Haji P: Female, male.
Brooke: Both… and he/ she attacks…
Haji P: He/ she enters our bodies.
Brooke: Which way? Through the mouth, or..?
Haji P: The point is, on the wind.
Haji P’s daughter: His/ her wind, wind.
Haji P: Yes, yes.
Brooke: Wind from the west or east or…
Haji P: All wind directions.
Brooke: All wind directions… so if it’s windy season…
Haji P: Yes, be careful.
Brooke: If it’s not windy season…
Haji P: Er there’s not … but if… given, you’ll certainly be afflicted.

Brooke: Really?

Haji P: In Labeau Missus, they have Lewe’olo [who causes] stomach\(^{269}\) illnesses, if [Lewe’olo] comes, [the illness] can’t be cured… [people get] diarrhoea…

Brooke: Oh really?

Haji P: Yes, and then there’s Sama’oda, those two illnesses are in that village because…

Haji M, Haji P: Sama’oda and Lewe’olo, two types of sorcery/ knowledge… \(^{270}\)

Sama’oda and Lewe’olo are powerful members of the theatre of the social. Part of their power lies in that which cannot be explained, for example the reason why they live in Labeau. As the possessors of bodies and the sources of craziness illness, stomach illness and diarrhoea, they are feared.\(^{271}\) Sama’oda and Lewe’olo not only travel on the wind, they harness it themselves. Wind may at any time become the conveyor of sorcery, having dangerous and possibly fatal effects on the bodies of specific individuals. The experience of craziness illness, stomach illness or diarrhoea confirms for Wawonii people the social presence of Sama’oda and Lewe’olo. The contaminated person becomes a double,\(^ {272}\) they are at once themselves and the spirit (Sama’oda or Lewe’olo) which has entered them. Angin enables this doubling effect. The excess created by this doubling is an index of forms of power which threaten to overwhelm. When this occurs, practical measures are taken to deflect imminent danger by contamination. Here, for example, Haji P recommends whispering verses from the Koran. Recommending an Islamic practice to treat/ ameliorate a supernatural malaise is not a contradiction; it is merely a pragmatic form of action which may or may not work. While numerous Wawonii people

\(^{269}\) Perut
\(^{270}\) Ilmu
\(^{271}\) In Java, lelembut are the spirits ‘which take possession of people and drive them insane’ (Magnis-Suseno 1997, p. 89).
\(^{272}\) An analogous doubling is considered a desirable state in Christianity. Believers pray for the Holy Spirit to ‘enter’ them. Conversely, others may be accused of being ‘possessed’ by the devil.
described themselves or others being the victims of wind-borne malevolence, no one I spoke to claimed that they themselves had the power to send spells, curses or other forms of magic via the wind. The dangers conveyed by the wind and directed at individual bodies require practices of deflection. These practices form part of the ‘productive nucleus’ by which bodies come to be known.

As an essential internal condition of human bodies, a consequence of perhaps their organic openness to cultural completion, bodies must take the social order as their productive nucleus. Part of their own “nature” is an organic or ontological “incompleteness” or lack of finality, an amenability to social completion, social ordering and organization. (Grosz 1994, p. x)

**Dangerous twilight winds**

*There was another moment of temporary relief at sundown when a cool wind blew.*

*But this treacherous cool wind was the great danger of Africa, beguiling the unwary European who bared himself to it and received its death-kiss.*

- *Arrow of God, Chinua Achebe*

Like Haji M and Haji P, Ibu Ratna, a distant descendent of the former Wawonii royal family, was well acquainted with the power of sorcery sent on the wind at sunset to kill. In Ibu Ratna’s account, the coconut symbolizes the intended victim’s skull. The incident took place at twilight, a particularly dangerous time, a liminal period when malevolent spirits stir from their slumber and attack.

Ibu Ratna: I have a cousin named Lukman, he was sick, he got the illness in Langara… he was sent home to Munse and given medication by my older sibling… he almost died… my older sibling took a red coconut, I saw it myself [this
happened] when I was in high school, he [the older sibling] cut the red and yellow coconut in half at sunset one evening and a week later the person who had sent the sorcery\textsuperscript{273} died, it was a girl, the sorcery was black magic… She was resentful so she recited [spells] so that he would die… the sorcery was sent on the wind… it came via the coconut you know… it’s as if it was actually superstition, in Islam we call it superstition… praying very sinful prayers to God… but they wanted to get revenge rather than being resentful… what’s important is that it’s not us who causes disturbances first but if someone does that to us… then they said it was as though it was the coconut that had conveyed the black magic, it was as though it was that [person] who had sent the sorcery, so he split it [the coconut] in half… it was as though it was that person who he [the older sibling] cut/ decapitated\textsuperscript{274}… why did he cut it in half before throwing it away, he didn’t drink the coconut milk, he just threw it away… black magic was chanted above the coconut before it was split in half… if we’re clever [at black magic] it means we know how to do sorcery… I don’t want to study black magic.’\textsuperscript{275}

Here, wind is both an animated and animating force. The wind is animated by sorcery, which is subsequently transferred to the coconut. Forces of morality and immorality, far from being properties of human intention or behaviour, occupy the wind and the coconut. The wind is an active element in an environment energized by an array of moral forces. More than just the health of her cousin, what is at stake in Ibu Ratna’s account are relationships between people from different villages, relationships between people and God, and the structures of morality within which these relationships are composed. The social participation required to form these relationships is simultaneously a dynamic way of continually forming and re-

\textsuperscript{273} d\textit{oti}
\textsuperscript{274} p\textit{otong}
\textsuperscript{275} s\textit{antet}
forming the self. The threat of death via black magic is both an individual and a social threat, and Lukman’s older sibling resolves the conflict by deploying the constellation of esoteric knowledge he has acquired. Nature is conscripted into this web of degenerating social relationships via the coconut and the wind at sunset. As the object of apotropaic magic, the coconut embodies malevolent powers, and the wind is the vehicle for these powers, which are released at twilight.

[T]hings such as the signs and symptoms of disease, as much as the technology of healing, are not “things-in-themselves,” are not only biological and physical, but are also signs of social relations disguised as natural things, concealing their roots in human reciprocity. (Taussig 1992, p. 83)

In Ibu Ratna’s account, reciprocity is found in its negative form: revenge. Lukman suffers severe pain. A retaliatory death is therefore required. These malevolent acts, enabled by the wind and the coconut, form ‘a medium of exchange, a currency, an equivalent’ (Deleuze 1983, 130).

Since the initial black magic was contained in the coconut, the coconut must be destroyed. The products of the coconut are not used in the usual way because this is not an ordinary coconut. Like the wind, it is a vessel, ‘a medium of exchange’, an instrument for conveying sorcery. Neither the coconut nor the wind are mere objects. Instead, they are fetish-objects through which a central trope of how bodies are brought to life (or have their lives threatened) within a landscape of magic is established. Their fetish-power derives from moves by villagers to elaborate and delimit these objects by instilling within them a rich set of moral conceptualizations which mirror the state of village politics, or social tensions, as they unfold. In this way, the coconut and the wind become part of an all-encompassing ‘language’ of social ethics.
It is important to note that the analogies between the human body, the social body, and nature form a cultural system, that is like a language with its own autonomy and integrity. (Taussig 1980, p. 158)

When the coconut is smashed, or when Wawonii people shut their houses to keep the wind out as sunset approaches, it is not the coconut or the wind as pure physical objects which must be destroyed or denied. Instead, what must really be obliterated are the conceptual powers and moral threats contained within them. The concept merges with the referent, which makes its annihilation possible.

**Wind in the stomach**

In the account below, Bapak La Wungu, a Wawonii man living in Kendari and pursuing a PhD at Hasanuddin University in Makassar, also describes how sorcery sent on the wind causes illness and even death. Both angin and the sorcery it conveys are sources of contamination.

As shown in earlier chapters, illness is associated not only with wind but also internal imbalance caused by excessive heat. Given the prevalence of masuk angin and other wind-related illnesses in other parts of Indonesia, it is unsurprising to see Bapak La Wungu make links between Wawonii, Java and Toraja. In Bapak La Wungu’s account, wind may be harnessed by a person with malevolent intentions to inflict illness via sorcery on another. As in Ibu Ani’s account, Bapak La Wungu either does not know the direction the wind comes from or considers this information irrelevant. Unlike Ibu Ani, however, Bapak La Wungu consistently makes close connections between wind, air, tiup-tiup and breath.

Brooke: Are there any spirits associated with women or pregnant women?

Bapak La Wungu: I don't know, I don't think so… but in/ through a different door, perhaps on the wind or on something…

Brooke: On the wind? Like what [sort of wind]?
Bapak La Wungu: We pray but we don’t know [what comes] on the wind you know, on the air, so we whisper, ah on the air… this person whose name I already wrote here, I already wrote it, later I said his/her name in a prayer which I studied… it’s like a bullet.

Brooke: And who is capable of sending sorcery on the wind?

Bapak La Wungu: I can. You can’t see it you know, magical or spiritual things. If it’s that you know, we can’t see it with eyesight.

Brooke: Sorcery which is sent on the wind must be sent from which direction?

Bapak La Wungu: It doesn’t mean… maybe we… there …but it’s people here we aim it at, we say their name and then we… we recognize that… the part, the part that is believed/ we believe in becomes its psychological direction/ guides it psychologically with the result that it enters us or our bodies.

Brooke: If it’s already in us, what are the signs/ symptoms?

Bapak La Wungu: There is also an author/ originator … we have to look for a person who does [it], or who knows.

Brooke: What’s the name of a person who knows about this magic/ sorcery/ knowledge? Is there a special name for them, like ‘dukun’ or ‘a clever person’?276

Bapak La Wungu: Here there’s a person who knows, a clever person, but… Indeed, I used to have a book which I read by Mr Fox from America, maybe you’ve heard of Mr Fox…

276 Orang pintar
Brooke: So coming back to the story about sorcery which can enter a person’s body, if it enters a person’s body via the wind, where does it enter from? Above, or beneath, or…

Bapak La Wungu: The point is/ The crux of it is, it can’t come from there because we can’t see it… but [it comes] via the breath.

Brooke: The breath?

Bapak La Wungu: Yes but I never… it means… that’s the point… it’s the same as with the women, I didn’t… speak like that… the air ah the process is like that, it enters because it goes via the wind, that’s the wind, it’s really air, air which enters via… we breathe, ah the wind, you know, it never stops… we breathe, that’s the way it goes…

Brooke: So if it’s already entered [a person], what sort of illness will that person [contract]?

Bapak La Wungu: It’s like this, someone’s sick, hot/ has a fever, flu, or maybe they’re sick in their stomach, it depends on the wish of the person who made/ did it.

Brooke: For example, could we say that a person contracts a fever277 which was sent via the wind and sorcery?

Bapak La Wungu: You could… [a person] could be/ get fat… this entered their stomach, ah if it was already done [like that] to them, it could even be fatal and the person would die.

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277 Panas dalam
Brooke: What would the reason be? Why would/ How could they die?

Bapak La Wungu: But you know in terms of medicine this doesn’t make sense, this can’t be analysed by scientists.

Brooke: So there aren’t any specific signs?

Bapak La Wungu: No there aren’t, only…

Brooke: Which could differentiate between people who are sick in a normal sense and people who are sick because they’ve been affected by sorcery?

Bapak La Wungu: If you go to a doctor, he/ she… knows, you know, it’s different, although if he/ she er …medical, it’s different again… so the medical treatment in Indonesia… still believe in magical things [while simultaneously] reciting… medical in a manual form or for example via a person with special knowledge, a person with special knowledge, this means someone with strong spiritual powers, spiritual powers the same as Javanese kyai … in Toraja, people who have already died can still walk, they can still walk…

Like Haji P’s earlier assertion that the spirit Lewe’olo causes diarrhoea by entering peoples’ stomachs via the wind, Bapak La Wungu singles out the stomach as being particularly affected by angin. Nurse Sinta, the most senior nurse in the village where I carried out my fieldwork, also associated the stomach with bloating caused by dangerous wind.

Nurse Sinta: Masuk angin … it’s wind that enters! The body is entered by wind … so [according to] the story we become bloated … masuk angin, usually if the stomach is bloated, Javanese people use the kerok [coin rubbing/ massage] treatment … Here? People don’t do that here, here the only strange illnesses are
those that can’t be explained with words … there are no medicines [for those illnesses], the dukun knows [about them]…

In contradiction to Nurse Sinta’s assertions, Wawonii villagers told me they used kerokan for a variety of illnesses, including masuk angin. I also witnessed a number of kerokan and massage treatments the dukun in my village gave people suffering from fever, coldness, tiredness, aches and broken bones.

**Tumbrano waterfall**

Ephraim feedeth on wind, and followeth after the east wind: he daily increaseth lies and desolation; and they do make a covenant with the Assyrians, and oil is carried into Egypt.

- Hosea 12:1, King James Bible

Winds that make people ill or bring about death frequently appear around Tumbrano, a waterfall where sorcery often occurs. Tumbrano is located approximately 8km from the village where most of my fieldwork research took place. It is both a source of pride and fear for local people. One of my first memories of arriving in Wawonii is being shown photographs and calendars with pictures of this waterfall by villagers who boasted that this was their tourist attraction. People had seen German and American tourists swimming beneath the waterfall and taken photos of them. Subsequently, a Wawonii village head had had some calendars printed in Kendari with these images. People said that this man had then presented these items to the Ministry of Tourism in Jakarta as part of the Wawonii campaign to break away from Kabupaten Konawe and become its own regency. This was a great source of pride to local people.

However, Tumbrano is simultaneously a source of fear. A local legend tells of how a Wawonii princess wanted to marry the son of a poor farmer. Since her family disagreed, the
young couple went to the top of the waterfall and leapt off together, being instantly killed as they hit the water. The largest pool at the bottom of the waterfall is named after the young man, and the smaller one below it after the young woman. People talk of Tumbrano as a dangerous place where sorcery occurs. Poisonous snakes which cannot be killed live there. These snakes inflict malevolent forms of magic on people they bite; they are not the same as snakes in rice paddies. The spirits of dead people and supernatural birds, pigs and water buffaloes also live in and around Tumbrano. Whole villages of Wawonii people visit Tumbrano during Lebaran. Apart from this one time of year, people do not go there, and they caution others not to go there. Tourists are, however, an exception. Foreign tourists rarely come to Wawonii, but when they do, a young Wawonii man (or group of men) will inevitably boast about the beauty of the waterfall and offer (for a fee) to accompany them there. Wawonii people say that since the foreign tourists do not believe in the sorcery that occurs at Tumbrano, they will not be harmed by it.

As a “foreign local”, I was repeatedly warned not to go to Tumbrano, or if I did go, to take a group of local men with me. On a few occasions, I walked to the waterfall by myself. Each time upon returning to the village, I was either berated for my ignorance or regarded with a sense of awe for my bravery in walking up there alone.

Bapak La Wungu described the winds at Tumbrano which cause coldness and death for people who disturb the spirits by making a racket there. Disruptions in terms of noise and movement cause disturbances in the surrounding supernatural world. As a consequence, people become ill and die.

Bapak La Wungu: It’s windy if people are making a lot of noise and commotion there… those winds appear… that’s usually what it is if we [feel] cold you know…

Brooke: What sort of winds? Normal winds?
Bapak La Wungu: No! Winds er these people… they die, you know, maybe they persist [towards] us… there are many stories about the waterfall, they say that that’s what usually happens… like the water buffaloes… like the ones that are slaughtered…’

The danger of cold winds Bapak La Wungu describes was also observed by Laderman (1988, p. 803) among Malays:

A strong cold wind can make you sick if it chills your body, upsetting your humoral balance and causing upper respiratory symptoms and pains in the joints.

Tuschinsky (1995, p. 1591) has also documented the ‘cold threats’ caused by wind in Malay villages. ‘Getting colder implicates a ‘loss of blood’, or by extension, of life energy’ (Tuschinsky 1995, p. 1591). However, not all coldness is a cause of illness. The point is to maintain a balance between heat and coolness within the body. Too much heat is just as dangerous as too much coolness. In South Sulawesi, the Toraja people say that illness and death are caused by ‘hot breath’ (malassu penaanna) and ‘hot feelings’ (Wellenkamp 1988, p. 492). Among the Malay, when a person is attacked by an evil spirit, a ritual specialist, known as a bomoh, ‘counteracts the spirits’ hot breath with their own, made ‘cool’ by an incantation’ (Laderman 1988, p. 802).

**Masuk angin**

*In a magical healing one indicates to the illness that it should leave the patient.*

*After the description of any such magical cure we’d like to add: if the illness doesn’t understand that, then I don’t know how one ought to say it.*

- *Remarks on Frazer’s Golden Bough, Wittgenstein*
As well as being closely associated with sorcery, angin is linked to other bodily and earthly elements: temperature, water, fire and earth. Understandings of health in humoral terms throughout Asia depend on balance between these elements. Out of these elements, in India and Southeast Asia,

...wind and heat are the ones most likely to cause problems, wind being most problematical (…) while a shortage may lead to muteness and mental problems.

(Wessing 2010, p. 57)

Excessive wind and heat and sitting in windy places causes one of the most common ailments in Indonesia: masuk angin, or, ‘wind entering (the body)’.278 Masuk angin is sometimes said to be the village term for influenza. Wawonii people, like Indonesians all over the archipelago, often talked about having contracted ‘masuk angin’. This is characterised by an excessive amount of wind in the body accompanied by sore joints, headaches, fever, reduced appetite, diarrhoea and nausea. Cold winds are particularly dangerous. While in Wawonii people sleep with thick blankets on windy nights to prevent masuk angin, in Java,

[p]eople guard against this by zipping up jackets and closing windows when riding a bus, or tying handkerchiefs over their mouths when riding a motorcycle.

(Keeler 1988, p. 95)

This echoes the commonly heard position in Indonesia that the body is a ‘bounded space with a potentially vulnerable perimeter’ (Kroeger 2003). A common way of curing masuk angin in Indonesia and Malaysia is by employing a local masseuse to act

278 Like masuk angin, in Northern Thailand, ‘wind illness/disease’ (rookh lom) and ‘wind seizures’ are common health complaints. Wind illness ‘may refer to organic pathology, psychosomatic disturbance, spirit possession, or a combination of these’. Wind illness, or ‘having the wind’ (pen lom) may affect ‘the body, emotions, or behaviour’. During ‘wind illness’, ‘wind rises, falls or gets stuck’. This usually happens in the ‘nerves, chest, brain, eyes’. Causes for this include ‘hunger, breach of post-partum custom, alcoholism, spirit possession, drug addiction’. As a result, those afflicted suffer ‘sharp pain, feeling faint, seizures, episodes of violent or disoriented behavior’. Wind illness occurs ‘more often in the hot season and the hottest time of day, because heat causes wind to rise in the body’ (Muecke 1979, p. 268).
as a conduit through which the wind can exit the sick person’s body; a sudden birdlike cry emitted by the masseuse is often an indication that the wind has been dispelled. (Kroeger 2003)

*Kerokan*, the practice of rubbing a coin on the back and shoulders of someone with *masuk angin*, is another possible cure. In Indonesia and Malaysia, the back is seen as vulnerable to attacks from malevolent spirits. Laderman (1988, p. 802) notes how, among Malay villagers, ‘disembodied spirits’ which are ‘composed of only air and fire’ attack people by blowing on the victim’s back, which increases the elements of fire and air in the body, thereby upsetting its humoral balance (…) Excess fire and air must be removed and earth and water increased (…) After blowing on the patient’s backs, the shaman often advises that they drink and bathe in water and lime juice, intrinsically cold and wet, and made still cooler by the bomoh’s breath. (Laderman 1988, p. 802)

The wife of the village head was performing *kerokan* on Ibu Ratna, a 40-year-old Wawonii woman with three children whose back was sore, when I arrived at her house one afternoon.

Ibu Ratna: I’ve been like this for a while. When my back is sore, I have to have the *kerokan* treatment. Red. It was sore just now. I was almost out of breath so I said I have to have the *kerokan* treatment, I don’t want to take medication, for those who take medication it [the pain] doesn’t stop, you need the *kerokan* treatment because this is *masuk angin*… bad weather, raining all the time, windy, the wind comes in the house and even more in the people…

Brooke: When you’ve had the *kerokan* treatment, will you have recovered?

Ibu Ratna: Yes, I’ll be relaxed, relaxed, quite good… my God…
In Ibu Ratna’s account, *angin* is a force which comes from beyond her body and links her directly to her environment (bad weather, rain, wind). Potent *angin* is qualified by two conditions: a source (the external environment) and a destination (the internal body of the afflicted). As Grosz (1994, p. x) argues, bodies

…are not only inscribed, marked, engraved, by social pressures external to them but are the products, the direct effects, of the very social constitution of nature itself. It is not simply that the body is represented in a variety of ways according to historical, social, and cultural exigencies, while it remains basically the same; these factors actively produce the body as a body of a determinate type (Grosz 1994, p. x).

This chapter has explored how, as an index of power, *angin* links people to one another, and to their environment.279 Like blood, *angin* is an in-between substance, hard to contain and difficult to define. It travels in, through and beyond bodies. It combines, separates and disperses. These moves, and the ‘bod[ies] of a determinate type’ they produce, signify the productive capacities of *angin*.

**Conclusion**

In Wawonii, *angin* is both a concept and an event. *Angin* is equally efficacious in its dual roles as a measurable weather event and as the conveyor of sorcery, since everyone grants it this efficacy and permits it to function in these ways. *Angin* is material in a social rather than empirical sense. The same principle applies to *tiup-tiup* and *baca-baca*. If the consensus of Wawonii people in these matters changed, so too would the productive power of *angin*, *tiup-

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279 In Java, for example, ‘All things in the world are grouped into five classes, classified in accordance with the four directions of the wind, plus the center. Colours, metals, days, personal characteristics, professions, different objects, and qualities fall into one of the five categories’ (Magnis-Suseno 1997, p. 92). While among the Bugis of Lindu, Central Sulawesi, wind is one of the four ‘basic elements’ and is categorised together with breath, the colour yellow, windstorms, shortness of breath and offerings of yellow glutinous rice and *panasa* bananas (Acciaioli 1990, p. 226).
tiup and baca-baca. The existing consensus on what angin is and what it does animates angin with desire: negative, destructive, lethal desire. Herein lies its power. Whether or not the sorcery conveyed on or represented by angin is “real” is subordinate to the reality of the desires (of revenge, illness, death and so on) which are cultivated in the sender of angin. When it is sent to harm another person in an act of revenge, angin becomes an extension of the sender. In this configuration, angin binds people to one another for the purposes of destroying the receiver. Caught within the forces of angin, the contorted social body produces the required destabilization of the individual physical body. Angin contaminates and must be blocked with powerful words (tiup-tiup, baca-baca) or more powerful angin.

Concepts of angin encompass ‘wind’, souls, life force, sorcery, bodily health and social and moral relationships. The porosity of physical and social bodies makes it possible for wind to enter and exit bodies at particular points. The direction from which the wind comes is of no real importance, and has no relationship to the potency of sorcery or spirits being transmitted via this wind. Temperature and balance have a strong bearing on how relationships are influenced by wind. There are close links between angin and the spoken word. Spells whispered and sent via angin cause illness and even death to others. Conversely, the practices of tiup-tiup and baca-baca protect villagers from dangerous angin or malevolent spirits – such as Kandoli, Sama’oda and Lewe’olo – transmitted via angin. Tiup-tiup and baca-baca are both productive and reproductive practices. They link Wawonii people with religious and moral communities beyond their island. Temporal and generational links are also established via these practices. In Wawonii, those who may be called upon to whisper tiup-tiup in times of crisis are accorded the social status of a person who ‘knows’.²⁸⁰ From the perspective of a person practising tiup-tiup or sending sorcery via the wind, angin is both knowable and controllable by words. Conversely, villagers fear winds entering their houses, particularly at twilight,

²⁸⁰ ‘Dia yang tahu’ was the phrase used to indicate such a person. Exactly what was known was never elaborated, which returns us to the importance of secrecy when dealing with esoteric knowledge.
because of the unknown powers which could be conveyed or embodied by these winds. The mystifying, fear-inducing aspect of *angin* opens up a path to the power of the fetish. The central trope of the *angin*-fetish forms part of the ‘storied landscapes’ (Mulligan 2001, p. 19) by which Wawonii people understand themselves within tightly-knit networks of social morality.
CHAPTER SIX

PANAS AND DINGIN ‘EVENTS’

‘The mode of the event is the problematic (...) events bear exclusively upon problems and define their conditions (...) The event by itself is problematic and problematizing.’

- The Logic of Sense, Deleuze

Panas dalam²⁸¹ leaving Bapak Rini’s body

After washing my face and drinking coffee this morning, I went outside and sat by the fire with Ibu Rini.²⁸² She was boiling water and frying fish. Bapak Rini was inside. He looked very weak. When he got up off the bed in which he was lying, he limped. Ibu Rini said he hadn’t slept the night before and he hadn’t washed himself in three days. He had a fever. He was still wearing the same thin jacket and sarong he’d been wearing since he started getting hot and cold shivers a few days earlier. Bapak Rini showed me an open wound on his calf. There was pus and other substances leaking out of it. He showed me the bottom of his foot. There were several clusters of small red-brown spots on it. Some were larger, they looked like small cuts. I asked him what they were.

²⁸¹ ‘Panas dalam’ literally means ‘heat inside’. It is also referred to as ‘demam panas’ (‘hot fever’) or ‘sakit panas’ (‘heat illness’), particularly by Malay speakers (Awang 1990, p. 48; Long 2009, p. 79). ‘Sakit panas’, like ‘panas dalam’, is related to external environmental influences, such as stress or misfortune (Long 2009, p.79). ‘Panah dalem’ among the Kenyah Leppo’Ke of East Kalimantan, refers to excessive heat trapped inside the body, a high temperature, wind inside the body, and hot breath accompanied by cold, sweaty skin (Gollin 2001, p. 337).

²⁸² Apart from being pseudonyms, ‘Ibu Rini’ and ‘Bapak Rini’ follow the pattern of teknonym usage which is common in Wawonii. Most parents in the villages where I was based referred to themselves and were referred to by others as ‘Bapak’ or ‘Ibu’ plus the name of their eldest child (whether male or female).
‘The heat wants to escape.’ Bapak Rini said, pointing to his calf and the spots on his foot.

‘Bapak is ill with panas dalam. That’s what you can see here.’ Ibu Rini said.

‘Doctors call panas dalam ‘sarampa’. Here we call it me’apu.’

I asked Bapak Rini how people recover from panas dalam.

‘They recover themselves.’ He said.

‘Panas dalam is from malaria.’ Bapak Rini tells me.

