

**From Labor to Cash:
Gender, Transformation and *Rewang* among Poor People
In Rural Java, Indonesia**

Pande Made Kutanegara (Universitas Gadjah Mada)

pkutanegara@yahoo.com

“That afternoon, in one of the villages in rural areas of Yogyakarta, an old woman in shabby and poorly dress pensive sitting next to her house which was very modest: woven bamboo walls and dirt floors. In a glance, her performance showed that she was poor. After being approached, she mentioned her confusion of the contributions should be paid to the neighbors who had a celebration. As a close neighbor, she had to attend a wedding party in the village hall's head office which located about 2 kilometers from the village. In addition, she also had to donate some money. In the past, before there was a custom to have a celebration in a meeting hall, she was still be able to help out in the kitchen by becoming a cook or washing dishes at the celebration's owner house. Usually she would do the helping at the house for a couple of days. But lately along with the parties frequently being held at the conference hall and the emergence of the habit of using catering services, chances to help the neighbors in the form of offering labor was missing. She had to find a job in order to contribute in form of money to a neighbor who had a celebration. If not, she would be considered 'uncommon' and would be the subject of gossip in the village. Fear of being the subject of gossip and excluded from social activities caused her pensive and thinking hard how to get more cash to fulfill the social obligations. Meanwhile, her work as a laborer was not providing her more money and the frequency was getting limited too”.

1. Celebration Season in Javanese Rural Society

In the Java rural community, especially in Yogyakarta Special Region, there are days and certain months which consider to be a good time to do ceremonies related human life cycle. These days are not only related to the calculation of days and months which considered to be 'good' in terms of religion and local customs, but also well related with the calculations of the modern society, especially school holidays. The days which consider as a good time, both by custom and religion, usually are in *bulan besar*, *Mulud* and *Sapar*. In association to school holidays, the good days are usually just in time of the school holidays, which is around June to July and days off after Eid al-Fitr which is around August. Up to one week after Eid al-Fitr, usually most of the urban people who *mudik* or going home to the village to celebrate the feast day were still in their villages and have not returned to the cities yet. Eid al-Fitr vacation opportunity is then used to perform ceremonial activities, especially the wedding ceremony. Gathering of relatives and distant relatives who are usually scattered in different regions and cities is considered to be a good time to celebrate a wedding ceremony which is more efficient in terms of financing.

The combination of economic calculation, time, and both custom and religion has led to a concentration of ceremonies on certain days and months. Rural communities in Java called it as *bulan ewuh* (months of party /busy months). During these months, there is a change in the atmosphere of rural Java. Rural

atmosphere which was quiet daily suddenly transformed into busy bustling villagers preparing a variety of ceremonial purposes, while others went to the venue of the ceremony. Some houses which used as the venue began preoccupied with various preparations so the owners invited neighbors and relatives to work in decorating the houses with a string of young coconut leaves, put up tents and so forth. Usually this activity would also be accompanied by Javanese traditional music played continuously throughout the day. To prepare for the wedding ceremony, there was usually a division of labor between men and women. Women are mainly working to prepare the food, such as cooking rice and side dishes, making tea and coffee, and receiving guests. Meanwhile, the men worked to put up tents of bamboo and sometimes they also helped preparing drinks for the guests. Young women were also busy helping the women cooking and preparing decorations to be put in the bridal chamber. Then young men were busy making tents of bamboo too and also preparing *sinoman* (conveyor for drinks and food, both before and during the party). Such a pattern occurs when the wedding party was held in the house of the celebration owner.

However currently there was a gradually shifting pattern of ceremony execution. Some households were no longer using tent from bamboo, but have rented a tent made of iron poles with a roof of tarpaulin. When installing the hood, men in rural areas lost their role because all of the tents were set up and dismantle by the owner of the tent as a part of their responsibility to the tenants. Similarly to that, the role of rural women which was usually hectic became greatly diminished when a party was held at the conference hall. Since this kind of party usually would be accompanied by the use of catering as caterers. In such a situation, the role of women and men in rural areas in the celebration are slowly decreased, even disappeared altogether.

The selection of the wedding ceremony venue is mostly dependent on the size of the event and also on the number of invited guests. When the number of invited guests is considered quite a lot, the execution of the wedding party is usually held in the spacious hall which have a large parking area.¹ Given the number of guests who come are usually in the hundreds, even thousands, in addition to requiring a large space, it also requires the preparation of food in large quantities. This is one of the reasons their using a provider of food catering services. The habits of using catering services are common in urban areas, but very rare in rural Java. But lately such phenomena are intensifying. Some parties, especially which held by those who are economically able to provide it, will consider the use of catering services are much more efficient and practical than preparing the meals in their homes even though the party is executed at home. They will just pay the cost according to the amount and quality of food to the catering company and the catering company will prepare the

¹ One of the new phenomenon in rural Java is the increasing number of car ownership. Various government programs, such as the production of low-price cars, along with the ease of getting credit from banks and an increase in people's income, especially the teachers who get certification allowances, significantly has led to an increasing number of car ownership in rural areas. Car as a symbol of status normally are used as a means of transportation when attending the wedding party of relatives and neighbors. A large number of cars that attended the wedding ceremony often caused new density on rural roads. It also drives of change in the party which usually held at the houses to be moved in conference halls with a large parking area.

food and serve the guests at the same time. One of the informants who was a mother and just used the catering services for the wedding of her daughter stated as follows.

