

PARTS AND WHOLES

Essays on Social Morphology,
Cosmology, and Exchange

in Honour of

J. D. M. Platenkamp

edited by

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LIT

Cover photo:

Pu Nyoe and Nya Nyoe, guardian spirits of Luang Prabang, Laos

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Bibliographic information published by the Deutsche Nationalbibliothek

The Deutsche Nationalbibliothek lists this publication in the Deutsche Nationalbibliografie; detailed bibliographic data are available on the Internet at <http://dnb.d-nb.de>.

ISBN 978-3-643-90789-9

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

© **LIT VERLAG** GmbH & Co. KG Wien,
Zweigniederlassung Zürich 2016
Klosbachstr. 107
CH-8032 Zürich
Tel. +41 (0) 44-251 75 05 Fax +41 (0) 44-251 75 06
E-Mail: zuerich@lit-verlag.ch <http://www.lit-verlag.ch>

Distribution:

In the UK: Global Book Marketing, e-mail: mo@centralbooks.com

In North America: International Specialized Book Services, e-mail: orders@isbs.com

In Germany: LIT Verlag Fresnostr. 2, D-48159 Münster

Tel. +49 (0) 2 51-620 32 22, Fax +49 (0) 2 51-922 60 99, e-mail: vertrieb@lit-verlag.de

In Austria: Medienlogistik Pichler-ÖBZ, e-mail: mlo@medien-logistik.at

e-books are available at www.litwebshop.de

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Preface

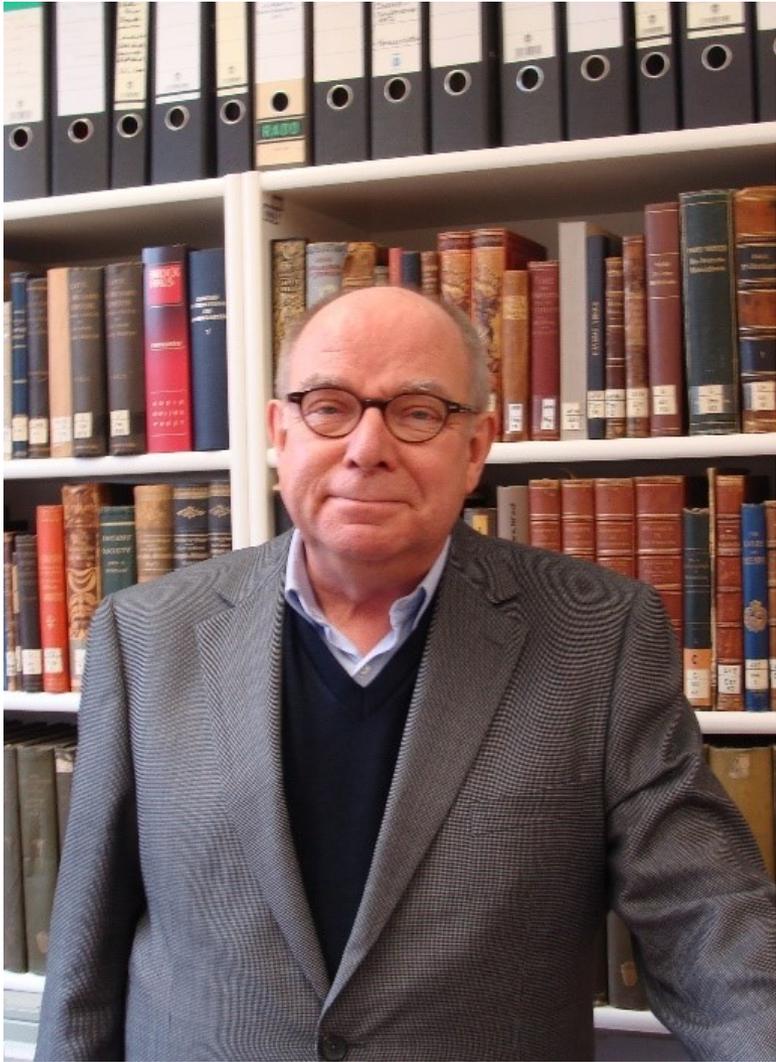
This collection is at once a felicitation volume for Josephus D.M. Platenkamp and a collection connecting his various fields of interest – which are indeed all connected: social morphology, exchange, cosmology, history and the practical application of social anthropology.

On June 23rd, 2016, Josephus D.M. Platenkamp is celebrating his 65th birthday. The next winter term will mark his final teaching semester at the University of Münster, where he has been professor of social anthropology since 1993. We present this volume to him as an expression of gratitude for the intellectual companionship, the great inspiration, the enthusiasm, and the warm-hearted sympathy he provided us with over many years. Quite a number of us can honestly state that they would not be what they are and where they are now without Jos.

For Jos Platenkamp, the most constitutive relationships of society are based on exchange. At the same time, these relationships encompass both human and non-human beings, the social and the cosmological domain. Thus, the study of social morphology, cosmology, exchange and the values informing these relationships merge into a single project. Jos Platenkamp applies these concepts to Southeast Asian societies, both in the insular region – specifically Halmahera – and the mainland – in particular Laos. However, his intellectual curiosity truly exceeds regional limitations, revealing him as a scholar whose scope and vision are ultimately grounded in general anthropology. In the course of his career, this has brought him in touch with numerous distinguished scholars, committed colleagues and enthusiastic students, many of whom have contributed to the present volume.

Our thanks go, first and foremost, to all contributors to the present volume which expressed their sympathy for Jos Platenkamp by delivering outstanding and inspiring work. Special thanks are due to Veit Hopf of LitVerlag, Felix Bregulla who helped to prepare the manuscript, and Melanie Duch for typesetting. We also thank Hans Georg Berger for supplying the cover picture, depicting Pu Nyoe and Nya Nyoe, the guardian spirits of Luang Prabang, Laos.

Laila Prager
Michael Prager
Guido Sprenger



Jos D.M. Platenkamp (2016)

Cosmology

The Ritual of Death in Acèh: An Ethnographic Study in Blangporoh Village, West Labuhan Haji, South Acèh, Indonesia

ABDUL MANAN

This article is dedicated to my PhD Supervisor, Prof. Dr. J. D. M. Platenkamp, since his interests lie in on rituals, exchange and personhood. “Ritual pertains to the very relationships that structure society both in its social morphology and in its overall order” (Barraud and Platenkamp, 1990: 121).

