
SPACES OF EXCLUSION, WALLS OF INTIMACY: RETHINKING “CHINESE EXCLUSIVITY” IN INDONESIA

Tsai Yen-Ling

It was a bright and humid Saturday afternoon during the rainy season. I had just met Yennis at the nearby Deli Plaza shopping mall, and was now riding with her and Lina, my Chinese-Indonesian friend who had facilitated this meeting. Yennis and I chatted in Lina’s compact black Hyundai as she navigated the traffic and drove away from the city, towards Yennis’s hometown, near Medan. Yennis was married to a Batak man (for two years), and she was raised in a Chinese-Batak family. But she had only recently been readmitted to her natal family, because her mother objected to Yennis’s interracial marriage. Pondering the bitter irony of her story, I rolled down the car window in search of a soothing breeze, but was instantly taken aback by Lina’s sudden demand: “Hey,” she cried out in Hokkien Chinese, “shut the window, quick!” Puzzled, I looked out the window and found myself face to face with a dark-skinned man who was gazing intensely into our car from his motorbike. “I hate to be stared at by others” (Hok: *bo song ho lan kua*), said Lina, as she sped away from the motorcyclist.¹

¹ The names of my interlocutors have been changed. In general, their statements were not recorded verbatim but were reconstructed shortly afterward from contemporaneous notes. Exact dialogue, when available, is shown within quotation marks. Original Indonesian, Chinese (Chi), Hokkien-Chinese (Hok), and Dutch (Dut) words are shown in parentheses; translations interpolated in the text are also shown in parentheses. I have used modern Indonesian spellings for Indonesian words, names, and place names, except in cases where individuals have retained the older style of spelling. The Romanization of Chinese names in this paper follows common, local spelling. In those cases, the spelled-out pronunciation is therefore often in one of the southern Chinese regional languages. Pinyin Romanization is used to spell out the Mandarin pronunciation when information about the common, local pronunciation is unavailable.

Vera, another Chinese-Indonesian friend, lives in a gated community in northern Jakarta, near the Soekarno-Hatta Airport. Single, career-minded, and independent, she lives alone and drives to work every morning at 5:30, before the first wave of traffic clogs the city. Even then, Vera's daily journey to work is never easy. She has to pass through five security gates before reaching the main road. And if she gives her nephew a ride and drops him off in the Muara Karang district, she encounters an additional three security gates along that route. According to Vera, the security posts appeared in all Chinese residential complexes soon after May 1998. Within the walled border of an individual complex, security posts and traffic barriers compartmentalize the inner space of the complex. Residents' access to their complex is mediated by a single, crooked route guarded by one security post after another. In the daytime, most of the gates stay open while under the watchful eyes of patrolling guards. After dark, all the gates are shut and will only be opened when the guard on duty recognizes someone as a resident, or else has inspected the visitor's state-issued identification (ID) and holds it in exchange for a temporary entrance pass.

Pak Iskandar owns an aluminum factory in Medan. For well over twenty years he has been manufacturing fences, and so he knows about the metamorphosis of the city's gates. According to Pak Iskandar, the *harmonika*, a kind of chain-link fence that can compress like an accordion, has been around since "the Dutch time." Shop doors that rolled up and down to control access dominated the street scene during the 1970s, but went out of fashion in the mid-1980s as they failed to meet heightened security demands. The 1990s witnessed the heyday of folding metal gates, especially among Chinese-Indonesian shop-houses. That fad lasted until May 1998, when thousands of those gates in Jakarta, Medan, and elsewhere were vandalized and the stores behind them looted. That turmoil marked the end of President Suharto's New Order regime and the beginning of the *Reformasi* era. For Pak Iskandar, the changes taking place also marked another business opportunity. Iron doors, or "doors of Reform" (*pintu Reformasi*) as they are nicknamed by Pak Iskandar and his colleagues, have since dominated the security market as the product most resistant to mob attack. Amidst mass poverty and a stagnant economy, sales of these iron doors of Reform mushroomed in post-1998 Jakarta and Medan, even as politicians proclaimed that Indonesia had crossed the threshold of the great Door of Reform. Will the political Door of Reform bring concrete changes to people's lives as have been promised? Or will it, like all the gates that once delineated the streets, eventually go out of fashion as well?

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Walls separate. The glass wall of a car window excluded unwanted exchanges for Lina, giving her a sense of security and a space for privacy. In that respect, the iron gates in front of shop-houses in Medan, and the tall walls encircling gated communities in Jakarta, are no different from a car window; all of them embody a desire to segregate, to isolate a community of Us and to wall out the rest as Others. Importantly, these projects of community-building through acts and projects of walling are never complete. New walls superseded earlier kinds as shop owners demanded better protection in Pak Iskandar's chronology of fencing technology in Medan. Similarly, internal gates supplemented exterior walls of gated communities as security

needs tightened in post-1998 Jakarta. These are walls that come after walls, and walls that stand behind walls. These recurrences of wall over time and in space suggest a need for renewal or doubling of walls in all projects of walling. In fact, these projects demand incessant acts of wall-making—movements of walling in/out—as seen in windows rolling down and up, gates following gates, and fences being replaced by fences.

This article explores the entangled and intimate relationship between Indonesian citizens of Chinese descent and their non-Chinese counterparts through the symbolism and materiality of walls. Observing through, alongside, and with walls, I attempt to understand walls through their “effective practices,”² to see how walls and fences as spacing devices simultaneously channel social bodies into specific modes of interaction. Michel Foucault reminds us that to study the modern technology of power, we should focus not only on what power prohibits, but also on how it “structure[s] the possible field of action.”³ I take on this approach to better explore the walls that stand between Chinese-Indonesians and their fellow citizens.⁴ The perceived differences and antagonism between the Chinese and indigenous Indonesians has a deep-seated history. The Dutch colonial regime perpetuated a multitude of racial and ethnic divisions, placing the Chinese in between the Europeans and the “natives.”⁵ The modern, postcolonial nation-state of Indonesia abolished the tripartite colonial racial hierarchy, but recast the legal boundary between its *pribumi* (literally, “sons of soil”) citizens and *nonpribumi* (or *nonpri*, effectively, the Chinese) citizens. Hence occupying a liminal space as being part of the Indonesian state but not the nation, the Chinese are perceived by the majority of Indonesians as neither domestic (i.e., native) nor totally foreign (i.e., of foreign nationality).⁶ It is worthwhile to emphasize, however, that the

² Michel Foucault, “Afterword: The Subject and Power,” in *Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics*, ed. Hubert Dreyfus and Paul Rabinow (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1983), p. 28.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 221.

⁴ Indonesian citizens of Chinese descent, roughly 3 percent of Indonesia’s population, are often called Chinese-Indonesians, or, simply, the Chinese (*orang Chinese, Tionghoa*). So-called indigenous Indonesians (*pribumi*) are most often simply called “the Indonesians” (*orang Indonesia*). I use the categories of “Chinese” and “natives,” *nonpribumi* and *pribumi*, fully aware that they are lived categories with rich, varied histories. Although using those terms is to follow state-sanctioned categories, among the objectives of my analysis is precisely to show how “Chinese” and “natives” are not antithetical (i.e., walled apart) as claimed by state regimes, but are, instead, mutually entangled and interior to one another. For an informative discussion of the complicated politics of naming the Indonesian citizens of Chinese descent as either “Chinese,” “Cina,” or “Tionghoa,” see Filomeno V. Aguilar, Jr., “Citizenship, Inheritance, and the Indigenizing of ‘Orang Chinese’ in Indonesia,” *positions* 9,3 (2001): 501–33.

⁵ The colonial government classified the population of the Netherlands Indies into three groups (Dut: *Bevolkingsgroepen*), namely Europeans, “Natives” (Dut: *Inlanders*) and “Foreign Orientals” (Dut: *Vreemde Oosterlingen*). Note, however, that such full-fledged threefold classification came very late in the colonial formation. The Constitutional Regulation of 1845 only made a basic distinction between those identified as “Europeans and those equated with Europeans,” and those identified as “Natives and those equated with Natives.” Classified as “Foreign Orientals,” the Chinese, along with Arabs, Japanese, and others, were equated with the “Natives.” It was not until 1925 that Article 163 of the Indies Constitution (Dut: *Indische Staatsregeling*) legally designated “Foreign Orientals” as a separate group rather than equating them with “Natives.” See C. Fasseur, “Colonial Dilemma: Van Vollenhoven and the Struggle between Adat Law and Western Law in Indonesia,” in *European Expansion and Law: The Encounter of European and Indigenous Law in Nineteenth- and Twentieth-Century Africa and Asia*, ed. W.J. Mommsen and J. A. de Moor (Oxford: Berg, 1992), pp. 237–56.

⁶ Rather, in Prameodya Ananta Toer’s words, the Chinese in Indonesia are seen as “foreigners who are not foreign” (*orang asing yang tidak asing*). Prameodya Ananta Toer, *Hoa Kiau di Indonesia* (Jakarta: Bintang Press, 1960), p. 14.

Chinese/*pribumi* distinction is not simply the product of colonial and postcolonial racial politics, but almost always connotes economic advantage/disadvantage. Faced with the constraints imposed on and opportunities offered to them by both colonial capitalism and Suharto's crony development schemes, the Chinese negotiated a niche for themselves as the middlemen and professional class. In the process, they further accumulated necessary financial advantage and capitalist know-how, which gradually placed them favorably in relation to the ever-expanding capitalist modernity, on the one hand, and in a relation of tension vis-à-vis the indigenous majority, on the other. Thus, in short, Chinese-Indonesians' participation in society is characterized by both liminality and ambivalence, as their economic potency is both admired and resented, and their presence is simultaneously praised and discriminated against. Significantly, for a heterogeneous population whose cultural practices and histories of settlement in Indonesia have varied greatly over time and in space, this structural liminality has induced multiple experiences of "belonging-in-alienation," which is perhaps the only commonality shared by all Chinese-Indonesians.⁷

Gating and wall-making form one such experience of belonging-in-alienation, which brings many Chinese-Indonesians together while separating them from the rest of the population. This is true not only because an increasing number of Chinese have chosen to live in gated communities or houses with security fences,⁸ but also because, in Indonesia, walls and fences historically have been powerful local idioms through which socialities between the Chinese and indigenous Indonesians are framed and articulated. As will be discussed later, the history of the Chinese in Indonesia is often narrated as a history of walling apart the Chinese and the *pribumi*. In the spirit of post-1998 reform, moreover, the act of Chinese-Indonesians moving out from behind various physical and institutional walls has become one of the metrics against which Indonesia's progress of reform and national integration is measured and monitored by critics—critics who may be Chinese or non-Chinese, domestic or international. Together with material walls, the discursive walls between the Chinese and the *pribumi* are thus quotidian sites where the nation's contemporary racial and class politics is incessantly played out.

In addressing literal and figurative examples of wall-making between the Chinese and indigenous Indonesians, this article considers movements of walling in/out as they are enacted and experienced by city dwellers in Jakarta and Medan. Tacit and ubiquitous, these practices of walling are everyday events of identity-making that seek to police the circulation of differently classified bodies. Across the Pacific, similar activities of walling and gating are the subjects of a growing literature on "fortress cities," fortified enclaves, and private, members-only neighborhoods in the urban Euro-Americas. While scholars may differ in their ways of connecting global movements to local histories, their views converge in interpreting gated communities

⁷ For a succinct and thought-provoking discussion on how Chinese/*pribumi* formation cannot be simplified either as race or class, see Ien Ang "Trapped in Ambivalence: Chinese Indonesians, Victimhood, and the Debris of History," in *"Race" Panic and the Memory of Migration*, ed. Meaghan Morris and Brett de Bary (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2001), pp. 21–51.

