

## *Construing Culture as Composition—Part 3: Traina’s Methodology Culturally Applied*

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### **Abstract**

We come now, in Part 3 of the series, to employ Traina’s inductive Bible study method, as discussed in the earlier articles in the series, to the sociological issue of slums. If, then, we are to discuss slums, we need to remind ourselves, at the outset, that we are not talking about overcrowding, lack of amenity, poverty or want as such; but about the relationship of such conditions to a context of meaning that changes with your point of view. Unless we remember this constantly, any proposal in terms of slums becomes unconscious ideological imposition.<sup>1</sup>

**Key Terms:** structure, interpretation, Bible study, structural relationships, inductive bible study (IBS), observation, understanding, explanation, Methodical Bible Study, Robert A. Traina, cultural analysis



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<sup>1</sup> Peter Marris, *The Meaning of Slums and Patterns of Change* (Los Angeles: School of Architecture and Urban Planning, University of California, n.d.), 2.

## Introduction

In two previous articles I have put forward the theses that (a) all truth is narrative in nature, that truth and knowledge are essentially storied concepts, notions bathed in histories that provide the material for interpretation, and (b) the inductive interpretive methodology historically proffered by Professor Robert Traina constitutes a robust hermeneutical approach, a methodology useful for interpreting far more than simply textual materials.<sup>2</sup> These two theses together allow me to suggest an additional hypothesis, one I will test in this final article: I submit that interpretive approaches to anthropology can be significantly enriched by utilizing methodologies native to narrative biblical criticism especially ones similar to in nature and rigor to Traina’s approach.

To field test this hypothesis, I did not need to go far. At the time of my field research, I lived in a context—West Java, Indonesia—quite foreign to the culture where I had grown up; thus, I simply needed to venture into my neighborhood and begin the process. I chose to study some of the activities in an informal market located approximately a half kilometer away from my home. I had previously met a man—I will call him Pak Uun—who had for many years been a tofu peddler. Assisted primarily by his daughter Tati, Pak Uun operated a thriving little business.<sup>3</sup> With many years of experience under his belt, Pak Uun was quite well-versed in his trade and seemed to be very well liked in the marketplace. For several months, for many a morning, I arose at about 2:30 a.m. and groped my way through darkness to Pak Uun’s stall. My aim, until approximately 9:00 a.m., was to perch myself on a

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<sup>2</sup> Lindy D. Backues, “Construing Culture as Composition—Part 1: The Narrative Nature of Truth,” *JIBS* 6.1 (2019): 7–54; idem, “Construing Culture as Composition—Part 2: Robert Traina’s Methodology,” *JIBS* 6.2 (2019): 29–62

<sup>3</sup> *Pak*—an abbreviated form of *Bapak* (literally “father” in Indonesian)—essentially translates as “Mr.” Neither Uun nor Tati are these people’s real names.

little stool just behind him and his daughter and—as they were peddling their wares—attempt to observe whatever I could and take note of it. In addition, I made about a half dozen visits to their house, sorting through what I saw.<sup>4</sup> In the process, I amassed several cassette tapes full of discussions as well as a considerable number of written notes based upon these. It will be these notes, augmented by my own observations, that will inform our analysis below.

## Cultural Analysis—Clean-up as a Cultural Domain in West Java

Consisting of thousands of kiosks situated next to each other cheek by jowl, the marketplace in *Cicadas*<sup>5</sup> lined a road bearing the same name. It was an informal market—one not officially sanctioned by the local government—which sprang up when the old official market was moved by the authorities to a more distant location so that a department store could be erected at the former site. Thus, for residents in the *Cicadas* area to reach the formal market, they were forced to cross a major thoroughfare filled with vehicles; it was a dangerous trek. In addition, the new marketplace was more than twice

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<sup>4</sup> I lived in Indonesia for close to 18 years which caused me to be quite fluent in the national language, Bahasa Indonesian. However, persons indigenous to West Java—the Sundanese—speak a regional language known to them as *Basa Sunda*. I must confess that I never gained complete fluency in that language, a fact that causes my analysis here to suffer since I could not converse fluently in the language of the marketplace—the heart language of Uun and Tati. Nevertheless, the visits I made to them greatly assisted in clarifying many things that I otherwise would have missed.

<sup>5</sup> This place where I lived during the middle of the 1990s, *Cicadas* (roughly pronounced “Chee-cha-das”), is also one of the principal neighborhoods MIT economists Banerjee and Duflo examine as they have attempted to rethink poverty alleviation and international development, taking more of a data-driven, grassroots approach to the problem. See Abhijit Banerjee and Esther Duflo, *Poor Economics: A Radical Rethinking of the Way to Fight Global Poverty*; Reprint ed. (New York: PublicAffairs, 2012).

the distance from neighborhood residents when contrasted to the old location. Hence, with typical entrepreneurial vigor aimed at capitalizing on a felt need, informal stalls popped up alongside *Cicadas* at a pace that frequently caused them to spill over into the street.<sup>6</sup> Nonetheless, few from the area complained. With most residents living at a subsistence level and thus not able to spend the better portion of their morning simply traveling to and from the new market, they seemed very willing to put up with overcrowded streets to have the opportunity of shopping in a market closer by. Besides, not many in these neighborhoods owned cars anyway so, to them, this seemed as good a use of city streets as any.

It was in this context that I stumbled across a term which set me on my investigation. It seemed that in Indonesia, when informal markets such as this arose (and, it must be admitted, they did that frequently), one of the local government's primary concerns was keeping them clean—the Indonesian word for this is *bersih*. However, as we will soon see, that word communicates more than one might think if it is taken at face value.

### *Observations*

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<sup>6</sup> De Soto describes the development of informal markets in Peru:

“Street vending commenced when people began to invade the public thoroughfare, the use of which is open to everybody, in order to sell goods and services and for commercial transactions—without obtaining permits, giving receipts, or paying taxes. Some of this trade benefitted from a legal exemption granted in exchange for payment of a charge or ‘excise’ which secured it the tolerance of the municipal authorities.

