

# SOUTHEAST ASIAN STUDIES

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Center for Southeast Asian Studies, Kyoto University

# SOUTHEAST ASIAN STUDIES

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# Jakarta “Since Yesterday”: The Making of the Post-New Order Regime in an Indonesian Metropolis

Arai Kenichiro\*

This paper is an attempt to explore the features of Indonesia’s post-New Order regime in terms of the reorganization of the spatial, economic, and socio-political order in the Jabodetabek region. Although buoyant property investments in the last seven to eight years significantly changed the skyline of the metropolis, this paper reveals that the basic pattern did not alter after the regime change, with major developers taking control of vast areas of suburban land and creating an oligopolistic order. This paper argues that this continuity was due greatly to the developers’ ability to organize and protect their collective interests through business associations and strong ties with political parties and the administration. The paper concludes that the emerging new regime comprises privatized urban governance in satellite cities, a dual government arrangement, and widening socio-spatial cleavages. So far, the tension inherent in this arrangement has been contained by measures such as the privatization of security and the political mobilization of Islam.

**Keywords:** Jabodetabek, property industry, urban development

## Introduction

In this paper, the author presents a political-economic analysis of the making of a new urban regime after the collapse of Suharto’s New Order regime in Jakarta and surrounding regions—Bogor, Depok, Tangerang, and Bekasi, popularly known in their abbreviated form as Jabodetabek. There are four major questions to be examined, basically corresponding with the four sections of this paper: (1) How, and to what extent, have basic patterns of urban development persisted after the regime change? (2) Why do the dominant development patterns persist even after losing the support of the government? (3) Combining spatial arrangements and socio-economic hierarchy, what kind of new social order is in the making? (4) How does the new regime maintain stability, and what kind of dynamism is observed?

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It is an appropriate time to address these questions for several reasons. First, since the collapse of the New Order, 16 years—about half the time of the Suharto presidency—have elapsed. The democratized post-New Order phase can no longer be treated as transitional. Second, the past seven or eight years have been a buoyant, booming period for the property business, with a number of newly developed apartments, shopping malls, large mixed-use complexes (“superblocks”), and gated communities, which have significantly changed the landscape of Jabodetabek.

Scholars on Jakarta and other large cities in Southeast Asia have stressed that urban spaces and built environments are crucial components in articulating class division and other social cleavages,<sup>1)</sup> and this could have various implications in understanding ongoing political or social developments. Today, the population of Jakarta is 10 million. Combined with three surrounding regencies (Tangerang, Bekasi, and Bogor) and several municipalities in them, the total population of Jabodetabek is about 28 million: more than 11 percent of the national population.<sup>2)</sup> The heavy weight of the population, together with the concentration of economic and political activities in Jakarta as the national capital, makes various issues in this region more important than ever—for the whole nation and the stability of the post-New Order regime.

This paper is divided into four parts. First, the author examines preceding studies to show that the concentration of land under a small number of developers during the New Order was facilitated by Suharto’s authoritarian power, and hence the persistence or revival of the oligopoly after the fall of Suharto requires a new explanation about its political economy. The second part examines the continuities and changes in large-scale property projects and major developers, and how they retained their control over land through the process of democratization. The third part shows the new social hierarchy under the developers’ privatized government, and widening social cleavages. The last part points out several elements of the regime that function to cover social cleavages and discontents, and suggests how these cleavages and discontents bring dynamics into urban politics under the new democratic framework. By focusing on the spatial dimensions of

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1) Abidin Kusno in his interpretive study of urban space and architecture has repeatedly addressed this issue (Kusno 2000; 2010). Peter Rimmer and Howard Dick, although approaching the subject from a totally different theoretical perspective, also stressed this point in analyzing how the class division of large cities in Southeast Asia is spatially articulated (Rimmer and Dick 2009, Chapters 5 and 8). Also see the analysis of Malaysia’s Multimedia Super Corridor by Tim Bunnell (2003) and Brenda Yeoh’s study on colonial Singapore (2003).

2) If we sum up the population of all regencies and cities in Jabodetabek from the annual report on each regency and municipality by BPS (such as *Kabupaten Bogor dalam Angka 2011*), the total population of Jabodetabek in 2010 was 279,426,508. The population of Jakarta in 2010 was 9,607,787, according to BPS (<http://www.bps.go.id/linkTabelStatis/view/id/1267>, accessed August 27, 2015).

a political economy perspective, this paper intends to contribute to a better understanding of the post-New Order regime, of its features, tensions, and resilience.

## **I Contextualizing Jabodetabek in the Making of the Post-New Order Regime**

Jakarta is surrounded by three regencies: Bogor to the south, Tangerang to the west, and Bekasi to the east. Although suburbanization and deconcentration have extended the metropolitan region in all three directions, each direction is characterized by different dominant patterns of suburbanization. The south was the most natural area for suburbanization and the formation of a satellite city since the Dutch colonial period, but this trend was intentionally curbed from the 1970s and 1980s because the southern highland functions as the water catchment area for the capital city. Since the second half of the 1980s, westward development has been propelled mainly by planned satellite city projects (mainly residential ones), while eastward development has been propelled by large-scale industrial estate projects (Arai 2011).

Several studies on urban development during the New Order are available as a starting point to assess the continuity and change before and after the regime change. Among them are Andrinof Chaniago's fairly comprehensive analysis on the failure of urban development during the New Order (2001); Robert Cowherd's studies on the political economy and the politics of hegemonic discourse in the implementation and distortion of city planning (2002; 2005; 2008); Tommy Firman's series of studies on the development in the Jakarta metropolitan region (for example, Firman 2004; 2014; Salim and Firman 2011); Bernard Dorleans's studies on changes in land use, land transaction, and speculation (1994; 2000); and large-scale, multifaceted joint research on Jakarta conducted by Osaka City University (Miyamoto and Konagaya 1999). Previous work by this author (2005) also analyzed the birth and development of about two dozen large-scale satellite city projects: how these projects were conceived, and how vast spreads of suburban land were consolidated and controlled by a small number of private developers (also Arai 1999; 2001a; 2001b; 2012).

Although varied in approach and focus, preceding studies on Jabodetabek urban development have generally focused on the development of either industrial estates or predominantly residential satellite city projects. For example, while Chaniago (2001) stressed the deregulation of industrial estate development at the end of the 1980s as the major momentum to open up widespread land speculation and the commoditization of urban space, the author of this paper, along with Firman (2004) and Cowherd (2005), put

a greater focus on large-scale satellite city projects as a dominant factor in shaping the spatial order of Jabodetabek (Arai 2005; 2012).

These satellite cities indeed deserve special attention in analyzing the spatial transformation of Jabodetabek during Suharto's New Order era. First, the scale of land appropriation was unusual, especially in the context of densely populated Java. Combined together, these projects were sanctioned by development permits that covered roughly 80,000 hectares of land in this region—roughly 12 percent of the whole Jabodetabek area (663,900 hectares)—and the 22 percent of the area in Bodetabek designated for residential use in the government's spatial plans (370,716 hectares). Second, these planned cities were developed as a private business, mainly by ethnic Chinese conglomerates. This meant that a small number of private businesses were in a position to decisively influence the land and residential market of the whole metropolitan region, and hence established oligopolistic market structure.

Observers generally agree that the New Order's policy promoting privately developed large satellite cities had a serious negative impact on the economy and society. It exacerbated land speculation, funded by mushrooming new banks and a buoyant capital market. Skyrocketing land prices made affordable housing unviable and at the same time aggravated social discrepancy and antagonism. Newly developed houses were generally targeted at a small market of the middle to upper classes and caused oversupply while excluding and alienating the lower classes. Overinvestment in land and property, financed by reckless bank loans, and the resulting massive nonperforming loans became one of the most consequential factors of the economic crisis in 1997. Many large corporations experienced *de facto* bankruptcy. Nonperforming loans of roughly Rp.70 trillion were then transferred from the private sector to the government. By setting up the Indonesia Bank Restructuring Agency (IBRA in English, BPPN in Indonesian), the state managed to recover only about 30 percent of the funds already invested to salvage the banks; the burden of the remaining 70 percent—roughly Rp.50 trillion—of nonperforming loans from the property sector ultimately fell on taxpayers. In terms of results, only land resources and profits were privatized; the cost of the failure was borne by the public sector. Neither did these satellite city projects succeed in the task of providing a large number of houses to the majority of urban residents at an affordable price (Arai 2005).

In tracking how a small number of developers got such a vast spread of land under their control, previous studies pointed out the crucial role of the permits issued by the government, especially *izin lokasi*, or location permits (Cowherd 2002; 2008; Firman 2004; Arai 2005; Rakodi and Firman 2009). In a country where land titles are not well registered and are blurred and multilayered by the complex history of colonialism,

revolution, and widespread squatting, legal rights on certain pieces of land stand on a fragile base. Control over land is often determined by which of the contesting stakeholders has the most power. During the New Order, location permits sanctioned by the authoritarian government gave developers (permit holders) the exclusive right to buy, keep, and develop land, thus leaving landholders with almost minimal bargaining power.

However, scholars differ in their view of why location permits were overissued. Firman (2004) stressed the speculative behavior of developers on the one hand, and an uncontrolled land permit system on the other, by both the National Land Agency (Badan Pertanahan Nasional, BPN) and local governments. He also pointed out that local governments had very weak capacity for managing and implementing spatial plans. This explanation stresses the weakness of the government (in terms of capacity or discipline) vis-à-vis private developers (see also Firman 2009, 332). Although this author agrees with each point of the above explanation, Firman stops short of explaining why the government was powerful in raising the position of permit holders vis-à-vis landholders while being weak in controlling the same permit holders it empowered.

Cowherd (2005) and Arai (2005) took the opposite view in stressing that the strong power of the government was a precondition of this process: developers were able to appropriate disproportionate amounts of land resources mainly because they were empowered and supported by the strong authority of the government. Although the resulting land-use patterns often deviated from what was officially planned, developers received extensive support from the government; in this sense, these deviations were intentionally overlooked (Arai 2005). A fuller explanation of this historical process has to include an analysis of the government-business relationship and internal differences of interest within the government. The political economy approach is well suited to this task.

Takashi Shiraishi (1992) pointed out the dual foundation of Suharto's New Order regime: the formal, functional hierarchy of bureaucracy, and the informal, patron-client hierarchy that was justified with the ideology equating the state with a large family. Suharto stood at the top of both hierarchies. Spatially, the apex of the formal one was the presidential office, and that of the informal one was Suharto's private residence on Cendana Street in Menteng, Central Jakarta. Members of the most privileged inner circle of this informal hierarchy were allowed to meet him privately in his Cendana home. Initially, Suharto skillfully manipulated these formal and informal aspects. However, as with the generational change within the body of bureaucracy and wider socioeconomic transformation, the two logics increasingly came apart and generated tension and conflict in the late 1980s and 1990s (*ibid.*). From this perspective, many of the policies of eco-

conomic liberalization and private-sector-driven development actually functioned for the members of the informal network to utilize the state's formal apparatus to maximize their chances of rent seeking, appropriating public resources, and accumulating wealth outside of the bureaucracy in the form of privatized capital. Cowherd took a similar view in analyzing urban development in the New Order era, naming the informal ruling elites the "Cendana-Cukong alliance" (Cowherd 2005).

Based on these previous studies, the question remains: If oligopolistic control was enabled and sustained by Suharto's Cendana-Cukong alliance, why and how did it sustain itself or change after the fall of Suharto? Firman's 2004 study presented the case that successful new-town developers were securing the support of the growing middle to upper strata by providing them with high security, good urban management, and the image of a modern lifestyle (Firman 2004). He discussed this topic in terms of segregation, but what he observed can also be framed as a "developer-middle class alliance" and counted as an alternative-support base for developers in the post-New Order era. This author finds it helpful in the following analysis. Cowherd did not try to extend his analysis in detail into the post-New Order era but hinted at the binding power of the discourse of "development" as an important factor in the continuity before and after the regime change (Cowherd 2008). Firman's more recent studies, together with the works of D. Hudalah and other scholars, seem to shift attention and effort into revealing the growing weight of new industrial centers in the Jakarta metropolitan region, and the emerging polycentric metropolitan structure (Hudalah and Firman 2012; Hudalah *et al.* 2013; Firman 2014). Although these are important issues in themselves, the analyses tend to bypass the issue of power relations, naturalizing the observed phenomena by relating them to some global trend or force (such as post-suburbanization and FDI of globally mobile capital) on the one hand, and the trend of deconcentration of industrial investment and employment on the other.

Just as the concentration of land under the New Order regime was not a natural or inevitable process, its continuation after the collapse of the Cendana-Cukong alliance is also not natural but needs explanation. This paper tries to present a brief outline of how the restructuring of social hegemony and spatial order in the post-New Order era reinforce each other, and how they guarantee the continuation of the highly oligopolistic control of land resources. This paper also argues that privatized security and the resulting employment opportunities as well as the political mobilization of Islam constitute important pillars of the post-New Order regime and guarantee a certain degree of social stability amid a polarized economic and spatial structure.

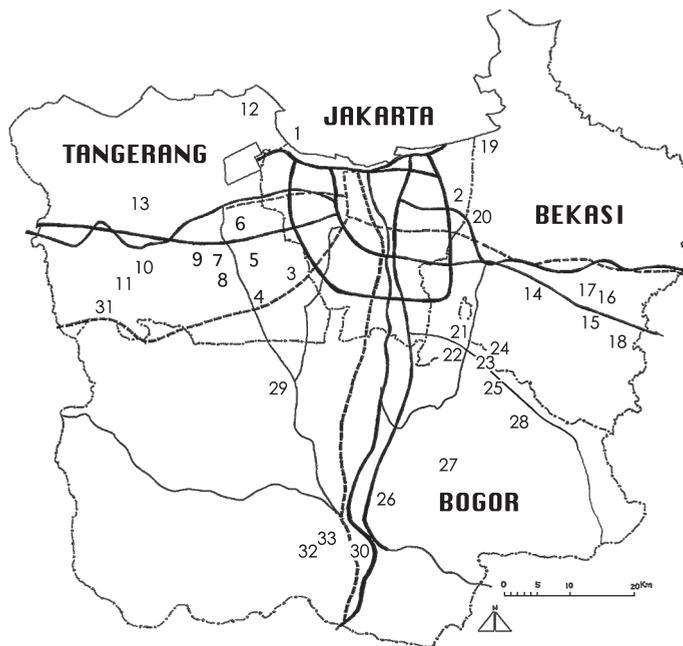
On the aspect of change, this paper maintains that the contemporary metropolitan order is ruled by a restructured growth coalition characterized by a more formalized

relationship between the government and the property business, and a highly commercialized relationship between privatized “municipal governments” and the wealthy middle to upper classes.

## II Reorganizing Oligopoly

### 1 Planned Satellite City Projects Revisited

The first question to be asked is how and to what extent the oligopolistic control of land has changed since the regime change. This author tracks major satellite city projects after the New Order (Table 1; Map 1). Just after the economic crisis and the collapse of the New Order, almost all large developers became temporarily insolvent, and the government—as creditor—had strong bargaining power against them. At that time, the BPN expressed the intent to review the appropriateness of existing development permits of large satellite city projects. However, Table 1 shows that most satellite city projects have survived, albeit with some changes in shareholders. As for projects of more than



**Map 1** Large-Scale Satellite City Projects in Jabodetabek

Source: Made by the author

Note: Numbers in this map correspond with those of Table 1.

**Table 1** Large-Scale Satellite City Projects in Jabodetabek (>500 ha)

No.	New Order		Post New Order		Planned Total Size (ha)		Place	
	Name of City	Developer	Name of City	Developer	Suharto Regime	2007		
1	Pantai Indah Kapuk	PT Mandara Permai (Salim Group and others)	Pantai Indah Kapuk	PT Mandara Permai (Berca Group), Agung Sedayu Group	800		Penjarangan	North Jakarta
2	Modern Jakarta	PT. Modernland Realty	Jakarta Garden City	Keppel Land & PT. Modernland Realty	500	270	Cakung	East Jakarta
3	Bintaro Jaya	PT. Jaya Real Property	Bintaro Jaya	PT Jaya Real Property Tbk	2,321		Pondok Aren	South Tangerang Municipality
4	Bumi Serpong Damai	PT BSD (Salim, Sinar Mas, Ciputra)	BSD City	PT Bumi Serpong Damai (Sinarmas Land)	6,000	6,000	Serpong	
5	Alam Sutera	PT Alfa Goldland Realty (Argo Manunggal Group)	Alam Sutera	PT Alam Sutera Realty Tbk (Argo Manunggal Group)	700	700	Serpong Utara	
6	Kota Modern	PT Modernland Realty	Kota Modern	PT. Modernland Realty	770	770	Cipondoh	Tangerang Municipality
7	Gading Serpong	PT Jakarta Baru Cosmopolitan (Summarecon Group, Batik Keris, Agung Podomoro Group)	Summarecon Gading Serpong	PT Summarecon Agung	1,500	375	Kelapa Dua	Tangerang Regency
8			Paramount Serpong	Paramount Land Development		600	Kelapa Dua	
9	Lippo Karawaci	PT Lippoland Development	Lippo Karawaci	PT Lippo Karawaci Tbk	2,000	2,266	Kelapa Dua	
10	Citra Raya	Ciputra Group	Citra Raya	Ciputra Group	1,000	2,760	Cikupa	
11	Kota Tigaraksa	PT Panca Wiratama Sakti	-	n.a. (Tangerang Regency Government)	3,000	-	Tigaraksa	
12	Kota Wisata Teluk Naga	Salim Group	-	-	8,000	-	Teluknaga	
13	Puri Jaya	PT Jaya Real Property	Puri Jaya	PT Jaya Real Property	1,745	n.a.	Pasar Kemis	
14	Kota Legenda	PT Putra Alvita Pratama (Napan, Puteraco, Bangun Tjipta Pratama, Duta Putra Mahkota, Kalbe Land, Dharmala Group, Pangestu family)	Grand Wisata	PT Putra Alvita Pratama (Sinarmas Land)	2,000	1,100	Tambun Selatan	
15	Lippo Cikarang	PT Lippoland Development	Lippo Cikarang	PT Lippo Karawaci Tbk	5,400	2,216	Cikarang Selatan	
16	Cikarang Baru	PT Grahabuana Cikarang	Kota Jababeka	PT Jababeka Tbk	1,400	5,600	Cikarang Selatan, Cikarang Utara	
17	(Kawasan Industri Jababeka)	PT Kawasan Industri Jababeka Tbk (Sudwikatmono and others)			2,140			
18	-	-	Kota Deltamas	PT Pembangunan Deltamas (Sinarmas, Itochu, Sojitz)	3,000		Cikarang Pusat	
19	Pantai Modern	PT Modernland Realty	-	-	500	-	Tarumajaya	Bekasi Municipality
20	Harapan Indah	PT Hasana Damai Putra	Kota Harapan Indah	PT Hasana Damai Putra (Damai Putra Group)	700	3,000	Medan Satria	

Table 1 continued

No.	New Order		Post New Order		Planned Total Size (ha)		Place	
	Name of City	Developer	Name of City	Developer	Suharto Regime	2007		
21	Kota Wisata	PT Duta Pertiwi (Sinar Mas), Marubeni (Japan), LG (Korea), Land & House (Thailand)	Kota Wisata	PT Duta Pertiwi (Sinarmas), Marubeni, LG, Land & House	1,000	750	Cileungsi	Bogor Regency
22	–	–	Legenda Wisata	PT Duta Pertiwi (Sinarmas Land)		200		
23	Kota Taman Metropolitan	PT Metropolitan Land	Metland Transyogi	PT Metropolitan Land	600	148	Cileungsi	
24			Metland Cileungsi			200		
25	–	–	Harvest City	PT Dwikarya Langgeng Sukses (Duta Putra, Kentanix Supra International, Suryamas Dutamakmur)	–	1,050	Cileungsi	
26	Bukit Sentul	PT Royal Sentul Highland (Bambang Trihatmodjo & Cahyadi Kumala)	Sentul City	PT Sentul City Tbk (Bakrieland Development, Kumala family & others)	2,000	3,100	Babakan Madang	
27	Bukit Jonggol Asri	PT Bukit Jonggol Asri (Bambang Trihatmodjo, Cahyadi Kumala, Haryadi Kumala)	Sentul Nirwana	Bakrieland Development	30,000	12,000	Jonggol	
28	Citra Indah	Ciputra Group	Citra Indah	Ciputra Group	1,000	1,200	Jonggol	
29	Telaga Kahuripan	PT Kuripan Raya (Duta Putra, Napan, Kalbe, Dharmala, Eka Anugrah)	Telaga Kahuripan	PT Kuripan Raya (Duta Putra, Napan, Kalbe, Dharmala, Eka Anugrah)	750	750	Parung	
30	Rancamaya	PT Suryamas Duta Makmur	Rancamaya Golf Estate	PT Suryamas Dutamakmur Tbk	500	325	Ciawi	
31	Kota Tenjo	BHS Land	–	–	3,000	–	Tenjo	
32	Taruma Resor	PT Pasir Wangun	Bogor Nirwana Residence	PT Bakrieland Development	1,100	810	Bogor Selatan	
33	Graha Bogor Indah	Sanggraha Pelita Sentosa			57			

Source: Made by the author. As for the New Order era, basically based on the data from *Properti Indonesia* (April 1997, 241), and supplemented with other sources such as *Top Tokoh Properti Indonesia & Karya-Karyanya* (1997), and *Rumah Untuk Anda: Direktori Proyek-Proyek Real-Estate di Indonesia* (1997). As for the Post-New Order era, compiled by the author based on the data from the backnumbers of *Properti Indonesia* (especially [*Properti Indonesia* March 2007]) and supplemented with various other sources such as *Direktori Perumahan* (Serpong, Cibubur, Depok + Bogor, Bekasi) and the websites of the developers and projects.

1,000 ha, 10 old projects have survived or been revived (sometimes, completely redesigned and rebranded)—Bintaro Jaya, BSD City, Lippo Karawaci, Citra Raya, Grand Wisata, Lippo Cikarang, Kota Jababeka, Sentul City, Citra Indah, and Sentul Nirwana,<sup>3)</sup>—

3) Grand Wisata, although succeeding to the land-bank of former Kota Legenda project, is being marketed as a totally new project. Sentul Nirwana (formerly Bukit Jonggol Asri) was launched in 2010, after the Bakrie Group had bought up a significant portion of the shares of PT Bukit Jonggol Asri and its parent company, PT Sentul City. However, the Bakrie Group then fell into financial difficulties and had to give up most of the shares. In 2014 the Corruption Eradication Commission arrested the director of the company along with the governor of Bogor, Rahmat Yasin, on corruption charges. Because of these negative events, it is unlikely that this project, still composed of only a few residential clusters, will develop into a true satellite city in the near future.

while another project (Kota Harapan Indah) has been significantly scaled up, and other two projects (Kota Deltamas and Harvest City) were newly started in the post-New Order era. As for projects between 500 ha and 1,000 ha, seven have survived or been revived—Pantai Indah Kapuk, Alam Sutera, Kota Modern, Gading Serpong, Kota Wisata, Bogor Nirwana Residence and, (although with a doubtful prospect) Telaga Kahuripan.<sup>4)</sup> Only three projects have been significantly scaled down to below 500 ha—Jakarta Garden City, Metland Transyogi & Metland Cileungsi, and Rancamaya Golf Estate, while five projects have disappeared or totally stalled—Kota Tigaraksa, Kota Wisata Teluk Naga, Pantai Modern, Kota Tenjo, and Puri Jaya.<sup>5)</sup>

Why have so many projects survived? First, during its most difficult and fragile period—between 1998 and 2004—the government prioritized the recovery of public money over the need for radical revision of urban development policy, such as setting up publicly managed land banks for securing the land to provide enough affordable public housing. The mission of IBRA was to recover as much public money as possible and return it to the government coffers—and thus to help finance the governmental budget—not to formulate an alternative blueprint for Jabodetabek development. Therefore, property-related assets under IBRA were quickly auctioned, while large and well-connected debtors were not robbed of their profitability but only prompted to restructure their debt into a sustainable level. The logical consequence was that the regional residential market today is as oligopolistic as in the New Order era, and the developers' position is even better after their debt has been restructured to a sustainable level.

Table 2 shows some of the 150 wealthiest businessmen from the 2007 *Globe Asia* magazine. This selection omits those whose business does not include property as a major line of business.<sup>6)</sup> In the post-New Order era, Sinarmas has become the largest property developer in all of Jabodetabek. The group manages Kota Wisata and Legenda Wisata in Bogor, BSD City in Tangerang, and Grand Wisata and Kota Deltamas in Bekasi. With these mega projects in all three regencies in Bodetabek, the group's influence on

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4) Gading Serpong is now being developed by two separate developers, but it retains coherence as a single satellite city. Telaga Kahuripan, although still exists and is being marketed, has long been stagnant and remains an ordinary housing estate.

5) Very recently, Jaya Real Property started developing a housing estate named Grand Batavia in Pasar Kemis, Tangerang, probably using a land-bank for Puri Jaya project. However, this is a quite recent event and this author does not have data whether this project signals the rebirth of long-stalled Puri Jaya.

6) Members of the Suharto family (Hutomo Mandara Putra, Bambang Trihatmodjo, Sudwikatmono, Siti Hardijanti Rukmana, and Probosutejo) and those who engaged in business with the Suharto family (Ibrahim Risjad) are underlined and also included in the excerpt, although they are not extensively engaged in the property business any more.

**Table 2** Property-Business-Related Super Rich among in the Top 150 Wealthiest Indonesian Businessmen

Rank	Name	Company	Net Worth US\$, million	Business
1	Budi Hartono	Djarum	4,200	Cigarettes, banking, property
3	Eka Tjipta Widjaja	Sinar Mas	3100	Palm oil, pulp & paper, finance, property
4	<u>Sudono Salim</u>	<u>Salim Group</u>	<u>2,800</u>	<u>Food, palm oil, telecommunication, property</u>
8	Aburizal Bakrie	Bakrie Group	1,050	Energy, property, telecommunication
14	Mochtar Riady	Lippo Group	585	Property, retail, healthcare
20	Trihatma Haliman	Agung Podomoro Group	505	Property
23	Osbert Lyman	Satya Djaja Raya	400	Timber, property
26	Dasuki Angkosubroto	Gunung Sewu Group	365	Manufacturing, property
27	Murdaya Poo	Berca Group	350	Manufacturing, property
29	Jan Darmadi	Darmadi Corp.	340	Property
30	Ciputra	Ciputra Development	335	Property
37	Eka Tjandranegara	Mulia Group	278	Property
38	Sugianto Kusma	Agung Sedayu	275	Property
39	Alexander Tedja	Pakuwon	270	Property, malls
41	The Ning King	Argo Pantas Group	260	Textile, property
49	Handoyo Santosa	Ometraco	240	Feed mill, property
50	Henry Onggo	Ratu Sayang Group	235	Property
52	Didi Darwis	Ling Brothers	225	Investment, property
53	<u>Hutomo Mandara Putra</u>	<u>Humpass</u>	<u>220</u>	<u>Shipping</u>
54	Soetjipto Nagaria	Summarecon	213	Property
55	Mu'min Ali Gunawan	Panin	210	Banking, property
61	Binawan Tjondro	CNI	170	Consumer goods, property
62	Rudy Sulawati	Mid Plaza	165	Property
65	<u>Bambang Trihatmodjo</u>	<u>Global Media Com</u>	<u>160</u>	<u>Media</u>
68	Luntungan Honoris	Modern Group	156	Property, Fujifilm
70	Soedjono	Wirasakti Adimulya	150	Property
77	Sri Sultan Hamengkubuwono	Sultan of Yogyakarta	140	Property
80	<u>Cahyadi Kumala</u>	<u>Bukit Sentul</u>	<u>130</u>	<u>Property</u>
82	G.Lukman Pudjiadi	Jayakarta Group	128	Property, hotels
85	Pontjo Sutowo	Nugra Sentana Group	125	Property, hotels
91	Sukamdani Gitosardjono	Sahid Group	110	Property, hotels
93	<u>Sudwikatmono</u>	<u>Indika Group</u>	<u>110</u>	<u>Entertainment</u>
95	GS Margono	Gapura Prima	110	Property
103	A Siang Rusli	Kurnia Tetap Mulia	98	Entertainment, property
106	<u>Siti Hardijanti Rukmana</u>	<u>Citra Lamtoro Gung</u>	<u>90</u>	<u>Investment</u>
108	Putra Masagung	Gunung Agung	90	Book store, property
110	<u>Ibrahim Risjad</u>	<u>Risjadson</u>	<u>90</u>	<u>Investment</u>
111	Hendro Gondokusumo	Dharmala Intiland	87	Property
117	Kahardin Ongko	Ongko Group	85	Property, ceramics
118	Benjamin Soeryadjaya	Surya Internusa	85	Property, finance
130	SD Darmono	Jababeka	70	Property
133	MS Hidayat	MSH Group	70	Property
138	Hendro Setiawan	Pikko Group	63	Property
139	Bambang Wiyogo	Kuningan Protama	62	Property
140	<u>Probosutejo</u>	<u>Mercu Buana Group</u>	<u>61</u>	<u>Property</u>
143	Frans Siswanto	Saka Agung Abadi	58	Property

Source: Edited from *Globe Asia* (August 2007, 130–134)

Note: Underlined are the business of Suharto's family members and those most closely related during the New Order era.

the landed residential market is stronger than any other developers operating in Bodetabek.<sup>7)</sup> In 2010 the group consolidated all these projects under a new umbrella company, Sinarmas Land, and located the national headquarters in BSD City.<sup>8)</sup>

The Summarecon Group has also risen to be a major player. After garnering huge profits from various projects in Kelapa Gading (North Jakarta), the group succeeded in revitalizing the once-stagnant Gading Serpong project in Tangerang and is currently developing a new project in Bekasi (Summarecon Bekasi, 240 ha). The Paramount Group from Singapore has joined in the development of Gading Serpong by purchasing the share previously owned by Batik Keris.

In Bekasi, Kota Jababeka (Cikarang area) and Kota Harapan Indah (Bekasi Municipality) have emerged as unique and influential players. Bekasi is characterized by the presence of several huge industrial estates and is becoming the industrial heartland of Indonesia. Since a substantial number of factory workers migrated to Bekasi, both Kota Jababeka and Kota Harapan Indah until recently grew by marketing relatively affordable housing to factory workers. In the case of Kota Jababeka, the developer also operates one industrial estate, contributing to make Cikarang the industrial center of Bekasi (Hudalah and Firman 2012). As a result, the class compositions of these satellite cities look more balanced and less exclusive than those in Tangerang or Bogor.

In contrast to these “winners,” some business groups have largely dropped out of the property business in Jabodetabek after the New Order. The Salim Group has lost its share in major property projects in Jabodetabek—such as Bumi Serpong Damai, Pondok Indah, Puri Indah, and Pantai Indah Kapuk—and largely withdrawn from the business landscape. The group’s shares in these projects were acquired by the Berca Group (headed by Murdaya Poo). The acquisition of these projects made Murdaya Poo one of the emerging property tycoons in the property industry in Jabodetabek. With the decline of the Salim Group, Ciputra, once renowned as the property king, also lost management control of projects such as Pondok Indah, BSD, Pantai Indah Kapuk, and Puri Indah. Ciputra’s family gave up most of the remaining shares in these projects during the restructuring process in order to save the projects of their own family business, the Ciputra Group. As far as the Jabodetabek region is concerned, the group’s projects are

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7) The Sinarmas Group developed Banjar Wijaya in Tangerang City, Telaga Golf Sawangan in Depok City, and Kota Bunga in Bogor (Puncak area). These are smaller than 500 ha, so they were not included in Table 1. See *Properti Indonesia* (March 2004).

8) The company is listed on the Singapore Exchange and headquartered in Singapore on paper, but the company’s projects outside Indonesia are almost negligible. For the company’s projects in Indonesia, Singapore, China, and Malaysia, see the company’s annual report (Sinarmas Land Limited 2012) and homepage ([www.sinarmasland.com](http://www.sinarmasland.com), accessed October 6, 2015).

either too peripherally located (Citra Raya and Citra Indah) or too piecemeal (Citra Garden Estate and Citra Gran) for it to be regarded as a dominant player. However, this does not mean the decline of the group itself. It has rapidly expanded business into the residential markets of dozens of smaller provincial cities in the whole of Indonesia, such as Surabaya, Semarang, Pekalongan, Sidoarjo (Jawa), Balikpapan, Banjarmasin (Kalimantan), Lampung, Medan, Pekanbaru (Sumatra), Makassar, Manado, Gowa, (Sulawesi), and Ambon (Maluku).<sup>9)</sup>

The children of former President Suharto have largely exited from the property business in Jabodetabek. During the New Order, Bambang Trihatmodjo was engaged in large-scale projects such as Bukit Sentul and Bukit Jonggol Asri in Bogor regency (*Properti Indonesia* March 1996, 20–27; August 1997, 36; November 1998, 20; Soesilo 1998, 134). In 2010, the Bakrie Group bought significant shares of both of these projects and announced that it would develop the 12,000 ha Sentul Nirwana satellite city in Jonggol (*Properti Indonesia* February 2011, 20), only to release it again amid the group's financial difficulty and scandal over development permits.<sup>10)</sup>

## 2 *Back to the City: Apartment Business in the Center of Jakarta*

One of the new and important developments of the post-New Order metropolitan region is the rapid proliferation of high-rise apartments. During the New Order, even at its peak in the mid-1990s, the annual supply of apartments was at best a few thousand units. The cumulative supply of apartments throughout the three decades of the New Order era was at most about 20,000 units, mostly targeted at the rental market for expatriates, and therefore had a relatively negligible impact on the general housing condition in Jabodetabek.<sup>11)</sup> However, with the worsening of traffic congestion, apartments built at strategic locations in or near the center of Jakarta are gaining in popularity among those who work in Jakarta. New developments in the post-New Order era have proliferated, with the cumulative supply of strata-title apartments in 2012 already reaching more than 100,000 units (Colliers International 2012). Although the majority of middle classes still prefer a landed house, living in a high-rise apartment is rapidly becoming part of a normal

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9) See [www.ciputra.com](http://www.ciputra.com) for the group's multiple projects spread all over Indonesia (Accessed October 6, 2015). Also see *Bisnis Properti* (March 2004) and *Properti Indonesia* (October 2011) for the business strategies of the Ciputra Group in the post-New Order period.

10) "Kasus suap bupati Bogor, Bakrie kembalikan Bukit Jonggol ke Sentul City" (DetikNews, May 9, 2014, accessed September 23, 2015) [<http://news.detik.com/berita/2578098/kasus-suap-bupati-bogor-bakrie-kembalikan-bukit-jonggol-ke-sentul-city-tahun-lalu>].

11) For a fairly comprehensive list of apartment developments during the New Order, see *Properti Indonesia* (June 1997, 24).

lifestyle in Jakarta.<sup>12)</sup>

Within the apartment industry of the post-New Order era, the most conspicuous phenomenon is the rise of the Agung Podomoro Group. As one of the relatively old players, the group itself was established in the 1970s through the development of landed housing estates in places such as Sunter, North Jakarta. Around the year 2000, when many developers were still struggling with debt restructuring, the group succeeded in developing and marketing a new and exclusive housing estate, Bukit Gading Mediterania, in Kelapa Gading, North Jakarta. However, the real breakthrough for the group came when it concentrated its resources into the development of high-rise apartment projects. Mainly through the brand name of Mediterania apartments, the group became the top apartment developer by providing a massive quantity of small-sized apartment units (36–54 m<sup>2</sup>) at a relatively low price. Since around 2004, the group has succeeded in selling these apartments to the lower middle-strata market in places such as Tanjung Duren, Kemayoran, Ancol, Kelapa Gading, Sudirman, Kalibata, and so on.<sup>13)</sup>

Another important player in the apartment sector is the Bakrie Group, which entered the apartment market in 1993 when it launched Taman Rasuna Apartments (Arai 2001b, 489). The group's apartment projects are concentrated in about 53 ha of land near Rasuna Said Road. In the post-New Order era, the group renamed the area Rasuna Epicentrum and marketed new apartment towers, such as The 18th Residence, The Wave, Grove, and so on. However, currently the group is heavily in debt and selling remaining land stocks to other developers, such as the Sinarmas Group.<sup>14)</sup>

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12) In 2011, *Weekly NNA Consum* magazine conducted a survey on 100 white-collar workers aged older than 20 (both male and female) who lived and worked in Jabodetabek. Asked what kind of house they hoped to live in, the majority of respondents chose a landed house with two floors (60 percent) or a single floor (31 percent). Only 1 percent answered that they hoped to live in an apartment, testifying to the strong desire to live in landed houses (*The Weekly NNA Consum*, October 21, 2011, No. 159, 5).

13) Gading Mediterania Residences (Kelapa Gading, North Jakarta, 1,650 units), Mediterania Boulevard Residences & Mediterania Lagoon Residences (Kemayoran, Central Jakarta, about 1,200 units), Mediterania Garden Residences I, II (Tanjung Duren, West Jakarta, about 5,700 units; more than 8,000 units in Podomoro City superbloc as a whole), Mediterania Marina Residences (Ancol, North Jakarta, 1,900 units). Sudirman Park (Jl K.H. Mangsyur, Central Jakarta, 1,500 units) is also one of the group's project with a similar price range, although it is not branded as "Mediterania." For the details of the group's major projects, see *Signature Properties in Jakarta* (2010), the group's official website ([www.agungpodomoro.com](http://www.agungpodomoro.com), accessed October 6, 2015), and several real-estate directories. For the phenomenal growth of the Agung Podomoro Group in the post-New Order era, see *Bisnis Properti* (February 2004, 12–26).

14) The Bakrie Group sold 3 ha to the Tiara Marga Trakindo Group in 2011, and another 5 ha to PT Bumi Serpong Damai Tbk under the Sinarmas Group in 2014 ("Lima indikasi bangkrutnya Bakrie," *Merdeka.com*, February 12, 2014, accessed September 23, 2015, <http://www.merdeka.com/uang/5-indikasi-bangkrutnya-bakrie.html>).

Another noticeable development in the post-New Order period is the growth of sub-CBD (central business district) areas outside of the golden triangle, including the areas alongside T.B. Simatupang Road, Pondok Indah, and Kemang in South Jakarta; Kembangan/Puri Indah in West Jakarta; and Pluit and Kelapa Gading in North Jakarta. These places have one common feature: in the late New Order era, all were well-known as relatively tranquil suburban residential areas for the upper class, although there were also some non-residential facilities such as shopping malls. However, with the rapid increase of the commuter population in the Bodetabek satellite cities, the worsening of traffic congestion, and the steep rise of property prices in the CBD area, developers are targeting these areas as the next growth centers and equipping them with new office buildings, apartments, and ambitious mixed-use complexes.

The most prominent actor in these areas is the Lippo Group. The group grew first as a major private bank in the 1980s and then entered the property development business in the early 1990s. Lippo Karawaci (Tangerang) and Lippo Cikarang (Bekasi) are two of the most prestigious satellite city projects in Jabodetabek. Through the development of these projects, the group acquired various new lines of business catering to upper- to middle-class residents, such as a department store (Matahari), hotel (Aryaduta), private school (Pelita Harapan), and hospital (Siloam). It added a bookstore chain (Times bookstore), an English newspaper and magazine publishing company (Globe Asia), and even a cemetery business (San Diego Hills). The group is most competitive when combining these various businesses together into one township and creating synergistic effects. In the post-New Order period the group applies a similar strategy, but not by developing new satellite cities (which would require acquiring hundreds of hectares of land); rather, it develops high-rise mixed-use complexes. The group's recent projects include Kemang Village (Kemang, South Jakarta), St. Moritz (Kembangan/Puri Indah, West Jakarta), and Holland Village (Cempaka Putih, Central Jakarta).<sup>15)</sup> The Pondok Indah Group, which was controlled by the Salim Group and then acquired by the Murdaya family, is also engaged in ambitious CBD developments in both Pondok Indah (South Jakarta) and Kembangan/Puri Indah (West Jakarta).<sup>16)</sup>

This section has examined the continuities and changes in major satellite city projects and dominant developers. Although the dominant trend is that of modified continu-

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15) For the Lippo Group's major activities since the first decade of the twenty-first century, see *Globe Asia* (August 2007, 162–166), the annual reports of Lippo Karawaci Tbk, and the company's website ([www.lippokarawaci.co.id](http://www.lippokarawaci.co.id), accessed October 6, 2015).

16) The group is developing Pondok Indah through PT Metropolitan Kentjana while developing the Kembangan area through PT Antilope Madju Puri Indah. See the official website of Pondok Indah Group ([www.pondokindahgroup.co.id](http://www.pondokindahgroup.co.id), accessed October 6, 2015).

ity, there are some interesting changes that also deserve attention. During the New Order era, almost all the big business groups tried to engage in large-scale satellite city projects. In the post-New Order era, each developer tends to focus on a specific sector in which to concentrate its resources and to have a competitive edge over its rivals. The Sinarmas Group is dominant in large-scale satellite city projects in Bodetabek, while the Lippo Group focuses on high-rise mixed-use projects in new CBD areas, the Agung Podomoro Group on high-rise apartments, and the Ciputra Group on dozens of residential projects in many provincial cities in Indonesia.

### *3 Adapting to Parliamentary Democracy*

After learning about the resilience of major satellite city projects and prominent developers, the next question is why their dominance persists even after the collapse of the Cendana-Cukong alliance. One of the key factors is that a formal channel between developers and policy makers, such as business associations and parliament, has replaced the informal Cendana-Cukong alliance of the New Order era.

First, developers today can protect their collective interests by negotiating through formal business associations. In fact, REI (Real Estate Indonesia) has grown to be one of the best-organized business associations since the New Order era. Its leadership posts have also functioned as an entry into a political career for ambitious businessmen (such as Siswono Yudohusodo, Mohamad S. Hidayat, and Enggartiasto Lukita) (Arai 2012, Chapter 5).

Second, developers have strong supporters within parliament. While most political parties are, by and large, accommodating to the interests of large business groups, especially interesting is the reorganization and resurgence of Golkar (Golongan Karya) from the rubber-stamp machine of the New Order regime to a major political party (Partai Golkar). What was salient through this reorganization process was that those who had strong ties with large business groups (such as Akbar Tanjung, Jusuf Kalla, Aburizal Bakrie, Mohamad S. Hidayat, and Enggartiasto Lukita) acquired prominent political positions (*ibid.*). Even though Golkar has lost some political clout since President Yudhoyono managed to strengthen his own party base with Partai Demokrat (Democratic Party) in his second term, thus pushing some influential Golkar members to other parties, it has played an important role as a representative of the collective interests of dominant domestic business groups, the majority of which have some kind of a property business division.

Third, the Indonesian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (KADIN) has a close partnership with the government and has become very influential in policy formulation (Sato 2011, 195). Yudhoyono's cabinet included many politicians with a business back-

ground, such as Aburizal Bakrie (the chairman of KADIN 1994–2004) and Jusuf Kalla. The series of road maps for economic development formulated by KADIN have heavily influenced the government's economic policy (Matsui 2005, 300). It is also worth noting that Mohamad S. Hidayat, the former general secretary of REI (1989–92), was the chairman of KADIN from 2004 to 2010 and also became the minister of industry in Yudhoyono's second cabinet (2009–14). This testifies to the weight and heavy presence of property developers among Indonesian business circles and the top strata of ruling elites.<sup>17)</sup>

The consequence is very clear. It is highly implausible that the government would take measures against big businesses controlling land. These big businesses have slimmed down their huge debt through restructuring deals with IBRA and have retained control over vast amounts of land in the metropolitan region without much of a debt burden. As long as urbanization pressure remains strong, they will continue to wield significant power to control and keep raising the price of land and houses in the region, regardless of whether tacit cartel agreements exist or not. New large-scale projects such as superblocks, office buildings, shopping malls, and apartments continue to proliferate. Businesses have the confidence that their huge investments on acquired land and infrastructure will never be disputed or disturbed by the government, at least in the foreseeable future. However, it is impossible for the new ruling elites to stabilize the dominance of big business without securing support from the wider urban masses. How does this new coalition of ruling elites sustain the support of the middle to lower strata?

### III Constructing New Social Order

#### *1 Privatized Municipal Governments and Middle Class Formation*

While securing their business interests via relations with the democratized central government, how do developers consolidate their position at the local level? In the following argument, this author basically extends Firman's (2004) suggestion and maintains that the developer-middle class alliance is building up another strong base for the stability of the new urban order. In this respect, one of the important factors is that new town developers take on the dual role of property developers and a privatized "municipal government," and, with the increase in the settled population, the weight of the latter role has been increasing both as an opportunity and as a burden. During the New Order

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17) Also see *Properti Indonesia* (March 2004, 28), which interviewed M.S. Hidayat about the relationship between KADIN and the property industry.

era, except for a few projects such as Bintaro Jaya and BSD, it was not end-buyers but speculators who led the residential property market (*ibid.*; Arai 2005). As a result, even though houses were built and handed over to consumers, the majority of them were vacant or underutilized. This “hollowness” of satellite cities made the developers’ dominance fragile. In the post-New Order era, however, the rapid expansion of retailers into these satellite cities (in the form of hypermarkets, malls, and trade centers<sup>18</sup>) together with the improvement of access to Jakarta (such as new direct-connection roads to highways) make these satellite cities comfortable and convenient enough for a large number of people to settle in. As a result, in such areas as Serpong-Karawaci (South Tangerang), Cibubur-Cileungsi (Bogor), Cikarang, and Bekasi City (Bekasi), the population has grown rapidly.

Who are the people in-migrating to these new satellite cities? The prices of houses in satellite cities vary greatly depending on the location, the targeted segment, and the scale of the projects. However, those who can afford to buy a house in one of these satellite cities are, as a whole, a relatively small proportion of the population in Jabodetabek and collectively constitute the conspicuous core of the *kelas menengah* (middle class). As Solvay Gerke pointed out, the middle-classes construct their identity by constantly distancing themselves from the poorer “Other.”

Typical in its formation, the culture of the ‘new middle class’ is one marked by an ongoing attempt to demarcate itself against the lower strata of the society. Its formation is thus bounded in a complex process of distancing itself from the poor ‘Other.’ In Indonesia, the ‘new middle class’ was in the strategic social position to construct hierarchies via the creation and promotion of a ‘modern’ lifestyle through consumption. (Gerke 2000, 145)

Developers capitalize on this desire for social distinction and upward orientation by providing an exclusive living environment (Rimmer and Dick 2009, 47–48). Exclusive residential estates function to delineate class lines between the middle to upper classes and the lower “others,” first by filtering privileged residents from the other urban masses by a certain price level, and then by delineating the space inside from the surrounding local sociocultural context and recontextualizing it into an imagined cosmopolitan sphere. It is only with this spatial separation and articulation that people of varied ethnic, vocational, and income backgrounds take on a similar appearance and somehow acquire a coherent identity as a middle class. In this sense, the developers’ capital accumulation goes hand in hand with the formation of a middle class and the construction of a middle-class lifestyle.

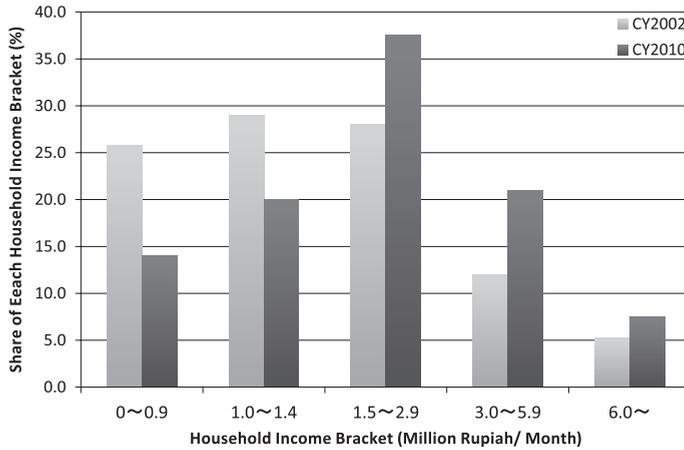
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18) In Jabodetabek, a “trade center” is a type of shopping center where all or the majority of retail space is subdivided into hundreds of relatively small compartments and sold in lots.

The price of houses functions to filter out those who live within a planned residential district of a satellite city. In major satellite cities such as BSD City, Gading Serpong, and Alam Sutera (20–25 km radius from the center of Jakarta), the majority of houses available are being sold at more than Rp.1 billion. Even the smallest and lowest-priced ones in the secondary market cost about Rp.600 million.<sup>19)</sup> Assuming that one is buying one of these lowest-priced houses with a 20 percent down payment and an 80 percent mortgage, with a fixed interest rate of 9.5 percent and a payment period of 20 years, the monthly payment will be about Rp.4.7 million. Assuming that a sustainable maximum loan payment is a third of monthly income, potential buyers need a monthly income of at least about Rp.14 million. Lower-priced units are available only in more remote or less prestigious satellite cities or the small residential estates scattered around them. For example, buying a small house for Rp.220 million in Citra Raya (about 35 km from the center of Jakarta) with the same assumptions as above requires a monthly income of about Rp.5 million. We can thus assume that the lower limit for buying a modest house in a planned satellite city or residential estate is a stable monthly income of about Rp.5 million.

How many Jabotabek residents meet this requirement? A large-scale study by JICA, the Japanese official aid agency (together with the coordinating ministry of economic affairs of the Indonesian government), divides households in Jabodetabek into five income groups (CMEA and JICA 2012, 36) (Fig. 1). The agency defines households with a monthly income of up to Rp.900,000 as "low income," Rp.1–5.9 million as "medium income," and more than Rp.6 million as "high income." JICA's threshold of "low income" corresponds roughly with the official minimum wage in 2010 of Jakarta (Rp.1.18 million) and Banten Province (Rp.960,000). This graph highlights several important points. First, the average household income rose significantly between 2002 and 2010, and "low income" households declined from a quarter to less than 15 percent. Second, households that can afford to buy a house from developers are still around 10 percent to 15 percent. The table bundles the monthly income of Rp.3–5.9 million into a single bracket, and hence does not specify the proportion of households with income above Rp.5 million. However, even if we add a third of this income bracket to the "high-income" group, they as a whole

19) Examples of housing prices here are loosely based on the search results of a property Web site (<http://rumah123.com>, accessed October 6, 2015) in early February 2014. For example, a house (building 70 m<sup>2</sup>/ land 72 m<sup>2</sup>) in Nusa Loka District (one of the old, non-clustered districts) in BSD City was on sale for Rp.590 million (listing ID hos145285), while another house (B: 60 m<sup>2</sup>/ L: 78 m<sup>2</sup>) in Neo Catalonia cluster was priced at Rp.760 million (listing ID1029026). In Citra Raya, a house with B: 21/L60 was Rp.185 million (hos1167187), and another one with B90/L72 was Rp.220 million (hos1150987). The assumption of interest rate is based on KPR Bank Permata in early February 2014.



**Fig. 1** Changes in Household Income

Source: CMEA and JICA (2012, 36)

comprise only the upper 15 percent of society. This means that what I have viewed as the middle-class core is rather the upper strata in terms of income. Their “middle-ness” should not be understood as average but as the embodiment of a social ideal type or exemplary center of lifestyle. Third, JICA’s “medium income” households (not the above-mentioned “middle-class core”) constitute the actual majority in Jabodetabek (almost 80 percent in 2010). Most of them probably still cannot afford to live in housing estates. However, with the general trend of rising income, many of them—especially the upper half—must have felt that their purchasing power had improved and experienced rising expectations. Many of those with Rp.3–5.9 million living in a kampung may well identify with the middle class or regard themselves as “middle class in the making.” This corresponds with what Aiko Kurasawa calls “pseudo middle-class.” Based on a series of detailed case studies in an urban kampung on the fringe of South Jakarta, she points out that there are many residents in urban kampung who have a strong upward orientation, pay keen attention to educational achievement, and display rational or selective consumerism. They selectively appropriate the attitude, values, and lifestyle of the middle-class core while adjusting to the kampung’s social and economic environment (Kurasawa 2013, 1–8). This is a very heuristic observation in understanding the dynamics of class differentiation in contemporary Jabodetabek.<sup>20)</sup> In the following analysis, this author only

20) Kurasawa’s “pseudo middle-class” is defined primarily by lifestyle and value, and income level is given secondary importance. However, in explaining a typical image of this class, Kurasawa mentions that monthly household income is around Rp.3–5 million. This also fits well with this paper’s analysis that Rp.5 million was the lower threshold of the middle-class core around 2010.

changes the term, calling them "semi-middle class" to avoid the negative connotation of "pseudo."

Let us take the example of Bekasi regency to examine the size of the middle-class core from different data. In Bekasi regency in 2009, there were 229,060 persons working in 788 manufacturing companies. This accounted for 14.6 percent of the population of productive age (15 to 64 years old), which was about 1,568,924 (BPS Kabupaten Bekasi 2010). On the other hand, another study by BPS showed that it was generally only those above the levels of managers and supervisors (plus accountants and secretaries) who received a monthly income of more than Rp.2.5 million (BPS 2011, 62, 70, 78, 79). We can assume that Rp.2.5 million was the lowest threshold of potential customers of developers' housing, because if they got married and worked together, their combined monthly income could reach Rp.5 million.