⁸ Because this is not a study about Chinese-Indonesian dwelling patterns, it makes no attempt to provide a comprehensive account of the various living situations of all Chinese-Indonesians. To be sure, a great many middle- and upper-class indigenous Indonesians, as well, lived in gated communities. Also, many Chinese-Indonesians do not live in gated communities.

in both Dallas, Texas, and São Paulo, Brazil, as instantiations of a new pattern of urban segregation responding to the ever-expanding neoliberal forms of governance and the resultant inequalities.⁹ By comparison, Abidin Kusno, in addressing the ubiquity of security posts and guardhouses (*gardu*) in contemporary urban Indonesia, chooses to emphasize how these structures, besides being part of a modern global trend, have complex roots in local history. Most interestingly, although regarded today by many as an autochthonous tradition, the *gardus* in Kusno's genealogy are, in fact, products of cross-cultural encounters. *Gardus'* multiple origins are intimately tied to the politics of Dutch colonialism, Japanese military occupation and administration, and the historical experience of the Chinese in what today we call "Indonesia."¹⁰ The *gardu* is therefore an everyday monument through which collective memories are formed, transformed, and (I would add) contested in Indonesia.¹¹

This essay follows Kusno in seeing gates, guard posts, and other urban security structures as sites of both community-building *and* cross-group encounters. Moreover, it seeks to add another layer of meaning of "encounter," in addition to those proposed by Kusno. I contend that urban security structures are important sites of cross-group encounter not simply because they interweave different historical experiences across time and space, but also because they are among the sites where cross-racial encounters between Chinese-Indonesians and indigenous Indonesians happen at the most mundane level. Violent or not, these everyday encounters and the cross-racial socialities they generate are important but overlooked aspects of racial politics of Indonesia.

By viewing walls as sites both of exclusion *and* encounter, this essay also wishes to offer another correction to the growing scholarship on gated communities and other forms of urban segregation, with regards to the long-held view that walling reflects desires for community and intimacy by facilitating class-differentiating avoidance, separation, and surveillance.¹² Accordingly, a walled neighborhood is often "marked by patterns of avoidance of social contact," such as by building fences between neighbors and cutting off relationships.¹³ According to this interpretation, walls, in short, restrict social contact universally. This conception of walls is part of a familiar liberal discourse that condemns the segregating effect of walls. From that perspective, a wall, visible or not, represents a system of control and is metonymic to the system of inequality and domination that produces it.

⁹ See, for example, Setha Low, "The Anthropology of Cities: Imagining and Theorizing the City," *Annual Review of Anthropology* 25,1 (1996), and Low, "The Edge and the Center: Gated Communities and the Discourse of Urban Fear," *American Anthropologist* 103,1 (2001); Teresa Caldeira, "Fortified Communities," *Public Culture* 8,2 (1996), and Caldeira, *City of Walls: Crime, Segregation, and Citizenship in Sao Paulo* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2000); and Sally Merry, *Getting Justice and Getting Even* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1990), and Merry, "Mending Walls and Building Fences: Constructing the Private Neighborhood," *Journal of Legal Pluralism* 33 (1993), and Merry, "Spatial Governmentality and the New Urban Social Order: Controlling Gender Violence through Law," *American Anthropologist* 103,1 (March 2001): 16–29.

¹⁰ Abidin Kusno, "Guardian of Memories: *Gardu* in Urban Java," *Indonesia* 81 (April 2006): 148.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 98.

¹² Low, "The Edge and the Center: Gated Communities and the Discourse of Urban Fear," p. 48. See also Caldeira, *City of Walls*, and Michael Sorkin, ed., *Against the Wall* (New York, NY: The New Press, 2005).

¹³ Merry, *Getting Justice and Getting Even*, p. 87, cited in Low, "The Anthropology of Cities," p. 397.

This essay explores walls from a different, but not necessarily incompatible, angle. It asks, How do we uphold the hope for a borderless society without resorting to a moralizing discourse about walls that sees no qualities in them except as obstacles? And if we translate walls and fences hastily and only as symbols of prejudice and obstruction, what does such a critique prevent us from seeing? Indeed, as scholars of colonialism, as well as post-apartheid South Africa, have observed, while different peoples were assigned to different categories and appeared to be segregated geographically, in fact those groups were caught up in reciprocal dependency and asymmetrical relations.¹⁴ In other words, in regulating individuals' movements, walls "produce not only a narrative of closure but also of contact and exchange," thus creating social contexts for interpersonal encounters.¹⁵ "Encounter" here does not imply that the individuals necessarily have equal footing or share power in negotiations. Rather, it suggests an interracial interface of asymmetrical power relations that may facilitate interactions while opening up new opportunities for further re-stratification. Walls conjoin even as they separate; they entail a dialectics of distance and proximity, which often confront as well as confirm forms of segregation. Only by studying the ways in which walls contribute to the exercise of power by creating *both conditions of obstruction and interaction, apartness and proximity*, can we better understand the walls that stand between Chinese-Indonesians and their fellow citizens.

In what follows, I will first introduce, through ethnography and textual analysis, the extent to which Chinese-Indonesian issues are embedded in the discourse of walls as obstacles. I will then expand on the paper's opening ethnographic scenes, as well as incorporating others, in order to illustrate through them the specific interracial socialities that are enacted by various projects of walling. By examining common practices of gate-crossing and fence-installation, especially in Chinese residential neighborhoods, this paper identifies interracial relations of asymmetrical codependency between the Chinese and indigenous Indonesians found commonly in various projects of walling. Most centrally, I will show the ways in which walls include and internalize that which they are built to exclude. This implosion of walls, I argue, textures and animates the daily microphysics of race and class in urban Indonesia.

"Just Wave and Smile": Walls and Identity

Medan 2003. After hanging out at a lounge bar late one night, I was ready to ride home with Dian in her two-door BMW. We were in a line of cars waiting to get off the premises when Dian realized that she had lost her parking ticket. "What should we do now?" I asked Dian, distressed. I remembered that in California a lost ticket would

¹⁴ For discussions of colonial domestic (especially sexual) intimacies, see Ann Laura Stoler, *Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2002), and Stoler, *Race and the Education of Desire: Foucault's History of Sexuality and the Colonial Order of Things* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1995); Anne McClintock, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender, and Nation in the Colonial Contest* (New York, NY: Routledge, 1995); and Vicente L. Rafael, *White Love and Other Events in Filipino History* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2000). For observations on interracial intimacy during post-apartheid South Africa, see J. A. Mbembe, "Aesthetics of Superfluity," *Public Culture* 16,3 (2004); and Lindsay Bremner, "Border/Skin," in *Against the Wall*, ed. Michael Sorkin (New York, NY: The New Press, 2005), pp. 122–35.

¹⁵ Bremner, "Border/Skin," p. 131.

usually amount to being charged the parking garage's daily maximum. Unflustered, Dian, a young, beautiful business executive, smiled at me. "Just watch," she muttered in English. To my surprise, our car was out in the street in no time, without even pausing as it passed by the guard on duty. No ticket, no parking fee, no questions asked; not even an exchange of words or explanation! Did the parking-lot guy know Dian, after all? No. Dian laughed, and explained that she simply acted like she has the privilege of not having to pay the fee. "Just wave and smile," she said, and that was what got us out.

Walls and fences materialize social boundaries. They promote the fantasy of separate regimes in which differently marked bodies may circulate. But the fact that a photocopied ID is often sufficient to pass an identity-check in Indonesia bespeaks the limited ability of walls to keep out intruders. As more than one of my interlocutors in Medan has taught me, there are many ways to get around security posts. To pass through gates and walls generally requires that people identify themselves (or be recognized), but, after being subjected to this requirement many times, some people learn to enact performative identities to serve their practical needs. People's experience of gate-crossing is thus profoundly shaped by the extent to which they can assume certain identities and avoid others.

Yet walling is not just about policing and performing proper identities. As a mechanism of spatial ordering, walling also encodes identities. Signs with phrases like "indigenous owner" and "Islam" appeared on the doors of many shop houses and residences in early May 1998, when Indonesia was on the brink of rioting. While many authors have rightfully pointed out that these scribbled door signs were themselves powerful tools of disciplining and (re-) inscribing identities,¹⁶ I consider the door signs' textual inscriptions to be markers that brought into sharp relief people's desperate attempts to overwrite a powerful social inscription: Walls delineate Chinese-ness, while spatial openness suggests indigenous-ness. An indigenous-owned walled space is, thus, something that needs to be actively asserted because, once fenced, it loses its default spatial and racial identity and thus risks being misidentified and, as a result, falling prey to mob attack. Positioning its inhabitants under one distinguished, group identity determined by walled space silently announces the invisible presence of its inhabitants, subjecting them to the local (and possibly mistaken) hermeneutics of race and class.

To be sure, while signs like the ones that read "indigenous owner" only surfaced during moments of social crisis, the folk ideology that links spatial order to racial identity in Indonesia (i.e., the spatially exclusive "Chinese" versus the spatially open

¹⁶ Abidin Kusno read the "Islam" door signs that surfaced during riots as "producing 'recognizable' identities for the Indonesian middle class, their Chinese parallel, and the underclass counterparts." Abidin Kusno, *Behind the Postcolonial: Architecture, Urban Space and Political Cultures in Indonesia* (London: Routledge, 2000), p. 164. That interpretation was influenced by James Siegel, who indicated that riots against the Chinese were about disciplining the Chinese as much as, if not more so than, disciplining the Indonesians (i.e., "that 'we' were not like 'them'"). James T. Siegel, *Solo in the New Order: Language and Hierarchy in an Indonesian City* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1986); and Siegel, "Thoughts on the Violence of May 13 and 14, 1998, in Jakarta," in *Violence and the State in Suharto's Indonesia*, ed. Benedict Anderson (Ithaca, NY: Cornell Southeast Asia Program Publications, 2001). Ariel Heryanto provides yet another reading of the scribbled door signs, suggesting that "signs and the world they represent were believed to be inseparable" in New Order Indonesia. Ariel Heryanto, *State Terrorism and Political Identity in Indonesia: Fatally Belonging* (London: Routledge, 2006), p. 30.

“Indigenous”) surfaced during the most mundane chats that I had with people in Medan. During many casual strolls within residential neighborhoods and gated communities, I was told time and again how to distinguish a Chinese residence from a house whose inhabitants are more likely to be *orang Indonesia*. A typical Chinese residence is a house with its former front yard completely fenced at the perimeter and covered with a vaulted iron cage, and the ground underneath cemented over so that the entire structure serves as an enclosed garage.¹⁷ An Indonesian residence, on the other hand, is often fenced to a much lesser extent and has lots of trees and greenery in the yard (i.e., open space).

The coupling of spatial and racial identities is so well entrenched that even an open car window can signify indigenous-ness. At Yennis’s backyard in Tempung, Yennis, Lina, Lina’s friend Cindy, and I sat down at the concrete edge of a newly completed fish pond to enjoy the afternoon breeze. Sipping chilled juice made from *markisa* syrup, we took turns flipping through Yennis’s family photo albums. During a lull in the conversation, I brought up the earlier incident in which Lina asked me to wall off the intrusive gaze of the dark-skinned onlooker. It was Cindy who first responded:

“You know these people, don’t you? They love to be in a car. As soon as they get a chance to be in a car, *any car*, they roll the windows down. “

“I like to roll the windows down, too,” I admitted.

“No, these people ... with you, it’s different ... [We] open the window to have some fresh air, but not them. [They] love to open the window no matter what kind of car they are in,” Cindy explained.

“So, what’s the point for them to keep car windows open?” I asked.

Cindy answered, “To show off that they can drive ... I know that some people would buy a new car every Islamic New Year and then sell it as soon as the New Year is over ...”

Then Lina joined in: “... so that they can go back to the village with a new car to please their in-laws.”

“... to put on airs [*gensis!*],” exclaimed Yennis.

Lina’s project of walling was at first articulated as a reaction against a visual intrusion. When asked to elaborate later, however, Cindy, Lina, and Yennis all shifted to linking signs of spatial openness to identities of class and race. For them, an open car window is a dramatic performance that fails to pass muster with those who have discerning eyes; it suggests an unsophisticated showing-off often staged by *orang Indonesia* who posture to adopt a class identity which they, in fact, do not deserve. Through such stereotypical reading of walling and non-walling, Lina and her friends articulated a class–race distinction between the spatially open (*terbuka*), ostentatious indigenous Indonesians and the closed (*tertutup*), modest Chinese-Indonesians. To be sure, while Cindy and Lina deployed this open/closed distinction to confirm their sense of racial and economic superiority, others in Indonesia have attached different meanings and levels of significance to it. For many intellectuals and politicians, the

¹⁷ In Medan, this fencing structure is nicknamed *kandang harimau* (tiger stall).

perceived closed-ness of Chinese-Indonesians has been a serious problem of national concern. The well-regarded news weekly *Tempo*, for example, reiterated this view in its 2004 Independence Day special issue, as explained next.

