

everyday magic

a study of the occult in Jakarta

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introduction

In June 2009 I travelled to Jakarta, the capital city of Indonesia, to join a workshop at Universitas Tarumanagara. Being in Jakarta, a hot and crowded city full of differences and contradictions, raised my interest in the different ways people live with and within this city. Quite accidentally I discovered in a travel guide an article about “superstitions” (Bacon, Collins 2007:80-83). Avoiding the term ‘superstition’, I asked many people in Jakarta about ‘magical beliefs’. All of them confirmed that, within the city, there is an omnipresent and strong belief in ‘magic’ – although this belief is often questioned. I became more and more interested in the role ‘magic’ plays within this modern city and finally I decided to choose this as the subject for my dissertation.

The title of this dissertation reflects the contradiction I was confronted with while studying magic, the occult in Jakarta. On the one hand, magic, the “art of influencing events and producing marvels” (Harper 2001) means the metaphysical, the mysterious, the supernatural, the paranormal, and is often connected to the divine. Occult means the hidden, the concealed, the secret, or to keep secret (*see* Drosdowski 1989:432,496; Mitzka 1967:484). But on the other hand, the magic and the occult in Jakarta seem to be metaphysical, supernatural, obvious, paranormal, apparent, connected to the domestic, or, in other words, a part of everyday life.

During my research I visited three people, talked with them for several hours about the nature of their practice and their involvement with magic, took portraits and photographed them in their domestic environments. They offer a wide range of treatments and help, for instance, alternative (magical) medicine, tarot, beauty treatments, help with sexual problems, advice for improving relationships and marriage, assistance for business success, or the making or preventing of rain. Many of the things that they can help with are related to urban life. Furthermore, it’s important to note that their magical aid engages with the future. On the whole, for the individual their service seems to be a form of ‘counselling’ or ‘life coaching’ that is as traditional as it is modern.

In the first part, **everyday magic I**, I will reveal the etymological starting points related to magic, occultism, and mystery. I will show that magic is concerned with the hidden, the secret, and the suspicious. After this, the vast literature about magic is examined. Under the title process versus concomitance, these two different approaches to magic are contrasted. The first and older approach asserts that there is a process from magic, (through religion,) to science. The writings of Frazer, Spencer, Tylor, and Weber are discussed here. The second approach rejects this assertion, arguing that magic, religion, and science exist in concomitance. For the second approach, different contemporary authors are discussed, such as Hadden, Heelas, and Woodhead. A special focus lies on Marcel Mauss’ “General Theory of Magic” (1950[1972]) which stands between process and concomitance, but leans toward to the latter.

In the second part, **a study of the occult in Jakarta**, I will write a narrative about my research in Jakarta. After describing the methods and digressing on how to photograph magic, the report of the research follows a thematic structure: arriving & environment, personal background & community, clients & business, and abilities, treatments & help.

In the third and last part, **everyday magic II (results)**, the theory of the first part will be brought together with the narrative reported in the second part. I will suggest that magic’s societal function can be understood as producing the possibility of future in the present.

everyday magic I

There are many words to describe what this study is about: magic, the occult, mysticism, metaphysics, sorcery, the supernatural, the paranormal, the otherworld, witchcraft, alchemy, spirituality, esotericism, alternative/magic medicine, psychics, and also the sacred, the divine. However, I felt I was being intolerant by assigning these terms to what I observed in Jakarta, to **something** that seems to be rather normal, a part of everyday life. In this respect, Versnel indicates that “Anthropologists in particular have argued that [...] our notion ‘magic’ is a modern-western biased construct which does not fit representations of other cultures. Consequently, in the view of some of them, the term ‘magic’ should be altogether avoided” (Versnel 1991:177). Conversely, Versnel argues, from “an etic point of view [...] it will be impossible to do cultural research without the aid of heuristic instruments such as—at least broad, polythetic or prototypical—definitions” (ibid.). In his book “Naming the Witch” Siegel writes: “Indeed, without trying to explain the other in his own terms, anthropology would not exist. The question is how to do so” (Siegel 2006:21). This problem is not only one of the ‘western scientist’ who travels abroad, but also for the ‘magic people’ themselves. The three people I visited in Jakarta used a variety of these words to name themselves, and the magazine where I found their advertisements is entitled “Misteri – Majalah investigasi supranatural” (*Misteri* 2009). This demonstrates that the subject of this dissertation is **something**, that is, apparently, hardly to name. By striking through the words I want to indicate that we are not speaking about an ‘object’, although in the photographs, objects can be found that seem to have magical abilities. Furthermore, I try to use these words as carefully as possible to avoid any stigmatisation.

etymological starting points

Mainly I want to work with the word ‘magic’ because of three reasons. *Firstly*, regarding the etymological origin, it is one of the ‘oldest’ words listed above. *Secondly*, it summarises most of the meanings of the other terms. Nevertheless, I will also have a closer look at the ‘occult’ and ‘mysticism’ because these ancient terms reveal the special way of (non)communication which becomes inevitably apparent while ‘observing’ magic. *Thirdly*, ‘magic’ is a term often used in academic studies in this field. In the following paragraphs, I will examine the etymological origin of ‘magic’, ‘occult’, and ‘mysticism’. Not only because this reveals some important starting points for this study, but also to take my carefulness of using these words into account.

