

Ripples, Echoes, and Reverberations: 1965 and Now in Indonesia

by

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“Ripples, Echoes, and Reverberations: 1965 and Now in Indonesia”

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## Abstract

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In Indonesia, during six months in 1965-1966, between half a million and a million people were killed during a purge of suspected Communist Party members after a purported failed coup d'état blamed on the Communist Party. Hundreds of thousands of Indonesians were imprisoned without trial, many for more than a decade. The regime that orchestrated the mass killings and detentions remained in power for over 30 years, suppressing public discussion of these events. It was not until 1998 that Indonesians were finally "free" to discuss this tragic chapter of Indonesian history.

In this dissertation, I investigate how Indonesians perceive and describe the relationship between the past and the present when it comes to the events of 1965-1966 and their aftermath. Do the killings and detentions still emerge in and influence daily life today? If so, how?

The experiences, interactions, and conversations I had and the interviews I conducted during two years of fieldwork, primarily in Yogyakarta on the island of Java, shape the form and focus of this dissertation. I examine how space and time are entangled when it comes to the events of 1965-1966 and the present day. I explore how the propaganda about these events continues to be circulated, internalized, and expressed in daily life, resulting in fear and paranoia that is managed through practices of surveillance and self-surveillance. I investigate stigmatization in the lives of my informants and the ways that stigma is assigned, transmitted, managed, and eluded. I explore the silences that weave themselves around this topic, and I focus on two case studies of ruptures in this silence that allow for new forms of voicing, authorship, and education. I explore the forms of satisfaction or justice my Indonesian informants want but do not expect to achieve. I offer a typology that reveals the complexities in the categories of "victim" and "perpetrator" when it comes to the events of 1965-1966 and their aftermath. Finally, I write about a few events that occurred after I left the field that illustrate the ongoing unfolding of this history today. Throughout the dissertation, I illuminate the ways in which the events of 1965-1966 continue to powerfully shape the subjectivities, social worlds, experiences, and identities of my informants nearly 50 years after the killings first began.

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Last but not least, I turn to some brief personal acknowledgments.

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## Introduction

To the newcomer who arrives in the daytime, the rice paddy in Petulu, Bali, Indonesia just north of the tourist hotbed of Ubud, looks no different from the thousands of other rice fields on this verdant volcanic island. Long stems of grass shoot up from the soggy irrigated soil. There are a few narrow earthen walkways through the rows and rows of rice plants.

I was a newcomer to this rice field during my first trip to Petulu in 2009. I arrived around 5 PM, before sunset. I walked across a raised narrow muddy walkway. Bordering the rice field was a wooden bar and plastic chairs arranged there. The closer it got to sunset, a few tourists showed up, clutching copies of their guidebooks, tiptoeing their way across the field, and asking the owner if this is the place. A few more pairs of tourists arrived, sat, ordered beer, iced tea, bottled water, and kept their eyes glued to the sky. As we sat there, the proprietor of this makeshift food stall brought out magazines where articles appeared about this rice field. He proudly displayed the articles in German, Dutch, and English.

As it started getting dark, the birds began to come. There were just a few at first, coming from the north, circling overhead before landing on one tree and then another. These were great big birds – white herons. Over the next ten minutes, more and more birds arrived. And soon the sky was filled with birds. They came from all directions, careening around the sky above the rice field before settling down in the branches of the trees that border it. The more birds that came, the more jockeying for position there was. As birds landed in the trees, they displaced other birds so the sky was filled with a constant stream of birds arriving or flying from one tree to another, finding another place to roost. Way off in the distance, in the tops of the tall palm trees, more birds perched, waiting before flying towards the rice field. But eventually they came as well, and slowly, over the course of about half an hour, as the skies grew darker and darker, the tops of the trees bordering the rice field, which had been green just minutes before, turned white as hundreds – maybe more than a thousand - birds overtook them. It was an extraordinary sight.

In the Lonely Planet listing of Bali attractions, this rice field was described as an “interesting place” nearby Ubud. The Lonely Planet description reported “thousands of big herons and egrets [...] started their visits to Petulu in 1965 for no apparent reason.” The proprietor of the bar we were sitting at explained to us – a group of Western tourists -- that many years ago there had been a ceremony in which a great blessing had been visited upon the village. Since then, the herons had returned, and their nightly return was a sign of the village’s good fortune.

That was not the story that I had heard. I had learned about this rice field from an American cultural anthropologist, Robert Lemelson, who had been doing research in Bali for over a decade.<sup>1</sup> I had heard that this rice field was the site of a massacre, which was part of a wave of mass killings that swept through Indonesia during 1965 and 1966.<sup>2</sup> After the killings at this rice field, the birds had appeared and had been coming ever since. The birds, I had heard, were believed to be the souls of the people killed in the massacre, and they returned each night to watch over the place where they had taken their last breaths. When I asked the proprietor about this “story” I had heard, he shook his head, “No,” he told me. “The birds started coming even

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<sup>1</sup> Lemelson’s documentary *40 Years of Silence: An Indonesian Tragedy*, released in 2009, includes footage from Petulu.

<sup>2</sup> Bali had been especially hard-hit in the killings, I had learned, when an estimated 80,000 people, five percent of the island’s population, lost their lives (Robinson, 1).

before the killings.” He quickly turned and went back inside, forestalling any other questions.

When the sky emptied and it grew too dark to see the birds clearly, I returned to the car I had hired to bring me to the village. Attempting to dodge the bird droppings that were already beginning to splatter down from the crowded trees above, I found the car’s driver smoking a cigarette and chatting with a man from the village. I told them that the proprietor had said that it was a great blessing that preceded the birds’ arrival. But, I told them, I had heard differently. I had heard the birds were the souls of the dead, returning to watch over the place where they had perished and the place where their bodies remain. “Oh yes,” the villager said. “The birds are the souls of the dead. Everyone knows that.” The driver nodded.

When I climbed into the car to head back to Ubud, the driver turned to me and asked whether everyone in America knows about the killings. When I shook my head no, he told me that I was the first white person who had ever mentioned the killings to him. On the drive back to Ubud, he began to share his own memories of 1965, the killings, and the effect they had on him. Over a year later, when I returned to Indonesia to begin my dissertation research, I texted the driver to see if his number still worked so I could give it to a friend who was planning to travel to Bali. He texted me back within moments to confirm the number still worked. Then, after a brief exchange of pleasantries, he texted, “When will you return to Petulu? The birds are still coming.”

When I stood in that rice field, the green treetops turning white and countless birds swerving from tree to tree in the sky above me, it was near the end of my first trip to Indonesia. I had come for three months in the summer to do language study in Yogyakarta, to live with an Indonesian family, and to immerse myself in the culture. I knew I wanted to pursue dissertation research about the killings, but I had not yet decided on a focus. When I found the focus, this experience in Petulu repeatedly came to mind, these birds arriving, intruding into the present, as winged apparitions of the past.

For the villagers in Petulu, the arrival of the birds each night, while routine, must have served as a daily reminder of the killings. The birds served as living memorial to this site of violence and the people who died there. The bodies still remain there, under the ground. Tourists came to the site, marveling at the display in the sky, without knowing what was beneath their feet as they made their way through the rice field. What kind of erasure did that constitute, what kind of forgetting? The differences between what the proprietor told me and what the villager and driver confirmed revealed that there might be competing interpretations about the significance of the birds, discomfort discussing the history of the killings, or that their local, shared knowledge was not easily or openly shared with outsiders. I wondered about the proprietor’s reaction. He did not deny that the killings had happened but did deny the birds’ relation to that history. Why? Was he worried it would deter tourism if people knew? Or was there another more personal reason he did not want to discuss it? In the case of my conversation with the driver, my admission of knowledge of the killings provided an opening for him to share his memories of the past and their impact in the present.

To answer the driver’s question from his text, I have not visited Petulu again since that sunset in August of 2009. I chose to center my research on the island of Java instead of Bali. In many ways, however, my research and this resulting dissertation is my return to Petulu and to the questions and provocations that materialized in front of me there. In the course of my research, I discovered many more spaces like Petulu, spaces in which the past of 1965 and its impacts have become part of present-day life and cannot be forgotten.

This dissertation explores the questions, “What is the relationship between the past and the present when it comes to the mass killings that took place in 1965-1966? Do the killings still

emerge in daily life today, and if so, how?" The experiences, conversations, interactions, and interviews I had with Indonesians, primarily in Yogyakarta on the island of Java, during two years of fieldwork between 2010 and 2012 shape the form and focus of this dissertation. The chapters are devoted to the themes that arose most often when I talked with Indonesians about how the events of 1965-1966 and their aftermath still influence daily life today.

### **The killings**

In the pre-dawn hours of October 1, 1965, a group that called itself the 30th of September Movement (*Gerakan 30 September*, abbreviated as G30S) kidnapped and killed six Indonesian Army generals and one senior Army lieutenant that they mistook for a general.<sup>3</sup> Troops loyal to the Movement seized brief control of the radio airwaves, over which they announced their aim was to protect President Sukarno from a CIA-supported right-wing Council of Generals (*Dewan Jenderal*) that was conspiring to take control of the government from Sukarno.

When one of the highest-ranking Army commanders who had not been kidnapped or killed, Major General Suharto, learned of the kidnappings and killings, he quickly took control of the military, organized a counter-attack, and defeated the 30th of September Movement in less than a day. John Roosa, the historian who has written the most comprehensive history of the events of October 1st, writes, "The Movement was defeated before most Indonesians knew it existed" (2012, 2).

In the days that followed, President Sukarno issued a presidential order for Suharto to restore order and security. Suharto and the Army moved to frame the Movement as a failed coup d'état.<sup>4</sup> Theories would abound for decades about who was responsible for the 30<sup>th</sup> of September Movement, but Suharto left no room for doubt. Suharto and the Army blamed the Movement, the attempted coup, and the murder of the generals on the Communist Party (*Partai Komunis Indonesia* or PKI) with whom the Army had long had tensions and who was the Army's main political rival. At the time, the PKI was the largest Communist party outside a Communist country with a membership of 3.5 million people. The military imposed martial law, took control of the media, shutting down leftist newspapers in the process. As state-sponsored propaganda flourished in the wake of the "failed coup," the 30th of September Movement came to be referred to as G30S/PKI with "/PKI" being added to the abbreviation of the Movement to reinforce the inextricable link between the Movement and the Communist Party even though evidence pointed to the Movement being internal to the Indonesian military and not a PKI plot.<sup>5</sup> In an indication of how quickly matters were becoming inflamed and how quickly people related the events of the 30<sup>th</sup> of September Movement to the PKI, the PKI headquarters in Jakarta were

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<sup>3</sup> Five additional people were killed in the process of the kidnappings, bringing the Movement's total casualties to 12.

<sup>4</sup> This is ironic since the Movement claimed that it was trying to safeguard *against* a coup. The group was then accused of mounting one.

<sup>5</sup> John Roosa has concluded that there was a dual structure to the 30<sup>th</sup> of September Movement: military and political. The military side of the Movement was made up of disaffected junior Indonesian Armed Forces officers who organized the military action. The chairman of the PKI (Aidit) led the political side of the Movement but not on behalf of the party as a whole, Roosa argues. Instead, Aidit and a few other members of PKI Politburo saw themselves as "the political advisors to 'progressive revolutionary' officers" (Styannes 2014). For more, see Roosa 2006 and 2012.

burned down during an army-organized mass demonstration on October 8<sup>th</sup>, just over a week after the purported coup. A demonstration four days earlier had a thousand people at it. The October 8<sup>th</sup> demonstration had tens of thousands of protestors (Hearman 2012, 96).

Stoked by anti-Communist propaganda, within weeks, the Indonesian army and local civilian militias began rounding up those suspected or accused of being PKI members. Some were immediately killed, but as the patterns of the killings are being studied, it seems that a general pattern is being identified. Suspected or accused PKI members were rounded up and taken to improvised detention centers.<sup>6</sup> From the detention centers, groups of prisoners were selected, put into trucks, never to return. The army, civilian groups, and civilian militias committed the killings. Systematic killings most often did not start in specific areas until the arrival of the RPKAD (*Resimen Para Komando Angkatan Darat*), the army's special forces commando unit, which supervised the killings. Estimates of how many individuals were killed between October 1965 and March of 1966 range from between half a million to three million individuals, but the most widely accepted number is between 500,000 and a million people killed over the course of six months.<sup>7</sup> Killings were most intense in northern Sumatra, Central Java, East Java, and Bali. It was said that rivers ran red with the blood and bodies of the victims. In addition to the killings that swept from one end of the archipelago to the other over those six months, hundreds of thousands more people were imprisoned without trial.<sup>8</sup> Many political prisoners (*tahanan politik*, abbreviated as *tapol*) died from hunger, torture, hard labor, or execution. Many of those who did not die in custody were imprisoned for over a decade. Tens of thousands of releases occurred between 1976 and 1979 as a result of increasing international pressure.<sup>9</sup>

In the months following the purported coup, a power struggle began between Suharto and President Sukarno, which involved many negotiations, machinations, and maneuvers. The power struggle would continue for 18 months as Suharto increasingly undermined President Sukarno's authority. The most significant event occurred in March of 1966 when President Sukarno signed a document authorizing Suharto to take any actions Suharto deemed necessary to restore order and calm. This document effectively transferred Sukarno's executive power to Suharto. The following day, Suharto banned the already crippled Communist Party. Then Suharto began purging the military, parliament, and government of Sukarno supporters, accusing many of them of being Communist or pro-Communist. Sukarno's supporters were replaced with people loyal to Suharto. The power struggle continued but ultimately concluded with the parliament removing Sukarno from the presidency in March 1967, appointing Suharto as Acting President. Although not officially sworn in as president of Indonesia until March of 1968, Suharto had essentially been in control since October 1st, 1965. Suharto and his New Order regime would go on to rule Indonesia for over 30 years.

When the bloodbath ended, Suharto and his regime constructed and enshrined an official, governmental version of the events of 1965 in which the Communist Party (PKI) and its millions

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<sup>6</sup> In Yogyakarta, one of the detention centers was at Fort Vredenburg, a Dutch-era fort, which starting in the 1980s was converted into a museum celebrating the history of the independence movement in the Yogyakarta area.

<sup>7</sup> For discussion on the difficulties estimating the number of those killed, see the writings of Robert Cribb 1990, 2001, 2002.

<sup>8</sup> Estimates on those imprisoned range from 600,000 to 1.5 million.

<sup>9</sup> For more on the release of political prisoners in Indonesia, see Fealy 1995.

of members were framed as being as responsible for the coup attempt as the members of 30<sup>th</sup> of September Movement themselves. This meant that every Communist was responsible for the murder of the generals and part of a plot to murder citizens of Indonesia, take their land, abolish religion, and destroy the country. The mass killings were rarely mentioned and when they were discussed at all, they were framed as the spontaneous actions of civilians and as a justifiable defense to protect the nation against these dangerous murderers. Any accounts of the killings or its victims that varied from the official version were forbidden, and people who shared those accounts were jailed or disappeared. The events of 1965 disappeared from public memory, except for the official annual ceremony to commemorate the generals killed during the alleged coup. Many families of those who were killed during the purge lived side by side with killers in silence. It was not until Suharto fell from power in 1998 that people were finally “free” to discuss the carnage and this dark period of their history. Despite the opening, for many Indonesians, the events of 1965-1966 and their aftermath remained unspeakable.

### **Scholarly attention to 1965-1966**

The discipline of anthropology, which has a long history in Indonesia, including the works of luminaries such as Margaret Mead and Clifford Geertz, ignored the killings at the time they occurred.

In an obituary for Clifford Geertz, anthropologist Ben White reflects on Geertz’s “puzzling and revealing avoidance of any serious discussion of the Indonesian mass murders of 1965-6” (2007, 1201). In an article a year later, aptly entitled “The Anthropologist’s Blind Spots: Clifford Geertz On Class, Killings and Communists In Indonesia,” White summarizes “the few scattered comments on the killings” that Geertz wrote in the years following the mass killings and detentions (2008).<sup>10</sup> It took Geertz three decades after the massacres to describe the killings that had taken place in his former field sites.<sup>11</sup> When he did so, White argues, Geertz served as a ventriloquist for his informants, not critically interpreting their remarks, and as a result, “Geertz appears virtually to endorse the official view of the Indonesian army and the CIA, that it was a matter of ‘kill or be killed’, that the slaughter of Communists was a matter of self-defense in the face of Communist aggression, and therefore justified (Reyna, 1998)” (2008).

In the wake of the killings, a few political scientists, historians, and scholars of Indonesia and Southeast Asia immediately turned to analyzing what happened during the purported coup and who was responsible.<sup>12</sup> Prior to the fall of Suharto in 1998, other than a few journalistic accounts, a translated short story collection, and a few primary sources published in the journal *Indonesia*,<sup>13</sup> there were only a handful of publications on the topic of the killings and imprisonments.<sup>14</sup> This was likely due to the impossibility of carrying out research, interviews, or

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<sup>10</sup> These include a footnote in Geertz’s landmark 1973 text about the Balinese cockfight.

<sup>11</sup> See Geertz 1995.

<sup>12</sup> Dommen 1966, Wertheim 1970, Anderson and McVey 1971, Crouch 1973 and 1978, Lee 1976.

<sup>13</sup> See Vickers 2010 (49) for a description of some of these journalistic accounts, the translated short story collection, and publication of primary sources in the journal *Indonesia*. Also see Goodfellow (21-24).

<sup>14</sup> Caldwell 1975, Southwood and Flanagan 1983, Anonymous 1986, Cribb ed. 1990, Hefner 1990, Fealy 1995, Robinson 1995, Sulistyono 1997, Webb 1986. Historian Robert Cribb’s edited volume on the Indonesian killings, albeit a rough collection, was the first book devoted to the

gathering data under Suharto's repressive regime.

Since the fall of Suharto in 1998 and the lifting of the censorship that characterized his regime, there has been a flourishing of scholarly interest in the killings and their aftermath. In the wake of the historical silencing, distortion, and propaganda, scholars have largely been focused on setting the record straight about what occurred in 1965-66, why, how, who was responsible, and contextualizing the events within the history that preceded and followed it.<sup>15</sup> There has also been a great deal of focus on collecting and publishing testimonies and collected oral histories of survivors, former political prisoners, and witnesses.<sup>16</sup> Within Indonesia, there has been frequent publication of autobiographies by former political prisoners.<sup>17</sup> A number of recent doctoral dissertations reveal the breadth of scholarship being conducted on this topic. The dissertations range from investigating the patterns of political activity, killings, and detentions in specific geographic areas<sup>18</sup> to exploring and analyzing the sexual violence against women and girls during 1965-1966<sup>19</sup> to focusing on former political prisoners and their descendants.<sup>20</sup> Despite the fact that there are a few anthropologists who have been conducting sustained, long-term ethnographic research about this topic,<sup>21</sup> most of the scholarship on 1965 and its aftermath has so far come from historians.<sup>22</sup>

This dissertation contributes to this scholarship on 1965-66 and its aftermath, but I depart from the studies listed above by focusing on present day (2010-2012) and including more than

history of the killings. Anthropologist Robert Hefner's 1990 ethnography *The Political Economy of Mountain Java: An Interpretive History* includes a chapter on the 1965-66 violence and its aftermath for the communities in the Tengger highlands in East Java he studied. (He reconstructed the history of this period from interviews he conducted in 1985.) Sulisty's doctoral dissertation on the killings in East Java would be later translated and published in Indonesia in 2000.

<sup>15</sup> See Davidson, Djakababa 2013, Fealy and McGregor 2010, Hearman 2012, Kammen and Zakaria, McGregor 2007, 2009, and 2010, Roosa 2006, Simpson 2008, Sulisty 2000, Vickers, Zurbuchen 2002. See the volume edited by Kammen and McGregor for a collection of recent scholarship on this topic, including Roosa 2012, Simpson 2012, Jenkins and Kammen, Fealy and McGregor 2012, Tsai and Kammen, Ahmad, Hearman 2012b, Bagus 2012, McGregor 2012. Another important collection is a 2013 issue of the *Journal of Current Southeast Asian Affairs* entitled "The Massacres of 1965-1966: New Interpretations and the Current Debate in Indonesia," including articles by Djakababa 2013, Hammer, Melvin 2013, Pohlman 2013a and 2013b, Wahyuningroem.

<sup>16</sup> See Hearman 2012; Pohlman 2008, 2013a, 2013c, and 2015; Roosa, Ratih, and Farid; Roosa 2008; Sukanta; Wardaya 2011 and 2014.

<sup>17</sup> For a discussion of these autobiographies, see Hearman 2009.

<sup>18</sup> See Hearman 2012, Melvin 2014, Setiyawan 2014.

<sup>19</sup> See Pohlman 2011 and the resulting book published in 2015.

<sup>20</sup> See Conroe 2012.

<sup>21</sup> See Dwyer 2004, 2009, and 2011, Dwyer and Santikarma 2007a and 2007b, Heryanto 2006, Lemelson 2006, 2010, and 2015, Santikarma 2002 and 2005. Anthropologists who have centered their research on other topics but have also written about 1965 and its aftermath include Bagus 2012 and Woodward 2011.

<sup>22</sup> This mirrors what I have noticed as a pattern in genocide studies in which historians and political scientists dominate the field.

only the voices of former political prisoners or family members of victims. I was also interested in how ordinary Indonesians who one might presume were not directly affected by this history would perceive and narrate the extent to which this violent history continues to surface in daily life today.

### **Methodology**

I conducted fieldwork in Indonesia between September 2010 and July 2012 to explore the lingering cultural effects of the mass killings in 1965. I conducted fieldwork primarily in Yogyakarta, which is located on the island of Java. I also made a few trips to the islands of Sumatra, Flores, and one small island east of Flores, but given the limited amount of time I spent in these places in comparison to Java, most of the material here comes from Java. Almost all my interactions and interviews were conducted in the national language of Indonesia (*bahasa Indonesia*). While I sometimes consulted native speakers about nuances of meaning, the translations that appear in this text are my own.

As will be described throughout this dissertation, the topic of 1965 remains a very sensitive one in Indonesia today. There is still a taboo against discussing the killings openly. As a result, both long-term fieldwork and the classic anthropological method of participant observation were essential to building relationships of mutual trust with the people who appear in this text. Building a presence in the community, fostering community ties, developing relationships, and making friends were all important parts of my fieldwork.

Bronislaw Malinowski, considered one of the inventors of participant observation, wrote that the Trobriand Islanders came to see him as “part and parcel of their life, a necessary evil or nuisance, mitigated by donations of tobacco” (8). I did not donate tobacco, but I did become part and parcel of the life of my chosen community in the northern part of Yogyakarta. Malinowski writes about his morning walks during which he would observe the villagers and their activities and through which the villagers would become accustomed to his ongoing presence. Walks were a central component of my fieldwork as well. My daily walks became the structure around which I began meeting, interacting, and forming relationships with people. In Yogyakarta, I spent a few hours each weekday morning meeting with language teachers for conversation. As I headed to language study and back, I often interacted with the same people along my route – neighbors, storekeepers, bus drivers, trash collectors, parking attendants, rickshaw (*becak*) drivers parked in their usual spots, security guards, women heading home from the market, students on their way to class. Along my regular routes, and during additional wanderings in my neighborhood and neighborhoods nearby, I was often first viewed with curiosity, surprise, confusion, delight, suspicion, or astonishment. Gradually, through repetition and routine, people became accustomed to seeing me. Interactions always began with polite small talk, as is typical in Indonesia. As relationships deepened, topics of conversation moved on to the dramas of daily life, both mine and theirs.

The extent to which my body, clothes, and habitus marked me as an outsider never faded, with even people I knew well constantly remarking on my height, my paleness, my independence, or my distance from home. The stories I would share about my linguistic gaffes, social blunders, and mortifying mistakes only further identified me as a newcomer to this place. I was perpetually a student, and my acquaintances, neighbors, and friends were my teachers. Over time, I came to be seen, even claimed, as part of the community. I was, in the words of anthropologist Hortense Powdermaker, both “stranger and friend.” Relationships grew and deepened out of familiarity, mutual curiosity, time, and mutual trust. People opened up to me

about this topic because of the relationships we formed. The placement of my presence in the pages that follow is a deliberate choice to reflect the fact that discussions, disclosures, and conversations related to this topic happened in the context of mutual engagement. Leaving myself out of the text might give the impression that my friends and informants talk this way all the time about the killings and their impact. Most often, that is not the case, and thus my inclusion of myself and my role in the conversation or setting reflects that and paints a fuller picture of the conditions in which these conversations occurred.

I approached my fieldwork with the idea that since my goal was to see whether the killings still emerge in or shape daily life today, anyone I encountered in my daily life could potentially contribute to my research. I set out to see what a convenient sample of ordinary people would reveal about the place of this history in their lives. The people in this text are Indonesians I met in daily life – taxi drivers, security guards, waiters or waitresses, college students, schoolteachers, housewives, architects, farmers, *becak* drivers, food vendors, friends of friends – who were willing to talk to me (or not talk to me, in some cases) about my research. Some people opened up to me fairly quickly once they knew my topic of research and trusted me with their stories. With others it took weeks or months before they would talk to me about their beliefs or experiences, even as they asked to hear stories about what I was learning elsewhere. With others, they spoke to me from the start but did not tell me what they *really* felt until months into our meetings. The voices in this text range from people with whom I had short-term relationships to people with whom I had long, sustained, and close relationships. With some, I discussed a few specific topics that emerged from my conversations with them, and with others, I discussed more issues and spent more time with them in their daily lives. The data is drawn from interviews that were recorded and casual conversations and interactions that I later wrote about in my field notes. Given the sensitivity of the topic, I have changed the names of my friends and informants who appear in the text.

My commitment was to exploring whether the killings and their aftermath are still influencing normal everyday life in Indonesia. As a result, I chose not to interact with NGOs working on issues related to 1965, support groups for former prisoners or affected families, or other 1965-related networks. In future projects, perhaps I will do in-depth research on these more specialized groups, communities, and networks. During my fieldwork I had very limited contact with intellectual circles and foreign researchers. I kept myself fairly isolated from the guesthouses and neighborhoods populated by non-Indonesian students and researchers, instead choosing to live in a neighborhood in the north of Yogyakarta where there were no other foreigners, where I lived in a boarding house with Indonesian college students.

### **Indonesia, Yogyakarta, and the Javanese**

Indonesia is the fourth most populous country in the world, with a population of over 252 million people. In a recent book review in *The New Yorker*, essayist Pankaj Mishra described Indonesia like this:

Indonesia's diversity is formidable: some thirteen and a half thousand islands, two hundred and fifty million people, around three hundred and sixty ethnic groups, and more than seven hundred languages. In this bewildering mosaic, it is hard to find any shared moral outlooks, political dispositions, customs, or artistic traditions that do not reveal further internal complexity and division. (Mishra)

Of the 13,500 islands that make up the Indonesian archipelago, over 6,000 are inhabited. Given the cultural, ethnic, linguistic, and religious diversity of the area, it is complicated to consider

what one means when one sets out to study or write about “Indonesia” or “Indonesian people.” Scholars have been wrestling with this since James Richardson Logan first coined the name “Indonesia” for the archipelago in 1850.<sup>23</sup>

The diversity that characterizes the country of Indonesia also characterizes its inhabited islands and the 34 provinces spread across those islands. Different ethnic groups are associated with particular geographic regions, but even within those groups, there can be considerable diversity and difference. The island of Java is the most populous island in Indonesia, and the most populous in the world, with a population of 143 million. The island includes six provinces, two of which are designated as “special regions”: Banten, West Java, Central Java, East Java, the Special Capital Region of Jakarta (the nation’s capital), and the Special Region of Yogyakarta. The capital of the Special Region of Yogyakarta is the city of Yogyakarta, where I carried out my fieldwork.

In 2010, the city of Yogyakarta had a population of 388,627 inhabitants in its 12.5 square miles. (The neighboring regencies that comprise the rest of the small province have a total population of roughly 2.7 million.) Geographically, the city of Yogyakarta is laid out mainly as neighborhoods (*kampung*) nestled between the streets and a few large boulevards that spread out from the center of the city. My friends and informants identify themselves much more as inhabitants of these *kampung* than of the 14 districts the city is bureaucratically divided into.

In the center of the city is the *kraton*, the royal palace of the Sultan. Yogyakarta’s sultanate tradition dates back to the 18<sup>th</sup> century, and a sultan still lives and rules there. Serving as governor of the province of the Special Region of Yogyakarta, the sultan is revered in Yogyakarta. Friends frequently pointed out to me that the *kraton* is located along a straight line from Mount Merapi in the north, Indonesia’s most active volcano that looms over the city of Yogyakarta, and the shores of the Indian Ocean about 17 miles to the south.

Known as the *kota pelajar*, the city of students, because it has the highest number of universities in the country, Yogyakarta is also widely regarded as the center of Javanese high culture and traditional arts, including dance, puppet theatre, music (including gamelan), wood carving, batik, and silver work. Because of this and the proximity to the 9<sup>th</sup> century Buddhist temple Borobodur and the 9<sup>th</sup> century Hindu temple complex called Prambanan, Yogyakarta has become the top tourist destination in Indonesia besides Bali.

The majority of inhabitants of Yogyakarta are Javanese, but the city is ethnically diverse because of the number of domestic immigrants and students from other regions of Indonesia. Most of my friends and informants in Java speak Javanese as their first language but are also fluent in *Bahasa Indonesia*, the language declared as the official national language in 1945, at the same time that Indonesia declared its independence. *Bahasa Indonesia* became the language of politics, education, and mass media. The majority of Javanese are Muslim, although I also met Christians and Hindus in Yogyakarta and Catholics as part of my travels to Flores and islands east of Flores.

Just as these geographic descriptions and divisions reflect a sense of ordering, boundaries, and coherence, so too does the image of the Javanese that emerges from the

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<sup>23</sup> The term “Indonesia” was later picked up and popularized by German ethnologist Adolf Bastian in 1884 when he wrote about his travels in the region in the 1860s and 1870s. Bastian was a teacher and mentor of Franz Boas. For more on the origins of the term “Indonesia,” see van der Kroef 1951 or Jones 1973.

formative ethnographic texts on Java.<sup>24</sup> In his classic text *The Religion of Java*, Clifford Geertz writes that “emotional equanimity, a certain flatness of affect, is, then, the prized psychological state, the mark of the truly *alus* [refined, smooth, calm] character” (240). He writes that the Javanese etiquette depends on four major behavioral strategies: “the proper form [of Javanese language] for the proper social rank, indirection, dissimulation, and the avoidance of any act suggesting disorder or lack of self-control” (243). The ideal is to manage one’s emotions and expectations so one does not experience roiling emotions. Even if one does experience roiling emotions, one disguises that on the outside, maintaining a composed and reserved outward demeanor. “Order,” according to Geertz, includes “the formality of bearing, restraint of expression, and bodily self-discipline – a constant awareness of himself and being an object of perception for others and therefore obligated to present a pleasing, *alus* picture” (247). The more one can maintain this equanimity, the higher status one is perceived to possess. This inner and outer control is desired for the purposes of achieving the appearance of social harmony.

In her volume on Javanese kinship and socialization, Hildred Geertz defines the term “*rukun*” as:

a state of agreement, of unanimity in a group concerning its means and purposes, at least in outer behavior. If there is no overt expression of divisive opinions and feelings, then the group is said to be in *rukun*. Thus, in practice *rukun* actually refers not to mutual aid and co-operation but to the appearance of such and to the absence of overt interpersonal conflict. (149)

She goes on to write that this maintenance of the appearance of external social harmony is “an active element in all aspects of Javanese social life” and that socializing children to internalize it depends on teaching children to “sharply inhibit one’s behavior, to choose inaction rather than action, [...] encouraging a deeply passive attitude” and an attitude of docility and deference (149-150).

Writing decades after the Geertzes, but also writing about Java, Ward Keeler writes that status and behavior are linked. To convey high status, one must avoid “spontaneous or extreme feelings, as evidenced in speech and gesture” (1990, 133). Any emotion or inner state, positive or negative, should be suppressed in favor of outward-appearing restraint, poise, and equanimity.

I offer these illustrations of the ways ideal Javanese comportment and emotion have been described for two reasons. One, I want to share how the general image of Javanese emotion and personhood are depicted in the classic literature of the anthropology of Indonesia, because I will return to these notions later in the dissertation. Second, I want to offer an illustration of how fieldwork conducted in East Java (for the Geertzes) and Central Java (for Ward Keeler) came to be used to describe the “Javanese,” despite the different historical and political moments in which their periods of fieldwork took place and despite the diversity that flourishes in Java. I am very wary about using terms like “Indonesian” or “Javanese,” because the lens through which I am investigating the relation between the past and the present is through the subjective experience, perceptions, and narrations of the people who shared their lives with me, which by their nature are very individual and particular. In these pages, I have shared the features I found most commonly, but I am careful about whether these could be described as “Javanese” or “Indonesian” responses more generally. How can I stay attuned to the specificity of these voices without subsuming their specificity in my desire to synthesize what I heard and discovered? This is a question that has confounded me during various periods of writing. When people shared

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<sup>24</sup> See Geertz 1960, Geertz 1961, Keeler 1987 and 1990.

their stories and their lives with me, most of the time they did not intend to communicate a national story or a story of their island or even of their village. In most cases, they were sharing with me something that they feel is profoundly *theirs*. I strive to be able to both attend to these individual stories and also look at what the mosaic of stories of the people I met reveals about the ways the killings do or do not emerge in this particular place (Yogyakarta and the other sites I visited and mention in the text) at the particular time of my fieldwork.

Anthropologist Ariel Heryanto writes about a time when Indonesian author Pramoedya Ananta Toer, who himself was branded a Communist and imprisoned for 10 years before returning to Jakarta to serve 13 more years of house arrest, was asked about who must (re)-write Indonesian history in the wake of Suharto's fall and the end of the New Order:

Pramoedya A. Toer replied that anyone is potentially qualified to do so. Any Indonesian who lived through the troubled years of 1965 can write what s/he saw and heard, because 'the experience of an individual can become the experience of a nation in a very direct way. And the experience of a nation is also the experience of humankind' (Inside Indonesia 20/10/1989:30). (2006, 53)

### **Anthropology of genocide**

In addition to contributing to the scholarship on 1965-1966 in Indonesia, and to the anthropology of Indonesia more broadly, this dissertation contributes to the field of the anthropology of genocide in its attention to the experiences of the aftermath of mass violence.

The very beginning of the field of the anthropology of genocide is preceded by an absence, a void. As Nancy Scheper-Hughes and Philippe Bourgois note in their introduction to a volume on violence in war and peace, "genocide and ethnocide constitute anthropology's primal scene" (5). Yet despite the fact that anthropologists from the start conducted fieldwork in places where local populations were being resettled, controlled, or killed, virtually no anthropologists wrote about the genocides that were taking place. In a classic illustration of what Orin Starn has referred to as "missing the revolution," anthropologists turned away from events that were likely very difficult to witness and comprehend, let alone write about, in order to focus on different aspects of the lives and cultures of those populations who were then being decimated. Salvage anthropology became necessary in the face of the "extinction" of indigenous peoples, languages, and cultural knowledges, but anthropologists did not explore or describe the mechanisms or forms of that extinction. Anthropologists have only begun writing about genocide fairly recently. The field of the anthropology of genocide began to flower in the 1980s. Other disciplines have been wrestling with genocide since the Holocaust, but not anthropologists. The description and analysis of genocide was largely left to historians, political scientists, and sociologists.<sup>25</sup>

In the first essay of his 2002 edited volume that collected works by anthropologists on genocide, Alexander Hinton points the way towards the development of an "anthropology of genocide." He argues that because of their immersion and experience in fieldsites where genocides occur or have occurred, anthropologists are "uniquely positioned" to contribute to the understanding of how genocides come to happen in the first place, how they are carried out, how they are culturally patterned, how people experience genocides, make sense of them, live in their wake, how people remember genocides, memorialize them, and how genocides destroy and reshape identities and social worlds. Genocide depends on the construction of categories, shaping

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<sup>25</sup> For example, see Chalk and Jonassohn, Charny, Horowitz, Kuper, Lemkin, Rubenstein.

of collective identities, and what Hinton has termed the “manufacturing of difference,” all of which anthropologists are attuned to analyzing. He argues that in addition to contributing to understanding the causes of genocide, anthropologists can also contribute to answering the question of how genocides could be predicted or prevented (Hinton 2002a). Since 2002, Hinton’s own important work on Cambodia was published,<sup>26</sup> and he has organized panels, conferences, and edited or co-edited volumes that have allowed the field of the anthropology of genocide, and the scholars within it, to flourish.<sup>27</sup>

It might seem that there is a contradiction in locating this dissertation within the anthropology of genocide because the mass killings in 1965-1966 in Indonesia do not technically meet the legal definition of genocide, which is found in Article II of the 1948 United Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide. In the UN convention, genocide is defined as:

any of the following acts committed with the intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group, as such:

- (a) Killing members of the group;
- (b) Causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group;
- (c) Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part;
- (d) Imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group;
- (e) Forcibly transferring children of the group to another group. (Hinton 2002b, 43-44)

This definition does not include targeted violence against social or political groups. Many scholars have looked at the process by which political groups came to be excluded from the definition, and debates have raged for decades about other broader definitions that could be applied instead, but none have stuck. Writing about the definition recently, Hinton wrote:

Race is a social construction and, like ethnicity, religion, and nationality, is clearly, and often highly, mutable. [...] The UNCG has created a set of privileged protected groups while leaving others unprotected and analytically invisible. [...] The UNCG definition constitutes a historical and social construction that, while having important legal implications, should have been more broadly defined to include the destruction of any sort of group as defined by the protagonists in genocide. [...] While recognizing that all definitions have weaknesses, we might simply define genocide as the more or less coordinated attempt to destroy a dehumanized and excluded group of people because of who they are. (2012, 9-10)

Annie Pohlman, writing about the 1965-1966 killings in particular, has argued that the killings should be considered genocide “given the underlying flaws of the definition of ‘genocide’ that excludes the persecution of political groups,” which she details (2014, 19). Mark Woodward has used the term “politicide” to describe the killings.

There is no question that the violence of 1965 was genocidal even if the killings do not

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<sup>26</sup> See Hinton 2005.