“Time to Come Out from behind Walls”: Articulating Race and Space

Entitled “The Ethnic Chinese in a Changing Era,” *Tempo*’s 2004 Independence Day edition, which came with a dashing front cover, included a sixty-two-page report regarding the integration of Chinese-Indonesians.¹⁸ The cover was designed by visual artist Lambok Hutabarat and features Indonesia’s national flag, lush green paddy fields, and the cityscape of Jakarta, all bathed in the golden-yellow radiance of a grand, rising sun. Against this mostly yellow and red background emerge four human figures standing triumphantly in a style reminiscent of propaganda art: a black-suited man with punk hair dyed red stands at the uppermost; at his left shoulder is a nurse in her blue uniform; below her left arm and to her right is an engineer holding a construction blueprint; and, finally, in the front row, a man in dark, ethnic, Minang customary garb gestures towards the sun. The visual message is clear and resonates well with what this special report tries to convey in words: the “ethnic Chinese,” identifiable through the slanted eyes found in these four otherwise distinctively characterized figures, have participated in the nation-building of Indonesia either by assimilating and adapting to local culture, or by becoming modern professionals and serving the needs of the country. By featuring the Chinese so centrally in its celebration of Indonesia’s independence (perhaps for the first time in mainstream print history), *Tempo* sent out an affirmative message that the Chinese are a separate yet integral part of Indonesia.¹⁹

According to this feature report in *Tempo*, Dutch colonialism planted the separation of the Chinese with a divide-and-rule policy, forcing them to enter the “racial box [kotak rasial] of Foreign Orientals.”²⁰ The declaration of independence in 1945 brought about two decades of high-level national and political participation by the Chinese in Indonesia: under the leadership of President Sukarno three Chinese served as cabinet ministers, and the group as a whole was recognized as one of the ethnic groups (*suku*) that constituted the Indonesian nation (*bangsa*). But that “beautiful history” ended disastrously.²¹ The power struggle between the military and the Indonesian Communist Party (Partai Komunis Indonesia, PKI) backfired in 1965, after an unsuccessful coup, allegedly mounted by the PKI, and a series of counteractions led by then-General Suharto. During the ensuing political turmoil, killings and other violence against real and alleged communists claimed at least half a million lives, while the rest of the population was left to endure the prolonged terror and surveillance of Suharto’s

¹⁸ This special edition is published in both Indonesian and English. The English edition contains selected articles from the Indonesian edition and has a different title, “Change and the Ethnic Chinese.” While the analysis presented in this paper is based on the Indonesian edition, I consulted the English edition for translations.

¹⁹ Recent topics featured in *Tempo*’s special Independence Day editions include: border integrity (2005), difference in diversity (2006), the era of Liberal Democracy (2007), Tan Malaka (2008), and, most recently (2010), the history of Darul Islam and the contemporary significance of an Islamic state in Indonesia.

²⁰ “Asimilasi Bukan Mandarinisasi” [Assimilation Is Not Mandarinization], *Tempo*, August 16, 2004, p. 33.

²¹ *Ibid.*

New Order regime for thirty-two years.²² Traumatized by being either directly or indirectly victimized in this state purge against communism, many Chinese, according to *Tempo's* staff writer, started to build house walls, literally walling themselves off from the indigenous community:

For a long time before 1965, [the Chinese] did not face many problems. Budi Lim, one of the best architects in Indonesia today, told of how beautiful that time was. [...] Then the 1965 tragedy struck. Since then, his village buddies, who used to run after kites in the rice fields, started to avoid him. [...] His relations with his neighborhood friends abruptly turned sour. At that time, his father started building walls around his house. The walls, gradually growing taller, have remained up to the present ...²³

The wall became increasingly higher, confirming that Budi's family was Chinese, and that the Chinese were not welcome to step on indigenous soil.²⁴

The narrative quoted above conjures both the topological and tropological notions of walls through Budi Lim's family history, which is repeated in two leading articles in *Tempo's* special report. Painting spatial exclusion and racial exclusivity in one stroke, *Tempo's* narrative epitomizes the drastic and traumatic effect of the shift of power from Sukarno to Suharto. The romanticized, mutually welcomed opening between the Chinese and the indigenous Indonesians under Sukarno's post-independence government fell short in 1965. The Chinese were once again forced back to their "closet" (*lemari*), now refashioned by Suharto's New Order regime.²⁵ From 1966 into the 1980s, Suharto issued more than sixty discriminatory laws against the Chinese and banned public display of Chinese religious and cultural practices.²⁶ According to a staff writer, this policy "systematically burned the bridges connecting the Chinese and the indigenous people" while sidelining the Chinese to garden only in the soil of the economy.²⁷ Physical and institutional walls between the Chinese group (*kaum Cina*) and the indigenous Indonesians (*warga pribumi*) have since prevailed, so much so that now the Chinese themselves build and impose those barriers as a way to remain separate and apart.

Tempo's Independence Day special report exemplifies a liberal, nationalist perspective that blames the colonial and New Order states for the perceived tensions between the Chinese and indigenous Indonesians. The twist in the fate of the Chinese, according to *Tempo*, largely correlates with that of the Indonesian nation: both flourished during Sukarno's nationalist triumph and suffered under colonial and New Order rules. In this light, the current moment of *Reformasi* presents a crucial historic conjuncture whence the nationalist project, once hijacked by the New Order regime,

²² Robert Cribb estimated that the fatalities numbered half a million. See Robert Cribb, ed., *The Indonesian Killings of 1965–1966: Studies from Java and Bali* (Clayton, Victoria: Center of Southeast Asian Studies, Monash University, 1990).

²³ "Asimilasi Bukan Mandarinasasi," p. 34.

²⁴ "Saatnya Keluar Dari Kepompong" [Coming OUT!], *Tempo*, August 16, 2004, p. 41.

²⁵ Bondan Winarno, "Etnis Chinese Keluar Dari Lemari" [Ethnic Chinese Come out from Closet], *Tempo*, August 16, 2004, p. 85.

²⁶ For an English translation of some of these key legal documents, see Charles A. Coppel, *Studying Ethnic Chinese in Indonesia* (Singapore: Singapore Society of Asian Studies, 2002), pp. 30–47.

²⁷ "Asimilasi Bukan Mandarinasasi."

should now be restored. To this end, *Tempo's* writers have tended to demand the elimination of all physical and institutional walls between the Chinese and the indigenous Indonesians that were erected as a result of the transition of power from Sukarno to Suharto. For example, voicing a note of cautionary hope, one staff writer reminds us that, while many walls have fallen away during *Reformasi*, state discrimination is still rampant,²⁸ and many indigenous Indonesians still perceive some Chinese as closed-minded and exclusive.²⁹ Two key articles in this report conclude that the Chinese should “leave the cocoon of trauma” (*keluar dari kepompong trauma*)³⁰ and “open themselves up” (*membuka diri*).³¹ “After being shackled for over three decades,” writes one reporter, “the time has now come for Chinese-Indonesians to come out from behind their tall house walls.”³² *Tempo* articles typically associate the Chinese post-New Order moment of coming out with the breaking down of internal walls within the nation. Hence, the deferred fulfillment of the national motto, *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika* (Unity in Diversity).

Like Cindy and Lina, *Tempo's* reporters see the distinction between those who are “open indigenous” and those who are “closed Chinese.” But unlike Cindy and Lina, who ridiculed the openness of the indigenous, these reporters and writers of *Tempo* problematize the closed-ness of the Chinese and ask the Chinese to come out from behind their walls. More than merely indexing Chineseness, walling to these writers suggests a separatist politics that threatens the national integrity of Indonesia. In this context, to wall is not only “Chinese,” but also anti-national.

Of critical importance is that, for nationalists, the heartfelt problem is the perceived walls between the “Chinese” and the “(indigenous) Indonesians,” not the construction of the “Chinese” and the “Indonesian” collective identities through the construction of physical and discursive walls between them. According to the astute observation of Ariel Heryanto, Chineseness in the dominant *Reformasi* discourse is “widely understood as something that the New Order attacked (and which must thus now be rehabilitated), but not as something that the regime actively helped to construct.”³³ This understanding of Chineseness, I suggest, has similarly informed *Tempo's* politics against walls, which sees walls as colonial and New Order evils that confined and ghettoized a much-repressed Chinese racial minority. That interpretation has resulted in an inherited tension in *Tempo's* anti-racism campaign against walls—an anxiety most clearly felt in *Tempo's* repeated warning against *Mandarinisasi* (Mandarinization), which appears on the same page where the magazine calls on the state to abolish all discriminatory practices against the Chinese. Calling for the Chinese to be out, *Tempo* is at the same time worried about the particular way in which some Chinese have been emerging from behind their walls, namely, by expressing Chineseness through cultural performances like the lion dance (*barongsai*) and “celebrating Chinese New Year on a

²⁸ “Sisa Diskriminasi Di Mana-Mana” [Remnants of Discrimination Are Everywhere], *Tempo*, August 16, 2004.

²⁹ “Orang Cina Di Mata Mereka” [Chinese in Their Eyes], *Tempo*, August 16, 2004.

³⁰ “Saatnya Keluar Dari Kepompong” and “Asimilasi Bukan Mandarinisasi.”

³¹ “Orang Cina Di Mata Mereka,” p. 88.

³² “Saatnya Keluar Dari Kepompong,” p. 41.

³³ Heryanto, *State Terrorism*, p. 30.

large scale" without striving to play a more balanced role in all social matters.³⁴ In short, since undoing racial walls is understood as the same as freeing an ever-persistent Chineseness, *Tempo's* authors warn against the possibility of a threatening excess; in other words, unleashed and rehabilitated, the once repressed Chineseness could, through its imagined and real diasporic connections, easily become too powerful for the Indonesian nation to contain it.³⁵ "Mandarinisation is not the answer," repeats one staff writer of *Tempo*, "Assimilation is not Mandarinisation."³⁶

Problematizing the closed-ness of Chinese but not Chineseness, the politics against walls that *Tempo* espouses thus seeks to undo walls but not race. Consequently, although blaming the Dutch and Suharto regimes for passing down their racism, *Tempo* does not question their ideology of race—an ideology that sees the boundary of race as fixed and given, and which can be managed through spatial manipulations.³⁷ As the colonial and postcolonial articulation of race (especially Chineseness) through space in Indonesia deserves a critical study of its own, here it suffices to highlight some representative spatial regulations. The Dutch colonial state imposed racial segregation in urban centers by creating ethnic enclaves ruled directly by their headmen and only indirectly by the colonial administration. In particular, it sought to curtail Chinese mobility via a passport regulation (*passenstelsel*, 1821–1906), a residential regulation (*wijkenstelsel*, 1841–1915), and the policing and enforcing of those regulations through the *Politierol* (1848 into the 1910s).³⁸ The New Order regime had laws that prohibited conspicuous (*menyolok*) displays of Chinese characters, as well as other religious and customary practices in public; instead, such activities were required to take place "internally, ... within the boundaries of the environment of the household of a family ... or place of worship."³⁹ Notably, the Sukarno regime was no exception in adopting spatial measures to manage the Chinese. In 1959, a presidential regulation was issued to ban "alien-owned" (read: Chinese) retail stores from rural areas. That measure was followed by the banning of Chinese from residing in rural areas (and enforced by regional military commands).⁴⁰

Dutch colonial apartheid was especially pronounced in Medan. Founded in the mid-to-late nineteenth century, Medan was the administrative center of a lucrative plantation economy that facilitated labor exploitation and political control through the administered movements of its racialized populations. Simply put, while "foreigners" such as Europeans, Chinese, Tamils, and Arabs were recruited and made to live within

³⁴ "Asimilasi Bukan Mandarinisasi," p. 35.

³⁵ This is an anxiety fed and sustained in no small measure by the reality of an economically expanding People's Republic of China and its growing political influence internationally.

³⁶ "Asimilasi Bukan Mandarinisasi."

³⁷ In his study of colonial racial classification, Cornelius Fasseur suggests that colonial society in the Indies could be compared in its carefully elaborated structure of rules and regulations to the "apartheid" system of South Africa. C. Fasseur, "Cornerstone and Stumbling Block: Racial Classification and the Late Colonial State in Indonesia," in *The Late Colonial State in Indonesia: Political and Economic Foundations of the Netherlands Indies, 1880–1942*, ed. Robert Cribb (Leiden: KITLV Press, 1994), p. 31.

³⁸ Mona Lohanda, *The Kapitan Cina of Batavia, 1837-1942* (Jakarta: KITLV Press, 1994), pp. 111, 132, 176.

