

*Sex and Sexualities in Contemporary Indonesia: Sexual Politics, Health, Diversity and Representations*. Edited by LINDA RAE BENNETT and SHARYN GRAHAM DAVIES. London: Routledge, 2015. xviii, 328 pp. ISBN: 9780415731287 (cloth, also available in paper and as e-book).

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*Sex and Sexualities in Contemporary Indonesia* provides a much-needed survey of and update on Indonesian sexualities and sexual politics. The authors included in this edited volume approach the subject from a variety of disciplinary backgrounds, and their papers have a wide geographic scope, covering cities across the archipelago (Jakarta, Surabaya, Yogyakarta, Denpasar, Medan, and Makassar) as well as the regions of West and Central Java, Bali, Lombok, and South Sulawesi. The book is the outcome of a two-day workshop held at the Auckland University of Technology in New Zealand. Four broad themes emerged from that discussion and are used to organize the volume's chapters: sexual politics, sexual health, sexual diversity, and sexual representations.

The book's chapters focus on the period that followed Indonesia's New Order (1966–98), known as Reformasi or the era of democratic reform. This was a period during which political power shifted from a highly centralized state authority to direct elections for president and greatly enhanced regional autonomy. As editors Linda Rae Bennett and Sharyn Graham Davies make clear, it is also an era that has seen the rise of social movements promoting progressive as well as conservative sexual values.

Chapter 2, "Masculinity, Sexuality, and Islam," by Kathryn Robinson, provides a useful background for understanding gender politics in the New Order and Reformasi eras and offers important context for the issues taken up by the chapters that follow. Indonesia is not an Islamic state, but is nonetheless the most populous Muslim nation in the world with almost 90 percent of its 261 million inhabitants identifying as Muslim. Robinson argues that under Suharto's New Order, a violent militant masculinity provided an ideological foundation for the government's policy of "state familism" and naturalized the masculinist cast of state power. For a significant portion of his thirty-two years in office, Suharto held Islam at arm's length. With the fall of the New Order and the beginning of Indonesia's Reformasi period, however, Islam has moved to the fore in contests over sex and sexuality. Robinson presents several of the key gender debates that emerged out of the Reformasi period, including those surrounding the election of Indonesia's first female president, Megawati Sukarnoputri, the new visibility of polygyny, and the passage of a law outlawing pornography.

Davies's chapter, "Surveilling Sexuality," focuses on emerging forms of sexual surveillance. Drawing on the work of Michel Foucault and Susie Scott, she identifies discourses of shame as one of the powerful regulating regimes that direct appropriate sexual behaviors in Indonesia. Perhaps not surprisingly, these discourses more often focus on women than men and serve to regulate and limit female sexual activity. They are powerful because they involve not only the individual but her entire extended family, creating what Davies refers to as "kinships of shame" (p. 33). Davies argues that morality is increasingly surveilled in Indonesia, but that surveillance can be productive. Individuals both adhere to and subvert sexual prescriptions; shame coerces subjects into compliance but also inspires agency.

The notion of "kinships of shame" is again picked up in Bennett's chapter, "Sexual Morality and the Silencing of Sexual Health within Indonesian Infertility Care," in the book's section on sexual health. Bennett argues that in this case it is not so much women's shame that is at issue, but the assumptions of healthcare providers who avoid mention of STIs or AIDS as possible causes of infertility, for fear of appearing indelicate.

Women, by contrast, indicate a strong preference for addressing such sensitive matters head-on because of their overwhelming desire for a child. In their chapter on Indonesian couples and HIV (in this same section), Irwan Hidayana and Brigitte Tenni underscore a related theme. For women who are HIV-positive, successful reproduction and the establishment of a “normal” family goes a long way towards addressing the shame and stigma of what is often seen as a moral failure.

Several themes taken up in the volume’s chapters speak across section headings. In the volume’s section on sexual tensions, Leslie Butt’s chapter on HIV-positive women in Papua notes how the negotiation of HIV status for Papuan women intersects with racialized perceptions of sexuality and morality. Papuan women are stigmatized by other Indonesians for their skin color; their short, muscular frames; and their curly hair. For women who are HIV-positive, their health status is a further source of stigmatization. Many attempt to hide their plight even from other family members, often with deleterious effects. This conflation of beauty with morality reappears in Helen Pausacker’s chapter on beauty queens in the book’s section on sexual representations. In the early 2000s, beauty pageants became a target of the Islamic Defenders Front (FPI) paramilitary, who considered such events pornographic and an affront to Islamic sexual mores. As debates over Indonesia’s pornography bill have subsided, however, the intensity of FPI protests has also lessened. Nonetheless, the issue of what constitutes a “standard Indonesian beauty”—and the degree to which religion, ethnicity, and even language proficiency factor into that designation—continues to be debated.

Two of the volume’s chapters are specifically focused on homosexuality, offering important updates to foundational studies. Evelyn Blackwood notes that the term *lesbi* appeared in Indonesia in the early 1980s and was adopted by many Indonesian lesbians, but was not accompanied by widespread shifts in sexual and gender identities at that time. In the Reformasi period a new *lesbi* subjectivity began to emerge, predicated on same-sex desire and a more androgynous gender self-presentation. However, recent research among highly educated and financially independent lesbians in Yogyakarta, Java, has found that while women use the term *lesbi*, it is not their only or primary identifier. Among themselves, masculine women self-identify as *butchi* and partner with feminine women (*femme*); in other words, binary gender models continue to hold their appeal. Among gay men, Stephen McNally, Jeffery Gierson, and Irwan Martua Hidayana find that the terms *gay* and *biseks* are widely used, but more often refer to practices rather than stable identities. The Internet has offered gay men important national and even global connections to a gay community; nonetheless many individuals report that they have limited personal networks of fellow gays. Although homosexuality is not illegal in Indonesia, the discourse of homosexuality as an illness continues to have widespread currency; many gay men still express the hope of eventually marrying in a heterosexual union and establishing a family.

The volume ends with reflections by two pioneers in the field of Indonesian LGBTI studies, Dédé Oetomo and Tom Boellstorff, who offer their thoughts on ongoing sexual changes, emergent political activism, and directions for future research.

*Sex and Sexualities in Contemporary Indonesia* is a timely and welcome volume that constitutes an invaluable resource for those who work on Indonesian sexualities and sex/gender politics. It will be of interest to those in gender and sexuality studies, queer studies, medical anthropology, and Southeast Asian cultural politics more broadly.

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