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40 Years of Silence: An Indonesian Tragedy by Robert Lemelson; Dag Yngvesson; Pietro Scalia; Malcolm Cross; Dengue Fever

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Uncovering the Trauma of Indonesia's Cold War Killing Fields

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40 Years of Silence: An Indonesian Tragedy. Produced and directed by Robert Lemelson. Photographed by Dag Yngvesson, edited by Pietro Scalia, music by Malcolm Cross and Dengue Fever. Los Angeles: Elemental Productions, 2009.

"An estimated 500,000 to 1,000,000 people were killed in Indonesia between October 1965 and April 1966. It is one of the largest unrecognized mass killings of the 20th century." These powerful words begin Robert Lemelson's documentary. The film focuses on four families who suffered the bloody purges that seamed the lengthy regimes of Indonesia's first and second presidents, Sukarno (1945–67) and Suharto (1967–98). The film intersperses archival footage and testimonials by survivors in Java and Bali with background statements by four academic historians and the anthropologist filmmaker. Edited from over 400 hours of footage shot over 10 years, the 86-minute documentary provides a fundamental background on the 1965–66 events as it explores the enduring psychological damage of victims, including young children who saw their parents and other relatives harmed, blacklisted, or disappeared.

Although terrible deeds are described by the eyewitnesses interviewed, Lemelson's well-constructed documentary eschews gratuitous violence. Instead, we come to feel terrified through the stories of terror: a brother tortured for a theft he did not commit, relatives arrested for knowing a song associated with Communists, families receiving a loved one's clothing from prison camp officials—indirect messages of death. The film's contributions include its ability to concisely convey the known events and horrors of the 1965–66 massacres, its cross-cultural engagement with psychological trauma, and its significant input to the emergent academic investigation of long-hidden facts about Indonesia's cold war killing fields.

What needs to be said, and is underscored by the film's main title, is that the Indonesian purges of the mid-1960s were almost fully erased from the pages of twentieth-century history. Deeply buried under a Suharto regime counternarrative that endures to this day, the killings could not be discussed even by ivory tower academics until the post-1998 "Reformasi" era. Certain troubling details are still open to debate. Essentially, the events of September 30, 1965, have long been captured and framed within particular grand narratives. Questioning the statist, anti-Communist narratives before Suharto's demise was dangerous to all.

Every Indonesian who grew up during the Suharto period

has viewed a state-produced documentary film that was shown annually in Indonesian public schools. The grizzly propaganda film is titled "Pengkianatan G30S/PKI," an abbreviation that roughly translates as "the treasonous September 30th movement by the Indonesian Communist Party." The sensationalist film depicts depraved Indonesian Communist Party members and their bloodthirsty wives killing and torturing seven anticommunist Indonesian officers, including six generals, on September 30, 1965. Upstanding military men are shown dragged from their homes in the middle of the night as their wives weep and children scream. Body parts are detached and ritually celebrated as trophies. Following the ambush and death of the army officers (which did in fact take place), the story of how a half-million to a million lives were sacrificed to extinguish Indonesian communism in revenge was utterly suppressed. That larger story, which must be assembled from many different pieces that took place on different islands, is just beginning to be told.

Robert Lemelson is a research anthropologist at UCLA's Semel Institute of Neuroscience. Starting in 1997, he began filming on Java and Bali, exploring the Indonesian experience of psychological disorders such as depression, schizophrenia, obsessive compulsive disorder, Tourette's syndrome, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). From this work, he culled visual materials on the experiences of four families blighted by the 1965–66 killings. These unlucky individuals, including Hindu Balinese, ethnic Chinese Christians, and Javanese Muslims, still live with intolerable anger or stigma. Most haunting is the film's depiction of a boy named Budi, raised in an orphanage, who experiences depression and anger for years after his family members were attacked, tortured, and persecuted.

To make sense of the vast and seemingly senseless violence, the filmmaker Lemelson and three accomplished historians of the cold war killings—Geoffrey Robinson, John Roosa, and Baskara Wardaya—discuss the geopolitical dynamics of 1960s Indonesia. Whereas President Sukarno sought neutrality from the hostilities of the United States and the Soviet Union, the United States feared the fact that Indonesia had the largest communist party outside of China. The United States was eager to support General Suharto's anticommunist stance and Sukarno's ouster. Suharto's army told the public that Indonesia's Communist Party (Partai Komunis Indonesia, or PKI) planned to follow the execution of the officers with a mass slaughter of noncommunists, a slaughter that could be prevented only by killing all Communist Party members everywhere in Indonesia. This call for preemptive violence ultimately caused neighbor to turn on neighbor in a chaotic and sometimes haphazard attempt to cleanse Indonesia of all that was communist, Chinese, atheist, or simply undesirable. Exterminating evil communists became an inflaming excuse.