³⁹ "Guidelines for the Implementation of Presidential Instruction, No. 14, 1967."

⁴⁰ J. A. C. Mackie, "Anti-Chinese Outbreaks in Indonesia, 1959–68," in *The Chinese in Indonesia: Five Essays*, ed. J. A. C. Mackie (Honolulu, HI: University of Hawaii Press, in association with the Australian Institute of International Affairs, 1976), pp. 77–138.

the city's border, the "natives" were kept outside Medan and under a separate jurisdiction. Specifically, Tamils, Javanese, and Chinese were imported *en masse* as estate laborers, to live and work on plantation lands leased by the Sultanate. Other foreigners, including European, Arab, and Chinese planters and merchants, lived in their respective ethnic enclaves within the city. Both foreign traders and laborers fell under Dutch jurisdiction. On the other hand, the "native" population—including the "indigenous" Malay, Karo-Batak, and Simalungun-Batak, and the "migrant" Minangkabau, Mandailing, and converted Toba Batak—lived outside of Medan, and were subjected to the Sultanate and its common law.⁴¹

In this light, the ubiquity of references to walls in *Tempo's* special report appears far from accidental. It is, in fact, informed by a deep-seated state discourse in Indonesia with regards to its Chinese subjects. Colonial or not, new or old, these state regimes attempted to localize an ever-expanding Chinese minority through spatial technologies of segregation, concentration, and surveillance. Fighting against this enduring state-sponsored racism while shaped by its ideological effects, the writers of *Tempo's* special report, as shown earlier, can hardly see the Chinese-Indonesians outside the paradigmatic language of walls, fences, boxes, closets, and cocoons. Read separately, each of those words postulates a Chinese-Indonesian community to be, above all, bounded and isolated spatially. Seen together, this chain of figurative terms tells the history of the Chinese in Indonesia as a series of episodic oscillations between confinement and opening, and at times, quite literally (as in Budi Lim's story), as a process of how the Chinese have gotten behind, and are now coming out from behind, the walls. Portrayed as being both excluded and excluding, Chinese-Indonesians, and their sense of community, are thus, in Abidin Kusno's perceptive words, "reduced to 'exclusivity.'"⁴²

Tempo's writers are certainly not alone in conjuring a Chinese-Indonesian community through images of spatial isolation. I have seen numerous other journal articles and government reports making the exact same association. For example, an official study of assimilation problems (*masalah pembauran*), published by the Department of Education and Culture in 1997, brings its readers to a Chinese neighborhood in Medan. "What really sticks out [*menonjol*] about these Chinese residences," the study reports, is that "almost all the houses have iron bars, stretching from yard fences all the way to the houses, so that the whole bases of the houses are protected by iron bars." The report further notes that "along with living gregariously, [the Chinese] tend to support [*mendukung*] the use of Chinese dialect in their everyday social intercourse. They rarely associate with *pribumi* residents, although they live close to each other."⁴³ Exactly how the Chinese live—"gregariously" or close to indigenous

⁴¹ Michael van Langenberg, "Class and Ethnic Conflict in Indonesia's Decolonization Process: A Study of East Sumatra," *Indonesia* 33 (April 1982): 1–30. Note, however, such controlled separation is always a contested project, necessarily curtailed by a more messy reality and its own unintended consequences. Ann Stoler, for example, showed that there were clandestine multi-ethnic villages, made up of Javanese, Malay, Chinese, and Gayo women and men, on the plantation periphery. Ann Stoler, "'In Cold Blood': Hierarchies of Credibility and the Politics of Colonial Narratives," *Representations* 37 (1992): 151–89.

⁴² Kusno, *Behind the Postcolonial: Architecture, Urban Space, and Political Cultures in Indonesia*, p. 165.

⁴³ Indonesia Departemen Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan, *Corak Dan Pola Hubungan Sosial Antar Golongan Dan Kelompok Etnik Di Daerah Perkotaan: Suatu Studi Masalah Pembauran Dalam Bidang Sosial Dan Ekonomi Daerah Sumatra Utara*, first edition (Jakarta: Departemen Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan RI, 1997), p. 39.

residents—is probably less important than the report’s rhetoric that invokes and reproduces the familiar image of a spatially and racially exclusive Chinese community. And, much like the reports cited in *Tempo*, this report assumes that spatial segregation necessarily entails racial segregation.

The rest of the paper explores the so-called “Chinese exclusivity” from a different angle. I do not deny the fact that there are, indeed, quite a number of Chinese-Indonesians who live within a fortified environment. Compared with other indigenous Indonesians who also live in gated communities, these Chinese-Indonesians are disproportionately singled out as an example of racial exclusivity. To acknowledge this somber reality is to acknowledge the complexity of the issue at hand, which cannot be dismissed lightly as a case of mere prejudice or bad sampling. The problem with “Chinese exclusivity,” I suggest, is not that it is “false” in some superficial empirical sense. Rather, this stereotype invites a sense of reality that reductively compresses the interweaving power relations and complex contradictions that have worked to generate it. As a counter effort, this paper seeks to “decompress” the power relations by showing the twisted trajectories and convoluted entanglement through which the concept of “Chinese exclusivity” has come into being. It does so by *decoupling spatial and racial exclusivity*, asking instead: When journalists, scholars, and citizens invoke walls and fences and translate them as symbols of obstacles, what is being left out? Could it be that walls and gates, boxes and closets, stand in misleadingly for a social vacuum and a lack of mutual engagement and shared complicity, so that everything we assume about these particular symbols of walling becomes an unspoken argument against a larger conception—that walls facilitate as well as impede social interactions, with expected and unexpected consequences? Indeed, if colonial and New Order policies of walling apart the Chinese and the indigenous have obstructed positive interracial relations between Chinese-Indonesians and indigenous Indonesians, I contend those policies did so successfully not simply through effective confinement and isolation of the Chinese, but, more pertinently, by creating specific cross-racial socialities that are capable of constantly reproducing notions of Chinese spatial and racial exclusivity and difference. To start illustrating just what these interracial socialities are, and the complex and often paradoxical dynamics they generate, let us now revisit Vera and her daily routine of crossing five security gates.

“We Spoiled Them”: Walls of Benevolence

For a week in December 2004, I woke up every morning at five o’clock and rode with Vera to her office in Jakarta’s central business district. Since I stayed at Vera’s place, riding with her was the easiest way to get out of the gated neighborhood. The other alternatives, the ones used by servants, are to ride a bicycle or to walk half an hour to a bus stop. After spending a full day getting stuck in traffic between appointments and interviews, I often met up with Vera again at her office building around five o’clock in the afternoon. We would then take the pedestrian bridge to cross Jl. Thamrin and spend two hours or so at Celebrity Fitness, an international member-

only fitness club, where we worked out some and waited for the carpool restriction to end at seven o'clock.⁴⁴

"Did you see those people standing outside my office building?" Vera asked me one evening as we were climbing up the bridge. My eyes had been focused squarely on the narrow and steep ladder steps, but the crowd was too big to miss; it was mostly young men or teenaged students standing near the side entrance or scattered along the back alley.

"Aren't they waiting for their friends or something?" I replied.

"Some are," Vera said, "but most of them are waiting for a different kind of friend." She went on to explain that because the carpool regulation, or "3-in-1" in local terms, forbids any private cars with fewer than three passengers to travel in or out of this section of Jl. Thamrin during peak hours, those people were waiting to earn some extra cash by riding with drivers who needed an extra head or two to get out of the central business district before seven o'clock. Such passengers are called, in Jakartan slang, *joki*. Aiming to reduce traffic flow, Jakarta's carpool restriction creates scenarios where kids and adults (usually from the urban lower class) are paid to ride with well-off professionals or businessmen in their sports utility vehicles or chauffeured luxury cars. According to Vera, many *joki* come into the regulated zone by bus, just to be transported out again as a paid passenger. Many child *joki* (or *joki anak-anak*), especially, are from a poor background, and become *joki* to support their families. Vera added that, although child *joki* request a smaller fee than do adult *joki*, she always ends up paying them more out of sympathy.⁴⁵ She also pointed out that some rich people require their domestic servants to ride in with them in the morning and let them find their way home by bus. For Chinese-Indonesians like Vera, these cross-class encounters are also cross-racial ones.⁴⁶

Vera had hired adult *joki* before, but only a few times. In her mind, there are potential risks involved when hiring and riding with someone from another class and race. She spoke about the possibility of being robbed, or having things in the car stolen, when hiring a *joki*. Also, according to her, a *joki* might become violent if the *joki* is not satisfied with the monetary compensation. Vera thus prefers to relax at Celebrity Fitness until the traffic regulation is no longer in force. Besides working out and socializing with other young professionals, she also enjoys taking free showers there with unlimited hot water, rather than manually mixing hot and cold water in a bucket at home. Vera and I therefore often got home late at night, after all the security gates were closed. Stopping in front of a gate, Vera typically flashes her headlights and honks intensely until a *satpam* (security guard) emerges from the little post station

⁴⁴ On weekdays, the carpool restriction is enforced twice per day (7–10 AM and 4:30–7 PM). The controlled zones include sections of Jl. Gadjah Mada, Jl. Thamrin, Ji. Sudirman, and Jl. Gatot Subroto.

⁴⁵ According to Vera, hiring a child *joki* costs around Rp. 5,000–10,000, while hiring an adult *joki* costs around Rp. 10,000–20,000. During the period of my major field research (2003–04), Rp. 10,000 was equivalent to approximately \$US 1.00.

⁴⁶ Alternatively, a driver can get out of the regulated zones by paying off the traffic police with about Rp. 50,000–100,000, according to Vera. Such bribery is another interracial intimacy commonly practiced throughout urban Indonesia. Vera claimed that it is illegal to hire *joki*, but, again, when caught by the police, a driver with cash can usually pay off the police officer.

adjacent to the gate.⁴⁷ Upon seeing Vera, the *satpam* raises the pole blocking the driveway without any questions. “*Terima kasih ya, Pak*” (thank you very much), Vera says, after rolling her window down momentarily to proffer a Rp. 5,000 bill—about the price of a meal at a cheap eatery. One night, having observed the same exchange repeated five times, I asked Vera if she always keeps a stack of small bills in her purse. Yes, she confirmed, and explained that she likes to tip “the Indonesians” all the time, and that a friend who works in a bank prepared the small bills for her. Vera concluded the conversation with these words: “We [the Chinese] spoil them!”

While attempting to channel all exchanges and traffic through limited and guarded entrances, walls reorganize a gated community’s spatial relationship with its adjacent neighborhoods. These walls and gates keep in check the flow of people and goods from outside the community, especially from its neighboring *kampung*—an urban, low-income residential area. One of the reasons that Vera goes through five security gates every night is that she chooses to drive through a nearby gated community rather than taking a public route. According to Vera, the public route, which runs through several indigenous *kampungs*, is often crowded and not very safe. The gated route, on the other hand, provides not only a shortcut, but also, Vera claims, a safer path because it passes through a community whose residents are mostly Chinese-Indonesians relocated from Surabaya and Medan. And more than merely driving through as passersby, Vera and I took note of community events announced by red banners strung above the neighborhood streets, and planned on returning for tasting tours to the new *Mei Bangka* (Bangka-style noodles) and *He Ci Medan* (Medanese shrimp cake) restaurants that had recently opened at the corner of *blok C*.

Vera’s strategy of rerouting is well-known to developers who build gated communities in Medan. Usman Pelly’s research on elite housing in Medan documents that developers avoid setting the entrance gates of their housing projects to face the adjacent low-income settlements, even if by so doing they make it necessary for residents to drive a longer distance to reach the main road. According to Pelly, such strategic routing is based on “security concerns” and the desire to maintain the spatial exclusivity of the elite housing communities.⁴⁸ For both developers and Vera, the low-income settlements are imagined to be a lingering security threat. Drivers and developers alike prefer that the traffic between a gated community and its neighboring *kampung* be controlled by security gates and walls.

Just like the carpool restriction in Jakarta’s central business district, security gates disable certain encounters while enabling others. While avoiding driving through neighboring areas that she considers racially indigenous, Vera finds a shortcut as well as a sense of safety and belonging in a Chinese gated community where she claims no

⁴⁷ While the New Order “security system” (*system keamanan lingkungan*, or SISKAMLING) differentiates security guards of public and commercial buildings (*satuan pengamanan*, or SATPAM) from neighborhood patrols (*pertahanan sipil*, or HANSIP), most of the Chinese I knew in Medan and Jakarta did not make such a distinction. They generally use the word “*satpam*” to encompass both categories. For a discussion of New Order civil security systems, see Joshua Barker, “Surveillance and Territoriality in Bandung,” in *Figures of Criminality in Indonesia, the Philippines, and Colonial Vietnam*, ed. Vicente Rafael (Ithaca, NY: Cornell Southeast Asia Program Publications, 1999), pp. 95–96.

