

Knowledge of the Child: the Governance of Relation and Person in Post-Trauma, Post-
SUHARTO Indonesia

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In Indonesia in July of last year, I sat with a group of NGO workers and volunteers at a workshop on helping children deal with trauma. The massive earthquake that had taken place on May 27th had its epicenter just south of Yogyakarta in central Java, the site of my ethnographic fieldwork since 1992. I had returned on this trip to continue a new project on childhood and expert systems on childhood emerging in Indonesia, an outgrowth of an earlier project on kinship. I was accompanied on this trip by my philosopher colleague, Christine Koggel, who was considering the concept of empowerment in use by local NGOs, and so the two of us also were spending time with SATUANAMA, a Yogyakarta-based NGO with which I had previous experience.

In the aftermath of the earthquake, calls for attention to needs of children had come fast and furiously. On this afternoon, NGO activists, artists, and community service workers had come to hear from an early childhood expert with experience in trauma healing for children. This collection of primarily young people represented some of the best spirit of the *Reformasi* era in Indonesia (*reformasi* or reform refers to the period of democratization after the end of Suharto's rule in 1998 and campaigns against corruption, collusion and nepotism associated with the regime). They worked long hours for little pay in mostly grassroots organizations, many of them devoted to the watchwords of the current era: democracy, transparency and accountability. The workshop speaker was identified as a child psychologist with expertise on trauma. She advocated a child-centred approach to trauma healing, a phrase that gained much currency in the days and weeks following the earthquake. This expert admonished those attending to value the perspective of the children themselves and to use play and art to identify their needs, rather than relying on the judgment of adults on their behalf. This view is in agreement with mainstream ideas about childhood, child behaviour, and early education in Euro-American contexts. Yet, this commonplace in North America was met on the part of one participant by the suggestion that children were not particularly affected emotionally by the earthquake. Rather, it was the adults who were struggling.

This disagreement identifies, I suggest, a particular moment to consider the possibility of the emergence of new ideas on the person, new systems of expert knowledge and knowledge practises, and new forms of governance and governmentality in Indonesia. This moment was further highlighted by the nature of the event itself: a voluntary workshop was set up by a local, private educational organization, led by an Indonesian expert in the field, and aimed at participants from local NGOs and aid groups. Some of these NGOs were entirely local; others would be completing contracts for multilateral and transnational aid organizations doing disaster relief.

I suggest that the call for trauma healing for children post-disaster marks not only a new and emerging concern with the child and early childhood in Java, and in Indonesia, but also a new site for the social management of Indonesian families. In the larger paper, I focus on the effects of the twin developments of a dramatic bifurcation in childhoods and the unfolding of new forms of governance beyond, below, and in conjunction with the state. For today, I see my role as the typical one for an anthropologist; I am the fly in the ointment. And so while I will gesture to these two emerging social changes, while considering what the Javanese case says to the idea of the person and power. And to a large extent, the Javanese case is the normative Indonesian case. **PP 1-5**

My previous work has been on the New Order state and its management of communities and social welfare through the national housewives organization, PKK (Support for the

Prosperous Family). PKK was part of a suite of programs used by the Suharto regime to modernize Indonesia, and its association with the national birth control campaign, KB and local neighbourhood administration exemplified a particular form of state intervention in families and localities. This approach to the state's management of local families was elaborated even in the model of the Indonesian nation-state as family, with Pak Suharto as its father, a form of top-down, state paternalism common in parts of Asia. **PP 6-8**

The post-earthquake workshop in which I took part, and the disagreement that took place within it, highlighted both continuity in and the changed conditions for family management and state practise in Indonesia in the era of *Reformasi*, post-Suharto. On the one hand, private organizations and local NGOs were intensively involved in disaster relief, illustrating the change to so-called civil society institutions in Indonesia after regional autonomy and government reform. This work supports the contention that under conditions of neoliberal international policy and a weakened state, the NGO sector has filled the gap in the delivery of social programs. On the other hand, disagreements over the proper perspective on dealing with children in traumatic contexts suggest new sites of intervention in the family, or rather, a re-visioning of child and family relations that may have significant effects not only for conceptions of the person but for social management, post-Suharto. I would like to consider some of the elements of each of these phenomena now.