“Informal markets, on the other hand, began when vendors who were already operating on the streets sought to end the insecurity of doing so and began to build their own markets without complying with legal provisions governing invaded land or legally developed lots. Others engaged formal businesses to do so or became their customers, but in either case the markets were built without complying with state regulations” (Hernando de Soto, *The Other Path: The Invisible Revolution in the Third World* [New York: Harper & Row, 1989], 59).

Informal markets in West Java owe their existence to a similar process.

The following excerpts are taken from conversations with Pak Uun and Tati conducted in the Indonesian language. I have translated these into English for obvious reasons. The two terms I will refer to below, *Clean* and *Clean-up*, are translations of the Indonesian words *bersih* and *pembersihan* respectively. In addition, “L” signifies statements made by me, whereas Pak Uun and Tati are listed by name.

- L: Why do city officials use the term *Cleaning* or *Clean-up* when they describe what we have been talking about? Yesterday you pointed out that city officials wanted the area to be as clean as possible. That makes sense. But it seems from our discussions that this term *Clean-up* refers, not only to tidying up the trash, but also to a notion city officials have regarding orderliness?
- Tati: That is because *Clean-up* can also mean “prohibited to sell.”
- L: Well, if that is the case, then why don’t they... (*interrupted*)
- Pak Uun: Yea, well ... according to city officials in the government, *Clean-up* is *Clean-up*. For instance, if there is a visiting guest, well it’s called *Clean-up*. For them, it’s the same thing.
- Tati: Yea—for those times, *Clean-up* means “prohibited to sell.” At times like those—when they tell us we can’t sell—they call it *Clean-up*.

When I first came across this expression *Clean-up* in the marketplace, I assumed it signified a simple process of keeping *Civitas* free of rubbish. With many thousands of people bustling in and out of the place daily, the market ended up peppered with its share of refuse—the likes of which could easily be seen scattered about in the area. In fact, at first, it seemed a rather attentive—and perhaps even supportive—thing for the local government to do to allow an unofficial market to spring up,

while also concerning themselves only with fostering a safe and clean environment for small scale peddlers to trade. “Surely stressing trash pick-up and health standards must be a good thing in the long run,” I thought to myself. However, after watching, waiting, and bouncing my observations off Pak Uun and Tati, I soon discovered that I was being a bit naïve.

L: So, allow me to summarize. Am I right to say that there is, in fact, a type of *Clean-up* that involves doing away with trash, or activities of *Clean-up* concerned with arranging pushcarts lest they stick out and block thoroughfares?

Pak Uun: Yea, that’s right. That is *Clean-up*. But, there’s also another kind of *Clean-up*. That happens when a guest comes to our market, someone visits from the outside.

L: So, at times like that, they do not allow you to sell, right?

Pak Uun: Yea. That’s right.

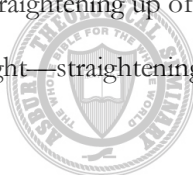
L: And they call that *Clean-up* too, then, right?

Pak Uun: Yea. You see, there are two types of *Clean-up*. You can have *Clean-up* involving trash and rubbish, but it also refers to an activity, an announcement by the local government, namely, at those times we are not permitted to sell goods in the street.

Tati: Yea, it’s sort of a straightening up of things. That’s why they call it *Clean-up*.

L: Oh yea, I guess that would be a good way of putting it—at those times, *Clean-up* is essentially a “straightening up of things.”

Tati: Right—straightening things up.



It did not take me long to realize, based upon conversations like these (and observations of activities in the market itself) that there was not just one type of *Clean-up* activity—there were, in fact, two very different varieties: the first type did indeed involve the elimination of rubbish; the second type of *Clean-up*, though, involved a completely different sort of “cleaning up,” since these were efforts directed toward the small-scale peddlers themselves. The first type of *Clean-up* was on-going and continuous efforts—municipal public officials of various types regularly made rounds inspecting, warning, and soliciting dues, ostensibly with a view toward ensuring that rubbish was collected and disposed of. In contrast, the second type of *Clean-up* seemed to happen only occasionally, sporadically, and these efforts were uniquely prompted by a particular, infrequent trigger: the appearance of an outside dignitary.

L:                   When there is a *Clean-up*—when you are told you cannot sell—what time is that usually announced? When do they deliver the message to you?

Pak Uun:           Oh, in those cases, the decree comes from the District Office. The mandate is delivered by various District Office Civil Defense Workers.

L:                   How do they do that? Do they come to your house?

Pak Uun:           No, they come straight to where we were selling the day before. They visit us—they drop in and tell us that we cannot sell the next day.

L:                   So, you find out one day before. You have 24 hours’ notice

Pak Uun:           Yea. “Tomorrow, don’t sell. There’s going to be a guest,” they’ll say. “It’s got to be clean.”

Thus, when an outside dignitary visited, all small-scale merchandising activities on the part of these peddlers—activities not in the least

related to whether or not there is rubbish—were implicitly likened to pollution and impurity. By selling at times like these, the message seemed to be, the very presence of these peddlers, and the new marketplace itself, was a pollutant.

It did not take me long to realize that literal rubbish was linked to small-scale peddling primarily by how each element was viewed by those in control; both were taken to be something less than attractive. In short, rubbish was framed as an “eyesore,” as too were small-scale peddler activities. But significantly, this parallel did not always hold—sometimes they were treated differently. It is important to note that the unsightliness of small-scale peddler activity was underscored by local officials only at those times when an outside visitor entered the area. It seemed that at all other times the potential distasteful appearance of these vendors did not constitute an issue at all. On the contrary, small-scale peddler activity was, at those times, viewed as a useful source of government (and—for government collectors who made the rounds in the informal market—personal) income, due to informal tariffs that small-scale peddlers were forced to pay by local government officials.<sup>8</sup> With respect to this second type of *Clean-up*, the problem seemed far more punctiliar in nature.