Concerning magic, the following is acknowledged: “c.1384, “art of influencing events and producing marvels,” from O.Fr. *magique*, from L. *magicæ* “sorcery, magic,” from Gk. *magike* (presumably with *tekhne* “art”), fem. of *magikos* “magical,” from *magos* “one of the members of the learned and priestly class,” from O.Pers. *magush*, possibly from PIE **magh-* “to be able, to have power” (Harper 2001). Thus, magic aims to change the respective future. But the way magic achieves its aims seems to be blurred, marvellous, a secret art (*see* Drosdowski 1989:432). This raised suspicion very early in history (not just since the Enlightenment). The Greek origin of the word ‘magician’ (which today would be better translated with ‘sorcerer’), *mágos*, not only means ‘the one who reads dreams’, the ‘sorcerer’, but also ‘swindler’ (ibid.). The word ‘may’ derives too in its ancient origin from ‘*mágos*’. Thus, ‘*mágos*’ has also the meaning of ‘to be able to, to be useful and helpful’ (Mitzka 1967:484). Furthermore, from the very beginning magic was related to the divine and the sacred.

Since the end of the 19th century, the word ‘occultism’ is connected with the secret science of supernatural powers and objects. The word ‘occult’ derives from the Latin word ‘*occultus*’ which means ‘hidden’, ‘concealed’, or ‘secret’. ‘*Occultus*’ derives from ‘*ob-celere*’ whose basic word is ‘*celare*’ which means, also in a negative way, ‘to conceal, to cover, to keep secret’ (Drosdowski 1989:496). Today, the word ‘mysticism’ can be used as synonym for the occult. Originally, it means ‘the initiated’ (especially regarding the Eleusinic secrets; Greek *mýstēs*) and possibly derives from the Greek word ‘*mystós*’ which means ‘descreet’, ‘reticent’. The etymon is the Greek word ‘*mýein*’ which means ‘to close the lips and eyes’ (Drosdowski 1989:477; Seebold 2002:641). In his “*Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*” Wittgenstein writes: “There are, indeed, things that cannot be put into words. They make themselves manifest. They are what is mystical” (Wittgenstein 2001[1922]:89).

To sum up, this study is about **something that** “cannot be put into words” (ibid.), **something** hidden, concealed, secret, marvellous, and connected to the divine. Furthermore, it is useful, helpful, enabling somebody to do something, but also raises suspicion of swindling. But how to write about **something that**, again, “cannot be put into words” (ibid.), **something that** is extracted from language, that has to be crossed out as soon as it is named? Or in the words of Siegel: “The difficulty of studying witchcraft, then, is that it remains inaccessible, not only to the anthropologist, but, it often seems, to those who believe in it” (Siegel 2006:20). In an essay about ‘observing the unobservable’ (Fuchs 1989:70-100) Fuchs faces the same problem, asking whether mysticism is a case of incommunicability. Consequently, he avoids fathoming the nature of mysticism, or to write a phenomenology about mystical experiences. Instead, he focuses on the (peculiar) communication that the incommunicability of mysticism provokes (ibid.:97). I want to follow this sociological approach, asking *not* what is magic, but why is society in need of **something** like magic. In other words: I’m interested in the everyday life when it is assumed that magic exists. What is the function of magic when its existence is as conspicuous as it is suspicious?

process versus concomitance

What Stevens points out for witchcraft could be assumed to be true for all magical phenomena: they are “timeless and universal, found at all stages of recorded human history and in all societies, and at all levels of society” (Stevens 1982:215). As universal as magic seems to be, writings about magic are, unsurprisingly, very comprehensive. Magic was always a subject in the humanities (philosophy, theology). But also in social sciences, there is probably no discipline that has not developed their own theories about magic. In this dissertation it is not feasible to even give an overview of all the different positions. Instead, I only want to focus on a basic assumption that fundamentally changed within the last century.

In the very beginning of social sciences, there was the assumption that in every society was, is, or - at least - should be an *evolution to science*. James Frazer, besides Spencer and Tylor, probably the best known author of this “early intellectualist approach” (Cunningham 1999:15), argues “that the movement of the higher thought, so far as we can trace it, has on the whole been from magic through religion to science. In magic, man depends on his own strength to meet the difficulties and dangers that beset him on every side. [...] [W]hen he recognises sadly that both the order of nature which he had assumed and the control which he had believed himself to exercise over it were purely imaginary, he ceases to rely on his own intelligence and his own unaided efforts, and throws himself humbly on the mercy of certain great invisible beings behind the veil of nature, to whom he now ascribes all those far-reaching powers which he once arrogated to himself. Thus in the acuter minds magic is gradually superseded by religion [...]. But as time goes on this explanation in its turn proves to be unsatisfactory. [...] Thus the keener minds [...] come to reject the religious theory of nature as inadequate, and to revert in a measure to the older standpoint of magic by postulating explicitly, what in magic had only been implicitly assumed, to wit, an inflexible regularity in the order of natural events, which, if carefully observed, enables us to foresee their course with certainty and to act accordingly. In short, religion, regarded as an explanation of nature, is displaced by science” (Frazer 1996[1922]:853-854). Also Spencer and Tylor regarded magic as ‘pseudo-science’, ‘false speculations’, ‘superstition’, one of the ‘lowest stages of civilisation’, a part of “Primitive Culture” (Tylor 1974[1871]), but science, on the contrary, as the ‘highest stage of civilisation’ (see Cunningham 1999:15-22; Wax, Wax 1963:495-499).

