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## **Embedded remembering : memory culture of the 1965 violence in rural East Java**

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## CHAPTER 2

### THE CONTEXT OF REMEMBERING: AGRARIAN INEQUALITIES AND PATRONAGE IN DONOMULYO

During my fieldwork, I noticed the different backgrounds and status of the people whom I interviewed. Some of them are local businessmen, retired school teachers or retired village officials who usually own land, pursue higher education in the city, and were involved in political activism either in the past or present. Their children also attended higher education institutions, sometimes national or even foreign universities, and many of them have permanent well-paid jobs in the city. These types of interviewees are usually well-known by other villagers, because they are considered as *tokoh*, a respected figure in the area and a counsellor for community or family matters. Meanwhile, other interviewees that I encountered live a very different life. Their houses are usually much smaller, sometimes almost in ruins. Some of them still do not have a legal land certificate, and struggle to till their land because of their physical condition or limited capital. They could not afford to send their children to universities, so most of these children work as hard labourers, such as sand miners, tire repairmen, or small entrepreneurs. In short, in the first few months of my fieldwork, I realised that villagers in Donomulyo are very different socially and economically.

This social and class differentiation existed far before the 1965 violence. Interviews with villagers soon unravelled stories about the village's first settlers with supernatural powers, where some of their descendants also became *tokoh* (local leaders) and village landowners today. Other stories revolved around a colonial plantation, where some of my interviewees' parents used to work, either as daily labourers or in higher positions such as overseer. These stories reflect the village as "the basis of a complex political and economic framework" in contrast to rural society as a static void, filled with subsistence-oriented peasants.<sup>73</sup> This complexity reflects the position of the state, which is not an external factor that resides far in central-national politics, but fully present and can be seen by zooming into patronage relationships that influence rural dynamics.<sup>74</sup> These relationships that already existed in pre-colonial societies were used and sharpened further by the colonial economy, the war of independence, and the New Order regime.

The aim of this chapter is to explore how patronage relationships evolved through the course of history, increasing the inequality in an agrarian society. To understand the presence of the state in these rural patronage politics, I used Joel Migdal's concept of the State in Society. Migdal perceives the state not as an independent and autonomous power, nor as a separate hierarchy from society, but the state is part of a *mélange* of social organisations within society.<sup>75</sup> For Migdal, the state in society model should explore its two main elements; first, the strong image of a clearly bounded, unified organisation that can be spoken of in singular terms, as if it were a single, centrally motivated actor performing in an integrated manner to rule a clearly defined territory. Second, the practices of a heap of loosely connected parts or fragments, which stands inside and outside the official state borders and often triggers a conflicting set of rules with one another and the official law.<sup>76</sup> Migdal then sees society not as a static formation, but as a result of struggles and conflicts between the

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<sup>73</sup> Elson 1984, 12.

<sup>74</sup> Hart 1989, 31-32.

<sup>75</sup> Migdal 2001, 49.

<sup>76</sup> Migdal 2001, 22.

above two elements, which includes numerous strategies chosen for individual survival or upward mobility.

This framework is beneficial when we zoom in to localities such as Donomulyo, because in this context of rural community, the state does not reside far away in central or national politics, but is part of a *mélange*, comprising a network of civilians and local elites, and very much present in everyday life. It is this same context and network that later constitute the memory of violence in rural Donomulyo. This chapter aligns with previous micro-agrarian studies in Java that use a historical-anthropology approach.<sup>77</sup> These studies follow the structural agrarian transformation in a particular setting and delve into the impact of those changes in society. Following a similar approach, this chapter will explore these questions: how were inequalities shaped and maintained in different historical periods in Donomulyo? Who were involved in maintaining and confronting those inequalities? How did violent episodes in Indonesia's history affect rural differentiation in Donomulyo?

### Colonial Era: Village Establishment and the Village Elites

From different oral sources, the origin of the Banyujati area<sup>78</sup> relates to the Javanese wars that took place in Central Java against Dutch colonialism, against the backdrop of the global capitalism and imperialism of the Netherlands. Villagers believed that the first settlers of Banyujati were the surviving troops from these wars who migrated to East Java to build a new livelihood. In some interviews, villagers mentioned *Pangeran Samber Nyawa* (Prince of Catcher of the Soul) – a prominent figure in several wars in mid-18<sup>th</sup> century Central Java. He was an aristocrat from Surakarta-Central Java, whose real name is Prince Mangkunegara I of Surakarta, or better known as Mas Said.<sup>79</sup> Meanwhile, other villagers believe that the first settlers of Banyujati were the former troops from a different Java war in 1825-30 between Diponegoro (eldest son of Central Java's aristocrat, Sultan Hamengkubuwana III) and the colonial government.<sup>80</sup> Despite the limitations with regard to confirming these stories of Banyujati's origin, both versions imply a wave of migration from Central Java because of the colonial wars, resulting in the emergence of new inhabitants in some parts of East Java. Although these groups arrived as migrants, they became a privileged group, assuming the role of village headmen and landowners.<sup>81</sup> Up to today, the graveyard of the village pioneer became a site of pilgrimage and a centre for traditional village activities (such as village cleansing or *bersih desa* – an annual communal activity to pray for a better condition of the village in the upcoming years).

Records from the 1870s showed that the land tenure system in Java was bounded by communal regulations in the village. Analysing a survey report from 1868-69 in Java, Hiroyoshi Kano describes two main features of land tenure: the heritable individual possession and the communal possession.<sup>82</sup> In the individual possession system, the system works as follows: a particular individual

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<sup>77</sup> For examples of similar studies, see Kanō 1990; Hefner 1990; and Yuwono 2018.

<sup>78</sup> Pseudonym for 3 villages where I conducted my fieldwork. See chapter 1.

<sup>79</sup> Ricklefs 2001, 127-8. Ricklefs also argued that the appellation 'Samber Nyawa' came from his troop's battle-banner, which expressed the fierce power of Mangkunegara I. Ricklefs 2015, 543-547.

<sup>80</sup> Ricklefs 2001, 151-2.

<sup>81</sup> In the village of Gondosari, Central Java, the first settlers owned about half of the village's sawah and approximately one-sixth of the village tegal. Throughout generations, not only was their ownership of land extended, but also their control over land, usually by renting to needy villagers. Huskens 1989, 309.

<sup>82</sup> This survey, called *Eindresume van het onderzoek naar de rechten van den inlander op den grond* (Final summary of the survey on the rights to land of the native population), was conducted by the Dutch colonial authorities and resulted in three-volume reports presented in late 1872. The main aim of this survey was to examine the land right practices of the Indonesians (or natives at that time). The survey area covered all

occupies a plot of land, can hand over the land (due to death or by will) and can freely dispose of it by selling, leasing or pawning the land. However, there were communal restrictions surrounding this individual possession. For example, sometimes it is completely forbidden to sell land, and the right of the possessor is usually recognised by the totality of the village only when he is actually cultivating or interested in cultivating the land.<sup>83</sup> Transfer of land to others from another village is prohibited. Meanwhile, in the communal possession system (which was more common in Java at that period), an individual or family uses certain land that is part of the village or hamlet communal land, and therefore, the person does not have the right to hand over or dispose of the land. This system also involves periodic rotation of shares, except in Malang where the distribution of the tenure period and its sharers are fixed (in this case, Kano noted that communal possession in Malang can be considered equal to individual possession, except that there is no freedom of disposition). Moreover, while individual possession does not allow people outside the village to receive land, the communal system allows people from other villages to become sharers after spending a certain period of time in that particular village.<sup>84</sup> Nevertheless, Kano noted that the sharing system within the communal possession is not completely egalitarian in practice. In some areas, larger shares and priority to choose a site are given to those who own livestock. In other cases, where the village officials have the power to decide on the distribution, it was done arbitrarily in their favour.<sup>85</sup> Both the individual and communal land tenure system already included a patronage network between landowners and land cultivators, which delineates most of the early agrarian societies.

Kano also argued that this land tenure system in the 1800s does not seem to resemble a landlord system, although the salary land contains a strong element of class relation.<sup>86</sup> It was the development of a commercial economy, especially an estate economy that further developed the landlord-tenant relationship, by increasing the transfer of arable land and penetrating into class relationships in the village.<sup>87</sup> This condition was exacerbated by the implementation of several colonial policies on *corvée* labour.<sup>88</sup> As a result, the communal system expanded, such as was the case in Central and East Java, where land without owners was designated as communal land in order to share the heavy burden of *corvée* labour.<sup>89</sup>

The system also used village heads as brokers, linking cultivator and higher level Indonesian officials not only in terms of tax collection, but also in providing labour for the plantation.<sup>90</sup> In the districts of Karanglo, Pakis, Sengguruh (in the colonial administration, Donomulyo was part of Sengguruh

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residencies in Java and Madura, except Batavia, Kedu, Jogjakarta and Solo. Not all villages in each residency were examined, but at least two of them were selected. For Malang, the survey included villages in the district of Gondanglegi, Pakis, Penanggoengan, Karanglo and Ngantang. Kano 1977.

<sup>83</sup> Kano 1977, 11-12.

<sup>84</sup> Kano 1977, 15-17.

<sup>85</sup> There are three common methods of distribution of communal land: 1) the village authorities decides on the distribution, 2) an agreement is made among sharers, 3) the shares of village authorities are first determined based on agreement among sharers, and then shares are rotated among the sharers in the same order each time. Kano 1977, 19-20.

