Thomas Stodulka, Birgitt Röttger-Rössler (eds.)

Feelings at the Margins

Dealing with Violence, Stigma and Isolation in Indonesia

campus

Feelings at the Margins

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In Memory of
Christina Siwi Handayani

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Acknowledgments

Introduction—The Emotional Make-up of Marginality and Stigma

Birgitt Röttger-Rössler and Thomas Stodulka

From the Dutch East India Company to the Republic of Indonesia: Marginality as colonial and post-colonial heritage

With its almost 250 million inhabitants, the Republic of Indonesia is the world's most populous archipelago, which as a nation is only outnumbered by China, India and the United States of America. Indonesia consists of more than 17,000 islands that spread across the equator, of which only around 6,000 are inhabited. Some of these islands are just small spits of sand, while others are large and densely populated, like Sumatra and Java, the latter being the most populous island with around 130 million inhabitants. The archipelago comprises more than three hundred ethnic groups, over seven hundred spoken languages, and stands out due to its variety of autochthonous and world religions. This variety seems surprising at a first glance, considering that 90 percent of the population officially identify themselves as Muslim.

Before many parts of what is now called "Indonesia" converted to Islam, mainly during the fifteenth century, Hindu and Buddhist kingdoms dominated the archipelago. There are still significant minority groups who adhere to these belief systems, like the Balinese or the Tengger in East Java. Protestants and Catholics comprise around eight percent of the population and are mostly located in Eastern Indonesia and in cities all over the archipelago. As a secular nation, political elites stress religious tolerance among believers of different faiths, but this attitude has significantly changed, at least in some parts of the archipelago. Religiously, ethnically, and socio-politically motivated atrocities in Sulawesi, Kalimantan, Java, Maluku, Sumatra, Papua and also the former province of East Timor (the now independent nation of Timor Leste) have seriously clouded the Indonesian ideal of archipelagic harmony. When considering the question of marginality, one has to keep in mind that beyond its religious, ethnic and

societal diversities, which bear great potential for conflict, oppression and discrimination, Indonesia's extensive geography of over 5,000 kilometers from West to East (about the distance between the West coast of Portugal to the Ural mountain range in Russia) must also be taken into account. Moreover, what is today defined as "Indonesia" did not exist before the young nation's declaration of independence on August 17, 1945.

The Dutch instigated the potential for geographic marginality from the onset of their colonial endeavor to construct the archipelago as a trade and commerce union called the Netherlands East India Company (Vickers 2005, 10). Batavia, present-day Jakarta, was founded in 1619 and became the center of the Dutch-Asian trade networks; it has remained the political, economic, and business center of the Republic of Indonesia until today. Dutch colonial indirect rule created a Javanese class of collaborators, who profited from Batavia's geographic centrality in a flourishing colonial trade, that weaved the so-called "outer islands" (a label given to the islands east of Java by the Dutch colonizers) into their continuously expanding self-understanding of Batavia as the center of the vast archipelago. Batavia's increasing commercial influence undermined the power of former political centers at the newly constructed geographic and commercial peripheries in the archipelago's eastern islands. This hegemony also manifested in Java's central role in the struggle for independence, when former political alliances with the Dutch colonizers were cut and turned against them in the wakening of a national consciousness. Japanese occupation during the Second World War, which ended Dutch rule, encouraged the previously suppressed Indonesian independence movement. Two days after the surrender of Japan in August 1945, Sukarno, an influential nationalist leader, declared independence and was appointed President. "Bung Karno" maintained his power base by balancing the opposing forces of the military and the PKI (Partai Komunis Indonesia; Communist Party of Indonesia), which was supposedly the biggest communist party outside The Soviet Union and China. This policy, also described as NASAKOM: an acronym based on the Indonesian words *NASionalisme* (nationalism), *Agama* (religion), and *KOMunisme* (communism), kept the increasingly authoritarian President Sukarno in power until an attempted coup to kill leading army generals on September 30, 1965 was countered by the army. What followed was a nation-wide massacre against alleged communists during which the PKI was blamed for the coup and destroyed. During the subsequent years of institutionalized genocide, the head of the military, General

Suharto, outmaneuvered the politically weakened Sukarno and was formally appointed president in March 1968.