"Catering services are very beneficial because it is practical and we don't have to bother to prepare a variety of materials needs to eat at home. The house is kept clean and not crowded and busy by neighbors who helped prepare the food (*rewang*). We don't need to bother to send food to the neighbors who helped during the preparation of the wedding ceremony"

Various changes to the format of the wedding ceremony in rural Java, particularly changes in the party location, the use of tents and the development of using catering services brings great impact and implications for the majority of poor households, particularly women of poor households in rural Java.

This paper would discuss the impact of changes in food supply in the celebration in rural Java which originally being prepared by themselves all together and involved a lot of women in rural areas to then changed to be done by a catering company. What are the effects on poor women in rural areas and what strategies they have to resolve the problem?

2. Socio-Economic and Cultural Transformations in Rural Java

Seeing from socio-economic side, people in rural Java in general have experienced exploitation since the Dutch colonial period. The Dutch government policy have made plantation crops as an export commodity which has led to excessive expansion of the agricultural lands in rural Java. In Yogyakarta and surrounding areas (*Vorstenlanden*), The Dutch rent farms in rural areas from the palace of Yogyakarta and Surakarta. They developed plantations of sugarcane, tobacco, *nila*, coffee and tea in very wide areas, even taking the lands of farmers which originally planted rice and plant food ingredient suppliers. In order to reduce the cost, the Dutch colonial government introduced a system of forced cultivation (*sistem tanam paksa*) which turned rural people as workers who worked and planted their own land with plants in accordance with the command of the Dutch colonial government. To that end, the farmers did not get wages and only granted the right to manage the land which was not used as plantation. This has led to a very low and bad economic conditions for the rural people population in Java. Their living in poverty, while millions of guilders export proceeds flew to the Dutch colonial government. According Suhartono (2002), the rural people of Java has become laborers in their own land, with very low levels of income which insufficient to sustain their daily lives. In addition to not having sufficient agricultural land, as agricultural lands (belonging to the palace) has been leased to Dutch colonial government, they were also forced to work on plantations owned by Dutch colonial government.

Relatively the same situation also happened during the presence of the Japanese when they occupied Java which in conjunction with the Greater East Asia War. War which involving large numbers of troops required many food supplies. Therefore, the rural Javanese people was forced to submit material food in form of rice, rice, maize, and cassava, as well as cattle, goats and so on as the food supply for the Japanese troops. Conditions of poverty and hunger in rural Java widespread outbreak at the time of the Japanese occupation of

Indonesia. After independence, especially in the Old Order, relatively similar conditions still found in rural areas. No significant changes in the social and economic for nearly twenty-five years of the Old Order.

Significant changes began in the middle of the New Order, along with the increasing number of development programs implemented in rural Java. Through policies and programs of green revolution in the early and mid-New Order, efforts to increase income of farmers conducted by agricultural intensification using quality seeds, fertilizer and pesticide usage. At almost the same time, urban development also required a lot of manpower so it attracted rural people to migrate and worked in informal sector as construction workers, factory workers, selling meatballs, drivers, as well as being an employee for those upper middle people. They worked far from their hometowns, such as in Jakarta, Bandung, Bogor, Semarang, Surabaya, but some only worked in the nearest town, such as Yogyakarta, Surakarta, and so on. Young women also went to the cities to be domestic servitude, factory workers, and worked in the informal sector. This fact lasted until today with many young people perform mobility outside the region. In order to seek a better life, they were willing to leave the villages to big cities, even some working abroad, such as in the Middle East, Malaysia, Hong Kong, Taiwan, South Korea and Japan. For those who lived far away from their home areas, they would return home only once a year (*mudik*), for example on the day of Eid al-Fitr. While those who worked close-by went home periodically once a month or once a week. Those who worked near-by their homes even traveling back and forward or *nglaju*, which departed in the morning and returned home in the afternoon. In the past they were using bicycles to do the trip, but now more of them were using motorbikes. The number of motorcycles increased rapidly in recent years has led to tremendous congestion on suburban streets, either in the morning or in the afternoon. Limitations of economic resources in rural Java have been circumvented by the majority of rural residents by working in urban areas.

The departure of the rural people, especially the young ones, have led to domination of housewives, children and old men in the daily life of rural Java. These people are the backbone in managing agricultural sector in rural areas. Activities to maintain the plant, looking for grass to feed livestock, harvesting, and selling crops are done by women. Therefore the contribution of labor of women and children to the household economy is very high. Donations of men in the agricultural sector are only to the activities of land preparation and planting.

3. New Order and Poverty Phenomenon in Rural Java

In contrast to the socio-economic and welfare condition of people before the New Order which was in very bad condition, the New Order government which came to power in 1966 instigated several programmes. It focused on overall economic growth as the main way to combat poverty. Since 1969, a series of Five-Year Development Plans (*Repelita: Rencana Pembangunan Lima Tahun*) have been launched as its major frameworks. The first *Repelita* concentrated on the agricultural sector as the engine of development: the government started to build and repair dams and irrigation systems and to expand agricultural service and crop