However, this study does not tell us the percentage of managers and supervisors. Kensuke Miyamoto's case study of three Japanese manufacturing companies in Bekasi in 2000 showed that those above the level of supervisors comprised only 5.2 percent of total employees (Miyamoto 2002, 146 Table 4-11). Assuming that roughly 5 percent to 10 percent of the manufacturing workers in Bekasi regency were above the supervisor level (supervisors, managers, and other professionals) in 2009, their number would be between 11,454 and 22,906. In addition to this, we may also count some civil public servants (14,187) and schoolteachers (42,557) as stable waged workers and hence potential consumers of developers' housing. Even if we sum them up all, their number would be around 68,000 to 80,000, or only about 5 percent of the population of productive age. The actual percentage of those with real purchasing power for developers' housing would be lower, because many of the above-mentioned people would not attain a monthly income of more than Rp.5 million; only those already married and having a dual-income household would.

Lastly, we have to add the manager class from the non-manufacturing sector (such as hotels and retail), other professionals (doctors, lawyers, etc.), successful businessmen, and the higher strata of military personnel to this wealthy population with real purchasing power. Unfortunately, this author does not have data on their number. However, even if their total number rivaled those of the manufacturing sector and public servants plus teachers, the total population of those with purchasing power for developers' housing would be between 5 percent and 10 percent of productive-age residents. The proportion would be higher in Jakarta and relatively wealthy cities such as Depok and South Tangerang. However, together with the data from JICA, we can estimate that the proportion of those eligible to form the middle-class core in Jabodetabek would be around 5 percent to 15 percent of households, depending on the regency and municipality.

To serve this limited but growing population, private developers provide various municipal services, such as the construction and maintenance of roads, supply of clean water, waste water disposal, landscaping and gardening, security service, shuttle bus transportation to Jakarta, and so on. For example, BSD City, the largest satellite city, is managed by PT Bumi Serpong Damai Tbk, a listed company with 49 percent stake held by PT Sinarmas Land. According to the company's 2011 annual report, it had as many as 1,599 employees—35 top management, 185 managers, 604 staff, and 775 “non-staff”—and had such divisions as planning, city infrastructure, estate management, landscape, nursery, and so on (PT Bumi Serpong Damai Tbk 2009, 13; 2011, 71). In short, Bodetabek today is characterized by the existence of dual governments—a public one and a privatized one. The public government greatly benefited financially from various economic activities in the privately managed satellite cities. For example, about 80 percent of the income of Tangerang regency is earned through various permit fees (such as building permits) in Serpong, Cisauk, Kelapa Dua, Pagedangan, and Legok, where BSD City, Gading Serpong, and Lippo Karawaci are located.<sup>21</sup> It would be difficult for public local governments to take over the role of these developers and continue to provide the same quality of services, even if the developers handed over all the above “municipal functions” to the former. It is here that the interests of satellite city developers meet and overlap not only with those of local governments but also with those of settled residents who hope to keep the high quality of services, living environment, and asset value. As a result, the increasing population of homeowners provides a kind of “constituency” for the continued presence of developers even long after the completion of residential areas. On the other hand, these developers are profit-oriented private enterprises. Naturally, what “municipal functions” they select and how they manage them follow the principles of profit-oriented business.

Satellite city developers often avoid installing infrastructure in existing settlements (*kampung*) and instead develop planned districts named *perumahan kluster* (“clustered housing estates” or gated communities) piece by piece. The resulting land-use pattern is a patchwork of well-planned walled estates and existing *kampung*. By confining the building of infrastructure to within the walled estates, developers and residents create a simple and direct relationship between the providers and customers of various services. At the same time, the obvious difference in living environments within and outside the walled estates becomes a clear medium to demarcate between the middle class and the poorer “Other.” Differences in income level, profession, and ethnic back-

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21) “More Malls in Tangerang” (Tempo.co, August 27, 2013), accessed September 23, 2015, “Pendapatan Retribusi IMB dan HO Lampau Target” (Satelitnews, June 20, 2013), accessed June 4, 2015.

ground among the residents are blurred by this strong contrast against outside kampung residents.

Taking the example of BSD City again, this satellite city consists of various "grand clusters" of about 40 to 70 hectares, each composed of multiple "clusters." Each cluster is a walled single-gate complex with 50 to a few hundred houses. The grand clusters are often located side by side with existing settlements and administratively belong to local *kelurahan* (towns) and *kecamatan* (districts). However, clusters' residents rarely visit or deal with the town or district government offices. More often, it is the privatized "municipal government" (i.e., the developer) that they find it necessary to negotiate with to improve or maintain the living environment; and for this purpose, they organize *forum warga* (residents' forums). All the examples above show how developers acquire a kind of legitimacy to function as a privatized "government" in return for providing a spatial foundation for the distinctive lifestyle and living environment for the aspiring middle to upper classes.

## 2 Widening Social Cleavages and Urban Problems

For those who cannot afford to buy a house in a walled residential estate or high-rise apartment building, the hurdle to homeownership has been rising, especially for those with a fixed salary. Despite the official minimum wage being revised repeatedly, it has lagged far behind the rapid hikes of land prices in the metropolitan region. Another barrier to homeownership is that regular staff jobs decreased drastically after the massive layoffs during the Asian economic crisis. As a compromise between labor movement groups and globally mobile capital, in 2003 a new labor law was introduced, enabling and encouraging companies to replace regular staff with fixed-term contract workers and outsourced workers (Arai 2011, 185–188). Such changes of employment structure also impact the place of living, because regular staff can apply for mortgage loans while fixed-term workers and agency workers generally cannot do so.

On the other hand, we have to realize that property development affects people's lives not only through the price and control of land, but in more diverse ways. With the rapid increase in the population with strong purchasing power, satellite cities, to some degree, have become a new source of job opportunities, even for those who cannot afford a house in them. Construction and many related industries have enjoyed a boom. The mushrooming of shopping centers, hypermarkets, and numerous other retail shops has also created significant numbers of jobs in the retail and service sectors. Various businesses targeting the growing middle class strata—restaurants, fashion retailers, auto sales, property brokerages, medical services, and so on—have also enjoyed a boom. The scale of business activities has not yet reached the point of creating a huge

demand for office buildings within these satellite cities; most office workers living in them still commute daily to Jakarta. However, the increase in business activity has already attracted enough business travelers to stimulate a boom in new hotel construction. Universities are also setting up new campuses or aggressively expanding existing campuses, for example, Universitas Pelita Harapan (Lippo Karawaci), Swiss German University and Prasetiya Mulya Business School (BSD City), Universitas Multimedia Nusantara (Gading Serpong), Universitas Bina Nusantara (Alam Sutera), Universitas Pembangunan Jaya (Bintaro Jaya), President University (Kota Jababeka), and Institut Teknologi dan Sains Bandung (Kota Deltamas) (*Housing Estate* March 2011, 46–52). As a result, existing kampung settlements in and around large satellite cities have become denser, receiving growing numbers of immigrants who cannot afford a home inside the residential estates.

The widening social cleavages create serious problems, including housing and traffic congestion. During the New Order, the government tried to resolve the housing shortage by facilitating the development of affordable landed housing (*rumah sederhana*) in satellite cities. Large-scale development and mass production of housing were expected to have the advantages of scale and enable developers to cross-subsidize the cost of affordable housing. A joint decree by three ministers in 1992, for example, obligated each developer to build six affordable houses and three medium-priced houses for each luxury home.<sup>22)</sup> However, without any effective sanctions against violation, the decree did not have enforcing power and large satellite-city developers generally skipped the obligation. The advantages of scale were simply absorbed as business profit or by a corrupt bureaucracy (Firman 1996; Cowherd 2005).

In the post-New Order period, the development of affordable housing in Jabodetabek has generally been stagnant. The government's priority during the debt restructuring process was to recover loans from debtors rather than make fundamental revisions to the existing land-use plan. As long as vast amounts of suburban land are under the control of about three dozen satellite-city developers, it is obvious that most of the land will be marketed to the middle to upper classes at the highest possible price. There is no incentive for developers to build and sell affordable housing with minimum profit margins, particularly since the policy supports for affordable housing have decreased rather than increased under the post-New Order government. In addition, in the highly decentralized post-New Order government structure, various ministries and local governments move

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22) Surat Keputusan Bersama Menteri Dalam Negeri, Menteri Pekerjaan Umum, Menteri Negara Perumahan Rakyat tentang Pedoman Pembangunan Perumahan dan Permukiman Dengan Lingkungan Hunian Yang Berimbang.

more independently and sporadically for their own interests. The government has thus failed to provide a coordinated and integrated business environment for affordable housing developers, such as securing the budget for the subsidization of low-interest mortgage loans (Arai 2003).

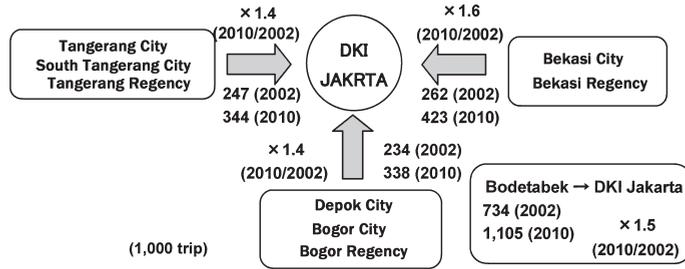
Because the government and private developers have not provided enough affordable housing, those who cannot afford to buy expensive houses within planned housing estates tend to concentrate in existing kampung settlements in and around large satellite cities. Statistical data of West Java in 2009 show that a relatively high percentage of households live in their own home or the home of parents or siblings. For example, 73 percent of households in Bogor regency and 78 percent in Bekasi regency live in their own home, while 11.7 percent of Bogor regency households live in the home of their parents or siblings (BPS Provinsi Jawa Barat 2010, 213, 214). These figures are surprisingly high in view of the general price level of commercial housing, suggesting that inheritance and informal housing in existing kampung areas have played a major role in meeting the housing demand. On the other hand, satellite-city developers have, through piecemeal infrastructure development, effectively skipped the burden of improving the infrastructure in these kampung settlements and hence betrayed the original policy justification for large-scale development.

A growing immigrant population further burdens the poor infrastructure in settlements in rapidly urbanizing areas. Available statistical data on West Java Province in 2010 show that almost two-thirds of the residents of Depok city (63.85 percent) and Bekasi city (63.12 percent) were immigrants from outside. This means that there were about 1.47 million immigrants in Bekasi city and 1.11 million in Depok city (BPS Provinsi Jawa Barat 2011, 66, 67).<sup>23)</sup> In these cities, the percentages of those living in rented rooms or rented houses are much higher than in regency areas: 26.66 percent (103,687) households in Depok city and 20.34 percent (114,542) in Bekasi city (BPS Provinsi Jawa Barat 2010, 213, 214). Even in regency areas, which tend to be more rural, 22 percent of residents in Bogor and 36.7 percent in Bekasi were immigrants.

Worsening traffic congestion is another logical consequence of the population increase in large satellite cities and their surroundings in Bodetabek. During the three decades of the New Order, neither the government nor private businesses invested in opening new commuter lines between Jakarta and Bodetabek. Limited investments in

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23) Assuming that the average size of immigrant households is 3.35 persons, about 44,000 households in Bekasi and 33,100 households in Depok city are made up of immigrant families. The average household size in Jabotabek is roughly 4 persons, but in the case of Bekasi regency in 2009 it was 3.35 persons. Because the immigrant population can include a relatively high percentage of singles and young couples, their average household size could be much smaller than 3.35.



**Fig. 2** Increase in Commuter Traffic from Bodetabek to Jakarta; 2002–10  
 Source: JICA (2012, 2–63)

**Table 3** Motorization in DKI Jakarta, Depok, Tangerang, and Bekasi (Excluding army and CD [diplomatic] vehicles)

	No. of Registered Vehicles (,000)				Registered Vehicles per 1,000 persons				Growth Rate of Registered Vehicles (% p.a.)		
	1990	2000	2005	2008	1990	2000	2005	2008	90–00	00–05	05–08
Motorcycle	804	1,620	4,647	6,766	47	77	197	258	7.3	23.5	13.3
Passenger Car	486	1,053	1,767	2,035	29	50	75	78	8.0	10.9	4.8
Truck	190	334	500	539	11	16	21	21	5.8	8.4	2.5
Bus	169	254	317	309	10	12	13	12	4.1	4.5	–0.8
Total	1,649	3,260	7,230	9,648	97	156	306	369	7.1	17.3	10.1

Source: Excerpt from JICA (2012, 2–5, Table 2.1.3)

the train sector were used to improve the existing lines inherited from the Dutch colonial period. In contrast, the New Order government constructed four new highways (Jagorawi, Jakarta-Merak, Jakarta-Cikampek, and Outer Ring Road). Almost all the large satellite cities were developed to capitalize on the improved accessibility between Bodetabek and Jakarta via these new highways. From the very beginning, developers assumed that the majority of residents would use private cars as a basic mode of transportation, and they designed the cities accordingly. Indeed, many residents do commute via their own private cars. According to JICA’s studies, from 2002 to 2010 the volume of traffic from Bodetabek to Jakarta increased 1.5 times, becoming about 1.1 million trips a day (JICA 2012, 2–63) (Fig. 2). Registered passenger cars in Jadetabek (without the data on Bogor) doubled to more than 2 million between 2000 and 2008 (Table 3). Among high-income households, 52.5 percent of trips in 2002 were made in private passenger cars (JICA 2004, ii) (Fig. 3). In 2010, 44 percent of their travel was still by private car (JICA 2012, 3–8) (Fig. 4).

With the rise in incomes and proliferation of auto loans, middle-income (about 80 percent of Jabotabek) and low-income households have adapted to the private-car ori-

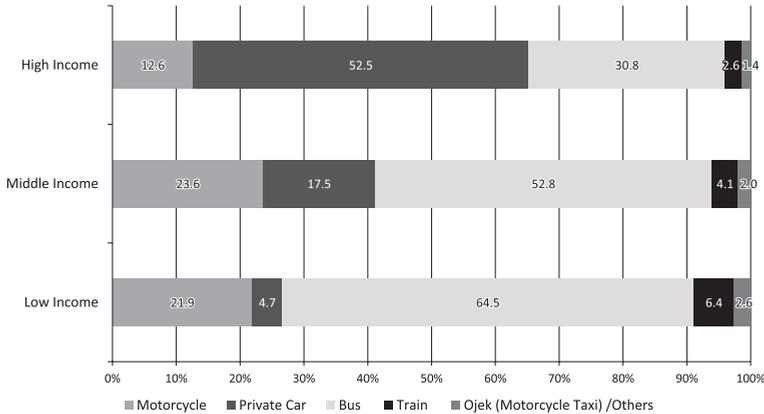


Fig. 3 Daily Mode Share by Income Group in 2002 (% of trips)

Source: JICA (2004, ii)

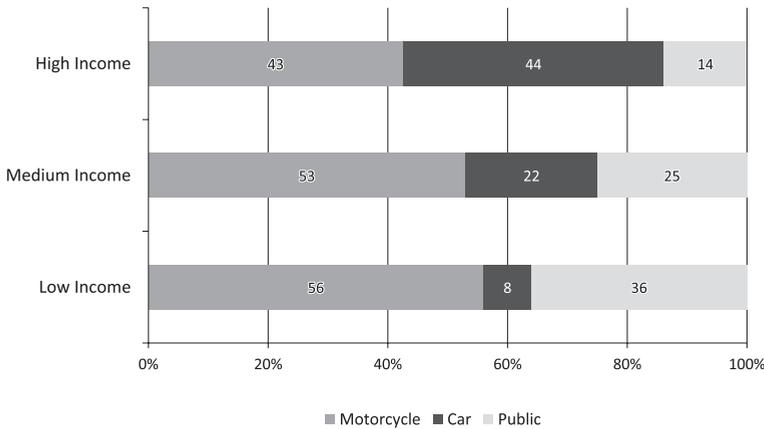
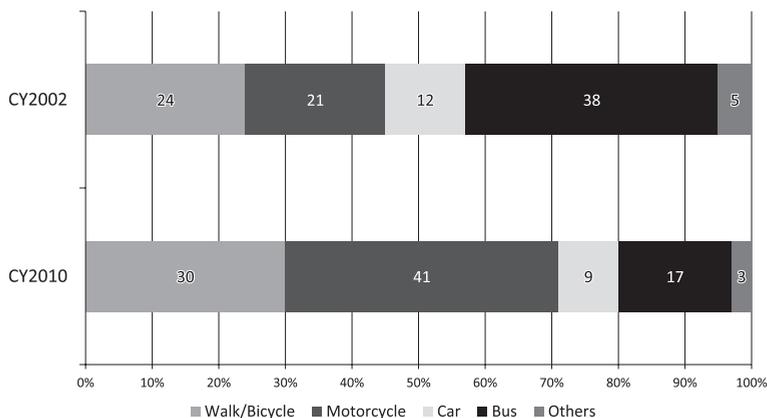


Fig. 4 Daily Mode Share by Income Group in 2010 (% of trips)

Source: JICA (2012, 3–8)

ented urban structure by procuring motorcycles. The number of registered motorcycles in Jadedabek (without the data on Bogor) jumped from 1.62 million in 2000 to 6.76 million in 2008, meaning 258 vehicles per 1,000 persons (Table 3). Considering that the average household size in this region is about four persons, motorcycles already outnumber households and have shifted from being a luxury item to being an essential commodity. This has resulted in a drastic decline in public transport. In 2002, the share of buses as a mode of commuting was 38 percent, while motorcycles accounted for 21 percent and private cars 12 percent. In 2010, the share of buses dropped to 17 percent (a drop of



**Fig. 5** Changes in Mode Transportation for Commuting

Source: CMEA and JICA (2012, 38)

more than half in eight years), while the share of motorcycles doubled to 41 percent, making it the dominant mode of commuting (CMEA and JICA 2012, 38) (Fig. 5). Especially among low-income households, the share of motorcycle traffic was the highest (56 percent). Although this may be an effective adaptation strategy for individual households, the collective outcome has been a devastating vicious circle. The average travel speed in Jakarta during weekday peak hours is 20 km or even below 10 km per hour on many arterial roads in and around the CBD area (JICA 2012, 2–26). The drop in car usage among high-income households from 2002 to 2010 suggests that even these people may give up some of the comfort of passenger cars because motorcycles run faster on congested roads. The heavy congestion heightens the financial and physical burden on commuters. The estimated opportunity cost of traffic jams (wasted fuel, air pollution, and loss of time and productivity) varies depending on various assumptions, but one estimate gives a figure of about Rp.48 trillion annually (Simanungkalit 2009, 50).<sup>24)</sup>

Another problem is poor linkages among satellite cities. Until recently, developers paid attention only to the infrastructure inside satellite cities, and how to improve access to Jakarta. Usually, the main roads within satellite cities are wide and well maintained. Many developers are also willing to invest heavily to connect their projects directly with highways to Jakarta, but they rarely pay attention to synchronizing their development with neighboring “competitor” projects. As satellite cities grow, the traffic between them

24) In comparison, the gross regional product of Jakarta was about Rp.371 trillion in 2009 (from the Web site of Indonesia Investment Coordinating Board, “Display Ekonomi PDRB DKI JAKARTA,” accessed September 23, 2015 (<http://regionalinvestment.bkpm.go.id/newsipid/ekonomipdrb.php?ia=31&is=43>)).

is already overwhelming existing road networks.<sup>25)</sup>

In summary, the restructuring of urban space in the post-New Order era is intricately related to sharpening social cleavages. On the one hand, there is the new tendency of many satellite cities in Bodetabek growing to be lively, populated regional cores, making the metropolitan region more polycentric. However, this positive effect is greatly offset by a steep rise in the prices of land and housing, numbers of cars and motorcycles, and piecemeal infrastructure development by private developers, which betrays the original policy justification of large-scale development. For many people, life in the post-New Order metropolis is the same old story of living in the increasingly squeezed urban kampung neighborhood, or commuting long distances (though not in a packed bus now, but by motorcycle) through steadily deteriorating congestion, and working under unstable terms, such as fixed-term contract work.

#### IV The Resilience of the Post-New Order Regime

##### *1 Narrowing the Cleavages, Containing the Discontent*

After examining the close relationship between spatial reorganization and widening social cleavages in post-New Order Jabodetabek, the next question to be asked is how the regime addresses or suppresses these spatial-social cleavages. There have been many attempts on the part of ruling elites to contain serious social disturbances. These attempts will be briefly outlined below.

First, there are efforts by the ruling political and economic elites to increase the beneficiaries of economic prosperity through improvements in public transportation and the provision of affordable housing. In this respect, a democratic framework in the post-New Order era is given all the more important roles to represent the needs and desires of the semi-middle to lower classes, because their interests cannot be represented by the profit-oriented "privatized governments." So far, the results have been mixed. Policies of the central government and newly strengthened local governments have often conflicted with each other. Even if the concerned parties bear goodwill toward each other, coordination and cooperation are not easy.

As for transportation, the post-New Order government significantly shifted the orientation away from private car ownership toward the improvement of public transport. The improvement has been tackled on four fronts: Bus Rapid Transit (busway), com-

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25) It is worth noting that BSD City and Gading Serpong worked together to build a direct road between the two cities. Hudalah and Firman also report that seven industrial estates in Bekasi decided to coordinate and jointly develop infrastructure (Hudalah and Firman 2012, 46).

muter train, Mass Rapid Transit (MRT), and Light Rail Transit (LRT). Bus Rapid Transit is operated by a public company under the Jakarta provincial government. It started in 2004 under the Sutiyoso governorship and has quickly expanded operation into 12 lines. The number of daily passengers increased from 47,589 in 2004 to 238,184 in 2010 (JICA 2012, 2–46; see also Kusno 2010, Chapter 2; Salim and Firman 2011). Although the increase is impressive, this is still a tiny portion of about 18.8 million trips undertaken daily in Jakarta (JICA 2012, 3–5). Moreover, the busway has not yet expanded into major parts of Bodetabek. The Indonesian Railway is also slowly expanding and improving its commuter train services between Jakarta and Bodetabek areas. As for the MRT, the first line between Kampung Bandan and Lebak Bulus (North-South line) is under construction. It is planned to open between 2018 and 2020, while the second line (East-West line) between Balaraja (in Tangerang) and Cikarang (in Bekasi) is planned to be completed in 2024–27.<sup>26)</sup>

LRT is a new project incepted by Jokowi-Ahok governorship. More than eight lines are being planned, aiming to connect major sub-centers of whole Jakarta, Soekarno-Hatta Airport, and some parts of Bogor, Depok and Bekasi. The construction of the first phase has already started in 2015, planned to connect Cibubur and Bekasi Timur to Dukuh Atas, the transportation hub of Jakarta's CBD in 2018.<sup>27)</sup>

The basic framework of these new transportation policies has been formulated through the joint efforts of the central government, local governments, and foreign aid agencies (such as JICA), and, except for the newly incepted LRT, the overall policy orientation has been consistent over the past eight or nine years. However, the implementation has been affected by conflicting interests, lack of coordination, and contestation among various actors. For example, taking over the governorship from Sutiyoso in 2007, Fauzi Bowo prioritized the progress of MRT projects over the betterment of busway services. While the busway's lines were steadily expanded, the quality of vehicles and services declined. In turn, when Joko Widodo (Jokowi) was elected new governor in 2012, the re-examination of the MRT and new highway projects were among his first policy agendas, to sustain the enormous popularity and support he had been shown during the election campaign. It took several months before Jokowi was convinced of the feasibility of the MRT program and became more enthusiastic. Overall, the government

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26) Tentang PT. MRT Jakarta (<http://www.jakartamrt.com/informasi-mrt/tentang-mrt/>), accessed June 2, 2015.

27) For LRT, see the following articles: "Kisah Jokowi-Ahok di Balik Pembangunan LRT di Jakarta" (Kompas.com, September 9, 2015), "LRT Tahap I Diharapkan Atasi Kemacetan dari Bekasi dan Cibubur" (Kompas.com, September 9, 2015), "Presiden: Akhiri Polemik Kereta Ringan" (Kompas.com, August 19, 2015), all accessed September 24, 2015.

is still struggling to counter the drastic shift from public transportation to motorcycles over the last decade.

As for housing policy, one of the most noteworthy moves was the central government's initiative to provide 1,000 towers of affordable apartments (*rumah susun sederhana milik*, or *rusunami*) with a price of Rp.144 million in five years in major cities in Indonesia, 60 percent of which was said to be built in Jakarta. This program started in the first cabinet of the Yudhoyono presidency. Jusuf Kalla, a Golkar politician with a business background and the vice president at the time, strongly promoted this policy and urged developers to invest in *rusunami*. Partly due to his strong pressure, the Agung Podomoro Group and several other developers decided to invest in *rusunami* projects, such as Gading Nias Residences in Kelapa Gading (North Jakarta; about 6,000 units) and Kalibata Residences in Kalibata (South Jakarta; about 15,000 units). However, the central government's initiative received a skeptical response from the Jakarta provincial government under the Fauzi Bowo governorship. While the central government (the vice presidents and the office of the state minister of people's housing) promised developers some incentives, such as a special bonus in floor-area ratio and a more simplified process for various permits, the Jakarta government found it incompatible with local decrees and blockaded six ongoing projects.<sup>28)</sup> This incident showed that even a national policy strongly promoted by the vice president could not be implemented consistently if it was opposed by a local government. Developers quickly lost interest in the *rusunami* business. Once Kalla left the cabinet in 2009, the policy quickly failed to maintain whatever support it had from the government and became deadlocked.

Another important element of the post-New Order regime is the development of privatized security (Honna 2013, 181–196). The rapid growth of office buildings, apartments, shopping malls, and gated communities has greatly increased the demand for private security guards. Developers also sometimes mobilize an army of guards during conflicts over land. On the other hand, the post-New Order government has deregulated both the setting up of new security companies and the outsourcing of security services, resulting in the mushrooming of new security companies. Masaaki Okamoto's study provides a noteworthy case of the tie-up between the Agung Podomoro Group, the top

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28) For a chronology of the blockade, see the following articles: "Soal Penyegehan Rusunami Kalibata Bisa Diselesaikan" (Kompas.com, April 8, 2009), "Enam Proyek Rusunami di Jakarta Disegel" (Kompas.com, April 30, 2009), "Segera Dibentuk, Tim Penyelesaian Perizinan Rusun" (Kompas.com, April 29, 2009), "DKI Percepat Proses Perizinan Rusunami" (Kompas.com, May 18, 2009), "Pemprov DKI Beri Keringanan Pembayaran Denda Rusunami" (Kompas.com, May 29, 2009), "Pemerintah Daerah Persulit Bangun Rumah Susun" (Merdeka.com, April 15, 2013). For the deadlock of the policy, see "Program 1.000 'Tower' Mati Suri" (Kompas.com, March 9, 2012). All the Web articles above were last accessed September 23, 2015.

apartment developer, and BPPKB, a mass-based security organization (Okamoto 2006). BPPKB was set up in July 1998 and presided over by Noer Indradjaja, the head of the legal section of Sunter Agung Co. Ltd. (a holding company of the Agung Podomoro Group). Both Agung Podomoro and BPPK have experienced phenomenal growth in the post-New Order era; while the Agung Podomoro group has built many apartments, BPPK has provided services in land acquisition and security.

The growth of the private security industry is a privatized form of an answer to the challenge of maintaining social order and security in the growingly polarized urban environment. It also functions as a social stabilizer because it contributes greatly to an increase in employment. As Jun Honna has pointed out, this privatization process has close relations with the co-optation and incorporation of organized thugs, locally known as *preman*. *Preman* groups accommodate those who are excluded from the fruit of present economic growth and give them a sort of order. It seems that for the ruling elites in the administration, the kind of hierarchy and order *preman* create is better suited to controlling and co-opting than allowing an unorganized urban mass that might explode at any time in an uncontrolled manner.

The political mobilization of Islam has also been tried in various ways to suppress the discontent and to attract support for the regime. Islam is a common denominator for both sides of the social cleavage in this region, where roughly 85 percent of residents are Muslim. One example is the 2012 gubernatorial election of the Jakarta provincial government. Incumbent Governor Fauzi in many ways represented the existing establishment (of ruling coalition parties, bureaucrats, leaders of mass organizations, and religious authority). Ken Miichi's study exemplifies how thoroughly Islam was exploited as a political resource by Fauzi's election campaign (Miichi 2014). As he pointed out, Fauzi's appeal to Islam was indeed effective in luring a significant portion of relatively lower-educated and less affluent (mainly Betawi, and also some Javanese) voters, thus providing another example that the banner of Islam is politically very effective in covering wide divisions among classes and sustaining the existing socio-political hierarchy.

## *2 Change and Dynamics: Semi-middle Class Pressure and Strong Leadership*

As has already been mentioned, the democratized political frameworks in the post-New Order era, with all their limits, are given an important role to accommodate the aspirations and discontent of the wider masses, while dominant urban governance is highly privatized. How, then, should we evaluate the victory of Joko Widodo (Jokowi) and Basuki Purnama (Ahok) in the 2012 gubernatorial election, and the subsequent victory of Jokowi and Jusuf Kalla in the 2014 presidential election? The factors behind the victory of the Jokowi-Ahok duo have been analyzed in great detail from multiple perspectives, such as

by Okamoto (2014), Abdul Hamid (2014), Ahmad Suaedy (2014), Wahyu Prasetyawan (2014), and Miichi (2014). Here, this author would just like to add a tentative hypothesis to stimulate further discussion. First, the victory of Jokowi and Ahok may suggest the potential influence of the semi-middle class. Miichi pointed out that ethnic Betawi and some lower-educated (and probably less affluent) Javanese voters tended to prioritize religious and ethnic affinity, while the more educated (and probably more affluent) people tended to support Jokowi-Ahok (Miichi 2014, 67–68). On the other hand, what I call the “middle-class core” is wealthy and well educated but comprises only around 5–15 percent of the population in Jabodetabek, hence it is too small in terms of voting power. The “semi-middle class” are probably much larger<sup>29)</sup> and can have a bigger voice in elections. They generally live in conventional kampung neighborhoods and hence have much to gain from improvements in infrastructure, housing, and other public services. Living side by side with the lower class, they can position themselves as the new mainstream in society, representing the grievances of the wider masses.

Second, Jokowi and Ahok as governor show a clear orientation to rebuilding and reasserting the role of the public sector to counter the various problems exacerbated by the highly privatized urban developments. Most of their high-profile policies have been targeted at low-income people, such as direct cash subsidies for students from low-income households, free medical services for poor families, and relocation of slum residents to better-equipped rental apartments. Other policies, such as improvement of busways and other public transport, also seem to target the semi-middle to lower classes: the benefits of these policies are at best indirect to the middle-class core, who can afford to buy good living environments and amenities from developers-cum-privatized governments.

As for the issue of housing, for example, the duo has visibly been paying great attention to the housing needs of the lower classes. Being aware that even the lowest-priced apartment unit would not be affordable for the lower classes, their policy so far has focused primarily on rental apartments (*rumah susun sederhana sewa*, or *rusunawa*). They have devoted significant amounts of time and energy to directly negotiate with residents who occupy the banks of flood-prone rivers and reservoirs about relocating to public rental apartments. Most of these public apartments were planned and constructed during the terms of Sutiyoso and Fauzi Bowo, but they did not receive any serious attention and lack decent facilities such as road access, public transportation, educational facilities, and shopping places. Compounded with rampant mismanagement and corrup-

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29) I cannot provide an estimate of their number, because “semi-middle class” is not defined solely in terms of income or specific professions but also includes lifestyle and upward orientation.

tion, many buildings were left deserted or appropriated by residents who did not meet the proper criteria.<sup>30)</sup> During the first year of their term, Jokowi and Ahok made the most of these existing stocks of housing, upgrading them to make them livable. They also disciplined the management of existing public apartments, discharging corrupt officials and evicting wealthier residents who had illegally appropriated the units. Their painstaking approach has started bearing fruit, and many of the occupants of riverbanks or reservoirs are moving to *rusunawa*, making it easier for the government to dredge the rivers and expand the reservoirs, hence decreasing the risk of flooding.<sup>31)</sup>

As for the traffic problem, Jokowi and Ahok have obviously tried hard to encourage as many people as possible to shift from private cars to public transport. To speed up the process, they have paid great attention to the improvement of the busway, such as rapid upgrading of the number of buses and reorganizing the operators. Since Jokowi became the President, they have cooperated together and exerted leadership in coordinating various public agencies to realize the newly incepted LRT.<sup>32)</sup> All of the above-mentioned measures need time to bring meaningful changes to the general housing and traffic condition. Until now, the leaders' strong leadership and commitment to resolve the issues gave a sense of the process speeding up. It also showed that, equipped with a strong leadership and clear orientation, a local government could have the clout to improve the living conditions of the urban masses and narrow the social cleavages. However, the importance of leadership also means that the momentum of change can be easily lost with a change in governorship.

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30) For the condition of *rusunawa* under Fauzi's governorship, see "11 Rusun di Jakarta Terbangkai" (PosKotaNews.com, May 26, 2013), "Rusun di Cengkareng Banyak 'Hantunya'" (PosKotaNews.com, January 19, 2012), "Ada Kabar Mau Dikunjungi Ahok, Rusun di Cengkareng Buru-buru Diperbaiki" (PosKotaNews.com, February 4, 2013), "Isu Anak Hilang Dibawa Gendruwo Gegerkan Rusun Penggilingan" (PosKotaNews.com, December 13, 2013), "Pemerintah Daerah Persulit Bangun Rumah Susun" (Merdeka.com, April 15, 2013). All the Web articles above were last accessed September 23, 2015. *Data Mengenai Rumah Susun Yang Telah Di Bangundan Belum Dihuni Di Provinsi DKI Jakarta* lists the vacant *rusunawa* as of December 2011 (a document in the databank of the official homepage of Jakarta provincial government [www.jakarta.go.id/v2/bankdata/listings/details/1994], accessed October 6, 2015).

31) For an example of disciplining measures, see "20 Unit Rusun Marunda dan 200 unit Rusun Tipar Cakung disegel" (Merdeka.com, May 24, 2013, accessed September 23, 2015). For examples of relocation, see "Pindah ke Rusun, Warga Sentiong Ucapkan Terima Kaish kepada Jokowi" (Kompas.com, February 10, 2014, accessed September 23, 2015), "Citizen Relocation Process to Pinus Elok Flat Finished, Jokowi Says" (Beritajakarta.com, October 3, 2013, accessed on June 2, 2015), "Warga Bantaran Kali Sentiong Pindah ke Rusunawa" (Beritajakarta.com, February 8, 2014, accessed on September 23, 2015).

32) For example, see "Kisah Jokowi-Ahok di Balik Pembangunan LRT di Jakarta" (Kompas.com, September 9, 2015) accessed September 23, 2015.

Third, the ascent of Jokowi and Kalla into the presidency creates a unique arrangement of political leadership, and that may be helpful in tackling urban issues of Jabodetabek, especially housing. It is noteworthy that before becoming the president and vice president in 2014, both Jokowi and Kalla had expended considerable time and energy on the issue of urban housing. As already mentioned, Kalla campaigned for the construction of 1,000 towers of affordable apartments in the first cabinet of the Yudhoyono presidency. However, he was frustrated by the resistance of the Jakarta administration, then headed by Fauzi Bowo. Kalla was cut from the second Yudhoyono cabinet in 2009, and he also lost the top position in the Golkar party, while Fauzi Bowo continued to enjoy strong support from Yudhoyono's Democratic Party. When Jokowi became a candidate in the Jakarta gubernatorial election, Kalla openly supported him, defying the party line of Golkar (headed by Aburizal Bakrie), which had decided to support Fauzi.<sup>33)</sup> Soon after Jokowi won and became the governor, Jakarta was hit by heavy flooding in early 2013. This pushed the issue of housing to the foreground, with flood refugees to be housed and occupants of riverbanks and water reservoirs to be relocated for future flood prevention. These events and experiences foreshadowed the 2015 presidential election, when Kalla became Jokowi's running mate while Bakrie's Golkar chose to support the opponents Prabowo Subianto-Hatta Rajasa. Now, it seems that both the central and Jakarta governments have leaderships that are willing to work together to increase the supply of affordable apartments.<sup>34)</sup> However, it is too early to say whether the new political arrangement will help to overcome the difficulties of coordination and bring substantive improvements to the various urban problems in Jabodetabek.

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33) For Kallas's support to Jokowi in the gubernatorial election, see "Alasan Jusuf Kalla Dukung Jokowi" (Tempo.co, August 6, 2012, accessed on June 2, 2015).

34) For the comments on housing policies (especially those affecting affordable apartments) by Jusuf Kalla before the presidential election campaign, see "JK Optimis Jokowi Dapat Atasi Banjir" (Jusufkalla.info, January 19, 2014), "Jakarta Banjir, JK Sindir Jokowi Soal Rusun '1.000 Tower'" (Liputan6.com, February 5, 2014). For the campaign promise, see "Jokowi-JK Akan Bangun 5.000 Menara Rusun" (Kompas.com, June 11, 2014), "Jokowi-JK Bakal Nasionalkan Program Kampung Deret" (Republika Online, June 13, 2014), "Jusuf Kalla janji bangun rumah susun untuk buruh" (Antaraneews.com, June 21, 2014). For Jokowi-Kalla's move after the election, see "Jokowi Pilih Urus Rusun ketimbang Gugatan Prabowo ke MK" (Kompas.com, August 6, 2014), "Pemerintah akan permudah izin proyek permukiman kelas bawah" (Antaraneews.com, November 13, 2014), "Jokowi Sebut DKI Punya Kemampuan Bangun Ribuan Rusun" (Jpnn.com, April 29, 2015). All the Web articles above were last accessed on June 2, 2015.

## Conclusion

This paper has provided a brief political-economic analysis to examine the characteristics of the post-New Order era from the perspective of urban development in the metropolitan region, by addressing several important points. First, by showing a table of major satellite city projects before and after the New Order, this paper argues that the basic patterns of urban development have not changed profoundly. Rather, what has appeared is a modified reuse of the patterns of the New Order. The policies of large-scale, privately developed satellite cities and the oligopolistic control of the land and housing market in Bodetabek have persisted, although the rise and fall of some business actors have modified the composition of the oligopoly. Previous studies on large satellite cities in Jabodetabek have not shown a comparison of the situations before and after the regime change, as detailed as Table 1 of this paper. The mushrooming of new buildings in CBD and sub-CBD areas have also further strained the density without changing the basic city structure established during the New Order.

Second, this paper argues that the continuation in the pattern of urban development owes greatly to the developers' ability to organize themselves and protect their collective interests through business associations such as REI and KADIN, and also to the fact that developers have deepened ties with dominant political parties and thus have succeeded in having representatives of their voice in the newly empowered parliament. In addition, politicians from a business background (including property development) now occupy the top strata of the central government, and this makes it easier for business circles to reflect their interests in the government's economic policy. Previous studies on Jabodetabek tended to focus on either geographic, demographic, or social aspects and hence bypass the political dimension of how private developers sustained support for the concentration of land resources into their hands after the total meltdown of the property industry around 1998 and the collapse of Suharto's New Order.

Third, this study points out that the developers' capital accumulation and the spatial articulation of the middle class go hand in hand, having created a *de facto* alliance between developers and the middle-class core. In most cases, it is only after the New Order era that a significant number of residents settled into these satellite cities and made them "real" inhabited cities. Now, Jakarta is surrounded by Bodetabek, with dozens of satellite cities characterized by dual governments—public and privatized. These satellite cities, each more than 500 ha, are developed and managed by private companies as profit-oriented businesses. The population with high purchasing power is rapidly increasing, and its needs are well represented in the spatial structures and the management of these privatized cities. On the other hand, the commercially unviable semi-middle and lower

classes are spatially alienated, and their needs are largely ignored under the highly privatized urban governance. Their living environments are poorly managed by the public governments, and their adaptation to the car-oriented urban structure has exacerbated the traffic gridlock.

Fourth, this paper points out several components of the post-New Order regime that function to cover the social cleavages, such as the rapid growth of the privatized security industry, co-optation of large *preman* groups, and political mobilization of Islamic symbols. While both the central and local governments have failed to significantly ameliorate the hardship of excluded classes, these components help to maintain security and order, alleviating the tension from widening social cleavages. Previous studies generally discussed these topics separately from the spatial dimension of post-New Order regime formation.

Fifth, this paper points out that the dominant spatial-class articulation largely fails to incorporate the growing population of the semi-middle class. While they are highly upward oriented and influenced by the hegemonic values and lifestyle embodied by the middle-class core, they are excluded from the dominant developer-middle class alliance. Under the democratic setting of the post-Suharto regime, they can express their discontent toward the status quo through their voting and other forms of support to politicians, adding dynamics and complexities to the political landscape.

Sixth, the existence of a public and private "dual government," along with the relationship between the newly strengthened local governments and the central government, makes a coordinated approach to the urban problems more challenging. For example, the failure of Kalla's initiative to provide massive amounts of *rusunami* showed both the responsiveness of some political elites to the public aspirations, and the difficulty of effective implementation. On the other hand, Jakarta's new governor Jokowi and his vice governor and successor Ahok have consciously readdressed the distortions of preceding urban development and the imbalances between privately managed spaces and publicly managed areas. Experiences of the past few years show that they have tackled issues that needed to be addressed. This implies that the leadership of local governments does matter. Jokowi's enormous popularity as the governor subsequently made him the strongest candidate in the presidential election, and finally led to the presidency. Although this underlines the importance of the issues of the capital city in shaping the future agenda on a national scale, we have yet to see the lasting legacy of this new political leadership arrangement on the urban issues of Jabodetabek.

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# Local Politics and Chinese Indonesian Business in Post-Suharto Era

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This article examines the relationships between the changes and continuities of Indonesian local politics and Chinese Indonesian business practices in the post-Suharto era, focusing on Chinese Indonesian businesses in two of the largest Indonesian cities, Medan and Surabaya. The fall of Suharto in May 1998 led to the opening up of a democratic and liberal space as well as the removal of many discriminatory measures against the Chinese minority. However, due to the absence of an effective, genuinely reformist party or political coalition, predatory political-business interests nurtured under Suharto's New Order managed to capture the new political and economic regimes. As a result, corruption and internal mismanagement continue to plague the bureaucracy in the country and devolve from the central to the local governments. This article argues that this is due partially to the role some Chinese businesspeople have played in perpetuating corrupt business practices. As targets of extortion and corruption by bureaucratic officials and youth/crime organizations, Chinese businesspeople are not merely passive and powerless victims of corrupt practices. This article argues, through a combination of Anthony Giddens's structure-agency theory as well as Pierre Bourdieu's notion of habitus and field, that although Chinese businesspeople are constrained by the muddy and corrupt business environment, they have also played an active role in shaping such a business environment. They have thus played an active role in shaping local politics, which is infused with corruption and institutionalized gangsterism, as well as perpetuating their increasingly ambivalent position.

**Keywords:** Indonesia, Chinese Indonesians, Chinese Indonesian business, local politics, democratization, regional decentralization

Susanto, a Chinese Indonesian living in Medan, is a distributor of stuffed toys. He runs his business from a shophouse located in the central city area. He started his business in 2003, and the business has remained small-scale. He brings in stuffed toys from Jakarta and sells them to customers in Medan. He has 15 employees working for him, most of whom are indigenous Indonesians.

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Susanto revealed to me that after the end of the New Order regime, the central government has become stricter in collecting taxes from business enterprises. Business owners need to declare their revenues, calculate the taxes they have to pay, and make payments accordingly. Tax officers later visit the companies to check their actual revenues. If they find that the business owners have under-reported their revenue, instead of penalizing them, the tax officers usually ask for bribes to cover up the tax fraud. Susanto emphasized, however, that even if a business owner has paid all the necessary taxes, tax officers usually create fictive taxes and charges and request the business owner to pay accordingly. Moreover, tax officers often demand higher bribes from businesspeople who are ethnic Chinese, as they are deemed to be doing better than other businesspeople. For this reason, Susanto and many local Chinese businesspeople have found it expedient not to declare their actual revenues, knowing that honesty does not pay and will lead to even more taxes and bribes. Instead, they wait for the officers to visit and negotiate with them the rates of the taxes and bribes requested and only then pay their taxes. In my interview with him, Susanto said, “Although many other businesspeople and I feel bad about it, we have no choice but to pay them [the bribes] since we have to survive.”<sup>1)</sup> Susanto also revealed that he and other Chinese businesspeople preferred not to fight against the extortion because they were “afraid of running into trouble” (Mandarin: *pa mafan*, 怕麻烦) if they did so. They would rather pay the bribes to avoid any further problems. This indicates also that Chinese businesspeople possess enough economic capital to pay the bribes in order to protect their business.

Susanto’s story indicates the ambivalence among Chinese toward democratization in post-Suharto Indonesia. Although democratization has opened spaces for them to live their culture and express their ethnicity, it has not led to the emergence of good governance that promotes the rule of law, transparency, and accountability, as corruption remains endemic in state institutions. This poorly developed democratization creates, therefore, an even more ambivalent situation for Chinese Indonesian businesspeople. On the one hand, they remain the targets of extortion and corruption by power holders; on the other hand, they play a role in perpetuating the corrupt, predatory political-business system. It is also important to note that the local business environment in post-Suharto Indonesia is crucially influenced by local politics, especially after the implementation of regional decentralization in 2001. If corrupt practices plague the local government, this will certainly lead to a corrupt and muddy business environment. Moreover, if institutionalized gangsterism is dominant in a particular locality, the local business

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1) Interview with Susanto, an ethnic Chinese businessperson engaged in the distribution of toys, Medan, August 4, 2010.

community will encounter more harassment and extortion.

This study shows that Chinese Indonesian businesspeople in Medan encounter more harassment and extortion than their counterparts in Surabaya, because institutionalized gangsterism is dominant in Medan. However, it is important to note that although Chinese Indonesian businesspeople in Surabaya do not experience as much harassment and extortion, they still play a crucial role in perpetuating the corrupt local business environment. In this article, I look at how local politics that is infused with corrupt practices and institutionalized gangsterism has led to the emergence of a corrupt and muddy business environment in post-Suharto Medan and Surabaya. I also examine how such a business environment has influenced the ways Chinese Indonesian businesspeople in both cities advance and safeguard their business interests as well as deal with illegal practices by government officials, police, and *preman* (thugs or gangsters). I argue that in facing the corrupt and muddy business environment, due to the fear of the hassle of fighting back, as well as the economic and social capital they possess, Chinese Indonesian businesspeople on the whole tend to give in to the illegal requests of government officials, police, and *preman*; they also resort to illegal or semi-legal means as well as opportunistic tactics to gain wealth and protect their business interests. Although there are Chinese businesspeople who fight against the illegal practices, they are rare. This collusion with corrupt practices in turn reinforces negative stereotypes against the Chinese and consequently perpetuates their ambivalent position as well as corruption in local politics.

It is hoped that the case studies in this paper constitute a pioneering representation of Chinese Indonesian business communities in urban centers of post-Suharto Indonesia—primarily Medan and Surabaya, because both are big cities with a relatively high percentage of ethnic Chinese Indonesians. The dynamics of Chinese Indonesian business communities in post-Suharto urban Indonesia are therefore apparent in this study.

This article is divided into 10 main sections. The first section deals with theoretical issues. The second focuses on research methodology. The third section looks at the economic role of ethnic Chinese in post-Suharto Medan and Surabaya. Next, I turn my attention to local governance and the business environment in post-Suharto Indonesia as well as the experiences of Chinese Indonesian businesspeople in Medan and Surabaya. I point out that Chinese big business as well as Chinese small and medium businesses deal with the new business environment in different ways. Then I discuss the changes in the political environment and the political activism of Chinese Indonesian businesspeople in the post-Suharto era. In the remaining four sections, I examine the illegal and semi-legal business practices utilized by Chinese Indonesian businesspeople in both cities to safeguard their business interests. I conclude that there is evidence to suggest that Chinese Indonesian businesspeople in Medan and Surabaya continue to encounter

rampant corrupt practices in bureaucracy as well as harassment and extortion from local power holders and youth/crime organizations (in Medan) since the end of the New Order. Using Anthony Giddens's concept of structure and agency, and Pierre Bourdieu's notion of habitus and field, I argue that such a corrupt, predatory political-business system continues to exist not only because the predatory political-business interests nurtured under the New Order managed to capture the new political vehicles and institutions, but also because many, if not most, local Chinese businesspeople play a role in perpetuating the system.

### Theoretical Framework

This study adopts a combination of Anthony Giddens's structure-agency theory as well as Pierre Bourdieu's notion of habitus and field as a framework for examining strategies and tactics that Chinese Indonesians adopt to safeguard their business interests in the post-Suharto era. Both Giddens and Bourdieu perceive social actors as agents that actively respond to and shape their social structures. Giddens argues that our social reality is shaped by both social forces and active human agency. All people are knowledgeable about the conditions and consequences of their actions in their daily lives. Although people are not entirely free to choose their own actions, they do have agency (Giddens 1984). Therefore, Giddens sees social structures as both the medium and the outcome of the actors' actions:

As human beings, we do make choices, and we do not simply respond passively to events around us. The way forward in bridging the gap between "structural" and "action" approaches is to recognize that we *actively make and remake* social structure during the course of our everyday activities. (Giddens 1989, 705, emphasis in the original)

Habitus, according to Bourdieu, is a system of acquired dispositions through which people deal with the social world (Bourdieu 1990a, 131). Bourdieu also notes that "[a]s an acquired system of generative schemes, the habitus makes possible the free production of all the thoughts, perceptions and actions inherent in the condition of production" (Bourdieu 1990b, 55). In other words, habitus is an orientation to individual action. The concept of field complements the idea of habitus. A field is a relatively autonomous arena within which people act strategically, depending on their habitus, to enhance their capital. Examples of fields include politics, religion, and philosophy (Bourdieu 1993, 72–74). Bourdieu considers habitus to be the union of structures and agency: "... habitus operates as a structuring structure able to selectively perceive and to transform the objective

structure [field] according to its own structure while, at the same time, being re-structured, transformed in its makeup by the pressure of the objective structure” (Bourdieu 2005, 46–47). In other words, habitus shapes the objective structure (field) but at the same time is also shaped by the objective structure. This concept is parallel to Giddens’s structure-agency theory. One of the significant strengths of Bourdieu’s notion of habitus lies in its consideration of actors’ social positions in the study of habitus; this is never discussed in Giddens’s theory. Bourdieu argues that a person’s habitus is structured by his or her position within a social space, which is determined by his or her sociological characteristics in the form of volume and kinds of economic capital, cultural capital, and social capital possessed (Bourdieu 1984, 114; 1998, 6–8). Economic capital refers to material resources that can be turned into money or property rights. Cultural capital refers to non-material goods such as types of knowledge, skills and expertise, educational credentials, and aesthetic preferences acquired through upbringing and education that can be converted into economic capital. Social capital refers to networks of contacts that can be used to maintain or advance one’s social position (Bourdieu 1986).

According to Bourdieu, actors who are well endowed with capital and therefore enjoy privileged positions in a particular field tend to defend the status quo in order to safeguard their capital, whereas those least endowed with capital and therefore occupying the less-advantaged positions within the field are inclined to challenge the status quo via subversion strategies in order to enhance their capital and improve their social positions (Bourdieu 1993, 73).

Hence, this is the theoretical framework for this study: Social structures constrain and enable actors’ actions. Actors’ actions are always oriented by their habitus, which is dependent on the volume and kinds of capital possessed. Those who are well endowed with capital in a social structure tend to defend the status quo of the structure in order to safeguard their capital and position, whereas those least endowed with capital within the structure are inclined to challenge it via subversion strategies.

## Methods of Research

My analysis is based on fieldwork conducted from July 2010 until May 2011 in Medan and Surabaya.<sup>2)</sup> Medan and Surabaya were selected as field sites for this study since both cities are economically and politically significant. These cities are the capitals of North Sumatra and East Java respectively, which have been “the sites of vibrant urban and

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2) I also had a personal communication with an academic in Jakarta.

industrial centers” (Hadiz 2004, 623). Medan is a historically important town for plantations, manufacturing, and trade, while Surabaya is a vital port city that functions as a gateway to Eastern Indonesia (Buiskool 2004, 1; Hadiz 2004, 623). According to *City Population*, an online atlas, Medan and Surabaya were the fifth- and second-largest cities in the country respectively in 2010 (*City Population* 2012). Both cities also have a significant Chinese Indonesian population: according to the Indonesian Population Census of 2000, the concentration of the Chinese Indonesian population was 10.65 percent in Medan and 4.37 percent in Surabaya,<sup>3</sup> figures that are much higher than the percentage of Chinese Indonesians in the total population of Indonesia (1.2 percent) (Aris *et al.* 2008, 27, Table 2.2). The methods used in this research are library research and individual interviews. I conducted library research at public as well as university libraries. I also interviewed or had personal communications with 12 Chinese Indonesian businesspeople, three politicians, one journalist, eight NGOs or social activists, one leader of the North Sumatra branch of Pancasila Youth (PP, Pemuda Pancasila), seven staff or people in charge of local Chinese-language presses, six academics or university lecturers, and one former staff of a real estate company in Surabaya’s Chinatown (see Appendix). All interviews and personal communications were conducted in Indonesian, Mandarin, Hokkien, or English. All names of informants used in this article, except for public figures, are pseudonyms.