<sup>27</sup> His edited and co-edited volumes on the anthropology of genocide include: Hinton and O’Neill, eds. 2009 on truth, memory, and representation; Hinton, ed. 2010 on transitional justice; Hinton, La Pointe, and Irvin-Erickson, eds. 2014 on hidden genocides; Woolford, Benvenuto, and Hinton, eds. 2014 on colonial genocide in indigenous North America; and Hinton and Hinton, eds. 2015 on the aftermaths of genocide.

rise to the standard of the UN definition. I use the terms “killings” or “mass killings” most frequently in this text not because I deny that the term “genocide” broadly applies, but because this is how my friends and informants refer to the killings. They also use the term “slaughter,” although less frequently.

### **The body**

I am sitting cross-legged on the floor of Pak Eddi’s porch as he chews thoughtfully on his lower lip for a few minutes. I eye the audio recorder between us and as a truck rumbles by I wonder if I should nudge it closer to him. No, I decide. I do not want to make him more aware of the recorder than he already is. I have known Pak Eddi for over two months but this is our first recorded interview, and I worry the recorder may have made him too self-conscious or too shy to speak freely. (“Who’s the one being self conscious here?” I laugh to myself as I type up my field notes later.) I have just asked Pak Eddi a question that I ultimately ask everyone I interview, “How do the killings affect daily life today?”

Pak Eddi is a 66-year old man who has told me repeatedly that he has no direct relationship to the killings. At first I wondered whether he was either trying to politely decline my request for an interview or trying to save me time by indicating that given his position to the killings, he would not be much help. After I explained, for the third time since I met him, that I am interested in talking to all sorts of Indonesians for my research, not just those who lost loved ones or were in prison themselves, he eagerly invited me to his home for the next afternoon, telling me he would be ready.

Pak Eddi takes a few thoughtful drags on his cigarette before replying. “We are wounded,” he says. “There are people who try to pretend the wound is not there. For others it is very painful. Some people do not know the wound exists, and they wonder why we are sick. The more time that passes, the more painful the wound becomes.”

There is much to draw from Pak Eddi’s reply, but for now, I point to how, for Pak Eddi, the legacy of these killings is best expressed through the description of a painful wound. This was not unique to him. It was a refrain I heard more than once during my conversations and interviews. It is significant that he and other people relate the aftermath of the killings to a wound – something corporeal, embodied, and affective. The wounds of 1965 and its aftermath are inextricably tied to the body, to the bodies that were divided, damaged, disappeared, and destroyed during the events of 1965-1966 and in the years that followed.

Bodies permeate this ethnography, including the bodies of Pak Eddi on his porch and the cross-legged ethnographer beside him. As will be evident throughout this dissertation, the topic of the lingering effects of 1965-1966 ultimately returns us to the body again and again.

“If someone told you that 1965 is ‘ancient history,’ how would you reply?” I ask Pak Eddi, echoing the words a prominent scholar of Southeast Asia said to me when she learned the topic of my dissertation research. Pak Eddi smiles slightly, not needing any time to consider his response. “I would say they do not know Indonesia,” he replies. In the conversation that followed, more interviews I recorded with him, and prolonged participant observation, conversations, interactions, and interviews with 77 more informants and friends, I sought to get to know Indonesia.

### **Map of the dissertation**

To analyze the extent to which 1965 and its aftermath affect daily life today, I have divided this dissertation into six chapters centered around the themes that emerged most often in

my conversations, interactions, and interviews with my Indonesian friends and informants.

In the first chapter, I analyze the complex relationship between space and time when it comes to the events of 1965-1966 and their aftermath. Many of my informants described the ways in which the past and present have become entangled so that the past can intrude on, interrupt, and intertwine with the present. I will examine how, for many of my informants, this entanglement contributes to the dissatisfaction of using terms like “history” and “memory” to talk about and grapple with the events of 1965-1966 and their relation to present day.

In chapter two, I explore the persistence of the propaganda and official narrative the Suharto regime enshrined, and I analyze the ways the narrative and propaganda continue to be articulated, expressed, and circulated today. I relate the propaganda and the fear and paranoia it engenders to practices of surveillance and self-surveillance that I encountered in my fieldwork.

In chapter three, I explore the most prevalent way the events of 1965-1966 emerge in daily life today -- the continuing stigmatization of people perceived as being related to the Communist Party, including former political prisoners and their families, family members of those killed in 1965-1966, and their descendants. I analyze the dynamics of the ways in which stigma is assigned, transmitted, and managed. Stigma remains such a powerful force in everyday life that even people not closely related to the events orient their lives around it, working to elude stigma.

In chapter four, I create a space for silence, exploring how silence weaved itself in and out of my fieldwork. I analyze the silences that my friends and informants described and the silences that I encountered in my fieldwork. The uses, strategies, and possible meanings of these silences reveal a great deal about the ways in which people continue to navigate their relationship to this history in their daily lives today.

In chapter five, I analyze ruptures in the prevailing public silence about the events of 1965-1966 and their aftermath in two domains: the arts and the internet. Through describing and analyzing two performances by Papermoon Puppet Theatre and following an internet user to the *warnet* (internet café), I consider how the arts and the internet offer new kinds of voicing, authorship of history, and education.

In chapter six, I investigate whether the wound of 1965-1966 that Pak Eddi described can ever be soothed or healed. I explore what kinds of satisfaction or justice my friends and informants would like to see, even while most consider these pursuits unrealistic or unattainable. I analyze how the fraught categories of “victim” and “perpetrator” are perceived and narrated by my friends and informants, and I illustrate how even the “event” of the mass killings themselves is an unstable category.

Finally, in the Epilogue, I write about a few major developments that occurred shortly after my departure from the field, the reactions to those events by some of my friends and informants, and what these events reveal about the continuing power of the events of 1965-1966 and their aftermath in daily life today.

## Chapter One: Entangled Time and Space

I clutch tightly onto the back handrail of the motorbike as Amina steers her way down the road, swerving often to try to avoid the holes in the road that are filled with water from the downpour that ended a half hour ago. There are more holes on the next road she turns onto so the motorbike creates a spray as she drives. She shouts something back towards me, but it is hard to hear or decipher. I marvel at how rural and agrarian the scenery has become so close to the borders of Yogyakarta. We travel on like this, bouncing and bumping our way down the road, for a long while. As an air-conditioned car with its windows all rolled up slides by us, its motor purring in comparison to the motorbike's engine, I wonder whether hiring a car or taxi might have been a better choice than this. We travel onwards. When Amina stops the bike, she does it suddenly, pulling over in an area that looks no different than the landscape we have spent most of the last hour passing through -- trees, rice fields with huts for shade, a few occasional houses, the road. As I ungracefully dismount from the motorbike, she gestures vaguely with her hand. We walk together for a few minutes in the direction of her gesture. Then she points. I follow the path of her pointing with my eyes. There is a field. There is no rice planted there. It is just a stretch of green that looks like it might serve to mark the border between two larger plots of land. Calling it a field is too generous, I think to myself. It is more than a patch of grass but not that much more. I look sideways at her, partly to see where she is looking, to confirm what I am meant to be looking at. This is where Amina has brought me. This is what she wants me to see. She has brought me here to show me the place where the body of her grandfather, killed during 1965, lies.

For Amina and many family members of the other victims in this unmarked mass grave, this landscape is suffused with significance and sentiment. For others it is just an unremarkable plot of land with nothing to mark or distinguish it from any other.

During six months in 1965 and 1966, between half a million and a million bodies were thrown into unmarked mass graves in fields like this one, or into rivers, caves, gorges, ravines. Thousands of unmarked mass graves are spread throughout the country. To date, only one mass grave has been excavated, and another excavation abandoned.<sup>28</sup> Meant to be forgotten and erased, the countless bodies that lie in these unmarked graves and the contours of the landscapes above them revive the past. It is not just the natural landscape that evokes the past. For others, the violent past is etched into urban places as well. The past permeates space and time and thus cannot be avoided, forgotten, or denied.

While this entire dissertation explores the ways in which the killings of 1965-1966 and their aftermath remain a force in people's daily lives today, I want to start with a brief contemplation of how the killings and their aftermath reveal a complex relationship between space and time. The past and the present have become entangled in space and time so that the past can intrude on, interrupt, and intertwine with the present. The violence of the past still sits in the landscape itself, in the "field" where I conducted my fieldwork. The ongoing, living connection between the events of 1965 and daily life today is made material in spaces all around my friends and informants. In this chapter, I will also examine how, for many of my informants, the entanglement of time contributes to the dissatisfaction of using terms like "history" and "memory" to talk about and grapple with the events of 1965-1966 and their relation to present

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<sup>28</sup> For more on the lack of excavation of mass graves, see Chapter Two. For analysis of how attitudes towards these graves reflect enduring stigma, see Chapter Three.

day.

### **Amina**

Amina was born in December of 1982, over 17 years after her grandfather was killed in 1965 in Central Java. She cannot remember the first time she visited her grandfather's grave. She thinks her mother must have shown it to her as a very small child. We spend a half hour or so sitting on a small slope between the side of the road, where her motorbike is parked, and the rice fields. Then we continue on to her parents' house another 20 minutes away where I ask if I can record our conversation about going to her grandfather's grave.

"Do you think it's strange?" she asks me once I get the audio recorder running.

"Strange?"

"If I didn't tell you, you wouldn't know there are victims there," she replies.

"Yes, that's true," I answer. "Do you think people around there know there is a grave?"

"Yes, of course they know," she answers quickly. "There are probably still people there who made that grave."

"How did you feel visiting there?" I ask her.

"Every time I come to this house," Amina tells me, "I pass that place. Most of the time I do not stop. But I never pass it without thinking of my grandfather. I *cannot* pass it without thinking of him."

"When you say 'thinking of him,' what do you mean?"

"I don't know," she answers, "I think about him, sometimes my mother's stories, or I think about why he died, how he died, and how I will never know him except by seeing him in the ground. That is our connection."

I cannot decipher Amina's tone. Is it anger? Regret? "Does that disturb you?" I ask.

"It's disturbing, yes, but I'm used to it," she replies. "How many times have I passed his grave? A thousand times? More, I think. Every time I think of him." She pauses for a few moments before continuing. "If I did not tell you, you would not know that he is there. I cannot not know." From her tone, I wonder whether she would ever wish to not know, but in this moment it feels callous to ask when she has no other option but knowing.<sup>29</sup>

For Amina, passing the site of the mass grave where her grandfather lies evokes thoughts about him, reflections on his death, the past, and their relationship. The land, the location, is bound to the past in a way that she cannot escape. She does not describe choosing to think of him when she passes by but instead describes the thoughts as spontaneous and automatic, beyond her control. While used to it by now from frequent visits, Amina twice emphasizes the strangeness of knowing that this place is not just land. She is in the category of people who *know*. She cannot experience it as earth alone. She experiences it profoundly personally, contemplating the past, her grandfather's violent death, and her connection to this man she never knew. That ongoing connection is expressed in her relation to this space, this landscape.

When Amina's mother, Ibu Nini, arrives home and joins our conversation out of curiosity, this is driven home even further. Amina's mother urges me not to use the word "buried" when writing about her father, Amina's grandfather. "My father was thrown away." Ibu Nini forcefully enunciates each syllable. "Killed and thrown away. Not buried. There is no gravestone. No sign that anyone is there at all. But he is there. That is what I think when I pass

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<sup>29</sup> Amina and I return to this question of the choice between knowing and not knowing in Chapter Three on stigma.

that place. He is still there.”

Amina has continued this act of recognition, this act of presence-ing, that her mother began before she was born. Her mother has marked the landscape for their family, rendering it meaningful within their family. Resisting the state’s desire to erase the signs of the mass violence and its victims, both Amina and Ibu Nini articulate the ongoing presence of their loved one in the landscape and by doing so, bring him and the violence that claimed his life present each time they pass the mass grave in which he lies.

Fieldnotes of my two years of research in Indonesia are peppered with visits to mass graves and discussions with people about their relation to the mass graves that surround them. Some people are affected, even disturbed, by their presence and what they evoke, others less so.

### **Pak Agus**

Pak Agus sits on his porch on a damp and muggy afternoon in a village in East Java. “Everyone talks about Buru,” he begins. (He is referring to Buru Island, a notorious prison that housed over 10,000 political prisoners during the 1960s and 1970s.) “Buru is known. It is famous. But there were places all over this area where people were tortured and killed. Not just Buru. It happened in rice fields, in the yards of people’s homes, in the town center. Many places.” What might sound like testifying, like remorse, or like bragging is neutralized by his completely matter-of-fact tone. It is hard to detect any emotion, positive or negative as he relates information to me about his village.

A friend has brought me here to Pak Agus’ house to introduce us. Pak Agus invites us to go for a walk with him. A 73-year old man, he walks slowly but deliberately, and as we walk around the village together, he points to places where he says bodies are buried. Some of the graves are mass graves, he tells me. Some are individual ones where mutilated bodies or body parts were discovered and buried. Over one of the sites, undershirts hang from a laundry line. At another site, there’s a new building being built. The men working on the building peer out from the construction of what will become the third floor, calling down to the old man and my friend in a language that I do not understand. It is clear from their tone and laughter that they are cajoling and teasing the old man who is playing tour guide.

Pak Agus’ attitude while showing me these sites, and others, is not one of sadness, distress, or solemnity. Neither is it one of nonchalance. There is just a matter-of-fact acceptance. There is a grave. There is a grave. There is another. When I ask whether locals know about the graves, he answers, “Everybody knows. But life goes on.” I ask Pak Agus about his thoughts or feelings of living with all these graves around him. He replies that some of the time he thinks about it and sometimes he does not. “Last month I went to [a nearby village] to watch a soccer game. Under the field there is a grave with several men from our village. I know they are there. Their families know. I went there and I thought about them. How could I not? But I also enjoyed the soccer game.”

Places in his village and the soccer field in the neighboring village are places of life while at the same time being places of death and, for some, landmarks of the violence. Pak Agus, with his “life goes on” attitude, experiences these places in multiple ways. He experiences the soccer field both as the unmarked mass grave where the bodies of some men from his village are buried, but also a site for relaxation. Like Amina, he cannot experience the landscape without thinking of the bodies that lie there (“How could I not?”), but he is not distressed by the ways in which the past manifests itself in the landscape around him. He seems to have incorporated the presence of these graves into his daily life and experience.

### **Pak Sapto**

Occupying an extremely narrow storefront two blocks from my boarding house, Pak Sapto works as a tailor. His sewing machine faces the road so he sees everyone passing, which is how we first met. He always wears a tape measure around his neck and almost always has a cigarette drooping from his lips as his wizened but still nimble fingers move from operating the sewing machine to the more fastidious work of sewing on buttons. After knowing me for many months, by the time I return from my first trip to East Java, Pak Sapto has come to see himself as my teacher, my advisor, I think. Pak Sapto was 22 years old when the killings began in East Java. He lived about 40 minutes from Pak Agus' village at the time, and he is curious to hear the stories of my travels there.

Eventually, in my recounting of my trip, I talk about my tour of the graves in Pak Agus' village. Pak Sapto furrows his brow and criticizes whoever showed me the graves. There are many graves there, he tells me. In his village too, he says. But I should not have been shown where they are. It only keeps the past alive, he tells me. When I ask him about whether the past is alive already, he answers that it may be for the local people who live there and who know where the graves are. However, he asserts, "We need to move forward." In his view, bringing attention to the graves in the landscape, especially to outsiders, hinders that progress.

It is hard for me to reconcile Pak Sapto's attitude with the ongoing eagerness he has shown to help me with my research, but he explains that for him, there is a difference between knowing that there are graves and knowing *where* the graves are. Being shown the location of the graves only makes the presence of the past more palpable. To move forward, there needs to be more distance between the past of 1965 and the present, a distance that is not yet wide enough in his opinion.

### **Reconstructing the present**

The construction of a new building on top of one of the mass graves in Pak Agus' village was just one case I encountered where attempts were made to transform space and place in order to remove a space or place's association with the events of 1965-1966 or to repackage the history that occurred there.

An article in *The Jakarta Post* provides one example:

Kim Ho stares at a five-story [sic] building beside his house on Jl. Gandhi, a bustling street in Medan, North Sumatra. The building houses a popular restaurant [sic], as well as the headquarters of a Chinese clan association. However, in the past the entire street was avoided by local residents due to the building that used to stand there.

[...]

Kim Ho, who at 60 is old enough to remember the aftermath of the so-called "year of living dangerously", said he felt comfortable living on Jl. Gandhi and never felt frightened of its dark past.

"I like living here, even though the place was used as a site for detention and torture," Kim said.

“Everything’s changed. The building has been renovated and has become a restaurant and an office”, Kim told The Jakarta Post.

He said he had lived here with his family for 10 years, adding that the street’s atmosphere was currently totally different from the past.

“People used to fear living here, but now it’s comfortable and busy,” said Kim, who sells flowers on the street. At the Hee Lai Ton Restaraunt, the maître d, Juni, says the place had been renovated “to remove its scary past” and to create a modern, comfortable ambience. Nothing freaky has happened there, he said. (Gunawan)

This article expresses the idea that a place associated with the detention, torture, and killings of suspected Communists can be renovated to remove its relation to the past. There is no room for the “scary past” in the new “modern ambience.” The past is erased and the violent history concealed through transformation of place.

I met Dodi in Yogyakarta but he comes from an area just outside of Medan in North Sumatra. In our third interview he tells me about what he knows about the place where the body of his grandfather, killed during 1965, remains.

Afterwards they built a building there. When I was little, we almost never went on that road. We avoided it. I remember that when we did go on that road, my mother cried. At that time I never looked at the building. It was like an evil place. But when I got older, I got curious. So I looked at it. At that time there was a store there that sold cosmetics. Now it’s changed. I went inside once to see how it felt. It was many years ago. Maybe I was 16 years old. I didn’t tell my parents. They still don’t know I went there. There were women walking around, just chatting. I pretended like I was shopping for a gift for my mother. I thought, “Beneath this building there are bodies.” I knew a secret. “Do they know? Should I tell them?” Part of me wanted to tell them. I wondered if they would run out of the store.

In a later interview, Dodi tells me that he will never forget visiting the store, and when he thinks of his grandfather or talks about him with his own children now, it is hard for him not to recall the smells of the perfumes, soaps, and other products he feigned interest in while contemplating the nearness of his grandfather’s body beneath the store.

Like Amina, Dodi was not yet alive when his grandfather was killed. But for him, his grandfather’s grave, already concealed by a building, is affectively charged with sentiment – first his mother’s sadness and tears, Dodi’s own fear of even looking at the building, and then a growing desire to experience the place himself, which he did down to the sensory level of the smell of the soaps and perfumes that still come to him when he thinks of his grandfather. He describes feeling as if he had a secret, and that secrecy is twofold – both the secret he was keeping by not telling his parents about the visit but also the secret he knew of the true history, the true meaning, of this place. If the women walking around the store knew that history, he wondered whether they would flee.

Dodi and Amina were both not around in 1965 to experience the massacres first hand, but they both have strong connections and sentiments about the ways in which these events linger in the present. Their own connections to their grandfathers are expressed, in part, through visits to the landscapes that contain their bodies. This interaction with place is significant.

### **Pak Budiarto**

The entanglement of the past and present surrounding the history of 1965 is not only revealed in the space of mass graves or detention centers but in other spaces and places as well.

Pak Budiarto was 11 years old when his father disappeared in 1965. When I ask him whether he is ever reminded of that time by the landscape around him in Central Java, he mentions a bridge that is not far from his house. “You know that bridge?” he asks. When I nod, he talks slowly, pausing occasionally, but without interruption:

I tried writing about that bridge once... I cross it every day... Sometimes it is just the bridge I cross to get to work. I get to work and I can't even remember crossing it. I am so used to the route I take. It is just like all the other roads on the way to work. But sometimes, it becomes more than the bridge I cross to get to work... It is also the bridge my mother went to every day for months when I was a child. Every day she went to the bridge to look for my father in the river. After he was arrested, she took food to the prison for him. But one day the guard told her that he was not there anymore. That was it. No other information... After that, she would go to that bridge and look in the river. There were many bodies in the river then. Mostly at nighttime. Every morning she would go... Then she stopped... After Suharto, every year, on my father's birthday, she threw flowers into the river from that bridge. There are many women who do that for the men that disappeared. She did that every year until the year before she died. So when I cross the bridge sometimes... I see my mother standing there... I know she's not there. But what I mean is sometimes it's not just the bridge I cross to get to work. Does that make sense?

Pak Budiarto looks at me, his eyes filled with such emotion, and the layers of meaning, significance, and emotions are clear. The bridge represents so much to him about the loss of his father, the strength of his mother, his grief after his mother's death. The bridge is the structure he crosses to get to work every day, but at times it is transformed into a landmark of the losses he has experienced and a manifestation of meaningful moments through time. The Indonesian landscape on the island of Java contains no official memorials or commemorative spaces for remembering the victims of the mass killings of 1965-1966. The only memorial statue is for the generals killed in the alleged coup.<sup>30</sup> So in the absence of monuments or monumentality to this chapter of violence, the spaces of mass graves, rice fields, bridges, rivers, cosmetics shops, and restaurants become the landmarks of a violent past that extends its tendrils into the present.

### **Ibu Murni and Ibu Lastri**

Ibu Murni tells me about her neighbor whose husband disappeared in 1965. “There were rumors about where he was killed, where the grave was, but no one would confirm where,” Ibu Murni explains. “She cannot even pass by the place where her husband is buried. So in her house, she has a picture of him with some things he liked to carry in his pockets. It's like a shrine.” So Ibu Murni's neighbor's home is not only the space of her neighbor's everyday life but also contains a personal, private memorial to the husband she lost. The loss Ibu Murni's neighbor experienced during 1965 has a daily presence in her lived world.

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<sup>30</sup> See the next chapter for more on this statue.

When I meet and spend time with Ibu Murni's neighbor, Ibu Lastri, we never go any further in her home than the room at the front of her house where guests are received. We sit there and drink tea together several times. She never tells me about the memorial to her husband she has made. It is personal and private. She does describe the suffering that comes from not being able to locate her husband in space, from not knowing where his body is, "At that time [1965] I didn't know where his body was located. I knew he was lost. People told me he was dead. I wanted to know where his grave was. I still want to know. If I don't know, it is like he is nowhere, like he never existed."

### **The mundane**

Sometimes people described interruptions of the present by the past in more mundane settings than the mass graves that dot the landscape. Ibu Ratih, whose father died in 1965, and I sit in the living room of her house near the language school. We watch her favorite soap opera (*sinetron*) together, and as she bustles in and out of the kitchen during a commercial break, bringing snacks, she tells me about her trip to the mall the day before.

There was a concert there. Pop music. I watched from the third floor. The lady singing was very young. She was so-so. The music was very loud. Then I went to the market – the one on Jalan Gejayan? I went in and I saw there were purple potatoes. After my father died we ate purple potatoes all the time. They were considered like ... how can I say it ... food for poor people. Most of the time we ate purple potatoes. And rice. At that time I hated purple potatoes and decided when I grew up, I would never eat purple potatoes again. Standing there in that market, I felt like I was nine years old again. I could taste them in my mouth, just looking at them. Disgusting.

She offers me a small cake she has made and turns the conversation towards another unrelated topic. For Ibu Ratih, the sight of purple potatoes brings the past present again, and she is filled with the same feelings and sensations – down to the taste in her mouth – that she experienced as a child after the death of her father in the 1965 mass killings.

### **Space in Time and Time in Space**

Through these vignettes drawn from my interactions, conversations, and interviews, I illustrate how space and time are, for many of my informants, entangled. For many of my informants, even those whose loved ones do not lie in the mass graves that dot the landscape, the presence of the past in space has to do with its material traces, the ways in which the past continues to exist, and which exists to create a sense of time that is always out of joint. For Pak Budiarto crossing the bridge on his way to work, space becomes a tableau of different moments in time that coexist with the present. The dead rearrange time and space. Distinctions between past and present dissolve and instead become entangled together. Places of past violence are folded into the everyday but continue bringing the past into the present for my friends and informants.

Between rice fields, under clotheslines, under soccer fields, on bridges, in markets, in stores with perfumes and soaps, in homes with private shrines to lost loved ones, the past intrudes into the present for those who do not merely pass through the space but interact with it relationally, imbue it with moral meaning, and make the past present by perceiving it not merely as a space of life but also a space or landmark of death that demands acknowledgement. "How could I not [think about the dead under the soccer field]?" Pak Agus asks. Amina says, "I cannot

not know [the field as the place of the grave].” In all these spaces of everyday life, through attending to the phenomenological experiences of space and place, the ongoing and forceful presence of the past for many of my informants becomes clear.

The uniqueness of the 1965 past remaining present is tied, in part, to Ibu Nini’s insistence that I not describe her father as “buried” but instead as “thrown away.” It is fascinating to relate these experiences to Javanese beliefs and rituals surrounding death that anthropologists including Clifford Geertz and James Siegel have carefully described.<sup>31</sup> Both Geertz and Siegel write about the “detachment” that the Javanese express and embody after someone dies. Geertz writes, “For the mourner, the funeral and postfuneral ritual is said to produce a feeling of *iklas*, a kind of willed affectlessness, a detached and static state of ‘not caring’” (1957, 59). This state of *iklas* explains why displays of grief and emotional disturbance after death are rare and undesirable in Java, according to Geertz and Siegel. Siegel writes that, in part, people explained their *iklas* to him by saying “it was God’s will that the person died” (1983, 3). But as Ibu Nini illustrates, the word “burial” connotes the rituals associated with death. For the dead of 1965, there were no such rituals -- preparation and purification of the body, rapid burial, funeral with oratory, eulogies, prayers, and community support, ceremonies held at certain intervals after the burial, visits to the grave. For the dead of 1965, there were no graves to visit, no community support.

I cannot help but think of the affect some people express towards the spaces where the bodies, many desecrated and violently killed, were thrown away. Dodi recalls her mother crying when passing the site of her father’s grave. The bodies from 1965 are in the ground, but not buried. They are without life, but denied the same status of “dead” as those who are ritually buried and commemorated. Officially uncounted, not mentioned in the history books, these dead lie in unmarked mass graves, sometimes under buildings that conceal this violence. Yet, in their daily lives, the people who live amongst these graves reckon with the ongoing presence of the past.

Understanding time in this way – where the relationship between the past and the present is not a chronological one proceeding through decades, but one in which the past and the present can intertwine and tangle together - is key to understanding how people live with, narrate, and navigate this past in daily life today.

### **Multiple worlds**

When I discussed this notion of time and space with Pak Darma, my trusted friend and advisor, he explained to me that perhaps this entanglement of the past and the present is comprehensible in the Indonesian context because at least in Yogyakarta, people experience this kind of concurrence or simultaneity in many dimensions of their daily lives. Multiple and even contradictory worlds often coexist in the context of everyday life.

He described several of these concurrences to me over the course of our discussions. When Pak Darma’s mother-in-law developed what looked like the beginnings of a goiter, he took her to the doctor and dutifully went to the pharmacist as well to get the medicine the doctor prescribed. Then he visited a traditional healer (*dukun*) to get a stone with mystical power for her to rub along her throat. He laughed with me about how this would be perceived by his mother-in-law’s doctor or by the pharmacist, but, he explained, it worked with a speed that medicine never would. Another example he provided is the way that the old and the new coexist in Yogyakarta.

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<sup>31</sup> See Geertz 1957 and 1960 (Chapter 6), Siegel 1983. Geertz’s fieldwork was carried out in East Java in 1953-1954. Siegel conducted his fieldwork in Solo in Central Java in 1978-1979.

The ancient temples that all the tourists arrive to see, even the sultan's palace, are all located in the midst of urban traffic, modernization, and development. Pak Darma explained that Indonesians can hold multiple, seemingly contradictory, things to be true at the same time, so it made sense to him that the past and the present could coexist, almost like two worlds existing side by side: the world of the past and the world of the present.<sup>32</sup>

During my fieldwork, nowhere was this proximity of worlds more dramatically illustrated or expressed than through the strong beliefs people articulated in spiritual power and the spirit world, which exists alongside and does not interfere with their religious practices.

Pak Yuda, a longtime friend of Pak Darma, is a caretaker at a hotel in northern Yogyakarta. A man of 59 years old and slightly pudgy build, he felt he was not paid well and not respected enough by the staff above him. Even though he did not enjoy a high economic status, he had a specialty that no one else possessed. He could see spirits and ghosts, and over the years of my fieldwork, he described to me a complex and highly elaborate spirit world with which he interacted. Because Pak Yuda was special, he could see spirits or ghosts, which all have different names, shapes, times they appear, different needs, different purposes, different goals, and Pak Yuda could intervene with them on people's behalfs. When a nearby family was having a string of bad luck, Pak Yuda went to visit and found a large *gendruwo*, a giant-sized spirit, sitting in the trees outside their house. Pak Yuda brought his sacred stones to expel the giant spirit and bring the family peace. One time we met, Pak Yuda appeared despondent, and when I asked him why he appeared to be feeling poorly, he told me that a spirit that takes the shape of a pig had come to his neighborhood, rubbed itself against people's gates, taking their money, including his own. When I asked him about all the other possibilities for the disappearance of his money, they were all foreclosed. His doors were locked. No one else had access to his wallet. He had not spent the money elsewhere. Yet the money was gone. It was this spirit in the shape of a pig that was responsible.

This complex and elaborate spirit world that he can see coexists with the everyday world in which we met and had our conversations, and its existence was no challenge to his deep Muslim faith. He explained that children are often born with the ability to see and experience this other world, but as they grow and are educated and get more closely attached to their religion, most lose this special ability. He had not.

Other informants and friends of mine did not raise an eyebrow at my descriptions of Pak Yuda and his skills with regard to the spirit world. In fact, fascination with spirits and ghosts was very widespread. Movies about ghosts and spirits dominated the Indonesian box office. Books, websites, and television shows about the spirit world proliferated. The existence of this spirit world is a given. There is a world that we can see, and at the same time there is a world that most cannot see. The existence of one does not negate the existence of the other. They exist side by side, and they can affect and inform each other deeply.

Understanding the juxtaposition of these worlds in the Indonesian context, as articulated by my friends and informants, became highly critical to the way I came to understand the relation of the past and present in time for my informants. Of course, people know the killings happened in 1965 and 1966. They do not reject the linear chronological notion of time. But that is not the only temporality available to them. They can also accept, and many do experience, the

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<sup>32</sup> The discussion of syncretism in Indonesia, particularly surrounding religious beliefs and traditions, has intrigued scholars for decades. In this section, I want to focus on how this syncretism is perceived and narrated by my friends and informants.

ways in which the past is not past at all, but is still present in people's everyday lives and experiences, which this dissertation aims to illuminate.

Before moving away from the spirit world, let's spend some time with it. Given the topic of my research, I repeatedly asked Pak Yuda, Pak Darma, and other close friends whether there is a relation between people's fascination with spirits and ghosts and the unresolved, unfinished history of 1965. They denied the association, patiently explaining that the ghosts that exist in Indonesia are not people who have died who return as ghosts, the way that we conceive of ghosts in the West. So a 1965 victim would not suddenly appear as a ghost, they told me. What about a spirit, I asked? Could the spirits of those killed in 1965 circulate and disturb or interfere with people? Most of the people I asked did not deny the possibility but they had not heard of such cases happening. How could I reconcile this, I wondered, with what I had read about people fearfully avoiding sites with mass graves or an anecdote I heard about someone being possessed by the spirits of 1965? Had those stories just been apocryphal or tales told through Western eyes, I wondered? The inability to reconcile what my friends were telling me confounded me at first and through time revealed a few important insights.

First, the fact that spirits of the 1965 dead are not disturbing people regularly reveals that, to some extent, the dead and their presence in the landscape have been incorporated into people's daily lives and experiences. Neither Pak Agus nor Pak Sapto are disturbed by the presence of the graves. It is just a fact of life. There is a grave. There is a grave. There is another. Pak Sapto objects to me being shown the graves, but he never denies the graves' existence or their significance. The fact that the spirits are not circulating in disturbing ways means that the presence of the graves, of the 1965 dead around them, the incidents of the violence in 1965-1966, have become, for some, normalized and integrated into people's experiences and lives.

The second insight that emerged from the difficulty of reconciling what people told me is that Communists, and those associated with Communists, have themselves become evil ghosts, similar to the harmful ghosts who kidnap children or make people disappear. Vanessa Hearman, who has written her dissertation on reconstructing the political history of East Java from 1965 to 1968, writes in the preface of her dissertation about growing up in East Java before moving to Australia:

I harboured deep fears about wells and about members of the Indonesian Women's Movement (*Gerakan Wanita Indonesia*, Gerwani) who, I was told, had tortured the generals with razors and cut off their private parts until they bled to death at Lubang Buaya. 'Gerwani' was a feared word among children in my community. "If you are naughty, Gerwani will come to take you away," I heard kids say. 'Gerwani' entered into the Javanese mystical world of evil old hags or spirits masquerading as beautiful women who prowled around looking for children to kidnap. (2012, v)

Anthropologist James Siegel has written about how Suharto's New Order regime always kept the fear alive that Communists could return and resume their unfinished work of destroying the nation. He writes that these notions of national ghosts supplanted Javanese ghosts:

The problem comes with the formation of national rather than Javanese ghosts. The hundreds of thousands of people massacred because they were suspected Communists were held in memory by the Suharto regime precisely as those who might return. And return, as we have said, in uncanny forms. Political disruption was frequently blamed on Communists and their descendants. The fear was that Communist ideas would prevail even without Communists. And so, in various

disruptions, their traces could be made out. It was an example of “O.T.B.” (organisasi tanpa bentuk) or “organizations without form or bodies” in the formulation of the time. Communists, defeated once during the revolution, came back again in the Suharto regime. Massacred at the beginning of the Suharto regime, it was feared they could rise again through some unknown process, meaning without formal organization, but saying, also, “bodiless,” just as specters lack bodies. (2006, 9)

This resonates very much with what I heard. The fears some people had about mass graves were not about just any ghosts or spirits emerging but *Communist* ghosts. Does the stigma of associating with anyone or anything Communist extend even to interactions with the spirit world? It seems so. So Communist ghosts, or the danger of their revival, could be a reason that people did not want to talk about their circulation or existence.

The final insight is about what Western scholars are really driving towards when they write about the “haunting” of Indonesia. Many scholars have written about it, although not always related to the events of 1965-1966 and their aftermath.<sup>33</sup> I propose that in their use of the term “haunting,” these scholars are trying to articulate the very thing this chapter, and the entire dissertation, is about – the ongoing presence of the past, the way in which the past continues to exist, the way in which it remains a force in people’s lives today. It is not something that can be left behind.

### **History and memory**

For many of my informants, the presence of the past in their daily lives means that when they talk about their experiences of 1965 or its aftermath, they are not turning towards a distant past that fills the category of history or memory. Instead, like Ibu Ratih and what the purple potatoes evoke, the past often comes rushing up to meet them in the present. In my conversations with them, I came to understand how and why they often resist terms like “memory” or “history” when it comes to the events of 1965-1966.

Talking with Pak Budiarto, whose father disappeared when he was 11, he explains:

If you want to talk about when my father disappeared, to me, it’s like it happened yesterday. If you ask me about school or when I learned to swim, I *make* myself remember. I think of a time long ago. I don’t have to *remember* my father disappearing or the last time I saw him. It lives inside me. It is always with me. It is more than memory.

Here, Pak Budiarto distinguishes between the realm of memory and a realm that is “more than memory.” He distinguishes between making himself remember and the experiences he continues living with today. The loss of his father, which happened 45 years before we met, is something that feels like it only just happened as opposed to the events that happened “long ago” which belong to the realm of memory. The term “memory,” for Pak Budiarto signifies a temporality that does not match his phenomenological experience of time when thinking about the loss of his father.

Does Ibu Ratih *make* herself remember when she sees the purple potatoes in the market? The memory of eating them after her father’s death comes to her automatically and involuntarily. When she experiences the taste of the purple potatoes in her mouth standing in the market, can we only relegate that experience to the category of memory? Or can we say that she is having an

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<sup>33</sup> See Bubandt 2014, Good 2012, Sears 2007, Vickers 2010.

immediate experience, a sensation, in that moment of tasting the purple potatoes? How do these questions trouble the categories of memory and time that we want to apply to her experience?

Just as informants expressed their discomfort with using the term “memory” to describe their relation to the events of 1965-1966 and their aftermath, I learned that using the term “history” equally troubled some. I discovered this first by paying attention to the words my informants were using to talk about 1965-1966 and its aftermath. While I often used the term “history” (*sejarah*) in my questions and discussions to refer to that period (“the history of 1965,” “that history”), I noticed that few people were echoing that word back to me when they would reply. Instead, I noticed that they used the term “*peristiwa enam lima*,” which Mary Zurbuchen translates as “the ’65 incident” (2002, 568). I will return to this translation in a moment. I wondered whether I was unwittingly imposing the term “history” on 1965 and began asking my friends and informants about whether they would use the word “history” to describe 1965-1966 and its aftermath, and several explained why they would not.

“To me, ‘history’ is something that is finished,” Lina, a young college student in Yogyakarta, tells me. “You think about history, and you think of books you have read or stories you have heard that have a beginning and an end. But this 1965 ‘history’ has not yet ended. So if it’s called ‘history’, it is a different kind of history than the kind of history taught in school. It has to be a history that is still being written... that is not finished.” Lina’s statements are illuminating on several levels. First, even though she has no direct association with the killings or imprisonments (she did not live through that time and has no family members who were killed or imprisoned), she articulates that 1965 is not finished yet. It is not over. I will return to Lina’s feelings about what an end to this history would look like in Chapter Six, but for our purposes now, it is significant that to her, this cannot be called history because it is unfinished. When she expresses that if 1965 is history, it is different than the kind of history taught in school, this statement is meaningful on several levels. As will be discussed in the next two chapters, under Suharto’s New Order regime and even afterwards, history books made no mention of the extermination of half a million to a million citizens. So any accounts of the mass killings would be different than the history learned in school.

“The word ‘history’ is just a way to close the door,” Pak Eddi tells me in our conversation about whether 1965 is ‘ancient history.’ “Politicians sometimes say it here too. 1965 is history. They do not want the topic discussed. For me, it is not history.”

