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**Sexual Slander and the 1965-1966
Mass Killings in Indonesia:
Political and Methodological Considerations**

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INTRODUCTION¹

By 1965 Gerwani was one of the largest women's organizations in the world. The organization was set up right after the war for independence, in 1950. Based on a nationalist, socialist and feminist ideology they opposed the restoration of the traditional roles of Indonesian women as loyal wives, homemakers and devoted mothers, and demanded space for women in the public sphere. This abruptly ended in October 1965. In one of the most grotesque demonstrations of mass manipulation they were accused of being involved in the murder of the generals who were the victims of a military action by leftist colonels. Several of their members were accused of having danced an erotic dance, castrated the generals and gouged out their eyes. This allegation was used to stir up the mass hysteria that led to the murder of many hundreds of thousands of leftist activists, and the real coup, the replacement of President Sukarno by General Suharto.² Since then women's political agency has been severely curtailed, as it became associated with sexual debauchery and social turmoil in general. State women's organizations were set up and existing women's organizations were forced to help build a 'stable' Indonesian society, based on women's subordination. More independent women's groups were afraid to be called 'new Gerwani' as that would unleash strong state repression and social ostracism. President Suharto was forced to step down in 1998 by the 'reformasi' movement. Since then a process of democratisation has started. This article analyses the above events and discusses their implications in the present 'reformasi' period.

THE CONTINUED FEAR OF COMMUNISM

In March 2009 campaigning for the parliamentary elections was in full swing. Nursyahbani Katjasungkana, a popular MP and candidate for the Muslim party PKB (Partai Kebangkitan Bangsa, National Awakening Party) and a well known feminist activist, was campaigning in the district of Banyuwangi, in East Java.³ Her adversaries spread the rumor that she 'defended the PKI', the illegal communist party. The association this allegation was supposed to evoke was that she was an atheist, opposing the clerical elite of the region, attacking women's traditional roles and in general looking for trouble. These are serious issues, considering that the PKB is an offshoot of the NU (Nahdlatul Ulema), one of the large Muslim organizations and that Banyuwangi is one of NU's strongholds, with many *pesantren* (Muslim boarding schools) scattered in its vast area. The *kyai*, leaders of these *pesantren*, are the backbone of the NU. This was not the first time she was associated with the PKI or with one of its mass organizations. In December 1998, half a year after the fall of General Suharto, the first national feminist conference was held, in Yogyakarta. NKS, as she is popularly known,

¹ Earlier versions of this paper have been presented at the Wertheim Centenary, 4 June 2008, Amsterdam and the '1965-66 Indonesian killings revisited' conference, Singapore 17-19 June 2009. I thank an anonymous reviewer for insightful comments that helped me improve the paper.

² During the Suharto regime the action in the night of October 1st was called a 'coup'. However, as it was not the intention of the plotters to replace the country's president, this is not a correct term. Likewise the use of the word 'putsch' is incorrect. As both words, 'coup' and 'putsch' do not adequately describe the motive of the plotters (who insisted they wanted to protect their president), I use inverted commas.

³ She was the first secretary general of the KPI (Koalisi Perempuan Indonesia, Indonesian Women's Coalition), from 1998 till 2004 and is co-founder of the Association for Women's Justice, APIK, which to date has 14 local branches. She is also the present president of the Kartini Asia Network, an Asia-wide network of feminist activists and academics.

chaired the congress at which the KPI (Kongres Perempuan Indonesia), the Indonesian Women's Congress, was established – the first feminist mass organization after the destruction of Gerwani. At the time she was accused of being 'Gerwani baru', a 'new Gerwani' (member). That term was reiterated by the then minister of Women's affairs, Tuti Alifiah in a Cabinet meeting in 1999, where she discussed her worries about the establishment of the KPI.⁴

Only a few months earlier, before General Suharto had been forced to step down, an accusation of that kind could land one in serious trouble. But even in December of that year, after 'reformasi' had been proclaimed, mention of Gerwani caused considerable anxiety. At the congress Ibu Sulami, a former secretary of the national leadership of Gerwani, and I spoke about Gerwani, its history and destruction. This was the first time Ibu Sulami addressed a public meeting, after having been imprisoned for 17 years. It was also the first time I could attend a public meeting again in Indonesia, after having been blacklisted for ten years.⁵ Many participants were shocked. They had believed the absurd lies the Suharto regime had spread about Gerwani's alleged involvement in the murder of the generals who were killed on the night of 1 October. When I told them that the official autopsy which proved the generals were not castrated but had died by gunshots was made public, some participants demanded I sent them that proof (which I subsequently did). Because of the presence of Ibu Sulami and me, the delegates of Aisyah, the women's organization of the Muhammadiyah, the other Indonesian Muslim mass organization, withdrew in protest.