- L: Why don't government officials use a different term when visitors come to town...uh...*prohibited to sell*, for instance? Wouldn't that be a bit more precise than the term *Clean-up*? Why do they use this same term *Clean-up* when they are actually simply wanting you to temporarily cease selling?

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<sup>8</sup> De Soto highlights similar “excise” tax arrangements between informal vendors and government officials in Peru: “The excise tax...is the preferred means of consolidating special rights of ownership because it benefits both the street vendors and the municipal authorities. The vendors pay it because it gives them a measure of stability and security, and the authorities levy it because they obtain more income per square meter than they would if the same vendors were formally established” (*The Other Path*, 69).



- Tati: I don't know. Maybe because, if they said we were prohibited from selling, we would take it as a permanent ban. *Clean-up* like this is short-term.
- Pak Uun: Yea, *Clean-up* like this is not permanent. We can sell again later.
- Tati: By using *Clean-up*, they are suggesting it is only a sometimes thing.
- Pak Uun: It's kind of like, normally we can sell; unless there is a *Clean-up*. If there is a *Clean-up*, we're not allowed. We just need to know when the *Clean-up* will be and when it will end. When there are visitors, they don't want us there.

Pak Uun and Tati helped me see that both the rubbish and small-scale peddlers were judged by the local government as problems—the difference between them, though, seemed connected to the duration of each of these two differing campaigns. Furthermore, seeing as how visitors were often chauffeured into the area in automobiles, small-scale peddlers presented a unique problem, a challenge not found in relation to rubbish: when visitors came through, vendors represented traffic impediments. The congestion caused by thousands of stalls and their resulting patrons consequently was something not only aesthetically unpleasing and unbecoming; schedules often needed to be altered and appointments broken. Thus, a good deal of effort was expended in clearing main transportation arteries of these obstructions.

- L: About *Clean-up* mandates related to outside visitors, how long do those last? Did you tell me those can sometimes last a week?
- Pak Uun: Yea, they can go on for a week if the guest stays that long.
- Tati: Yea—we just need to wait until the guest leaves.
- Pak Uun: Kind of like *Clean-up* the other day.

- L: You mean the one on Asia-Africa Street [a reference to a conference for Non-Aligned Nations held in town the previous week]? How long did that go on, for a week or how long?
- Pak Uun: Yes—that’s a good example. That one lasted a week.
- Tati: Yea.
- L: So, last week, for a whole week, you were not allowed to sell?
- Pak Uun: We didn’t dare. We had to wait.
- L: A whole week without business activity. That seems a long time. Was that especially difficult? After all, that’s many days without income.
- Pak Uun: Yea, it was hard. Instead of setting up at our normal place, at the informal market, we must set up at the official market much farther away—and looking for a spot can be hard. But, we must do it; we can’t afford to be inactive. At the formal market, we can’t sell to our normal customers and our sales really go down. But, what can we do?

As we will soon see, *Clean-up* was, in fact, a cover term tracing a certain crescendo, a designation that encompassed problems in need of resolution. But as can also be seen, *Clean-up* came in two different varieties with each type corresponding to separate problems. In keeping with the contrasting frequency of the two causal elements—i.e., *Rubbish* as an on-going problem and *Small-Scale Peddlers* as occasional problems at certain times—the high points of each of these two movements also exhibited their own distinctions: *Rubbish Clean-up* seemed to be an on-going affair designed to sustain small, more regular climactic efforts; *Small-scale Peddler Clean-up*, on the other hand, served an occasional, much less frequent event, induced by a visit on the part of an outside dignitary or guest.

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Considering the general interpretive methodology I am putting forward in this series of articles, a cultural domain seems to be appearing here—one visually presented in the appendix found at the end of this article, a constellation organized, as I intimate above, under the general cover term *Clean-up*. In keeping with Traina’s inductive methodology, I offer a visual breakdown of the domain as well as corresponding interpretive questions and strategic events.<sup>9</sup>

### *Initial Interpretation*

The idea of dirt implies a structure of idea [*sic*]. For us dirt is a kind of compendium category for all events which blur, smudge, contradict, or otherwise confuse accepted classifications. The underlying feeling is that a system of values which is habitually expressed in a given arrangement of things has been violated.<sup>10</sup>

One of the primary ways in which this arrangement seems to hold together is by way of a comparison proposed between *Rubbish* and *Small-Scale Peddlers* (Structural Relationship I—*Recurrence of Substantiation with Comparison*). By comparatively linking these two very different subjects (human beings with waste products!), the need for *Clean-up* is substantiated.<sup>11</sup> In fact, the closer *Rubbish* and *Small-Scale Peddlers* are

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<sup>9</sup> In contrast to Traina’s system, I have chosen to isolate not strategic areas, seeing as how we have no encoded text before us, but strategic events—actual incidents that serve as focal points for analysis. In addition, this also allows us to deliberately treat occurrences and our observations of them in a text analogue fashion and thus avoid undue reliance on verbal responses from informants.

<sup>10</sup> Mary Douglas, as cited in Jerome H. Neyrey, “The Symbolic Universe of Luke-Acts: ‘They Turn the World Upside Down,’” in *The Social World of Luke-Acts: Models for Interpretation*, ed. Jerome H. Neyrey (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1991), 271–304 at 274.