Both Lina and Pak Eddi distinguish between “history” and 1965. The next chapter details some of the ways in which the Suharto regime rewrote history and attempted to shape and control the collective memory of generations of Indonesians surrounding these events. Suffice it to say here:

The six-volume *National History of Indonesia* contains one sentence that mentions killings: “Only in East Java and Bali arose the chaos of abductions and killings, which were successfully brought under control again.” Even this hopelessly vague and factually incorrect sentence did not make it into the school textbooks, which were completely silent on the massacres. (Roosa, 2014)

It makes sense why my friends and informants would not want to use the terms “history” or “memory,” two domains managed and manipulated by the government. Refusing to relegate the events of 1965 to these domains is as an act of resistance that counters the official attempts to diminish, if not totally erase, the mass murders and suffering of millions of Indonesians. Not relegating these events to the domains of “history” and “memory” also underscores their immediacy for so many people, the way that they are still weaved into daily life.

Instead of using “history,” my friends and informants called 1965-1966 and its aftermath “*peristiwa 65*.” This is especially significant in light of John Roosa’s recent writing about how Suharto and his regime treated the killings “as a non-event, unworthy of consideration” (2014).<sup>34</sup> Zurbuchen translates “*peristiwa*” as “incident.” My exhaustive Indonesian-English dictionary offers the following translations: “episode, event, happening, affair, historical fact” (Stevens and Schmidgall-Tellings, 741). From the specific contextual examples the dictionary provides, it appears that “affair” would be the correct translation since other historical events are translated similarly. For example, “*peristiwa Madiun*” is widely known in English as the “The Madiun Affair.” What is significant is not these quibbles over translation, but the fact that through using the word “*peristiwa*,” my friends and informants define 1965-1966 and its aftermath, claim it, as an “event.” This happened, their choice of words insists. This is not a non-event. It is an event and one that does not belong to the distant, closed realms of “history” or “memory” but instead is an active force the lives of Indonesians in a myriad of ways.

### Conclusion

Throughout this chapter, I have described the ways in which the past and present have become entangled in time and space and deeply inform and affect each other. Material traces of the past include the unmarked mass graves that dot the Indonesian landscape, the purple potatoes at market, the bridge a man crosses on his way to work. For my informants, this past does not belong in the categories of “history” or “memory” because of the ways it is still navigated, experienced, and felt in daily life today.

Degung Santikarma, a Balinese anthropologist who is working on an ethnography of the killings and their impact in Bali, has written, “The past soaks into the ground of the present, saturating it with meaning and shifting the landscape with its cultural and emotional weight. It can be buried or even burned, but its ashes change the composition of the soil” (Santikarma, 2000). There is no question that the soil of the present is permeated and transformed by the past, but I propose that Santikarma has the direction going the wrong way. Instead of the past soaking down into the soil of the present, it springs up, refusing to be left behind. In the chapters that follow, you will see how the past rushes into the present experiences, emotions, and expressions of the people in these pages.

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<sup>34</sup> As part of Roosa’s current project, he is investigating a single mass grave in Bali and the massacre of the 35 men who lie in that grave. Through a “micro-level analysis” that includes oral history interviews with witnesses, perpetrators, and the victims’ families, Roosa describes his investigation as “turning what was meant to be a non-event into a historical fact” (2015).

## Chapter Two - Propaganda, Paranoia, and Surveillance

Ridha, the 19-year old college student who was my first neighbor in my boarding house in Yogyakarta, asked me about the topic of my research one Saturday afternoon when she and two of her friends, all clad in their pajamas, were sprawled on the two couches in front of the TV that never worked in the common room. Most of them were staring down at their phones as I replied that I was trying to better understand the impact of the killings that happened during 1965, trying to understand the ways those still affect daily life today. “The killings?” Ridha asked, “You mean of the generals?” “No,” I replied, “The other killings.” She looked around at her friends. “The other killings?” one of them echoed inquisitively. Most of the tapping on the phones stopped as each woman looked at me. “You mean of the Communists?” the third woman asked, “Why do you want to understand that?” She paused for only a moment or two before continuing, “You know when the Communist Party murdered those generals? They tortured them first. Mutilated them.” Her voice grew louder, “Women *danced* as they were murdered.” Ridha grimaced. The second woman leaned forward and said, “My grandfather told me that in my village the Communists were digging a giant hole right behind the schoolhouse. The Communists were planning to kill people and bury their bodies there behind the schoolhouse. So, yes, there were Communists killed, but they were planning to kill people. The PKI was evil.”

Here, in my boarding house in the university town of Yogyakarta in 2011, living with college students who were not even born in 1965 and people who had been educated after the fall of Suharto, the official narrative of the purported attempted coup and the Communist threat persisted. This was not the first or last time I would hear a story about Communists digging a giant pit, plotting mass murder, although sometimes the pit was behind a schoolhouse, sometimes behind a mosque, or near a market. It certainly was not the first or last time I would hear about how the generals were mutilated before their deaths, although I often heard about the mutilation in even more lurid detail with informants telling me about how the generals’ penises had been sliced with razor blades. Informants articulated to me how these activities by the Communists illustrated their menace. They needed to be stopped.

It was an ongoing part of my research to ask people what happened in 1965. I wanted to hear how people would articulate the events of that time. I was surprised by how often I heard the tropes of the official narrative repeated back to me as if they were historical facts and surprised by how many people focused on the deaths of the generals in great detail, barely mentioning the mass killings and imprisonments, if at all. Before my fieldwork began, I had heard stories about prominent scholars on this topic giving lectures about 1965 and its aftermath where Indonesian students would stand up afterwards in disbelief, shocked that they had never learned or did not know this part of the history of their own country.<sup>35</sup> The narrative emerged not only in conversations in my own boarding house with well-educated people but in conversations and interviews throughout my fieldwork. These tropes emerged again and again, both from people who had lived through this history and those who had not.

Not everyone I encountered repeated the official narrative. Many people recognized the government’s version of what happened on October 1, 1965 and its characterization of the PKI (Communist Party) as propaganda. Others confided in me uncertainties, reservations, and

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<sup>35</sup> Echoing stories I have heard from other scholars, Saskia Wieringa has recently written about the shocked reactions of Indonesian audience members at two lectures she gave in late 2014. See Wieringa 2014.

questions about what they had learned. There are lots of people who now actively write against the narrative, make art against it, collect oral histories to counteract it, and work to influence revisions in the educational curriculum. Despite all of these efforts, the official narrative and the propaganda still have a tenacious hold. The official narrative continues to dominate many people's knowledge and understanding of the past.

While it is tempting in the face of this dominant historical distortion to focus this chapter on the truth or falsity of the details of the official narrative, reducing discussion of the propaganda to a discussion of 'lies' versus 'truth' misses the ways in which people are influenced, subjects are created, even by 'false' narratives. Such a reduction misses the ways in which people come to articulate, navigate, and circulate the history, even false history, that they have learned. Exploring the persistence of this propaganda is critical to contextualizing people's attitudes towards the Communist Party, towards the period of the killings, towards reconciliation or justice, and to appreciate the impact of stigmatization and marginalization that still exist almost 50 years after the alleged coup and the killings took place. None of these can be investigated without first delving into the foundational role of the official narrative and propaganda that alerted everyone to the Communist threat and the ways the narrative and propaganda continue to be articulated, expressed, and circulated today.

In this chapter, I explore some of the most powerful propaganda tools that still shape attitudes and opinions in the present, and I relate that propaganda and the fear and paranoia they engender to practices of surveillance and self-surveillance that I encountered in my fieldwork.

### **The official narrative**

The official narrative about the attempted coup and the Communist threat is an elaborate one that entire books and dissertations have been written about.<sup>36</sup> In a recent article by historian John Roosa, he argues that the Suharto regime actually presented three different versions of the events of October 1<sup>st</sup> 1965 and its aftermath to the public at different times, with slight differences between them, but the feature common to all of them was that the Communist Party (PKI) was unquestionably the mastermind between the 30<sup>th</sup> of September Movement (Roosa, 2012). The 30<sup>th</sup> of September Movement was not just framed as a coup against President Sukarno or as a purge of top Army commanders but also as "a mass revolt against all decent patriotic Indonesians. PKI members across the country, from big cities to inaccessible villages, were part of one vast conspiracy to overthrow the state and establish a communist dictatorship" (Roosa 2012, 31).

Much of the initial propaganda surrounded the nature of the deaths of the generals and how the manner of their deaths illustrated the depravity of the Communist Party. Following the purported attempted coup, the military seized control of the media, shutting down leftist newspapers, and they began disseminating their version of what happened in the early morning hours of October 1st. Roosa writes that newspaper "editors were told in early October that the Army was starting a campaign against the PKI and anyone printing information critical of that campaign would be considered an ally of the PKI. No neutrality was permitted" (2012, 29).

According to the propaganda, military troops taking their orders from the PKI kidnapped the generals and took them to a rubber grove in the south of Jakarta (*Lubang Buaya*). There, members of Gerwani, a women's organization affiliated with the PKI, danced naked in front of members of the youth wing of the PKI (*Pemuda Rakyat*) before torturing, mutilating, and killing

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<sup>36</sup> See Djakababa 2009 and 2013, McGregor 2007, Roosa 2012.

the generals. Roosa summarizes, “Women were alleged to have danced naked in front of captured generals, cut their bodies a thousand times with razor blades, gouged out their eyeballs, and sliced off their genitals. The entire story was fabricated” (Roosa 2012, 30). In December 1965, President Sukarno told the press that the mutilation stories were false, but mutilation remains a central part of the narrative (Drakely, 19). When the generals’ autopsy results were later discovered, translated, and published outside of Indonesia, they revealed no signs of torture or mutilation. The generals died from gunshot wounds (Anderson 1987).

In addition to detailing the events of October 1st and the lurid details of the deaths of the generals, the media began spreading Suharto’s claims that even though he had defeated the 30<sup>th</sup> of September Movement, the danger of the Movement and of the PKI remained:

According to press reports of late 1965 and early 1966, the September 30<sup>th</sup> Movement [...] was a social revolt led by the PKI that would, if not stopped, lead to many more murders of non-communists throughout the country. [...] PKI members across the country, from big cities to inaccessible villages, were part of one vast conspiracy to overthrow the state and establish a communist dictatorship. They were allegedly digging mass graves to hold their intended victims, stockpiling weapons from China and typing up lists of names of their enemies to be killed. The sadistic tortures inflicted on the generals in Jakarta were to be repeated on all of the Party’s opponents around the country. [...] As Suharto put it in November 1965, the Movement had to be ‘destroyed down to its roots.’ (Roosa 2012, 31-32)

Historian Steven Drakeley describes: “The Lubang Buaya myth was a black propaganda campaign which luridly and highly effectively detailed alleged crimes against humanity, against the Indonesian nation and state, against God, and against the normative Indonesian cosmic and social order” (12). According to the narrative, these crimes were committed by the PKI which Suharto cast as solely responsible for the attempted coup. Historian, activist, and lecturer Hilmar Farid describes:

Suharto’s clique used its control over the media to promote an image of the PKI as a kind of wild beast of larger-than-life proportions. The media circulated stories about sadistic violence committed on the generals in Lubang Buaya – eye gouging, genital mutilation, orgiastic pleasure in inflicting pain. Suharto’s terror campaign was designed not just to make the public hate the PKI but also to feel directly threatened by it. The army made near daily announcements about new ‘evidence’ it uncovered in raiding PKI buildings and homes. In many regions of Indonesia, the army declared that it had discovered a PKI hit list of people to be executed, such as religious leaders and non-communist politicians. All those on the list were encouraged to feel that the PKI was out to murder them. These lists too were probably part of the same intelligence operation since they included fanciful lists of the weapons to be used, such as instruments for gouging out eyes (which in many cases were actually tools for tapping rubber trees), as well as ditches or holes in the earth, like the well in Lubang Buaya, for throwing away the corpses. Newspapers reported sensational discoveries, such as containers filled with firearms upon which had been carved Chinese characters and slogans such as ‘Long Live PKI!’ Most of the stories were complete fabrications. (Farid 2005, 6)

Drakeley writes about how the propaganda fueled this feeling of immediate danger.

[A] wide range of irrational fears and rumours readily washed around the country

(a phenomenon not unknown in other historical contexts, such as the “Great Fear” during the French Revolution). These fears and rumours acquired further credibility thanks to a press full of panic-inducing reports of water and food supplies being poisoned by the PKI, and of discoveries of "poisoned arrow" caches and suspicious stores of DDT (Djakarta Daily Mail, 16 November 1965, 9 December 1965). Also reported discovered were comprehensive death lists, ready-prepared mass graves and arms caches in every PKI stronghold. In this atmosphere, in which every rubber-tapping tool was construed as an "eye-gouger", the "PKI Malam" (underground PKI) seemed supernaturally potent, and ever ready and able to strike regardless of how many times it was decapitated. (Drakeley, 16)

The circulating propaganda convinced ordinary people that they were waged in a life and death struggle against the Communist Party. Not only were their lives in danger, but their way of life would be destroyed if the Communists succeeded in abolishing religion and seizing power, property, and land. Steven Drakeley writes:

Essentially, as black propaganda of about the darkest shade imaginable; the horror story was designed to "otherise" the PKI to a truly extreme degree. In other words, it was intended to demonise the PKI (and dehumanise its members) in order to feed the fear and loathing with which many regarded it, and thereby to stimulate, justify and facilitate the harshest possible anti-PKI measures. [...] Its rigorous demonisation of the PKI dehumanised PKI supporters so that they appeared as nothing but bloodthirsty and sexually sadistic monsters. The dehumanisation even approached a literal equation of PKI members with animals: "these scurvy mongrels (who) put their slimy claws on the innocent souls of our children" (Djakarta Daily Mail, 11 December 1965). (Drakeley, 20-21)

Hilmar Farid writes:

The communists of Indonesia were dehumanized so that the public would not see the communists as fellow citizens but only as demons bent on spreading atheism and sadism. Those civilians who approved of the killings of the communists often argue today that it was a time when ‘you either kill or be killed’, as if the PKI members were dangerous killers ready and determined to kill all their enemies. But what needs to be recognized is that this atmosphere was intentionally manufactured by the army. (Farid 2005, 7)

This manufacturing of a perilous kill-or-be-killed atmosphere was a key driver of the ensuing mass killings. In his book about the Cambodian genocide, anthropologist Alexander Hinton writes about how genocide does not just happen on its own. No amount of state ideology, even in familiar packaging, can motivate people to kill without what Hinton calls “genocidal priming” -- the historical processes that “generate a genocidal context” (2005, 279-280). The community needs to be prepared, Hinton argues. The “manufacturing of difference” by the state sets the enemy apart and in a context of political, social, or economic upheaval, the state conducts a campaign of racist propaganda against the victim group. The propaganda campaign against the Communist Party by the military in Indonesia is one such vivid example with massively deadly results.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> We will return to the dehumanizing aspects of the propaganda in the next chapter on stigmatization and marginalization.

As propaganda was being spread in the media, Suharto turned towards institutionalizing and enshrining the official version of history. In *History In Uniform: Military Ideology and the Construction of Indonesia's Past*, historian Katharine McGregor examines the means by which “the Indonesian military sought to monopolize the production of official history and control its contents.” She details the projects to replicate, preserve, and memorialize the official narrative of the coup and the Communist threat. The three most salient ways Suharto and the military accomplished these goals were through history textbooks, a museum and monument to the fallen generals erected at Lubang Buaya, and a four-hour propaganda film relating the official narrative in lurid and bloody detail. Ratna Hapsari, the head of the Indonesian History Teachers Association, asserts, “Suharto’s New Order regime had shaped Indonesia’s collective memory through propagandist monuments, museums and movies” (Jacobson).

We can see how this collective memory continues to emerge today in my conversation with Ridha and her friends in the common room of my guesthouse. First, when I say I am there to investigate the killings of 1965 and the way those affect daily life today, Ridha assumes I mean the killing of the generals, as if those are the 1965 killings that deserve attention. “Why do you want to understand [the killings of the Communists]?” one of her friends asks me. Second, they say that the generals were tortured, mutilated, and women danced as the generals were murdered. Finally, Ridha’s friend articulates the familiar propaganda tropes of PKI members preparing a giant grave for their future victims, the need to kill or be killed, and the overall evil of the PKI. These young women have not read the news reports that proliferated in 1965 and 1966, but they have clearly absorbed the official narrative to the point where they repeat it uncritically, as if it is historical fact. They were not the only ones to do so.

### ***Pengkhianatan G30S/PKI (The Treachery of the G30S/PKI)***

In the opening minutes of the film *Pengkhianatan G30S/PKI (The Treachery of the G30S/PKI)*, the camera focuses on hands grabbing knives and sickles. Ominous music plays as shadowy figures make their way into the darkness outside. A chicken crows. In a mosque, men bow from the waist as part of their prayer ritual as the shadowy figures approach. The men in the mosque kneel, foreheads to the floor, in prayer. The shadowy figures, holding clubs and sticks, stride forward in the darkness. As the praying men raise their palms upwards, the shadowy figures strike, running into the mosque, descending on the faithful, beating them, bloodying them, and striking copies of the Koran with a sickle.

The four-hour dramatic film *Pengkhianatan G30S/PKI (The Treachery of the G30S/PKI)* was released in 1984 and portrays the days leading up to the coup, the coup attempt, and the days following the coup. Based on the first Indonesian official written history of the attempted coup, the film depicts Communists as depraved and ruthless killers. They attack Muslim landowners. They plot, hunt, torture, and kill the generals, and Suharto leaps to action to defeat them. Nothing is sacred to the Communists -- not children, not old people, not praying Muslims in the mosque, not the generals. They are all bloodied, tortured, and slaughtered in gory closeups. The only violence the film leaves out is the extermination of hundreds of thousands of Indonesians and the detention of hundreds of thousands more.

Once released, the film was shown every year on September 30<sup>th</sup> on state television, private television stations, and in movie theatres. Students from elementary school to college were required to watch the film.

Polls conducted by *Tempo Magazine* and the newspaper *Kompas* illustrate the influence of the film on people’s education about the events of October 1st and on their attitudes about

Communists. Yosef Djakababa summarizes:

In a 1999 survey, *Tempo* magazine found that 97 percent of their respondents had seen Pengkhianatan G.30.S/PKI. Among that number, around 60 percent saw the movie more than three times. Furthermore 72 percent of respondents depended on the movie as their major source of information about what had happened on October 1, 1965. A survey done by Kompas newspaper and published on September 30, 2002, revealed that 77 percent of respondents perceived being a communist as identical with sadistic, atheist, and immoral attitudes. Moreover, more than half of the respondents agreed that communist was identical to murderer. (2009, 309-310)

Anthropologist Ariel Heryanto writes about a separate poll conducted by *Tempo Magazine* in September of 2000:

Two years into the post-New Order era, *Tempo* held another round of polls, canvassing 1,101 secondary school students from the nation's three largest cities (Jakarta, Surabaya and Medan). To the question of where they had learned the history of the 1965 events, 90 per cent responded "film". As there was only one film on the subject, there is no ambiguity as to which film they were referring to. [...] Respondents in this poll were invited to give more than one answer to the question. At the top of the list was "teachers and text books" (97 per cent); "film" came second. (Heryanto 2014a, 82)

When I asked people throughout my fieldwork how they learned the details of the purported attempted coup, I heard most often that they learned about it from their family members. A close second was this film, and school textbooks were the third most common source.

The film had an undeniable power in educating people about the official narrative that pinned total responsibility for the abortive coup on the PKI and omitted the mass killings and detentions from the picture. The film was not just educational in an intellectual or an historic capacity but in a moral one as well. In the next chapter on stigma, we will explore this moral dimension further. To delve deeper than simply whether people have seen it or how many times, I wanted to explore how people received the film, the ways in which they perceived it or were affected by it, and whether they took it as truth, as fiction, or something in between.

Ibu Lia, a 35-year old teacher in Yogyakarta, told me that watching the movie annually from an early age had a "terrifying effect" on her.

I have two children now, and I do not want them ever to see that movie. It is so violent. Really terrifying. Even though I haven't seen the movie in 10 years or more, I could describe so many scenes to you now. I remember certain scenes like I am watching the movie now. Because of censors, we usually don't see violence in movies. It is not shown. Maybe it is suggested or it happens off-camera. In this film, you see the violence. [...] The scene that had the greatest effect on me was a scene where a man had his eyeball sliced with a razor. The Communist took a razor and sliced the man's eyeball. Just like that. And it was shown very very close up. I still don't like razor blades because of that scene. I was a child. Why did I have to see that? The film would give me nightmares.

When I asked her if she ever questioned whether the film was true or not, she said she never doubted it.

It's strange, because maybe it wasn't until I was in college that I learned that the

film wasn't true. Looking at it now, I consider the film almost like a horror movie. That's how I remember it. Very scary. Very disgusting. Very violent. Maybe because I was still young... At the time, I thought it was true. It was like a documentary. What I mean is that even though there were actors in it and obviously the actor playing Suharto only looked like Suharto, it was just a filmed version of what had happened. That is what I thought then. Very clear. No one ever said it wasn't true. I started seeing the film in school before I could question whether it was true or not. The teachers never said it wasn't true. They said we had to pay attention. I remember that so well. I looked down during the scene with the razor blade. Like this... [Ibu Lia casts her eyes downward.] One year a teacher saw me and told me that I had to watch. I had to pay attention. She would watch me to make sure my eyes were open and I was looking at the film. Why would I have to pay attention to it if it weren't true? We had to know. We had to be reminded. I saw that film for many years. Of course I was affected by it.

Pak Darma, my closest friend and informant, shook his head when we were talking about the film one day.

*"Cuci otak. Cuci otak.* Brainwashing, brainwashing. The film was so scary and so violent that it brainwashed people into thinking that Communists were evil. It brainwashed them into thinking Suharto was a hero. The history textbooks contained the same material. The military, the government, Suharto, they tried to control the minds of all these people who grew up watching this movie. Even me. I didn't know. To be honest, I still don't know. It is hard to say that I was manipulated, but I was. Have I told you that as a boy, I would be afraid to utter the word 'Communist'? I thought people would come and take me away. That's how dangerous it was to even talk about it. And you know where I grew up. The danger of even mentioning Communism reached me there. The danger was everywhere. That's what I believed."

Pak Darma, who was born in 1968, grew up in a very remote fishing village on an island in Eastern Indonesia. As a boy, his village had no electricity and no telephones given its remote location. The fact that he felt the danger of speaking about Communism, even there, illustrates the extent and force of the propaganda's reach.

"How do you reverse brainwashing?" he asks me later in the conversation. "If people believed this their whole lives, how do you tell them that they are wrong? They won't accept it."

For many, the official narrative's inventions and distortions occupy the category of historical fact. "To me, the film *is* what happened." Pak Widi emphasizes when we discuss the relation between the film and his knowledge about the history of the events of 1965. "There is no difference between the film and what happened. You ask me that question like they are two separate things. The film was how I learned what happened. It was shown every year on television. It was shown in school. You could not avoid seeing it. I saw that film every year for 13 years."

After the fall of Suharto in 1998, the film was not shown publicly anymore or required viewing in school. When I surveyed the 17 college students in my guesthouse, only four answered that they had seen the film. More than half reported hearing about the film from their parents or teachers, and two said they had watched parts of the film on YouTube but never the whole thing. Even though the film is not being shown anymore, its effects are still being felt and the propagandistic power of the film is still being expressed.

One damp Thursday afternoon, just days after my conversation with Pak Darma about brainwashing, I accompany Pak Sapto to the closest post office to his tailor shop. As we walk and discuss his latest news and mine, people hurry past us to avoid the rain that looks like it is about to return, but Pak Sapto keeps his measured pace, and I shuffle along beside him, forcing myself to take smaller steps to match his.

Walking back to the shop after his business at the post office is done, we talk a bit about my research. I mention that someone told me that the film *Pengkhianatan G30S/PKI* was used as a tool to brainwash people. Pak Sapto responds so passionately, I have no trouble quoting him in my fieldnotes later. “The PKI wanted to brainwash us!” he spits out, “It was them who wanted to take our land and destroy our religion. They wanted to control our minds. It was the Communists!”

Pak Sapto then asks whether the person who told me that the film was a brainwashing tool is aware that the dangers of Communism predated the 30<sup>th</sup> of September Movement. He launches into a history lesson that lasts the rest of the slightly quicker shuffle back to the tailor shop, detailing his knowledge about pro-Communist protests that turned violent, the methods the PKI used to intimidate landowners, and the Madiun Affair, which Pak Sapto characterizes as the first time the Communists tried to seize control. He tells me that during the Madiun Affair, which happened during the Indonesian National Revolution, Communists took control of Madiun, a town in east Java, and killed many Muslim leaders. It was training (*latihan*), Pak Sapto tells me, for what they would attempt 17 years later on a grander scale.<sup>38</sup> For Pak Sapto, whose anti-Communist sentiments still run strong, notions that the film could be used for brainwashing are ludicrous.

### Textbooks

Film was not the only medium that parroted the official narrative. As early as 1966, there was debate outside Indonesia about who was truly responsible for the purported attempted coup, but inside Indonesia, the first published account of the coup, published in 1966, “was largely a consolidated version of Army propaganda setting out ‘proof’ that the coup attempt was a Communist plot” (McGregor 2007, 62). The abbreviation for the purported coup attempt was immediately instantiated as “G30S/PKI,” linking the name of the purported coup movement (30<sup>th</sup> of September Movement or G30S) with those responsible, the Communist Party (PKI). This abbreviation appeared in newspapers, published accounts of the coup, and textbooks. For decades, textbooks emphasized the treachery of the 30<sup>th</sup> of September Movement, the Communist Party, the heroism of Suharto, and made no mention of the mass killings that followed the attempted “coup.”

When Suharto fell from power in 1998, public debate was finally allowed about what had happened in the early morning hours of October 1, 1965 and who had been responsible. Scholars, journalists, and activists began to openly question the level of participation of the Communist Party in the purported coup.

In 2004, six years after Suharto stepped down from power, history books for the nationwide history curriculum were published that removed the “PKI” part from the “G30S/PKI”

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<sup>38</sup> Pak Sapto does not mention that in the crushing of the leftist rebellion, in which the PKI played only a part, tens of thousands of Communists were killed or jailed. So who exactly was practicing? I almost ask him, but in this promenading lecture, I am his student, and I do not want to offend.

term. The new curriculum acknowledged the debate over whether the Communist Party was solely responsible for the 30th of September Movement, the alleged coup, and the killings of the generals. Almost immediately, protests began about this change to the history books. In 2007, the Attorney General banned the new history textbooks and some of the books were burned in public protests. The new curriculum was replaced with the Suharto-era accounts of the history of the coup, the murder of the generals, and the erasure of the deaths of hundreds of thousands of people and the detention of hundreds of thousands more.

Ibu Susi, a mother of four children who lives in an affluent enclave in Yogyakarta, tries to provide me with context when we discuss the furor caused by the revision of the history books, “By the time Suharto fell, many people hated him, it’s true. We hoped for open discussion. Finally. But for 30 years people believed what was said about the PKI. Communists were guilty. Evil. We hated Suharto but maybe we had been taught to hate the PKI more. In 2007, certainly the government was not ready to correct the textbooks. At that time they were not ready to say they were wrong. They still are not ready.”

Ibu Susi’s husband, who has been intermittently eavesdropping on our interview, finding excuses to repeatedly enter and leave the room we are sitting in, enters to add his thoughts to the conversation. “What you have to understand, Martha, is that the people in power then... in 1965.... They still have power now. Suharto is dead. But many people benefited from the New Order, from what happened in 1965... Of course they do not want to change the history books. They are protecting themselves. Their positions.” Ibu Susi nods.

“Even after Suharto, we weren’t free,” Pak Budiarto tells me as he flicks some ants off the fried bananas his wife has placed in front of us. “When Suharto fell, my family was so happy. Everyone was so excited. We thought there would be democracy. Justice.” Pak Budiarto was 11 years old and living in Central Java when his father was disappeared during 1965. “But it turned out that asking questions about what had happened made too many people afraid. Even after Suharto. To suggest that the PKI was not responsible...?” Pak Budiarto’s voice trails off and he shakes his head. “People were afraid.” Afraid of what, I ask him, and he pauses so long before answering, I start wondering whether I should ask a different question. Eventually, he speaks, “How could people explain what they had experienced or maybe what they had done if the Communists weren’t to blame? If Suharto lied and everyone believed the lie, what do we do?” Pak Budiarto sips the tea and falls into silence.

No wonder there is a great deal of anxiety associated with disentangling the Communist Party from descriptions of the 30<sup>th</sup> of September Movement and with asking questions about this official version of history. In these reflections, there is a sense of the kinds of issues at stake for people reconsidering the official narrative. The official narrative has provided Indonesians with a particular shared understanding of the past and a particular justification for their circumstances then and now. What happens if that is destroyed? What would it mean about people’s own actions, losses, or experiences if the official narrative turns out not to be true? Would those actions lose their meaning, their coherence if the framework that undergirded them – the ultimate guilt of the Communists, the idea that the Communists were getting what they deserved, the notion that the Communists were going to kill if they were not killed -- dropped away? For some Indonesians, particularly families of victims, revisiting this official narrative is extremely important and long overdue. For others, there is a potential undoing of selves and of worlds that might come with the revision of this history. People might have to face their own guilt or complicity in relation to the events of 1965-1966 if the justification for those events is acknowledged to be false. This lies at the heart of Pak Budiarto’s question of what people would

do if it were discovered that Suharto had lied. How would some live with what they had done? In the presence of the official narrative, these hard questions do not have to be faced because the official narrative paints the stark picture of good and evil, and it is clear who is on what side. If the image of Communists as evil is destabilized or falls away by suggesting they were not responsible for the purported coup, which became the foundational event of the overthrow of President Sukarno and the ushering in of Suharto's New Order, would that those who had "defended" Indonesia were not good, that what they did was not right, that the ways they might have profited from the killings or from the New Order were not earned or deserved? There are likely many Indonesians who do not want to confront these types of questions.

### **Paranoia and the Communist threat**

Before, during, and after my fieldwork, news reports sprung up about incidents arising out of the fear that Communism is about to be revived in Indonesia.

Police Say Communism Fears Led Them To Disband Yogyakarta Teachers Forum: The National Police apologized on Thursday for a July 17 incident in which Yogyakarta Police broke up a workshop attended by history teachers on suspicions that the session would be used to spread communism. – *Jakarta Globe*, August 7, 2009

A public meeting on free health care services sponsored by the House of Representatives here [in Banyuwangi, East Java] on Thursday was rudely disrupted by a crowd that considered it to be a gathering of the banned Indonesian Communist Party. "There are members of the PKI community here. Why are they here?" local FPI chairman Aman Faturahman shouted at the meeting's participants, referring to the communist party by its acronym. Aman said he suspected the meeting was part of activities to keep the PKI legacy alive and eventually to prepare for its comeback. - *Jakarta Globe*, June 25, 2010

The Indonesian Anti-Communist Front (FAKI) in Yogyakarta has vowed to fight against all movements aimed at reviving the abolished Indonesian Communist Party (PKI) and threatened to kill family members of the 1965 political prisoners. "They (the families) are PKI cadres, (we) should not only disband them, we should also kill them," said Burhanuddin Zainuddin Rusjiman, founder of FAKI Yogyakarta on Monday. On Sunday, FAKI disbanded a gathering of the family members of the 1965 communist genocide in Yogyakarta, resulting in several injured. Burhanuddin, 73 years old, said there would be no mercy for communists in Indonesia. – *Tempo*, October 29, 2013

Concern, paranoia, and fear about the revival of Communism in Indonesia were common themes I heard during my fieldwork. Any broaching of the topic of the attempted coup or the killings during my fieldwork, 14 years after the fall of Suharto, opens one up to questions about one's motives and ultimate aims.

Barbara Hatley, who has written about performance and theatre as forms of cultural resistance against the official narrative, writes:

[T]he Suharto regime not only justified its rise to power in terms of suppression of

the Communist movement, but deliberately maintained a sense of danger, and fuelled fears of the recurrence of the events of 1965-66, as a mechanism of social control. The term “Communist”, as Ariel Heryanto explains, became a “floating signifier” which could become attached to anyone or anything, undermining the legitimacy of their existence. (Heryanto 2006) Citizens set up hyper-obedient practices, reproducing the fear of Communist threat and reflecting it back to state authorities. In this sense the trauma affected the entire society, and lasted for 30 years, right throughout the life of the New Order regime. (Hatley, 2)

As this excerpt indicates, along with a fear of the revival of Communism is the latent threat of the revival of state violence at the level exercised in 1965-66. Informants often shared with me that under Suharto, there was a constant wariness that should things get bad, the government might exercise its power again like it did in 1965.

“The military learned in 1965 that they could kill a million people, put hundreds of thousands of people in jail, and nothing would happen to them. It was the ultimate control. They certainly learned a lesson from that. And so did the public. It taught us something about what was possible,” Pak Darma told me.

Ibu Nini, whose father died in 1965, echoed these concerns when talking about the memorial events that Suharto held each October 1<sup>st</sup> at Lubang Buaya, the site where the bodies of the generals were disposed of. For her, the commemorative events were not just a reminder of the deaths of the generals but also a reminder of the mass killings:

It looked like it was a memorial service for the generals. It was. But at the same time, it was also a reminder – an annual reminder – of all the other deaths, of all the other violence. It was like Suharto was saying ‘I have not forgotten.’ We did not forget either. If they could do this with no one standing against them, what else could they do? I think many people felt that way. I know that’s how I felt and how my family felt.

The commemorative ritual was a reminder of the government’s exercise of brute force and a warning that they could potentially use it in the future.

### **The Truth of the Bones: Exhumation**

Much of the sensitivity, concern, and fear about the Communist threat is expressed through the attitudes towards the mass graves that dot the Indonesian landscape and the bodies that lie within them. Anthropologist Ariel Heryanto’s book *State Terrorism and Political Identity in Indonesia: Fatally Belonging* opens with a few pages describing the first and only successful excavation of a mass grave in Java on November 16, 2000.

They found the broken skeletons of eight bodies on the first day, nine the next, and seven others on the third and concluding day. Preliminary forensic study on-site by a volunteer physician identified a couple of females among the exhumed, including one with a wedding ring dated 28/06/1965, or nine months prior to the date on which the mass murder had taken place (according to the local residents, on 3 March 1966). Most had apparently been shot at point blank range from above, with guns that were available only to the military. As many as 13 cartridges were found. (Heryanto 2006, 1-2)

Heryanto goes on to describe that when the remains reached Sarjito Hospital in Yogyakarta: it took many weeks before anyone from this reputable hospital had the courage to

proceed with the autopsies as requested. They refused to do anything until the Republic's Police Chief granted official permission, which involved another long series of negotiations with local, regional, and national authorities. (Heryanto 2006, 2)

The real problems came in late March 2001 when the bones were going to be reburied on the land of Irawan Mangunkusuma, who had been a political prisoner for eight years.

On the day of the scheduled reburial, 15 people occupied Irawan's house, while a hostile crowd of around 3,000 according to one estimate (TAPOL 2001b) encircled the house, 'many of them brandishing sharp weapons and yelling slogans like "Death to Irawan" and "Irawan PKI"' (TAPOL 2001b). Not only were the ceremony and reburial cancelled, several attendees of the ceremonies were beaten, and vehicles damaged before the police stopped the crowd from burning them. According to one report, at least 'five coffins... were dragged out, broken into, and the bodies strewn on the ground' (TAPOL 2001a). The attacking group, which called itself Forum Ukhuwah Islamiyah Kaloran, demanded that no bodies of the alleged communists or their associates and kin should be buried or reburied in their surrounding areas. Several figures on the local council endorsed this demand, and those in charge of the ceremony duly complied. (Heryanto 2006, 2)

In an article about this exhumation and reburial attempt in Kaloran, Katharine McGregor writes that "many" within the committee that organized the exhumations and reburial (the Foundation for the Research into Victims of the 1965-66 Killings) "realised that the reburial had not been properly planned and that they were perhaps overconfident about the extent to which community attitudes towards the events of 1965 had changed" (McGregor 2010).

It is evident that the literal unearthing of this period of Indonesian history involves contestation, confusion, and emotion on all sides. The bones were exhumed but then when they were going to be reburied, there was a riot. That is how volatile this history is. In this case, the protestors opposed the "reburial [that] served to rehumanise the victims of this violence, thus challenging the long held view that communists were somehow subhuman and deserving of their fate" (McGregor 2010).

As described in the previous chapter, there are mass graves everywhere, but people's relation to them often expresses the anxiety or concern about whether attempts to exhume and rebury the dead or even mark the graves would be perceived as an attempt to revive Communism.

On a sweltering August day, Ibu Nini serves me hot tea and I ask her about moving or reburying the bones of her father, which lie in a mass grave 20 minutes away:

I want to bury my father in the Islamic way. But it's too dangerous. I remember when a group came here to research mass graves. They asked us the locations of mass graves in this area. They said they were making a map with locations of the graves. So I told them where they were. So did others. But what happened after that? Nothing. [...] If I go to the place where my father is buried and I ask someone to help remove my father, I am reminding people that my father was killed during 1965. They would not help me. Afterwards, maybe they will watch me more closely. They might think I am Communist. It would not be safe for me or for my family. I wish they would remove all the bones together. I do not want to ask. If they removed everyone who lies there and returned their bones to us...

But it is not safe.

When I ask if she had heard about the riot in Kaloran, she tells me she has. She says she is not surprised there were problems. There will likely be problems if anyone tries something like that again, she tells me. She echoes that reestablishing a connection to the body of her father would present a danger to her today and reinforce her connection to this violent past.

“What about a monument or a gravestone?” I ask her. “Can you do something like that?”

“Treating the place as special would anger people,” she says. “These people were thrown away. They were thrown out. To go now and say this place is special... They might say that I support Communism. [...] Is that place special to me? Yes, it is special. My father is there. But on another hand, it is horrible. It’s a terrible place. I do not think we should behave like it is special or sacred when people were thrown out there like they were no better than garbage.”

The other refrain I heard often was that the people who died in 1965 were not worthy of reburial.