<sup>86</sup> Salary land is land assigned to officials for their private use. For village heads, 5-10 percent of the total communally possessed paddy fields were salary land, which cannot be cultivated by the working hands of the village head's household, resulting in the use of a number of the village labour force to till the land. Kano 1977, 31.

<sup>87</sup> Kano 1977, 40.

<sup>88</sup> *Cultuurstelsel*, for example, demanded land allocation to produce export crops to be sold at fixed prices to the colonial government. Ricklefs 2001, 156.

<sup>89</sup> Paulus (ed) 1917, 824.

<sup>90</sup> Breman 1983, 6.

district), Turen, and Gondanglegi in Malang, a high official received f 2.50-f 5 per bouw<sup>91</sup> from the company for their services in helping to rent land. Village officials received f 0.50-f 2 for their role in arranging contracts with labourers and crop transporters.<sup>92</sup> This system often bred corruption and also led to the exploitation of villagers.<sup>93</sup> In the Sengguruh district, village heads were involved in tax evasion and land leasing fraud.<sup>94</sup> The traditional patronage relationship that existed earlier gradually shifted to accommodate the colonial economy. Patronal ties that previously relied on crop-sharing and household chores were now expanded into practices of the money economy.

In the early 1900s, village officials became village elites and landlords, playing a role as brokers, while at the same time enjoying their privileged position in society. Another group that can be considered as being landlords were the *Hadjis* (title for people who went to the pilgrimage in Mecca, which made them respected Islamic leaders in the community), who could own up to 50 bouw of *tegal* land (dry land used for planting non-rice crops), such as was the case in Sumberpucung, Malang.<sup>95</sup> These elites were the patrons in colonial times. On the one hand, they became a concrete manifestation of the 'state' at the local level, implementing colonial policy and taking advantage of 'the rewards' given for their efforts. On the other hand, this was done through coercive means towards villagers which gradually reinforced the elite's economic and cultural power in society. In return, their clients would receive jobs as plantation workers or land cultivators.

The establishment of the 1870 Agrarian Law enabled private enterprises to rent uncultivated land from the government for up to 75 years.<sup>96</sup> In the Malang regency, private companies soon made investments particularly in coffee and sugar industries. From 1881 to 1884, almost one-third of the coffee production in Java came from Malang, and in 1922, the regency contributed 19.6% of the whole coffee production in Java and Madura.<sup>97</sup> Donomulyo also became part of this industry, through the establishment of a coffee and rubber company, NV Kali Tello, which operated in the Northern part of Donomulyo. Starting with 370 bouw of land, the company faced multiple challenges during their first years of production, such as drought, plant diseases and unfavourable market prices of coffee.<sup>98</sup> Their high-quality products were sent to Holland, while inferior coffees were sold in Surabaya. The challenging first years slowly began to improve through expansion (by adding another 130 bouw of coffee plantation) and diversification of crops (cacao and pepper) in 1902.<sup>99</sup> Leaf or other plant-related diseases and extreme weather condition (drought and heavy rainfall) remained

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<sup>91</sup> One bouw equals 0.7 hectare.

<sup>92</sup> Dutch East Indies Welvaartcommissie, Batavia. Onderzoek Naar de Mindere Welvaart Der Inlandsche Bevolking Op Java En Madoera. [IX, Economie van de Desa] : Samentrekking van de Afdeelingsverslagen over de Uitkomsten Der Onderzoekingen, 125. 1907. Box 21, folder 21.4, Inventory 2.10.64. Collectie Grijs, Ministerie van Koloniën. Nationaal Archief The Hague, Netherlands.

<sup>93</sup> Ricklefs 2001, 157.

<sup>94</sup> Dutch East Indies Welvaartcommissie, Batavia. Onderzoek Naar de Mindere Welvaart Der Inlandsche Bevolking Op Java En Madoera. [IX, Economie van de Desa] : Samentrekking van de Afdeelingsverslagen over de Uitkomsten Der Onderzoekingen, 161-2. 1907. Box 21, folder 21.4, Inventory 2.10.64. Collectie Grijs, Ministerie van Koloniën. Nationaal Archief The Hague, Netherlands.

<sup>95</sup> Dutch East Indies Welvaartcommissie, Batavia. Onderzoek Naar de Mindere Welvaart Der Inlandsche Bevolking Op Java En Madoera. [IX, Economie van de Desa] : Samentrekking van de Afdeelingsverslagen over de Uitkomsten Der Onderzoekingen, 18-19. 1907. Box 21, folder 21.4, Inventory 2.10.64. Collectie Grijs, Ministerie van Koloniën. Nationaal Archief The Hague, Netherlands.

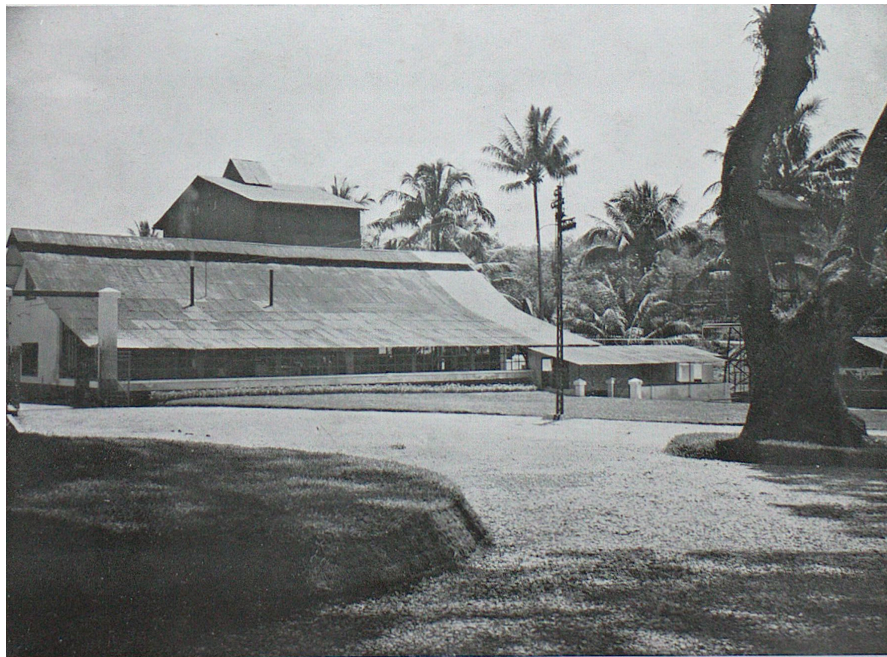
<sup>96</sup> Paulus (ed) 1917, 18.

<sup>97</sup> Kanō 1990, 13.

<sup>98</sup> Verslag Over Het Boekjaar 1895. 1895. NEHA ZK 60163. Nederlandsch Economisch-Historisch Archief (NEHA) Internationaal Instituut voor Sociale Geschiedenis, Amsterdam, Netherlands.

<sup>99</sup> Verslag Over Het Boekjaar 1902. 1902. NEHA ZK 60163. Nederlandsch Economisch-Historisch Archief (NEHA) Internationaal Instituut voor Sociale Geschiedenis, Amsterdam, Netherlands.

influencing factors of the harvest in Kali Tello throughout the years. In 1910, the company started to invest in rubber by planting more than 17,000 trees aged one to four years, and continued by building a rubber factory two years later.<sup>100</sup>



**PICTURE 3. RUBBER FACTORY IN KALI TELLO, CA 1934**

Source: Verslag over het boekjaar NV. Cultuur-Maatschappij Kali Tello 1934

World War I and disasters affected the distribution of Kali Tello's crops to the Netherlands.<sup>101</sup> However, the company continued to operate and in 1922, it occupied 1465 bouw, of which 207 bouw was used for the factory, houses, kampongs, roads; and the other 1258 bouw was used for the coffee and rubber plantations. A few years later, NV Kali Tello started to acquire other companies, namely the adjacent Poerwodadie coffee company, Soember Nongko I-IV rubber company, and Kali Gentong kapok plantation (both in Kediri). However, in 1929, the company started to deteriorate along with the fall of global coffee and rubber prices. The company entered into a financial deficit that resulted in a 10% salary reduction for their European staff, and ceased rubber production in the Soember Nongko plantation in 1931.<sup>102</sup>

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<sup>100</sup> Verslag Over Het Boekjaar 1910. 1910. NEHA ZK 60163. Nederlandsch Economisch-Historisch Archief (NEHA) Internationaal Instituut voor Sociale Geschiedenis, Amsterdam, Netherlands.

<sup>101</sup> The yearly report recorded earthquake, Kelud volcano eruption, fire on the plantation, and plague, which affected the plantation's activities. Verslag Over Het Boekjaar 1917. 1917. NEHA ZK 60163. Nederlandsch Economisch-Historisch Archief (NEHA) Internationaal Instituut voor Sociale Geschiedenis, Amsterdam, Netherlands.

<sup>102</sup> Verslag Over Het Boekjaar 1931. 1931. NEHA ZK 60163. Nederlandsch Economisch-Historisch Archief (NEHA) Internationaal Instituut voor Sociale Geschiedenis, Amsterdam, Netherlands.



