HEALTH, HEALING AND THE QUEST FOR WELLBEING IN PONOROGO REGENCY, EAST JAVA

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STATEMENT OF ORIGINALITY

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(Signed): .................................................................

Caroline Campbell
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ABSTRACT

HEALTH, HEALING AND THE QUEST FOR WELLBEING IN PONOROGO REGENCY, EAST JAVA

This thesis draws on diverse documentary sources and ethnographic research to look at the importance of place and ethos in the constitution of historical processes and contemporary cultural practices concerned with health and healing. Through an analysis of the interrelationships of morbidity, conceptual frameworks, behaviour, morality, therapeutic modalities, and socioeconomic and religious transformation, the thesis elucidates how people in Ponorogo deal with illness and misfortune in their quest for wellbeing.

The regency of Ponorogo is located in the southwest corner of the province of East Java. Its most identifiable symbol is the barong tiger mask which is the main character in Reog Ponorogo performances. An exploration of the area’s extensive archaeological, historical and narrative resources reveals the ongoing dialogue with wider Java, and how the celebration of strength and physical prowess in the performance of reog enacts a distinctive rural ethos and local identity. Reog, therefore, lends itself to de Certeau’s everyday practices of arts of “operating” and “practice”.

Strength and stamina are important for the livelihoods of people in Ponorogo, the majority of whom depend on physical labour. A somatic culture and skilful aesthetic inform the search for wellbeing and the use of therapeutic resources. In rural Java biomedical services predominantly dispense pharmaceuticals. Their reputation for fast relief, together with the coincidence of patterns of morbidity, constrained economic resources, problems of access, and the historical and contemporary use of other therapeutic agents forms a local ecology of care in which the use of pharmaceuticals has been incorporated into existing regimens of prevention, protection, cure and maintenance. This local ecology also includes folk practitioners who offer a diverse range of services which are encompassed by the dynamic concept of slamet (wellbeing). While socioeconomic change has enabled them to take advantage of
changing aspirations, the moral framework of religious transformation has meant that practitioners have had to modify their services to maintain their legitimacy.

In contemporary Ponorogo topography plays a significant role in the exacerbation of socioeconomic difference and health inequalities. The latter part of the thesis focuses on the dry limestone highlands of the regency’s borders. Lack of infrastructure, difficult terrain, and resource-poor environments characterise the chronic poverty of these regions. Ecology and the realities of living in small, geographically-isolated communities contribute to a distinctive ethos which places emphasis on social harmony and conflict avoidance. Extended analysis of a community killing of suspected sorcerers not only illustrates the multidimensional and contextual understanding of wellbeing, but also articulates with the increasing importance placed on the morality of folk practitioners in contemporary Java.

The final chapter revisits and integrates the main themes of the thesis in a concluding discussion of lowland and highland contrasts and connections, and how the dynamic concept of *slamet* is able to adapt to and incorporate change.

GLOSSARY

adat  customary law and practices.
aloon aloon  town square
angker  wild, unusual, marginal, or luminal place, haunted
babad  historical chronicle
batin  related to one’s inner spiritual and moral self,
bidan  nurse midwife
Buda  Hindu-Buddhist, religion of pre-Islamic Java
BPOM  Badan Pengawasan Obat dan Makanan (Indonesian Food and Drug Administration)
camat  sub-district head
cocog  to fit, match, be compatible, align oneself with
dangdut  an eclectic form of Indonesian popular music which incorporates Arabic, Indian, and Malay folk music genres
desa  administrative village unit
dhanyang  guardian or tutelary spirit
dukun  generic name for a Javanese healer
dusun  hamlet
GAKY  Gangguan akibat kekurangan yodium (disorders resulting from iodine deficiency)
gaplek  cassava
GPJI  Gabungan Pengusaha Jamu Indonesia (Federation of Indonesian Jamu Manufacturers)
Golkar  Golongan Karya (functional groups)
gotong royong  mutual cooperation
halus  refined
ilmu  individual mystical or therapeutic knowledge or potency
jamu  herbal mixture
jaranan  masked trance performances
JPS  Jaring Pengaman Sosial (Social Safety Net)
juru kunci  guardian of a place of significance
kabupaten  regency
kader  cadre, voluntary health worker
kartu sehat  health card
kasar  coarse, vulgar
kebetulan  coincidence
kebal  invulnerable
kejawan  Javanism
kramat  sacred
kraton  court
kyai  traditional Muslim leader, head of a pesantren, religious healer
madrasah  Islamic primary level day school
mantri  Low ranking government employee, assistant
Muhammadiyah  Indonesia’s largest Islamic “modernist” organisation
nomer  lottery number
NU  Nahdlatul Ulama, Indonesia’s largest Islamic “traditionalist” organisation
obat  medicine
orang pintar  person possessing a special skill
paranormal  equivalent of a general aetiological folk practitioner, previously called a dukun
pekarangan  home garden
perdikan  tax free area
pesantren  Islamic boarding school
pijet  massage
priyayi  member of nobility or elite
puasa  fast
Posyandu  Pos pelayanan terpadu – a package of mother-and-child care programs which include nutrition, family planning, vaccination and maternal care
Puskesmas  Pusat kesehatan masyarakat (community health centre)
rasa  feeling, intuition, an aesthetic sensual complex which links the outer physical senses and the inner emotional senses to higher consciousness
reog  Javanese cultural performance featuring masked dance, humour and satire
RT  kepala rumah tangga (neighbourhood head)
rakan  social harmony
sakti  magical knowledge
santet  sorcery; also called tenung, sihir, guna-guna
sawah  wet-rice field
sepuh  elder
setan  troubling spirit, demon
slamet  multidimensional concept of wellbeing
suntik  injection
suro  Javanese new year
susuk  placing a slither of a precious substance, usually gold or diamond, underneath the skin to make one especially attractive
tiban  fallen, miraculously come down from the heavens
TKI  tenaga kerja Indonesia (Indonesian workforce) applied to overseas workers
toko gelap  blackmarket lottery vendor
tukang  labourer, craftsmen, dealer, operator
warok  charismatic figure noted for his strength, agility, magical and spiritual powers
warung  small trader’s stall
wong cilik  commoner