“Why should we bury them?” Ibu Kunthi asks me forcefully when I ask her about exhuming the mass graves one day. “They put the generals down a hole. The generals were mutilated. So why do the PKI deserve to be buried with respect when they tortured the generals the way they did? Let them stay where they are.” In this remark, Ibu Kunthi assigns responsibility for the killings of the generals on the people buried in her village in East Java. As the propaganda campaign asserted, all Communists should be held equally responsible for the 30<sup>th</sup> of September Movement. Whether they knew about it or not, they were part of a surreptitious plot by the Communists to seize control and were thus as culpable as those at Lubang Buaya.

Pak Sapto explains it to me patiently as if I don’t understand. “It has been too long to bury them again now. It would remind too many people... It’s better if the bones are not moved.” When I ask Pak Sapto why that would be better, he replies in a tone like he is answering a young child’s question, “These are people who wanted to kill us. Should we care how they were buried? They wanted to kill my family, me, my neighbor, his neighbor. Do you think they would have cared how my family was buried? They didn’t believe in God so I’m sure they wouldn’t have buried us with respect. Why should we treat them with respect? We don’t want the PKI to return. That would be very bad for Indonesia.”

It is clear that to reestablish one’s relationship to the deceased person’s body is to bring alive again all the things entailed in that relationship in present day, including judgment and stigma, which I will discuss more in the following chapter, and the fear of being perceived as Communist or pro-Communist (or leftist or pro-leftist). The attitude towards mass graves and the bodies that lie within express much of the current attitudes to this history and the latent, perceived danger of Communism in daily life today.

## **Surveillance**

There remains a great deal of sensitivity about the topic of 1965, and I never experienced this more directly during my fieldwork than when The Goethe Institute in Jakarta organized a conference called “Indonesia and the World in 1965” that was held from January 18<sup>th</sup> to January 21<sup>st</sup>, 2011. The goal of the conference was to discuss and explore the international dimensions of what happened in 1965, to understand how the Cold War provided a context for the political events in Indonesia, and to discuss the reactions of other nations once what was happening in Indonesia became clear. The central focus of the conference was not the mass killings but the context in which they unfolded and the reactions to them. The conference included two public

events on the first and last nights of the conference, but the two conference days in the middle were for invited guests only, and the guests included most of the leading figures in research around this topic. While there had been previously been smaller cultural events related to 1965, this was the first time an international conference surrounding this topic had been held in Indonesia.<sup>39</sup>

Throughout the conference, there was a great deal of attention and agitation by members of the public and the police. Organizers received threats early in the day from the FPI (*Front Pembela Islam*), a radical Muslim organization, that FPI would shut down the conference. By the time the conference opened, a group who identified itself as the Islamic Youth Movement (GPI) was protesting in the street outside and blocking the entry gate to the building. The protestors chanted that the conference was Communist propaganda and carried banners that read “gory PKI”, “PKI are Muslim butchers”, “PKI are Anti God”, and “God Destroys Communism.” To the news reporters who came to report on the story, the protestors asserted that the historians at the conference were trying to distort history to make the Communists seem like victims in 1965.<sup>40</sup> The demonstration was peacefully resolved when the demonstrators were invited to attend the public forum on the final evening of the conference.

On the first day of the conference, the police had demanded the passports of all the foreign participants at the conference, but the organizers had refused to provide them. On the first night of the conference, there was a book launch and public discussion of Bradley Simpson’s *Economists with Guns: Authoritarian Development and U.S.-Indonesia Relations* in which Simpson examines the relationship between the United States and Indonesia from 1960 to 1968, focusing on the relationship between Suharto and the United States. After the discussion, the police detained Simpson and escorted him to his hotel to examine his passport and visa. After a few hours, the police left, without incident, but told the press that Simpson had gotten the wrong kind of visa and was in Indonesia under false pretenses. He had entered on a tourist visa but was in fact talking about his book and attending this conference, and they told the press that the immigration office would pursue his case.

On the final day of the conference, a group of ten conference-goers, including myself, went on a guided visit to the Lubang Buaya Memorial Park and Museum, the one official monument to the events of 1965. The site memorializes the seven national heroes (the generals) who were killed on October 1, 1965, and exhibits at the site and attached museum illustrate and underscore the treachery of the 30<sup>th</sup> of September Movement and the Communist Party. This is a site for commemorating and enshrining the official narrative, which was emphasized and reinforced each October 1<sup>st</sup> as Suharto conducted a televised ceremony commemorating the heroes and their sacrifice. There is no mention made at the site of the mass killings that occurred after the attempted coup.

The features of the Lubang Buaya Memorial Park and Museum include the well where the bodies of the generals were disposed of. The well is bordered by four short walls so visitors

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<sup>39</sup> An important international conference about 1965 called “The 1965-1966 Indonesian Killings Revisited” had previously been held in Singapore in 2009. See Kammen and McGregor, eds. 2012 for the resulting volume.

<sup>40</sup> In the view of the official narrative, Communists were not victims but perpetrators, and the citizens of Indonesia were the intended victims of their malice. I will discuss these categories more in Chapter Six.

cannot walk right up to it. A red light shines up from below the well, and red paint drips down its edges to represent the blood of the generals. (See image below.)



A giant statue of the seven generals with a big garuda flying above them towers over the site. (See below.)



A bas-relief at eye level beneath the statue depicts the “the anti-Communists' version of Indonesia's postcolonial history” (Roosa 2006, 8).

The bas-relief presents a classic fable in which the hero (Suharto) defeats the evil villain (the PKI) and saves the nation from misrule. The scene in the very center of the bas-relief is of women garlanded with flowers and dancing naked around a man stuffing an officer's corpse down a well. These psychological warfare fabrications, full of powerful images of sex and violence, were cast in metal and acquired the status of indubitable fact. In front of the bas-relief is inscribed the slogan "Be vigilant and self-aware so that an event like this never happens again" (Roosa 2006, 8-10)



A lifesize diorama depicts the bloody interrogation and torture of the generals prior to their deaths. (See below.)



In a Museum of PKI Treason at the site, there are dioramas depicting “episodes of the PKI’s alleged brutality from 1945 to 1965. What visitors learn from the museum is a simple morality lesson: the PKI was, from the moment of independence onward, antinational, antireligion, aggressive, bloodthirsty, and sadistic” (Roosa 2006, 10).

On a drizzling day, we took a bus to Lubang Buaya from the Goethe Institute, and when we arrived, there was nobody else there touring the site except for us even though the Lubang Buaya Memorial Park and Museum is open to the public. Our bus pulled up in front of a small food stall and souvenir stand, and our group gathered to go on the guided tour. As the tour began, there were a number of people accompanying our group who did not arrive by bus with us. There were six Indonesian men who tagged along, some with cameras, some without. As we moved through the displays, they appeared far more interested in us than in the features of the site. As I took in the site around us, I noticed that the men had begun photographing us. The tour guide was speaking in Indonesian, which most of the group did not understand, so one of the conference attendees served as unofficial translator and guide. That was John Roosa. John Roosa’s book about the coup attempt in 1965 is entitled *Pretext for Mass Murder: The September 30th Movement and Suharto's Coup d'État in Indonesia*. His book, published in 2006 in the United States, was translated into Indonesian and published in Indonesia under the title *Dalih Pembunuhan Massal: Gerakan 30 September dan Kudeta Suharto* in 2007. However, it was quickly banned and copies disappeared from bookstore shelves although they continued to circulate in photocopied form.<sup>41</sup>

<sup>41</sup> The Attorney General’s Office has banned 400 books since 1959. Of the 22 books that the Attorney General’s Office has banned since 2006, 13 were history textbooks. In 2010, the

Later, when we were exploring the site on our own and not in a big group all together, the men who had accompanied us on our tour sat in the food stall area at the museum with an open conference program, comparing the pictures of the conference speakers in the program with the pictures they had just taken. One of the men appeared to be taking notes on who was who. Only two people from our group did not have their pictures in the conference program – me and one other woman – and the men inquired a few times to the coordinator of our group about our names. She declined to tell them. We eventually boarded the bus and left, and John Roosa, who was probably of most interest to our unexpected guests, hopped out of the bus, which was surely being followed, to make his own way to his next destination.

Despite how much time has passed and the supposed freedom to discuss this topic now in a democratic climate, this surveillance was a powerful illustration of the sensitivity of the topic and how concern and paranoia often accompany discussion of the events of 1965-1966 and their aftermath. On the way back to the Goethe Institute on the bus, one of the other conference participants told me that she felt the police's main goal was to intimidate our group by taking photographs of us, expressing curiosity about us, letting us know that they were investigating our interest in this topic. In fact, they were achieving the opposite result. Their interest in us and their concern about our interest in this history were convincing signs of the importance of doing work on this topic and the ways this period of history is still alive today in people's fears, anxieties, and imaginations.

### **Self-surveillance**

Surveillance does not just come from outside, from state actors, but also from within. Even though people are supposedly free to talk about this topic now, there remains real concern and sensitivity about what other people might think of those who express interest in this topic. The feeling that one is under a state of constant surveillance and must maintain self-vigilance is an issue that many people negotiate daily.

Robert Goodfellow reported about his fieldwork in Yogyakarta in 1997:

The main difficulties of organising kampung-based interviews in 1997 was that there remained a serious social stigma associated with having been identified as *terlibat* or 'involved' in the coup. In fact to even discuss the coup, or especially the killings, was perceived to indicate an unhealthy sympathy with the plight of former PKI. (Goodfellow, 95)

He wrote about another researcher, Lea Olga Jellinek, whose doctoral dissertation in 1987 was entitled *Kebun Kacang: An Oral History of a Poor Inner City Community in Jakarta from the 1930s to the 1980s*. He wrote, "Lea Jellinek in her study of poor kampung dwellers in Jakarta describes a 'deep reluctance of residents to discuss the killings or to even admit any knowledge of them.'" (Goodfellow, 120)

There is no question that this reluctance has lessened in the intervening years, but it does remain. People remain concerned about what expressing opinions or interest in this topic might convey about them. Where people chose to have conversations, around whom they felt free to speak, what kinds of questions they felt they could ask me, or what level of curiosity they felt free to express all were matters over which people exercised control in order to adapt to the circumstances of our conversations and interviews.

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Constitutional Court ruled that the Attorney General's Office did not have the authority to ban books. (Hapsari)

Andrew Marc Conroe, who began his fieldwork on former political prisoners in Yogyakarta in 2005, writes in his dissertation that as a sign of the opening up of this history, people did not seem afraid to discuss this topic in public settings in the home or at cafes. (xii) This was true for my research as well for some of my informants, but my fieldnotes are also peppered with descriptions of informants changing the subject if someone else came into earshot, suddenly speaking very vaguely if it appeared anyone else could be listening, physically getting up to move, or encouraging me to take a walk with them to continue talking. There seemed to be a constant vigilance and self-control maintained to protect against the potential curiosity of others. Self-surveillance practices of limiting activity, discussion, and associations so one could avoid suspicion of being leftist or radical or controversial in any way were common in my fieldwork encounters.

Pak Darma, my close friend and informant, met often with me to discuss life in Yogyakarta and the progress of my research. He was a great source of support and encouragement. Over the course of our burgeoning friendship and collaboration, he also became a fount of questions about what had really happened on October 1<sup>st</sup>, what happened during the killings afterwards, who was responsible, who knew the truth, and what their motivations were for staying silent. Over the course of my fieldwork, he borrowed several books on the topic from me, including *Pretext for Mass Murder*, Roosa's book that had previously been banned but which I had a copy of in Indonesian. When he eagerly borrowed my copy of Robert Lemelson's documentary *40 Years of Silence: An Indonesian Tragedy* about the killings and their aftermath, he told me he would like to discuss it with me after watching it. When we met a couple of weeks later to discuss the film and his thoughts about it, he told me first, "To be honest, I was a little nervous watching it. I kept thinking, 'What would my neighbors think if they knew I were watching this film? Would they think I'm a Communist? Just because I'm interested in knowing what happened?' I kept wondering what I would do or say if someone suddenly entered or knocked on my door." The fact that he is already anticipating the potential curiosity of others, even as he sits alone in his living room, illustrates the laden meanings of even being interested in the topic of 1965, let alone expressing that interest.

Another example of this self-surveillance was with Pak Eddi, with whom I often sat on the porch of his four-room house. The chairs in which we sit sag down deeply in the seat area from the wear and tear of people sitting in them over time. To get out of the chair, Pak Eddi, who's not as lithe as he was as a young man (he's shown me pictures), rocks himself back and forth a few times to gain the momentum to hoist himself out of the sinking seat. Perhaps that's one of the reasons he doesn't get up much when I'm visiting. If he needs something, he usually turns and calls indoors to ask his wife to retrieve whatever he needs.

"I like sitting here," he tells me one day when I ask what it is about this spot on the porch that appeals to him. "I can see everyone who goes by." (That is its own casual form of surveillance, I think later.) As people pass, Pak Eddi provides a running commentary to me of who's who, where they're likely off to at this time of day, and whether it's routine or not for them to pass at this time. He occasionally gives me brief biographies of the people who pass, how long they have lived or worked nearby, maybe some memorable encounter he has had with them in the past. He has lots of opinions on the people who pass, and they seem to provide his daily entertainment now that he is retired and home all the time.

"If I sit here long enough," he tells me, "I see people passing many times. I see the schoolchildren wearing their uniforms on the way home from school. Then maybe 20 minutes later I see them in regular clothes going out again." Sure enough, sitting there with him on an

October afternoon, I see uniformed young people heading home and then passing again not too much later, and then passing one more time, sipping from plastic bags filled with juice from the nearby juice stand. When we sit there long enough, we see people come and go and come and go again.

Pak Eddi's porch is set back from the road but not too far away from the people who pass there. It is far enough for him to play observer but close enough to greet the people who pass, receive visitors on his porch, or briefly chat with those who stop and lean against the low stone fence as they are passing to exchange views on the news, the weather, their health, or their work.

I spent many afternoons informally on the porch with Pak Eddi, just chatting. One day I noted in my fieldnotes:

Pak Eddi was in the middle of telling me a story about how he feels about what should be done for the families of victims of 1965. He told me he thought the president should apologize to the families of the victims. We were talking about why when a woman with a basket on her back appeared on the road outside his house. He changed the subject. He went from talking about the president apologizing to suddenly talking about corruption, which we had discussed earlier that same day. He repeated what he said earlier without making any comment about why or any facial expressions to me or any other indications. The woman didn't stop to say hello. He didn't greet her. I don't even know if they knew each other. After she had passed, he went back to talking about a presidential apology for the victims of 1965 without remarking on why he had suddenly changed the subject and repeated himself.

On my next visit, I asked him why he had changed the subject. He replied, "There are many people who are curious about other people in this neighborhood. They probably wonder why you come to sit with me. I didn't want her to hear me. There are many people who wouldn't agree with my viewpoint. Lots of people. So I thought it would be best to talk about something else." When I asked him if he was scared of what people think about me visiting his house, he said he wasn't scared. I asked what he thought they think about my visits. He replied, "I have told some people that you come here to practice Indonesian with me. You are studying Indonesian and you come here to practice that with me." "What do you think they would think if you told them we were talking about something related to 1965?" I asked. "I don't know." He replied. "There are many people who might not care. But there are some who might think I am making trouble. Or they might think you are making trouble. I like to talk with you about what I think. I enjoy it. But I don't want anyone to think that I support the PKI. People might think that if they hear what I say. So I think it's best that we don't talk about this with other people." After a few minutes, he added, "There are some people we could talk about it with, but it's best you let me decide. So if I change the topic of conversation, that's because it's best to not discuss it with whoever is there." "I understand," I told him. "I like sitting here," Pak Eddi told me. "I don't want to be forced to sit inside." "Of course," I replied.

Out of concern about what people would perceive about them, my informants would sometimes censor themselves or recount viewpoints that contradicted what they told me in private. This happened repeatedly with another informant, Ibu Murni, a middle-aged woman, who explained it to me this way, "I tell the truth to you when we are alone. But sometimes when other people are around, I change my viewpoint. I don't want people to think I am different from them. I would rather just smile and agree with them. I don't want to argue. When we are alone again, I will tell you what's true. Or if my husband is there, I don't care. Or my son. No problem.

But it depends on who's there.”

It is intriguing to consider whether the self-surveillance and self-vigilance practices I noticed in my fieldwork were an echo of the same self-vigilance one felt they needed to exercise under the surveillance and control of the Suharto regime. Under Suharto's rule, perceived interest in the topic or any sympathy for Communists could result in one's detention, disappearance, or death. After Suharto, perhaps the stakes are not as dangerous as that, but there are still dangers lurking -- particularly the danger of being perceived as “different,” being perceived as leftist or pro-leftist, or being perceived as Communist or pro-Communist, which bears its own stigma. I will discuss stigma more in the next chapter.

These practices of self-surveillance and self-vigilance on the part of my informants illustrate the stigma that interest in this topic and that Communism still carry, which was largely instantiated by the official narrative and its characterization of the Communists as “ineffably evil” (Roosa 2006, 7). Roosa writes, “Suharto's regime incessantly drilled the events [of the official narrative] into the minds of the populace by every method of state propaganda: textbooks, monuments, street names, films, museums, commemorative rituals, and national holidays.” (Roosa 2006, 7)

## **Conclusion**

The propaganda and official narrative began shaping collective memory almost 50 years ago. This chapter illustrates the ways in which the propaganda and official narrative continue to be expressed and circulated in daily life today. The official narrative and the shared past it has constructed are powerfully persistent. The paranoia about the possible return of the PKI, manufactured by the state, has engendered fear and anxiety surrounding the events of 1965-1966, their aftermath, and the ongoing threat of Communism. This fear and anxiety are manifested in many domains, including the attitudes towards mass graves and the bodies that lie within them, state surveillance, and the practices of self-surveillance that people exercise to guard against people's potential or possible suspicions. Even after the fall of Suharto, the tenacious grip the propaganda and official narrative have on people's imaginations, anxieties, and fears set the foundation for the ongoing stigmatization of anyone associated with or expressing an interest in this history.

### Chapter Three – Stigmatization and Marginalization

The lines of motor scooters outside the popular fried duck place are double and triple-parked so deep that they are beginning to intrude onto the busy boulevard. The calls back and forth between the parking attendants grow in urgency and get louder and louder, floating up and through the window next to where my friend Nurzi and I sit on a clammy November day. As the fan over my shoulder oscillates, it wafts a feeble breeze through the sticky air, providing a few seconds of relief. As I feel another stream of sweat descend down my side, Nurzi does not appear disturbed by the heat at all. Instead, her eyes are focused on my plate and my attempts to separate the duck meat from the bones with the fingers of my right hand, as is local custom. No forks or knives are provided here. I have known Nurzi for four months at this point so she is not shy about occasionally laughing as she watches me fumble and recoil from the crispy skin and hot meat beneath. A young boy at the next table, no more than four years old, is accomplishing this feat with the dexterity of a one-handed surgeon – separating the meat, scooping up rice with the same hand, dipping the meat and rice in the spicy sauce and bringing it to his lips over and over again – while I have managed to get maybe two small pieces of the hot meat to my mouth. The duck breast clatters around the plate as I attempt to handle it. Later in the meal, the young boy and his family long gone, Nurzi leans towards me and says, “I want to tell you a secret. My grandfather was a Communist.” She stops there, searching my face for my reaction. After a long pause, she continues by confiding that she has never told anyone outside her family that piece of information before. She has not told her friends at college. Her co-workers do not know. She only told her husband after they were married. “My grandfather wasn’t a political person,” she hurriedly adds. “He was just a farmer. He didn’t know what Communism meant. But he was killed because officially he was a PKI member.”

It took several more conversations and interviews for Nurzi to share all the reasons why she was keeping this a secret and how she felt about being the descendant of someone in the Communist Party, but even in this initial conversation, the secrecy she revealed spoke volumes. Nurzi’s grandfather died 15 years before she was born. Yet her identity was deeply influenced by the history that had preceded her and that continued to unfold in her lifetime. In the years following the attempted coup, the term “*anak PKI*,” which literally means “child of the Communist Party,” became an epithet to refer to any descendant of someone in the Communist Party. “I don’t want to be *that*.” Nurzi told me. “I didn’t choose it. But there was no escape. As soon as I could, I ran from it. It became my secret. I always wonder ‘What if people knew this secret? What would they think of me? How would my life be different?’ I think about that almost every day.”

The most pervasive way that the events of 1965 and 1966 emerge in daily life today is the lingering stigma that former political prisoners and family members of the victims still feel, experience, or fear. Again and again in my conversations and interviews, people talked about how they had been discriminated against, mistreated, or marginalized because of their presumed association with the Communist Party (PKI). Fears about being socially stigmatized as pro-Communist are pervasive, even amongst those who were not directly affected by the killings, and experiences of social stigmatization and marginalization are part of the daily lived worlds of many of my informants. In this chapter, I explore these experiences, the feelings they raise, the meanings my informants attach to them, and the dynamics of the ways that stigma is assigned, transmitted, and managed.

### State-directed stigma

Before Nurzi's story continues, it is important to contextualize the role the state played in creating, perpetuating, and maintaining the stigma against the Communist Party and those associated with it, even distantly.

As described in the previous chapter, immediately following the attempted coup, the government began a massive propaganda campaign in the media describing the treachery of the Communist Party and their culpability in the purported attempted coup and the deaths of the generals. This propaganda was key to creating the stigma against the PKI and its suspected members and allies. In March of 1966, Suharto officially banned the Communist Party, which before 1965 was the third largest Communist Party in the world, the largest outside of a Communist country. The Communist Party remains banned until today. In the mid-to-late 1970s, under increasing pressure from the West, the Indonesian government began releasing the political prisoners who had been imprisoned without trial because they were Communists or suspected of being Communists. To monitor and control these former political prisoners, a number of new laws and decrees were enforced. Anthropologist Ariel Heryanto describes:

When hundreds of thousands of detainees were released in the late 1970s and up to 1980 they were condemned to pariah status, and they became subject to periodic "re-victimization." They had to carry an identity card at all times bearing the special mark "ET" (*Eks Tahanan-politik*, "ex-political prisoner," henceforth ex-tapol). They had to report periodically to the local police and military apparatuses. Depending on the category of charges against them, the lifelong stigma denied them basic civil rights. These included freedom of movement (such as going out of town or moving to a new house within the same district; overseas travel was out of the question); freedom of association (meeting in groups of more than five individuals, becoming village heads, joining political parties or legal aid institutes); freedom of expression (including writing 'letters-to-the-editor'); and access to employment (especially in the Armed Forces, government service, 'strategic' national and private commercial enterprises, and in areas related to public opinion, such as teaching, the priesthood, journalism, or as traditional puppeteer-storytellers). In everyday life, these individuals regularly became convenient targets for further scapegoating and blackmailing. (2006, 17)

Heryanto goes on to explain that it was not only those who had been political prisoners who were affected. In the early 1980s the government set out to classify and monitor the people who were in any way associated with people who were associated with the PKI:

Individuals were officially designated as "unclean" (*tidak bersih diri*) if they were in one way or another declared or believed to have had some sort of association with the PKI (even when this was legal), or with any of the Party's various affiliates or allies, not only during the 1960's but also in previous years. They were not necessarily ETs [former political prisoners], in the sense that they experienced no detention. [...] There were a few million other Indonesians who fell under the category "*tidak bersih lingkungan*," "environmentally unclean" or unclean by association, due to marital, descent, or institutional links with any of the former two categories of political pariahs. These stigmatized people also faced all kinds of state-sponsored and socially-supported restrictions, abuses, and humiliations. (2006, 37-38)

As Heryanto describes, the government “declared the stigma to be socially contagious and hereditary” (2006, 18).

These categories of difference defined and established by the state (“ex-political prisoner,” “unclean,” or “unclean environment”) were tied to identity, both in terms of the bureaucratic mechanisms of identity (the national identification card which would bear these designations) but also in tracing one’s own uncleanliness or the uncleanliness of one’s “environment” through lines and ties of kinship. This is how Nurzi could already be designated as officially stigmatized before she was even two years old.

### **Nurzi**

“To you, Communism is just a word, right?” Nurzi tells me the next time we meet for an interview. “For you, what does it mean? It’s an ideology, right? Maybe a political party? To Indonesians, Communist is the same thing as evil. There is nothing worse than being a Communist. There is no person more wrong, more evil, more hated. A Communist has no god. No values. Communism is not a way of thinking. It does not live in the mind. It resides in the soul. It’s an identity. Because of my grandfather, it was our identity as well.”

When I ask Nurzi to explain why she continues to keep this fact about her grandfather a secret, she turns immediately to stories of the past. She tells me that living in a small farming village north of Yogyakarta, she learned early in her life that her grandfather had been a Communist. Her parents explained it to her as the reason they were often harassed and mistreated in their village. When I ask about her about the harassment and mistreatment she alludes to, she responds:

We were treated differently. Not the same as everybody else. We were viewed as “red” so people didn’t respect us. When they demanded things, we had to give them. One time, we were experiencing a very bad harvesting season so all the families in the village were given rice. A neighbor came and demanded some of our rice. Then another neighbor. Then another. My parents gave it. When we had very little rice left over, my father said no, he needed the rest of the rice to feed his children. That was very dangerous. To say no. Most of the time, we didn’t refuse, no matter what was asked.

From the time she learned she was the descendant of a Communist, she didn’t tell other people because she “knew, not thought” that she would be judged, excluded, treated differently, or her family might be harmed. “Even when people weren’t abusing us or harassing us, they were always watching us,” she said. “There was always danger. From the time I was very young, I was afraid that someone might do something to my parents or to my family. It could happen at any time. So I kept this secret. Even though everyone in my village already knew.”

Nurzi felt a great deal of shame about their status in the village, connected to her grandfather and his membership in the PKI. In a later interview, she revealed:

My mother always told me that even though he wasn’t here, we had to remember and love my grandfather. She often said that he did not deserve to die and we did not deserve this treatment. But truly I hated him. I was so angry. Because he was Communist, our lives were terrible. When I was little, I thought if anyone important found out that my grandfather was a Communist, I would be taken away. My neighbors, everyone around me knew, but I was still afraid that my parents might disappear. My grandfather was not alive. I never knew him. But I felt he was destroying our family. My mother told me that my grandfather was

innocent. He wasn't *really* a Communist. He wasn't like those men who killed the generals. He was a farmer. But honestly, he *was* a Communist. He joined the PKI. So I blamed him. I thought he was guilty. And it was my family who was still being punished for his crime.

Moving away from the village and to Yogyakarta, the large city to the south, is what liberated Nurzi to some extent, she told me. "Then I really could keep the secret," she said. From then on, the chance of anyone finding out about her grandfather was very slim unless she revealed it, and she rarely returned to the village for any extended periods of time.

As early as her adolescence, Nurzi worried about whether she'd be able to marry given her family history. No one would want to marry someone from her "red family" and therefore also become "unclean." "I married later than most of the other women from my village. I think the only reason I could marry is that I moved away from home first, which was unusual, and also I chose to marry a man from outside Java. My mother wasn't happy about it. She wanted me to marry someone from Java. But I think she understood it was better this way." If Nurzi had chosen to marry a Javanese man, her family history would have undergone much more scrutiny, she told me, and she would have been judged as undesirable because of her family's past and the stigma attached to them. But marrying someone from another island helped. Still, she didn't tell her husband about her grandfather until after they were married.

I told him a year after we were married. We already had our first child. I decided it was time. I thought that if he knew before we were married, maybe he would reject me. It made sense to tell him after our son was born. Before that, I was scared when we would meet with my family that someone might mention my grandfather or mention some bad treatment from the neighbors. There is one neighbor who is still really mean, and sometimes my parents told me and my husband stories about this neighbor, and I would hold my breath, waiting for my husband to ask why this neighbor hated them so much. He never did. I feared what he would think, but I am glad he knows now. He is very strong. He understands that my grandfather has little to do with who I am now. Who I became.

When I ask if she will ever tell her own children – she has two boys so far – about this family history, she answers, "I will tell them the history of that time. I will tell the story about what happened. I think it's important that they know. But I won't tell them that their great-grandfather was PKI. I don't want them to know. I don't want them to question whether they are clean or unclean." "Did you question that?" I ask her, "Whether you were clean or unclean?" "Honestly, yes," she answers:

My mother told me to respect my grandfather, but all the information from everywhere else was so bad that I wondered sometimes whether I was evil deep down. Maybe I inherited it from my grandfather. Maybe my mother and father were only protecting me from the truth. There must be some reason that we were treated this way, I used to think. My neighbors, the kids in school, history books, movies, teachers, the villagers – they all made me feel like I was different. I remember wondering whether that difference came from deep inside me, instead of coming from how others saw me. My mother got angry. She was angry that people treated us that way. It was their mistake, she told me. I did not understand it at the time because I really thought it was our fault. Or my grandfather's fault. It wasn't until I was much older that I stopped blaming him and was able to see him

as a victim.

When I ask Nurzi about whether the stigma and shame she felt as a child, which she describes so vividly to me, remains with her today, she struggles with the question a bit. “No one knows about my grandfather now,” she tells me, “No one knows my connection to the PKI. So I want to say no, there is no stigma. But honestly, of course I feel it. If I didn’t, I wouldn’t have this big secret. I wouldn’t worry about what would happen to my family and me if people discovered the truth. Even now, I worry about that.”

In our next meeting a month later, she returns to this topic, saying she has been thinking a lot about our conversations about her shame, secrecy, blame, and stigma. “The biggest question I have now is that I don’t know whether the stigma comes from outside or inside me now. Can it be both?” Nurzi’s question is a powerful inquiry that illuminates the complexity of her ongoing experience of stigma, even while keeping the source of that stigma a secret.

Sociologist Erving Goffman articulated his theory of social stigma in *Stigma: Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity*, published in 1963. Goffman defines stigma as “an attribute that is deeply discrediting” – an attribute that reduces the person, in the view of other (“normal”) people, “from a whole and usual person to a tainted, discounted one.” (3) The stigma renders its possessor “not quite human” (5) and is the locus of the discrepancy between one’s “virtual social identity” (the characterization and construction of what we expect another to be) and one’s “actual social identity” (what attributes the person actually possesses). It is this discrepancy that “spoils” the social identity of the stigmatized person. For Goffman, stigma is a social process in which both “stigmatized” and “normal” are social roles that people play, perspectives that they adopt. (138) He differentiates between people whose stigma is evident and people in whom the stigma may be concealed or unperceivable but for whom it would be discrediting if discovered. (4)

Goffman lays out three different types of stigma:

First there are abominations of the body -- the various physical deformities. Next there are blemishes of individual character perceived as weak will, domineering or unnatural passions, treacherous and rigid beliefs, and dishonesty, these being inferred from a known record of, for example, mental disorder, imprisonment, addiction, alcoholism, homosexuality, unemployment, suicidal attempts, and radical political behavior. Finally there are the tribal stigma of race, nation, and religion, these being stigma that can be transmitted through lineages and equally contaminate all members of a family. (4)

He describes the path by which stigmatized people learn about their stigma and change their conceptions of self as a result. He terms this path a “moral career” during which the stigmatized person is socialized to know what is normal in their wider society, then discovers they possess a stigmatized attribute, and then discovers the consequences of possessing it. (32)

Scholars have criticized Goffman’s theory for being overly centered on the individual and not focused enough on the social, cultural, and historical contexts the stigmatized person finds themselves in<sup>42</sup> or the moral worlds and moral processes in which they are situated.<sup>43</sup> While many scholars have carried his work forward, elaborating theories of stigma to include these omissions, the force of Goffman’s theory of the subjective and emotional experiences of the

<sup>42</sup> For example, see Becker and Arnold.

<sup>43</sup> See Yang et al; Kleinman and Hall-Clifford.

stigmatized cannot be denied. “Reading” Nurzi’s experiences through Goffman’s theory reveals the strengths and limitations of his work.

First, in terms of classifying what kind of stigma Nurzi possesses, Goffman’s rigid typology falls short. It is complicated to know which category applies. The “blemishes of individual character” are relevant since those involve the stigma of treacherous beliefs, which many people felt that the PKI had. But Goffman’s “tribal stigma” seems to be a better fit. Political parties are not included in Goffman’s definition, just tribes of race, nation, and religion. However, Communism was viewed as imbued with qualities as immutable as these categories, and the association with Communism did “equally contaminate all members of a family” (Goffman, 4). There are other stigmas present in Nurzi’s experience as well, including the stigma of place. Nurzi does not like returning to her village where people know her tainted status and secrets could be exposed through banal conversation.

We could look at different details of Nurzi’s story as outlining phases of her “moral career,” moving from the early recognition that she is different, experiencing the consequences of that stigma, fleeing from her village so that she can conceal the stigma that would discredit her if others knew about it, and inquiring into aspects of the self to see whether the stigma does, in fact, emanate from within her or is just something applied to her by others.

Goffman argues that families or neighborhoods can become “protective capsules for its young,” protecting children with stigmatizing attributes from learning they possess it or experiencing the consequences of that “differentness” (33). It is interesting to note that in Nurzi’s case, the family provided no such protection. Even though her mother repeatedly told her that her grandfather was an innocent victim and that the people who were mistreating them were wrong, Nurzi experienced a transgenerational state of terror as a child, feeling that she and her family were in danger and anything could happen to them. Nurzi’s family was one of the many similar stigmatized families throughout Indonesia to whom anything could be done and from whom anything could be demanded. The power of the messages she was getting outside the home (in school, from other villagers, from the film) competed with her mother’s messages and penetrated far enough to cause Nurzi deeply question her own status.

To manage the shame of her stigma, Nurzi has chosen secrecy and concealment. Her relocation from her village setting to the more metropolitan and anonymous city of Yogyakarta provided some relief from the fear and shame that marked her childhood, but the stigma and shame did not dissipate entirely in her new environment. Even though people do not directly stigmatize her in the new city, the stigma she internalized drives her to maintain secrecy. Goffman pays a good deal of attention to concealment as a strategy for managing stigma, on the ways in which people with stigmatized conditions attempt to “pass” as those who don’t. This is a major part of Nurzi’s daily experience as she wonders what people would think if they knew, what would happen to her if her secret were discovered. Before the fall of Suharto, when Nurzi was a child, discovery or suspicion of Communist sympathies could be a matter of life and death so it is no wonder that she harbors worries about her secret being discovered. The persistence of that worry into her new circumstances in a different city and in a new social and political climate is fascinating and reveals a great deal about the ongoing power of the secret and the larger social, political and cultural milieu in which she feels uncertain about how such an association would be received or interpreted. Goffman writes that ultimately if one learns to accept and respect themselves, they can “unlearn” the concealment of their stigma. He describes “this phase in the moral career [...] as the final, mature, well-adjusted one -- a state of grace” in which the person no longer has to hide the attribute they feel is stigmatizing (102). With Nurzi and in the current

social and political climate where this stigma still exists, it seems unlikely that she will ever achieve this state of grace, and this is one case where Goffman's optimistic model does not account for the wider forces that make such a state of grace seem unlikely.

Goffman writes about how the stigmatized person "divides the world into a large group to whom he tells nothing, and a small group to whom he tells all and upon whose help he then relies" (95). The ways in which Nurzi describes waiting to tell her husband about her grandfather until after they were married and had had their first child powerfully illustrates the extent to which she was trying to conceal her connection to this history. Even in terms of telling me the secret, the timing she chose was revealing. Nurzi knew the topic of my research. She knew that I was meeting and talking with people about the effect of 1965-1966 and its aftermath on people's lives today. Yet she chose to reveal her secret on an afternoon in which my attempts to eat duck with my right hand only have marked me as a hopeless, incompetent outsider, inept in a skill that is very basic for Indonesians to perform. I believe that it is no accident that this is the moment when she chooses to confess her secret to me. She feels safe telling me her secret precisely because I am an outsider.

Exploring Nurzi's current relation to the stigma necessarily involves the past. So there is a temporal dimension to her stigma. She secretly or silently experiences in the present the vestiges of the stigma she observed and experienced in the past. She echoes and has internalized the language of the state-defined categories of stigmatization ("clean" and "unclean") and wants to protect her own children from the kinds of doubts she experienced about herself when coming to terms with her relationship to this history. There are spatial dimensions to her experience of stigma as well since the village is the site of exposure, danger, and stigma, and the city presumably is not as long as no one there knows her secret.

Nurzi expresses that who she is today has little to do with her grandfather. Yet she also reports managing her secret almost every day – protecting it and wondering what would happen to her now if it were to be revealed. It might seem that these two statements are contradictory, but they illuminate the dynamics of how the stigma, first assigned to her grandfather, with deadly consequences, extended to her family, and then was internalized by Nurzi. So her current experience of her stigma has little to do with her grandfather but has to do instead with her own management of the stigma that she herself possesses. The genealogy of that stigma is no longer important.

Another insight we glean from Nurzi's story about the dynamics of how stigma operates is that in her experience, there is no blame directed outwards but only anxiety, fear, disgust, and investigation directed inwards. Nurzi's mother tells her that the people affixing this stigma to them are the ones who are wrong. They are mistaken. This is not deserved, her mother tells her. However, there is no hint of that attitude in Nurzi's account. She does mention that for a period of time, she blamed her grandfather for his responsibility for the family being so stigmatized because of his membership in the Communist Party. It is intriguing how her blame of her grandfather reproduces the popular attitude that Communists were responsible for their own deaths and imprisonments because of their membership, participation in, or sympathy for the PKI. Besides her criticism of her grandfather, the rest of Nurzi's notions of blame and responsibility fall on her, as she wonders whether there is something inside of her that results in being so stigmatized, whether it is her fault.

## Pollution

Nurzi's echoing of the categories of "clean" and "unclean" reveal the force of the propaganda's arguments about the polluting dangers of the PKI. Steven Drakeley has described that the language of pollution, contamination, and infection was commonly embedded in anti-Communist propaganda:

Another feature of the demonisation/dehumanisation process included the repeated association of the PKI with a range of pollutants. Thus the description of the PKI as the "poisonous stabbers in the back (who) must be eliminated", and the employment of headlines such as: "The Coming Generation must not be Infected by the Anti-God Mentality", "Clean all Departments Etc. from "G-30-S" Elements" (*Djakarta Daily Mail*, 16 November 1965, 17 December 1965, 17 November 1965 respectively). (21-22)

Tropes of pollution, contamination, and infection were deployed to mark the Communist (or suspected Communist) body as a different kind of dangerous body, poised to infect, contaminate, or pollute the normal, pure body.<sup>44</sup> The contamination or potential contamination had to be quarantined, controlled, or eradicated. The Communists did not just represent contamination of the mind. They embodied it. Extermination was just one of the methods of warding off the potential spread of pollution, contamination, and infection. Contamination and infection arose in my conversations with Ibu Tini.

