Introduction

Friendship appears to be everywhere: most of us have a number of (different) friends, our family members have their own friends, and even countries are understood to have friendships with one another. There are political friends, best friends, mates, buddies, close friends, loose friends. Friendships can be dyadic or collective. In short: there seems to exist an indefinite number of friendship types.

This indicates that friendship constitutes a corner stone of human life, and that it emerges in very different ways and caters for a variety of different needs. As our needs might change, so do our friendships. In public discourse, friendship has become a popular topic and has been depicted in a variety of different forms. In recent years, television shows such as *Friends* or *Sex and the City* bear witness to this. What these popular representations of friendship have in common is that they portray images of relationships in which people are able to choose their companions freely, and in which decisions are based on individual interests and ideals of self-fulfilment. Friendship in this sense is a highly individualised project that unites people who think in similar ways; it builds upon notions of sameness, common interests, and experiences. Such social relations are represented as distinct and are constructed as oppositions, or as complements to the family and other kinship relations.

In fact, popular representations of interpersonal relations in the television shows mentioned here portray kinship relations as being of minor importance for the modern emancipated self. The main characters are eloquent, live in big cities, lead interesting lifestyles, and are embedded in a group of best friends and acquaintances that are further removed. Friends seem to act as 'compensation' for the traditional family and appear as a new kind of self-chosen family. They are available when one needs to talk, and they provide emo-

tional, practical, and sometimes even financial support. The empirical data I discuss in Chapters Four and Five seeks to destabilise such rather one-dimensional perspectives of contemporary urban lives. It hints at much more complex interrelations between culture, family, various friendship types, and cultural-moral ideals.

This 'comeback' of friendship is mirrored in scholarly research. Even though the number of sociological and anthropological investigations has jumped to unknown heights in recent years, friendship is predominantly analysed according to its function for the individual or collective. Researchers rarely ask what friendship means to the people of a particular community, or how those people perceive its role in their lives. In simpler terms: what is friendship and what are the related social practices? What ideals and cultural conventions play into local friendship conceptions?

This book attempts to narrow this gap in research by focusing on non-European friendship conceptions and practices in contemporary Indonesia. During the end of my first field research for this project, it became clear that I my investigation would narrow in on emic perceptions and practices of friendships in contemporary Java. But over the course of my fieldwork I was surprised to discover to what extent friendship relations structure society in Java, and also throughout the whole of the postcolonial state. They go far beyond the private and immediate public and political life.

During my research it became clear that friendship in postcolonial Indonesia is written into the moral matrix of the nation state. In what I term *filsafat sosial* (social philosophy) in Chapter Three, particular Javanese behaviour codes are explained. They were politically exploited to work towards a cultural homogenisation of the Indonesian archipelago, which has been referred to as 'Javanisation.' During this process, Java did not only emerge as Indonesia's 'main' island; ideals of moral behaviour from local spiritual traditions, Islam, and custom were also installed to guide Indonesian citizens. And guidance they needed, because in the new Indonesian state, citizens were viewed as children or followers (*anak buah*) of the president-father figure (*bapak*).

Until today, there exists no account of social relationships in Indonesia that mentions friendship as a bond of significance. This complete lack of research induced me to decide that rather than framing my data through existing friendship literature and social theory, a rigid focus on the empirical data would be the most reasonable approach for presenting this work. Related herewith is an interdisciplinary methodology that incorporates sociological theory and ethnographic methods. Ethnographic methods were used for conducting fieldwork and collecting data, but I utilize sociological, anthropological, and social developmental research on family, friendship, and intimacy to discuss the empirical data.

In doing so, I attempt to disrupt a certain academic discourse on Western Euro-American conceptions that frames friendship as a relationship among co-equals engaged in a sentimental and symmetrical relation. I depart from this by presenting emic friendship types from the greater area of Yogyakarta and Jakarta. When I present these everyday life experiences of my interlocutors speaking, I do not interpret them according to certain theoretical schools; instead, I analyse them according to their respective socio-cultural contexts. This strategy allows space for my interlocutors to express their individual perspectives, ideas, wishes, and imaginations of friendship; how they experience their friends and their different friendships, and how they interpret the role such relationships play in their daily lives.