intensification through the Green Revolution. The immense investments in technology and infrastructure resulted in a rapidly and sharply increasing agricultural production. This was accompanied by what came to be known as the 'Colt Revolution' by which new means of transportation became available and the general infrastructure of transport and communication improved: rural areas became accessible to urban traders and cities and urban markets came within reach of the rural population. (Hefner, 1990:2; Koning, 1997:12; Kragten, 2000; Singarimbun, 1994). As a consequence, during the New Order period the social organization of the countryside gradually changed together with economic conditions. In many areas predominantly subsistence-oriented agriculture gave way to commercial production and increased non-farm employment. This had an impact on the incidence of poverty, because all in all the percentage of poor in the total population went down from about 50 per cent around 1970 to 15 per cent in 1995.² However, the economic crisis of 1997-1998 is considered as a turning point in economic growth in Indonesia, so that the poverty rate increased again in Indonesia. ILO (1998) reported that the number of poor has increased substantially. In 1998, the number of the poor was 98.8 million people, almost half of the Indonesian population. The figures for 1999 was even worse with about 137.8 million people, or 66.3 per cent Indonesia being poor (Sukamdi, 2013). After the reform, economic growth in Indonesia increased rapidly, so that poverty has decreased significantly. BPS data (2012) shows the decline in the poverty rate in Indonesia from 25.72 per cent in 1998 to 13.33 per cent in 2010.

Poverty reduction ran parallel to the reconstruction of the national economy. During most of the New Order years, the average annual growth rate of the national economy was around 8 per cent. This growth rate, and in particular the fact that it seemed to indicate a stable growth, gave the impression in Indonesia and abroad that the country was to become one of the big and strong economies of the 21st century (Hill, 1996: 5). During 1993-1997, the economy grew at an average rate of 7.06 per cent, which abruptly declined to around 1 per cent in 1998-2000, then increased to 4.73 per cent in 2000-2007 (Sukamdi, 2013), and more recently to 6.5 per cent annually between 2000 and 2010 (Burke and Resosudarmo 2012:301).

But although poverty has decreased considerably, the 13 per cent of poor people in 2010 means that one in eight Indonesians still lived below the poverty line of less than a dollar per day, and has not been able to benefit from economic growth. Although the national economy has almost doubled since 2000³, a large proportion of people still live in poverty and face daily difficulties in making ends meet. According to a 2012 World Bank Country Report: "Out of a population of 234 million, more than 32 million Indonesians currently live below the poverty line and approximately half of all households remain clustered around the national

2 Hill (1995) gives a figure of 47 per cent in 1971; The Central Bureau of Statistics (BPS 2000) puts the proportion of poor in 1970 at 60 per cent.

³ The country's gross national income per capita has steadily risen from \$ 2,200 in 2000 to \$ 3,720 in 2009, and it continues to grow at rates above 6 – 6.5% annually (www.worldbank.org country overview, accessed February 2013).

poverty line set at [a very low] 200,262 rupiahs per month (\$22)".⁴ Poverty in Special Region of Yogyakarta also quite significant decrease of 20.14 per cent in 2000 to 16.05 per cent in 2012 (Bappeda DIY, 2012).

Table
Total and Percentage of Poor by Areas in Yogyakarta Special Region, 2000-2012

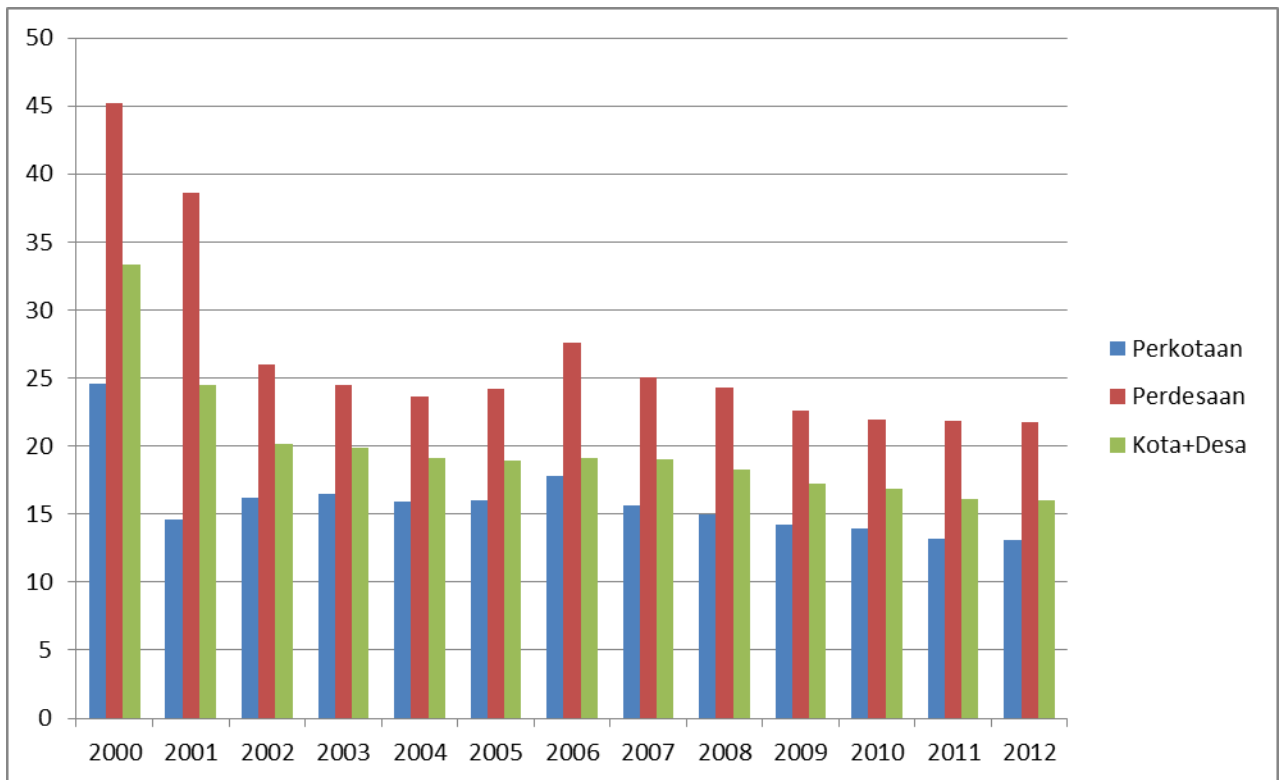
Year	Urban		Rural		Urban+Rural	
	Total	Percentage	Total	Percentage	Total	Percentage
2000	436.6	24.58	599.2	45.17	1,035.8	33.39
2001	266.8	14.56	500.8	38.65	767.6	24.53
2002	303.8	16.17	331.9	25.96	635.7	20.14
2003	303.3	16.44	333.5	24.48	636.8	19.86
2004	301.4	15.96	314.8	23.65	616.2	19.14
2005	340.3	16.02	285.5	24.23	625.8	18.95
2006	346.0	17.85	302.7	27.64	648.7	19.15
2007	335.3	15.63	298.2	25.03	633.5	18.99
2008	324.2	14.99	292.1	24.32	616.3	18.32
2009	311.5	14.25	274.3	22.60	585.8	17.23
2010	308,4	13,98	268,9	21,95	577,3	16,83
2011	304,3	13,16	256,6	21,82	560,9	16,08
2012	305,9	13,13	259,4	21,76	565,3	16,05