Living in this world is only temporary for human beings. Both happiness and sadness are always present in life. In Acèh province, when a person dies, men and women bathe and enshroud the body. It is then prayed for and chanted to before being buried; the dead person’s debts must also be settled. All this work, alongside near-continuous hosting, cooking, and cleaning, is morally incumbent, emotionally draining, and physically exhausting. But all this work has a moral purpose and is considered to be the best thing for the bereaved family. This article¹ describes the different phases of the death rituals in Blangporoh village reflecting both Islamic and Aneuk Jamee *adat* rules and ideas. It is concerned with the ritual treatment of the deceased, the actual burial ceremony, and the rituals conducted in the months afterward.

Dying

A death ritual² can be said to last from the time of dying till the time of burial both in the form of rites, the performance of certain series of actions, words and gestures, and the mobilisation of particular social and religious relations by the deceased’s family, neighbours or others. Before he³ faces the agony of death, a person who is severely ill but still conscious is strongly urged to recover. He is reminded to always remember Allāh by reciting the “begging for divine pardon” and reciting the two sentences of the confession of faith: “There is no deity except Allāh and Muḥammad is His messenger”. Meanwhile other people, especially his or her family members, recite from the Qur’ān.

1 I would like to thank Guido Sprenger for his perceptive critical comments and suggestions as well as for his careful correction of the early version of the English text.

2 Three death rituals have been observed. Two were for men and one for a woman. For the woman, much information is obtained from a female informant. Taking pictures during the death rituals is not allowed. Otherwise, the deceased’s family will be offended and I would have to leave the village.

3 I use the male form for the dead person.

When agony sets in, the *teungku* (religious leader) or other devout people are called immediately to recite the Qur'ān, especially the *sūrah Yāsīn* (QS 36:1-83), several times as long as the eyes of the dying person are open. After seeing that the person's condition is getting worse, "there is no deity except Allāh" is repeatedly whispered to the dying person in the hope that the dying person is able to repeat the phrase. This act is called *peuintat* (accompanying). For those under the age of puberty who do not completely understand the two sentences of profession of faith, *peuintat* is not performed. Nevertheless, even in these cases reciting the Qur'ān is often performed to provide peace.

Some villagers say that at the time of dying various sufferings are felt. One of them is great thirst. At that moment, "Satan comes and takes the semblance of one of that person's relatives who have passed away. Satan holds a glass of drinking water in front of his or her eyes. If that person renounces his faith by saying, 'there are two gods' or 'god is not Allāh', he will receive the water. However, if his faith is strong, they are not interested in Satan's temptation because he knows that it is only a trick", as one informant explained in contrast, someone who has less faith can easily become Satan's prey.

After the moment of death, the dead person's pulse is checked and his eyes are closed. The person who had stayed with the dying person immediately utters, "we belong to Allāh and return to Him", and this is continuously repeated by others sitting around the body. Next, the *do'a* or "the safety of the deceased", led by a religious leader, is recited. At the end of the *do'a*, all attendants intone *amīn ya Allāh* (please accept oh Allāh).

Besides reciting Qur'ān and *do'a* as described above, there are other rituals taking place, for example, the dead person's head is oriented towards the north. It is said that for someone who had practiced black magic, the body is stretched out on the bed with his head to the east and his feet to the west. Such a person dies in difficulty and can hardly end his life because the *malaikat* (angel) do not press him. Those accompanying the dying, therefore, open the windows, cupboards and even the roof above the dying. The healer then begins to scatter husked and unhusked rice while saying: "One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, get away from here! Your possessor has already gone; there is no need to wait." The dead body is then covered with cloth and his eyes are immediately closed. The hands of the dead are placed together on the chest; the right hand is placed on the left as if he were praying. After that, the body is moved from the mat where he died to a new mat and mattress. During the period of dying, it is forbidden to say or to do something that can disturb the dying person. When he is truly dead, the family of the deceased immediately informs the head of the village and the *teungku*. These people order one of the mosque staff to announce the news of the death to the public using a microphone and loudspeakers. In the past, the announcement was made by beating a tambourine at the mosque or *meunasah* three times.

Bathing and Enshrouding

1. Prior to Bathing

While waiting for the dead person to be bathed, some women sitting near it pray to the Prophet Muḥammad. If the bathing takes longer, they continue reciting the Qur’ān. People who have just heard the news should say ‘*inna lillā hī wa inna ilaiḥi raji’ūn*’ (we belong to Allāh and return to Him), then continue with the *do’a* for the safety of the deceased. The members of the deceased’s family immediately call their neighbours and distant relatives to prepare and to look for the things needed for bathing the dead person. These are water, soap, lime, camphor, and yellow sandalwood. Besides that, burning incense in a coconut shell is placed next to the dead person’s feet to avoid unpleasant smells.

Some men, especially close neighbours, immediately organise the enshrouding and the burial process. They acquire a set of white cotton cloth, a coffin, and a burial site. They also prepare a charity box containing some rice for visitors.⁴ The visitors come and give charity to the host by slipping bank notes under the rice. This is done so that their charity is not seen by others and the notes are not blown away by the wind. Those who help with the preparations are not paid and they consider it a moral obligation to help the family of the deceased. The deceased’s family just serves them drinks and dried bread.

2. Bathing

When the implements for washing the dead person are ready, the people who have been appointed by the deceased’s family for this task carry the body to the washing place in the back room to prevent anyone else from watching. They place it on a raised table, his head pointing towards the east, and cover him with a piece of cloth between his navel and knee. For a woman, the cloth covers the chest to the ankles. The washers pour water over the body from the head to the tip of the feet, using a piece of cloth. They turn the body on its left side to wash the right side. Then they turn it onto its right side to wash the left side. This they do for each wash. The first and the second wash are done with water and soap till the body is clean. The teeth and the nose are cleaned from the outside only. The stomach is pressed gently and whatever comes out is removed. The hair is unbraided, washed and combed. For women, the hair is braided again in more than one braid. All the while, the washers simultaneously utter “in the name of Allāh” and “invocation to the Prophet”.

⁴ Visitors here mean the people who come and offer condolences for the dead. In Arabic it is called *ta’ziyyah*, meaning visitation by one group to express condolences to another group.

After finishing the bathing, the body's orifices are plugged up with the pieces of cloth called *ija palam*. Furthermore, the *teungku* performs an ablution and ends with "nine waters", meaning washing the dead body three times on the right side, three times in the centre, and three on the left side respectively, by reciting *do'a*. The Imām recited to me the *do'a* after washing the dead body as follows. During the first three pourings on the right side, he utters: "You are the greatest forgiver, o Allāh", during the second three pourings on the centre he utters: "You are the greatest forgiver, o Merciful Lord", and during the third three pourings on the left side he utters: "You are the greatest forgiver, o Charitable Lord". For this last washing, water is mixed with flowers, sliced lime and scented oil (non-alcoholic) and filtered through white cotton cloth called *ija saréng*. The piece of cloth covering the dead body is then replaced with a dry one after the body is dried with a clean towel and the body's orifices are closed once again with other clean pieces of cloth. After that the body is brought directly to the enshrouding place.