PKK has been closely tied to the general administrative structure of government, from the highest national levels to the smallest local levels. At the lowest levels of administration in urban Java, unpaid, popularly selected local men serve as leaders. The neighbourhood section system in urban areas includes the RT and RW units, small clusters of adjacent households. The RT represents some 10 households, and the RW represents 6 of these clusters. Each of these units is typically headed by a popularly selected man, and the paid civil service begins immediately above this level. Formed as the mirror image of male-headed local administration, PKK sections are typically headed by the wives of the male leaders of these smallest units and by the wives of male civil servants above these most local-level units.

It is through the offices of PKK that the government of Indonesia has delivered low-cost and no-cost social welfare to communities. **PP 9** PKK ideology plays on notions of the good woman, particularly the *ibu* or mother, who stays at home to take care of her home and her community as a loyal helper to her husband and a loyal citizen of the state. The ideology of the developmentalist Indonesia state emphasized the family as the prime social unit, and this was understood to be a husband and wife and their children. The management of the family was understood to be by husband and wife, just as the management of communities and localities was to be accomplished through male civil service and female community work.

The contradictions in PKK are numerous. On the one hand, the activities of PKK that range from elder and infant care to management of social funds and the promulgation of official social programs required women's unpaid labour in the support of government modernization ideology and administrative needs. As a consequence, the programs of the New Order served to tie women to the domestic sphere officially and to relate women's value solely to that realm **PP 10**. On the other, in my own fieldwork, I found PKK being used for ends other than official ones. For example, women who worked outside the home, in offices for example, used the cooperative work of the PKK to accomplish important neighbourhood obligations, such as checking on the poor and sick or cooking Idul Fitri foods. In this way, this state-ordered program for domesticity actually allowed many women to work outside of the home.

When I returned to the field in 2004, after the end of Suharto's regime and the beginning

of the era of *Reformasi*, I expected to find that the programs of PKK and the neighbourhood section system had been abolished. It was with some surprise then that I found both PKK and the RT/RW system continuing to be used in the era of reform. In fact, in Presidential Decree Number 49, 2001, the basic form of RT/RW organization is reiterated. These very local units, whatever they are called, should be used to *menggerakkan swadaya gotong royong dan partisipasi masyarakat di wilayahnya*, to motivate the sense of mutual self-help and participation of the citizenry. Even more, the legislation suggests an end to LKMD or Village Community Resilience Board, because it is no longer appropriate to the spirit of regional autonomy. For this reason, it should return to an organization appropriate to the needs of the local-level of governance.

This change in the fortunes of the LKMD is fascinating, given Schulte-Nordholt's 1987 analysis that the LKMD structure had replaced the nationalist-era, grassroots organisations known as LSD or *Lembaga Sosial Desa* (Village Social Institution). What is interesting is the call for a return to its original intent as a vehicle for expressing local needs and requirements. Now, in the era of reform, the NGO sector in Indonesia is filled with LSM (*Lembaga Sosial Masyarakat* or People's Social Institution) understood to be aimed, at least in theory, towards grassroots, democratic responses to local needs. As another example, SATUNAMA collaborated with the Danish Embassy in using PKK in the reform era as a way to strengthen civil society in Indonesia. What we see here are instruments of social management, and rule, being defined at one point as grassroots and local and the next as forms of administration and national and then back again.

It was in the context of these changes that I began a new project on kinship in Java. What I found instead was a dramatic decrease in the size of the family and a new emphasis on early childhood along with an explosion of private educational opportunities available to the middle class. Recent scholarly attention to the character of the emerging class in Indonesia has described this class in terms of its consumption practises, raising the possibility that changing class composition is amplifying the effect of smaller families, or that these are mutually reinforcing trends.