‘Only when the heat has escaped will recovery occur. If it doesn’t exit the body, if it goes further inside; people can die in a short period of time.’

Ibu Rini said that since her husband has panas dalam, she has to fry food outside or he’ll become sicker.

‘If someone has panas dalam we have to fry food outside. If we don’t, the heat increases along with the severity of the illness.’

I asked Bapak when the sores on the side of his leg and his foot first appeared. A few days ago when the panas dalam started, he said.

‘Maybe you don’t have illnesses like this in Australia.’ He added.

Ibu Rini and I went down to the beach to phone Muhammad, Ibu Rini’s 27-year-old son. After several attempts, we got through. Ibu Rini talked to Muhammad for about 15 minutes. I talked with him afterwards too. Muhammad asked when I’m coming to Kendari. He said I should contact him when I do. Muhammad’s grandmother, Bapak’s mother, was taken to the hospital in Kendari a few days ago because she was very ill. This occurred at the same time as the red spots and pus

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283 Among the Sasak people of Lombok, women who have recently given birth and their babies are considered particularly vulnerable to attacks of ‘panas dalam’ (Hay 2004, p. 111).

284 This is the first time I had heard this term in reference to doctors or anything else.

285 On the other hand, malaria is considered a ‘cold’ illness by Malays in the northern state of Kelantan. This means that cold food should be avoided until health is regained (Awang 1990, p. 65).
started appearing on Bapak’s leg and foot. Now, Bapak’s mother is back at home and is making a good recovery. Rini, Muhammad’s eldest sister, brought her food and looked after her last night. Ibu Rini was relieved to hear this. Walking back to the house, Ibu Rini told me,

‘That’s why Bapak became increasingly ill last night, because he remembered his mother. Thanks be to God that his mother is already better.’

I asked Ibu Rini what had made Bapak’s mother ill.

‘I don’t know. It’s an old person’s illness because she’s already old. Just now Bapak was thinking about his mother which is why he became increasingly ill last night. If Bapak already knows that his mother has recovered, he will definitely recover too.’ Ibu Rini said.

She put rice and fish on the table. I ate some. Bapak Rini was lying in his sarong on the bed. Ibu Rini sat at the table with me but she said she did not have any appetite. She repeated much of what she had said earlier that morning about having a fever and shivering and being cold.

Ibu told Bapak about the conversation with Muhammad, emphasising the improvement in Bapak’s mother’s health. A faint smile appears on Bapak’s face. As night was falling, Ibu made rice, boiled fish and sinonggi, a Kolaka speciality made from sago and fish, for dinner. Bapak ate sinonggi and drank several cups of hot tea. Then he returned to bed.

The following morning, Bapak said he was beginning to feel better. On the sole of his foot, the red-brown dots were fading. The pus on his leg had dried up.

‘The panas dalam is leaving my body,’ Bapak told me as I drank my morning coffee.

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286 ‘Demam’
‘Tomorrow I’ll return to my fields to pick cashews.’

Instability in temperature, direction and balance are three features consistently mentioned in discussions about panas dalam. It is also evident from Bapak Rini’s account that panas dalam is a condition linking the sufferer to other aspects of his or her environment, proximate and far. Panas dalam is a site of convergence where Bapak Rini’s suffering connects him to his mother, his living space and the act of frying food. The appearance of panas dalam is not a random occurrence, one which could happen anywhere; instead, it is closely tied to this particular context. Since this convergence of people, places and events is not found in Australia, Bapak Rini doubts that panas dalam occurs in Australia. Bapak Rini understands the existence of this specific bodily condition in terms of the particular space and time in which it appears. Panas dalam is not an illness which simply appears when a person or environment is hot in temperature. Instead, this illness is viewed through the prism of the relationships one has to one’s close relatives and surrounding environment.  

As in many parts of Indonesia and indeed across Asia, in Wawonii health is viewed in terms of a balance (or lack of balance) between social, spiritual and physical elements. Balance in one’s physical surroundings is also considered to be important. Local people say panas dalam usually occurs during the shift between dry and rainy seasons when the weather is unpredictable. These conditions disturb the body’s internal equilibrium. As well as changes in temperature, wind exacerbates the onset of panas dalam. The ‘eastern wind season’

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287 Among the Wana of Central Sulawesi, heat is also associated with a threatening environment. Ceremonies are performed to placate land which has become hot and dangerous. ‘Unsatisfied with the minor ceremonies, the land has proved a dangerous place to live. As the wana put it, mapoi lipu, “the place is hot”’ (Atkinson 1979, p. 360). Similarly, in East Kalimantan, rituals are required to cool Kenyah Leppo’Ke villages which have become excessively hot and therefore menacing as a result of ignoring adat (Gollin 2001, p. 113). Heat in the form of ‘hot money’ (bhs. Ind: ‘uang panas”; bhs. Rej: ‘caci paneus’) is linked to conflicts with earth deities according to the Rejang people working in the Lebong gold mines in South Sumatra (Znoj 1998, p. 203).

288 In Java, for example, ‘Strong emotions can lead to extreme frustration. The Javanese work hard to avoid this. They strive to attain an inner condition which is distinguished by a flattening out of emotional intensity. In this respect the Javanese believe that sudden emotions, especially feelings of disappointment (gela) or being startled (kaget) endanger health. Whereas peasants see supernatural dangers in such feelings because they make it easier for spirits to enter into man, for example through accidents, sickness, and death, educated people see in strong emotions a danger to their inner feelings of balance and steadiness’ (Magnis Suseno 1997, p. 124).

289 This is also heard regularly in other parts of the archipelago, for example in Java.
lasts from May to August, while the ‘western wind season’ begins in December and ends in March. People say windy nights bring on the types of hot and cold shivers from which Bapak Rini is suffering. Almost all the villages in Wawonii are within walking distance of the coast and are unprotected from strong winds coming in from the sea.

Among the other causes of panas dalam is an over-consumption of hot foods. These foods may be hot in temperature, such as fried snacks, or those considered to have hot characteristics, such as turtle, durian, jackfruit, garlic or mango. Some say panas dalam begins with gastric secretions that spread from the digestive organs upwards to the oesophagus. It is therefore recommended that sufferers sleep with extra pillows in order to keep the head high. It is also important to regulate the temperature of their surroundings.

Although to outsiders, panas dalam seems to describe a rather tenebrous set of symptoms and situations, to Wawonii people, panas dalam is a frightening and potentially fatal illness. In seeking to understand how Wawonii people see the relationships between their bodies, their health and their environments, we gain a glimpse into the way they perceive themselves in the world and the world within themselves.

Bapak and Ibu Rini talk of the body as a structure with boundaries from which things (such as unwanted heat) may enter or escape. Heat is also understood as an external threat in other parts of Sulawesi. The Wana people of Central Sulawesi attribute certain types of fever to ‘ransong’; dangerous, hot objects sent by hostile people or spirits which invade the body and are intended to cause illness (Atkinson 1979, p. 105).

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290 This is in contrast to understandings of the effects of hot and cold food on the body in other parts of Indonesia. In Lombok, for example, Sasak people suffering from excessive heat are given foods classified as ‘hot’. ‘Cold’ foods, it is thought, would shock the body, causing ‘kaget’ (shock), another type of illness (Hay 2004, p. 73).

291 Lamoa, ‘the punitive thunder-lightening being’ is the spirit with the most powerful set of ransong which, when cast into a person’s body, require a shaman for healing (Atkinson 1979, p. 104). To inflict punishment, Lamoa may also hurl ‘icy cold’ objects at people, causing chills and illness (Atkinson 1979, p. 306).
Although the body is described in Bapak and Ibu Rini’s account as a contained, definable entity, they also describe affective links between Bapak Rini’s body, his house and his mother.

[W]e do not grasp space directly or through our senses but through our bodily situation. Space is not understood as a series of relations between different objectively located points, points of equal value (...) Rather, space is understood by us as a relation between these points and a central or organizing perspective which regulates perceptions so that they occupy the same perceptual field. This perspective has no other location than that given by the body (Grosz 1994, p. 90).

Increased heat (from cooking, lighting fires) inside the house is linked to rising heat inside Bapak Rini’s body, which makes him more ill. Just as the excess heat in the body of someone afflicted by panas dalam must be expunged, so too must the excess heat in a house whose occupants have panas dalam. Ibu Rini therefore cooks outside, where the heat from flames and hot oil may escape. Within this parallel constellation, the house becomes the metaphorical body. External heat becomes embodied heat. There are two elements at work here: metaphor and action. The close association between houses and bodies, where the house is often conceived as a metaphor for the body, is common in many Eastern Indonesian societies. In Sumba, for example, the death of a relative is expressed in ritual speech as the destruction of the clan house. In South Sulawesi, tongkonan houses are also closely linked to Torajan identities and the bodies and spirits of their ancestors. In the massalama’ bola ritual conducted by the Bugis of Lindu, Central Sulawesi, offerings are ‘directed first toward a navel (posi’) of the object that is the focus of the ritual. In house consecrations, the central housepost (posi’ bola) is first approached’ (Acciaioli 1990, p. 215). Among the Ngaju Dayak of Central Kalimantan, houses are associated with femaleness and are believed to possess souls.
The connections between Bapak Rini’s health and the health of his mother also affect the panas dalam illness from which Bapak Rini is suffering. As Ibu Rini explained, thinking about, or remembering, his mother in her time of illness causes Bapak Rini’s health to decline.\textsuperscript{292} Conversely, Ibu Rini insists that the news that his mother has recovered will result in Bapak Rini’s speedy recovery. The link between Bapak Rini’s body and that of his mother is the act of remembering. This act affects the level of heat contained in his body, and thereby his health. As Hay (2009) found in her research with the Sasak people of Lombok, ‘anxiety, remembering, agency, and healing’ are ‘intertwined processes’ based on ‘embodied experience’. Furthermore, the act of remembering here is at once an individual experience and a social practice, and its effects are not only psychological but also physiological. In remembering his mother during her time of suffering, Bapak Rini’s suffering intensifies. Remembering is not a trigger for action; it is a purposefully-directed action in itself with direct physiological consequences for Bapak Rini.\textsuperscript{293}

In handling a body sick with excessive heat, Bapak Rini – rather than being subjected to the objectifying gaze of the clinic – becomes ‘the subject of sensation, experience, and world’ (Csordas 1994, p. 8). Unlike in many accounts of the body, the primary framework of perception here is not ‘visualism’ but rather ‘sensation’. Here, the body is not ‘read’ but ‘felt’.\textsuperscript{294}

\textsuperscript{292} Bapak Rini was generally more taciturn than his wife. When he became ill, he barely spoke at all. On our walks, Ibu Rini would explain his illness to me, express her worries and answer any questions I had. Sometimes during dinner if Bapak Rini were sitting with the family drinking tea, I would ask him questions about his condition, but these too would usually be answered by his wife. As Ibu Rini spoke, Bapak Rini would often nod silently, seeming to be relieved at having the burden of speech taken care of by his wife.

\textsuperscript{293} Clearly, the importance of memory in times of illness is not limited to Wawonii, or even Indonesia. Hay (2009) argues, ‘I suspect that the seeking of memories is likely a cross-culturally pervasive and biologically promoted response to serious illnesses regardless of local models of causality and agency.’

\textsuperscript{294} ‘Another major impact of the accumulating political/theoretical critique of anthropology may be briefly summarized as a rejection of “visualism.”’ Ong (1967, 1977), among others, has studied ways in which the senses are hierarchically ordered in different cultures and epochs. He argues that the truth of vision in Western, literate cultures has predominated over the evidences of sound and interlocution, of touch, smell, and taste. (Mary Pratt has observed that references to odour, very prominent in travel writing, are virtually absent from ethnographies.) The predominant metaphors in anthropological research have been participant-observation, data collection, and cultural description, all of which presuppose a standpoint outside – looking at, objectifying, or, somewhat closer, “reading,” a given reality (Clifford & Marcus 1986, p. 11).
Rather than arguing that Bapak Rini’s body is here a passive surface upon which outside forces act, I argue that Bapak Rini’s body here is an emergent/-ing body. Both his house and his mother’s body are or were sites of protection, shelter and safety. Bapak Rini has emerged from both. His relationship with both precedes the illness and the excessive heat he is suffering. It is therefore unsurprising that these sites of emergence should have an influence on him in his time of vulnerability. Bapak Rini’s body is located here within a field of interconnected bodies, his mother’s body and his house being just two of these. Modifications within any of these interconnected bodies entail influences on the other bodies with which they are connected. Heat and coldness, sickness and health, seep from one body into another, affecting the health and stability of the receiving body. Bapak Rini’s body is many things: a biological organism with all the physiological vulnerability that entails; a material structure which enact[s] the embodiment of its relational ties; an indeterminate entity subject to the constraints and demands of power and a site of lived experience. It is a body perpetually in flux – a body which changes in accordance with the changes occurring in its surroundings, not least of which is changes in temperature. All three of the bodies theorized by Schepers-Hughes and Lock (1987) in their influential paper ‘The Mindful Body: A Prolegomenon to Future Work in Medical Anthropology’ resonate with Bapak Rini’s bodily experience of suffering excessive heat. Although the boundaries of this body exist, they are ambiguous, indeterminate, dependent on context.

Bapak Rini points out the specificity of bodily conditions – ‘Maybe you don’t have illnesses like this in Australia.’ Here, the close link between the individual and their cultural, geographic and social origins is made explicit. Bapak Rini’s body is a cultural body.

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295 ‘The body must be regarded as a site of social, political, cultural, and geographical inscriptions, production, or constitution. The body is not opposed to culture; a distant throwback to a natural past; it is itself a cultural, the cultural, product (...) this implies the difficult task of producing or exploring a range of possible metaphors other than the mechanistic ones which have dominated the history of philosophy, metaphors which postulate or make recognizable different relations between the biological and the social than those represented by the
defines me – and my physical condition – as a product of the social relations and geographic location from which I have emerged. If the natural surroundings are different in Australia, then so too must be the elements which threaten to destabilise Australian bodies. ‘[E]xperience’ – here, the experience of threats to the integrity of the physical body by an excessive degree of invading heat – as Hay (2009) and others have argued, is ‘coemergent through cultural and biological processes.’

**Panas and dingin: multiple associations**

‘*Panas*’ and ‘*dingin*’\(^{296}\) literally mean ‘hot’ and cold’ in Indonesian. These words, however, have much more complex lives of their own, which are eclipsed by such bare translation. ‘*Panas*’ and ‘*dingin*’ are not two discrete properties or descriptive categories which can be easily defined and sundered from one another. As in other parts of Indonesia, in Wawonii, these words connote a multitude of meanings which extend far beyond temperature alone (Hay 2004, p. 73) and have direct implications for bodies and varying states of health. As well as describing ‘qualities of illness’ (Hay 2004, p. 73), in much of Southeast Asia, ‘hot’ and ‘cold’ ‘imply individual and social values’ (Tuschinsky 1995, p. 1590). In Bali, heat is associated with emotions such as ‘fright, (...) anger, envy, jealousy and offense’ and may be transmitted from a mother to her child via breast milk (Wikan 1989, p. 30). Apart from being associated with illness and heath, in Indonesia, heat and coolness are also ‘a means of expressing power’, symbols for money, properties of lightning which may create happiness or cause illness, representations of modernity and tradition, spiritual properties which influence mother-child relationships, associated with *adat*\(^{297}\)-related punishment and pacification rituals and characteristics of places where ‘undisclosed incidents of adultery’ have occurred (Tuschinsky machine, by the base-superstructure or building model and the model of binarized opposition. These metaphors have all presumed a certain mastery of and exteriority to the object – the body, bodies – that, I claim, is not possible. What is needed are metaphors and models that implicate the subject in the object, that render mastery and exteriority undesirable’ (Grosz 1994, p. 23).

\(^{296}\) Or ‘*sejuk*’, which is more common among Malay speakers.

\(^{297}\) Customary law

This chapter takes a Deleuzean approach in exploring how individual physical bodies experiencing different degrees of ‘panas’ and ‘dingin’ are linked to other (physical, environmental, metaphorical) bodies. In so doing, these individual physical bodies ‘refer outside themselves in non- or extradiscursive relations. One does not need to read meaning onto bodies and their behavior; rather, one can survey the linkages between bodies of different kinds. Instead of aspiring to a model of signification, which links the subject’s psyche to signifying chains, to the order of the signifier, that is, in which the body is the medium of signification, Deleuze sees his project as that of the mapmaker’ (Grosz 1994, p. 121).

_Panas_ and _dingin_ are sensory relations not only affecting bodies as corporeal subjects, but linking bodies and therefore subjects to history, their environment and the people around them. As the ethnographic data in this chapter show, _panas_ and _dingin_ affect not only physical, but also emotional and psychological health. The properties associated with _panas_ and _dingin_ implicate individuals, families and whole villages. In this chapter, I argue that, seen as clusters comprising qualities of both _panas_ and _dingin_, Wawonii bodies of all types are culturally, socially and historically specific creations. These creative processes by which Wawonii bodies are constituted are closely linked to local epistemologies.

This chapter explores the effects of _panas_ and _dingin_ on bodies in their historical and cultural specificity. Social norms and Wawonii peoples’ relations to their environmental
surroundings are influenced by the concepts of *panas* and *dingin*, and the practices these entail. These are processes of self-construction and social formation. They are also experientially based methods of knowledge accumulation. People define their bodily capacities through an awareness of the dangers threatening their health when degrees of *panas* and *dingin* are unbalanced. These are social systems of knowledge, constructed as being the inheritance of the ancestors, a move which endows these systems with authority.

Knowledge which gives people ways to deal with *panas* and *dingin* is exchanged between Wawonii people as they work, prepare for ceremonies or eat together. *Panas* and *dingin* are two components of the cultural praxis through which community is constructed in Wawonii. They are ‘an attribute of community capable of transcending the natural or ‘naturalized’ order and creating new and different orders’ (Bauman 1999, p. 95). The origins of these ‘new and different orders’ are found in the strategies Wawonii people develop and use on themselves and others when, for example, illness occurs because of excessive heat or coldness. This chapter examines the effects of these imbalances on individual subjects as bodies which articulate, through experience and practices such as memory recollection and the recitation of ancestral wisdom, their links to other bodies.

In this chapter, I argue that the effects of excessive heat or coldness on physiological and social bodies in Wawonii show that rather than being assumed to be a self-sustaining category, the body must be understood instead as being brought into existence and sustained through its embeddedness within a set of social, historical and environmental relationships. Here, the body is a complex constellation of agency and reactivity, health-enhancing and health-diminishing capacities.

The body, along with its *panas*/*dingin* capacities, is an energetic force in the sense that it is productive and capable of provoking individual and social change. It is also vulnerable to
the effects of other forces. The processes of construction and disintegration within which this body is active are influenced by the effects of *panas/dingin*. The body is not simply an agent, nor its passive opposite: an inert surface upon which agents act or are represented. Instead, the body is a constellation integrated in patterns of receiving and transmitting/engaging in (processes of) force. Linked closely to its environment by its *panas/dingin* capacities, the body is socially and historically embedded. It is knowable only through an examination of these forces of embeddedness. Social discourse is another force of embeddedness, dis-embedding, re-forming and re-embedding from generation to generation as stories of the body are told and re-told, forming part of the epistemological basis of village culture in Wawonii.

Whereas much of what is written about bodies relies primarily on a visual code of reference, an exploration of the *panas/dingin* capabilities of bodies is primarily a foray into the sensory. *Panas/dingin* are situated on the threshold where new realities open up, where the apparent robustness of other ontologies of the body (where ‘hot’ and cold’ are easily understood categories, related only to temperature) begin to falter. Here, new pathways appear for seeing the body as a cultural rather than natural product. Confronted with *panas/dingin*, the binary hot/ cold framework familiar to essentialist paradigms of the body begins to collapse. In Wawonii, individual and collective understandings of bodies are formed out of the various modes of contact the subject has with its environment through its actions in the world. In this sense, the body is an anticipatory plan of (future) action in which a knowledge of the body’s current position and capacities for action must be registered. It is also comprised of various emotional and libidinal attitudes to the body, its parts and its capacity for certain kinds of performance; and finally, it is a social relation, in which the subject’s experience of its own body is connected to and mediated by others’ relations to their own bodies and to the subject’s body (Grosz 1994, p. 67).
Bodies experiencing varying degrees of health in Wawonii are constructed within both materialist and idealist constellations.\(^{298}\) The materialist/idealist binary is disrupted; bodies exist at the intersection of these worlds. *Panas* and *dingin* form part of a complex pattern of agency and reactivity, of encounters that enhance one’s capacities and those which diminish one’s capacities, of actions and passions. A body relies on many bodies, just as concepts rely on a milieu of other concepts, for these two orders always function inseparably (Grosz 1994, p. 23).

The close relationship between concepts of heat and coolness and the health of human bodies has a long, diverse history. Insofar as they affect human and spiritual bodies, plants, foods and places, heat and coolness are fundamental characteristics of different types of energy. From the sixteenth century, Native American and European humoral systems, which both recognised these properties, came to influence each other (Kay & Yoder 1987, p. 348). Asian humoral systems emphasise the ways in which hotness and coldness as qualities of foods, temperature and metaphor are related to humoral frameworks of health (Hay 2004, p. 72).

‘*Panas*’ and ‘*dingin*’ are understood throughout my work as Deleuzean ‘events’ impinging upon the (sick, labouring, exhausted, threatened) ‘problem’ of the body, defining its ‘conditions’. Rather than seeking ‘solutions’ for this problematic body (starting with the usual methodology based in a quest for ‘meaning’ or answers to what the signifier signifies), my work emphasises the dynamism of the body over its structural properties. Thus, ‘unexplainable’\(^{299}\) aspects of the body, its movements, conditions, effects and behaviours, are

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\(^{298}\) “Rethinking the body implies major epistemological upheavals not only for the humanities, which have tended toward idealism, but equally for the natural and social sciences, which have at least aspired to materialism. Both broad “types” of knowledge are implicated in and in part are responsible for prevailing understandings of bodies and are thus vulnerable to transformation and upheaval in challenges to these prevailing models.” (Grosz 1994, p.x).

\(^{299}\) Here, I mean that these aspects are unexplainable in anthropological terms. Wawonii people themselves regularly had explanations where I had none. It is important to remember that just because something is unexplainable in anthropological or academic terms, or terms that outsiders such as myself can understand, this lack certainly does not mean that there is no explanation, particularly for local people, who are closer to the thing being explained.
no hindrance to analysis because what is being experienced is no longer the depth of a structure
(body, social world) but its movements, its migration through time and space, its dynamism
and the potential displacements it projects towards other bodies similarly in flux.

Curing ‘panas dalam’ with coconuts and kapok leaves

It was a warm afternoon in Wawonii and I was sitting outside, chatting with Pak
Edy, a descendent of the last Wawonii king.
Brooke: I have a question about health, particularly feeling cold or feeling hot
because I, often in Wawonii I hear people say ‘I’m sick with panas dalam’ or, ‘I
am cold, I think I will become ill’ and there are also people who say ‘this fruit has
a hot or cold quality’, yeah, durian is ‘hot’, jackfruit is ‘hot’ but others are ‘cool’
and I don’t really understand…

Pak Edy: Regarding hot and cold illnesses, usually older people use the term ‘panas
dalam’, you know Miss, they mean… what is it, ‘panas dalam’? If heat is outside
[the body] we already know, usually you know people with a fever are not too hot
but [the heat] moves inside the stomach and gut area,\(^\text{300}\) which very often becomes
agitated or uneasy. Old people say that it’s better for heat to be outside rather than
inside [the body] because people with a fever are often agitated or uneasy and
cannot sleep so the first thing that helps is coconut juice, we just drink coconut
juice because it’s natural, and it can change the situation of heat being inside [the
body] by expelling it.
Brooke: If there’s no coconut juice, we…

\(^{300}\) Perut.
Pak Edy: If there’s no coconut juice, I often give my children kapok leaves, kapok leaves which have been wrung out...

Brooke: Wrung out...

Pak Edy: Then they’re put here.

Pak Edy points to his forehead.

Brooke: On the head?

Pak Edy: They’re rubbed...

Brooke: Rubbed first...

Pak Edy: Yes, the whole body is rubbed, that strengthens your body quicker than a compress.

Brooke: Oh, that’s how it is.

Pak Edy: Yes.

Brooke: It’s not mixed with...

Pak Edy: No, no, only with water in a box or a plate or a bowl, when that’s done, it’s rubbed on, it evaporates/ vaporizes, it looks like steam...

Brooke: From the head?

Pak Edy: Yes, if you can, because our parents and the older people drink the kapok leaf liquid.

Brooke: I see. After it’s been rubbed on, is the liquid [which the kapok leaves were boiled in] given to drink?

Pak Edy: No, after liquid has been added, when it’s being wrung out, there is already a bit of liquid, after that it’s smeared on the chest, on the back and so on.

Brooke: How long do we leave it on our skin?

Pak Edy: Oh you have to leave it on there until it becomes sticky. If it’s already dried, put more on, put more on, the heat inside is scrubbed away.
Brooke: Oh so the heat inside [the body] will exit the body after that?
Pak Edy: It’s expelled, it’s expelled. Yes, the medicine of Wawonii people… they don’t have any [modern] medicine yet. Before, there wasn’t any medication so they used this medicine.
Brooke: Yes, Bapak Rini, the man we already met, he was ill with panas dalam but he said the heat escaped through his foot which, er his foot had red dots on it…
Pak Edy: Red. I hope he didn’t have dengue fever, which the medical profession is already acquainted with now.
Brooke: Yes, I don’t know what illness it is but he said if it gets worse---
Pak Edy: Tuberculosis.
Brooke: Yes, the heat could escape so he’s waiting to see if he will recover later on.
Pak Edy: To recover, that is the medicine which helps, if people have an injury, they use that leaf, the leaf is wrung out, then it’s rubbed on there (the wounded area) so (the person) recovers.