<sup>11</sup> Of course, the world view I am exploring here is that embraced by government officials in West Java. It is their assumptions and beliefs that prevail upon small-scale peddlers in the way I describe here. Consequently, this should not

linked, the more the presence of one can be proffered as a justification for *Clean-up* activities directed toward the other (thus, the substantiation components found in the movement are mutually sustaining). Therefore, the appearance of a good deal of rubbish in *Cicadas* was highlighted by local authorities as a justifying reason for banning small-scale peddling in the community when they deemed that necessary—whether it was necessary for a short period or indefinitely.<sup>12</sup> And if not banned, much of the blame for social problems in the area could still be laid at the feet of small-scale peddlers. For instance, while the graphic clearly shows the motif *Health Hazard* as being uniquely brought about by the presence of *Rubbish*, if the distinction between these two motifs could be blurred by way of likening one to the other, *Small-scale Peddlers* became easily cited as the principal reason for substandard health conditions found in *Cicadas*—irrespective of the service they offered to local residents who frequented the market.<sup>13</sup> Thus the government (and any other outside parties) could be relieved of all responsibility, as well as conveniently absolved of all complicity, whether in terms of ill effects engendered by way of edicts that banned market activity or in terms of the levels of poverty apparent in the area. In fact, it was possible for visiting guests to be given just this sort of an explanation as to the privation or poverty affecting those in the area. In short, this mechanism justified a classic case of blaming the victim.<sup>14</sup> The supposed eyesore that

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be taken as a statement concerning the culture of the region in general. We are dealing here with a sub-stratum.

<sup>12</sup> Never mind the impact this will have upon community residents' well-being if they can no longer sustain themselves by means of their sole source of income.

<sup>13</sup> This, of course, calls upon insight gained by attempting to answer some of the questions listed under Structural Relationship II—*Recurrence of Causal Particularization with Contrast*. Thus, we see how the answering of questions related to one structural relationship leads us to an investigation of another.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. William Ryan's insightful book *Blaming the Victim*, rev. ed. (New York: Vintage, 1976) which introduced this phrase. Clearly, I am not saying that this is always what happens. I am merely pointing out that the existing constellation of structural relationships makes this a distinct possibility. Certainly, whether

peddlers represented, the alleged health threat they posed, and the obvious obstruction to traffic they became, thereafter served to thrust causal factors in an upward spiral that culminated in the second type of *Clean-up* event—a ban on market activity.<sup>15</sup>

Taking our cue from this relationship’s implicational questions as found below, we might ask ourselves (1) Upon what assumption is this comparative coupling based? and (2) What sort of ideas, beliefs, or actions are brought about by continuing to link these two motifs?

One obvious assumption is that there must exist a legitimization of the dehumanization process upon which the entire construct is built. This can be seen in the equating of waste with persons. *Small-scale Peddlers* could not be thought to require *Clean-up* in the same way as did rubbish unless they were first seen as something other than human. Of course, this puts a safe ontological distance between *Cicadas*’s small-scale peddlers and those from outside the area, persons doing the judging: in a word, it relieves outsiders of all responsibility in relation to problems insiders face. “Indeed,” as the reasoning goes, “these peddlers comprise the problem—they are not like us (since we are not problems!)—and thus the answer is for them to become more like us, so as not to perpetuate *Cicadas*’s predicament.”<sup>16</sup>

An equally obvious outgrowth of all of this is the need for *Cicadas*’s peddlers to be either recuperated or swept away—depending

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government officials (or anyone else, for that matter) take this road depends upon their cognizance concerning this dynamic as well as their own moral fabric.

<sup>15</sup> Here we have the emergence of Structural Relationship IV—*Recurrence of Climax*.

<sup>16</sup> Once again, we run into another collaboration of constructs—this time as it relates to Structural Relationship III, *Recurrence of Interrogation with Contrast*—since we are now speaking of small-scale peddlers as problems. Cf. Riley: “We must particularly ask, “To whom are social problems a problem?” And usually, if truth were to be told, we would have to admit that we mean they are a problem to those of us who are outside the boundaries of what we have defined as the problem” (*Blaming the Victim*, 12). We will touch upon the role boundaries play in all of this in a moment.

upon whether they are viewed as invalids or as rubbish.<sup>17</sup> While the latter is the primary comparison we have cited here, the former, of course, also aligns itself quite nicely with the fabricated construct *Small-scale Peddlers As Health Hazards*, since it is made possible by comparison.<sup>18</sup> In addition, once these people are viewed as less than human, any sort of action considered necessary in order to deal with them can be rationalized, even though it might not be so easily justified before. Therefore, not only were individual crescendos of *Clean-up* made possible in *Cicadas*, but a sort of climax of climaxes was also made tenable, wherein *Clean-up* campaigns deemed ineffective could be intensified into efforts more and more inhumane, all directed at ridding *Cicadas* of its “problems.”

One final word is needed concerning the analysis of the structural relationships found in this cultural scene. Borrowing from the understanding of *Strategic Areas* we gained by way of the second article in our series, we know that *Strategic Events* can likewise serve as targeted occasions—what I called “key points of contact” in our discussion pertaining to *Strategic Areas*—for the purpose of answering select interpretive questions. These can then serve as hermeneutical windows into the particular structural relationship identified.

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<sup>17</sup> These two views align with what Janice Perlman found to be the predominant images held by outsiders concerning slum dwellers in Rio de Janeiro: (1) pathological agglomerations, or (2) inevitable blights (*The Myth of Marginality: Urban Poverty and Politics in Rio de Janeiro* [Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 1976], 14–17). The former, says Perlman, can only lead to one policy objective: “eradicate the favela” (*The Myth of Marginality*, 15), whereas, she says, “... policy implications of [the latter] are that the favelados should be helped within the limits of what is feasible, so that they can be recuperated... (*The Myth of Marginality*, 17). Perlman’s terminology makes sense of our images as well: rubbish deserves eradication, while invalids require recuperation.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. “The oppressed are regarded as the pathology of the healthy society, which must therefore adjust these ‘incompetent and lazy’ folk to its own patterns by changing their mentality. These marginals need to be ‘integrated,’ ‘incorporated’ into the healthy society that they have ‘forsaken’” (Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* [New York: Continuum, 1990], 61).