A quick note on functionalist pitfalls

Throughout this book I argue that friendships emerge and are entertained for certain reasons. I am aware that this statement might be misunderstood as having possible functionalist undercurrents. One might even postulate that this entire book has a strong functionalist thrust in its analysis of friendships. After all, I investigate friendship and kinship structures, along with related activities, in terms of their functions for maintaining postcolonial Indonesian

society, and Javanese society in particular. Critics of functionalism have pointed out that it may be legitimate to assume that societies have certain goals, and that this brings certain structures and functions into creation to achieve these goals (Turner 2006:6; Turner and Maryanski 1979). I do not, however, imply or hope to indicate in any way that current structures and functions in Indonesian society are the only ones that could have been created to achieve those goals. Rather, I hope to point out how particular ideal discourses of social relationships have developed through the course of Javanese history and later postcolonial Indonesian history, and how these ideals have been exploited by the political elite to fashion a particular discourse of culture politics. Correlating social practices are not static as functionalism seems to suggest, but are subject to continuous processes of cultural and social change. Still, when I was working to document networks that secure social security in rural Java, I simply had to accept the fact that these networks were built on local friendship types, and that friendships did indeed have a particular function in Javanese society.

Outline

Research on friendship is predominantly presented along the lines of idealised moral perceptions that have emerged from European cultural history. The ideal of free association of people who are capable of being friends and who construct intimate relationships as autonomous persons is generally considered to be a modern Western understanding of friendship, and has been criticised as "[…] an occidental over-simplification and stylization of Western society" (Carrier 1999:31). The following accounts highlight emic Javanese perceptions of friendship and contextualise friendship relations in their respective socio-cultural contexts. They shed light upon the particularities that are responsible for local conceptions of relatedness in general, and friendship practices in particular. They also strongly suggest that friendships are in close proximity to

other forms of social organisation (Bovenschen 1998:22). According to Bovenschen, friendship is located in a social and cultural in-between space, between kinship, love, and acquaintanceship. During fieldwork it became evident that friendship in Java constitutes a relationship in-between. It is closely related to kinship and patronage networks, and friendship practices might also oscillate between non-sexual and sexual relationships. From this perspective, this book might be a starting point for a renewed debate on friendship, but also on relatedness, attachment, and sentimental bonds in contemporary Indonesia. I do hope that the data presented in this book provides ample space for animated discussion and triggers further friendship research in Indonesia.

Chapter One is an investigation of recent friendship research. It focuses on the topics and issues that came up as central during data analysis and it connects social scientific approaches to friendship with research on Indonesian sociality. Chapter Two describes the qualitative research methods I used, explaining how the data were collected and analysed.

I tried to practice a mode of research that I term 'cooperative and engaged research.' Often this was time-consuming and I was not entirely clear as to what would come out of it, but after a while, ongoing discussions and conversations with my research partners opened another door of perception on the topic. In a way, then, I researched my original topic, but I also engaged in participant observation, seeing and learning about how my research partners conducted research, and how they thought about the topic themselves.

Chapter Two also presents the total sample of the people I worked with, as well as the locations where research was conducted. In the end, many of the interviews I recorded did not end up in the text, but they certainly contributed to the understanding of friendships in Java that is debated in this book.

Chapter Three introduces Indonesia's history, with particular reference to Java. After discussing its historical development, the chapter presents a history of relatedness and sketches out the main

dimensions of Javanese versions of sociality. I outline a social philosophy (filsafat sosial) that incorporates the basic ideas of sociality as explained in Javanese mystical tradition. These remain influential to this day, shaping local conceptions that are central to indigenous friendship types. This historical perspective is extended by introducing indigenous Javanese historical sources, with a focus on the social relationships that appear as most important. Indonesian historiography before independence mainly consisted of expressive genres and written sources that promoted idealised versions of a harmonious society. Because of the continuing importance of Javanese mystics, this sub-chapter looks into accounts of expressive genres such as theatre and shadow puppet play, and it elaborates on the most significant social relations that are represented in these art forms. A discussion of written sources as well as an analysis of several expressive genres reveals the importance of certain behaviour codes, and equips readers with an understanding of the circumstances that shape contemporary social interaction in Java.

Chapter Four is entirely guided by empirical data. I describe the different friendship types practiced in Java, including their particular interrelations with other forms of social relationships and the contexts in which they unfold. I start with a local grammatology of friendship in which I introduce the linguistic terms that my interviewees, participants, and discussants used to describe the most prominent friendship relations. I then discuss the modes of exchange and notions of mutuality that appeared as central to those friendship types. I suggest that strategic friendship relations and patronage networks frequently rely on the usage of kinship and friendship terminology to create feelings of closeness and social responsibility.

Chapter Five focuses on the '*keluarga* complex,' meaning the intersection between family structures and friendship practices. In Java, family and friendship often intersect, for instance when friendship is employed to substitute for missing family or to construct quasi kinship relations. Friendship can function as a tool for empowerment and emancipation from the family. The chapter

then discusses the meaning of feelings and emotions in the context of emerging intimate friendships that informants labelled as 'best friends,' in which people exhibited high degrees of attachment, emotional commitment, and care.

Chapter Six concludes and summarises the book, together with some implications for further, much-needed ethnographic research on friendship.