3. Enshrouding

In the enshrouding place, three layers of cloth have already been prepared. The pieces of cloth consist of two layers of long white cotton; one layer of white cotton for the waist and for the dress and a piece of cloth for covering the head which is cut to make it seem like an ordinary dress without stitches. Before laying down the dead body, scented oil, henna leaves, flowers and yellow sandalwood which have been refined are scattered on the shrouds. Some soft cotton is mixed with scented oil and camphor and then placed on the finger joints, elbow, face (eyes, nose, mouth, and ears), knees, armpit, and toes of the dead person. The body is then covered by uttering *bismillāh*; the waist is covered, and the head cloth is put on. The dead person is then covered with long white cotton cloth and next is lifted up first from the middle, then the lower (knees and toes) and upper parts (chest and head). Prior to fastening the head cloth, the face of the dead person is displayed for a while to let the deceased's family, especially his children and other close relatives, see him for the last time. If the person had been bleeding at death, for example, a woman who had died in childbirth or a man or woman who had died due to an accident, at the time of wrapping a broken needle with no hole is placed in the shrouds. In addition, tangled thread and torn cloth are also placed on the body to avoid disturbing other living people in the village. During the enshrouding and bathing process, all speaking and any activities that can disturb the process are forbidden.

4. Praying

Before the pallbearers bring the dead body to the place of prayer, it is placed sideways into the coffin, facing the direction of Mecca. If no coffin is used,

the body is placed on a stretcher. While lifting it, the pallbearers utter *bis-millāh* and *seulawet* to the Prophet Muḥammad. As soon as the body reaches the front door (approximately three meters from the door), an old woman scatters husked and unhusked rice in the hope that the dead person will be safe and happy at the side of Allāh. In addition, a representative of the deceased's family delivers a short speech, asking for forgiveness for the bad deeds of the deceased. He also asks the deceased's debts to be paid for the future peace of the "soul". Furthermore, he admonishes those still alive to keep thinking about Allāh, to be afraid of Him and follow all His commands.

After the speech, the dead person is brought into the mosque of the boarding school. There, a prayer is performed in front of the dead. This prayer is spoken in Arabic, reflecting Islamic belief about the destiny of the deceased. One of the deceased's family members is asked to be the leader of the prayer.

If no one of the deceased's family wants to, the mosque's *imām* will be kindly asked to lead the prayer. The men stand in front and the women behind them. After praying, the *imām* delivers a short speech, asking the followers of *imām*, *ma'mūm* and all attendants whether this person has done good deeds or not, then all of them answer simultaneously: "Yes, he is good and may heaven welcome him". The position of the body varies. A man's head faces to the north in a sideways position in the coffin. Another possible position is the head facing to the south in a sideways position and the third position is the body lying down in a sideways position to the north. A woman is lying on her back on the coffin with her head to the north.

This funeral prayer is somewhat different from a common prayer. There is no bowing and prostration. The *imām* performs it while standing at the waist if the dead person is a woman and at the shoulder if a man, followed by the attendants in odd numbers of rows, in a minimum of three rows. When the *imām* stands up and all followers in rows are ready to pray, he says: "Let us pray collectively". To this, all followers reply: "Please bestow Your mercy on you [the deceased]", and sometimes they also utter: "There is no deity except Allāh and Muḥammad is His messenger". Furthermore, the *imām* begins the prayer by pronouncing the *takbir* (the act of pronouncing the formula "Allāh is great") which is followed by the assembly with the same thoughts (intention). The intention is as follows: "I intend to perform as prayer on behalf of this deceased four *takbir*, *fardhu kifayah* (Arabic *fard al-kifāyah*),⁵ and to follow the *imām* because of Allāh". Then the prayer is performed.

In the first *takbir*, the *imām* and all followers recite, "the mother of the Qur'ān", that is the *sūrah al-Fātiḥah* (QS 1:1-7), the second *takbir* continuously recites the *seulawet* to Prophet Muḥammad. The third *takbir* contains *do'a* asking for the forgiveness of the deceased and the fourth *takbir* recites

5 *Fardhu kifayah* is the obligatory funeral prayer for every Muslim adult to perform upon the death of any Muslim; however even when only a few perform it, this alleviates that obligation for everyone else (Federspiel 1995).

do'a asking Allāh's mercy for the living. The prayer ends by saying *salam* or "peace" while the praying turn around, first to the right and then to the left. After the prayer, the *imām* recites the *do'a* for the safety of the deceased and all followers intone *amīn* (please accept o Allāh). Those who do not pray for the deceased wait outside of the mosque to take the body to the funeral site. They are strictly forbidden to speak and or to do anything that can disturb people performing the funeral prayer.

5. Burial

a. The Grave

The public graveyard is situated in the south of the village. Affluent people, however, have their own special burial grounds called *bhom*. The grave is dug by two men who have already been appointed and approved by the village head and been guided by the village *imām*. They first recite *Bismillāh* before digging the hole. The grave is adjusted to the body's length, and it is as deep as a normal men's chest (approximately 120 cm) or as high as an armpit for a woman (approximately 140 cm). It is placed in a north-south direction. Affluent families use a coffin but the poor do not. A dead person without a coffin is placed in a niche (a hole facing the west) called *liang lahat*, dug according to the body's size and then closed with a board. The height of the grave is approximately 30 cm from the ground. At the head and feet, plants such as the 'jarak' are planted.

b. Burial Rites

While lifting the body, the pallbearers recite *bismillāhi wa 'alā millati rasulillāh* (in the name of Allāh and the religion of the apostle of Allāh). They then carry the body, shaded with an umbrella, out of the house with the head first, followed by the deceased's family and other male and female visitors. The *imām* walks in front of the stretcher. The body is covered with a long and valuable cloth with embroideries of the profession of faith: "There is no deity except Allāh, and the Prophet Muḥammad is His messenger". If people and vehicles encounter the funeral procession, they stop for a while to show respect. While carrying the dead person, making any noise is forbidden. After arriving at the burial site, the pallbearers place the body on the west side of the grave while reciting *bismillāh* and *seulawet* to the Prophet. Before lowering the dead into the grave, a *muazzin* calls for prayer. In Lampulo, Banda Acèh, I also observed that he does so when the coffin is half covered with earth. In addition, my informant said that sometimes the *muazzin* calls for prayer before the body is buried. Three people in the grave hold up the coffin following directions given by the *imām*. While lowering the body into the grave, the same *do'a* is recited again by the *imām*. I observed that the *imām* also descends into the grave to place the body exactly in the direction of

Mecca. When finished, five shrouds from the body are loosened, then the deceased is covered with a board (the coffin lid) and the grave is filled in.