⁴⁸ Usman Pelly, “Social Institutions and Ethnic Cohesion in Medan,” in *Sama-Sama: Facets of Ethnic Relations in South East Asia*, ed. Miriam Coronel Ferrer (Quezon City: The Third World Studies Center, University of the Philippines–Diliman, 1999), pp. 180–81.

residence. And, by monitoring public access, this gated community acquires for itself a Chinese identity, which further attracts other Chinese to visit as passersby and customers. However, its security guards, the very agents who keep the racial and class identity of this space constantly in check, are all indigenous Indonesians from the neighboring *kampungs*.⁴⁹ How does Vera see the relationship between those security guards and her fellow community residents? There are two kinds of residents, Vera told me. Some residents pay no special attention to the guards on duty; after all, those people are paid to do their jobs. Other residents, by comparison, often give the guards cigarette money (*uang rokok*), as well as food and unwanted household items. Announcing later that she is the second type of resident, Vera added that, as a result of the cash and items she offers the guards, they all know her and are, in her own words, “always ready to help me”—for example, delivering Vera’s suits to the nearby dry-cleaner’s shop. Notably, Vera knows her *satpam* well by sight, but not by their names. She just beckons for “that fat one,” for example, and waits for other *satpams* to call the guy over.

In describing the long-term gift-giving practices she has employed to cultivate a friendly relationship with the *satpam*, Vera casts the everyday interracial sociality between them and her in light of an exchanged benevolence. But since, as suggested by Vera, the guards are both doing their job and returning Vera’s gift, their “help” is not really help, but part reciprocation and part job obligation. In other words, Vera’s framing of the relationship as a gift exchange does not remove it conceptually from the context of exchanging labor for money, but adds to the relationship a sense of asymmetrical intimacy. Vera presents herself as giving more than she has to through her compassionate acts of tipping, gift-giving, and paying more to the child *joki*. And in bestowing such a unilateral benevolent excess upon these *orang Indonesia*, Vera stands on the higher end of an unbalanced moral economy, wherein she and other Chinese who have been doing the same “spoil them.”

In her work on the politics of compassion, Lauren Berlant proposes to see compassion not as an “organic emotion” but “a social and aesthetic technology of belonging.”⁵⁰ Through money and gift-giving, Vera patronizes her *satpam* and *joki* and engages in individuated relationships with them that span the commercial and the communal. But in characterizing those relationships as benevolent excess, she postulates a crucial difference between herself and those who receive her sympathy—the difference between “us,” the Chinese who spoil, and the Indonesians who are being spoiled. In other words, Vera’s sense of belonging to a community of similitude, i.e., to a class and race that spoils, is articulated through her voluntary distribution of money and goodwill to the “other.” In this way, she crosses the physical borders between class and race without unsettling them.

⁴⁹ It is worth noting that some gated communities outsource security services to security companies that routinely transfer their security guards between different posts so that, theoretically, the guards never get to know their communities well enough to conspire with local thugs. As is well known, the Indonesian armed forces during the New Order used a similar strategy of not stationing individual troops close to their home towns. Also, writing during Java’s age of popular urban radicalism, Mr. A. N. de W. noted in 1923 that three thousand civilians had been recruited and trained as field police to safeguard Java’s largest cities, yet those professional police “were not allowed to police the areas where they were originally from” (p. 109, cited in Kusno, “Guardian of Memories: *Gardu* in Urban Java,” p. 126).

⁵⁰ Lauren Berlant, “Introduction: Compassion (and Withholding),” in *Compassion: The Culture and Politics of an Emotion*, ed. Lauren Berlant (New York, NY: Routledge, 2004), p. 5.

Vera does not occupy her privileged position with full ease and conviction. On another occasion, she used the word “troublesome” (*repotin*) to characterize her daily experience of having to pass through one security gate after another while returning home late at night. At such odd hours, Vera explains, tipping the security guards becomes more of an expected obligation than a voluntary contribution. Are we Chinese, Vera thus pondered, really spoiling the Indonesians, or are we, in fact, their cash/milk cows (*sapi perah*)?

Paying for a Permit that Does Not Exist: The Ambivalence of *Keamanan*

Vera’s ambivalence suggests the coexistence of two seemingly conflicting interpretations of her relationship with the *satpams*. On the one hand, as discussed above, Vera presents tipping as part of her everyday benevolence that patronizes and spoils security guards. On the other hand, she cannot help feeling as though she is being treated as a cash cow. This second view renders her relationship with the guards as one of everyday exploitation, in which she finds herself paying extra to go through a system of walls that she has helped build. What is characteristically at work here, according to this view, is no longer benevolence, but violence. Instead of safeguarding Vera and other Chinese, the wall has, in this perspective, become part of a widespread practice of intimidation and extortion that often targets Chinese-Indonesians like Vera. While at this point the readers might find it difficult to imagine the security guards as being part of this longstanding practice of extortion, as the story unfolds we will see how and why this may be so.⁵¹

Vera is conflicted because she sees that both interpretations are equally valid. Moreover, I suggest that Vera’s indeterminacy is far from singular, but reflects a common ambivalence among the Chinese towards walls and all security devices in general. It is no accident that *Media Sinergi Bangsa* (hereafter *Sinergi*) monthly, an important magazine that portrays the perspectives of Chinese-Indonesians, ran a special report in its inaugural issue (September 1998) on the “phenomenon of fences,” addressing the proliferation of tall fences and walls in and beyond Chinese neighborhoods after May 1998. Like *Tempo*, *Sinergi* noted the ubiquity of walls in Chinese-Indonesian social experiences. But the *Sinergi* articles differ from *Tempo*’s in one important respect: rather than presenting walls as merely obstructing interracial and national integration, *Sinergi*’s writers see in walls both protection and danger. After what happened in May 1998, these writers suggest, the Chinese can no longer rely on the state’s security apparatus. The fences that keep growing taller and taller in front of Chinese households establish a much needed sense of security and comfort that the state has failed to provide. But the elaborate reliance of the Chinese on walls can, in fact, incur opposite effects by breeding social isolation and mutual suspicion.⁵² To extend this view, the *Sinergi* report reiterates a true crime story in which a whole

⁵¹ It is worth noting that Joshua Barker argues that *satpam* (and *hansip*) may be comparable with *preman* in the sense that they all define neighborhood security posts not as emblems of surveillance but of territoriality, hence, their payment is not salary but the payment of debt (of tribute). However, I do not suggest that all security guards in Indonesia are involved in extortion. Barker, “Surveillance and Territoriality in Bandung,” pp. 126–27.

⁵² “Antara Kambing, Manusia, dan Penguasa” [Between Goat, Human, and Authority], *Media Sinergi Bangsa* 1 (November 1998), pp. 10-13.

Chinese family was robbed and killed during a break-in, and their corpses rotted before neighbors and police eventually fought their way into the gated fortress. Cutting the victims off from other human and institutional networks of support, the home security system in the story has nightmarishly morphed into a trap, abetting the murders of its masters.⁵³

Sinergi exploits the horror of this tragedy to good effect. Far from being a source of prestige and coziness as intended, the fortified residence became a Frankenstein-ish monster that ultimately contributed to the harm that befell its creator. "A fence is supposed to conjure the feeling of safety," the *Sinergi* report declares in bold letters, "but in reality it also causes the sense of alienation."⁵⁴ Indeed, what can be more alienating than being trapped in and then left to die alone in the very space called home? But when newspapers report yet another street shooting or incident of urban unrest, which in turn triggers charged memories of past attacks against the Chinese, how many Chinese-Indonesians will feel at home in a place without fences and walls? Challenging its readers with these difficult questions, *Sinergi* in effect reiterates Vera's troubled ambivalence concerning walls: the Chinese deploy walls and security guards to keep violence at bay, but they often find these walls and guards perpetuating violence in their own ways. Thus understood, the horror story recited by *Sinergi* can be read as an allegory for the relationship between Chinese-Indonesians and their security walls: the walls are at the same time protective and menacing to the Chinese, who often find that the walls facilitate the violence they are built to exclude. Although not always fatal, this relationship is often both intimate and alienating, and therefore fraught with paradox and ambivalence.

Back in Medan, Pak Iskandar was the first person to share with me his experience of being treated like a cash cow. A successful businessman in his early sixties, Pak Iskandar had an engineering degree and was once a science teacher. Yet he was forced to stop teaching after the North Sumatran regional military command banned all foreign-run (read: Chinese) schools amidst the turmoil that came after 1965. Like many Chinese in Medan who only acquired their Indonesian citizenships much later on, Pak Iskandar found "business" to be among the very few career options available under the reign of the New Order. As mentioned in the prelude, Pak Iskandar now owns an aluminum factory in Medan and has extensive knowledge about fences and gates. Yet, even though he makes high-quality, solid security products, Pak Iskandar is not immune from the periodic harassment and extortion perpetuated on the Chinese in the name of security. Each month, Pak Iskandar pays 50,000 rupiah as a security fee (*uang keamanan*) to the Pancasila Youth (Pemuda Pancasila, PP), a youth organization headquartered right across the street from his office. When New Year and Independence Day approach, additional donations are requested through a PP officer's visit. "Pak, help, it's about New Year's time ... " (*Tolong, Pak, Hari Raya sudah mau datang*). Upon hearing just those words and seeing the orange-and-black camouflage uniform, Pak Iskandar knows what is expected from him.

⁵³ "Benteng-Benteng Di Sekitar Rumah" [Fortresses Surrounding Houses], *Media Sinergi Bangsa* 1 (November 1998), p. 8.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

There is more besides these routine, common encounters, Pak Iskandar adds. He recalls that PP once asked for a special protection fee in the amount of one million rupiah when all the Chinese in Medan were targeted by the street unrest that occurred on May 7 and 8, 1998. Pak Iskandar was also asked to contribute to PP's office renovation project several years earlier. He ended up pledging half a million rupiah to help replace the floor tile. When Pak Iskandar remodeled his own residence the next year, the camouflage-clad party members showed up again, asking for security money. "This is how Indonesia is," Pak Iskandar explained:

[No matter what is going on, be it] moving, house construction and renovation, grand-opening, wedding, even holding a funeral at home ..., these people come and ask to take care of our security ... We have to give them money when we're remodeling our houses, but we also have to give them money when they are remodeling their houses. Similarly, we have to give them money when they celebrate their Islamic New Year, but when it comes to our turn to celebrate the Chinese New Year, we are still obliged to give them money! ... They come to take care of our security. But we all know that, be it safe or dangerous, it's all their doing.

Pak Iskandar's comment brings into sharp relief the arbitrariness of *keamanan*. A New Year celebration entitles PP to ask for security money simply because it does, no matter who is celebrating which New Year. Such arbitrariness becomes possible when what is safe and what is not is at PP's discretion. Without having to verbalize it, the organization threatens to make certain situations "dangerous" if PP's monetary demands are not met. Thus in control of defining both danger and security, PP and other similar organizations forged an intricate interracial relationship with those Chinese who are their best targets/clients over the course of the New Order, and that relationship persists in the *Reformasi* period. It is a double-edged relationship, whereby organizations such as PP are known to their clients/victims as both the protector and perpetrator.

We can begin to probe this double-edged interracial relationship by looking at the histories and activities of Pemuda Pancasila. Officially a youth organization (*organisasi pemuda*) that claims to defend *Pancasila*, PP is also broadly understood as an organization of *preman* (street thugs, hoodlums) who work at the margins of the law (when not violating it) as parking attendants, day laborers, security guards, extortionists, and debt collectors.⁵⁵ According to Loren Ryter's perceptive study, this conflation of *pemuda* and *preman* as embodied by PP illustrates the transformation of Indonesia's youth activism under the New Order. In short, PP members fight not for transformative causes, as did the youth of 1945 and 1966, but for servicing the state.⁵⁶ Such close affinity between PP and the New Order regime blurred the distinction between legitimate and illegitimate sources of violence, because both deployed criminality to establish authority. Rather than social anomalies, then, organizations like

⁵⁵ Loren Ryter, "Pemuda Pancasila: The Last Loyalist Free Men of Suharto's Order?," *Indonesia* 66 (April 1998): 46-47.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 70.