Source: BPS, 2013

Although the poverty rate has decreased significantly in Yogyakarta Special Region, accelerating the decline always differs between urban and rural areas. The poverty rate in rural areas is higher than the urban areas. Early in 2000 a decrease in the poverty rate was much faster in urban than in rural areas. Although in a few moments later over time, the percentage of poverty in rural areas was also quite significant. Overall, both in absolute and percentage, the poverty rate in rural areas was much higher than the urban areas. This indicates that the problem of poverty and the implications will be far more in rural areas than in urban areas.

⁴ www.worldbank.org country overview Indonesia (accessed February 2013).

Figure
Poverty Trends in Yogyakarta Special Region
by Regions



4. Exchanges and Reciprocity in Javanese Rural Areas

Wedding ceremony is one of many ceremonies which are considered very important for Java community. Therefore, each household will try to execute the ceremony properly. Rich households will organize it on a large scale, while on the contrary, poor households will organize it in a simple, but still festive. Regardless the size of the event, the wedding ceremony will also involve the relatives and neighbors surrounding. The presence of relatives and neighbors are not only intended to witness the ceremony as a symbol of social legality, but also contributing to the success of the event.

As a form of assistance from relatives and neighbors, usually they can contribute their labor, goods, or even money to the celebration. They will try to help each other when one of them has an event or difficulties in life. Mutual help activities is one of very important social activities in rural Java. Throughout the human life cycle ceremonies, such as birth, circumcision, marriage, and death, usually the neighbors, relatives, and friends will come to help. Thus, the burden of social, economic and psychological responsibilities will become lighter. At other times, those who have received the donations will do the same too. Assistance can be given in form of labor, money and goods of daily needs, especially to be used in the event. Habits for mutual aid among community members has led to the process of exchange in the form of money, goods and labor. Through these activities, in addition to the burden can be alleviated, the social relations among members of the community are well-established. Therefore, in the mutual assistance, in addition to economic and social value, there is also a symbolic value as a form of social solidarity rural Java (Koentjaraningrat, 1974). Through that kind of activity, the rural people of Java have develop *guyub* values and harmony.

Some classic papers on Javanese culture suggested that rural Javanese communities were living in harmony and full of mutual help activities. Koentjaraningrat (1974) explained that the reciprocity relationship was very strong in rural Java. In the rural areas of Java, a household must first maintained a good relationship with the surrounding neighbors, with other families in the same hamlets, then with another families who lived in another hamlets. Emphasizing at first to nurturing the good relation with the neighbors indicates the role and function of the neighbors are very important for rural communities. Good rapport, even overcome the good relations with relatives who are in more remote places. Form of this good relationships could be reveal in various ways of mutual help, such as inviting them to the ceremonies and sending food when holding a celebration, bringing souvenirs after traveling, and do *sambat-sinambat* for jobs around the house and farm. In addition, they also conduct *tetlung layat* activities when the neighbors experience the unfortunate death and illness. Contributing when the neighbors or relatives having a celebration has become a necessity in rural Java. Besides of donating, assistance in the form of labor when the neighbors hold an event also is an obligation which must be carried out, particularly for women in rural Java.

Reciprocity refers to exchanges of goods and labor between individuals and/or groups (Dalton 1961; 1968; Polanyi 1968; Swartz and Jordan 1976; Sahlins 1965; 1974). Reciprocity can either be symmetrical or asymmetrical. In the first case it involves exchanges between social equals, like when a farmer invites his neighbor to the ritual meal (*kenduri* or *selamatan*) for his new-born baby. At another occasion, when the neighbor's wife has given birth, the invitation will go in the opposite direction. In that exchange, people are not fundamentally different socially and consider each other to be equally-footed members of the same community.