Whereas the theories of this intellectual approach can be assigned to anthropology, in other disciplines that emerged in the 19th century the direction was the same, but, of course, the arguments different. Concerning Weber, the Waxes summarise his writings about magic: “In order for a society to move toward a more rational economy, or a generally more rational way of life, Weber felt that the power of magic had to be broken. [...] For him, magic was an essential element of a particular kind of rigidified culture” (Wax, Wax 1963:501). Also in early psychology, pertaining to the “emotionalist approach” (Cunningham 1999:23), there was an agreement about this process (see *in relation to Freud* Cunningham 1999:26; Geertz 1972:9).

From a contemporary point of view this claim of an evolution can be easily regarded as prejudice, as arrogant, or as racist. However, it has to be seen in the context of the 19th century, when the ideas of Enlightenment were still strong and the complexity of modernity (what is today called ‘postmodernity’) was underestimated. But Frazer also wrote: “In the last analysis magic, religion, and science are nothing but theories of thought” (ibid.:854) and Pocock argues that with a general critique of the theory of evolution relevant achievements of this period are neglected. “One of the most important of these [...] was that the application to primitive societies of the theory of evolution re-established the fundamental human unity” (Pocock 1972:1). This should not go unmentioned.

Nevertheless, the evolution theories regard magic not only as opposed to the West, to modernity, science, and sometimes to religion and rationality, but also as inferior, and sometimes immoral. Whereas the latter was criticised early, the other distinctions often still exist today. According to Geertz, the first criticism (“anti-evolutionism”) that had a serious impact on social sciences came from the Boas school that criticised “armchair speculation” and encouraged a more phenomenological approach (Geertz 1972:8). With the notion of *concomitance* I want to describe contemporary theories which mostly reject the idea of a process from magic, through religion, to science, or the idea of an *evolution*. Since the cruelties of World War II, it would be hard to uphold distinctions like modern people/primitive man. Thus, also the examination of magic became more and more unbiased and the formerly firm distinctions weakened. Collingwood even claimed that magic is a necessity of a healthy society (Collingwood 1958:69). Maybe he oversteps the mark, but it’s obvious that in nearly every society magic can be found, so, at least, there seems to be a universal *need* of magic.

I now want to take a closer look at Marcel Mauss’ “General Theory of Magic” (Mauss 1972[1950]), because this theory stands between the idea of a *process* and the idea of *concomitance*, but leans toward the latter. Retrospectively, his work marks a turning point in the studies of magic. Mauss demonstrates that there is a historical connection between magic and science: “Magicians, who were also alchemists, astrologers and doctors in Greece, India and elsewhere, were the founders and exponents of astronomy, physics and natural history” (ibid.). The following passage sums up the “genuine kinship” (ibid.:141) between science, magic, and religion. Moreover, it indicates why there is a need of magic, also today: “While religion is directed towards more metaphysical ends and is involved in the creation of idealistic images, magic has found a thousand fissures in the mystical world from whence it draws its forces, and is continually leaving it in order to take part in everyday life and play a practical role there. It has a taste for concrete. Religion, on the other hand, tends to be abstract. Magic works in the same way as do our techniques, crafts, medicine, chemistry, industry, etc. Magic is essentially the art of doing things, and magicians have always taken advantage of their know-how, their dexterity, their manual skill. Magic is

the domain of pure production, ex nihilo” (ibid.:141). Nevertheless, he writes also that “magic is the most childish of skills” (ibid.:142). This shows why he marks an important turning point in the studies about magic. He also inspired the later published work of Lévi-Strauss (see Pocock 1972:6) whose inferences are in many ways similar: “It is [...] better instead of contrasting magic and science, to compare them as two parallel modes of acquiring knowledge” (Lévi-Strauss 1966:13). In conclusion, I would say that Mauss argues in a way that regards science and magic as additional, or even sometimes similar, rather than exclusive or superior and inferior. As Pocock argues, he even *dissolutes* magic as a category, albeit unintentionally. Pocock speaks of a “work of demolition”, but in a positive sense – the need for this could be found in the “earlier history of ethnology” (Pocock 1972:6).

