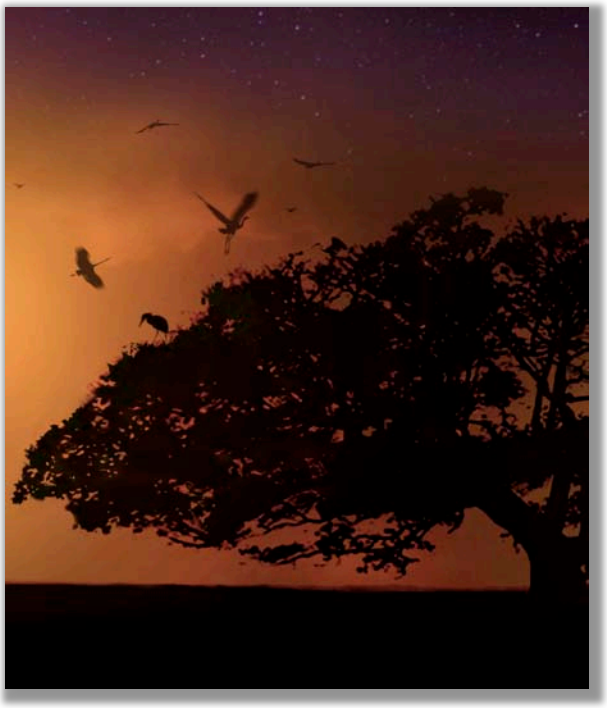
40 Years of Silence: An Indonesian Tragedy

Film Guide



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40 Years of Silence is Now Available Through:

A VISUAL ANTHROPOLOGY OF THE EFFECTS OF TRAUMA: RESEARCH METHODS

The four case studies presented in the film are drawn from ongoing clinical visual ethnographic research on culture and mental illness in Indonesia conducted by Robert Lemelson over the ten-year period, from 1997-2007. Dr. Lemelson is a psychological anthropologist at UCLA's Semel Institute of Neuroscience who studies the relationship between culture and mental illness. His most recent research address the long-term psychosocial outcomes of families who survived the executions, disappearances, and political imprisonments following Suharto's rise to power and his "New Order" regime in Indonesia.

As a clinically trained ethnographer, Robert Lemelson asked specific questions, modeled on diagnostic interviews, that were designed to uncover core symptoms of trauma-related disorders. This form of ethnographic interviewing is similar in some respects to the process of psychotherapy, including exposure therapy, which requires that patients narrate their distress repeatedly. It is reported that narrating their experience in such a manner can often bring patients significant relief. In many instances Dr. Lemelson worked with a research team, which included Indonesian psychiatrists, psychologists, and counselors who knew the subjects well. Interviews were conducted in Bahasa Indonesia and participants' native dialects, such as Balinese and Javanese. All

participants gave informed consent for their participation in the study. Consent for filming was also obtained at the time of the interviews. Participants had the chance to view and react to working versions of the film.

It is important to note here that presenting clinical or ethnographic vignettes tends to obscure the way in which stories of trauma evolve over time. All of the stories in the film are condensed from many hours of conversation; to get a sense of how many, over 300 hours of interviews were recorded with over 10,000 pages of translated transcripts, and 400 hours of footage was edited down into this 86-minute film. Some parts of each person's story were offered spontaneously whereas others emerged only gradually, as trust was established and individuals rethought their experience or were confronted with alternative versions of events provided by others. Similarly, while some symptoms were volunteered by interviewees, and thought of as directly connected to the trauma they had experienced, others were elicited only when explicitly asked about and not consciously associated with traumatic events by the interviewees.

What each interviewee chose to focus on and disclose in the interview setting varied markedly, as did the ways they narrated their experience to others in everyday life. These varying stories reflect processes of psychological coping or adaptation—creating order, coherence, and value from chaos, meaninglessness, and suffering—but they are also acts of social positioning, locating the person in a specific role, status, or stance vis-à-vis the interviewer and others not present.

PTSD

Adapted from Trauma in Context: Integrating Biological, Clinical, and Cultural Perspectives, by Robert Lemelson, Laurence J. Kirmayer, and Mark Barad

Each of the characters in *40 Years of Silence* describe similar struggles in the wake of similarly terrifying experiences. Lanny, Budi, Kereta, and Degung all suffered from persistent nightmares, avoidance of stimuli associated with their trauma, detachment from others, and problems with anger control and irritability. These symptoms fit the commonly accepted features of Post-traumatic Stress Disorder, or PTSD.

PTSD is an anxiety disorder that can occur after a traumatic or life-threatening event. These events can include combat or military exposure, child sexual or physical abuse, terrorist attacks, serious accidents, and natural disasters. The symptoms of PTSD can be very disruptive of the subject's ability to perform basic functions of daily life. Besides the symptoms suffered by the characters in the film, other frequent symptoms of PTSD are re-experiencing events, also known as flashbacks; hyperarousal, which can include feeling jittery or keyed up; and insomnia, depression, or numbness.

By linking these characteristic symptoms to specific causal events, the PTSD diagnosis legitimates them as expressions of a universal, and in many ways normal and evolutionarily adaptive response to trauma with roots in the systems that allow humans, like other animals, to learn to avoid dangerous situations in their environments. Danger occurs frequently and

yet often unexpectedly, and the animals that survive best are the ones who best convert the unexpected into the anticipated—that is, the ones that learn to fear. However, animals that are too fearful cannot forage, mate, or raise offspring. People who are too fearful cannot think clearly to distinguish what is truly dangerous from what is safe, and to extinguish fear of safe situations. The biology of fear suggests that fear and security exist in balance and that PTSD may be due to either an excess of fear or to a failure of the mechanisms of learned safety.

In some cases, symptoms of PTSD may not emerge for a long period following exposure to traumatic events. In most cases such as these, individuals who suffer from PTSD also had an acute stress disorder—that is, they suffered symptoms during and directly after the event. Indeed, the intensity of response in the acute period, and the presence of dissociative symptoms in particular, may predict the likelihood of later symptoms of PTSD.