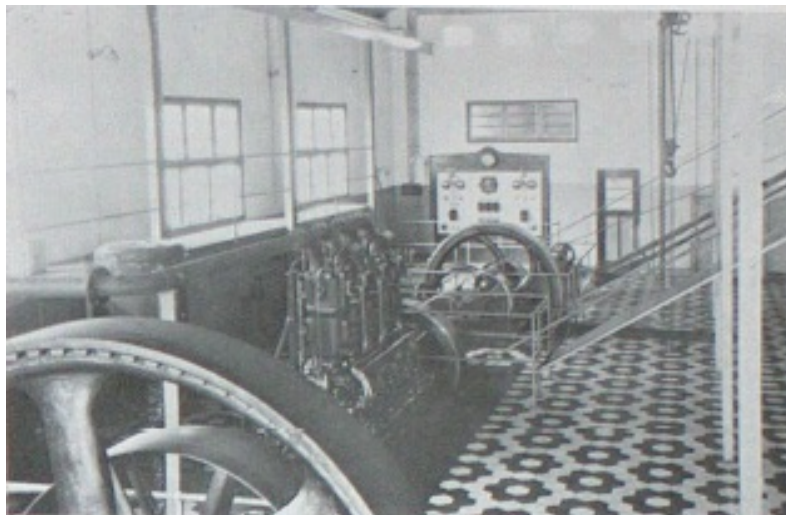
**Table 1**

**Size of land, number of trees and harvest of NV Kali Tello in 1928**

Plantation	Coffee			Rubber	
	Total size of land (bouw, 1 bouw= 0.7 ha)	Total number of trees	Harvest 1928 (picols; 1 picol = c 61,7 kg)	Total number of trees	Harvest 1928 (in ½ kg)
Kali Tello	1460	932900	14688	103526	486630
Poerwodadie	1568	699572	5008	146773	934364
Soember Nongko	833			86649	304030
Total	3861	1632472	19696	336948	1725024

Source: Verslag Over Het Boekjaar NV. Cultuur-Maatschappij Kali Tello 1931.

Modern infrastructure was built by the company to process coffee and rubber. For example, modern machinery and running fresh water were used to produce latex in the rubber factory.<sup>103</sup> Electricity was used in the factory and became accessible to the neighbouring kampong, Oemboel Dawe.<sup>104</sup> After the acquisition of the Poerwodadie plantation, the entire coffee factory in Kali Tello was electrically driven from a power plant located in the nearby rubber factory. To enhance the transportation of coffee from Powerwodadie to the factory in Kali Tello, a 2600 m cable car (*kabelbaan*) was operated in July 1926.<sup>105</sup> The company also invested in infrastructure, such as the main road to the railway station (presumably Ngebroek station in Sumberpucung, Malang), and a private road from the plantation to the main road, which made the area accessible for small cars.<sup>106</sup>



**PICTURE 4. MACHINE ROOM OF THE RUBBER FACTORY IN POERWODADIE**

Source: Verslag over het boekjaar 1934 NV. Cultuur-Maatschappij Kali Tello

<sup>103</sup> Verslag Over Het Boekjaar 1914. 1914. NEHA ZK 60163. Nederlandsch Economisch-Historisch Archief (NEHA) Internationaal Instituut voor Sociale Geschiedenis, Amsterdam, Netherlands.

<sup>104</sup> Verslag Over Het Boekjaar 1919. 1919. NEHA ZK 60163. Nederlandsch Economisch-Historisch Archief (NEHA) Internationaal Instituut voor Sociale Geschiedenis, Amsterdam, Netherlands.

<sup>105</sup> Verslag Over Het Boekjaar 1925. 1925. NEHA ZK 60163. Nederlandsch Economisch-Historisch Archief (NEHA) Internationaal Instituut voor Sociale Geschiedenis, Amsterdam, Netherlands.

<sup>106</sup> Verslag Over Het Boekjaar 1925. 1925. NEHA ZK 60163. Nederlandsch Economisch-Historisch Archief (NEHA) Internationaal Instituut voor Sociale Geschiedenis, Amsterdam, Netherlands.



The opening of new plantations in South Malang increased the number of migrants. Between 1880-85, the population in the Pagak subdistrict tripled due to the opening of new coffee plantations in Sengguruh, Turen and Gondanglegi, facilitated by the opening of the Surabaya-Malang train connection.<sup>107</sup> Besides new labourers who arrived from Central Java, Madurese were also reported as immigrants to this area and were even preferable and more trusted compared to the locals.<sup>108</sup> Migration seems to have increased the labour supply, but was not followed by a rise in job opportunities. This condition caused a fall in wages for labourers within the period of twenty years:

**Table 2**  
**Wages for labourers in 1880 and 1900**

Type of earnings	Labour Wages	
	1880	1900
Overall earnings per day	f 0.40 and f 0.75 (for men) <sup>109</sup> f 0.30 and f 0.50 (for women)	f 0.20 (for men) f 0.30 (for women)
Coffee picking	f 0.75 – f 1.25	f 0.50 – f 0.60
Cultivation per bouw (around 30 days of work)	f 20- f 25	f 15
Tilling land for planting (around 90 days of work)	f 50- f 60	f 40

Source: Onderzoek naar de mindere welvaart 1907.

There were no pensions, financial compensations or compensation in labour time when a worker was unable to work.<sup>110</sup> Wages fluctuated, and companies often had to compromise between demand by the government to ease the welfare of ‘indigenous people’, and the company’s own budget and harvest.<sup>111</sup> For example, wages for coffee pickers in Lebak Roto (a coffee plantation in Turen, Malang) fluctuated between f 4.13 per kg in September/ November 1936 to f 2.80 per kg in March/ May 1937 and increased to f 4.68 per kg in September/ November 1937. The plantation administrator in Lebak Roto estimated that these wages were still sufficient to cover the workers’ living cost of 12.5 cents per day.<sup>112</sup> For families, the amount was estimated as much lower compared to a single person because of the assumption that married women also worked as labourers and thus also contributed to the total amount of wages per family. However, it seems that this calculation did not take family

<sup>107</sup> Dutch East Indies Welvaartcommissie, Batavia. Onderzoek Naar de Mindere Welvaart Der Inlandsche Bevolking Op Java En Madoera. [IX, Economie van de Desa] : Samentrekking van de Afdeelingsverslagen over de Uitkomsten Der Onderzoekingen, 5. 1907. Box 21, folder 21.4, Inventory 2.10.64. Collectie Grijs, Ministerie van Koloniën. Nationaal Archief The Hague, Netherlandsp.

<sup>108</sup> Dutch East Indies Welvaartcommissie, Batavia. Onderzoek Naar de Mindere Welvaart Der Inlandsche Bevolking Op Java En Madoera. [IX, Economie van de Desa] : Samentrekking van de Afdeelingsverslagen over de Uitkomsten Der Onderzoekingen, 83-4. 1907. Box 21, folder 21.4, Inventory 2.10.64. Collectie Grijs, Ministerie van Koloniën. Nationaal Archief The Hague, Netherlands.

<sup>109</sup> 1 f or Netherlands Guilders = € 0.45

<sup>110</sup> Dutch East Indies Welvaartcommissie, Batavia. Onderzoek Naar de Mindere Welvaart Der Inlandsche Bevolking Op Java En Madoera. [IX, Economie van de Desa] : Samentrekking van de Afdeelingsverslagen over de Uitkomsten Der Onderzoekingen, 85. 1907. Box 21, folder 21.4, Inventory 2.10.64. Collectie Grijs, Ministerie van Koloniën. Nationaal Archief The Hague, Netherlands.

<sup>111</sup> Correspondence from NV. Kooy & Coster van Voorhout to De Directie der NV Lebak Roto Cultuur Maatschappij in Amsterdam, 10 December 1937. 2.20.01, inventory 11638. Inventaris van het archief van de Nederlandsche Handel-Maatschappij (NHM), 1824-1964. Nationaal Archief, The Hague, Netherlands.

<sup>112</sup> Correspondence from NV. Kooy & Coster van Voorhout to De Directie der NV Lebak Roto Cultuur Maatschappij in Amsterdam, 10 December 1937. 2.20.01, inventory 11638. Inventaris van het archief van de Nederlandsche Handel-Maatschappij (NHM), 1824-1964. Nationaal Archief, The Hague, Netherlands.

size into account, where children and extended family members often live together in one household.

With these unstable conditions, workers tended to move from one type of work to another, depending on the wages and facilities they could obtain. Kali Tello management repeatedly reported difficulty in finding labourers, because of higher wages that were offered by neighbouring plantations, especially the sugar industry, or simply because the people preferred to work in their own fields.<sup>113</sup> To tackle the shortage of labour, besides offering higher wages, the company also provided facilities, such as housing or health care.<sup>114</sup> Nevertheless, these were not the only way to keep the workers on the plantation. From my conversation with Prambodo, who was born in 1933 on the rubber plantation Gledekan Pancur in Dampit - Malang regency, plantation owners provided workers with other facilities to informally bind them to the plantation. He was the son of a high-overseer assistant. His father organised lower level foremen in different divisions, such as factory, rubber tappers, maintenance, and so on. Prambodo grew up on the plantation, but went to elementary school in the Malang municipality and returned to the plantation during school holidays. During his stay on the plantation, he realised that providing entertainment was one of the Dutch's strategies to keep the workers attached to the company:

[the workers'] wages were paid every week, each Saturday. Lower level foremen, in different divisions, were gathered together by their superiors and their data were submitted to the factory overseer who was responsible for the wages. ... I think the Dutch were very smart. We lived on a plantation, in an isolated area, so they provide us with entertainment [every Saturday]. There were dancers, and also people who played dice [gambling], so I realised the workers were busy with these entertainments. Meanwhile, the Dutch took a break to Malang [municipality], stayed in a hotel or went to *kamar bola* [a place to play billiards]. The workers were drinking, having fun, dancing, and so on. After that, their money was gone, spent just like that. Because they didn't have more money, they would work vigorously again on Monday. ... There were a lot of Madurese workers. ... They were cheap labour on the plantation. ... The Madurese like to play [the dice] or cock fight, and this was allowed by the Dutch. Because by the end [of the week], their money would be gone. Madurese were usually involved in a fight. ... The police usually came to take those people who were fighting. ... That's the life of uneducated workers, maintained by the Dutch to work [on the plantation].<sup>115</sup>

Prambodo described a lively situation of workers that is not usually recorded in the companies' reports. He depicted the existence of Madurese workers (as also mentioned in colonial reports) and the entertainment that was provided by the companies. According to Prambodo, this was a 'smooth' strategy to keep workers on the plantation. At the same time, he also highlighted the gap between Dutch administrators and ordinary labourers.