If the relationship is asymmetrical, exchanges will have the form of redistribution. This can either be the case when a wealthy farmer invites people to his daughter's wedding or when the village head summons

villagers to contribute to the expenses of the village festival and to come and help prepare the festival. In that case, authority and inequality are involved, either of a patron vis-à-vis his clients or of a village head vis-à-vis the village residents.

Reciprocity requires a personal (face-to-face) relationship between the two parties. Such a relationship tends to be characteristic of small communities where its members know each other well and collective activities are still common. The small size also guarantees that in general people will live up to their obligations as social control is powerful and people cannot afford to be socially marginalized or even ostracized.

Among the earliest contributions to the subject of reciprocity, we find Mauss' monograph (1924) on *The Gift*. In that short essay he laid the foundation of the theory of social exchange and the mutual nature of exchanging gifts as fundamental community life. Half a century later, Sahlins distinguished three different types of reciprocity: generalized reciprocity, balanced reciprocity, and negative reciprocity. He speaks of generalized reciprocity when an individual or a group gives something to another individual or group without determining the time limit before which it needs to be returned. In this type of exchange, each party trusts the other to return the gift at some point in time. Within a family, people give material goods or affection without calculating if and when this will be returned; such gifts are highly controlled by morality and hardly ever by strict rules, let alone laws. Exchanges are based on trust, and people are not forced to return a gift when they are unable to do so (Swartz and Jordan, 1976: 479). It is therefore a type to be found mainly in circles of close relationships (Swartz and Jordan, 1976: 477-478). Within families, people do things as members of a collective that aims at its own regeneration⁵ and therefore it is not an instrumental exchange but an exchange that expresses communality. But although generalized reciprocity is prevalent within the circle of close kin, we also may find it in other environments between neighbors and more distant relatives – particularly in agrarian communities.

Balanced or direct reciprocity involves an exchange of goods or labor that have a more or less equivalent value. It takes place between individuals or groups and includes a time dimension that stipulates when to give, when to receive and when to return the gift. It is a common phenomenon when people need certain goods or labor from others. They will receive them with the more or less explicit understanding that the recipients will return a similar gift when the primary givers need it. It is a transaction between people that is based on solidarity between equals who have a longstanding relationship that acts as a guarantee that the gift will be returned.

Negative reciprocity is of a totally different category as it refers to direct exchanges between people who have no relationship. We find this phenomenon in situations where people are unwilling to give but eager

⁵ From a socio-biological point of view, one might say that it is genetic cooperation that warrants the survival of the small group of people sharing a common gene pool.

to receive. It includes the behavior of ‘free riders’ in a community, or of common thieves, but also in repressive economics system in systematic forms of exploitation.

In Sahlins’ view, we find balanced reciprocity between members of a community while generalized reciprocity is common within the intimate family unit (Sahlins, 1974: 199). Generalized reciprocity is a relationship where transactions are presumed to be altruistic and where the expectation of a direct material return is considered to be unseemly or at best, implicit. Balanced reciprocity refers to direct exchanges between people who have an ongoing relationship: failing to return the gift in time may disrupt the relationship between the parties involved. So Sahlins (1965: 145-148) refers to balanced reciprocity as being “more economic” and to generalized reciprocity as being “more social”, and therefore more personalized in nature.

But even if it is “more economic”, any kind of exchange takes place within a moral framework and confirms that code. For the members of a community that code has its own existence, apart from and beyond the exchange itself (Ekeh, 1974). Morality emerging from and being reproduced by social exchanges then becomes the framework in which economic, social and political relationships are embedded. Forms of balanced exchange create a general moral expectation that members of a community will help each other at specific moments: it creates mutual obligations that bind people together.

This means that reciprocity – and in a wider sense also social security – perceived as a system of mutual support is a function of social relationships and social networks consisting of the nuclear family, the wider circle of relatives, neighbors, friends, and of the community. Between them exchanges take place. They have a moral dimension but they are also instrumental in providing a social environment that may serve as a social safety net when people confront problems that they cannot solve on their own. Through networks people are members of a community, and that means that in those cases access to these networks is as essential as having access to economic resources for survival. As such they are what Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992: 119) have called social capital: “the sum of resources, actual or virtual, that accrue to an individual or group by possessing a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition”. Only through being a member of social networks can people acquire social capital and thus support from others that might help them to survive or to advance in the world, and they are crucial when it comes to coping with insecurities.

Social scientific studies on Java have always paid much attention to several forms of reciprocity and mutual support which can be summarized under the general heading of *gotong royong* (Bowen, 1989; Koentjaraningrat, 1961, 1971; Jay, 1969). “They go under a variety of local names, but in general they can be divided into roughly four categories: community labor (the collective implementation of public works like roads and bridges, or organizing the village night-watch); mutual help or reciprocal labor (exchanging labor in agriculture, contributing to house-building parties; but also mutual savings groups); ritual exchanges (contributions made to people organizing a life cycle or calendar ritual; and the redistribution of food to these

donors); and everyday exchanges among close kin and neighbors.” (Hüsken and Koning, 2006: 12). In many ways, these local institutions provide some form of social security in local communities as they constitute the only source of help when it is needed most. They were, however, rarely open to all members of a community as not all were able to return a gift or labor. They might also involve obligations that go further than just returning an equivalent gift, like in the case of sharecropping where not only the sharecropper has to till the land but he and his family also have to do all kinds of odd jobs for their landlord. In that latter case, the terms of trade between the parties in the exchange are such that equivalence has acquired a different meaning from being of more or less the same quality and value.