PTSD has gained currency in popular and psychological discourses in recent years, and it is important to acknowledge that it is both historically situated and in conversation with cultural conceptions of trauma. Popular and professional understandings of psychiatric disorders are in constant circulation and contestation, and influence each other. Furthermore, psychiatric categories become part of folk knowledge and practice but may be understood and applied in ways that are different from their original technical use.

The predicament of Vietnam veterans has been central to the development of notions of PTSD and trauma-related pathology, and present clinical trauma studies in the United States continue to be influenced by the particularities of this veteran population but are also shaped by the dominant modes of interpersonal violence in America: domestic violence, child abuse, and criminal acts. However, on a global basis the dominant forms of violence causing trauma may be different in nature: these may include interreligious or interethnic conflict, state-endorsed forms of terror, and the structural violence that besets poor communities everywhere. Recent research, to which this film contributes, also suggests that although the neurobiological processes underlying an acute posttraumatic stress response have universal components, their temporal configuration and interaction is powerfully shaped by developmental, social, and cultural contexts.

Does this mean that psychiatric constructs like PTSD have limited explanatory or heuristic values for non-Westerners? This is a crucial question, given the debilitating symptoms found in culturally diverse refugee populations and the fact that many forms of violence are most prevalent in parts of the world where people do not share Western assumptions about the appropriate ways to respond to suffering and adversity. A conservative response would insist that the question is still open: the salience and usefulness of PTSD in diverse social and cultural contexts is an empirical question that can be resolved only by research in the particular contexts in which it is

For more information about PTSD, trauma, and genocide, see the film's website at

www.40yearsofsilence.com

G-30-S

Gerakan 30 September, or the September 30 Movement, was the initial name given by General Suharto to the unknown group of people responsible for the murder of six high-ranking generals and their disposal in a well in Lubang Buaya just outside Jakarta on the night of September 30, 1965. Over time the September 30 Movement, and its abbreviation G-30-S, has come to reference this event, its alleged perpetrators, and the complex of violence that occurred throughout the country in the aftermath of the murders.

While the reasons for, and perpetrators of, these deaths remains contested to this day, the violence was framed as part of an coup d'etat attempted by communists and those affiliated with them. Part of the response to this purported communist-backed coup attempt was a military bloodbath that swept across Bali and other areas of Indonesia. Between 80,000 and 100,000 Balinese, or approximately 5–8 percent of the population, were killed between December 1965 and March 1966. Estimates for the number of people killed nationwide are somewhere between 500,000 and 1 million. Thousands more were imprisoned and subjected to torture, forced labor, and other harsh conditions. Some prisoners were held for as long as a decade. The primary victims of this violence were alleged PKI-members, members of an affiliated women's group called Gerwani, and those accused of being sympathetic to the communist cause. The perpetrators of the violence included military and paramilitary forces, those neighbors and family members who voluntarily informed on or attacked other villagers, and those who were forced into violent acts through threats of death or further brutality.

It must be stated here that up until that time, the communist party was an entirely legal political organization, in fact one of the largest parties in the nation. Yet, the events of 1965 had reverberations for decades as the New Order regime of former president Suharto (1966–98) led a campaign to officially frame these events in a certain way and to stigmatize, ostracize, and blacklist those who were perceived as supporting the communists. This included not only former PKI members, but also their extended families. A ''clean environment'' policy (*lingkungan bersih*) legally banned family members of the PKI from the civil service and the media and from participation in civil society organizations, such as NGOs. Family members also had limited access to other civil rights, such as the ''good behavior letter'' necessary to obtain a passport, a university scholarship, or permission to move from one district to another. Until Suharto's fall in 1998, any public discussion of the events of 1965 that was at variance with the official government version was forbidden, and those who engaged in it were jailed or ''disappeared.''

40 Years of Silence addresses the long-term and intergenerational impacts of the traumas of G-30-S and its extended aftermath. In the following articles, the shorthand references "the events of 1965" suggest the acute traumas of this historical event.

To learn more about G-30-S from various perspectives, look at the materials listed in the **"Selected Bibliography"** section of this film guide.

TRAUMA IN CULTURAL CONTEXT

Adapted from Trauma in Context: Integrating Biological, Clinical, and Cultural Perspectives, by Robert Lemelson, Laurence J. Kirmayer, and Mark Barad

In considering the diverse perspectives from which to view trauma and its impacts, it is useful to consider how biological, clinical, and cultural approaches might work together to deepen our understanding of individual and collective responses to traumatic experiences.

In the film, all four characters suffered trauma during the political upheaval in Indonesia in 1965. All experienced intense fear or terror witnessing family members being severely beaten, taken away, or killed. All have lived in a political climate, from 1965 through the late 1990's, in which their status as relatives of alleged communist party members made them continued targets for harassment, intimidation, violence, and discrimination. However despite these similarities, the long-term outcomes they and their families have experienced are vastly different. These divergent trajectories illustrate the complex interaction of sociocultural, psychological, and neurobiological processes that give rise to individuals' strengths and resiliencies.

The following articles in the study guide will address the particulars of each of the characters' stories in greater depth. The will also further detail each individual's markedly different background and resources, which represent some of the diverse ethnic, cultural, and religious strands within the rich tapestry of Indonesian society and which contribute to equally diverse experiences of trauma.

Budi's case is compelling in the way it highlights the interactions between developmental changes, clinical symptoms, and familial and sociopolitical contexts. Kereta's case emphasizes the cultural specificity of trauma response and the potential for even disturbing symptoms of illness to act as a form of social and political resistance. Degung's case further situates this resistance within a context of activism and international networks of intervention. Finally, Lanny's case provides an example of how spiritual practice can provide a framework for healing and transformation.

Understanding their stories requires we understand how they are embedded in—and emerge from—multiple contexts: biological processes of learning and memory; embodied experiences of injury, pain, and fear; the narrative trajectories of personal biography; the knowledges and practices of cultural and social systems; and the power and positioning of political struggles enacted on individual, family, community, and national levels.