In Jakarta, science, magic, and religion exist at *one place* and at the *same time*. It’s obvious that there was and is no process from magic, (through religion,) to science, rather a concomitance. But this also means that a clear difference between magic, science, and religion exists. *Neither they substitute one another, nor are they mutually exclusive*. Consequently, the dissolution of magic took place only, but reasonably, as an academic category. But this is not only true for an eastern city like Jakarta, but also for a western city like London. Greenwood proves this clearly in a chapter about “The Magical Subculture in London” (Greenwood 2000:3-8). For the United States, Hadden shows that in the US religion is still strong and that worldwide the political influence of religion persists. Accordingly, he argues *against* a theory that claims a progressive secularisation (Hadden 1987; Hadden 1997; see Cunningham 1999:111-112). More recently, Heelas and Woodhead describe on the one hand a decline of the influence of religion (particularly Christianity) in the west, but indicate on the other hand a raising interest in ‘spirituality’: “Terms like spirituality, holism, New Age, mind-body-spirit, yoga, feng shui, chi and chakra have become more and more common in the general culture than Christian vocabulary” (Heelas, Woodhead 2005:1). Or as Davis puts it: “Inside the United States, within whose high-tech bosom I quite self-consciously write, the spirit has definitely made a comeback – if it could be said to have ever left this giddy, gold rush land, where most people believe in the Lord and his coming kingdom, and more than you’d guess believe in UFOs” (Davis 2004 [1999]:4). In his article about “Urban Witchcraft Beliefs” in the US, Stevens indicates the problems that arise when these beliefs exist in a society whose self-description is modern, secular, and free of magic (Stevens 1982). But science, modernity, etc. themselves create their own mysteries. In this respect I want to mention the photographs of Taryn Simon in her series “An American Index of the Hidden and Unfamiliar” (Simon 2007).

As important as Mauss’ ‘demolition’ was, it is equally important now to reveal the specifics of magic: why there is a need of magic, regarding both its *concomitance* with science and religion and, what was often forgotten, the *hidden and suspicious* which ‘cannot be put into words’. In the next chapter I will write about my own research into magic in Jakarta. In the last chapter I will come back to the theoretical questions.

a study of the occult in Jakarta

In Jakarta, everything seems to be intermingled. Malls like “Pacific Place” with an artificial lake 20 meters above ground, where you can have your dinner in an original sailing boat, are next to ‘Kampungs’, the old and often very poor boroughs of Jakarta, then, 100 meters away a modern private university, opposite a mosque, and around the corner there is a medium class hotel where a ‘sorcerer’ regularly practices. In this chapter, a study of the occult in Jakarta, I want to examine the “practical role” (Mauss 1972[1950]:141) of magic. The three people I visited, Mas Liong Bie Sugema, Ustadz Lukman Har, and HJ. Umi Jeng Monalisa, gave me an insight into their abilities, their business, their role in the community, and also into their private life. To find the three people was not difficult at all: they all advertised in popular Indonesian magazine called “Misteri : Majalah Investigasi Supranatural” (Misteri 2009) (circulation of 100.000 copies). Although they all advertised in the same magazine, their practices are quite different.

methods

The methods I used were determined by the limited amount of time I had to do this research. I decided to interview the people instead of handing out questionnaires because of two reasons. Firstly, directly asking the people shows that you’re much more interested and this personal connection is in a way expected in the Indonesian culture. Secondly, it allowed me to *listen* and to change the questions if necessary. I wanted to do research in a way Les Back calls “the art of listening” and who also claims to take the everyday life (with all its ‘secrets’) into consideration (Back 2007:7). However, I didn’t have the chance to visit the people again. This is why I decided to do guideline-based interviews with questions that are open enough to discover the unexpected but also allow a certain degree of comparability (see appendix). In this chapter I represent what they told me without evaluating it. The picture they drew of themselves is probably more important for this study than the ‘reality’.

Concerning photography I had the same limitation: I couldn’t go back to take more photographs. This was one reason why I decided to use a digital camera. With the digital camera I was able to check the photographs immediately and to show the pictures to the photographed people which is often helpful to integrate them to the process of getting photographed within a short time. But it was also, and not least, an aesthetical decision. Photographing magic is popular, especially ‘ghost photography’. What could prove the existence of ghosts better than a photograph? Some old masterpieces of ghost photography, Buguets “Fluid Effect” (1875), Thiébaux’s “Henri Robin and a Specter” (1863), and Prinz’s “Ghost” (~ 1900), were shown in an exhibition in The Metropolitan Museum of Art (New York) under the meaningful title “The Perfect Medium : Photography and the Occult” (metmuseum.org). Recent photographs are collected on websites like ghoststudy.com, or on the website of the International Ghost Hunters Society (ghostweb.com). Photographs of ghosts and other magical spirits are very often blurred, grainy, pixelated, or dark. I wanted to maintain the invisible as invisible and not follow this aesthetic. This was another reason why I decided to use a digital camera that produces images of more sharpness and directness. Consequently, rather than photographing magic itself, I photographed *symbols* of magic. Furthermore, the medium of photography allows, much better than text could do, to show the emotions that are involved in magic. The photographs are both a visual study of the occult and a travelogue.

arriving & environment

Sugema asked us to come to the hotel ‘Prinsen Park’ where he practices. On the way to the hotel, he sent us a text message advising us what to do to get inside his hotel room. When we arrived at the hotel the bellboy sent us to the right floor. There we had to say a ‘code’ to Sugemas private security, “bang soleh bang soleh tak tak tak tak dung lagu keruk duit”, which means, according to Dian, nothing at all, and were finally granted access. With Har and Monalisa, we didn’t need a ‘code’ – but it was difficult to find their houses: Hars house was situated at the edge of this edgeless city and Monalisas in the middle of a Kampung and with this in the middle of a maze.