Few events have impacted Indonesian modern history more deeply than the mass murders of 1965/6. Yet the prelude to these mass murders is hardly ever mentioned. As is the genocide itself, the underlying sexual currents are hidden under deep layers of fear, guilt, horror and shame. Clearly the trauma of the 'events of 1965' as they are commonly referred to, is still playing an important role in the national subconscious. Other than in countries like South Africa, Chile and Argentina, where processes of truth finding have led to reconciliation, in Indonesia there still has not been a national process of truth finding.⁶ Many issues remain unclear, such as the role Suharto himself played and the extent of the genocide unleashed by the military assisted by religious and in some cases conservative nationalist forces. At the local level some careful efforts at reconciliation are being made by the members of Syarikat Islam (Muslim Association), which was set up in Yogyakarta in 2003. Young people are being confronted with the mysterious pasts of their parents which have created insurmountable rifts between the families of the killers and of their victims. At the very emotional meeting when Syarikat Islam was launched members of Ansor, the youth movement of the NU, confessed to have butchered PKI members. In tears they declared they thought they had been doing the right thing at the time, purging society from the perceived communist threat. They insisted they had had little choice, acting as they did under threat of the military.⁷ Similar sentiments were voiced when I spoke to a former leader of Banser, the military wing of Ansor in Probolinggo, in April 2008.

⁴ Personal communication of NKS, April 2009.

⁵ Ibu Sulami was one of four members of Gerwani who had ever been tried. However they were not convicted because of their alleged involvement with the murder of the generals, but for their involvement with a movement to support the then deposed Sukarno.

⁶ Recently the National Human Rights Commission has started an investigation into the extent of the genocide. To date no results have been made public.

⁷ Information gleaned from several conversations with Syarikat Islam members.

The hatred and fear of Gerwani are still so strong that the shooting of *Lastri*, a fictional film based on a series of interviews with ex-Gerwani members was prohibited.⁸ In early 2009, after protests of a Muslim right wing militia group, the FPI (Front Pembela Islam, Muslim Defender's Front) in Surakarta, the mayor of that city forbade Eros Djarot, the director, to shoot the film on location. The arguments used by the FPI were that the film would 'violate the rights of the Muslim community'. The film was seen to be part of a propaganda strategy to 'create sympathy for communism'. A press statement published by the FPI declared further that this was a similar propaganda strategy as the Jews used to enhance sympathy for Israel by stressing the suffering of the many Holocaust victims. The FPI noted that films have a great potential to sway the mind of people, particularly when they contain a love story. They strongly opposed the views of the director that the present beliefs of what happened at Lubang Buaya were just a (gruesome) fairy tale.⁹ The inhabitants of Karanganyar, where the shooting was to take place, joined the protests and demanded that the permission that was already issued be withdrawn.¹⁰ Later students of the HMI Bogor (Himpunan Mahasiswa Islam, Muslim Students Union) expressed their solidarity with the protesters. They feared, so they declared, that the film would stir up the 'latent danger' (a phrase used consistently throughout the New Order) that the PKI still pose for Indonesian society.¹¹