### The Economic Role of Ethnic Chinese in Post-Suharto Medan and Surabaya

Sofyan Wanandi (1999), Michael Backman (2001), and Charles A. Coppel (2008) have pointed out that it is commonly asserted that ethnic Chinese control 70 percent of Indonesia’s economy, although official data on the economic domination of Chinese in Indonesia is unavailable. These authors emphasize that such a view is an exaggeration because a large portion of Indonesia’s economy (such as the oil and gas industry) has always been under the control of the state, not the Chinese (Wanandi 1999; Backman 2001; Coppel 2008). In addition, the sociologist Mely G. Tan (陈玉兰) argues that it is impossible for the Chinese minority, who constitute less than 3 percent of the total population in Indonesia, to control 70 percent of the national economy.<sup>4</sup> Wanandi suggests that Chinese Indonesian businesses constitute only 25 percent of the national

3) Calculated from Central Statistics Agency of North Sumatra (2001, 40, Table 6) and Central Statistics Agency of East Java (2001, 75, Table 10.9). These are the latest official figures on the Chinese Indonesian populations in Medan and Surabaya.

4) Personal communication with Mely G. Tan, sociologist, Jakarta, June 8, 2010.

economy, while Backman estimates that Chinese Indonesians “control 70 percent of the private, corporate, domestic capital” (Wanandi 1999, 132; Backman 2001, 88).

In the post-Suharto era, Chinese Indonesians continue to play a crucial role in the economic development of Medan and Surabaya. Since there is no official data available specifically on the economic domination of Chinese Indonesians, I had to rely on individual interviews to obtain information on this aspect. According to an NGO activist in Medan, Chinese Indonesians in the city dominate businesses that are medium-sized and larger, such as manufacturing, food production, and hotels. At the same time, domination of businesses that are medium-sized and smaller is split almost evenly between Chinese and indigenous businesspeople. Businesses that are small and micro are dominated by indigenous businesspeople.<sup>5)</sup> In addition, three other NGO activists disclosed that Chinese businesspeople engage in nearly all sectors of the economy in Medan except the construction industry, which is dominated by indigenous businesspeople who are Batak and members of youth/crime organizations.<sup>6)</sup> This is because most construction projects in Medan are local state projects that are usually allocated to members of youth/crime organizations who are well connected to the local government.<sup>7)</sup> A local economic analyst in Surabaya remarked that Chinese businesspeople dominate 100 percent of the manufacturing business and about 90 percent of the real estate business in the city. In addition, more than 60 percent of bankers and about 70 percent of advertisers in Surabaya are Chinese Indonesians.<sup>8)</sup> In short, based on the information provided by my informants, Chinese Indonesians continue to dominate the private economy of Medan and Surabaya in the post-New Order era.

## Local Governance and Business Environment in Post-Suharto Indonesia

In order to accommodate growing regional and local demands for greater autonomy in access to local resources and control of local political machines, the post-Suharto government introduced regional decentralization and local autonomy policies under two umbrella laws, Law No. 22/1999 and Law No. 25/1999. These laws were later revised and replaced with Law No. 32/2004 and Law No. 33/2004. Under the decentralization laws and regula-

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5) Interview with Halim, NGO activist, Medan, July 26, 2010.

6) Interview with Daniel (deceased), former media activist, Medan, September 17, 2010; interview with Surya, media activist, Medan, September 17, 2010; interview with Halim, July 26, 2010.

7) Interview with Halim, July 26, 2010. This point is elaborated in the section titled “Relations with *Preman*.”

8) Interview with Wahyu, economic analyst and university lecturer, Surabaya, May 18, 2011.

tions, significant administrative powers in industry, trade, investments, agriculture, public works, transport, cooperatives, labor, land, health care, education and culture, and environmental issues transferred from the central government to regional and local governments (Ariel and Hadiz 2005, 261; Hadiz and Robison 2005, 233; Widjajanti 2009, 76). According to the scholar-bureaucrat Ryaas Rasyid, who was appointed by President Habibie to form a group known as the Team of Ten (Tim Sepuluh) to formulate the decentralization laws and regulations, "The [decentralization] policy was intended to provide more scope for local creativity and initiative in making policy and promoting public participation" (Rasyid 2003, 64). Therefore, it can be said that in the context of Indonesia, one of the objectives of regional decentralization is to promote democratization at the local level.

Moreover, international and domestic organizations such as the SMERU Research Institute, the World Bank, and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) have been actively offering policy advice on decentralization of state authority in the country. The SMERU Research Institute sees regional decentralization as a huge administrative operation that could improve weaknesses in the administration of central and local governments (Syaiqhu 2002). The World Bank believes that decentralization will break up stifling central government authority, reduce complex bureaucratic procedures and administrative bottlenecks, as well as "increase government officials' sensitivity to local conditions and needs" (World Bank Group, n.d.). A USAID publication argues that decentralization will stimulate the development of democratic, accountable, and effective local governance (USAID Office of Democracy and Governance 2000, 7). In particular, the Asia Foundation assists local governments in addressing inefficiencies in the business licensing process and reducing the cost of doing business in Indonesia through developing the One Stop Shops (OSS) program. OSS are service centers that handle applications for various business permits (Steer 2006). As stated in an article that introduces the program, "[OSS] are new institutions that merge authority from disparate technical departments into one office where licenses and permits can be obtained quickly" (*ibid.*, 7).

However, according to some scholars, the end of authoritarianism and the subsequent opening up of politics, as well as the introduction of regional decentralization, have not led to the emergence of good governance that is able to deploy public authority and public resources in a regularized manner for public purposes. Both Marcus Mietzner and Jamie S. Davidson point out that corruption and internal mismanagement continue to characterize the bureaucracy in the country (Mietzner 2008, 244–248; Davidson 2009, 294). Due to the absence of an effective, genuinely reformist party or political coalition, the demise of Suharto's New Order regime did not end the rampant corruption and

internal mismanagement in the country's bureaucracy. According to Vedi R. Hadiz and Richard Robison, the predatory political-business interests nurtured under the New Order managed to reconstitute and reorganize themselves successfully within the new political and economic regimes. Newly decentralized and competing predatory interests contest to gain ascendancy at the local level of politics as regional decentralization has created new rent-seeking opportunities for local governments (Hadiz and Robison 2005, 232). In other words, corruption, or what Indonesians generally call KKN (the Indonesian-language acronym for corruption, collusion, and nepotism), has devolved from the central to local governments.

For instance, during my fieldwork in Medan, the OSS program, which was established with the aim of addressing the licensing process and reducing the burden on business, actually created more burdens for local businesspeople. According to a news report in *Harian Orbit*, a local Indonesian-language newspaper in Medan, officials at the center often demand bribes by asking for "service charges" from applicants. If the applicants refuse to pay, they need to wait a long time before getting their permits (*Harian Orbit*, November 15, 2010). For instance, applicants for a business permit (SIUP, Surat Izin Usaha Perdagangan) need to pay an extra Rp.150,000 of unofficial "service charge" to the officials in order to get a permit on time (*ibid.*). Such incidents have been highlighted in the press, and the then Medan Mayor Rahudman Harahap said he would summon the persons in charge of the OSS (*Harian Orbit*, November 16, 2010). But as of December 2013, the local government had not yet investigated the problem and such corrupt practices were still rampant in the OSS of Medan (*Batak Pos*, December 5, 2013).

Although Joko Widodo, a politician who does not have any ties to the New Order regime, was elected as the new president of Indonesia in 2014 and promised to improve and simplify business licensing procedures in government offices, the House of Representatives is dominated by parliamentarians who favor Prabowo Subianto, Widodo's only opponent in the presidential election (*The Jakarta Globe*, October 9, 2014; October 28, 2014). Subianto is a former general who used to be Suharto's son-in-law.<sup>9)</sup> He was accused of human rights violations when he was a general (Tomsa 2009). Subianto's supporters in the House of Representatives declared that they would block every policy made by Widodo. Hence, it might not be easy for Widodo to deliver on his promise to address the licensing process and reduce the burden on business.

In addition, scholars have noted that the implementation of regional decentralization in Indonesia has produced many regional heads who behave like "little kings" (*raja-raja kecil*) in the sense that they perceive decentralization and autonomy as meaning more

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9) Subianto and his wife (Suharto's daughter) were divorced after the end of the Suharto regime.

power given to them to control local resources and raise revenues rather than as greater responsibility for them to offer better public services to their local constituencies. These “little kings” are unaccountable to central authorities, local parliaments, or local citizens (Azis 2003, 3; Hofman and Kaiser 2004, 26; 2006, 97; Firman 2009, 148). Since the decentralization law went into effect, local governments in Indonesia have had more power to tax the local population in order to raise revenues. According to my informants, the imposition of new taxes has increased the burden on local businesspeople, particularly those running small or medium businesses.<sup>10</sup> The local governments in Medan and Surabaya have been levying new taxes and charges on businesses as a means to increase direct revenues, as well as to extract indirect revenues in the form of bribes. Moreover, officials at all levels of government—central, provincial, and local—claim ultimate authority over many kinds of investment activity (Hadiz and Robison 2005, 235–236). This increases unpredictability in business, as well as the necessity to further the common practice of bribing officials for licenses and the like.

At the end of 2010, the Committee of Monitoring for Regional Autonomy (KPPOD, Komite Pemantau Pelaksanaan Otonomi Daerah), an NGO in Indonesia that monitors the implementation of regional autonomy in the country, announced that North Sumatra and East Java, where Medan and Surabaya are located, had more problematic local regulations issued by the city and *kabupaten* governments than all the other provinces. The committee proposed that 315 local regulations in North Sumatra and 291 local regulations in East Java should be abolished because they were deemed to hamper business activities in the provinces. Nevertheless, as of 2011, the city and *kabupaten* governments of North Sumatra and East Java had only repealed 98 and 91 of the problematic regulations respectively (*Jawa Pos National Network*, February 23, 2011).<sup>11</sup>

Therefore, it can be said that local politics in North Sumatra and East Java is infused with corruption. However, it is also important to note that there is a significant difference between the two provinces in regard to local politics: the dominance of institutionalized gangsterism in North Sumatra. In other words, youth/crime organizations are influential and dominant in North Sumatra. According to Vedi R. Hadiz (2010), such organizations exist also in Surabaya but are much less dominant. As the capital of North Sumatra, Medan is notorious for its institutionalized gangsterism or *premanism* and is therefore known as a gangster city (*kota preman*) (Honna 2011). The origins of *preman* go back to

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10) Interview with Johan Tjongiran, social activist, Medan, August 3, 2010; interview with Sofyan Tan, a candidate in Medan’s 2010 mayoral election and social activist, Medan, August 23, 2010; interview with Harianto, an ethnic Chinese businessperson engaged in the beverage production industry, Surabaya, November 23, 2010.

11) These are the latest data available. There is no further update after 2011.

the 1945–49 Indonesian National Revolution and the late 1950s. According to Ian Wilson, during the revolution strongmen and toughs were at the forefront of the struggle for Indonesia’s independence. Many of them were later incorporated into the new national military (Wilson 2010, 201). In 1954 General Nasution, the head of the armed forces, “deployed networks of gangsters and former militias as part of a campaign to pressure Sukarno into suspending parliamentary democracy, eventually ushering in the period known as ‘Guided Democracy’” (*ibid.*).<sup>12</sup> Pancasila Youth (PP, Pemuda Pancasila), the largest quasi-official youth/crime organization, was formed out of this alliance. In the mid-1960s, the military mobilized PP and local gangsters to confront and crush suspected members of the Communist Party (Ryter 2000, 19; 2001; 2002; Hadiz 2004, 626). Former Governor of North Sumatra Syamsul Arifin, interviewed in *The Act of Killing*—a 2012 documentary film about the anti-communist genocide—acknowledged the important role of gangsters in eliminating communism in Indonesia: “Communism will never be accepted here, because we have so many gangsters, and that’s a good thing” (cited in the subtitles of Oppenheimer 2012). Under Suharto the institutionalization of local gangsters was further intensified (Wilson 2011, 242). Apart from PP, other quasi-official youth/crime organizations, such as the Army Veterans’ Youth (PPM, Pemuda Panca Marga) and Armed Forces Sons’ and Daughters’ Communication Forum (FKPPI, Forum Komunikasi Putra-Putri Purnawirawan Indonesia), were formed to help maintain political order and stability through violence and intimidation (Ryter 2001; 2005, 22; Beittinger-Lee 2009, 164). These organizations are generally considered to be “fronts for *preman* activity” (Hadiz 2003, 125–126) and were usually backed and protected by the military during the New Order period (Ryter 2000, 20). Thus, such organizations are also known as “*preman* organizations” (Wilson 2010, 200). (Hereafter, the terms “youth/crime organizations” and “*preman* organizations” will be used interchangeably.) Therefore, it can be said that the distinction between *preman*, soldier, politician, and criminal is often blurry.

After the unraveling of the New Order regime, despite losing their main backer, *preman* have been able to survive by taking advantage of the inability of the post-New Order regimes to maintain security and the opportunities opened up by competitive electoral politics as well as regional decentralization. Many political parties have established their own paramilitary wings or civilian militia known as *satgas parpol* (*satuan tugas partai politik*, i.e., political party militias). Members come mostly from youth/crime organizations such as PP and “[mercenaries] of the disenfranchised urban milieu” (King 2003). Moreover, *preman* still dominate the protection racket scene in Indonesia.

As ethnic Chinese are often deemed wealthier than other residents in Medan, they

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12) For the background and characteristics of Guided Democracy, see Ricklefs (2008, 292–321).

become the target of extortion for *preman* (Hadiluwih 1994, 159). It is also common for local Chinese Indonesian businesspeople in the city to rely on extralegal resources such as *preman* for their security and protection (Purdey 2006, 117). *Preman* in Medan are mostly members of major New Order-nurtured youth/crime organizations such as PP, Work Service Youth Association (IPK, Ikatan Pemuda Karya), and FKPP. When the Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle (PDI-P, Partai Demokrasi Indonesia-Perjuangan) became the ruling party after winning a majority of national parliamentary seats in the 1999 elections, they formed Satgas PDI-P as the paramilitary arm of the party to compete with the other more established youth/crime organizations in Medan in controlling local state and private resources (Hadiz 2003, 128).<sup>13</sup> Although *satgas* were banned in 2004, they later revived in a less formal way (Wilson 2010, 204–205). In other words, there are more *preman* organizations in Medan now than before the fall of Suharto.

Indeed, according to Hadiz, the collapse of the Suharto regime did not reduce the influence of local *preman* linked to youth/crime organizations in Medan, but instead brought new opportunities for them to exploit (Hadiz 2004, 626). These *preman* are able to provide muscle for candidates during election periods and fund political bids since they dominate lucrative underworld businesses (Hadiz 2003, 128). In addition, many leaders of youth/crime organizations are given opportunities to run local branches of political parties. Some even hold local parliamentary seats and top executive body positions in local government (*ibid.*, 125–126). For instance, during 1999–2004, three members of the Medan city parliament—Bangkit Sitepu (Golkar), Moses Tambunan (Golkar), and Martius Latuperissa (Justice and Unity Party)—were leaders of the local branches of *preman* organizations. Sitepu, Tambunan, and Latuperissa led the Medan branches of PP, IPK, and FKPP respectively (Ryter 2000, 19–21; Bambang 2002; Hadiz 2005, 47). Besides that, Ajib Shah, the former chairperson of PP’s North Sumatra branch, is a member of the North Sumatra provincial parliament who was affiliated to Golkar during 2009–14 (*Harian Mandiri*, May 11, 2012; *Harian Sumut Pos*, April 23, 2013; *Medan Bisnis*, August 29, 2013). He was also one of the candidates in Medan’s 2010 mayoral election (Pancasila Youth of North Sumatra’s website, 2010). Therefore, it can be said that members and leaders of local youth/crime organizations in Medan have captured the new local state institutions and political vehicles in the *Reformasi* era.

This is felt by some of my informants who are local Chinese businesspeople in

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13) Among all political parties, PDI-P has the largest number of members with a *preman* background. The party greatly appealed to *preman* through its populist approach and pro-“little people” rhetoric (see Wilson 2010, 204).

Medan, who say they have encountered more harassment and extortion from *preman* in the post-Suharto era, especially during Megawati's presidency (2001–04).<sup>14</sup> A few of my informants disclosed that *preman* often ask for “protection money” from businesspeople who own factories or shophouses, and if the latter do not pay up the *preman* vandalize these places.<sup>15</sup> To further squeeze money from these businesses, when an owner or their employees load or unload goods in front of their shophouse, *preman* again force their loading or unloading services on the business. Usually they charge Rp.500–1,000 per item of goods. Even if the business owner or their employees refuse such service, they still need to pay the *preman*, who will otherwise vandalize their shophouses.<sup>16</sup> In addition, *preman* ask for Rp.300,000–500,000 when a businessperson opens a new company in their area; and if a shophouse is renovated, the owner also needs to pay a certain amount of money to *preman*.<sup>17</sup> Moreover, whenever *preman* organizations have installation events, they send an “invitation” with a proposal for expenses to be paid by businesspeople and ask for “donations.” Normally, businesspeople need to pay them at least Rp.10,000–20,000.<sup>18</sup> Some Chinese businesspeople need to pay *uang keamanan* (protection money) to more than one *preman* if there is more than one youth/crime organization that claims authority over that particular area.<sup>19</sup> As a “service” to industrialists, *preman* also help to break up strikes.<sup>20</sup>

It is important to point out that *preman* demand *uang keamanan* also from indigenous businesspeople.<sup>21</sup> But my informants disclosed that they often ask for more *uang keamanan* from businesspeople who are ethnic Chinese as the latter are deemed to be doing better in business than their non-Chinese counterparts.<sup>22</sup>

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14) Interview with Susanto, August 4, 2010; interview with Eddie, an ethnic Chinese businessperson engaged in the distribution of mechanical power-transmission products, Medan, November 10, 2010.

15) Interview with Hasyim a.k.a. Oei Kien Lim, member of Medan city parliament, 2009–present, Medan, August 11, 2010; interview with Sofyan Tan, August 23, 2010; interview with Halim, July 26, 2010; interview with Joko, NGO activist, Medan, November 11, 2010.

16) Interview with Johan Tjongiran, August 3, 2010; interview with Andi, journalist, Medan, September 20, 2010.

17) Interview with Johan Tjongiran, August 3, 2010.

18) Interview with Daniel (deceased), September 17, 2010; interview with Johan Tjongiran, August 3, 2010.

19) Interview with Andi, September 20, 2010.

20) Interview with Halim, July 26, 2010.

21) For instance, an indigenous businesswoman who owned a restaurant in Medan was beaten by two *preman* on November 4, 2010, as she refused to pay the Rp.500,000 “protection money,” which she deemed too high (see *Harian Orbit*, November 12, 2010). In addition, *preman* often extort money from small and medium businesspeople, including street vendors (*pedagang kaki lima*), who are mostly indigenous Indonesians, in exchange for “protection” (see Tan 2004, 134–136).

22) Interview with Susanto, August 4, 2010; interview with Sofyan Tan, August 23, 2010.

Why do *preman* ask for money from the business community? According to the chief of PP's North Sumatra branch, there are too many unemployed citizens in Indonesia. If they join "youth" organizations such as PP, the organizations arrange for them to help in taking care of the safety of business areas and let them collect money from the businesspeople.<sup>23)</sup> The sociologist Usman Pelly and criminologist Mohammad Irvan Olii, as interviewed by *Gatra* and *The Jakarta Globe* respectively, made a similar argument that poverty and unemployment are the main causes of *premanism* (Sujatmoko *et al.* 1995, 27; *The Jakarta Globe*, February 24, 2012). According to another source, the unemployment rate in Indonesia reached 6.8 percent in 2011, and more than half the population were living on less than US\$2 per day in the same year. In addition, more than 65 percent of workers in the country were employed informally (Brooks 2011).<sup>24)</sup> Poverty and the failure of the Indonesian government to create sufficient employment opportunities for its citizens are seen by many as the main causes of the rampancy of such extortion.

Informants told me that *preman* have become less active since President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono (2004–14) came to power because the police have become more powerful and have started to arrest *preman* who extort money from the business community.<sup>25)</sup> This corresponds to findings by other scholars working on Indonesia (Aspinall *et al.* 2011, 33; Wilson 2011, 257–258). According to Wilson, high-profile anti-*preman* campaigns were initially run by the police in 2001 and were limited only to Jakarta, but they became national in scope by 2004 (Wilson 2011, 257). Aspinall and his co-authors, on the other hand, remarked that the influence of IPK, which was once a dominant youth/crime organization in Medan, has declined since the death of its founder, Olo Panggabean, in 2009 (Aspinall *et al.* 2011, 33).<sup>26)</sup> The diminution of IPK's power is due also to a police crackdown on illegal gambling run by the organization. Although the power of *preman* organizations in the city has declined markedly, it is alleged that business enterprises in certain areas such as Jalan Asia and Jalan Gatot Subroto still encounter harassment and extortion from *preman*.<sup>27)</sup>

In Surabaya, on the other hand, youth/crime organizations such as PP and FKPPPI are much less dominant and influential. In addition, IPK, which is based in North Sumatra, does not have a presence in East Java. *Preman* who offer "protection" for Chinese busi-

23) Interview with Anuar Shah, chairperson, PP's North Sumatra branch, Medan, October 30, 2010.

24) These are the latest data available at the time of writing.

25) Interview with Johan Tjongiran, August 3, 2010; interview with Susanto, August 4, 2010; interview with Dirk A. Buiskool, historian, Medan, July 14, 2010.

26) See also *Harian Global* (April 30, 2009).

27) Interview with Andi, September 20, 2010.

ness premises in Surabaya are often unorganized Madurese *preman*. According to Dédé Oetomo (温忠孝), an ethnic Chinese social activist in Surabaya, there is a system of mutual dependence between Chinese businesspeople and Madurese *preman* in Surabaya. Chinese businesspeople usually pay about Rp.500,000 a month to the Madurese *preman* in exchange for protection of their business.<sup>28)</sup> The *preman* make sure that the business premises in their territories are free of burglary, theft, robbery, and vandalism.<sup>29)</sup> Such a system of mutual dependence existed in the city even before the demise of the New Order regime. Although unorganized, Madurese *preman* normally allocate their territories among themselves so that each area has only one *preman* in charge of its “safety.” Since in general Chinese businesspeople in Surabaya need to pay only one *preman* in exchange for protection of their business premises, it can be said that they enjoy a relatively peaceful business environment compared to their counterparts in Medan who need to deal with more *preman* organizations in the post-Suharto era, and pay more than one *preman* if there is more than one youth/crime organization that claims authority over that particular area.

In addition, according to Jun Honna (2010, 148) and Hadiz (2010, 156), industrialists in Surabaya often hire Madurese *preman* or members of Banser, the vigilante corps of Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), the largest mass-based Muslim organization in Indonesia, to break up strikes. NU has a strong base in East Java.

In Surabaya, military and police units are more dominant than youth/crime organizations and Banser in the control of underworld activities. According to Hadiz, it is alleged that the military act as immediate protectors and bodyguards for illegal gambling operations controlled by Chinese Indonesians in Surabaya. Furthermore, navy and marine units in the city are said to have direct links with local prostitution (*ibid.*, 140).<sup>30)</sup>

It is ironic, therefore, that in attempting to control *preman* activities, the police have started acting like *preman*. According to an NGO activist in Medan, local police officers often extort money from businesspeople in the city, especially those who own factories; such incidents have become more rampant, especially throughout the anti-*preman* campaigns.<sup>31)</sup> Police officers pay a visit to the factory and ask for money. If the business owner refuses to pay, the police coerce him or her to admit to offenses that he or she did

28) Interview with Dédé Oetomo, social activist, Surabaya, December 24, 2010.

29) Interview with Dédé Oetomo, social activist, Surabaya, December 24, 2010.

30) Ironically, in May 1998, when riots against the Chinese broke out in several major cities in Indonesia, it was reported that the local Chinese Indonesian business community in Surabaya was able to guarantee relative peace in the city by paying generously for local military protection, in contrast to many other cities such as Medan, Jakarta and Solo, where all troops mysteriously disappeared when the riots broke out (Dick 2003, 475; Purdey 2006, 113–122).

31) Interview with Joko, November 11, 2010.

not commit and threaten to close down the factory. Sometimes the police even confiscate machines in a factory if the business owner refuses to pay them.<sup>32)</sup> Wilson suggests that such phenomena indicate that some police “have used the campaigns as an opportunity to reclaim sources of illegal rent extraction taken from them by street level racketeers” (Wilson 2011, 257). A well-established Chinese businessperson in Medan even remarked that:

During Suharto’s reign, the military was the most powerful institution. Since the fall of Suharto, the military is not as powerful as before. Now the police are more powerful. They often ask for money from businesspeople and will give us a hard time if we refuse to pay them. So the police are no different from a select group of scoundrels.<sup>33)</sup>

Similarly, in Surabaya, the police often ask for money from local businesspeople, who are mostly ethnic Chinese. According to an informant who used to work in a real estate company in Surabaya’s Chinatown, whenever the police have an event they ask for contributions from businesspeople in their area. If the businesspeople refuse to pay, the police give them a hard time when the former ask for police help.<sup>34)</sup> In addition, Junus, a university professor in Surabaya, told me that the police often visit nightclubs and discos (which are mostly run by Chinese businesspeople) and ask for a “protection fee.” If the owners refuse to pay, the police conduct a raid and threaten to close down the premises.<sup>35)</sup>

It is important to note that Chinese big business or conglomerates and Chinese small and medium businesses react and adapt to the corrupt and muddy business environment in the post-Suharto era in different ways. Christian Chua (2008) in his work on Chinese big business in post-Suharto Indonesia points out that Chinese big business or conglomerates manage to deal with the murky business environment well because they have experienced staff to identify and approach the right persons in different political departments, and sufficient capital to bribe regional decision makers. The wealth and strong social networks of Chinese big businesspeople also enable them to establish close ties with local power holders and security forces. Chua further notes that some Chinese big businesspeople establish close links with youth/crime organizations and through such connections have their own vigilante groups at their command. Some control or intimi-

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32) Interview with Joko, November 11, 2010.

33) Interview with Erik, an ethnic Chinese businessperson engaged in the iron and plastics industry, Medan, August 25, 2010.

34) Personal communication with Yati, former staff of a real estate company in Surabaya’s Chinatown, April 8, 2011.

35) Interview with Junus, university professor, Surabaya, January 11, 2011.

date critical media through financial coercion to ensure favorable reporting on them and their business. In these ways their businesses are well protected. My study, as will be shown with a few examples later in this article, confirms Chua's research findings that Chinese big business or conglomerates are in an advantageous position when dealing with the new business environment, which is—paradoxically—more infused with corruption and uncertainties. However, as mentioned, my study also shows that Chinese businesspeople running small or medium businesses generally do not have the necessary economic and social capital to establish close ties with local power holders, local security forces, and *preman*. Most of them choose to give in to the illegal requests of government officials or *preman* to prevent further hassles.

### Changes in Political Environment and Political Activism of Chinese Businesspeople

The opening up of the political space after the fall of Suharto was followed by an explosion in the cost of election campaigning. Therefore, as Chua (2008) reveals in his work, in the era of *Reformasi*, those who want to contest and win in general or local elections need to pay large amounts of campaign funds. Consequently, aspiring power holders need to seek harder for the support of rich businesspeople, who can make considerable financial contributions to their political activities and campaign fund. Chinese Indonesian business elites are therefore deemed to be important sources of income for political parties that need significant electoral campaign funds to win local elections. In return, the former often expect to receive political protection, kickbacks, or other benefits should the candidate get elected. In addition, since the advent of competitive electoral politics, it is too risky for Chinese business elites to offer funding for only one particular candidate during general elections. Hence, some hedge their bets by sponsoring more than one candidate, thus creating a higher chance that they will have supported someone who will be elected into office, whom they can seek favors from. For example, during the 2004 presidential elections, it was alleged that Tomy Winata, the owner of the Artha Graha Group, financed the campaigns of both Megawati and Yudhoyono.<sup>36</sup> Chua (*ibid.*) notes that certain Chi-

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36) There were five pairs of candidates contesting in the 2004 presidential election: Wiranto-Solahuddin Wahid (nominated by the Party of Functional Groups, Golkar), Megawati Sukarnoputri-Hasyim Muzadi (nominated by the Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle, PDI-P), Amien Rais-Siswono Yudo Husodo (nominated by the National Mandate Party, PAN), Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono-Jusuf Kalla (nominated by the Democrat Party, PD), and Hamzah Haz-Agum Gumelar (nominated by the United Development Party, PPP) (Aris *et al.* 2005, 71–74). The Yudhoyono-Kalla pair was elected.

nese business family members “carefully split their political loyalties” (*ibid.*, 126). For instance, Sofjan Wanandi, the owner of the Gemala Group,<sup>37)</sup> backed Yudhoyono, while his brother, Jusuf Wanandi, who was a board member of the *Jakarta Post*, used the daily to secure support for Megawati. Mochtar Riady, the founder and owner of the Lippo Group,<sup>38)</sup> backed opposition leaders, while his son, James Riady, supported the actual power holders.

My field study in Medan and Surabaya shows similar findings. For example, Yahya, a university professor in Surabaya, disclosed that Alim Markus (林文光), the owner of the Maspion Group in the city, funded three out of five pairs of candidates during the first direct gubernatorial election in 2008, although he was well connected to only one candidate pair: Soekarwo-Saifullah Yusuf. The other two candidate pairs were Soenarjo-Ali Maschan Moesa and Kholifah Indar-Mudjiono.<sup>39)</sup> The election was eventually won by the Soekarwo-Saifullah Yusuf pair.

Likewise, in Medan, according to a Chinese Indonesian city parliamentarian, many well-established Chinese businesspeople sponsor candidates (usually incumbents) who are deemed to have better chances of winning in general or local elections, in order to get political protection for their own business.<sup>40)</sup> For instance, during Medan’s mayoral election in 2010, although many Chinese big businesspeople funded the Rahudman Harahap-Dzulmi Eldin pair as Rahudman was the incumbent acting Medan mayor and was deemed to have a higher chance of winning, they also offered to sponsor Sofyan Tan (陈金扬), a well-known social activist, who was also the only ethnic Chinese mayoral candidate, and his running mate after they won the second-highest number of votes in the first round and were qualified to enter the second round.<sup>41)</sup> These business elites included a well-established real estate tycoon in the city. Sofyan Tan disclosed that the business elites intended to fund him and his running mate in order to obtain business favors if the pair won in the second round.<sup>42)</sup> Nevertheless, Tan refused their financial offers and made it clear that if he were to get elected and become the mayor, he would not involve himself in corruption and nepotism. In addition, he would not grant any favors to businesspeople who had sponsored him during the election. Tan and his running mate ended up losing in the second round of elections.

On the other hand, there are also Chinese Indonesian businesspeople who make

37) The Gemala Group is a conglomerate engaged in automotive and property development businesses.

38) The Lippo Group is a conglomerate engaged in retailing, media, real estate, health care, and financial businesses.

39) Interview with Yahya, university professor, Surabaya, December 31, 2010.

40) Interview with Hasyim, August 11, 2010.

41) Interview with Sofyan Tan, August 23, 2010; interview with Surya, September 17, 2010.

42) Interview with Sofyan Tan, August 23, 2010.

use of the democratic environment in the post-Suharto era to directly participate in formal politics, and some of them even run for public office. Rusdi Kirana, Murdaya Widyawimatra Poo a.k.a. Poo Tjie Goan (傅志宽) and his wife, Siti Hartati Cakra Murdaya a.k.a. Chow Li Ing (邹丽英), and Hary Tanoesoedibjo (陈明立) are examples of Chinese big businesspeople or owners of Chinese conglomerates who get involved in politics. Kirana is the founder and chief executive officer of Lion Air, Indonesia's low-cost airline. He joined the National Awakening Party (PKB, Partai Kebangkitan Bangsa), founded by former President Abdurrahman Wahid, and was appointed as the vice chairperson of the party in January 2014. He was later appointed as a member of the Presidential Advisory Council (Dewan Pertimbangan Presiden) by President Joko Widodo in January 2015 (*Bisnis.com*, January 12, 2014; *Kompas*, January 19, 2015). Poo and Siti are the founders and owners of the CCM Group, a conglomerate engaged in the electric utility, footwear, plantation, furniture, and plywood industries. Poo joined PDI-P, led by Megawati, and became the treasurer and financial backer of the party. He also ran in the 2004 and 2009 elections and was elected into the national parliament in both, thanks to his financial status as a wealthy businessman and the support of well-established Chinese businesspeople in Surabaya (*Jawa Pos*, March 26, 2004; Li 2007, 195; 2010, 122; *Detik News*, December 2, 2009). In fact, Poo is the only Chinese Indonesian conglomerate owner who has been elected into public office since the end of the Suharto regime. Siti, on the other hand, joined the Democratic Party (PD, Partai Demokrat) led by Yudhoyono and became his benefactor (*The Jakarta Globe*, September 12, 2012). In other words, the Poo family members split their political loyalties and financial support between PDI-P and PD. But after the presidential election in 2009, when Yudhoyono was re-elected as president, Poo was dismissed from his party membership and his office in the parliament by PDI-P as he allegedly channeled his support to Yudhoyono, the incumbent, instead of Megawati during the presidential election (*Detik News*, December 2, 2009).<sup>43</sup> Moreover, his wife, Siti, was later charged with bribery by the Jakarta Corruption Court and was sentenced to 32 months' imprisonment in February 2013 (*The Jakarta Post*, February 5, 2013).<sup>44</sup>

Tanoesoedibjo is the owner of the MNC Group, a media company in Indonesia. He initially joined the National Democratic Party (NasDem, Partai Nasional Demokrat), led

43) There were three pairs of candidates contesting in the 2009 presidential election: Jusuf Kalla-Wiranto (nominated by Golkar), Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono-Boediono (nominated by PD), and Megawati Sukarnoputri-Prabowo (nominated by PDI-P) (Rizal 2010, 61).

44) However, Siti was granted parole by the Ministry of Justice in September 2014 (*The Jakarta Globe*, September 2, 2014). The case of the Poo family indicates that splitting political loyalties and financial support between different political elites does not necessarily bring long-term protection and guarantees for the family members' business or political career.

by the media tycoon Surya Paloh, but later switched to the People's Conscience Party (Hanura, Partai Hati Nurani Rakyat), led by ex-General Wiranto (*Tempo*, February 25, 2013). Moreover, he decided that he would become Wiranto's running mate in the 2014 presidential elections (*The Jakarta Post*, July 3, 2013). However, Tanoesoedibjo could not fulfill such a wish as Wiranto later decided not to contest in the presidential elections (*The Jakarta Post*, May 18, 2014). Tanoesoedibjo left Hanura in May 2014 (*Tempo*, May 23, 2014).

However, it is worth noting that very few Chinese Indonesians who enter politics are well-established big businesspeople or conglomerate owners. A Chinese big businessman in Medan revealed that Chinese big businesspeople were usually reluctant to participate in formal politics because their businesses were already well established and well protected by local power holders or *preman*. Furthermore, they were afraid that they would make many enemies by getting involved in politics.<sup>45)</sup> Therefore, Chinese Indonesian businesspeople who get involved in politics are mostly not in big business.

In Medan and Surabaya, there are a few Chinese Indonesian parliamentarians with a background in business. These include Brilian Moktar (莫粧量), North Sumatra provincial parliamentarian from 2009 to the present; Hasyim a.k.a. Oei Kien Lim (黄建霖), Medan city parliamentarian from 2009 to the present; A Hie (王田喜), Medan city parliamentarian from 2009 to 2014; Fajar Budianto, East Java provincial parliamentarian from 1999 to 2004; Arifli Harbianto Hanurakin (韩明理), Surabaya city parliamentarian from 2004 to 2009; Simon Lekatompessy, Surabaya city parliamentarian from 2009 to 2014; Henky Kurniadi (游经善), national parliamentarian representing East Java 1 (covering Surabaya and Sidoarjo) from 2014 to the present; and Vinsensius Awey, Surabaya city parliamentarian from 2014 to the present. They were in small- or medium-scale businesses prior to getting elected as parliamentarians. Moktar was engaged in vehicle trading and servicing.<sup>46)</sup> Hasyim was a distributor of office stationery.<sup>47)</sup> A Hie was a hotel owner.<sup>48)</sup> Budianto ran a grocery shop in Kembang Jepun, Surabaya.<sup>49)</sup> Hanurakin owned a bakery shop (*Jawa Pos*, April 10, 2004). Lekatompessy was a billboard entre-

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45) Interview with Christopher, an ethnic Chinese businessperson engaged in the frozen seafood industry, Medan, August 18, 2010.

46) Interview with Brilian Moktar, member of North Sumatra provincial parliament, 2009–present, Medan, July 16, 2010.

47) Interview with Hasyim, August 11, 2010.

48) Interview with Yap Juk Lim, an ethnic Chinese businessperson engaged in the snack production industry and chairperson of the Medan Deli Regional Forum of Small and Medium Enterprises (FORDA UKM Medan Deli), Medan, November 16, 2010.

49) Interview with Harry Tanudjaja, chairperson, Surabaya branch of the Indonesian Democratic Party of Devotion (PKDI); candidate in the 1999 and 2009 general elections; and lawyer, Surabaya, March 31, 2011.

preneur.<sup>50</sup> Kurniadi was a real estate businessman.<sup>51</sup> Awey ran a furniture shop (*Surabaya Pagi*, September 2, 2014).

Nevertheless, it should be pointed out that at present, none of the Chinese Indonesian businessmen-turned-politicians have the political standing of Joko Widodo, Jusuf Kalla, and Aburizal Bakrie, who were prominent indigenous Indonesian businesspeople. Widodo was a furniture entrepreneur before getting involved in politics. Kalla used to be the CEO of NV Hadji Kalla (now known as the Kalla Group), owned by his family. NV Hadji Kalla is a conglomerate engaged in the automotive, property, construction, and energy industries. Bakrie was the former chairperson of the Bakrie Group, a conglomerate with diversified interests across mining, oil and gas, real estate, agriculture, media, and telecommunications. Widodo served as the mayor of Solo from 2005 to 2012 and governor of Jakarta from 2012 to 2014, and was elected as the seventh president in 2014. Kalla was vice president from 2004 to 2009 and was elected into the same office in the 2014 presidential election, while Bakrie was the coordinating minister for economy under former President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono. The fact that no Chinese Indonesian businessmen-turned-politicians currently have the political standing of Widodo, Kalla, and Bakrie is due mainly to the reluctance of many indigenous Indonesians to fully accept Chinese participation in public life. As Chua puts it, “[T]he label of Chinese would still be a barrier” (Chua 2008, 130). In addition, there have not been any Chinese Indonesians in Medan and Surabaya elected as local government heads, who have greater power to directly control local resources.

In the following sections, I will explore various illegal or semi-legal business practices that some Chinese businesspeople utilize to gain wealth and safeguard their business interests in the face of the difficult business environment.

## Dealing with Power Holders, Police, and Military Commanders

As mentioned earlier, according to some of my informants, most of the Chinese businesspeople in Medan and Surabaya—especially those running small and medium businesses—usually just pay the amount of money or bribes requested by government officials in order to get their business permit or other related documents issued on time. Most of them give in to police officers’ illegal requests as well, in order to prevent further problems.

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50) Interview with Simon Lekatompessy, member of the Surabaya city parliament, 2009–14, Surabaya, May 5, 2011.

51) Interview with Henky Kurniadi, an ethnic Chinese businessperson engaged in the real estate industry and national parliamentarian representing East Java 1, 2014–present, Surabaya, March 9, 2011.

Sometimes they try to negotiate with the people who ask for money if the amount requested is too large.<sup>52)</sup> As mentioned at the beginning of this article, it is alleged that even if a businessperson pays all taxes and charges levied on his or her business, tax officers still pay a visit to check on his or her business and ask for bribes; even when businesspersons pay their taxes honestly, they have to pay more. So, most Chinese businesspeople pay only some of the taxes and charges. Then when tax officers pay a visit to their companies, they just bribe the officers as requested.<sup>53)</sup> Johan Tjongiran, an ethnic Chinese social activist in Medan, explained such a practice by giving an example:

For instance, if a businessperson needs to pay Rp.500 million of taxes, the officers would normally ask him or her to pay only Rp.250 million and they would keep Rp.220 million for themselves, and submit only Rp.30 million to the government.<sup>54)</sup>

Therefore, Susanto, the ethnic Chinese toy distributor in Medan mentioned in the opening story of this article, argues that:

The wealthiest people in Indonesia are in fact not ethnic Chinese businesspeople but indigenous bureaucrats in the central and local governments like Gayus Tambunan.<sup>55)</sup> They become extremely rich after getting many bribes from businesspeople. Their children often spend time shopping in Singapore and bringing back many branded luxury goods to Indonesia.<sup>56)</sup>

Following Bourdieu's concept of habitus and field, I argue that most Chinese businesspeople choose to give in to the illegal requests of government officials, police, and *preman* not only due to their reluctance to run into more trouble and their fear of the hassle of fighting back, but also because they have enough economic capital to pay bribes and extortion to protect their business and avoid further trouble. This is in line with Bourdieu's notion of habitus and field that social actors well endowed with capital tend to defend the status quo of the field (social structure) they are in, in order to safeguard their capital.

Although there are also Chinese businesspeople who refuse to be extorted by the

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52) Interview with Daniel (deceased), July 13, 2010; interview with Johan Tjongiran, August 3, 2010; interview with Susanto, August 4, 2010; interview with Atan, an ethnic Chinese businessperson engaged in the real estate industry and a developer-cum-contractor, Surabaya, February 28, 2011.

53) Interview with Johan Tjongiran, August 3, 2010; interview with Susanto, August 4, 2010.

54) Interview with Johan Tjongiran, August 3, 2010.

55) Gayus Tambunan is a former tax official who was arrested by police on March 30, 2010, for alleged tax evasion of Rp.25 billion (see *ANTARA News*, March 27, 2010; March 31, 2010). Although Tambunan is of Batak origin, an ethnic minority group in Indonesia, his ethnicity is never problematized by the public because Batak are one of the indigenous groups in the country.

56) Interview with Susanto, August 4, 2010.

police and choose to get themselves organized and protest against the extortion, such people are rare. These businesspeople often do not have the necessary economic capital to pay the bribes and extortion. They therefore decide to protest against the extortion in order to safeguard their business. This is in line with Bourdieu's notion of habitus and field that social actors least endowed with capital are inclined to challenge the status quo of the field (social structure) they are in. One well-known example is Yap Juk Lim (叶郁林), a Chinese businessperson engaged in the snack production industry near Jalan Metal, Medan. Yap used to have to pay the police Rp.300,000–400,000 every time they visited his factory. Eventually, he could not bear the extortion; and in 2007 he refused to pay. As a result, the police alleged that his factory used expired ingredients in snack production and detained him for eight days.<sup>57)</sup> As noted in a news report in *Waspada*, the Medan branch of the Regional Forum of Small and Medium Enterprises (FORDA UKM, Forum Daerah Usaha Kecil dan Menengah) supported Yap and launched a public protest together with other small and medium businesspeople from different ethnic backgrounds on March 25, 2008 (*Waspada*, March 25, 2008). The protest took place in front of the North Sumatra Police Headquarters, governor's office, mayor's office, provincial parliament, and Medan city parliament. The approximately 2,000 people who joined the protest demanded that the police stop extorting small and medium businesspeople.<sup>58)</sup> According to Yap, after the protest the police officers stopped harassing the factories around Jalan Metal for a long time. In 2010, however, they began to again visit some factories in that area, asking for payments; Yap's factory, however, was free from the harassment.<sup>59)</sup> This indicates that the police recognized that Yap would fight back if they tried to extort him.

Sofyan Tan, a candidate in Medan's 2010 mayoral election, revealed that many local Chinese businesspeople viewed Yap's action positively, although it was not a common practice among Chinese businesspeople.<sup>60)</sup> Yap talked about the reluctance of most Chinese businesspeople to fight against extortion by government officials and police, and their reluctance to spend time getting themselves organized:

We have to get ourselves organized if we want to fight against such illegal requests. Many Chinese businesspeople regard this as time-consuming and would rather give in to illegal requests of government officials and police to avoid any further problems.<sup>61)</sup>

Another Chinese businessperson made a similar remark: "The Chinese are gener-

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57) Interview with Yap Juk Lim, November 16, 2010.

58) Interview with Yap Juk Lim, November 16, 2010.

59) Interview with Yap Juk Lim, November 16, 2010.

60) Interview with Sofyan Tan, August 23, 2010.

61) Interview with Yap Juk Lim, November 16, 2010.

ally afraid of getting in trouble. If paying money to those extorting them can save them from further trouble, they will just pay the money instead of fighting back.”<sup>62)</sup>

In short, most Chinese businesspeople prefer to give in to the illegal requests of government officials and police because they are afraid of the hassle of fighting back, and of the trouble it is likely to cause them. Moreover, they have the necessary economic capital to pay the bribes and extortion to protect their business and save them from further troubles. Very few of them choose to fight against the extortion, because they feel that getting themselves organized to fight back is time consuming. By giving in to the illegal requests, Chinese businesspeople continue to make themselves the targets of extortion and perpetuate a corrupt, predatory political-business system.

Additionally, in order to obtain protection for their businesses, many well-established Chinese Indonesian businesspeople in Medan and Surabaya have utilized their social capital to establish close relationships with heads of security forces. The following quotation from an interview and the excerpts from a Chinese-language newspaper report on a welcome and farewell dinner for the East Java Regional Military Command in 2010 illustrate such political-business relationships between local Chinese Indonesian business elites and heads of security forces in both cities:

The ceremony of North Sumatra police chief transfers was held recently [in March 2010]. I was there too. [Do you] want to know who most of the attendees were? About 90 percent of them were Chinese big businesspeople!<sup>63)</sup>

East Java Entrepreneur Charitable Foundation, Surabaya Chinese Association (PMTS, Paguyuban Masyarakat Tionghoa Surabaya), and Chinese community leaders jointly organized a welcome and farewell dinner for the East Java Regional Military Command on October 6 at 7pm. The event was held at the Grand Ballroom of Shangri-La Hotel, Surabaya.

During the dinner, Alim Markus [president of East Java Entrepreneur Charitable Foundation and PMTS] delivered his speech with enthusiasm: “Thanks to the mercy of the Lord, tonight we have the opportunity to get together with the former and new military commanders of East Java. On behalf of the Chinese community in Surabaya, I would like to wish our former military commander [Suwarno] all the best in his future endeavors. I would also like to call upon the Chinese community to cooperate with the new military commander [Gatot]. (*Medan Zao Bao*, October 9, 2010, my translation from the Chinese original)

As referred to in the excerpt from the Chinese-language newspaper report above, the local Chinese business community in Surabaya led by Alim Markus (林文光) organized a welcome and farewell dinner for the former and new regional military commander

62) Interview with Ivan, an ethnic Chinese businessperson engaged in real estate, Medan, July 16, 2010.

63) Interview with Usman, NGO activist, Medan, July 30, 2010.

of East Java in 2010. Junus, one of my informants—a university professor in Surabaya—revealed that Markus was well connected with President Suharto during the New Order. After the collapse of the Suharto regime, Markus established close ties with Imam Utomo, the then governor of East Java.<sup>64</sup> Markus is the owner of Maspion Group, a Surabaya-based conglomerate that manufactures household appliances.

Many well-established Chinese businesspeople in Surabaya have also established close relationships with the governor, the regional police chief (Kapolda, Kepala Polisi Daerah), and the regional military commander (Pangdam, Panglima Daerah Militer), all of whom are paid by the former on a regular basis.<sup>65</sup> Bambang, a Chinese big businessman whom I interviewed, disclosed that he was a good friend of Soekarwo, the governor of East Java. Bambang owns a ceramic tile factory.<sup>66</sup> Junus, who knows many local Chinese businesspeople, commented that Bambang is free from harassment and extortion by the police due to his good relationship with the governor.<sup>67</sup> A few well-established Chinese businesspeople who run nightclubs in the city are well connected to the mayor and local police. Therefore, their businesses are protected and their clubs are free from police raids.<sup>68</sup>

It is alleged that some Chinese businesspeople who run big businesses in Surabaya are connected to Anton Prijatno (王炳金), a Golkar member who served in the East Java provincial legislature and the national legislature (DPR, Dewan Perwakilan Rakyat) during the Suharto era, and later, after the end of the New Order, became a prominent businessman and political patron for many Chinese businesses in Surabaya.<sup>69</sup> In my interview with him, Prijatno revealed that he left Golkar in May 1998 because he was very disappointed with the rampant corruption within the Suharto regime.<sup>70</sup> Unlike most local Chinese politicians with business backgrounds, Prijatno became actively engaged in business only after spending many years in politics. He became the chairperson of an asphalt distribution company in 2003.<sup>71</sup> Since Prijatno is close to the governor, his business flourishes and is protected from harassment and extortion by the police. He is

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64) Interview with Junus, January 11, 2011.

65) Interview with Junus, January 11, 2011.

66) Interview with Bambang, an ethnic Chinese ceramic tile factory owner, Surabaya, March 3, 2011.

67) Interview with Junus, January 11, 2011.

68) Interview with Junus, January 11, 2011.

69) Interview with Junus, January 11, 2011. Prijatno was a member of the East Java provincial legislature from 1977 to 1987 and a member of the national legislature from 1987 to 1997 (interview with Anton Prijatno, an ethnic Chinese businessperson engaged in the distribution of asphalt; a former member of the East Java provincial legislature, 1977–87; and a former member of the national legislature, 1987–97, Surabaya, February 24, 2011).

70) Interview with Anton Prijatno, February 24, 2011.

71) Interview with Anton Prijatno, February 24, 2011.

also a business partner of Sudomo Mergonoto (吴德辉), who owns Kapal Api Group, a coffee production company, and Bambang (the ceramic tile factory owner).<sup>72)</sup> In addition, Prijatno is a supplier of asphalt for many well-established Chinese real estate developers and contractors in the city.<sup>73)</sup> Since he is a prominent politician and close to the governor, it is alleged that he also acts as a political patron for most well-established Chinese businesses in Surabaya, except Markus's Maspion Group, the largest conglomerate in Surabaya.<sup>74)</sup>

Similarly, in Medan, according to a local media activist who knows many local businesspeople of Chinese descent, in order to obtain protection and privileged access to permits and contracts from local power holders, many well-established Chinese Indonesian businesspeople in the city have established close relationships with local power holders and heads of security forces who hold the most power in North Sumatra, i.e., the governor, the regional police chief, and the regional military commander. They often group together to “contribute” money to those power holders and heads of security forces in exchange for protection and permits.<sup>75)</sup> Another NGO activist disclosed that it is common for Chinese businesspeople who operate big businesses in the city to group together and form close ties with local police officers. They pay money to the police regularly in exchange for protection.<sup>76)</sup>

Benny Basri (张保圆) is a good example of a well-connected Chinese businessman in Medan. Running PT Central Business District (CBD), a well-established real estate company in the city, Basri is said to be close to regional military officers and local police officers.<sup>77)</sup> He has also held the position of treasurer in the North Sumatra branch of the Democratic Party (PD, Partai Demokrat) since 2003.<sup>78)</sup> It is alleged that because of his close relationship with local power holders, he was able to purchase land previously owned by the Indonesian Air Force in Polonia, Medan, for a real estate development project.<sup>79)</sup>

While Chinese businesspeople who run large-scale businesses are able to establish close ties with local power holders and heads of security forces because they have a strong social network, those who own small- and medium-scale businesses generally do

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72) Interview with Junus, January 11, 2011.

73) Interview with Anton Prijatno, February 24, 2011.

74) Interview with Junus, January 11, 2011.

75) Interview with Daniel (deceased), September 17, 2010.

76) Interview with Joko, November 11, 2010.

77) Interview with Usman, July 30, 2010; interview with Christopher, August 18, 2010; interview with Joko, November 11, 2010.

78) Interview with Sofyan Tan, August 23, 2010; interview with Joko, November 11, 2010.

79) Interview with Usman, July 30, 2010.

not have the ability and opportunity to establish close ties with local or potential power holders.

### Relations with *Preman*

As mentioned, institutionalized gangsterism is dominant in Medan. Some local Chinese businesspeople who run large-scale businesses have established close relationships with youth/crime organizations to get protection for their business. According to an NGO activist in Medan, many well-established Chinese businesspeople hire *preman* to protect their business and to break up strikes.<sup>80)</sup> Some of them have also become advisers of youth/crime organizations. For instance, one of my informants disclosed that Vincent Wijaya, a local Chinese businessperson engaged in the frozen seafood industry, was an adviser of PP's North Sumatra branch, a major youth/crime organization in the province, and hence his business was well protected by PP.<sup>81)</sup> In addition, according to the person in charge of *Harian Promosi Indonesia* (《印广日报》), a Chinese-language press in Medan, the founder of the press, Hakim Honggandhi (关健康), used to be the treasurer of IPK, a youth/crime organization based in Medan. Honggandhi was also connected to the North Sumatran military because he used to distribute consumer goods to them.<sup>82)</sup>

Another good example is the support that Indra Wahidin (黄印华), the then chairperson of the North Sumatra branch of the Chinese Indonesian Association, and a group of Chinese community leaders (who were mostly businesspeople) gave to Ajib Shah-Binsar Situmorang, one of the candidate pairs in Medan's 2010 mayoral election (*Harian Global*, March 30, 2010; *Harian Analisa*, May 7, 2010; *Waspada*, May 7, 2010).<sup>83)</sup> Wahidin is an insurance agent and paint distributor.<sup>84)</sup> He openly supported Ajib-Binsar because of his connections with Ajib, the former chairperson of PP's North Sumatra branch. Wahidin and several other Chinese businesspeople, some said, believed Ajib would offer more protection to their business if he was elected,<sup>85)</sup> as opposed to Sofyan Tan (the only

80) Interview with Halim, July 26, 2010.