For some clinicians, a crucial aspect of these stories is captured by the previously discussed diagnostic construct of PTSD. Such a diagnosis is helpful in that it may lead to specific guidelines for the prognosis and treatment of illness. But it can be argued that in its very nature psychiatric diagnosis decontextualizes or essentializes human problems, assuming that disorders can be generalized or treated similarly across diverse cultures or situations. Also, the focus on personal pathology lacks a developed conceptual vocabulary for relational, social, communal, or cultural problems and de-emphasizes how trauma effects—and is affected by—families, kinship networks, and communities. *40 Years of Silence* encourages the viewer to think about some of these key issues of traumatic experience in the context of 1965.

<u>The Temporal Landscape of Trauma</u>

One salient critique of the post-traumatic stress disorder construct questions the appropriate-ness of the prefix "post." For example,

situations where traumatic exposure appears to be ongoing rather than the result of a discrete event can be found in conflict-ridden parts of the world where the conditions responsible for the original trauma continue to exist.

40 Years of Silence illustrates components of persisting and recurring trauma in Indonesia after the events of 1965, such as the triggers of state-orchestrated national memorials; public viewings of state-authorized versions of collective history that conveyed a sense of menace for those associated in any way with the banned PKI; and the campaigns against ex-PKI members carried out at village and regency levels which reactivated fears acquired during the period of active political violence.

This overt lingering political threat is compounded by ongoing forced daily interaction with perpetrators of violence. Because of the historical context of G-30-S in central Java and Bali, the perpetrators were often members of the community. When the violence ended and the normalization campaign was begun by the central government, many individuals continued living their lives in the shadows of neighbors who had committed the atrocities. Being compelled to behave in a polite and deferential manner to those who have tormented one's family is a common fact of life in village Indonesia.

Perhaps an even more pervasive and lingering trauma for many victims of 1965 is the sense of being betrayed by one's own dearest friends or most beloved family members, as in the case of those villagers who informed on suspected PKI members and supporters.

In such instances, the fabric of the most basic trust has been torn and therefore any intimate relationship can become the grounds for re-experiencing trauma.

Thus, social and political circumstances determine the temporality of trauma and may not allow the "post" of PTSD to emerge. Instead, there is layer upon layer of acute response to constantly changing threats—which may be real or imagined with equal effects. Throughout, the meaning of trauma depends on its personal, social, cultural, and political context and interpretation.

The Cultural Politics of Memory

Ongoing exposure to trauma including conditions of political intimidation, social necessity, and the destruction of intimacy and trust, may alone create an understandable condition of silence surrounding traumatic events; yet these compelling factors may be further compounded by cultural models of grief and suffering.

For example, the complexity of remembering and forgetting in the Indonesian context is further deepened by prevalent cultural ideas about the harmful effects of expressing negative emotions or dwelling on painful events. Javanese and Balinese cultures value interpersonal harmony and therefore call for the management and regulation of strong or negative emotions. So while ignoring the

political injunction for silence challenges the social order and invites repression, ignoring the cultural norms for containment challenges the cosmological order and so risks exposing the community to natural disasters and other catastrophic retribution.

Such cultural models provide their own locally coherent ways to orient, explain, and give meaning to traumatic events and their consequences. For example, in the Indonesian context where voicing complaint may not be appropriate, there are ways that silence can become a powerful form of witness. Such is the case in the Balinese condition of *ngeb*, which will be discussed in the film guide sections on Pak Kereta.

Additionally, spiritual models and discourses may highlight the power of survival. Survivorship may afford an achieved status that has its own value and in the eyes of the survivor even transcend the politics of trauma. Bu Lanny even goes so far as to say that she is "lucky" for having survived trauma, as it opened her eyes to fundamental truths of existence and led her towards the path of *vipassana* Buddhism.

Conclusion

The film and following articles in the study guide clearly show that what is at stake for individuals who have suffered trauma is usually much broader than any discrete psychiatric disorder, encompassing social and political dimensions that articulate with individual experience in complex ways. Although the suffering and impairment caused by trauma may be the primary focus for some individuals, in other cases the social, moral, and political dimensions of trauma are paramount, and the crucial questions center on how to make sense of violence and loss and how to rebuild one's life and one's community in the face of stigmatization, discrimination, or genocide.

Stories of trauma can be constructed for different purposes, whether these be to guide scientific research or to enable people to live together despite the injuries of the past. There may be no one story that gets it right from biological, clinical, cultural, and political perspectives. We must judge each story in terms of the audience to which it is addressed and the goals it aims to achieve. And yet, stories created for one purpose and told in one context go out into the world to be taken up and used for other ends. We cannot ignore these wider implications of the stories we tell about trauma.

BUDI: ANAK PKI

Adapted from Anak PKI: A longitudinal case study of social ostracism, violence and bullying on an adolescent Javanese Boy, by Robert Lemelson, Ninik Supartini, and Emily Ng

What is a "healthy" psychological response to long-term social ostracism and discriminatory violence, enacted not by the state apparatus but by the agency of local community members? How should notions of revenge and retribution be viewed in this context? How does the cultural setting in which neurobiological and developmental changes occur shape or impact these processes? These

are some of the questions raised by Budi, the central Javanese boy who over the course of *40 Years of Silence* transitions from childhood to early adulthood and in doing so develops resources for coping with his personal experiences of injustice.

Meeting Mas Budi

Budi was initially referred to Dr. Mahar Agusno, a Javanese psychiatrist and Dr. Lemelson's colleague, by the staff of the orphanage where his parents had placed him to remove him from an environment of community and family violence. At twelve, he was a slight boy with a lost expression.

Budi:
I came to this home because I had… rather complicated problem… My family was unjustly maltreated, slandered, terrorized (*keluarga saya dianiaya, difitnah gitu, diteror*). It was like that.

For example, at age nine he witnessed his 17-year-old brother Kris being attacked by his fellow villagers, stoned, beaten, stripped, and forced to walk naked on his hands. Budi himself was targeted by the youths but managed to escape and ran to get help.