I began to do research with my colleague, Nita KarianiPurwanti, on the emergence of new private, pre-school educational opportunities in Yogyakarta. This ongoing research is directed to the question of expert systems and their emergence in post-*Reformasi* Indonesia; that is to say, given regional autonomy and the general weakness of the Indonesian state in this era, are new systems of expertise developing, for instance, in the field of early childhood studies, to replace the highly rationalized and bureaucratic approach to education and social welfare under the New Order? And if so, are new conceptions of the child emerging as well? Although this research is just begun, there is some evidence that changes are occurring both in the management of childhood and in the definition of the child.

First, there appears to be a sudden increase in playgroups and kindergartens in the Yogya area aimed at the middle class. Although there have long been TK, *taman kanak-kanak* or early kindergarten schools, these new programs signal several changes. These programs include an emphasis both on early childhood as an important time for intervening in the child's future, and this is in contrast to the New Order's longstanding interest in BALITA, or children under 5, as a focus primarily of health. Early childhood is being identified as a time when creativity and success can be begun. Often these programs emphasize the importance of creativity, the arts, and expressive forms of play. **PP 11-17** Again, this is in some contrast to the New Order's standardized approach to education measured through testing. A range of programs are being

advertised, including those directed toward Muslim families and one devoted to nature. **PP18-19** In many ways, we see here the evidence of a middle class concern with achievement through purchasing the right kind of education for their children.

Educational legislation is one of the most significant policy domains for children, and in the case of post-Suharto Indonesia, changes in policy reveal some of the synergy between international and multilateral approaches to the child and childhood and political reform in Indonesia. In this era of transparency and accountability matched in unholy alliance with a lack of funding and a weak central authority, 2003 legislation on education in Indonesia reflects important shifts. The national curriculum is being redefined, and authority for it is being devolved to the provincial level. For the first time, explicit attention has been paid to the needs of *anak usia dini* or the young child, meaning here the young child who has not yet entered formal schooling. This legislation also considered for the first time education in non-formal settings.

Although playgroups emerged in urban Indonesia as early as 1963, and a focus on child development appeared in 1989 legislation, the government's attention to *anak usia dini*, or the young child, was only formalized in 2001 when the Directorate of Early Childhood Education (PAUD) was established. This Directorate was founded to provide an integrated approach to early childhood care and education outside of formal contexts.

In 2002, this new Directorate PAUD produced a Reference Book for Early Childhood Education. PAUD has subsequently become part of the lexicon of a developing expert system devoted to early childhood, and it is a model that is currently being widely extended in Java and other parts of Indonesia. These changes in the administration of early childhood education were happening at the same time that work was being done to produce a UNESCO report on early childhood in Indonesia as well as the 1999-2004 research project on early childhood jointly sponsored by the World Bank. Indeed, early childhood programs seem to be receiving increased attention across multilateral settings since the late 1990s.

A snapshot of this emerging expert system or sets of systems is captured in APIASIA, the Indonesian Association for Early Childhood Educators established in 2004. **PP 20-21** Its organizational chart includes a member of the Department of National Education's Direktorat for PAUD, the heads of several private early childhood programs in Jakarta as well as the Director of the Early Childhood Care and Development-Resource Centre in Yogyakarta, a centre whose web resources include significant attention to the PAUD approach.