The burying starts from the west side. A mat is held up over the coffin onto which soil is thrown till completely covered. Then earth is continuously piled up on the east side so that the coffin cannot shift from its position. Finally, the hole is filled completely and soil is heaped up from the head to the feet as high as 30 cm from the ground surface. The *imām* pours water mixed with flowers and sliced lime into the grave, from the head to the feet. This is repeated by the deceased's close relatives. The pallbearers sit around the grave to listen to the *talkin* (Arabic *talqīn*) recited by the *imām*:

“Now witness that there is no deity but Allāh and Muḥammad is his Messenger. Death is true. The grave is true. The mercy of the grave and His torture are true. Questions from Munkar are true. The Day of Resurrection is true. That deeds are weighed is true. The bridge of *shirathal-mustaqim* is true. The *syafā'ah* (help) from the Prophet Muḥammad is true. Paradise is true. Hell is true. That you will meet Allāh is true. That the Last Day will come is true. That Allāh will resurrect people from their graves is true. Hai [calling the name of the deceased]! Now you are in the layer of earth, the realm of Barzah [the transitional realm between this world and the world of the final judgment] among the dead. If two angels, Munkar and Nakir come to you, do not be afraid of them! Both of them are the servants of Allāh. If they ask you questions, answer them in a clear voice. The questions will be:

Who is your God? Answer: My God is Allāh.

Who is your prophet? Answer: My prophet is Muḥammad.

What is your *kitāb*? Answer: My *kitāb* is the Qur'ān al-Karīm.

What is your *kiblat*? Answer: My *kiblat* is the Ka'batullāh [Mecca].

Who are your *ikhwān*? Answer: All Muslim men and women.

Answer these questions with a clear voice. In the Judgement Day, if Allāh wills, you will be in the groups of true believers. Allāh remains you with two words of profession of faith as the believers till the day of hereafter. O reassured soul, return to your Lord, be well-pleased and pleasing [to Him], and enter among His [righteous] servants and enter His Paradise.” (author's translation from Arabic).

This text is written in Arabic and Indonesian so that it can benefit the living as well as the dead. Some villagers said that the aim of reciting this text is to help teaching the dead not to be afraid of the angels Munkar and Nakir who will come to him. It will enable him to remember the answers to the angel's questions and to utter them fluently in a clear voice. Others said that the text explains what will happen at the grave soon after the *imām* has left and what the deceased should do or say when the two angels come to examine him. But the “modernists” say, “the dead cannot hear, the chanting cannot help the dead”.

The *imām* only recites the Arabic version of the text as he sits at the head of the grave. An informant explains that after the burial rites the dead can understand Arabic even when he did not understand it while being alive. He

emphases that Arabic is “the language of the realm of Barzah” that is “spoken in Paradise”. The prayers refer to the idea that “Allāh returns the ‘soul’ (Acèhese *aruwah*; Arabic *arwah* plur., sing. *rūh*) to the body”. Allegedly, the deceased person “is revived for a few moments after burial” so that “his good deeds will respond to the angels’ questions” about his moral conduct during his lifetime. If the dead has done many good deeds, he will be able to answer the questions, says the *imām*. If the dead has not done any good deeds, then automatically his *aruwah* cannot answer the angel’s questions. If the dead can answer all questions satisfactorily, Munkar will release him in peace till the Day of Resurrection. Otherwise, Nakir will beat the dead till the day of Resurrection. “Neither rationality nor intelligence works in answering Munkar’s question; the belief is that the brain is where rationality and intelligence reside and these must also be dead when the body dies. Only beliefs, which are found in the *aruwah*, not in the body, will last forever” (Muhaimin 2004: 55). After the angels’ questions about the Islamic catechism have been answered, Allāh will soon provide “mercy in the grave”.

Reciting *talkin* takes around fifteen minutes. After that, many people go to the deceased’s house again to have drinks and a meal. Here they are informed that the ritual for the *aruwah* will be held again.⁶ All tools carried to the burial sites are returned to the deceased’s family except the mat used to cover the body; it is given to a place of religious services such as a mosque or *meunasah*.

6. After Burial

The extended family of the deceased soon holds a meeting to discuss the recital of *shamadiyah* together on several nights. The *shamadiyah* is held for seven nights at the deceased’s house. The recital is performed after sunset prayer. It aims helping the deceased’s family feel relief while praying for the deceased. Others say that reciting *shamadiyah* is merely to add to the deceased’s good deeds. It is said that the more good deeds are assigned to the deceased, the happier he will be. Below is the order of *shamadiyah* recited from the first till the seventh night at the house of the dead in Blangporoh:

1. Reciting the *sūrah al-Fātiḥah*.
2. Reciting *istighfār*, at least three times, either the short or long version.
3. Reciting *seulawet* to the Prophet *Muḥammad* from three to seven times, either the short or long version.
4. Reciting the *sūrah al-Ikhlās* for about 15 to 50 times or even 100 times. This is the core of *shamadiyah* recitation.
5. Reciting the *sūrah al-Falaq*, once.

6 In a village that is slightly modern or already influenced by “young groups”, people go back to their houses directly except for the close relatives of the deceased who go to the deceased’s house.

6. Reciting the *sūrah an-Nās*, once.
7. Reciting the *sūrah al-Fātiḥah*, once.
8. Reciting the *sūrah al-Baqarah*, verse one to five, verse 163-255 (verse of 'kursi') and ending with verse 284 to 286.
9. Reciting *taḥlīl* [*lā ilāhā il-lallāh*] between 50 to 100 times.
10. Reciting *do'a* guided by an *imām* and replied *amīn* by all *shamadiyah* followers.

Shamadiyah is recited in the same way from the first till the seventh night respectively. The difference is that the *shamadiyah* on the seventh night is longer as the *sūrah al-Ikhlās* is recited 100 times. This performance is called the *khatam shamadiyah*.⁷ In addition, reciting *do'a* for the dead on this night is also longer than during the previous six nights. The *do'a* asks Allāh's forgiveness and guidance for all Muslims. It is specifically aimed at the deceased to be forgiven by Allāh, to have his/her good deeds accepted and to be placed in a respectable place beside Allāh. In addition, the deceased's family members are hoped to remain patient. However, "young modernists" do not agree with the recitation of *shamadiyah*. They say that one person cannot make up for the sins of another.

