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Embedded remembering : memory culture of the 1965 violence in rural East Java

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Cover Page



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SUMMARY

This dissertation examines the dynamics of memory culture of the anti-communist violence in 1965 Indonesia. The problem starts with the contrasting narrative about this particular event. On the one hand, the national narrative by the state commemorates the death of six generals and one low rank army officer during the September 30th Movement or *Gerakan 30 September 1965/ G30S*. The military accused the Indonesian Communist Party or *Partai Komunis Indonesia/ PKI* as the mastermind behind the movement. The movement was followed by a regime shift from Sukarno to Suharto. This new regime initiated a nation-wide purge against communists, leftists, and their affiliates in 1965-66 and in 1968 in some parts of East Java. On the other hand, the purge that had turned into a violent bloodbath continued to be excluded from Indonesia's national historiography until today. Popular memories of this violence are marginalized, silenced, and excluded, and are considered as the counter-narrative of 1965.

This dissertation goes beyond this binary approach of state versus counter narrative. Through a case study in rural area of Donomulyo district in East Java, this research discovered that memories of violence are multi-layered. They are not exclusively determined by the repressive memory project of the state, but are actually embedded in social relations and local context where the violence occurred. The first two chapters after the introduction explain and analyze how these relations and transformations evolved in three different eras: the colonial, pre-independence, and early New Order period. Combining different sources, chapter 2 portrays the early connections between state and society, especially regarding the position of rural elites. The traditional patron-client relationships that were formed through the land tenure and crop-sharing system during pre-colonial era were transformed into economy-driven patronage relationships since the establishment of the Dutch plantations in the area. Even though state transformation (from colonial East Indies to independent Indonesia) took place, this state-society patronage relations persisted and were even utilized during the 1965-66 violence. The collaboration between the army and certain mass organizations resulted in severe violence in Donomulyo, as described in chapter 3. There was an unequal, yet mutual collaboration between the army and civilians. Using archives of the Brawijaya military command in East Java, this dissertation also presents a new interpretation of the 1965-66 killings in the area. One of the main findings is that the killings were structurally organized by the army by gathering, coordinating, and managing anti-communist civilian forces under the regional army.

From the backgrounds of these developments in Donomulyo, the dissertation continues to examine the memory culture of 1965 violence in rural community in chapter 4. The main finding is that remembering the violence is locally embedded, rather than exclusively constructed by memory projects of the state. Local patrons connect the local and national, influencing how villagers understand and remember the violence that they experienced in their area. The memories of people who have close ties with the state through the patronage network and who benefited from the violence, reflect a similar construction of the state's narrative of the violence – for example, expressing the need to eliminate the PKI, because they were troublemakers in the village. Whereas others, who experienced great losses after the violence, became critical of the official narrative. Furthermore, at the community level, memories of violence are not about the violent acts per se, but also about what the violence brought afterwards. In Donomulyo, memories of violence are also

connected to the rural transformation that occurred after 1965, particularly during the early New Order period when the military controlled the local economy. Therefore, the question of 'who gets what after the violence', is also central to an examination of memories of 1965-66 violence.