81) Interview with Joko, November 11, 2010.

82) As *Harian Promosi Indonesia* had been running at a loss due to low readership, Honggandhi eventually lost all of the capital he had invested in the press. He later moved to Jakarta and worked in a hotel (interview with Setiawan, person in charge, *Harian Promosi Indonesia* [《印广日报》], Medan, November 8, 2010).

83) For more details of Medan's 2010 mayoral election, see Aspinall *et al.* (2011).

84) Interview with Christopher, August 18, 2010.

85) Interview with Farid, an ethnic Chinese businessperson engaged in the garment production industry, Medan, July 15, 2010; interview with Ivan, July 16, 2010.

ethnic Chinese mayoral candidate), who refused to promise any favors to those who supported his candidature.<sup>86)</sup> One informant, however, has a different interpretation of this support: that Wahidin supported Ajib in order to secure the safety of the local Chinese community. This is because Ajib was initially the candidate chosen by the Prosperous Peace Party (PDS, Partai Damai Sejahtera), but the party later revoked its support in favor of Sofyan Tan. Since Wahidin was afraid that Ajib would blame the local Chinese community for this turnaround and make trouble for them, he decided to openly support and campaign for Ajib.<sup>87)</sup>

Besides that, according to some of my informants, the local governments of post-New Order Medan/North Sumatra often allocate local state projects to indigenous contractors who are members of youth/crime organizations.<sup>88)</sup> But it is also not uncommon for them to subcontract some of their projects to Chinese contractors who are their friends. An indigenous contractor may subcontract his projects to his Chinese friends at 20 percent less than his original tender cost. What this means is that the contractor would get a 20 percent cut from the cost.<sup>89)</sup> In other words, some local Chinese businesspeople who are well connected with youth/crime organizations could informally work on local state projects.

Conversely, in Surabaya, the relations between Chinese businesspeople and *preman* are different since the youth/crime organizations there are much less dominant. As mentioned, Chinese businesspeople in Surabaya often pay Madurese *preman* in exchange for “protection” for their business premises. In addition, during workers’ strikes, Chinese Indonesian industrialists often hire Madurese *preman* or members of Banser, the vigilante corps of Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), to apply pressure on striking workers. With regard to the allocation of local state projects, according to a university professor in Surabaya, unlike in Medan, contractors who get local state projects in Surabaya are not necessarily members of youth/crime organizations, since such organizations are less dominant in the city. However, these contractors are generally well connected to local decision makers.<sup>90)</sup> A Chinese Indonesian politician-turned-businessman in Surabaya disclosed that during the New Order era, the local government of Surabaya often allocated state projects to indigenous Indonesian contractors; very few Chinese Indonesian contractors got the projects. Hence, it was common for indigenous contractors to subcon-

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86) Interview with Sofyan Tan, August 23, 2010.

87) This interpretation was given by Surya, a media activist in Medan (interview with Surya, September 17, 2010).

88) Interview with Ivan, July 16, 2010; interview with Halim, July 26, 2010.

89) Interview with Halim, July 26, 2010.

90) Interview with Junus, January 11, 2011.

tract some of their projects to Chinese contractors. But since the end of the New Order, the local government of Surabaya has become more open and less discriminative: about 50 percent of contractors who get state projects are well-established Chinese contractors.<sup>91)</sup> Therefore, in the *Reformasi* era, very few Chinese contractors in Surabaya work on state projects that are subcontracted by indigenous contractors. This is certainly very different from the triangular collusion (Chinese contractors-youth/crime organizations-local government officials) that their Chinese counterparts in Medan have developed.

### Financial Coercion against the Media

After the unraveling of the Suharto regime in May 1998, many discriminatory measures against the Chinese were removed. Most significantly, Suharto's policy of forced assimilation was abandoned.<sup>92)</sup> In 2001 President Wahid sanctioned the publication of Chinese-language print media through the repealing of laws that had prohibited the local publication of Chinese characters in Indonesia since 1965, and thus Chinese-language materials became more freely available. Many schools were allowed to conduct Chinese-language courses. Besides that, ethnic Chinese were allowed to openly celebrate Chinese festivals (Turner 2003, 347–348; Hoon 2008, 104).

The advent of democratization and the removal of restrictions on Chinese cultural expression brought about press freedom and a new beginning for Chinese-language presses in Indonesia. Several Chinese-language presses were established across the country after the end of the New Order. In Medan, five Chinese-language presses were established after the end of the Suharto regime: *Harian Promosi Indonesia* (《印+日报》), *Su Bei Ri Bao* (《苏北日报》), *Xun Bao* (《讯报》), *Hao Bao* (《好报》), and *Zheng Bao Daily* (《正报》). All of them except *Harian Promosi Indonesia* are still in business at the time of writing. *Harian Promosi Indonesia* ceased publication at the end of December 2014 due to low readership. It was later re-launched under a new name, *Zheng Bao Daily*, in February 2015 (*Zheng Bao Daily*, February 16, 2015). In Surabaya, four Chinese-language presses were established in the post-Suharto era: *Harian Naga Surya* (《龙阳日报》), *Harian Nusantara* (《千岛日报》), *Rela Warta* (《诚报》), and *Si Shui Chen Bao* (《泗水晨报》).<sup>93)</sup> However, *Harian Naga Surya* and *Rela Warta* ceased publication after a few years

91) Interview with Anton Prijatno, February 24, 2011.

92) For a background to Suharto's policy of forced assimilation, see Suryadinata (1992) and Coppel (1983).

93) *Si Shui Chen Bao* is a subsidiary paper of *Guo Ji Ri Bao*, the largest Chinese-language daily in Jakarta.

due to various reasons.<sup>94)</sup>

It is worth noting that press freedom appears to be a double-edged sword for Chinese businesspeople. On the one hand, Chinese businesspeople can establish Chinese-language presses to promote Chinese culture and discuss issues related to ethnic Chinese in Indonesian society. They can also use the presses as a cultural space to showcase themselves and their business. But on the other hand, press freedom allows the media to expose the corrupt practices of Chinese businesspeople and the politicians to whom they are connected.

Chinese-language presses in Medan and Surabaya generally run at a loss due to low readership. The prohibition of Chinese-language education in New Order Indonesia produced a younger generation of Chinese who are mostly Chinese illiterate. Therefore, there is no general readership beyond the older generation, and this leads to a diminishing market.<sup>95)</sup> The presses need to depend on the financial support of local Chinese businesspeople in order to survive. Some well-established Chinese businesspeople support Chinese-language presses in Medan and Surabaya by becoming their shareholders or advertisers. In this way, they also make sure that the presses report in favor of them and their business. Such patrimonial power relations between Chinese-language presses and well-established Chinese businesspeople have deterred the presses from reporting negative news about local Chinese businesses. Therefore, news about corrupt business practices involving Chinese businesspeople is rarely reported in local Chinese-language presses. For instance, in October 2010, while Indonesian-language newspapers in Medan such as *Waspada* and *Harian Orbit* covered the alleged tax evasion by PT Indo Palapa, a real estate company owned by Benny Basri, an ethnic Chinese real estate tycoon in the city, most of the local Chinese-language newspapers did not report on the case. PT Indo Palapa allegedly submitted false information to the tax offices in the city about the number of shophouses that had been built by the company, so as to avoid paying taxes.<sup>96)</sup> When *Xun Bao* later published a news report on the case, it did not mention the name of Benny Basri.<sup>97)</sup>

Chinese businesspeople who fund Chinese-language presses are mostly connected to national- and local-level power holders. In order to survive, the presses must refrain from being critical of these power holders, otherwise they might encounter a withdrawal

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94) The closing down of *Rela Warta* was due mainly to the withdrawal of advertising by its main advertiser. The closing down of *Harian Naga Surya* was due to low readership. For more details, see Huang (2005).

95) Interviews with people in charge and staff of local Chinese-language presses in Medan and Surabaya.

96) See *Harian Orbit* (October 15, 2010) and *Waspada* (October 15, 2010).

97) See *Xun Bao* (November 2, 2010).

of their funders' sponsorship. The fate of *Rela Warta* (《诚报》) in Surabaya vividly illustrates the carrot-and-stick method used on a critical press. *Rela Warta* was the only Chinese-language newspaper in Surabaya that did not cover many of the sociocultural activities organized by local Chinese organizations. It was also the only Chinese-language newspaper that often published in-depth and critical editorials and opinion pieces on current affairs and politics in Indonesia. The newspaper published a few editorials and opinion pieces on the general election and the role of Chinese Indonesian voters during the 2004 parliamentary election.<sup>98</sup> It also published news on Dédé Oetomo (温忠孝), an ethnic Chinese social activist in Surabaya who contested in the East Java regional representative council (DPD, Dewan Perwakilan Daerah) election in 2004.<sup>99</sup>

Shortly after the 2004 election, *Rela Warta* suddenly announced that it would turn into a weekly paper due to low readership and the increase in printing price (*Rela Warta*, April 8, 2004).<sup>100</sup> But according to the former person in charge of the newspaper, the change was actually due to the main advertiser's decision to stop advertising in the newspaper after the editorial team refused to openly support Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, the soon-to-be presidential candidate at that time, as requested by the main advertiser. The main advertiser was a member of the Chinese business elite who ran various types of business in East Java. He had been contributing Rp.2 million in advertising fees to the newspaper every month. Prior to the polls, the main advertiser, who was close to Yudhoyono, urged *Rela Warta* to openly support Yudhoyono and call upon the local Chinese community to do the same. But the newspaper's editorial team refused to do so because they maintained that the Chinese community had the right to support any electoral candidate they liked. In addition, the newspaper published a few news articles that were critical of Yudhoyono prior to the election. The main advertiser was upset and subsequently decided to withdraw his regular contribution of advertisements to the newspaper. Moreover, he urged other local Chinese business elites to boycott the newspaper. Consequently, *Rela Warta* lost many subscribers and a considerable amount of advertising revenue. Therefore, shortly after the parliamentary election, the founders decided to turn *Rela Warta* into a weekly paper.<sup>101</sup> But even after the weekly circulation of the paper was reduced to 2,000 copies, the publication continued to lose money. Later, in June 2007, *Rela Warta* was taken over by the East Java branch of the Chinese Indonesian Social Association (PSMTI, Paguyuban Sosial Marga Tionghoa Indonesia), led by Jos

98) For examples, see *Rela Warta* (March 11, 2004; April 2, 2004; April 3, 2004; June 25–July 1, 2004).

99) For example, see *Rela Warta* (March 3, 2004).

100) See also Li (2008, 360).

101) Interview with Samas H. Widjaja, former chief editor, *Rela Warta* (《诚报》), and former adviser, *Harian Naga Surya* (《龙阳日报》), Surabaya, May 5, 2011.

Soetomo (江庆德), and became the bulletin of the organization (Li 2008, 360). In 2009, the paper ceased publication as it was no longer supported by PSMTI's East Java branch (*ibid.*).<sup>102)</sup>

The decline of *Rela Warta* clearly shows that some Chinese business elites do not hesitate to resort to financial coercion against a media outlet in order to safeguard their business interests. It also shows that it is extremely difficult to establish and maintain a Chinese-language press without financial support from the Chinese business community. Without the money, it is impossible for a press to survive in the long term. This illustrates the ambivalence of press freedom for the Chinese in the post-Suharto era. The patrimonial power relations between local Chinese-language presses and Chinese business elites in Medan and Surabaya have also played an important role in shaping local politics, which is infused with corruption.

### Land Disputes in Medan and Threats against Chinese Indonesians

Due to the absence of a well-established rule of law before and after the end of the New Order, there have been several cases of land disputes involving illegal seizure of state and residential land by real estate developers, who are mostly Chinese Indonesians. However, as I will discuss later in this section, land disputes in Medan tend to turn into violent conflicts and threats against Chinese Indonesians. Conversely, violent conflicts and threats against Chinese Indonesians related to land disputes rarely occur in Surabaya, due to two reasons. The first has much to do with the interethnic relationships between Chinese and indigenous Indonesians in these two cities. According to Judith Nagata (2003, 375), Medan has a long history of tensions between local Chinese and local indigenous groups. The use of Hokkien, a Chinese dialect originating from the southern part of Fujian Province in China, among Chinese in Medan creates a gulf between them and indigenous Indonesians. The Chinese are also considered wealthier and often encounter opposition and antagonism from indigenous Indonesians.<sup>103)</sup> The situation is quite different in Surabaya; according to an article in *Gatra* magazine (July 18, 1998), and also mentioned in an interview with Dédé Oetomo—an ethnic Chinese social activist in Surabaya—Chinese in Surabaya, who often speak Indonesian instead of Chinese languages, generally maintain a good relationship with indigenous Indonesians.<sup>104)</sup> This good relationship

102) PSMTI is a major ethnic Chinese organization formed in Indonesia after the end of the New Order.

103) In fact, Medan was the site of the first violence against Chinese in May 1998 (Purdey 2006, 114).

104) Interview with Dédé Oetomo, December 24, 2010.

is due also to the dominance of NU in East Java. According to Suhaimi, a university lecturer in Surabaya, NU is a mass-based Muslim organization that embraces moderate Islam and emphasizes tolerance for minorities, including the Chinese minority. Its teachings have influenced many East Javanese Muslims.<sup>105</sup> A second reason has much to do with the way the local government and developers in Surabaya deal with land disputes. As Howard W. Dick notes in his book on Surabaya, the local government and developers in the city prefer negotiation to violence in dealing with land disputes. Prompt resettlement with a higher rate of compensation is the usual compromise (Dick 2003, 406). In other words, residents in Surabaya enjoy better institutional protection compared to those in Medan. Hence, land disputes in Surabaya seldom turn into threats against ethnic Chinese Indonesians.

There are a few land disputes involving Chinese Indonesian real estate developers in Medan that I want to showcase here to show how some Chinese Indonesian developers have willingly resorted to illegal practices to further their business interests. These cases have received fairly high coverage in the local and national press and have kept alive the general national view of Chinese Indonesians as being collusive and willing to engage in corruption to maintain their wealth.

In November and December 2011, Indonesian-language newspapers in Medan reported that three ethnic Chinese tycoons had been implicated in the illegal seizure of state and residential land in the city. The tycoons involved were Benny Basri (张保圆), Tamin Sukardi, and Mujianto (郑祥南). All of them were real estate developers (*Harian Sumut Pos*, November 8, 2011; November 9, 2011; *Harian Orbit*, November 17, 2011; November 30, 2011; December 5, 2011; December 7, 2011). It was alleged that they had managed to take over the land by bribing local government bureaucrats. Basri, the owner of PT Central Business District (CBD), was alleged to have obtained the land title for Sari Rejo Sub-district (Kelurahan Sari Rejo) through illegal means. The land was previously under the ownership of the Indonesian Air Force, but it had later become a residential area. However, residents who had been living in Sari Rejo for decades did not get their land title, while Basri managed to get it within a short period of time and planned to turn the land into a commercial property. In other words, the ownership of the land had been transferred from the air force to Basri's company.

As mentioned earlier in this article, Basri was a real estate tycoon well connected to local power holders and local military as well as police officers. He was also the treasurer of PD's North Sumatra branch since 2003. So, it was quite possible that Basri managed to take over the land in Sari Rejo within a short period of time because of his

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105) Interview with Suhaimi, university lecturer, Surabaya, April 27, 2011.

close association with local power holders and officers at the local air force base.

Both Sukardi and Mujianto were implicated in land seizures at Helvetia, Deliserdang Regency (Kabupaten Deliserdang), North Sumatra. Sukardi, the owner of PT Erniputra Terari, had taken over former state land in Helvetia for commercial purposes. The land was earlier given by the state to the residents of Helvetia. Sukardi was allegedly involved in the hiring of gangsters to kidnap and assault an NGO activist who led residents of Helvetia to defend their land rights. The activist was later released, after being repeatedly assaulted by gangsters for several hours. Mujianto, the owner of Agung Cemara Realty, was implicated in the seizure of another piece of former state land in Helvetia in 1968. The land had been given to residents of Helvetia, who later turned it into a football field. According to a local social activist, as cited in *Harian Orbit*, Mujianto suddenly claimed ownership of the land in 2011 with a title deed. Although the title deed did not show the correct address of the land, Mujianto still fenced the land with the help of the police to prevent residents from entering. Therefore, the activist believed the incident was “a game of land mafia” with the collusion of government officials (*Harian Orbit*, November 30, 2011, my translation from the Indonesian original). As a result, the residents could no longer use the field for leisure and exercise. This angered the residents, and they subsequently demolished the fence, leading to a clash between the residents and gangsters hired by Mujianto. Police officers showed up during the clash; but instead of protecting the residents, they joined the gangsters in attacking the residents. Several residents were injured in the confrontation.

The land disputes in Helvetia drew the attention of a few North Sumatra provincial parliamentarians, who paid a visit to the site of the land disputes on April 9, 2013. They promised to hold a meeting with the residents to discuss the issue and a search for a solution. By June 2013 the promise had not yet been fulfilled, so on June 7, 2013, the Islamic organization Al Washliyah, which owned land in Helvetia that had been taken over by Sukardi, officially lodged a complaint with the Corruption Eradication Commission (KPK, Komisi Pemberantasan Korupsi) about Sukardi’s seizure of land in Helvetia. Apart from protesting against Sukardi in front of his office, members of Al Washliyah also held demonstrations in front of the North Sumatra chief attorney’s office and the North Sumatra High Court, urging law enforcers to take action against Sukardi (*Harian Orbit*, June 10, 2013). The protesters carried a coffin when they protested again outside Sukardi’s office on June 24, 2013 (*Harian Orbit*, June 25, 2013).

*Harian Orbit* referred to the three developers as “slanted-eye businesspeople” (*pengusaha mata cipit*), clearly indicating their Chinese ethnicity, since it was common for non-Chinese in Indonesia to refer to the Chinese as “slanted-eye” or *mata cipit* (*Harian Orbit*, December 5, 2011). To some extent, the alleged involvement of the three

Chinese developers in land disputes reinforced the stereotypes of Chinese business-people as being heartless, corrupt, and opportunistic.

On another occasion, PT Jatimasindo, a real estate company owned by Arsyad Lis, another ethnic Chinese tycoon in Medan, was involved in the demolition of the Raudhatul Islam Mosque in Medan on April 11, 2011 (*Suara Nasional News*, January 30, 2013). The mosque was situated behind Emerald Garden Hotel, which was also owned by Lis. According to the chairperson of the Muslim People's Forum (FUI, Forum Umat Islam),<sup>106</sup> Indra Suheri, as interviewed by the *Jakarta Post*, the demolition of the mosque was to make way for the establishment of a shopping mall and a housing complex (*The Jakarta Post*, January 28, 2012). The company carried out the demolition after getting approval from Medan's Council of Indonesian Islamic Scholars (MUI, Majelis Ulama Indonesia). Suheri accused Medan's MUI of gaining material benefits at the expense of a mosque (*Harian Orbit*, February 7, 2012). Since then, FUI and several local Islamic activists have staged demonstrations in front of Emerald Garden Hotel from time to time. In early February 2012, banners with the provocative words "[Kalau] 1 mesjid lagi digusurr. 1000 rumah cina kami bakarr!" (If one more mosque is demolished, we will burn 1,000 Chinese houses!) were even displayed during the demonstrations. It was also rumored that the protesters carried out sweeping raids on every car passing the area and asked the drivers to lower the car window. Although the sweeping never really occurred, the rumor—which was circulated via mobile phone text messages in Medan—caused panic among local Chinese in the city (*Tribun Medan*, February 4, 2012).

Later, in February 2013, PT Jatimasindo promised to rebuild the mosque at the same location. But as of May 2014, the company had not yet provided the rebuilding funds, and this was perceived by local Islamic activists as breaking the promise. So, the activists continued to stage open demonstrations in front of the Emerald Garden Hotel (*Harian Sumut Pos*, March 23, 2013; *Harian Andalas*, May 17, 2014).

At the time of writing, there has been no further news on land disputes involving the above Chinese tycoons.

The Chinese Indonesian developers' involvement in land disputes not only violated the land rights of local communities but also perpetuated the corrupt, predatory political-business system in Medan. In addition, their alleged corrupt business practices reinforced the negative perception of ethnic Chinese among indigenous Indonesians, and this sometimes led to violence and threats against Chinese Indonesians.

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106) Muslim People's Forum is an Islamic organization in Indonesia.

## Conclusion

The corrupt local politics and murky business environment in post-Suharto Indonesia are the result of corrupt practices and internal mismanagement that continue to characterize the bureaucracy in the country. This study shows that Chinese big business or conglomerates and Chinese small and medium businesses react and adapt to such a political-business environment in different ways. Chinese big businesses or conglomerates have experienced staff to identify and approach the right persons in different political departments as well as sufficient capital to bribe regional decision makers. Moreover, Chinese big businesspeople utilize their wealth and strong social networks to establish close ties with local power holders, security forces, and youth/crime organizations. Some control or intimidate critical media through financial coercion. In other words, Chinese big businesses or conglomerates are in an advantageous position in dealing with the corrupt and muddy business environment. Chinese businesspeople running small or medium businesses, however, generally do not have the necessary economic and social capital to establish close ties with local power holders, security forces, and youth/crime organizations. Most of them just choose to give in to the illegal requests of government officials or *preman* to prevent further hassles. On the other hand, there have been a few Chinese Indonesian businesspeople getting involved in politics and being elected as parliamentarians after the opening up of a democratic political space. However, I argue that the political power of Chinese Indonesians in Medan and Surabaya is overall still limited, because there have not been any Chinese Indonesians elected as local government heads, who have more power to directly control local resources.

It is important to note that all the different semi-legal and illegal means utilized by Chinese Indonesian businesspeople in dealing with the new political-business environment have perpetuated and reproduced the corrupt, predatory political-business system. By giving in to the illegal requests of power holders, police, and *preman*, Chinese businesspeople have colluded in and indirectly perpetuated such corrupt practices, as well as reinforced the stereotype that the Chinese can pay, will pay, and should pay for everything, including a peaceful business environment. By colluding with local power holders, heads of security forces, and youth/crime organizations to get protection and access to permits and contracts, Chinese businesspeople have directly become an integral part of the problematic political-business relationships and the local politics infused with corruption and institutionalized gangsterism. Although there are a few Chinese businesspeople who refuse to become victims of extortion and choose to fight back, these appear to be rare. By intimidating critical media through financial coercion, Chinese businesspeople have seriously threatened press freedom in post-Suharto Indonesia. Such a

problematic political-business system is a vicious circle: Following Giddens's structure-agency theory, corrupt local politics in post-Suharto Indonesia prompts Chinese businesspeople to resort to various illegal and semi-legal business practices to gain and protect their business and personal interests. Such business practices in turn perpetuate and reproduce the problematic business environment, as well as reinforce and reproduce the ambivalent position of ethnic Chinese in Indonesian society. I therefore argue that the corrupt local politics and murky political-business environment continue to exist in the *Reformasi* era not only because of the capture of new political vehicles and institutions by the New Order-nurtured predatory interests, but also due to the active role of many Chinese businesspeople in perpetuating the system. Many, if not most, Chinese businesspeople in post-Suharto Medan and Surabaya are agents who maintain the status quo (of the corrupt local politics, the problematic political-business system, and the ambivalent position of the Chinese minority) instead of being agents of change.

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## Appendix

### List of Informants

#### *Public Figures*

##### Jakarta

Mely G. Tan (陈玉兰) (sociologist), June 8, 2010.

##### Medan

Dirk A. Buiskool (historian), July 14, 2010.

Brilian Moktar (莫粧量) (member of North Sumatra provincial parliament, 2009–present), July 16, 2010.

Johan Tjongiran (章生荣) (social activist), August 3, 2010.

Hasyim a.k.a. Oei Kien Lim (黄建霖) (member of Medan city parliament, 2009–present), August 11, 2010.

Sofyan Tan (陈金扬) (candidate in Medan's 2010 mayoral election; social activist), August 23, 2010.

Anuar Shah (chairperson, Pancasila Youth's North Sumatra branch), October 30, 2010.

Yap Juk Lim (叶郁林) (ethnic Chinese businessperson engaged in the snack production industry; chairperson, Medan Deli Regional Forum of Small and Medium Enterprises [FORDA UKM Medan Deli]), November 16, 2010.

#### Surabaya

Dédé Oetomo (温忠孝) (social activist), December 24, 2010.

Anton Prijatno (王炳金) (ethnic Chinese businessperson engaged in the distribution of asphalt; former member of the East Java provincial legislature, 1977–87; former member of the national legislature, 1987–97), February 24, 2011.

Henky Kurniadi (游经善) (ethnic Chinese businessperson engaged in the real estate industry; national parliamentarian representing East Java 1, 2014–present), March 9, 2011.

Harry Tanudjaja (陈国樑) (chairperson, Surabaya branch of the *Partai Kasih Demokrasi Indonesia* (PKDD); candidate in 1999 and 2009 general elections; lawyer), March 31, 2011.

Samas H. Widjaja (黄三槐) (former chief editor, *Rela Warta* [《诚报》]; former adviser, *Harian Naga Surya* [《龙阳日报》]), May 5, 2011.

#### Other Informants (with Pseudonyms)

##### Medan

Daniel (deceased) (former media activist), July 13, 2010; September 17, 2010.

Farid (ethnic Chinese businessperson engaged in the garment production industry), July 15, 2010.

Ivan (ethnic Chinese businessperson engaged in real estate), July 16, 2010.

Halim (NGO activist), July 26, 2010.

Usman (NGO activist), July 30, 2010.

Susanto (ethnic Chinese businessperson engaged in the distribution of toys), August 4, 2010.

Christopher (ethnic Chinese businessperson engaged in the frozen seafood industry), August 18, 2010.

Erik (ethnic Chinese businessperson engaged in the iron and plastics industry), August 25, 2010.

Surya (media activist), September 17, 2010.

Andi (journalist), September 20, 2010.

Melani (person in charge, *Medan Zao Bao* [《棉兰早报》] and *Su Bei Ri Bao* [《苏北日报》]), October 22, 2010.

Janice (staff, *Medan Zao Bao/Su Bei Ri Bao*; former staff, *Hua Shang Bao* [《华商报》]), November 12, 2010.

Joe (person in charge, *Xun Bao* [《讯报》]), November 5, 2010.

Setiawan (person in charge, *Harian Promosi Indonesia* [《印广日报》]), November 8, 2010.

Eddie (ethnic Chinese businessperson engaged in the distribution of mechanical power-transmission products), November 10, 2010.

Joko (NGO activist), November 11, 2010.

Patrick (person in charge, *Hao Bao* [《好报》]), November 15, 2010.

##### Surabaya

Harianto (ethnic Chinese businessperson engaged in the beverage production industry), November 23, 2010.

Yahya (university professor), December 31, 2010.

Junus (university professor), January 11, 2011.

Atan (ethnic Chinese businessperson engaged in the real estate industry; developer-cum-contractor), February 28, 2011.

Bambang (ethnic Chinese ceramic tile factory owner), March 3, 2011.

Vincent (adviser, *Si Shui Chen Bao* [《泗水晨报》]), April 7, 2011.

Yati (former staff of a real estate company in Surabaya's Chinatown), April 8, 2011.

Suhaimi (university lecturer), April 27, 2011.

Wahyu (economic analyst; university lecturer), May 18, 2011.

# Blossoming Dahlia: Chinese Women Novelists in Colonial Indonesia

Elizabeth Chandra\*

In the early decades of the twentieth century in colonial Indonesia, one witnessed the proliferation of novels in which women were thematized as the *femme fatale*. These novels were written largely by male novelists as cautionary tales for girls who had a European-style school education and therefore were perceived to be predisposed to violating customary gender norms in the pursuit of personal autonomy. While such masculinist responses to women and material progress have been well studied, women's views of the social transformation conditioned by modernization and secular education are still insufficiently understood. This essay responds to this scantiness with a survey of texts written by Chinese women novelists who emerged during the third and fourth decades of the twentieth century, drawing attention in particular to the ways in which these texts differed from those written by their male predecessors. More important, this essay highlights the works by one particular woman novelist, Dahlia, who wrote with an exceptionally distinct female voice and woman-centered viewpoint.

**Keywords:** Sino-Malay literature, Chinese women, women novelists, Dahlia, Tan Lam Nio, Indonesia

In the history of modern literature in Indonesia, women regularly served as a thematic subject of representation. Scores of early twentieth century novels in the then Dutch East Indies tell the story of a young woman protagonist who, influenced by Western education, casts aside tradition and as a consequence meets a tragic end—she is disowned by her parents, forsaken by her lover, shunned by her community, and withers away with remorse. These novels, which place women at the center of their moral, were written largely by male novelists as cautionary tales for girls who had a European-style school education and therefore were perceived to be predisposed to violating customary gender norms in the pursuit of personal autonomy.

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While such masculinist responses to women and material progress have been studied (Sidharta 1992; Coppel 2002a; Chandra 2011; Hellwig 2012, 127–150), women’s views of the social transformation conditioned by industrialization and secular education are still insufficiently understood, for the simple reason that very few writers in the early decades of the twentieth century were women. While the literary output by female writers is nowhere near that produced by male writers, Chinese women in the Indies actually published quite a number of texts, which taken together are more than what was produced by women of other ethnic groups in colonial Indonesia. A few scholars have accorded these works the attention they deserve (Salmon 1984; Chan 1995; Hellwig 2012, 151–179), while others have found it convenient to avoid them even in discussions about Indonesian women’s writings of the 1930s (Hatley and Blackburn 2000).

This essay examines female subjectivity in early twentieth century Indonesia by surveying the field of Chinese women writers, whose publishing outlets afforded them a comparatively sizeable production in Malay literature. To twist Sigmund Freud’s famous question, this essay asks “What did Chinese women write?” and proceeds to examine literary texts—especially novels—penned by women. It attempts to see whether there are indeed discernible patterns of themes, motifs, genres, or other creative elements specific to women authors. It discusses, among other things, the curious phenomenon of male authors writing in the feminine voice, and what might have motivated such a claim of feminine authorial subjectivity. Most important, this essay spotlights one female novelist by the pen name Dahlia, who was arguably the most promising female author of her generation as she wrote with exceptionally distinct female agency.

### Identifying Women Authors

It has been established that although the most prolific and innovative literary productions in Malay in the first half of the twentieth century came out of the Chinese segment of the Indies population, very few of the writers were women. My own accounting, based on surviving literary publications, estimates no more than 50 Chinese women authors—that is, those attributed with book publications—compared with approximately 800 Chinese male writers from the turn of the twentieth century until the end of the colonial period.<sup>1)</sup> One can speculate that the Confucian patriarchal bias was holding back education for Chinese girls in the Indies, or that as a migrant group, the Chinese population had a

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1) Claudine Salmon (1984, 152) estimates 30 women writers, including translators, compared with 800 men writers and translators.

demography that was naturally tilted toward the male population. Census data shows that even in 1930, Chinese males outnumbered their female counterparts 2 to 1.<sup>2)</sup> This factor, however, can be dismissed as most of the Chinese writers in the Indies were not first generation immigrants but were creolized settlers (*peranakan*) whose mother tongue was Malay rather than a Chinese dialect.<sup>3)</sup> Likewise, lack of education as a factor is only partly true, because from early on access to formal education was opened up to both Chinese boys and girls. Since its inception in 1901, the community-subsidized Tiong Hoa Hwee Koan (THHK) schools made rooms for Chinese girls to attend and study alongside boys.<sup>4)</sup> But while access to formal education was accorded to both sexes at the same time, it was the attitude toward education for girls that eventually factored into the gender imbalance in the field of literature.

The establishment of THHK schools was first and foremost intended for boys, as an investment for their social mobility, whereas for girls education was considered not imperative, even problematic. Even in the early years of the THHK school in Batavia, the first school of its kind, female students were admitted as a temporary solution before a special school exclusively for girls was created (Nio 1940, 17, 60). The girls were taught separately from the boys; and in addition to learning Mandarin, English, and other subjects, they learned practical domestic skills such as sewing, embroidering, and other crafts associated with women.<sup>5)</sup>

While access to education was open to Chinese girls in the Indies, the prevailing view in the early decades of the twentieth century was that education was not essential for their social mobility. While a boy needed formal education in order to acquire gainful

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2) Departement van Economische Zaken (1935), as footnoted in Nio (1940, 10).

3) I refrain from referring to the Chinese individuals under discussion here as *peranakan* (mixed blood, creole), as is commonly done in academic writings on the subject, simply because in their writings most Chinese authors refer to themselves and their community as “Tionghoa” (Chinese), rarely the more specific “*peranakan*”; and only infrequently, when alluding to recent immigrants, do they invoke the term *totok* (full-blooded). See, for instance, Kwee (1933), Yang (1937), Tjan (1941), or Kwee (1930), who uses both terms for contrast. Also, for the sake of authenticity, in this essay the original spellings of proper names are retained.

4) A Chinese community-subsidized school in Ambon administered by a European, Poi Tik Hak Tong, had close to perfect gender balance, with 46 female students in a total student body of 94; see Nio’s citation of a 1912 study by J. H. Abendanon on education in the Indies (Nio 1940, 116). A 1940 report by the Batavia Kong Koan archive gives a total number of 2,243 male students and 1,529 female students at various Chinese schools in Batavia (Govaars-Tjia 2005, 262).

5) In 1923 the school commission considered abandoning the segregated system for mixed-gender education (*coëducatie*) in order to keep costs down, as the number of female students was often too small to warrant separate classes. In the following year, Mandarin 1–3 classes were made coeducational; and in 1928, as a result of further cost rationalization, the school became largely coeducational (Nio 1940, 156–161).

employment, a girl was expected to secure her future by marrying well. Many of those who were fortunate enough to experience a school education in their youth would eventually give it up in their adolescent years, when they were withdrawn from school and began the period of customary seclusion (*pingitan*) until they were married. The practice and stringency of seclusion varied, from strict prison-like confinement to lax observance—freer association under parental supervision—depending on the parents' cultural orientation and the family's social standing. In this essay I refer to as “patriarchal” the complex economic arrangement in which the household, including daughters, is subsumed under the authority of the father as the ultimate proprietor (Engels 2004). In public, this arrangement translates into a social system in which the male figure holds authority over the female sex (Walby 1990; McClintock 1993). Under patriarchy, women serve as objects to be exchanged in order for men to build alliances or gain prestige, ultimately to consolidate the system (Levi-Strauss 1969; Rubin 1975; Irigaray 1985). As we shall see below, it was this patriarchal authority—and specifically its utilitarian approach toward marriage—that was challenged in the early twentieth century when Indies society transitioned to modernity.

Early on, until around the 1910s, parents who sent their daughters to school were counted as progressive, until the practice became commonplace and basic education such as reading and writing skills became a practical necessity even for those who did not expect to work in the formal sector. In the second and third decades of the twentieth century, a progressive (*moderen, madjoe*) parent would not subject his daughter to *pingitan* but would let her work in the formal sector outside the home and perhaps even allow her to choose her own marriage partner. This type of parent, however, was rare, and intergenerational clash between old-fashioned (*kolot*) parents and *moderen* daughters was a frequent theme in novels written by both male and female authors of these decades.

A parent's social standing could make a difference in terms of education for girls. Before the advent of THHK schools, families of means could afford to hire private European or Chinese tutors for their children or send them to schools that were generally reserved for Europeans but were open to children of privileged Chinese and native Indies families. Chinese parents of such an elite circle could be expected to have developed a more accepting attitude toward school education for daughters. Liem Titie Nio, one of the earliest Chinese women journalists in the Indies, who edited the women's column in the weekly *Tiong Hoa Wi Sien Po* (Chinese Reformist Newspaper)—founded in Bogor in 1906—appears to have come from such a privileged background (Salmon 1981). Another pioneering woman journalist, Lie On Moy, was also well connected: she was married to the prominent writer and publisher Lauw Giok Lan, with whom she collaborated in the publication of the weekly *Penghiboer* (Entertainer), which first appeared in

1913 (*ibid.*). Many of their publications do not survive for our examination, but Lauw's Malay translations of Dutch novels and plays signal the couple's extensive European education and early exposure to literary works in at least Dutch. One imagines the same case for Tan Tjeng Nio, the author (composer) of highly popular verses, compiled by Intje Ismail in *Sair Tiga Sobat Nona Boedjang* (Verses of Three Bachelorette Friends), which was published by Albrecht & Co. in 1897 and went to the seventh edition in 1924. The book-length poetry itself is so intriguing and provocative for its tone and subject matter—questioning the merit of marriage for women—that it warrants a separate discussion devoted solely to it.<sup>6)</sup>

At any rate, the proliferation of secular, Western-style education from the early twentieth century provided the material structure for the eventual emergence of Chinese women novelists in the Indies. Initially formal education created a gulf between generations, giving rise to the new social category of *kaem moeda* (the young generation)—educated youth whose worldview was radically different from their parents' (Shiraishi 1990). Education and exposure to emancipatory ideas accorded the young generation a new subjectivity—one that has been identified as uniquely modern—that is, a newly attained consciousness concerning their place in the formerly rigid social hierarchies. While superficially the qualities of being modern have been associated with a range of novel practices, from attending school to going to the cinema and wearing Western-style outfits, on a deeper, cognitive level, being modern signifies “the ability to achieve an identity as opposed to always being defined by identity given by birth” (Siegel 1997, 93). Exposed to new ideas, the young generation in the Indies challenged existing norms, including received notions of morality, marriage, and the family. While in earlier times marriage was largely an economic transaction between families, for the younger generation, compatibility and romantic love became essentials. School education also fostered divergent views and expectations regarding gender roles, a theme that is central in many novels penned by women authors.

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6) One can make the opposite argument here, that Tan might not have been educated at all and that since she was illiterate, her composition was published only after being transcribed by Ismail. In addition, the women characters in her poem do not suggest attributes usually associated with “modern” life such as attending school, reading books, or writing letters but the customary conjugal arrangements with suitors who are practically strangers, against which the women in the poem rebel (Tan 1899). The figure of the overprotective parent, ubiquitous in Sino-Malay romance novels, is curiously missing. The characters are women who are conditioned by custom to attach themselves to men, sometimes without ceremony or legal provisions; thus, the nuptial union can be dissolved at any time without legal ramifications. Miss A in the poem simply deserts her partner (*baba*) after being squeezed out of her possessions. The physical intimacy among the three girlfriends described in the long poem—involving kissing, lip-locking, cuddling, and frolicking in bed—suggests a more innocent time before heteronormativity became well established.

Identifying women writers and resurrecting them from the depths of historical obscurity is not an easy task, but it has been made possible by Claudine Salmon's influential work *Literature in Malay by the Chinese of Indonesia: A Provisional Annotated Bibliography* (1981), which to this day remains the most comprehensive reference on Sino-Malay literature. Salmon (1984) herself has done a remarkable review of Chinese women authors, whose works she divides into three broad periods based on their outlook toward women's emancipation: from the beginning until 1924, from 1925 to 1928, and from 1929 to 1942. While my discussion on women writers does not subscribe to Salmon's periodization, it relies on her works in identifying especially writers who were not novelists or translators, in other words, those who did not leave behind published books. Countless essays and short stories penned by women writers graced popular Sino-Malay magazines, especially because many novelists were also freelance journalists or launched their writing career in journalism. It will take an extensive collaborative effort to compile and study the materials scattered in various magazines, an endeavor Faye Yik-Wei Chan (1995) has initiated with an examination of two Sino-Malay magazines, the weekly *Panorama* (1926–31) and the women's monthly *Maandblad Istri* (1935–42). Tineke Hellwig (2012, 151–179) retraces Salmon's review of Chinese women authors, drawing attention to a selection of texts that reflect women's self-definition. While my discussion covers much of the same territory as Salmon's and Hellwig's articles, what each of us finds to be noteworthy and the conclusions we draw vary considerably. In addition, this essay problematizes the question of voice, specifically gendered voice, and to a good extent concentrates on one author, Dahlia.

The most straightforward way to identify the women authors is by name. Names with the feminine qualifier "Nio" can be safely assumed to be women, such as the above-mentioned Tan Tjeng Nio and Liem Titie Nio.<sup>7</sup> Others used female honorifics, such as Njonja (Mrs.) The Tiang Ek, Miss Kin, Miss Huang, and Miss I. N. Liem—seemingly the female counterparts of the many "Monsieurs" among pen names used by male writers, such as Monsieur d'Amour, Monsieur Novel, Monsieur Adonis, Monsieur Hsu, and Monsieur Kekasih.

Gender identification becomes trickier when it comes to pseudonyms. The "Njonja" and "Nona" in pen names such as "Njonja Pasar Baroe" and "Nona Glatik" no longer function as female honorifics but as synonyms of married and unmarried women—therefore, "Dame of Pasar Baroe" and "Songbird Girl." The use of the non-honorific "Nona"

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7) Indies-born Chinese women were given names with the (Hokkien) suffix "nio" (lady) to mark their status as free subjects, distinguished from their mothers who might be local slave women (Yuan 2002). Eventually, the name "Nio" simply became a common feminine name rather than a legal or social marker.

in pen names was especially popular early on in the poetry genre. Nona Glatik, Si Nonah Boto (Cute Damsel), Si Nona Boedjang (Maiden Girl), and Si Nona Manis (Charming Damsel) were all authors of poetry books from the turn of the twentieth century and the 1920s. Though Salmon (1984, 152) refers to them as women poets, many of their compositions do not indicate that the texts were written by women. Si Nona Boedjang's *Boekoe Pantoen Karang-karangan* (Book of Motley Verses, 1891), for instance, contains a collection of poems commemorating the eruption of Krakatoa and the incident of murder and robbery that took the life of the Resident of Tamboen. The collection also carries social *pantoen*, the traditional Malay verses, addressed to bachelorettes. In the same year, Si Nonah Boto published *Rodja Melati* (Jasmine Flower Strings), containing, among others, conventional *pantoen* of courtship, which likewise call out to an unnamed "girl" (*nona*). In both cases, the narrator (enunciator) takes the voice of a bachelor and the authors might not be women.

One encounters the same problem with other feminine pen names, such as Boenga Mawar (Rose), Melati-gambir (Jasmine), Venus, Mimi, and Madonna—all of whom appear to be male writers. Flowers and plants were especially popular for noms de plume, including, among women writers, Aster and Dahlia. While Mimi (a.k.a. Lim Kim Lip) and Madonna (a.k.a. Oen Hong Seng) were known to be male writers—their real identities were not concealed—one can only speculate about the others based on the tenor and temperament of their works. The voice in Boenga Mawar's poems, compiled in *Boekoe Pantoen Pengiboer Hati* (Book of Verses to Please the Heart, 1902), is also masculine, referring to self interchangeably in the first person narrator "I" (*saja*) and the third person "*baba*" (term of address for creolized Chinese men). In another case, Venus wrote original novels as early as in the 1910s, when there did not seem to be Chinese women writing novels in the Indies. In the long introduction to *Tjerita Gadis jang Genit, atawa Pengaroenja Oewang* (Story of a Coquette, or the Influence of Money, 1921), Venus criticizes parents who use daughters as "bait" to lure wealthy suitors in order for the family to secure a comfortable life. Though seemingly critical of many parents' materialistic tendency, Venus's stories do not quite side with women either; in fact, they portray women in a negative light. Poesoet, the titular coquette in *Tjerita Gadis jang Genit*, endorses her parents' scheme to get her to marry the son of a Chinese officer, while the family's materialistic and dishonest dispositions are blamed on the mother. It is highly unlikely that Venus was a woman author.

This phenomenon of male writers assuming feminine pen names is indicative of the significance of gendered voice. Si Nonah Botoh, Si Nona Boedjang, Si Nona Manis, Nona Glatik, Boenga Mawar, Venus, Mimi, and Madonna were all (or likely) pseudonyms of male authors. The opposite case, where female writers took on masculine pseudonyms,

has not been discovered among Indies Chinese women novelists, and appears to be uncommon. This pattern distinguished them somewhat from Victorian women novelists, who used pseudonyms to protect their reputation. In a society where the public sphere was still largely a male domain, exposing one's inner thoughts to the reading public, though clothed as fiction, risked being seen as unseemly, unladylike. The Brontë sisters and Mary Ann Evans (a.k.a. George Eliot) used masculine names in part to avoid personal publicity, and so that their writings would be taken seriously by a reading public that still expected "serious" works to be written by men. The Brontë sisters did not want to reveal their gender because, as Charlotte Brontë explained, "without at that time suspecting that our mode of writing and thinking was not what is called 'feminine'—we had a vague impression that authoresses are liable to be looked on with prejudice" (Bloom 2008, 8). These novelists foreshadowed J. K. Rowling, author of the best-selling Harry Potter series, who abbreviated her name to avoid being typecast by her gender and shunned by potential boy readers (Kennedy 2013).

What we see among authors in the Indies was rather different. While some women authors concealed their identity by using pseudonyms (e.g., Aster, Dahlia, Mrs. Leader) or abbreviations (Miss Kin, Miss Huang, Miss I. N. Liem), they generally did not conceal their gender. In her short memoir, Tjan Kwan Nio (1992) confesses to having used the pseudonym "Madame H" for what would be her first novel, *Satoe Orang Sial* (A Hapless Person, 1940), before being coaxed by the publisher into using her real name. While I agree with Salmon (1984) that women authors used pseudonyms to protect their reputation, in my view their gender had become an asset in the literary publishing industry at this time and was one of the reasons why a number of male authors published under feminine pseudonyms.

Leafing through popular literary journals like *Penghidoepan* (Life) and *Tjerita Roman* (Romance Stories), it does not escape one's notice that many of the images and illustrations on the cover as well as inside the volumes feature women, often portrayed with "modern" accoutrements. On the covers of *Penghidoepan* especially, the woman does not gaze directly at the reader. She does not peer at the male reader to elicit masculine gaze, but projects herself in a way that draws non-erotic gaze.<sup>8)</sup> The woman on the cover usually looks pensive, as if absorbed in her own world. She is contemplative more than inviting; or she invites a different kind of response, one of identification more than erotic

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8) Laura Mulvey (1989) contends that the male gaze in cinematic representations turns women into erotic objects, both for the heterosexual male characters on screen and for the audience they represent. The structure of gaze is indeed constitutive of power relationship in that the object of gaze loses some degree of autonomy (Hall 1997), even becoming "fixed" by the gazer (Fanon 1967).



Fig. 1 *Penghidoepan* Cover Illustration 1930

Source: KITLV digital books

attraction. She appears to stand as a mirror, calling out to educated (thus, literate) women who recognize themselves in her image.

The January 1930 issue of *Penghidoepan* announced an essay contest to explicate the journal's new cover illustration, which was to be used for one whole year.<sup>9)</sup> Judging from the journal's name ("Life") and contents thus far, the editor notes, readers must already have had some idea about its mission, which was to draw attention to matters essential in life and to present them in the form of stories. The new cover illustration was supposed to reflect this mission. It portrays a woman, a child, a wick lamp, an hourglass, two volumes of science books, an ink bottle, a quill, and a spooled scroll. Each of these items is supposed to relate to life, and readers are invited to submit their interpretations (see Fig. 1).

Until its abrupt termination in February 1942 *Penghidoepan* would use cover illustrations of the same theme (see Figs. 2 and 3), with small alterations such as an image of a grown man (representing the husband figure) being added to the original young mother

9) Later the journal cover appears to change mid-year, that is, every July. Many of the covers were illustrated by Tan Liep Poen, with symbols consistently denoting the journal's mission "to enlighten, to educate, and to provide worthy examples through stories that are affordable to all groups and ranks [*deradjat*]." See the editor's note in *Penghidoepan* 104 (1933). Tan Liep Poen, a Malang-based illustrator, also sketched covers for *Tjerita Roman*.



Fig. 2 *Penghidoepan* Cover Illustration 1933  
Source: KITLV digital books

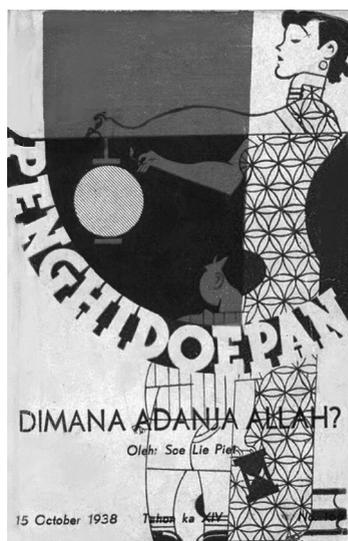


Fig. 3 *Penghidoepan* Cover Illustration 1938  
Source: KITLV digital books

and boy toddler. The author Kwee Teng Hin, commenting on the cover illustration in his novel *Maen Komedi* (Play-Acting, 1933), sees it as a metaphor for the family: the husband figure leads the way by holding up the lamp, while the wife, gripping the quill, chronicles their life story. It is obvious in these illustrations that the woman is the central figure, surrounded by books, a blank scroll, a pen, a child, and sometimes a man. In each of these scenes, it is the woman who does the writing.

It appears that there was a consistent effort to court women readers on the part of popular literary journals and publishers. This was done by featuring stories where the central characters were women (which had been the case even in the 1910s), by drawing attention to issues and challenges women identified as uniquely theirs, such as arranged marriage, formal education, and career—and naturally by featuring women authors whenever possible. In the introduction to Tjan Kwan Nio's *Satoe Orang Sial* (1940), the editor of *Tjerita Roman* expresses delight that the journal has accepted her manuscript “after not publishing any composition by women authors in a while.” The previous work by a woman author it had published was Gadis Goenoeng's *Anak Haram* (Bastard Child, 1938),<sup>10</sup>

10) One cannot be entirely certain of the author's gender. Gadis Goenoeng (Mountain Maiden) could have been a male author using a feminine pseudonym. The tone of the novel, however, suggests that it might have been penned by a woman.

while in 1937 it had published Yang Lioe's *Pelita Penghidoepan* (Beacon of Life) and Roro Paloepe's *Janie*, and in 1936 it had published Rosita's translation of the Chinese opera *See Siang Kie*. The journal did not publish any works by women authors in 1934 and 1935, save for the novels by a male author writing under the pen name "Madonna." Seen in this light, it is not surprising that there were men authors using feminine pseudonyms, but not the reverse. This begs the question: Do women and men write differently?

Extensive inquiries into the nature of the sexes have shown that very little of what constitutes "man" or "woman" is inherently biological and that it has more to do with social constructs (Wittig 1981; Alcoff 1988). We know now that biological sex and social gender are two dissimilar things, and what distinguishes a female from a male author is to a great extent predetermined by social conventions and therefore mere echoes of the structure in and by which they are (en)gendered. Gayle Rubin (1975) has referred to this structure as the "sex/gender system," which is a set of arrangements by which a society transforms the biological sex into human activity and in this manner reproduces gender conventions. Judith Butler (1990; 1993) goes so far as to equate gender with performativity—one taking on and acting out a set of prescribed attributes and practices associated with a gender. One important and easily identifiable gender attribute is no doubt naming, usually distinguished along the lines of feminine and masculine. Given the literary conventions of the time, when some degree of autobiographical affinity between authors and their writings was often assumed, the use of feminine pen names was no doubt to invoke and accord feminine qualities to one's writing. The artistic ruse of taking on the feminine façade is a first step in the authorial attempt to speak in the feminine voice and appeal to potential women readers.

In fact, the romance genre itself, being the most common genre featured in popular magazines, seemed to demand women authors, if not the feminine voice.<sup>11</sup> It has been noted that women were the subject of literary writings in the Indies from the early part of the twentieth century (Hellwig 1994a; 1994b; Chandra 2011). But while early novels tend to be antagonistic toward women, written in the tradition of the Decadent literary movement (Pierrot 1981; Chandra 2011), from the late 1920s one detects a gradual shift in tone coming from a younger generation of writers who were more exposed to ideas of equality between the sexes. Romance novels continued to feature female protagonists,

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11) Such an association of gender and genre was not entirely new. While romance novels were fast becoming a "women's genre," crime and detective fiction were still considered men's genres. Louisa May Alcott wrote potboilers as "A. M. Barnard" but published romance and children's stories using her real name. Traditionally, male writers in Bali are rarely known by name as they purport to represent a "female" perspective. In Malay oral tradition, an "author" is supposed to be able to assume many different voices. I am grateful to Barbara Andaya for pointing out comparable practices in indigenous literary traditions in Southeast Asia.

and women readers continued to find in the heroines reflections of their own thoughts and desires. However, among the younger and more progressive women and men authors, the focus of conflict gradually shifted to the Chinese parents and customs, which were seen as rigid, irrational, and unfair to women. The dearth of women contributors, combined with the growing number of women readers whom romance publishers liked to court, might have motivated male authors to publish under feminine pseudonyms.