Looking at our cultural scene as found in the appendix, we see that *Clean-up* functioned as just such a *Strategic Event*. First, the compound structural relationship *Recurrence of Climax* includes the structural law *Climax*, itself one of the relationships that manifests a distinctive *Strategic Area*, in this case “at the apex or pinnacle portion of the relationship—the crescendo.” Thus, my being present at the *Clean-up* event surely would have yielded additional insight for my analysis, since I would have been present at the culmination of a previous on-going chain of events. In addition, *Clean-up* is also specifically mentioned as a representative *Strategic Event* for both *Recurrence of Substantiation with Comparison* and *Recurrence of Interrogation with Contrast*. Consequently, identification of *Strategic Events* for three of the four existing relationships points to the *Clean-up* event as something of critical importance. This being the case, a few of the more illuminating questions could have been chosen from each of the above three laws, and thereafter these questions could have served as guides for my continued interpretation of the cultural scene by means of participatory observation and ethnographic interviewing, especially during *Clean-up* events themselves.

Therefore, by causing us to return to the observation phase, *Strategic Events* assist in converting *understanding as comprehension* into *understanding as a guess about the whole* (the two ends of the interpretive arc I highlighted in the first article), thereby beginning the interpretive cycle all over again. In this way, dialectic interpretation would become “an ever-expanding spiral leading on to greater clarity in the evolving process of comprehending.”<sup>19</sup>



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<sup>19</sup> Backues, “Construing Culture as Composition—Part 1,” 22.

*Tentative, Deeper Interpretation*

According to Jerome H. Neyrey,

“Purity,” then, is the orderly system whereby people perceive that certain things belong in certain places at certain times. “Purity” is the abstract way of indicating what fits, what is appropriate, and what is in place. “Purity” refers to a system, a coherent and detailed drawing of lines in the world to peg, classify, and structure that world. “Purity” is a cultural map which indicates “a place for everything and everything in its place.”<sup>20</sup>

While isolating definitive cultural themes is certainly premature at this point, I will indulge myself in a few suggestions as to what we have found here in order that the process might tentatively be rounded out.

I asserted in my earlier discussion that a cultural theme serves as “a shared, integrating premise embraced by a particular people which resounds repeatedly throughout their world view concerning a certain aspect of life lived out individually or together.”<sup>21</sup> I also maintained that by isolating semantic relationships within domains, one can better comprehend the leitmotifs current within the domain.<sup>22</sup> Plainly, we have isolated here structures akin to Spradley’s semantic relationships in our analysis above (i.e., Traina’s structural relationships). Thus, we seem now poised to search for integrating premises coalescing the symbolic world there—the *logico-structural integration* (borrowing from Kearney),<sup>23</sup> which serves to make the entire system tick. As we have seen, this is the essence of the text analogue approach to culture.

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<sup>20</sup> Neyrey, “Symbolic Universe of Luke-Acts,” 275.

<sup>21</sup> Backues, “Construing Culture as Composition—Part 1,” 48.

<sup>22</sup> Backues, “Construing Culture as Composition—Part 1,” 48.

<sup>23</sup> Michael Kearney, *World View* (California: Chandler & Sharp, 1984).



Consequently, it is now fair to ask: what sort of premise(s) were operative in the government officials' world view in relation to their involvement in the cultural domain *Clean-up*? What do these themes tell us about their symbolic world as they oversaw the affairs of small-scale peddlers in *Cicadas*?

In attempting to answer these questions I would like to direct our attention once more to a statement found above. There it was noted that, with the arrival of an outside guest, small-scale peddlers' activities were generally equated with pollution and impurity. As we will see in a moment, this points us to a primary theme that holds sway amongst officials in West Java: something I will call *Baku*-ism. The term stems from the Indonesian word *baku* (meaning: standard), and is a theme that seems to be at the root of the *Clean-up* process as we have observed it. However, as will be seen in a moment, it also seems to accommodate far more than is indicated merely by glossing the term *standardization*.

One cannot live in Indonesia long before coming across government rhetoric based upon the word *baku*. In addition, there seems to be a primary fascination with three related qualities as well: matters *resmi* (being formal), *tertib* (being tidy, neat) and *teratur* (being in proper order). These four terms serve as a constellation of meaning and at times they surface as virtual bureaucratic mantras.<sup>24</sup> This being the case, it seems no coincidence that dignitaries saw small-scale peddlers as the very antithesis of all they held dear, i.e., that which that took to be standard, formal, tidy, neat, or in proper order.

The surface relationship to the *Clean-up* event is more than obvious. It was simply an attempt to bring small-scale peddlers into line with an esteemed view of order operative in the minds of these officials. Paradoxically, however, anyone who has ever attempted to do

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<sup>24</sup> An interesting connection exists between the term *tertib* and the actual *Clean-up* event itself. The special government task force that was given the responsibility of removing illegal settlements, businesses, and residents was called *Tibum*, an abbreviation short for *Penertiban Umum*, literally, "Public Arrangement." The word *penertiban* derives from *tertib*.

business with a government office in Indonesia will notice these qualities are usually conspicuously absent there as well. That being so, why pick on small-scale peddlers? Why point to the splinter in *Cicadas*'s eye when there were so often logs found lying about in government offices? Clearly there was more than a simple concern for physical order and discipline at work in this case.

I believe the answer to this riddle can be found in realizing the sort of standardization that was sought by government officials, i.e., cognitive tidiness as opposed to a mere physical tidiness. Of course, this seemingly ill-placed craving for orderly conceptual arrangement was itself brought on by the officials' need to classify and label to exercise control. For, to their way of thinking, to effectively regulate their domain they had to be able to catalogue, categorize, and mentally place that which was within their jurisdiction. Therefore, the confusing or unmanageable surely presented more than a physical and persnickety problem here; ultimately physical orderliness seemed to defy constraint and governance. Moreover, in this regard small-scale peddlers were no doubt especially trying. Operating in the informal economy as they did, they surely not only proved difficult to tally, they were next to impossible to pigeonhole since they existed at the hazy margins of the government's taxonomy. Classifying them was like shooting at a moving target. After all, were they businesspersons or not? A part of the economy or not? A stimulus to national development or not? A source of national income or not (remembering the "excise" tax collected from them)? These persons serve as a conceptual conundrum not easily swept away—hence the need for repeated *clean-ups*.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Even current development literature seems to tacitly acknowledge the dilemma—a good deal of discussion pertaining to the "informal economy" revolves around questions like "What is this sector?", "What does informality encompass?", and "Where does one draw the line in studying the informal economy?"