A common incident in the 1920s on Javanese plantations was coffee thefts. The first case of coffee theft in Kali Tello was recorded in the company's 1922- annual report, where around 20% of its coffee beans were stolen by a group of coffee thieves. In the following years, women were also

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<sup>113</sup> Verslag Over Het Boekjaar 1913. 1913. NEHA ZK 60163. Nederlandsch Economisch-Historisch Archief (NEHA) Internationaal Instituut voor Sociale Geschiedenis, Amsterdam, Netherlands

<sup>114</sup> Medicine was provided for free, while patients with serious illnesses were sent to a clinic in Malang. An outpatient clinic was established in 1927 near Kali Tello and Poerwodadie, where the plantation's residents can be treated by a doctor who comes from Malang every once a week. Verslag Over Het Boekjaar 1927. 1927. NEHA ZK 60163. Nederlandsch Economisch-Historisch Archief (NEHA) Internationaal Instituut voor Sociale Geschiedenis, Amsterdam, Netherlands.

<sup>115</sup> Interview with Prambodo, Malang municipality, 29 July 2016 #14.04-18.15

involved in these thefts.<sup>116</sup> NV. Kali Tello used several means to eliminate coffee thefts, including severe punishment for the thieves, erecting barbed-wire around the plantation, special plantation police, and cooperation between plantation police and *desa* (village) police.<sup>117</sup> The company reported that the numbers of thefts increased due to the abolishment of the *koffie-passen stelsel* (a pass that authorised coffee transport) around 1931. Initially, in Malang, a pass or permission was required for local owners to possess, process, or transport coffee. The pass was considered necessary because of the frequent occurrence of coffee theft, caused by the coffee boom (high prices for coffee) in the 1920s and insufficient security on plantations.<sup>118</sup> When coffee prices fell dramatically during the great depression around 1929-1930, and the security system had been improved, the passes were abolished. However, it did not diminish the acts of thievery. Therefore, it is highly possible that the abolishment of the *koffiepassen stelsel* may not have been the determining factor for the higher degree of coffee thefts, but the combined factors of economic crisis, migration, and fluctuation in labour wages. For the locals, thievery was an act of surviving the dire living condition in colonial times.

### Workers on the Plantation

The plantation affected the livelihood of villagers in Banyujati, especially for those who worked on the plantation. Different positions within the labour force (for example, coffee pickers and overseers or *mandor*) generated different amounts of income for the locals, which enabled them to accumulate more or less capital for their families. Today, these differences can still be seen in the lives of the second or third generation of those former workers. One of these families was that of Burmudji, who was born in 1952, a former school teacher and a retired staff member in the district education office. His father, Darsa, was born in 1917 and was one of the descendants of Banyujati's first settlers. He managed to finish school in *Ongko Loro* and *Ongko Telu* (schools established by the Dutch for the natives) and became a teacher in Kebon Agung, another district in Malang. Around 1930, he became a Catholic and, as part of the Catholic mission, Darsa was assigned to teach in a newly established Catholic school in Donomulyo.<sup>119</sup> After a few years, he established another Catholic school in a village outside the Banyujati area. Together with two other Catholics in the village, Darsa was respected as the pioneer of the Catholic community in the district. His ability to read, write, and count, also enabled him to work as an overseer in the Kali Tello plantation.

When the plantation still existed, my father was a *mandor* (overseer) of labourers. But don't imagine it was like a *mandor* today. It was more like a group chief. For example, there were ten labourers, so my father was the chief. This chief is called *mandor*. Because my father was considered 'educated' [quotation marks emphasised by Burmudji], although he only attended *Ongko Loro* and *Ongko Telu*... he was considered educated. So he was assigned administrative matters. ... So [for] wages or other [matters], it was enough to only call for the chief, and then the boss gave instructions. ... My father also distributed the wages. Although we were poor, we were not *that* poor compared to other people around us.<sup>120</sup>

<sup>116</sup> A newspaper article in 1939 reported that a woman together with a 15-year-old girl were arrested after stealing 3.5 kg of coffee beans. While the girl was returned to her parents, the woman was imprisoned for six weeks and fined f 7.50 for using a fake name. "De Koffiediefstallen in Zuid Malang", 12. 1939. *Soerabaiasch Handelsblad*. September 22, 1939.

<sup>117</sup> Verslag Over Het Boekjaar 1929; 1930. 1929 & 1930. NEHA ZK 60163. Nederlandsch Economisch-Historisch Archief (NEHA) Internationaal Instituut voor Sociale Geschiedenis, Amsterdam, Netherlands.

<sup>118</sup> "De Nieuwe Koffie Ordonantie", III-1. 1931 *Soerabaiasch Handelsblad*. July 13, 1931.

<sup>119</sup> In 1938, *Sekolah Rendah Katolik* was established in Donomulyo, but later closed during the Independence war. It was reopened in 1948 and obtained official permission from the Regent of Malang in 1950 as a *Sekolah Rakyat Katolik*/ Catholic Elementary School. Suhadiyono et.al 2010

<sup>120</sup> Interview with Burmudji, Kepanjen, 6 December 2016 #01.09.29-01.11.20

Burmudji is fully aware of his family's status in the village. Darsa's educational background had led him to become a teacher, an overseer of plantation labourers, and a respected Catholic leader in the area. Reflected by the case of Burmudji's family, the existence of the Kali Tello plantation had contributed to the class and status formation of the villagers.

Being part of the plantation also enabled villagers to extend their capital ownership. This was the experience of Mrs Aji Marlan's father. Aji Marlan himself was the village secretary in the New Order era and the son of a local businessman, who traded cattle (mostly cows) around different areas in the district. His father-in-law, later joined the business and both of them became the village's 'rich men', according to Marlan. Furthermore, his father also became a respected religious figure, with connections to Hajj around the area because of his trading business. Aji Marlan's father built the first mosque in the hamlet, and Marlan became an Ansor (a youth wing of Nahdlatul Ulama, one of Indonesia's prominent Islamic organisations) activist later on. Both fathers of Mr and Mrs Marlan had already shown economic managerial capabilities even before they collaborated in the business, which started through the work on the plantation.

Mrs Aji Marlan: [it was] my father. My grandmother sold *gethuk* (Javanese sweets made with cassava and shredded coconut) in the place where the people worked. And her son, my father, was the only child. He worked with the Dutch, but only to tap the rubber, not as an overseer. He was always given a packet of food [by his mother], but he did not eat it, instead he sold it to his friend. Then when he ate, he ate with my grandmother. He constantly saved the money, so he could buy a *sawah* (rice paddy field). He was always an economist ever since he was young. He worked with the Dutch. ... The Dutch paid their labourers, there was no forced labour. People were paid daily, but the wages were low.<sup>121</sup>

Although wages for labourers were low, Mrs Aji Marlan's father managed to overcome this by selling his food ration. The money that he saved by working on the plantation, and from the cattle business later on, was used to purchase large amounts of land in the village. This, together with the land that he inherited from Marlan's grandfather, and his network of Islamic figures, also positioned the family in the village elite group.

However, there were also other villagers outside the elite circle who worked on the plantation. This was the case of Marwono, which was very different from the family of Aji Marlan or Burmudji. Marwono, born around 1936 or 1937, is currently a farmer who owns a small plot of land. His land is planted with food crops, mainly cassava and a few cacao trees, and also timber (*sengon* type). In our conversation, he admitted that he had had a difficult childhood, growing up without knowing his parents and then he lost his aunt who took care of him.

I was born in Beji Rejo (an area in the Kasembon district, Malang). There was a coffee and rubber plantation there [in Banyuwati area]. My aunt and grandmother worked as labourers in the factory. There was a factory and a plantation. They picked coffee beans during the harvest season, and at other times, they worked as labourers on the plantation. ... When I was small, I remember my grandmother and aunt worked on the plantation. My brother and uncle, who also worked there, usually came home and brought firewood. Then they sold it. Wages at that time were very low, but I don't remember how low they were. But it was not enough for us to live on. We ate more vegetables. The value of firewood was really unpredictable. Sometimes we traded it for food, *tiwul* (cassava-based meal), to add to our daily menu. ... The people worked in the factory, they came from the surrounding area. There were no migrants from outside. The Dutch managed the factory, but the overseers were mostly Javanese. There were Dutch people, but only a few. ... There were usually feasts during holidays, all the workers gathered in the factory. Some of the food crops, including corn in the factory, were distributed to the workers. Once I also grilled the corn until dry. There was no entertainment

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<sup>121</sup> Interview with Mr and Mrs Aji Marlan, Donomulyo, 15 May 2017 #01.10.33-01.12.43

during the feast, but only an invitation to eat together. We did not use plates at that time, but only banana leaves.<sup>122</sup>

Marwono's family migrated to Banyujati because of the work opportunities on the plantation. Similar to Aji Marlan, Marwono mentioned the low wages for plantation workers, especially for his large extended family. They relied only on their limited wages, selling firewood, and free crops from feasts, Marwono's family did not have any reserved funds, let alone were they able to buy land for their property.