The introduction of the lingua franca *Bahasa Indonesia*[1] as national language and Sukarno's declaration of the young nation's *Pancasila* ideology in 1945 marginalized local languages (Kuipers 2001) and customs (*adat*) in their aspiration of a shared national identity. Indonesia's national motto, *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika*, which translates as "Unity in Diversity" from Old Javanese, highlights both the nation's desire for unity and the high potential for separation and marginalization. The *Pancasila* ideology is deeply ingrained into the Indonesian constitution and the everyday lives of Indonesian citizens by means of state performances, public monuments, and decrees. The ideology is taught from the onset of children's schooling in national school curriculum and consists of five founding principles, namely: nationalism (*kebangsaan*), humanism (*kemanusiaan*), rule of the people (*kerakyatan*), social justice (*keadilan sosial*), and belief in one God (*ketuhanan yang maha Esa*). In the realm of neighborhood and community life, the philosophy of mutual respect and cooperation in achieving a collective goal (*gotong royong*) is highly emphasized.

Indonesia's current striving to foster democracy and abolish corruption, collusion, and nepotism needs to be regarded in relation to the turn of events resulting from the era of Indonesia's second president Suharto, who ruled the country for over 30 years, from 1968 to 1998, in a rather absolutistic style. The president, his family, and their cronies (also referred to as the "Suharto-Clan" or "Suharto *dan kronco-kronconya*") monopolized political and economic power, administered foundations (*yayasan*), controlled the media, and staged tainted myths on Indonesia's history of nation-building. Regarding the nation's economic development plans, the government and its technocrats, who mostly held diplomas and degrees from overseas universities, intended to accelerate the national economy by attracting foreign investment and establishing a labor-intensive industrial production. This "New Order" (*Orde Baru*) was publicly promoted by the prospective rhetoric of "progress and development" (*kemajuan dan pem-*

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1 *Bahasa Indonesia* is an extension of classic Malay, which was spoken not only on the Malay Peninsula but also served as lingua franca that was mostly spoken in the archipelago's ports of colonial trade for centuries. *Bahasa Indonesia* is an extremely dynamic language, comprising terms, which stem from Javanese (*Basa Jawa*), Indo-Aryan Sanskrit, Arabic, Chinese languages, Dutch, and English is continuously expanded by neologisms and acronyms.

bangunan). Suharto promoted himself as the "father of development" and promised his children—the Indonesian citizens—a prosperous future if they followed his orders. Contrary to his predecessor Sukarno, Suharto targeted a reduction of the population growth rate in order to foster the nation's market economy. As early as 1968 he founded a national institute for family planning that promoted a policy of *Dua anak cukup* (Two children are enough) in nationwide propaganda campaigns that was part of an institutionalized *State Ibuism* (Suryakusuma 1996; Brenner 1998; Robinson 2007). The term can be translated as "state-mother-ism" or "wife-ism" in which the mother or wife (*ibu*) was discursively framed as follower and servant of the father (*bapak*). *State Ibuism* was supposed to discipline women and hierarchically position the mother below the father. Regarding its powerful social force, this national policy did not only promote gender inequalities between men and women, but implicitly advocated a heterosexism that marginalized and stigmatized "deviant" forms of companionship, intimacy, and relationship. In order to promote national education while at the same time strengthen a national Indonesian identity through the national language, the "New Order" government introduced and implemented a compulsory program of nine years schooling. Compared to 1968, when only 41 percent of Indonesia's children attended grammar school (Booth 1999), today statistically almost every child between seven and twelve years of age is endowed with basic school education.

Although Suharto had economically and logistically neglected the vast northern and eastern islands, towards the end of his rule around 56 percent of the population living below the poverty line were still found in Java and Bali—where development was supposedly centralized. In the aftermath of the economic crisis that hit Southeast Asia in 1997 and Indonesia in particular, food prices sky-rocketed and the poverty rate rose from 15 to 33 percent, equaling to around 60 million people living in absolute poverty. Economic instability, high food prices, a drastic rise in unemployment among the new middle class, and rumors of Suharto's systematic and large-scale corruption led to a climate of fear and rage, which ultimately unloaded in mass demonstrations against the government, primarily organized by student movements. The president's re-election for another five-year term by the National Assembly in March 1998 elicited protest from a number of universities in Java and Sulawesi and quickly spread to a nationwide discontent. This led to mass violence instigated by both police and protesters and incited a severe state of chaos throughout the archipel-