Budi:
When he was tortured he screamed, cried, you know. Er… he called my name. I wanted to run, wanted to run and help him. I was dragged by the kids, and they wanted to hit me. Then I cried. "Why… why did you guys beat my brother? Suddenly I was slapped by a [military] officer. "You little child, you know nothing but you dare [to argue] with your elders," he said. Then I cried. I went home crying.

This incident was only one of many violent experiences Budi's family suffered at the hands of fellow villagers. He said that he was regularly mocked by other youth in the community, since he was as young as seven.

Budi:
They would say, "Look, the thief's brother is walking by." Then another person would say, "Hey, the son of an ex-PKI…the son of an ex-PKI is passing by. Step back, step back, step back."

Repetitive memories of such scenes led to much grief for Budi, accompanied by feelings of worthlessness. Memories and thoughts about these events were often associated with physical discomfort for the teen.

Budi:
I feel my body temperature increase. It becomes hot. There is a stabbing pain in my chest as if it were pricked with needles. Then I feel short-winded. Then my heart beats quickly, and after that I feel tense…and I want to punch whoever is around me. And suddenly I pass out, I faint.

He added that when he remembered the unrecognizable appearance of his brother's face after one particularly severe beating, he experienced debilitating stomach cramps.

His teachers noted that Budi would fall asleep at his desk. The nuns at the orphanage reported that he often awoke in the middle of the night calling out his brother's name, sometimes wracked by physical paroxysms that frightened them and led them to bring him to the local hospital's emergency room. They had also on several occasions intercepted him standing on the edge of a nearby well, as he wrestled with his frequent suicidal thoughts. Based on all this information, Dr. Mahar diagnosed Budi with posttraumatic stress disorder, depression with psychotic features, and conversion disorder. He prescribed both pharmacotherapy and counseling.

While Budi was certainly facing many personal

troubles, later interviews revealed the layers of violence and hardship that were impacting Budi's daily life before he entered the orphanage. To more fully understand Budi's suffering and why Budi's family had been scapegoated and tortured, one needs to further unravel their family's history and the broader historical and political contexts in which it has been situated.

Political and Social Stigmatization and its Effect on Family Life

Budi's father Mudakir grew up a trouble-maker in a poor village outside of Yogyakarta. He worked as a coffee salesman, fell in love with a woman from his village, and hoped to marry her. Unfortunately, the son of the village headman also desired her, and in the chaos of 1965 reported to the authorities that Pak Mudakir was a PKI activist. While Pak Mudakir denied this, he was arrested and sent to a series of prisons where conditions were unbearable.

Mudakir:
Nusakambangan was… the cage of lions, that's what people say… for those who were in critical condition, when they came out for morning briefing they would be hit when they got there late… and not infrequently they would die…For me, my life was full of suffering, full of strokes of the whip and beatings till my head got multiple fractures… they treated us like animals.

Pak Mudakir was not released until 14 years later, in 1979. His readjustment was rife with more hardship; his ex-prisoner status meant that many jobs were not open to him, his activities and movements were restricted by the government, and his potential of finding a spouse was limited. Furthermore, he was broken-hearted to discover his previous love interest had married the village headman's son. He found that he now more frequently lost control of his temper and flew into violent rages, a development he attributed to the harsh physical maltreatment he had received in prison.

Eventually, Mudakir was introduced to Budi's mother, Bu Sumini, through a family member's matchmaking, and Bu Sumini's mother pressured her into accepting the marriage. The start of married life was terrible for Bu Sumini. Her own father had been accused of being PKI, and she did not know that Pak Mudakir was in a similar situation until he was forced to attend a "rehabilitation" program sponsored by the New Order. Mudakir was frequently violent towards her and her young sons, and his parents treated her poorly. The family was continuously subjected to harassment, intimidation, and discrimination from the local community due to Mudakir's political status and Sumini was often sexually harassed by village men when her husband was away at work. Her attempts to report these incidents to local leaders were met by threats of sending her husband back to jail if she did "anything stupid." Similarly, her attempts to report the officers who tortured Kris were met with threats of publicizing the case in the newspaper, which would endanger the entire family. Thus they moved to Yogyakarta for safety and in 2002 were told that villagers had destroyed their house.

Trauma, Revenge, and Justice in a Longitudinal Perspective

Up until the present, the theme of revenge has been prominent in Budi's everyday preoccupations, constituting a salient narrative arc that links his past, present, and future.

Mahar:
How do you see your future, Mas Budi?

Budi:
I think my future is complicated. I think it is disappearing from my sight… Because after I got the problems I do not know who I am anymore… I now want to do evil things. For example, I want to assassinate, to torture them the way they did to my family members… Then another thought has emerged. If I want to fight them, then I have to have a bottle and chemical substance, gasoline, and a match. What I wanted to do was blow up their houses so that they experience the grief and pain that my family members and I have been suffering from.

Caring adults surrounding Budi have tried to continuously deter such vengeful thoughts, however it is understandable how from his perspective violence might seem a feasible and fulfilling response. Since 2002 he has been studying how to make bombs and various poisons, and this new knowledge seems to give him a sense of mastery and identity; he proudly shares the nickname an old school principal gave him, "the insane professor."

One cannot fully understand Budi's interest in violent revenge without addressing one of his key motivations: justice. Fortunately, as he ages he is finding newer and more socially acceptable ways of seeking this justice, particularly through the practice and ethos of martial arts. At first, Budi was drawn to the Japanese martial art Ninjutsu he was introduced to through Manga and the movies. Then in 2006 he began training in *pencak silat*, or Javanese martial arts. The combination of breathing exercises, meditation, and free fight has created a bodily, spiritual, and psychological outlet for coping with his emotions. Budi says that through marital arts his emotions can be channeled. This affords him a more nuanced and multifaceted understanding of the relationship between retribution and coping, and of interpersonal relationships themselves; he has even developed a friendship with a girl who he says is the first peer who truly understands him.