At a similar but more theoretical level, a thesis proposed by Mary Douglas pertaining to the cultural process of classification sheds light on this dynamic.<sup>26</sup>

[B]ritish anthropologist Mary Douglas ... calls the orderly systems of lines and classifications [in a given culture] “purity,” a term which brings out the sense of correctness when the system is known and observed. “Purity” is an abstract terms [*sic*] which stands for the order of a social system, that is, the pattern of perceptions and the system of classifications. All people have a sense of what is “pure” and what is “polluted,” although just what constitutes “purity” and “pollution” changes from culture to culture.<sup>27</sup>

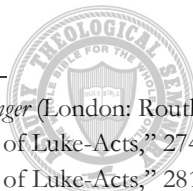
Three key elements make up Douglas’s thesis: (1) boundaries, (2) structure, and (3) margins.<sup>28</sup> The first component marks off those items considered *in* and those deemed *out* in a domain, the second represents the internal, hierarchical classification at work within it, while the third focuses upon fringe elements which threaten to blur the classification system. And even though the concepts “purity” and “pollution” are employed by Douglas to describe the mechanism operative in the classification process, such a polarization does not break down into a simple *in-out* dichotomy. Instead, components deemed “pure” are those dutifully occupying positions in the prevailing system of classifications, whereas those classified “impure,”—*pollution*—are elements that “straddle a line or blur a definition.” Neyrey maintains, “[T]hey are moving out of place and begin to be thought of as “impure.” Such things are perceived as

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<sup>26</sup> Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1966).

<sup>27</sup> Neyrey, “Symbolic Universe of Luke-Acts,” 274.

<sup>28</sup> Neyrey, “Symbolic Universe of Luke-Acts,” 281.



dangerous or threatening, precisely because the perceivers are unsure of just how to classify them.”<sup>29</sup>

In contrast, elements outside of the domain are not seen as impure, they are simply irrelevant since, by lying as *outside* of the constellation, they occupy a spot easily classified. Consequently, as such, these outside features present no problem at all to the prevailing system.

Resemblance to what we have been discussing is clear. More interesting yet, though, is the fact that “pollution” is the designation Douglas uses to describe boundary-blurring elements—this conjures a connotation curiously similar to that was used by government officials to represent small-scale peddlers in the cultural scene we examined above. And although curious, the affinity surely is not coincidental. For, while physical pollutants can bring about actual diseases and therefore deserve public separation, much of the social contempt reserved for this type of material finds its source in the cognitive confusion it engenders: as waste product, rubbish is simultaneously both attached and not attached to those renouncing it.

Douglas ... argues that acts and things that do not fit into the conceptual categories of a people are often tabu to them. For example, body excretions are not fully part of the body, nor fully detached from it. Hence, they are somehow polluting.<sup>30</sup>

Thus, pollution is often material in transition: liminal substance just recently useful but now shifting in status. If still clearly designated *in*, it would not be a pollutant; on the other hand, neither would it receive such negative focus if clearly unconnected to us—classified as *out* in the *in-out* combination. But, instead, it hovers hazily in between, threatening the categories and thus confusing all who encounter it.

<sup>29</sup> Neyrey, “Symbolic Universe of Luke-Acts,” 281.

<sup>30</sup> Paul G. Hiebert, *Cultural Anthropology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1983), 375.

At this stage the concept of liminality could remind us of Arnold van Gennep's landmark work, *Rites of Passage*.<sup>31</sup> In that analysis, Gennep asserts that shifts in an individual's social status are communally handled by a three-stage process extant in all cultures; one which "serve[s] to facilitate the [exchange of roles in society] and to reduce the anxiety brought on by the status passage."<sup>32</sup> The three steps in the process are: (1) a *separation* from the previous status; (2) a *transitional*, liminal phase in which the participant is ritually held in a state of limbo; and (3) an *incorporation* into the new status by means of the aforementioned ritual. Most crucial to this whole process seems to be the middle phase. Spradley and McCurdy explain:

Each person who makes the transition must assume a new identity and the role that accompanies it. He must know the content of this new role and be able to perform it appropriately. He must gain acceptance from others and come to feel within himself that he has become an adult, a husband, or some other new identity. This change and the tasks it presents create anxiety and insecurity. The rites of passage serve to facilitate the accomplishment of these tasks and to reduce anxiety brought on by the status passage.<sup>33</sup>

While useful for our analysis here, it seems that we must modify the way the rites of passage thesis has often been embraced. Arising as it does out of a structural-functionalist model of anthropology, it assumes a well-lubed society that tends toward equilibrium and harmony. Spradley and McCurdy exemplify this bias when they argue the following:

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<sup>31</sup> Arnold van Gennep, *The Rites of Passage* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1960).

<sup>32</sup> James P. Spradley and David W. McCurdy, *Anthropology: The Cultural Perspective*, 2nd ed. (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1980), 136.

<sup>33</sup> Spradley and McCurdy, *Anthropology: The Cultural Perspective*, 136.

[E]very society is a functioning unit, and the equilibrium is upset when individual members change their positions within the social system. Rites of passage serve to reinforce the values on which a society is founded and restore the equilibrium of the social order. They enable us all to deal appropriately with changes that occur in our own social worlds.<sup>34</sup>

But a society as a functioning unit can also be quite cruel to some of its members. One is forced to ask: Whose values are we speaking of the society being based upon? Stated plainly, the theory as normally interpreted does not deal well with conflict in cultures; i.e., the sort of conflict which we have seen clearly existed between government officials and small-scale peddlers in *Cicadas*.