The Reformasi that started in 1998, after Suharto was forced to step down, was apparently not such a clean break as many had hoped at the time. Old wounds were not suddenly healed, democracy and truth did not spring in bright bloom from the toxic moral morass of the New Order. Old ghosts continue to haunt Indonesian society. The association of communism with atheism, the destruction of the family, the degradation of women's sexual morals and the rupture of social harmony persists to this very day. Communism is still prohibited; an attempt to legitimize communist thought failed in the Senate (MPR) in 2003. When NU chairman Abdulrahman Wahid (popularly known as Gus Dur) became president he suggested that the ban on communism was lifted. Straight away, on 8 April 2000, a mass demonstration organized by the FUII (Front Umat Islam Indonesia, Front of the Indonesian Muslim Community) marched to the presidential palace, burning the PKI flag. Their banner read: 'we are confused! We love Gus (Dur) but we hate communism and zionism'. In Medan and Jambi similar demonstrations were held. In Jambi three demands were formulated: continue the ban on communism, no restoration of diplomatic ties with Israel, and an end to prostitution.¹² When the proposal to lift the ban on communism came to the vote in the MPR in August 2003, the majority were opposed. Only the PDI-P fraction declared it was unjust that people associated with the PKI still could not vote.¹³ When early in the following year the issue of the voting rights of people associated with the PKI again was discussed in the MPR, strong opposition was voiced by an uncle of Abdulrahman Wahid, *kyai* Jusuf Hasyim, the leader of

⁸ The interviews are found in Nadia (2007). I wrote the introduction to the book.

⁹ <http://www.fpi.or.id/artikel.asp?oy=sik-24>, accessed 5/18/2009. Lubang Buaya is the name of the neighbourhood where the training field where the generals were killed is located.

¹⁰ 29-Nov-2008, 14:15:41 WIB - [www.kabarindonesia.com]. Eros Djarot realized that the 'spontaneous protesters' in the countryside were in effect paid by the secret police to sabotage his film. His main actress was taken to jail for a minor offence and spent several weeks there. Interview, Djarot with Swedish film maker Maj Wechselmann, March 2009.

¹¹ Jurnal Bogor 19 December 2008.

¹² Kompas 8 April 2000.

¹³ Kompas 2 August 2003.

a big *pesantren* in Jombang. He said he was supported by many *kyai*, as they had experienced the ‘terror and intimidation and even the violence [of the PKI] towards the *pesantren*’.¹⁴

At present the opposition against anybody or anything associated with the PKI in general and with Gerwani in particular is less stringent than during the New Order, when anything associated with liberalism, activism and human and women’s rights was called communist depravity. As Heryanto (2006) rightly maintains, one cannot understand Indonesian present day society without referring to the impact ‘the events of 1965’ as it continues to permeate the people’s minds and the society at large. Suharto and his allies were able to maintain their grip of terror on the country for so long by periodically reviving the spectre of communism and this has deeply influenced the texture of Indonesian society.

The defamation of women’s sexuality after 1965 was based on the association of progressive women with unspeakable acts of debauchery. This slanderous campaign played such a large role in triggering the genocide that it stands to reason to expect that scholarship pays ample attention to these issues and to gender issues in general. Of all mass organizations associated with the PKI, its women’s organization was the object of most hatred, not the unions of farmers, labourers, artists or youth. All through the New Order the word Gerwani was associated with unspeakable sexual perversions. People lowered their voices when referring to the ‘evil mothers of Gerwani’. The police beat women activists harder than they did student activists.¹⁵ It took enormous courage for women to set up the first feminist organizations in the 1980s, Yasanti in Yogyakarta (1982), Kalyanamitra in Jakarta (1984), and in the early 1990s groups such as Solidaritas Perempuan (Women’s Solidarity) and APIK, as women’s political activism was still associated with moral depravity.¹⁶

Schoolbooks still echo the version of army historian Nugroho Notosutanto that the army saved the nation from the treacherous communists (McGregor 2005 and 2007). In 2007 new schoolbooks were produced in which this army version was contested. However this effort met with strong protests and the new books had to be burnt. The order was given by the country’s Attorney General, Abdul Rahman Saleh. It was widely rumoured that President Yudhoyono, might be involved in this action; his father in law, Sarwo Edhie, was the main executor of the genocide.¹⁷ After the 1 October 1965 putsch the government went all out to associate any kind of resistance to the army with communism, feminism, sexual depravity and violence, even producing a film (which was compulsory viewing on many occasions such as Independence Day) and a novel on the topic (see also Heryanto 2006).

¹⁴ Tempo Interaktif, 4 March 2004.