Budi's yearnings for empowerment, revenge, and justice are slowly being channeled into visions of a more positive future. In more recent years, he has named peace and safety as the ultimate purpose of life, and characterized himself as a potential agent of justice.

Budi:
I sincerely want to help people. I will see what kinds of problems they have, and if the problems are like mine, then I will use my own experiences to help them without any other reservation.

Overall, by early 2007 Budi seemed to feel increasingly stable, confident, and in control. While cognitive and moral transitions

accompanying his development were likely one source of these shifts, changes in sociopolitical circumstances also play a crucial role. Many of the events that initially traumatized Budi and his family occurred during a period of unrest following the Asian economic crisis, when there was an upsurge of local violence across numerous ethnic and religious divides and ex-PKI members became convenient scapegoats. By the time of later interviews, this turmoil had eased slightly. Thus, Budi's sense of growing empowerment cannot be separated from the systematic changes that provided new structures of support, including legal recourse and a growing community of fellow survivors of political violence who are willing to share their perspectives with one another. During a candid conversation with Budi in 2006, he showed the research team a book of histories written by survivors of G-30-S violence that challenged the state-sanctioned narrative. The worn, photocopied pages had been passed around in his family, and many others before that.

The developmental contexts of fear, oppression, and ostracism should be the exception rather than the norm. Unfortunately, as social scientists we know that many children inhabit such worlds; in Budi's case the course of Indonesian national politics and hierarchical systems at the national, local, and family levels all rendered him an easy target for bullying, social ostracism, and interpersonal and political violence. His case shows we must consider the impact of such social forces on children's current lives and relationships as well their future development and engagement as citizens in their respective

KERETA: LIVING IN TWO WORLDS

Adapted from The Spirits, Ngeb, and the Social Suppression of Memory: A Complex Clinical Case from Bali by Robert Lemelson and Luh Ketut Suryani

Pak Kereta was born in 1944 in a small rural village in central Bali. He continues to live in the same extended family compound in which he was born. He has been a farmer his whole life, and has been married for over twenty-five years to a woman who is a member of his clan. They have two adult sons. When he is feeling well he is active in neighborhood activities, particularly the *seka gong*, or local village gamelan orchestra. However, he is sometimes unable to participate due to disturbances by the spirits, which affect his physical and mental state. He speaks candidly and openly about his relationship with these spirit beings and the efforts he has made to care for them or make them leave. He says he has been living in two worlds (*dua dunia*), the world of his family and community and the world of the spirits, for the past 15 years.

Life History

Kereta traces his present illness back to 1965, when, at the age of 21, he witnessed the massacre of several fellow villagers in the

context of a political coup. Military and paramilitary forces purportedly belonging to the Indonesian Nationalist Party (PNI) entered his village looking for suspected members of the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI). A number of the villagers were singled out as PKI members and marched off to the local cemetery. Pak Kereta followed along at a distance along with a group of other villagers. He felt a sense of great terror, and though he had not been singled out for execution he felt sure someone would hurt or kill him. He slipped away and climbed a tree; from there he witnessed the group being systematically hacked to death with machetes.

Perhaps even more distressing, Pak Kereta also witnessed the murder of his own father just outside the family compound. He and his brother Made remembered the events together.

Made:
Our father was taken as it grew dark. My cousin called out to him, "Uncle, you should come out. Someone told me to get you." My cousin embraced my father as he took him out. After my father was on the road, outside of the house, they attacked him with a sword. Then they hit his head--

Kereta:
They hit his head until his brains splattered.

Made:
They stabbed his stomach with a sword.

Kereta:
They gauged his eyes out with a pick so that he couldn't see if he lived. He died and was taken to be buried.

Soon after this horrifically traumatic event, Pak Kereta's long-standing problems with social withdrawal and fear began. He believes the constant terror he experienced in the wake of these murders weakened his life force. He began to have problems with feeling his heart beating rapidly and a ''inner pressure'' weighing down his body. For months after the massacre he had difficulty eating and became very thin and withdrawn. His eyes felt like they were deeply sunk in his head. He was jumpy and easily startled, and had periods when he felt his mind go blank. He had difficulty falling asleep, and was frequently awoken by nightmares of being chased or people being butchered.

Kereta became increasingly afraid of social gatherings and avoided public places and events. He withdrew from the common social activities of his *banjar* and stopped participating in community work projects. He often had ''quiet'' or ''closed'' (Bal. *nyebeng*) demeanor in contrast to the more socially desirable Balinese presentation of self that is "friendly and open" (Bal. *mebraya*.) These problems continued to disturb Kereta in the years following the violence, but he never sought treatment or medical care.

After some reluctance about his condition, Kereta's wife agreed to marry him in 1980. They had a son a year later, and then in 1984 they had a daughter. Unfortunately, the baby girl died soon after being delivered. Kereta describes this as the most difficult time in his life. In his grief he cried continuously. He also began seeing small, black figures, which he believed to be spirits known as the *wong samar*, or "the indistinct people," a commonly recognized form of potentially dangerous spirit. He first saw the *wong samar* while cutting the grass in the rice field, describing them as wandering over the grass and hiding in stagnant water. At first they made noises that he could not understand, but gradually the noises coalesced into words as they asked him, ''Why don't you take care of yourself? Will you take care of us?'' He felt the figures were competing with one another to enter his head and take possession of his body.

Kereta:
I wanted to hide in a quiet place, but there were always creatures and sounds. There were voices coming from the grass. There was an image of a black creature. The rice fields were full of voices.

Rob Lemelson:
When the spirits enter your body, how do you feel?

Kereta:
It feels hot. They want to take my body and make me a communist.

When occupied by these spirits, Pak Kereta would stay home or avoid social contact, by hiding in solitary places, such as remote rice fields or the deeply cut canyons that criss-cross the Balinese landscape. He knew that the spirits could be found in these quiet spots and, at times, it seemed he sought a relationship with them by going to their likely dwelling places. Kereta would sometimes leave his home for days. When he returned he would explian to his family that he had been taken into the *wong samar* world and forced to marry a *wong samar* woman.