In Pak Edy’s account, it is clear that heat within the body is located specifically inside the stomach. This unwanted heat causes the stomach to be ‘agitated’ and ‘uneasy’. A person may have a fever without suffering from this affliction but added heat will intensify their suffering. Drinking coconut juice\textsuperscript{301} or the liquid which kapok leaves have been boiled in is said to expel the excessive heat in the stomach. Rubbing a paste made of kapok leaves on the body has the same effect. These practices are associated with ‘dulu’ – ‘before’, the past, the time associated with the wisdom of older people and ancestors, the time which went before ‘zaman sekarang’ – the present, linked with ideas of ‘modernity’, which comprises things such as ‘the medical profession’ and the pharmaceutical industry. Pak Edy interprets Bapak Rini’s

\begin{footnote}
\textsuperscript{301} Similarly, in East Kalimantan, the Kenyah Leppo’Ke people use young coconut to draw out unhealthy forms of heat in the body (Gollin 2001, p. 165).
\end{footnote}
symptoms within the framework of ‘modern’ diseases and diagnoses. He mentions tuberculosis and dengue fever. Possibly he does this because of the assumptions he makes about me as his listener, knowing as he did that I come from a presumably ‘modern’ country and culture, where ‘village’ illnesses such as *panas dalam* do not exist. Pak Edy’s account makes clear that there is considerable overlap between ‘modernity’ and earlier times. Wawonii people acted within these in-between spaces when people fell ill, usually consulting both the *dukun* and the nurses at the local clinics. These clinics offered biochemical medication, and as the case of Shabrina, later in this chapter, shows, the services of the nurses working there are used when people are ill because of excessive internal heat. Simultaneously, practices like the kapok leaf rub described by Pak Edy and the ‘whispering and blowing treatment’ described by Ibu Nisa below are also used.

**‘Panas dalam’: Ibu Nisa’s perspective**

Ibu Nisa was slouched on a rickety bamboo chair outside her house, which is where I found her almost every afternoon. I sat beside her and, looking out past the coconut palms towards the languid sea and diminishing sun, we began talking. I asked Ibu Nisa what she did when she was sick.

‘Usually if I’m sick, first I ask my parents to give me whispering and blowing treatment,’ I look for someone wise, for example if this person’s wise I ask them to give me the whispering and blowing treatment and I ask God, oh God, cure me... just that... we speak to God, it’s God who conveys [health] you know, it’s God, we ask [him], whatever we ask [him], he gives us... Many people use

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Superscripts:

302 *tiup-tiup*
303 ‘Tuhan ya Allah’
cigarettes. Later [their health] becomes worse … there are many symptoms like headaches… if they have high blood pressure\textsuperscript{304} they should drink soursop [juice], here people rarely go to the hospital you know… most [people] use natural [treatments], use natural [treatments] you know… if our bodies are hot like this [we use] the whispering and blowing treatment… we have to find a wise person… an old person who is really, really old is found if [we are] hot and [it] comes out immediately if we use the whispering and blowing treatment, if the whispering and blowing treatment is used it comes out immediately, the scarred, marked skin,\textsuperscript{305} which… because most of the heat inside,\textsuperscript{306} heat inside the body exits, so the scabs\textsuperscript{307} appear, they’re red, that’s called heat inside, we don’t go to the hospital ah whoever is treated … is treated here ah after that they recover immediately.

Brooke: How does the heat inside exit [the body]?

Ibu Nisa: The scabs and spots,\textsuperscript{308} the scabs must be opened/ removed…

Brooke: What comes out?

Ibu Nisa: Redness… usually it appears on the face, ah that is heat inside ah it can’t [be treated] at a hospital, you need to drink coconut juice so it all comes out…

Brooke: What causes heat inside?

Ibu Nisa: Usually what causes heat inside is if it’s rainy-hot-rainy-hot usually that’s the weather/ air from, from above to below, it affects you immediately, it’s usually like that and many people are very sick, an influence like that comes from the weather/ air you know, in foreign countries it’s a cold area, you know it’s cold,

\textsuperscript{304} ‘darah tinggi’
\textsuperscript{305} ‘cacar’
\textsuperscript{306} ‘panas dalam’
\textsuperscript{307} ‘kudis-kudis’
\textsuperscript{308} ‘bintik-bintik kudis’
many people cough, they’re influenced by coughing because it’s cold, it’s like that… like now, there’s a lot of heat-rain-heat-rain, many people are sick with what’s called heat inside, usually children are affected so whenever … they’ll cough a lot, they’re given a drink made from papaya leaves, papaya leaves like this… they’re washed immediately and boiled in hot water… if people are shivering we make them hot like this… they have sore bones you know… papaya leaves, we take water and wash (them) there… then we pour it, wring it out… then it’s drunk twice until there’s none left, after that you know this is where the medication is from…Here, if someone’s hot we take the papaya leaf… a hot person drinks it and immediately recovers, here they drink it twice, you see people here rarely go to the clinic, you know… because even if we go, they are not capable/effective… more people believe in this treatment from their parents and the old people…’

Ibu Nisa describes bodies in relation to the vast network of influences which contain and structure them. Hot air or winds blowing from above to below, as well as conditions which fluctuate between being hot and rainy, cause heat to enter the bodies of vulnerable villagers, making them ill. Hot drinks made from boiled papaya leaves restore health in situations where a suffering individual is either shivering with coldness or suffering from an excessive amount of heat inside. This concept is not unusual in Indonesia. In Java, for example, ‘[h]ealthy drinks such as “stmj” – milk, raw egg, honey and ginger – are served hot to fortify the body’ (Woods 2007, p. 95). Interestingly, the hot papaya leaf drink here is not just a counterbalance to those suffering from coldness, it is also used to treat illness caused by excessive heat. Gollin (2001, p. 115) found similar patterns among the Kenyah Dayak of East Kalimantan.

‘In therapy, dangerous extremes of hot or cold may be addressed through balancing treatments, such as warming a cold postpartum mother with hot plants like ginger.
But they are also just as likely to employ hot therapies (e.g., ginger, chilli) to defeat hot conditions (e.g., fever).

Like Pak Edy, Ibu Nisa recommends coconut juice to expel excess internal heat. Whispering and blowing treatment is also required for the restoration of health. These are acts of agency in which Wawonii people attempt to contain, control and ultimately expunge illness from the body. The restoration of the physiological health of the individual is necessary to sustain the health of the social body of which they are a part. Other individuals are therefore invested in the health of the suffering individual. People such as older men and women considered wise due to their access to the sort of esoteric knowledge necessary to perform whispering and blowing treatment play a pivotal role in the restoration of the health of the suffering individual.

In Ibu Nisa’s account, bodies are both circumscribed by powerful surrounding forces – weather, temperature, the supernatural powers contained in the whispering and blowing treatment – and active sites of transformation themselves. Localised, personal histories live on in these bodies through the power of the whispering and blowing treatments. In this way, ancestral wisdom is collapsed into the bodies of Wawonii people. These bodies are both socially structured and formed according to lived experience and acts of embodiment. In processes of recovery from illness, they are at once both passive and active. At times of individual vulnerability, the natural – wind, rain, heat, papaya leaves, coconut juice – is dynamically integrated into the social and physical. Heat has a meaning and therefore a value as both a natural and social phenomenon. Individuals suffering from excessive heat or shivering are situated at the point where natural and social worlds overlap. Social reproduction occurs during processes of navigating health according to the spiritual wisdom of ancestors, expressed in the whispering and blowing treatment. Here, whispering and blowing treatment is a normative social practice which reinforces the widespread Indonesian belief in locating
wisdom and knowledge with ancestors. Typically, as in Ibu Nisa’s account, older people have access to this wisdom.

Ibu Nisa accounts for the body as a resonance, a mimetic becoming, unstable, unbounded and vibrant. Sustained by a nexus of social relations, her body has a personalised rather than a prescribed history and produces knowledge based on this corporeal history, which is linked also to other bodies. When she says the body is ‘panas’ she talks about a feeling situated within a specific environment, not an abstract concept. The richness of Ibu Nisa’s description produces an almost Cubist body, brought vividly into view from different angles (sensory, visual, relational, thermodynamic, historical, social) all at once. She talks about whispering and blowing treatment, the relation of the body to the wisdom of the elderly, the porousness of the body, how heat and pus escape from it; she describes danger zones – the hospital and clinic – best avoided by body; she details the soothing physical effects of ‘cool’ coconut water and ‘papaya leaf drink’ on the body; she warns of the dangers of disruptive weather (rain-heat-rain-heat) and the potential threats posed by disruptive flows of air from above to below. She describes the effectiveness of the medical treatments from previous times, locating wisdom within collective forms of social knowledge and warns that at the (‘modern’) clinic, ‘they are not effective’. Belief in the effectiveness of the cures handed down from previous generations is evidence of the robustness of these relationships, which endure despite death. Ibu Nisa’s body is alive in the resonances which it produces and by which it is constituted. And when she mentions the bodies of others ‘outside’, they too are understood not as atomized things, but in their relation to the ‘cold area’ around them. The

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309 *‘obat’*
310 *‘dia tidak mampun’*
311 *‘di luar negeri’*
312 *‘daerah dingin’*
next section shows how the biomedically-trained nurses at the local clinic who Ibu Nisa accuses of being ‘not sensitive or effective’ understand the same illness in an entirely different way.

‘Panas dalam’: Nurse Ani’s perspective

Brooke: What is ‘heat inside’?\(^\text{313}\)

Nurse Ani: If people here say ‘heat inside’…they say (it means) a fever, inflammation… oh ISPA, do you know ISPA? Acute duct infection illness… which… it’s the throat which, in the village language they say is (affected by) heat inside, that’s what ‘heat inside’ is called, ISPA (acute duct infection illness) is said to be ‘heat inside’…

Brooke: How can people be cured?

Nurse Ani: By taking medication… medication from the clinic… usually we give anti-inflammator\(\text{ies}\)… if they’re coughing, we give them cough medication for a dry cough…

The body-as-abstract-thing, produced in Nurse Ani’s story, is presented as a flat, one-dimensional stick-figure. The body Nurse Ani describes is taken directly from a medical textbook. She mentions a fever, inflammation and ISPA. Individual body-parts such as the throat are singled out. While Ibu Nisa, a speaker of the ‘village language’ Nurse Ani mentions, associates coughing with coldness, Nurse Ani says, ‘it’s the throat which, in the village language they say is (affected by) heat inside’. Cures include anti-inflammatory medicine and cough medicine, which must come from the clinic. Whereas Ibu Nisa recites stories told by her mother and grandmother, Nurse Ani recites those she has picked up from the head of the clinic and her employers at the Department of Health. Imprisoned within biomedical fiction, the body

\(^\text{313}\) ‘panas dalam’
in Nurse Ani’s story is the petrified object of an epistemology that sunders dynamic totalities into static ‘things’ incapable of flux and synthesis. Here, the body is alienated within the fetishism of biomedical mythology. The rituals and discourses of this biomedical mythology produce the dominant regulatory norms through which the body materializes. This results in the body being constructed only through erasure, an essential part of the normative and symbolic violence meted out to it at the clinic.

The erasures and exclusions that constitute the limits of the body in the biomedical account form the basis of its mythology. Backed by the apparatus of the State, this mythology is necessarily ideological. Wawonii people, in elaborations of the sort provided by Ibu Nisa, expose the impoverishment of this fiction in which the body is an atomized cripple. Atomized and crippled, this stick-figure creation of biomedical discourse does not get very far among Wawonii villagers where its creators are considered ‘not effective’. The necessary fiction of the body in Wawonii already has a history and a home of the sort described by Ibu Nisa. Out-maneuved by the persistent significance of necessary fictions embedded in Wawonii culture itself, of which panas/dingin is one, the attempted appropriation of these histories and homes fails. The foreign agent (disguised as biomedical ‘fact’) attempting to infect the (social) organism is repelled. In practice, however, village healing practices and biomedical techniques are regularly combined, particularly in dire situations. This is as true in Wawonii as it is in most parts of Indonesia. The next ethnographic piece illustrates these responses to a young girl’s suffering because ‘her body was too hot’.

‘Her body was too hot’: Shabrina’s death

I walked up to Ibu Evi’s shop. Some women were walking past carrying small pots with rice.

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314 ‘tidak mampun’
‘A child died in Dongkalaea,’ they told me.

I chatted with Ibu Evi for a few minutes, then I walked to Dongkalaea, a village of around 600 people on the north coast of Wawonii. Ibu Evi said she was staying at her shop. As I walked up the road, people asked me if I was going to the funeral or the griever’s house. I told them I was.

I arrived at the house. It was Shabrina, a nine-year-old girl I’d played volleyball with when I had been on earlier walks to Dongkalaea, who had died the previous evening. There was a tarpaulin strung up over some bamboo in front of the house and people were gathering. Most of them were locals. They said they were waiting for relatives from other parts of Wawonii and Kendari to arrive. We sat on plastic chairs out the front. All the women talked about how sudden and unexpected Shabrina’s death was. They all said she was ‘beautiful’ and ‘white’ and ‘clever’.

I went inside. Outside, the women had been chatting among themselves. The men sat on the other side smoking and talking. No one was crying. Inside, prayers were being chanted and people sat cross-legged on the floor. Most of them were Shabrina’s relatives. Her grandmother was leading the chanting. Six women and two men sat around Shabrina’s corpse chanting. Shabrina was wrapped in white cloth. There was makeup on her face. She looked older than the nine-year-old she was. While they chanted, some of the people shed tears. They kissed her face and touched her feet and stroked her cheeks. Quite a few of the women sitting in the room were shedding tears too, some quietly, while others were quite overcome.

The room was full of people, mostly women but also some men. Shabrina’s younger sister was lying in her aunt’s lap near Shabrina’s corpse. Shabrina’s mother sat nearby, wiping tears away. The atmosphere was sombre. Some women

315 ‘pesta anak meninggal’
316 ‘rumah duka’
held my arm or shoulder while they cried. Even though I could not understand them, the verses that were being chanted sounded so sad I started crying too. I sat cross-legged on the floor. A woman brought me a coffee. Most of the other people had cups of tea in front of them. People went quietly in and out of the room. Shabrina’s mother bent over her daughter’s face and kissed it repeatedly. People took photos on their mobile phones. Shabrina’s younger sister began crying.

After I’d been sitting there for a while, I went out the front. Some women wanted me to sit beside them, so I did. We chatted for a while. Some of them were from Waworope, some had come from Palingi and Noko. After a while, a young woman came around with plates of cake for everyone. People said it was Wawonii cake, made from flour, sugar, coconut milk and eggs. Someone told me Shabrina’s mother, Ibu Musda, is Bugis but she was born in Kendari and married a Wawonii man whose job is ‘small-scale trade’.317 He buys copra from Wawonii people and sells it to people in Kendari. Ibu Musda has a small shop in front of her house. Ibu Musda’s grandparents come from Bone.

Some people said Shabrina died of ‘fever’,318 other said it was because of ‘the hot sun’319 or because ‘her body was too hot’.320 A middle-aged woman said, ‘but it was a common illness, no one imagined a child like that could die just because of having a fever.’321 Those around her nodded in agreement. They told me that Shabrina had died at 5pm the evening before. Some people said she’d only been sick for one day before she died, others said three days, and some said four.

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317 ‘dagang kecil’
318 ‘demam’
319 ‘panas matahari’
320 ‘badannya terlalu panas’
321 ‘tapi itu penyakit biasa, tidak disangka-sangka anak begini bias langsung meninggal gara-gara demam saja.’
After a while I walked around the back of the house, where women were gathered in groups around large woks and pots and pans, cooking and boiling water. I talked to some of them. They pointed to where Shabrina would be buried, not far from the house, between the banana palms and the sea, where there were already a few graves from her family.

I went back round the front and the women told me to go inside again. I sat inside. The chanting continued. After a while, the people from Kendari arrived. The chanting stopped and women came in with trays of food. People sat against the walls and began eating. Afterwards we went outside and some of the people out there went inside and ate. More food was taken inside. Outside it was sprinkling. I talked to some of the men. It was very humid.

After people had eaten, the same women took the trays and bowls out the back to be washed. Shabrina’s corpse was wrapped up in a mat and some sarongs. A green mat with prayers in Arabic was laid over the top. Three men on either side carried her on their shoulders out of the house. People watched quietly. The corpse was carried around behind the house in the direction of Waworope behind the banana palms at the back to where we could see the sea. People followed silently. The light rain continued. When we reached the spot where the grave had been dug, Shabrina’s corpse was lowered into it. The men in the grave, who had been digging it, got out and stood to the side. They started filling the grave in with dirt. When it had been filled, mats were laid over the top and burning incense was put in the middle. Eight men in sarongs, songkoks and shawls sat on the mats. The man who led the chants held prayer beads. Everyone stood silently in the rain listening to the chants. When it was finished, people walked quietly back to the house and from there, most people made their way home.
I walked home with a few other women.

The next day, I was going for my regular afternoon walk along the one road in the village. I stopped at Ibu Musda’s shop. She greeted me warmly and said she had the type of rice flour I was looking for. I went into her shop, which was the front room of her house, and bought the rice flour and some eggs.

Ibu Musda invited me in to the largest room in her house to drink coffee and eat cake. Inside, two men and Shabrina’s younger sister were sitting on the floor in the big room where Shabrina’s corpse had lain during the funeral. Another woman came in and sat beside me. She told Ibu Musda not to put any sugar in my coffee. The men told me to eat the cake. The younger men started speaking whatever English they knew with me. The other man, one of Ibu Musda’s cousins, said he was from Roko-Roko, southeast Wawonii. He said he’d been here in Dongkalaa for the past three days.

I drank my coffee and we talked. They’d been looking at photos of Shabrina before I arrived. They passed a large, framed photo of her to me and a photo album. ‘Beautiful,’ they said, ‘white.’

I asked Ibu Musda what had caused her daughter’s death.

‘Fever, blemishes exiting [her body]… She just had a common illness for four days and four nights… she wasn’t staying at home, she went for a walk, she never thought she could become ill like this you know… That evening the light came on, she went over there to watch [television] at her grandmother’s house at 4:30pm, her younger sibling, this one, was also ill with a fever, he stayed at home, I went to look for Shabrina at her grandmother’s house, and (when I got there) she was like this.’

322 ‘Demam, keluar cacat… Cuma sakit biasa empat hari empat malam… dia tidak tinggal di rumah dia pergi jalan dia tidak hiraukan dia sakit begini toh… Sore itu dia nyala lampu dia pergi di situ nonton di rumahnya
Ibu Musda bent her head to one side, opened her mouth and rolled her eyes back.

‘Her neck was like this. Blue. Saliva was coming out of her mouth, her eyes were rolled back, she couldn’t speak, she couldn’t see, she was just like this. Her arm was like this.’

Ibu Musda tightened her arms straight and rigid in front of her.

I asked where her grandmother had been, and if any others were at the house.

‘She was alone. Her grandmother had gone up to the fields. She was watching (television) alone in the house.’

Ibu Musda told me she was very shocked. She took Shabrina home and laid her down in the kiosk at the front of her house. I asked if a nurse had come. She said Pak Akbar, the head nurse at the local clinic, had come and given an injection and some medication.

‘After the injection, her condition worsened.’ She said.

She said at that point Shabrina was breathing heavily, making a lot of noise as she breathed.

‘She was no longer conscious.’

Ibu Musda had previously said it’d seemed like it was only a fever. Earlier that afternoon she’d said she wanted to take Shabrina to Kendari but her grandmother said Shabrina wasn’t strong enough to be taken.

‘Her grandmother had a closer look too you know, she (Shabrina) couldn’t be taken (to Kendari), her grandmother looked closely, it was from that thing you know, the

neneknya jam 4:30pm, adiknya ini juga sakti demam, di rumah dia, saya pergi cari Shabrina di rumahnya nenehnya, terus dia begini,

323 ‘Lehernya begini. Biru. Air keluar dari mulut, mata tinggi, nggak bisa bicara, nggak bisa lihat, begini saja. Tangannya begini,’

324 ‘Sendiri dia. Neneknya naik kebun. Dia sendiri nonton di rumah,’

325 ‘Habis infus, tambah parah.’

326 ‘Dia tidak sadar lagi.’
illness, she had a look, we can’t (take Shabrina to Kendari), she said, look, yeah, it looks like she’s facing the hole. she said, that’s how it is, you know usually Wawonii people are good at perceiving holes like this er yeah, her grandmother said don’t (take Shabrina to Kendari) if we said that, er the doctor would er, if the critical point/time has passed, she would die, poor her, that could er, she could return you know but she hasn’t passed the time, the critical point in time, that’s what the doctor said you know, the illness is already severe…

They moved her inside in the living room, laid her on the mat in sarongs and she died at 5pm. I asked them what they thought of Pak Akbar’s help; if he should have done something different to save her. They said Pak Akbar was not to blame.

‘She [Shabrina] could not be helped anymore.’

They passed around more photos of Shabrina and asked me some questions about Australia. The younger man, who would return to Kendari tomorrow, where he works in a shop, continued trying to practise his English. He said he had learnt English in Palu, where his mother lives. His father lives in Wawonii. Both his parents are divorced and have remarried.

I left Ibu Musda’s house and walked home. The sun was setting.

In Wawonii, it was common to hear parents berating their children for playing too long in the hot sun. The six-year-old boy in the house where I lived was often scolded at dinner time for spending all afternoon after school on the beach in the sun looking for crabs with his friends.

Adults warned children that this would cause children to be ill with a fever, or headaches.

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327 ‘lubang’

328 ‘Dia lihat-lihat juga neneknya toh dia tidak bisa mi dibawa neneknya dia lihat-lihat dari anunya toh penyakitnya dia lihat nggak bisa itu katanya lihat-lihat ya lihat-lihat menghadapi katanya lubang begitu itu mi kan biasa orang Wawonii toh pintar anu lihat-lihat begini lubang anu ya nenek jangan mi katanya kalau kita bilang itu anu dokter yang itu anu kalau lewat itu masa kritisnya begitu dia anu sampai kasihan mati toh itu bisa anu dia kembali toh tapi ini dia tidak lewatii masa anunya masa kritisnya begitu dia bilang dokter toh sudah parah itu penyakitnya…’

329 ‘Ya dia nggak tertolong lagi.’
Although Shabrina was indoors when she became critically ill and died, local people cite ‘the hot sun’, her body being ‘too hot’ and the ‘blemishes’ as causes of death. Most houses in the village were built with tin roofs, which meant that they were indeed very hot, particularly in the afternoons after the sun had been heating the houses all day.

Excessive heat\(^{330}\) is seen by Wawonii people as a threat to the integrity of their bodies. As in Bapak Rini’s case, when the heat was escaping his body via small red blemishes on his foot, Ibu Musda mentions the ‘blemishes exiting…’ on Shabrina’s skin. Likewise, Ibu Nisa discusses ‘scabs’, ‘spots’, and ‘redness’ on the skin, through which ‘heat inside’ exits. Unlike Ibu Nisa, Ibu Musda does not mention ‘whispering and blowing treatment’ or drinking coconut juice as cures for excessive heat.

Exactly what Ibu Musda is referring to by ‘lubang’ is unclear. The ‘hole’ may be the hole dug for the grave (‘lubang kuburan’), in other words, her grandmother perceived that her granddaughter was facing death. It may also be an aperture to the afterlife.

‘The force of the myth lies not just in its meaning construction; it rather derives from the power of death as a vital force (…) and it is also the transformation of the bodies of those present at this ritual’ (Muecke 1999, p. 2).

Deciphering the meaning of Ibu Musda’s words may, as Muecke writes, be beside the point.

**Conclusion**

Within the ethnographic excerpts in this chapter, ‘panas’ and ‘dingin’ are Deleuzean ‘events’ which bear down upon bodies ill with ‘panas dalam’. From this suffering comes forms...

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\(^{330}\) The point at which heat is considered ‘excessive’ was never clear to me. Somewhat tautologically, the fact that someone was ill in a particular way was regarded as sufficient evidence of heat being excessive. Degrees of heat, and whether the same level of heat (internal or external) was safe or unsafe, seemed to depend on the specific conditions of an individual’s body.
of local knowledge about how to control these ‘events’ by treating illness in a variety of ways – from whispering and blowing treatment to rubbing the body with kapok leaf scrubs to drinking coconut milk or using the services of biomedically-trained nurses. Forms of bodily knowledge practised by Wawonii villagers underscore the relations between bodies or parts of bodies and many other things: the environment, other people, spiritual, moral and ancestral energies, language, memory and so on. This body is a cluster of forces with no outline, or with a restless outline, constantly destabilizing and transforming itself. It is an embodied organism enmeshed in its environment. Through the healing practices required to deal with the effects of panas/ dingin imbalances, Wawonii bodies, due to their ‘lack of finality (…) take the social order as their productive nucleus’ (Grosz 1994, p. x).

This chapter has illustrated how Wawonii bodies are deeply embedded in their cultural and geographic environment, where ‘embodiment’ is the ‘existential ground of culture and self’ (Csordas 1994, p. 6). This is as much an anthropological as a philosophical argument, as Sartre’s (2001, p. 346) asserts regarding the ‘body in situation’: ‘the body – whether it be as an organism, as character, or as tool – never appears to me without surroundings, and that the body must be determined in terms of these surroundings.’

Each of the ethnographic sections in this chapter has shown how, when Wawonii villagers talk about panas and dingin in relation to their bodies, these bodies are in close connection with other bodies (Bapak Rini and his mother), with their surrounding environment (heat in Bapak Rini’s house and his body, Ibu Nisa and the wind, the treatments using kapok leaves, papaya leaves and coconut juice), and with certain bodies of knowledge (Ibu Nisa and the whispering and blowing treatment). As Wawonii bodies fluctuate through different stages or ‘events’ of coolness and heat, they are best understood in the Spinozan sense ‘as a series of processes of becoming, rather than as a fixed state of being’ (Grosz 1994, p. 12).
CHAPTER SEVEN
LIMINAL SPACES

Introduction

‘Whether we are individuals or groups, we are made up of lines and these lines are very varied in nature. The first kind of line which forms us is segmentary – of rigid segmentarity (or rather there are many lines of this sort): family-profession; job-holiday (...) But rather than molar lines with segments, they are molecular fluxes with thresholds or quanta. A threshold\textsuperscript{331} is crossed, which does not necessarily coincide with a segment of more visible lines. Many things happen on this second kind of line – becomings, micro-becomings, which don’t even have the same rhythm as our ‘history’. ’

- Dialogues, Deleuze & Parnet

This chapter explores the ‘molecular fluxes’, ‘becomings, micro-becomings’ and in-between spaces which opened up to me during fieldwork. To do so, I deploy a ‘lexicon of fuzziness – including terms such as hybridity, liminality and montage’ (Pedersen & Willerslev 2012, p. 464). The ethnographic excerpts in this chapter elaborate on in-between spaces where people, beings and things adopt an uncertain status. Dreams are often at the centre of these spaces, within which, ‘alterity is every inch a relationship, not a thing in itself’ (Taussig 1993, p. 130). Such spaces are characterised by apprehension, danger and instability. Magic which makes one immune or invulnerable to evil spirits, illness or the sharp blade of a parang, appears in these

\textsuperscript{331} ‘Liminality’, Turner (1979, p. 465) reminds us, literally means, ‘being-on-a-threshold’.
These are places where growth, becomings and therefore potential also manifest. This chapter endeavours to show the ways bodies implicated in these spaces are affected and the ways bodies punctured by becomings go on to affect the other bodies around them. The question of where the body stands in relation to the mind and soul also stands at the centre of this chapter. Finally, my own double liminal status – as an outsider in a small Wawonii village, and the overall liminal status of being a PhD student – is addressed.