Although this is just the beginning of what must become a larger research endeavor, *40 Years of Silence* is well-designed for college classroom use. The interpretive sections offer a solid introduction for those new to the topic, while its local

interview data make it valuable for specialists. Strong production techniques and sophisticated aesthetic touches such as Indonesian shadow puppetry images and soundtrack music by the American-Cambodian fusion group Dengue Fever resonate with prior scholarship about the dark side of Southeast Asian political history.

The film's drawbacks are few. One small quibble is that the documentary sometimes shifts among the four focal families, three religions, two islands, and multiple generations so readily that a viewer unfamiliar with Indonesian geography and ethnic diversity may lose track of the family narratives that shift or progress between commentary segments by the academic experts. The film also presents the Indonesian interviewees' testimonials about their trauma, persecution, and mental health problems in a way that could suggest the existence of a uniform human psychology and experience of emotion uninflected by cultural difference.

More important, though, is the film's apt culmination in the problems of Indonesia's present and future. As the filmmaker Robert Lemelson states, "even today, many who killed feel like heroes, and those who were related to the killed are meant to feel guilty." Indonesian historian Baskara Wardaya adds that "if killing a half a million people is not a problem, then it could happen again and again." This core predicament faces Indonesia as a nation, as well as our anthropological scholarship about Indonesia's cold war and its echoes in other episodes of mass brutality. *40 Years of Silence: An Indonesian Tragedy* merits a wide viewing by students and scholars. Then, adepts should consider watching Joshua Oppenheimer's 2012 film *The Act of Killing*. It approaches the same postcoup violence from the standpoint of some unforgettable Sumatran perpetrators openly recalling their exploits. Oppenheimer's extraordinarily long and utterly mind-blowing film makes gratuitous violence a surreal art of historical reenactment. Together, *40 Years of Silence* and *The Act of Killing* leave us anticipating the next stage of Indonesian cold war research. Anthropologists may begin to engage further with the millions of "ordinary" and still-silent bystanders to the purges.

Struggle in Saudi Arabia

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A Most Masculine State: Gender, Politics, and Religion in Saudi Arabia. By Madawi Al-Rasheed. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013.

Society in Saudi Arabia is complex and changing rapidly. Culture and identity are in flux. Public politics hardly exist. And the state leadership grows older and older in age. Ancient home to modest communities of farmers, herders, craft work-

ers, traders, religious scholars, and tribal leaders, the contemporary Kingdom of Saudi Arabia was created in 1932 when the regions of Najd, Hijaz, Asir, and Al-Hasa were brought together under a centralized state. By the 1950s, modern urbanization was underway in Riyadh, Jiddah, and other towns. A national bureaucracy and security system emerged, and a new economy started up with salaried employment and waged labor for some local men.

Oil—discovered in 1938 in Dhahran—developed into a major economic sector by the 1960s and brought in foreign managers, experts, and workers to Saudi Arabia's Al-Hasa Province. Local workers from nomadic and sedentary backgrounds and from Sunni and Shia Islamic persuasions toiled, learned, and advanced side-by-side in the new Arabian American Oil Company (ARAMCO). Cash trickled into the economy. Then—in the wake of the 1973 Arab-Israeli war and associated international oil boycott—cash poured into Saudi Arabian coffers as the price of oil quadrupled. Arab-bashing exploded in the United States and elsewhere. And Western and other companies rushed in to repatriate "petro-dollars" by selling development, security, consumer goods, and a new lifestyle.

The old Saudi Arabia seemed to disappear. Mass migration to new megacities drew Saudis away from towns, villages, and nomad camps, and masses of expatriate workers entered the country. Local population growth took off, and widespread education for boys and many girls became the norm. The 9/11 attack in 2001 added Islamophobia to the matrix of Saudi Arabian concerns. Today, widespread travel abroad for study and pleasure plus new communication technologies and high-scale marketing of fashion and lifestyle transform the desires and expectations of many. Yet high rates of unemployment or underemployment haunt young modern educated Saudi Arabian men and especially women. Boredom, frustration, culture conflict, and identity issues seem to reign among youth and young adults as they navigate their lives against the background of a state that is "most masculine" and also in contrast to an earlier time when knowledge and values were different.

It is within this context of change that Madawi Al-Rasheed provides a wealth of data and nuanced interpretation of state history, Muslim belief and practice, women and gender concerns, sexuality and marriage, and economic factors. She draws on her knowledge as a Saudi Arabian person and anthropologist, as well as a wide range of published material, documents, blogs, emails, video clips, interviews abroad, discussions, and correspondence. The "woman question" provides the dominant concept behind her quest to examine and explain the persistent exclusion of women in Saudi Arabian public domains to a much greater degree than in other Arab and Muslim societies. The answer Al-Rasheed finds lies mainly in the history and structure of the Saudi Arabian state and its ideological use of "religious nationalism" rather than in Islam, per se, or other factors.

A mass of data and interpretation are covered, starting with a historical accord in the eighteenth century between an Is-