He withdrew from his family and society even further, finally refusing to leave his room at all. At this point his family brought him to a *balian*, or traditional healer. According to the *balian*, his illness was caused by witchcraft, as the result of the ill wishes of unspecified village members. Pak Kereta stayed at the *balian*'s compound for a month to receive treatment.

Kereta's experiences with spirit beings gradually waned over time. When he did experience a relapse in symptoms, he would seek out different treatments, including traditional healing and pharmacological interventions prescribed by psychiatrists at the Wanjaya and Bangli mental hospitals in Bali. He described long periods where he would not see or hear any spirits at all. However, during the national election campaigns in 2002–2003, when Indonesia elected its first-ever democratically elected president, the spirits returned. This time they were asking Kereta to rejoin the Communist Party. In response he would wear a camouflage jacket and military helmet, and would sleep in his family temple courtyard. He believed these actions prevented the spirits from entering his body and forcing him to return to the PKI.

Ngeb

Kereta himself describes his illness as "*ngeb*," which has two distinct, but related, meanings and presentations in Balinese culture. *Ngeb* is an illness caused by witnessing something horrific, frightening, or bizarre, such as the devastating cholera epidemic that swept through Bali in the 1920s. Seeing spirits, such as the *wong samar*, causes another variant of *ngeb*. As a result of these frightening or horrific experiences, sufferers put themselves in a self-imposed exile characterized by "muteness" (*membisu*) and lack of participation in the social world. Kereta believes his *ngeb* began with the witnessing of the massacre in 1965. Following the death of his infant daughter, his initial *ngeb* was compounded by visual and auditory hallucinations of the *wong samar*

world. An observer might consider Pak Kereta as delusional. One might also read Kereta's withdrawal into the spirit world as a rejection of an untrustworthy or unsafe human world; one of the most vicious of the paramilitaries after 1965 is now married to his older sister, and his own second cousin purportedly encouraged the paramilitary to attack Kereta's home because he wanted the land.

However, while psychiatrists may refer to *ngeb* as mental illness, *ngeb* is also quite resonant with a the Balinese practice of *puik*, intentional silence and social avoidance, or a kind of social commentary indicating the person is *koh ngomong*, or ''fed up of speaking." This intentional silence was compounded by a national political culture that, until the fall of Suharto, made expressing distress and remembering 1965 a politically and socially dangerous, if not fatal, behavior. Kereta's social avoidance and isolation, as defined by *ngeb*, have their origins in witnessing a trauma that, until recently, had a schematized and politically monolithic construction in Indonesia's historical memory, and a fear-inducing and stigmatizing enactment on a daily level in village life. While it might seem obvious to outsiders that Kereta is a victim and survivor of a politically based massacre, bordering on genocide, he is viewed by members of his community as being a perpetrator or instigator of the events of 1965, because he was a sympathizer with the communist party. Only in 2004 could his brother say that Kereta himself had been forgiven by villagers for causing the ''disorder'' of the events of 1965.

Suppression of these social memories took place at all levels of Indonesian society and was supported by notions regarding the negative effects on mental health, economic development, and Indonesia's national status of discussing these traumatic events. This is reinforced by a cosmological context that leads to further suppression of social memory. *Ngeb* has been viewed as a means of political protest that can take two forms. One is the muteness that acts as a form of a resistance against political authority, in which the memorializing and even recall of a specific traumatic event, caused by state terror, has been suppressed. The other meaning of *ngeb* is a fear of memorializing or resisting cosmological authority, which it is believed causes the community to risk natural disasters, such as epidemics or volcanic eruptions.

It is significant that Kereta has several friends who are similarly characterized as *ngeb*, and avoid social gatherings. His closest neighbor has symptoms very similar to his own, is also classified as *ngeb*, and also witnessed the events of 1965. Individuals with *ngeb* arising from 1965 can thus be seen as mute witnesses against the domination and control that the Suharto regime imposed on Indonesia following its ascendancy in 1965.

LANNY: FINDING STRENGTH IN BUDDHISM

Adapted from Trauma in Context: Integrating Biological, Clinical, and Cultural Perspectives, by Robert Lemelson, Laurence J. Kirmayer, and Mark Barad

Ibu Lanny is a 60-year-old, well-educated English teacher in Java, Indonesia. She was born into a socially respected, well-off Chinese-Indonesian family in 1952. Her father, Alex, was a prominent leader in the local Chinese Indonesian community and a successful businessman. Bu Lanny was very close with her father and describes herself as his favorite child. Alex owned several motorbikes, which was very rare at the time, and like to show off little Lanny by having her ride these motorcycles with him. She described him as "my hero."

For several months after G-30-S there were frequent riots led by youth brigades, paramilitary forces, and other groups associated with the PNI. Although few in Lanny's Chinese merchant community in Klaten were associated with the PKI, during this period more than 200 Chinese homes and businesses were burned, and numerous members of the Chinese community were arrested or disappeared. During one of these protests, hundreds of people surrounded Bu Lanny's house throwing stones and axes and calling Alex's name. Shots were fired into the house, and the family hid in terror behind sandbags to avoid being killed.

For Bu Lanny, the most painful memory from this frightening event was her father's response to the violence and fear. During the height of the terror, with the crowd shouting his name in anger, Alex ran away. Bu Lanny's last image of her father was of him leaning against a wall, hyperventilating in fear, having abandoned his family. Alex was picked up several weeks later and brought to a local internment camp near Klaten.

The family was able to visit Alex in prison before he disappeared forever. Bu Lanny remembers seeing him through the iron bars of his prison cell.

Bu Lanny:

I saw my father. At that time I realized, "This is my hero"…with short underwear and also with undershirt. And there was…this bar, you know, and he asked me, and the first question was, "how's school"? And I said, "OK, good."…I didn't want to cry because, you know, since I was small I liked to hear heroic stories and things like that. And he said, "be good," and then he took off his ring and gave it to me…That was very, very maybe big trauma for me because for many years I had headache if I saw vertical lines…you know, we were separated by the vertical lines.

