Technologies of feeling and being: medicines in contemporary Indonesia

Transformations wrought by urbanization, industrialization and economic globalization are embedded in diverse local social and cultural formations played out in the routines of everyday practices of life. Changing forms of consumption, whether of clothing, material objects, or services, are not simply a move towards the ‘international’. Changes are also generated by diverse local social and cultural formations played out in the routines and lived experience. Individuals and groups seek to manifest their being in the world through new forms of embodiment.

The ‘uses’ of medicines in Indonesia

Patterns of medicine usage is an ideal realm in which to explore the processes of the embodiment of social change, as well as to show how such usage constitutes a key arena in the construction of sociality. The body is a site of agency and, therefore, a site for the expression, or the embodiment of social and cultural conditions of existence. To study the consumption of medicines in this sense is about more than the medicines themselves or their prescriptive practices, but about what else is sought through their use.

The body is not a passive vehicle to which medicines are administered from without, but is an active site of embodiment. The body becomes a site of action and thus transformation for the people who are active in their own lives, through the enactment of their actions, which are connected to, and help shape, the conditions of their existence.

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