The family history of Burmudji, Aji Marlan, and Marwono illustrates the aggravated class relationship that was influenced by colonial industry, enabling village elites to extend their capital, leading to intensified landlordism and escalating inequality in the village. Participating in the colonial plantation industry enhanced their position as patrons, increasing their capital and connection to the colonial state. From the case of Donomulyo, it is interesting to note that people like Burmudji or Aji Marlan became members of the village elite not only because of their economic status, but also because of their religious and cultural connections. Aji Marlan came from a religious elite circle, while Burmudji is the descendant of the village's first settlers who were considered sacral by the locals. In other words, their positions as patrons in society are a result of intertwined factors of tradition, religion and economic position. However, challenges against the position of these patrons started to emerge after the independence war in 1945-50. The closing of the Dutch company because of the war provided the opportunity for villagers to occupy former plantation land.

### **The War of Independence, 1945-1950**

The remains of the Kali Tello plantation are hard to find in Donomulyo today. Buildings, traces of the *kabelbaan*, or coffee and rubber trees are no longer present in the Banyujati area. The only remaining trace of this colonial plantation was the road that became the village's main road. From the story of the villagers, I understand that the Japanese occupation (1942-45) and the Indonesian war of independence (1945-49) had destroyed everything owned by NV. Kali Tello. Whereas there were no strong memories or archive information about the Japanese occupation in this area, memories about the independence war still linger in the villagers' memories, such as in Marwono's story.

When I went to school, the plantation was already gone, occupied by the people. Because people did not have any land, and the Dutch had already been evicted. ... If we do not destroy it, they will return, that was what people said. All the coffee and rubber trees were destroyed, and replaced by food crops, to be consumed by the people. [Grace: Did you see the destruction?] I was still very young, I did not understand much. I saw people running around, burning the factories, like a riot. There was a commander, but I did not know who it was. The factory was burned down, but I did not know by whom. Back then, during the coffee harvest period, the coffee was sent with a kind of box, automatically moved by itself with a hanging cable (Marwono was referring to the *kabelbaan*). ... I also did not know about the land distribution, but I think there was somebody who arranged it. [Grace: How much did your family receive?] We got one yard, one hectare, if I'm not mistaken. They calculated the number of family members, small or large.<sup>123</sup>

This incident in Marwono's childhood memory happened in 1947. During the revolutionary war in 1945-1948, most plantations in the South Malang plantation belt were destroyed. Prambodo, who spent his childhood years in a rubber plantation in another South Malang plantation area (Dampit), also witnessed how the Japanese destroyed the rubber trees and removed them (although no further information can be obtained on the use of these rubber trees). In the first years of

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<sup>122</sup> Interview with Marwono, Donomulyo, 16 September 2016 #02.45-10.38.

<sup>123</sup> interview with Marwono, Donomulyo, 16 September 2016 #14.36-21.02.

independence, most of the rubber trees were gone, so the people started to convert the abandoned area into farmland. Even people from outside the plantation migrated to the area, destroy the remaining trees, and established land for themselves. In 1948, the factory in Dampit was scorched, bombed by the Indonesian guerrillas.<sup>124</sup> The materials from the factory, such as iron, were looted. Some of them were sold, others were used as materials to build villagers' houses. There seemed to be no law enforcement, according to Prambodo. People just took whatever they wanted; even Prambodo's family house was built with some of the materials from the factory. Prambodo also mentioned that guerrillas and refugees from outside the village also used the plantation land in order to survive.<sup>125</sup>

It was difficult to trace how and who coordinated the squatting of ex-plantation land. However, this during this period of war and land-squatting, a new player in the agrarian business started to emerge: the Indonesian army. For example, a report from NV Kooy & Coster van Voorhout in 1951 mentioned that a former TNI (Indonesian army) formed an alliance to established NV. Sumi, which used the former plantation lands of Wonokoio, Banduardjo, Alas Tledak, Donowarie and Kali Tello.<sup>126</sup> There is no further information on NV. Sumi, but it is likely that the company was unable to survive after independence. With new inhabitants in the area, former plantation land soon became *desa darurat* (emergency village) and in the 1950s, it became a source of conflict with companies or the government during the reclamation period.

In general, Dutch plantations in Indonesia were either destroyed during the Revolution or occupied by surrounding villagers. If they survived, they were returned to their previous Dutch owners and became nationalised in the late 1950s. The case of Kali Tello is an example of the first,<sup>127</sup> while other plantations in South Malang (and some areas in Indonesia) fall into the second category. In cases where plantations were destroyed, land occupation became a major issue. Opinions differed as, on the one hand, land-squatting was considered a progressive realisation of land reform and, on the other hand, it was considered as an act of theft by plantation owners and Indonesian government institutions.<sup>128</sup> When the government eventually 'tolerated' this massive land squatting, it was faced with an incongruity between 'the actual land situation, the official rules and the state registration system'.<sup>129</sup> In cases where plantations were nationalised, the role of Leftist organisations was prominent in the process. Local administrations formed *Panitia Pengembalian Milik Asing*

<sup>124</sup> This was known as the scorched earth (*bumi hangus*) tactics, part of the Indonesian Republican Army's guerilla tactics, geared towards inhibiting Dutch economic reconstruction. Nasution 1953, 20. The yearly report 1941-1949 of NV Kali Tello also stated that their factories, plantations and dwellings were destroyed as a result of the scorched earth tactic.

<sup>125</sup> Interview with Prambodo, Malang municipality, 29 July 2016 #46.11-49.39

<sup>126</sup> In this period, there was competition between different military groups to legalize ownership of former plantation lands. The group from NV. Sumi was competing with TNI group led by Oemar Maksim, who had strong connections with ALS (*Algemeen Landbouw Syndicaat*). Correspondence from NV. Kooy & Coster van Voorhout to De Directie der NV Lebak Roto Cultuur Maatschappij in Amsterdam, 12 March 1951. 2.20.01, inventory 11636. Inventaris van het archief van de Nederlandsche Handel-Maatschappij (NHM), 1824-1964. Nationaal Archief, The Hague, Netherlands.

<sup>127</sup> When an Agricultural and Technical expert, R. Ismantri, visited the south Malang area in August 1948, he reported that all the estates of Poerwodadie and Kali Tello had been completely destroyed and only 2% of the rubber remained. Copy Certificate Re: Condition of Estates and Factories South Malang Area, August 3, 1948. Inventory 11636. Nederlandsche Handel Maatschappij (NHM). Nationaal Archief, The Hague, Netherlands. NV Kali Tello decided not to reinvest in the plantation and decided to divert their assets to established a tobacco company. Verslag Over Het Boekjaar 1940-49. 1949. NEHA ZK 60163. Nederlandsch Economisch-Historisch Archief (NEHA) Internationaal Instituut voor Sociale Geschiedenis, Amsterdam, Netherlands.

<sup>128</sup> Lund & Rachman 2016, 1317.

<sup>129</sup> Bedner 2016, 41.



(Committee of Restoration of Foreign Property), who had the duty to restore foreign property to the owners. The committee consisted of union representatives, peasants, civil and military officials and plantation owners; and the first two had strong positions in the restoration processes.<sup>130</sup> In many cases, negotiations in this committee were difficult and even resulted in deadlocks, such as the case in South Malang, where no agreement could be reached on compensation funds for the plantation land.<sup>131</sup>

It could be said that the strongest union in the negotiation process was Sarbupri (*Serikat Buruh Perkebunan Republik Indonesia*/ The Indonesian Plantation Labour Union), which was founded in 1947 and subsequently became closely related to PKI. In the North Sumatra plantation, for example, Sarbupri became the vanguard to strive for better working conditions for plantation workers. They organised strikes to demand shorter working hours, and protested against sexual abuse of female workers by their superiors.<sup>132</sup> During the nationalisation around 1957-1959, a number of plantations fell into the hands of the army, such as in the case of the Ngadirejo sugar plantation in Kediri.<sup>133</sup> Intense disputes (often intermingled with religious and cultural factors) between the military-backed sugar company and the Sarbupri union together with the peasants continued in most of these plantations until the fall of the leftist movement in 1965.