For Ibu Lanny, witnessing her father's brutalization and imprisonment triggered a number of physical and psychological ailments. She suffered from more severe headaches. She startled easily and couldn't stand loud noises, panicked when she saw vertical lines or people in uniform, and often felt her heart beating rapidly. She became forgetful and couldn't remember people's names, even that of her desk-mate at school. She experienced episodes of mental "blankness" and would sometimes disassociate to the point where she would fall over while riding her bicycle, or find herself riding a motorcycle, not knowing how she got there or where she was going.

These personal struggles were in the context of the struggles of her family, who was suffering a financial crisis due to Alex's imprisonment. Her mother was distraught and unable to function, so Lanny bore the brunt of responsibility for caring for her younger siblings and the family business.

Ibu Lanny says she reacted to this stressful situation—the emotional distress of her father's perceived cowardice, the pressure to keep her family together, and frustration at the injustices faced by her family—by becoming very angry and hateful. She was short-tempered, competitive, and obsessed with vengeance. She says she had always played the role of the tough

and plucky heroine ever since she was a little girl, standing up to neighborhood bullies and protecting her siblings. In the face of her devastation, she lost control of these feelings and became an "iron fist." She became harsh and easily enraged, getting upset at anyone who did show signs of sadness or weakness, controlling her younger siblings, and responding with cold indifference to peers.

This way of coping helped her to survive but also caused her great suffering until in 1978 she had a spiritual awakening:

Lanny:
So maybe, maybe, hatred made me live. But also, at the same time, it killed me. Spiritually, I was very, very disappointed. I would sit outside and say, "Why? Where is God? Why does he let this happen?" And some priest would come and he would say, "Oh please don't doubt God's love, let's pray and ask for forgiveness" and on and on….And I said, "Bullshit!" You know?...And when I started to really rebel against God then I had this experience of seeing light. You know, very bright light. And I heard something like, "I am God." So I still remember I kneeled…knelt down and said, "Okay, I now know that you are there," and then I said, "Use me for good things." And I got the promise, "From now on, I'm not going to leave you." Then I felt peace in my heart—a feeling I had never had. Wonderful peace.

In the years that followed, Bu Lanny's trauma was triggered by various sensory occurrences—such as seeing vertical lines and experiencing persistent episodes of dissociation—and by social interactions. Some members of her community were those who had organized the anti-Chinese campaigns in 1965, and others took part in more recent campaigns, such as those following the fall of Suharto and his New Order in the late nineties. Her family as a unit never regained a sense of connection or comfort with the surrounding community and felt (as many ethnic Chinese in Indonesia feel) that they were outsiders within their own society.

However, Lanny had the support of her family members, who developed an enduring trust. Through the encouragement of her grandmother, who always reassured her that her father was not a criminal but the victim of racism, she began to find ways to tell her story and come to peace with the sorrows she had suffered. In 1992, she had another compelling religious experience in which she confronted some of her worst fears and found the key to her future work.

Lanny:
I consider myself lucky because I came across Buddhism. When I went to this…ten-day vipassana course, I didn't know anything about meditation. So I paid attention to whatever the teacher was telling us. He said, "Observe. Whatever comes up will go away. Arising only to pass away." And I had to do that meditation for ten days. After three or four days, there was a big eruption in my mind and I started to see my thoughts very clearly. And it went on and faster and faster, until I panicked, you see, I couldn't control myself. I realized I was going to go crazy. I am being crazy, I said, "Oh, a crazy person has this experience." I was alone. I wanted to see my teacher but I didn't know where he was. So I said, "What am I supposed to do? Whatever rises will pass away." Maybe 20 minutes elapsed. My mind started to calm down. I felt very, very tired. And sweat flowed down like a stream. But suddenly, I understood so many things that had been hidden deep in my heart. I had been buried in fear. I had feared separation, death. But at that very moment, I was not afraid of death anymore. So calmly, I put

everyone in their very last moment. So I imagined facing a bed and on the bed, I put the dead body of everyone I loved, one by one….And at last, my own dead body.

The insight into impermanence and the ability to let go that Lanny learned through meditation have had lasting effects on her life. She became a practicing Buddhist and founded a center for Buddhist meditation. Once the New Order fell, Lanny and many like her began to take the first steps towards openly discussing the events of 1965. Despite the lingering political danger, Lanny has published her memoirs of the period and spoken about her experiences at public events and trauma training workshops for Indonesian professionals. Far from suppressing her memories of the events, she has found ways to make active use of them as historical testimony, evidence of her own resiliency, and still more importantly as a foundation for her experience with Buddhism. This has made her a moving and effective teacher.

Lanny's history highlights the redeeming aspects of the will to bear witness that can be seen as crucial to the survivor's recovery. However, it should be noted that although this will may be a strong, perhaps universal, response in some people to forms of violence and trauma, its enactment and realization can take place only when political conditions allow it.

DEGUNG: ADVOCATING DIALOGUE

Degung Santikarma is an Indonesian anthropologist, journalist, and human-rights activist from a high-caste Balinese family. He remembers enjoying a happy and well-off childhood. He was one of the first children in the neighborhood to have a car. He also enjoyed products from abroad, such as his coveted pair of waterproof swimming trunks.

Degung was five years old in 1965. When the violence and chaos reached his village, at first he was too young to understand its implications; in fact he remembers the thrill of houses burning and people crowded in the streets, and the novelty of being awake in the middle of the night and hiding in the temple. Gradually fear and horror took the place of excitement, however, as a beloved neighborhood doctor was killed and as Degung witnessed corpses piling up on the streets and riverbanks of his village.

Degung:
They killed them in front of their houses, dragged their bodies. And they just buried them by the leaves. You know, I was just playing like that kid just now… And then when I walked with my Auntie I thought, ew. We saw guts. It stopped being fun.