Such forms of mutual support systems all fall into the category of Sahlins’ balanced reciprocity and are supposed to be deeply rooted in Javanese village communities, making them into exemplary centers of communal solidarity. Although these support system are supposed to have been common in a distant past, there are good reasons to doubt whether they have ever functioned in that way. Certainly present-day villages are quite different from what they used to be even fifty years ago. As I have explained at the beginning of this chapter, the increased monetization of the economy and more specifically the processes of migration, urbanization, and education have led to a thorough transformation of the Javanese countryside. Kartodirdjo (1987: 254-271) writes that during the New Order period, the Javanese village society as a result of the national development policy underwent all kind of changes. The policy influenced in particular the form, structure and content of the existing *gotong royong* practices, as more and more activities were paid in cash. At this time of transition, when the village is changing, whether as a result of development efforts and as a result of the monetization and commercialization process, the morality of a rural community plays an important role, especially in curbing individualism inherent in modernization and commercialization. Collective awareness can reduce the gap between rich peasants and poor farmers. Consensus is still alive in today’s rural communities should be used as the basis for the formation forms a new solidarity. Mutual assistance which is deeply rooted in the tradition can be given a new function such that the village continues to manifest solidarity and used as a basis for improving the lives of the villagers. Older forms of cooperation on the basis of mutuality, like labor exchange and community labor, gradually gave way to wage labor arrangements where hired workers replaced the co-villagers who came out to lend a helping hand (Abdullah and White 2006; Hefner, 1990; Nooteboom, 2003). This seems to be less so in the case of ritual exchanges as people still support each other when they organize a wedding or circumcision party or when they have to bury a dead relative. However, from such general studies it is difficult to assess what actually is going on at the village level in Java and whether such institutions like *gotong royong* still have a social security function, and if so, to what extent.

5. *Sumbangan* as Form of Social Solidarity in Rural Java

Although the socio-economic level of the rural people is relatively low, donating activity is ongoing. They differentiate donating activity into two kinds of activity. First, the contribution they give at the happy time, such as birth, circumcision and marriage. Second, the contribution in the time of sorrow, especially for death, illness and natural disasters. The use of the word 'happy' has shown that this activity is related to the moments filled with joy. Mutual assistance in the form of goods and money for activities related to the current rather be called as a donation, while activities related to the sorrow is to be called as *tetulang layat*.

There is a considerable difference between the two forms of activities. The happy activities are usually planned previously so that all preparations have been done much earlier, either in the household who would execute the activities as well as the surrounding people. For this kind of activity, surrounding people already be prepared and accounted the form and amount of donations would be given to the neighbors and relatives who held the events. But sometimes there were times when donating activity was being done suddenly. Events like this is called as *tonjokan* which usually came suddenly without prior notice. The term *tonjokan* comes from the word *tonjok* (punch) which means a direct and all of a sudden kind of hit so those affected could not dodge in advance. In Javanese culture, *tonjokan* means delivering food by those who held the celebration to neighbors and relatives. Usually the food is placed in *beseke* (baskets made from bamboo slats) containing rice and various side dishes, such as fried chicken, boiled eggs and vegetables.

As a consequence of receiving *tonjokan*, neighbors and relatives will return it in the form of donations. There is no clear criteria for the amount of donations. However, there are no-written standards and size of the contribution which they refer to as *umume* (the usual, common thing). Those who follow the rules are considered as common (*umum*) and on the contrary, those who do not follow these rules will be considered as uncommon people (*ora umum*). These people will be considered as a peculiar people and become the center of conversation (gossip) in rural Java. Traditionally, they are still using the size of rice as a benchmark in calculating the amount of donations. Donations to neighbors and distant relatives is ranged from five to seven kilograms of rice, while for neighbors and close relatives is around ten to twenty kilograms of rice. With the average price of rice Rp8,000 per kilogram, the average donation will be ranged between Rp40,000 to Rp50,000 to neighbors and distant relatives. The amount will be doubled or tripled when it comes to close neighbors and relatives. In addition to depending on the closeness of the relationship, the contribution also depends on the scale of celebration. There are at least four things which are used as a benchmark to assess the size of the celebration. The first criterion is the amount of rice being spent. The more rice is spent, the greater is the event. The second is the scope and number of guests. When the guests are in large numbers and mostly come from outside the region, people call it as a big event. The third one is related to the number of vehicles, such as cars and motorcycles, in the parking lot. More cars are parked during the celebration underway, the greater is the celebration. It also indicates the higher socio-economic status of people who have a celebration. Fourth is related to the socio-economic status of the coming guests. More officials are present in the celebration, the greater is the celebration and the honor will further being add to those who have a celebration.

Traditionally, the size of the event can also be seen from the donation received or not by the owner of the celebrations. Only celebrations which are considered medium and large scale are deemed reasonable to accept donations. Meanwhile, a small scale of celebration (*among-among*) is considered inappropriate to accept donations.

In the past, about the mid-1990s, donations were still tangible items of agricultural production, such as rice, coconut, banana and tempeh. But today in almost all rural areas of Java, money has become the form of donations. To close neighbors and relatives, even the form of donations is not just money, but also coupled with daily necessities, such as rice, soybean, coconut, bananas, noodles and egg. The replacement of rice donation to money has become the sign of more intense penetration of money into the rural economy of Java.⁶ Money is not only serving as the exchange rate, but also as an expression of one's feelings. The consequence of this is a close relationship can be determined from the size of the money donated. Unlike when the donation is in the form of goods and foodstuffs, the closeness of the relationship is not measured by the number of items donated slightly, but rather the involvement of people in a celebration.