ago. Suharto was finally forced to resign on May 21, 1998. Vice president B.J. Habibie took over in the first critical post-Suharto year, before the Muslim liberal intellectual Abdurrahman Wahid was appointed president. In 2001, Megawati Sukarnoputri, daughter of Indonesia's independence proclaimer, was elected as the first female president for a three-year term. Former army general Susilo Bambang Yudyohono (popularly abbreviated SBY) is the current and first directly elected president of the Republic of Indonesia. SBY is serving his second and final five-year term (until 2014), where he continues to lead the era of the so-called *reformasi* with some main agendas including the arrestment of corruption, establishment of a democratic political system, and the advancement of decentralized regional governments and jurisdictions that were first initiated in 1999.

Taking in mind the ongoing rural exodus, the radicalization of politico-religious hardliners, striving separatist movements, and the increasing intolerance towards religious, political, and sexual minorities, it seems pivotal who will be elected as the seventh Indonesian president in October 2014. Another equally open question remains as to whether the number of people who live in absolute poverty can be reduced beyond the 2011 official record low of 12.5 percent. Besides looming presidential challenges to navigate the national economy and appease rivaling political fractions, the Indonesian population faces perturbing ecological, political, and socio-economic developments, which particularly affect those communities who live at the archipelago's margins and the niches of Indonesia's big cities.

The scope of this volume is not to point at oppressing political elites, but to highlight the practices and counter-discourses of individuals and communities in dealing with marginality, stigma, isolation, and related violent acts. To set the authors' various perspectives within this common frame of interest, we shall first theorize the underlying core concepts of marginality, stigma, and emotion, before releasing the reader into a series of vivid ethnographic and historical case studies.

Marginality and Stigma: Two Sides of one Coin?

According to social geographers, "marginality is a complex condition of disadvantage which individuals and communities experience as a result of vulnerabilities that may arise from unfavourable environmental, cultural,

social, political and economic factors" (Mehretu et al. 2000, 90). Marginality is defined as a universal phenomenon that differs in type and intensity. Alluding to its theoretical roots in social geography, marginality is conceptually divided into the disparate, yet overlapping frameworks of societal and spatial marginality. Both indicate an exclusion from a socio-cultural mainstream or a geographic political center. Gurung and Kollmair, also social geographers by profession, highlight that marginality is a dynamic concept: it ultimately refers to a process between a marginalizing center and a marginalized periphery. Marginal living conditions are not considered to be fixed states, but possess an innate potential for social change (2005, 11). The authors argue that societal marginality alludes to social conditions in terms of lacking opportunities, resources, and skills compared to a real or imagined hegemonic mainstream society. These social inequalities are equally related to restricted participation in public decision-making processes as well as low self-esteem. As we shall see in this volume's subsequent chapters, the discrimination of marginalized people frequently arises from ascribed markers related to ethnicity, gender, sexuality, social rank, political attitude or religion. Spatial marginality delineates geographical disadvantages, "A marginal region is defined as an area lying at the edge of a system" (Gurung and Kollmair 2005, 13). This includes a geographically obstructed accessibility to economic centers, lacking infrastructure, or an exclusion from technological advancements.

The social geographical concepts are helpful in distinguishing between two fundamental marginality dimensions. But from anthropological, historical, and political perspectives, whereas the intersections and frictions of marginalities' various facets are of particular interest, they seem rather one-dimensional. Anthropological explanations stress the situated contingencies of marginality: it is defined as a constantly shaped asymmetric power relationship between an often self-claimed center and a (constructed) periphery (Tsing 1993; Li 1999; Haug 2010). Veena Das and Deborah Poole (2004) describe margins as a space where power is exercised but where its implementation cannot be ensured. As an inherently anthropological topic, it is surprising though that marginality has rarely been scrutinized conceptually beyond the particularities of its respective ethnographic settings.

The authors in this volume address marginality's manifold facets from historical, political, religious, sexual, psychological, ethnic, and social perspectives. Despite their diversity, the chapters can roughly be grouped into two blocks. Michaela Haug, Martin Ramstedt, and Nils Bubandt elaborate