When villagers in the Banyujati area started to occupy the former plantation land, it did not automatically lead to an improvement of their economic situation. Destruction of the plantation meant that the villagers lost the village's largest economic sector, including its infrastructure (i.e. electricity, housing) and facilities (i.e. health care). It also means that the village's money economy that was introduced by the colonial plantation industry became disrupted with the loss of the plantation. Even when villagers eventually managed to own their land, tilling and planting was a whole different story. The quality of soil had changed after the intense exploitation of the coffee and rubber plantation. The dry-soil character and limited rainfall also made food crop farming very difficult. It was not surprising when East Java experienced a food crisis in 1963 and the Donomulyo population suffered extreme malnutrition.<sup>134</sup> Furthermore, even when the state shifted (from colonial to independent Indonesia), patronage relationships in rural areas remained the same. Crop-sharing, land tilling, and the communal land system remained mostly the same, including the patron-client relationships that operate these systems. The only difference was the patron's connection to the state. In the colonial era, the plantation industry was the link between rural patrons and the state, while in the post-independence period, the military became a leading representation of the state. Moreover, the end of the Dutch plantation in Donomulyo was not followed by changes in their class relationships. Overall, the colonial plantation industry in Indonesia managed to increase socio-economic differentiation, concentration of land against the landlessness or near-landlessness, semi-proletarianisation and the emergence of a core of modern skilled labour.<sup>135</sup> No significant changes occurred during the early independence years, as in Donomulyo. At that time, there was a famous expression among the villagers: "When is this independence going to end (*Kapan yo entekne*

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<sup>130</sup> For example, while the companies were supposed to be returned to their owners, Sarbupri demanded f42,500 for the return of Margomulio company. Although the company paid only f 10,000, this case showed how strong the union was at that time. Keppy 2010, 212.

<sup>131</sup> Kementerian Penerangan 1953, 429.

<sup>132</sup> Agustono 2002, 134.

<sup>133</sup> Knight 2012, 409.

<sup>134</sup> "Notes Ketjil dari Malang Selatan: Tragedi Busung Lapar Perlu Perhatian", 4. 1964. *Trompet Masjarakat*. 25 Januari 1964.

<sup>135</sup> Slamet-Velsink 1988, 167.

*merdeka*)?"<sup>136</sup> This does not mean that the villagers wanted to be recolonised, but according to them, the Indonesian independence was not bringing any improvements for their lives.

### Confronting Class Differentiation: The Left and Agrarian Reform

Class differentiation also influenced the ways in which villagers overcame hardships in the district. For example, during a period of starvation in Donomulyo, Burmudji's father received donations such as rice, oil, milk, sugar and even cigars because he was working for the church Carmelite foundation.<sup>137</sup> In contrast, Marwono's family only ate *tiwul* (a dish made from fermented cassava) and the inner-side of papaya stem to survive the famine. It was the leftist organisations, mainly the PKI and the Indonesia Peasant Front (*Barisan Tani Indonesia*/ BTI) who started to confront and criticise these village inequalities together with practices of 'feudalistic' patronage. Information on how the BTI started to establish their branch in Banyujati is not clear. Some of the interviewees were certain that the organisation became active because of the agrarian reform, which was marked by the establishment of the Basic Agrarian Law (BAL) no. 5 in 1960. However, the BTI's advocacy on land issues already started even before the law was introduced. In 1951, the BTI criticised the new Indonesian government because of their tardiness in legalising the occupied former plantation land. The BTI strongly urged the government to be more aggressive and to even opt for forced handover of those land to the people.<sup>138</sup> They also supported advocacy and mass actions by the people to defend their land, the *desa darurat*, which were also formed on forestry land during the war. They condemned forestry officials in the ministry who still argued that squatted forestry land should be returned without considering the lives of the villagers.<sup>139</sup>

It is highly possible that the BTI's advocacy of land for the people and their position against feudalistic village administration,<sup>140</sup> led to their success in the 1955 legislative election. In the Malang Regency, the NU party received the highest number of votes (231,918 votes), followed by the PNI (Partai Nasional Indonesia – Sukarno's party) with 193,297 votes and the PKI with 164,159 votes.<sup>141</sup> In contrast with the provincial result, the PKI actually received the highest number of votes in the Donomulyo district, up to 12,981 votes. The second place was for the PNI with 3609 votes, followed by the NU in third place with 591 votes.<sup>142</sup> The dominance of the PKI was also reflected at the village level, where village heads in the Banyujati area were members of the PKI.

The BTI's mobilisation became more intensive when the Basic Agrarian Law (BAL) no.5 was introduced. The law had several functions: it asserted the 'social function' of land and other resources; reiterated the state's responsibility for managing those resources in the interests of 'the people'; prohibited absentee and foreign ownership of land, and paved the way for the redistribution of land through subsequent land reform legislation.<sup>143</sup> In short, the law aimed to provide land for the

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<sup>136</sup> Interview with Burmudji, Kepanjen, 6 December 2016 #19.29

<sup>137</sup> Interview with Burmudji, Kepanjen, 6 December 2016 #01.03.50

<sup>138</sup> Tj. "Okupasi Tanah", 3-4. 1951. *Suara Tani*, 31 Djanuari 1951. Edisi Tahun VI.

<sup>139</sup> Sardju, Imam. "Aksi-Aksi Kaum Tani Mempertahankan Tanah Bekas Kehutanan Jang Sudah Lama Dikerdjakan", 2. 1957. *Suara Tani*. July 1957, tahun VIII no. 8.

<sup>140</sup> In a *Suara Tani* article, the BTI criticized the undemocratic mechanism in forming village authorities. The existing practices at that time relied on family relationships to choose the village apparatus. The BTI suggested the formation of village law (Undang-undang Desa) to tackle this problem. Djojohadiwikarso, Kasno. "Keadaan Desa", 19. 1951. *Suara Tani*. Djanuari 1951, Tahun VI.

<sup>141</sup> The number of voters (478,454 people) in East Java was small compared to the total number of residents in the province (1,226,754 people). There is no explanation for this discrepancy. Panitia Pemilihan Indonesia 1955.

<sup>142</sup> "Hasil Pemungutan Suara Di Kabupaten Malang", 2. *Suara Masyarakat*, Oktober 1955.

<sup>143</sup> Lucas & Warren 2013, 2.

landless. However, the implementation of the law tells a different story. In 1963, the Central Land Reform Committee recorded that only 153,043 ha of land had been distributed of a total of 403,000 ha of government land.<sup>144</sup> Up to the end of 1964, the Agrarian minister noted difficulties in executing the Law, such as deficiencies in the registration of land; lack of understanding of the necessity and significance of the Law; and the inhibition of peasants' organisations from playing a significant role in the committee.<sup>145</sup> In extreme cases, obstruction of land distribution by the landlords was found in forms of deception by converting surplus lands into false grants, divorce, leasing and even deaths that led to false inheritance.<sup>146</sup> These landlords were apparently reluctant to give up their land which served as the basis of their status as patrons in society. The government was seen to be very slow in implementing the law, which led the PKI to take an aggressive step by launching unilateral actions. These actions took several forms, including physical attacks against landowners (usually followed by acts of retaliation towards the peasants); land grabbing; or refusal to hand in part of the harvest to the landowners.

In the Donomulyo district, 41,001 ha of land was already registered as excess land (*tanah kelebihan*) and 75 people were registered as candidates for the redistribution of this land.<sup>147</sup> There was no further information whether this redistribution was implemented or not. Land reform policy generated opposite reactions amongst Banyuwati villagers. Village (*desa*) capitalists perceived this policy as a threat to their property. This was the case with Burmudji. He explained his position on the policy:

My father was the head of the Catholic party. He was an opponent figure. The [PKI] village head's policies were always opposed. In front of my house, there was a plaque "Head of the Indonesian Catholic Party", and beside it "Head of Catholic Youth". My father was brave. "If I died, I died in the name of Jesus". ... There was a policy called land reform. ... At that time, my father was leading the resistance against the village head. Because land reform was really making the people suffer ... the land was controlled by the bureaucrats. ... So even if I had inherited land, those bureaucrats would decide only this [size] is your land. I cannot do anything, because it was restricted. Individual ownership was restricted, because of the PKI influence. There was a promise that members of the BTI will receive a piece of land. That land was actually obtained by reducing [ownership] through land reform. ... My father was supporting the people who felt harmed [by the land reform policy], so he took a role as the vanguard. Father had two missions, besides defending those oppressed people, he also had a private agenda. By generating goodwill, people will become Catholics. Directly or indirectly, they will be interested in Catholicism ... realising that those who suffered were defended.<sup>148</sup>

In Burmudji's perspective, the agrarian reform was a threat to his family's private property. Implying resentment against bureaucracy, he sees his family as the victim of the law and blamed the PKI as the initiator of the law.<sup>149</sup> Moreover, Burmudji's account also shows how land issues are intertwined with

<sup>144</sup> Asmu. "Keterangan Asmu Tentang Aksi Sepihak: Aksi Sepihak Kaum Tani, Karena Ada Aksi Sepihak Tuan Tanah II." 1964. *Harian Rakjat*. June 29, 1964.

<sup>145</sup> These difficulties were disclosed in a report by the Agrarian Minister in 14 January 1965. See Utrecht 1969, 78-79.

<sup>146</sup> Asmu. "Keterangan Asmu Tentang Aksi Sepihak: Aksi Sepihak Kaum Tani, Karena Ada Aksi Sepihak Tuan Tanah II." 1964. *Harian Rakjat*. June 29, 1964.

<sup>147</sup> Sagijati 1968.

<sup>148</sup> Interview with Burmudji, op cit. #02.32.13-02.35.57

<sup>149</sup> This is not accurate. During debates about the law in the Supreme Advisory Council and the parliament, the PKI had objections to some features of the law. Despite this, the party still voted in favour of the amended Bill that was finally adopted. According to Rex Mortimer, the PKI was playing consensus politics, guarding their alliance with the President, and demonstrating to the elite groups that they were moderate and responsible men. In other words, rather than influencing representatives of the political parties in the Parliament, they were conforming to negotiations on the law. Mortimer 1972, 16-17.

religion. His father was using his advocacy against agrarian reform as a strategy to expand Catholic followers in the village. In other areas, unilateral conflict turned into religious clashes because most landowners were part of Muslim religious institutions.<sup>150</sup> This became intensified when religious propaganda was used, i.e. portraying communists as atheist and therefore, as a threat to Islam and Catholicism.