Be this as it may, the rites of passage thesis can still contribute to our analysis here. I argued above that during the liminal period, anxiety and insecurity are at their highest—“equilibrium is upset when individual members change their positions within the social system.” Generally, the saving grace at that point seems to be the fact that the liminal stage functions as a very temporary stage aimed at promptly re-establishing equilibrium, based upon a newly incorporated status for those in transition. However, if a given status is seen by Party A to be transitional, yet it is seen as fixed and sustaining in the eyes of Party B, doubtless anxiety will be experienced by the former, seeing as how it is their equilibrium put at risk. In addition, Party A’s uneasiness will be protracted, since Party B will not be inclined to “move on through,” transitioning out of liminality toward incorporation (since, to them, they do not find themselves in a transitional, liminal phase at all). And, of course, this is exactly what we have seen to be the situation that prevailed in *Cicadas*. The informal, liminal position occupied by small-scale peddlers in the government’s classification system caused public

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<sup>34</sup> Spradley and McCurdy, *Anthropology: The Cultural Perspective*, 136.

officials a great deal of stress. Therefore, these officials naturally sought a resolution to this tension by means of a transitioning of the peddlers (by way of the *Clean-up* event) away from what they took to be borders or margins—rubbish was thus swept away, invalids recuperated.<sup>35</sup> Combining Douglas’s theory with van Gennep’s concepts, the status of the informal small-scale peddler functioned, for government officials, as an impure, liminal status since it did not fit neatly into their conceptual categories. It upset *their* sense of equilibrium upon which *their* classification system and labelling depended. Hence, jealously guarded administrative authority appeared threatened.

Returning to what I have called *Baku*-ism, it is now possible to restate what seems signified. While it remains true that the term *standardization* does not capture the entirety of what obtained in *Cicadas*, it remains a good place to start. For equilibrium is a standard state of affairs; a modicum of harmonious order for a given party. Of course, this implies a standardizer. In that case, we are forced to inquire who is setting the criteria.

## **Conclusion to Part 3: Robert Traina’s Methodology Culturally Applied**

*Baku*-ism seemed to assert that public officials had the exclusive right to decide rules and boundaries and the images of “purity” and equilibrium that accompanied them. Accordingly, these officials were also the ones (self-?) authorized to deem what was “clean.” Once these decisions were made, they were then to be embraced by all. Persons or things not fitting into the schema—marginal elements—would be

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<sup>35</sup> Could it be that the *Clean-up* event does function as a sort of rite of passage here, but one which is imposed and considerably disadvantageous to the peddlers? Hence, it only seeks to safeguard the equilibrium of government officials (and then, only sporadically, as we have seen) while threatening the equilibrium of the vendors in the informal sector.

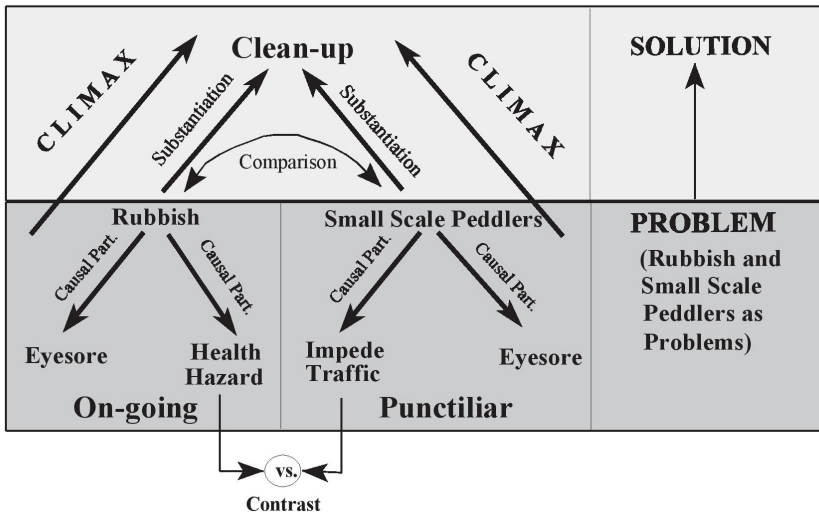
perceived as “impure” and thus it was only fitting that these would be subjected to the *Clean-up* process since they imperiled the system and the positions of power latent within it. To sum up, *Baku*-ism viewed small-scale peddlers as liminal persons polluting the order of society. Pollution, of course, always calls for removal—something to be got rid of as quickly as possible before it metastasizes.

While we have not time nor space to analyze it here, a countervailing investigation arising from this theme could be attempted. While government officials saw peddlers as problems, peddlers no doubt in turn experiences *Baku*-ism as a problem—after all, in the case of *Civadas*, the informal market came about due to a *Baku*-ism-based decision to relocate the old, formal market to a new location no longer as accessible to those most dependent upon it. Hence, the peddlers’ solution to this problem was the informal market—ironically thereafter framed as a problem by public officials. But, with the consequent power disparity in this face-off, it was inevitable that small-scale peddlers would become (or already had become) a socialized underclass—at least partially imbibing a self-image as rubbish that needs to be cleaned up. Utilizing the interpretive methodology suggested here, just how this process affected them might be explored. Certainly, this would prove a worthwhile study—one at once illuminating as well as disturbing.



# Appendix

## Structural Analysis of “Clean-up” as a Cultural Domain



### I. Recurrence of Substantiation with Comparison

The two elements *Rubbish* and *Small-scale Peddlers* recurringly substantiate the need for a *Clean-up* and are thereby compared to each other.

### Interpretive Questions

**Definitive Qs:** What is the meaning of *Rubbish*? What is the meaning of *Small-scale Peddlers*? In what way(s) are they similar to each other? By what element(s) are they compared? How does each movement substantiate/lead to a need for a *Clean-up*? How does this substantiate/ reinforce the comparison? What is the meaning of such a substantiation in each case? What is the meaning of the recurring substantiation of a *Clean-up*? What is the meaning of the

implicit comparison of *Rubbish* with *Small-scale Peddlers*?