Quite literally there has been an explosion of attention to the issues of early childhood with a related explosion in systems of expertise on this issue in Indonesia. These expert systems reference the changing goals, interests and projects of multilateral aid agencies like the UN and the World Bank, but also the twin developments in Indonesia of a decreased national role and burgeoning private sector network of resources and expert knowledge. Many of the projects and reports also identify the hybridity of approaches, at once both governmental and non-governmental. Let me show you some evidence of this unfolding system and its global reach. **PP 22-24**

One of the elements of last summer's rush to heal the traumatized child was the rising interest in the rights of the child. This interest is not just limited to Indonesia; it is a global phenomenon and not a recent one. The Geneva Declaration on the Rights of the Child was made in 1924, and UNICEF was formed in 1946. The UN Declaration on the Rights of the Child was made in 1959, followed by the Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1989, and the World Summit on Children to 1990. It was during the 2002 UN Special Session on Children that, for

the first time, the General Assembly allowed children to serve in delegations as the UN considered the situation of children. In fact, UN documents show an increasing attention to and individuation of the child as actor and agent in their own right. For example, the 1959 Declaration of Rights includes statements such as: “mankind owes to the child the best it has to give,” and “the child shall enjoy special protection.” The language of the Declaration points to the importance of relationship and protection for the child and to the responsibility for children of parents, “men and women as individuals,” voluntary organizations, local authorities, and national governments. In other words, the sets of relationships within which we find children are key to understanding the child’s rights. In some contrast, the 2002 Special Session on the child highlights the child as actor in his or her own right, including discussions by 350 child delegates, and the presentation of a statement by child representatives chosen by their peers.

This growing attention to child-centred approaches is evident in the scholarly literature where there are increasing calls to include children as ‘informed participants in governance,’ to use a ‘child-centred approach to research,’ to see children as ‘social actors,’ and to try and see the world ‘through the eyes of children.’ The growing web of conventions, declarations, amendments and elaborations in human rights discourse on the child is based in part on the growing recognition of the prevalence of child labour, child soldiers, and child sex workers (each of these an indicator of increasing poverty and instability in the world with particular effects for children). The mapping of international initiatives, goals, reports, and statements concerning children is a project just underway in my research, but already it is clear that the child has become a significant focus of international and multilateral aid and intervention. In the wake of the earthquake in Java, this proliferation of global governmentality aimed at the child has become localized in programs that are simultaneously, national and local, governmental and non-governmental, and non-profit and private. It seems we are witnessing a particular moment of social, political, and international concern about the rights of children that has combined synergistically with an equally portentous time in the history of Indonesia.

Rather than challenging progressive discourses aimed at the protection of children, anthropologists ask instead what does this new emphasis and concern tell us about social process? Maila Stivens’s concludes that this new attention to the child and childhood may be an indication of a moral panic in the face of new forms of globalisation and rapid, disorienting, in many cases disappointing, change. Under such conditions, what is the most potent symbol of group continuity and identity? The child. It is not surprising then that the definition of the child and childhood is an emerging terrain for contestation over these issues. Yet, the question remains what kind of a person is this child as actor, agent, and problem solver, and what is the congruence of this characterization with everyday lives of children in particular localities?

Philosophers and legal scholars are typically those who consider the nature of personhood, but in recent years, this has become an abiding concern for anthropologists as well. As Scheper-Hughes and Sargent note, “childhood . . . involves cultural notions of personhood, morality, and social order and disorder” (1998:1-2). Like the other facets of research considered here, the person is deeply implicated in definitions of relationships and how we understand them. My question, at one level then, is whether the notion of child as individual is a useful one for Java or Indonesia. Does the child outside of family and community make local sense?

The model of pregnancy and parturition is useful here, along with the new kinship studies in anthropology that question what constitutes a relative, who owns the body, and the connection to local ideas of shared substance. Is it separability and discreteness, legally, socially, bodily, that defines the person, or is it dependence and mutual constitution? Sharon Bessell contrasts

citizenship-as-status with citizenship-as-practise to question the relevance of rights-bearing as a definition of citizen, and thus in some ways, of person. And yet, ethnographic work suggests that cultural and local notions of the person carry more meanings than rights alone.