PP are the double of the New Order state and are in a position to expose the New Order's true nature.⁵⁷

Notably, while tracing the genealogical formation of Pemuda Pancasila, Ryter takes his readers to the streets of Medan in the late 1950s. The focus is on Effendi Nasution, a youth leader who grew up in Medan and later became the head of PP North Sumatra. Nicknamed Pendi, Effendi was the main player who turned street living into a lucrative venture, according to Ryter. The key to Pendi's success was devising a common profit scheme so that local hoodlums would stop deadly brawls against each other. This was done primarily through protection rackets targeting the Chinese, who were forced to pay monthly dues to Effendi's organization: Medan City Pemuda Association (P2KM). Quoting from an unpublished biography, Ryter further relates Effendi's racketeering scheme to his early experience of living in a mostly Chinese neighborhood:

One night, while his neighbors were fast asleep, Pendi went outside and gathered stones the size of *kendondong* fruit ... which he threw against the [corrugated iron] roofs of the homes of his mainly ethnic Chinese neighbors. Pendi ran inside his house via the back door. The Chinese ... immediately woke up and opened their doors. Pendi then pretended to be awoken and to be angry that his sleep had been disturbed. The Chinese didn't know who had thrown the stones. Maybe some of them suspected Pendi, but they didn't have the guts to accuse him. [He repeated this "drama" for several nights.] Finally, these Chinese agreed to ask Pendi to guard against these disturbances and promised him a monthly compensation that was not too shabby. Since then, Pendi received routine monthly "security money."⁵⁸

Ryter's origin story of Pemuda Pancasila places the Chinese community in Medan at the center of its birth. To be sure, the Chinese had been subjected to racketeering before the founding of P2KM.⁵⁹ What was new about P2KM, according to Ryter, was the fact that it started an "enterprise" that employed street youths in both extortion *and* private security as night guards for the Chinese. During the turmoil of the revolution (1946–49), many "rebel" robber bands profited from plundering and attacking Chinese and Indians, who were both easy targets and easy to blame as "Dutch sympathizers."⁶⁰ In response, the Chinese all over the Dutch Indies organized voluntary self-defense squads called *Poh An Tui*.⁶¹ But in Medan, creating *Poh An Tui* turned out to be a

⁵⁷ Loren Ryter, "Youth, Gangs, and the State in Indonesia" (PhD dissertation, University of Washington–Seattle, 2002), p. 13.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 41.

⁵⁹ See, for example, Ong Hokham, *Thugs, the Curtain Thief, and Sugar Lord* (Jakarta: Metaphor, 2003).

⁶⁰ Ann Laura Stoler, "Working the Revolution: Plantation Laborers and the People's Militia in North Sumatra," *Journal of Asian Studies* 47,2 (1988): 232; and Anthony Reid, *The Blood of the People: Revolution and the End of Traditional Rule in Northern Sumatra* (Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1979), pp. 162–63.

⁶¹ Langenberg, "Class and Ethnic Conflict in Indonesia's Decolonization Process: A Study of East Sumatra," p. 11, n. 35 and n. 36. Also, Victor Purcell outlined the controversies over the establishment of *Poh An Tui*; see Victor Purcell, *The Chinese in Southeast Asia*, first edition (London and New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1951), pp. 564–65. Sulardi's unpublished bachelor's thesis, "Pao An Tui Jakarta 1947–1949" (Fakultas Sastra Universitas Indonesia, Jakarta, 1994), provides a detailed case study of the controversy, quoted in Benny Setiono, *Tionghoa Dalam Pusaran Politik* [The Chinese in Political Vortex] (Jakarta: Elkasa, 2003), p. 642, n. 552.

disaster; even today, the official history paints the entire Medan Chinese community as colonial lackeys and anti-revolutionaries.⁶² Thus stripped of their legitimate right to self-protection, the Chinese in Medan after the revolution could only rely on the army and private guards recruited by P2KM and its later incarnations. During the New Order, this vulnerability continued to foster interracial connections between the Chinese and youth organizations such as PP, as the latter kept switching between provocation and protection.⁶³ In May 1998, while PP's members were quoted as being involved in terrorizing the Chinese,⁶⁴ they also lamented the burning of Chinese households and businesses in central Jakarta. "PP lives from the Chinese," a PP field operative told Ryter while ringing up potential Chinese clients.⁶⁵

PP exemplifies an elaborate industry of *keamanan* that "lives from" the Chinese by both terrorizing and protecting them. In other words, the Chinese—economically powerful but politically marginal—have been an integral part of a system of extortion and rents exchanged for security in Indonesia since the 1950s.⁶⁶ In post-1998 Medan, this industry continues to assert itself in various ways, ranging from demanding monthly security fees to asking for "THR" (*Tunjangan Hari Raya*, New Year Subsidy) and donations for "special projects." Likewise, household events that are of a ceremonial or public nature—such as a marriage, funerals, moving, construction, grand-openings, and even installing a new gate—will all ensure the enthusiastic participation of several uninvited "security guards." And as the industry grows, so does the competition between different *preman* groups. For example, after having hired ten day-laborers to install a new fence for his private residence a few years ago, Pak Juwanda was visited by people representing three youth groups: PP, IPK (Ikatan Pemuda Karya, The Work Service Youth Association), and FKPP (Forum Komunikasi Putra Putri Purnawirawan dan Putra Putri TNI POLRI, The Armed Forces Sons' and Daughters' Communication Forum). He was also visited by the village chief (*lurah*), the alley chief (*kepala lorong*), and officers from the construction department at the municipal government—all of whom threatened to stop the installation unless Pak

⁶² Note that the stigmatization remains strong in Medan up to the present. For example, in his sympathetic account of the history of Chinese in Medan and North Sumatra, Chinese-Indonesian politician Sofyan Tan grappled with the stigmatization by arguing that not all Chinese supported *Poh An Tui* at the time; according to Tan, these non-*Poh An Tui* Chinese (together with other pro-Republican forces) were equally victimized by *Poh An Tui*. Sofyan Tan, *Jalan Menuju Masyarakat Anti Diskriminasi* [The Road towards an Anti-Discrimination Society] (Medan: Kajian Informasi, Pendidikan dan Penerbitan Sumatra, 2003), p. 3. Although it seeks to counter racism, Tan's account unfortunately further demonizes the pro-Dutch, ex-*Poh An Tui* Chinese in Medan.

⁶³ Loren Ryter, "A Tale of Two Cities," *Inside Indonesia* 63 (July–September 2000), also available at www.insideindonesia.org/edition-63/a-tale-of-two-cities-0207541 (viewed on June 20, 2011).

⁶⁴ Ryter, "Pemuda Pancasila: The Last Loyalist Free Men of Suharto's Order?," p. 68, n. 68, n. 71; and Jemma Purdey, *Anti-Chinese Violence in Indonesia, 1996–1999* (Honolulu, HI: University of Hawaii Press, 2006), p. 111. It should be noted also that PP's involvement was probably not directly connected to the Jakartan elite power struggle, which was thought to be the major reason behind the 1998 rioting. Ryter, for example, argues that, by May 1998, Prabowo's reliance on PP as a source of its *preman* was minimal.

⁶⁵ Ryter, "Youth, Gangs, and the State in Indonesia," p. 73.

⁶⁶ There are some Chinese in these organizations, of course. Two famous examples were Yorrys Raweyai (a mixed Chinese-Papuan) and Anton Medan (a Chinese-Muslim). Both were once prominent Chinese figures in the criminal underworld (and were once rivals in Jakarta's early 1980 gambling scenes), and both were later racially targeted by their colleagues. See Ryter, "Pemuda Pancasila: The Last Loyalist Free Men of Suharto's Order?" and Eben Kirksey, "First Voice Honey Center: Freedom in a Multinational Contact Zone" (PhD dissertation, University of California–Santa Cruz, 2008).

Juwanda paid for a permit. "The thing is," Pak Juwanda told me with a faint smile, "there is no such permit for installing fences and gates. Nobody issues a permit of that sort. But if you don't pay them, they will simply ask their men to tear your thing down." Of the ten million rupiah that Pak Juwanda eventually paid for the installation, two million went to the various *preman* groups and one million paid for a ghost permit.

Far from blocking social interactions, then, Pak Juwanda's residential gates attracted excessive attention from various *preman* groups and petty bureaucrats. And far from walling out those uninvited guests, Pak Juwanda complied with their extra-legal demands in order to keep his advanced gating system intact. The episode shows that the installation and ongoing existence of fences and gates in the Chinese neighborhood is contingent upon the successful maintenance of an exchange relationship between the Chinese and the "security" industry, however tense and unwelcome that relationship may be. Much like Effendi's Chinese neighbors who had to pay to get a good night's sleep in the 1950s, the Chinese in Medan continue to pay today just so that they can keep their gates intact. Likewise, they pay to run their businesses, to welcome new family members, and to mourn the deceased. In this vein, the "required" yet nonexistent permit is nevertheless an appropriate trope, pointing sardonically to a bitter reality that many Chinese have to endure: there indeed exists a "permit" for which *keamanan* is exchanged. It is a permit authorized by bureaucrats and hoodlums to grant their "nonservice" so that the Chinese can be left alone and carry on their everyday course of life smoothly. Or, in the event that some hoodlums do show up during a wedding, the permit ensures that they do nothing but eat quietly on the benches.

For the Chinese I met in Medan and Jakarta, the ambivalence of *keamanan* persists during both ordinary and extra-ordinary times. In the heat of May 1998, Pak Juwanda and each of his neighbors in Medan paid PP one million rupiah for their *keamanan* service. Living in Jakarta's Muara Karang district at the time, Vera joined other Chinese neighbors and paid her share of half a million rupiah to "rent [*sewa*] the police." The police then came to patrol the neighborhood. Yet having remembered seeing fewer than five policemen during those four days, Vera insisted that it was actually the two police trucks parked in front of the neighborhood entrance that really safeguarded the whole complex. During their interviews with me, moreover, two Medan Chinese community leaders repeatedly boasted that they had solid personal connections to the military, which is why they were capable of outbidding other communities who were also seeking military protection. It seems that *preman* groups, military factions, and some Chinese have all capitalized on the industry of security, which both complicates and serves the interests of many.

As it thus actively authorizes, protects, and, at times, threatens to tear down the physical walls in front of Chinese households, this industry of security can be seen as a wall outside walls. And as a wall, the security industry does not work by simply blocking interracial interactions; instead, and in accordance with what I have been trying to argue, it forges various sorts of relationships between *orang Chinese* and *orang Indonesia*. The industry of security, in other words, demands an ongoing engagement of the Chinese with *preman*, bureaucrats, police, and military—groups whose racial composition is overwhelmingly non-Chinese, thanks to Suharto's thirty-two years of discriminatory policy. Paying monthly security fees, then, becomes a way for the

Chinese to stay in limited engagement with the industry while avoiding its excessive attention. Conversely, some Chinese express little interest in addressing the *preman* they know personally. Both Pak Iskandar and Juwanda know close to nothing about the *preman* who visit their offices every month. As long as the Chinese keep paying for their security service, minimum interference from the local *preman* group is ensured, while interference from other *premans* is blocked entirely.

Very often, however, the engagement entails, or is based on, relationships that are less contrived. Vera grew up knowing Trisno, a *preman* leader, as her brother's childhood pal. Even though she does not personally befriend Trisno, she keeps his number in her cell phone ever since he and his five subordinates (*anak buah*) successfully collected a debt for a friend of Vera's brother. "It's good to know some of them so that you can ask for their help," says Vera. Likewise, Flora confides that she and her ninety-year-old father love listening to the Batak songs sung by *premans*, who at night often sing and drink while staffing the guard post. Living in the neighborhood of Sambu in Medan for over half a century, Flora and her relatives have come to view *premans* as part of the daily fabric of their lives. During the presidential election on September 20, 2004, these same neighborhood *premans* showed up as party witnesses at Sambu's voting booth, sitting and chatting with an all-Chinese election administrative team and other neighborhood residents for the whole afternoon. They poked fun at each other's flat noses and "immigrant" background, for while the Chinese are forever marked as "foreigners" (*pendatang*) in Indonesia, the Bataks are also considered as migrants (*perantau*) in Medan (versus the *asli*, indigenous Malays).⁶⁷ They also joked about Batak and Chinese surnames (*marga*); in their jests, common Batak surnames like Tambunan and Simatupang became "Tan Bun An" (a Hokkien sounding name) and "Cina numpang" (Chinese passenger, dependent).