After finishing the recitation, cakes and drinks are served to the reciters⁸. Especially on the third and the fifth night, the family of the deceased serves them special cakes. On the third night, they are served with *dayak-dayak* spongy cakes, made of glutinous powder mixed with coconut milk, salt and sugar. One informant said that the cake reminds the living that the body in the grave has already become mushy, similar to the *dayak-dayak* cake. On the fifth night, the visitors are served with *apam* cakes. It is said that this reminds the living that the body in the grave has already swollen, similar to the *apam* cakes. Thus these two kinds of cake provide a communication. On the seventh night, a big *khanduri* called *khanduri seunujoh* is held. This *khanduri* is bigger than the previous six nights, it is held from the afternoon of the sixth day until the afternoon of the seventh day to welcome relatives, neighbours and other close friends of the family. The family serves a big meal consisting of rice with various side dishes including curry, after the *shamadiyah* recitation. I also observed especially among the affluent families that soon after the big meal, the group of *qāri'*⁹ from various districts in the region of south Acèh arrived and started to recite the Qur'ān for a whole night in Blangporoh, using a microphone and loudspeakers. The more famous the invited *qāri'*, the more

7 One says that if *shamadiyah* is recited till morning for the deceased, Rp 100 to Rp 200 will be given to each reciter.

8 Many *shamadiyah* reciters are people who at the same time offer condolences at the deceased's house and go back after the recitation.

9 *Qāri'* is a male reciter of the Qur'ān who has memorized the Qur'ān for a wide variety of contexts. *qari'ah* means a female reciter of the Qur'ān.

money will be given to him by the deceased's family. In addition, for the rich family, the Qur'ān is also recited at the grave¹⁰ from the first till the seventh day and night. In return, the reciters are also given money for their daily needs as well as meals and cakes. These events constitute a critical point of transformation. They finally release the *aruwah* of the deceased and its ties to the house.

Besides the *shamadiyah* which is held on the first till the seventh night after the burial, Qur'ānic recitations are also held at the house of the dead in which each man present takes turns at reading the Qur'ān till late in the night. One of the participants says that reciting Qur'ān for the dead is a kind of good deed. All the words of the recited Qur'ān contain merit and all merit obtained from its recitation is intended for the *aruwah*. The reciters have a break after an hour of reciting Qur'ān. They are then served with drink and cakes. During this break, the reciters recite *qasidah* (songs in praise of religion) to entertain the deceased family and so the other listeners can take a break. The recitation is then continued until midnight.

In the morning of the seventh day, the close relatives, both men and women, go to the grave to “plant” the tombstones on the grave¹¹. The stones are taken from the river; they are as big as a man's head. The *imām* guides the ritual of planting the tombstone. One is planted at the head and another one at the feet while reciting *bismillāh* and *seulawet* to Prophet Muḥammad. Then water mixed with flowers and sliced lime is poured over the grave. The relatives sit together to recite *do'a* before leaving the grave.

Tilam Bungong

In Blangporoh, I observed that the deceased's family construct a bed in a room belonging to the deceased, with the deceased's clothes embellished with colourful shawls of his wife and other personal objects, as a charitable act. Pillows with colourful embroidered flowers on their covers are placed at the head of the bed while a bolster is placed on the right side and another one is placed on the left side. The center is left empty assuming that it is “the place where the dead person's *aruwah* sleeps”. This bed is called *tilam bungong*. *Tilam* means mattress and *bungong* means flower.¹² The room with the bed may not be used by other persons except for the deceased's core family, his wife and his children. It is not allowed to be left empty and a lamp is always lit there as

10 The Qur'ān reciters who recite Qur'ān at the grave are usually chosen from the *imām* in the district or from the students at the boarding school in Blangporoh.

11 Usually the ritual of “planting” the tombstones is performed on the 44th day of the death. This is related to the situation of the rice plants in the fields.

12 In Nagan Raya, West Acèh, this bed is called *reuhab* as a “station of meeting” with the living family. The local people believe that during 44 days the soul of the deceased has not yet ascended to Heaven? but still roams on the earth. On day 44 the *reuhab* is opened, the ritual of planting the tombstones at the grave is then performed (Husda 1988: 34).

the *aruwah* needs to be accompanied by at least one of his family members. For seven days and nights, white incense is burnt in this room because the deceased's *aruwah* likes its smell. The aim of burning incense is said to summon the *aruwah* so that it will not get lost when returning to its house.

After the seventh day the *tilam bungong* is opened. The clothes and other personal belongings, constituting the objectified body of the deceased, are distributed as gifts among the corpse washers. Different items are given to those who have washed different body parts. In case the dead is a male, his rimless cap is given to the person who had washed the head; his tie to the person who had washed the neck; his watch to the one who had washed the hands; his shirt to the one who had washed the chest; his belt to the one who had washed the hips; his trousers to the one who had washed the legs and his shoes to the one who had washed the feet. The white cotton cloth functioning as a water filter during the washing is given to the *imām* who pours the "nine waters" over the dead body. A woman is treated the same way. The difference is that a woman is only bathed by women and her clothes are shared out accordingly. My informant said that every village in West Labuhan Haji district appoints the male and female *teungku* for bathing a dead person. In return, they receive some gifts from the deceased's family and from the village mosque. In an affluent family, *tilam bungong* is opened up on the fourteenth day. Affluent families do the same as poor families on the fourteenth day of the death. This extension is made because affluent families still hold a *khanduri* for the orphans and the poor that are invited to the deceased's house. The religious merit from holding this *khanduri* is once again transferred to the dead. "The more *khanduri* are held for the *aruwah*, the happier the *aruwah* will be and vice versa the deceased's *aruwah* will be sad if the *khanduri* is not done at his or her house", the *imam* explained.

Giving the clothes to the people who bathe the dead body is very important for the fate of the deceased. It is said that several years ago the previous *imam* of Blangporoh village, Teungku M. Isim, saw a person in the darkness coming back from the Blangporoh mosque to the house of Tgk. Bile Rantau. He was completely sure that the person he saw was the *aruwah* of Teungku Bile Rantau who had passed away seven days earlier. His *aruwah* went back to his house with shorts, a small pail in his hand and a sheet of cloth on his shoulder. Teungku Ahmad said to his children, "this is retaliation from Allāh", because his clothes were not distributed to the corpse washers. Soon after, the children of Teungku Bile Rantau called all washers and gave them their father's clothes. Only after that, the *aruwah* was no longer seen.