Ethnographic work in Southeast Asia gives us some clues as to local conceptions of the person. These include attention to a Malay understanding of the individual character of destiny, captured in the phrase *rezeki* or *rajaki*, as noted by Anna Tsing for highland Kalimantan and by Li for Singapore and Malaysia. “[T]he formation and birth of the child highlights the individual nature of *rajaki*. . .[as] the child in the womb creates its own subjective needs, desires, and life course in an individual confrontation with God. The individuation of the child follows from the need to follow individual destiny: “it is the practice of living and finding one’s *rajaki* that differentiates individuals” (Li 1998:680).

Even so, others have emphasized the accomplishments entailed in conceptions of the adult and personhood. Ferzacca, for example, notes the Javanese folklore that identifies the completeness of the man in his attainment of several things including a wife, a horse, a bird, a kris, and so on. Similarly, a parsing of Javanese words associated with marriage and the house suggests the achievement of adulthood, and presumably differentiation, follows upon fluency in registers of Javanese language (*durung jawa*, not yet fluent, not yet a social adult), marriage, and the building or inhabiting of a house (for example, in the lower register of Javanese, *omah* means house and *diomah’ake* means to be married). In all of these associations, we see possible elements of a Javanese definition of the person that hinges not just on individual destiny but also on individual accomplishment as well as relations of flow and exchange between people.

This idea of personhood associated with accomplishment dovetails with Javanese notions of power that have been much discussed by scholars of Javanese culture. I offer the outlines of this argument here to shed some light on the possible limitations to a generalized concept of empowerment.

Benedict Anderson famously offered the idea of potency as opposed to power for Java, an analysis used by many subsequent scholars. It is an idea of power that emphasizes a *man*’s ability to concentrate inner, spiritual strength through a variety of practices, many of them related to asceticism and denial of physical needs. This notion of potency is exemplified in classic notions of Hindu-Buddhist kingdoms, for example. The ruler is understood to have tremendous spiritual potency, and this concentration of power is what draws his supporters to him. Rather than actively seeking followers and loyalty, this model emphasizes the attraction of potency and the still center of power, also foundational to the noble character (*budi luhur*) still highly prized in Java, at least for men. The names of many sultans of Java hinge on this idea of being at the center, the nail of the universe, for example.

What is interesting here is the contrast with female power in Java. Women are understood to be effective and instrumental. They are widely acknowledged as the managers of the household, the most successful traders, and the guiding force behind the organization of family and community life. The great contradiction for a Western model of power is that the material success and effectiveness demonstrated by women is denigrated. Indeed, women’s mobility, their very instrumental effectiveness, only serves to lower their status. That is to say, the power that is valued is a power that is largely immobile and indirect, and the power to act in the world in a direct way is accorded much less value. While these are classical ideas, they remain salient in surprisingly durable ways. In terms of the issue at hand, the congruence of these ideas with empowerment is far from clear.

In all of this the status of the child is unclear, and a social history of the category of the

child for Java, and Indonesia, has not yet been written. Douglas and Nety (1998) consider the issue of understanding people as isolated from other social units and relations, that is, the person as a stand-alone category, as part of a more general critique of the naturalization of Western categories not only of the person, but of rationality and economy. This work also speaks to questions of sovereignty, not only of the individual but of the nation-state. That is, the body of the individual and the body of the nation often exhibit isomorphic properties. As a consequence, there is reason to consider notions of the person simultaneously with notions of rule. In an era when the human rights discourse coming from multilateral agencies such as the UN highlights the rights of the individual over other social units, the congruence and reconciliation of these ideas with the management by non-state actors may be significant. That is, multilateral aid that is targeted to the individual child outside of family and community seems to parallel aid that jumps over the national government and is delivered directly to localities.

The proliferation of non-governmental actors in Indonesia is not a new phenomenon, but the perfect storm of earthquake and international relief illustrated not only the density of NGOs on the ground, but the rapid proliferation of non-governmental connections, both top to bottom but also laterally, geographically and organizationally. It is worthwhile to remember that the tsunami two years ago may have been the first such case of relief and its effects on governmentality. Yet, the coalescence of the forces I am tracing here has been in-the-making for some time, indexing as it does class formation as well as changing conditions of rule in a neoliberal global order. To begin my summary here, I would like to consider two things that I saw happen during this brief time last summer.