### What Women Wrote

Up until the 1920s, women novelists appear to be nonexistent. The women writers were primarily poets—such as Tan Tjeng Nio and Lioe Gwat Kiauw Nio—or translators of Chinese works—such as Lie Keng Nio, Lie Loan Lian Nio, and Lie Djien Nio, who translated Chinese detective stories in the 1920s, before writing original novels and short stories in the following decade.

Women novelists began to emerge in the middle of the 1920s. Chan Leang Nio's novel of a family drama set in Soerabaja, *Tamper Moekanja Sendiri* (To Slap One's Own Face, 1925), was featured in the first year of the literary monthly *Penghidoepan*, an extraordinary feat for a woman, considering that popular journals such as *Penghidoepan* and *Tjerita Roman* featured only approximately one woman writer per year.<sup>12)</sup> Despite Chan's accomplishment, the voice of the woman protagonist was indistinguishable from the voices created by male novelists. It is worth noting, however, that the moral of Chan's story at least sides with the character of the ill-treated wife, Tin Nio, whose domineering husband ultimately regrets his mistakes and begs for her forgiveness. In the novel, the city of Soerabaja and especially the Chinese community's penchant for gossip is described as an oppressive force in the life of Chinese women: Tin Nio must relocate to Medan in order to start anew after a failed marriage. An original composition by Kwee Ay Nio of Semarang, *Pertjintaan jang Sedjati* (True Romance), was featured in *Penghidoepan* in 1927; but, like Chan's, Kwee's story is unremarkable in that neither the characters nor the narrator conveys a perceptible woman's voice or a woman-centered outlook on life. The story's rags-to-riches motif is presented in an uncomplicated way, with a clear line separating good and evil, like in traditional didactic tales.

Likewise, the novel by The Liep Nio, *Siksa'an Allah* (Affliction from God, 1931), was written in the mold created by her male predecessors. A native of Probolinggo, The

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12) Lie Djien Nio's translation of a detective story set among the Chinese migrant community in New York City's Chinatown, titled *Huang Jing Hoa* (1925), graced the 17th and 18th issues of *Penghidoepan*.

also wrote short stories, poems, and essays for the magazines *Liberty* and *Djawa Tengah Review* (Salmon 1981). The opening scene of *Siksa'an Allah*, where we find the despondent protagonist cuddling and caressing her cat, is unusually tender and tactile in temperament, which at first sight appears to distinguish The from her male counterparts. This promising early signal—that a woman author might in fact write differently from men—proves to be unfounded when the woman protagonist Liang Nio slides into a downward spiral after opting to pursue romance over her filial duty by eloping. Her lover, a spoiled rich brat, proves to be an indolent man who turns abusive when pressed into difficult circumstances. Liang Nio eventually sees what her parents have seen in her lover—an unscrupulous man—but this realization comes belatedly. She dies in agony, and the story repeats when her husband coerces their adolescent daughter Liesje into becoming the mistress of a wealthy old man, setting up an Anna Karenina-like ending with Liesje in front of an oncoming train. Rather than conjuring up a world where women make defensible choices, The Liep Nio seems to confirm the prevalent view that women act on passion, not reason, and as a consequence bring disgrace to their family.

A novel written under the pen name “Gadis Goenoeng” takes issue with the prevailing practice of arranged marriage. *Anak Haram* spotlights the enduring and tragic consequence of elopement through the figure of Lian Nio, who is born of eloping youths, given up for adoption, and lives with the social stigma of an illegitimate child. Lian Nio moves to the city of Soerabaja, in part to track down her origins, in part to escape her disgraced status. When later she finds love with the son of a prominent family, his father predictably disapproves, because her obscure background will stain his family’s high standing. Heartbroken, Lian Nio returns to Bangil and dies of heart failure, thus replicating her mother’s fate of dying young at the beginning of the novel. Like the character Liang Nio in The’s *Siksa'an Allah*, at first glance Lian Nio’s sad lot appears to be a persistent punishment for her parents’ disregard of their filial duty. Hellwig (2012, 175) reads the story along this line, that it sends a message to readers “not to be blinded by modern liberties.” My take on it is different, though: the author sympathizes with Lian Nio and, voiced through various characters in the story, questions the oppressiveness of a Chinese custom that takes its toll on an innocent life. As the male protagonist in the story observes, Chinese society (*siahwee*) holds men in higher regard and treats them better than it does women. Such sympathetic views of women notwithstanding, Gadis Goenoeng’s protagonist fails to challenge the status quo or to offer an alternative scenario that is more equitable for a woman in her situation.

Curiously, a few years before *Anak Haram* appeared, from roughly 1930, the Sino-Malay literary scene witnessed the appearance of novels with notable female agency written by Indies Chinese women. This group included novelists such as Khoe Trima

Nio (Aster), Tan Lam Nio (Dahlia), Miss Kin, Yang Lioe, and the above-mentioned Lie Djien Nio (Mrs. Leader), some of whom counted themselves as women activists and journalists in addition to romance writers. Their novels feature increasingly autonomous female protagonists who are intelligent, outspoken, culturally sophisticated, and self-reliant. They are autonomous in that they exist with a clear sense of their own fulfillment, not for the sake of the family or the husband, and therefore not as an accessory to men's happiness. These characters are far removed from the male-centered universe of conventional novels such as Kwee Tek Hoay's *Boenga Roos dari Tjikembang* (The Rose of Tjikembang, 1927), where wives and concubines persist or perish for the sake of the male characters' happiness.

Khoe Trima Nio, writing under the nom de plume "Aster," was a contributor to the popular literary and cultural magazine *Liberty* and a member of the Indonesian Chinese Women Association, an organization launched in 1928 by another woman journalist, Hong Le Hoa (Salmon 1981; Sidharta 1992). Her novel *Apa Moesti Bikin?* (What to Do?), which featured in *Penghidoepan* (February 1930), revolves around the single-mother character Hiang Nio who has to raise her daughter alone after a failed marriage. Estranged from her gambling addict and uncaring husband, Hiang Nio makes the radical choice of widowhood, deserting Tjilatjap—where her husband lives—and starting anew with her infant daughter in Tegal under a new identity as Lim Kay Nio. A wealthy old widow sympathizes with her lot and helps her get back on her feet; she eventually becomes a respectable dressmaker in Tegal, financially stable enough to send her only daughter to Shanghai to pursue a bachelor's degree. The women characters in Khoe's story support each other, a motif frequently found in writings by women (Hellwig 2012); the omniscient narrator sees and speaks from their perspectives and stresses the importance of formal education for women as a condition to becoming self-reliant. The novel's happy ending distinguishes it from Koo Han Siok's novel on a similar theme, *Kawin Soedara Sendiri* (Married to One's Own Sibling), published two years earlier.

The February 1930 issue of *Penghidoepan* also features a second, shorter story penned by "LSG of Tjilatjap," whom Salmon identifies as Khoe's other pen name, and the residency in Tjilatjap appears to confirm this. Unlike the main story, however, the second composition is told from the point of view of a young man first-person narrator whose romantic relationship with a girl falls victim to her "rigid, old-fashioned" parents. Though assuming a male voice, the narrator nonetheless faults "the common practice of Chinese people with adolescent-age daughters, whom they mercilessly place in prison alias *pingit*," from which marriage is the only (and inevitable) escape (LSG 1930, 66). Speaking through Kim Lian, the young male narrator, Khoe writes against the patriarchal custom that deprived young women of basic freedoms and severely limited their life's choices.

If Khoe's character Hiang Nio refuses to remain in an oppressive marriage, the adolescent heroine in Miss Kin's novel, *Doenia Rasanja Antjoer!* (Like the World Is Shattering!, 1931), rebels against arranged marriage. Tjio Hong Nio, the protagonist, is in a romantic relationship with a boy from a humble background, Lim Tjin Seng, but her parents refuse to acknowledge this and instead accept the proposal from Tan Giau Siang, son of a former Chinese officer (*kapitan*), to make Hong Nio his second wife. Feeling pressured and powerless to go against her father's wishes, and lacking the courage or resources to break ties with her parents, Hong Nio resorts to hanging herself; she would rather die than break her promise to Tjin Seng and become a second wife. Fortunately, she is rescued in time and her parents finally relent. The novel expresses surprisingly progressive views about gender equality, properly written by a woman. In objecting to her parents' denial of her own will and desires, Hong Nio seems to speak for women of her generation. Her insistence that a woman must be able to choose her own life partner because she is the one who has to go through the marriage signals a shift in the conception of marital union—from an affair of the family to the two individuals forming a nuclear unit. Hong Nio's objection to being made a second wife is even more striking as it stems from a firm conviction in the basic equality between the sexes. A second wife, Hong Nio concurs, is essentially a prostitute because, deprived of legal protections and stability, she is at the mercy of her master, whom she must constantly please. Such an arrangement renders a second wife no more than an instrument (*pekakas*) for the man's pleasure, much more so if she is acquired in exchange for money. By deciding to take her own life rather than submit to her father's demand, Hong Nio seems to convey that a woman holds the ultimate authority over her own life.

Yang Lioe, the author of *Pasir Poetih* (1936) and *Pelita Penghidoepan* (Beacon of Life, 1937), appears to be not an actual name, but the pen name ("Willow Tree") of a woman writer. She also wrote for *Liberty*, a journal that was quite progressive in its time and was closely connected in terms of personnel with both *Penghidoepan* and *Tjerita Roman*. Her novel *Pasir Poetih* features two adolescent sisters who, orphaned and impoverished by the death of their father, go to live with their miserly maternal uncle in Pasir-Poetih, a tea estate in West Java. Long before that, we are told, their mother was disowned by her family for eloping with their father, a transgression for which she allegedly was disinherited. It is revealed later, however, that the girls' maternal grandfather had actually passed on his assets to their mother, making them the legitimate beneficiaries of the estate. But their unscrupulous uncle has another plan: to arrange for the elder sister, Kiok Lan, to marry his son Giok Hoo, so he does not have to surrender the estate to the girls. Kiok Lan rejects this arrangement outright, despite her real feelings for the sympathetic Giok Hoo, just so she can disprove her imperious uncle about "woman being a

compliant creature, can be pushed around” (Yang 1936, 75), especially in a matter so important as marriage. The characterization of the sisters—well educated and comfortable with modern ways of thinking—seems to be indicative of Yang, the author herself. Both Kiok Lan and her sister, Betty, believe that persons who have been exposed to Western education must necessarily “have a modern outlook and therefore good manners,” meaning that they treat women with respect. The novel is rather Austen-esque in temperament, specifically *Pride and Prejudice*; in this case, barriers to the protagonists’ romantic union finally fall after Kiok Lan overcomes her pride and Giok Hoo proves that he does not share his father’s prejudice. Yang’s other novel, *Pelita Penghidoepan*, is similar in nature, with an equally strong and proud female protagonist.

In terms of characterization, the protagonist in Lie Djien Nio’s novel *Soeami?* (Husband?, 1933) is perhaps the most “modern” among the heroines. A translator of Chinese detective stories early in her career, Lie also wrote articles for *Liberty*, *Sin Bin*, and *Panorama*. She was such an established name that her translations and original works appeared in reputable journals such as *Tjerita Pilian*, *Penghidoepan*, and *Tjerita Roman*—though admittedly, her translation works were poorly done, quite different from her original composition in the 1930s. In terms of storyline, *Soeami?*, which was published under the pseudonym “Mrs. Leader,” offers nothing new or remarkable. It relates the story of a wife who goes through the pain of neglect and eventual abandonment by a straying husband, left to raise her children alone. What sets the wife figure, Lie Tjoe, apart from other contemporary romance heroines is that she is a journalist. She has all the credentials of a “modern” woman: she is a graduate of the European Elementary School (Europeesche Lagere School), she has been brought up in the Dutch ways, she speaks Dutch with her friends and associates, and she is comfortable associating with men.<sup>13</sup> Unlike many of her contemporaries, Lie Tjoe marries by choice, not through an arrangement. Her husband, Ho An, too, is a modern man who never inhibits her professional work; this was an important reason why she chose him. Her goals in life are to become a famous author, like the Dutch woman writer and journalist Anna de Savornin, and to be happily married. At times, however, she wonders whether these goals are compatible. As a journalist, Lie Tjoe writes about the fate of Indies Chinese women and wives; and being a married woman, her writings resonate with many women readers. She is a “genuine” (*soenggoean*) woman journalist, we are told, unlike the “pretenders” (*tetiron*), presumably men journalists writing under female pseudonyms. Like the

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13) The second and third names of Chinese persons in the novels are spelled inconsistently with and without a hyphen. For consistency, I use the unhyphenated form; in this case, Lie-tjoe becomes Lie Tjoe.

character Lie Tjoe, who speaks through her writings, the author Lie Djien Nio appears to speak through Lie Tjoe; at times their voices seem to conflate. Both seem to ask, “What is the meaning of husband?” as the title suggests, and concur that a husband must be more than just a material provider. Having had a marriage of choice, Lie Tjoe longs for a fuller connection, which is better fulfilled by her old friend and fellow journalist Soey Mo. Curiously, despite her husband’s infidelity, Lie Tjoe does not see it as a license for her to pursue another love, insisting on her principle of boundaries as a married woman. Her faith in it pays off when in the end, betrayed by his mistress, penniless Ho An returns and pleads for her forgiveness. The story ends happily with their reunion and Lie Tjoe gradually withdrawing from journalism in order to focus on being a housewife. Her own question seems to be answered: that for women, professional career and happy marriage are mutually exclusive, and that the latter must always be prioritized—a surprisingly conservative moral from such an unconventional heroine. Lie Djien Nio perhaps signaled this in her choices of pseudonyms: both “Njonja The Tiang Ek” and “Mrs. Leader” mark her status as a married woman, in addition to subsuming her identity under her husband’s. One might say that even in her professional life, she was defined by her marriage.

What the narrator in *Soeami?* has hinted, however, is relevant in this inquiry concerning female subjectivity: that there might be elementary differences in the way “genuine” women write, because while gender is performative, it is performed on a daily basis and is constantly reproduced by each performance. There is thus an expectable difference between men writers who assume the feminine voice only in imaginative writings and women writers who speak based on experience. A “genuine” woman writer lives her life performing the conventions of her gender, making her representation of women relatively more perceptive and persuasive. It resonates with women readers who are likewise identified. These assumptions, of course, overlook the diversity of women’s experiences in terms of class or ethnicity but might be indicative of the demographic segment that produced and consumed Malay romance novels in the Indies.

Nevertheless, as reflections of (as well as reactions to) the male-centered structure that shaped them, the literary works penned by women authors do not always feature an autonomous woman protagonist or a heroine with strong female agency. The heroines created by the male novelist Madonna are by and large more emancipated compared with those in novels by female authors such as The Liep Nio, Kwee Ay Nio, even Lie Djien Nio. As late as in the latter half of the 1930s, Phoa Gin Hian translated Chinese romance stories that cautioned against Western education for young women, the most conservative of which is *Pembalesan Dendam Hati* (Revenge of the Heart, 1935). The aforementioned Tjan Kwan Nio, who emerged in the early 1940s, likewise produced novels with

rather conventional women characters, including an unexpected rehash of the femme fatale motif in *Bidadari Elmaoet* (Angel of Doom, 1941).

Despite the novel's conservative moral, the narrator in *Soeami*? can perhaps furnish us with a workable parameter of what distinguishes female from male authors: the relative capacity to resonate among women readers, the ability to perceptively communicate the experiences, feelings, thoughts, and desires that women in general identify with. A female writer is presumably better equipped to represent these qualities than a male writer, or a man writing in the feminine voice for that matter. And it is generally true that women authors were more enthusiastic in taking up a certain set of issues, such as marriage, education, career, and equality between the sexes. These issues were defined by the boundaries of the real women's world, making their writings less commercially oriented than those produced by men (Salmon 1984, 169). The stories and the heroines they paint tend to have a broad authorial brush, suggesting a close proximity to their own experiences as women. The most original and compelling author in exploring "women's issues" is indeed a woman novelist by the pen name "Dahlia," to whom we now turn.

## Dahlia

Dahlia is the nom de plume of Tan Lam Nio, a writer who in her early 20s produced novels with the most distinct female agency. Tan was born in 1909 in Soekaradja, West Java, and in 1929 married a journalist and writer by the name of Oen Hong Seng, who in the same year served briefly as director of the monthly *Boelan Poernama* (Full Moon) (Salmon 1981, 273–274). At the age of 20, she was not quite a young bride; her contemporary, the novelist Tjan Kwan Nio (1992, 159), described the age of 18 as preferable for marriage but was herself wedded at the age of 16. Though it appears that Tan began her writing career only after marrying Oen, their book-length works show that Tan actually published ahead of her husband. They appear to have resided in West Java early on, and their works between 1930 and 1931 appeared in *Goedang Tjerita* (Warehouse of Stories) and *Boelan Poernama*, both Bandoeng-based periodicals. From 1932 on, their writings appeared in the Soerabaja-based *Tjerita Roman*, *Penghidoepan*, and *Liberty*—all of which were comparatively better known. While Oen, who wrote under the pen name "Madonna," began as a translator of European and Chinese works, Tan appears to have started out as a full-fledged novelist. Later on Oen would follow in the footsteps of his accomplished wife in writing about Chinese marriage customs, women's rights, and interracial romance.

Before her life was cut short at the age of 24 by a sudden illness,<sup>14</sup> Tan wrote—among other novels—*Kapan Sampe di Poentjaknja, atawa Tjinta dan Pengorbanan* (Upon Reaching the Top, or Love and Sacrifice, 1930), *Hidoep dalem Gelombang Air Mata* (Living in the Tide of Tears, 1932), *Kasopanan Timoer* (Eastern Civility, 1932), *Doerinja Pernikahan* (Matrimonial Thorns, 1933), and *Oh, Nasib!* (Oh, Destiny!, 1933), in addition to short stories published in *Liberty*.<sup>15</sup> The last two novels were published posthumously; her husband wrote an introduction to the latter to explain that the manuscript had been completed only days before Tan fell ill. In her last work published by *Tjerita Roman*—her second in as many years—a short obituary from the editor likens “Dahlia” to a blossoming flower, seemingly at the peak of her literary career. It refers to her as a diligent and loyal staff member (*pembantoe*) and comments on the popularity of her novels, especially among women readers. It appears that Tan had become a freelance contributor to the journal by the time of her passing, surely a notable achievement for a woman in the male-dominant world of literary publishing.

What is remarkable about Tan’s novels is the audaciousness of her heroines. Her stories explore a range of topics related to the position of women in Chinese society—from education, romance, and marriage to professional career—and with the exception of her last novel, they are anchored by a female character who is intelligent, confident, outspoken, well educated, and fiercely independent.<sup>16</sup> While education for young girls was a contentious issue in the preceding decades since the establishment of THHK schools, in the 1930s the battlefield for women’s emancipation had shifted to issues concerning economic autonomy and women’s right to work outside the domestic sphere and in the formal sector. The customary practice of arranged marriage remained an issue but was increasingly contested from the point of view of the daughter and her supposed

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14) The introduction to *Doerinja Pernikahan* notes that Tan passed away at the age of 24, but *Penghidoepan* 104 notes that she passed away only two weeks after completing the manuscript of *Oh, Nasib!*, or days after falling ill. Her husband Oen Hong Seng’s introduction to the novel notes that Tan fell ill in September 1932, thus she was not yet 24 at the time of her passing.

15) *Hidoep dalem Gelombang Air Mata* was published by the lesser-known agency Dj. M. Arifin in Medan in 1932, and we have not been able to locate a copy of it. This and Tan’s short stories, such as “Soeda Kasep” (Too Late) (*Liberty* 53 [August 1932]) and “Pertimbangan Adil” (Fair Judgement) (*Liberty* 55 [October 1932]) were not available during the writing of this essay and therefore cannot be but glaring omissions in the discussion of Dahlia and her works.

16) Tan’s very last novel, *Oh Nasib!* (1933), was completed only days before she fell ill and was published posthumously. It features an educated but very young and frail girl protagonist who is orphaned by the death of her mother and subsequently suffers, living under a jealous and domineering stepmother. Tan herself appears to have left behind a toddler when she passed away in late 1932. The novel is not only uncharacteristic of Tan but also lacks thematic coherence. In his introduction to the novel, her husband Oen Hong Seng confesses to being puzzled by the story and wonders whether it was written with a foreshadowing unconscious that Tan herself would soon be gone.

right to pursue personal happiness, and away from the Confucian moral of filial duty. Tan's novels *Kapan Sampe di Poentjaknja* and *Kasopanan Timoer* in particular take up these issues and reformulate them in remarkably progressive frameworks and language.

*Kapan Sampe di Poentjaknja* might well have been Tan's first novel. It features the enduring theme of father-daughter confrontation over her matrimonial choice (or lack thereof). This subject has been dealt with in countless ways, yet it continues to be the novel's most featured theme, popular among Chinese and non-Chinese readers alike. Here, the affluent Nora Tio befriends and develops romantic feelings for her uncle's office employee (*pegawe*) Tjeng Giok, who comes from a humble background. The attraction is mutual, but Nora unwittingly also attracts the attentions of Henri Tjoe, the son of a wealthy family who subsequently sends a marriage proposal to her parents. To Nora's indignation, her father wants her to break off her relationship with Tjeng Giok and accept Henri's proposal. When pressured, Nora absconds to Batavia to join Tjeng Giok, who earlier moved to the city for a more promising employment.

Unlike most heroines in contemporary Malay novels, Nora is very assertive. She is confident, knows what she wants, and sets out to accomplish her goals. She is intrigued by Tjeng Giok, but he is especially reserved with her because of his position as a staff member in her uncle's workshop. So she takes the initiative in approaching him and nudges him to confess that he, too, has feelings for her. In their relationship, she appears to be the one in charge, as when she drives and he sits in the passenger seat when they go to places. When their relationship meets obstacles, due to her father's objections to Tjeng Giok's lower social standing, she challenges the timid Tjeng Giok to prove himself worthy of her affection. He leaves Semarang for Batavia to work at a European firm that pays sufficiently well for him to start saving for their future. Nora talks back to her father, an act that is regarded as especially disrespectful according to the Confucian moral of filial piety. When her father declares that there is a "big possibility" that he would accept the marriage proposal from Henri Tjoe, Nora retorts, "On what basis do you say that? Do you know that there is just as big a possibility that I turn it down?" (Dahlia 1930, 61).<sup>17</sup>

Nora turns the notions of duty and propriety on their heads. Not only does she reverse conventional gender roles in courtship, she rejects the idea of filial duty. She accuses her father—who covets the prestige his family would gain through a marriage connection with the wealthy Tjoe family—of being "blinded [*silu*] by riches," of selling (*djoeal*) her, and of using her as capital (*poko*) to acquire material security and add pres-

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17) In accordance with cultural norms, Nora does not address her father directly in the second person singular "you" but in the deferential third person "papa."

tige to his name. Reminded that in the Chinese tradition she is under her parents' authority until she is married, Nora asks whether marriage is essentially a trade transaction (*saroepa perdagangan*). It used to be proper for parents to demand from a daughter her self-sacrifice for the benefit of the entire family, in this case for Nora to prioritize the overall welfare of her family over her personal desires. This is understood as her filial duty to her parents, as a form of "repayment" to them for bringing her into the world and nurturing her to adulthood. But by Nora, this well-established concept is made foreign and the duty is unacknowledged for the simple reason that she, like any other child, never asked to be born. What comes to the fore instead is a new notion of a woman's inalienable right to self-determination, including her right to pursue personal happiness, disconnected from that of her family. In other words, she insists on the right to exist for her own gratification, not as an accessory to her family's happiness. This new concept of rights cancels out any form of filial piety that is predicated on self-sacrifice. When pressured by her father to comply with his choice of suitor, Nora warns him "not to treat her like those girls who do not understand the meaning of liberty [*kamerdika'an*] and women's rights [*haknja saorang prampoean*]" (*ibid.*, 95). Her exposure to these ideas presumably shields her from being subjected to a condition of unfreedom, in this case her father overriding her own free will. In the novel, his stubborn insistence on parental authority is characterized as an existential violation, a "rape" (*perkosahan*) of her basic liberty, giving her the moral justification to flee to Batavia.

In the story, Nora's school education is credited as being responsible for her values, the yardstick with which she measures what is proper and improper, as well as the ultimate resource to becoming self-reliant. Her Western name in some ways signals her cultural dispositions; her real name is Tio Kian Nio, but among friends at school she is known as "Nora." Chinese students usually acquired their Western names at school, given by European teachers. Nora conducts herself in accordance with what she imagines a modern woman is supposed to do. Early on, she develops the courage to approach Tjeng Giok because "it would be embarrassing if as a modern girl she was nervous about being face to face with a man" (*ibid.*, 12). Having gone through the Dutch secondary school (Hoogere Burger School, HBS), Nora is not clumsy in associating with peers of the opposite sex and, at the same time, is intellectually equipped to support herself. When she settles in Batavia, her sense of propriety does not allow her to be dependent on Tjeng Giok for a livelihood because they are not yet legally married. Disowned by her father for eloping, Nora easily secures a teaching job at a Dutch-Chinese School (Hollandsche Chineesche School) and becomes self-sufficient. Like her, Tjeng Giok is well educated; they correspond in Dutch.

In fact, school education and the notion of a self-made identity are important motifs

in Tan's novels. They mark "modern" individuals like Nora and Tjeng Giok. On the other side, there is an almost hostile attitude toward wealth—specifically, inherited wealth—and family connections. In Tan's novels, sons of wealthy families almost always represent an obstacle that the heroine must overcome. They are the suitors preferred by old-fashioned parents who prioritize worldly status over the daughter's happiness, or the spurned rivals who resort to violence to eliminate competition. Here, inherited wealth is associated with idleness, lack of independence, backwardness, illegitimacy, even criminality. Henri Tjoe hires a goon to eliminate his rival, Tjeng Giok, and when he fails, he flees to Singapore to elude the long arm of the law. Eventually he is penalized for this and other offenses, even after his father tries to use money and influence to get him out of trouble. Henri's criminal case is widely covered by the Sino-Malay press, bringing shame to his family and, indirectly, serving as validation of Nora's decision to choose the humble Tjeng Giok over the wealthy Henri. The novel seems to suggest that sons of affluent families are essentially spoiled brats and potential trouble, undeserving of intelligent women's affection.

Nowhere is this preferential shift away from family fortune to personal ingenuity more apparent than in the changing quality of what counts as blessed matrimony. The Malay word *beroentoeng* (fortunate, blessed) was often invoked to refer to the state of material contentment, in which case a match to a suitor with a sizeable family fortune made perfect sense. In the prevailing Chinese custom, a marriage was essentially an alliance between two families, more than a union of two individuals. Hence, the "fortune" that a woman's nuptial ties would bring was not hers individually, but collective—one from which her entire family could (and theoretically should be able to) benefit. Seen in this light, Nora's attitude toward marriage is extremely self-centered, benefiting no one else but the couple involved. For this "modern" generation, marriage was less a calculation of collective benefits than the culmination of romantic heterosexual attraction. Thus, romantic love, not family fortune, was regarded as the only legitimate basis of marriage (Siegel 1997, 135). If in the custom of arranged marriage the bride and the groom hardly knew each other until the time they were wed, schooled youth generally had developed a habit of courtship before marriage, thanks in large part to the experience of coeducation. For youngsters who had gone through a period of courtship like Nora had, romantic attraction arose from compatibility in interests and outlook toward life. Thus, *beroentoeng* for them was largely immaterial, undifferentiated from romantic bliss, an abstract concept whose dissemination in fact owed much to the proliferation of romance novels. Unable to marry legally, Nora and Tjeng Giok wed in a small ceremony, attended by only a few close friends, and proceed to embrace a life that is said to brim with romantic bliss (*penoeh madoe pertintahan*). Following her heart, Nora finds true fortune.

The novel's happy ending sets it apart from many others with a similar theme. At an earlier time, or in works by other authors, heroines who follow their hearts are usually given tragic endings. But in Tan's story, it is Nora's father who undergoes a change of heart and regrets the way he treated his only daughter. Realizing that he has been wrong about Henri, Nora's father finally sees that he has been led too far "astray" (*tersesat*), made insensible by the promise of the world's riches (*harta doenia*). This new framing, forcefully articulated in Tan's novels, would continue in the novels penned by her husband, Oen Hong Seng (a.k.a. Madonna) after she passed away.

Nevertheless, Nora's admission of romantic attraction for Tjeng Giok must have been rather problematic. It implies sexual desire when a woman is expected to be chaste in both conduct and thought. Scholars have noted how romance novels, including Western novels in the Indies, were blamed for "putting ideas in women's heads," for awakening erotic desire (McCarthy 1979; Chandra 2011). In this story, Nora's father represents the older generation with conservative values and expectations, who sees erotic desire and propriety as mutually exclusive. When Nora insists that she wants to choose her own marriage partner instead of having the choice made for her, her father likens her to a whore (*soendel*), an insult she finds especially intolerable. This episode is intriguing as it brings to the surface the underlying masculinist paradigm that sees women in binary terms, as either the virtuous Madonna or the debased prostitute. Sexual desire is associated only with the latter; thus the charge of Nora "acting like a whore" simply for wanting to choose her own marriage partner. While sexual virtue and modesty is arguably a masculinist fantasy projected onto women, this fantasy proved to be so well internalized that it remained relevant even for a progressive woman writer like Tan. The challenge for women writers who were sympathetic to young women faced with such a predicament was to carve out a prototype of a heroine who professed only to marriage based on romance, was self-supporting, made her living outside the domestic sphere, was not clumsy toward the opposite sex, and yet remained as virtuous as the Madonna. Tan's heroines arguably are prototypes of the modern Madonna.

If Nora represents a properly modern woman's view of marriage, Siem Kiok Nio in *Kasapanan Timoer* (1932) exemplifies the right attitude toward profession. The novel tells of Kiok Nio, who must resort to working outside the home after her father falls on hard times in his business and passes away, leaving Kiok Nio and her mother to fend for themselves. For a while they try the conventional alternative, making and selling cakes from home. But the income it generates is inadequate, so Kiok Nio decides to go against the current and makes use of her school diploma to secure a position at a Dutch firm (European firms generally paid better than Chinese firms). Working as a steno-typist, Kiok Nio does very well. She is serious and ambitious, earning the respect and admira-

tion of her colleagues, particularly her supervisor, a young sympathetic Dutchman named Jansen, who soon falls for her. But Kiok Nio's affection is reserved for Koen San, who, like her, is well educated and relies on personal ingenuity to find success. Kiok Nio's biggest obstacle is not an old-fashioned, materialistic father but societal prejudice against women who work outside the domestic sphere. The challenge for her is to prove that professional women do not by definition lack virtue.

Like Tan's other heroines, Siem Kiok Nio is portrayed as unfailingly modern. She is a graduate of secondary school (Meer Uitgebreid Lager Onderwijs) and therefore "no less educated than Dutch girls" (Dahlia 1932b, 24). She also has a Western name: she is known by her friends and colleagues as Johana Siem. Her "modern" qualities go beyond education; Tan emphasizes her manners, taste, and appearance. Kiok Nio dresses in a skirt most of the time, "like most modern girls with Western upbringing" (*ibid.*, 70), not in the traditional *kebaja* ensemble of a blouse and long wraparound cloth. We are told that she is tall and not too fair, that people often mistake her for a Eurasian. The house she rents, where she and her mother dwell, is a little villa and decorated in such a way that it can be mistaken for a European's residence.

Early in the story we are told how Kiok Nio sees being a woman as a handicap. She has graduated from secondary school and taken a stenography course, and yet, because she is a woman she is bound to stay at home after graduation. This was a prevalent view in Chinese society at that time, that for girls to work in an office was "unseemly" (*koerang netjis*)—"comparable to a prostitute walking the streets" (*ibid.*, 9). So for a while, Kiok Nio is forced to shelve her diplomas and certified skills and try other things such as baking and dressmaking. "If only I were a man," she laments.

Kiok Nio's eventual success in overcoming this gender handicap is attributed to her modern spirit. Pressured by economic hardship and a sense of responsibility for her mother's well-being, she finds a job at a European firm. She meets Koen San, who will become her romantic interest, on the job; he is a client of her company. He, too, is highly educated—he is a graduate of HBS and has studied in the Netherlands—and is pleasantly surprised when meeting her. "You must be the first Chinese woman to work in a trading company!" he commends before they exchange business cards (*ibid.*, 34). While he admires her aptitude, she is impressed by his open-mindedness. They converse in Dutch.

Her education also guards her against unwanted overtures by wealthy married men, "who seem to be unaware that an educated woman like Kiok Nio does not capitulate so easily to becoming a concubine" (*ibid.*, 75). Her modern spirit (*semangatnja jang moderen*) does not permit Kiok Nio to simply accept preconceived ideas and practices. She criticizes the tendency in society to hold women back, calling it narrow-minded, fanatical, and

isolated from the fast-changing world. She regrets the “mossy views” (*anggapan jang boeloekan*) among some women who limit their life-scope to kitchen, appearance, and leisure. As the story progresses, Kiok Nio’s earnestness and determination are validated when her supervisor remarks that even though she is a woman, she is “capable of supporting a household, no less than a man” (*ibid.*, 27). She no longer wishes she were a man, because as a woman she is no less than a man.

In the absence of the father figure, the abstract entity of the public represents the conservative force. In many contemporary romance novels, the father figure regularly assumes the voice of the conservative patriarch whose resistance to change the modern (usually lovestruck) youth must overcome. This is true in *Kapan Sampe di Poentjaknja*, where Nora’s father constitutes the most significant obstacle to her exercising self-determination. In Kiok Nio’s case, social impediments manifest in the form of a gossip-mongering Chinese public. While Dutch and other Indies women have become accustomed to making a living on their education, we are told that Chinese women are only now starting to follow suit. To the latter, *publiek opinie* is a constant specter; it has deterred many capable women from utilizing their talents in the proper places, “because they fear being chastised by the public” (*ibid.*, 40). Every time Kiok Nio’s supervisor, a Dutchman, pays her a visit, the busybodies in the neighborhood get busy. But she perseveres, determined to prove wrong the common assumption that working among men and foreigners makes a woman “loose” (*binal*). This view, she opines, is outdated (*koeno*) and absurd (*nonsens*).

There is a discernible attempt to redefine modernity, or to establish an alternative modernity, in Tan’s stories. The modernity that Tan imagines thus far has been unflinchingly (and almost indistinguishable from the qualities of being) “Western.” It has been equated with a wide range of practices identified with European norms—from attending school and having a career to driving a car and wearing skirts. It is also associated with intangible concepts such as romance, equality between the sexes, women’s rights, and individual self-determination. This makes Nora and Kiok Nio seem like mere duplicates of Dutch women, as derivatives, at the same time they try to be original and autonomous. In the introduction to *Kasopanan Timoer*, editor Ong Ping Lok remarks that the quality of being “East” cannot be narrowly defined by the veil or the customary seclusion for women (*pinjit* or *pingit*), because like Western civility, Eastern civility also progresses with the changing of time. In other words, adjusting to the changing of time does not make a woman “Western” by default, and one can become modern and Eastern simultaneously. Indeed, the novel’s title, “Eastern Civility,” seems to suggest this alternative—the possibility of an Eastern modernity, exemplified by Kiok Nio’s sense of moral virtues. Like the aforementioned journalist heroine in Lie Djien Nio’s novel *Soeami?*,

Kiok Nio, too, associates freely with men without transgressing a self-imposed line of propriety.<sup>18</sup> This line is understood to be private, known only to the one observing it, and does not require societal approval. Kiok Nio remains virtuous not due to fear of societal reprimand, but because she has a firm grasp of boundaries and self-respect. So even though the public deems her “Western obsessed” (*gila kebaratan*), her conscience (*liangsim*) remains firmly anchored in Eastern civility.

Curiously, remaining Eastern for a Chinese woman also means disciplining her desire and limiting it to only Chinese man. Faced with two equally eligible suitors—Jansen and Koen San—Kiok Nio is drawn to the latter. She is more comfortable around her own kind. When Jansen proposes, she reminds him that they are of different races (*bangsa*) and that his family would not approve: “East goes with East, West with West” (Dahlia 1932b, 51). In fact, to be properly modern in this novel is for one to accord proper dignity to one’s national group, which is not unexpected given the rising tide of nationalist sentiment in the Indies at the time (Williams 1960). While intermarriage was the norm among early Chinese migrants to the archipelago (Sidharta 1992; Salmon 1996; Skinner 1996), from the second half of the nineteenth century various colonial legal codes had led to the constitution and stratification of “races” and the sharpening of racial boundaries in the Indies (Albrecht 1890; Willmott 1961; Coppel 2002b). Thus, while Dutch, Chinese, and Javanese students, for instance, might find themselves freely associating with each other as schoolmates at an HBS, or as co-workers once they graduated, social pressures discouraged such associations from developing into interracial matrimony. This is what we see with Kiok Nio, that a modern Chinese woman can be like Dutch women in all regards—education, career, appearance, lifestyle—except in the object of desire. Kiok Nio cannot be like Jansen, whose love does not see race.<sup>19</sup>

The distinction between “Western” and “modern Chinese” women is further explored in Tan’s subsequent novel, *Doerinja Pernikahan* (1933), where the morality of women graduates of Dutch and Chinese schools is compared and contrasted. The mod-

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18) In fact, the heroine in *Soeami?* (1933) seems to attest to the influence of Tan’s novels. Published a year after *Kasapanan Timoer*, it follows the mold Tan created for a modern Chinese woman.

19) Interestingly, *Kasapanan Timoer* (*Tjerita Roman* 42) follows directly Madonna’s *Dr. Lie* (*Tjerita Roman* 41), which tackles the issue of interracial romance. While Tan’s novel takes the perspective of a woman protagonist and portrays Dutch people in a positive light, despite the ultimate message for “East [to remain] with East,” *Dr. Lie* conveys a negative sentiment concerning interracial marriage. In it, the highly educated physician Lie falls head over heels in love with a beautiful Eurasian and marries her despite his family’s reservations. The woman turns out to be a charlatan who uses him for her own gains. Madonna (a.k.a. Oen Hong Seng) would echo his wife’s progressive take on the issue of arranged marriage in *Berdosa* (likely published in or after 1933), and again in *Impiken Kaberoentoengan* (1935), which scrutinizes the Chinese custom of three-generation households that tend to be oppressive toward daughters-in-law.

ern heroine in this novel does not clash with her father but with her Dutch-educated husband and peers. The Chinese and Dutch names given respectively to the righteous heroine and her shifty antagonist—Sioe Lan and Tientje—are telling. Sioe Lan is modern but was brought up in the “Eastern” way, a graduate of the Chinese THHK school, not a Dutch school. She is supposedly modern and virtuous, not modern and loose like Tientje. Commenting on the novel, Hellwig (2012, 155–157) reads the focal conflict in rather binary terms—Eastern vs. Western, Chinese/Asian vs. Dutch/European, tradition vs. modernity—and concludes that the story conveys a conservative message. On the contrary, I see it as a further attempt by Tan to redefine Eastern civility as a form of alternative modernity, making her an early herald of what would be the postcolonial quest to establish modernity as a plural condition without a “Western governing center” (Gaonkar 2001).

Unfortunately, we do not have many more works by Tan to explain this rather ethnocentric (or early postmodern) turn in her writing, as she passed away not long after the manuscript of *Doerinja Pernikahan* was submitted to the publisher. Sentiments of ethnonationalism in general were on the rise among the Chinese population in the Indies ever since Japan annexed Manchuria in 1931. In Tan’s novels, this sentiment might have manifested as her defense of a number of Chinese virtues to balance out her critiques of practices oppressive to women. On the other hand, the desire to refine and redefine progress was not hers alone. The contemporary Chinese women’s monthly *Istri* (Wife, 1937–42) has been described as a magazine that “tries to achieve progress in harmony with Eastern civilization” (Sidharta 1992, 71).

Regardless, the modernity that Tan expounds for the most part manifests as a challenge to traditional gender roles, specifically the roles prescribed for women. It does not lack substance, as Siegel (1997, 146–147) observes in other contemporary Malay novels’ treatment of modernity, but corroborates his findings that it fails to address relevant issues such as inequality or separation between races. Tan’s modernity reiterates racial preconceptions, because she molds her new woman within the broader framework of the “Eastern/Chinese” woman.

## Conclusion

This essay sets out to review the literary works written by Chinese women authors and to provide a sketch of what women in the first few decades of the twentieth century Indies wrote when they finally became published authors. It outlines some patterns of themes, motifs, and narrative angles found in their writings that might distinguish their works

from those written by male authors. The question of voice immediately springs forward: Who counts as a woman author or has the authority to speak on behalf of Indies Chinese women? A good number of male writers, as it turns out, wrote in the feminine voice by assuming feminine pen names and speaking through a female protagonist or narrator. Some of them created heroines with compelling female agency, such as the heroines in Madonna's novels *Berdosa* (Transgressing, n.d.) and *Impiken Kaberoentoengan* (Hoping for a Contented Life, 1935). In contrast, a good number of women novelists produced weak and forgettable female protagonists. Thus, female authorship did not guarantee an autonomous female protagonist, or a woman-centered narrative for that matter. But while men authors wrote about a broader range of topics, women authors dealt largely with issues that immediately concerned them. In general, the latter group could be expected to be more candid with respect to gender inequality and the position of women in Chinese society, even when these problems were presented in a pessimistic light.

Other broad conclusions can be drawn. In the Indies, women began to write novels only in the 1920s, and in prose writing early on their voices were largely indistinguishable from those of their male counterparts. Their central characters are generally women, who seem to have come from the same mold created by their male predecessors. The narratives presented are timeless—intergenerational clash between old-fashioned parents and modern daughters—and have been explored in countless ways by writers before them. The possibilities accorded to the fictional daughters are limited: they wilt under social pressure or are overpowered by the modernity they desire to embrace. Only from the 1930s do we witness the emergence of new prototypes, that is, heroines who successfully utilize modern attributes such as education to challenge the entrenched patriarchal order. In such stories, it is the parents (often the father) who undergo a change of heart and find their way back to the moral path.

The most remarkable among the Chinese women novelists was Tan Lam Nio, who wrote under the pen name Dahlia. Her works wrestle with problems related to gender inequality in Chinese society in the Indies, specifically in relation to education, marriage choice, and career. While in the 1930s attending school for women had become less of a contentious issue, gender inequality manifested most visibly in the problems of arranged marriage and women acquiring a formal profession. Tan explores these topics from a woman's perspective and deals with them in a way that accords agency to the women characters. Her heroines are ardently modern, but modern in the way that makes them almost indistinguishable from Dutch women, at least initially. Becoming like Dutch women appears to be the prototypical modern woman in Tan's imagination, and this might be jarring to her overwhelmingly Chinese readers. Tan's interlocutors are indisputably "Chinese," and this might have compelled her to redefine her heroines into an Eastern

version of modern women after her first novel. Reading them, we are to infer that modern is neither identical with Western nor mutually exclusive with Eastern. It is unfortunate that Tan did not have the opportunity to further explore her ideas of modernity, womanhood, being Chinese, and—who knows?—being Indonesian. Passing away at the youthful age of 24, Dahlia withered at the peak of her bloom.

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# Tourism and Crime: Evidence from the Philippines

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Using panel data gathered from 16 regions of the Philippines for the period 2009–11, this paper investigates the relationship between tourism and crime. The findings of the study show that the relation between tourism and crime may largely depend on the characteristics of visitors and the types of crime. For all types of crime and their aggregate, no significant correlation between the crime rate (defined as the number of crime cases divided by population) and total tourist arrivals is found. However, a statistically significant positive relation is found between foreign tourism and robbery and theft cases as well as between overseas Filipino tourism and robbery. On the other hand, domestic tourism is not significantly correlated with any of the four types of crimes. These results, together with a strong evidence of the negative relationship between crime and the crime clearance efficiency, present much opportunity for policy intervention in order to minimize the crime externality of the country's tourism-led development strategy.

**Keywords:** tourism, crime, negative externality, sustainable development

## Introduction

The tourism industry in the Philippines has expanded rapidly in recent years due primarily to intensified marketing of the country's rich geographical and biological diversity and of its historical and cultural heritage. In 2000–10, the tourism sector consistently made substantial contribution to the Philippine economy, averaging about 5.8% of gross domestic product (GDP) on an annual basis. In 2011, tourism revenues further increased by 10.2% from 2010, and its share in GDP inched up to 5.9% (National Statistical Coordination Board 2012). In the same year, the tourism sector provided 778,000 employment opportunities nationwide. Most recently, the count of foreign visitor arrivals for January–August 2013 reached 3.2 million, an increase of about 11.3% from 2.9 million visitors recorded in the same period in 2012 (Department of Tourism 2013). The Philippine

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tourism industry is expected to continue to expand in the coming years. From 2012 to 2022, travel and tourism contribution to GDP is forecasted to rise at an annual average of 6.5%, and its employment generation by 3.3% (World Travel and Tourism Council 2012).

With its extensive forward and backward linkages—transport, hotel and restaurant, wholesale and retail trade, banking and finance, construction, food processing, agriculture and livestock, manufacturing, etc., the tourism industry promises to have a high income generating potential that can spur growth of local economies and the national economy as a whole. The sector, however, is associated with negative externalities such as environmental degradation and higher incidence of crimes, social costs that are shouldered by residents of tourist destinations in terms of lower quality of life (Pizam 1982). Notwithstanding the significant positive contribution of the tourism industry in the growth of the Philippine economy and as the goal of development planners must be no less than over-all societal welfare with income and quality of life components, there is a need to properly assess the social costs associated with the tourism sector. For a tourism-led development policy to effectively and sustainably raise people's welfare, it must be coupled with measures to address the sector's negative environmental and social consequences, if these exist.

The positive link between tourism and crime is suggested in the Routine Activity Theory on Crime developed by Cohen and Felson (1979). Tourists are "suitable targets," one of three essential elements that are necessary for the success of predatory activities. Fujii and Mak (1980) point to the characteristics of tourists that make them highly desirable targets—they carry money and valuable objects, they are on a holiday mood and hence tend to be less prudent, and they are perceived to be "safer" targets since they rarely report crime to the police. Ryan (1993) points that some tourism activity arises from the demand for illegal goods and services, as in the case of sex tourism (Johnson 2011) and tourism for substance abuse, a phenomenon that is also suspected to prevail in the Philippines. Becker's (1968) quantitative economic model of criminal activity predicts that the incidence of crime increases with higher expected net returns from committing crimes. Expected returns increase with more tourists who commonly possess money and other valuables (expected income from crime) and who are less likely to report crimes (lower probability of detection).

Empirical studies done in both developing and developed countries lend some support to the hypothesized positive relation between tourism and crime. McPheters and Stronge (1974) found that the season of crime coincided with the season of tourism in Miami, USA. Jud (1975) likewise confirmed that growth of tourism-based businesses had a strong positive relationship with crime incidence in his study of 32 states in Mexico.

Pizam's study (1982) using data from 50 states in the United States found significant positive relationship between tourism expenditures and crime incidence in four (namely, crime against property, robbery, rape, and aggravated assault) out of nine categories of crime investigated in the study. A high correlation between tourist arrivals and criminal movements is also found by Wallace (2009) in the case of Tobago. Most recently, Biagi *et al.* (2012) using a panel data of Italian provinces for the years 1985–2003 showed that tourist areas have a significantly higher occurrence of crime than non-tourist areas in the short and long-run.

There are likewise studies that suggest a negative relation between tourism and crime. Grinols *et al.* (2011) present two theoretical considerations for a negative link. One, visitors increase demand for goods and services, which can lead to increase in wages and employment for low-skilled workers. Two, a place that is frequented by tourists is likely to experience and undergo modernization and development programs which can make the area less conducive to criminal activity. Thus, the effect of tourism on crime may be ambiguous, depending on the relative strengths of the positive and negative effects. Grinols *et al.* use these arguments to explain why some tourist types yield no impact on crime in his study of visitors in national parks of counties in the United States.

Empirical literature on Philippine tourism has so far been focused on the performance and contribution of the industry to Philippine economic growth (see, for instance, Lagman 2008; Henderson 2011; and Yu 2012). To the authors' knowledge, there has been no recent paper linking crime in the Philippines to tourism. This paper aims to fill this gap in the literature. Using regression analysis, this paper investigates whether or not crime and tourism in the Philippines are correlated with each other.<sup>1)</sup> This is done using panel data gathered from 16 regions of the country for the period 2009–11. Establishing a positive link between tourism activities and incidence of crime would indicate a need to design and institute appropriate measures to sustain tourism-led development.

## An Economic Analysis of Crime

This paper adopts the economic framework of Becker (1968) in analyzing the determinants of criminal behavior. An individual  $i$  chooses to commit an offense depending on the utility  $U_i$  he expects to gain from the criminal act:

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1) The analysis in this paper is limited to the determination of the existence or non-existence of a relationship/correlation between different types of crimes and different types of tourists. This limitation is imposed by the difficulty of finding an appropriate instrumental variable for tourism that can address the possible reverse causality between crime and tourism.

$$E(U_i) = p_i U_i(y_i - f_i) + (1 - p_i) U_i(y_i)$$

where  $p_i$  is the probability of being caught and convicted,  $y_i$  is income that can be realized from committing the crime, and  $f_i$  is the monetary equivalent of punishment if convicted. The partial derivatives of the expected utility function with respect to each of the three variables are:

$$\begin{aligned} \frac{\partial E(U_i)}{\partial p_i} &= U_i(y_i - f_i) - U_i(y_i) < 0; \\ \frac{\partial E(U_i)}{\partial y_i} &= p_i U_i'(y_i - f_i) + (1 - p_i) U_i'(y_i) > 0; \\ \frac{\partial E(U_i)}{\partial f_i} &= -p_i U_i(y_i - f_i) < 0. \end{aligned}$$

An increase in the probability of conviction as well as an increase in punishment if convicted reduce the expected utility from criminal activities while an increase in income from criminal activities raises the expected utility.

Becker then specifies the number of offenses committed by an individual  $O_i$  as a function of the probability of conviction ( $p_i$ ), punishment ( $f_i$ ) and a catch all variable denoted by  $u_i$  which may include income from criminal activities ( $y_i$ ), income from legal activities, among others. Probability of conviction and punishment provides disincentives for an individual to engage in criminal activities, thereby reducing the number of offenses; while income from criminal activities encourages criminal acts and hence, increases the number of offenses. Availability of legal sources of income (a factor that is captured in  $u_i$ ) may also reduce  $O_i$ .

The total number of offenses,  $O$ , is the sum of all  $O_i$ , and is a function of the (weighted) average values of  $p_i$ ,  $f_i$ , and  $u_i$ ,

$$O = \sum_{i=1}^N O_i = h(p, f, u).$$

The Routine Activity Theory offers a sociological explanation of the determinants of crime. The theory proposes that the level of criminal activity in an area is a function of the dynamics between and among certain groups of people in a particular geographical location. It predicts that crime rate will increase in a community if motivated offenders and suitable targets converge in a particular time and place in the absence of capable guardians (Cohen and Felson 1979). It emphasizes spatial considerations, that is, the

visibility of desirable materials and the ease of access, in the persistence of crime.

The economic and sociological frameworks above both provide a basis to expect a positive link between crime and tourism. Tourism, which involves the influx of people for a holiday, carrying money and valuable objects and with less prudent behavior are suitable targets for criminal activity. In Becker's economic framework, tourism increases the expected gain from criminal activity (tourists have more valuables) and is associated with lower probability of detection (tourist are less likely to report crimes).

This paper investigates the link between crime and tourism through regression analysis for a cross section of 16 regions in the Philippines. A balanced panel data set for the three years, 2009, 2010, and 2011 for all 16 regions is used. The empirical model is specified as

$$Crime_{j,t} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 Tourism_{j,t} + \beta_2 Deterrence_{j,t} + \beta_3 Unemployment_{j,t} + \beta_4 GDP_{j,t} \\ + \beta_5 Growth_{j,t} + \beta_6 DUM2010 + \beta_7 DUM2011 + \varepsilon_{j,t} + \eta_j.$$

The subscripts  $j$  and  $t$  refer to the region and year, respectively. The  $\beta$ s are the coefficients to be estimated, while  $\varepsilon_{j,t}$  and  $\eta_j$  are the error term and the region fixed effect, respectively. The dependent variable *Crime* is per capita crime calculated as the number of crime cases in the region divided by the region's population. Criminal reporting in the Philippines classifies crime into index and non-index crimes. Index crimes are further classified into crimes against persons (which include murder, homicide, physical injury, and rape) and crime against property (further categorized into robbery, theft, car-napping, and cattle rustling). Non-index crimes are all other crimes not falling under any of the above-mentioned categories (eg: smuggling, prostitution, illegal drug trade, and abuse). Separate regression runs are done for total crime and certain crime categories that can possibly target and/or involve tourists, namely, crime against persons, robbery, theft, and non-index crime.