6. Between *Rewang*, Catering and *Sumbangan*: Heavy Burden of Poor Women in Rural Java

In the Java community, especially in rural areas, there are norms about the position and role of parents to their children: giving birth and raising children, sending children to school, finding them jobs, wedded the children and the last is inherited house to their children. They are considered a successful as parents if they are able to meet these five things. Therefore, the burden of parents to their children is very heavy. They will strive to meet these obligations even though they are not fully able to fulfill it. One sign of the seriousness of the parents is carrying out their obligations to carry out the marriage ceremony of the children, including by holding a festive party. They will do anything in their ability to execute the party although their economic burden is very heavy. This would be a new source of trouble in the economic life. Traditionally, this difficulty faced by the parents will be assisted by the surrounding neighbors through working together to prepare necessary things for the success of the wedding party. Almost all close neighbors and relatives are usually involved in carrying out these activities. Men will work to prepare the party and carry out activities that are considered physically strenuous, such as making *tarub* or temporary house which is usually made at the front or at the side of the house. *Tarub* is usually made with bamboo poles, with a roof made of woven palm leaves. In addition, men are also in charge of building temporary kitchen, which is usually located at the back of the house, sometimes attached to the house, but sometimes also somewhat separate from the house. Separation of the kitchen from the house building relates to the smoke released from the kitchen which will disrupt the event

⁶ In urban areas of Yogyakarta, changes in the form of donations of money gifts became increasingly developed in the late 1990s. At that time, some households have started to include the celebration invitation card firmly noted that they did not accept donations, aside from money. The phrase often used is "without lessen our gratitude, your love sign should not be in form of goods and wreaths". In other words the phrase is a statement that those who have a celebration just willing to accept the money.

since the majority kitchen use firewood to cook which produce more smoke. After the temporary buildings for the party is ready and the feast day is getting closer, usually the role of women becomes very important. They prepare food ingredients by cooking in the kitchen for daily consumption before the party for those involved in the preparation; preparing beverages such as hot tea, even some are in charge for bridal makeup. Some too are in charge to greet the guests (*among tamu*). Young women usually help their mothers in preparing food for the party. Then young men are helping their fathers in the preparation of the party, especially for serving guests, such as delivering food as the celebration in progress (*sinoman*). They should serving the guests properly. There are a variety ways of serving which are considered polite and appropriate according to Java custom. They will generally wear a white shirt and black trousers as a sign that they are the young men who are there in charge to serve the guests at the party. They will walk back and forward carrying a tray of food.

Part of the party preparations which are considered heavy is to make a temporary home (*tarub*) so the male relatives and neighbors from surrounding areas are together in making it. Meanwhile, the other heavy part of the work and is considered low was boiling water and making tea for the guests during the preparation and execution of the party and cooking in the kitchen. Both jobs are very heavy because it directly relates to fire and firewood so a large force is required and must also be willing to be filled with smoke, and even soot (dirt from burning). Hence, since both activities are specific, not many people are willing to undertake them. Those who want to carry out such work are usually poor men and women in rural areas. In every village there are some poor men and women in particular carrying out such work. Since a few days before the party, they have helped in the neighbor's house to cook in the kitchen. When it was getting closer to the party, they spent more time working on the venue. If initially they only came the morning or afternoon for a few hours, when the party was approaching and at the time of the party, they sometimes worked from morning until midnight, sometimes even having to work all day and stayed at a neighbor's house. As the wages of the job, they were entitled to eat at the venue of celebration and then when coming home later in the afternoon or evening, they were also given food which could be distributed to their members of household. After completion of the wedding, sometimes they got the rest of foodstuffs such as rice, sugar, vegetables, tempeh and eggs to take home so that it can be used to sustain the life of the household. Sometimes they were also given a sum of money as a reward to work a few days at a neighbor's or relatives' house.

This story below will describe the real condition of *rewang* which used to be done by rural people in Java.

Mr. and Mrs. Manto were often asked to help the neighbors cooking in the kitchen during a party. They were one of the poor households in the rural villages in Java. Mr. Manto's day job was a farm laborer and working casual. Their house was very modest which made of woven bamboo walls and a tile roof, while most of the floors were made of dirt. They had two children, an-8 and 12 years who were still in elementary school which located near their home. This family has been known in the village as people who could help cooking when someone holding weddings and other parties. Since a few days before the party, they have been busy working in the house of the events. In *ewuh* months, they were rarely at home because they were busy cooking in the houses of people who had celebration.