This more personal and playful relationship between *preman* and the Chinese to some extent resonates with local stories surrounding the criminal figure of Olo Panggabean and the Medan neighborhood of Sekip. A Christian Batak, Olo led the powerful local IPK gang in Medan. It was widely known among Medan Chinese that Olo spoke perfect Hokkien Chinese and conducted all his legal and illegal business with Chinese partners. He also had an insatiable appetite for beautiful Chinese women—and only Chinese women. Most importantly, it was said that, to safeguard his turf, Olo protected the Chinese of Sekip during May 1998. While many gated communities were attacked and burned in May 1998, Sekip was left intact. Nor did residents of Sekip pay for military protection or organize a self-defense team like other Chinese did in central Medan. Popular interpretation credited the safety of Sekip to Olo, whose IPK network stretched all over Sekip; his crème-colored mansion (called the White House in Medanese vernacular) occupied the southwest corner of the neighborhood. During the periods of my field research (2003–04, 2005, 2008), Chinese living both in and outside of Sekip considered it the safest place to live in Medan.

Analysts might be quick to point out that Sekip was spared turmoil in 1998 more as a result of Olo's inactivity than his activity. Put differently, Olo protected Sekip not by fighting rioting intruders, but by doing nothing to exacerbate the unrest. Since his

⁶⁷ The Toba Batak (mostly Christian), especially, were once legally prohibited to enter Medan and its vicinity. See Clark E. Cunningham, *The Post-War Migration of Toba Batak to East Sumatra* (New Haven, CT: Yale University, Southeast Asia Studies, 1958).

control over the neighborhood was firmly established, the analysis goes, Olo had no incentive to create further disturbances and capitalize on them—unlike PP's strategy. This is a plausible explanation, and one that resists portraying Olo as a benevolent protector of the Chinese. But what is interesting about the story of Olo and his Chinese neighbors lies precisely in this purportedly peculiar relationship between the two: There was a two-way dependency between the Chinese and Olo, the king of underground gambling. On the one hand, Olo was a powerful patron who managed to take charge of events by standing in between, and speaking across, the Chinese and the extortionists (himself being one, of course). All that was left for the Chinese to do, then, was to pay. On the other hand, Olo seemed to procure much of his wealth and prowess through working closely with the Chinese. Like PP, Olo owed what he had to Chinese, except that he acquired his wealth and authority less through direct violence (or threats of violence) than through maintaining cross-racial linguistic and monetary intimacies. A clear example of this strategy was that, unlike PP, Olo and his IPK began to manage gambling operations directly rather than merely squeeze the owners for protection money.⁶⁸ While touring two of Olo's gambling dens in 2004, I was told by my guide, an *ex-preman*, that *orang Indonesia* were not allowed to enter those gambling dens unless accompanied or endorsed by a Chinese. After the new Police Chief General Sutanto declared a war against gambling in July 2005, Olo fled overseas with his Chinese business partner, Asiang.⁶⁹ He died in 2009.

To be sure, both PP and Olo's gang, IPK, were viewed by the Chinese as *preman* organizations that demanded security money from the Chinese in exchange for not creating situations of insecurity. But Olo alone was viewed as a hero who actually protected Chinese to some extent. PP, on the other hand, made their way into the collective memory of Medan Chinese as a group of opportunistic, violent, "rotten hoodlums" (Hok: *lamcai*) who capitalized on the plight of the Chinese during the period 1965 to 1968. PP members killed and terrorized Chinese who had joined BAPERKI, a pro-PKI nationwide Chinese organization.⁷⁰ PP also joined student activists in seizing Chinese language schools and Chinese properties.⁷¹ Nothing serves better as a long-lasting symbol and daily reminder of this tragic encounter between PP

⁶⁸ Ryter, "A Tale of Two Cities."

⁶⁹ Nurlis Meuko, Rumbadi Dalle, and Hambali Batubara, "Going Legit," *Tempo*, August 29–September 4, 2006. Note that Sutanto was once the police chief of North Sumatra. Popular among the people, but not among members of the underworld, Sutanto was removed from the position. Sutanto later headed the National Narcotics Coordinating Agency (Badan Narkotika Nasional, BKKNN) before becoming the National Police Chief in 2005. On the other hand, police and military personnel in Indonesia have long been accused of involvement in illegal businesses, and are thought to be in fierce competition with each other. In one incident in November 2002, eight people were killed in a drug-related gun battle between police and the military at a barracks in Binjai, North Sumatra. Sutanto's struggle with Olo and other *preman* groups was fondly remembered by many Medanese I met in 2004 precisely because, at least at that time, his was a rare case.

⁷⁰ Yen-ling Tsai, "Through a Building Darkly," *Inside Indonesia* 95 (January–March 2009), also available at <http://insideindonesia.org/content/view/full/1163/47/> (viewed on June 20, 2011).

⁷¹ Aceh and North Sumatra were the regions where the Chinese suffered most heavily during the post-1965 anti-Communist purge against real and alleged ex-PKI members and their affiliates. In fact, the situation in Medan did not settle down until 1968. See Mackie, "Anti-Chinese Outbreaks in Indonesia, 1959–68," pp. 117–18. See also Yen-ling Tsai and Douglas Kammen, "Anti-Communist Violence and the Ethnic Chinese in Medan, North Sumatra," in *The Contours of Mass Violence in Indonesia, 1965–1968*, ed. Douglas Kammen and Katharine McGregor (Singapore: NUS Press for the Asian Studies Association of Australia, forthcoming 2012).

and Medan Chinese than PP's headquarters, which was the North Sumatra Hakka Lineage Association (蘇北客屬總會, Chi: *Subei Keshu Zhonghui*) before PP seized the building in 1966. Given what PP did in 1998, that image had certainly been soundly reinforced.

The contrast between PP and Olo resonates with the ambiguity of *keamanan* that Chinese commonly experience with regard to the industry of security, as is shown earlier in the story of Vera. The security industry creates its own condition of existence by being alternately exploiting and protecting. Structurally powerless to protect themselves, the Chinese maintain a certain engagement with the industry, and, preferably, with one powerful patron like Olo who can take care of other predators, such as PP. Functioning as a security net, Olo protects the Chinese from PP's extortion and harassment by engaging closely with the Chinese. In this vein, we can say that PP and Olo reflect the two different extremes by which Chinese perceive the industry of security, with PP representing the exploiting pole and Olo the opposite, protective pole. But they are both *premans*, and like Vera says, "they are all Indonesians, not Chinese." But there is an interesting twist: If the Chinese view PP with fear and contempt because it always robs the Chinese of what they have, they view Olo with a degree of awe and fascination, perhaps because he embodies that which the Medan Chinese were deprived of since the disbanding of *Poh An Tui*. In that sense, Olo is both almost a Chinese and more than a Chinese. Not only does he equal other Chinese in terms of linguistic and financial prowess, but he also outdoes other Chinese with his command of the coarse form of power. Remember, also, his alleged sexual liaisons with countless Chinese women. With a perfected Chinese masculinity, Olo is more "Chinese" than anyone else.

The difference between PP and Olo is further defined by one common thread. That is, be it PP or Olo, the exploiting or protecting thugs in Medan all depend largely on the Chinese. Like Pak Juwanda, the Medan Chinese well understand the industry of *keamanan*, which creates its own condition of existence by forging and constantly reproducing its relationship with the Chinese. But the reproduction fails in the end in one important symbolic aspect: Olo acquired all his power and money through interacting with the Chinese, but he could not reproduce them. After striking a deal with a devil, the gossip continues, he exchanged his reproductivity for productivity, and remained childless through his life. All of his interracial intercourse and capitalist accumulation was therefore inconsequential. Olo's story can thus be read as a Medan Chinese commentary on the industry of *keamanan*, which they see as relying heavily on Chinese money. The Chinese are both exploited and protected by the *preman* organizations, which, in turn, find the Chinese to be their best targets and clients. But such an interracial industry does not create other interracial possibilities. The racial boundaries are left intact, at least in the world of gossips. Olo may be a perfect Chinese, but a Chinese in drag. After all, he is an *orang Indonesia*. In Medan Chinese folk ideology, Olo may have countless Chinese lovers, but their sexual intimacies produce no *keturunan*—a term in *bahasa Indonesia* that refers to both descendants and Chinese.

Citra Garden Medan: Walls as Entangled Interests

Walls generate interracial socialities as much as they block them. Focusing on an array of spatial-social intercourses between Chinese-Indonesians and their non-Chinese counterparts, this essay shows that walls both exclude and include, in social and political terms. It also sees in walls the complex, collusive relationships between Chinese and indigenous Indonesians that bind them in actuality. Likewise, this discussion provides a picture of how the need to maintain security spawned binding ties between Chinese and indigenous Indonesians, whether those ties have been based on mutual trust or threats of retribution. In the last section of this essay, besides showing that the construction of gated communities combines and serves the interests of many, I show how those communities became places where people with different racial and class standings are bound together in a city increasingly characterized by the militarization of urban spaces and class stratification.

On April 1, 2004, four days before the general election,⁷² hundreds of residents of the Padang Bulan region in southwest Medan set ablaze an office building and destroyed a truck, three tractors, and road-paving equipment belonging to the elite Citra Garden housing project.⁷³ The next day, the angry crowd resumed their attack on Citra Garden, setting four trailer trucks aflame in the Greek-style, semi-circular entrance bounded by ten massive pillars. One pillar was painted with six big red letters, "A-Siang," the name of a notorious *preman* leader and, as previously mentioned, Olo's underground-gambling business partner.

Newspapers reported that, the night before the attack, a group of masked men terrified Pak Yatimin, the tenant of a house adjacent to Citra Garden.⁷⁴ They tried to force Yatimin to accept the Rp 30,000 (USD 3.50) per meter for his land that had been offered by Citra Garden's developer, who had allegedly pre-sold 98 percent of Citra Garden's Phase One properties at the price of Rp. 403,000,000 (USD 45,300) per unit.⁷⁵ Pak Yatimin rejected the developer's offer and refused the masked men; a bulldozer razed his house the next day. His enraged neighbors retaliated by attacking the plush housing complex, blaming A-Siang for masterminding the threat. The protestors believed that A-Siang worked for the Medan-based entrepreneur Ishak Charlie and the national conglomerate Ciputra—the two major partners of the Citra Garden project. All of them—A-Siang, Charlie, and Ciputra—are known as Indonesians of Chinese decent.

Citra Garden Medan was one of a string of gated housing complexes that mushroomed in Medan and throughout urban Indonesia in the 1990s.⁷⁶ Just like many other elite housing projects, Citra Garden promised upper-middle-class citizens dream houses. One unaccounted cost of this development was that meager settlements

⁷² The 2004 general election was the first parliamentary election held under the Indonesian constitution of 1945. See Angus McIntyre, *The Indonesian Presidency: The Shift from Personal toward Constitutional Rule* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2005), p. 261.

⁷³ "Medan Land Conflict Continues," *The Jakarta Post*, April 3, 2004, also available at www.thejakartapost.com/news/2004/04/03/medan-land-conflict-continues.html (viewed on August 10, 2011).

⁷⁴ "Pasca Amuk Massa, Perumahan Citra Garden Medan Dijaga Aparat" [After Mass Amok, Citra Garden Guarded by Apparatus], *Media Indonesia*, April 2, 2004.

⁷⁵ "Citra Garden Medan Tawarkan 'Hunian dalam Taman,'" *Sinar Harapan*, January 30, 2004.

