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Gregory M. Simon. *Caged in on the Outside: Moral Subjectivity, Selfhood, and Islam in Minangkabau, Indonesia*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2014.

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ages us to look at the persistent influence of transnational mobilities that have permeated cinema, rendering complex the manifestations of the national and global and the hybrid images in between. Despite the title of the book, Campos does not seem to advocate for the obsolescence of the nation. In fact, the discussions remain to play around with the perception of the nation, no matter how obscure and malleable the idea is.

Darlene Machell de Leon Espena

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Caged in on the Outside: Moral Subjectivity, Selfhood, and Islam in Minangkabau, Indonesia

GREGORY M. SIMON

Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2014.

Entangled in the existing literature between the notions of customary laws (*adat*) and Islam, the moral integrities and religious lives of the Minangkabau community in West Sumatra, Indonesia, have been a point of constant scholarly and polemical debate. The debate emerged partly from the “reformist” movement-turned-civil war of the Padri War since the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries and escalated through the Kaum Muda movement in the early twentieth century. Ever since, the questions of religious and ethnic identities vis-à-vis collective morality and personal piety have remained in the atmosphere of this mainland community. Often concentrated on questions of matrilineal culture, one peculiar phenomenon in which the Islamic and *adat* elements face each other, existing studies have analyzed questions of religiosity, customs, culture, and ethnicity in varying levels, depending themselves on varying arenas of society, such as government policies, land and property relations, religious discourses, etc. In *Caged in on the Outside: Moral Subjectivity, Selfhood, and Islam in Minangkabau, Indonesia*, Gregory M. Simon moves away from these debates and explores the ways in which the Minangkabau people make sense of their subjectivities in terms of morality, whether or not based on religion, customs, and ethnic characters.

The study is a refreshing read for it presents a number of different voices on the foundational questions of morality and subjectivity from outside the usually sought-out venues such as religious texts, legal codes, mosques, and pesantrens. An equal presence and voices of both female and male interlocutors make it further interesting in comparison with most of the existing studies, which present an imbalanced male voice when it comes to issues such as morality even if the location of the research is a matriarchal or matrilineal one as is this Minangkabau community. Through open-ended and person-centered interviews, the author explores what participants told him about their experiences, and he “treat[s their voices] as legitimate windows into their lives and subjec-

tivities" (p. 12).

From the perspective of subjectivity in anthropology, a subdiscipline that focuses mostly on the loci of violence, sorrow, and other disruptions in the normativity of human behavior, Simon's book presents an interesting case on how and why subjectivity can be unraveled in the everyday lives of people even when they are not suffering any psychological or physical pressure or distress, and subjectivity "also must be seen as intrinsic to more settled forms of social and cultural order" (p. 210). Simon debunks such existing anthropological notions surrounding the "suffering subjects" and presents compelling reflections and arguments on selfhood and subjectivity through his communications on moral predicaments. The normalcy of subjectivity and the attempts of participants (as well as of the author himself) to understand them coherently and logically, though at times futile, are intriguing for everyone who is interested not only in the questions of morality and ethics in human experiences, but also in the ways in which religion (or more precisely Islam) presents contradictory and confusing moral dilemmatic moments for its followers.

Simon conducted his fieldwork over two years in Bukittinggi, West Sumatra. Thirty-five people participated in his recorded interviews, while 13 engaged in what he considers to be "a full series of interviews following the person-centered approach" (p. 12). All these interviews and many more notes of 2,000 pages form the central ethnographic material of the book. The author divides it into six chapters, along with an introduction and a brief coda.

In the first chapter, the author deals mainly with the geographical-social division of village (*kampung*) and marketplace (*pasa*) in Bukittinggi with a few insights into the region's past and present entangled in the nodal points of commerce, colonialism, and Islam. The divisions between the village and marketplace are not cut and dried; rather, the author argues, they are fluid and can—and do—coexist with remarkable implications on the everyday life of the area in the realms of household, family, property, authority, and gender.

The second chapter deals with the issues of *adat* (traditional culture), Islam, and ethnic character. As *adat* and Islam are often pitched against each other, Simon explores the ways in which Minangkabau people try to make meaning of both these traditions vis-à-vis their ethnic character as the "people present to others, and to themselves, as describing the Minang society, at least in its ideal form" (p. 39). Despite the ambiguity on or obsession with its position in contemporary life, *adat* stands as an important framework for the Minang people for their "moral discourses," often with tangible consequences. Instead of taking the *adat* as a problematic framework against the one suggested by Islam, "the conceptual fusion of *adat* and Islam has been an important project" in the community (p. 47) even though "there remains a consequential consciousness of tensions" between the two (p. 51). In between these two compromising and conflicting situations, the cleverness constitutes a central characteristic of the Minang ethnicity and helps the Minangkabau to find their own ways to assert themselves or evade hindrances.