Before discussing ‘liminality’ and related concepts, we must first acknowledge the necessity of a perspective, a temporal positioning, a social location within a particular field. Liminality, along with materiality and ontology, is itself contained within the broader category of ‘chaos’. By drawing attention to the precondition of ‘chaos’, we accentuate the possibility of becomings emerging through and within liminal events. Bodies are clusters of events at biological, experiential and symbolic levels. Some of these events are liminal. The complexity of bodies shows us that bodies may be simultaneously liminal and non-liminal. Events within bodies may produce liminal spaces, or liminality may arise spontaneously. The concept of ‘liminality’ is usefully deployed in relation to bodies in the ‘experientially based’ (Thomassen 2009, p. 5) sense which it derives from van Gennep. However, considering the substantial influence of Deleuze in my work, when taking up the concept of liminality, I do not simply trace the progression from separation to transition and incorporation in my ethnographic data.

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332 In Java, such magic is called ‘ilmu kanuragan’ (invincibility magic/ knowledge) and ‘ilmu kadigdayaan’ (invulnerability magic/ knowledge). There are four types of ‘ilmu kanuragan’: ‘waringin sungsang’, ‘rawarontek’ (also known as ‘ajian pancasona’), ‘lembu sekilan’ and ‘gelap ngampar’. Some of these are ‘ilmu hitam’, ‘klenik’, ‘temung’, ‘sihir’ (black magic), others ‘ilmu putih’ (white magic). While they each involve different ritual practices, and have different effects on their environment, fundamentally, they are all practices of self-protection. People who contain the power of invulnerability ‘are sekti. The power that makes sekti is called kasekten’ (Magnis Suseno 1997, p. 102). ‘Ilmu kadigdayaan’, also designed to protect the self, involves the recitation of particular mantras and is most often used by pencak silat practitioners (<http://kriogja.com/web/news/read/1253/Empat_Ilmu_Kanuragan_Tersohor_Tanah_Jawa>; <http://kisahasalusul.blogspot.com/2015/08/mengenal-ajian-pancasona-rawa-rontek-si.html>; Magnis Suseno 1997, p. 95).

333 ‘Chaos is the condition under which objects and events emerge. Objects and events are the material conditions for the emergence of living beings which are themselves objects and events of a particular kind’ (Grosz 2011, p. 18).
Instead, I see a multitude of transitions (or ‘becomings’ in Deleuzean language) splintering off, reproducing, pushing the ontological limits. The ethnographic data in this chapter indicate that, like abjection, liminality ‘…attests to the impossibility of clear borders, lines of demarcation or divisions between the proper and the improper, the clean and the unclean, order and disorder’ (Grosz 1989, p. 73). This is particularly clear insofar as it relates to the dream lives of Wawonii people. Recurrent dreams of the recently deceased are a common source of angst in the villages where I conducted fieldwork. As the ethnographic sections of this chapter show, such fears and the misbehaving spirits who provoke them by returning to their relatives night after night are dealt with via prayers and small-scale ceremonies. As one respondent says, following dreams of dead relatives, ‘we have to take some action’. This chapter shows how dreams of the deceased become communicative devices with agentic potential.

Beyond Wawonii, the disorderly aspect of liminality, its chaotic potential, has become clear in the multitude of ways it has been reconfigured in anthropology since van Gennep’s *Rites de Passage* appeared in 1909. Well before van Gennep’s work, such overlappings were present in Indonesia, specifically in relation to the body in Javanese wayang. As we shall see in the ethnographic pieces in this chapter, ‘[l]iminality is a world of contingency where events and ideas, and “reality” itself, can be carried in different directions (Thomassen 2009, p. 5).

This chapter argues that not only are Judaeo-Christian binaries an unhelpful construction through which to view small-scale non-Judaeo-Christian societies like those in Wawonii, they are also only one of many ways to know the body. Speaking of the Zande in the

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334 For example, the defeated King Parta enters Arjuna’s body; Yudhisthira absorbs the spirit of Begawan Bagaspati and the bodies of Srikanth and Ambalika merge in the struggle against Resi Bisma during the Bratayuda War (Anderson 1990, p. 28).

335 The soul/ body and spiritual/ material binaries are some examples. As Willerslev (2011, p. 520) and Pedersen & Willerslev (2012, p. 468) point out, for many people broadly categorized as ‘animist’, ‘the soul is the body in a single totalizing view’ and belief in a purely immaterial soul is very rare. Similarly, Javanese concepts of the human soul (*suksmra*), rather than pitting it against the body or mind, conceive of it as ‘a series of stages or concentric circles of increasingly [sic.] externality (…) [it] is an emanation from the divine soul of everything (*Hyang Suksmra*) (Magnis Suseno 1997, p. 120).
midst of ritual, Taussig (2016, p. 481) describes how ‘[t]he various dichotomies of trick and technique, intellect and intuition, secrecy and public secrecy, are deferred by a series of other types of knowledge given in a body dancing the question under an open sky.’

A focus on dichotomous frameworks is also problematic insofar as it obscures the fact that humans in every culture are united by their capacity for abstract thought, which differentiates us from other species. The abstractions we have created – money, nations, religion – have an enormous degree of social and political power. The title I will receive upon completing my PhD is just as much of an abstraction as the title of ‘dukun’. Both are deeply embedded in powerful social and political stories which societies tell themselves and which contribute to social consensus, since they are agreed upon by most people in their respective societies. Both titles are simultaneously ‘virtual’ and ‘actual’. Their efficacy is not reduced by the fact that they are abstractions based on the narratives created within their respective societies. One is powerful in terms of academic life, the other in terms of spiritual life, and both carry some degree of social power within their particular fields.

In adopting a self-reflexive position, we must ask, is there any intrinsic difference between these abstractions and magic? The abstractions (or forms of magic) upon which modern industrial societies are built – money, nations, religion – are equally as ‘real’ (or ‘unreal’) as the spirits, supernatural animals and the phantom island rising out of the sea which Wawonii people perceive around them. Where the two categories differ is in terms of scale

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336 ‘Virtual’ is understood here not in the more recent sense of ‘artificial or merely apparent’ but in the sense in which Deleuze and, earlier, Spinoza used the word, where it describes something akin to productive potential, or ‘the possession of inherent virtues or powers’ (Hallward 2006, p. 30). The Indonesian term ‘batin’ resembles ‘virtual’.

337 ‘Actual’ is defined here as something which ‘exists in the conventional sense of being empirically present – that it can be experienced, observed, and so on’ (Willerslev 2011, p. 506). In Indonesia, the concept of ‘lahir’ can be understood as ‘actual’.

338 Echoing Marx and Engels, in Child of All Nations (1975, p. 259-60), Pramoedya Ananta Toer’s character Ter Haar explains to Minke, the protagonist, “‘but what people call capital is more than just money, Mr Minke. It is something invisible, abstract; it has a supernatural power over real objects; it causes everything that is scattered to collect together, that which is together to scatter, that which is liquid to solidify, and that which is solid to turn into liquid. Once in its grip, everything changes shape. The wet is made dry and the dry made wet. A new God has the world in its fist.’
and therefore power (economic, social, physical). Such abstractions, or myths\textsuperscript{339} are essential for creating the large-scale social bonds upon which networks of people unknown to each other depend in order to live in a relatively peaceful, structured way. These networks become entrenched by systems of exchange, mutual responsibility, gift-giving and the social and moral codes formulated by those within the network. Finally, we call these networks, which are simultaneously actual and virtual, ‘cultures’, and within (and between) these cultures, ‘societies’.

Myths about what these ‘cultures’ and ‘societies’ are, and who can say or do what within these spaces, continue to develop. These myths are events which provoke other events, bring new becomings into being. The veracity of a myth has nothing whatsoever to do with its potential social or political power. All human cultures operate with an underlying degree of cognitive dissonance which tells us that operating on the basis of a myth being simultaneously true and untrue is – or certainly can be – unproblematic. As living configurations, cultures are extended forms of bodies, characterised by complexity and dynamism. The myths circulating within cultural spaces may be planned or spontaneous but most importantly, they are always adaptable, which is why they persist. Times change, people change and cultures therefore change. Humans mythologize and engage in practices of abstraction in all areas of life. These are not ‘cultural’ processes unless it is human culture as an entire species which we are talking about. Since the virtual is certainly no less and sometimes even more real than the actual, there is little point in setting one up against the other (Willerslev 2011, p. 506). Ultimately, the virtual and the actual are contained within each other. Combined, they become the constantly shifting configuration we call ‘the real’\textsuperscript{340}. This combination, however, far from being ‘a coherent

\textsuperscript{339} ‘Fictions’ is another term that has been used, particularly in work by Clifford Geertz, Stephan Muecke and Michael Taussig.

\textsuperscript{340} Which brings up ‘the question of ontology’ (Grosz 2011, p. 17).
system of knowledge’, is ‘contingent, fragmentary, perpetually assuming a coherence and a stability that swiftly dissolves’ (Mikkelsen 2016, p. 189).

The ethnographic sections of this chapter discuss magic, spirits, souls and dreams by looking at the virtual in the actual and applying a combination of ‘speculative investigation’ (Willerslev 2011, p. 504) and ‘perspectivist ontology’ (Pedersen & Willerslev 2012, p. 469). The excerpts below abound in ‘contradictions’ and ‘inconsistencies’. While reading through these, it is helpful to remember Mikkelsen’s (2016, p. 202) injunction ‘to take inconsistency seriously as a cosmological dynamic (…) such knowledge is not about “truthfulness” according to some fixed cosmological order but about effective invocation of metaphysics derived from a common cosmos in flux.’

These inconsistencies, or ‘subcertainties’ are important not because of their empirical veracity (or otherwise), but because they are ‘contributory’ to events and becomings within the social field in which they arise (Burke 1945, p. 513). Furthermore, what is inconsistent, contradictory or paradoxical to the reader/listener is not necessarily any of these things to the writer/speaker. Stranded beyond its signifying function, struggles with language arise yet again. While I do not take the position that my respondents purposefully laced their speech with paradox, it may be helpful here to keep in mind Deleuze’s points while going through the ethnographic material in this chapter.

‘[T]he paradox is the force of the unconscious: it occurs always in the space between (l’entredeaux) consciousness, contrary to good sense or, behind the back of consciousness, contrary to common sense’ (Deleuze 1990, p. 80).

To avoid getting tied up in ‘anthropological knots’, the ethnographic sections in this chapter draw close to the ‘practice of philosophy’ as an ‘ironical performance’ in which
emphasis is placed on the productive potential\textsuperscript{341} of cultural, linguistic and ritual practices (Carrithers 2014, p. 117). In my work, I am more interested in the practices of Wawonii people than in hypothesizing any ‘meanings’ behind acts. When we ask, ‘[f]or whom are the meanings meaningful?’ the answer is often ourselves, whereas local people emphasise participation over understanding (Keesing 2012, p. 422).

**Becoming ‘kebal’:\textsuperscript{342} Ibu Lina**

Ibu Lina and I were sitting on the floor in her kitchen, eating the fried bananas she had just prepared. I asked Ibu Lina about Wawonii Number Two. Could people reach Wawonii Number Two when it appeared by sampan? Was there any other way of reaching Wawonii Number Two?

‘In the past, there were old people who could walk on top of the sea. Ordinary people, but wise. Now there are no more wise people. Before, our ancestors learned such things via dreams\textsuperscript{343} because that sort of wisdom is not passed down, it can’t be taught… there’s a lot of wisdom… magic… I have an older sibling. If she says in three days someone will die, in three days they die. If someone is offended or wounded by someone else and my older sibling pronounces three days, four days [for the person who caused the offense], they die. Magic. I don’t know where my

\textsuperscript{341}The ‘productive potential’ is related to the virtual aspect of these practices.

\textsuperscript{342}‘Kebal’ is translated as ‘invulnerable’ or ‘immune’. In all these ethnographic excerpts, it refers to specifically to the invulnerability or immunity one possesses towards outside attacks from others, sent in varying forms of evil magic. Such invulnerability was a feature of the magic used in the DI/TII war in Wawonii in 1959 (described in Chapter One), where Haji Muhammad Mahdi’s 60 men remained untouched by bullets. This invulnerability usually comes from a combination of magical powers and God’s blessings. As Velthoen (1997, p. 380) describes, ‘[o]ral traditions in eastern Sulawesi abound with stories of brave men with strong invulnerability magic’.

Among the Bugis of South Sulawesi, ‘[p]adisengeng oroané is the knowledge that renders its user impenetrable, whether in regard to the physically intrusive agent – dagger, bush knife, or bullet – or the spiritually invasive – the attacks of parrakang, poppo’, and other sorts of knowledge’ (Acciaioli 2004, pp. 155-156).

\textsuperscript{343}Such ‘important information’ is also conveyed via dreams among the Kwaio of Malaita (Keesing 2012, p. 419).
older sibling learned this. She cannot be wounded by sharp objects. So, if someone attempts to cut her with a knife, she can’t be cut. She is invulnerable/ immune. She wants to pass this on to my aunt, but my aunt doesn’t want to inherit it. Evil spirits will consume anyone who dies without passing their magic on or sharing it with others; it’s dangerous, so we accept the magic, accept the wisdom so that later no one is consumed by evil spirits. The living descendents of wise people who die must accept their wisdom/ knowledge. I don’t know the method of accepting this [wisdom/ knowledge].’

I asked Ibu Lina about the aunt of her older sister, who refused to accept the wisdom/ knowledge.

‘My aunt accepted the healing magic, not the evil magic… the face [of the magic] is half black, half white… the white half cures people who are ill so they recover, it’s not evil, it cures all kinds of illnesses, it’s called lakalibun.’

Ibu Lina continued,

‘I had a cousin who was sick named Lukman. He was sick, he got an illness in Langara. He was sent home to Munse and given medicine, my older sibling gave him medicine… he almost died… my older sibling took a young coconut344 which was red, I saw it myself, this was when I was still in school, he cut the red coconut in half at maghrib. One week later the person who had given (Lukman) the illness died, the one who had sent the evil magic, a woman; that evil magic is a curse… She was offended so she whispered mantras so that he died… the evil magic was sent on the wind… It happened [her death] to that woman via the young coconut… it’s as if it’s actually superstition [according to] Islam it’s superstition, praying very

344For more on the ritual, symbolic and economic importance of coconuts in Wawonii, see Chapter Two. Beyond Indonesia, coconuts are used as ritual symbols in many societies, for example among the Kwaio of Malaita, in the Solomon Islands (Keesing 2012).
sinful prayers to God you know… but they also want to take revenge rather than being offended… what is important is that it’s not us who goes and disturbs others first, but if we have already been sent something like that, so they say it will be finished/ over [via] the young coconut, the person who sent the evil magic will be finished, so [the coconut was] cut in half… it’s as if that person [who sent the evil magic] was cut… the coconut was cut in half before it was thrown away, they didn’t drink the juice, it was just thrown away… the evil magic was recited above the coconut before it was cut in half… if we are wise/ knowledgeable, it means we already know how to do this evil magic… I don’t want to learn evil magic.’

Ibu Lina and I continued talking about when the Japanese occupied Wawonii. Ibu Lina told me about relatives of hers who had co-operated with the Japanese. They had had no problem with the Japanese, she said. One day, ten people died within twenty days in Munse. Ibu Lina didn’t specify who they were or how they died.

‘God the Almighty decides when we die, if God says “die”, a person dies,’ she said.

Discussion

‘The virtual (...) constitutes the primordial groundwork of the observable world’s actual living manifestations – that is, their real starting point or origin.’

(Willerslev 2011, p. 506)

Ibu Lina describes how powerful knowledge/ wisdom is conveyed via dreams. Dreams are considered spaces of great potential in Wawonii, both in their capacity to influence and to communicate. This will be described in further detail in another ethnographic excerpt in this chapter. Ibu Lina’s explanations of how death occur appear to be contradictory. God decides when people die, but people with particular knowledge/ wisdom, such as her older sister, seem to have the same power. How can this be? Here, the actual is displaced by the virtual. The
actual event is death, while the virtual is the causation (and its various sources) ascribed to the actual. Combined, the actual and the virtual make the real. That there may be a difference between ‘God’ and someone with godlike powers is beside the point, in Ibu Lina’s perspective. A hypothetical interrogation of this sort into the virtual would not change the real. Both God and those with godlike powers contribute to the construction of the real.

Furthermore, if ‘God’ is taken to be an amalgamation of forces, energies, becomings (rather than a structure or self-contained being, which means that we cannot talk of this God using personal pronouns), then the appearance of these forces, energies, becomings elsewhere, within what appears at one level to be a ‘body’ but at another level is a cluster of events at biological, experiential and symbolic levels (as stated in the introduction to this chapter) does not signify a transference (from one being to another) but a multiplication (of forces, energies, becomings). Rather than being the result of a synthesis, collective assemblages (such as ‘God’ or an older sister) are multiplicities (Deleuze & Parnet 1987, p. 132). Therefore, instead of saying ‘God decides when…’, which assumes a contained Being with a will capable of being consciously directed towards things, it is more accurate to say, ‘The forces of the proclamation as an event produce certain effects within assemblages’. While a transference implies linear movement from ‘a’ to ‘b’, wherever we have an ‘a and b’, multiplicities occupy the ‘and’ position (Deleuze & Parnet 1987, p. 34). This is an aspect not only of multiplicities, but also of ‘becoming’ which operates according to ‘the coexistence of planes, not the succession of systems’ (Deleuze & Guattari 1994, p. 59). Even when they produce death, multiplicities are productive. The invulnerability/immunity Ibu Lina’s older sister actualizes is the inverse aspect of this multiplicity: the death force – life force fusion. It must be passed on because a life force multiplicity is useless in death. It may also be possible that passing it

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on is necessary because such energy is finite and therefore the volume of such force would diminish and eventually disappear if it was not being passed on.

**Becoming ‘kebal’: Hakim**

I was sitting beneath a tree with my feet in the sand, waiting for the old wooden boat which ran between the north coast of Wawonii and Kendari. Along with many other people, I’d been waiting since 8am. Now it was past 9am. There was no way of knowing if or when the boat would arrive. A young man named Hakim sat down on the twisted root of the tree jutting up out of the sand beside me. We began talking. I asked Hakim about his family.

‘My grandmother isn’t affected by sharp objects such as knives. Her hand was cut, but she’s invulnerable/ immune. Do you know about invulnerability/ immunity? It’s called invulnerability/ immunity. Like a person made of stone, but their skin is the same as ours, but they know the prayers so that they remain unaffected by sharp objects.’

‘Really?’ I said in disbelief.

‘Yes.’

‘So if she is cut with a knife…’

‘She’s uninjured.’

‘Uninjured?’

‘Uninjured.’

‘Where did she get this wisdom/ knowledge?’
'From her father, her father, her ancestors, her ancestors got it from other people, from her father, then it came to her, she accepted it, she accepted it straight away, then she sent it on, it goes on through descendents, I don’t want it.’

‘Why not? Why don’t you want it?’

‘I am afraid, there’s also a lot of women’s knowledge/ wisdom, so if some girl doesn’t want [to be with a man], prayers are said about that girl so she wants [and] then she will will want [the man], that’s how it is.’

‘What will she want? To fall in love with the man?’

‘Yes, to fall in love with us, she wanted to give it to me but I didn’t want it, I was afraid.’

**Discussion**

As in Ibu Lina’s account, Hakim explains that powers of invulnerability/ immunity must be passed on through one’s family. His grandmother has acquired these powers from her father and her ancestors. Unlike in Ibu Lina’s account, Hakim does not mention ‘God’. However, this does not mean that ‘God’ has no part in these configurations. I did not explicitly ask him about ‘God’. Like Ibu Lina’s aunt, Hakim refuses the powers of his grandmother (both the invulnerability/ immunity magic and the love magic) because he is ‘afraid’. Language, speech practices, produce effects, they make the invulnerability/ immunity knowledge available to Hakim’s grandmother. Similarly, although Ibu Lina says she does not know how the invulnerability/ immunity magic is passed on, in her account, it is when her older sister, or God, ‘says’ someone will die, they die. The efficacy of speech as action which produces
material effects, including in the realm of magic, has a detailed anthropological history (Taussig 2016, p. 461).

**Becoming ‘kebal’: Pak Joni and Pak Sofian**

Pak Joni and Pak Sofian were descendents of the former royal family. We were sitting together with Pak Sofian’s 13-year-old daughter in the living room of his house in Unaaha. The two men worked as civil servants, as did many of the descendents of the royal family. We had been talking all morning about the family’s history. I had been shown old photos, documents and objects with supernatural powers. The men were keen for others to know about Wawonii’s history, its royal past and its culture, which they liked to characterise as ‘fierce’.

Pak Joni began talking about an amulet.

‘He kept it here Missus, he said, this, they say, will do it, as a result I was brave enough to win, there were prayers, I prayed, yesterday, just recently, they said, they gave it to some young children to look after it again; it was this which made me invulnerable/ immune.’

Pak Joni held up a small, thin piece of black material about 30cm long, which looked like velvet, against his arm.

‘On your arm?’ I asked.

‘That’s what is attached here, which makes people invulnerable/ immune.’ He said.

‘Keeping amulets, talismans,’ Pak Sofian added.\[346\]

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\[346\] This practice is by no means limited to Wawonii. ‘Many Javanese carry talismans (jimat) of various kinds with them, supposed to protect them from evil spirits’ (Magnis-Suseno 1997, p. 90). This also resembles the ‘pusaka’ (heirlooms) – krisses, sacred musical instruments, spears, palace equipment, relics and so on – which
‘That’s what makes us invulnerable/ immune.’ Pak Joni said.\footnote{Similarly, the Chukchi people of Siberia wear amulets to protect themselves from evil spirits (ke ’let) (Pedersen & Willerslev 2012, p. 475). Unlike the Chukchi, however, none of my respondents said that their amulets or talismans endowed them with a new body, which the spirits mistake for one of their own (Pedersen & Willerslev 2012, p. 476).}

‘Right,’ I said.

‘Ah, he put it here, he [Pak Joni’s father] said, I will put it in here, keep it like a belt, ah, so my father explained that Noni said it’s as if, for example, with this object we can go around the world; it could be left with the world because it’s the earth’s chain and rope.’\footnote{Rantainya bumi tali.} Pak Joni said.

‘He, er, pigs making a squealing sound as they dig/ stomp around in land.’ Pak Sofian said.

‘So that’s the story.’ His brother added.

‘It’s extraordinary.’ I said, confused.

‘Yes, yesterday Binti Onea’s friend was consumed with burdens, suppose if she had quickly said, Missus, Missus... she could rent a room out [to you]… would it, er, you know, if there’s a problem, be careful, later we will deal with it.’

‘She’s a mystical person, she likes me.’ Pak Sofian said.

‘Really?’ I said.

‘Yes, God says don’t… we go and want to check there, like…’ Pak Joni said.

‘That old man, that old man who was guarding the village before, is in the mountain, the one we went down, that one.’ Pak Sofian said.

\footnote{Dia ber- anu di babi babi dering menggali tanah.}

\footnote{contain divine power and are kept by Javanese royal families to accumulate more power (Anderson 1990, p. 27; Pemberton 1994, p. 32)}
‘The old man who…’ I was trying to determine which old man Pak Sofian meant.

‘The one [from] yesterday, the big one.’

‘The fat one,’ Pak Joni added.

‘From Palingi. If they disturb us, as the ones who started it, they will die, so they keep coming,’ said Pak Sofian.

‘We have troops/ forces.’ Pak Joni said.

‘Troops/ forces.’ His brother added.

I asked them what kinds of troops or forces they had.

‘Troops/ forces like [ones that] work.’ Pak Sofian said.

‘If there’s someone who replaces the one who was at work earlier, they step down, you know for example, Missus, they are being disturbed, or we are being disturbed for some time, we just use [the troops/ forces], if you are being disturbed and [you need] help from their friends so that…

‘They will take care [of it], security, security, security…’ Pak Sofian said.

‘They will take care, so that there isn’t an accident.’ Pak Joni said.

I asked the men how these troops ‘took care’ of situations.

‘If they’re there, you don’t need to, er, for example if you want to harm somebody they [the person you wish to harm] don’t need to be nearby, usually they already know that they, er… we have members who are invulnerable/ immune.’

I asked Pak Joni to elaborate.

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350 Pasukan.
‘Basically, you know it’s like this, there’s knowledge and wisdom or prayers which protect us, usually the bodies of people who know those prayers are invulnerable/immune, they can’t be affected by knives or weapons.’

‘What are those prayers which make people invulnerable/immune called?’ I asked.

‘Usually they can only be seen/known by oneself, but there are others like these ones which can protect everyone, all a person’s friends can be made invulnerable/immune, that’s protection, not just protecting your own body but protecting the bodies of all your friends. This is what they do/use on Wawonii,’ Pak Joni said.

‘It’s incredible. I was here in Mandonga351 where they have a certain method, but I have a cousin and he said he wanted [something] like this, so he wanted to kill three of his chickens one night, he recited over and over again, there were two Wawonii people there, one was my cousin, the other was my uncle from Lansilowo named Bapak Masuhi Lapolana, it’s a Lansilowo name you know, so he arrived and they wanted to kill the chickens and this cousin of mine is a real mystical person, you know. He told his brother-in-law, my uncle, the dark one who [also] wanted to kill the chickens, he’s a shy person, he said his wife was going to give birth,352 he’s a shy person you know, he wanted us to kill the chickens, he purposely wanted to show that he was the man of the house because he’d never [shown/proven it]; he’d only talked about it, he’d never proven it or given an example. The source was this knife, er, magical knife which this head of the house was holding; he held the legs of the chicken, you know, so that the chicken couldn’t move, so my uncle killed it, my cousin with mystical powers stood behind, he was behind you know, the chicken was sluggish after it had been cut open, it had feathers on

351 A district of Kendari.
352 Wawonii language for ‘to give birth’: bamokohina; Indonesian: melahirkan.
its neck, the chickens eyes were rubbed again and again, but there was no one who could kill it.’

‘Why?’ I asked.

‘Because the chicken had become immune/ invulnerable! It had become immune/ invulnerable! The person who tried to kill [the chicken] said, how can it be like this, boss?! Ooh it’s fitting, he said.’ Pak Sofian threw his hands in the air.


‘It was made immune/ invulnerable.’ Pak Joni said.