The theoretical model predicts that *Crime* is related positively with *Tourism* ( $\beta_1 > 0$ ) and negatively with *Deterrence*, the probability of being caught and convicted ( $\beta_2 < 0$ ). *Tourism* is defined as the number of tourist arrivals, classified into three types: foreign, domestic, and overseas Filipino. The latter two categories are distinguished from each other on the basis of residency. If a Filipino holds residency in the Philippines, he is considered a domestic tourist. On the other hand, a Filipino who resides (at least temporarily) in another country, say for work or study, is counted as an overseas Filipino tourist. Tourist traffic is calculated by the Department of Tourism from data on hotel check-ins, entry into tourist areas such as parks, and restaurant traffic.

*Deterrence* or the probability of being caught and convicted is proxied by the crime

clearance rate, a data series generated by the Philippine National Police and reported in the Philippine Statistical Yearbook. The crime clearance rate is calculated as the ratio of the number of crimes for which a case has been filed to the total number of crimes reported. This ratio reflects police and law enforcers' knowledge of the local environment and the efficiency of criminal investigation and hence, can serve as an indicator of the probability of detection and conviction (Marselli and Vannini 1997).

Cantor and Land (1985) provide theoretical arguments for the likely influence of macroeconomic variables on crime rate. The rate of *Unemployment* will be positively related with *Crime* ( $\beta_3 > 0$ ) if criminal activity provides an alternative income source. Brenner (1978) proposes that the inability of an individual to maintain a particular standard of living as a consequence of becoming unemployed may lead to criminal acts. Regional Gross Domestic Product or income (*GDP*) and *GDP Growth* rate can serve as measures of economic prosperity in the region and hence may serve as indicators of the potential for generating income through both legal and illegal means (hence  $\beta_4$  and  $\beta_5$  may be  $>$  or  $<$  0). Dummy variables for the years 2010 and 2011 are included to capture period effects.

The Variance Inflation Factor (*VIF*) test is used to rule out possible multicollinearity in the regression analyses. The *VIF* of a regressor  $X_i$  is calculated as

$$VIF = 1/(1 - R_i^2)$$

where  $R_i^2$  is the coefficient of determination obtained when  $X_i$  is regressed against all the other independent variables. A *VIF* of at least 10 is indicative of severe multicollinearity problems in the data, which require correction.

## Tourism and Crime: A Preliminary, Descriptive Analysis

### *Demographic and Economic Profile of the Regions*

The Philippines is divided into 17 administrative regions: 8 of which are in Luzon (National Capital Region-NCR, Cordillera Administrative Region-CAR, Ilocos-I, Cagayan Valley-II, Central Luzon-III, CALABARZON-IVA, MIMAROPA-IVB, and Bicol-V), 3 in Visayas (Western Visayas-VI, Central Visayas-VII, and Eastern Visayas-VIII), and 6 in Mindanao (Zamboanga Peninsula-IX, Northern Mindanao-X, Davao-XI, SOCCSKSARGEN-XII, Caraga-XIII, and Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao-ARMM<sup>2)</sup>). Table 1 presents demographic and economic data on these regions.

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2) Due to lack of data on crime and tourism, ARMM is not included in the study.

**Table 1** Demographic and Economic Profile of the Regions

Region	Land Area		Population (as of 2011)			Average 2009–11				
	km <sup>2</sup>	% Share	thousands	% Share	Density	GDP PhPMillions	% Share	% Growth	Per Capita GDP (PhP)	Unemploy- ment Rate %
National Capital Region (NCR)	639	0.2	11,990	12.8	18,764	2,012,814	36.0	5.7	167,874	11.9
Cordillera Administrative Region (CAR)	19,294	6.2	1,649	1.8	85	118,219	2.1	9.3	71,691	4.9
I Ilocos Region	13,055	4.2	4,836	5.1	370	177,534	3.2	11.8	36,711	8.4
II Cagayan Valley	31,159	10.1	3,283	3.5	105	101,989	1.8	6.3	31,066	3.1
III Central Luzon	21,543	7.0	10,321	11.0	479	507,284	9.1	13.7	49,151	8.8
IV-A CALABARZON	16,368	5.3	12,859	13.7	786	979,766	17.5	28.2	76,193	9.9
IV-B MIMAROPA	29,621	9.6	2,813	3.0	95	102,990	1.8	-0.9	36,612	4.2
V Bicol Region	18,054	5.8	5,523	5.9	306	113,551	2.0	-1.8	20,560	5.9
VI Western Visayas	20,614	6.7	7,235	7.7	351	228,646	4.1	-7.7	31,603	6.9
VII Central Visayas	15,875	5.1	6,931	7.4	437	335,495	6.0	5.2	48,405	7.3
VIII Eastern Visayas	21,563	7.0	4,183	4.4	194	150,371	2.7	14.2	35,948	5.4
IX Zamboanga Peninsula	16,823	5.4	3,473	3.7	206	116,538	2.1	2.1	33,555	3.5
X Northern Mindanao	20,132	6.5	4,382	4.7	218	210,748	3.8	0.1	48,094	4.8
XI Davao Region	20,244	6.6	4,537	4.8	224	216,158	3.9	2.2	47,643	5.8
XII SOCCSKSARGEN	22,466	7.3	4,194	4.5	187	152,899	2.7	0.9	36,457	4.1
XIII Caraga	21,471	7.0	2,475	2.6	115	64,270	1.1	4.4	25,968	6.1

Source of data: Philippine Statistical Yearbooks 2010, 2011 and 2012 for unemployment data; Bureau of Agricultural Statistics database (countrystat.bas.gov.ph) for all other data series.

NCR or Metropolitan Manila, is the center of culture, economy, and government in the Philippines. The country's population is highly concentrated in this region, accounting for 13% of the nation's population but only 0.2% of its land area. Still posting modest growth, NCR contributes 36% of the country's GDP. Although per capita GDP in the NCR is way above those of the other regions, it has the highest unemployment rate. Second to NCR in terms of population density and economic activity is CALABARZON, the southern neighbor of NCR. In recent years, many of the industries in Metro Manila have moved to this region, making it the fastest growing region in the country economically. Other growth centers in Luzon are Central Luzon, Ilocos, and CAR, all of which are to the north of NCR. In the Visayas, the lead region is Central Visayas which includes Cebu, the second metropolis in the country. In Mindanao, Northern Mindanao and Davao are the lead regions. The poorest region (lowest per capita GDP) in the country is Bicol, which is located in an area that is regularly visited by typhoons. It can be observed from Table 1 that unemployment rate tends to be highest in the most highly urbanized and industrialized regions (NCR, CALABARZON, Central Luzon, and Central Visayas). This is due to in-migration of people from rural areas in search of better economic opportunities.

*Crime*

Table 2 reveals an over-all concentration of crime in the NCR and Central Luzon. Metro Manila, the foremost metropolis in the Philippines, comprises much of NCR while Central Luzon, immediately to the north of NCR, was the location of the two former US naval bases in the country (Clark, Pampanga and Subic, Zambales). Next in line are the relatively more urbanized regions of CALABARZON, Western and Central Visayas. Only data on crime categories that are most likely to involve tourists, namely, crimes against persons, robbery, and theft, are presented in Table 2. In terms of number of crimes against persons, the top three regions are Central Luzon (14%), NCR (11%) and CALABARZON (10%), which are among the most industrialized and urbanized regions in Luzon. Occurrences of robbery and theft are highest in NCR, followed by Central Visayas, and then, Central Luzon, likewise the regions that are relatively more advanced economically.

With regard to deterrence, proxied by the crime clearance efficiency rate or the ratio of the number of crimes for which a case has been filed to the total number of crimes, the top three ranking regions are NCR (64%), SOCCSKSARGEN (50%), and Ilocos (45%). Remarkably, the latter two regions have relatively lower crime shares in the national total.

**Table 2** Crime (number of occurrences) and Crime Clearance Efficiency,\* Average for 2009–11

Regions	Total Crimes		Against Persons		Index Crimes		Theft		Non-index Crimes		Crime Clearance Efficiency
	Number	Share	Number	Share	Number	Share	Number	Share	Number	Share	
National Capital Region (NCR)	148,283	13.3%	31,690	11.1%	28,786	25.8%	34,079	14.8%	48,201	10.4%	64.1
Cordillera Administrative Region (CAR)	33,992	3.0%	11,782	4.1%	2,796	2.5%	7,559	3.3%	11,407	2.5%	22.7
I Ilocos Region	42,268	3.8%	16,036	5.6%	2,118	1.9%	7,125	3.1%	16,040	3.5%	45.4
II Cagayan Valley	36,830	3.3%	11,454	4.0%	2,024	1.8%	4,498	2.0%	18,008	3.9%	23.6
III Central Luzon	148,956	13.3%	39,832	13.9%	12,631	11.3%	25,248	11.0%	67,480	14.6%	20.5
IV-A CALABARZON	109,140	9.8%	28,628	10.0%	11,693	10.5%	17,224	7.5%	48,141	10.4%	28.4
IV-B MIMAROPA	27,859	2.5%	8,587	3.0%	1,399	1.3%	2,796	1.2%	14,751	3.2%	36.1
V Bicol Region	48,271	4.3%	15,233	5.3%	3,425	3.1%	8,749	3.8%	20,148	4.4%	36.3
VI Western Visayas	101,526	9.1%	22,363	7.8%	6,518	5.8%	21,346	9.3%	49,891	10.8%	19.4
VII Central Visayas	95,680	8.6%	19,826	6.9%	13,715	12.3%	31,853	13.9%	28,351	6.1%	28.3
VIII Eastern Visayas	52,852	4.7%	12,248	4.3%	2,215	2.0%	9,240	4.0%	28,716	6.2%	21.2
IX Zamboanga Peninsula	49,074	4.4%	11,514	4.0%	3,074	2.8%	7,300	3.2%	26,094	5.6%	25.8
X Northern Mindanao	75,804	6.8%	19,951	7.0%	8,119	7.3%	21,341	9.3%	23,826	5.1%	13.7
XI Davao Region	72,348	6.5%	17,577	6.2%	7,107	6.4%	18,271	8.0%	28,326	6.1%	19.4
XII SOCCSKSARGEN	47,066	4.2%	11,190	3.9%	3,833	3.4%	7,160	3.1%	23,332	5.0%	50.3
XIII Caraga	26,193	2.3%	7,713	2.7%	1,987	1.8%	5,860	2.6%	10,156	2.2%	29.1
Total	1,116,142	100.0%	285,624	100.0%	111,440	100.0%	229,649	100.0%	462,868	100.0%	

Source of data: *Philippine Statistical Yearbooks* 2010, 2011, and 2012 (National Statistical Coordination Board various years)

Note: \* Crime clearance efficiency is the ratio of the number of cases for which a case had been filed with the prosecutor's office or proper court with at least one of the suspects arrested to the total number of crimes reported.

### Tourism

In the three years, 2009–11, there were more than 65 million tourist arrivals in the whole country, most of which are domestic tourists (52 million or 79% of the total) and only a fifth (about 13 million) are foreigners. The most popular destinations for domestic tourists are CALABARZON, Bicol, and Western and Central Visayas. Due to its proximity to Metro Manila (only 1–4 hour land travel), CALABARZON is an affordable vacation spot with its natural attractions (waterfalls in Pagsanjan; mountains, lakes, and hot springs in Laguna, Tagaytay, and Quezon; some beaches in Batangas), historical sites (Cavite and Laguna), and colorful festivals and religious celebrations, among Metro Manila residents for day tours and weekend holidays. Bicol, which is a little farther but still accessible by land travel from Metro Manila, is another favorite destination because of its beautiful beaches and volcanoes, centuries-old stone churches, and the Camsur Watersports Complex. Those who have more resources to spend travel by plane to Western and Central Visayas for the famous beaches of Cebu and Boracay.

Foreign tourists, on the other hand, are concentrated in NCR, Central Visayas, Bicol, and Western Visayas. Metro Manila and Cebu in Central Visayas are the entry points for the foreign tourists. For foreign tourists, the white sand beaches and historical sites in Central Visayas (Cebu and Bohol), Bicol (Camsur), and Western Visayas (Boracay) are the most alluring attractions. Overseas Filipino tourists, like foreign tourists, are mostly attracted to Western Visayas, Bicol, Central Visayas, and NCR.

**Table 3** Tourist Arrivals

Region	Total		Foreign		Overseas Filipinos		Domestic	
	Number	Share	Number	Share	Number	Share	Number	Share
National Capital Region (NCR)	6,931,748	10.6%	4,354,387	34.0%	61,473	8.5%	2,515,888	4.8%
Cordillera Administrative Region (CAR)	3,297,801	5.0%	270,607	2.1%	27,850	3.9%	2,999,344	5.8%
I Ilocos Region	1,381,314	2.1%	96,016	0.7%	5,332	0.7%	1,279,966	2.5%
II Cagayan Valley	2,103,199	3.2%	96,487	0.8%	–	0.0%	2,006,712	3.9%
III Central Luzon	2,858,411	4.4%	435,958	3.4%	20,635	2.9%	2,401,818	4.6%
IV-A CALABARZON	12,049,466	18.4%	1,012,145	7.9%	39,821	5.5%	10,997,500	21.1%
IV-B MIMAROPA	1,724,609	2.6%	339,064	2.6%	20,793	2.9%	1,364,752	2.6%
V Bicol Region	8,823,131	13.4%	1,737,219	13.6%	133,594	18.6%	6,952,318	13.3%
VI Western Visayas	6,590,759	10.0%	1,281,828	10.0%	230,009	31.9%	5,078,922	9.7%
VII Central Visayas	7,176,578	10.9%	2,642,256	20.6%	60,687	8.4%	4,473,635	8.6%
VIII Eastern Visayas	652,849	1.0%	48,894	0.4%	3,495	0.5%	600,460	1.2%
IX Zamboanga Peninsula	1,386,547	2.1%	57,517	0.4%	23,440	3.3%	1,305,590	2.5%
X Northern Mindanao	4,199,539	6.4%	162,524	1.3%	55,863	7.8%	3,981,152	7.6%
XI Davao Region	2,766,388	4.2%	175,677	1.4%	20,099	2.8%	2,570,612	4.9%
XII SOCCSKSARGEN	2,015,470	3.1%	12,096	0.1%	10,807	1.5%	1,992,567	3.8%
XIII Caraga	1,683,702	2.6%	95,448	0.7%	6,210	0.9%	1,582,044	3.0%
Total	65,641,511	100.0%	12,818,123	100.0%	720,108	100.0%	52,103,280	100.0%

Source of Data: Department of Tourism (2013)

A cursory look at data presented in Tables 2 and 3 indicates relatively higher crimes in tourist areas. The list of top ranking regions in crime is more or less the same as the list of top ranking regions in tourist arrivals.

*Location Quotient*

To appraise the incidence of crime and tourist arrivals in each region relative to the national average, location quotients (*LQ*) are calculated using the following formulas (Biagi *et al.* 2012):

$$LQ_{tourism_i} = \frac{(Tourist\ Arrivals\ in\ Region_i)/(Total\ Arrivals)}{(Area\ of\ Region_i)/(Total\ Area)}$$

$$LQ_{crime_i} = \frac{(No.\ of\ Crimes\ in\ Region_i)/(Total\ Crime)}{(Population\ of\ Region_i)/(Total\ Population)}$$

where *i* refers to a particular region and *Total* denotes variable values for the whole country. *LQ*s for each region for each of the three years are calculated, resulting in 48 *LQ<sub>tourism</sub>* and 48 *LQ<sub>crime</sub>*. Plotting points for corresponding *LQ<sub>tourism</sub>* and *LQ<sub>crime</sub>* and drawing lines through the median values of *LQ<sub>tourism</sub>* and *LQ<sub>crime</sub>*, the graph is divided into four quadrants: quadrant 1—high *LQ<sub>tourism</sub>*, high *LQ<sub>crime</sub>* combinations; quadrant 2—low *LQ<sub>tourism</sub>* and high *LQ<sub>crime</sub>*; quadrant 3—low *LQ<sub>tourism</sub>*, low *LQ<sub>crime</sub>*; and quadrant 4—high *LQ<sub>tourism</sub>*, low *LQ<sub>crime</sub>* (Fig. 1). Out of the 48 points (*LQ<sub>tourism</sub>* and *LQ<sub>crime</sub>* combinations), 30 are in quadrants 1 and 3. The regions of Ilocos (I), Cagayan Valley (II), MIMAROPA (IVB), Eastern Visayas (VIII), and Caraga (XIII) appear to be low-crime, low-tourism regions while CAR,

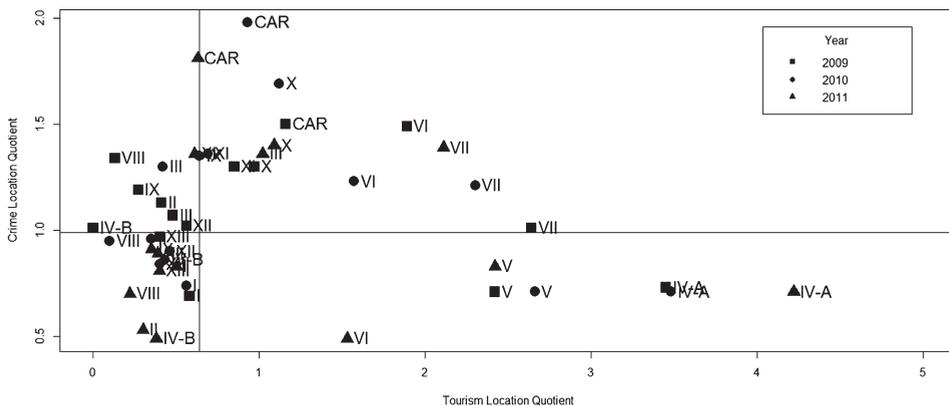


Fig. 1 Location Quotients for Tourism and Crime

Western and Central Visayas (VI and VII), Northern Mindanao (X), and Davao (XI) are the high-tourism, high-crime regions. Central Luzon is consistently a high crime area with relatively less tourism activities. NCR, CALABARZON, and the Bicol region are tourist areas with relatively low incidence of crime. NCR and CALABARZON are the two most highly urbanized and developed regions in the main island of Luzon. Both CALABARZON and Bicol are highly popular for domestic and overseas Filipino tourists. Our LQ analysis is indicative of some degree and forms of direct relationship between crime and tourism which is further investigated in the regression analysis of the next section.

### **Econometric Analysis**

Two regressions runs are done for each of the five dependent crime rate variables, namely, (1) total crime, (2) crime against persons, (3) robbery, (4) theft, and (5) non-index crimes. The two runs differ only in the independent tourism variable/s used. Total tourist arrivals are used in the first run, while the three categories of tourist arrivals (namely, foreign, overseas Filipino, and domestic tourist arrivals) are included as three separate independent variables in the second run. Hence, a total of 10 equations are estimated using the method of ordinary least squares. The results are presented in Table 4.

The last two columns of Table 4 give the VIF of the regressors. All calculated VIFs are much less than the critical value of 10, indicating the absence of multicollinearity. This means that while it is possible that some of the independent variables are correlated with one another, the extent to which they are linearly related is not large enough to render the parameter estimates unreliable as well as necessitate the omission of any of the regressors.

The coefficient of the total number of tourist arrivals is not significant in all five regression runs for aggregate crime and four categories of crime. However, when the number of tourist arrivals is broken down into foreign, overseas Filipino, and domestic, some significant relationships surface. The number of foreign tourist arrivals has a significant positive relationship with robbery and theft cases, as predicted by economic and sociological theories. The estimated value of the coefficient of foreign tourism in the equation for robbery cases implies that an increase in foreign tourists of 1,000 translates into an increase in incidence of robbery cases of 4 per 10,000,000 population. In the case of NCR where population is roughly 12 million, 1,000 more foreign tourists translates into 5 more robbery cases. The magnitude of the coefficient of foreign tourism in the theft equation is about double that in the robbery equation; an increase in foreign tourists

**Table 4** Regression Results

Independent Variables	Alternative Dependent Variables										Variance Inflation Factor (VIF)	
	Total Crime		Crime against Persons		Robbery		Theft		Non-index Crime			
	Run 1	Run 2	Run 1	Run 2	Run 1	Run 2	Run 1	Run 2	Run 1	Run 2	Run 1	Run 2
Constant	0.0081 (0.00071) ***	0.0099 (0.00103) ***	0.0024 (0.00031) ***	0.0028 (0.00050) ***	0.0006 (0.00011) ***	9.50E-04 (0.00014) ***	0.0016 (0.00027) ***	0.0025 (0.00036) ***	0.0035 (0.00042) ***	0.0035 (0.00062) ***	0	0
Unemployment	-0.0001 (0.00011)	-0.00036 (0.00015) **	-3E-05 (0.00005)	-7.81E-05 (0.00007)	-8E-06 (0.00002)	-4.27E-05 (0.00002) **	1.8E-05 (0.00005)	-7.26E-05 (0.00005)	-1E-04 (0.00007)	-1.53E-04 (0.00009) *	3.068	4.198
GDP	1.61E-09 (6.1E-10) **	1.99E-09 (7.92E-10) **	2.09E-10 (2.69E-10)	3.13E-10 (3.86E-10)	3.61E-10 (9.37E-11) ***	2.88E-10 (1.07E-10) ***	2.92E-10 (2.35E-10)	2.03E-10 (2.74E-10)	6.59E-10 (3.60E-10) *	1.08E-09 (4.78E-10) **	3.286	5.611
GDP Growth	-2E-05 (0.00001)	-0.000014 (0.00001)	-5E-06 (5E-06)	-4.70E-06 (6.67E-6)	-3E-06 (1.87E-6)	-2.62E-07 (1.85E-6)	-9E-06 (4.68E-6) *	-5.25E-06 (4.75E-6)	-3E-06 (7.18E-6)	-3.34E-06 (8.28E-6)	1.103	1.274
Deterrence	-7E-05 (0.00001) ***	-0.000084 (0.00002) ***	-1E-05 (6.38E-6) **	-1.78E-05 (8.11E-6) **	-5E-06 (2.25E-6) **	-9.33E-06 (2.25E-6) ***	-2E-05 (5.57E-6) ***	-2.88E-05 (5.77E-6) ***	-3E-05 (8.53E-6) ***	-2.70E-05 (0.00001) **	1.977	2.223
DUM2010	-0.001 (0.00040) **	-0.00109 (0.00043) **	-0.0007 (0.00018) **	-7.15E-04 (0.00021) ***	-0.0001 (0.00006) *	-1.75E-04 (0.00006) **	-0.0004 (0.00015) **	-4.82E-04 (0.00015) ***	0.00021 (0.00023)	3.20E-04 (0.00026)	1.354	1.462
DUM2011	-0.0021 (0.00049) ***	-0.00218 (0.00051) ***	-0.0009 (0.00022) ***	-8.90E-04 (0.00025) ***	-0.0001 (0.00007)	-1.35E-04 (0.00007) *	-0.0003 (0.00019)	-3.62E-04 (0.00017) **	-0.0008 (0.00028) ***	-7.52E-04 (0.00031) **	1.998	1.975
Total Tourism	-2.75E-10 (1.856E-10)	-	-7.8E-11 (8.16E-11)	-	-9.7E-12 (2.84E-11)	-	-2.5E-11 (7.13E-11)	-	-1.6E-10 (1.09E-10)	-	1.605	-
Foreign Tourism	-	9.11E-10 (8.37E-10)	-	1.20E-10 (4.07E-10)	-	3.84E-10 (1.31E-10) ***	-	8.46E-10 (2.90E-10) **	-	-4.33E-10 (5.05E-10)	-	4.096
Overseas Filipino Tourism	-	-3.58E-09 (1.03E-8)	-	-3.80E-09 (5.02E-9)	-	-2.72E-09 (1.39E-9) *	-	-5.30E-09 (3.57E-9)	-	8.57E-09 (6.22E-9)	-	1.738
Domestic Tourism	-	-3.29E-10 (2.19E-10)	-	-4.94E-11 (1.07E-10)	-	-3.58E-11 (2.96E-11)	-	-7.28E-11 (7.59E-11)	-	-1.71E-10 (1.32E-10)	-	1.431
Adjusted R2	0.6956	0.7298	0.5500	0.529	0.4720	0.6637	0.4301	0.6187	0.6017	0.6151	-	-

Notes: 1) \* = Significant at  $\alpha=0.10$ , \*\* = Significant at  $\alpha=0.05$ , \*\*\* = Significant at  $\alpha=0.01$   
 2) Number of observations = 48

of 1,000 translates into an increase in incidence of theft of 8 per 10,000,000 population (10 additional theft cases in the NCR).

The number of overseas Filipino arrivals, on the other hand, is significantly and negatively correlated with robbery. For every 1,000 increase in overseas Filipino tourists, incidence of robbery cases falls by 3 per 1,000,000 population. Again, taking NCR as an example, 1,000 additional overseas Filipino tourists is associated with 36 less robbery cases. It could be that criminals are not particularly attracted to overseas Filipino tourists as they are more cautious and also, more likely to report crimes, relative to foreign tourists. It is also possible that these overseas Filipino tourists, being more familiar with local conditions in different parts of the Philippines, would avoid crime areas. The number of domestic tourists, is not found to be significantly correlated with any type of crime.

The coefficient of *Deterrence* (crime clearance efficiency) is consistently significant

and negative in all 10 regressions. A region with a higher proportion of crimes reported and investigated tends to have a lower rate of criminal cases.<sup>3)</sup> This supports the theoretical proposition that the probability of detection and conviction is indirectly related to crime incidence.

Per capita GDP also turns out to be significantly and positively related with aggregate crime, robbery and non-index crime. Regions with higher per capita GDP have more crimes. This is consistent with the “opportunity effect” argument which asserts that the decision to commit crime depends on the availability of target “goods” and the perceived profitability of illegal activities which increases with income and affluence in the community. The significant negative correlation between GDP growth rate and theft, on the other hand, may be reflecting the potential of the people in the region to generate income through legal means and hence, lower rate of theft. Unexpectedly, regions with higher unemployment turn out to have lower rates of aggregate crime, robbery and non-index crime.<sup>4)</sup>

The significant negative sign of the coefficients of the dummy variable for the year 2010 for all types of crimes except non-index crime indicates that there are less crimes of these categories in 2010 compared to 2009. There is a further significant reduction in all types of crimes (non-index crime included) in 2011. Hence, the crime rates in the different regions are generally higher in 2009 compared to 2010 and 2011 which may be reflective of increased effort and improvements in general peace and order condition nationwide during the Aquino administration.

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3) The crime clearance rate, calculated as the ratio of the number of crimes for which a case has been filed to the total number of crimes reported, is generated and reported in the Philippine Statistical Yearbook by designated government agencies primarily as an indicator of the efficiency of the criminal prevention system or the probability of crime detection and conviction. However, possible under-reporting of crimes in the Philippines may result in artificially high values for this proxy variable. In such a case, public expenditure on police/military may be a more appropriate variable. Lack of regional data on police/military expenditures prevented the authors from running regressions using this alternative deterrence variable.

4) In an alternative regression run where number of crimes, not per capita crime (number of crimes divided by population), is used as the dependent variable, unemployment has the expected significant and positive relationship with crime. These contrasting findings on the relationship between unemployment and crime warrants a further study, preferably, with longer time period coverage in order to track the long-term dynamics between unemployment and crime. At the outset, it can be supposed that unemployment will not instantly convert an individual into a criminal. But persistent unemployment may eventually lead to people resorting to illegal income generating activities.

## Conclusions

The study reveals that only certain types of tourists are correlated with certain types of crimes in the Philippines. Foreign tourism is positively associated with robbery and theft while overseas Filipino tourism is negatively related with robbery.

Regression analysis of the panel data set reveals that regions with more foreign tourist arrivals experience higher rates of robbery and theft. It appears that robbers and thieves distinguish between overseas Filipino and foreign travelers, with foreigners considered to be more “suitable” targets associated with a lower propensity to report a crime and more material possessions. These results may also be reflective of overseas Filipino tourists’ knowledge and awareness of the conditions in different areas of the Philippines and their decisions to choose the relatively developed and safe regions. Potential offenders, aware of these traits of overseas Filipino tourists, may be labeling these tourists as “less suitable targets” and are thus, not “motivated” to pursue crimes in areas frequented by this type of tourists.

Overall, the findings of the study show that the extent of the impact of tourism on crime largely depends on the characteristics of the visitors and the type of crime, a conclusion that is similar to Pizam’s (1982). This implies that efforts in abating the tourism sector’s crime externality must take into consideration the demographics of tourist flows. More resources can be directed towards areas that are frequented by foreign tourists. The study also provides strong statistical evidence of the negative relationship between crime and the deterrence factor, the crime clearance efficiency rate of police forces in the Philippines. This potential deterrent factor must be put to maximum use in areas where they are most essential.

Furthermore, the study provides some empirical support for the hypothesized influence of macroeconomic factors. The significant positive relationship of crime with per capita GDP highlights the better opportunities criminals are faced given the more active circulation of goods and services.

The analysis in this paper is limited to the determination of the existence or non-existence of a correlation between different types of crimes and different types of tourists. It is recommended that a further study on the direction of causality between crime and tourism be undertaken to validate the preliminary findings and recommendations of this paper.

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# Inclusive Spirituality: The Bodhisattva Kuan-yin as Moral Exemplar and Self-Cultivation in a Malaysian Dharma House

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Based on an ethnographic study of a lay Buddhist organization in contemporary Malaysia called the Kuan-yin Contemplative Order (KYCO), this paper looks into the inclusive spiritualism KYCO engenders by situating the organization and the religious universalism from which it emerges in the cultural and historical context of “redemptive societies”—a religious tradition that was established during the late imperial era of China and exploded during the early twentieth century into the cities and spread to Southeast Asia. While the ongoing racial politics and simmering religious tensions in Malaysia limit what followers of KYCO can realistically hope to achieve in terms of realizing a more peaceful and equitable existence, these perennial issues and challenges do not stop them from pursuing the ideals of the Bodhisattva—one who out of compassion delays her/his own salvation until all others have been saved from suffering.

**Keywords:** self-cultivation, morality, inclusive spiritualism, redemptive societies, Malaysia

## Introduction

I readily agreed to join in the Vesak<sup>1)</sup> day procession that was to be held on a weekend evening of May 2008. No prior registration was required nor forms to be filled. I just needed to show up at the Maha Vihara Buddhist temple in Brickfields, Kuala Lumpur, joining my friends from the Kuan-yin Contemplative Order (KYCO)—a lay Buddhist organization. They stood out in their crisp all-white attire, looking fresh and clean. There

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1) Vesak is a holiday observed by Buddhists in many countries. Vesak commemorates the birth, enlightenment, and passing away of the Buddha. It falls on a full moon day, typically during the fifth or sixth lunar month of the year.

were 11 of them from KYCO that evening. Kiat,<sup>2)</sup> one of the most active members of KYCO and the coordinator for this outing, was happy to see me there and delighted that I had worn the white KYCO polo shirt as well. Someone from the group pointed at my dark blue cap and said with good humor, “You look like you are from UMNO.” It was a stark reminder of the recent watershed general election of March 2008, which had seen the biggest loss for the ruling Malay party—UMNO—in its history (although the party still maintained a precarious majority).<sup>3)</sup> I was perturbed by that insinuation, because UMNO is not only the ruling party of the country but also an exclusively and dominantly ethnic Malay political party, and the comment reminded me uncomfortably of my place as an outsider.

The atmosphere was festive as we marched along the 10 km route that weaved through the city of Kuala Lumpur. However, the mood in my group was subdued and somber, in contrast to the joyous singing and easy camaraderie amongst other marchers. Kiat proposed that we “contemplate on the sufferings of the world” and “dedicate merit generated from the march to those who are suffering.” Although the march was not physically arduous and I secretly found it to be enjoyable, Kiat invoked the effort as a spiritual struggle of sorts, dedicating it to all beings—humans and non-humans in this world as well as others.

Going home that night, my mind was occupied by the image of these Chinese middle-class English-speaking devotees from KYCO dressed in white marching solemnly, in contrast to the celebratory atmosphere of the Vesak day procession. They stood out in their all-white outfit as a marker of purity and virtue, and demonstrated visually the relationship between the body’s corporeality and morality.<sup>4)</sup> Kiat’s reference to suffering

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2) Out of respect to religious sensitivities in Malaysia and to protect confidentiality, most names in this paper are pseudonyms.

3) UMNO stands for United Malays National Organisation. It is the dominant political party amongst 13 other parties organized along ethnic and communal lines, in the ruling coalition *Barisan Nasional* (BN). Other component parties of BN include the Malaysian Chinese Association (MCA), Malaysian Indian Congress (MIC), and *Gerakan Rakyat Malaysia* (*Gerakan* or Malaysia’s Peoples Movement). During the general election of March 2008, BN lost its two-thirds majority in the *Dewan Rakyat* (House of Representatives), which it had held since independence in August 1957; 82 parliamentary seats and 5 states went to a newly formed coalition, the *Pakatan Rakyat* (People’s Alliance or PR) led by former Deputy Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim. The election marked the start of a series of power struggles between and within these two political groups. See also “Malaysia in 2009: Confronting Old Challenges through a New Leadership” (Singh 2010).

4) In Buddhism, “beautiful bodies” serve as visible markers of, and are presumed to be the karmic effects of, morality. For example, it is written in the Pali Buddhist canon “*Digha Nikaya*” that the Buddha is reported to have borne 32 greater and 80 lesser marks held to be distinguished qualities of the body. Thus, a description of a person’s physical features and appearances may serve as a commentary of his or her moral character (Mroziak 2004).

seemed to set things in a certain perspective—suffering is central to Buddhism, where the world is depicted as suffering and a solution is sought to the end of suffering<sup>5</sup>—but his call to contemplate on the world’s sufferings invoked moral empathy, prompting “something that depends on intellectual and practical disciplines” (Asad 1993, 62).

I am moved by my friends’ actions in which they seek to dedicate themselves to help all beings. By doing so they manifest not only Buddhist compassion but, more important, a spirit of inclusiveness and universalism. Their actions are grounded in aspirations not necessarily realized in the (protective) powers acquired through meditation and disciplinary practices that normally accrue to magical monks and/or meditation masters in Thai, Laotian, or Burmese Buddhism (Houtman 1997; Cook 2010; McDaniel 2011). Instead, KYCO followers aspire toward moral transformation through self-cultivation practices where spiritual accomplishment and morality are demonstrated by the exemplary life and conduct of charismatic lay masters and gifted adepts.

This paper seeks to describe some of these moral aspirations and spiritual experiences, examining the self-cultivation practices and inclusive spiritualism that give rise to them by situating KYCO and the religious universalism from which it emerges in the cultural and historical context of “redemptive societies”—a religious tradition that was established in the late imperial era of China and exploded during the early twentieth century into the cities and spread to Southeast Asia.

## **Kuan-yin Contemplative Order: Inclusive Spiritualism**

The arguments in this paper emerge from fieldwork conducted from 2008 to 2009 at KYCO during which I observed firsthand the activities that KYCO followers carry out in order to fulfill or realize the Bodhisattva Vow<sup>6</sup> they have undertaken. I also analyzed

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5) The notion of suffering also requires us to attend to the idea of embodiment—that is, that human action and experience are sited in a material body—as well as the idea of the body as an “integrated totality having developable capacities for activity and experience unique to it, the capacities for sensing, imagining, and doing that are culturally mediated” (Asad 1993, 89). I argue that the body’s ability to suffer and respond to suffering, as well as to use its own suffering in social relationships by empathizing with others, constitute the conduct and experiences of KYCO marchers during the Vesak day procession of 2008.

6) In Mahayana Buddhist practice, vow taking underscores a compelling desire to cultivate compassion and is such a highly esteemed virtue that every new aspirant is advised to take the Bodhisattva Vow, which speaks of self-sacrifice and solidarity. Adapted from the Mahayana Bodhisattva Vow, the KYCO version is as follows: “All beings without number, I vow to liberate. Endless blind passions, I vow to uproot. Dharma Doors beyond measure, I vow to penetrate. The great way of Buddha, I vow to attain.”

KYCO newsletters and magazines containing personal essays, stories, and poems written by followers. The people whom I befriended at KYCO were happy to assist and facilitate my study. They were welcoming of my presence because they perceived it as the work of the divine that had brought me to them, and which they hoped would ultimately lead me to the discovery and achievement of my own goals, spiritually speaking.

In the heartlands of Petaling Jaya—or “PJ” as locals affectionately call it—the suburban residential city southwest of Malaysia’s capital, Kuala Lumpur, people gather regularly at KYCO, located in a nondescript twin double-story link-house, to pray, chant sutras, sing hymns, and listen to Dharma lectures. The KYCO membership consists mainly of urban middle-class ethnic Chinese who are accountants, bankers, managers, lecturers, doctors, computer executives, secretaries, and businessmen as well as retirees and housewives. On festival days, when attendance is highest, thousands of people might pass through the house. Devotees wearing their all-white ensemble descend upon the quiet neighborhood in their Toyota, Honda, Proton, and the occasional Mercedes-Benz sedans. Most people come for the blessings, some for the healing—both spiritual and physical—that are offered by the Bodhisattva Kuan-yin. Many are devout followers, like my friend Kiat, who goes to renew his spiritual and moral vows as well as make new ones.

KYCO was inspired and founded in 1979 by Tony Wong Kuan Ming to fulfill a personal pledge: it was a commitment to “save the world,” but the salvational or redemptive imperatives would become clearer to Tony only in later years. Born in 1940 Kuala Lumpur into a Chinese Catholic household, Tony was the son of a millionaire. He led a self-professed privileged life and was cared for as a boy by *ah-mahs* (bonded servants) in his household. He received a formative English-based education at Christian missionary schools in Kuala Lumpur. In the late 1970s Tony’s brother Nelson was diagnosed with cancer, and the news devastated his family emotionally. Tony was affected particularly badly, and during his brother’s sickness he (Tony) was “visited” by various Chinese deities who urged him to pray to the Bodhisattva Kuan-yin and start up a congregation of Kuan-yin followers and devotees.

In 1979, Tony began gathering a few friends and colleagues to venerate Kuan-yin and learn about Buddhism at his office. Over time, he acquired a reputation as a healer and teacher of the Buddhist Dharma. Later on, with a sizeable following, he was transformed into Master Tony Wong or “Sifu”—a respectful Cantonese<sup>7)</sup> term that people use to address him. He is now known mainly as a teacher who delivers the Buddhist Dharma in English, teaching in a way that is considered by his followers to be accessible and use-

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7) Cantonese, rather than Mandarin, is the lingua franca of the Chinese community in Kuala Lumpur.

ful for the ordinary person. He addresses problems that relate to family, work, and personal well-being, casting and reframing them under the light of Buddhist compassion and moral rhetoric.

The charismatic persona of leadership is not unique to contemporary religious or spiritual organizations; for instance, the successes of Sai Baba's following, New Age religions, and Christian mega-churches have always hinged upon the skill and popularity of their leaders. The leadership of Sifu or Master Tony Wong as a male authority figure is a central feature of KYCO. Charismatic leadership, alongside the fostering of a family-like atmosphere that is conducive to experiences of emotional security, spiritual effervescence, and moral rhetoric contribute to the appeal of KYCO for many of its followers.

KYCO's leadership structure may be described as patriarchal. Sifu Tony Wong as the founder-leader assumes the most authoritative role along with "lay clergy": an inner circle of disciples composed of men and women who are appointed to take charge of ritual duties as well as manage the day-to-day operations of the organization. Entry into this inner core group is coveted by many KYCO followers, including my friend Kiat, but it is decided solely by Sifu, who assesses potential disciples based on their spiritual potential and level of commitment to KYCO. Leadership revolves around Sifu and two of his most senior male disciples, who are exceptional hands-on managers. This centralized patriarchal style of leadership has remained strong over the years. Because of its highly syncretic and non-sectarian pronouncement, KYCO does not subject itself directly to monastic authority; it develops and teaches its own Dharma. Monastic authority serves as a symbolic purpose for KYCO; hence, its relationship with Buddhist organizations and temples can be regarded as competitive rather than hierarchical or complementary.

Through his followers, Sifu has cultivated many close relationships with Tibetan monks and lamas, Sai Baba devotees, spiritual adepts, and local nonsectarian humanitarian figures. Sifu is a key proponent of the Vajrayana Buddhist Council of Malaysia, which was formed in 2000 to represent the Vajrayana Buddhist community and to work with other Buddhist groups in Malaysia. This Vajrayana Buddhist umbrella organization comprises KYCO as well as other Tibetan-based Buddhist organizations, branches, and temples in Malaysia.

The network of affiliations exemplifies the nonsectarian, eclectic, and communal ethos of KYCO. More important, the network is constructed along the lines of affective relationship and personalized interaction. For Sifu and his followers, this relationship is maintained by the regularity of the Dharma sessions and activities at KYCO.

KYCO's membership number is modest, but the organization can draw upon tremendous support from followers and donors during fund-raising and other important festive as well as philanthropic events. In the context of the Petaling Jaya area, with an

urban population of over 450,000, and the Kuala Lumpur metropolitan population of 1.5 million, the establishment and steady growth of urban middle-class spiritual organizations such as KYCO and the socioeconomic wealth and resources they represent are significant developments.

KYCO followers are active supporters of Tibetan Buddhist clergies on the Dharma-dispensing-cum-fund-raising world circuit. In the global scheme of things, they are tapped into the local chapter of the international Sai Baba network; they also engage in local charities and organize spiritual tours to Sai Baba's headquarters in Puttaparthi, India, as well as Buddhist and Taoist temples in China and Taiwan. Through these activities, they participate in a transnational flow of funds, personnel, activities, and events that encompasses and expands self-cultivation as a spiritual field that dovetails with the growth of a self-help milieu promulgated by a burgeoning global consumer market for self-cultivation or self-help literature, media programs, workshops, retreats, and wellness centers promising to heal, restore, and rejuvenate the soul and to make the world a better place.

KYCO's membership expanded gradually and spiked during the 1990s, an era when the Sixth Malaysia Plan was rolled out by then Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad. The 1991 plan outlined a rapid economic program that envisioned the transformation of Malaysia into a "fully developed country" by the year 2020. The plan also outlined cultural goals to be achieved alongside economic growth. Primary among those were the making of a "liberal and tolerant society in which Malaysians of all colors and creeds would be free to practice and profess their customs, cultures and religious beliefs" (Mahathir 1991) and the vision of a "united Malaysian nation with a sense of common and shared destiny" (*ibid.*) that upended the postcolonial ideology asserting Malay ethnicity as the national identity. It was a powerful and compelling motion of unity and inclusiveness that encouraged the nascent development of nondenominational philanthropic spiritual movements in Malaysia: during this time, the Taiwan-based humanitarian-work-oriented Tzu Chi organization expanded through the outreach efforts of a Taiwanese businessman and his wife based in Melaka (Huang 2009, 247–266); Yiguandao—a Chinese spiritual sect banned in Singapore—put down roots in Malaysia and gained a nationwide following (Soo 1998); the Sai Baba movement grew rapidly (Kent 2005); and charity organizations such as the Pure Life Society, led by spiritually inspired local figures such as Mother Mangalam, captured the imagination and wide support of Malaysians regardless of their race, language, or religion. Together, these entities constitute what could be considered a grass-roots spiritual movement that transcends ethnic and religious boundaries with an emphasis on social action and spiritual salvation, charity, and self-cultivation.

Many of their philanthropic and spiritual pursuits are aimed at social as well as per-

sonal enrichment. Their membership comprises predominantly well-educated middle-class, middle-aged professionals and businessmen who fraternize in these congregations to network and seek outlets for their shared spiritual and emotional needs. The same people can often be found in different spiritual and philanthropic organizations.

KYCO is part of this grassroots religious movement. Tapped into a network of social as well as business relations, it contributes to the discourse and practice of “civility” and “participation” by advocating Buddhist compassion and adopting an inclusive spiritualism that does not require people to give up their own religions or beliefs or philanthropy. It transgresses boundaries of race, language, religion as well as binaries of good and evil, right and wrong—not by proclaiming ultimate truths but by promulgating a quasi-religious quality of “civility” in public association and interaction that generates peace and respect for others. The political anthropologist Robert Hefner proposes that civility, when added to the “structural reality of civic association,” could bring about the development of a “civil society” (Hefner 2001, 10–11). Weaving individual spiritual and social goals that reinforce and intertwine with each other often blurs the distinction between the needs of the individual versus community, and self versus others. Much of this blurring is embodied in the personal convictions and charisma of Sifu Tony Wong and some of his closest disciples, whose efforts are aimed at making KYCO a meaningful presence in the lives of its followers.

KYCO devotees and followers value the personal and communal relations as well as the moral and spiritual upliftment the organization provides. Sifu Tony Wong is often cited as the primary reason why they support KYCO: they appreciate his teachings, which focus on the “essentials” of Buddhist teachings and have general applicability in cultivating personal wellness as well as the collective well-being of society. In the context of Malaysia’s difficult racial and religious politics, KYCO’s inclusive message of spirituality and morality is poignant yet powerful. Some scholars have come to the conclusion that adherence to the religious or spiritual moral principles of compassion, kindness, empathy, and even philanthropic work does not have a significant impact on civil society. Contrary to these opinions, KYCO demonstrates how personal efficacy is generated through practices and discourses that become political practices however apolitical or anti-political they may appear or claim to be. I argue that KYCO’s spiritually informed notion of inclusiveness continues to be relevant for many Malaysians, with power being drawn not from political institutions but through self-cultivation practices whose moral purpose is to sustain, promote, and uplift life.

## Redemptive Societies, Self-Cultivation and Kuan-yin Veneration

The moral rhetoric of self-cultivation practices is reproduced in the notion of Bodhisattvas or Buddhist saints who vow to work for the good of all beings by renouncing their own enlightenment or salvation until all have been saved. Bodhisattvas epitomize the highest ethical standards in the Mahayana Buddhist tradition because “they dedicate themselves in all their lifetimes to rescuing living beings from various kinds of suffering” (Mrozik 2004, 176).

The idea that it is possible and desirable to attain or acquire certain qualities and transform oneself into a better person or a more superior form of being through self-cultivation has been present in Chinese religious, philosophical, and medical traditions. Self-cultivation, generally understood to be a set of mental and physical routines, is undertaken as an individual practice or in groups. Varieties of self-cultivation are found in Buddhist, Taoist, as well as Confucian traditions; in traditional Chinese medical teachings; and in the bio-spiritual practice of qigong and Chinese martial arts. All these different traditions and practices of self-cultivation share the common idea that humans can attain a stage of perfection (in whatever ways the traditions dictate or determine what that perfection is) through physical and mental disciplines (Palmer and Liu 2012; Penny 2012).

Self-cultivation popularized through Chinese redemptive societies during the turbulent Chinese Republican era of the early twentieth century achieved a particular social and political salience in China as well as among Chinese communities in Taiwan and Southeast Asia. The term “redemptive societies” was coined by Prasenjit Duara in his study of Manchukuo—the Japanese state established in the Chinese northeast (Manchuria) between 1932 and 1945 (Duara 2003). Later scholars have used the term to describe and identify groups such as Falun Gong (Ownby 2008) and Dejjiao (Formoso 2010). Redemptive societies that emerged out of the troubled times at the turn of the twentieth century in China “urged the extinguishing of worldly desires and engagement in moral action” (*ibid.*, 103), retaining sectarian traditions and scriptures as well as popular practices such as divination, spirit writing, and so on. These spiritual and historical traditions provided ideas and notions of sovereignty for the project of nation making and modernization in Manchukuo.

Redemptive cults such as Dao De-hui (Morality Society), Daoyuan (Society of the Way), Zailijiao (The Teaching of the Abiding Principle), Shijie Zongjiao Datong-hui (Society for the Great Unity of World Religions), and Yiguandao (Way of Pervading Unity) claimed a following of 7 million to 30 million people in China from the 1930s to the 1940s (*ibid.*). These organizations taught and put into practice a universalizing and syncretic

form of Chinese Buddhism, Confucianism, and Taoism. Members of contemporary redemptive societies were usually drawn from the cities and urban townships. They included the local gentry and officials who came together to partake in philanthropic activities such as disaster relief, poverty alleviation, education, the teaching of virtues including charity and filial piety, as well as self-cultivation.

Adapting to the times by incorporating major religious traditions and teachings, redemptive societies focused on the idioms of self-cultivation, knowledge, and the rhetoric of “saving the world” from physical destruction and moral impairment. Moral and spiritual goals as well as processes were pitted against hedonistic materialism, and communal as well as community needs were put before self-interest. Popular concerns about moral progress and the rhetoric of universal redemption came to be associated with “civilizational ideals and practices” of *wenming*<sup>8)</sup> (文明, Chinese civilization) and *jiaohua*<sup>9)</sup> (教化, moral transformation) (Duara 2003, 105–106) with the explicit aim of teaching the truths of “heaven” and the “way” to transform selves and society, and to “urge towards a transcendent universalism” (*ibid.*) or restore the “glory of ancient civilization” (Formoso 2010).

Thus, redemptive societies not only embodied virtues of an older moral order, they were also engaged in the reconstruction of communities and society along utopian visions of the future. Self-cultivation, then, would lead to the achievement of civilized nobility or *wen* (文). The cultivation of a strong inner spirit, *neisheng* (内圣), that matched the outer/worldly dimension of *waiwang*<sup>10)</sup> (外王) constituted a fundamental practice of redemptive societies (Duara 2003, 103–104). Therefore, self-cultivation practices included “outer” or outward expressions of kindness such as the performing of charity or charitable deeds as well as “inner” practices of moral and spiritual introspection, maintaining abstinences, and the observation of a moral code or behavior and bodily comportment. For the political aspirants and community leaders among members of redemptive societies, they advocated the development of a strong inner spiritual dimen-

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8) In this context, *wenming* refers to the Chinese intellectual discourse of civilization that emerged during the late nineteenth century where elites from inside and outside the imperial court were concerned about the “backwardness” of Chinese society. They had contesting ideas about modernizing and reforming the government as well as differing ideologies regarding sovereignty and civilization (see also Duara 2003, 89–129).

9) *Jiaohua* refers to the moral transformation of the person as well as society. The term is rooted in the Confucianist imperial ideology “to morally transform by means of virtuous rule” (Duara 2003, 106). It emphasizes social propriety and obligations rooted in cosmological “truths,” and is deeply connected to the discourse of *wenming* or civilization.

10) *Waiwang* literally means “outer king” (Duara 2003, 108). It is premised on a Chinese spiritual dialectic of the internal or “inner sage” (*neisheng*) i.e. the mind: emotions and thoughts, and the external or “outer king” (*waiwang*) of the body: behavior and conduct.

sion through “moral religious cultivation of the individual spirit and body” (*ibid.*, 105) to match an outer dimension of engaging in worldly affairs through philanthropic enterprises and public works. Thus, self-cultivation prescribes for the elites as well as the politically ambitious a way of connecting the inner state—hopes, aspirations, and passions that constitute a sense of self—with outer social and political action.

Describing the redemptive societies project as a “civilizing process,” Duara highlights its mission to enlighten or teach and transform social morality through virtuous rule and self-cultivation. Redemptive societies such as the Morality Society, Yiguandao, and Red Swastika were lay religious congregations that espoused an ideology of universal salvation promoting a syncretism of Buddhism, Taoism, and Confucianism, which gained popularity amongst Confucian gentry and the Buddhist as well as Taoist laity during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and in the twentieth century came to encompass and adapt world religions, including Islam and Christianity (*ibid.*, 103–104). They sought to distill “truths” from these traditions and to synthesize religious as well as moral visions with a scientific view of the world. They adopted a social organization along the lines of a Christian model of “religion,” with “a church hierarchy, Sunday prayers, missions, journals, and even, in some cases baptism” (Goossaert and Palmer 2011, 95). Claiming to represent “religious modernity in its universal dimension” (*ibid.*), redemptive societies were highly effective in mobilizing members into large organizations of adepts who engaged in a variety of self-cultivation and devotional practices as well as in performing emergency relief work.

Redemptive societies had national reach, with provincial and municipal organizations registered under the post-imperial Chinese state as philanthropic public associations. They were characterized by a distinct mode of authority and a leadership system that emphasized an intimate master-disciple relationship, a fraternity of brotherhood constituted by a closed group of adepts, and a network of followers and practitioners who operated within a broad moralistic discourse (Goossaert 2008, 25–26).