Apart from the sharing of the deceased's clothes on the seventh day of the death, the gravediggers are also invited. One of the devout village women immediately comes to talk to the wife of the deceased person:

"*Alah cukup tu* (it is enough). I know your brother well. He is a good person and he has done many good deeds as well. Moreover, he died because of a motorbike

accident and therefore he receives the same religious merit as for a martyr's death. His good deeds will become a person whose face is very much like his own but that "person" is better and wears better clothes and will accompany his *aruwah* forever. His *aruwah* is very happy and can sleep well until the day of the resurrection. Vice versa, if a person does bad deeds when he or she was alive, his or her bad deeds will also resemble a person whose face is very much like his or her own but that person's body has much blood on it. His clothes are torn and smell very bad. He comes from the deceased's bad deeds. That person says 'I am like this because none of your deeds are good. You follow your lust and never followed Allāh's command when you were alive. So now I will not leave you. Do not hate looking at me because when you were still alive you were not afraid of doing something wrong. That means you were always looking for me. As you are like your bad deeds, thus I am like you. I will never leave you and accompany you till the day of resurrection.' That person then hugs the *aruwah* even though the *aruwah* refuses that person. The more the *aruwah* hates that person, the stronger that person hugs the *aruwah*. In addition, many other grave's torments will come because of not bringing about the pillar of Islam; prayer, fasting, [...]."

The devout woman emphasised further: "What I tell you now is what I heard from my previous teacher. He tells the story about the person who has done a lot good deeds in his life and receives a reward from Allāh when he dies. So do not be sad." Only after hearing about this moral mirror image of the dead person, the wife of the dead person looks good and no longer cries. The idea here is that one cannot escape from his or her own image. The gravedigger is then given two kilograms of sugar; two packs of cigarettes and half a kilo of coffee by the wife of the deceased person. He also receives some money from the deceased's family and from the village mosque on the following day.

Apart from preparing *tilam bungong*, the deceased's family in Blangporoh also invites a devout person three times a day to eat at the deceased's house from the first till the seventh day (and till the fourteenth day for the affluent families). This is called *pajōh khanduri watèe* ("eating *khanduri* at the appointed time"). The devout person is chosen by the village *imām*. The *imām* said that the *aruwah* is the same as we are. The *aruwah* of the deceased is also "hungry and thirsty". It returns to his or her house and asks for food and water but we cannot hear it. That is why the deceased's relatives, especially his core family has to feed a devout person instead in order to fulfil the deceased's *aruwah*'s needs. The food served to the devout person or *teungku* is that which the deceased liked when he or she was still alive. The *teungku* uses the plates, cups, and spoons, fork and glasses that the deceased used in his life. All crockery used by the *teungku* when he eats at the deceased's house is given to him on the seventh day or on the fourteenth for the affluent families. This is all done with the aim of adding to the deceased's good deeds as well as making the deceased's *aruwah* happy. The *imām* is invited to the dead person's house to eat the "*khanduri* at the appointed time" from the first till seventh day respectively. Empty glasses are placed on the table where he eats, to receive

Allāh's mercy. Fresh water in a bowl on the table symbolises that the *khanduri* for the *aruwah* is held sincerely by the family. In addition, a lamp on the table symbolises that the descendants will always remember and pray for the deceased. Praying for the deceased is said to be like a lamp on the grave. The pious children of the deceased person who invoke Allāh in their wishes may indeed hear their prayer answered by Allāh, and they can be especially effective in transmitting the merit of the recitation to their parents' *aruwah*.

Aruwah

Aruwah (from Indonesian *arwah*) can be translated as "soul or spirit". Nevertheless, in the ritual of *khanduri bu* the villagers say *roh* (Arabic *rūh*). Many villagers in Blangporoh whom I interviewed believe that *aruwah* remains in the house and sometimes returns to the grave during the seventh day after death. Therefore, *tilam bungong* is prepared for the *aruwah*. It is said that from the seventh day the *aruwah* of a devout person goes back from its place in 'illiyūn (the highest elevation of paradise) to the house and to the grave. The *aruwah* of people who violate Allāh's law go to a place under the earth called *barhud*. Some say their *aruwah* are placed in *sijjīn* (the lowest level of hell). The *aruwah* then stands at the ventilation of the house. Therefore ventilations may not be closed at night. The *aruwah* observes the behaviour of his family members. If the relatives perform the *khanduri*, behave well and never forget to pray, the *aruwah* is happy. However, if the family members violate Allāh's law, the *aruwah* will be sad and then return to 'illiyūn immediately. The *khanduri* and *shamadiyah*, therefore, have to be held and the *teungku* and other devout people have to be invited to eat and recite *do'a* from the first to seventh night respectively. However, my informant, Mukim Hukom has a different opinion; he argues that the *aruwah* returns and stands at the door. The door has to remain open till late at night, especially on the night when the *aruwah* returns to its house. The *khanduri* has to be held and at least one *teungku* or devout person must be invited to eat instead of "feeding" the *aruwah*. There must be some rice left in the cooking pot when the *aruwah* comes back. If there is no more rice, more must be cooked because the *aruwah* enjoys the smell of the rice. It is said that if there is no *khanduri* held as the *aruwah* arrives, the *aruwah* will not enter the house, thinking: "They no longer care about their deceased brother".

The aim of the *aruwah* returning on the first night is to observe whether his close relatives and close friends who live near his house come to offer condolences as well as how his family members welcome them. The family members must pray for the *aruwah* because the torment during the first night in the grave is said to be very frightening. Therefore, recommended prayers

which are called *seumayang hadiyah* (“gift prayer”)¹³ are recommended. It is said that if this recommended prayer is not performed, one can give charity to the needy instead, with the aim of helping the dead in the grave. “Prayer is like depositing money in a bank. Allāh repays it by sending the ‘grave’s mercy’ to the dead”. “The fine for failure to perform prayer” is also paid to the village, as one liter of rice given to the poor through the *teungku*. But this is only done by affluent families who did not perform prayer five times a day when the dead person was still alive.

The aim of the *aruwah* returning on the third night, when the spongy *dayak-dayak* cakes are eaten, is to observe whether his relatives and close friends who live far from his house come to offer condolences for him and how his family welcomes them.

On the fifth night, reciting *shamadiyah* and *do’a, khanduri apam* is held to mark the corpse’s swollen condition in the grave. The *aruwah* is truly sad and cries when it sees the condition of the body in the grave. The task of the *aruwah* returning on this night is to observe how much attention his family members give to him. Some villagers say that if the debt has not been paid yet, the *aruwah* will be in *awang awang*, a place which is not well defined, somewhere between sky and earth. Some others say that the *aruwah* will be suspended between the sky and earth.