‘The chicken was made immune/ invulnerable by my cousin who stood behind. Hey, later you can meet him too, so Lapolana from Lansilowo said. Lapolana is still alive now, he can tell you the story, he said “ooh it’s fitting!” this is the man/ head of the house, you know, there was a boss behind, he couldn’t give him any food. We had a knife we tried to use, but couldn’t. It would have been better if we’d said we want to eat some chicken, my cousin said, his father would have given it to us, we were going to eat in a minute and then they wanted to kill this chicken.’ Pak Sofian said.

I was trying to make sense of the story that had just unfolded. I asked when this had happened. In about 2003, I was told. About ten years ago? I asked, to be certain.

‘Yes about ten years ago, in 2003. Lapolana is still in Lansilowo, he will take us to the mountain, and my cousin, the one who made the chicken immune/ invulnerable lives in Noko, he’s the one who guards the fort, we will meet him later.’

‘We will go there together,’ added Pak Joni.

353 This is not the only supernatural power possessed by chickens on Wawonii. Chapter five explains how Kandoli, disguised as a chicken, may enter houses at night, posing a danger to residents.
‘Later we will buy a chicken and you can kill it, later I will secretively make the chicken recover. Your knife will not be sharp, so you will have to acknowledge that this chicken cannot be killed.’

I mumbled something in agreement, and Pak Sofian continued.

‘So this is why Wawonii is well-known, from stories like these, our grandmothers who kill chickens, if people arrive in boats, someone orders them to stop by this island to do Pancasila or kill each other, a gong will be struck, there’s a gong, ‘pangaroh’ it’s called… so later we will develop it further as soon as we’re invited/ asked to, this is why people from islands like the Wakatobi islands, if they really want to pierce each other, they use this well-known Wawonii magic.’

‘I see,’ I said.

‘As a result, they’re afraid of going to Wawonii. We’ve already talked about this all day. If you want to wash yourself, please go and wash.’

Discussion

Conversations such as those above, in which most of the discussion concerned supernatural beings, or supernatural forms of action (for example, those which cause a person to become ill or die) which took place at often unspecified or uncertain times were common in Wawonii. A large proportion of my ethnographic material centres upon such material. How am I to deal with this? For an extended period following fieldwork this produced a sort of thought-paralysis. As I had already left the field, I could not simply go back, but I felt I could not go forward either. Contained within the language were so many ‘rough edges and contradictions’ which certainly could not be simply ‘edited out’ (Willerslev 2004, p. 399).
I looked for something empirical to grab onto, but often even the empirical material was incoherent (a word I will return to) in the terms with which I was trying to think. In this situation, where my data was simultaneously real and ‘essentially an imaginary issue’, a ‘Malinowskian recourse to ethnographical evidence’ was clearly impossible (Willerslev 2011, p. 504). The problem here was not with the word ‘evidence’, which is often taken for ‘reality’, but is in fact quite different from ‘the real’. Whether or not these things were empirically ‘real’, their virtual, numinous or abstract status certainly did not prevent them from being ‘real’ to the Wawonii people with whom I spoke. Similarly, throughout the world, the virtual, numinous or abstract status of things such as nationhood, religion or money does not prevent these things from being ‘real’ (beyond any empirical reality – for example, if money retained only the value of the paper it was printed on, which would make all notes in all currencies worth the same amount and therefore worth nothing) to people. Indeed, it is most often the virtual, numinous or abstract to which which people ascribe more worth than concrete objects whose reality begins and ends with their empirical status. Consumerism, nationalism and religiosity are not merely ‘real’ to most people, they are concepts to which people dedicate their lives, and for which some people are prepared to die.

I make these points in the interests of self-reflexivity.\textsuperscript{354} In this case, reflecting on the forces of consumerism, nationalism and religiosity with which, from my own social and cultural background, I am all too familiar, made it easier to move forward, to find a way through the impasse which stood before me as I stumbled while trying to follow in Malinowski’s footsteps. Just as we in developed post-industrial societies are thoroughly submerged in abstractions such as consumerism, nationalism and religiosity, which make up a large part of

\textsuperscript{354} ‘…an anthropologist tends to think in terms not of solitary but of plural reflection, or, much better, plural reflexivity, the ways in which a group or community seeks to portray, understand, and then act on itself. Essentially, public reflexivity takes the form of a performance (…) Public reflexivity is also concerned with what I have called “liminality”’ (Turner 1979, p. 465).
own virtual realities, so too are Wawonii people submerged in theirs. While I was struggling to understand how anyone could take the ‘reality’ of immune/ invulnerable chickens or people seriously, I never questioned the ‘reality’ of the money in my bank account. In both cases, the power of the reality concerned has one fundamental source: the overwhelming majority of people at a particular time, in a particular space, agree to believe in the reality of these things. Therefore, they become real. Once they are ‘real’, they take on a degree of power, which is always relative to the power of other mutually-agreed-upon ‘real’ entities.

How does this affect language? Much of my time as a PhD student has been spent struggling with language: either the sort of language encountered above, which I experienced as frustrating, incoherent, full of gaps and contradictions and often disorientating or at best unclear in terms of the time and space in which events took place, or the sometimes equally unclear, disorienting and frustrating language of academic jargon. Why couldn’t everyone simply be clear and tell me what they meant in plain terms?\(^{355}\) Deleuze and Parnet provide an answer:

‘information is a myth and (...) language is not essentially informative (...) language is not neutral, not informative. Language is not made to be believed but to be obeyed’ (Deleuze & Parnet 1987, p. 22).

My starting point had been misguided. I was not conducting interviews or reading academic texts to get ‘information’ which could then be neatly placed into my thesis. I was both witnessing and myself submerged in, the extension/ elaboration of two distinct power-practices as they unfolded: one from within the academy, the other in the Wawonii social-cultural field. Furthermore, the obscurity of language is often the very source of its power.

\(^{355}\) A frustration most, probably all, ethnographers and anthropologists struggle with, regardless of where they are working. Discussing her ethnographic work on the Greek island of Tinos, Dubisch (1995, p. 104) writes ‘I often found myself in the course of my fieldwork unable to obtain clear answers to certain of the questions I had formulated.’
From my perspective, both my Wawonii respondents and theorists such as Deleuze used language to signal difference and to practise equally effective forms of ‘skilled concealment’ (Taussig 2016, p. 455). We engage in our own mythologizing practices when we pretend that texts, recited stories or histories and theses such as this one, just because they may be coherent in the sense of being intelligible, are somehow themselves ‘complete’. Even the etymology of the word ‘coherent’\textsuperscript{356} reveals its affinity not with omnitude but with hybridity. Ethnography is the initial stage of piecing together, where we record stories, accounts, histories, which themselves are hybrid, fragmented forms of events woven together, some bits omitted, other bits added, whether randomly or intentionally. Thesis-making is thus a multi-staged, wilfull process of becoming itself, both in terms of the object and its creator. A thesis is at once a meta-archive and a contrapuntal piece of creative work. It is not a recording. Its authenticity lies in its constructedness. Ethnography is a way of configuring the arbitrary by turning it into an arbitrary configuration.\textsuperscript{357}

Rather than being absolute, these realities and their associated powers are emergent and receding multiplicities. In different spaces, at different times, their reality and therefore power increases or decreases. Using Indonesian \textit{rupiah} to pay for items in foreign countries or attempting to use Netherlands Indies \textit{gulden}\textsuperscript{358} to pay for things in present-day Indonesia are both useless endeavours.

Malinowski’s approach must be challenged. While empirically grounded ethnography was a vast improvement on the ‘armchair anthropology’ that preceded Malinowski, Malinowski’s lack of self-reflexivity was a serious flaw. On the one hand, the reality of the virtual and the abstract in European societies went unquestioned, remaining a naturally

\textsuperscript{356} From Latin (1550s) ‘cohaerentem’ : ‘com’ (together) + ‘haerere’ (to adhere, stick) (www.etymonline.com), the term ‘coherent’ implies a plurality of components.

\textsuperscript{357} ‘The arbitrary’ is what is encountered in the field, and ‘the configuration’ is the thesis.

\textsuperscript{358} One of the colonial currencies.
assumed part of the social and cultural fabric, whereas these aspects of non-European societies were ignored since they could not be empirically proven, or only their by-products, their social or political effects, were taken seriously, since these concerned behaviour, which was observable. The crucial point here is that, for the non-European people concerned, such by-products were/ are secondary to the reality of the thing (spirit, ancestor, supernatural potency) itself. Rather than focusing on origins or effects, we must trace the centre, focus on the centre. Ignoring or delegitimizing something because it is empirically unproveable, or simply because we do not understand it, is no longer acceptable. As Deleuze reminds us,

‘What matters on a path, what matters on a line, is always the middle, not the beginning or the end. We are always in the middle of a path, in the middle of something’ (Deleuze & Parnet 1987, p. 28).

**Becoming ‘ibu’: two excerpts from fieldnotes**

**November 7th**

Nurse Miryam asked if I’m married. She said that she’s 23 and she’s worried because she does not have a fiancé yet. Her parents told her she should be married before she turns 25. Miryam said that lots of people in Wawonii get married when they’re still in their teenage years.

‘Some people get married when they’re 13 or 14 years old. Basically, if a girl is already menstruating, she’s already ready to get married. There are lots of people like that. It’s called MBA.’ She said, giggling.

I asked her what MBA meant.

‘Married By Accident,’ she said in English.
I told her I was confused and asked what she meant. Those are the people, often teenagers, who have to get married because the girl is pregnant, she told me. She said she knows a 16-year-old girl and a boy of the same age and a 17-year-old girl and an 18-year-old boy in Palingi, on the north coast of Wawonii, who were ‘married by accident’. The girls are going to give birth soon, she said. I asked what would happen if a young girl got pregnant and didn’t want to get married.

‘They must. Out of respect for their family,’ Miryam said.

The other nurses agreed with her.

**November 8th**

Woke up early this morning, washed my face, drank coffee in the kitchen. Yudha’s mum had succeeded in her daily struggle to wake him up, and the two of them were talking about something very loudly in bahasa Wawonii while Yudha was getting ready for school. Yudha’s mum turned to me and said,

‘Many of Yudha’s friends marry young. They quit school and want to get married. I say if he wants to get married young, I want to die!’

At dinner that evening:

Yudha’s mum told me that Yenti, the 16-year-old girl next door, is going to marry one of Yudha’s friends from school, a 16-year-old boy from Lansilowo, a larger village about 15 minutes away, in 22 days’ time. Yudha’s mum strongly disapproves, particularly since it probably means that one or both of them will drop out of school.

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359 Wawonii language: *metia*; Indonesian: *hamil*.
360 Yudha was one of my ‘Wawonii brothers’, the 16-year-old youngest son in the family with which I lived during fieldwork.
‘What if Yenti’s parents disagree with the marriage?’ I asked.

‘But what do they want [to do about it]? So, whether they agree or disagree, they have to agree. That’s how it is.’ She said.

I asked her if Yenti is pregnant.

‘I don’t know. Maybe. Here, there are lots of girls like that. Get married young, quit school. A lot.’ Yudha’s mum said.

Discussion

The excerpts from my fieldnotes above illustrate some of the tensions by which liminal periods are often defined. Yenti was indeed married in December 2012, shortly after the conversation above took place. The following year in April, she gave birth to a baby boy in her parents’ house. After marriage, Yenti dropped out of school, while her 16-year-old husband went to Kendari, where he lived with relatives and continued his schooling. When I left Wawonii in June 2013, he still had not returned to see Yenti and his new son. Yenti spent her days looking after her son and doing chores in her mother’s house. When I arrived in Wawonii in mid-2012, she had been a cheerful, energetic girl, frequently playing mischievous tricks on Yudha and his friends. When I left Wawonii a year later, she had been absorbed into her mother’s group of women, washing the clothes beside the well in the mornings, dealing with screaming children, cooking endless pots of rice, sweeping the floors every day and sitting slumped beside the other women after the sun had set when they were all too exhausted to chase after the children, who were still screaming. She no longer smiled and made cheeky comments when she saw me. Instead, her expression was vacant, listless with the realization that this was it. Whatever romantic notions she may have had about having a husband and child had been cut down by reality. Her husband was gone, and her son was wailing and pissing and defecating and hungry.
and thirsty and sick and tired and needed her constantly. Trapped between her screaming child and the horde of women thirty years older than her, this was the price she was paying for escaping the liminal zone where single mothers, Indonesia’s abject women, languish. While her husband was equally a new parent, and married young, he had never been threatened with abjection because in Indonesia, as in many places, the status of the socially outcast single parent is one specifically reserved for women.

Here we see how gender and liminality become entwined, how young men and women behaving in the same way (having sex, getting married) are not equally threatened with liminal status. Yenti’s situation was simultaneously liminal and beyond liminality. As a teenager, Yenti was still in a period of transition. On the other hand, her status as a married, sexually active person probably obliterated any liminality associated with her age. Wawonii people frequently forgot or mixed up peoples’ ages, including their own. In any case, through her incorporation into the social structure of marriage, Yenti had averted the frightening prospect of a lifetime of liminality (Thomassen 2009, p. 17).³⁶¹ Yenti’s situation shows the utterly experiential reality of liminality, and how inseparable this reality is from concrete bodily experiences and realities. Since van Gennep first introduced the term, liminality has been fundamentally grounded in experiential aspects of social life (Thomassen 2009, p.5). Yenti had undergone the classic liminal journey: her previous identity as a carefree teenage girl had dissolved, a crisis had arisen as her pregnancy progressed, and the resolution of this crisis meant her re-absorption into another socially acceptable structure: marriage. It was the same fraught journey many, many teenage girls across Indonesia (and indeed the world) make or are forced to make every year. In this situation, all attempts are made (not only by those directly involved, but particularly by their families, on whom this unwanted status reflects) to bring the liminal phase (when the girl is pregnant without being married) to an end as soon as possible. This type of undesirable

³⁶¹ This sort of liminality appeared to have been Nurse Miryam’s fear.
liminal situation threatens the status not only of the man and woman most intimately involved, but also their families. Yenti must be married in order to locate herself within a structure (marriage) whose boundaries annihilate the error (pregnancy) which everyone around her may then pretend to be unaware of. The whole process is a performance of mock erasure. The error itself will be re-framed once contained within the accepted boundaries of marriage as a blessing from God.

**Becoming dream-spirit**

This afternoon I was sitting outside on a bamboo bench, chatting with Ibu Na’ila. We’d been talking for about half an hour when I stood up to go.

‘Don’t go! Stay and have a look at someone reciting because every evening another woman dreams of her husband and when we dream [something like this], we recite prayers… if for example we dream he [the husband] is returning, we see it [in our dreams] you know, it means the person who has died, he wants to be remembered… remembered in dreams, so… there’s a recitation, the one who comes to recite can see… it’s Watitiya’s mother, Watitiya’s uncle, the uncle of Watitiya’s mother who recites… his recitation is different [not a Quranic recitation] … He recites because here if for example we sleep it’s difficult [for her] to be reminded of her husband, Arul’s father, the recitation, we must recite, it’s the dreaming adat here… I sleep too much, you know… the recitation is here on Friday evening, so if there’s food leftover, every Friday or every day there’s an event, we always recite for people who have died. It’s like this because… we here,

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362 As Keesing (2012, p. 417) puts it, ‘The shades of the dead are ever-present participants in social life’.  
363 ‘Custom’.
er, from birth, from being a baby to marriage until a person dies, there are three types: birth, marriage, death...’

Ibu Na’ila and I walked slowly to the house where the recitation was about to take place. We entered the main room and sat down at the table. The house was small, dark and made of wood. All the doors were open. Another woman entered the room carrying four plates, which she put down on the table. Ibu Na’ila resumed her description of the recitation.

‘Here it must be four plates… four plates while reciting.’

I asked why.

‘Because it’s our custom.’ Ibu Na’ila replied.364

Om Yasril, the man sitting opposite me, indicated towards the woman who had brought the four plates in. He spoke.

‘Yesterday she dreamt of her parents-in-law.’

Om Yasril and Ibu Na’ila chatted together. Ibu Na’ila pointed towards me.

‘Ah she has to know how it is… she has to know, so when we sleep we dream, like we dream of the man who died, we have to take some action. What’s the custom in Australia? What’s the custom?’

I mumbled something about not having a particular custom.

‘Oh we have a custom, if we dream, we must tell someone to recite for us like this, it’s like a boat which is passed on to the descendants [of the boat owner] you know,

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364 This is a common reply to pesky questions from anthropologists. See, for example, Keesing (2012, p. 412).
our custom is like that, that’s what they say, [so that] he’s calm/ at peace, the one who has died, we don’t want him to always haunt us because they say he’s hungry or he’s remembering all his children so he comes to us, it’s difficult for him, after the coconut has been stir-fried, how about this wife of his, she’s got that husband, we all come [to the house for the recitation], she dreamt about that, I didn’t dream it…’

Ibu Na’ila went quiet as Om Yasril began reciting quietly under his breath. His words were barely audible. His head was bowed and his eyes lowered. He was wearing a songkok, a long-sleeved semi-formal shirt and a sarong.

‘That’s the incense,’ Ibu Na’ila whispered to me, pointing at the smoking incense.

Om Yasril continued chanting.

‘We keep some food [for the spirit of the dead person] if there is food, if there’s a photo, we use that too, if it's a long way away we must bring it…’ Ibu Na’ila whispered, while Om Yasril continued chanting. In front of him on the table was the bowl of boiled white rice and the burning incense.

Om Yasril finished chanting.

‘This is incense, incense… if we recite, we use this because this is aromatic, it smells nice, the person who recites uses it, if we burn [incense], this is what we use… this is aromatic, take a photo of it… if we are remembering our parents [who have died], we must recite prayers…’ Ibu Na’ila said.

Om Yasril gave me a bowl of boiled white rice.

‘This is natural food!’ He proclaimed.
Ibu Na’ila, Om Yasril, the woman who had dreamt of her deceased husband and I were sitting at the table. We began eating together. Although I made a few attempts to speak with her, the woman who had had the dream remained silent.

‘She’s shy,’ said Ibu Na’ila, who seemed more than happy to do the talking for her.

I asked Om Yasril if the recitation had been from the Koran or the ancestors or local custom.

‘The ancestors,’ said Om Yasril.

‘From the ancestors, he was reciting from the ancestors,’ Ibu Na’ila added.

I asked Om Yasril how he knows what to recite.

‘This is from The Prophet Muhammad, Allah, there are many prophets…’

I asked if the person who had the dream about the dead person will dream again about them after the recitation ritual.

‘They won’t, they won’t… sometimes this is from a ghost, then it’s not there any more… I say, if there’s a recitation like this, take a photo, there must be someone who takes photos so that there is someone who’s with us… then if you go home back there, [you can] recite…’

Om Yasril told me he is the father-in-law of the woman who had the dream.

‘My father had two wives, they gave birth to children, only two survived, both boys; I am the youngest.’ Om Yasril said.

I asked about the small flame and the incense burning as Om Yasril was chanting.
‘It’s our custom. Our parents and elders said we should burn it so that the smoke can be smelled, it’s used so there’s lots of smoke, so it’s aromatic because there must be an aroma. When people die aroma is used, isn’t it? They’re sprayed so they smell nice, so when we recite we have to use aromas like this sweet-smelling wood because we follow our custom. There [in Australia], you use aromas too, don’t you? So, if we recite for someone who has died, we must use aromas because when someone is buried, their clothes are sprayed, they’re sprayed like this. This is called sweet-smelling incense. It’s a particular kind that people rarely keep/ have.’ Ibu Na’ila said.

I asked Ibu Na’ila where the incense came from.

‘Wood. It’s a certain type of wood.’ Ibu Na’ila said.

We continued chatting. I asked if the prayers which were recited just now were specific ones, specially for communicating with the spirit of the dead man.

‘They’re inherited from the ancestors. They’re in Wawonii language, everyday language. God knows all languages you know, so if we say, ‘Oh God…’ so that this child of mine can be calm, don’t keep coming back. He comes, you know, not that he wants to order his parents around, he wants to be given his parents’ food. Don’t make your parents suffer, don’t. Go home calmly to your house, you know people who’ve died have a house. Go home calmly to your house; don’t come back and haunt, don’t come and disturb. He comes back, not because he wants something; he comes back to make his wife happy.’ Ibu Na’ila said.

Are the prayers always the same, I asked her.
‘They’re all the same. The same. They’re certain prayers,’ Ibu Nai’la replied. I asked her once more if the prayers were from the Qur’an or the ancestors.

‘The ancestors,’ she said.

How did Om Yasril know the prayers he just repeated, I asked.

‘He was taught by his ancestors. Like his father, who was taught by his father. Descendants. Here, whoever is old may be called. Because the old people know the language of the village; we don’t know the language of the village.’

Did she (Ibu Na’ila) understand what Om Yasril just said? I asked.

Ibu Na’ila nodded.

‘God, send him home, don’t [let him] come and disturb his wife every day, every evening. It’s not him, it’s this [other] person who wants to come, what do they want, you have a wife… you know, he haunts so we send him this aroma…’

What about if the wife of the dead man dreams about him tonight? I asked.

‘No! Because already, when we’ve already er, it’s not like this you know, calm, calm, if not yet, oh not yet because he’s also joining, it’s like he hasn’t been remembered… this person who has died is only separated but they can still see us, they’re just in a separate place. We are in this world and they are in the afterlife, that’s the difference, but they can still see us, what our character is like, particularly this recent one … Although he certainly returns to his wife like this, this is also natural…’ Ibu Na’ila said.

I asked Ibu Na’ila why four plates of rice were used when Om Yasril was reciting.
‘Because when we recite the words of the ancestors we must use four plates… because there must be pairs you know, for example this one with her husband or mother…’ Ibu Na’ila said.

‘What if there are only three plates?’ I asked.

‘That’s not allowed! You must arrange it, arrange four plates, after you have them, there must be water to drink, one or four, because those people must drink while they’re eating… keep the drinking water… for the fire where we burn the incense, if it’s not burnt, it won’t smell nice and later the smoke will not go anywhere so we have to burn it. It’s the rule we have to burn it. We pray to convey, like giving advice, oh God, send this one who has died home to his place which is good so that he leaves calmly. There’s no use in reminding him/ her, it’s finished, it’s over! We have to use an explanation like this… an explanation so there’s a custom, there’s a person there burning incense, reciting, burning incense, that’s called remembering someone who has died.’

I asked her if anything else is required or if people are allowed to use anything else in the ceremony.

‘No, it’s not allowed, because the title is burning incense to remember someone who has died. Burning incense to remember someone who has died. It’s different again if we are reading or reciting something for someone’s welfare…’

Ibu Na’ila gave me the example of prayers after a student graduates.

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365 Although she did not explicitly mention it, Ibu Na’ila’s insistence on four plates of rice may be related to ‘the four basic elements (patang passaleng) of the universe’, the number four being ‘a common Austronesian numeric symbol for wholeness’ (Acciaioli 1990, p. 214). Among the Bugis of Lindu, Central Sulawesi, ‘the four types of glutinous rice are associated with the four elder sibling spirits of the child, each linked to a constituent element of the body – bone, flesh, blood and breath’ (Acciaioli 1990, p. 214).
‘We do the work but God completes it,’ she said.

‘Could a woman also do the dream prayer ceremony Om Yasril just did?’ I asked Ibu Na’ila.

‘Yes, yes! If there’s no man to do it. If there’s no man, a woman can do it. People of any religion can do it… Women can, men can, actually they can’t, men must do it, except if there are no men, for example if they’ve gone to someone else’s village…’

It’s better if I study things like this dream ceremony rather than just health or nature, Ibu Na’ila tells me.

‘Because all health includes everything… this is also because if we, if we don’t recite this, we will always be ill because we remember our (dead) husband. Finally [we will become] disturbed, with sick thoughts… our health will be disturbed, this is the influence on our health… our imagination is influenced by our soul so we have to be careful of our health… so everything also depends on our health… if we don’t recite, they will always be imprisoned, our thoughts will be disturbed and we will become sick, there are several types of sickness. People usually get a fever because maybe their spirit is being contained with er in er… they’re sick. The point is, there’s no… headache, fear sickness, the soul is disturbed because we always remember, bah! Oh, last night I remembered again, I hope I don’t fall asleep… Until after I sleep I dream again. Don’t let me dream again, I’m afraid of going to sleep. Ah, so all these things inflame/ provoke/ stimulate health so you have come here for these things but here there are not enough people to explain… because no one has ever done research here, now is the first time… Researching health, everything is health… health comes from food, everything, all kinds of things must
[contain] health… including dreams, because what we dream always brings… usually we cry, particularly if we just dream here, don’t wander too much, if there’s no one here who can carry it out here, there aren’t enough students who can explain to people…’

‘Can spirits disturb our health?’ I asked Ibu Na’ila.

‘Yes, they can. Spirits can disturb our health. If we are always afraid, our… don’t you usually dream? Usually when we dream, I look over there, I’m afraid, it’s night time again, finally it will be a recurring dream, the soul will be disturbed like this one…’

**Discussion**

*Matter, including living beings, carries with it a series of forces, modes of self-organization that direct themselves to maximize the chaotic forces that surround and provide the milieu of all kinds of processes of actualization or individuation* (...) *It is (...) a kind of aesthetics, in which life finds in the excesses of matter the conditions for its own becoming-other, its own modes of convergence with and transformation of material relations and energies.*

- *Matter, Life and Other Variations, Elizabeth Grosz*

In this ethnographic episode, existence is clearly understood as exceeding the biological boundaries of the body.366 The spirit of the dead man, the becoming-other, is dominated by the

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366 Pedersen & Willerslev (2012, p. 480) found similar practices and beliefs described as ‘sumus’ among various Siberian ethnic groups. Discussing Kwakiutl shamanism, Taussig (2016, p. 471) shows how the ‘soul can be dislocated from the body, implicating not one but several bodies and energies flowing into and out of one another across borders accessed by dream, surrealism, and animal visitations.’
accumulated forces of the past. These forces are overwhelming, they push him back towards the world in which he was previously an emergent ‘becoming’. He wants to be remembered but he is no longer ‘matter’, instead he is its ‘excess’, its unwanted and unnecessary counterpart being ruthlessly projected into as yet unknown future ‘material relations’. In considering the ethnographic excerpt above, I take note of Guyer’s (2013, p. 289) call to anthropologists to ‘retain the unknown as a quality to which one learns to be attentive, without locking it into alterity’. We can see how a framework must be invented to give form to the unknown, by which it may be contained. Rules are required, and an acceptance of those rules implies obedience to the structure. Ironically, what then becomes structured is not the unknown but the known: the social field in which this ritual is enacted. The practice folds back on itself: Om Yasril, Ibu Na’ila, the wife of the deceased man and any others involved in these practices, in their efforts to contain the liminal, succeed in making themselves both the subjects and the products of the structuration procedures they have created to impose on the spirit of the deceased. The recitation is part of the work people must do before God can complete the action. This recitation is not about conveying information, it is not an expressive device, instead, it is a multiplicity, firing off in several directions at once. It is aimed at God (who is expected to listen and complete the work the people involved in the ritual have begun), at the self (for illness prevention), at the people gathered to participate (the validity of local custom and related belief systems are thereby strengthened) and finally the recitation is directed at the spirit of the dead man himself (asking him to ‘go home calmly’ and stop unsettling his wife).