While in the houses of Har and Monalisa I thought for the first time that magic is a part of everyday life: the ‘magical objects’, joss sticks, tarot cards, figurines, minerals, oils, pills, etc., were next to domestic objects such as cooling fans, televisions, photographs, a Playstation, shoes, etc. It was quite funny when I discovered an object that resisted to be assigned to both the magic and the domestic category: it was a room spray against insects with the inscription ‘Force Magic’. Only the hotel room of Sugema was more like what I expected when doing research into magic: dimmed light, stuffy and smoky air, swords, dragon figures, and wooden penises on a table, and big photographs of himself above the bed and in the corner. But after he opened the curtains, the bright light from outside came in and some meters behind the window a big McDonalds ‘M’ appeared. The ‘mystical atmosphere’ was confronted with the everyday life of a ‘modern city’, or, better expressed, there was a connection made.

personal background & community

Sugema, who said himself that he was a ‘bad kid’, changing school many times, claimed that he was afterwards a ‘bad guy’. He worked as a photographic model, dancer, was a clubber, and had many women. But this ‘dark world’ is over now. After a motorbike accident some years ago he decided to change

his life and in 2002 he started practising 'magic' as his profession. He has three wives and four children aged 2, 1, 1, and 1. According to him, the three wives live in their own house and have a good relationship between them. As a child he was Muslim, today he still believes but doesn't practice his religion anymore – as long as he is doing good things, he told me, this is ok. The 'magic abilities' he got from his parents, but also learned via trial and error. When Sugema receives too much 'bad energy' during his work he goes to bars, gets drunk, and watches striptease – or he is practising 'Nunkachu'. He also told me that he likes fear and fighting on the street. Overall, he said, he is quite different to other 'psychics'. In the community where Sugema lives there is also resistance against him: half of the people believe in him, the other half do not. Once, in the morning all his expensive fish in his eight aquariums and also his chickens were dead. Then he knew that somebody was using magic against him – this can't harm him but it can harm his animals. But normally the people in his community respect him, because he is funding a refuge for homeless children, a mosque, and, interestingly, a church. He also stated that people often ask him for advice instead asking the RT (the local official). When he is asked what to do with 'bad people' (e.g. drug dealers) he tries to help these people, or, at least, tells them to do their stuff somewhere else. He said: everybody has his reasons to do what he is doing.

Har was not self-praising at all. He was not reserved, but rather modest. He calls himself 'Ustadz' (teacher). His profession is deeply rooted in Islamic culture and he got his abilities from studying. Nevertheless, he can also help people that are not Muslim. He showed me different treatments in books that are – according to him – like a bible. He assumes that everybody could get these abilities but it takes a very long time. Har seems to be a public figure in his community and beyond. If there are any problems in the community people seek his advice. He said that there is no resistance against him.

Monalisa usually lives and works in Surabaya. However, she also has a house here because for her clients from Singapore it's easier to come to Jakarta. She is the head of the psychics association FKKPAL (Forum Komunikasi Paranormal dan Penyembuh Alternatif). Her religion is Islam and she argues against many voices claiming that treatments like hers are not compatible with Islam. The blood of the family is where her abilities originate. Her family tree goes back to 'Wali 9' (in the 15th century the 'Wali Songo' brought Islam to Indonesia). Even as child she was treated specially and she never slept at night. Furthermore, she got the abilities from "Permadi", who is a well-known member of the Indonesian parliament. In her community she is quite popular. Because of her TV appearances, where reporters often ask her for advice, she is nationally and internationally well-known. She has close contact with her clients – they are like her family, she said. In fact, being in her house it was difficult to distinguish between guests, clients, and her family. When she is in trouble her 'family members' protect her.

clients & business

Sugema has national and international clients, about 6 to 7 per day. Some clients visit him only once, but he also has regular clients. With them, his prices are flexible – he doesn't want to give them even more problems. 40% of his clients visit him through word-of-mouth advertising, 50% because of his advertisement in magazines, and for 10% he uses his special abilities to make them see him. His clients are, for instance, artists, politicians (especially before elections), and other 'psychics' who want to learn from him. He practices in two different hotels, at home, and sometimes he visits his clients at their homes. He also mentioned the high competition among 'psychics' and that others speak ill of him which he tries to ignore. This profession is his only income, but each of his three wives has her own business.