Pak Manto was charge of the boiling water and preparing drinks, while Ibu Manto was cooking in the kitchen. Their small often came to the houses their parents worked after school, playing around and sometimes helped their parents cooking in the kitchen. Because they spent all day in the neighbor's house, they ate there since they did not cook at home. Sometimes when they came home, they also brought a bundle of rice and side dishes giving by the host to be eaten at home. When the party was over, Pak Manto and his family were responsible to help cleaning the kitchen appliances, sweeping the yard and also delivering gifts of leftover food to the surrounding neighbors. For at least four days to one week, this family helped the neighbors during the party. As a reward, this family got the leftover foods, such as rice, sugar, tea, tempeh, eggs and vegetables which have not been cooked. Sometimes they were also given 25 kg of rice plus 3 kg of eggs, tempeh and so forth. According to Pak Manto, at first (about twenty years ago), they were never given money as a reward. But about ten or twelve years ago, they began to be adequately compensated in money by the host. In recent years, they are often given the amount of money approximately Rp100,000 to Rp200,000 for working four to five days. In addition, they were also free to not donate money to a neighbor who held the celebration. Once upon a time, they tried to give a donation, even just got scolded by the neighbor who held the event. They knew that it they were not allowed to make donation, but to make it look proper (*wangun*) as neighbors, they still tried to. In addition of receiving food materials, sometimes they also acted a little bit naughty with taking (stealing) food or food ingredient to take home, unbeknownst to the homeowner. But the certain thing was that they always had the chance to taste the cooked food, which generally tasted good and were rarely being eaten at home. This was one of the pleasures as a poor people because they were able to eat good food after helping the neighbors during a party. The good times and the full enjoyment apparently slowly began to expire in the Manto family since there was a new trend in the village, namely to execute the party at the conference hall. In addition, food catering services slowly started to enter the village. The *rewang's* habits (helping a neighbor who held a celebration) was automatically begin to decline because it was replaced by a food catering and the use of modern tents instead *tarub*. Pak Manto and his wife began losing jobs and income that has been running since the many years. Additionally, as residents of rural communities in Java, they began to donate money to neighbors and relatives if there was a wedding. Until now, the family is still in confusion to find an exit to be able to donate in cash because they have economic burden as well.

The entry of tent rental services, catering services and changes in the form of donations of food materials into cash has become one of the pressures and new demands of rural households throughout Java, especially for poor households. Although the general norm states that poor people do not have to donate in cash and can be replaced with labor, social fact shows that if they do not do that (donating), they will face a bigger social pressure. Therefore, almost all households are trying to follow the general rule. Javanese rural community togetherness and a sense of solidarity expressed by the term of *umume* (usually, commonly). *Umume* means value of togetherness that have been agreed upon by the citizens of the village community, including the size of the donation of about five or seven kilograms of rice. This has put the majority of rural households in the condition of full compulsion. They often feel overloaded and overwhelmed when they have to follow the rule of *umume* (donation rules). Especially there will times when many people have their celebrations (good months) at the same time so it could be four households with celebrations in one week.

To meet the need of *umume*, some households are forced to perform a variety of strategies in order to still be able to donate. Those who have livestock, such as chickens, ducks and goats, are forced to sell their livestock. Some very poor households are forced to choose and classify which households to be donated or not. The decision making to choose which households to be contributed and which to be not is also another

pressure for them. In rural communities, it is very difficult to determine which family to be donated and which is not. But in a very difficult economic necessity, they are not forced to donate or in Java terminology, it refers as 'closing the eye' (*merem*). One of the poor informant stated as follows. "*Nek pas wulan ewuh, sing ora nduwe apa-apa, keperes*" (when there are many celebrations, those who did not have anything will be squeezed). At the time of good months to have celebration, the resources of poor households will be depleted to donate and helping neighbors and relatives so they become increasingly poor.

7. Closing Remarks

The process of socio-economic and cultural transformation followed by a more intense role of cash as the linking relation among people in connection with donating habits have resulted in quite large social and cultural change in rural Java. Donating activity as a form of social solidarity in rural Java, which has lasted a very long time, have changed from donating production of agricultural goods into cash. On the other hand, consideration of effectiveness and efficiency in running the wedding celebration has prompted the inclusion of modern institutions, such as tent rentals to replace *tarub* and catering to replace the cooking at home which takes time, money and considerable attention for the celebration organizers. Activities which previously carried out largely by working together to begin the preparation is now being taken over by modern institutions as well as means of eliminating *rewang*, *sambatan* and the atmosphere of intimacy, and mutual help among rural residents. Sense of community and mutual help has been replaced with cash. Rural people began to not be bothered with the custom of mutual help and *rewang* when their neighbors or relatives hold a celebration. For them, their presence at a party upon the invitation and donating money are considered as the replacement of the social relationships that had been formed.

For those with better economic status, changes in the pattern of the relationship is not a problem. High economic status has allowed them to pay donations in cash. But not so with the poor, especially poor women who have been rescued from the difficulty providing cash for donations. They can help neighbors by providing their labor through the traditional institution called *rewang*. The loss of *rewang* has made poor households in rural Java increasingly cornered and marginalized because it seems there is no space for dialogue to resolve the question of those who have limitation of money. The only solution that can be done in order to remain socially acceptable in rural areas is energetically searching for various kinds of jobs which bring money in cash. It is obviously not an easy issue for them since there are limited employment opportunities in rural areas and the wages are also very low. Even when compared with the average amount of the contribution to be paid, the figure reached three or four times as much. Last option they can do is to not carry a social obligation, namely by did not come at once to the celebration and did not pay in cash donations to their nearest neighbors and relatives. The choice is obviously very difficult for them because for poor people, they are depending on their nearest neighbors and relatives if they faced difficulties. If they do not run a social obligation in the form of

donating, then they will be the center of talking or gossip. In the long run it will cause them to be socially excluded.

The process of socio-economic transformation followed by a cultural transformation in rural Java, in addition to causing a lot of changes and progress, on the other hand has made the poor increasingly marginalized. The poor, especially women, have been the main victims of the change process.

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