In a multiplicity, what counts are not the terms or the elements, but what there is ‘between’, the between, a set of relations which are not separable from each other. Every multiplicity grows from the middle, like the blade of grass or the rhizome.

(Deleuze & Parnet 1987, p. viii)
In the ethnographic excerpt above, Ibu Na’ila outlines the multi-directional nature of the recitations said for a spirit. Recitations such as those whispered by Om Yasril simultaneously proceed in several directions. They are directed towards God, who is expected to advise the spirit of the deceased to continue their journey home and cease disturbing their relatives. They are also aimed at those present, as a way of calming the person who has experienced the disturbing dreams and showing others present that local custom is being carried out. They are aimed at the spirit itself, which is imprisoned and must be reminded to go home to its final resting place. Finally, they are also directed at the self, in order to prevent illnesses such as fever, headache, fear sickness and other disturbances of the mind and soul. As a ‘multiplicity’, the recitation is between all these beings, growing ‘from the middle’ (Deleuze & Parnet 1987, p. viii). It spreads throughout the room, travels via the incense to the realm where the restless spirit resides, journeys through/ into bodies, healing and strengthening them. The recitation is a way of answering the conflicted spirit, which has sent its loved ones dreams in order to be remembered. The person suffering from disturbing dreams exercises agency in having the recitation performed. The boundaries are drawn, the spirit is told that further attempts to violate this boundary will not be accepted. They are instructed to go peacefully to their new home.

It must not be said that language deforms a reality which is pre-existing or of another nature. Language is first, it has invented the dualism (…) we must pass through dualisms because they are in language. (Deleuze & Parnet 1987, p. 34)

In the previous ethnographic piece, Om Yasril’s recitation, his ‘language’, is ‘first’, in positioning itself between, ‘it has invented the dualism’ (material/ spiritual, alive/ dead etc.) from which its own meaning or use value derives.
You should not try to find whether an idea is just or correct. You should look for a completely different idea, elsewhere, in another area, so that something passes between the two which is neither one nor the other. (Deleuze & Parnet 1987, p. 10)

**Becoming ‘doctor’**

*What is important for me is, then, not where I am from, but where I am between.*

*(Hendry 2007, p. 596)*

I write this chapter during a liminal period of my own, as a PhD student suspended between my present student status, and a future ‘professional self’ (Deegan & Hill 1991, p. 329). Hendry (2007), Carrithers (2014) and in particular Deegan & Hill (1991) have written excellent papers on the doctoral student as liminar. As Deegan & Hill (1991, p. 329) emphasise, this liminal status has direct material effects, including on one’s body.

Thomassen (2009, p. 14) describes how, because of the liminal phase of life he was in while going through van Gennep’s work, ‘Turner experientially recognized the importance of van Gennep’s insight’. Being immersed in the ‘experiential mystery and uncertainty’ of my own ‘transformational ritual’ (Deegan & Hill 1991, p. 322) while writing this thesis, Thomassen’s words resonated with me.

**Conclusion**

*[P]eripheral vision can be very powerful – the half-glimpsed, half-grasped, continues to hold possibilities for exploration.*

*(Strathern 2013, p. 21)*
This chapter has explored the deictic ontologies in which Wawonii people are immersed and which stretch far beyond their material realities. The ‘half-glimpsed, half-grasped’ ethnographic material presented in this chapter reflects the tendencies of Wawonii people to permit themselves no more than half-glimpses and half-grasps at the powerful energetic forces surrounding them. Liminal practices produce some degree of apprehension among those nearby. Ibu Lina, Ibu Na’ila and Hakim all state explicitly that they do not know, and do not want to know, the mantra, or the magic, they describe. Ibu Na’ila makes it clear that she did not dream of a dead person, it was another woman in the village. We have seen how liminality, while it may be ‘full of potency and potentiality (…) experiment and play’ (Turner 1979, p. 466) is more commonly experienced in Wawonii as dangerous and threatening, something to be erased beneath the hasty process of re-incorporation into structure. Rather than ‘explaining acts in terms of preceding events, projected aims, unconscious concerns or precepts and rules’, this chapter has focussed on the productive potential created through the ‘connections or “intermediary links”’ which come about through (ritual) action which addresses spirits, dreams, the supernatural, the otherworldly (Jackson 2013, p. 60). The ethnographic material in this chapter provides ‘an accumulation of glimpses’ of the practises and becomings of Wawonii people, their lines of flight, their escapades into the virtual (Strathern 2013, p. 21). Rather than pursuing an explanatory line of thought, this chapter has endeavoured to show how the struggle to understand when one is located both within and beyond a social (Wawonii) or institutional (academic) field may be productive. A configuration is formed, a unique configuration, situated within an entirely new spatial and temporal location, and from between the tensions of this configuration, something is produced, not in order to be explanatory, but in order to be.\footnote{This recalls Taussig’s (1992, p. 9) post-fieldwork struggle with language: ‘I was battling with how to write Putumayo curing nights without pushing them into the Enlightenment soap opera, my wanting instead to preserve their hallucinatory montaged flowing and stopping and starting once again, the power of the mental image to hold a history of nations, of wilderness as curative, of the continuous joking undermining everything, testimony to Benjamin’s highlighting Brecht’s figure of water wearing away the granite. Here shock and}
being collides in future configurations with other beings, where something else, something entirely unpredictable, is produced. What is produced? A glimpse of a glimpse. The reverse side of the glimpse, its reception, the power or meaning imbued in it by its multiple receptions, remains unknown. As Carrithers (2014, p. 125) writes,

‘our work is predicated throughout on a basis of its immediate transparency, yet it meets with unintended reinterpretation at every turn.’

It is precisely this ‘unintended reinterpretation’ which is the yet-to-be-discovered productive value of the anthropological endeavour. Anthropology may just be the attempt to understand different stories other people tell themselves, and the way these stories guide peoples’ behaviour. While we engage in this quest, it is important to remember that the cultures and societies we come from are just as dependent on mythmaking. Furthermore, the most powerful myths are those which convince people that there are no myths at all.

montage came center-stage with impressive curing power – tumbling certainties into the imageric politics of reality-and-illusion, the curer’s medium as much as terror’s, too.'
CHAPTER EIGHT

DEATH

Introduction

There are three types: birth, marriage, death.

Rather than being taken from Van Gennep’s The Rites of Passage (1960), the above quote was uttered by one of my Wawonii interlocutors, Ibu Na’ila. These ‘three types’ were indeed the most momentous events I experienced during my twelve months in Wawonii. This chapter deals with the final of the three: death. Writing about death is both preposterous and vital. On the one hand, it is venturing into the fictitious in the sense that neither I nor anyone I have ever met has died and returned to discuss the experience. On the other hand, it is not only a topic which persistently occupied my Wawonii respondents, but it is the one certainty that links us all.

During the twelve months I lived in Wawonii, death was a common event, which was amplified by the ceremonies held three, seven, forty and one hundred days after a person’s death. On a few occasions, there were two funerals being held in my village (with a population of about five hundred people) on the same day. During the time that I was there, the youngest person to die was a two-month-old baby, who died of diarrhoea. The oldest death was that of a Haji whose age nobody knew so people simply said he was about one hundred years old. Since the Haji had great-great grandchildren, one hundred years was probably close to accurate. Whereas people beyond infancy were ‘buried’, babies, since they were not

368 Wawonii language: tahalil mia mate; Indonesian: upacara orang meninggal.
369 Wawonii language: mate; Indonesian: meninggal or mati.
370 Or referred to him as mia motua (‘old person’ in Wawonii language).
371 Indonesian: dikubur.
yet considered properly human, were ‘planted’.372 Female children who died before menstruation were described as ‘not yet adult’,373 and since they were ‘still clean’374 according to Islam, they were expected to return to a state of holiness.375 Wawonii people said that these children did not ‘mati’ (Indonesian; mate in Wawonii language), instead they ‘hule’ako’ (Wawonii language). Although the word ‘mati’ usually refers to the death of animals or plants in Java and other parts of Indonesia whereas ‘meninggal dunia’ describes human deaths, in Wawonii, ‘mati’ and ‘mate’ were the most common words used to describe the death of people. ‘Hule’ako’ means, ‘pulang kembali’ (Bahasa Indonesia), or ‘return home’. Many women in Wawonii had had children die in childbirth, or shortly thereafter. The question, ‘How many children do you have?’ usually evoked an answer such as, ‘I have seven children, three of them have died’. The deceased children were always counted in the number of children people ‘have’ (‘punya’ rather than ‘dulu saya punya’, which means ‘I used to have’ or ‘I had before’). This shows us that despite their absence, they were still in a certain sense present.

This chapter explores both actual and virtual aspects (described in chapter seven) of the cessation of life. Dialogues about causation, the eternal and links between this world and the world (or worlds) of the dead (in whatever form they may take) form the basis of this chapter. Language may be conceived here as one of the greatest obstacles in working through such an acutely numinous event. Conversely,

It is precisely because language is the very medium through which human beings obtain their sense of self-consciousness that it can serve so well as the basis of reaction to the awareness of death. (Davies 2002, p. 1)

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372 Indonesian: ditanam.
373 ‘belum jadi dewasa’, ‘belum jadi orang besar’
374 ‘masih bersih’
375 ‘dia masih bersih kalau dalam agama kita, dia kembali keadaan suci’
Wawonii people spoke openly and frequently about death, the afterlife, evil and benevolent spirits, souls, consequences suffered or enjoyed in the afterlife, interactions with ancestral spirits and so on. To speak about death means to capture it (the great unknown ‘it’) within the confines of our language, which is why Wawonii people use metaphors such as ‘going home’. In doing so, they summon up a concept with which we all are familiar (‘home’) to seal the void of a concept about which we are all ignorant. This is a symbolic-linguistic method of developing ‘ways to think the unthinkable’ (Davies 2011, p. 29). Of course, this masking-via-symbolism practice is not limited to the people with whom I did my research. Death makes the limits of language obvious. As an ‘actual’ event, death is primarily something which impacts the body.

This subjugation of the bodily to the semantic is empirically untenable (…) from both phylogenetic and ontogenetic points of view, thinking and communicating through the body precede and to a great extent always remain beyond speech.

(Jackson 2013, p. 55)

Asking Wawonii people about causation elicited responses ranging from the supernatural (spirits such as Kuntilanak) to the religious (‘God took his spirit’)\(^{376}\) to the pragmatic (public servants at the Ministry of Health explaining that the number of Wawonii women dying in childbirth is high because there are not enough nurses and doctors permanently stationed on the island). My interlocutors related stories of a fierce\(^{377}\) past in which Wawonii people were murdered, tortured and burnt alive in their houses by invading DI/ TII aggressors from South Sulawesi in the 1950s.\(^{378}\) The practice of sacrificing unmarried female slaves\(^{379}\)

\(^{376}\) ‘*Tuhan ambil nyawanya*’
\(^{377}\) ‘*ganas*’
\(^{378}\) Such events were detailed in Chapter Two.
\(^{379}\) ‘*Ata*’ (Wawonii language); ‘*budak*’ (Indonesian).
continued until 1904, when the Dutch forbade it. These women were decapitated at weddings between lower rank men and women of royal heritage in order to balance out the difference in status between the two.

The ethnographic section of this chapter describes the social, cultural and religious practices required to integrate death as an event within the historical body of the village, thereby creating a distribution that allows for the flourishing of the social, despite the disintegration of one of the variables within this structure. Paradoxically, structures require disintegration in order to persist. Here, I am referring to the disintegration of the concrete body. While the physical assemblage disintegrates, the distribution of its intensity is reconfigured. What is this intensity and how is it reconfigured? Intensity may derive from language. The dead take on an intensity they never had while they were alive. They are reconstructed, re-made, re-told innumerable times. The unfoldings of these intensities, their spatial and temporal travels, are chaotic, dynamic and entirely unpredictable. The dead were never so alive as they are in these unbounded travels. They are infinitely re-invented, beyond territorialisation. They become what they could never become in their physical distribution. A rift materializes, the assemblage undergoes an amputation of its material incarnation before the reconfiguring impulses are once again set in motion. These impulses ensure that the body-as-node (in its social capacities) remains, despite being emptied of its material aspect. Mortuary rites on the third, seventh, fortieth and one hundredth days following death are required not only to mark the transition, but more importantly to reassure people that the integrity of the social body as an assemblage has not been threatened. In fact, the conservation of this greater body, which is more persistent in terms of both time and space, depends on carving out spaces within its orbit for re-generation.

Death and Islam

380 Velthoen (1997) provides a broader picture of the history of slave-trading in Sulawesi between 1750 – 1850.
381 ’potong leher’
382 ’supaya sama derajatnya’
All the mortuary rites I attended in Wawonii were Islamic. According to the Qur’an and the Hadith, Islamic eschatology is based on divine creation, resurrection, the final judgment, a belief in heaven and hell. All of these are determined by God, who has created people ‘from sperm’ (Reynolds and Waugh 1977, p. 186). These events clearly follow a cyclical pattern: birth – life – death – resurrection. In the Qur’an, sleep symbolizes death, while awakening symbolizes resurrection (Reynolds and Waugh 1977, p. 187). When a person dies, they are questioned by the angels Munkar and Nakir in the grave about their actions during their lifetime before their soul is taken and they receive the final judgement (Reynolds and Waugh 1977, p. 193). Following this, they are sent to the garden of heaven or the fire of hell.

Islamic funeral rites follow a predetermined formula: Within 24 hours of a death, the deceased is ritually washed, wrapped in a white cloth, prayed for and laid in a grave facing Mecca. In this way, the contingency of the death of the individual is obliterated and with the resurgence of the controlled ritual, the hegemony of the prevailing religious and social structure is ensured. Death thus becomes a source of social production.

Viewed through the framework of Islamic eschatology, birth marks the beginning of a measurable time period, whereas on the other side of this relatively short space stretches an expanse of irreversible duration. Muslims are encouraged to use their finite time on Earth preparing for death by living according to the principles of Islam set out in the Qur’an and the Hadith. Death is not a punishment, but rather an incontrovertible certainty which requires preparation. Within this framework, there are close linkages between temporality and authority.

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383 *Yawm al-Qiyāmah* (Arabic)
384 *Yawm ad-Din* (Arabic)
385 *Jannah* (Arabic)
386 *Jahannam* (Arabic)
387 Nevertheless, there is great variation in funerals as cultural practices among Indonesian Muslims. Religious and ancestral practices frequently become intertwined in these ceremonies and the ritual practices following funerals. For example, in Java, graves are not only places where bones are put to rest and souls are interrogated by Munkar and Nakir, they are also ‘visited to solicit blessings, [and] to seek guidance when faced with difficult decisions about job promotions, money or debt problems’ (Magnis Suseno 1997, p. 89).
Clearly, once the accomplishment of death as a re-birth has been achieved, the eternal is the
domain of spiritual and religious authority. Within Islam then, history becomes marginal and
the present useful predominantly insofar as it determines what happens in the eternal afterlife.
Birth and death do not oppose each another as beginning and end but instead become merely
two transitions along a continuum which is to some extent pre-determined.

The concepts of ‘nasib’ (fate)\textsuperscript{388} and ‘takdir’ (destiny) are prevalent throughout the
Islamic world.\textsuperscript{389} In Indonesia, ‘[l]ife and death, misfortune and illness are fated (nasib)’
(Magnis Suseno 1997, p. 134). ‘Nasib’ is both a religious and social response to death. The
concept of ‘nasib’ and related practices are often deployed as methods of defusing conflict or
avoiding accusations of blame. This encourages social harmony and cohesion, cultural values
which are highly regarded in many parts of Indonesia. However, insofar as it attests to the
Islamic belief that God decrees the time and nature of a person’s birth and death, ‘nasib’ is a
religious concept.

In Wawonii and other parts of Indonesia, three periods of great vulnerability in which
people are believed to be at danger of becoming sick and dying include ‘pregnancy and birth;
the first seven or nine days after birth for both mother and child; and the period after the death
of someone else’ (Hay 2004, p. 109). These fears are shared by Muslim communities in
Malaysia and other parts of Asia (e.g., Peletz 1996, p. 216; Davis-Floyd and Sargent 1997).

\begin{center}
\textbf{Death and soul loss}
\end{center}

\textsuperscript{388} Derived from Arabic ‘naseeb’ or ‘nasip’. Apart from Indonesian, this term appears with the same meaning in
languages as diverse as Malay, Urdu, Turkish, Pashto, Bengali, Sindh, Hindi and Punjabi.
\textsuperscript{389} Although I focus here on Islamic cultures, as Davies (2002, p. 3) points out, concepts of ‘a destiny beyond
that of a single lifetime’ and mortuary rites associated with these concepts are not limited to the Islamic world
but apply to ‘[t]he great majority of cultures’.

\textit{\textsuperscript{254}}
Wawonii people are good. Wawonii people are afraid of death. If you’re afraid of death, obviously, you’ll be good. If you’re good to others, you won’t be lost.\(^{390}\)

In her statement above, Ibu Ani, a teacher with three children who lived in my village, shows how the fear of death acts as the framework for a moral life, a well-guided life, a life (and afterlife) salvaged from the abyss which threatens those bereft of the fear of death. Ibu Ani’s words show us how, in order to understand life in Wawonii, it is also necessary to understand how people conceptualise death and its moral underpinnings.

Whereas in other parts of Sulawesi, soul guidance is repeatedly invoked as a defence against soul loss,\(^{391}\) this potential loss and its associated dangers were overriding narratives among the Wawonii people with whom I spoke. For example, people in my village were constantly reminding me of the association between Tumbrano waterfall, spirits and death.

Tumbrano, people get lost there, not spirits, in Malay they say you’ve already become a mountain person, [they’re] not people who have really died, [but] people who are indeed lost, like this, you shut your eyes, open them again, have a look, shut your eyes again and the person’s disappeared\(^{392}\) (…) there are also lost people in Australia, you just don’t know where (…) wherever there’s forest, there are lost people.\(^{393}\)

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\(^{391}\) In South Sulawesi, ‘loss’ is prevented by ‘guidance’ via collective mortuary rituals. Among Torajan aluk to dolo practitioners, ‘neither the gods nor the individual fully determine the ultimate destiny of one’s soul. Rather, through the successful orchestration of the funeral rites and, if one is privileged, subsequent rituals, the living community controls the soul’s movement from this world to Puya and perhaps on to join the deities in heaven. After death, as in life, the Torajan individual’s soul is oriented by the group’ (Adams 1993, p. 61).

\(^{392}\) Similarly, in Java, defeated members of the Majapahit royal family are said to have fled for the mountains of Central Java where ‘they either died or magically disappeared (muksa) as Majapahit’s last king, Brawijaya V, is said to have done on Mount Lawu’s summit, leaving behind a ghostly trail of spiritual energy that would be retraced by future generations of Javanese in search of power’ (Pemberton 1994, p. 35).

\(^{393}\) *Tumbrano... orang hilang-hilang di sana... bukan setan... bahasa Melayu bilang sudah menjadi orang gunung... bukan orang mati betul, memang orang hilang... begini tutup mata buka mata lihat tutup mata hilang itu orang itu... Ada juga orang hilang di Australia, cuma ko nggak tahu tempatnya mereka di mana itu... Di mana ada hutan ada orang hilang di sana.*
Loss and being lost came up several times in conversations about death with Wawonii people. A woman from the village I lived in, Ibu Evi, told me about a Tolaki man from Kendari who was electrocuted while attempting to install electricity in a building in Kendari. The man died upon being electrocuted. Disagreements between his wife and his parents over where he should be buried followed. Finally, the wife determined that he should be buried near her house rather than where his family’s graves were.

But the wife asked for him to be buried there... poor thing, when we divide our love like that, it’s a loss... 394

Ibu Tini, an older Wawonii woman, was describing the recent sudden death of Shabrina, the nine-year-old girl described in Chapter Six.

That’s it, she fainted, it was already, already er, already past... she had er... it came out...

She indicated towards her mouth.

‘It came out of her mouth?’ I asked.

‘From here it came out until, er...’ She pointed at her stomach.

‘From her stomach to her mouth?’ I asked.

‘Yes, yes.’ She said.

‘Then it came out?’ I asked.

‘Mmm. That’s why she fainted (...) it had gone, there was no more soul, it had already been lost...’

394 ‘Tapi itu isterinya dia minta di sana dia dikubur...kasihan mi sementara kita bagi sayang begitu langsung kehilangan.’
Ibu Tini describes the soul as a bounded thing, capable of the sort of movement which is harmful, indeed fatal, to the body within which it is (or was) encapsulated. A body bereft of a soul is unable to sustain life. This is one of many understandings of the soul in Indonesia.

In South Sulawesi, the Sa’dan Toraja conceptualize the soul as being about ‘life’ (*katuoan*) and ‘death’ (*kamatean*), but it is not life or death – indeed, hidden in the enigma of its unfolding (‘path’), it traverses both life and death. (Tsintjilonis 1999, p. 617)

Elsewhere in Indonesia, the soul ‘changes its nature and manifestation in different contexts and is ‘not considered eternal’ (Huntington & Metcalf 1979, p. 69). The Ngaju Dayak people define the soul in material terms, as blood during a person’s life, and divided into two or three separate souls which are identified with particular parts of the body following death.

In the liminal stage immediately following death, when souls have not yet been integrated into the afterlife, they are characterised as ‘pitiful and dangerous (…) painful and disquieting’ (Hertz 1960, p. 37). Among the Ngaju Dayak, soul loss occurs after death when the soul splits into two. One half, the ‘*salumpok liau*’, defined as ‘the marrow of the soul’, ‘the essential element of the personality’ is ‘unstable (…) it does not yet have an appointed place (…) it does

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395 In other parts of Sulawesi, different types of movement are closely associated with the death of the soul. Among the Buntao’ Toraja, ‘death is perceived as movement from the left (*lalan kairi*, ‘the path [from the] left’)’ (Tsintjilonis 1999, p. 625).

396 Here it is important to note that throughout Indonesia, all these ‘understandings’ are basically dialogues between people of different ethnicities, officially-recognized ‘*agama*’ (religion), influential ‘*kepercayaan*’ (beliefs) and the ancestors. As dialogues, they are constantly changing, evolving, re-forming.

397 The Ngaju Dayak term for ‘soul’ is *liau*. During life, human beings have a single soul, *hambaruan*, which is found in the blood. Upon death, this soul divides itself into two or three: the soul of the intellect, *salumpuk teras liau* or *panyalumpuk liau*; the soul of the fleshy parts of the body, *liau balawang panjang ganan bereng*; and the soul of the nails, bones and hair, *liau karahang tulang, silu, tuntung balau*. There is some dispute among members of the Ngaju Dayak Kaharingan community as to the origins of these souls. However, the Ngaju Dayak agree that the soul of the intellect is the primary soul (Hertz 1960, p. 34; Schiller 1997, p. 36; Schiller 2002, p. 22). Weinstock describes a slightly different concept of the soul among the Luangan Dayak, who are also Kaharingan followers and live east of the Barito River (the Ngaju Dayak populate the area west of this river) (1987, p. 77). Upon death, the Luangan soul (*ju’us*) bifurcates into ‘the refined soul of the head/brain’ (*kelalongan*) and ‘the coarse soul of the body/shadow’ (*liau*). Following death, *kelalongan* ‘goes to live in Tenangkai (Senangkai), an abstract heaven located in the sky’ while *liau* ‘goes to live on Gunung Lumut’ (Weinstock 1987, p. 79). The Ngaju Dayak term for ‘upper world’ is *Lewu Tatau* (Schiller 1997, p. 12). The upper world is also called the ‘The Village of Souls’ and ‘The Prosperous Village’. These titles are synonymous with each other. They oppose the lower world.
not feel at ease (…) it is sad and as though lost, and pines for its other half” (Hertz 1960, p. 34). Whereas Ibu Tini describes loss of the soul being the cause of death (or fainting preceding death), in Hertz’s account, death occurs prior to the bifurcation of the soul, which only becomes lost following this splitting.

Death and dreams

My Wawonii Ibu’s mother had died when she was about six years old. Her parents had divorced shortly after she had been born, and she had been sent to live with her father and his new wife in a village about six hours’ walk from Noko, where her mother lived. Fifty years after her mother’s death, the intensity of her mother’s spirit was still very real. My Ibu explained:

There was a sign… I dreamt my mother told me to come home to her, so I woke up and could not sleep until the morning when I drank a glass of hot water, told my father I wanted to go [to my mother’s house]. He said, ‘why?’ Afterwards he knew maybe my mother was sick, he said, ‘Go home then,’ so I went home (…) I went to where my mother was, oooh she was in a very bad condition, I went there. My mother was surprised that I’d arrived there. She said, why have you come here? I said, ‘But I know you’re sick.’ She said, ‘Who told you?’ I said, ‘No one, but I dreamt it.’ How many days (remained)? Five days, then my mother died. That’s what I regret most. If I had known that my mother already wanted to go and leave me, I would not have left her… I may never get rid of that regret…

Ibu’s dream-wanderings depict a vivid form of communion with her mother. The ‘internal partings’ (Hertz 1960, p. 81) required of my Ibu were so severely painful, they had

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398 Similarly, among the Berawan people of Kalimantan, while souls are considered to wander during dreams, if they stray too far, they may become lost and cross into the land of the dead, causing illness, unconsciousness and possible death (Huntington & Metcalf 1979, p. 70).
399 These experiences correspond with Hollan’s (1989, p. 170) third classification of Toraja dreams (tiindo).

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met with a lifetime of resistance and had indeed never taken place. In Chapter Seven we saw how intimate links between the living and the dead are created through dreams.400 This excerpt shows the reverse: the dream urges my Ibu to return home in anticipation of her mother’s death. Even within a single small village, a ‘great diversity of dream experience and interpretation’ appears (Hollan 1989, p. 166).

**Death and mortuary rites**

Pak Joni: In earlier times there was no such thing as falling in love, before people were married off by their families, between first cousins, that’s why we’re all still family, so if there are festivities here, everyone comes from all the villages.401

Brooke: What are the funeral customs?