⁷⁶ See Pelly, "Social Institutions and Ethnic Cohesion in Medan," p. 159.

occupied by urban squatters were displaced, thus creating a class-based pattern of dispossession that stirred racial sentiments. Moreover, just like other controversies over development in Medan and elsewhere, the Citra Garden incident was characterized by the press in terms of attacks by the developer's thugs on the residents, who, in turn, "ran amok."⁷⁷ While this picture of a clash between the victimizing developer and the victimized people is largely correct, it is too simplified. A sketch below of local history and the political economy of land development in Medan suggests that military and local *preman* groups, besides developers, all had vested and entangled interests in the establishment of the walled community of Citra Garden Medan.⁷⁸

As mentioned previously, colonial policies of social engineering had resulted in pervasive racial segregation in Medan. Consequently, many of the contradictions faced by Medan during its post-independence development are embedded in the spatial form created by this history. A post-independence influx of migrants and urban expansion began to erode colonial segregation in the late 1940s.⁷⁹ Medan expanded significantly, more than doubling its size, by incorporating land that had been part of plantations, and most of the Chinese remained living in the city center.⁸⁰ During this growth process, part of the region of Padang Bulan fell under the control of the Regional Military Command (*Kodam I/Bukit Barisan*), while the region at large was transformed from plantations to a bustling urban periphery, acquiring a new administrative identity as the New Medan (*Medan Baru*) District of the Medan municipality. In the Medanese vernacular, however, the area remains Padang Bulan and a predominantly *pribumi* region.⁸¹ Thus, when the Regional Military Command relocated its Cavalry Battalion from Padang Bulan to Sunggal and sold the former Battalion land to the developers of Citra Garden Medan in 2003,⁸² it also facilitated a partial remapping of the racial-spatial order of the region. Indeed, everyone I interviewed in Medan characterized Citra Garden Medan as a project that was intended to "build a Chinese community" (*membangun komunitas Chinese*) in a *pribumi* area and turn Padang Bulan into an "elite zone" (*daerah elite*). Residents anticipated that most of the buyers of Citra Garden Medan would be well-to-do Chinese-

⁷⁷ *The Jakarta Post* used the phrase *massa mengamuk* (April 3, 2004) and *Media Indonesia* used the phrase *amuk massa* (April 4, 2004).

⁷⁸ My analysis is based on journalist reports and conversations with local informants and is inspired by Loren Ryster's dissertation, "Youth, Gangs, and the State in Indonesia."

⁷⁹ Clark E. Cunningham, *The Post-War Migration of Toba Batak to East Sumatra*.

⁸⁰ According to Anthony Reid, in the 1930s "the Chinese contract labor force (in colonial Medan/ East Sumatra) had virtually disappeared, and those members of it who were not repatriated were in the course of being absorbed into the flourishing Chinese community" (see Reid, *The Blood of the People*, p. 42). It should be noted here that while many Chinese plantation laborers relocated to the city, some stayed behind. Today, there are still rural Chinese communities in previous plantation peripheries all over North Sumatra. For details of Medan's pre-war ethnic segregation and post-war urban expansion, see Usman Pelly, "Urban Migration and Adaptation in Indonesia: A Case Study of Minangkabau and Mandailing Batak Migrants in Medan, North Sumatra" (PhD dissertation, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 1983), pp. 107–8.

⁸¹ Interview with several Medan residents, February 11, 2005. One of the informants also used the Hokkien term *daerah huana* (native area) to characterize Padang Bulan.

⁸² Agung Rulianto, Hambali Batubara, and Bambang Soedjiartono, "Clear Moon in Polonia," *Tempo*, (September 13–19, 2005).

Indonesians, and security, they agreed, would be of great concern for any potential buyer since that area has “a lot of *Bataks* and *preman*.”

Although still largely occupied by *pribumi*, Padang Bulan has become an area with enormous economic prospects in recent decades. A master project surfaced in the early 1990s, aiming to relocate Medan’s Polonia Airport from its current central location to a place outside of Medan.⁸³ Although to this day the relocation has not taken place,⁸⁴ some one hundred hectares of military-owned land in Polonia were turned into one of the most prestigious gated communities in Medan without proper compensation to local squatters and landowners.⁸⁵ Located at the end of the airport runway, Padang Bulan promises to become the next Polonia, and, indeed, has expanded rapidly since the mid-2000s. Besides Citra Garden, several other developers have reportedly bought other plots of land in the area.⁸⁶

The conversions of ex-plantation-turned-military land to elite housing in Polonia and Padang Bulan should be seen as linked events in which the military, government officials, developers, and local mafia all wished to capitalize on the prospect of airport relocation and the transformation of spatial identities.⁸⁷ Both projects were embedded within the same local structure of land-prospecting that required a close collaboration and constant negotiation between these power entities. As Loren Ryter’s detailed study of the Polonia case suggests, the developers provided capital to cover the relocation costs and the purchase of land for the new airport, in exchange for real-estate development permits and administrative favors from the government and military officials. Local *preman*, on the other hand, both served and obstructed the agenda of the developer in land-clearing in order to maximize their bargaining power with the developer and residents. Moreover, different *preman* groups, which were often backed by different military/police factions, staged turf wars to fight for shares in brokerage, security, and demolition fees provided by the developers.⁸⁸ Undergirded by such a

⁸³ In the early 1990s, the Indonesian air force, the provincial government, and a private Chinese developer reached a deal to relocate Medan’s Polonia Airport from its established central location to Kuala Namu.

⁸⁴ As of mid-2011, the new Kuala Namu International Airport is scheduled to open in 2013. Hasyim Widhiarto, “‘Made in Indonesia’ Airport Construction May Last Forever,” *The Jakarta Post*, April 25, 2011, also available at www.thejakartapost.com/news/2011/04/25/land-clearing-ignites-inevitable-conflict.html (viewed on August 10, 2011).

⁸⁵ Loren Ryter, “Youth, Gangs, and the State in Indonesia,” pp. 167–93.

⁸⁶ Devi Asmarani, “Medan Residents’ Worst Nightmare Comes True,” *The Straits Times*, September 7, 2005.

⁸⁷ Aspects of Citra Garden’s land-clearing conflict are similar to what happened in Polonia in the 1990s. But note the description used by a newspaper—“intimidasi ala Ninja.” See *Media Indonesia*, “Pasca Amuk Massa, Perumahan Citra Garden Medan Dijaga Aparat” [After Mass Amok, Citra Garden Guarded by Apparatus], April 2, 2004. Curiously enough, before any members of the press had voiced their suspicion about military involvement in the incident, the Regional Military Command held a press conference the morning after the second attack, denying any connection with either the “mafia-style destruction” (against Yatimin’s house) or the revenge against the developer and the heavy equipment (*tidak terlibat penggusuran ala premanisme maupun serangan balik terhadap pengembang Citra Garden dan alat-alat beratnya*). In a typical rhetorical gesture, the spokesperson also warned the Medan society “not to give random comments [to the media] about the Citra Garden event, so as not to make the issue muddier” (*tidak mengomentarkannya agar tidak memperkeruh permasalahan*). See *Waspada*, “Kapendam Kodam I/BB: Jangan Asal Bicara Soal Kerusuhan Citra Garden” [Bukit Barisan Regional Military Command: Don’t Talk About Citra Garden Disturbances Carelessly], April 3, 2004.

⁸⁸ See Loren Ryter, “Youth, Gangs, and the State in Indonesia,” pp. 167–93. Note that, although some scholars characterize the relationship between local thugs and the Indonesian state apparatus as an insidious system of the *preman* state—for example, see T. Lindsey, “From Soepomo to Prabowo: Law,

three-way relationship, the walls of the gated communities in Medan therefore congeal and cement the interlocking interests of elite Chinese entrepreneurs, local *premans*, and state authorities.

Seen in this light, then, clashes over land-clearing in Medan do not necessarily signify failed negotiations between developers and residents. Rather, many clashes are staged by *preman* groups, whose roles are more complicated than those of “developers’ thugs.”⁸⁹ Such a staging of violence could aim not only to scare the local residents into accepting the offered compensation, but also to put the land-clearing under a spotlight so that developers will be forced to buy into peace. Nor are these clashes simply the result of racial tensions between the Chinese and the non-Chinese residents of Medan. Rather, we can see these clashes as part of a larger social mechanism that actively produces racial tensions. Indeed, violence triggers racialized fears. When the gas tanks of the burning trucks exploded at Citra Garden on the afternoon of April 2, 2004, statues of several horse-riding Greek Goddesses mounted atop the massive pillars fell and crashed to the ground. The noise panicked people in the nearby University of North Sumatra neighborhood, residents who were mostly *pribumi* college students or from lower-middle-class families. Yet the Chinese who lived on the other side of town were even more panicked. In the evening, rumors of unrest travelled across town through personal networks of text messaging and phone calls, warning that some people in Padang Bulan intended “to attack the Chinese” (*ada keinginan utk memukul org. tiong hua*). Living in central Medan at the time, I received a phone call from a friend who lived near Padang Bulan; as a precaution, she wanted to know if she could stay at my place just in case the situation really turned bad. Cindy, who also received a warning text message, had agreed with her Catholic friends to pray for peace at 10:00 PM at their homes. Kok A-Kiang, a Chinese motorbike parts dealer who would soon open his first showroom in town, swore to cast a protest vote (*golput*) at Monday’s general election. For many Indonesians of Chinese descent living in Medan, the intense atmosphere of that evening and those that came immediately after was as uncertain and anxiety-provoking as the outcome of the upcoming election. For Cindy, Kok A-Kiang, and many other Chinese living in Medan, the familiar combination of local unrest and an important political event triggered charged memories of past attacks against Chinese-Indonesians in both local and national history.⁹⁰

Moreover, fear and anxiety trigger the need for walls, and therefore turn class warfare into racialized segregation. One of the marketed features of Citra Garden Medan was its security, guaranteed by an “outsourced security force” (*tenaga security outsourcing*). According to the amicable salesman who hosted me and my friend Mia during an afternoon visit in 2004, the outsourcing of Citra Garden’s security meant

Violence, and Corruption in the Preman State,” in *Violent Conflicts in Indonesia: Analysis, Representation, Resolution*, ed. Charles Coppel (London: Routledge, 2006), pp. 19–36; and Jemma Purdey, “Anti-Chinese Violence in Indonesia, 1996–1999” (PhD dissertation, University of Melbourne, 2002)—not all scholars and researchers assume that *preman* are part of the functionality of the state (for example, see Barker, “Surveillance and Territoriality in Bandung,” p. 122).

⁸⁹ See Hasyim Widhiarto, “Land Clearing Ignites Inevitable Conflict,” *The Jakarta Post*, April 26, 2011, available at www.thejakartapost.com/news/2011/04/26/land-clearing-ignites-inevitable-conflict.html (viewed on September 10, 2011).

⁹⁰ The three biggest “anti-Chinese riots” happened in 1946, 1965, and 1998. In Medan, a workers’ protest also stirred social unrest in 1994.

“joining with a local group” (*joint dengan group lokal*). The salesman, however, claimed to have no idea about which or what kind of local group had been recruited to provide security for Citra Garden Medan.⁹¹ But Mia knew. As we returned to our car, she named Olo, whose connection to A-Siang and the officials of the Regional Military Command was well known locally. Hence, the rich Chinese in Medan pay to live in the walls of Citra Garden, only to be guarded by the thugs they seek to avoid. Like Mia, perhaps, they know all too well that the source of fear is also the source of security. And their lived experiences suggest that capitalist development, criminality, and state authority collaborate and negotiate with each other to transform urban spatial identities, to stage violence, to cultivate fear, and eventually to capitalize on an industry that produces both fear and security. In this view, the dispossessed *pribumi* residents of Padang Bulan (such as Pak Yatimin), the residents of Citra Garden Medan, and the frightened Chinese residents of central Medan (such as Kok A-Kiang), are all subject to this mechanism of wall-making and spatial-disciplining, albeit with very different class and racial positioning.

Rather than seeing walls as merely tools and symbols of disconnect, this essay demonstrates that walls generate interracial socialities as much as they block them. As conventional wisdom has it, walls exclude; they keep *kampung* villagers out of Vera’s gated community. But walls also connect and include, I argue, as villagers become security guards who not only open gates for Vera late at night, but also deliver her suits to the dry-cleaner’s shop during the day. Moreover, walls in Indonesia promote the interest of an industry of security, which has been an important interracial interface where the activities of protection and extortion have been alternately staged so that security money is paid in exchange for peace. Ironically, then, walls as security devices often end up including that which they are built to exclude. While trying to safeguard their properties through acts of walling, the Chinese-Indonesians find themselves even more dependent on the *pribumi* security guards and neighborhood hoodlums. In other words, the more *orang Chinese* attempt to wall themselves off from *orang Indonesia*, the more connected—socially as well as psychologically—the two groups seem to have become. Studying such social intimacy enables us to understand better the spatial dynamic of race- and class-making in urban Indonesia, where “Chinese exclusivity” is produced through cross-racial encounters infused with asymmetrical intimacies.

⁹¹ Another important security feature is a “clustered security system” (*systim keamanan cluster*), which requires that all community members use only one entrance gate. Thus, those who come and go may be easily monitored.