KYCO’s emergence during the 1980s coincided with a flourishing of redemptive societies led by Dejjiao (Formoso 2010) and Yiguandao (Soo 1998) in Malaysia, when branches, prayer halls, and family shrines were set up on the advice and request of relatives, friends, and colleagues who were sect members from Singapore, Taiwan, and Hong Kong. However, the newly formed sects faced tremendous pressure and consternation from religious bodies such as the Malaysian Buddhist Association and the local Chinese press, who accused and depicted sect members as “heretics,” “foreign swindlers,” “deviant,” “evil,” and “anti-social.” Yiguandao was banned in Taiwan until 1987 and is still considered to be illegal in China due to its “alleged close ties with the Japanese puppet government at Manchukuo during the Sino-Japanese war, and partly due to the

hostile views held towards it by leaders of the more orthodox Buddhist groups” (Lim 2011, 7). In July 1981 Singapore expelled and blacklisted 12 Taiwanese Yiguandao members for spreading heretic teachings (Soo 1998, 155), but this only further strengthened the group’s resolve:

One direct consequence of this early negative experience was the decision by Taiwan-based leadership to establish a chemical factory in Singapore as a front for missionary activities and as a viable source of funds for the expansion of the group in Singapore and the region. In 1981, the group formally registered in Singapore as the Hua Yuan Hui, essentially identifying itself publicly as a moral uplifting society and charitable organization, and not as Yiguandao and an explicitly religious organization. In fact, the name of Hua Yuan Hui in Singapore suggested both an orientation towards Chinese traditional culture that might appeal to the Chinese population in the country, as well as to fit into the state’s effort to cultivate moral citizens through the re-acquaintance of the “traditional culture” of one’s ethnicity. (Lim 2011, 8)

The Malaysian Chinese media picked up on the negative public perception resulting from Singapore’s expulsion of the 12 Taiwanese Yiguandao members and cast a similar lens onto the situation in Malaysia. It highlighted a public quarrel between individuals that implicated sect teachings and practices suggesting moral impropriety. With significant encouragement from the Chinese press, a grassroots vigilante group to combat “hereticism” was formed by one of the antagonists in the quarrel, and it attracted a handful of supporters. Finally, in 1993, the Malaysian Ministry of Home Affairs stepped in to issue a warning against the “illegal preaching” and “propagation of heretical teaching” that caused “disunity among Chinese communities” while reiterating the government’s policy of religious freedom and its guarantee under the Malaysian Constitution (Soo 1998, 165).

Not unlike their innovative redemptive society counterparts, serious KYCO followers cast themselves as spiritual cultivators, take the Bodhisattva Vow, and adopt a gentle, caring, humble, and faithful disposition. They learn to accept Sifu’s teachings with humility and respect, practice self-cultivation, and strive toward a moral life, convinced that moral discipline and self-cultivation are an efficacious way to mediate the consequences of karma as a form of “retribution from past actions” or “inescapable Fate” (Van der Veer 1989, 458).

Here, KYCO devotees share with their religious counterparts in Buddhism and Taoism a basic adherence to the following tenets. First, the universe is believed to comprise benevolent (as well as malevolent) spirits and divine entities. Second, historical religious figures such as the Buddha, Jesus Christ, etc., as well as contemporary ones such as Sathya Sai Baba (1926–2011)—the Hindu spiritual founder-leader of the international Sai Baba movement—are regarded as compelling evidence of the divine

presence in the human world. These figures are believed to be virtuous, efficacious, and responsive. Third, practical, moral, and spiritual goals are intertwined, and these goals are believed to be achieved or achievable through individual as well as collective effort rather than through belief or faith alone. Through these efforts to be awakened and thus to be free from suffering, devotees aspire toward positive changes in their lives and within themselves. They invest their time and energy in self-cultivation practices such as contemplation, praying, chanting, and charity that fulfill personal aspirations; reinforce fortitude; give meaning; emphasize feelings and cathartic sensations; and embody caring and giving as well as belonging and laboring. These self-cultivation practices enact feelings of doing right and good, which may be discerned and understood as moral or ethical practices (Zigon 2013).

The character and ethos of redemptive societies—particularly lay voluntary organizations—the emphasis on moral transformation, and the practice of self-cultivation have been built on the foundation of Kuan-yin veneration, which could perhaps be described as “personal fulfillment” for devotees (Lee and Ackerman 1997, 68). Kuan-yin is a powerful symbol of compassion and efficacy: devotees believe that Kuan-yin offers protection for women and children as well as relief for those who experience suffering. Scholars suggest that the popularity of Kuan-yin among Chinese in Southeast Asia arose because ancestral cults, which are based on notions of lineage, lost their hold or appeal among voluntary Buddhist associations in migrant communities (Topley 1961, Nyce 1971, Baity 1975, Sangren 1983 in Lee and Ackerman 1997, 69). Kuan-yin’s popularity signaled the decline of patrilineal forms of relations and organizations due to the dominance of impersonal market conditions. Thus, Kuan-yin-venerating voluntary Buddhist associations that upheld and propagated a “universalistic kinship idiom” (Lee and Ackerman 1997, 70) were able to incorporate unrelated people of different social status, language, and ethnicity into communities that comprised members, followers, and devotees. The idea of “universal kinship” entailed new forms of social relatedness through membership and association of faith. It facilitated the development of new social organizations and relations determined by what people do and how they act in a new environment.

Organizations such as the Great Way of the Former Heaven (Topley 1963), a secretive sect that arrived with the waves of Chinese migration during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, played a vital role as a voluntary Buddhist association that propagated Kuan-yin veneration in Southeast Asia. It nurtured the idiom of universal kinship that incorporated devotees into a community of “Kuan-yin’s children.” The origin of the Great Way of the Former Heaven could be traced to the Buddhist sectarian White Lotus sect, which sprang up during the fourteenth century against Mongol rule in China and played an instrumental role in the establishment of the Ming dynasty, which

reigned from the fourteenth to the seventeenth century.

Later, sect members who were wealthy Chinese merchants donated money and land to set up a series of Kuan-yin temples, including the Waterloo Street Kuan-yin temple in Singapore in 1884, which gained a reputation for efficacy. They also established a series of “vegetarian halls” that functioned as “mutual aid establishments for women who sought to live unmarried or to remain unmarried once they had been widowed” (Prazniak 1999, 229) in Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand, and Indonesia following commercial and family connections as well as philanthropic interests. All the efforts that went into establishing public temples and semi-private vegetarian halls not only contributed to the efficacy and popularity of Kuan-yin veneration but also laid the ground for the development of redemptive societies.

### **Compassion: Inclusive Spiritualism, Moral Reasoning, and Self-Cultivation in Practice**

KYCO’s ethos of compassion symbolizes an inclusive spiritualism, morality, and self-cultivation that are embodied and expressed vividly in the everyday life and struggles of followers. Lim Kuan Meng is a Kuala Lumpur native and lifelong KYCO follower. Strongly opinionated, he has a caustic sense of humor and a wry wit to match. Nothing is too sacred for him; his sarcasm spares no one and has earned him a reputation. He is revered and respected as an elder but also quietly loathed for his acidic tongue. Mr. Lim joined KYCO more than 20 years ago through his wife, who regularly attended Sifu’s Dharma sessions. Now in their mid-60s, the couple live in nearby Petaling Jaya.

An economics graduate of the University of Malaya, Mr. Lim pursued a professional career in banking, where he reviewed and dispensed loans to individuals as well as private businesses for the most part of his working life. But several years ago he was forced into early retirement, and for a period of time he found himself in a precarious financial position. He struggled to make ends meet, relying on an irregular stream of income from periodic consulting jobs advising small companies. On a few occasions, usually after a Dharma session, we would hang out at the neighborhood coffee shop to chat. I took the chance to speak with him about his religious and spiritual pursuits. Mr. Lim disclosed that he became more serious about religion after his early retirement: he devoted one hour each morning to praying, chanting, and meditating at home. He made it quite clear to me that his spiritual practice was not just an escape into the quiet or a withdrawal into himself, but an outreach to others through charity and service, which he considers to be the most important part of his spirituality.

During my encounters with Mr. Lim, we talked frequently about the world economy. Deeply frustrated with the financial crisis of 2008, he could not come to terms with how a small elite group of men—investment bankers, driven by greed and personal gain—could make decisions that adversely affected the lives of so many people around the world. He was critical of “easy credit” consumption and felt that “real businesses” such as the small enterprises that he consulted for had to pay the price and suffer because of the tightening credit crunch. It was a spiral into a moral abyss, Mr. Lim decried. Over many late-night suppers, he gave me a gloomy prognosis of the socioeconomic situation in Malaysia: foreclosures of businesses and houses, a prolonged slump in the property and stock markets, and high unemployment. He lamented the rising cost of living, especially in cities such as Kuala Lumpur, and said, “Inflation has been rampant and wages stagnant over the past decade. The quality of life has deteriorated. Even eating out [in Kuala Lumpur] has become costly for many people. Imagine a plate of chicken rice that costs RM4.50, even RM5, versus S\$2.50 in Singapore on a wage level that is comparatively lower here.”

Mr. Lim felt that something had been fundamentally wrong over the past decade, when people did not seem to have benefited from the economic growth years before the financial crisis hit in 2008. “Where was the prosperity that the government kept talking about?” he asked. “People just do not feel it.” His disappointment, as he pointed out himself, had come from “the hard-hitting reality on the ground.” Expressing sympathy toward young working adults, especially those who were planning or just starting a family, he cited the exorbitant costs of a marriage banquet, buying a house, getting a car, and other concerns that reflected a sense of his own trepidation for his children’s future. Mr. Lim’s perspective of the world was grim and pessimistic. He did not camouflage his sometimes dark and pensive mood or fatalistic views. “The way I see it, people’s lives are getting more and more difficult, even desperate,” he said, not foreseeing an end to the sources of human suffering and viewing the world as declining. His reflection on the difficult human circumstances (including his own) ruptured by the fickle boom-and-bust cycles of the modern financial and economic system only hardened his fatalistic view of the world. “It is not that I am angry or pessimistic,” he said ironically, “the world can only become a better place provided that people become more compassionate.” Compassion was a powerful moral imperative that he strongly believed would make this world a better, if not more bearable, place to live in. He said compassion “moves people’s hearts so that they could hear the sufferings of others.” The value of compassion—the empathy of suffering with those who suffer, leading to benevolent action—is often cited as the central emphasis of KYCO and a core quality for followers.

There were two significant events in Mr. Lim’s life when he made “personal sacri-

faces”: on the first occasion, he gave a significant sum of money to help an acquaintance—the father of his daughter’s classmate, mired in debt—even though he himself was not financially secure; and on the second occasion, he gave a huge sum of money to help out an old friend who had lost his fortune in the erratic property market. Mr. Lim recounted:

I had a call from an old friend whom I had been worried about, for I knew he was going through very difficult moments in life. I was glad he called, for he was on my mind then. He had been out of work for a year and hoped that I could help in some real estate brokerage deals. He had some clients, but the properties for sale were marginalized properties that did not excite the market at all. Nor were the potential buyers he had genuine. I sensed he was in quite deep financial difficulty and found him emaciating fast! It was not a good sign, especially the latter, as I had just lost a friend to cancer who had had accelerated emaciation just six months before he died. As it was four days to Chinese New Year, I was concerned this filial son, a good husband and father to three sons, may just find the festive season too difficult to face. I called him for a drink. When I passed him a “red packet” and apologized I could not give more, he broke into tears and said: “All my friends have avoided me and refused to help. Without asking, you gave me this.” His tears flowed heavier when he felt the weight of the red packet, which contained a substantial sum—enough to buy a home theater set. I wanted only for him to be able to hold his head high. I told him he was to take his mother in Ipoh and his family for a reunion dinner and to buy them necessities for the New Year, never to let them worry at all. I’ll try to settle his delinquent housing loan. . . . He then subsequently confided in me that now, at the age of 50, he had contracted nose cancer. I had to fight off my tears all that while, as I regretted I was truly unable to really help much more as I too was unemployed and had been medically forced into retirement. I told him that was what brothers were for as we parted!

The suffering of his friends weighed heavily on Mr. Lim; their anguish inflicted as much shame and guilt as it induced compassion and empathy in him. The compassion that Mr. Lim felt for his friends who were down on their luck was inscribed by the shame and guilt he felt over being unable to do more despite his relatively more secure and better-off position in life. Stories of “personal sacrifices” like Mr. Lim’s articulate a situated-ness or consciousness in the world that do not suggest collective advocacy or social action but turn to the importance of personal commitment and individual action. Mr. Lim cast socioeconomic problems within the ambit of personal responsibility and spirituality. He recognized these problems as systemic or structural as well as moral in nature. By thinking about the difficulties that he and his friends had confronted in moral terms, Mr. Lim considered what kind of person he was trying to become or what he could and should be. His perspective emphasized compassion as an end in itself and not so much a means or solution to social problems.

In his narration, Mr. Lim expressed compassion as an ultimate imperative to be pursued with determined effort. According to him, compassion was a matter of heart-work rather than something dogmatic, prescriptive, or coercive. When I asked Mr. Lim

more pointedly to explain what compassion meant to him and what it took to be compassionate, he replied firmly:

My ideal is to be kind, and I will try to be kind. I may not be perfectly kind, but I can be kind any time I want to be. And I do not move toward whether I will be kind; I will be kind whenever I should be and must be kind. That is how I move forward . . . always moving toward something better. Not only kind, but I am going to be kind and caring, kind and helpful, kind and gentle, kind and charitable, kind and noble. I will keep on moving until a time comes when I [can] say that I am going to be selflessly kind . . .

In elaborating on the meaning of compassion, Mr. Lim imagined a “progressive path” toward “selfless kindness” that could be understood as an “unconditional,” “no strings attached,” “without expecting anything in return” type of kindness. More importantly to Mr. Lim, it was a matter of autonomy—“I can be kind any time I want to be”—expressing free will as it pertained to the exercise of compassion. During one of our conversations, I asked Mr. Lim how he knew whether he was successful in his spiritual-moral endeavor. He replied with some bittersweet bemusement, “You will always be a joyous person even if your life is difficult: joyous because you know many others are happier than you—this is selflessness.” Mr. Lim’s response illustrates moral reasoning, which by one’s own means and volition—and effected on one’s thoughts and conduct—is critical to the attainment of compassion as well as a state of peace and happiness.

Compassion is also about skills and practice, particularly empathetic suffering with those who suffer, leading to benevolent action. Spiritual adepts are expected to act on their sense of compassion with a desire to do so, with no strings attached, and without expectation of anything in return. This is best demonstrated through intended acts of charitable giving, defined by the exemplary standards of the Bodhisattva. As an “embodied ethical ideal” (Mrozik 2004), the Bodhisattva is virtue incarnate. This is illustrated in the popular Chinese legend of the Bodhisattva Kuan-yin, who in her mortal life as Princess Miao-shan sacrificed herself to save her cruel and despotic father.

“How do we make compassion real, rather than it just being a good idea and an ideal?” I asked Mr. Lim. He highlighted how KYCO had organized visits and raised funds for several charity institutions, including the nondenominational orphanage run by Mother Mangalam of Pure Life Society. He explained empathetically that “real charity” came from self-cultivation and said, “Without skills, you can tell a joke at the wrong time; without wisdom and compassion, you contribute to charity wrongly.” Thus, self-cultivation is critical in opening the heart and connecting one with the feelings of compassion and kindness. Effective self-cultivation also enables practitioners to develop a sense of equanimity and calmness in the face of adversities and adversaries.

## Listening with the Heart: Moral Empathy and Skills

During one of our regular suppers at a café near KYCO, I confided in Kiat my increasing frustration with Sifu's Dharma lectures: it had been several months already, and in spite of my efforts, I still did not know what to make of these lectures, which seemed esoteric and didactic to my untrained ears. In his kindly and patient way, Kiat advised me to "open my heart." He said, "Do not feel pressurized to understand everything that Sifu is saying. Just know that the intentions are good, and try to listen with your heart. Listen with a pure heart and go along with your feelings of sincerity and kindness."

By exhorting that I listen with my heart, Kiat suggested that I would be able to perceive the essence of Sifu's Dharma lectures without necessarily understanding them. Kiat's statement points to a form of comprehension or understanding that is not necessarily conceptual. This conception of knowing without understanding is played out between distinctions of the heart and mind, wisdom and knowledge, where the wisdom attained through spiritual practice is distinguished from the kind of knowledge acquired through thinking and reasoning. In other words, knowing is not the same as having knowledge. In order to know, I would first have to learn how to listen with my heart.

Listening to Sifu's Dharma lectures is an exercise in self-discipline, as devotees/followers strive to learn how to improve themselves. Followers take Sifu's Dharma lectures, held two or three times a week, seriously. Attending the lectures constitutes a learning that enriches self-knowledge and purifies the heart. According to Kiat, listening to Sifu's Dharma lectures has enabled him to deal better with life events; it has also helped him become a better person. Listening with the heart is a metonym for discipline. My frustration with the "incomprehensibility" of Sifu's Dharma lectures demonstrated to Kiat that listening was not a passive process: simply listening to Sifu's Dharma lectures does not necessarily make one a follower or a more moral person; one needs to listen with sincerity and conviction, concentration as well as intention.

The effects of Sifu's Dharma lectures are evocative—the lectures attempt to inspire responses such as shame and repentance, humility and equanimity. These are affective dispositions that endow the heart with the capacity to think and feel morally. Sifu's audience reciprocates by "listening properly": during lectures followers sit with their backs straight, take notes, and maintain a serious attitude throughout.

Sifu's oratorical virtuosity is evidenced by his ability to move some of his audience to various states of introspection, elation, and even sadness. But Sifu is reticent about such emotions and passions: emotions are not an end—they must lead to moral transformation. Sifu's rhetorical techniques deployed to effect the desired emotions, passions, and affective dispositions can be outlined in three parts: first, the invocation of human

suffering and misery such as the 2008 Sichuan earthquake, the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami, tensions in the restive southern region of Thailand, and the conflict in the Middle East aim to startle listeners out of their complacency. Natural calamities as well as socio-political unrest around the world provide a rich “eschatological phantasmagoria” (Hirschkind 2001, 631) to draw upon. Second, Dharma lectures edify by reproaching and berating, for example in a lecture on “relationship” Sifu chided his audience:

That is why if anyone has got no love for his or her parents, that is a very, very unfortunate being. Such beings will have much to answer at the end of life, and future lifetimes will surely have an unfortunate life of being rejected in his childhood because whoever does not repay parental love, even the Buddha will not cast His love upon him. . . . So you have to think very, very carefully. If you cannot love your parents, you are someone who is worse than an animal. . . . If we ever ill-treat our parents, then, according to our Path and most religions, this is one way of going down to Hell.

Third, by weaving his lectures into the lived experiences of his audience, Sifu highlights problems of everyday life such as setbacks and anxieties over health, relationships, and work that point toward or can lead to certain solutions and resolutions. The rhetorical method Sifu deploys in his lectures often entails moral exhortation and a call for the practice of self-cultivation. In his lectures, Sifu maps out a system of progression from anxiety and fear to shame and guilt, then to repentance, forgiveness, empathy, and finally compassion. It attempts to prescribe a set of emotions to be experienced by the listener, and seeks to achieve a moral state that is founded upon the embodied capacities of emotion such as the ability to allay anger and to forgive others for their wrongdoings and transgressions (real or perceived), rather than obedience to rules, doctrine, or belief.

The success of Sifu’s Dharma lectures is ultimately dependent on the listening skill of his audience. The cultivation of this listening skill is essential for the audience to be moved as well as to derive meanings and insights from these lectures. Listening with the heart speaks of a moral and disciplinary practice that aims to mold and strengthen resolve; it has less to do with the indoctrination or dissemination of rules than the formation of a sensorium; it seeks neither to persuade nor force but to arouse feelings so as to impart perceptual habits that predispose one toward certain actions and states of mind. It is about developing a moral outlook, about learning to interpret, understand, and act upon the world as “a space of moral action and the actor as a moral being” (*ibid.*, 641).

Sifu’s Dharma lectures focus mainly on the cultivation of perceptual skills and habits that are fundamentally grounded in a morality rather than a concern with tradition, doctrine, or discourse. This is similar to what some scholars have argued in anthropological studies on Islamic and Christian practices—that the conception of what constitutes “apt performance” is “not the apparent repetition of an old form” (Asad 1986, 14–15

in Hirschkind 2001, 641). The perceptual skill of empathy and the disposition of compassion that practitioners seek to cultivate are honed by years of praying, chanting, contemplating, and listening with the heart. Listening with the heart as a disciplinary form of self-cultivation highlights and exaggerates emotions such as pity, joy, and sadness. It evokes a sense of compassion, beauty, gentleness, and grace that magnifies and scrutinizes the processes of feeling, thinking, and empathizing.

Like their predecessors from redemptive societies, KYCO followers are encouraged to “bring forth” their qualities of kindness and compassion through listening with the heart as a way of self-cultivation. The focus on the self is explicit and essential for the cultivation of virtues in order to meet moral or ethical demands and to negate or avoid negative karma. In sharpening one’s sense of self-awareness, it aims to open up potentials and possibilities for the right action instead of restricting and restraining one from wrong conduct. As a form of self-fashioning, self-cultivation is part of an identity project where devotees and followers seek to (re)constitute and transform themselves into the kind of person they think they ought to become, at a time of religious and political tensions marked by episodic violence. Such violence includes the “cow head incident” on August 28, 2009, in which Muslim protestors brought along and desecrated a cow’s head to oppose the relocation of a Hindu temple from one residential area to another in a suburb of Kuala Lumpur (*Boston Globe*, August 29, 2009; Singh 2010).

The virtue of compassion as a bedrock of spiritual and moral life for followers is widely acceptable and generally recognized as an exemplary goal and noble principle for self-cultivation. In this respect, nobody needs any persuasion or compulsion to convince themselves of the immediate merit of Sifu’s teachings. However, followers would have to constantly listen and re-listen, read and reread Sifu’s lectures and teachings, in order to gradually gain many insights into his perspective of the world. The moral dictates and goals articulated in Sifu’s lectures and teachings are challenging to fulfill, but for serious followers they have become a life-consuming pursuit. Standing firm in their conviction, these followers strongly believe that if they cultivate with a true heart and follow Sifu’s instructions closely, it is possible to attain the goal of fully living out the Bodhisattva Vow they have made.

For many devotees and followers of KYCO, self-cultivation is nothing more than an efficacious practice in the ideals of compassion, service, and reverence—one in which people meet other sincere, well-meaning, polite, helpful, and encouraging people, where they find support and friendship in a semi-formalized spiritual and moral fellowship of sorts. For them, self-cultivation is not overtly about freedom or political power but a way that involves potentially a new rationale and understanding. Applied as an everyday life tactic, self-cultivation allows people to “escape without leaving” (De Certeau 2000), even

momentarily, the sometimes uncertain and anxiety-filled situations that are experienced and expressed as suffering. The politics of self-cultivation plays out mainly as an internal drama of the self—reimagining and remaking oneself within the social and political order that contains it, articulated by the moral ideology and inclusive spiritualism of redemptive societies.

## Conclusion

This paper describes the spiritual experience and aspirations of a contemporary grassroots religious movement exemplified by KYCO in Malaysia. It examines KYCO's ethos of inclusive spiritualism, morality, and compassion and situates it within the cultural and historical tradition of redemptive societies and its discourse of the body, self-cultivation, and religious universalism. It also highlights how the spiritual and mundane, the ethical and ideological, the moral and political as well as the self and social are intertwined and mutually constitutive rather than distinct and causal.

On nearly every other day of the week, from early evening until late into the night, the premises of KYCO ring softly with melodic chanting and singing, which adds an ethereal feel to the tranquility of its middle-class suburban neighborhood. There is a keen sense of power, something emanating from the deliberate voice of Sifu echoing through the in-house speakers and in the pensive gaze of his followers. There is no doubt among the followers that the KYCO space they fill almost every second day is abundant with a melancholic but purposeful and contemplative energy. For a few precious hours on those days, KYCO opens up as a space for followers to reflect, to express, and to seek answers to life's complex problems; it is also a place for them to gain strength and find solace in the company of their "brothers and sisters in Dharma." The power or energy that they draw upon, mobilize, and renew is an everyday power of affection as well as personal effectiveness.

Listening to Sifu's Dharma lectures and watching enraptured KYCO followers diligently taking notes and engulfed in their own thoughts, I am alerted to the seriousness with which they take the fulfillment of the Bodhisattva Vow they have taken or, as Sifu said in one of his Dharma lectures, ". . . to transform ourselves from human-hood to Bodhisattva-hood." Transformation and change are central themes in Sifu's teachings, and so are they core ideas in many religious traditions. Yet these traditions, whether in pursuit of sage-hood or Bodhisattva-hood, are not the only or necessarily the main cultural reference points for KYCO followers who also furbish their own understanding from Sai Baba, Tibetan Buddhism, Theosophy, New Age teachings, and popular psychology

references. All these have come to inform the ideas and processes through which they make of themselves the kind of people they think they ought to become—in the terms and principles of inclusive spiritualism. Buddhist compassion is understood as inclusive spiritualism and embodied through moral reasoning as well as self-cultivation that do not compel followers toward any singular or particular truth claim. Instead, it initiates a reflexive and empathetic process of listening with the heart that works on one's anxieties, guilt, and shame as well as hopes and passions in order to help one adapt to or face one's circumstances, fate, and karmic providence.

Followers are enjoined to fulfill their Bodhisattva Vow not through the imposition of codes and rules of conduct or beliefs but through the development of perceptual habits, skills, and ethical capacities as well as reflexivity in terms of what they have to consider for themselves to be apt conduct and moral or ethical action. In the context of contemporary Malaysia, rife with politically charged religious and ethnic tensions as well as economic uncertainties, followers voice these anxieties not as the cause nor condition of suffering but challenges to be overcome by themselves. By working on themselves and their moralities, they have sought to expand their spiritual repertoire or perceptual horizons and emotional capacities charged with social and political potential, where the historical precedent of redemptive societies sheds some light on their moral aspirations and religious experiences.

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*Between Dissent and Power: The Transformation of Islamic Politics  
in the Middle East and Asia*

KHOO BOO TEIK, VEDI HADIZ, and YOSHIHIRO NAKANISHI, eds.

London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014, xv+298p., index.

The key intervention this timely volume makes is to question whether political agitation that speaks in the name of Islam is best understood in terms of the Islamic content its exponents profess. In this respect, the titular choice to describe the volume as being about “Islamic” politics is no coincidence. To the contrary, it splits the difference between assuming that no more than a politics of actors who happen to be “Muslim” merits attention and assuming that their politics are overdetermined by Islamist predilections/pronouncements. At the same time, as the editors’ fine introductory chapter makes clear, the choice is also meant to provoke. This is because the collection prioritizes what the editors suggest are heretofore neglected political economy and institutional (political, sociological) perspectives on understanding recent events in the Muslim majority countries the volume surveys. Those countries—which include Iran, Turkey, Egypt, Tunisia, Morocco, Malaysia, Pakistan, Algeria, and Indonesia—comprise the basis for the volume’s nine case study chapters. The choice of case studies is governed by the volume’s concern with tracing how Islamic politics has oscillated between “dissent” and “power,” especially in the aftermath of the Arab spring.

After making requisite mention of the fact that the volume is intended to treat the Islamic character of politics in the places it surveys neither as “an epiphenomenon of economics” nor “the mere expression of religion,” in their introductory chapter the editors instead proceed to highlight a series of so-called institutional factors. These include, first, capitalist development, economic crises, and their social consequences; second, the relative strengths of regimes, parties, and social movements; and, third, the shifting bases and constituencies of support and opposition (p. 4). Before proceeding to the nine case studies, the two chapters following the editors’ introduction helpfully elaborate on the key crosscutting perspectives the volume seeks to use to illuminate relevant patterns and contrasts. In Chapter 2 (“Political Economy and the Explanation of the Islamic Politics in the Contemporary World”) Richard Robison contrasts cultural and ideological approaches

to understanding “politics and society in Islamic countries” with several others (p. 21). Most important among these are the various strands of the political economy perspective Robison advocates. According to Robison, whether in its radicalized or party electoral form Islamic politics is thus best viewed in light of the confluence between class dynamics (e.g. by paying attention to phenomena like the “declining petty bourgeoisie”) and shifting state structures (e.g. by paying attention to the move from “market authoritarian rule” to “the embrace of modern market”). Chapter 3 by Vedi Hadiz (“The Organizational Vehicles of Islamic Political Dissent: Social Bases, Genealogies and Strategies”) complements Robison’s chapter nicely. Not only does it bring the volume closer to the ground of how Islamic politics is actually undertaken, it also still focuses on developing a set of generalized explanatory resources to clarify the particular approach the volume as a whole means to pursue. Noting that the titular “organizational vehicles” the chapter is focused on vary greatly from full fledged political parties to small and isolated cells engaged in terrorist activity, Hadiz emphasizes that the vehicles of “Islamic dissent” must be understood in relation to “transformations in the social bases of Islamic politics” over the last half century. Hadiz contrasts the shared desire expressed by many parties for “a variant of capitalism” (p. 47) with the rise of “organizing from the fringes” when such mainstream Islamic forces “fail to build coalitions that can plausibly challenge for state power through the formal political arena” (p. 50).

Yasuyuki Matsunaga’s fourth chapter turns to the first case study on Iran (“Islamic Dissent in Iran’s Full-Fledged Islamic Revolutionary State”). Matsunaga’s main goal is to treat political dissent “relationally” as a form “of adversary relations between sets of contending actors” (p. 66). More specifically his focus is on what he calls “post-*revivalist*” forms of Islamic dissent that were highly visible in Iran before the end of the Islamic Revolution’s second decade (in the late 1990s). After providing relevant context, he looks especially closely at Mohsen Kadivar’s brand of post-revivalist Islamic dissent and its rejection of the connection between politics and religion. Chapter 5 by Jenny White is entitled “Muslimhood and Post-Islamist Power: The Turkish Example.” Like most of the country studies White’s is also principally a narrative-based account of contemporary Islamic political agitators (in Turkey) as told from the standpoint of recent events, with a healthy dose of broader contextualizing discussion of earlier periods as well. The main analytical intervention of the chapter is to draw out several “principles” from the Turkish case that may be relevant to Arab countries as well. These include the following: a) that Islam undergoes a transformation as a defining identity once “enmeshed in the democratic process in the context of a globalized economy”; b) that parties embracing a “privatized Islam” are best able to expand constituencies; c) that gaining official power tends to involve “the loss of the social movement aspect of earlier party incarnations”; and d) that the introduction of greater conservatism or religiosity into government and secular state institutions is not inevitable due to the “anxiety and push-back” it inspires among secularists (pp. 90–91).

Housam Darwisheh’s contribution in Chapter 6 looks at the “The Political Transformation of

the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt.” The chapter’s informative narrative takes the reader up to the present. Analytically, the chapter is connected to the volume’s wider themes through its conclusion that revolutionary forces in Egypt did not ultimately sour against the rise of the Muslim Brotherhood after the Tahrir Square uprising due to the fear that it would institute an “Islamic state.” Rather it was the Brotherhood’s “tendency to act unilaterally” and its perceived attempt to create “a shift from pluralist, inclusive politics towards a monopoly of power” that made its regime suspect (p. 130). Chapter 7 by Nadia Marzouki looks at “Islamist Ideals and Governing Realities” through examining “Nahda’s Project and the Constraint of Adaptation in Post-Revolution Tunisia.” Over and above the narrative survey Marzouki provides, the chapter focuses on the ideas of Rached Ghannouchi, Nahda’s leader, emphasizing the concept of the civil state (*dawla madaniyya*) through which he has argued for a compatibility between Islam and democracy. The chapter takes the reader up to the end of Nahda’s first coalition government in 2013.

Shoko Watanabe’s chapter comes next and is entitled “Reforming the Regime or Reforming the Dissidents? The Gradualist Dissent of Islamic Movements in Morocco.” Observing that Morocco’s Islamic movements have been distinguished by their “gradualist” nature” (p. 154), Watanabe’s looks at events over the last several decades draw attention to the resilience of the so-called *Makhzan* structure of Morocco’s deep state. Watanabe emphasizes how the central state has thus remained the dominant player in Moroccan politics through a “divide and conquer” approach to Islamic movements. The state’s use of strategic “inclusion” and “exclusion” of such forces, Watanabe argues, is more significant than any dichotomy between “moderate” and “radical” Islamic forces (p. 171).

Khoo Boo Teik’s chapter is the first of the case studies that takes the reader outside of the worlds of the Middle East and North Africa and looks at “Social Transformation and the Reinventions of Parti Islam in Malaysia.” The first main topic he considers is the political economic forces underlying social transformation in Malaysia, here emphasizing that the Parti Islam SeMalaysia (PAS) did not arise as a response to “failed developmentalism” as in many other Muslim majority countries. From here the chapter goes on to consider the social origins of Islamic politics and provides a narrative of the PAS’s oscillation from the early 1980s between “strident Islamism and fortuitous religiosity.” The author emphasizes that it was only after the early 2000s—after the retirement of Prime Minister Mahathir—that anger at the ruling party and oligarchic character of the country’s politics allowed the PAS to finally break through (by 2006–07). As Khoo details, this breakthrough took place through a “confluence of dissent” and a larger ethos of *Reformasi* that the PAS was then able to capitalize on.

The last three chapters both continue to keep us outside of the Middle East and North Africa with discussion of Pakistan and Indonesia and also bring us back to the region with the chapter on Algeria. Chapter 10 by Yoshihiro Nakanishi is entitled “Political Fragmentation and Islamic Politics in Pakistan.” Nakanishi starts by providing a primarily contextualizing historical survey of the

genesis of contemporary Islamic politics in Pakistan. The chapter then proceeds to focus most intently on the period since 2000, while also including a section elaborating on “the weakness” of Islamic parties that brings the reader back to Pakistan’s origins in 1947. Other sections consider the role of Islam as both security tool and threat after the coup of General Pervez Musharraf in 1999 and the ensuing war on terror years as well as a consideration of the relationship between social change, Islam, and political dissent. The chapter concludes open-endedly, noting that “current Islamization” will not necessarily bring about a radical transformation into a state wholly governed by “Islamic principles like Shariah” even if, at the same time, the potency of Islamic militant groups is likely only to increase.

The chapter bringing us back westward is Alejandro Colás’ and is entitled “A Perverse Symbiosis: The State, Islam and Political Dissent in Contemporary Algeria.” Colás frames the country’s experience as exceptional given the “circular quality to” its history of Islam and political dissent. Colás thus emphasizes how Algeria continues to be run by “a narrow military-bureaucratic oligarchy which has staked its survival on the distribution of hydrocarbon wealth to curry political favor from supporters and contenders alike” (p. 244). It is for these reasons that Colás suggests the regime has been able to “snuff out” the ripple effects of the Arab Spring. In keeping with these claims, the chapter’s narrative focuses on the last 20 years of Algeria’s history, in the wake of the defeat of the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS). In the wake of the FIS’ suppression, Colás argues that the Bouteflika regime has been able to successfully deploy “co-option strategies” to “incorporate aspects of the Islamist programme and some of its ‘accommodationist’ personnel into the *bricolage* of the regime itself” (p. 244).

Ian Wilson’s final chapter brings us back eastward, turning to Indonesia, and is entitled “Morality Racketeering: Vigilantism and Populist Islamic Militancy in Indonesia.” Wilson discusses “Islamic vigilante groups” in the country and emphasizes how rather than seeking to overturn or radically transform the state they have pursued “a socially conservative ‘anti-vice’ and ‘anti-apostasy’ agenda against perceived liberal excesses” (p. 248). The chapter’s empirical focus is on the Defenders of Islam Front (FPI) as well as certain other vigilante groups in Jakarta. Wilson argues that theirs is a “pragmatic Islamic militancy” that appeals to the urban poor as its most active membership (p. 249). Wilson’s narrative reviews the rise of vigilantism by situating it in the local contexts of post-authoritarian Indonesia after the fall of the Suharto regime in 1998. The chapter goes on to discuss the FPI’s history, relationship to other Islamic organizations, and the class tensions that it has been able to feed on.

As a closing chapter, Wilson’s is another that gives voice to the volume’s overall concern with questioning how important normative Islamic ideas (or, simply, ideas adverting to be drawn from the normative Islamic tradition) are to real politics. Certainly, there can be no doubt that such a view is refreshing and even necessary when considered relative to so much popular and even academic discussion. Clearly, it is untenable (and, perhaps, suspect in still other ways) for com-

mentators to become as selectively idealist as they often do when it comes to understanding politics and politicized violence in the Muslim world. That said, as vital as any such corrective must be, it is also limited by its own will to correct. After all, there would be nothing to correct if Islamic politics was, indeed, no more than the politics of Muslim actors. A more head-on interrogation of how the practice of dissent and power in the Muslim-majority world has, does, and will likely continue to be “determined” also by the Islamic or purportedly Islamic content of its practitioners’ ideas remains necessary. While no single edited volume can address all issues, it would be a mistake to imagine that the volume under review—as valuable as it is—suffers only from the limits of space. So too, the reader should remain aware, are certain limits imposed, and relevant questions that are unlikely to go away obscured by its preferred explanatory approach.

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***“Good Coup” Gone Bad: Thailand’s Political Developments since Thaksin’s Downfall***

PAVIN CHACHAVALPONGPUN, ed.

Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2014, xv + 290p.

Come back, General Sonthi—all is forgiven! The 2006 coup may have turned bad, but compared with the 2014 coup it now looks positively benign. This useful edited volume appeared just in time to serve as a primer for what went wrong in the wake of the previous military seizure of power. But apart from one chapter on the military, the focus of the book is not on the coup itself, but on a range of related actors and issues. The book is divided into four sections of two or three chapters: the impact of the coup on Thailand’s political landscape; the military and the monarchy; the emergence of yellow and red politics; and crises of legitimacy. In a sparse field, the volume is an invaluable addition to reading lists (I have already assigned it to my students), but some chapters are stronger than others, and several of them go over ground that the same authors have already covered in previous writings. To my mind the first two sections are much the most useful, and Thongchai Winichakul’s chapter on monarchy and anti-monarchy stands out as the centerpiece of the book.

Thongchai’s argument can be distilled into one provocative and important assertion: the Thai monarchy, far from serving as a source of stability, lies at the core of the country’s persistent instability and regular recourse to mass bloodshed, as seen in the four violent crackdowns of 1973, 1976, 1992, and 2010. Offering a brilliant exegesis of a provocative speech by redshirt leader Nattawut Saikua in 2008 about the contrast between the earth and the sky, Thongchai demonstrates

how a combination of hyper-royalism and suppression has helped produce a large-scale “awakening” of anti-monarchist sentiments. Most dangerously of all, widespread popular denial about the problematic role of the monarchy and the impending succession means that many Thais are living in a kind of alternate reality. However dark the period since September 2006 has been for Thailand’s politics, worse is yet to come.

Thongchai’s paper is bookended by two others: James Ockey on the military, and David Streckfuss on Thailand’s *lèse-majesté* laws (on which Streckfuss is the world’s leading authority). Streckfuss provides detailed evidence of the steep climb in Article 112 cases brought since the coup, and especially since the arrival of the unelected Abhisit Vejjajiva government in late 2008. Citing historical examples from France and Germany, Streckfuss argues that heavy-handed use of such laws undermines the legitimacy of the monarchy and so runs precisely counter to their stated aim of protecting the royal institution. The chapter should whet readers’ appetites to tackle Streckfuss’s 2011 book *Truth on Trial in Thailand*, in which he explores these arguments at much greater length. Ockey’s chapter argues that developments such as the assassination by a fellow soldier of pro-Thaksin Major General Khatiya Sawasdiphol at the height of the 2010 redshirt demonstrations illustrated deep-seated divisions in the Royal Thai Army. Ockey asserts that the politicization of the military into color-coded factions has left the institution “broken, divided and dangerous both to itself and to others” (p. 72). This is a bold claim: to date, the latest coup has shown the capacity of the Eastern Tigers/Queen’s Guard faction to dominate the army and subordinate internal contestation to the will of the top brass. Ockey’s calls for the “restoration of military corporateness” suggest that such corporateness genuinely existed in earlier decades. It might instead be argued that the Thai military has always been profoundly politicized—in other words, that it was broken from birth.

Federico Ferrara offers some historical context for the arguments advanced in these chapters. In a highly persuasive article, he suggests that “the recent recourse to bullets and emergency rule” (p. 38) and the associated rise in Article 112 cases are signs of desperation, as the yet-to-be *ancien régime* experiences a sharply declining moral authority. As of this writing, the themes of Thainess, Thai-style democracy, and unity in hierarchy are very much back in fashion—at least among the alarming numerous supporters of Prime Minister General Prayut Chan-o-cha and the current junta. That Thailand is, in Ferrara’s words, “running on empty” can scarcely be disputed. But I remain to be convinced that the future of the monarchy itself hangs in the balance.

The later chapters of the book address various additional perspectives on Thailand’s politics. Michael Nelson’s discussion of the People’s Alliance for Democracy (PAD) and the “Vote No” campaign makes a couple of important points: the anti-Thaksin movement was not synonymous with the PAD, and with or without the PAD, the “societal infrastructure and its political culture” (p. 160) was still in place for a resurgence of anti-Yingluck Shinawatra protests. The emergence of the People’s Democratic Reform Committee (PDRC) in late 2013 proved Nelson completely

correct, and was to prove the undoing of the Yingluck government. Nick Nostitz's chapter on the redshirt movement provides a useful summary of his views, though there are few surprises for those who follow his regular online commentary pieces on these issues. Andrew Walker's article "Is Peasant Politics in Thailand Civil?" answers its own question in his second sentence: "No." He goes on to provide a helpful sketch of the arguments he has made at greater length in his important 2012 book *Thailand's Political Peasants*.

The book concludes with two chapters ostensibly focused on crises of legitimacy. In his discussion of the bloody Southern border conflict, Marc Askew fails to engage with the arguments of those who see the decade-long violence as a legitimacy crisis for the Thai state, and omits to state his own position on this central debate. He rightly concludes that "the South is still an insecure place" (p. 246), but neglects to explain exactly why. Pavin Chachavalongpong offers a final chapter on Thai-Cambodia relations, but does not add a great deal to his brilliant earlier essay on Preah Vihear as "Temple of Doom," which remains the seminal account of that tragi-comic interstate conflict.

I would have liked more gender balance among the contributors: there are a number of female scholars who could and should have been included. Overall, this is an extremely valuable book which will be widely read and assigned to students.

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### ***Taming People's Power: The EDSA Revolutions and Their Contradictions***

LISANDRO E. CLAUDIO

Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 2013, 240p.

People power is the foundationalist myth of the ruling Aquino regime which began with the presidency of Corazon ("Cory") C. Aquino who replaced the fallen dictator Ferdinand E. Marcos in 1986 and which continues under the presidency of her son, Benigno ("Noynoy") S. Aquino, III, which will end in mid-2016. The Aquinos and their "yellow" crowd elite supporters claim legitimacy based on a divinely sanctioned popular uprising against an evil dictator re-establishing a righteous democracy. "People power" also gained international prominence as one of the first televised revolutions, with the plucky Cory Aquino defeating the wily dictator Marcos, leading to a heroic transition to democracy. That this piece of political folklore has lost appeal for most Filipinos who remain poor and are now often disillusioned with this once new political order is evidenced by the dwindling crowds at the annual official celebration of people power. The people themselves seem to have abandoned the idea of "people power."

No recent book captures the ambiguous legacy of people power better than the work of the young Ateneo historian Lisandro E. Claudio. What Claudio has done in this book is quite extraordinary. He systematically distinguishes two “discursive formations,” the official, “yellow” narrative and the anti-people power “National Democratic” discourse of the communist left (later in the study it becomes evident that he analyzes a third discursive alternative as well: the subaltern perspective of laborers on the Aquino-Cojuangco owned Hacienda Luisita). Claudio then examines how these discourses are literally “monumentalized” and the message this political architecture is trying to convey. These “material commemorations” of the anti-Marcos struggle culminating in the mass uprising against Marcos that he examines are, on the one hand, the quasi-official shrine of the Shrine of Mary Queen of Peace, popularly known as the “Our Lady EDSA shrine” and the Bantayog ng mga Bayani (Monument of Heroes) of the left.

Beyond this Claudio then undertakes an ambitious and revealing case study of how “people power” is viewed in Hacienda Luisita, the great plantation of the landlord-politician Aquino-Cojuangco dynasty. But he also shows how the role of the communist left is viewed ambivalently by the sugar plantation workers, many of whom were caught up in violence initiated by the strike breaking landlords but also instrumentalized by the left.

The book is well written in a sophisticated, but intelligible “post-modern” style, with key theoretical insights effectively used to clarify Claudio’s discursive approach to recent Philippine history. The result is a study full of more insights about recent Philippine politics than any other I have read in past decade. Claudio constructs a theoretical framework for the book drawn from “memory studies” to reconstruct the “people power narrative.” He invokes Foucault’s “regime of truth,” a “provisional . . . product of the capillary movement of knowledge-power—but may nevertheless coalesce into identifiable discursive formations” (pp. 5–6). Not a mere top-down ideology like the authoritarian developmentalist one of the Marcos era, the mainstream people power discourse was created by the Church hierarchy, middle class activists, big business, and traditional politicians. But Claudio is not content with just analyzing the “official story” which deemphasizes the role played by ordinary Filipinos who overthrew Marcos in favor of the God-given-miracle explanation of EDSA (the major Manila street after which “people power” is often known in the Philippines). Rather, he employs a “multivocal” approach to this narrative, focusing in particular on the relationship with class interests and the way the popular uprising against the Marcos regime is narrated. Not a static approach, Claudio shows the people power narrative evolved from a symbol of national unity seen to have overcome class differences to a divisive elitist discourse that justified the elite-led overthrow of the populist president Joseph Estrada in 2001 in what was dubbed “EDSA dos” or “people power II.” Estrada was an elected president loved by poor voters who rallied to his cause after his overthrow by what was essentially an elitist *putsch*. This led to a third people power event that nearly overthrew the government of president Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo who had replaced the deposed Estrada.

It is not surprising that Claudio concludes competing narratives of people power are shaped by class interests. The ruling Aquino regime and the strategic groups that generally back it—big business, the Church, “civil society” activists, and the military hierarchy—have turned the popular uprising against Marcos into a “ruling state ideology,” as Claudio shows. By contrast, the exploited plantation workers in Hacienda Luisita have challenged this elite narrative with a counter-hegemonic discourse which usually goes unnoticed both because it is localized and from the lower classes. Claudio, who very frankly explores his own biographical ties to the left, shows how difficult it is to classify the leftist discourse in class terms. While clearly aimed at achieving social liberation, it is also a discourse which obscures the poor as actors independent of a communist party that always claims to know what is in their best interest, revealing the left’s own hegemonic ambitions. This emphasis on class position makes Claudio’s contribution to memory studies generally and our understanding of the people power narrative in the Philippines in particular unusually valuable.

When one considers the major contributions to post-Marcos understandings of Philippine politics, the predominance of interpretations which stress what Benedict Anderson famously called “cacique democracy” is striking. On the first reading, Claudio’s study appears to be part of this genre (and he does defend Anderson’s categorization against elite Philippine critics who mythologize people power as a symbol of national unity). But Claudio’s position goes beyond this anti-oligarchical perspective by pointing to the evolving nature of an elite discourse that sometimes very effectively “covers up” class interests, capable of winning widespread popular support for its project of democratic and anti-corruption reforms. This was of course evident in not only Cory Aquino’s defeat of Marcos, but also in her son, Noynoy Aquino’s easy victory in the 2010 presidential election in which he effectively revived the people power narrative. Claudio shows why sub-altern perspectives such as those of the workers of Hacienda Luisita are so easily ignored. But he also points to the limits of a left discourse which has its own agenda. (One limitation of the study is the relative neglect of a fourth discourse—the “national populist” appeals made by movie star politicians Estrada in the 1998 and his close Fernando Poe, Jr. in the 2004 election.) Philippine politics is more complex than the “elites versus the masses” dichotomy of the left and the “national unity” narrative of the rightist pro-Aquino forces, with a discursive “truth” to be sought somewhere in between. There is no recent better guide to these ambiguities than this excellent study.

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*Indonesian Women and Local Politics: Islam, Gender and Networks  
in Post-Suharto Indonesia*

KURNIAWATI HASTUTI DEWI

Singapore: NUS Press in association with Kyoto: Kyoto University Press, 2015,  
xxi+246p.

Indonesia began its political reform almost 15 years ago following the collapse of Suharto's authoritarian administration in 1998. As in many other democratizing countries, increasing gender equality in government became an important reform agenda in Indonesia and greater democratic freedom and increased demand for gender equality were believed to move women's issues to the center of social policymaking. The newly democratic Indonesian government introduced Law No. 31/2002 on Political Parties and Law No. 12/2003 on General Elections, as part of an "affirmative action" policy which set quotas for women's representation. These two laws were later revised into Law No. 2/2008 and Law No. 10/2008 regulating women's wider participation in politics and obliging political parties to nominate at least one woman in every three candidates to run in legislative elections.

To date, women's representation in the national legislature has increased from only 8.8% during the Suharto administration to 17.3% in 2014. This means there are now 97 women out of a total of 560 members in the national parliament. In addition, Law No. 32/2004 on Direct Elections has lifted structural barriers to women running for leadership positions in local elections. This Law has helped a number of women to become district Mayors (Regent), Vice Governors, and Governors. In Java, the most populated island in Indonesia, there were five women elected as Regent, one Vice-Governor, and one Governor as the result of the 2005 direct election (p. 18).

Yet, regardless of the increase in women's representation in government, Indonesian women continue to receive unfair treatment and are discriminated against in many social policies and practices. To name a few, the introduction of sharia-based regional regulations in the Province of Aceh and in 52 districts and municipalities since 2001 has expanded discrimination against women and limited women's freedom of expression (Bush 2008, 176). Misogynist policies continue to be put in place. In 2013, the National Ulama Council (MUI), for example, supported the initiative of some Regents to require female students to undertake a virginity test in order to get into high schools (Kompas 2013). Meanwhile, Indonesia's Military and the National Police continue to require female candidates to pass virginity tests before joining (Russin 2015). It was only recently that Indonesia's Constitutional court rejected an application made by women activists to increase the marriageable age for girls from 16 years old, as stated in Article 7(1) of the 1974 Marriage Law, to 18 (Sciortino 2015). The legislative review was initiated due to the increasing risks of unwanted pregnancies, sexual disease, maternal health hazards, and violence as girls at the age of 16 are not mentally and physically ready to enter marriages. Women and human rights activists argue that

this continuing discrimination against women is the result of many contributing factors, from Indonesia's misogynist socio-cultural tradition and poor gender-based policy making to a lack of women's representation in government.

The issue of whether or not an increase in women's representation in government will lead to the advancement of women's issues, in fact, has become a subject of scholarly debate among political scientists. The debate centers on the role of democracy in improving women's access to political positions, thereby enabling the women elected to pass more women-friendly policies (Fallon *et al.* 2012). Researching women's representation in the legislature and its impact on advancing women's issues into women's friendly policies in the United States, Osborn (2012, 1, 6) argues that while many people expect women elected to public office to address women's policy concerns and represent women's needs, it is, in fact, political parties that work in shaping and influencing women legislators in addressing their agenda and producing policies that affect them positively.

*Indonesian Women and Local Politics: Islam, Gender and Networks in Post-Suharto Indonesia* discusses at length Javanese Muslim women's ascendancy to power in post-Suharto Indonesia. The book is a product of the author's PhD research and is an attempt to contribute to the scholarly discussion on the place of women in the public sphere and women's rights in Muslim societies. In particular, it attempts to contribute to the wider discussion on women's political leadership. It tries to unpack the cultural, structural, and institutional barriers that hinder women in gaining public office. With the majority of Indonesia's population being Muslim, the author argues that Islamization and modernization have changed Indonesian society's gender perception towards women. The author chooses to focus her research on Java because a considerable number of Javanese Muslim women, she argues, have been successful in taking public offices by becoming Regents and Vice-Governor between the period of 2005 to 2010 (p. 18).

Given the broader context of democratization and issues surrounding Islamization, the book's attempt at answering important questions around the role of Islam and gender under the victory of female Javanese politicians is a timely and valuable contribution to Indonesian scholarship. The author uses the Javanese concept of power and the local conception of women's role in public life when explaining women's ascendancy to power in a Javanese context. Apart from Islam and gender, the book also scrutinizes how female politicians use their male networks and their familial ties with male authority to help them win elections (p. 16). This book uses four constructs to explore women's increase political participation at local level: Islam, gender, networks, and familial ties.

The book consists of seven chapters. The first three provide overviews of the research background, methodology, and the theoretical framework on Islamization, democratization, and cultural conceptions of gender and leadership. Chapter 2 discusses Indonesia's political reform, including the introduction of national legislation that favors women's participation in politics, and explores the socio-political context of the emergence of women's leadership at the local level. In

Chapter 3 the author considers the role of Islamization and democratization in changing societal attitudes towards women's public roles. It discusses how two mainstream Muslim organizations, the Nahdhatul Ulama (NU) and Muhammadiyah, have continued to shape public discussion and perception of the role of women in public and in leadership. It highlights the different public responses towards female leadership at local and national levels by looking at the debate over, and rejection of, the nomination of Megawati Sukarnoputri as Indonesia's first female President in 1999 (pp. 62–63, 177).

Chapters 3, 4, and 5 discuss specifically three female leaders: Rustriningsih and Siti Qomariyah in Central Java, and Ratna Ani Lestari in East Java. Each chapter reviews the particular socio-religious and political landscapes that shape the political opportunities for these women to gain power. The discussion demonstrates how female candidates use Islam and their identity as women to gain popular support. There is also lengthy discussion of the socio-educational background of the women, their level of religiosity, networks with male politicians and religious leaders, their attachment to women's organizations, and their agenda on advancing women's issues. Each chapter also provides an overview on the particularity of the pressing issues that confront women in the respective regions.

Chapter 4 on Rustriningsih highlights the candidate's strong family background in politics and her close attachment with the nationalist and secular political party, the PDIP. The chapter demonstrates that Rustriningsih won and became the Vice-Governor due to strong PDIP support. It also details how "religious symbols" such as the headscarf and the tactic of approaching religious leaders from the Nahdhatul Ulama were used in order to win Muslim support.