Pak Joni: The customs for funerals just require reciting and after that serving food (…) they’re influenced by Islam and customary law, two [things], religion is still carried out and customs are carried out. The customs are our own, not mixed, our knowledge is not mixed…402

Mortuary rites are ‘the human adaptive response to death’ (Davies 2002, p. 1). They are both ‘events’, and ‘processes’ (Volkman 1985, p. 84). Rather than being purely individual emotional expressions, responses to death are mediated by social and cultural norms. In Java, for example, although

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400 These links have been described elsewhere in Sulawesi among the Toraja by Adams (1993, p. 60).

401 ‘Kalau dulu kalau dulu itu nggak ada saling percintaan kalau dulu, dulu itu kan dijodohkan antara sepupu-sepupu satu kali dijodohkan ya makanya itu ya makanya itu tetap ada keluarga semua ini Miss sekarang jadi kalau kita di sini ada pesta-esta begini pasti kita datang semua semua desa pasti hadir.’

402 ‘Adatnya upacara orang meninggal itu hanya istilahnya pembacaan doa kemudian sajian (…) Ya pengaruh beragama Islam dengan adat, diaa, agama tetap jalankan kemudian adat juga dilakukan. Adat tersendiri pulau Wawonii, tidak dicampuri, ilmu tidak dicampuri…’
[t]he question of life after death seems to evoke little interest (…) it is an important duty for surviving dependents to ensure that correct procedures for burial of mortal remains are carried out, to avoid incurring the anger of the spirit (\textit{arwah}) of the departed (Magnis Suseno 1997, p. 140).

Death as an event always concerns a group, a community, a society. In this scenario, where the living are inextricably bound to the deceased, who prevails? In ‘Death and the Regeneration of Life’, Bloch and Parry (1982, p. 4) claim that the living, as the collective group that carries out the required rituals, ‘emerge triumphant since they determine the treatment of the corpse and the direction the soul takes, the soul’s fate.’

Similarly, Bradbury (1999, p. 128) argues, ‘[a] common theme in cultures across the world is the desire to manipulate the corpse to maintain some vestige of control over the chaos of death.’ Within Islamic eschatology, however, where the final judgment is paramount, God, as many Wawonii people explained to me, is the sole determinant of ‘the soul’s fate’. Although ‘both the Qur’an and Hadith may be supplemented by custom and exegesis’, the ‘final and absolute authority’ lie with the Qur’an and Hadith’ (Bowker 1993, p. 104).

Besides their specifically Islamic aspects, in terms of general procedure, the Wawonii funerals I attended resemble funerals located in vastly different times and places.\textsuperscript{403} Wawonii funerals and mortuary rites are not as elaborate as those in some other parts of Indonesia.\textsuperscript{404} All the Wawonii funerals I attended took from between a few hours to a whole day to complete. Preparation sometimes took an extra day. Although there was a significant amount of work

\textsuperscript{403} For example, the nineteenth century funerals in Britain described by Bradbury (1999, p. 9) where the body would be washed, limbs arranged, hair brushed before being wrapped in a white cloth by family members; relatives and friends would gather to view the body; people would be occupied with food preparation; finally, the body would be carried to the graveyard and buried wrapped in the white sheet, or a coffin if the family could afford it. As in present-day Wawonii, in 19\textsuperscript{th} century Britain, ‘these funerals expressed the community’s belief that death leads to regeneration and rebirth’ (Bradbury 1999, p. 10).

\textsuperscript{404} The Toraja, Karo Batak and Tobaku people, for example, have highly elaborate and very costly funerals which are often performed \textit{en masse} to save a single family from the expense of the ceremony (Volkman 1985, p. 6; Kipp 1996, p. 141; Aragon 2000, p. 220).
required, there were also plenty of people willing and capable of performing this work (cooking, washing, splitting logs for firewood, cleaning, constructing coffins, digging graves). This recalls the Javanese proverb ‘rame ing gawe’, ‘[t]he performance of one’s duties in the world’ where ‘The word gawe means not only work, but also festivity. The connection between the two is explained, on the one hand by the fact that festive preparations always involve a good deal of joyous communal labour and, on the other, that the various stages of work in the fields are accompanied by appropriate festivities’ (Magnis Suseno 1997, p. 143).

An example apart from the groups mentioned in footnote 21 are the Berawan and Kahayan River Ngaju Dayak people in Central Kalimantan (Huntington & Metcalf 1979, p. 68; Schiller 2002, p. 22). The Kahayan River Ngaju Dayak perform mortuary rites in which the ‘the three stages of treatment of the dead are burial, called mangubur, which provides primary treatment for the physical remains; priestly chants that provide initial treatment for souls and cleanse the survivors from part of the supernatural pollution of death called balian tantuluk matei mampisik liau; and finally iwah’ (Schiller 2002, p. 22).

For example, the multi-stage funerals in Laboya, West Sumba, where gongs are played and repetitive wailing is encouraged (Geinaert 2002, p. 44). Loud female wailing, characterised by its ‘formulaic auditory and lyrical patterns’ is also a feature of Tobaku funerals, in Central Sulawesi (Aragon 2000, p. 220). The elaborate performative aspects of Toraja funerals have been well documented (Budiman, M. 2013, p. 119). Performative behaviour such as ritual weeping is found beyond Indonesia, for example among the Andamanese (Radcliffe-Brown 1964, p. 117).

See Huntington & Metcalf (1979, p. 72) on ‘death songs’ and recitation at Berawan funerals. Some Indonesian ritual speech forms include ‘basa santiago’ among the Ngaju Dayak (Fox 1988, p. 9; Kuhnt-Saptodewo 1999, p. 16); ‘li’i marapu’ (words of the ancestors) and ‘panggecango’ (Kodi ritual speech), ‘teda’ and ‘loluku’ (Anakalang ritual speech) and ‘loluku’ (Rindi ritual speech) in Sumba (Kuipers 1990, p. 3; Hoskins 1988, p. 31; Keane 1997, p. 100; Forth 1988, p. 134).

While men and women sometimes sit in different rooms, or most women may be together outside cooking while most of the men are inside chanting and praying, this is not a ‘rule’ or a strictly prescribed separation. Space is not as strictly divided up and policed in Wawonii mortuary rites as it is within some other Indonesian groups.

Singing ‘death songs’ and chanting in holy languages and ritual speech forms derived from the ancestors are common practices in Kalimantan, Sumba and other parts of Indonesia.

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These chants take on a cleansing function.\textsuperscript{409} Wawonii chanting has no such aim. Incense is burnt at funerals for cleansing purposes. Prayers, chants and verses taken from the Qur’an are recited in Arabic. Speeches made at Wawonii funerals are said in a mixture of the local language, Bahasa Wawonii, and the national language, Indonesian.

Insofar as they perpetuate social values and create and re-create social identities, mortuary rituals become what Bourdieu (1977, p. 163) calls ‘realized myth’. In this way, a temporal leap is achieved whereby the community of the living submits to the norms of the community of the dead and the not-yet-born. How is this possible? Those remaining behind after a death or awaiting a birth are constantly adhering to the mythical precepts of those who have left or not yet arrived, and it is through this behaviour that the social and cultural worlds which they inhabit in a real, rather than a mythical sense, are formed.

Below are two detailed descriptions of the mortuary rites for Ibu Siti, a young mother who died a sudden, unexpected death, and Haji Burhan\textsuperscript{410} and his wife Ibu Kulsulmi, who people said were the oldest people in the village before they died within a few months of each other.

**Ibu Siti**

**Sunday February 24th**

My Ibu was telling me about a sick young woman in our village.

‘That woman who is sick already has seven children… she’s already given birth seven times… I think she’s about the same age as Deny.’

\textsuperscript{409} In Central Kalimantan, chanting by Ngaju Dayak priests ‘provide[s] initial treatment for souls and cleanse[s] the survivors from part of the supernatural pollution of death…’ (Schiller 2002, p. 22). In Central Kalimantan and Sumba, cleansing rituals and ablutions are also performed in rivers to wash away any remnants of supernatural pollution which may have been picked up during death ceremonies (Schiller 2002, p. 24; Renard-Clamagirand 1988, p. 100).

\textsuperscript{410} This is the one hundred-year-old man referred to earlier in this chapter.
Ibu’s son Deny was 25 years old.

Ibu told me that the sick woman’s father taught children how to recite the Qur’an. He was my Ibu’s second cousin.

‘Siti Nurul is her name. She married when she was still young, she had children too early, she already has seven children… She’s about 25 years old perhaps… four of her children are still alive… many of them have died… She works too hard, she cleans and washes dishes in the evenings, she doesn’t wash in the mornings. No, if her family have finished dinner, she doesn’t leave the dishes for the morning, she washes them immediately… she doesn’t finish [washing dishes] until midnight… because she thinks that since she has many children, if she leaves the dishes until morning, she won’t be able to do her other work then, so that’s why she works so hard. Her children are very hardworking, in the house they usually cook, take care of her other children…’

Ibu told me Ibu Siti is the youngest of her siblings, the only daughter, and she lives at her mother’s house. I asked Ibu what sort of illness Ibu Siti had contracted.

‘I don’t know. She’s really sick indeed. She’s been sick for eleven days already. People say there’s someone there who sent [something]. They say her eyesight is hazy, she can’t see clearly… Yes, that’s how it is, she became sick immediately… Before she was sick, she was taken to the hospital and she recovered… not too long ago…’

Many people had gone to Ibu Siti’s house. Ibu said a nurse had checked Ibu Siti and had given her some medication. Ibu Siti was quiet, she didn’t scream too much according to the nurse. Someone else had said Ibu Siti might be taken to Kendari the following day. Ibu told me about her fear of hospitals, and how she had
instructed her children never to take her to a hospital, that she’d rather die in her house than go to a hospital. Her children had disagreed and said if she ever became unconscious, they would take her to a hospital. Ibu has only been to a hospital once, in Kendari, to see her daughter-in-law give birth there. I mentioned that other women had said Ibu Siti had ‘women’s illness’. Ibu said it was called ‘women’s illness’ because it was the illness women get after giving birth and not recovering properly. Ibu Siti had contracted ‘women’s illness’ because she had given birth again and again without giving her body time to recover from the previous birth. Ibu Siti has already had ‘women’s illness’ twice. A doctor had once told Ibu that if women have too many births, the lining of their uterus becomes thin.

‘But, we think, our ancestors used to have 12 or 13 children and they didn’t get any severe illnesses.’ Ibu said.

I asked if Ibu Siti had used any contraception or family planning. Ibu said she did not know.

‘Can she eat?’ I asked.

‘Only a bit, three spoons at the most, or less… She said her hips and back hurt, because of that they say, if that’s (where the pain is), you know the kidneys are stuck on the bones, maybe it’s the influence of the kidneys…’

Ibu Siti had been massaged, and people were praying for her.

‘I pray for her in my heart. That [sickness] has to come… it’s the burden of illness you know…’

I mentioned that another woman had said Ibu Siti had white blood.
'Usually if people get hazy vision, other people say that there’s white blood in their head…’ Ibu told me Ibu Siti’s family come from Dimba and Waworope, both on the north coast of Wawonii. Her husband is Tolaki.

Seven days later, Ibu Siti died.

**Sunday March 10th**

This morning, Ibu and I walked up to the house where Ibu Siti’s family lives. Today was the ceremony for the seventh day after her death. Ibu carried rice in a saucepan and a knife in her hand. Lots of other people were walking up the road too.

When we got there, women were already washing plates beside the well outside. Others were preparing food in the kitchen or beside the pots of boiling water under the tarpaulin out the back. Men were sitting in the chairs out the front, or cross-legged on the floor in the front room. We sat beside two older women on the floor in the middle room. Soon, Ibu went outside to help prepare the food. Some women took me into a bedroom where there were containers of cake, bananas and round trays. We began arranging the trays, called *haroa* in Wawonii language, which would be set out later after prayers. *Haroa* are only used for funerals. There were three trays, and they were all set out in the same way as I had seen at other funerals in Wawonii. On the trays were bananas, *wade* (cake), *tuturu* (round dry cake), *bolu kukus* (like cupcakes), a large *bolu* (dry cake) in the middle (around which everything else was arranged), a plate of cooked rice beneath the *bolu* and *lapa-lapa* (thin, glutinous rice snack in a banana leaf). Before everything was arranged on the trays, one woman whispered a prayer so quietly no one could hear it over the plates of boiled rice, which she raised right up to her lips. Then everything was set out around the *bolu* cake in the same way on each tray.
One of the women told me to go with Ibu Haji into the front room. Men wearing songkoks and sarongs were sitting round the circumference of the room cross-legged. In front of the imam, incense was burning in a small pot. He and two or three old men around him wore shawls over their shoulders. There were about thirty men there, including the village head of Labeau and Pak Haji. There was the usual chanting, singing and prayers. Only the men made any noise. The women sat with their heads bowed. When it was finished, the three trays we had arranged were brought out and put on the floor. Next, more trays of food were brought out. The men sat opposite each other, eating. Once all the men had finished and left, trays bearing hard boiled eggs, fish, noodles, green papaya, some vegetables and boiled rice were brought in for the women.

After we had eaten, the women who had been working in the kitchen came into the room and ate what was left on the trays. Soon, Ibu and I walked home, where we took an afternoon nap.

When I woke up, no one was in the house. I went for a walk. Outside the house where Haji Burhan had died last month, men were cutting wood. Ibu Yusuf was on the doorstep. She asked me to come inside and introduced me to her younger sister, who had just arrived from Kendari.

Ibu Yusuf made me some coffee and told me that the day after tomorrow is the forty-day ceremony for the death of her father, Haji Burhan. The sister from Kendari had brought lots of fruit and vegetables and sugar, flour and eggs for the occasion.

**Tuesday April 16th**
After breakfast, Ibu, Randi and I walked up to the forty-day ceremony\textsuperscript{411} for Ibu Siti. This ceremony was much bigger than the one immediately after Ibu Siti’s death. For the last two days, Ibu and the other women had been preparing the food.

The men sat in the front room in rows and outside on chairs on the left, while women sat on chairs on the right. People had come from as far away as Dimba and Lampiapi.\textsuperscript{412} The praying and speeches, which took over two hours, were performed by the old men – one imam and a couple of hajis – who always officiate at funerals and weddings in these small villages. Afterwards, we ate chicken, egg, beans, vegetables, rice and fish. It was getting cloudy, and I was exhausted, so I walked home with Bapak, Yudha and Randi. Ibu stayed behind, cleaning dishes.

\textbf{Haji Burhan and Ibu Kulsumi}

\textbf{Wednesday January 30\textsuperscript{th}}

Ibu Titin and I arrived at the funeral of a relative of hers, an old man from Labeau. There were about 150 people gathered outside three houses. The women were sitting in circles on banana palm leaves under the trees on the left, cutting pumpkin into chunks and chatting. The men were sitting on chairs in groups on the right, smoking and talking. Other men were splitting logs of wood beside one house. The wood was used for the fires that had been lit to cook the food. Four huge pots were set up over the fires behind the women chopping the pumpkin. Rice was cooking, and water was boiling. The women cutting pumpkin asked me to sit with them. Someone gave me a knife and I began chopping pumpkin. The women had heard

\textsuperscript{411}‘Pesta empat puluh hari kematian’.

\textsuperscript{412}Dimba is a village on the far north-eastern tip of Wawonii about half a day’s walk away. Lampiapi is located inland, almost a full day’s walk away.
about my most recent trip to Tumbrano waterfall. They were shocked that I went there by myself. They talked about evil spirits\textsuperscript{413} and djinn at Tumbrano and they all told me I should never go there by myself again.

One of the women took me inside. Men were sitting crosslegged in the front room. In the back room, eight men were reciting prayers for the dead man. Four women were seated with them. One of them was crying. The others looked dazed. The women did not recite prayers. One of those women, who looked very, very old, was the wife of the deceased. In the middle were some items that had belonged to the deceased: shawls, prayer mats, songkok, sarongs. About twelve women sat on a mat on the floor talking quietly. A few were crying. Four women who had just arrived sat and recited prayers with the men.

I went outside and sat with a big group of women under the trees. We chatted and laughed. Soon I started to feel tired, so I had a rest in the neighbouring house. When I woke up, it was still hot. I went back to the mourning house where everyone was gathered out the front. Some young men hoisted the corpse, wrapped in white cloth and prayer mats, up onto their shoulders. They walked slowly around the back of the house and up the hill to where there were two other graves and a hole had been dug to bury Haji Burhan. Everyone followed them. Three old men in songkoks, shawls and sarongs had just finished digging the grave. Haji Burhan’s corpse was lowered in. About five younger men shovelled dirt on top, while the three older men put a foot each on the corpse. When the grave had been filled with dirt, prayer mats were put on top of it and twenty men, including the village head of Labeau and the village head of Wawobeau, sat on the mats, with the imam at the front. A stone and a bowl with incense, ashes and smoke was put at the head of the grave.

\textsuperscript{413} ‘setan’ (Indonesian).
The men recited verses from the Qur’an. Everyone sat around watching. People climbed on top of nearby graves and sat on them to watch the men reciting. After about 15 minutes the prayers and recitations had finished, and everyone proceeded down the hill. Back at the house, people sat under the trees and talked. The women cleared plates and bowls away. More tea and coffee was brought out. Ibu and Bapak had gone home already. I said goodbye to people and left.

Three months later, Haji Burhan’s widow, Ibu Kulsulmi, also died in her sleep. Her funeral was almost the same as her husband’s ceremony had been. People cried and laughed; prayed and ate; cooked and chopped wood. Relatives came from all around Wawonii and also Kendari as they had done for her husband. The same imams officiated and the same village heads were present. Her funeral took place in the same part of the house as her husbands had. Ibu Kulsulmi was buried in a grave dug out directly beside her husband’s beneath the coconut palms on the small hill behind their house. After her corpse had been lowered into the grave and when the prayers and chanting were over, one of her sons announced that on May 25th, an important ceremony to remember Ibu Kulsulmi and Haji Burhan would be held at the house.

**Saturday May 25th**

Hundreds of people were at the ceremony when I arrived. The big tent was full. I took some photos, greeted people, and went inside. The people sitting cross-legged on the stage told me to come and sit with them. They all wanted their photos taken. It was 8am. There were prayers, and a woman sang a song in Arabic. The food was already on the tables. The imam, two hajis and three young girls dressed in white with colourful hijabs sat with Qur’ans on pillows in front of them. Someone I did not know started telling people I was a journalist. It was very hot and stuffy inside
the tent. The prayers and speeches went on and on while people talked and the women distributed the food.

Outside the tent, Pak Joni was sitting, smoking. He told me to sit beside him, so I did. We sat there talking while the ceremony went on. It started raining. Women and men out the back were washing plates and bowls. You could hear them squealing and splashing water over each other beneath the banana palms.

People were told it was time to eat. There was rice, beef, eggplant and egg. Everybody exiting the tent shook Pak Joni’s hand. A few of the women also kissed it. Some of them talked to me and shook my hand as well.

Pak Joni left, and I talked to some other men inside the tent. Now the people who had been doing all the work outside were coming in to get something to eat. One man who had been working out the back got annoyed because it was not an orderly process and there was no more beef left for those who had been cutting wood and cooking rice.

‘Don’t get emotional! Don’t get angry!’ said the woman sitting near me.

After a while, Ibu came in and got some food. Out the back, people were having a water fight. One man was completely soaked. Soon, Ibu and I walked home.

**Discussion**

The mortuary rites for Ibu Siti, Haji Burhan and Ibu Kulsulmi were all large-scale events for a village with a population of about 500 people. Although they were funerals, they were not only characterised by sadness and crying, but also by laughter and game-playing. Similar patterns appeared: women prepared food outside or in the kitchen; men cut wood for fires where rice would be cooked; praying, chanting and soft recitation of verses from the Qur’an took place;

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414 ‘Jangan emosi, Pak! Jangan marah-marah!’
people sat very close to the body of the recently-deceased, who was always wrapped in a white cloth after being washed; corpses were buried in family graves near the house of the deceased. Participation in these events was simply one of many village practices, both burdensome and enjoyable; these were simply practices that people undertook as members of the village. This is not to deny the energetic intensities oscillating throughout these mortuary rituals. These intensities varied depending on proximity to the deceased. Space was also a factor: closest family members touched and kissed the faces and hands of their deceased loved ones, remaining by them, reciting verses or softly crying. Conversely, water fights and laughter filled outside spaces where women cooked and men chopped wood.

Mortuary rituals are also landscapes within which bodily knowledges are contested. Upon hearing the biomedical narrative concerning the apparently thin lining of the uterus following too many strenuous births, my Ibu immediately contends with, ‘But we think, our ancestors…’ Apart from ancestral knowledge, the body is known through its (sometimes failing) functional and tactile capacities, as in Ibu Siti’s responses to massage and her weakened vision.

The work-intensive reality of life in Wawonii is starkly conveyed in this ethnographic material. Although the specificities of her illness were unknown, what was very clear indeed was that Ibu Siti died exhausted, having withered away both internally and externally, half-blind, her wrecked uterus shattered by the strain of birth after birth at a young age. After her death, my Ibu vividly recalled Ibu Siti’s dogged diligence at home, cooking, cleaning and washing until midnight, pushing her body to its limit with the same drudging tasks day after day. Throughout Indonesia, particularly in Java, excessive intensive work is considered harmful not necessarily because of its physical demands, but because it disturbs inner balance.

These excerpts show how desire in the village meets with two responses: work and words. Material desires require collective work since the money-based economy in Wawonii
is weak. Immaterial desires, such as those associated with the fate of souls following death, require ‘words against death’ (Davies 2002, p. 126): quiet chanting, recitation of Qur’anic verses, and the whispering of prayers.

The words which ensue become all the more powerful as a rhetoric of death, and against death, for they are the very words of an ongoing and living community (…) It is the very human nature which has, symbolically, died to itself in order to be submitted to God which now dies, physically, so that it may be resurrected to a new reality with God. (Davies 2002, p. 124)

**Conclusion**

This chapter has explored some of the dynamic processes which link cultural and religious understandings of death and mortuary ritual practices with soul loss, dreams and death-related practices. These practices tend to involve every member of a group and cause a suspension of normal day-to-day life. In non-industrial cultures suffering from a high mortality rate, they also occur with great regularity. (Bradbury 1999, p. 113)

As in other parts of Sulawesi, Wawonii mortuary rites, experiences of grief and the absences left behind by death are all social events, experienced collectively.415 The greatest differences between the purpose of mortuary rites in Wawonii and those of people in other parts of Sulawesi are marked by religion.416 Despite the predetermined ritual and symbolic

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415 Similar collective experiences have been documented in other temporal and spatial locations (Bradbury 1999, p. xi; Hertz 1960, p. 28).

416 The Buntao’ Toraja, for example, who are predominantly Christian, see death as being ‘co-extensive with the transformation of one’s deata (‘life-spirit’) into a bombo (‘black shadow’), and the most important purpose of the traditional rites of death is to initiate a process of transition through which one’s bombo is eventually ‘converted’ back into sumanga’ (Tsintjilonis 1999, p. 622).
practices enacted in Wawonii mortuary rites, the ethnographic material in this chapter has shown how,

as far as the bereaved are concerned, the body is first and foremost a site of personhood: a point at which persona, social existence, and the idiomatic soul interconnect. (Prior 1989, p. 20)

In ‘Magic, Science, Religion and Other Essays’ (1948), Malinowski argued that throughout all cultures and religions the idea of an afterlife or a rebirth is the primary method for assuaging fears of death. These afterlives and rebirths are a way of constructing relations with the unknown. The ‘relations of exteriority’ (DeLanda 2006, p. 10) by which death as an assemblage is characterised permeate families and villages in Wawonii. These relations extend beyond the grave in space and time, interacting with other assemblages and creating new ones.417 Constructed within these relations, those absent become present. Death may thus be understood both in terms of degeneration and regeneration.418

Wawonii people spoke about their surroundings as both dynamic and potentially threatening. Spirits with the power to kill may occupy animals (chickens, snakes, birds, octopi) and the environment (rivers, waterfalls, the wind, trees, the sea) before entering human bodies via dreams or the wind.419 Such spirits are found throughout the archipelago. In Java, for example, dhemit spirits are ‘found inhabiting tall trees, crossroads, wells, and many other localities’ (Magnis-Suseno 1997, p. 89). As the ‘Death and Dreams’ section of this chapter has

417 Clearly, this statement is not limited to Wawonii. In Sumba, for example, ‘[t]he link between the living and the dead is one of the basic social relationships of Laboya society and the well-being of the people depends on the quality of this relationship’ (Geinaert 2002, p. 33).
418 Cycles of generation-degeneration-regeneration have an extended history in Indonesia, particularly in relation to the body. In Java, for example, the wayang depicts numerous ‘battle[s] between a hero and a powerful adversary, in which the defeated adversary in death enters the hero’s body, adding to his conqueror’s strength’ (Anderson 1990, p. 28).
419 Similarly, a Cuna person whose soul has been ‘possessed by an outside spirit (...) appears as spirit in the dreams of fellow villagers, plural, and can even cause their deaths – not to mention the self-destruction of the seductive distinction between “inside” and “outside” a distinction which has more than its fair share, we might say, of erotic power, binding dreaming to that always-present, interiorized alterity shaped by longing for the Other’ (Taussig 1993, p. 130).
shown, it is not only the ‘situational and environmental factors that affect psychodynamic processes’ (Hollan 1989, p. 182); these affective energies go both ways, affecting bodies and relationships as well as ‘psychodynamic processes’. Rather than conceptualizing themselves as objects placed within an environment subjected to their manipulation, Wawonii peoples’ descriptions of mutually permeable ‘things’ (spirits, water, human bodies, animal bodies, words, dreams, wind) gave the impression of a series of fusions, de-fusions and re-fusions.\footnote{Similarly, ‘[t]hrough a series of related centres and navels’, the Toraja ‘transcend the relative boundaries of human bodies and fix human existence in a series of inter-related places’ (Tsintjilonis 1999, p. 640).}

In other words: becoming.
CHAPTER NINE

CONCLUSION

...[I]t is from the depths of the force that brought them into being and that remains in them, as though motionless yet still quivering, that things – in fragments, outlines, pieces, shards – offer themselves, though very partially, to representation. And from their inaccessible store, representation can draw out, piece by piece, only tenuous elements whose unity, whose point of connection, always remains hidden in that beyond. The space of order, which served as a common place for representation and for things, for empirical visibility and for the essential rules, which united the regularities of nature and the resemblances of imagination in the grid of identities and differences, which displayed the empirical sequence of representations in a simultaneous table, and made it possible to scan step by step, in accordance with a logical sequence, the totality of nature’s elements thus rendered contemporaneous with one another – this space of order is from now on shattered: there will be things, with their own organic structures, their hidden veins, the space that articulates them, the time that produces them; and then representation, a purely temporal succession, in which things address themselves (always partially) to a subjectivity, a consciousness, a singular effort of cognition, to the ‘psychological’ individual who from the depth of his own history, or on the basis of the tradition handed on to him, is trying to know.