Har's clients are mainly from Bali, Brunei, Saudi Arabia, and the USA (especially emigrated Indonesians). Depending on the problem, he has also clients who visit him only once (e.g. for relationship problems) and regular clients (e.g. long-lasting illnesses). He also makes contracts, for instance two year contracts with businessmen, who want to have a privileged treatment for all cases and pay regularly. Normally, he gets his clients through word-of-mouth advertising. But he also appears in a national TV-Show called "Ghostbusters", which brings him clients. Most of his clients belong to the middle and upper class. For the lower class he provides mass treatments that are announced at the mosque. Between 200 and 400 people are treated together – if somebody starts screaming or vomiting then he does a singular diagnosis and treatment.

Monalisa's clients come from Taiwan, Malaysia, the USA, Arabic countries, but also from Jakarta and Indonesia. Her clients often have high positions in government, the army, the police, or they are celebrities (e.g. Eko Prasetyo). Other clients are businessmen, entertainers, professors, or students – which shows again that magic is not substituted by science. But she also helps 'bad girls' (e.g. prostitutes) to find a solution for them (e.g. a good husband). She told me that she is able to do this because she isn't a religious leader and she doesn't have any fear of contact. Also her clients don't have to be Muslim. Most of her clients she gets with word-of-mouth advertisement. This 'business' is her only income.

abilities, treatments & help

The wide range of treatments and counselling, Sugema, Har, and Monalisa offer, can be basically assigned to three categories: health & sexuality, relationships & beauty, and career & business – but quite often one and the same treatment helps for different problems. Whereas Har and Monalisa insist on doing only 'good things', Sugema said that he uses both white and sometimes black magic.

But when he does 'bad things' then he also has to do 'good things' because of his karma. His treatments are very much concerned with *health & sexuality*. With pills and transferring energy he can cure impotence, make sex more powerful, and increase the quality of sperm so that the wish of having children is more likely fulfilled. With the same pills he can increase the size of the penis, make it smaller, or shape it – one pill costs 100.000 Rupiah (~ 6 £). With transferring energy and herbals he can also do breast shaping. He is able to change the colour of nipples and carry out abortions using energy (no bleeding). With his help, women can give birth after 7 months and the child is normally developed and healthy. He can make women fall pregnant within three months and determine the gender of the baby with a success rate of 80%. Concerning *relationships & beauty* he is able to change the sexual orientations of others: the formerly heterosexual man is then homosexual and falls, if requested, in love with the client who ordered this change. For people who hang around in night clubs, he can make them attractive to the opposite gender. For couples, he is able to make the husband (for the time he wants to sleep with other women) impotent. He can't change faces, he said, but he can change the way people see themselves and how others see them. In respect to *career & business* he can influence people in a way that they are unable to say "no". Within 40 days competitors can be eliminated and Sugemas client gets another shop and takes the income of the eliminated. Moreover, he can make the client's money 'stay longer with them' and offers objects that bring luck for gambling, sport competitions, or in exams.

All the treatments Har offers are rooted in Islamic Culture. He is very much engaged in *curing diseases* (e.g. diabetes, head- or stomach ache). He often has patients with a long history of doctor visits – Har is able to uncover the hidden diseases and to take the negative energy away. He claims that this 'alternative medicine' is not only cheaper but also it doesn't affect the body that much. He treats his patients mainly in three ways. Firstly, he changes the negative energy to positive energy. Secondly, he transfers energy. Or thirdly, he treats them with water. Water plays an important role in Islam and it is regarded as purifying (see Lings 207:111-120). He has holy water from Mekka and can 'put' energy, oils, and prayers into this water which is afterwards used for the treatment. He showed me how the transfer of energy works. First, he took a razor blade and cut some of my hair. Then he transferred energy and put oil on a metal pen. I had to hold this pen in my hand and he tried again with the same razor blade to cut my hair. It was not possible anymore and also when he tried to cut my skin the blade was not able to do any harm to me. Of course, as a scientist you could be suspicious now: was it really the same (side of the) blade? But much more interesting than this is the fact that such questions would have been totally inappropriate to ask. The important question is not 'what is the truth' but 'how is the truth communicated'. Here, it was communicated in a kind of ritual and Fuchs pointed out that one of the main characteristics of a ritual is to prevent the communicative possibility of negation (Fuchs 1992:2; referring to Douglas 1970). As another treatment, Har uses hypnosis to help for example drug addicted people: He can take the desire for drugs ('sugesti') away while adding good 'sugesti' – as soon as the patient tries to take drugs again they will feel a horrible disgust. In relation to the city there are two particular reasons people go to see him: for ejaculation problems (due to 'the stress of the city') and relationship problems. For the latter, normally the wives come to seek his advice. Har is then able to open the aura of the wife to make her more attractive for her husband, and he teaches her Islamic thoughts how a wife should treat her man. He makes the men fall in love with their women again. For *business needs*, Har can clean the space of the business and can make it attractive for clients. Further, he has the ability to catch ghosts that are in houses and put them in bottles. And finally, he promised me to pray for the success of this dissertation.