The aim of *aruwah* returning on the seventh night¹⁴ is to observe whether his debt has been paid or not. If not, the *aruwah* will cry and condemn his family members. The body is then said to explode in the grave and be devoured by worms. The *aruwah* is again truly sad and cries when it sees the condition of its former body. From the seventh day onwards, the *aruwah* loosens its ties to the house but still roams around the yard. In addition, it is said to leave the decomposed body. The ritual series called *khanduri seunujoh* reaches its climax. The women work hard in the kitchen to make special sweets and prepare food for the *khanduri*. Relatives come from other villages and stay for the *shamadiyah*, a night time chanting session. A ram is slaughtered for the deceased on the Day of Judgement and guests are served rice with side dishes and drink. Serving rice and drink to the guests is said to equal the religious merit received when one performs *hajj* and *umrah* (the lesser pilgrimage out of the *hajj* season) in Mecca. One *imām* said; “Any guest coming to the deceased’s house must be fed. Do not refuse the guests! Refusing them is the same as refusing the Prophet”. This indicates how high a value is put on the *khanduri* on the seventh night of death. It is said that although the *khanduri*

13 The *teungku* tells me that “gift prayer” can be performed in at least two circles (Arabic. *raka’at*) for the dead. In the first circle, the verse of *qursi* (QS 2:255) is recited once. The second circle, the *sūrah at-Takāthur* (QS 102:1-8) is recited once and the *sūrah al-Ikhlās* (QS 112:1-4) ten times.

14 Nothing was known about the tasks of the *aruwah* on the second, the fourth, and the sixth night. In any case, according to many *teungku*, it returns every Friday night.

is not held when the Prophet was still alive, it was held at ‘Ali’s house¹⁵ for seven days and at Aisyah’s¹⁶ house for fourteen days when he died.

The aim of the *aruwah* returning on the fourteenth night is to observe whether his *wasiyyah* (the last minute testament) is carried out by his close relative. If not, the *aruwah* will be very sad and will curse them. Around this time, the body begins decaying, and the *aruwah* is said to start roaming away from the yard. A small *khanduri* with a short *shamadiyah* and *do’a* is held. There is a belief that if the *aruwah* condemns his family, the wealth that he left on the earth will no longer bring ‘blessing’ and will gradually be lost.

The aim of the *aruwah* returning on the 44th night is to observe whether his extended family, especially *wali hukum* (a group of men from the husband’s side who receive a greater share of the inheritance),¹⁷ cares for his children and wife. If not, the *aruwah* will condemn his extended family and return to its abode with sadness. A small *khanduri* with short *shamadiyah* and *do’a* is also held for the *aruwah* at home. The decaying process of the body continues. The *aruwah* is said to gradually leave the house and start roaming in the village. On this day, the deceased’s family wraps dried bread that is made by his wife and children. All the dried bread is wrapped in a piece of white cloth and then given to the village *teungku* or other devout people in the village. Traditional cakes such as *leumang*, *leupèk*, *keutupèk*, *bada* and *umping* made of *idi* glutinous rice are also made as the proof of his wife and children’s love. These various foods are “sent to Allāh” for the deceased through the village *teungku*.

The aim of *aruwah* returning on the one hundredth night is said to remind its close relatives to do good deeds (the living cannot hear this). It reminds them that his death has to be exemplary for his family members and for the living. It says: “The rewards received by those who follow Allāh’s command compare to those who do not have already been seen”. A small *khanduri* with short *shamadiyah* and *do’a* is also held for the *aruwah* to make it happy. At this time, the decaying body turns from a lying to a sitting position. The flesh has disappeared and the bones gradually dissolve into the soil. The *aruwah* is said to start roaming far away from the village but only sometimes wanders in and out of its former house. In order to have a clearer idea about the tasks performed by the *aruwah*, see the *table one* below:

15 ‘Ali bin Abu Thalib, a cousin of the Prophet Muḥammad, an important leader in the early Muslim community and the fourth caliph.

16 ‘Aisyah binti Abu Bakar, a favourite wife of the Prophet Muḥammad in his last years and political personality in the struggle for Muslim community leadership after his death.

17 Also called *wali meukeutam*.

No	Night	The tasks of the <i>aruwah</i> returning to its former home
01	1	To observe whether his close relatives and friends living near his house come to offer condolences for him as well as to observe how his family welcomes them
02	3	To observe whether his family and close friends living far from his house come to offer condolences for him as well as to observe how his family welcomes them.
03	5	To observe how much attention his family gives him.
04	7	To observe whether his debt has been paid or not. If not, the <i>aruwah</i> will cry and condemn his family.
05	14	To observe whether his <i>wasiyyah</i> (last minute testament) is carried out by his close relatives.
06	44	To observe whether his children and wife are looked after by his extended family, especially <i>wali hukum</i> .
07	100	To remind his close relatives to do good deeds as well as to remind them that his death is exemplary for his family and for the living.

Table 1: The tasks of the *aruwah* returning to its former home

Besides these occasions, it is said that the *aruwah* also returns to visit his family on the following dates: 1) on the night of determination; 2) two nights preceding Ramadhan; 3) on the night of power which takes place on the last ten nights of Ramadhan; 4) on the night marking the end of Ramadhan; 5) on the night of the tenth day of the month of Zulhijjah, celebrating the pilgrimage, also known as *'īdul qurban*. Like on the one hundredth night, the *aruwah* again reminds its close relatives to do good deeds as well as that his death is exemplary. On these particular nights *khanduri* is held again and the *do'a* recited. According to many *teungku*, this is like providing a life vest for the *aruwah* (see Table 2 below for a summary of the corpse's condition, the exchanges and the *aruwah*'s location).