The first speaks to the changes in governance of locality post-*Reformasi*. My colleague and I accompanied SATUNAMA staff as they completed a short-term Oxfam contract to count tents they had donated to people in the affected areas. It is relevant here that SATUNAMA did not distribute the tents, but was contracted as a check on whether tents were delivered successfully. This work was an example of the variety of inter-organization connections between local NGOs and other agencies, relations that were multiple and sometimes conflicting. We spent the day driving throughout the Bantul area and beyond contacting several *Kepala Desa* or village heads to discover if they had received tents. Tellingly, the KaDes contacted typically reported not being aware of how many tents were delivered, although in some cases, they were aware that tents had been delivered. What the young workers of SATUNAMA discovered was that the tents had been delivered straight to the people, jumping across the government's administrative structure. As the day of accounting continued, it also became clear that there was some relief fatigue and weariness with the business of keeping track of relief.

In a situation of relief inflation in which too much aid was chasing too few easy victims, a local critique developed among citizen and aid worker alike that aid was being delivered only to those along the roadside. Part of this confusion and mismanagement was the result of ignoring longstanding forms of administration at the local level. As suggested above, New Order forms of governmentality such as PKK were designed to work at the most local level. In the era of *Reformasi*, when the national government has been decentralized and regional autonomy measures begun, the roles of these local units is not always clear.

What was evident in the counting of Oxfam tents was the work of the NGOs, in this case that of SATUNAMA, working in a landscape made chaotic not just by the effects of the earthquake, but also by the remnants of New Order administrative structure and the endurance of forms of local governance that may be driven by community needs and a kind of local habitus as much as by any new kind of civil society filled with LSMs and global aid and relief agencies.

This network of structures, governmental and non-governmental, local, regional, national, and supranational, was thrown into relief in a different way when it came time to heal traumatized children.

In post-earthquake Yogya, an emerging topic of concern was how to deal with the traumas faced by children. In an era of shrinking families but rising (if slowly) incomes, the needs of children have emerged as a focus of attention in Indonesia. This attention is marked by class concerns that reflect as well an international focus on the child, not as member of family, but as actor and agent in their own right. While New Order programs were aimed at women in families within communities, the new attention to the child appears to be about the child outside of family, the child outside of community. The fit of this image with Javanese notions of the person, or of the family for that matter, is far from clear. More troubling is the evidence from the interviews with NGO activists that the attention to trauma healing was driven as much by the contracts and the goals of multilateral aid agencies as it was by local desires. That is, despite NGO sector concern with sustainability, a variety of short-term trauma healing projects bloomed only to disappear very quickly, although this was not always the case.

This concern for the child as victim just so happens to coincide with a shift in governance practises that likewise are far from straightforward, shifts made abundantly clear in the wake of the disaster. These connections are summed up nicely in Ferguson's description of the possibility of a new, transnational apparatus of governmentality. As Ferguson says, this does not replace the older system of nation-states "(which is – let us be clear – far from about to disappear), but overlays and coexists with it. In this optic, it might make sense to think of the new organizations that have sprung up in recent years not as challengers pressing up against the state from below but as horizontal contemporaries of the organs of the state – sometimes rivals, sometimes servants, sometimes watchdogs, sometimes parasites, but in every case operative on the same level and in the same global space' (103). This analysis resonates with the description of transnational governance as networked and lateral, rather than an older model of state above and people below. The question that some are asking is whether this in fact represents democracy and accountability in the terms represented. In the case examined here, older forms of accountability to Suharto's New Order are being jumped over in a rush to empower the grassroots, and some aspects of this accountability are elided. The question becomes: at what level is this transnational network held accountable by local Javanese and Indonesians? Indeed, what is their power to make claims against it?