In my interviews, the villagers explained that although there was resentment between the leftist organisations (PKI and BTI) and religious ones (NU, Catholic Party) in the village, there were no physical clashes during the land reform. This is different compared to other places in East Java, such as Kediri and Jombang, where violent conflicts occurred between these two polarised organisations. Aji Marlan, the former village secretary, described that both parties constantly bullied each other, and public events were used to show off the power that they both had through mass mobilisations. For example, during celebration of Indonesia's Independence Day, each organisation paraded around the district, wearing costumes and holding each organisation's banner. Aji Marlan himself, once participated in Ansor's (the youth organisation of Nahdlatul Ulama, Indonesia's Islamic organisation) drum band. This festivity became an occasion to show off each organisation's forces, which can be seen in the number of participants and appearance in the parade. Ridicules and threats between the BTI and the NU or Catholic Party usually circulated in the parade as they tried to prove themselves. However, villagers admitted that everyday activities in the village went on as usual. Communal work or *soyo*,<sup>151</sup> and other communal traditions such as the village cleansing or *bersih desa*, were still attended by everyone, including members of these conflicting parties. Given this background, it is hard to believe that the conflict between these parties resulted in mass killings in 1965 without external interference, in this case, the military.

One possible explanation of why no violent acts occurred during land reform in Donomulyo may stem from the differences of grassroots activities of leftist organisations in rural areas, which may not fit in with the solidity of the peasant's mobilisation that the PKI central committee had imagined. A study conducted in 1961 in nine subdistricts in the Malang Regency by the *Akademi Pemerintahan Dalam Negeri* (Internal Affairs Academy) reported that people in the region were reluctant to engage in political activity. For example, in the Purworedjo, Ngantang district, the presence of political parties and organisations were extensive. The PKI was the largest, followed by the PNI and NU. They existed together with many leftist organisations such as the BTI, Pemuda Rakyat (Youth organisation) and Gerwani (*Gerakan Wanita Indonesia*/ Indonesia Women's Movement). The later was reported to have a sub-branch in every four hamlets in the subdistrict. However, these parties and organisations were basically stagnant, because they had lost the support and belief of the locals.<sup>152</sup> Even some of these locals admitted that they were already bored with political activities. In the Ngadas, Tumpang district, it was reported that even political campaigns did not exist and therefore, no villagers joined political parties. The reporter himself was also puzzled, because in the last election, every party in this area had voters. Unfortunately, the study did not explain further the causes for such disinterest.

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<sup>150</sup> Mortimer 1972, 50-51

<sup>151</sup> Soyo is usually held when a person needs a large workforce to do something, for example build a house, till land, or prepare festivities (such as a wedding or circumcision). Neighboring villagers usually work together for the person on a voluntary basis.

<sup>152</sup> This research aimed at providing input for political and social-economic re-organisation and development. The Malang Regency was intended as a first case study which would then be extended to other regions in Indonesia. The nine subdistricts were considered as sites that had sufficient democratic institutions based on the results of the village elections since 1955. Six research assistants, who were second year students from *Perguruan Tinggi Hukum dan Pengetahuan Masyarakat Kota Pradja Malang* (Law and Public Knowledge University in Malang City), were involved for a minimum one-week stay in the subdistricts. Ruspana, 44-45.

Four years later, a participatory study by the BTI and PKI cadres found similar results. This research started in early 1965 by the Academy of Social Science 'Aliarcham' and was supported by the government. Covering Java, Bali and Lampung, the research report reflected on the variety of grassroots PKI and BTI movements. In some areas, the movements were rather passive, lacking consolidation and support; while in other areas, BTI members were aggressive, more demanding and no longer willing to rely on peaceful means.<sup>153</sup> These variations, according to Slamet-Velsink, resulted from a combination of several factors, such as the local political context, colonial capital penetration, and cultural elements (religion and ethnicity).<sup>154</sup> In other words, there was a huge discrepancy between the political strategies of the peasants' movement designed by the BTI's political elites with the actual grassroots situation.

This may also be the case in the Banyujati area. Although the PKI dominated the political sphere in the Banyujati area, this does not mean that villagers (including landless peasants) were also progressively leftist. These different levels of activism and participation might also relate to the fact that there was no continuous dispute over former plantation land in Donomulyo. It could not be said that the whole village lived up to the same level of Leftist ideology. Another reason why the BTI was not very active, although politically strong in Donomulyo, is because most of the former plantation land had already been occupied by the locals during 1945-49. Sarbupri (labour union affiliated with the PKI) also did not exist in the area, which led to less resistance against the state during the reclamation and nationalisation of plantations compared to other areas in South Malang.<sup>155</sup> Despite this discrepancy between central and rural politics, friction in the village was later used by the military to annihilate the leftists.

### Rural Transformation under the New Order

The anti-communist operation in Donomulyo occurred in 1965, under the name of the Pancasila Operation, and in 1968, namely the Trisula operation. Both of these operations had the same impact: mass disappearance, detention, killing, and continuous surveillance of villagers accused of being members or sympathisers of Leftist organisations (see Chapter 3). Villagers that were not detained were required to report continuously to the district military office (Koramil). This was a programme of *Bina Mental* or Mental Building, a screening programme to direct people's ideology to the Pancasila (the national ideology). Bina Mental methods consisted of three elements: *bina rohani*/ spiritual building (aimed at rebuilding faith in God through religious teachings), *santiaji* (aimed at enforcing the mental ideology of the Pancasila) and *pembinaan tradisi*/ tradition building (to achieve spiritual welfare and fighting spirit).<sup>156</sup> Although the programme claimed to build a nationalistic character, it was basically applied to control and ensure the establishment of the New Order at every administrative level in Indonesia. In Donomulyo, the people who were obliged to undergo the *bina*

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<sup>153</sup> Slamet-Velsink 1988, 47.

<sup>154</sup> Slamet-Versink 1988, 164.

<sup>155</sup> Compare to Yuwono study in Central Java, where many plantation workers joined the Sarbupri because they thought that the organisation would defend their rights, as the workers fell further into poverty after nationalization. Even then, Yuwono also noted that not all motives to be involved in the Sarbupri were ideological. See Yuwono 2018.

<sup>156</sup> Tim Skrining Propinsi Daerah Tingkat I Jawa Timur 1984, 31.

*mental* were known as the *santiaji* or *walap/ wajib lapor*. In 1997, there was 2,731<sup>157</sup> *santiaji* in Donomulyo, which decreased to 1,850 people in 1999.<sup>158</sup>

This monitoring mechanism also involved replacing all village heads with military officer and removing all leftist elements in the village apparatus. This happened to the PKI village head in Banyujati area, Ario Dursam, who disappeared. Political activities vanished throughout the late 1960s, but re-emerged under the New Order command. Its ruling party, the Golongan Karya or Golkar, dominated the political sphere in the village by mobilising all of the village elites to join them. Furthermore, while leftists' organisations have already been dismissed and banned, other organisations, such as religious-based women's organisations, also struggled to exist. Santi, Head of the village branch of the Catholic Women's Organisation (*Wanita Katolik Indonesia/ WKRI*) and organiser of the Family Welfare Education programme (*Pendidikan Kesejahteraan Keluarga/ PKK*) in the 1980s, described that villagers were too scared to be involved in any of the organisation's activities. They believed that the violence against communist activists was a result of their political involvement in mass organisations. Santi and her fellow organisers in the WKRI and PKK struggled to convince people that both organisations were not political in any way. In WKRI, through guidance from the Regional Officials, Santi started to revive the organisation through routine communal prayers. In this manner, she convinced villagers that it was safe to participate in the WKRI.<sup>159</sup> Similar reluctance was also experienced by traditional theatre groups or *Ketoprak*. Before 1965, these groups were the vanguard of mass education and mobilisation by conveying revolutionary messages to the villagers. After the anti-communist military operation, all *Ketoprak* players were accused of being members of Lekra (the leftist cultural organisation, closely related to PKI) and were either killed or became *santiaji*. Since then, cultural performances disappeared, but started to re-emerge again in the early 1970s. This was monitored closely by the Babinsa (*Badan Pembina Desa*, a village-level monitoring officials) and became the funnel of New Order propaganda. In short, all political activities in the village were highly controlled under New Order authoritarian ideology.

Another prominent transformation in the village was the conversion of religion, because the New Order government instructed that every Indonesian should have one of the five monolithic religions approved by the state. This was a national phenomenon as a result of the 1965 violence.<sup>160</sup> A letter from a former priest in Donomulyo parish, B. Soedarmodjo, stated that parishioners increased rapidly especially in the years of 1966 to 1968. "Most of them have the motive of political security as a result of the communist rebellion Gestapu/ G30S. Therefore, they have not reached the maturity of faith", said Soedarmodjo.<sup>161</sup> Data from the Catholic parish in the district showed that only 378 people were baptized in 1960-1965, and 290 people received communion. These numbers increased sharply in 1966-1970 where 3,472 people were baptized and 2,666 people received communion.<sup>162</sup> A report from the Carmelite foundation mentioned that villagers were protected by the catholic priests,

<sup>157</sup> "Surat Kepada Kepala Direktorat Sosial Politik Propinsi Dati I Jawa Timur – Daftar Rekapitulasi Bekas Tahanan Narapidana Dan Walap G30S/ PKI Se-Wilayah Kabupaten Malang Dan Se-Kotatiff Batu Bagian Bulan Desember 1997". January 18, 1998. Arsip Badan Perencanaan Daerah Jawa Timur, Surabaya, Indonesia.