Chapter 5 on Siti Qomariyah presents the interesting story of how a woman with no previous political background and experience became Regent. Her status as the daughter of a respected NU *Kyai* led the Muslimat NU, the women's wing of NU, to nominate Siti Qomariyah to run in the election for district Major in Pekalongan. The fact that she gained her higher education from an Islamic higher educational institution increased her religious profile, thus securing the nomination of PKB, an Islamic political party that is strongly affiliated with the Nahdhatul Ulama and the majority party in the local parliament. Her family's strong affiliation with NU helped her to win the full support of NU *Kyais*.

Chapter 6 on Ratna Ani Lestari shows that her rise to power was due to the support she received from her husband, who is a member of PDIP and was a former Regent in the Province of Bali. Despite having no religious background, Lestari made efforts to use Islamic symbols such as wearing a headscarf and approaching religious leaders to gain support.

Interestingly, the author reveals that none of these female leaders had any previous attachment to women's organizations and had no knowledge about issues that women face at the local level. As a result, none of these female leaders had a clear social policy agenda to advance women's interests. In the case of Siti Qomariyah, the author argues that her nomination was mainly because

the Nahdhlhatul Ulama wanted to take control of both the legislature and the executive branch of the local government (p. 114).

Generally speaking, the book provides an in-depth analysis of the changing political landscape, Islam's view on women, and changing perceptions on gender. These aspects, the author argues, provide women the opportunity to take up public roles. The changing public mood towards male leadership is also a factor that leads voters to look for alternative candidates. The appeal that women would be less corrupt and could make better local leaders also helped women candidates to win votes.

The book demonstrates that getting women into local leadership positions may be claimed as an achievement in Indonesia's process of democratization. But the book clearly demonstrates that getting women candidates into public offices does not necessarily mean that women's interests receive better policy attention. It possibly raises the question as to whether putting women who have no previous engagement with women's issues into power may have contributed to the government's ongoing failure in addressing women's issues and in introducing women-friendly policies.

The book clearly demonstrates that the political success of these women was due to their political affiliation and support from political parties, however, the author does not make any attempt to discuss the political parties' platform regarding women's issues. It would be helpful if the book also unpacked the platform of PDIP and PKB, the two parties mentioned that strongly supported two of the subjects, in regards to women's issues. Further discussion about political parties' platforms on women's issues might help deter readers from feeling that women and religion are merely being hijacked by male politicians, in a country where the majority of the population are Muslims and where women constitute 55% of Indonesian voters. This book forces us to think that Indonesia's democracy should not only able to put women in power but should also enable women leaders to exercise authority to advance more women-friendly policies so that Indonesia will progress towards gender equality in education, health care, work, the family, and the public sphere.

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### ***Migration Revolution: Philippine Nationhood and Class Relations in a Globalized Age***

FILOMENO V. AGUILAR JR.

Singapore: NUS Press in association with Kyoto: Kyoto University Press, 2014, xii + 293p.

The central argument made by Filomeno Aguilar in *Migration Revolution* is that overseas migration, as it is occurring since the 1960s, has brought about important social, cultural, and institutional changes in Philippine society. The migration of Filipinos overseas has become a crucial economic factor because of the enormous remittances that they have generated every year. Migration has accordingly reconfigured class structure, transnationalized social relations, and engendered legal and discursive shifts pertaining to migrants' political participation and inclusion in the Philippine state. It has also rekindled a sense of nationhood and national identity among migrant Filipinos, contributing to a profound reinterpretation of the national narrative. *Migration Revolution* offers us a thorough examination of these changes and their consequences.

Contemporary cross-border migration has enabled the Philippine nation to envision itself within a plurality of nations, pushing the Philippine state to reorient its foreign policy and redefine the boundaries of both citizenship and the nation across borders. It has also important emotive implications. The public outcry caused by the execution of Flor Contemplacion in 1995, for example, marked not only a traumatic moment pointing at the vulnerability of overseas labor migrants, but also produced unprecedented surges in Filipino transnationalism.

The book is a collection of essays written by Aguilar over the past decade and a half, mostly during his sojourns outside the Philippines. He focused on Filipino migrants because "the situations described here<sup>1)</sup> are somehow internal to, albeit not identical with, my own life experiences

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1) Here, Aguilar writes about migrant Filipinos in the United States and Filipino contract workers in the Asia-Pacific region.

as one of them” (p. 174). An important strength of the book—and of Aguilar’s scholarship in general—lies in his positionality as an itinerant scholar. Aguilar has generated precious data from his field research among migrant laborers and professionals in Southeast Asia as well as the United States throughout his academic career. This research enabled him to draw important comparisons and analyze migrant transnationalism in its various manifestations. The result is an empirically grounded work that has greatly contributed to the exploration and discussion of migrant transnationalism, challenging some of the findings in academic work on migrant transnationalism that emerged in the early 1990s. For instance Aguilar notes that the same group of migrants is either considered as reneging on patriotism and thus “lost” to the nation, or described as the newfound transnationalists, thus identifying an academic discourse in the South that runs counter to that in the North (p. 175).

The tensions generated by the execution of *Contemplacion* in Singapore in 1995, where Aguilar was employed at the time, led him to the study of Philippine labor migration. His empathy for overseas Filipino workers (OFWs) is strongly evident in his writings, and his interest in labor migration from the angles of social class and nationhood reveals his concerns for questions of status, belonging, and place as they relate to sentiments of nationhood and shame. In exploring these relationships, Aguilar looks back to the nascent nationalism among young *ilustrados*<sup>2)</sup> in Europe, drawing an interesting parallel between Jose Rizal’s and his comrades’ reaction to colonial racism and its shaming of the nation-cum-race, and today’s sense of shame experienced by educated middle- and upper-class Filipinos for the nationality they share with low-status OFWs. Underpinning these sentiments is not merely exasperation over being stereotyped, but also the Filipino elite’s discontent with having lost control over the international image of the nation.

While labor migrants are being labeled as “shameful export” (p. 87) by the more privileged segments of the Philippine diaspora, they have been lauded as the nation’s new heroes by the state by virtue of their enormous economic contributions to the national economy. Forming a pool of affordable, flexible labor and filling in the needs for care in advanced economies, OFWs have enabled the expansion and subsistence of a middle-class in both receiving and sending countries. Despite their low status origins, numerous OFWs have turned into petty capitalist landowners and entrepreneurs back home because of their savings and investments.

This “progress” has led OFWs to simultaneously occupy two contradictory class positions: that of migrant proletarians overseas, and petty capitalists back home. Thus, Aguilar argues that class structures and class relations in a globalized world cannot be understood without reference to state borders and national frames. Rather, the social structures of societies are intertwined, with the migrant worker entangled in these transnational class relations.

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2) The *ilustrados* were a group of Filipino intellectuals during the Spanish colonial period in the late nineteenth century.

While the class structures of migrant sending and migrant receiving societies connect beyond borders, citizenship regimes continue to regulate individuals' legal status and access to various rights and privileges within a given territory. Receiving societies have made use of the presence of the immigrant "Other" to underscore the boundaries of the nation and to reinforce sentiments of national belonging among their citizens.

Simultaneously, globalization has profoundly transformed the concept of citizenship, and thereby also the rules defining formal membership in a given state. The criteria for categorizing people as either "aliens" or citizens have changed over time, due to mutable ideas of who belongs to the nation but also because of pragmatic state interests. State pragmatism has enabled overseas Filipinos to hold dual-citizenship, and the variability of categories has considerably changed to ideologically validate the formal inclusion of overseas Filipinos.

Mass migration has thus led to the reconceptualization of the nation beyond territorial borders, but also allowed the state to bring overseas Filipinos back into its fold by granting them dual citizenship. The discursive and formal inclusion of overseas Filipinos also contained hopes and assumptions about their economic investments and participation in the politics of their "homeland." Unfortunately, the invitation to become politically involved has had very few takers ever since voting rights were granted to OFWs in early 2003.

As a result of this, Aguilar argues that the assumption that all migrants engage in transnational practices or maintain transnational ties is a fallacy. Rather, transnationalism still needs to be proven. In investigating this, scholars must note that transnational ties vary in nature, with numerous migrants disinterested in political participation from afar. It is better to examine the issue by recognizing that there exist multiple and contradictory visions of the nation among migrants and non-migrants. One of Aguilar's original contributions in this book is thus the discussion and comparison of elite-nationalism and the discourses by public intellectuals over the transnationalism of different groups of Filipino migrants overseas.

However, the book says very little about the impact of technological advancement in communications, and the improved availability of devices that enable real-time updates and information exchange though the World Wide Web. Online media has become an important element in the study of migrant transnationalism as it introduces new possibilities for negotiating family relationships across borders (cf. Madianou and Miller 2012), and provides new ways of constructing and reinforcing a sense of national identity among migrants (cf. Ignacio 2004).

Moreover, Aguilar's brief examination of Filipino-foreign offspring remains limited to a particular group of Filipino descendants, many of whom have North-American or European parents, and who seem to epitomize today's *mestizo* and his/her association with modernity and privileged lives. However, Philippine state policies and individual initiatives have led to affective and sexual relationships which produced offspring who are regarded with greater ambivalence. For example, children of Filipina entertainers and Japanese men have been condescendingly called "the products

of summer flings and mostly out of wedlock relations . . .” (Amor 1992) when their births were first picked up as an issue by journalists, or “one-night babies” by the director of one NGO (Kyodo News Int. 1992). Since 2005, the migration of Filipina entertainers to Japan has starkly declined. However, the lingering association of this migration with sex-work continues to affect a number of Japanese-Filipinos who report about scathing comments by classmates and about being bullied for having a Japanese father (DAWN 2010).

These reactions go back to the issue of shame that Aguilar explores in chapter 3. The children born of this “shameful” migration (to Filipinas who worked in Japan’s entertainment districts) are viewed as evidence of the nation’s feebleness to foreign money and power. The children of former entertainers and Japanese men also “haunt the nation” (p. 197), but in ways far different from how Filipino-foreign offspring born under other circumstances are regarded.

A singular achievement of this well-organized work is its synthesizing of the many strands arising from the profound changes that followed from the massive emigration of Filipinos. To someone who has studied these issues, some of its arguments are not entirely new. But for readers with limited familiarity with the Philippines, *Migration Revolution* is a major introductory text to deepen their understanding of the complicated relationship between migration and nationalism.

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## *The Eurasian Core and Its Edges: Dialogues with Wang Gungwu on the History of the World*

OUI KEE BENG

Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2014, 254p.

Scholars from, or based in, Europe, North America, or Australia have shaped most of the writing

on world history over the past half century. Few Asians have taken up the challenge of examining the forces and developments, contacts and collisions, connecting and shaping the world's societies over the centuries. Although it has a somewhat limited focus (mostly Eurasia) and emphasizes the Big Picture rather than details, this innovative book illuminates the always interesting thoughts of a prominent Singapore-based Malaysian scholar, Wang Gungwu, and adds a new and largely Asian perspective through a dialogue with a younger Malaysian historian also working in Singapore, Ooi Kee Beng. In a series of interviews in 2013 the author, Ooi, skillfully posed thoughtful questions to Wang and compiled their extended conversations into this unconventional but intriguing book. The collaboration, which is loosely organized thematically rather than chronologically, should be of interest to specialists on world, European, Indian, Southeast Asian, and especially Central Asian and Chinese history. The result is like a rewarding and intellectually exciting graduate school seminar with a master historian bringing together his vast knowledge to ponder the broad structure of world history over several millennia.

Few historians are more qualified to explore and identify some of the main themes of such a vast topic. Wang Gungwu is one of the most outstanding, prolific, and wide-ranging historians of our generation. His life and career have spanned the tumultuous transition from Western colonialism through World War II, decolonization, the Cold War, and the multipolar globalized world of today. His background is exceptionally cosmopolitan. Born in 1930 in colonial Indonesia to an ethnic Chinese family and raised in British Malaya, Wang was educated at the University of Malaya in Singapore (BA, MA) and School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) in London (Ph.D.) before his highly successful academic and administrative career at the University of Malaya (History Department Head), Australian National University (Professor and Head of Far Eastern History and Director, Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies), Hong Kong University (Vice Chancellor), and National University of Singapore (University Professor). His travels and sojourns have also taken him to many countries around the world. This reviewer first met Wang in the mid-1960s at the University of Malaya in Kuala Lumpur, where Wang had helped build a "globalized" History Department with a multinational faculty offering courses on both Southeast Asia and various world regions, a harbinger of the cosmopolitan approach he would demonstrate in some of his writings, including this book. Wang's numerous books and articles examine diverse topics but especially China's pre-modern and modern history and politics, Chinese migrations and the resulting diaspora (a concept he dislikes), Malaysian and Singapore history and society, political and economic relations among Asian societies, and Asia's role in world history.

The book is structured around several key themes that Wang believes were major factors in the broader history of Eurasia, which he identifies (along with North Africa) as the canvas where most of world history was made. This view does not conflict with a lot of Western historical writing on the subject, which also (in the reviewer's mind, wrongly) devalues Africa and the Americas prior to the past few centuries, but Wang places stronger emphasis on Central Asia and China.

Wang views Eurasia as a vast core of irrepressible power and several coastal edges (some historians might use the term fringes)—the agrarian-based west (Europe), south (India), and east (China)—connected by Central Asian horse-riding pastoral nomadic societies whose interaction, friendly or hostile, with inland-looking states to the west and east fostered the emergence of European and Chinese civilizations. He might have said more about the role of Central Asian migrants and invaders in shaping Indian civilization. The conflicts between the core and the edges, especially Atlantic Europe, led to Western mastery of the seas and the Global Age of today. In Wang's conception, Central Asians were not supplementary to world history but the key factor, which contrasts with the views of many Western historians for whom the region's role is peripheral and does not extend much beyond the Silk Road, Mongols, and possibly Turks. Central Asia was oriented largely to overland exchange but over time lost power and influence to the coastal edges—Western Europe and China. Wang asserts that only in modern times did the expansion of the Russian Empire destroy the Central Asian core.

In common with many Western scholars, Wang also emphasizes that in more recent centuries “the global is maritime” (p. xiv). The advent of maritime skills and technology made global travel, trade, resource extraction, military conquest, religious spread—indeed, a whole new world—possible. It also undermined the influence of land-oriented continental powers like China and Russia and helped seagoing nations like Britain. As Wang puts it, “No doubt the West was an outlier as well in the face of Eurasian clout, but thanks to its maritime power, it created its own globality. They could not have become a global power were it not for the sea. Mastery of the sea and ruling the waves is the secret of becoming a global power. Now, the Chinese don't know how to do that” (p. 142). Hence, he concludes, powered by the Industrial Revolution, the maritime global economy closed a chapter in human history. The United States, both a continental and maritime power, moved to the forefront, invulnerable on land and sea, in contrast to China. In his account the Cold War becomes a conflict largely between maritime (U.S., Britain, France) and continental (Russia, China) powers. Some scholars would portray a more complex situation.

Wang claims that the dominance of continental power kept much of Southeast Asia, in his view never a cohesive region, peripheral to continental dynamics, hence, as he oddly puts it, enjoying “a relatively beautiful and peaceful time” (p. 62). One suspects that local peoples may not have perceived their world as lacking conflict, threats, and challenges. Furthermore, he suggests, sea power was never developed on the basis of a very powerful state with the possible exception of Indianized Java. The Malay world was left alone, Wang believes, because the continental powers had little interest in the oceanic peoples. This approach downplays the maritime tradition, albeit largely a commercial but sometimes a military one, in parts of the region (especially the Indonesian archipelago). Wang tends to view maritime power as largely of military rather than economic importance, despite the considerable amount of trade within Southeast Asia as well as with East Asia, South Asia, and even the Middle East.

The eastern Asian and Indian Ocean maritime worlds probably deserve more attention in his account. In other writings he has expressed reservations about the “Asian Mediterranean” concept (Wang 2008; 2012) but does not say much about it here. To Wang the Southeast Asian waters were at best a “semi-Mediterranean” since China made little effort to exercise power there, a Sinocentric view. Nor does he pay much attention to the “Maritime Silk Road” via the Malay Peninsula, Straits of Melaka, and Indian Ocean as a counterpart to the overland Silk Road. Some recent scholarship (Andaya and Andaya 2015; Gunn 2011; Hall 2011; Lockard 2010; Miksic 2013; Paine 2013) suggests the maritime trade route was more significant than earlier studies, mostly focused on the overland route, concluded. Today China, seeking to assert itself and become a maritime power, builds a navy and claims vast stretches of the South China Sea.

Given Wang’s long interest in China, the reader will find many interesting side trips into Chinese history and comparisons between Chinese and Western traditions and mindsets, especially the Confucian legacy which Wang sees as very powerful today and a stark contrast with Western thinking. Western thought, he suggests, is analytical and categorizes everything; religion, philosophy, etc. are all defined and bordered. The Chinese mix and match Confucianism and Buddhism (one might add here Daoism and ancestor worship), making Chinese thought a bit of everything but not a philosophy. It would have been interesting to get his take on the “Great Divergence” debate concerning when and why the West took the lead over China (Pomeranz 2000; Wong 1997). But Chinese have learned to adapt. “Becoming the [world’s] second economic power is the product of the fact that the Chinese have mastered everything that has made Japan and the U.S. wealthy and powerful. What’s left is the question, where is the heart, where is the soul” (p. 192). China’s rise, including growing naval power, shows that they have the latecomer’s advantage. Besides the South China Sea, to maintain its rise China needs to keep the Straits of Melaka, Sunda Strait, and Indonesia neutral and hence open to Chinese shipping. Still, he believes that the United States has better long-term prospects because its continental and maritime reach is secure and because it possesses cyber and air power. “Together, this makes you quite unbeatable. The Chinese are vulnerable on all these fronts” (p. 226).

The book is full of arguments for other historians to consider. Given its genesis in conversations rather than a well-researched manuscript, the structure is not very tight and the narrative sometimes wanders off into often interesting tangents. Wang and Ooi do not explore the detailed history of the wider world; the focus throughout remains on Eurasia although Wang also makes some interesting observations about the United States in the world. There is very little attention to regions such as Africa or Latin America or even South Asia, with most of the examples coming from East Asia, Southeast Asia, Central Asia, and Europe. Wang also says surprisingly little about Southwest Asia (the Middle East) and Islam, and tends to downplay Arab and Persian maritime trade. Many historians would place a stronger emphasis on Islam as a major factor in Afro-Eurasian history. There are some other problems with this ambitious effort, including a few questionable

assertions or perhaps just slips of the tongue in recorded conversations. For example, it was the Mughal Empire rather than the Sultanate of Delhi that finally collapsed in 1857. Borobodur was a Buddhist temple complex, not a kingdom, in tenth century Java. Wang credits Hindus with destroying Buddhism in India but this is too simple; Muslims, White Huns, and even severe problems and divisions within the Buddhist establishment were also contributing factors. Despite the flaws and some debatable points, this is a stimulating book that may interest academic historians and can be used in a graduate seminar but not a survey course on world history, more a way of thinking about history rather than presenting it. Wang remains an active scholar and role model for many of us. Ooi and Wang should be congratulated for this book, which gives us access to Wang's learned and provocative thought late in his much-respected and influential career.

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*Land's End: Capitalist Relations on an Indigenous Frontier*

TANIA MURRAY LI

Durham: Duke University Press, 2014, 240p.

*Land's End* is an intimate analysis of the effects of capitalist relations and a fascinating complement to Li's previous work *The Will to Improve* (see Murray Li 2007). While the latter critiques well-intentioned, top-down, large-scale development programs in the Indonesian province of Sulawesi, this new monograph places the spotlight on small-scale farmers in the same province and the insidious effects of capitalism in foreclosing their choices. These indigenous highland peoples, she argues, have plugged into global capitalist circuits of their own volition through their everyday decisions such as the choice of crops to plant and this eventually alienated them from their own lands and each other. Furthermore, while some modernization theories had previously contended that the impact on people so adversely displaced could be mitigated by opportunities for wage work, Li demonstrates that such options were severely limited. "Land's End" does not refer simply to the ending of access to common land but also to the dead end in employment prospects for thousands of landless highlanders even as some of their neighbors prospered.

Li's case study is a window for observing the workings of market competition in a society that had been insulated from such circuits until as late as the 1990s. The setting of the study highlights the incursion of almost perfect market competition, a case of free market success rather than market failure. Although Sulawesi had once been colonized, Dutch rule there had been fairly light, especially in the inaccessible highlands, and the Lauje—Li's subjects—were not compelled to sell either their produce or their labor at that time. It is arguably this element of compulsion that distinguished capitalist relations from pre-capitalist ones. Li defines "capitalist relations" as "the ensemble of relations characterized by private and unequal ownership of the means of production (land, capital), a group of unequal non-owners compelled to sell their labor and the use of capital to generate profit under competitive conditions" (p. 8). Such a definition places the spotlight on the uneven impact of capitalist relations on the actors within the Sulawesi community and these relations become the central focus of this book.

Her argument is structured in five parts. The first chapter elucidates the spatial, social, and trade positions between the highlands and the coast. The villages (*desas*) tended to be positioned perpendicular to the coast and each group of *desas* is striated into a hierarchy where power and opportunities increase the closer it is to the coast. The most powerless—socially and politically—were the *bela* who lived at the highest gradient. Unlike scholars such as Scott (2009) who theorized that the highlands in mainland Southeast Asia were a refuge from state-like polities on the lowlands, Li depicts the Lauje's relationship with the coast as more vexed than that captured by the coercion-resistance model. While the Lauje tended to keep their distance from state power in the lowlands, they "were marginalized by a discursive regime that saw them as backward" and "came to see

themselves in the same light" (p. 56). They were thus simultaneously attracted to the coastal idea of progress while also valuing their autonomy, as evidenced by the fact the highlanders engaged with trade at the coast and paid taxes voluntarily during the colonial period although they retained autonomy in food production.

In general, until the 1990s, the highland economy runs on a dense network of intra-personal relationships. Li shows in the second chapter that the Lauje have a strong recognition of individual autonomy that is based on acknowledging the link between work and ownership. Working the land is a way of staking ownership to it. Even children are awarded the right to earn from the crops that they planted themselves. Along with this implicit recognition to reward individual efforts comes the parallel obligation to care for others. Care and concern are expressed through a network of reciprocity such as communal work parties in which neighbors work for each other for free, and the practice of *modagang*—buying food from kin and neighbors at cheaper prices, the preference for referring to paid service as a “gift” rather than employment.

These practices began to change as the Lauje started planting cacao. In her third chapter, Li explained how cacao led to the enclosure of common land and paved the way for land accumulation for those who had the capital at this crucial juncture. Cacao as a standing tree crop required extensive land but less effort in cultivation, challenging the equitability of customary associations between work, reward, and ownership that had previously obtained for the Lauje. *Lokasi*, an awkwardly adopted term for private land, entered the vocabulary of a people whose language previously had no English equivalent for the word “land” (p. 84). Where ownership of land could once be rotated as people took turns to work it, enclosure now became the norm. These enclosures were rarely resisted on the basis of customary laws partly because the cacao crop signposted ownership. Such laws, in any case, have little authority, as they are informal and illegible to the state. These voluntary moves into planting cacao for sale thus tended to have the effect of concentrating land into a few, making it difficult to get it back to grow food.

As a result, Li explains in Chapter four, the ratio between the price of cacao and the price of rice became crucial in determining whether these farmers could survive. In the decade 1998–2009, inequality in the highlands intensified, with some highlanders having no access to land at all. At the same time, other options to survive a crisis, for example, by turning to kin for food or land narrowed dramatically as few grew enough food to sell. It was at this juncture that capitalist relations emerged in earnest since the desperation of farmers and the “erosion of non-commoditized relations” worked in concert (p. 116). The competition that characterized this form of relations meant that the highlanders lost their land, not through land grabs by faceless corporations, but to their neighbors through mechanisms as mundane as land sales or even gambling games where small-scale farmers wagered their meager land in a last bid for fairer fortune.

A lack of jobs in other sectors of the economy exacerbated the problem as Li shows in her final two chapters. There are essentially three strategies for highlanders trapped without land or

jobs—loyalty, voice, and exit (p. 150). None of the three offers a true way out since tolerance to inequality led peasants to work harder without seeing results, their isolation made it difficult for them to seek allies to voice out their concerns, and Indonesia's high but jobless growth trajectory precluded an easy exit. It is on this basis that Li concludes, "progressive settlements aren't tied to growth but to a commitment for distribution fought for on political terrain" (p. 185).

Li's study resonates with a growing literature by scholars concerned with growing income inequality and concerns over the potential for the market to self-correct. Economists currently dominate the debate on precisely what these corrective measures should be. Most notably, French economist Piketty (2014) recently advocated for a global system of progressive taxes to prevent wealth from being concentrated in the hands of a few on the basis that such concentration is an inevitable long-term outcome when the rate of return of capital is larger than the rate of economic growth. Li's ethnographic contribution, however, seems reluctant to join in the search for generalized solutions. It does not advocate for specific policies beyond pointing to a need for direct cash transfers to dispossessed highlanders and a fostering of greater political will among local communities.

The biggest question mark left by this study is where to situate the Lauje within the global economy. Unlike scholars such as Tsing (2005) who focused on global interconnections forged by capitalist networks in remote areas, Li takes a resolutely localized approach. Capital, in her study, appears to flow within an internal circuit; between neighbors and villages within the province. There is perhaps room for future scholars to investigate the potential for change through external capital inflows. Cacao as cash crop had proved disastrous for some Lauje highlanders, but would capital flowing in from other, non-agricultural enterprises break the cycle of land-dispossession or further entrench it? At the end of Li's study, the economy in the Lauje highlands is undergoing yet another transition—this time away from cacao—and it is unclear what will replace it. Infusions of external capital that had been negligible in this study might yet play a bigger role in Sulawesi in the future.

Overall, this book is a valuable addition to the interrogation into the nature of capitalist relations and its attendant impact. The significance of Li's contribution lies in connecting a global pattern of inequality to a set of circumstances that is peculiarly Lauje-an, while giving human faces to a trend that has been quiet and insidious. Any system will have its winners and losers; what Li's book highlights is that the line separating the former from the latter is a thin one indeed. Hard work makes little difference in improving the circumstances of the structurally dispossessed. How could we mitigate the iniquities of the market? Should we? The audience of this monograph—largely winners in the system—will be confronting these issues for years to come.

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### *Champions of Buddhism: Weikza Cults in Contemporary Burma*

BÉNÉDICTE BRAC DE LA PERRIÈRE, GUILLAUME ROZENBERG, and ALICIA TURNER, eds.  
Singapore: NUS Press, 2014, xxvii+261p.

Exciting things are happening in the study of Burmese Buddhism. Recent years have seen the publication of very important contributions to our understanding of this field. In particular, investigations of the roots of the “mindfulness” meditation phenomenon as a Burmese reaction to colonialism have garnered attention far beyond a scholarly audience concerned with Burma exclusively (for example, Braun 2013). Though fascinating, this focus on the origins and spread of the so-called *vipassanā* meditation movement has neglected what Kate Crosby, in the preface to *Champions of Buddhism*, calls “the Other Burmese Buddhism,” by which she means the popular yet politically marginal set of practices belonging to the so-called *weikza*-path. It is to examining this path that *Champions of Buddhism* is devoted, both as an introduction to this under-investigated phenomenon and as a stimulus to further inquiries into the nature of Buddhism in Burma and Buddhist global modernity in general. In both respects, it succeeds marvelously.

Unless they are experts in Burmese Buddhism, readers may at this point wonder what exactly is meant by the term *weikza*. In the foreword to the volume, the editors give a good idea by describing *weikza* as “a religious virtuoso” (p. ix). Because of his behavior, meditation skills, and expertise in the magical arts, a *weikza* attains the ability to live very long, with the purpose of being present when the next Buddha, Maitreya, appears in our world. Though the usage of magic with the explicit purpose of lengthening one’s life may not sound very “Buddhist” to some, one argument that this volume forcefully makes is that such practices are as Buddhist as monks singing sutras or meditating in temples. In her preface (the book has both a foreword and a preface, but—puzzlingly—no introduction), Crosby explores this alternative Burmese Buddhism by sketching the practical, political, and ideological motivations that have kept it in obscurity for so long. Together with Steven Collins’ postscript, Crosby’s piece connects the materials in the volume to a larger context, a context that is sometimes lost in the detailed accounts collected here.

The main body of the volume is divided into three thematic parts. In the first, the *weikza*

phenomenon is further defined by contrasting it to a number of other Burmese Buddhist and non-Buddhist indigenous practices. In chapter 1, Patrick Pranke distinguishes *weikza* from another, better known ideal, that of the *arahant* (Sanskrit: *arhat*). Whereas the latter are the ultimate goal of practitioners in the *vipassanā* tradition, the former belong to a different, esoteric path. Nevertheless, both *arhats* and *weikza* are revered after their physical body has disappeared (which does not mean that they are considered “dead”). In the course of his description, Pranke provides a useful history of Buddhism in colonial and postcolonial Burma, serving to orient the reader for the chapters to come. In the next chapter, Juliane Schober expands this comparison between *vipassanā* and *weikza* practices by affirming that, although *weikza* are certainly marginalized politically (not having strong connections with the Burmese leaders), doctrinally they are firmly Theravāda Buddhist. In the last chapter of the first part, Bénédicte Brac de la Perrière introduces a final distinction, namely between different types of spirit mediums: on the one hand, there are the *nat gadaw*, who contact the spirits of dead Burmese kings. On the other, there are the *bodaw* or *medaw*, who contact the spirits of physically departed *weikza*. Brac de la Perrière’s discussion is interesting for several reasons, not in the least because the division she describes is gendered: whereas *weikza* mediums tend to be male, *nat gadaw* tend to be female.

The second part of the book then details the role of *weikza* as protectors of Buddhism. In what I found the most stimulating contribution to the volume, Niklas Foxeus shows that the *ariya-weikza* organization, a millenarian group centered around a historical person who claimed to be a *weikza*, can be adequately characterized as a Buddhist fundamentalist group with an anti-Western and anti-colonial agenda. Though the group does not itself perpetrate violence, adherents claim their meditation efforts and rituals lead to the demise of many who threaten Burmese Buddhism. Recently, this group’s primary targets have become Muslims who mass-migrated to Burma under British colonial rule. The group’s stance reminds one of the combative Burmese monks whom we have seen appear in the news headlines more and more often. Foxeus concludes his fascinating treatment with a consideration of how these Buddhists justify violence doctrinally, in other words, how bringing about someone’s death is not a violation of the Buddhist precept of non-violence. In the next contribution to the second part, Keiko Tosa provides a detailed overview of how *weikza* are called upon to ensure the successful completion of pagodas. In the process, *weikza* can often steer the construction of such pagodas to reflect their personal viewpoints.

The last part of the book continues the trend of Tosa’s examination by detailing other *weikza* practices. Thomas Patton documents how sacred diagrams are constructed and used. This focus on non-canonical material allows him to criticize conventional approaches to Buddhism, which tend to be normative in trying to discern the “real” Buddhism. Patton shows that such approaches are not only misguided; they also play into the hands of those who would cast Burma as a protector of such a “pure” Buddhism. The last two chapters of the volume, by Céline Coderey and Guillaume Rozenberg, both address the roles of *weikza* as healers of non-conventional diseases. Coderey

does this within Arakan, a province located in the periphery of Burma. Despite being located at the fringes, Arakan healers nevertheless utilize the prestige of *weikza* to boost the power and prestige of their healing practices. Finally, Guillaume Rozenberg further explores one specific healing practice, namely exorcism. He is concerned mainly with how *weikza* exorcists see their own practice, which he situates between active and passive: on the one hand, the exorcist lets another power act through him. On the other, the manifestation of this power depends on his personal virtues.

In exploring a phenomenon about which we know comparatively little, *Champions of Buddhism* does a superb job. The volume is very well organized, beautifully illustrated, and the contributions are consistently of high quality. My criticisms stem mostly from my position as neither an expert on Burma nor an anthropologist. Since this material is in dialogue with the larger theme of Buddhism and modernity, it could have provided interested readers from different fields a better way in by providing a comprehensive glossary. Such a glossary is included, but at merely three pages it is wholly insufficient for a reader for whom many of the Burmese and Pāli terms will be unfamiliar. For example, in the opening essay sentences like the following caused me pause: “Wayā-zawta [a monk] promised his followers *sotāpanna* through *anāgāmi* status if they would follow his teachings” (p. 4). Another problem is that the preoccupation with documenting phenomena that were previously not described (such as the building of pagodas, how magical inscriptions work, and so on) prevents many of the contributors in the book from making more solid connections with the socio-political realities of post-colonial Burma. For example, though we are consistently told that *weikza* are politically marginalized, a consistent analysis of why this is the case is not provided. As I said before, the preface and postscript partly address this problem, but it would have been better had such connections been integrated throughout the volume. However, these are minor objections to a work that both continues exciting conversations and breaks new ground.

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*Beyond Borders: Stories of Yunnanese Chinese Migrants of Burma*

WEN-CHIN CHANG

Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2014, xiii+278p.

Responding to a call for studies on the varied ethnic Chinese societies in host countries around the world, Wen-Chin Chang's *Beyond Borders* explores the whereabouts of the Yunnanese Chinese who migrated to Burma before and around the Chinese Communist Party's access to power in 1949, and addresses the issue of their consequent socio-political marginality.

General scholarly approaches consider migration as a flow of anonymous people, taken within a historico-political context that leaves them with little choice. They respond more or less effectively to impulsive economic ambitions and mercantile nature and are driven by despair and/or hope for a different life. In her account, Chang sketches a more subtle picture. Here, building on long-term relationships established within a community scattered over an extended territory that includes Yunnan, Burma, Thailand, and Taiwan and with some characters particular to the past two decades, Chang succeeds in bringing back faces, names, stories, anecdotes, and the individual experiences of these people. Anonymous heroes of forgotten struggles, incredible families, and motivated entrepreneurs all come to life through their stories. Chang's work sheds light on the fundamental entanglement of this community with unstable foreign and risky contexts that have compelled individuals to constantly redefine their very conditions of survival.

The book is organized into two main sections that each includes four chapters: the history of Yunnanese migrants' mobility in Burma, and their involvement in cross-border trade. Each of the chapters starts with a description of the author's field site and her approach to her informants through connections that echo throughout the whole book. This provides the reader with a sense of the importance of the community network. Chang also presents personal narratives that in their own way shed light on migrant's experiences in Burma. The eight chapters are dedicated to one community of this group, in turn represented by one or several individuals or by one theme that reveals a specific aspect of the history and the economic strategies that framed their settlement.

Be they refugees, soldiers, cross-border smugglers, caravans' muleteers, or jade traders, all have experienced extraordinary journeys that have led them and their families from Yunnan to Taiwan via Burma and Thailand over several generations. Chang approaches the success and failures of these groups which are characterized by their economic activity (with the exception of the Muslim Yunnanese and women) through several themes that emerge recurrently in most narratives: military conflicts, illegal trade, an underground banking system, drug addiction, constant displacement, the scattering of families, and social networks. In this specific context, the lives of Yunnanese migrants in Burma particularly enlighten Chinese diaspora diversity and struggles that sustain the laboring capacity that one more generally attribute them.

*Beyond Borders* provides insights on the ways different groups of Chinese refugees from

Yunnan, their families, and the subsequent generations established themselves in Burma and transcended their socio-political marginality. As refugees they lacked state recognition and protection and thus relied heavily on the support of the remaining Kuomintang army. Still, the accounts provided by Chang's informants give the impression that collecting the life story of any Yunnanese migrant in Burma can disclose a series of fascinating and challenging adventures. First of all, they show how trade and migration trajectories are intertwined with local politics, ethnic conflicts, and a balance of power that, according to the period, could favor or ostracize the presence of Chinese and their activities. Indeed, despite this uneven context, life stories also reveal how the constant interconnection between Yunnanese ethnic groups—be they social or military—and Burmese ethnic groups led to business collaborations that benefited many. Several informants emphasized how relationships with local groups (ethnic minorities and Burmese) can fluctuate, vacillating between, on the one hand, kindness and good neighborhood milieus with ethnic groups such as the Shan, and, on the other hand, contempt and avoidance of the Burmese. Nonetheless the book offers an alternative depiction of the bond that Han Chinese can establish with other ethnic groups once they escape the dominant political propaganda emanating from China.

In the framework of a context that reveals the fragility of imposed ethnic categories and boundaries, Chang's analysis explores two specific aspects of this very mobile community: initial marginality and transnationalism. What could be perceived as contradictory characteristics actually constitute a driving force for families determined to not only survive but to go beyond the structural limits that their mobility and status inflicted upon them in pursuit of a better life. The book praises the Yunnanese spirit, resistance, strength, and networking ability, as well as their mercantile consciousness. For many of the first-generation Yunnanese who settled in Burma, migration was the only option to escape their socio-political position in China (be that the Kuomintang army, or any of the "black categories," as defined during the Cultural Revolution, i.e. landlords, rich farmers, anti-revolutionaries, bad-influencers, and right-wingers) but it also entailed switching their position in the social hierarchy by taking whatever jobs are available in their new surroundings to make a living.

To endure marginality in the first period of settlement, Yunnanese migrants relied on both their intragroup behavior and external support. Most life stories emphasize the importance given to maintaining their identity in a foreign country, i.e. their cultural roots (food, language, and religion education), and transmitting their values (solidarity, anti-communism, and religion), in a distinctive way separate from the Fujianese and Cantonese Chinese settled in south Burma who are, according to the Yunnanese, more acculturated. To survive, the Yunnanese Chinese have demonstrated a strong sense of initiative and creativity, using all their potential skills to overcome challenges and frictions in an insecure environment. To support them, the Kuomintang army based in Burma since their escape from China resettled in northern Thailand in the 1960s. Their incomes came from controlling drug trafficking trade in jade stones and the protection of caravans. This

provided Yunnanese migrants with an informal economic surrounding to reconstruct their lives in Burmese society despite their vulnerable status and allowed them to develop a form of community coherence and solidarity.

Thanks to their fascinating ability to rely on and extend their families and their ethnic and religious networks, these migrants were able to tackle their marginal status. On several levels, the strength of these networks has allowed them to undertake and sustain individual risk-taking projects. Chang calls these national and transnational networks the “intragroup nexuses,” or connections based on references rather than familiarity (in the context of mobility). The life stories of this book clearly demonstrate how social and economic survival depends on mobility, opportunities, and connections. Still, they also stress that serendipity and unexpected encounters can lead to different paths. The intimate dimension of migration disclosed in some accounts (see Guoguang’s story, chapter 3) emphasizes that individual’s destinies rely as much on unhappy circumstances as on fortunate encounters. Transnationalism, as experienced by the Yunnanese migrants in Burma, is about maintaining social connections between their home society Yunnan and the societies of settlement such as Burma, followed by Thailand and Taiwan. Particularly inspiring is the case of the Yunnanese Muslims (chapter 4), a closely tied group within the Chinese community. Because of their religious links with Muslim countries, their mobility takes them beyond Asia. They adjust to their host societies either through their cultural roots (while studying in Arab countries, they connect with other Asians) or their religious faith (after migrating to Taiwan, they connect with other Muslims), according to their needs. Therefore, the Muslim Yunnanese are an example of dynamism and flexibility. Despite unavoidable sacrifices, these two qualities have helped them transcend their double marginality (Chinese and Muslim) within the frame of a double transnational network: the regional Chinese diaspora *and* the international Islamic community.

The strength of this book is the space the author gives to personal narratives. In this refreshing ethnography, Chang demonstrates how the vivid descriptions of life trajectories and intimate relationships of ordinary people, supported by clear explanations on the chaotic historical political circumstances in which they are grounded, can be more revealing than reconstituted realities inspired by scarce documentation available to foreign observers. This is precisely the value of Chang’s work. Her perspective steps around the economic performance of the Chinese diaspora and concentrates on linking national history with people’s lives in a very enlightening and lively way.

This is definitely a richly documented account of the historical roots of Yunnanese settlements in Burmese borderlands, their influence, and their involvement with trade. Banned by the Burmese government and only protected by armed ethnic groups, Yunnanese cross-border trade with Thailand supported the Burmese economy during its socialist regime. During the dictatorial military regime, trade with China became prominent but was still a risky business until the new democratic

regime allowed more flexibility and new influx of Chinese. Chang delivers a rich analysis of this complex context through the words of those once involved in this underground yet dynamic economy. She provides reliable figures on the ground realities that were difficult to investigate when they were taking place. Doing so draws out how transnationalism has been practiced by Yunnanese migrants and how it has partially transformed the region. Chang also questions the usual understanding of borders as remote areas negatively labelled as “wasteland, backward and lawless” (p. 174) with a limited perspective. Even though Yunnanese migrants have been living on the margins of the Burmese state, they have contributed to opening the country to the outside world, and participated in its economic survival, revealing the double nature of borderlands as “peripheral and central, separate and connected” (p. 174).

Less convincing maybe is the section related to gender roles and women’s involvement in the economic sphere. Chang draws on her informants’ life trajectories, their plight, and their struggle to overcome fatalism driven by commitment to their family well-being. Although the author’s analysis of these stories is convincing, it is not specific to this particular group and would have become more interesting if she had adopted a comparative perspective. Regarding the issue of gender roles and expectations, many of the Yunnanese women’s narratives challenge the usual stereotypes on hardworking and responsible Chinese men, and highlight the contrasting and unusual image of brave and strong women compelled to take on the breadwinning role of the family. In this case, one can observe similar strategies in several societies in Southeast Asia where women who find themselves trapped between their traditional duty and their unreliable husbands are constrained to find ways to ensure their family’s survival. Furthermore, the author’s arguments could have benefited from further comparison with the difficult position of other mobile diaspora in the region, such as Chinese in Northern Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos (Nyíri 2012; Tan 2012), or ethnic groups in Yunnan related to Burmese ethnic guerrillas for instance.

Besides the fascinating stories that nourish this account of a largely ignored Chinese diaspora, and the rigorous historical approach to their contemporary situation, this book is also a real pleasure to read. It distinguishes itself from other academic works that often tend to overload ethnographic accounts with excessive references and global perspectives that sometimes seem artificially developed. Moreover, the author shares her ethnographer experiences with a confounding honesty and vivid descriptions (with the occasional doubts), recalling her feelings in the process of collecting life stories. In a sense we are able to feel the closeness that she has cultivated with her informants and their families who gave her privileged insights into their lives. Simultaneously this has exposed the limits of her objectivity. Chang questions the boundaries of the anthropologist with humility, adding a personal touch that is rare, while providing a sense of the ethnographer’s proximity to her informants, and the degree of mutual trust and expectations such fragile relationships implicitly entail (chapters 2, 3).

Despite the lack of comparative perspective that would have enhanced further the unique

specificities of Yunnanese migrants in Burma, *Beyond Borders* remains an academic achievement and a very relevant addition to the literature on diasporas in Southeast Asia. Works like this inevitably improve our understanding of the socioeconomic and political changes currently occurring in this strategic country.

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### ***The Politics of Protection Rackets in Post-New Order Indonesia: Coercive Capital, Authority and Street Politics***

IAN DOUGLAS WILSON

Oxon, NY: Routledge, 2015, xxii+198p.

Seventeen years have passed since the fall of Suharto’s New Order regime. Indonesia’s *reformasi* has since been lauded as a successful case of democratization. Despite the consolidation of institutional democracy, however, some critics have argued that the conventional system of power relations established by the end of New Order still persists, while others have argued that distribution of power and material resources is still under the strong influence of a small number of very wealthy individuals (Ford and Pepinsky 2014). By giving a clear account of the changing condition regarding the politics of racketeering and mass organizations in Jakarta, this book illustrates that the principle of local politics fundamentally altered after the end of the authoritarian regime.

The originality of this study is twofold: it sees Jakarta as a site of local politics rather than the center of national politics; it also sheds lights on the positive side of mass mobilization. Studies on mass mobilization in decentralizing Indonesia have been predominantly about the local politics of regions outside Jakarta, if not about politics at a national level. More importantly, they have largely disregarded the potential for mass organizations to be “advocates on issues of immediate consequence to their members and the neighborhoods in which they live” (p. 94).

In Chapter 1, “Protection, Violence and the State,” the author sets up the theoretical framework for his study. Following Charles Tilly, the author starts by denying the state’s complete

monopoly over the control of coercive force within its territory. However, while Tilly identifies state as an entity “controlling the principle means of coercion within a given territory” (Tilly 1975, 62), Wilson sees the state, with Joel Migdal, as a “field of power marked by the use and threat of violence” (Migdal 2001, 15) and the aim of his study as “identifying the dynamics and contradictions of the practices and strategies of the parts making up this ‘field of power’” (*ibid.*, 16). Thus, the boundary between state and non-state actors is essentially blurred. Furthermore, Wilson cites the criminologist Alfredo Schulte-Bockholt, who differs from Tilly in seeing the state “as the product of a particular historical period and stage of state-formation” (p. 10) in order to conceptualize the relation between regimes and the protection of rackets as “protection racket regimes.” These regimes are “formed by state and/or non-state elites in order to preserve their domination through the violent exclusion of large groups in society that experience condition of substantial social disparities” (Schulte-Bockholt 2006, 35). But unlike Schulte-Bockholt, who presumes that power elites would simply subsume sub-hegemonic groups into the dominating class “across conventional class lines” both systematically and ideologically (pp. 8–9), Wilson draws a different picture. For mass organizations in post-New Order Jakarta are “largely untethered from the direct control of the military or police,” where “the racket as a relationship of domination” operates in a “peculiar brand of populist racketeering” (p. 172).

In Chapter 2, “Reconfigured Rackets: Continuity, Change and Consolidation,” the author outlines how gangs and mass organizations adapted to the post-New Order social environment and how they transformed themselves from racketeers into “professional” protection providers. Demographic domination of the poor due to massive immigration and their spatial segregation from the upper-middle class due to a growing number of enclave residences characterize the urban space of Jakarta. These conditions gave rise to insecurity and a feeling of deprivation among the lower middle-class population in the city, including Betawi. On top of this situation was the nation-wide political trend of democratization and decentralization, which gave rise to “a particular kind of populist political agency of the urban poor,” who claim to have grass-roots relations with the urban underclass and to represent such people (p. 20).

The city administration soon sought to take advantage of this situation in order to regain control of the security over the city. For them, it seemed more reasonable to utilize Betawi groups by encouraging the consolidation of their rackets than to tackle directly the gangs originating from eastern parts of the archipelago. Local political actors were keen to establish alliances with organizations calling for the rights of the indigenous Betawi population. Thus, political alliances in Jakarta increasingly became “based upon communal identities and populist rights demands of various social groups based in critiques of the state, rather than one-way vertical lines of political patronage and defence of state ideology” (p. 29).

Chapter 3, “A New Order of Crime: Suharto’s Racket Regime,” briefly explains the relationship between state and violent entrepreneurs under the New Order regime. While the New Order

state did not have a monopoly over coercive force, it forged informal alliances with non-state organizations. Such organizations were “subcontracted” and only loosely allied to the state apparatus, but they employed violence “under the guise of the state and its symbols” (p.38). While encouraging some violent entrepreneurs to integrate under state institutions, the state eliminated others via purges. Eventually, the state created the complex and delicate mechanism of political backings “based upon contingent patronage,” which was transformed dramatically into something more unstable and opportunistic after democratization (p. 56).

Chapter 4, “The Changing of the *Preman* Guard” focuses on one of the biggest informal sector districts of Tanah Abang in Central Jakarta, and examines the transformation of patronage patterns during the period between 1997 and 2002. In this district, the East Timorese youths organized by Hercules took power during the 1990s. Hercules had close ties with the military figure Prabowo Subianto after cooperating with him in the fight against guerrillas in East Timor in the late 1980s. Tacit yet firm backing by Prabowo made him a prominent gang figure in Jakarta. However, the economic crisis in 1997 triggered uneasiness and resentment against harsh extortion by these “outsiders.” Upon its formation, an organization formed by the indigenous Betawi population in the district, called Family of Tanah Abang Association (IKBT), soon received an endorsement from the city administration. In pursuing anti-*preman* campaigns, Governor Sutiyoso strategically made use of emergent ethnic tensions based on the “native versus other” rhetoric. He recruited local Betawi gangs during the campaigns to eliminate gangs from eastern Indonesia.

It should be noted that “the stage upon which his strategies were played out was radically different” from that of New Order (p. 80). The case of Tanah Abang epitomizes the nation-wide shift in the nature of alliances between the formal administration and *preman* organizations. The fragmented nature of political allegiances brought about by democratization led to a shift “away from a vertical dependence upon powerful patrons” (p. 83) toward “fragmented and frequently shifting alliances” (p. 147). Now that local politics had become a contested arena for coalitions of different political interests, it was no longer a necessity for the leadership of *preman* organizations to gain firm support from formal authority in order to survive and prosper. To do so was now at best advantageous.

This changing political landscape engendered a highly self-conscious and often exclusivist sense of localism. In Jakarta, this typically resulted in heightened ethnic tensions and turf wars, especially until the mid- to late-2000s (p. 118). In Chapter 5, “The Rise of the Betawi,” the author highlights Jakarta’s case, taking examples from vigilante groups claiming to represent ethnic Betawi. Violent entrepreneurs who established groups like FBR (Betawi Brotherhood Forum) saw broadened opportunities to mobilize the masses by bringing ethnic symbolism in the forefront. They sought to build alliances with political elites by showcasing their ability to represent the native lower-middle class population who had long been marginalized from urban development. Such violent entrepreneurs were in that sense Janus-faced: at times they became “advocates on

issues of immediate consequence to their members and the neighborhoods in which they live,” and at other times they could be subcontracted to political elites on their demand for violent protests (p. 94). As such, groups like FBR were initially very offensive in character, provoking clashes over turf and violent protests through the use of ethnicized class tensions. The consequences were often disadvantageous to and exploitative of lower-middle class *kampung* residents who were supposed to be the very objective of their mobilization.

From the onset of its expansion, however, FBR went well beyond the domain of violent racketeering. In Chapter 6, “Jakarta’s Political Economy of Rackets,” the author traces the transformation of FBR since the mid-2000s. During this time the city administration and Jakarta Police Department strategically (and implicitly) backed up Betawi mass organizations in the hope that the urban security would be more orderly and predictable. The consequences were a substantial expansion of the organization’s territorial boundaries and a radical transformation of its working principle. The primary concern for FBR quickly shifted from “the turf wars of East Jakarta” (p. 136), to something more common to the urban working-class across the city. This was due in part to the rapid expansion in its constituency and the subsequent emergence of a city-wide network of lower-middle class neighborhoods. As FBR expanded itself through “a city-wide network of branch franchises” (p. 120), activities of newly established branches were deeply embedded in the social world of respective neighborhoods. This process of expansion led to less restraint and more autonomy for the branches, hence mass mobilization becoming increasingly populist in character.

Results from 2014 presidential election were indicative of a further reinforcement of these trends, as is detailed in Chapter 7, “Coercive Capital, Political Entrepreneurship and Electoral Democracy.” During the campaign, most leaders of mass organizations in Jakarta publicly supported Prabowo Subianto, the former military figure and one of the most powerful oligarchs during and after the New Order. This happened in spite of his support for Hercules, the once powerful East Timorese gang leader, because Prabowo “appeared most likely to deliver concrete material returns” (p. 174). Robust continuity from the former authoritarian regime was once again brought to the fore. However, Prabowo’s defeat by Joko Widodo, the symbol of Indonesia’s popularizing democracy, together with the precedent elimination of Hercules by the Police Department and national political elites, were signs that the populist political trend was to be further reinforced.

Overall, this book is an intriguing work that provides a comprehensive and detailed picture of a changing political landscape full of diverse actors ranging from state to non-state actors including violent entrepreneurs in post-New Order Jakarta. This study is especially insightful in that the author sees mass organizations’ appeal to political elites not in terms of their actual ability to mobilize people for voting or the grass-roots relations that they establish in local neighborhoods, but in terms of their sheer ability to bolster or demonstrate such an image. Only on this basis is it possible to understand why organizations like FBR can gain support from formal political actors

despite the fluidity of political allegiances from the members.

It is regrettable, however, that the book does not go beyond depicting the political relationship between formal actors and the leadership of mass organizations. The author's detailed investigations on neighborhood-level activities in two of the huge market districts (the case of Tanah Abang in Chapter 4 and that of Pasar Minggu in Chapter 6) are fundamentally about the economy of racketeering and turf politics pursued by violent entrepreneurs, whose activities often turn out to be inconsistent with, if not contradictory to, the will of local residents. His investigations do not clearly present a picture of neighborhood residents actively engaging in or making use of organizational activities for their own sake. Such a perspective is important if the current political trend were (as the author hopes) to "move beyond populist rhetoric," to tackle "the structural conditions reproducing poverty and social and political exclusion," and to "be transformed into more directly representative social movements of the street" (p. 174). Nevertheless, this does not reduce the significance of this study. By offering a careful examination of the changing dynamics of local politics concerning diverse actors ranging from politicians to violent entrepreneurs, Wilson successfully reveals how and why the mode of mass mobilization and political alliances became increasingly fluid and populist in Jakarta.

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