## Ibu Tini

"Do you know where Plantungan prison is?" Ibu Tini's speech comes out in powerful staccato bursts, and it takes me a moment to make sense of this thin, wiry woman's speech. When I've taken a moment or two to decipher her question, I shake my head, and Ibu Tini launches into a description of Plantungan's location in Central Java. In her long description, which I come to understand must be directions on how to get there, I recognize the names of a few places she mentions (out of many more that I do not know) so eventually I nod my head, hoping to cut the geography lesson short. "Do you know what Plantungan was before it was a prison for 'PKI women?'" She intones "PKI women" in a sarcastic tone. I shake my head again, no. Ibu Tini replies, "It was a leper colony." Shaking her head, she continues, "That teaches you what you need to know about the events of that time. It's like leprosy and Communism were the same thing. A disease. An infection. They threw away women prisoners there because they might infect everyone with Communism."

"Unclean environment..." Ibu Tini sighs as she says it, her voice trailing off. "When Suharto stepped down, we no longer were classified that way. Not officially. But that didn't change anything. People already knew that we were unclean environment, and a piece of paper didn't change their opinions." Even when laws and restrictions were no longer being enforced to officially discriminate against former political prisoners or families of 1965 victims, the propaganda and long-term discrimination, stigmatization, and marginalization by the state had so suffused popular attitudes that the change in policy had little to no effect on people's daily experiences of stigma.

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<sup>44</sup> It is interesting how this echoes the way in which Dutch colonial materials marked the native Indonesian body as polluting. Stoler and Strassler describe how "colonial housekeeping guides, childrearing manuals and medical handbooks warn against the contaminating influence of servants on European children" (5).

Ibu Tini used to live in East Java, just outside Kediri, one of the areas where the killings were most intense during 1965 and 1966. Ibu Tini's father was killed, and her mother was imprisoned for 14 years. "I could tell you lots of stories of how I was treated when I was a child," she tells me one day.

I was not thrown into a prison like Plantungan, but I was treated like I had the same infection as my parents. I was a child. 9 years old. Isolated there in the village. My friends stopped talking to me. I remember my closest friend started calling me names, making fun of me. I had to stop going to school. All of a sudden, everything changed. I could tell you so many stories like that.

Ibu Tini's tone hardens, "But I am not a child anymore."

When I ask Ibu Tini whether she became friends with other children who had lost a parent or who were similarly stigmatized, she replies matter-of-factly:

It wasn't safe to be friends with children whose parents had been killed or arrested. There was a boy in my village whose father had been killed. After that, we all avoided him. All of my family members did. I did not talk to him again. I did not play with him anymore. I didn't do that because someone told me, "Avoid that boy." I don't remember that. I think I did it because that's what I saw other people doing, and I was trying so hard to be like everybody else. My neighbors treated his whole family that way. His family came to village events, and they just sat together, separated from everybody else. They weren't a part of the activities.

When I probed with some follow-up questions, she explained, "I didn't hate him. I didn't think he was evil. I didn't want to hurt him. I just wanted to act like everyone else, and it seemed like everyone else was behaving like he wasn't really there. So that's what I did too." When I asked how that compared to her own experience of isolation and ostracism, Ibu Tini did not draw any overt connections between how she treated this boy and the way that she and her family were treated.

In Goffman's work on stigma, he writes briefly of the notion of the stigma extending to family members of the stigmatized person:

The loyal spouse of the mental patient, the daughter of the ex-con, the parent of the cripple, the friend of the blind, the family of the hangman, are all obliged to share some of the discredit of the stigmatized person to whom they are related. One response to this fate is to embrace it, and to live within the world of one's stigmatized connection. It should be added that persons who acquire a degree of stigma in this way can themselves have connections who acquire a little of the disease twice-removed. The problems faced by stigmatized persons spread out in waves, but of diminishing intensity. (30)

Part of the "stigmatized connection" Goffman writes about is his conception that the stigmatized person "will find that there are sympathetic others who are ready to adopt his standpoint in the world and to share with him the feeling that he is human and 'essentially' normal in spite of appearances and in spite of his own self-doubts" (19-20). People who share the same stigma "can provide the individual with instruction in the tricks of the trade and with a circle of lament to which he can withdraw for moral support and for the comfort of feeling at home, at ease, accepted as a person who really is like any other normal person" (20).

With regards to 1965-1966 and its aftermath, Goffman's description of sympathetic others is certainly found in support groups and advocacy organizations for former political prisoners or family members of those killed during 1965. But in Ibu Tini's case, Goffman's

neglect of social, political, and cultural context diminishes the theory's power. In Ibu Tini's experience, the stigma of her parents affects her, and she carries her own stigma too -- that of being the child of suspected Communists. I do not think she would agree that she experienced this stigma in diminishing intensity, even though the costs of her stigma were different than the costs to her parents. The limits of Goffman's "sympathetic others" argument is illustrated by Ibu Tini's choice to stigmatize others in an attempt to fit in with what Goffman would call "normals" rather than further stigmatizing herself by associating with the other stigmatized children. One of her reactions to being stigmatized was to try to simulate normalcy, which involved participating in the stigmatization of others, visiting upon them the social death that she herself was experiencing.

Hearing the ways that both Nurzi and Ibu Tini echo the state-imposed categories of "clean," "unclean," and "unclean environment" brings to mind anthropologists and other social scientists who have been grappling with conceptions of contagion and pollution and how those relate to notions of sacredness and purity in magic, religion, and science.<sup>45</sup> In Mary Douglas' seminal work on purity and danger, she explores the concerns, anxieties, fears, and vigilance about categorical purity. Dirt as "matter out of place" is the same as disorder, she writes. It demands an ordering or re-ordering of the environment (Douglas, 1966). The logics of contamination and purity at work in the case of 1965-1966 and its aftermath illuminate how boundaries between clean and unclean were drawn, demarcated, and perpetuated not only through bureaucratic control and regulations, but how these categories entered people's subjectivities, shaping how individuals perceived each other and themselves.

Veena Das has written about how in "in the everyday life of communities" concepts of stigma and contagion "tend to slide in each other." She argues that within "the domains of family and kinship, stigmatized conditions are seen as a matter of *connected body-selves*". She writes:

We find the family pitted against the kinship group which tries to put pressure on it so as to contain the stigma to the individual body rather than allowing it to "spread" to the whole kinship group. Various strategies are then put into place through rumor and gossip for separating the stigmatized individual, confining him or her to a limited sociality, or giving only limited recognition when included in the collective life of the group. (Das, 2001)

To illustrate the effects of this commingled notion of stigma and contagion, Das offers a couple of examples. With the case of tuberculosis in Delhi, "some children who had to drop out of government schools because of tuberculosis in one year were refused admission in the next year even after they were cured, on the grounds that they could spread the disease." Even though the disease was physically cured, the stigma associated with it remained and became the logic of denying the stigmatized opportunities to go to school. Das also summarizes Meira Weiss' research in Israel on "appearance-impaired" newborns who were abandoned by their parents despite not having any functional disabilities. Das writes that Weiss' work "points to the conditional character of parental acceptance of stigmatized subjects" and continues:

Her analysis shows that parents felt that their social lives would be thrown into peril for which they blamed their impaired infants – even when persuaded by

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<sup>45</sup> In the "Pollution" entry of the *International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences*, Mary Douglas very briefly summarizes the ways in which the works of Sir William Frazer, William Robertson Smith, Emile Durkheim, and Lucien Levy-Bruhl have touched on "the reconciliation of the concept of pollution, or defilement, with that of holiness" (336).

social workers to bring such infants home for short periods of time, they ended up hiding them in dark corners of the house because they wanted to “protect” their other children from contact with an impaired sibling.

While Das’ inquiry, ethnographic examples, and arguments are rooted firmly in the field of public health, they apply to the case of the contagion represented by the Indonesian Communist Party. Notions of stigma and contagion are combined. Not only is the stigma seen as contagious, which results in the isolation of Ibu Tini in the middle of her village, but the source of the stigma – Communism or the association with Communsim – is a contagion that must be isolated, cleaned, disinfected, and controlled lest it spread and find new hosts to revive it, which would be perilous for everybody. In the case of Indonesia, members of the family share equal amounts of stigma, but the dramas Das’ chosen ethnographic examples illustrate clearly play out between tainted families and their wider networks and communities, not to mention the state.

Ibu Tini’s description of isolation right in the middle of her village reminded me of Susan Sontag’s writing about how, when epidemics occur, “demands are made to [...] isolate the ill and those suspected of being ill or of transmitting illness, and to erect barriers against the real or imaginary contamination” (168). This certainly happened with AIDS patients early in the epidemic.

My use of examples from the realm of public health is not an accidental one. The stigma borne by surviving political prisoners, their family members, and the family members of those killed in 1965-1966, and the suffering that has resulted, is an affliction that continues to affect many people and an affliction from which many have not yet healed.

### **Herlina and Endo**

On my third visit to Ibu Tini’s home, she invites her grown children over and after a while leaves us all sitting on the shaded porch together while she goes inside for a rest. They have heard about my project from their mother, and they are eager to be recorded with my audio recorder. The conversation between us is lively at first about my life so far in Yogyakarta and what I have been finding in my research. When the conversation turns to stigma and difference, Ibu Tini’s daughter Herlina, the oldest of the two siblings at 35 years old, interjects:

I have always known that I am different. From a very early age I knew that my family was different from other families. I can’t remember how I came to know it. I don’t remember anyone telling me why. But we were treated differently. I always knew we were different. And I knew the difference was not good. If I didn’t have my brother, I think I would have felt very alone.

Her brother Endo, three years younger, is more reluctant to identify ways in which stigma affected his life as a child or continues affecting it today.

“What about soccer?” Herlina asked, “The kids wouldn’t let you play you soccer.”

Endo replies, “Yes, I didn’t play soccer with the boys in my village, but that’s because I was too slow. Not fast enough. The other boys played better than me. So when I went to play soccer, I would watch, not play. But now I play on Tuesdays with some men from the office. I am not slow.”

Gesturing to his sister, Endo continues:

She has always felt that we are treated differently in the village. Sometimes something small happens. Someone in the shop is rude. Or someone at the market refuses to sell her something. In life, it happens. She thinks it’s because our family is treated differently. Sometimes she becomes angry. Our mother often

gets angry for the same reason. My mother and my sister are not always calm. Maybe *that's* why we are sometimes treated differently.

Herlina rolls her eyes towards me. "It's not that simple. We are still treated differently in our village, right? He doesn't want to see why... Maybe doesn't want to accept it..." Herlina looks at her brother, who is smirking now. "It's true," Herlina finishes.

Some interesting dynamics of stigma are revealed here. First, I wonder whether Endo's explanations about his mother's and sister's anger reflect general attitudes towards Javanese etiquette in which the Javanese are not meant to display extreme emotions, and if they do so, it shows a lack of refinement on their parts. Secondly, I wonder if there is a gender aspect to this in which Herlina and her mother are seen as reacting inappropriately to small slights because they are women and thus should show more control. Third, I am interested in Endo having developed an explanatory model for why he was not allowed to play soccer in the past, a reason that has been rectified now that he plays with some men from work. Is this explanatory model a defense mechanism, a protective shield to explain away his exclusion? Finally, I am intrigued by the idea that stigma can be expressed or conveyed through a cavalcade of "something small's" instead of grand dramatic gestures, speeches, or events. This evokes Scheper-Hughes' notion of the "genocidal continuum," which she defines as the following:

[the] multitude of "small wars and invisible genocides" conducted in the normative social spaces of public schools, clinics, emergency rooms, hospital wards, nursing homes, court rooms, prisons, detention centers, and public morgues. The continuum refers to the human capacity to reduce others to nonpersons, to monsters, or to things that give structure, meaning, and rationale to everyday practices of violence. (2002, 369)

Scheper-Hughes writes that it is the "less dramatic, permitted, everyday acts of violence that make participation (under other conditions) in genocidal acts possible, perhaps more easy than we would like to know. I would include all expressions of social exclusion, dehumanization, depersonalization, pseudo-speciation, and reification that normalize atrocious behavior and violence towards others" (2002, 369).

Refusing to sell someone something at the market, being rude to someone in a shop, isolating someone in the middle of the village, excluding someone from the soccer game are all stigmatizing acts that deny someone a normative role in social life and reduce them to the status of what Goffman described as "not quite human."

### **Foreclosed futures**

One repeated refrain in my discussions with people about stigmatization and marginalization was a curiosity about and mourning for the futures that had been foreclosed by their stigmatized status. Many conversations did not just touch on formative experiences of stigma in the past or continuing feelings and experiences of stigma in the present. They also delved into unrealized futures. People often expressed questions about what their lives might have been like, what different paths their lives might have taken, had they not experienced this stigma in their lives.

In an interview after knowing him about four months, Pak Guntur opens up to me about the true cost of his 13-year imprisonment:

When they know my status [as a former political prisoner], people sometimes ask about my time in prison, how I suffered, what happened to me and to the other prisoners. I don't want to talk about just my time in prison. I want to talk about

my life. My whole life. Everything was taken from me. My home. My land. My job. If I hadn't been locked up, who knows where I would be living, how much land I would have, how much money I would have, who I would be married to, how many children I would have? [...] When I was released from prison, all of that was already gone. The more time that passed, the angrier I became about what had been stolen from me.

When I ask him what he imagines his life might look like if he had never been imprisoned, it is not land, money, or work that he speaks of. "Respected," Pak Guntur replies. "If I had not been in prison, I would be respected. I would be accepted." I feel a twinge listening to the conditional form of the word "if" he uses. He uses the form "*seandainya*" -- the form of the word "if" that is not possible, not achievable -- only supposed, imagined or dreamt.

In our conversation after visiting the mass grave where Amina's grandfather's lies, she told me, "If I did not tell you, you would not know that he is there. I cannot not know." From her tone, I wondered whether she would ever wish to not know, but in that moment it felt callous to ask when she has no other option but knowing.<sup>46</sup> Two months later, I ask Amina whether she has ever thought about what her life would be like if things were different, if she did not know. She considers my question for a long time before replying, speaking slowly at first as if the words are still forming in her mind before they start to come out in a tumble:

When I was younger, I often watched people on the road and thought about whether they knew or not. Like I was looking for signs of whether they knew. Did they look in that direction? What was their facial expression? I was curious how many people knew. But if I am honest, I was probably envious of those who did not know. If I didn't know, what would my life would be like?

[Amina pauses here for 42 seconds.]

If I didn't know, I would live in a different world. Every time I pass that place, I know how cruel the world can be... I know how dangerous the world can be. People can treat each other horribly. Torture each other. Kill each other. Throw bodies away like trash. Like animals.... The proof is there.... The people who don't know there is a grave there... If I were like them, if I didn't know, I would live in a world that is very different. I am glad I know. But honestly, sometimes I wish I didn't.

In my interviews with Nurzi, she had also talked about the impact of knowing her grandfather's past. Her parents had told her since she was little that her grandfather was a member of the PKI so that she would understand why the family was often harassed and mistreated. "My parents wanted me to understand. They thought I would feel better if I knew why. Sometimes I wish they hadn't told me. I wonder what my life would be like if I never knew," Nurzi tells me. When I ask her if she can imagine what that life would be like, she considers the question for a quite a while, "Free," she finally replies. "I wouldn't worry, watch people's faces, wonder if they know..." She pauses for a couple of minutes before shrugging slightly, "It's so hard to answer." The idea of living a non-stigmatized life or having a non-stigmatized identity tests the boundaries of Nurzi's imagination.

We have seen the ways in which the state, through its propaganda campaign and official

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<sup>46</sup> See Chapter One for this exchange (30).

narrative, constructed a past. The same narrative and the state-defined designations of “ex-political prisoner,” “unclean,” and “unclean environment” constructed futures as well. For Pak Guntur, Amina, Nurzi, and hundreds of thousands of others, the killings, detentions, state-sponsored discrimination, and social stigma has had material effects on access to education, economic opportunities, marital prospects, and so on. These categories curtailed the futures of millions of Indonesians.

### **Stigmatized “others”**

It is not just former political prisoners or the descendants of Communists or suspected Communists that still bear stigma associated with the PKI. It is anything that could be associated with Communism.

Ibu Diah lives in the northern part of Yogyakarta. Her children are already grown and out of the house. After polite chit chat in her front receiving room that begins each of my weekly visits, the two of us move to the central room for my visit – the kitchen. Ibu Diah begins cooking for me – usually one or two dishes per visit. I have arranged to take cooking lessons from her, but the word “lesson” is a generous one. The “lessons” have really become demonstrations, performances by the teacher, with Ibu Diah showing me how she cooks classic Indonesian fare. I occasionally get to flip a banana that’s frying in hot oil or perhaps stir ingredients together, but she enjoys showing off her skill. On one visit, I hear her bragging to her housekeeper about my effusive compliments to the chef. “Better than a restaurant, she said,” I hear Ibu Diah bragging to her housekeeper. After a few weeks of these lessons, I arrive to find the courses expanding. She has made a course earlier in the day for us to enjoy. She tells me she gets such joy from watching me eat the food we prepare that now she prepares even more. She asks whether there are other foreigner friends I could bring with me to enjoy her cooking. An old woman who moves her body slowly through the kitchen, Ibu Diah is like a dancer, moving her arms and hands in perfect synchronicity. She knows the dance well, and appreciates the attention and awe of her one-woman audience. As I stand in my regular spot against the white cabinet in the steamy kitchen, which is only large enough to accommodate a few people, she cooks passionately, glancing over her shoulder from time to time to take in my reactions. She is almost always smiling.

As I get to know her better, and she gets to know me, the time between us grows more informal and relaxed. One day our chat gets into the subject of songs, and she asks me what songs in Indonesian I know. I sing a few songs for her that I learned while studying Indonesian – children’s songs about brushing one’s teeth before bed and another about a star in the sky. These both please her immensely. Then I say I know one modern song, and I sing for her a song that is a theme song for a soap opera that airs on nightly television. This absolutely delights her, and a long conversation ensues about the drama unfolding in the soap opera in question and what we really think of the characters and the actors who play them. (One of the actresses has recently been involved in a personal scandal, and Ibu Diah is eager to share her thoughts and hear mine.) She sings me a few songs while she is cooking. Her voice cracks a little, but she warbles out a few tunes. Then I remember that I know one more song, even though I do not know all the words. I will sing what I can, I tell her. And I start to hum the tune to “Genjer Genjer.” After just a few hummed notes, a few seconds perhaps, she stares at me, surprised, the delight from her face fading, “Where did you learn that?” she asks me. Her face darkening, she warns, “That’s a Communist song.”

Written by Muhammed Ari in 1943, the song's lyrics were about the poverty in Ari's home region of Banyuwangi. While the song's subject was just about a poor

woman picking genjer (a flat-tasting river plant) to sell at the market, it quickly became used as a rallying song for the Indonesian Communist Party to decry Indonesia's economic inequality. After the New Order military coup of General Suharto took power in 1965, Ari was killed and the song banned. Anyone who was caught singing "Genjer Genjer" was seen as an enemy of the state, and today it's still taboo in many parts of Indonesia. (Raby 2012)

Robert Goodfellow writes that not just the song was stigmatized through its association with the "Communist song," but the plant itself became taboo:

Genjer is a weed that grows in drains, ponds, and sewerage outlets. It can be boiled as a vegetable, and is usually only eaten during hard times. According to one person in Kidul, "it is a very communist-type of plant." During the early New Order period, the song was banned and people stopped eating the plant because it was associated with communism. (149)

Here the stigma of Communism spreads beyond people to affect songs and even plants. The stigma continues until today as evidenced by Ibu Diah's less-than-thrilled response to my humming of the tune.

### **Avoiding stigma**

Stigma is not only a force in the lives of former political prisoners, their families, and the families of those killed during 1965-1966. Because of the long-standing taboo against open discussion of the killings and their aftermath, people fear the stigma that might accompany even expressing an interest in the topic. In the previous chapter, when Pak Darma told me that he was nervous about watching a documentary about the killings alone in his own home because of what others might make that mean about him if they knew what he was doing, he is expressing the fear of this stigma. He watched the movie anyway. There are many people – activists, scholars, students, survivors, journalists, authors, artists, filmmakers -- who are working to open a public conversation about this period of history. But even they do not deny that the feared stigma against this topic is an active force in people's social worlds, shaping what is speakable and what is unspeakable, what is acceptable and what is unacceptable, what is allowable and what is not allowed. In my fieldwork, I sometimes felt that the stigma comes more from the taboo of talking about this topic than it does from an active and ongoing hatred of the PKI, but it was hard to discern the difference sometimes since the taboo against discussing the topic is so fused with long-ingrained attitudes towards the PKI. In Chapter Five, I return to the realm of the unspeakable.

### **Hierarchy of stigma**

In my interviews, conversations, and observations of people over the two years of my fieldwork, a fascinating but complicated phenomenon became clear to me. Certain groups of people seem to bear more stigma than others depending on their involvement or lack thereof in the Communist Party (PKI).

Four categories of "victim"<sup>47</sup> most often emerged in my interviews and conversations

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<sup>47</sup> The words "victim" and "perpetrator" are very loaded ones in the 1965 context since the people killed during the mass killings were framed by the state as potential perpetrators and the

about the lingering cultural effects of the events of 1965. From the least to the most stigmatized, these are:

(1) People wrongly accused of being PKI. These people had no association with the PKI. Perhaps they were accused of being Communists to settle personal scores or grudges, so their accusers could claim their land, or to accomplish other agendas.

(2) People accused of being PKI because they were members in organizations that were perceived to be leftist or leftist-leaning, even when those organizations had no official affiliation with the PKI.

(3) People who joined the PKI but did not really understand what that meant. These are people who had joined without necessarily being aware of what that entailed. This includes many farmers and peasants who joined the PKI because of the gatherings or performances they would attend but they may not have been fully aware of the political dimensions of their participation in the party.

(4) People who were actively involved in the PKI

I had written a little bit about these categories in my fieldnotes before meeting Ibu Ayu, a confident and articulate woman in Yogyakarta whose father played an important role in the Communist Party in Central Java and was killed in 1965:

Ibu Ayu: When people find out that my father was involved in the PKI... I feel strange saying this... It's almost like people believe he deserved punishment because he was *actually* a Communist. Sometimes I feel I get less sympathy than other people. He was not part of the 30<sup>th</sup> of September Movement. But people think he was guilty because yes, he really was a Communist. I feel I have to convince people that the PKI did not deserve to be destroyed.

Me: Because they do not know the historical facts?

Ibu Ayu: Even those who know the facts. It is like the Communists are still blamed, still guilty. So many people tell stories of being wrongly accused. They weren't part of the PKI. That is what they say. I say, there was also no reason for the PKI members to be killed or imprisoned. The only thing my father did was become a PKI member. Does that make him guiltier than anyone else?

Ibu Ayu's question hangs in the air, and it is one that is important to explore.

There is a notion that came out in my interviews again and again that there is a category of the purely innocent victim -- the people falsely associated with the PKI, who were wrongly accused of being PKI. It is important to carefully examine how people define innocence in this context. Wasn't everyone who was killed in 1965 an innocent victim since there was no due process and since they were being punished for participating in a purported attempted coup that they had no involvement in? Yet there are those who are deemed more or less innocent, who deserve more or less sympathy, and who experience more or less stigma. Even if those killed were members of the PKI, they were not directly involved in the alleged coup and did not deserve to die. Did those who were killed but not Communists at all *really* not deserve to die compared to the Communists? Were they less deserving of their fate than those who embraced Communist ideology or PKI membership? These were the attitudes that emerged from many of

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people who killed them and the nation itself were painted as potential and imminent victims. See Chapter Six for more in-depth discussion of these terms.

my conversations and interviews. These attitudes suggest that those whose parents actually were Communists or the political prisoners who actually were Communists actually deserved to be stigmatized more than those who were “clean” -- that is, those who had no affiliation with the party. These unspoken notions inflected many of the conversations and interviews I had.

Another interesting phenomenon is that in all my interviews and conversations, the idea of the “perpetrators” of the violence being stigmatized did not emerge organically. When discussing with my friends and informants the way that stigma emerges in daily life in Yogyakarta today, the conversations were always about stigma for those killed, former political prisoners, and their families. There was no discussion about stigma for the “perpetrators.” I suspect this is because in daily life in Yogyakarta, there is no stigma for the perpetrators of the violence. Their actions are framed either as heroic because they were ridding the country of the dangerous menace of the PKI or they were just following orders or they had to kill or be killed. Their actions are still primarily viewed as a defense of the nation and not worthy of stigmatization, discrimination, and ostracism.<sup>48</sup>

### **Conclusion**

In this chapter, I have argued that stigmatization of those suspected to be associated in any way with the Communist Party is the most prevalent way that the events of 1965-1966 and their aftermath emerge in the present day for my friends and informants. Former political prisoners and family members of those killed continue to feel the effects of the stigma they face. Others less closely related to this history work to avoid stigma. For everyone, the stigma’s existence is undeniable. It was established through the propaganda and official narrative and then reinforced by discriminatory laws and regulations. Even as some of the regulations ended, the stigma endured. Stigma is often expressed through tropes of pollution, infection, and contamination. In 1965-1966, those considered the most contaminated -- those accused or suspected of being PKI -- were killed or detained. Their families, who were infected by their loved one’s stigmatized status, suffered social death. In these families, even many who were born long after the events of 1965-1966 experienced and sometimes internalized this inherited stigma. Many continue navigating it today.

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<sup>48</sup> I return to the category of the “perpetrator” in Chapter Six.

## Chapter Four – The Space for Silence

How do I write an ethnography of silence? How do I write an ethnography of polite diversions, conversations rebuffed or refused, questions dismissed, departures from rooms? How do I write an ethnography of things unsaid, darkness falling over faces, cringes, wincing, and shrugs? How do I write an ethnography of sighs, incomprehensible murmurs, hard swallows? How do I write an ethnography of implacability, impossible-to-decipher expressions -- perhaps passivity, stoicism, defense, or protection? How do I write an ethnography of my own silence, my own caution, the questions I was afraid to ask, the trust that I withheld? This dissertation so far has been filled with the words shared by my friends and informants. How do I create the space for silence? Should I include blank pages to represent silences? How do I make a space for silence with all these words?

### Pak Tirto

“Research something else,” Pak Tirto advises me forcefully one day as we wait on the porch of my guesthouse for a downpour to pass so we can resume the activities of the day. I have known him for a year at this point. He is a security guard at my boarding house, a position he takes a lot of pride in. He is protective of the women who live there, and he often goes and stands in front of the building, or strolls around it, instead of just staying in the small security post with the television where most of the rest of the security guards spend their hours. He is warm and paternal with the tenants, but with visitors, he takes on a different air -- part police officer, part soldier. He is guarded about his own life, taking months to share personal details with me, no matter how often I ply him with treats bought at the corner store on the way home. Even while guarded about himself, he is always curious about me -- my studies, my work and travels.

It took me months to fully explain my project to him. Not knowing what his history was or how he'd feel about my project, I had begun with my cautious approach and revealed the rest slowly over time. I had developed a sort of routine for strangers who asked me about my work. I was in Yogyakarta to study language because I was doing research for my PhD, I would always start. A PhD in what? Anthropology. (Sometimes this required further explanation, sometimes not.) Research about what? I want to study how Indonesians go on with their lives after tragedies. Tragedies? Yes. It seems that Indonesia has a long history of tragedies, both natural and manmade. I want to understand how people continue their lives after these tragedies happen. The ways in which people responded to this was often very revealing. They would sometimes talk about the natural disasters they remembered or experienced, such as the big earthquake in Yogyakarta in 2006, the devastating tsunami in Aceh in 2004, or stories of Mount Merapi's volcanic eruptions. Sometimes they would respond by listing the manmade tragedies they could think of -- terrorism (such as the Bali bombings in 2002), Indonesia's invasion and occupation of East Timor, human rights abuses in Papua, or the May 1998 riots in Jakarta during which more than a thousand people died and hundreds of women were reportedly raped. No one I ever met spontaneously brought up the events of 1965 in response to my standard line, but depending on how the conversation would go, or subsequent conversations, I might eventually feel secure enough to ask about 1965, about what had happened then, in order to gauge the person's receptiveness to discussing it or to gauge someone's position relative to that history. When I brought up 1965, how people would respond spoke volumes. What they said and what they left silent communicated a great deal about them and the role of this history in their lives today.

When I finally talked to Pak Tirto about 1965 and my interest in finding out how that

period of history emerges in daily life today, I had known him for seven months. When I told him, he had been neither resistant nor receptive, my field notes reflect. He had said nothing at all, in fact. “He just nodded,” I wrote. I could not tell how he felt about it. But by this moment, many months later, on the porch of the guesthouse, it certainly seems he has formed an opinion.

“If you want to study culture,” he tells me, “study Javanese dance or music.” (I must have talked to him about cultural anthropology at some point.) I respond by telling him that there are types of anthropologists and researchers who study dance or music, but I am more interested in the everyday life of Indonesians (*kehidupan sehari-hari*) – how they live, what they think, feel, and believe, how their lives have been affected by the events of 1965. For the next two weeks, my fieldnotes are peppered with Pak Tirto’s attempts to persuade me towards another focus.

After bringing him lunch from a place near my language school that he had revealed he loved, I work up the courage to ask him why he does not want me to research this topic. “May I ask you a question that might be difficult to answer?” I inquire, preparing him in the best way I can for a question that might seem unusually direct. “Why do you keep advising me to change my topic?” I ask him. To that question, this gregarious man, usually happy to chat, falls silent. He smiles at first in response to my question, looking somewhat amused, but as I stand there in the silence waiting for a reply, his smile fades. He turns and sits down, pulls his chair to face the desk where his food is, bends over his lunch, and begins to eat. The conversation is clearly over. I wish him a good lunch, he does the same in return, and I go to my room. I am concerned I have offended him, but afterwards he remains just as friendly as before. He does not speak about my topic again.

I never learned why Pak Tirto did not want me studying 1965’s relation to the present. Was he trying to protect me, I wondered? Perhaps with his advice, he was trying to extend his protection beyond the walls of the guesthouse in an attempt to steer me away from a topic that could be fraught and dangerous. Perhaps he wanted me to research something that would have a more positive outcome, tell a happier story, or focus on something that Indonesians take pride in. (I heard that plea from one of my first language teachers in Yogyakarta.) Perhaps he had some personal connection to the history and did not want wounds reopened or pains revived. Perhaps he was just trying to be helpful in general to someone he perceived was under his care. Or perhaps his silence was an act of refusal to have any of these motives ascribed to him. Whatever his reasons, he chose to keep them quiet. I would never know. His silence constituted a boundary I could not cross. In this chapter, I want to dwell in the space of that boundary by approaching silence from two directions – the silences that my friends and informants described and the silences that I encountered in my fieldwork. The uses, meanings, strategies, and patterns of these silences reveal a great deal about the ways in which people continue to navigate their relationship to this history in their daily lives today.

### **Pak Sarwo – the silence of terror and fear**

“I do not talk about those events,” Pak Sarwo tells me, “Especially if people do not already know.” This is how Pak Sarwo explains why he does not talk to his children and grandchildren about what he witnessed in 1965 in Central Java. “You know about those events. I know you have heard stories already,” he tells me, “Therefore I can tell you what I saw. But to someone who doesn’t know?” he shakes his head, “I do not want not tell those stories.”

When I press him about the reasons why, he tells me that he does not want to give his children or grandchildren nightmares. He does not want them to be afraid. “At that time, did you have nightmares? Were you afraid?” I ask him. “It was not possible to live without fear,” he

replies. “Those who were in power, they were also afraid,” he continues. And now? I ask him. Does he still have nightmares of that time? “Sometimes,” he answers.

Pak Sarwo uses his silence as a form of protection. In employing it, he is protecting his family from an ugly, terrifying history.

Interestingly, despite Pak Sarwo saying that he could talk to me about what he saw in 1965 because I was someone who already knew this history, he never did. When our conversations, which were fruitful in other ways, turned to the past, Pak Sarwo would often digress to standard stories, familiar but gruesome narrative tropes about the killings – about how mutilated bodies would be put on display, about how the rivers were so filled with blood and bodies that people could not fish, bathe, or travel on the rivers for months. Pak Sarwo would bring up these stories in a knowing tone, but he never related them to specific incidents of his own witnessing, his own seeing. He never placed himself in the scenes. I suspected that may have been another form of silencing his own experience.

Pak Sarwo leaves his own witnessing, his own subjective experience, out of the telling. The first person falls away. These general stories are the mode through which he expresses his experiences of that time to me, someone who knows. So even within speech, he employs a certain strategy of silence.

When Annie Pohlman talked with women about their experiences during the killings and imprisonments, she discovered that when it came to describing experiences of sexual violence, women would often shift into the third person, enmeshing their stories with others. “It was also not uncommon for a woman to talk about ‘all the women’, referring to either ‘everyone in the cell with me’, ‘all the women in the same camp/prison’ or ‘all the women in this region’” (2008, 55).<sup>49</sup> Pohlman also writes about how women used “euphemisms, ambiguous or vague terms to refer to different actions or events during sexual assaults” (2008, 56). She argues that women adopt these strategies to avoid the stigmatization that comes with sexual assault or because of the difficulty of narrating such traumatic events. Veena Das noted similar strategies at work when talking with women about their experiences of violence during the Partition of India in 1947:

When asking women to narrate their experiences of the Partition, I found a zone of silence around the event. This silence was achieved either by the use of language that was general and metaphoric but that evaded description of any events with specificity so as to capture the particularity of their experience, or by describing the surrounding events but leaving the actual experience of abduction and rape unstated. (2007, 54)

Pak Sarwo’s admission that he could talk to those who know about this history reinforces the idea that depending on the people who are listening, you can choose to tell or choose to remain silent. As discussed in Chapter Two, depending on who is listening and who can overhear, one might modulate their voice or modulate their silence.

In maintaining silence, Pak Sarwo protects his family from the fear that was pervasive for him as a young man. No relatives of Pak Sarwo’s were killed or arrested in 1965-1966 or its aftermath, but he remains deeply affected by the culture of terror at that time and maintains vigilance against it through his silence.

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<sup>49</sup> Pohlman notes that this narrative strategy has been discussed by a number of researchers, including, for example, Vesna Nikolic-Ristanovic in her study of violence against women in the 1990s conflict in the former Yugoslavia and Kosovo (Pohlman 2008, 55).

### **Ida – an opaque silence and silences of protection**

“He goes somewhere else,” Ida tells me about her grandfather. “Sometimes he is in the room with us physically, but it is like he goes somewhere else in his mind. He’s not there anymore. When I was younger, sometimes I would play with him or talk to him to try to force him to come back. He might move his body or his face towards me, but it was like he was gone. It still happens.” When I ask her how often this happens, Ida replies, “Often.” And for how long? “A few minutes... Maybe ten minutes... I don’t know. Then he returns. All of a sudden.” “How do you know he’s returned?” I ask her. “His eyes... his face... Like he comes back to life.” “Where do you think he goes?” I ask. “I don’t know,” she replies. A long pause follows. It is getting uncomfortable how long this pause lasts, but I want to see what she will say next. More time passes. Her eyes looking down, not at me any longer, she finally speaks. “It must be Buru,” she says.

This was the conversation that unfolded when I asked Ida, a young woman who teaches at a daycare center in northern Yogyakarta, if “1965” is now or was ever present in her home.<sup>50</sup> Ida’s grandfather had been a political prisoner for 14 years, moving from one prison to another and eventually ending up at Buru Island. Buru Island was the most notorious prison camp for men jailed for suspicion of being Communists. 12,000 men were imprisoned there, and there were deaths from starvation, torture, and disease. Ida’s grandfather had already been freed for six years when she was born. Ida learned about 1965 through her grandfather’s silence and these “departures.”

Ida tells me that when she was little, she did not know anything about the killings and imprisonments in general or about Buru specifically. When I ask her what she knew of her grandfather’s past, she replies, “I knew we shouldn’t speak of it.” She could not remember exactly when she learned that it was a subject to avoid. “My parents told me not to talk about it?” she says in a quizzical tone, like she is asking me whether or not that is correct. When I ask her how she made sense of her grandfather “going somewhere else” when she was a child, she replies, “I was used to it. But from my parents’ reactions, I knew it was very bad.” Through her grandfather’s silence and his departures, Ida came to believe that he was dwelling in a past that was very painful. In the absence of historical facts, Ida came to know that the events of 1965 and their aftermath, whatever they were, were horrible -- events that still have an impact on the present as her grandfather continues to make these “departures.” “That is why I answered your question like that,” Ida tells me in our next meeting as we discuss the impact of her talking about her grandfather’s silences. “You asked me if 1965 is present in my home today. It still is.”

In this family, silence is being exercised in multiple directions. Silence on this topic pervades Ida’s home. Her grandfather does not speak about it. Her parents do not speak about it. From what Ida remembers, she thinks they taught her not to speak about it. And now Ida employs silence too as a form of protecting her grandfather from his painful past. “He must have terrible memories of what he experienced. What he saw.” Ida continues, her eyes growing wider and wetter. “There is a part of me that is curious, that wants to ask him, that wants to know. But I want to protect him so I don’t ask.” Even though no one is speaking about this history inside her home, her grandfather’s silence and his “departures” make a certain kind of knowing about 1965 and its aftermath possible.

I had hoped to meet Ida’s grandfather myself. At first, Ida seemed eager to introduce us,

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<sup>50</sup> The question is adapted from anthropologist Carol Kidron’s work with the descendants of Holocaust survivors in Israel.

even if just socially and not for the purposes of my research. But as months passed, while I continued to see Ida and her husband regularly, the plans for visits to her parents' home never came together. We scheduled visits far in advance several times, and every time, Ida cancelled those plans with profuse apologies and excuses. The last time that happened, a day before the planned visit, I decided not to impose by suggesting another visit. Instead, I told her, she could invite me when the time was right. I would not ask again. Even though we remained close, the invitation never came. I can speculate the reasons why, but I will never really know. I suspect that given my research interests, even a social visit from me was considered (by her? by her parents? by her grandfather?) too great a danger to the silence with which Ida and her parents protected her grandfather. Or maybe the reason was far more banal than that.

