

Ateneo de Manila University

**Archium Ateneo**

---

Sociology & Anthropology Department

School of Social Sciences  
Theses and Dissertations

---

2004

## **Stigmatization and responses of the Mikung : the case of a marginalized group in Indonesia**

Sofwan. Samandawai

Follow this and additional works at: <https://archium.ateneo.edu/sa-theses-dissertations>

---

### **Recommended Citation**

Samandawai, Sofwan., "Stigmatization and responses of the Mikung : the case of a marginalized group in Indonesia" (2004). *Sociology & Anthropology Department. 2.*  
<https://archium.ateneo.edu/sa-theses-dissertations/2>

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the School of Social Sciences Theses and Dissertations at Archium Ateneo. It has been accepted for inclusion in Sociology & Anthropology Department by an authorized administrator of Archium Ateneo. For more information, please contact [mdelaspenas@ateneo.edu](mailto:mdelaspenas@ateneo.edu).

THESIS/DISSERTATION ABSTRACT  
(107)

Title: Stigmatization and Responses of the Mikung: A Case of a Marginalized Group in Indonesia

Researcher: Sofwan Samandawai No. of Pages: 158  
Adviser: Liza L. Lim, Ph.D. Year: 2004  
Subject Area: Anthropology Degree Conferred: M.A.

Statement of the Problem

Main Problem: There have been cases in which marginalization arises as people become labeled or stigmatized by the community, more so by the state. This study analyzes the process of stigmatization of a group of people in Indonesia called the Mikung, and identifies the sources of the stigma and how it is utilized in the power relations between the dominant group in the community and the local government, with respect to the stigmatized group. While most studies of stigmatization or labeling are based on the moral perspective, this study is based largely on the political perspective.

Subproblems: This study describes the implications of stigmatization on the marginalization and victimization of the Mikung. It also presents how members adopt coping strategies and passive or hidden resistance to sustain their everyday life in the community.

Procedure

This research employs a descriptive case study design. Data were gathered through a combination of in-depth interview, direct and participant observation, and secondary data analysis. The life story method was also employed to know the experiences of the Mikung in the process of stigmatization, marginalization, and victimization, as well as their coping strategies and forms of resistance.

Treatment of Data

The data collected are analyzed qualitatively, and the results are presented descriptively.

Findings

The Mikung are stigmatized because of their religious practices (animism). They are also associated with communist party sympathizers who threatened the authority of the state in the 30 September 1965 Action of the Communist Party of Indonesia. A dominant Islamic group plays an important role in labeling the Mikung for their religious beliefs. The state, in turn, has worked to legitimize the Mikung's political stigma, and to impose and suppress their rights as members of the community. Consequently, cases of killing, arrest, imprisonment, destroying assets, and psychological trauma are common among the Mikung. Moreover, they are controlled by the dominant Islamic group through its religious rehabilitation initiatives, and by the local government through its political

rehabilitation program. Owing to the government's policy of "clean self" and "clean environment," the Mikung are blacklisted in government and military institutions, so their chances of finding employment in these institutions are nil. This has been unfavorable especially for Mikung who are merely descendants of those involved in the communist party.

Despite their situation, the Mikung have sought to maintain their identity by adopting coping strategies and mechanisms of passive or hidden resistance. A "channel of expression" was opened for them when the euphoria of reformation hit Indonesia. They managed to engage in active resistance to de-stigmatize people who are included in the local government's list of communist sympathizers. However, this did not bear fruit because communism is still a very sensitive issue in the country.

### Conclusion

The religious stigma attached to the Mikung has resulted in their marginalization. This is aggravated by political stigmatization, which has led to their further oppression and victimization. In power relations, the domination by one group causes the subordination of the other, although the tendency of the latter to resist is not remote. Stigmatized people manage to survive under these conditions by adopting coping strategies. In the case of the Mikung, they engage in "passing" and "covering" their stigma in an effort to be considered by others as "normal." They also try to control the reaction of others by manipulating what they reveal about themselves, particularly during social interaction. Meanwhile, they exercise passive or hidden resistance when an event or situation from outside the community creates changes in their physical setting or ideology (such as the construction of a park building or the euphoria of reformation).

These coping strategies and forms of resistance, however, have not been effective in removing the stigma from the Mikung and reversing their marginal condition. They remain outsiders with limited political rights in the community. This relates to the larger sociopolitical conditions in Indonesia, in which the fear that the Communist Party will once again converge and become empowered remains.

### Recommendations

This study suggests that the government adjust its policies to de-stigmatize those who are not involved in the communist party by removing the political screen test for Mikung descendants. It also recommends further research on how the stigmatized group survives economically, the gender dimension of stigmatization, and efforts of certain Islamic groups to eliminate the roots of communism in the rural villages.