<sup>158</sup> "Daftar Nama WNRI Yang Terlibat G30S/PKI (Walap) Atau Organisasi Terlarang Lainnya (ELA) Di Wilayah Kecamatan Donomulyo, Kabupaten DATI II Malang," September 1999. Pendidikan, Sosial, Politik. Badan Arsip Propinsi Jawa Timur, Surabaya Indonesia.

<sup>159</sup> Interview with Santi, Donomulyo, 20 September 2016 #05.04-10.55.

<sup>160</sup> In Central Java, Catholic Church members grew 126% in 1966 and onwards. Meanwhile, Gereja Kristen Jawi Wetan or GKJW in East Java, reported an increase of around 32,500 baptized members and eight new congregations between 1964 and 1967. Hearman 2018, 181.

<sup>161</sup> Soedarmodjo. "Ikhtisar Mengenai Paroki Purworejo Keuskupan Malang," March 5, 1977. Arsip Keuskupan Malang. Keuskupan Malang, Jawa Timur.

<sup>162</sup> Appendix in Suhadiyono, et.al. 2002, 37.



teachers and students during the G30S turmoil. This became the reason why most of the villagers turned to Catholicism instead of Islam because the latter became perpetrators of the mass killings, according to the report.<sup>163</sup> People who converted to Catholicism or Christianity were formerly not devoted religious people (some of them also practiced *Kejawen*, a spiritual Javanese belief), but chose these religions to avoid being accused of being a communist. In Central Java, Christianity was chosen for several reasons, such as the use of the Javanese language instead of a foreign language (such as Arabic), the use of traditional cultural performances in their prayers or masses, and in some cases, Christian organisations provided economic support (for example, scholarship or sponsored transmigration programmes).<sup>164</sup> In other cases, people were also attracted to Christianity because of its principle of equality.<sup>165</sup>

At the national level, the development agenda was completely transformed after 1965. During Sukarno's leadership, economic policy in the 1960s revolved around control of the state in all sectors of the Indonesian economy; destruction of imperialism and subordination of foreign capital to national social and economic goals; and replacement of the colonial import/export economy by a more self-sufficient and industrialised economy.<sup>166</sup> This policy took a capitalistic turn in the hands of the New Order government. In 1965-1968, the National Planning Board (*Badan Perencanaan Nasional/ Bappenas*) technocrats were convinced by the IMF (International Monetary Fund) / IBRD (International Bank for Reconstruction and Development) ideology of free-market economics, which limited the state in providing the fiscal and monetary conditions for capital accumulation, and trusted in the mechanisms of the market to generate maximum growth and efficiency.<sup>167</sup> When Bappenas released the five-year development programme (*Rencana Pembangunan Lima Tahun/ Repelita*), 60% of the programme's budget expenditure was derived from foreign loans.<sup>168</sup> This drastic transformation of the economic policy leads several scholars to argue that the 1965-66 killings happened in order to set the foundation for the growth of capitalism in Indonesia.<sup>169</sup>

This change in economic policy directly affected the agrarian strategy. Emphasising increasing food production, the New Order created one of the well-known intensification programmes BIMAS or *Bimbingan Massal* (mass guidance). It started in 1965-1966 under the supervision of a state-owned enterprise 'Pertani' which was tasked with giving information, providing the peasants with seedlings, fertilizer, insecticides and fodder for the plough-oxen, and granting credits.<sup>170</sup> This programme then took a different turn under the New Order with the involvement of multinational corporations. Companies such as the Swiss Ciba and West German Hoechst were contracted by the state and paid about US\$50 per hectare for provision of the necessary Green Revolution inputs including fertilizers, insecticides, extension and management, and the new IR/ rice varieties. Peasants were expected to repay these inputs by delivering one-sixth of their crop to a national collection agency.<sup>171</sup> Although

<sup>163</sup> Hogenkamp. "Beberapa Pandangan Mengenai Jajasan Karmel Bagian Pengadjaran (Diterangkan Dan Dibitjarakan Dalam Rapat Definitorium)." 1972. Jajasan Karmel. Arsip Keuskupan Agung Malang, Indonesia.

<sup>164</sup> Nugroho 2008, 176-180.

<sup>165</sup> Sevenster-Brouwer 2017, 46.

<sup>166</sup> Robison 2009, 71-72.

<sup>167</sup> Robison 2009, 133.

<sup>168</sup> In December 1966, the Indonesian government delegation made a statement at the IGGI (Inter-Governmental Group on Indonesia) conference in Paris that resulted in reopening access to international networks of finance. See Robison 2009, 137-138.

<sup>169</sup> Farid 2005, 4. Foreign countries, such as the US, were expecting this kind of transformation. Noam Chomsky and Edward Herman have noted that the massacres in Indonesia represented a 'benign bloodbath' and a 'constructive terror because they served US foreign policy interests'. Roosa 2006, 16.

<sup>170</sup> Utrecht 1973, 161.

<sup>171</sup> White & Huskens 1989, 252.

BIMAS resulted in a substantial increase in rice production, it only lasted until the late 1980s because it became very problematic, involving corruption.<sup>172</sup> A study in Gondanglegi, South Malang, concludes that BIMAS was only effective for middle- or upper-class farmers, because this group tended to have larger plots of land and more capital to access farming credit, compared to lower-class farmers.<sup>173</sup>

Meanwhile, the 1960 Basic Agrarian Law continued to be used by the New Order, although the law's principle of state control became deviated. Land distribution was implemented under patronage politics and top-down control so that concessions were centralised in the establishment of an alliance between a property-owning elite and government-backed-army.<sup>174</sup> The military's interference can be seen, for example, in the case of a land dispute between villagers and the PT. Swadaja/ State Estate Company (*Perusahaan Perkebunan Negara/ PPN*) in Ampelgading, in the Malang Regency in 1968. Villagers, who lived on former plantation land converted to *desa darurat*, were forced to return the land to the company and relocate to another area. To execute this demand, Military Resort Command 083 released an instruction decree, which was soon followed by another decree by the East Java Land Reform Committee. Both documents instructed the termination of the certification process of former plantation land that was inhabited by villagers. Even land certificates that had already been issued should be reassessed.<sup>175</sup>

In Donomulyo, by replacing the leftist village apparatus, the army and village elites easily formed a new alliance. After the 1965 violence, local patrons who were once confronted by the left, remained unshakable with this new alliance. People such as Burmudji's family, who resented the land reform policy, benefited from the loss of the leftists. The property and social status of these groups in the village were no longer questioned. Alliance with the military reinforced their position, while at the same time, paving the way for establishing the New Order in rural areas. This also led to several forms of arbitrary action, such as land confiscation. For example, Marwono's father-in-law lost 18 are<sup>176</sup> of land to village officials which was later distributed between them and the local army. It was not possible to resist, because Marwono and his father-in-law were following *santiaji* at that time. "It was confiscated because he was accused of being a BTI. It was only one reason, a member of BTI is PKI", said Marwono. Local patrons repeatedly used this communist label to benefit themselves not only through land confiscation, but also by controlling the distribution of farming credits. This case reflected how village elites in the New Order era became "political and economic agents of the state in the countryside and were co-opted into the larger structure of power as preferred but dependent clients and in return, they were granted access to subsidised credit, inputs, licenses, guaranteed prices, and so forth for their service in monitoring the village".<sup>177</sup>

## Conclusion

The history of Donomulyo illustrates the connections between larger global state economic policy and local livelihoods. Through this historical narrative, Donomulyo shows the continuity of inequality and patronage that persisted throughout different periods of history. This continuity occurred not only because of state penetration in rural areas, but also because rural elites that attempted to maintain their privileged position, access, and ownership, needed to form alliances with the state.

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<sup>172</sup> Utrecht 1973, 161; Crouch 1988, 290-291.

<sup>173</sup> Kano 1990, 120-21.

<sup>174</sup> Lund & Rachman 2016, 1320.

<sup>175</sup> The documents include Surat Perintah 001/10/1967 by Korem 083, and Surat Panitia Landreform Daerah Tingkat I Djawa Timur No.7/Agr/Lf/01/67 on 12 June 1967. Sagijati 1968.

<sup>176</sup> 1 are = 100 square meters.

<sup>177</sup> Hart 1989, 33.

The case of Burmudji above, shows an example of how village elites despised land reform, and were relieved when the left ended their advocacy. During the colonial era, alliances were formed between village authorities and administrators of colonial plantations or colonial government. The traditional patron-client relationships that was formed through the land tenure and crop-sharing system were transformed into economy-driven patronage relationships since the establishment of the Dutch plantations. Practices such as elites who became middlemen for collecting taxes and recruiting labourers are some of the examples of this shift. When this relationship accommodated the colonial economy, it also exacerbated the inequality in Donomulyo. In the independence era, it was the leftist organisations, mostly the PKI and BTI, that became the vanguard in challenging this village inequality. It was also during this period that the patrons' alliance with the state started to transform – from economy oriented to authoritative and power oriented (involving the creation of security and order). The opposition from the left had completely vanished along with the anti-communist operation in 1965 and establishment of the New Order. Rather than reforming the village patronage, the New Order created a new alliance of patrons between the local elites and the military. It is within this context of patronage and inequalities that memories of the 1965 violence were formed and shaped.