By its nature, silence is open to multiple interpretations. How does one know that Ida's grandfather's silent departures are, in fact, related to his past? Of course, we cannot know for sure.<sup>51</sup> However, it is significant that the meaning Ida has attached to these silences is one related to his past. What if his departures have nothing to do with a painful past, but through their own misreading of his departures, Ida and her family have constructed a silence that he, the grandfather, might not even want?

### **Pak Rudi – the silence of refusal**

“He never talked about it,” Pak Rudi tells me. “Not one word.” Pak Rudi, who works as a jack-of-all-trades caretaker at a middle school in Yogyakarta, was 14 years old when his late father returned from prison. He had been just over a year old when his father was arrested. When I had asked him what he learned from his father about his father's imprisonment, Pak Rudi replied, “I asked him to tell me, but he refused.” And what did he think of that silence as a teenager? “His silence made me more afraid of what had happened to him. To not know...” Pak Rudi's voice trails off, “Maybe there was something specific he did not want me to know.” He continued:

Many political prisoners lost their wives and children. They came home and their wives had remarried. But my mother was very strong. She worked hard. My father's parents helped us. When my father came home, he behaved almost like nothing had happened. Like he had been away on a trip. [...] At that time there were people who did not want to hear about the suffering... About the torture... But I *wanted* to know. He did not say a word.

What does Pak Rudi make of that silence? “I think he wanted to go back to life as usual,” Pak Rudi replied, “But his life was very different than before he was arrested. So neither of us got what we wanted.”

How can we read Pak Rudi's father's use of silence? Methodologically, it is challenging to discuss the various meanings of his silence if he never articulated them. Similar to the reading of Pak Tirto's silence at the beginning of the chapter, I worry whether in reading silences, I may be taking my “interpretive license”<sup>52</sup> too far instead of just letting them stand on their own. If we accept Pak Rudi's claim that his father did not talk about his experiences because he wanted to

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<sup>51</sup> A reader who is both a graduate student in medical anthropology and a medical student offered dementia as a possible medical reason Ida's grandfather could be “departing.”

<sup>52</sup> See Stoler and Strassler for the challenges on reading silences and evasions in their interviews with Indonesians who worked as servants in the late Dutch colonial period.

return to normal life, we can speculate the work that he thought silence might do and his motives for staying silent. Perhaps he thought staying silent would enable him to move forward with his life, to not further identify himself as a former political prisoner by talking about those experiences, to shield himself from stigma or further suspicion, to avoid re-experiencing his painful past. He might have imagined that silence would accomplish all these things. Or perhaps there were other reasons for his silence.

### Active silence

Early on in my fieldwork, I thought that either people spoke about the events of 1965 -- honestly or dishonestly, fully or partially -- or they were silent. But I came to understand that in most cases, staying silent *becomes* an expression. Silences are suffused with meaning. Just because people remain silent does not mean they have nothing to say. In fact, even in silence, they may be communicating a great deal.

In her article “Toward an Ethnography of Silence: The Lived Presence of the Past in the Everyday Life of Holocaust Trauma Survivors and Their Descendants in Israel,” anthropologist Carol Kidron writes about how silence is so often understood as an absence – an absence of voice:

The absence of voice is understood as signaling psychopathologized processes of avoidance and repression, socially suspect processes of personal secrecy, or collective processes of political subjugation. Whether the issue is personal, communal, or national silence, well-being is thought to be contingent on the liberation of voice. It is asserted that these logocentric readings have led to a neglect of the phenomenon of silence as a medium of expression, communication, and transmission of knowledge in its own right or as an alternative form of personal knowing that is not dependent on speech for its own objectification. (2009, 6-7)

About her own work with descendants of Holocaust survivors, in which she attends to the silences in the survivor’s homes, the form those silences took, and what the descendants experienced and learned from those silences, Kidron writes:

Contrary to reductionist readings of survivor family silence as a marker of absence, hegemonic silencing, pathology, or the unspeakability of genocide, descendant accounts depict the dynamic, normative, and self-imposed silent presence of the Holocaust death-world interwoven with everyday life. (2009, 15)

The silent presence of the Holocaust death-world in the home includes “the nonverbal and partially verbal traces of the Holocaust interwoven in everyday life” (2009, 9). These nonverbal and partially verbal traces include practices of survival carried over from the Holocaust, such as vigilantly preparing and protecting one’s shoes or exhibiting obsessive food behavior, and parent-child empathic encounters “(e.g., the child’s empathic gaze at the parent silently reminiscing).” (2009, 6)

As with the Holocaust descendants Kidron works with, silence became a feature in my informants’ homes through which they came to know, relate to, and make meaning around this history, even when it was not being actively discussed. For many of my informants who were more intimately connected to the killings and the aftermath, they grew used to the silence in the ways that Mbak Ida and Pak Rudi describe. To most of my informants, silence around this topic made sense.

Kidron’s image of the “dynamic, normative, and self-imposed silent presence of the

Holocaust death-world interwoven with everyday life” is very evocative in terms of the ways in which the events of 1965-1966 continue to be present in many of my friends’ and informants’ lives. I agree with Kidron that silence is not *only* “a marker of absence, hegemonic silencing, pathology, or the unspeakability of genocide.” However, I also assert that it is not *only* reductionist to argue that family silence can be a marker of hegemonic silencing, pathology, or the unspeakability of genocide. In Indonesia, there are cases where silence precisely marks these things. For others, silence can mark far more than these. Silence can be a powerful mode through which someone chooses to communicate -- instead of using the voice -- and that choice can be a strategic one that communicates a great deal. For many of my friends and informants, the public, enforced silence extended itself into the space of the home. It was not unusual, concerning, or noteworthy that the topic was not discussed in their homes.

### **Silencing and silence: historical, political, cultural dimensions**

One cannot examine these silences without attending to their specific historical, political, and cultural contexts. These contexts deeply influence the pattern, use, and expression of these silences. Where, to whom, and how freely people speak about the killings, or stay silent, depends so much on these contexts.

In the Introduction, I wrote about how anthropologists have often focused on the notion that the Javanese do not like to express emotions and instead work to maintain a calm and controlled interior and exterior. The more calm and undisturbed someone appears, the more refined, the higher his or her status. Throughout the participant observation, interactions, and interviews of my fieldwork, many Javanese people expressed emotions to me and around me, sometimes very difficult and painful emotions. Sometimes they did not. That made me reflect on the need to attend to the particular contexts of this suppression of emotion described so often by anthropologists of Java in the past – not just where, when, for whom, around whom, and towards what aims people suppress their emotions, but also the historical and political contexts of that outward suppression and silence.

In an essay published in 1995, before Suharto’s fall, Saya S. Shiraishi writes about the relation between the Indonesian language, the bloody events of 1965, and silence:

The most tragic affair in national history has never been openly discussed and fully analyzed inside Indonesia. Indonesian, which had once created, spread through, and thus given life to the imagining of a new nation, kept silent at this crucial hour, refusing to reveal the truth behind the bloodshed.

Order and stability was restored to the nation by military might. When the silently smiling army general Soeharto came into power and assumed the title of the second Bapak President in 1967, Bapak adopted the silence behind which the unspoken truth of the killings was stashed. The New Order stands on this silence of Bapak and the silences pervading contemporary use of Indonesian. The New Order stands on suppression of speech. It is as if breaking the silence could fatally, once and for all, destroy the fragile order of the nation that has lost confidence in itself. The nation today is addicted to a national pastime of guessing what is behind the silent smile of the Bapak President, who is, in turn, to keep watch on his children, or the citizens, from behind.

Learning Indonesian today implies learning not only its grammar and syntax, but

also what has to be kept unsaid and how to know what lies behind the silence. The Indonesian language of today contains within itself the possibility of punishment that may strike without warning. It is safer to accept, memorize, and reproduce what has already been said and has not been condemned. (178-179)

In her preface to her book *Speaking through the Silence: Narratives, Social Conventions, and Power in Java*, which went to press just as the Suharto regime was falling, Laine Berman writes:

I had written this book initially to expand our scholarly knowledge of the Javanese language. I wanted to argue that our dominant associations of the Javanese language and culture with refinement and grace were inadequate because they did not account for what they hid: the silences that disguised an institutionalized suffering and inequality in everyday social interaction. Silence in Java is cultivated not just as the suppression of speech, but also through the control of knowledge at all levels of society. Silence in Java is defined as a noble acquiescence, which has greatly assisted successive absolute rulers. With the tides of change sweeping the country now, my intention is that the people of Indonesia recognize how they have contributed to these abuses of power, and that their everyday language practices are essential sites for political and social reform.

Throughout this dissertation, I have described some of the context for the silences I encountered and heard about: the ongoing sensitivity of the topic of the events of 1965-1966 and their aftermath, the persistence of the propaganda and official narrative, the fears of being stigmatized for diverging from the official narrative or sharing one's own experiences, and the ways in which the stigma for those accused of being Communists spread into future generations. Once Suharto and his New Order regime constructed a narrative in which the mass killings played no part, if the killings were discussed openly, people could be branded as Communists, arrested, imprisoned, and disappeared. People avoided speaking about the killings publicly for decades. But why is it still perceived as dangerous to speak about the killings publicly in Indonesia *today*, in a democratic era? Why during my fieldwork did so many people still exercise such caution in talking about the killings? Why was I so cautious in how I designed and carried out my research?

When Suharto stepped down from power in 1998, he left a legacy of atrocities behind him – not only the mass killings in 1965-1966 and the imprisonments that followed, but also genocidal violence during the invasion and occupation of East Timor beginning in 1975; other state-sponsored mass killings, like the Petrus killings of the early 1980s in which 5,000 to 10,000 “criminals” were executed in Indonesia's larger cities, their bodies left in public places, tossed into rivers, or thrown into mass graves, the Tanjung Priok massacre in Jakarta in 1984, the Lampung massacre in 1989; the deadly shooting of protestors during student demonstrations in 1997 and 1998; disappearances of other protestors and activists; the shooting by police of protestors during the May 1998 riots in Jakarta; and finally, ongoing killings, torture, and atrocities in suppressing independence movements in the provinces of Aceh and Papua. This is by no means a complete list, but this is the violence that springs to mind in my friends' and informants' memories of the Suharto regime.

When Suharto fell from power and his dictatorship ended, there were many strides towards the nation that many people had yearned for. Democratic and judicial reforms were implemented. Democratic elections were held. Despite these important advances, the notion that those in power were in some ways linked to the killings in one way or another never fully

dissipated for my friends and informants, who often told me that many in the ruling elite had some connection or relationship to the events of 1965-1966 or other atrocities committed under the New Order. The New Order's legacy of violence continued to cast a long shadow, especially since none of the leaders or organizers of these actions was ever held accountable for these atrocities, and more atrocities continued after Suharto, including the murder of one of Indonesia's most famous human rights activists, Munir Said Thalib, in 2004.<sup>53</sup>

The idea that those with force can act with impunity had filtered down into all levels of the nation's security apparatus by the time Suharto fell, and during my fieldwork was expressed most acutely in concern over the actions of the police and special security forces. During the two years of my fieldwork, newspapers often reported abuses by police or security forces. The cases I noted in my fieldnotes include the police shooting peaceful protestors, detaining people at will, sometimes without cause, frequent reports of torture by the police, and several cases in which people died in police custody and the police claimed the deaths were suicides, but the bodies showed signs of extended beatings and torture. Additionally, during my fieldwork, there were reports of anti-corruption activists and journalists being beaten or mysteriously killed.

Given this climate of impunity, some of the people I met in my fieldwork feared the consequences of talking about this history. The consequences today do not take the form of being disappeared or killed, but instead include increased attention from local authorities, surveillance, harassment, intimidation, and interrogation, not only at the hands of the police but also by groups that see any attention to this history as a potential revival of Communism. As I shared in Chapter Two, meetings and gatherings, even innocuous ones, are frequently disrupted or cancelled, often by the police themselves, due to fears about the revival of Communism. An example includes a workshop for history teachers broken up by the Yogyakarta Police due to suspicion that the meeting would be used to spread Communism.

My own caution stemmed from this same climate. If the authorities discovered the true aims of my research, I could have been surveilled, intimidated, harassed, or, at worst, ejected from the country. But the consequences for my friends, informants, or anyone who spent time with me could have been worse.<sup>54</sup> This had a profound influence on the design of my research, including my choices to focus on the present day, to be immersed in a community where people came to know me well and include me in their activities, to depend on friendships built over time, to continue language studies throughout my fieldwork, and to work with a convenient sample of informants instead of focusing on a small and specific site of past violence.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> Munir was assassinated on a flight from Jakarta to Amsterdam. He was poisoned from arsenic being put in his orange juice. While the man who put the arsenic in Munir's orange juice was tried and convicted to 20 years in prison, his sentence later reduced by Indonesia's Supreme Court, no one in Indonesia's intelligence community, which human rights activists believe was responsible, has ever been charged.

<sup>54</sup> See Pohlman 2013c for a powerful exploration of the risks for her informants while doing research on 1965-1966. Her discussion of the culture of impunity in the same article provides useful and important context on the current climate of doing research on this topic in Indonesia.

<sup>55</sup> For a future project, I would be interested in picking one village where a massacre took place and doing a close ethnographic study of that community, the event, and its repercussions, but I knew that if I did that for this project, the suspicion such a project would attract from authorities would make it impossible for me and any potential informants. Hopefully, in the future, as Indonesia reckons more with this history, this will change.

### **Silence in the field**

For most of my informants with whom I discussed the continuing silence surrounding this topic, there was no surprise that people would choose acts of silence rather than openly discuss the killings. The taboo against open discussion of the killings is still widely felt.

Over and over again in the two years of my fieldwork, I found conversations stalling or topics shifting when the topic of 1965 emerged. While this dissertation has been filled with the voices of people who trusted me enough to talk about it, there were a lot of people who did not, who could not, or who did not see the topic as something worth discussing. I want to include them in these pages too since they are part of the picture as well.

Some people who were resistant to my topic just did not speak when I would mention it. When I would make comments or remarks about my research, they would express no curiosity about it at all. If I mentioned some interesting conversation I had had, performance I had attended, site I had visited, they would say nothing in return. Most of the time, the resistance I experienced was expressed through silence or through diversion -- a polite changing of the subject to my language studies, travel plans, or how my family in America was doing. My fieldnotes have many notations of these detours away from the looming topic. The most common deflections and diversions included laughter, changing the subject, telling an unrelated story, saying they did not know anything about whatever I was talking about, finding a reason to leave the room. A few times, however, people expressed why they did not want to discuss the topic.

### **Arisanti**

“That period was very bad. I think it should just be forgotten,” Arisanti tells me during our third meeting, pulling stuffing out of the lumpy couch we are sitting on in the air-conditioned café halfway between our two boarding houses. “Do you think people have forgotten?” I ask her. I met Arisanti through a mutual friend because Arisanti’s family has a direct connection to this history. But she does not want to discuss it. “It is best to just forget. Forgetting is not always bad,” she replies, shifting her body so that it tilts slightly away from me at an angle. (‘Lumpy couch or a different kind of discomfort?’ I wonder.) I reply, “Some people have told me that they are reminded all the time.” I trail off, waiting for her reply. She looks at the waiter who is fiddling with his phone across the room, then up at the muted television, then back to me for a moment before excusing herself to go to the bathroom. When she returns, she asks me a question about a market on Jalan Malioboro, and the previous subject is closed.

### **Wibowo**

I gently tease my language teacher Wibowo about him rolling his eyes when I talked about my topic today. He has never been that interested in discussing my research, which is a contrast to my other teachers. In my language studies, I have been spending about six hours a week in one-on-one conversations with my teachers to improve my language skills. My other teachers are happy to have something to talk about, but Wibowo has always been less enthused about me discussing my work. Today I caught him rolling his eyes. “Is there an Indonesian word for this?” I ask him, mimicking his eye-roll. “*Mata berputar-putar*,” he replies. “Why did you roll your eyes?” I ask him. “Do you not want to talk about my research?” Putting his elbows on the table between us, Wibowo leans his upper body across the table towards me, “It’s not polite,” he tells me, adopting a chiding parental tone even though he is younger than me by a decade at

least. “It’s not polite to talk about the past with people if the past is painful. Why not ask people about things that they are proud of? Things they *want* to talk about?” When I tell him that a lot of people I have met do want to talk about the past and about how this history still influences life today, he shakes his head and says something in Indonesian that I do not understand. When I tell him I do not understand, he gets up and draws the symbol of a u-turn on the whiteboard. “*Putar balik*,” he repeats, pointing to the symbol of the U-turn. “They want to *memputarbalikkan* history,” he tells me, emphasizing this new term. I still do not understand what he means so he hands me the Indonesian-English dictionary to look it up. “Twist, pervert, distort,” the dictionary reads. “This is why you should not talk about this history,” he tells me. “This is why I do not want to talk about it.” Out of respect, I did not pursue it after that but always found it fascinating that Wibowo saw any discussion of this history and its effect on daily life now as an attempt to twist or distort the history he knew. The threat the discussion represented to his notions of history made the topic something he did not want to discuss further. We never did.

### **Ibu Fina**

“What is there to say?” Ibu Fina asks me when I finally work up the courage to ask her thoughts about my topic. For over a year, I have been a regular customer at her rolling blue stall with the tiny awning and two stools where she and her husband sell sliced fruit (*rujak*) and ice cream to the passersby. “How can anyone talk about a time like that?” She moves her body in a sort of spasm – like a shudder is passing through her whole body while she shakes her head at the same time – and it is clear her question is rhetorical. I wonder whether she is expressing through her body what she feels unspeakable. I ponder her question and wonder about its many possible valences. “How can anyone talk about a time like that?” Does her question express the total impossibility of talking about this history? Does it express a judgment of the people who are talking about it? Does it express a judgment about me? Whatever the case, she moves on to the gossip of the day, more drama from the neighbors, and the topic fades back into silence.

### **Conclusion**

In this chapter, I approached silence from multiple directions -- writing about the silences people talked to me about as well as the silences that I encountered in my fieldwork – in order to explore the patterns of silence surrounding this topic. Silence does not only signify absence. Silence can communicate a great deal and be a mode through which people learn this history. For many, silence makes sense in what people have described as Indonesia’s “culture of impunity.” The risks for speaking are great, especially when the topic of 1965-1966 and its aftermath is so sensitive, and when language and accusation once had such power to determine and destroy futures. While I have struggled with how much interpretive license to bring to my analysis of silence, in this chapter I have created a space within all these words to attend to a major dimension of daily life surrounding the present-day emergence of the events of 1965-1966 and their aftermath: silence.

## Chapter Five – The Ruptures of Silence

In January 2012, a rainy month in Yogyakarta, over a year into my fieldwork, multiple friends, colleagues, and family members sent me a link to an article that had just appeared on the website for *The New York Times*. When I clicked on the link, the headline read “Veil of Silence Lifted in Indonesia.” It was an article about some of the books, films, magazines, and performances examining the events of 1965.<sup>56</sup> I read the article with excitement. Any coverage of 1965 in the media is rare, and the projects included were important ones. But I was skeptical. I could not get over the headline. “Veil of Silence Lifted in Indonesia.” There was such a discrepancy between that headline and what I was encountering in my fieldwork. For the majority of my Indonesian friends and informants, and in my daily life, the silence was far from lifted. It was still and always there, like an ocean current or a gravitational pull one had to exert oneself to resist if one wanted to express oneself on the topic. People were “free” to discuss the topic openly, but for many, they equated doing so with stigma, shame, or danger. The default position on this topic was still silence. I discovered that by the time the article appeared in the print edition of *The New York Times*, the headline had been changed to “Indonesia Chips Away At the Enforced Silence Around a Dark History.” “Chipping away” felt more suitable, as did the headline’s attention to the origin and direction of that silence, which was first enforced by the state.

Silence was a pervasive part of my fieldwork. Questions about the status of silence and the breaking of silence were common. In this chapter, I will be exploring different examples of silence’s ruptures.

In my fieldwork, through long, patient, mutually trusting relationships, people often did open up to me about the role of this history in their lives. Besides my conversations and interactions, I dramatically experienced the opening of this history, more chipping away, in two domains – the arts and the internet. This chapter is devoted to exploring them both through the use of two examples. Using these examples, I consider the types of authorship, activism, education, and voicing they provide. Both the arts and the internet allow new forms of expression, representation, inquiry, exchange, and discussion for people to learn about, confront, grapple with, remember, reclaim, and commemorate this history.

### Breaking the silence, again, and again

In January 2011, an Indonesian book came out entitled *Memecah Pembisuan: Tutaran Penyintas Tragedi '65-'66 (Breaking the Silence: Survivors of the '65-'66 Tragedy Speak)*.<sup>57</sup> Published in Jakarta, the book collected testimonies from 15 people throughout Indonesia about how they navigated the events of 1965 and their aftermath. In Indonesia already doing fieldwork, I tried through many methods to get ahold of the book – requesting it through booksellers, emailing the publisher, communicating with the publisher through Facebook. I could not gain access to the book until I returned to Berkeley and found it in the university library.

I had noticed that there were more books on the history of 1965-1966 making their way to bookstore shelves in Yogyakarta than I had found when I first lived in the city in 2009. In 2009, all I could find on the topic in the central Gramedia bookstore was a poster

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<sup>56</sup> See Schonhardt 2012.

<sup>57</sup> When the English translation of the book was published, its title became *Breaking the Silence: Survivors Speak about 1965-66 Violence in Indonesia*. See Sukanta 2011.

commemorating the murdered generals. Between 2010 and 2012, things were changing. There were one or two books at a time about this history, the purported coup attempt, the PKI, or testimonies by former political prisoners or others who had lived through the events of 1965-1966 and its aftermath. But this was in Yogyakarta, the center of higher education in Indonesia and the city where many of the publishing houses were located. I wondered how hard these books would be to obtain in other areas of Indonesia. If the silence was being broken, I wondered, for whom, to whom, and where?

In February of 2014, when I was already back in Berkeley, the writer of a *New York Times* op-ed about the documentary *The Act of Killing* wrote that the film “has now broken the official silence about the massacres” (Harsono). “Here we go again,” I thought.

Ariel Heryanto, an Indonesian anthropologist, must have been feeling the same, because he took to Facebook the same day in response, posting a column in which he wrote:

For decades now, each time a new book, film, or novel about 1965 is released, its creators or supporters find it hard to resist the temptation to make claims that this work “breaks the silence,” as if until then there was nothing but “silence.” Due respect for acknowledging the preceding works by others is missing or lacking. Once the most recent work is assumed to have “broken the silence,” silence itself is imagined to be over, as if it will never return again, until later a newer book, novel or film is released, and newer claims of “breaking the silence” are made.

For the record, there has been a long history of efforts to contest the official government’s propaganda and lies about what happened in Indonesia in 1965-1966. It is not something recent or a novelty. Previous works are authored not only by foreigners in a foreign language, but also by Indonesian people themselves, in the national language, and officially published in Indonesia itself. (Heryanto 2014b)

He went on in the column to provide a partial list of publications that have challenged the official narrative, all published in Indonesia by Indonesians between 1990 to 1995 (before Suharto left office). For example, he writes that a 1990 *Tempo Magazine* story about 1965 was the seventh time the magazine had devoted a cover story to the topic. But the one in 1990 was the first time they did not repeat the “ruler’s propaganda.” Instead, he explains, the *Tempo Magazine* story in 1990 explored “the different versions of the events of 1965 that circulated outside of Indonesia, including those that contradict the official narrative. In this report, there is a clear version that accuses the military and President Suharto of being involved.” He also lists several books published in 1994 and 1995 – Wimanjaya K. Liotohe’s three-volume *Primadosa* “that accuses President Suharto of staging a coup d’etat in 1965”; Manai Sophiaan’s *Kehormatan Bagi Yang Berhak* that argues that “America was behind the bloody events” of 1965; and *Memoar Oei Tjoe Tat: Pembantu Presiden Soekarno* which included “his testimony as a member of the fact-finding team sent by President Sukarno to investigate the killings in the final months of 1965 in Java, Bali, and Sumatra. The story is much different from what the government had propagated.” In the Facebook note, Heryanto directed his readers to his book for even more examples of the ways people within Indonesia, not just foreigners, have been breaking the prevailing silence over and over again. (Heryanto 2014b)

## A Cup of Coffee from the Playa

When I arrive at the Kedai Kebun complex, a museum and performing arts space in the southern part of Yogyakarta, people are already standing around waiting, clustered into pairs or into groups of three or four. At the folding table out front, we exchange tickets for lanyards and programs, and we stand around as more and more people arrive. Just after sunset a bus pulls up, and the two people at the folding table invite all of those present to climb aboard. We get on the bus, packing in tight, and the bus begins to make its way through the streets of Yogyakarta. A man stands up near the front of the bus and begins narrating for us the area we are passing through – he is a quasi tourist guide. He points out several large homes we pass and tells us stories about the people who lived there in the past. And this continues until we reach a non-descript area with some large buildings. The bus stops, and he encourages us to get us off. He leads us into a large space filled with antiques. I cannot tell if it is a store or a warehouse, but the place is filled with small statues, silverware, old advertising posters, old furniture. From small curios to large items, the place is filled with stuff everywhere you look. The proprietor there circulates amongst us as we browse the collection, answering questions, joking with us. We are browsing this area for ten minutes or so before he invites us to another space where he says something even more special awaits. It has started to rain outside so we lurch and tiptoe our way down an increasingly muddy lane that leads to a couple of structures that look like barns. We go inside one, and there are even more antiques stacked up everywhere, although this space looks more like it is for storage than for display. There are some old chairs and benches there too, and we are invited to sit. As we sit, the lights suddenly go out, plunging the space into darkness. The proprietor shouts to his staff to help him with the lights, and then a single light illuminates over the part of the warehouse we are facing. It is a stage of sorts, and even it looks like an antiques shop with suitcases stacked up here and there. Suitcases, old bikes, old china.

Before us, the antiques have been cleared to create a stage, throughout which antiques are strewn and stacked. A young man sits alone while a young woman nearby stirs a cup of tea. She brings him the cup of tea, and he drinks. The two of them sit together for a while. It begins to rain. The couple huddles together under an umbrella, shy about their proximity. The rain ends. The couple get on a bicycle, the man in front and the woman sitting behind him. He rings the bell and begins to pedal. As they ride, they occasionally hold hands. They stop at a bench, and she begins to read to him. A passing man with a camera offers to take their photo, and they pose together. The photographer hands the young man the Polaroid. The young man shakes the photo as it is developing, and when it is developed, he hands it to the young woman. They look at the photo together and embrace.

Suddenly the radio blares, interrupting this scene. The radio announces that the brightest sons and daughters of Indonesia are being sent to study in Russia.

The young couple returns to the table and to the cup of tea. The young woman looks sad. The young man raises a small red velvet box holding a ring, and when she sees it, she accepts it happily and shyly. They gaze at each other. When he stands, he has a suitcase in his hands. He kisses her on the forehead and they part.

The young man joins two other people at a ceremony where they don hats known as *kopiah*s, which are traditionally worn by Indonesian (and Muslim) men on formal occasions, and red and white scarves around their necks. (The colors of the Indonesian flag are red and white.) The crowd applauds them. Patriotic music plays. They are saluted. The young man then flies away. In a new land, the young man types letters to the young woman, who reads them when

they arrive. She writes letters to him in reply. As the man types, a friend teases him about writing letters. The young man asks his friend to mail the letter. The young woman gives a friend her letter to mail. Letters fly back and forth between them.

Suddenly, everything changes. Discordant music and announcements blare. A group of people, their faces twisted into vile expressions, enter and grab the young man. He struggles against them, but it is no use. They rip off his *kopiah* and red and white scarf, throwing them away. Time slows down as the group forces him inside a suitcase and closes the lid. The twisted-faced group turns to stare us down.

The young woman sits alone, her head resting on her arm. She has the teacup and the red velvet ring box in front of her. As she sits, a different young man appears, bringing flowers. He sits next to her and hands her the flowers. They sit together, her body turned away from his. After a few moments pass, two people appear and place a white veil on their heads. People clap and congratulate them on their marriage.

After a few moments, two people enter and open the suitcase where the young man was trapped. As he emerges from the suitcase, he is much older. He has grey hair and wrinkles, wears glasses. As he takes a seat at the table near him, he stares at the typewriter and telephone in front of him. He begins to type. The telephone rings. He listens to the voice on the other end. Patriotic music begins to play, and a red and white scarf is tied around his neck. A *kopiah* is placed upon his head. Someone hands the young man his passport, and as he opens it, an Indonesian flag emerges from its pages. He stares in disbelief.

The young woman has also aged. She has wrinkles and a shawl wrapped around her shrunken frame. She starts to dust the table and then pulls out a box from underneath. From the box, she withdraws the Polaroid photograph, her memento of her time with the young man. She looks at it for several moments before replacing it in the box. When she draws her hand from the box again, she is holding the teacup. She stares at it. She moves across the room and finds the book she read from on that afternoon so long ago. After looking at the book, she leaves the teacup there.

The old man moves slowly and finds his old bicycle. He goes to ring the rusty bell, which still dings. He slowly climbs on to the bike and pedals. As he rides, he reminisces about his young love sitting on the bike behind him. The old man gets off his bicycle and as he moves through old suitcases and tables, he spies the teacup. He picks it up and stares at it as it dangles from his hand. And all goes dark.

This is the world of the Papermoon Puppet Theatre's production of *Setjangkir Kopi dari Plaja (A Cup of Coffee from the Playa)*, a puppet show that was staged in December 2011 in Yogyakarta.



The performance is wordless, accompanied by music. The expressions, emotions, and affect of the puppets are communicated by the ways in which the performers manipulate the puppet characters.

The play is based on the life of Widodo Suwardjo, who the creators of the performance call Pak Wi. In 1959, Pak Wi was a college student studying Civil Engineering at Gadjah Madah University in Yogyakarta. In 1960 he received a scholarship from the government of Indonesia to study metallurgy in Moscow. He and other Indonesian students went to Russia under this

program organized by President Sukarno. As the play depicts, Pak Wi promised his fiancée, Widari Soewahjo, that he would marry her upon his return. In 1965, after the 30<sup>th</sup> of September Movement, because he was in a Communist country, he and the other students were stripped of their Indonesian citizenship. Their passports were revoked in 1966. They could not return home, essentially stranded in Russia. In all his years of forced exile, Pak Wi never married. He stayed true to his promise.

In 2001, after then-president Abdurrahman Wahid visited Havana, Pak Wi was able to secure a three-month visa to return to Indonesia. He did not regain his Indonesian citizenship until 2007. When he got his Indonesian passport back, he wrote to a friend: “You can imagine how I feel, like a man who wanted to die, who was resigned to fate, then given the right to live again.” (“*Ya bisa dibayangkan bagaimana perasaan saya, bagaikan orang yang mau mati, sudah pasrah pada nasib, lalu diberi hak hidup lagi.*”) (Taman Sari)

When this play was staged in 2011, Pak Wi was 71, still unmarried, and living in Havana, Cuba.

### ***Mwathirika***

*Setjangkir Kopi dari Plaja* was the second production of the Papermoon Puppet Theatre to address the events of 1965. Their first, entitled *Mwathirika*, tells the story of two families living side by side in 1965. At the beginning of the performance, many people are seen at a rally, listening to a speech and waving red balloons, wearing and sometimes waving red scarves. Brother and sister Moyo and Tupu live with their father Baba. Moyo and Tupu wear red whistles to blow to summon each other. When a dog threatens Tupu, she blows her whistle, and her brother protects her. They play with each other happily. Baba returns home, bringing Tupu a red balloon from the rally. As the children enjoy a performance from a traveling artist, someone arrives at Baba’s house and hands him a red flag. He takes it, nodding. The children play with their neighbor’s daughter Lacuna, who is in a wheelchair. As turmoil and chaos begin, people around them start disappearing. One night, a figure appears and draws a red triangle on the front of Baba’s house. Later, Baba’s neighbor Haki, sweeping his yard next door, is startled to see the red triangle on his neighbor’s house and the red balloon Baba had brought home for his daughter. When Baba returns from work and sees his neighbor, Haki runs away. Baba sees the triangle on his house and tries, unsuccessfully, to rub it away. Haki lurks in the shadows, afraid. A figure with a gun appears and notices the triangle on Baba’s house. He calls another gun-toting figure over. When they ask Haki if the house is his, he indicates it is Baba’s. The gun-toting figures begin to escort Baba away just as Moyo and Tupu return home, one of them blowing on their red whistle. He kisses his children and is led away by the gun-toting figures.

Time passes, and Moyo and Tupu grow hungry. They hunt for frogs so they can eat. Moyo goes to visit his father in jail. One of the guards notices his red whistle, and Moyo is dragged away. Tupu remains at home, waiting for her brother. She blows her whistle but there is no reply. Lacuna, Tupu’s neighbor in the wheelchair, approaches Tupu, bringing her a toy. Lacuna’s father Haki indicates his disapproval and orders Lacuna back indoors. She takes her toy with her. Tupu sits alone, still blowing her whistle.

Baba is in prison. Behind bars, his shirt is stained with blood. He places his hand to his heart as he sinks to his knees. The cell door is thrown open, and he is ordered out of his cell, prodded by a rifle. As Baba’s cell stands empty, prisoners, presumably including Baba, are taken from the back of a truck, lined up, and killed. Back home, Tupu finds her red balloon burst. She cries. As the bodies of the killed prisoners circulate around her in spirit form, she is unable to

touch or stop them. Tupu blows her whistle. Again and again, she blows. Lacuna sees her and approaches. She tries giving a music box to Tupu. Tupu shakes her head, blows her whistle again. Lacuna leaves the music box at Tupu's feet. After several more weak blows, Tupu drops her whistle as the music from Lacuna's music box plays at her feet. The puppeteer who is operating Tupu lifts Tupu into her lap, enfolding her in an embrace as the lights fade out completely.

More prisoners pass through, all having red hats placed on them before being put in the back of a truck.

Lacuna hears the music from her music box playing and calls Tupu. There is no sign of Tupu. Lacuna rolls her wheelchair around, looking for Tupu. On the ground she finds the fuzzy hat that Tupu always wears. She spots Tupu's red whistle beside it, picks it up, and blows it. No response. She blows it again. Men marching in lockstep in the background take notice of her blowing the red whistle. The lights go dark. When the lights shine again, there is just an empty wheelchair on its side, one wheel spinning, lying next to the red whistle, as music from the music box continues to play.

### **Papermoon**

The artistic directors of the Papermoon Puppet Theatre are Maria Tri Sulistyani and Iwan Effendi. Maria is a granddaughter of a military man, and Iwan is the grandson of a puppetmaster (*dalang*) who was imprisoned during the purge. They are two of the artists grappling with this period of history through art. In the *Mwathirika* program, they write:

Why choose this theme? Isn't the 'dark chapter' in Indonesia's history 'old news', does it need to be told again? Perhaps this is so for some people in Indonesia or perhaps there are even more who don't want to talk about it, and choose to forget it because they fear it. But that's not the way it is for us. Although hundreds of books and films about this 'dark chapter' have been produced, under a cloud of controversy, how many of the young men and women of our archipelago have heard about, watched, or read them? How many of us want to remember this dark chapter of our history?

For us, it is not about who killed who. This is about a lost history (and the loss of history) in our lives. Shouldn't it be so, that if we know what has happened in the past, then we can understand why we stand here now, and where we want to go in years to come?

So, this is what actually happen while the daughter of a former Lieutenant Colonel of Indonesian Air Force, and the grandson of *dalang* (wayang puppet-master) who was a political prisoner for 13 years – like us – could talk about the dark chapters of history, that are also a part of their family histories. (*Mwathirika* program)

In a profile accompanying an exhibition in Yogyakarta, Iwan reveals that he did not investigate his own family's connections to 1965 until he participated in an arts project called "September Something" at the Kedai Kebun Forum in 2008.

"We were attending a workshop on the trauma of 1965 Affair. I, as a part of the generation of 2000 who was born in 1979, scarcely had knowledge of the anti-PKI massacres. I have heard of it, but I was not completely aware of what it really

meant," [Iwan] stated.

"September Something" art project which aim was to trace the history of 1965 from the living room has motivated Iwan Effendi to fit together the pieces of his family tale puzzle. He started compiling the stories of his grandfather from his mother's siblings, particularly from his uncle who had already reached fifteen at the time of the Affair. Many were also gained from the late mother of his; vaguely-heard ones finally began interlacing into a whole horrifying story.

"At that time, in 1965, he was summoned to the village's administrative unit's office, they said. Only the village officials who picked up my grandfather. It seemed pretty normal. However, he had never come back home again for thirteen years. Having to take care of nine children, my grandmother faced a hard time. She, eventually, decided to send them to relatives homes in different cities so that they could grow in a "healthy" environment without being accused as the children of PKI. (Tanesia)

Iwan himself is an example of the very youth that Papermoon has geared *Mwathirika* towards – the youth that have not yet learned about this chapter of history. Perhaps it would seem strange to people not familiar with Indonesia that Iwan reports he “scarcely” knew about the killings by the time he was 29, but that was the climate in which he and millions of other Indonesians were raised. Born in 1979, he would have grown to adulthood with Suharto as president, being educated from history books that made no mention of the mass killings. Even within his own family, to learn about this history required an active effort on his part, embarking on a project to piece together the impact of this chapter of history on his family. Perhaps one would think that his grandfather’s 13-year imprisonment would make Iwan naturally curious about this history. However, most of the prisoner releases occurred before or around the time Iwan was born. And again, conversation and curiosity on this topic were generally constrained because of fears about repercussions of discussing this history. Iwan and Maria’s question from the *Mwathirika* program about how many young people have actually heard about, read about, or watched the films about this history reveals a great deal about prevailing popular attitudes to this history amongst subsequent generations. It speaks volumes about the climate in which they were raised and educated.