In contrast to Har, Monalisa doesn't believe in 'sugesti' and in alternative medicine. Thus, she doesn't cure any diseases: the risk would be too high and so she sends sick people to the doctor (Har does this also for more severe illnesses or when surgery is necessary). Many of her treatments are related to *beauty*. She can make the vagina more beautiful and offers 'susuk', an old Malayan tradition which means that pieces of valuable metals or small diamonds are implanted under the skin (see Geertz 1960:94). According to Monalisa, they protect against illness when they are implanted in the foot or the hip, and increase beauty and the aura when implanted in the face. Formerly used by Kings and the elite, it's today common for actors, people on TV, politicians, businessmen, but also for prostitutes who hope to get more customers with having a susuk (see Wahyunadi (et al.) 2004:82). For a susuk Monalisa charges between 3.500.000 and 5.000.000 Rupiah (~200-300 £). *Relationships* are also an important focus of her work. She helps to find the soul mate and sometimes she brings her clients together. I had the possibility to speak with one of her regular clients: a young woman who was going to Singapore the next day to see her boyfriend. So that everything goes well and that her appearance is beautiful she received at 'flower shower' from Monalisa. Afterwards, the whole family was 'showered', including Monalisa, and myself. Monalisa told me I received it so that nothing happens to me during my stay in Jakarta – I was very pleased. Concerning *business & career*, Monalisa offers different ways of purification to increase success and wealth. In 1998, when Indonesia was in severe economical crisis, she offered mass purifications in malls to enable the people to get through the crisis. Further, she is a 'Pawang Hujan', a person who is able to influence the weather. When there is an event, she can prevent rain but see to it that there are some clouds that it is not so hot. She said that she has success in 90% of the cases and she never had a complaint. And last, Monalisa can read Tarot cards. It costs 150.000 Rupiah (~10 £) and after she has done it she is not able to sleep for seven days. Because of the latter, I really felt sorry not to be able to say 'no' when she offered to read the Tarot cards for me. She told me about myself: my work is more important for me than my relationship; when I have a plan I cannot be convinced to change it; I have a trauma; I'm not stubborn; I'm hard to my parents; I'm a total workaholic; I want to do too many things at the same time; and my girlfriend is not supportive. She advised me not to be attracted by others; follow my own ideas; start trusting myself; do my work calmly and with patience; get in close contact with god; pay attention to health; don't waste time with too many things; start communicating; and, what she repeated again and again: put all effort in one (!) thing – then I would have success. Monalisa never says when success will come – god decides this, she said, we are still humans.

everyday magic II (results)

In this chapter, I will bring the theory together with my own research, trying to answer the questions already raised. The last chapter showed clearly what Mauss described: that magic “take[s] part in everyday life and play[s] a practical role there” (Mauss 1972[1950]:142). What Geertz writes about sorcery emphasises the practical side of magic: “sorcery is always practiced for a specific reason” (Geertz 1960:110). We have seen that these reasons are numerous and diverse: problems in relationships, influencing the weather, health problems, stress, writing a dissertation, or getting rid of a business competitor – to name but a few. The reasons for magic are, and magic is itself, *universal*. Mauss continues that “Magic is the domain of pure production” (Mauss 1972[1950]:142). But the ‘product’ of magic is not obvious. I want to posit the view that *magic produces the possibility of future in the present*. Consequently, *society’s need of magic is a need for the possibility of future*.

Moreover, in a city like Jakarta where even pornography is forbidden and where sexuality is not on the everyday agenda, I was surprised at the frankness of the conversations about sexuality and relationships. Magic seems to allow a high degree of intimacy between the ‘magicians’ and their clients – regardless of their role and position in society. I could experience this myself when Monalisa read the Tarot cards for me: rather than prophecy, it was a conversation about myself – the tarot cards seemed to be merely the starting point and legitimated this intimate conversation. Thus, magic makes unlikely communication likely, allows conversations about taboos, and with this it could also be described as *a form of therapy*. Geller assumes that magic had this task from its very beginning: “Magic serves as a particular form of therapy in Mesopotamia by helping to provide defence mechanisms against various forms of anxiety, depression and neurosis” (Geller 1997:6).

Consequently, Geller claims: “There is no magic in magic” (ibid.). Mauss argues a similar point: because magic “responds to [...] positive and individual needs” (Mauss 1972[1950]:140) he claims that “Magic is, therefore, a social phenomenon” (ibid.:141). With the notion of ‘everyday magic’ I partly followed these descriptions. However, as the enquiry into the etymological origin revealed, magic ‘hides’ *something* that is (because of this?) often forgotten. But this is exactly what makes magic *unique* and why magic was/is everywhere in the world not substituted by religion or science. I showed this with the concept of *concomitance*.

