

INDONESIAN EXPLORATION: LEIF RANDT & ANDREAS STICHMANN

LEIF RANDT AND ANDREAS STICHMANN ARE AUTHORS FROM GERMANY WHO RECENTLY SPENT FOUR WEEKS TRAVELING THROUGH THE ARCHIPELAGO AND EXPLORING POPULAR LOCALITIES AS WELL AS THOSE OFF THE BEATEN PATH.

Text NISA SOEHERMAN Photos courtesy of GOETHE-INSTITUT INDONESIA

In anticipation of this month's Frankfurt Book Fair 2015 (October 14-18), with Indonesia as the Guest of Honor Country, the two writers wayfared through colorful communities, cultural wonderments and unforgettable experiences from the land to bring back riveting stories to share in their home country.

The places they ventured to included Makassar, Lombok, Yogyakarta and Bandung. Though both admitted the journeys can at times be grueling and prone to capriciousness, they were nevertheless worthwhile adventures to inspire their respective writings.

Leif Randt and Andreas Stichmann are well

regarded for their novels and associated works of fiction. Leif related that he often writes about established systems and the fight against them, such as a rebellion within a social order. Andreas, who has also visited the Islamic Republic of Iran and written on it, favors the use of self-irony to infuse into the realism of the story.

Being in Indonesia itself turned out to be storybook-worthy, as attested by one of Leif's experiences. While on a small island off of the coast of Makassar, the author stood under a shade beneath a palm tree and was deep in conversation with one of his guides when an errant coconut fell right into the narrow empty space between them. Laughingly,



he asked and wondered, “What if I had been standing at the very spot where it fell? Yeah, I was almost killed by a coconut!” No doubt, that is a tale to be remembered and recounted.

Asked if there are differences in culture that were particularly felt during their time here, the two authors were mum for a brief moment before expressing their thoughts. “[Things are] actually not as different as I expected,” Leif shared. Andreas added that a sense of religiosity and close community ties are definitely palpable. They noted the kind and welcoming nature of Indonesians and the seemingly general reticence in the people to say a curt “no” for worry of being seen as unfriendly. Leif said, “In

Germany, when you don’t know the answer, you don’t hesitate to just say ‘No, I don’t know’, but that’s not quite the case here.”

Exploring the different cities and surrounding areas in a country of thousands of islands, one of the enjoyable particulars is island-hopping, going from an island to the next by boat or short plane rides. And not only does it make for a memorable adventure to be re-experienced; it is also one that can inspire the authors’ literary works. Leif and Andreas explained that what often goes into the writing is based on memories, and inspirations may come long after the trip is over. As such, they look forward to being inspired by the time they spent in Indonesia.