They just killed people like *caru* [animal sacrifice]. Mutilated.

Unfortunately, this danger would soon affect Degung's own immediate family. His parents were well educated and very politically active, often travelling outside the country to attend political conferences. His mother was renowned in the village for being a typist, which was associated with writing, a potentially subversive act in such volatile times. This activity made them targets of governmental violence.

First, Degung's father was taken by the nationalist party for interrogation. Degung's aunt remembers her brother being paraded around town, called a criminal and a communist and publicly humiliated. The family watched in fear and grief but was unable to intercede. Ultimately he was taken away and murdered.

Degung's mother was a member of Gerwani, the women's organization affiliated with the communist party, and soon after his father's death she was also imprisoned. While in jail she developed a relationship with a guard. This resulted in her being stigmatized by her family and accused of being a prostitute. Feeling shunned and threatened, Degung's mother left Degung with the family and married the prison guard. Members of Degung's extended family and village ostracized him as well, avoiding or taunting him because of his communist connections.

Degung felt deeply abandoned and rejected. He couldn't believe his own mother would leave him, and he had a hard time accepting the way people had treated each other in the context of political violence. Friends, family, and respected members of the community had all shown themselves to be untrustworthy.

Degung:
This is what I find very very devastating about this violence. It's so much about the politics of the neighborhoods. You know, who initiated the killings is really more like the guy next door. Or sometimes it was your cousin, or even a key figure.

Hoping to remove him from an upsetting situation and to and help him reinvent himself without the stigma of being an "anak PKI," Degung's grandmother sent him to live with an uncle in Surabaya. The man was such a harsh disciplinarian that Degung ran away and found solace with a group of prostitutes who lived in the Wonokromo neighborhood. They cared for him, providing him with clothes and other necessities as they could. While Degung continued to attend school, he also lived as a street kid, surviving on food he had stolen himself. He said he returned to Bali some years later as a "wild boy" but received some life-changing guidance from his uncle, who had also been imprisoned during the events of 1965.

Degung:
My uncle [came] back from jail and begin to see me. 'Degung, you can do everything as naughty as you can. One thing I beg you, don't give up education. If you give up education I will never speak to you again in all your life.' And then I become really smart in the class. Then I go to university. And then I started to study about human rights, and I turned into an activist.

Degung has also gone on to do work as an academic and a journalist. A significant part of his work is to advocate for a more direct and open dialogue about the events of 1965; this in turn necessitates a more direct and open dialogue about the flows of power and political discourse in his native island of Bali and more broadly, the country of Indonesia.
Degung has been called a "maverick" for his writing and public speaking, which challenges stereotypes about Balinese life and boldly questions the status quo.

Degung's case illustrates that to come to terms with the events of 1965 and resolve the grief they caused, dialogue must be engaged on personal, local, national, and international levels.

For Degung, the heartbreaking experience of feeling abandoned by his mother gradually developed into an understanding that she may have been pressured into leaving him, and that she had to make difficult choices to ensure both her own survival, and his.

In trying to understand such choices, which faced not only his mother but many more like her during the events of 1965, Degung has initiated discussion with other villagers about 1965. *40 Years of Silence* captures Degung directly confronting his neighbor about his role in targeting certain villagers for imprisonment and execution. In doing so he comes face to face with the complexities of reconciliation, including entrenched and culturally specific ways of dealing with trauma as well as firmly rooted personal fears and grudges.

Rather than avoiding such uncomfortable confrontations, Degung continues to engage issues of culture, power, and domination in contemporary Indonesia. He has written numerous articles about violence in Bali, presented this work at national and international conferences, and engaged in public conversations and debates with other journalists and academics.

Some of his works implicate globalized forms of commerce and international relationships that may perpetuate the silence around 1965. For example, Degung connects the mandates of a tourist economy, and its requisite demands of presenting Bali as a peaceful paradise with smiling inhabitants, with an enforced amnesia about past and present violence, unrest, or discontent on the island.

In widening the discourse of 1965 and in encouraging multiple levels of dialogue about an incredibly difficult and painful topic, Degung's case shows us that perhaps resolving or moving beyond personal experiences of grief cannot be done without political engagement. In fact, perhaps even as a full personal or national resolution remains elusive, the conversations about power, injustice, culture, and trauma are important in and of themselves.

FAQ'S FOR ROB LEMELSON

Q: Do you have a personal connection to Indonesia? Why did you choose to do research there?

I have been working in Indonesia every year since 1993. I was a Fulbright scholar to Indonesia from 1996-1997 and have conducted thousands of interviews with subjects throughout the country, all focusing on issues relating to personal experience, culture, and mental illness.

Q: How did you find the individuals and families for the film? Was it difficult convincing them to participate?

Some of them were patients in the clinics where I was conducting anthropological research, some were colleagues, and others were informants. I now consider all of them close personal friends and am still in contact with them. Some feared for their personal safety but ultimately, they all felt that their stories should be told. It was only after I knew them well that they agreed to speak about their experiences during 1965 and afterwards.

Q: How do the events of 1965 in Indonesia apply to other regions in the world?

There are both similarities and differences between the mass killings of 1965 and other mass killings of the 20th century. One of the striking features of the violence under General Suharto's regime was the degree to which the government successfully repressed all memorials, remembrances, and recollections of the event. The Suharto regime created a monolithic state narrative, and thus the world knows very little of this horrific and tragic history. There was an enforced silence in Indonesia because the perpetrators remained in power for decades afterwards.

It is only now that Indonesians are beginning to speak out, and this film represents part of that effort. Whenever I have given talks about this, even to highly educated audiences, rarely do people even know about this event, even though it was among the largest mass killings of the 20th century. This brings to mind the quote from Adolf Hitler, who, in planning the "Final Solution" stated, "Who remembers the Armenians?" His belief was that he could act with impunity because he believed no one remembered or chose to care about the Armenian Genocide. The "will to bear witness" in the efforts to bring such events as the mass killings of 1965 to wide attention are necessary correctives to the silencing of millions.

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