Let me repeat two sentences: this study is (also) about *something* that “cannot be put into words” (ibid.), *something* hidden, concealed, secret, marvellous, and connected to the divine. Furthermore, it is useful, helpful, enabling somebody to do something, but also raises suspicion on swindling. That magic is ‘useful, helpful’ was clearly showed in my own research and that it is ‘enabling somebody to do something’ is related to the ‘product’ of magic described above. But magic’s uniqueness, the ‘nature’ of magic, is ‘hidden’, and can also not be put into words here. This rejects, to a certain degree, Mauss’ argument that magic is a social phenomenon: the ‘nature’ of magic is *not* social – otherwise we could speak about it. I want to claim exactly this, the unnameable, makes magic unique. *Marking the unnameable distinguishes magic from religion and science*: in religion the transcendent is marked (e.g. God), in science the immanent (e.g. genes), and magic neither marks the one, nor the other – it’s in between. The non designation of magic’s nature arouses suspicion, but without suspicion magic wouldn’t function. Thus, it’s fair enough to say that *the unnameable, rather than knowledge about the nature of magic, and suspicion, rather than believe in magic, are essential to bring magic into operation*.

From between immanence and transcendence, Magic aims at the immanent (it tries to change *facts* of everyday life), as well as it aims at the transcendent (it tries to influence *fate*, the Fates, or God). Fuchs suggested regarding magic as ‘immanent tunnelling work’ in the scheme immanence/transcendence (Fuchs 2004:241). This means that transcendental powers can be ‘manipulated’ (ibid.) and be used to change immanent conditions. In this sense, Monalisa told me the following about influencing the weather: she prays to Allah begging to prevent rain at a certain place and time, because only Allah is able to change the weather. This does not only explain how magic interacts with religion (and religion with magic), but also why religion is often fiercely against magic. For Indonesia, this contradiction becomes obvious by comparing different perceptions of Islam. On the one hand, from the very beginning Sufism, which includes mystical practices, played an important role in Indonesia: the Wali Songo who brought Islam to Indonesia, and from those Monalisa says she derives from, were Sufis. On the other hand, Wahabism and the Muslim Modernist Challenge reject Sufism, naming it “Islam yang bukan Islam”, “the Islam which is not Islam” (Howell 2001:706). In an essay Howell indicates that today Sufism along with its mystical practices receive a new popularity in Indonesia (Howell 2001).

Because magic must keep its nature secret and suspicion is essential for magic, magic is able to provide solutions to contemporary problems: magic allows causality and can cross boundaries which otherwise couldn’t be crossed, thus, *magic provides a shortcut*. What is often described as postmodernity, but can more exactly be expressed with Günthers term ‘poly-contextuality’ (Günther 1970), which means that in (post)modernity everything can be observed from another perspective, there are no facts which are unambiguous, which cannot be contested. Consequently, people can’t reckon causality, cause and effect, and every decision is unsure and provisional. But the universal and hidden power of magic can cause the effect, support the (already) made decisions, secure them. Further, Luhmanns claim that ‘only communication can communicate’ (Luhmann 1995:113) and that, in modernity, communication processing systems are not only autopoietically closed but people are outside of these systems, explains why in (post)modernity society experiences a *loss of control*. Whether one agrees with systems theory or not, the loss of control is

also acknowledged from many other recent theories (e.g. Harvey 1989). The universal and hidden power of magic is able to reinstate control and to cross the boundaries of systems in the same way as it can cross the boundary from the immanent to the transcendent. Again, the unnameable nature of magic is *not* social and therefore not restricted within social, viz. communicative, boundaries. As I showed in the last chapter, magic can easily influence and control from outside the economical system (e.g. Monalisas mass purifications during the economical crisis in 1998), the political system (e.g. black magic against a competitor), or the intimate system (e.g. 'susuk'). Thus, it's not surprising that in crisis magic is often both accused for the crisis and plead to solve it.

Let us briefly sum up the results of this study. In (post)modernity there is a concomitance of magic, religion, and science: neither they substitute one another, nor are they mutually exclusive. The reasons for magic are, and magic is itself, universal. Magic 'hides' ~~something~~ and this is what makes magic unique. Magic must keep its nature secret, the unnameable, rather than knowledge about the nature of magic, and suspicion, rather than believe in magic, are essential to bring magic into operation. From between immanence and transcendence, Magic aims at the immanent (it tries to change facts of everyday life), as well as it aims at the transcendent (it tries to influence fate, the Fates, or God). On account of this, magic is able to provide solutions to contemporary problems: magic allows causality and can cross boundaries which otherwise couldn't be crossed; magic can support (already) made decisions and secure them; and magic is able to reinstate control. Furthermore, magic makes unlikely communication likely, allows speaking about taboos, and with this it could be also described as a form of therapy. What this may mean for the involved individuals was not thoroughly examined within this dissertation, which is more focussed on sociology, than on psychology. Nevertheless, it's plausible that for individuals magic could be described as a form of counselling, or life coaching, with the unique ability of providing magical shortcuts. Interestingly enough, Fuchs described the same from the opposite perspective, claiming that counselling is close to magic (Fuchs 2004). Conclusively, this study revealed how magic fulfils its *societal function*, which is *producing the possibility of future in the present*.

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