**Rational Qs:** Why is this interrogational movement used as it is here?

Why is the Clean-up substantiated in such a way by each of the two elements? Why is it substantiated recurrently here? Why is *Rubbish* compared to *Small-scale Peddlers*? Why such a comparison as related to the recurring substantiation of a Clean-up?

**Implicational Qs:** Assumptions:

What must be assumed for the above relationship(s) to exist? What is taken for granted in advance in order for the above relationship(s) to be operative?

Outworkings/Outgrowths:

What natural developments or implications flow from the above relationship(s)? What assumptions develop from such a relationship/ relationships?

**II. Recurrence of Causal Particularization with Contrast**

**Both *Rubbish* and *Small-scale Peddlers* bring about certain particular outcomes, i.e., they are eyesores, health hazards and traffic impediments. While both *Rubbish* and *Small-scale Peddlers* manifest a common result (the “*Eyesore*” *Motif*), each in turn generates a unique result which differs from the corresponding outcome found in the other (*Health Hazard* vs. *Traffic Impediment*).**

**Interpretive Questions**

**Definitive Qs:** What is the meaning of *Rubbish*? What is the meaning of *Small-scale Peddlers*? What is the meaning of each of their particular outcomes? How do each of these causes lead to their relative outcomes? What is the meaning of each causal movement? What

is the meaning of the particularized movement in each case? How does the particularization of the elements substantiate the causal movement in each case? What is the meaning of the recurring appearance of such causal particularization here? What particular elements differ (Observational Question)? How do these particular elements differ? What is the meaning of such a contrast/difference here? How does such a contrast relate to recurring causal particularization as found here?

**Rational Qs:** Why is such causal particularization found in each case? Why is causation linked with particularization in each case? Why is this movement found recurrently? Why the contrasting of particular elements? Why is the contrast found in the recurring causal particularization relationship evident here?

**Implicational Qs:** Assumptions:

What must be assumed for the above relationship(s) to exist? What is taken for granted in advance for the above relationship(s) to be operative?

Outworkings/Outgrowths:

What natural developments/ implications flow from the above relationship(s)? What assumptions develop from such a relationship/ relationships?

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**III. Recurrence of Interrogation with Contrast**

**The problem/solution relationship appears recurrently, i.e., both Rubbish and Small-Scale Peddlers are seen as problems needing a solution (Cleanup). However, Rubbish is seen as an on-going, recurring problem whereas Small-Scale Peddlers are only seen as problems requiring a solution when local dignitaries visit.**

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**Interpretive Questions**

**Definitive Qs:** For whom are each of the elements seen as problems and what is the meaning of the problem in each case? What is the meaning of Clean-up as its solution in each case and for whom is it a solution? How does each problem bring about the need for a solution? How does Clean-up solve the problem in each case? What is the meaning of the recurrence or reappearance of this problem/solution relationship as it presents itself here? What is the meaning of Rubbish as an ongoing problem? What is the meaning of Small-Scale Peddlers as problems only occasionally? How do these two problems differ? What is the meaning of this temporal/frequency difference here?

**Rational Qs:** Why is Rubbish seen as a problem? Why are Small-scale Peddlers seen as problems? Why is Clean-up proposed as their corresponding solutions? Why does this problem/solution relationship recur here? Why is Rubbish seen as an ongoing problem? Why are Small-scale Peddlers seen as problems only intermittently? Why the temporal/frequency difference here?

**Implicational Qs:** Assumptions:

What must be assumed for the above relationship(s) to exist? What is taken for granted in advance for the above relationship(s) to be operative?

Outworkings/Outgrowths:

What natural developments/ implications flow from the above relationship(s)? What assumptions develop from such a relationship/ relationships?

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**IV. Recurrence of Climax**

**The appearance of Rubbish and Small, Scale Peddlers each lead separately to their corresponding implications which in turn bring about an activity known as Clean-up.**

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**Interpretive Questions**

**Definitive Qs:** What is the meaning of Rubbish and what is the meaning of Small-Scale Peddlers? How do each of these lead to their corresponding implications and how do they independently crescendo into the activity known as Clean-up? How does Clean-up function as the apex of the movement in each case? What is the meaning of each culminating movement here? What does the recurrence of this climactic movement mean as it appears here?

**Rational Qs:** Why is Clean-up presented as the culmination of each of the movements? Why do such climactic movements appear here? Why recurrently?

**Implicational Qs:** Assumptions:

What must be assumed for the above relationship(s) to exist? What is taken for granted in advance for the above relationship(s) to be operative?

Outworkings/Outgrowths:

What natural developments/ implications flow from the above relationship(s)? What assumptions develop from such a relationship/ relationships?

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**Strategic Events:**

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**I. Recurrence of Substantiation with Comparison**

Events which bring about both causal elements—*Rubbish* and *Small-Scale Peddlers*—deserve special notice, especially since both relate to the two types of *Clean-up*. These *Clean-up* events themselves need to be clarified in order that the way they are brought about by their respective causes might be understood and so that the similarities between them as well as between their ostensible sources, i.e., the justification for labelling them the same thing, might be discerned.

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**II. Recurrence of Causal Particularization with Contrast**

The events during which *Rubbish* and *Small-Scale Peddlers* both relate to their common result, *Being an Eyesore*, each need to be explained as do the events out of which each of these respective causes bring about their unique outcomes, i.e., *Rubbish* to *Health Hazard* and *Small-Scale Peddlers* to *Traffic Impediment*.

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**III. Recurrence of Interrogation with Contrast**

The events in which *Clean-up* functions as a solution to these two “problems” need to be deciphered. In addition, both the events that lead to *Rubbish* being seen as an ongoing problem and the events that lead to *Small-Scale Peddlers* being seen as an intermittent problem need to be interpreted so as to understand the reason(s) for and implications of this difference in terms of duration.

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**IV. Recurrence of Climax**

Each of the two *Clean-up* events needs to be interpreted to understand the way(s) in which they serve as the culmination for each of their causes

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