Time	Corpse's condition	Exchange	Aruwah's location
1 st day	As usual	- <i>Shamadiyah</i> + <i>do'a</i> for the deceased and food gift	} 1 st to 6 th day the <i>aruwah</i> remains in house
2 nd day	Begins to smell	- <i>Shamadiyah</i> + <i>do'a</i> for the deceased and food gift	
3 rd day	Smells and is mushy	- <i>Khanduri dayak-dayak</i> - <i>Shamadiyah</i> + <i>do'a</i> for the deceased and <i>dayak-dayak</i> , spongy cakes are distributed	
4 th day	Begins swelling	- <i>Shamadiyah</i> + <i>do'a</i> for the deceased and food gift	
5 th day	Swollen	- <i>Khanduri apam</i> - <i>Shamadiyah</i> + <i>do'a</i> for the deceased and <i>apam</i> cakes are distributed	
6 th day	About to explode	- <i>Shamadiyah</i> + <i>do'a</i> for the deceased and food gift	
7 th day	Explodes	- <i>Khanduri sinujoh</i> - <i>Khatam shamadiyah</i> + <i>do'a</i> for the deceased and food gift and monetary gift + clothes of the deceased are distributed and his debts are paid	- Unties its bond to the house but still roams around the house
14 th day	Begins decaying	- <i>Khanduri duasen tujoh</i> <i>do'a</i> for the deceased + food gift and monetary gift	- Roams outside of the house or domestic surroundings
44 th day	The decaying process continues	- <i>Khanduri peutproh peut</i> <i>do'a</i> for the deceased + food gift and monetary gift	- Gradually leaves the house and starts roaming in the village
100 th day	Turning from a lying to a sitting position. As the flesh has disappeared the bones gradually dissolve into the soil	- <i>Khanduri sireutoh</i> + food gift and monetary gift	- Starts roaming far away from the village
<p>↓</p> <p>Corpse decayed → Allah</p>			

Table 2: Intervals of the deceased's *aruwah*

Conclusion

After a person has died, the body is washed and wrapped in cloth inside the house. Ceremonial prayers are said in Arabic reflecting Islamic beliefs about the destiny of the deceased. On the same day, the dead person is buried in the village burial grounds. This entails a ritual performed by the *imam*, who addresses the deceased in Arabic, the “language of *barzah*” that is “spoken in paradise”. The prayers refer to the idea that “Allāh returns the *aruwah* to the body”. This signifies that the deceased person is “revived for a few moments after burial” so that “his good deeds will respond to the angels’ question” about his moral conduct during his lifetime. Having answered these questions

satisfactorily, Allāh rewards the deceased with the “mercy of the grave”. Nowadays, however, such ideas are contested, particularly those ideas concerning the collective performance of these ritual actions, as being efficacious in improving the ancestral destiny of an individual person. “Young modernists” in West Labuhan Haji argue, “the dead cannot hear, the chanting cannot help the dead and one person cannot make up for the sins of another”. It appears that an individualist understanding of morality is gaining ground against the moral precept of collective responsibility as expressed in these instructions to the deceased. The form and meaning of this ritual is not only a topic for anthropological analysis but also a subject for long-standing and hotly contested religious debates within Indonesia, between the proponents of Islamic modernism and those who would reaffirm the correctness of older, local ritual practices (Bowen 1984: 21).

Meanwhile, the deceased’s family has constructed a bed composed of the deceased’s clothes and other personal objects. It is between these objects that “the deceased *aruwah* sleeps”. Represented by his “soul” and the textile objects, the deceased is surrounded by his spouse and children. For seven days and nights incense is burnt “guiding the *aruwah*” in his domestic surroundings. After seven days the clothes and other personal belongings, constituting the objectified body of the deceased, are distributed among the persons who washed the dead body immediately after death. Different items are given to those who washed different body parts. At the same time, food is distributed among the poor and the orphans of the village, once again generating merit for the deceased. Such ritual injunctions are strongly sanctioned by the expectation that negligence to fulfil them results in the return of the deceased’s *aruwah* into the village society. This is seen as “retaliation from Allāh for not distributing the clothes to the people who bathed him on the seventh day of his death.”

At certain intervals, the deceased’s *aruwah* returns to the house again, where it is accompanied by *shamadiyah*, *tahlil*, and *do’a* recited after the “sunset prayer” and food gifts. These food gifts are subsequently distributed among the participants. Particularly during the first seven nights, different food gifts mark the different parts of ritual reception of the deceased’s *aruwah* as described in the summary above. The constitution of these different foodstuffs refers to the successive stages in the deceased’s body’s process of decay. For example sponge cake and *apam* cake signify that the dead body is in an advanced stage of decomposition. This indicates that the deceased’s progeny partakes in a ritual communication of the former’s substitute body: the deceased personal image (shown by the clothes and jewellery that he wore when still alive, for instance) as well as his body are represented in clothes and foodstuffs and distributed among his or her progeny. In other words, the aspects of the social person are transferred into gifts that are distributed to others. This fundamental idea of a person, whose constituent parts are distributed after his

death among close kin and/or neighbours, is known in other Southeast Asian and Pacific societies as well (Coppet 1981; Platenkamp 1988a, 1988b, 1992, 1996, 2001, 2006; Barraud and Platenkamp 1990; Iteanu 1990; Manan 2015).

On the seventh night, the ritual series called *khanduri seunujoh* reaches its climax. The family release their feelings of sadness, loss, and frustration. The crying is no longer in regret of the death. Relatives, neighbours and close friends are served a large meal. Male reciters from various districts of South Acèh arrive to recite the Qur'ān for a full night for the deceased's benefit. The more famous the reciters are, the more monetary gifts are distributed by the deceased's family. These events constitute the critical point of transformation. The *aruwah* of the deceased releases its ties to the house, its worldly debts, and the people in turn release their pent-up emotions. The period between death and the seventh day corresponds to what Hertz called the "intermediary period", which is represented in some Indonesian societies by the exposed body of the dead. Hertz's insight is that, in these societies, the exposed, decomposing body is the material basis for the passage of the soul (Hertz 1960: 29); like the Gayo in Central Acèh (Bowen 1984: 27), the people of Blangporoh also see decomposition as a natural process and perform similar key rituals, but without exposing the dead body.

The mortuary ritual is not just performed for the bereaved family but most importantly to help release the *aruwah* of the deceased from its ties to the house, so that the remaining family can stop mourning. All the *khanduri* are to finalise the transformation and to accomplish a slow gradual unbinding of the *aruwah* to the house, the community, and the social world. Each time the gifts are properly distributed, the *aruwah* moves away from its house, domestic surroundings or village, and moves toward Allāh. In the meantime, the putrefaction process of the dead body continues. This indicates that there is a significant relation among the practice of commemorative *khanduri*, the reciting of *shamdiyah*, *tahlil*, and *do'a*, and the delivery of the *aruwah* to its own world, the transfer of gifts and the putrefaction process of the corpse before it finally disappears altogether into soil. The mortuary ritual therefore continues to have a lot to say about death and constitutes an intricate process of exchange, in which parts of the deceased person in spiritual, physical and objective modalities are fragmented and transferred amongst those social relationships that constitute the elementary network of which he was part of during his lifetime.

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