Choosing to present and explore this history through the form of puppetry is highly significant in the Indonesian context. Puppetry is an extremely familiar cultural form in Indonesia, with a very long history. Leather shadow puppets (*wayang kulit*) against a white screen are the most famous type of puppetry in Indonesia and have become an emblematic image of the country. There is tremendous regional variation within the world of *wayang*, and there are several other types of puppetry besides *wayang kulit*, including wooden doll puppets (*wayang golek*) and flat puppets that are almost identical to leather shadow puppets except they are made of wood (*wayang klitik*), *Teater boneka* is another form of Indonesian puppetry that is targeted at children and uses marionette-type puppets. Puppetry in Indonesia has been a hugely popular topic for intellectuals.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> Leading scholars of Indonesia who have written about shadow puppetry include Clifford Geertz, Benedict Anderson, and Tony Day. Other prominent scholars on the different genres of puppet theatre in Indonesia are Ward Keeler, Jan Mrázek, and Matthew Isaac Cohen.

### ***Voice and body***

Shadow puppet (*wayang kulit*) performances always have one puppetmaster (*dalang*), who is accompanied by a gamelan orchestra. The puppetmaster manipulates all the puppets and voices all the characters. He is the central storyteller, the sole narrator of the events.

Papermoon Puppet Theatre plays with, reimagines, and reworks this extremely familiar cultural form to offer alternate histories of the events of 1965 and their aftermath. One major feature of the Papermoon performances is the type of voicing that they offer. In these Papermoon productions there is no central narrator, no one authoritative voice. Instead, the story is conveyed through the movement of the puppets, the way these figures are affectively and bodily charged by the puppeteers who operate them. The audience is not told what to think or feel about what they are seeing.

The type of puppetry employed by Papermoon in these two productions is “bunraku and kuruma ningyo puppets, which originate from Japan” (*Mwathirika* program). Maria explains:

In *Mwathirika* and *Setjangkir Kopi dari Plaja*, we were adapting bunraku and kuruma ningyo from Japan because we see that there is an intimate feeling when playing with these puppets. The puppeteers can touch the puppet directly without using sticks like in wayang, or using strings, like with a marionette. This kind of intimacy is what we need to tell intimate and personal stories. (Lestari)

The intimacy Maria speaks of here is related to the desire to evoke the emotions of the audience as a way of allowing them to access, experience, and reflect on this history.

The Papermoon performances are performed almost totally without words. *Mwathirika* is mostly wordless except for a few occasions where one character calls out searching for another, calling her name. *Setjangkir Kopi Dari Plaja* is completely wordless except for the blaring from the radio. This is significant for several reasons.

First, the fact that the performance is wordless makes it universal for Indonesian audiences. In Indonesia, there are over 700 spoken languages. Language is something that can separate people, demarcate borders between “us” and “them.” Having the characters speak in a particular dialect would locate them in a particular place, within a particular ethnic identity, or, in the case of *bahasa Indonesia*, the national language, within a sphere of language used for education, politics, and mass media. With no words – and as such no particular sphere, no specific identity, no precise place -- the story can be viewed as a more general “Indonesian” story.

Interestingly, the title of *Mwathirika* and the character’s names in *Mwathirika* are from Swahili. “*Mwathirika*” means “victim” in Swahili. Why not use the Indonesian word for “victim” (*korban*)?

The word *mwathirika*, which means victim in the East African Swahili language, according to Maria, was used mostly because it sounded strange to the ears of an Indonesian audience and therefore would not block their imagination while enjoying the performance. That way she expected to create curiosity among the audience. In principle, the play wanted to show something that the audience was familiar with but by using a new language. (Wayhuni)

The fact that the puppet show is called *Mwathirika* leaves it open to the audience who the victim is. No one says to anyone else that “You are a victim” or “I am a victim.” Perhaps it is even the audience members who are the victims.

Second, both Papermoon productions are telling a history around which speech is a very

charged domain. Who can speak, who cannot, what speech is permissible, what speech is not, about whom people can speak, about whom they should not, where they can speak safely, where they cannot, to whom or near whom people can speak – all of these were and remain matters of great concern. When it comes to this history, speech could be deadly. This is a history where accusations of being a Communist or being a Communist sympathizer could result in death, imprisonment, being disappeared, and stigma for anyone associated with the accused. Speech had life and death consequences. Speech could bring suffering for generations. In representing such a history, how powerful it is to not use words at all.

Third, without words, the performances depend almost entirely on movement. “Movement is the first language of a human being,” artistic director Maria is quoted as saying in an interview. “With fewer words, sometimes we can better communicate things” (Wayhuni). The embodiment of the performance is so vital to the representation of the story and this history. Movement provides all the expression and emotion of the piece. As I discuss in the introduction, the history of 1965 and its aftermath is inextricably tied to the body, and here is a theatrical manifestation of that connection. When the puppeteer leans forward, the character leans forward. When the puppeteer outstretches their hand, so does the puppet. The expression on the puppets’ faces do not change. Nor does the emotion on the puppeteer’s faces. Otherwise people would watch the puppeteer and not the puppet, Maria explains in an interview (Official Net News). Yet the puppeteers are very expressive with their bodies. When Pak Wi is proud, the puppet is held in a proud posture, and the puppeteer stands that way. So this type of puppetry performance provides a way of embodying the history, connecting to the history and expressing it through the body. This is not only a depiction of what happened then. It is happening now in front of us, and the puppeteer is conveying everything through the manipulation of the body, both their body and the puppet’s.

### ***History, affect, and time***

In both these Papermoon performances, what is presented is not some grand narrative about what happened in 1965-1966 and afterwards. The stories that are told are the story of two families (in the case of *Mwathirika*) and the story of a relationship (in the case of *Setjangkir Kopi dari Plaja*). Through the story of individuals, Papermoon tells the history of this period. So Papermoon productions explore how history can be told, who can author it, through whose stories it can be presented or understood. History is not approached intellectually in these performances, but affectively instead.

In an article about the production of *Mwathirika*, Iwan states, “Unlike historical facts that work more with figures and numbers, this performance tries to present the history of feelings: the feeling of losing something and the feeling of causing something to be lost” (Wahyuni).

Iwan and Maria write in the program that *Mwathirika* is “not about who killed who.” They are less interested in historical *facts* than historical *feelings*. What is more important than assigning responsibility or blame is exploring the costs of this violence -- the ways it engendered suspicion between neighbors, destroyed families and communities, divided loved ones, and continues to impact future generations.

*Mwathirika* is a story about the past, but *Setjangkir Kopi dari Plaja*, staged two years after *Mwathirika* was first staged, is very much about the relation between the past and the present, the way the past has undeniably influenced the lives that people live now. The bus ride to the antiques warehouse, the discussion about the old houses we were passing, hearing stories about who lived in those houses were the production’s first enactments of the connections

between the past and the present, the landscape around us being filled with markers of the past, our experiences having some relation to that past. As we explored the antiques shop and then were taken to the antiques warehouse, where the performance unfolded in a space filled with objects of the past, the past surrounded us. We watched an old man hold a teacup from his past and be awash in memories and in all that he has lost and all that will never be realized. The ongoing force of the past was all too clear.

When willful forgetting, erasure, or avoidance cut off exploration and discussion about the past, one cannot truly understand the hidden forces and context of the present or determine their futures. In the program for *Mwathirika*, Maria and Iwan write, “Shouldn’t it be so, that if we know what has happened in the past, then we can understand why we stand here now, and where we want to go in years to come?”

Theatrical performance and the body have often been used as tools of human liberation or to promote social and political change. The most famous example is probably the Theater of the Oppressed, established by Brazilian theatre director Augusto Boal. There is a tradition of such theatre in Indonesia as well.<sup>59</sup> These two Papermoon performances, which resonate with so many dimensions of the experiences articulated by my friends and informants and insights of my fieldwork, provide two very powerful and poignant examples of transformational theatre.

### **Art and 1965**

Art can be used not just to connect and educate, as Papermoon did, but to confront as well. Anthropologists Degung Santikarma and Leslie Dwyer describe a performance art project called “Memasak Sejarah” (“Cooking History”):

On the opening night [June 9, 2004], the artists [a collective of young Balinese artists calling themselves Klinik Seni Taxu (“Taxu Art Clinic”)], dressed in traditional Balinese ritual attire, washed and chopped and cooked sweet potatoes – a food associated with Indonesia’s poor – for their audience, who were then invited to share the meal. Only after the meal was finished did the artists inform the audience that they had grown the sweet potatoes on a field in west Bali that covered a hidden mass grave from 1965, the year when state-sponsored terror began its sweep across Indonesia, leaving some 1 million alleged communists dead and Soeharto’s New Order regime ascending to power.

One of the young artists, Ngurah Suryawan, explained that the aim of the performance – which culminated in a number of audience members vomiting in disgust – was to move away from the “exoticization of violence” he claimed characterized media coverage of the conflicts that had emerged after Soeharto’s resignation, in which violence was reduced to the reemergence of “primordial sentiments” in the absence of state control. He argued that by evoking the history of 1965, which had long been suppressed under the New Order, the links among violence, entrenched political repression, and injustice could be exposed. What the artists had intended, Suryawan said, was to “traumatize” the audience into an embodied relationship with history that could substitute social memory of atrocity for a willful forgetting (N. Suryawan, personal communication, June 13, 2004).

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<sup>59</sup> For example, see Bodden 2010, Hatley 2006 on 1965-1966-related theatre, and Hatley 2008.

(Dwyer and Santikarma 2007a, 404-405)

Art can also be used to redefine or reclaim pieces of this history. As described in Chapter Three, “Genjer Genjer” was a song written in 1943 about the difficulties of living under Japanese occupation. A song about a woman picking the plant genjer, selling it at the market, and cooking the river plant became a hit song in the 1950s. The PKI began playing the song at gatherings and rallies, and it became associated with the PKI as a result. Several of my friends and informants reported to me that the women who killed and tortured the generals were singing this song at the time. The song was banned after the purported attempted coup, and the songwriter was killed due to his membership in *Lekra* (*Lembaga Kebudayaan Rakyat*, or the Institute of People’s Culture). After the song was banned, a new version of the song emerged retitled “Jendral-Jendral” (Generals) with the lyrics changed to be about how Communist women tortured and killed the generals.

Even after the fall of Suharto and his New Order regime, the song remains very charged in the Indonesian imagination. When “Genjer Genjer” was played on the radio in Solo, Central Java, in 2009, a protest ensued.

In a Jakarta exhibition “Indonesia & The World 1965-1969: A Critical Decade,” which accompanied the conference I wrote about in Chapter Two, Sigit Wijaya and M. Sigit Budi Santoso offered an interactive video installation of a karaoke sing-along version of “Genjer Genjer.” The song played on the TV, with lyrics displayed, over banal images of people smiling, performing, and singing. Headphones and a microphone were provided for spectators to sing along. In the exhibition’s catalogue, the artists write:

The song “genjer-genjer” always interpreted as one of PKI’s official song. When we heard it maybe it will remind us about the cruelty of the PKI itself. But actually the true meaning of the song, is about people who ate Genjer because lack of food at the Japanese oppression [sic]. This Karaoke video directed to cast away the dark image of the past with the image of happiness. So people wouldn’t imagine the tragedy of G30S and ecetera [sic].

Like the puppetry example, here is another example of taking a hugely popular and familiar cultural form in Indonesia, albeit an imported one, karaoke, and using it to reclaim or redefine the song and its associations. Despite the exhibition being very well-attended on the two days I went to it, I saw only a handful of people with the headphones on and microphone in hand. At other pieces in the exhibition, held at the Goethe Institute in Jakarta, there were more examples of artists using familiar forms to re-present this history in their work -- comics, murals, slideshows, textiles, drawings, and video.

### Internet

The arts is not the only arena in which people are engaging with their relation to the events of 1965-1966 and their aftermath. The internet is another space where conversations, discussions, and debates are unfolding.

Although only a small percentage the population has access to the internet, it has a powerful and growing influence. In 1999, less than .5 percent of the population of Indonesia had access to the internet (Brauchler 2003). In 2012, the internet served 55 million out of a total population of 240 million (Lim 2013).

In Yogyakarta, the city of students, there are lots of internet cafes spread throughout the city. Depending on the neighborhood, they range in size and luxury from a single room *warnet* (*warung internet*) with just a few computer terminals to large and luxurious air-conditioned

internet cafes with a choice of communal tables, cubicles, or private rooms where one can have food and drink delivered right to one's computer. When I traveled outside of Yogyakarta, as I did multiple times for extended trips, the contrast became clear. There was usually always somewhere to find a *warnet* or an internet café, but the drives grew longer to reach them and the per-minute cost to use the services grew higher. As I traveled further into eastern Indonesia, into areas where there was no electricity during the day or none at all except as provided by generators, the notion of access to the internet through a computer became unrealistic. However, even in these places, people used their mobile phones to access Facebook, Twitter, and other social media sites. As an illustrative anecdote, in the most remote region I traveled to in Indonesia, an island east of Flores, I spent almost a month in a fishing village where there was no electricity during the day and no phone signal any of the time due to the terrain of the island and the village's location in a cove. Some people there owned cell phones, and when their school or work was done, they would often hop on motorbikes or climb the steep road with spectacular views of the sea crashing against the shore until they reached a point where one or two bars would pop up on their phones indicating they had entered the area with cell phone reception. There they would sit, most often checking soccer scores, texting their friends, playing games, checking Facebook, or watching videos on the cell phone's screens. On my walks in the village, I could always tell where the phone signal began by the clumps of teenagers and a couple of adults clustered there. Later they would return to the village, their phones stowed away.

The internet offers forms of voice, authorship, activism, and exchange that may not be available to people in their daily social worlds, and it offers a venue through which people actively seek to educate themselves about this history. The internet represents a widening alternate sphere of information, narrative space, identity-making, and activism.

When I asked people where they learned about the history of 1965-1966, most of my friends and informants replied that they learned about it from their parents or families, from the propaganda film *Pengkhianatan G30S/PKI*, and/or from teachers and school textbooks. Those were the most common responses. However, in my interviews, conversations, observations, and communications with people, I noticed that many mentioned discovering something new on the internet, and some of my friends and informants would send or text me links to articles, videos, or websites that they thought I would find helpful or that would clarify or support something they had told me. This did not happen all the time, but it happened often enough that I came to believe that something is happening online in relation to this history that deserves attention.

Scholars who have written about the internet in Indonesia have focused on the history of its development, growth, and spread,<sup>60</sup> the role and influence of the internet on social and political movements and conflicts, including the conflict in the Moluccas, *Reformasi*, and the end of the New Order,<sup>61</sup> the ways in which the internet is employed by Islamic groups to disseminate information and establish networks amongst a wider audience,<sup>62</sup> how Indonesian *cadari* women (women who veil their faces, heads, and bodies) use the internet as a tool in the creation and maintenance of their subculture,<sup>63</sup> and how the online spheres of anonymous internet chat rooms allow youths to negotiate gender roles and express themselves more emotionally than is

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<sup>60</sup> See Hill and Sen 1997, 2002, and 2005.

<sup>61</sup> See Bräuchler 2003, Hill and Sen 1997, 2002, 2005, Lim 2003a, 2003b, 2013, Maruc 1999.

<sup>62</sup> See Ali 2011, Hosen 2008, Lim 2005.

<sup>63</sup> See Nisa 2013. This article was an invaluable resource for this section and an important reminder of how the internet is not always a tool of liberation.

culturally acceptable outside of those spheres.<sup>64</sup>

### Marwan

As I pull up a stool next to the white plastic chair Marwan is sitting in, he is already clicking on the mouse and typing on the keyboard, pulling up the first website he is going to visit today. This is the third time I have accompanied Marwan to the small *warnet* in his neighborhood north of Gadjah Mada University, where he is a student. The *warnet* is one small room. There are five PCs and a printer, not including the terminal on the desk of the young man in charge who is reading a book while Marwan and I get situated. There are no other customers. The door stands open to the street outside (for air flow, Marwan tells me). Marwan has chosen a computer that is next to the door. He tells me later that this is his favorite computer because people who come in cannot easily see what is on the screen. After entering the room or even if they peeked in from the street, they would have to turn their bodies or twist their heads to look over Marwan's shoulder at the screen, which would be so obvious Marwan would know that they were looking. The men who work there do not care what he does online, he tells me. They are friends. Marwan uses the computers at a steep discount here for offering them a similar discount at the photocopy shop where he works nearby.

When I first interviewed Marwan after meeting through a mutual friend, he told me that even though he grew up in a village near Klaten in Central Java, an area where the killings were intense due to the strength of the PKI in the region, "No one talked about those events. So I studied it myself." He studied it, he told me, by looking it up on the internet. He read websites about the history, testimonies by survivors that were shared online, searched for YouTube videos, which included more testimonies, news stories, documentaries, and watched them, contributed to an "open community" website that compiled lots of resources (articles, videos, discussion boards) about the events of 1965-1966 and their aftermath,<sup>65</sup> downloaded and read electronic books, sometimes printing and copying them at work and circulating them to his friends, and clicking all the links he could to read more. After joking with me in a pointed fashion about how much of the material online is in English, he says, "Now I am like an expert. A native historian," he laughs.

An economics student at Gadjah Mada, Marwan has used the information he has learned through the internet to fashion himself into an expert, a "native historian," on the events of 1965-1966 and their aftermath. Information is not only available in history textbooks produced by the state, but history by many authors, in many voices, is available online in many forms (news articles, scholarly articles, books, videos, testimonies).

"Anyone can speak on the internet," Marwan tells me when we talk about why he turned to the internet to learn about this history.

There is no control... I am free to read whatever I want. No one knows. In junior high, in high school, if I had asked a question about 1965, people would have been suspicious. 'Why does he want to know about that?' Through the internet, I can read what I want and find out what I want. I do not have to be careful about what I want to know. There is *a lot* of information online. Some of it cannot be trusted, but the more you read, you more you learn.

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<sup>64</sup> Slama 2010.

<sup>65</sup> The website, called "Kolektif Info Coup d'etat '65," stopped operating by January 2013.

When I ask him about why he thinks people would be suspicious about his interest in the topic, he replies that maybe people would suspect him of being Communist or harboring sympathies for the PKI. Perhaps they would assume that his family was involved with the PKI, which they were not.

On this particular day in the *warnet*, Marwan first loads the propaganda movie on YouTube. He has not come to the website to watch the movie, he tells me. He has already watched it several times. He comes to the YouTube page to read the comments, which he proceeds to do quietly for the next 20 minutes, occasionally typing replies to comments. On this visit, he then loads Facebook and chats with two friends simultaneously in separate browser windows while clicking around various Facebook pages and photos of his friends. In our interview afterwards in a nearby café, he tells me that reading the comments and posting comments of his own is one of his favorite activities online. He does it on YouTube and sometimes in the comments section of newspaper articles where discussions unfold about this history.

I love reading the comments. Sometimes I debate people who are just repeating what the history books say. I reply to their comment with some piece of information and wait to see if they reply. Sometimes the debates go on for a long time. Back and forth. Back and forth. Other people get involved.

When I ask him why he posts comments to debate people, and what sorts of emotions motivate him to do so, his answer is a long one:

Sometimes I feel like I am helping them. I want to teach them. I see a comment that is very ignorant, and I want to explain why they are wrong. I want to give them proof that they are wrong. [...] This history is very complicated. There are many reasons why it happened, many parties who were involved. The story that we have been told ... that so many people believe ... is so simple. Sometimes the comments make me angry, and I comment because I want to fight back.

Me: Against....?

Fight back against ignorance. Against fear. The people who comment and just repeat what they have been told, they do not know.... Or maybe they do not want to know... I tell them. Maybe they will reject what I say. But at least they read it. Maybe they will learn.

In a later interview, Marwan situates his “fighting back” within the activities of others, who also use comments sections to share historical facts or testimonies of their own. He wants me to understand that he is not the only one doing this. It is just something that he enjoys and thinks is important.

When I ask Marwan whether he engages in these kinds of debates on other websites like Facebook. He replies quickly, “No. On Facebook, people know who I am. My picture is up there. I cannot be as free. I have to be more careful. But on YouTube, my identity is secret. I use a different name. No one knows me. So I am free to say what I want.”

While Marwan is concerned about the possible detection of his online activities in the *warnet* and strategically chooses which computer to sit at to avoid surveillance, he feels free to exercise his curiosity online, especially within the anonymous identity he uses on YouTube to debate people about the truth of this history. He sees his role as fighting back against the overly simplistic official narrative by providing proof of the complexity of the real history. Just

exposing people to information is enough, he hopes, to motivate them to learn, to move them out of the ignorance, sometimes willful ignorance, and fear from which their comments emerge.

Listening to Marwan talk about his activities online, two things come to mind. The first is the poignant question that Pak Darma posed to me when discussing the persistence of the propaganda and official narrative. "How do you reverse brainwashing?" Pak Darma asked me. I wonder whether Marwan would situate his activities in the spaces of online commentary as part of his answer to that question. I wish I had asked him. Secondly, the way that Marwan situates his activities makes me think of the works of James Scott and the small, everyday forms of resistance he showed that Malay peasants use to fight back against a system which they recognized they were subordinated within. Here, through his near daily visits to the *warnet*, his role as historian and activist, Marwan uses online activity to fight back against the ignorance, fear, and silence that prevails in regards to this history.

### **Ignorance and fear in the comments**

Since returning home from Indonesia, I have spent a lot of time reading internet comments on news articles and YouTube videos, wondering if I will spot Marwan in one of his favorite activities and spaces. Analyzing the comments sections carries with it its own methodological limitations for several reasons. These limitations include the fact that while the people who have access to the internet are a select group, those who comment on online articles and videos are an even more select group about whom it is hard to make generalizations. It is precarious to draw inferences from such a select group about general patterns of popular thoughts and feelings. Additionally, it is impossible within the anonymous space of comments sections to determine whether commenters are from Indonesia or from other geographic areas. Despite these limitations, I do think the general patterns of commentary are worthy of attention for what they reveal about what is happening in these particular spheres.

The range of comments on videos like different versions of "Genjer Genjer" or the propaganda film *Pengkhianatan G30S/PKI* reveals the extent to which this history remains contested and controversial. There are not only people like Marwan in the spheres of online comments sections: educating people, discussing the history, or countering the official narrative. Online comments sections can also be a space where suspicion, paranoia, propaganda, and lies can continue to propagate and circulate.

In December of 2012, the Coalition for Justice and Truth Finding (KKPK) attempted to hold a public hearing in Solo, Central Java about human rights abuses. Two days later, the Commander of the Regional Military Command in Diponegoro (PANGDAM IV Diponegoro), Major General Hardiono Saroso said to journalists in Semarang, Central Java, "Never ever try to revive the PKI (Indonesian Communist Party) in Central Java and Jogjakarta. I will destroy them. I will kill them!" (Solopos)

There were 33 comments on the online version of the article when I accessed it in June 2013. There was comment after comment supporting the Commander's point of view and describing how the Communists are already infiltrating the government and presenting a danger. The comments, written in Indonesian and translated by me, included:

If caught, kill them all already. They are traitors to the nation. Those who destroy the nation are the PKI. Replace the PKI with PKL [street vendors, sellers from street carts]. It's safer.

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The snakes must be eradicated. We are ready to help the military.

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Thank you, Sir Yusuf. We are already grateful we have the figure of a brave commander who unequivocally threatens the presence of the PKI. It means you are still thinking about peace, serenity, tranquility, and safety of your people. I therefore support the vision and mission of the Commander. I am personally ready to slaughter people who comment on or defend the PKI. What kind of people are still defending the PKI?

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I hope the latent dangers of Communism in fact receive the attention of all of us so Communism doesn't infiltrate and spread everywhere. It is difficult for us to distinguish who is Communist and who is not. Because we know that the PKI and their lackeys are difficult to detect in the midst of the people.

One commenter posts a comment that these remarks are not appropriate. That comment reads:

Whoever agrees with the commander are all crazy, crazy, stupid. They don't know humanity or these serious human rights violators, destructive to democratic life. Like Suharto!

The subsequent commenters accuse this commenter of being Communist. A typical comment reads:

Whoever does not agree with the statements of the Commander are perhaps minions of the PKI.

These comments illustrate the paranoia and suspicion that still exist in these spheres about the revival of the Communist Party. The online spheres in which people are facilitating discussion, sharing information, rewriting history, and including new voices and alternate narratives are not just occupied by people like Marwan. These spaces are occupied by everyone. The internet can be a space of fear, suspicion, and hatred as well. Here, the echoes of 1965 are all too clear.

## **Conclusion**

In the face of state suppression of speech, propaganda, paranoia, stigma, and silence, and despite the taboo that still exists today about public discussion of the killings and their repercussions, the events of 1965-1966 and their aftermath are slowly emerging from the shadows. In this chapter, I illuminate two powerful forms of "rupture" of silence, exploring how in the arts and on the internet, people within Indonesia are reimagining authorship, education, and activism. Their efforts to "break the silence" again and again set the stage for a seismic shift in who is allowed to speak about this history and what they are allowed to say.

## Chapter Six - Justice and Reconciliation

On December 9, 2011, the Dutch ambassador to Indonesia visited a village in West Java called Balongsari to attend a ceremony that commemorated the anniversary of a massacre that the Dutch committed there in 1947 during the Indonesian National Revolution. On that day in 1947, when the village was called Rawagede, the Royal Netherlands East Indies Army massacred all the men and boys in the village. Estimates vary on how many people were killed. The Dutch have estimated the casualties at around 150, but the estimates by the local community were that around 450 men and boys perished. On December 9, 2011, Tjeerd de Zwaan, the Dutch ambassador, stood before an audience of hundreds of people and said the following:

Today, December 9th, we remember the members of your families and those of your fellow villagers who died 64 years ago during the action of the Dutch military in your village. In this context and on behalf of the Dutch government, I apologize for the tragedy that took place in Rawagede on the 9<sup>th</sup> of December, 1947.

He spoke the words in English and then repeated the apology in Indonesian. Newspapers report that family members of the victims and a number of the surviving widows, now in their 90s, wept at his apology, which was greeted with applause. (Hitipeuw; Karmini)

The flurry of messages, telephone calls, and texts I got after this event was staggering. There was no other event during my fieldwork that generated as much of a response amongst the friends and informants who had already been discussing 1965-1966 and its aftermath with me. Many reached out to talk to me about what the Dutch had done and whether such an apology would ever be made for the events of 1965-1966 and their aftermath. “Now the Dutch have apologized for killing innocent Indonesians,” Ibu Nini said on the telephone. “When will our country apologize for the same thing?”

“Will we have to wait over 60 years for an apology?” Amina texted me. As of the completion of this dissertation in 2015, almost 50 years after the killings, an apology has yet to come.

The burst of reactions from my friends and informants about the Rawagede apology provoked my curiosity. Sitting on his porch a year before, Pak Eddi had likened the influence of 1965 on daily life today to a wound, growing more painful over time, present even for those who do not know it exists or want to pretend it is not there. I wondered whether an apology, or anything else, could soothe the wound, make it less painful, whether anything could heal it or bring peace to a place so long occupied only by pain. My own sensibilities tempted me to use the word “justice” for the possible salves or balms for the wound. I set out to explore how my friends and informants want the events of 1965-1966 and their aftermath to be addressed now, whether there is anything now that could bring them satisfaction or justice.

### Forms of justice

In this section, I will share many of the responses that capture what I heard most often when I asked people about what would bring them satisfaction or justice when it comes to the events of 1965-1966 and their aftermath.

Many people expressed at first that determining what constitutes satisfaction or justice is not up to them. It is up to God or Allah. When I asked them whether there were earthly forms of satisfaction or justice they would like to see, besides or in addition to divine justice, these are the

areas I heard about most often.

### ***Apology and acknowledgment***

The form of satisfaction or justice that my friends and informants most often said they wanted or hoped for is an apology. Most hoped that then President Yudhoyono, popularly known and referred to in conversation as SBY, would apologize and acknowledge the needless deaths and suffering of those killed, imprisoned, and their family members and descendants.

Lina, the young college student from Yogyakarta who told me that 1965 is not yet finished, explains to me during the same interview that the only hope for an end to 1965 is to stop pretending it never happened. She wants the President to acknowledge what happened, apologize, and tell the Indonesian people that the people who were killed and imprisoned were not guilty of the crimes they were accused of.

She is one of the people who contacts me after the Rawagede apology. “In my opinion, the apology was very brave,” Lina says the next time we meet. “He said that innocent people were killed. He apologized. He told the truth.” “And if SBY apologizes, what will happen? Will anything change?” I ask her. “If SBY apologizes, all of society will hear it. It will help the victims. They will not feel forgotten.”

“I hope SBY apologizes,” Ibu Murni answers when I ask her if justice is possible when it comes to the events of 1965-1966. “Part of me thinks it will not happen, but I hope it does.” “What would it mean if he apologizes?” I ask her. “Everyone can acknowledge the facts. We can speak about what happened without fear. We can treat each other better...” Ibu Murni stops and sighs... “I don’t know if it will happen, but it would be a giant step... We could stop blaming each other.”

“If SBY apologizes, who knows what will happen?” Dodi tells me when we talk about justice. Dodi is my friend whose grandfather’s grave was concealed by the construction of a building that held a cosmetics shop when he was 16 years old. “Maybe people will want to study what actually happened. Maybe the victims will not be blamed any longer. I think my mother would feel freer. I want the president to apologize, but it is very important what he says. I hope they are not just empty words.”

### ***Nama baik***

Repeatedly in my conversations and interviews about the lingering effects of 1965-1966, I heard from my informants that they wanted their “*nama baik*” restored. When I talked to my good friend Pak Darma about the nuances of this term, which literally translates to “good name,” he revealed that it connotes “good reputation.” The *nama baik* of many of my friends and informants has been destroyed by the stigma that comes from either being a former political prisoner or the family member of a person killed or a former political prisoner.

“How can I have a good reputation again?” Ibu Ayu asks me. “Will an apology from SBY give me one again? If he ever apologizes, there will be many people who do not believe him. Many people will fear the PKI is returning. An apology cannot give me a good reputation again.”

In an interview with Ibu Ratih, whose father was killed in 1965, she tells me what she wants most of all: “More than anything, I wish our good reputation could be restored. But it’s not possible. It’s been so long that people have thought of us this way.” She looks at me for a few moments before continuing in an apologetic tone, “My idea is a dream. Perhaps I should answer what satisfaction I want for my father?” She is silent for a few minutes. “I don’t know... I can’t

think right now... I'm so sorry." When I reassure her that it is okay and ask how she is doing, she tells me she is sad now and would like to stop the interview. We do. I apologize again, and she says that it is not my questions that have made her sad. It is the difficulty of figuring out what will bring her satisfaction.

The next time we meet to watch our favorite soap opera together, Ibu Ratih wants to say something on the recorder about her *nama baik* so I take the recorder out of my bag and turn it on. She speaks, staring down at it on the table:

It has an impact, to not have a good reputation. I am very nice to my neighbors. I work hard. I help people within the community. But there is nothing I can do... If our family had a good reputation again, I would feel so proud. I was so little when my father was killed. I almost do not remember what it felt like before... to have a good reputation...

She shifts her eye contact from the recorder back to me and nods to indicate she is finished. She glances at her watch to see how much longer it is before the soap opera is going to start, and she affably starts telling me the latest neighborhood gossip.

Ibu Ratih and Ibu Ayu evoke the endurance of stigma. People's opinions do not change when some of the discriminatory policies do. The satisfaction they would like to achieve of having their good reputations again, as they did before the killings and imprisonments, seems like only a dream.

### ***Information, education, and authorship***

Ibu Lastri, whose husband disappeared in 1965, first tells me that satisfaction or justice is impossible because of the circumstances of the killings. "Who would remember who killed him?" she asks about the presumed death of her husband. "They were killing so many people at that time. Do you think they know who killed him? Did they write it down? Do you think his killer remembers?" The tone of her questions indicates there is no proper reply. She pauses for a few moments and then continues, "For me, I would like to know where his body is buried. But no one will ever tell me. I wonder if there is anyone alive who knows." The futility in her tone suggests she thinks it is doubtful.

It is interesting to note the way that in Ibu Lastri's answer, her focus shifts from the perpetrator to the record. Instead of only seeking satisfaction or justice from the individual who took her husband's life, information about the location of his grave could be the key. Information would not then be the sole property of the state or of the killers, but of the families and of the victims as well.

Marwan is the first person, but not the only one, to suggest that satisfaction could be achieved through educating people more broadly about these events. This is no surprise coming from someone who has worked so hard to educate himself about the events of 1965-1966.

If all the facts were presented, people would learn for themselves what is true. If they learn the facts, they will see who was and was not responsible. They will understand why the people in their village or the next village were wrongly blamed. The books written by ex-tapol [former political prisoners] should be taught in schools too.

Marwan argues that satisfaction or justice can be achieved, in part, by removing the state's monopoly on authoring the history taught in schools by introducing other voices from those directly involved and impacted by these events.

### ***Official memory***

The wish for a memorial to the victims of 1965 is another form of satisfaction. “If people accepted the truth about what happened, there could be an official memorial to the victims. Maybe a museum. Like Lubang Buaya,” Pak Budiarto laughs before he continues, “There should be some place we can go to commemorate the victims. Maybe they could put a memorial next to the river. Near the bridge.”

### ***Recovering voice***

“I want to be able to tell stories about my childhood,” Ibu Tini tells me when trying to describe the form of satisfaction she most hopes for. “For so long, no one has wanted to talk about my parents. We must be quiet. I want to be able to speak, but more than that, I want people to listen.”

Losing my father... It was awful. But to never talk about him again? If I said anything about him, all of a sudden, people looked at me... “Be quiet, be quiet.” Like it would remind people... I could not tell stories... Stories with my mother or father... To be able to talk about them without ... I was never ashamed of them. But people tried to make me ashamed....

Ibu Tini pauses to take a sip of the drink sitting in front of her. She takes a few breaths and resumes:

For years, people told lies about my parents. I felt like I was not allowed to talk about them at all. So to talk about them, even with you, it makes me feel so happy. Maybe you think it would make me sad... But I enjoy talking about them. To be free to talk about them whenever I want... It’s hard to imagine. But to talk about them freely after so long... That is so satisfying.

To be able to tell stories from her past, about her parents, is important to Ibu Tini. For many of my informants, after years of enforced silence, to be able to speak about what happened, to be able to be heard on their own terms matters a great deal to them. This emerged in my interactions, interviews, and relationships again and again. While cautious at first, once trust was established, my friends and informants frequently expressed gratitude for my attention, my curiosity, and for the freedom to express themselves without having to restrict their stories to fit a particular genre (like restricting them to fit within the official narrative or locating their stories within the genre of survivor testimony), and they were generous in return.

It is fascinating that so many of these forms of satisfaction or justice that my friends and informants articulate are in the domains previously controlled and manipulated by the state.

### ***Attempts at justice and reconciliation***

In this section, I will explore a few of the attempts so far towards justice and reconciliation in Indonesia, on both the state-sponsored and grassroots levels.

#### ***State-sponsored attempts at reconciliation and justice***

There have been two major moves towards reconciliation and justice from the state, but both ultimately failed. Here is a quick review for historical context.<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> For a more nuanced discussion of these historical developments than this space allows, see Bräuchler 2009, Budiawan 2004, Zurbuchen 2002.

The first elected president after Suharto, Abdurrahman Wahid (popularly known as Gus Dur), the former leader of the Islamic mass organization Nahdatul Ulama (NU), became president in 1999. As president, he took steps to restore the rights of former political prisoners and political exiles. He invited the long-banned and formerly imprisoned writer Pramoedya Ananta Toer to the presidential palace.

While important, none of these steps compared to the symbolic and stunning power of what he did on the morning television talk show *Secangkir Kopi*<sup>67</sup> on March 14, 2000. According to a newspaper article in *Kompas* the next day, Wahid said on the talk show that as head of the NU, he had already apologized for “all the murders that happened against people who were said to be Communists.” In his opinion, the article states, not necessarily all the people who were accused of being Communist were guilty and deserving of punishment by death. He apologized again, stating that members of the NU had committed many killings. He went on to say that he thought it would be good for the nation of Indonesia to reopen and debate the G30S/PKI matter, as well as other human rights violations. “Many people consider the PKI to be guilty. There are also those who consider them innocent. Because of that, we will determine later through the courts which one is accurate,” he said. (*Kompas* March 15, 2000, translations are mine) The rest of the *Kompas* article is filled with reactions to Gus Dur’s comments from members of parliament. The comments reveal the lack of political support for his apology and invitation to revisit this history.

Gus Dur followed his TV appearance by suggesting that the parliament repeal the resolution that had banned Marxism-Leninism (and the PKI) in 1966. Historian Mary Zurbuchen writes about the explosive reaction:

A burst of strong criticism exploded around him, as uneasy local religious leaders cited dangers of atheism or of the rebirth of the PKI as a legal party. Rivals from within the reform movement, including People’s Consultative Assembly chair Amien Rais, saw Wahid as overreaching his powers and quickly moved to block any parliamentary debate over the proposed revocation. Student groups criticized the president for sparking anxiety among the people, and anti-communist demonstrations erupted in Jakarta and other cities in early April 2000. Anti-left vigilante and Muslim groups made their opposition known by descending on the presidential palace as well as threatening an advocacy group working on behalf of 1965 victims. (2002, 572)

The recommendation to repeal the resolution went no further.

The final major development towards state-sponsored reconciliation under the Gus Dur administration was the start of a process to create a Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) to address the violence of the Suharto regime, including the violence of 1965-1966. The upper house of parliament passed a law requiring the government to create a TRC, and Gus Dur’s administration began writing the regulations the TRC would follow.

In 2001, Gus Dur was impeached, and the vice president Megawati Sukarnoputri was sworn in as president. Many of my friends and informants who talked to me about Gus Dur speculated that while his impeachment was based on charges of corruption, it was likely also in retaliation for his attempts towards reconciliation and towards opening discussion of the events of 1965-1966. Many people told me they thought the apology was significant and promising at

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<sup>67</sup> It is interesting that one of the Papermoon Puppet Theatre performances takes its name, in part, from this talk show.

the time, but as nothing resulted from it, it became an example of the unwillingness of the state to address this history.