- The Order of Things, Foucault
Why Wawonii?

‘Why Wawonii?’ Over the course of my PhD, I have been asked this question many, many times by Indonesians, Australians and others.

Why, indeed?

What lay behind this question generally depended on who was asking it. Usually, Indonesians (including Wawonii people) asked this question with a sense of puzzlement or confusion – Why Wawonii when I could have done research in Java or Bali (which is where many of these questioners proclaimed ‘culture’ was located)? Why choose a small, apparently insignificant island where life can be tough, where there are none of the conveniences of Java or Bali, and certainly none of the conveniences I must be used to back in Australia? Why go somewhere known either for black magic (among people in Kendari), or not known at all (among most Indonesians outside Sulawesi)? Why go somewhere without electricity, running water or a mobile phone network? Why go somewhere so far from my family in Australia?

At the very beginning of my fieldwork, I was checking into a hotel in Kendari before catching the boat to Wawonii the following day. One of the receptionists, Intan, said she was from Langara, the largest town on Wawonii. Initially, she seemed quite excited when I said I was going there the following day. As I explained I’d be doing a year of research in a village on the north coast of the island, however, the aforementioned puzzlement, along with a touch of concern, seeped into her voice.

‘But that’s a long way away and there’s no [mobile phone] network,’\textsuperscript{421} she said.

During my stay on Wawonii, I was to discover just how important the idea of ‘networks’ – whether social, political, historical, biological, ancestral, supernatural or mobile

\textsuperscript{421} ‘tapi di sana jauh sekali dan tidak ada jaringan.’
phone networks – really were. A network implies a relationship and Wawonii people relied on relationships not only for personal or emotional reasons but also to get practical things done.

About a month later, I was talking with a woman in Noko, a village on the north-east coast of Wawonii. She was worried about her unemployed 20-year-old son. I mentioned the cargo ships – Japanese, South Korean, American – that employ young men from Sulawesi and other parts of Indonesia. Maybe her son could apply for work there, as other Wawonii men had done? I told her they train and hire the men in Tanjung Priok.

‘Jakarta, yes… but you need a network,’ came the reply.

It was an acknowledgement that her family’s current social network was too restricted for him to gain access to that type of work. Informal networks were key. Informal social networks are not only paramount to the structural possibilities of village life in general, but they are seen as the primary, often the only, way to get things (jobs, for example) done.

Bodies are both the building blocks of these networks, in other words their structural parts, and the structures upon which the effects of these networks are felt. My work has explored how these networks exist through dynamic relationships within which bodies are both implicated and embedded. The body materializes within these relationships: the body and time (aging, death); the body and other bodies (touch, illness, reproduction); and the body and place (effects of weather, available nourishment and protection). In its elucidation of communication with spirits, ancestors and deceased relatives which appear in dreams, this thesis has shown how, although the body ages, becomes ill and eventually dies, these relationships are not trapped within a materialist framework of finitude. The extinguished body does not imply the extinction of these relationships, networks, linkages. In fact, since energy cannot be destroyed, even the extinguished physical body is not ‘gone’, but simply reconfigured. Such

422 ‘Jakarta ya... tapi harus ada jaringan.’
reconfigurations also take place emotionally, psychologically and socially. These forms of endurance exist on the plane of immanence, signalling the performance of what Deleuze and Guattari (1983, p. 1) term ‘desiring-production’.

So, why Wawonii? In the excerpts below, Wawonii people ask me this question while reflecting themselves on it. Further, they question what can be known about Wawonii by me, an outsider in a double sense. Firstly, and most obviously, I was an outsider owing to my cultural background, and secondly, I was an outsider to important forms of Wawonii ‘knowledge/magic’ (‘ilmu’). Often, as in some of the excerpts below, I was assumed to be an ‘expert’ within the realm of ‘pengetahuan’ knowledge. ‘Ilmu’ knowledge, however, was considered permanently beyond my capacities. Here, we can see how knowledge – whether ilmu or pengetahuan⁴²³ – is an event which requires participation, an activity in which only certain people, at certain times and locations, may perform. As an activity, it cannot be static. Rather than being something people ‘have’, it is something people ‘do’.

1.

Ibu Ani and I were sitting on the floor of her kitchen. She told me she’d been talking to her brother about my research. He’d asked her what kind of knowledge I can find on Wawonii.

Ibu Ani: What kind of knowledge are you getting here? Because here, there’s nothing here…

I tried to explain that I was studying social life in Wawonii.

⁴²³ Although I frame ilmu and pengetahuan here in an either/or construction, the two are frequently used together. For example, the Indonesian Institute of Sciences is known as LIPI (Lembaga Ilmu Pengetahuan Indonesia).
Ibu Ani: When I was in high school I studied sociology.424

2.

The ‘Becoming Dream-Spirit’ section of Chapter Seven details Ibu Na’ila’s comprehensive statement on what she considers health – beginning with nutrition and extending to dreams, feelings and thoughts – to be. Finally, she says,

so all these things stimulate health, so you have come here for these things but here there are not enough people to explain… because no one has ever done research here, now is the first time… Researching health, everything is health… health comes from food, everything, all kinds of things must (contain) health… including dreams, because what we dream always brings psychiatric (elements), usually we cry, particularly if we just dream here, don’t wander too much, if there’s no one here who can carry it out here, there aren’t enough students who can explain to people…

Ibu Na’ila seems to associate my activities with ‘expertise’ and concludes that there are no experts on Wawonii ‘to explain’. Implied in her statement is a distinction between the kind of knowledge I represent, the kind which I am seeking (expert explanations by ‘students who can explain to people’) and the knowledge located within Wawonii villages.

3.

I was sitting at a café with Bapak La Sita, a Wawonii man doing a PhD at a university in Makassar. He was explaining how people in Wawonii can go into a trance.425 Like Ibu Na’ila, he cites the necessity of ‘expert’ knowledge, the need for trances to be ‘scientifically proven’.

424 Ibu Ani: Ilmu apa yang kita dapat di sini? (...) karena di sini tidak ada apa-apa di sini... Saya masih SMA saya punya jurusan sosiologi...

425 Kena surupan
This is likely to reflect how he perceives me, my role and the sort of ‘information’ I was seeking when I asked him about trances.

Bapak La Sita: For example you know one way is that they can disappear. We can’t see them, they don’t speak clearly. It’s already certain that they don’t know who they are. Some types of trance are like that; further, they don’t know where they are, where they work, maybe they don’t even use their own name… maybe they don’t know. Maybe it’s like this, it really requires research, it really needs to be scientifically proven. That’s a part of anthropology, an approach, there’s a social approach, or socialization…

Bapak La Sita and I continued talking, moving on to the subject of Wawonii Number Two. Once again, he cites the need for ‘research’ to ‘prove’ its existence. He mentions ‘a marine scientist’. The story of Wawonii Number Two, he says, ‘certainly doesn’t make sense’. The ‘ancestors’ he mentions are ‘Ryukyu, Japanese people’. Bapak La Sita was the only person I encountered during fieldwork who spoke of Japanese ancestry in relation to Wawonii people.

Bapak La Sita: Yes, this story is certainly something that doesn’t make sense but fishermen there sometimes… or when they sail they see there is a type of island on the seabed. But this must be researched, it also needs research (to show/ prove) that it really is there… a marine scientist I think… there to prove that that Wawonii is not the current Wawonii, but there are two called Wawonii. The old Wawonii derives from the word ‘wawo’ and ‘ni’i’, ‘wawo’ means ‘at the top of’ and ‘ni’i’ is

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426Bapak La Sita: Misalnya caranya kan sudah dia mengabur kita tidak lihat bicara tidak jelas pun dia sudah pasti tidak tahu siapa dirinya gitu sebagian kesurupan kemudian dia tidak tahu berada di mana kerja di mana mungkin namanya sendiri sudah tidak dipakai … cara merupakan mungkin nggak tahu mungkin gitu ini memang perlu penelitian memang apa namanya buktikan ini secara ilmiah tapi itu bagian daripada anthropologi ah pendekatannya ada pendekatannya sosial atau bersosialisasi…

427 Described in detail in Chapters One and Two.
‘coconut’. So (...) this Wawonii is [the abode of] the noble descendents of Wawonii people. If we er, the logic that Wawonii is a noble who originates from the area of the ancestors maybe or… there.

Brooke: Where?

Bapak La Sita: Yes I believe earlier the ancestors, Ryukyu, Japanese people who were nobles there… so that it’s said ‘Wawonii’, ‘wawo’ ‘on top of’ but we don’t harm (...) sort of requirement of those noble people…

4.

Whereas respondents such as Bapak La Sita and Ibu Na’ila held the view that ‘expert’ knowledge was of paramount importance, Pak Muhammad has a more integrated perspective, one which highlights the importance of relationships, personal links, deeper connections (emotional, psychological, bodily, material), the establishment of an enduring set of networks through marriage. Such hypothetical networks would of course involve not only myself and a marriage partner, but also families, friends, neighbours and so on. Perhaps this is what Pak Muhammad means by ‘complete’ in the excerpt below: a complete set of relationships, networks, linkages, from which knowledge (in the form of ‘research’) would flow. In other words, ‘complete’ research is not that which is thorough, or based on truth-value, or research

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428 Bapak La Sita: Ya ceritanya memang sesuatu yang tidak masuk akal tapi kalau ada nelayan kadang-kadang di situ … atau berlayar melihat di situ ada semacam pulau dasar laut tapi ini kan harus penelitian ah perlu penelitian juga bahwa di situ memang ada … saya pikir ilmuwan ya tentang kelautan … di sana untuk buktikan bahwa Wawonii itu bukan ya Wawonii yang sekarang tapi ada dua namanya Wawonii tuh Wawonii itu kan berasal dari kata ‘wawo’ dan ‘nii’, ‘wawo’ itu ‘atas’ dan ‘nii’ itu ‘kelapa’ jadi bisa (?) bahwa Wawonii ini adalah keturunan bangsawan orang-orang Wawonii kalau kita anu logika kan bahwa Wawonii adalah bangsawan yang berasal dari daerah leluhur mungkin atau … sana

Brooke: Di mana?
Bapak La Sita: Ya saya percaya dengan tadi leluhurnya tadi itu Ryukyu orang Jepang yang bangsawan sana … sehingga itu dikatakan Wawonii ‘wawo’ ‘atas’ tapi kita nggak rugikan (?) macam eh syaratnya (?) itu orang bangsawan
which discovers something new or proves or disproves something. Instead, completeness is measured by the embeddedness from which it emerges and by which it is defined.

Pak Muhammad: Wawonii is unique but I have the feeling that your research won’t be complete if you don’t get married here.\textsuperscript{429}

Pak tells me about an Australian woman who married a Bajo man on Wakatobi while she was doing research there. They had two children. Pak tells me once more that I need to marry a Wawonii man so that my research is ‘complete’.\textsuperscript{430} He asks me if my parents are still alive, asks a few more questions about my family, about my marriage plans, my research, where I learnt Indonesian, and the details of my scholarship.

5.

Haji Mahmoud, his wife and I were sitting together in their lounge room in their Kendari house. Below, Haji Mahmoud makes a distinction between what can be imagined or known ‘using scientific knowledge’ as opposed to ‘esoteric knowledge’. The latter (‘ilmu’) is located in Wawonii, whereas the former (‘pengetahuan’) is associated with people such as me and places such as universities. In Haji Mahmoud’s view, a correspondence between these two knowledges does not seem possible or even imaginable. One of the many practical applications of ‘ilmu’ is ‘protection’ from harmful people and things. Haji Mahmoud’s words echo those of others with whom I spoke on Wawonii. Both the idea that there are different, non-corresponding forms of knowledge, with different applications, affecting different people at different times, and the idea that one of the main uses of ‘ilmu’ is ‘protection’ were commonly-held perspectives among the people with whom I spoke in Sulawesi. Fundamentally, both ilmu and pengetahuan were less about truth than they were about relationships operating according

\textsuperscript{429} Wawonii itu unik tapi rasanya tidak lengkap penelitiannya kalau tidak dapat jodoh di sini.
\textsuperscript{430} ‘lengkap’
to differential flows of power. The ‘Knowledge, Power, Reality’ section of Chapter Two and ‘The Regulative Potential of Power-Between’ section of Chapter Three explored the relational aspects of knowledge and power in Wawonii. As these dynamic forms of ‘knowledge’ coursed between individuals and groups, linkages emerged, reproduced, were dismantled and re-emerged in new forms, under new conditions. Since only certain types of relationships are possible between certain people at certain times, knowledge is seen not as a quest for an objective truth ‘out there’ but as embedded within these specific conditions.

Haji Mahmoud tells me he hopes I can meet a lecturer at Hasanuddin University, Makassar. His wife interrupts to tell me that one of her children died in 1980. I say that was the year I was born. Haji Mahmoud says that one of his uncles, a ship captain, lives in the USA. Older members of his family went to the USA during the colonial time.

‘In Wawonii there is a lot of esoteric knowledge which people can’t imagine using scientific knowledge.’

Brooke: ‘Black magic?’

Haji Mahmoud: ‘Yes, no…’

Brooke: ‘No?’

Haji Mahmoud: ‘Yes knowledge… which means we are protected from all disturbances, thieves or anything…’

Brooke: ‘For protection?’

Haji Mahmoud: ‘Yes, for protection…’

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431 Haji Mahmoud: Di Wawonii itu banyak ilmu yang tidak bisa disangka dengan ilmu pengetahuan
Brooke: Ilmu hitam?
Haji Mahmoud: Ya, bukan
Brooke: Bukan?
In a (coco)nutshell

This thesis has endeavoured to explore the ways in which bodies emerge along the lines of tension between emic and etic perspectives. Using narrative ethnography and other approaches, such as a minor ethnography, I have looked at bodies in Wawonii configured within various realms ranging from myth to history to language. These bodies materialize through processes of becoming over time in numerous transitory spaces: birth, circumcision, menstruation, menopause, illness and death. Spaces imply centres and peripheries. Indeed, as my work in Wawonii shows, under certain conditions, particular bodies appear on peripheries, while others are located in centres. None of these positions is secure; as processes of becoming develop, bodies move or are moved from and between locations. The dynamic potentialities, or the virtual aspect, of the body present challenges, sometimes even threats, to regimes of power.

The circumcision practices described in Chapter Three and the practices of *mewowa* and *merarane* described in Chapter Four are some of the bodily rituals embedded in dynamics of power in Wawonii. Peripheral or untamed, uninitiated bodies are problematic because they represent outer extremes, points of weakness, potential rupture, decay or dissemination. Pollution enters from the periphery and since the structure is invested in maintaining its own integrity, peripheries must be policed.

The necessity for such policing practices is clear also in Chapter Five. This chapter explored the ways wind (*angin*) enters physical bodies and the dangers this presents. Specific types of wind, linked to temperature, time and environment, must be repelled in order to avoid illness and harm (whether physical or spiritual) in general.

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Haji Mahmoud: *Ya ilmu,... artinya kita selamat dari segala gangguan, perampok atau apa segalanya*
Brooke: *Untuk menjaga?*
Haji Mahmoud: *Ya untuk menjaga...*
Chapter Six explored energy and temperature as Deleuzean ‘events’ capable, like angin, of threatening the integrity of the body. Within these ‘events’, suffering links both living and non-living bodies. These bodies themselves and the wider social bodies of which they are a part are unstable sites of transformation. They resonate, disintegrate, re-align themselves. They become knowable within metamorphosing frameworks of relations. Within these structures, they are linked via their sensory capacities, which are both productive and reactive. Knowledge develops within these dynamic relations; ontologies of the body appear. One of the fundamental points of this thesis has been to explore how life in Wawonii (as it relates to the body) pushes the constraints of conventional anthropological epistemologies. As my work has shown, bodies are endowed with significance by virtue of the social, cultural and historical situations in which they appear at specific points in time. Like the body, these situations are energetic sites generating change and subject to flux. Neither physical nor social bodies stand still.

Between these dynamics emerge the liminal spaces explored in Chapter Seven. Liminal spaces, in Wawonii as elsewhere, are characterized by ambiguity, uncertainty, danger. They are dynamic fields of tension where relations and relationships emerge, fuse, splinter off, become other. The body exists in and through these spaces, which are where the limits of conventional ethnographic conceptual frameworks are challenged.

For the new – in other words, difference – calls forth forces in thought which are not the forces of recognition, today or tomorrow, but the powers of a completely other model, from an unrecognised and unrecognisable terra incognita (Deleuze 1994, p. 136).

How does the ethnographer deal with dreams, for example, which are liminal insofar as they are simultaneously ‘real’ and ‘unreal’? Chapter Seven discusses how, within Ibu Lina’s dreams, the actual is displaced by the virtual. As Chapter Seven shows, in Wawonii, under
particular conditions, liminal spaces allow people to ‘become kebal’. Within liminal spaces, reality itself is problematized. Liminal spaces are social spaces. They may threaten to become spaces of abjection for those, such as Yenti, who drift unintentionally into them. This thesis has shown how emergent forms of knowledge (both ilmu and pengetahuan) must endure the becomings through which they are born. Particularly in liminal spaces, emergent forms of embodied knowledge gather in intensity, demanding the crisis\textsuperscript{432} be resolved, the ambiguity straightened out. This can be seen in the problem of Yenti’s pregnancy. The threat of abjection means that the sorts of liminal spaces examined in this thesis must be avoided. Yet, these are not only spaces of abjection, they are also defined by the potential for growth, ambiguity and curiosity. As an outsider, the ethnographic work I carried out over the twelve months I was in Wawonii was carved out within such liminal spaces from which I, unlike Yenti, could not be rescued.

Now the strange thing about this silly if not desperate place between the real and the really made-up is that it appears to be where most of us spend most of our time as epistemically correct, socially created, and occasionally creative beings. We dissimulate. We act and have to act as if mischief were not afoot in the kingdom of the real and that all around the ground lay firm. That is what the public secret, the facticity of the social fact, being a social being, is all about (Taussig 1993, p. xvii).

In the final chapter, death as an intense form of becoming is explored. Liminal spaces are also characteristic of this time, particularly in the period between physical death and burial. Dangers arise, such as the danger of soul loss. Social and religious frameworks are required to contain the threats to the souls of the dead and the bodies of the living during these times. These frameworks arise in the practices associated with mortuary rites. Wawonii funerals are

\textsuperscript{432} While liminality cannot always be equated with a ‘crisis’, in the specific case of Yenti’s pregnancy, I would characterise her liminal status in this way.
understood as landscapes within which bodily knowledges are contested. People reach for religious and ancestral knowledge during these times of uncertainty. According to Islamic eschatology, the immediate period after death is a period of transition from mortality to immortality (whether in heaven or damnation). Language accompanies this transition process: prayers, chants and recitations are required to ensure a smooth progression. Here, language imbues some structure on an event which otherwise threatens to immerse those remaining in chaos. Death is an event which begins with the failure of networks on the cellular level as the blood-surge ceases, veins slacken, lungs deflate. As these dynamic biological structures falter, others – those involving family, relatives, friends, religious figures – re-surface, re-assert their bonds, re-intensify their alliances. Together with language, social structures emerge to fortify the community at times of danger and vulnerability.

**Ethnographic writing as an assemblage**

Rather than presenting the ‘facts’ discovered about Wawonii during fieldwork, and then engaging in a systematic evaluation, I have sought to explore both the ethnographic and theoretical sections of this thesis as dynamic assemblages. Within these spaces, I have sought to fuse academic theory with accounts of how bodily aspects of everyday life in Wawonii undergo processes of becoming.

The language I want is just the language that runs along the seam where matter and myth connect and disconnect continuously (Taussig 2004, p. xviii).

As I have discussed, temporality is understood in terms of similar processes of fusion. Rather than presenting this as some sort of ‘cultural’ oddity, I recognize that there are universal aspects to these mergings; these are human, rather than specifically Wawonii, experiences. As Benjamin (1969, p. 261) writes:
History is the subject of a structure whose site is not homogenous, empty time, but time filled by the presence of the now \textit{[jetztzeit]} (Benjamin 1969, p. 261).

My work in Wawonii questions what it means to know viscerally, to know not within familiar spaces of representation but outside those realms, in spaces where islands rise above the sea and people make themselves immune to black magic. Entering into these spaces we leave behind conventional realms where anthropology colludes in the construction of concept/thing dichotomies. Instead, concepts and things are both recognized as energy, motion, vibration, in other words becomings. In this way, we avoid disfiguring aspects of Wawonii peoples’ realities by doing what has been done so often by baffled anthropologists – stamping ‘the field’ and those within it with our familiar frameworks of representation, symbolism, functionalism. This is not to deny that representation, symbolism and functional aspects of life exist in a place such as Wawonii. It is, however, to allow that which does not exist within these structures (a mimetic second island, for example) to thrive and be recognised.

The ethnographic sections of my work show how, when Wawonii people face situations of bodily crisis, such as illness,

the issues of “how” and “why” are folded into one another; etiology is simultaneously physical, social and moral. A cause of my physically obvious distress is to be located in my nexus of social relations involving someone else’s unjustly called-for malevolence. This property of my social nexus expresses itself in physical symptoms and signs. My disease is a social relation, and therapy has to address that synthesis of moral, social and physical presentation. (Taussig 1992, p. 85).

My work has been an exploration of such foldings, nexuses, relations and syntheses. Rather than having pretensions towards some sort of explanatory power, my work is a restless
movement between self and other, swaying, losing focus, lurching between the material and the mystical, emerging from the sea and the wind all at once, incomplete, a never fully analysable excess sustained by an unknown and unknowable body.
Appendix

Everything starts with a question. Most of this thesis has been written from the perspective of the questions (stated or implicit) which I had for my Wawonii respondents. But they had questions for me too. A strange-looking foreigner wandering into a village in a remote island is bound to trigger curiosity and it is part of the self-reflexive task of the anthropologist to be open to these questions, nurture them, feel their sharp edges or their fuzziness, deal with the complexities that emerge from answers, admit to the puzzlement that results from some questions and engage in the emotional work that comes with facing another’s questions. This appendix lists some of the many questions Wawonii people had for me. They appear in no particular order. I feel it is important to include the concerns, queries, curiosities of the people I worked with in their own words, albeit in translation. Part of any self-reflexive approach is the obvious acknowledgement that questioners are not above or beyond being questioned themselves. Also, I think these questions provide an interesting reflection of Wawonii peoples’ perspectives on me, on what I was doing there and on any potential usefulness I may have for them. They reflect the things Wawonii people felt could be said between us. It would be impossible to list every question that was asked of me. I have listed recurring questions, the questions that seemed to puzzle people most and the most urgent questions. Certain themes are noticeable. The body is a persistent concern. Issues ranging from the esoteric (magic practices, spirits) to the mundane (money, jobs) are important to people. Many people seem to think that I have some special knowledge about sickness, medicine or healing processes. Also, many questions inquire specifically about Australia, or more generally about the world beyond Wawonii (‘di sana’ – ‘there’, as many people put it). I have not categorised them because I want the questions to stand on their own. This way, readers may notice their own patterns in them. Unfortunately, there is no space here for a detailed exploration of what
these questions mean, what sort of people asked them and in what specific context, how I answered them and so on. That is a project for the future.

Questions

- What’s your religion?
- Do you know an Australian man I can marry?
- Are unmarried women in Australia allowed to have sex?
- Are unmarried women in Australia allowed to obtain contraception?
- Have you been to Tumbrano waterfall?
- Aren’t you afraid of evil spirits at Tumbrano waterfall?
- Do people in Australia have many children?
- Do you have any medicine?
- Have you been sick in Wawonii?
- Do you believe that people with pure hearts won’t be affected by magic and will be loved by the people in their village?
- How do you feel, living in Wawonii for so many years?
- Do you want to get married in Wawonii?
- When are you getting married?
- Where is the man whom you are going to marry?
- Doesn’t the heat make you sick?
- How long are you staying in Wawonii?
- When are you going to Kendari?
- How long are you staying in Kendari?
- When are you going to Jakarta?
- When are you going back to Australia?
- What medicine would you recommend giving someone who has stopped speaking?
- Why are you interested in talking about widowed and divorced women?
- Did you become thin when you were working part time while studying in Australia?
- Why did my thin relative with high blood pressure suddenly die?
- Do you want to eat now?
- Do you want to wash now?
- Has the boat from Lansilowo arrived yet?
- How much did the food you bought in Kendari cost?
- Can you take some cakes from Wawonii back to Australia as a present for your family?
- How many brothers and sisters do you have?
- Are you the youngest sibling?
- Are your parents still alive?
- Why did your father die?
- Why didn’t your mother re-marry?
- You are from a rich family, aren’t you?
- Was your father a businessman?
- Who is funding your studies?
- How much money does your mother give you every month?
- When were you born?
- Are there Muslims in Australia?
- How long does it take to get from Australia to Indonesia?
- How much is the airfare to Australia?
- Have you heard Poppo’s ‘Po! Po!’ or Kandoli’s ‘Kri! Kri!’ noise at night?
- Weren’t you afraid to come to Wawonii by yourself?
- Aren’t you afraid of magic on Wawonii?
- Are you still a virgin?
- What medication should I take to cure my cyst?
- What medication should I take to cure childlessness?
- What’s the customary law in Australia regarding dreams about dead relatives?
- Do you usually dream?
- Do Australian women smoke?
- It’s not hot in Australia, is it?
- There (in Australia) no one knows mantras, do they?
- Are there any fish for dinner at your house tonight?
- What’s your advice about what we should eat and drink?
- Do you want to be injected?
- Did you bring a syringe?
- When you go back to Australia, you’ll become white again, won’t you?
- Are there black snakes in Australia?
- Are there lots of evil spirits in Australia?
- Have you ever fasted?
- Do you dream about dead people?
- Have you been to Menui Island?
- Do you know any descendants of the Wawonii royal family?
- Do you know the spirit that eats people?
- Do you know the spirit that changes into a person, then an animal, then a cardboard box?
- Do you know about the female spirit called Kuntilanak?
- Have you seen Poppo’ yet?
- In Australia there aren’t any spirits that suck blood and eat peoples’ stomachs, are there?
- Do you know about the banyan tree, which is the home of the spirits of the forest?
- Do you know what a machete is?
- Do you know how to become invulnerable/immune to magic?
- Have you walked to Tumbrano waterfall alone?
- Have you swum in the river beneath Tumbrano waterfall?
- Sharks in the sea in Australia aren’t too vicious, are they?
- Do sharks in Australia regularly eat people?
- Do you understand what animism is?
- Do you believe in Wawonii magic?
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