In the following chapter, the author unravels notions of social unity among the community.

He identifies the Minangkabau people as “the *Awak* People,” *awak* being a Minang term to denote “me,” “you,” “him/her,” sometimes “us” exclusive of the listener, “Minangkabau,” “one of us,” and all in all it implies that “we are all one body, one self” (p. 63). Through various forms of expected manners, etiquette, norms, and social interactions the Minang people endeavor to maintain their social unity. The discussions in this chapter seem to state the obvious.

The fourth chapter engages with the boundaries and responsibilities of the self. By looking at the divisions between the seen and unseen, the pure and devil worlds in the imaginations and daily lives of the people, the chapter analyzes how morality moves into and out of selves through the Minangkabau, who often conceptualize them through hierarchical moral capacities of selves. The chapter concludes that “the various ideas about human capacities and their value that are commonly employed by Minangkabau people do not come together to form a single, coherent hierarchy” (p. 121).

The fifth chapter focuses on the personal spaces and indirection in communications. Indirection acts as a unique Minang way of daily speech, and it stands as a strategy to balance social interactions with the maintenance of personal and social boundaries of selves and others. This chapter stands close to the previous chapter on the divisions between seen and unseen worlds for the fact that the personal spaces and autonomy that the Minang value so much in their communications and interactions are often threatened by unseen supernatural attacks through spiritual and mystical powers.

The sixth chapter zooms into the spiritual realm with attention to one practice that brings together various modes of moral subjectivity at play. Focusing on the microsite of prayers (*shalat*), the chapter investigates how its practice (or the absence thereof) motivates people to contemplate on their rationality and relationality with Islam and its moral subjectivities. Although unified in the conviction that the *shalat* plays a significant role in the making of moral subjectivity, the participants take multidimensional and fluid stands once it comes to the actual practice on an everyday basis. The chapter concludes with a remark that captures the core argument of the book: “The challenges of Islamic subjectivity take on particular shape in West Sumatra, but ultimately the struggle is a human one in which the pursuit of moral coherence is ongoing, constantly challenged by the competing demands and conflicting experiences of life” (p. 207).

The book moves away from the “piety turn” that predominates recent anthropological studies of Islam and Muslims with its discussions on selfhood and subjectivity in the first five chapters, yet it comes back to the same concerns around piety in the last chapter, in which it takes up the prayer as a cornerstone of moral subjectivity. Even so, it does not “project Islam as a perfectionist ethical project of self-discipline” (to quote Samuli Schielke). Instead, it presents the fluid and multiple conflicts of Muslim subjects who themselves struggle to make sense of their beliefs, convictions, piety, and religion. Taken as a whole, the book raises the crucial question of whether it is impossible to explore Muslims’ selfhood and moral subjectivities without Islam.

There are a few issues that I found problematic. In some places the author discredits the importance of *adat*, while in others he overemphasizes it vis-à-vis Islam when it is criticized by someone sitting in the market (for example, compare the discussions on p.33 and p.55). On another occasion, he provides an image of a wall painting in which Osama bin Laden appears close to Bob Marley. In its visuality there seems to be a change in the focus/gaze/orientation (the very text written at the top of the painting is “what are you looking at” [p.170]). Even so, he chooses to discuss only Bin Laden at length while glossing over Marley. Why does Marley appear with/ before Bin Laden, and why does he disappear in the discussion? Does Bin Laden ring relevant only because the community in focus is Muslims, who not only produced an image of Bin Laden through ambiguous and changing connotations but also kept it undamaged along with a painting of Marley? Does this imply that the moral subjectivity of a Muslim community is thus rooted only in particular sets of images and Islamic practices (such as prayer) but not in other forms of piety and subjectivities such as music and songs?

Notwithstanding these issues, the book impressively explores the Minangkabau community’s social life beyond its matrilineal identity and tells us about people’s everyday concerns and lives while grappling with existential questions on their place and time in society, religion, and nation. The questions and the predicaments they find themselves in are not exceptional and unique to the community; rather, they are often universal even though the solutions might be peculiar to the individuals or micro-communities. Conflated with the notions of Islam, the book argues how people problematize their ideas of selfhood in their everyday interactions, practices, and religious existence through different realms. The book will be an interesting read for all those who are interested in the notions of morality and religion in Islamic and/or Asian communities in general and Indonesia in particular.

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Marriage Migration in Asia: Emerging Minorities at the Frontiers of Nation-States

SARI K. ISHII, ed.

Singapore: NUS Press in association with Kyoto University Press, 2016.

Marriage Migration in Asia: Emerging Minorities at the Frontiers of Nation-States, edited by Sari K. Ishii, strives to deepen understanding of the complex trajectories of marriage migration in Asia. Going beyond the narrow vision of marriage migration as solely a South-to-North axis, this book underlines the complexity of the patterns of international marriage migration and its various axes.