Grace Leksana describes the pace of the development of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission:

Many politicians and government officials, accustomed to the state propaganda of the Suharto years, were wary about new information coming out about the violence. While hoping that the TRC could foster national unity through reconciliation, they had many reservations about the ‘truth’ side of the TRC. It took the government four years to finally draft the regulations by which the TRC would operate. (2009, 176)

Before the Truth and Reconciliation Commission could be formed and begin its work, human rights organizations and NGOs challenged the law before the Constitutional Court on the grounds that the regulations allowed for the possibility of granting amnesty to perpetrators, and the regulations also stated that to qualify for reparations, victims would be required to forgive perpetrators. The Constitutional Court reviewed the law, soliciting the opinions of international human rights experts. Instead of just striking down the problematic sections, the court struck down the entire law as unconstitutional in December 2006. Priyambudi Sulistiyanti and Rumesko Setyadi describe the reaction:

This verdict shocked the nation and took many people by surprise because there was a strong perception that Indonesia had opened a new chapter in the quest for reconciliation, and that those who had suffered human rights abuses would finally have the opportunity to tell their stories in a national truth-telling forum. The verdict caused disappointment and increased a sense of anxiety as victims’ hopes for reconciliation through a truth commission were crushed and the window of opportunity for the establishment of a truth commission was closed. (196-197)

While the parliament had the opportunity to review and revise the law, they never did, and the possibility of a Truth and Reconciliation Commission faded from view.

In the absence of state-sponsored movements towards justice and reconciliation, a number of non-governmental organizations devoted to those affected by the killings, imprisonments, and other violence during the New Order were formed.<sup>68</sup> These NGOs have driven most of the activities related to dealing with the killings today, such as collecting oral histories, advocating for restoration of rights for former political prisoners, organizing conferences, and mapping the locations of mass graves. Galuh Wandita, a human rights activist, described a coalition of some of these NGOs as “a small boat in the ocean of impunity” (2014, 170).

In the forms of satisfaction or justice my friends and informants articulated most often in

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<sup>68</sup> These include KontraS (*Komisi untuk Orang Hilang dan Korban Tindak Kekerasan*, Commission for “the Disappeared” and Victims of Violence), KKPK (*Koalisi Keadilan and Penungkapan Kebenaran*, Coalition for Justice and Truth Finding), YPKP (*Yayasan Penelitian Korban Pembunuhan 1965-66*, Foundation for the Research into Victims of the 1965-66 Killings), ISSI (*Institut Sejarah Sosial Indonesia*, Institute for Indonesian Social History), human rights NGO ELSAM (*Lembaga Studi dan Advokasi Masyarakat*, Institute for Policy Research and Advocacy), YLBH (*Yayasan Lembaga Bantuan Hukum*, Legal Aid Foundation), and IKOHI (*Ikatan Keluarga Orang Hilang Indonesia*, Indonesian Association of Families of the Disappeared).

interviews and conversations with me, there was a notable absence of the courts and judicial system. There were a few people who mentioned using the courts to seek return of the resources, such as money or land, that had been taken away from them, but when I asked people later why they had not mentioned the courts as a form of justice they would seek out, many talked about the prevalence of corruption in the judiciary. Corruption was a big part of the headlines during my fieldwork. My friends and informants saw the courts and judges as part of a system designed to protect the powerful.

Many of my informants mentioned a specific court case to me, which they characterized as an example of the lack of courage of the courts to adequately address this history. In 2005, a class-action lawsuit was filed on behalf of former political prisoners and their families against Suharto and all the presidents who followed him. The lawsuit demanded “a full restoration of their civil and political rights, the ‘rehabilitation’ of their good names, an apology from the government to be issued through national media, and monetary compensation for their past suffering at the hands of the state.” The committee of judges dismissed the case, arguing that their court did not have the authority to hear it.<sup>69</sup>

## **Grassroots justice**

### *Syarikat*

There has been a good deal of scholarly attention paid to Syarikat, an organization formed in 2000 to explore the role of the Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), the largest Islamic organization in Indonesia, in the killings and to foster better relationships between the NU and those affected by the killings. Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) supported and helped carry out the killings in 1965-1966. Younger members of the NU started Syarikat with the goal of promoting reconciliation between those who supported or participated in the killings and those who survived them or continue to be adversely affected by that history today. Syarikat has organized conferences where people come from both sides to share their stories. They have also done educational outreach and community projects, including a project to install clean water pipes in underdeveloped areas, which are underdeveloped because of association with the Communist Party.

Many people use Syarikat as a model example of grassroots reconciliation. It has garnered some backlash within and outside the NU. The attitudes of my friends and informants towards Syarikat range from deep support to opinions that Syarikat’s efforts are just part of a public relations campaign to protect the NU’s image after the fall of Suharto.

### *Palu*

The example of grassroots community justice and reconciliation that has been most universally embraced by activists, and with which my friends and informants were very impressed, was an event held in Sulawesi in March 2012. Sulawesi is an island in Indonesia where I did not carry out any fieldwork. A victims’ support group in Palu, Sulawesi, the Victim’s Solidarity Palu (SKPHAM Palu), organized a day of public reconciliation where the victims shared their experiences.

Among the invitees was the mayor of Palu. At the end of the event, the mayor recounted how he, as a 15 year-old member of the boy scouts, rounded up and beat up people during this time. He then apologized.

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<sup>69</sup> For more, see Conroe (154-187).

He said, “Now, we cannot repeat these crimes. At the time, the state was like that. I didn’t know anything. We were conditioned to detain a lot of people, to kill them. It was a massive provocation only because of different ideologies. I can only say I am sorry, on a personal basis and in the name of the government of the city of Palu. I ask for your forgiveness.” (Wandita 2012)

The victims’ group in Palu has spent years collecting stories from former political prisoners, and they have documented the results of the political prisoners’ forced labor: “13 public infrastructure sites (buildings, dams, roads, and parks) built by slave labor. The prisoners were unpaid and given only one meal a day. This forced labor started in 1966 and lasted for 13 years until 1983” (Wandita, 2012). The mayor has committed to initiate “programs of reparation and restitution: free healthcare for survivors and family members, and education scholarships and government grants for economic cooperatives and startups for descendants [sic] of victims” (Hatley, 2013), recognizing the ways in which this history has affected the opportunities of generations.

### **Complications**

Other than the prevailing public silence about these events and the culture of impunity, what has constrained Indonesians from getting the satisfaction or justice they want? In this section, I will explore the complexity of the categories of the event, victim, and perpetrator that I argue make it very difficult for processes of justice to proceed.

#### ***The fundamentals: the event, victim, and perpetrator***

“Do you think there is the need for justice for what happened in 1965?” I ask Pak Darma, my closest friend and collaborator. Pak Darma does not register much of a reaction. His face is unusually blank as he considers my question. “I want to say yes,” he replies after a minute or two, “But it is very complicated.” I assume the complexity he is referring to is the definition of justice, what do I mean when I use that term, so I prepare to ask Pak Darma what satisfaction or justice would look like to him, but he speaks again before I can formulate my question, “There are many people in this country who do not know that justice is needed. If you asked them that question, ‘Is there the need for justice for what happened in 1965?’ they would not say yes or no... They would reply, ‘Justice for what?’”

Pak Darma articulates here a fundamental dilemma about the possible pursuit of justice and reconciliation around the events of 1965-1966. Not only is there no clarity about what the word “justice” means, or in what forms satisfaction or justice can be found for these events, but there is not even public acknowledgment or consensus about whether anything happened in the first place towards which processes of justice could or should be aimed. There is no ground for my question about whether justice is needed for what happened in 1965, because, in many people’s views, nothing happened, or nothing noteworthy, other than the murders of the generals and Suharto’s rise to power. The “events of 1965-1966 and their aftermath” never became an event, publicly silenced, historically erased. How does one seek justice for something that never happened?

This is not the only fundamental dilemma. Even for those who do concede or assert that something happened, the consideration of whether those killed or detained deserve justice is complicated by the categories of “victim” and “perpetrator.” People continue to wrestle with

these terms and who is included in which category. Below I offer a typology of how my friends and informants perceived and articulated their notions of “victims” and “perpetrators” when it came to the killings and their aftermath. This range reflects what I heard most often. Sometimes people used multiple categories. For example, many of my friends and informants would not deny that the people killed and imprisoned in 1965-1966 and the aftermath were victims. They did often express, however, how the circle of “victim” (“*korban*”) could widen to include the family members and even the whole nation of Indonesia. To summarize, this typology falls into six categories:

1. The killed and imprisoned as perpetrators
2. The killed and imprisoned as victims
3. The families of those killed and imprisoned as victims
4. The nation as victim
5. The blurred status of the killers
6. The ultimate perpetrator

### *The killed and imprisoned as perpetrators*

The official narrative depicts those accused as Communists as perpetrators against the Indonesian nation and depicts the citizens of Indonesia as their potential and imminent victims. This is the way that many people I met and talked with still conceive of these categories. This is why many of them see no need for any processes of justice or reconciliation around this history. In these people’s views, those accused as Communists have already gotten what they deserved.

“There is no reason to apologize,” Ibu Kunthi tells me when I ask her about rumors that are circulating that then-President Yudhoyono, popularly known as SBY, is preparing to apologize for human rights abuses, including, possibly, the events of 1965-1966 and their aftermath. “It will make him look weak.” Ibu Kunthi has found reasons to complain about SBY’s weakness in the past to me so I ask her whether this time is different or unique. “You do not apologize to murderers,” she replies. “What will happen if he apologizes? Maybe the PKI will come back. Very dangerous...” Ibu Kunthi trails off, her face registering her disapproval. For Ibu Kunthi, any apology from the government about the events of 1965-1966 would be targeted at murderers and threaten revival of the PKI.

The apology from the president never came.

Pak Widi and I are sitting together in the front room of his house when I ask about whether there is a need for justice for what happened in 1965. “No, there is no need for justice,” Pak Widi replies quickly. When I ask him why, he replies, “They have already been punished.” I realize that when I asked him about justice, he automatically assumed that I meant processes of justice against those accused of being Communist, not processes of justice on their behalf. This already reveals a great deal. I tell him that some people have told me that there should be justice for those accused of being Communists at that time. He looks at me with a sympathetic expression on his face, perhaps sad for the earnest student being duped by opinions like those. He explains, “If they were accused of being Communist, whatever happened to them was their fault. They should not have been involved with the PKI. The PKI wanted to destroy us.” The “us” in Pak Widi’s reply include the citizens of Indonesia, the potential victims that the PKI perpetrators wanted to destroy. In Pak Widi’s view, the accusation of someone being Communist placed the responsibility for their deaths, their imprisonment, and other punishments rightfully at their feet. It was their fault for associating with the PKI. The blame belongs with them.

*The killed and imprisoned as victims*

Most of my friends and informants, those who lived through the events of 1965-1966 and those in subsequent generations, believe that those killed and imprisoned during 1965-1966 and its aftermath are victims. However, there are interesting dynamics to this category.

The hierarchy of stigma that I outlined in Chapter Three illuminates the complexity of this category of “victim.” There is a sliding scale of victimhood, with the “truly innocent” victim -- the victim that had no association with the PKI or its activities but was swept up as a victim of the mass killings and detentions to settle other scores, perhaps having to do with land, romantic competition, or other personal grudges -- as the most noble kind of victim. This scale of victimhood implies that the victims who were actually members of the PKI or those active in the PKI’s activities are somehow lesser victims than the truly innocent ones. In all the interviews I conducted and all the people I met during my two years of fieldwork, I was stunned by how few people articulated that they or their loved ones were active in the PKI. Instead, many former political prisoners, their family members, and family members of those killed expressed instead that they or their loved ones were either truly innocent, only peripherally involved with the PKI, or technically a PKI member but ignorant or naive about what that really meant. These expressions of varying levels of victimhood reveal that, to some extent, even those who were most intimately affected by the events of 1965-1966 have adopted the language and logic of the official narrative, by implying or expressing that there were those who were more or less deserving of their fates. This comparative tendency is expressed more strongly and much more often than the argument that every person punished by death or imprisonment in 1965-1966 and its aftermath was an innocent victim because they were punished for crimes that neither they nor the PKI committed.

*The families of the killed and imprisoned as victims*

One interesting phenomenon about the category of “victim” as perceived and narrated by my friends and informants is the way in which the category widens outward from those killed and imprisoned in 1965-1966 to include other spheres of people. The first sphere included in this widening is the family members of those killed and imprisoned in 1965-1966.

In an early interview with Pak Rudi, whose father was a political prisoner for 13 years, he says this, “It was not just the people killed or locked up in 1965 who became victims. Their families too. Wives. Children. Our lives were destroyed by my father’s arrest. When he came home, we were still victims.” For Pak Rudi, the victimhood did not end when his father’s incarceration ended. The category of victim could not be shaken off so easily given how profoundly their lives had been changed by the imprisonment of Pak Rudi’s father.

Sitting with Amina and her mother Ibu Nini a few months after my first visit to Amina’s grandfather’s mass grave, I ask them whether they consider themselves victims. “Absolutely,” Amina’s mother immediately replies. Amina nods her head. “Not just the two of us,” Ibu Nini continues, “My whole family. My mother.... She died 10 years after my father. When I was little, she was very healthy. Her health worsened after he died. She was a victim too.”

As you can see from the brief examples above, some of my friends and informants expressed their status of victim without distinguishing their victimhood from that of their loved ones who were killed or imprisoned. The word they used is the same (“*korban*”), and they expressed that they, like their family members, are victims too, emphasizing their similarity.

Some friends and informants, however, were more careful. Pak Budiarto, whose mother used to go to a bridge in Central Java to search for the body of her husband, draws distinctions

when I ask him whether he feels like a victim, “I feel like I am a victim, yes. But it’s impossible to compare what I experienced to the experience of those who disappeared or were killed or locked up. I am a different type of victim than them.” As our conversation continues about the category of the victim, Pak Budiarto goes on to say, “I want to call myself a victim because it is a way of saying ‘I have suffered.’ But my suffering cannot be compared to theirs.”

Pak Budiarto draws distinctions here between different kinds of victims and different kinds of costs. Instead of death, torture, forced labor, rape, and detention, the family members and descendants experience social death in the form of stigmatization, surveillance, harassment, intimidation, and the structural violence of the state denying them access to education, careers, and the same rights and opportunities as everyone else.

### *The nation as victim*

“We are all victims,” Nurzi tells me when I ask her whether she identifies herself as a victim, “All of us who have been affected by these events. All of us who have been lied to. We are all victims.”

I heard this refrain often in my fieldwork, from people who were alive in 1965-1966 and people born afterwards, from people who were intimately affected by the killings and those who learned about the topic after the fact on their own. Many people told me that the nation of Indonesia and all its citizens were victims, their lives and worlds so profoundly shaped by the events of 1965-1966 and their aftermath.

I spent a great deal of time talking with my friends and informants about the choice to place oneself in the category of “victim.” Why do they see themselves as victims and why do they want to be seen by others as victims? I wondered whether the human rights discourse of the many NGOs that now work on issues related to 1965 was shaping what sorts of claims or demands someone could make from the subject position of “victim” that would not otherwise be available to them. I found again and again, although not universally, that, simply put, the language and chosen identity of “victim” (“*korban*”) became the means by which my friends and informants could take the license to express that they were affected by this history. To the outsider, it might seem obvious that people were affected. Between half a million and a million people died, and hundreds of thousands of people were imprisoned. Of course their loved ones and subsequent generations were affected. However, people were not allowed to publicly voice the personal or familial costs of these events for decades, lest they be considered sympathetic to Communism and become targets themselves. Many of them still feel constrained in expressing these costs openly. Self-identifying with the category of “victim” allows them to stake a claim similar to what Pak Budiarto articulated, “I want to call myself a victim because it is a way of saying ‘I have suffered.’” This claim works against the erasure of the event of the killings and imprisonments and the suppression of speech that in the wake of the tragedy demanded that people go on with their lives without comment, resistance, or complaint. In self-identifying as victims, many of my friends and informants seek an acknowledgment of their suffering or of the impact of this history on their lives. For some, this acknowledgment constitutes at least partial satisfaction or justice.

### *The blurred status of the killers – heroes, perpetrators, or victims*

Throughout my fieldwork, my friends and informants expressed a range of views about which category the killers belonged in. Some of my friends and informants consider the killers neither victims nor perpetrators but as defenders and protectors of the Indonesian people. Some

thought of the killers as victims, while others strongly opposed that label. Still others felt the killers fell somewhere in the middle between “victims” and “perpetrators.” In defining what category the killers belonged in, my friends’ and informants’ position to the killings was extremely relevant. It was extremely rare to hear the family members of those killed in 1965 call the killers victims, although it did happen on two occasions. Yet some would not go so far as to call the killers perpetrators. One reason the family members of victims may not have wanted to call the perpetrators victims, other than the obvious one, is that then the perpetrators would occupy the same status as their loved ones or even themselves. They would refuse such equivalence.

A common refrain I heard that contributed to what I call the “blurred status” of the killers is that the killers were in a kill-or-be-killed scenario. Interestingly, the “or be killed” part of that scenario differed slightly between my various interlocutors. Some told me that if the killers had not killed those accused of being PKI, the PKI would have killed them. That is in line with the official narrative and the fear the propaganda stoked about the vast conspiracy the PKI was plotting. That is how killers have frequently justified their participation in the killings. However, another variation I heard was that if the killers did not kill, they would have been accused of being Communists themselves and would have been killed. So to survive, they had to kill. For many, this blurs their status somewhere between perpetrator and victim.

When talking to Ibu Tini about the fraught categories of “victim” and “perpetrator” that people have described to me, her expression is pleasant but her voice is low and controlled when she speaks:

Someone killed my father. That person is not a victim. The heads of victims were chopped off. The bodies of victims were thrown in the river... I have heard excuses why they had to kill... Like you said you were told... Why did they do what was done to women? What is the excuse for that? ... The killers have land, houses, money... They still live... They are not victims.

Ibu Susi does not share Ibu Tini’s conviction when I discuss these categories with her. “The killers were also deceived,” Ibu Susi tells me. “They believed that what they were doing was right. The Army told them who to kill. I know that they are not victims, but are they perpetrators?” she asks me. I wonder if she really wants to hear my answer.

### *The ultimate perpetrator*

One of the most interesting phenomena I discovered when talking to people about these categories as they relate to notions of justice was the desire many people expressed to discover the ultimate perpetrator, the ultimate person (or persons) on whom responsibility should be fixed or blame should be placed. More people talked about this than talked about whether individual killers deserved blame or bore any individual responsibility for the killings.

### *Suharto*

In many of my conversations and interviews, my friends and informants focused on Suharto as the person ultimately responsible for the events of 1965-1966 and their aftermath. When doing so, many expressed how notions of satisfaction or justice could or could not be realized if he were the ultimate perpetrator.

“How do you seek justice from a dead man?” Nurzi asks me in our first interview about justice. “Suharto is already dead. He is the one who was responsible. So who do we punish now?” For Nurzi, notions of justice are tied to punishing those responsible. If Suharto is not here

to punish, the pursuit of justice will be thwarted.

Perhaps Nurzi would have been comforted by the views of Ibu Susi, who also fixed the blame for what happened in 1965 on Suharto. However, Ibu Susi told me, Suharto had already been punished. She regaled me with stories about Suharto's health problems after he stepped down from power. He had terrible health problems, she told me, problems with his brain, his heart, his stomach, his lungs. To hear Ibu Susi tell it, Suharto was wracked with illness. When Suharto went to the hospital the last time, he lived for almost a month before he died, she said. She told me that many people believe that his health problems were the consequences for the suffering he caused. So, for Ibu Susi, in a way, justice had already been achieved. When I mentioned this theory to a few friends of mine, they said that eight years before he died, Suharto had strategically used his "poor health" as a pretext to avoid prosecution for corruption and embezzling over \$500 million. He did have serious health problems before his death, but they doubted he had been suffering for as long as Ibu Susi claimed.

In October 2010, during my fieldwork, the Indonesian government's Ministry of Social Affairs included Suharto on a shortlist of ten people to be considered for the status of National Hero of Indonesia, the highest honor awarded in Indonesia. This recommendation came at a time when there seemed to be increasing nostalgia for Suharto and his rule among some of the people I had begun meeting and talking with, which surprised me. Once this shortlist was revealed, there was an immediate backlash from journalists, intellectuals, and human rights workers. I was only a month into my fieldwork when I had dinner with Pak Budiarto at a satay restaurant near my boarding house. We discussed the news of the shortlist and Suharto's inclusion on it, and Pak Budiarto said it was just a reminder of the need to educate people about what Suharto had orchestrated and remind them of all the atrocities under his rule. "His actions cannot be forgotten," I quoted Pak Budiarto as saying in my fieldnotes that night. I had not yet started to interview people formally or talk with people about pursuits for justice, but looking back on this conversation once I started to meet with Pak Budiarto regularly, I asked him whether this was part of how he conceived of satisfaction or justice for the events of 1965-1966 and their aftermath. "Certainly," he answered, "Suharto is not here to be punished. But maybe the memory of him... people's views of him... can still be influenced..." A week later, Pak Budiarto sent me a Facebook message, "Is a time coming when Suharto could be declared a national hero? What kind of forgetting is needed for that?"

### *United States*

Sitting with Gita in the corner of the food court on the top floor of the fancy mall, she points towards the movie theatre that occupies the other end of the long floor. She begins telling me that a few years ago there was a movie that was so popular, there were lines here like she had never seen before. The lines would stretch all the way from the movie theatre to the food court and then back again, wrapping around and around. It was that way for months, she tells me. You had to wait in line all day if you wanted to see the film. The movie was *2012*, an American disaster movie. She describes how the movie depicted the natural world transforming -- core temperature of the earth increasing, earthquakes, tsunamis, volcanic eruptions. Ultimately the only way for the characters to survive, she tells me, was to board one of the giant arks being built by a few countries that had arks for their citizens. (In my fieldnotes, I wrote that she told me the countries were the United States, England, Japan, and China. In fact, in the film, the arks belong to the G8 nations and China.) She describes that three arks traveled to Africa where people could build and begin life again. "Do you know what I thought while I was watching the people on the

arks?” she asks me, “I thought, ‘What about Indonesia?’ There weren’t any Indonesians on the arks. I guess it’s not a problem if all the Indonesians die.” Gita laughs and sips on her avocado shake while my mind spins with all the possible subtext of this conversation. In the year that I have known her, since first telling her about my project, Gita has been the friend who has been most vocal and inquisitive about the role the United States played in the 1965 killings.<sup>70</sup> This cannot just be a coincidence she is telling me this story, I write in my fieldnotes hours later. We are not just talking about a movie.

When I talk to Gita about satisfaction, justice, and reconciliation and what she would hope for, she expresses that she thinks it is important to better understand the role that the United States played in the killings, and she thinks the United States should be held accountable for their participation. “It’s not a secret, right?” she asks me. “It’s already clear that they gave lists of names of PKI members. Do we know who made that decision? Who was responsible?” In a Facebook message she sends me that night, Gita writes:

It is easy for people from other countries to come here and tell us what we must do. The President must apologize, they say. But what about the United States? Why hasn’t any president of the United States apologized? We are told that killers must be held responsible. But what about the United States, when will they take responsibility for their part? They did not kill directly but they do have responsibility.

This position was not unique to Gita. At almost every public event about 1965 that I attended in Indonesia, people often brought up the culpability of the United States in the killings.

When I talk to Pak Darma about the United States’ role coming up again and again and whether notions of justice should extend to American involvement, he agrees that of course, they absolutely should, but he also reflects on other possible motivations for eagerly fixing responsibility on the United States.

We can blame Suharto. Many do. But there is not much satisfaction in that. Right now there is no easy place to look for blame in Indonesia. Maybe it is easier to blame someone else and say that Suharto was just a puppet. Maybe people think that if the United States is blamed, it means Indonesia is not so bad. The United States is so powerful. Maybe that is why the killings happened, people say. Maybe by getting justice from the United States, it gives people some sense of progress. There will never be justice here in Indonesia so maybe we can look for it elsewhere.

### **Returning to these categories**

I do not intend to assert that all Indonesians fall into the typology I have outlined. Interestingly, the witnesses who lived through this history do not. Some witnesses, like Pak Sapto or Ibu Kunthi, do not consider the events problematic. Some, like Pak Sarwo, still experience nightmares from what they saw. Many who benefited economically from the seizure and redistribution of victims’ land and houses by the army are also missing from the typology.

Why is attention to these categories, as perceived and narrated by my friends and informants, so important in understanding people’s attitudes towards justice?

The state’s official narrative defined for decades who should be considered the victims

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<sup>70</sup> For details on the United States’ role in and responses to the events of 1965-1966 in Indonesia, see Simpson 2008 and 2012.

and perpetrators. While the propaganda still exercises a tenacious hold on people's viewpoints in Indonesia, more voices are entering the conversation, exemplified by how my friends and informants make claims for inclusion in the category of "victim" – room that the official narrative does not provide.

With the uncertainty and discrepancies that the multitude of voices, scales of responsibility, and multiple categories of victim and perpetrator present, I faced fundamental questions in my fieldnotes. From whom can justice be demanded? By whom? In what form? Whose truth matters? Whose suffering? Is justice possible? Any processes of justice in Indonesia must be predicated on this diversity. Unless room is made for the complexities, efforts at justice will fail.

### **Impossibility (*ketidakmungkinan*)**

Often when I asked my friends and informants about satisfaction, justice, and reconciliation, their answers focused on impossibility. For many of my them, the prospect of achieving satisfaction or justice was unrealistic, unattainable, or impossible.

"Justice is not possible," Pak Guntur explains. "Not possible," he repeats. "Maybe that is what needs to be 'reconciled,'" he jokes, sarcastically intoning the passive form of the Indonesian word *rekonsiliasi*. "What do you mean 'justice is not possible'?" I reply. His tone turns more serious when he answers, "I was locked up from the time I was 25 years old until I was 38. I'm 71 now. My life is almost over. What is 'justice' for what was lost?"

As he stares at me, the weight of his question hangs in the air. I feel the impulse to list out forms of satisfaction or justice that other friends and informants have talked about to see whether any of those might constitute satisfaction or justice for him. I catch myself and wonder whether my desire stems from my own discomfort with sitting with the impossibility he is articulating – a world without justice.

I do not speak.

### **Reconciliation inside oneself, moving on, moving forward**

As I engaged in conversations about people's desires for justice, a common theme I heard in my conversations is that reconciliation is not only a process that happens between one person and another or one community group or another, as we might expect. Reconciliation is also the work that one has to do within oneself to come to terms with what has happened, to find peace within oneself, to be able to move forward. So many people touched on this, even though they did not always use the language of reconciliation. From the experience of my informants, I want to assert that if reconciliation is happening in Indonesia, *this* is where it is mostly happening, not between the contested categories of victim and perpetrator, or between the victims and the state, but inside people as they reconcile their own experiences, their own suffering.

From an interview with Pak Budiarto:

They tried to destroy my family. How else am I supposed to see it when my father was taken from us? We lost him, and we lost our good reputation. But what were we supposed to do? We had to go on. My mother did domestic work [...] and she made a little money. We got rice. We ate. Life continued. If I think of it now, I am not sure how we got through those days.... But if we lost all hope for the future, we would be destroyed. So my mother told me stories about the future...

Pak Budiarto begins to cry and does not continue.

Over and over again, my friends and informants emphasized the necessity, both then and

now, of moving on with one's life, even in the wake of the horrors they experienced.

Ibu Ratih once compared life after the killings with life for people who live on the slopes of the nearby volcano Mount Merapi, "It's all up to God. What is the choice? You stop? You have to keep going, keep moving forward."

Ibu Lastri tells me about visiting the home of the man who she believes ordered the disappearance of her husband. His wife died, and as is customary, there was a big event in the village where the whole village comes, remembers the person, there are speeches, they eat and sit and visit with the family members and community members, and they pray.

I know you will ask me, How could I bring this man food or invite my family to sit with him or how could I comfort him? He was responsible for the disappearance of so many people so many years ago. I know you will ask me that. But there is no question. You have to do it. You have to move on. What else can you do?

I ask Ibu Lastri how she feels when she encounters him in the village or when she visited his home when his wife died.

At that time [after 1965], I was very angry. I did not show it, but I would shake with anger when I saw him. He did not know. I only smiled. [...] When I visited his house, I felt ... What is the word? ... [She shakes her head.] To be honest... I was proud. Maybe he thought I would not come. Maybe he thought I would be ashamed... Actually, probably he did not think about me at all. Why would he think about me? He believes that he did nothing wrong at that time... Of course I cannot see him without thinking about my husband. He probably does not think of my husband at all when he sees me...

When I ask her about why she felt proud when she visited his home, she replies that she felt proud because she showed up to fulfill her obligations. There was no question she would, she told me. She would not let anger or shame prevent her from doing her community duty. Even though she often feels she is never really fully accepted, she will not stop participating in community life.

Ibu Lastri asks "What else can you do [besides move on]?" in such a matter-of-fact way, it seems obvious there is no other option. Ibu Ratih's tone is so pragmatic when asking "What is the other choice [other than moving forward]?" I notice a tendency in myself to speak of these women, Pak Budiarto, and many of the other people I met in the language of resilience. Look how strong they are. Look what they suffered, and, still, they endure. They demand their right to live, to tell childhood stories about families destroyed, to show their children the ground that contains graves, to speak when they have been silenced, or to choose silence when they are asked to speak. There is no doubt that these are resilient people.

Ever the curious ethnographer, however, I pause to question my instinct to read their questions about moving on as *only* resilient, as only heroic. Their questions of "What else can you do?" and "What is the other choice?" are also reflections of the current historical and political context of my fieldwork. In the current climate of Indonesia, in their daily lives, there is no other choice, no other recourse for satisfaction or justice, other than to just continue, to go on with life. Do Ibu Lastri's and Ibu Ratih's questions "What else can you do?" and "What is the other choice?" [other than moving on] reveal resilience, resignation, or both?

Finally, it is critical to be attentive to the different valences of "moving on" when the words are uttered by different people in different contexts with different relation to this history.

Here, we hear it from the survivors of this violence, from those whose lives were utterly transformed by the events of 1965-1966 and their aftermath. However, the same language of the importance or necessity of “moving on” is also used by those who do not want to examine this history at all, who do not accept or acknowledge the catastrophic consequences of the events of 1965-1966. Those who want to close the door on this history, as Pak Eddi called it, who want it to remain silenced, also use the language of “moving on” and “moving forward.”

### **Conclusion**

The desire for satisfaction or justice exists just beneath the surface of daily life, as evidenced by the unanticipated and overwhelming outpouring of messages I got from my friends and informants after the Dutch state apologized for the massacre in Rawagede in 1947. Although many of them doubt that satisfaction or justice will ever come, they do have ideas of what they would like to see happen, however unrealistic they feel these are. Exploring state-sponsored and grassroots attempts at justice and reconciliation allow us to see the failures and successes, the progress and setbacks, and the ensuing satisfaction and dissatisfaction in what has happened so far. By closely examining the typology of the categories of “victim” and “perpetrator” as perceived and narrated by my informants, and pointing to problems with the category of the “event” itself, I have uncovered some of the complexities, complications, and difficulties in this particular pursuit of justice.

### Epilogue: Since Leaving the Field

On Monday July 23, 2012, Indonesia's National Commission on Human Rights (Komnas HAM) held a press conference to announce that they had delivered a report to the government about the mass killings and imprisonments that took place in Indonesia during 1965 and 1966. Their investigation took almost four years, from June 2008 to April 2012. The investigators traveled across the archipelago and conducted interviews with 349 victims and witnesses. In the commission's report, which numbered 850 pages, they stated that the events of 1965-1966 and their aftermath constituted both a gross violation of human rights and crimes against humanity. The report detailed "incidents of murder, extermination, slavery, forced eviction, deprivation of freedom, torture, rape, and other abuses" (Prakosa).

My inbox was flooded with messages from my friends and informants, most telling me the news and teasing me for the inopportune timing of my departure from the field just two weeks before the release of this report. "If you were here to see all the stories in the newspaper, you would never leave," Pak Darma joked with me. Amina wrote me an email filled with hope. "Finally!" she wrote, "Now maybe people will listen. Now maybe something will be done."

On Wednesday July 25, 2012, President Yudhoyono stated at a press conference that he had referred the report to the Attorney General's Office, which would evaluate it and report back to him. *The Jakarta Globe* reported this about the press conference:

He [the president] said that he had studied the strategies that South Africa, Cambodia, Bosnia and other sites of gross human rights abuses had used to deal with their violent histories.

"We can pick whichever, in order to settle the historical issue justly. We have to think clearly, and be honest and objective about what happened in the past. We cannot distort history and facts," the president said. (Prakosa)

Still emailing back and forth with Amina, I ask whether her mother shares her hopes about what this report could mean. She replies to say that her mother said the President's promises may just be empty words. Her mother doubts whether anything will be done. But, Amina adds, "My mother cried while watching the news."

When Pak Budiarto replies to a Facebook message I have sent him, he says how important he thinks this is. "Honestly, there is a part of me that cannot believe this is happening. I am shocked. Who knows what will happen? But this has been an important week."

Just over two months later, in October 2012, *Tempo* magazine released a stunning double issue of their weekly magazine that devoted 69 pages to investigations of some of the specific massacres of 1965-1966 from throughout the archipelago, testimonies of killers, photos of massacre sites and mass graves, a few historical photos of assembled prisoners, and essays by scholars on the topic. This issue of the magazine, entitled "Confessions of the 1965 Executioners,"<sup>71</sup> followed the premiere two months before of a new documentary directed by

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<sup>71</sup> The English-language version of *Tempo* entitled that week's issue "Requiem for a Massacre." The Indonesian-language cover title is "*Pengakuan Algojo 1965*," which translates to "Confessions of the 1965 Executioners." Unfortunately, the English language version of the section on the mass killings is much shorter than the Indonesian-language version and leaves out some of the articles and commentary.

Joshua Oppenheimer called *The Act of Killing*, which documents a killer<sup>72</sup> named Anwar Congo sharing stories of the killings he committed during the purge of suspected Communists and even re-enacting the killings with his friends and, in some cases, fellow killers for a film they are making. The documentary had clandestine screenings in Indonesia but few of my friends and informants I was still in touch with had seen it before the filmmakers uploaded the film to YouTube.

It was from Marwan that I first learned of the special issue of *Tempo*. Marwan had sent me an email all about it, which was six pages long because he had transcribed some of the most wrenching stories, including one story from Dasuki, a 55-year old man who was eight years old when he witnessed the immediate aftermath of a massacre in East Java:

Fresh blood covered the 200-square meter yard. “If we had walked through it, the blood would have been ankle-high.” [...] Dasuki remembers the sickle-shaped knives, the swords and machetes, stacked next to the lifeless bodies with lacerated throats. That afternoon Dasuki saw exhausted executioners wearily returning to their homes after working for seven hours to cut the throats of about 700 people accused of being PKI members. They wore black masks.

No one came to collect the bodies. Besides the families of PKI members, said Dasuki, other residents of Mlancu were too terrified to leave their homes, especially after listening to the strange noises all night long. The bodies were eventually buried in the yard, which today is only marked by two red and white posts. In 1969, the land was dug up and the bones removed to an old well in a nearby cacao plantation. (*Tempo English*, 32)

This was just one story of many that Marwan sent me in that first email. He told me that he was photocopying the magazine for all his friends. When I saw the magazine’s cover photo, a crying woman with at least a few people lined up behind her, under the watchful eye of two helmeted, uniformed, gun-toting men,<sup>73</sup> I wished I were in Indonesia to see how people were reacting. I replied to Marwan to thank him and asked him what he thought of the issue. His reply was brief and powerful. He said it was the most important thing he had ever read on the history of 1965-1966. “There are many stories from all over. Most from the killers. Now people will have to face the slaughter. Finally, the truth is being told,” he wrote.

Just under a month after that email, on Friday November 9, 2012, the Attorney General Basrief Arief held a press conference to announce his office’s decision about the 850-page report submitted by Komnas HAM three and a half months earlier. There was not sufficient evidence of gross violation of human rights, he stated. The report was returned to Komnas HAM. The Attorney General’s Office would not be conducting any official investigation.

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These have not been the only developments on this topic since I left the field. These were only the first. In the course of writing of this dissertation, many more things have happened

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<sup>72</sup> The film’s Indonesian-language title “*Jagal*” translates to “Butcher.”

<sup>73</sup> Interestingly, the English-language edition of this issue uses a different cover photo of several men, their hands clasped behind their necks, being marched single file under the supervision of soldiers in Central Java.

related to the continuing stigma, silence, and sensitivity surrounding the history of 1965-1966. Here are some of the most recent:

During a close campaign for the 2014 presidential election in Indonesia, the candidate leading in the polls and his supporters were accused of being Communists and/or Communist sympathizers as a way of undermining his campaign.<sup>74</sup>

Beginning in December 2014, film screenings of Joshua Oppenheimer's follow-up documentary about the events of 1965-1966 and their aftermath, *The Look of Silence*, have been canceled, disrupted, and even banned in certain areas of Indonesia.<sup>75</sup>

In March 2015, a meeting of 1965 victims, organized by the YPKP (Foundation for the Research of the 1965-1966 Massacres), in Bukittingi, West Sumatra, was attacked by a "rampaging mob." Days later, a meeting scheduled by a different victims' group in Solo, Central Java was cancelled by the police.<sup>76</sup>

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Despite the dramatic progress made, even from the time of my first visit to Petulu, there always seem to be steps forwards and steps backwards in a kind of dance my friends and informants described to me throughout my fieldwork. There are promising and important developments and then reminders of how much further there is to go.

There is no end to this story. Nothing regarding this history wraps itself up neatly. With the events of 1965-1966 continuing to emerge in the present day, there is no closure. While this dissertation captures particular moments from 2010 to 2012 in the particular places of my fieldwork, things are ever changing. Even though my writing ends, this story is still being written by the people who appear in these pages and countless other Indonesians. Almost 50 years after the killings first began, the story still unfolds.

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<sup>74</sup> See Hearman 2014.

<sup>75</sup> See Leksana 2015. The film has also had many successful screenings that have been publicized openly. This shows the progress from when Oppenheimer's documentary *The Act of Killing* was first screened secretly in Indonesia in 2012.

<sup>76</sup> See Hearman 2015.

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