¹⁵ The activist Yenny Rosa told me that when she was captured in Yogyakarta at the end of the 1980s for selling the books of Pramoedya Ananta Toer, she noticed she was treated with more viciousness than the male students who were picked up with her. The soldiers shouted at her that she was a dirty whore. Only after her release, when she had read about the campaign of sexual slander against Gerwani did she understand where those accusations came from.

¹⁶ Yasanti was set up by Muslim feminists. Kalyanamitra was initially mainly a women’s documentation centre. Solidaritas Perempuan focused on women migrant workers. APIK (Asosiasi Perempuan Indonesia untuk Keadilan, Indonesian Women’s Association for Justice) is a network by women’s legal aid bureaus set up by Nursyahbani Katjasungkana.

¹⁷ See ABC reporting on the incident <http://abc.net.au/pm/content/2007/s1911645.htm>. The allegation is made by Asvi Warman Adam, from the Indonesian Institute of Sciences.

Are the Indonesianists paying sufficient attention to these critical issues of sexual slander underlying the formation of Indonesia's nationhood (Wieringa 2003a)? Below I will review some recent analyses on state terrorism and violence in Indonesia and point out their blind spots in dealing with issues of gender and sexual politics. How can noted scholars ignore the sexual overtones of Indonesia's particular form of state terrorism when they are writing on the topic? Is it perhaps because gender relations and sexual politics in general are ignored, or confined to the corner of 'women's studies' which only seem to have a relevance to feminist scholars? If so, what are the ramifications of this black hole for mainstream Indonesian studies? I will first summarize the sexual politics behind the 'imagination' of the Orba (Orde Baru, New Order, the reign of President Suharto, 1966-1998) in Indonesia. I will then illustrate the effects of the strict censorship on the 'truth' about 1965 and the mass killings by referring to some of my own experiences as a researcher in the New Order era. At the time of writing this essay, Reformasi is a decade underway and there are now fewer restrictions on social science research. Yet the silence continues.

THE SEXUAL POLITICS OF THE 'EVENTS OF 1965-1966'

On the night of 1 October 1965 a military action in Jakarta wiped out the country's top brass, apart from General Suharto. The perpetrators were leftist colonels who said they wanted to protect President Sukarno. They were supported by a few top members of the Communist Party, which as a whole was not informed. Some members of the youth movement of the Communist Party were employed to guard strategic objects (Roosa 2006). Women were not involved and were never indicted in the trials that followed (Wieringa 2002). The 'putsch' was folded within one day, and General Suharto gained control over the army. Afterwards a campaign of sexual slander was launched with the help of newspapers and the radio, in which members of the communist women's organization, Gerwani, were accused of having killed and castrated the generals. A genocide followed the dimensions of which have never been fully uncovered: probably over a million people were massacred.¹⁸ Thereafter the power of the then President Sukarno was so weakened that in March 1966 he could be forced to hand over the authority to General Suharto.

How could this happen? By mid-1965 tensions in Indonesian society were reaching a climax. In the countryside the actions of the socialist Farmers' Front, the so called 'aksi sepihak' (one-sided actions) which demanded the rapid implementation of the recently promulgated land reform laws, had thoroughly disturbed social relations. In particular the *kyai* of large *pesantren* were inflamed, as they had extensive landholdings and had been the objects of many of these 'unilateral actions' of the Farmers' Union.¹⁹ Rising levels of inflation caused increasing poverty particularly in urban areas. The relationship between the army leaders and conservative religious, mainly Muslim, groups on the one hand and the Communist Party of Indonesia (PKI) on the other hand, became increasingly tense, with President Sukarno

¹⁸ This is the figure of Amnesty International. Cribb's figure is more conservative; he concluded that it was most likely that around 500,000 people were massacred (1990). Sarwo Edhie, who led the army units that orchestrated the killings boasted of having reached a total of three million dead (Wieringa 2002).

¹⁹ The land reform law was adopted in 1960. It set an upper limit of land that a single family could possess. Yet its implementation lagged behind. In 1963 the Farmers' Union spearheaded a campaign for peasants to forcibly evict large landowners. This led to violent confrontations, particularly in East Java, where many local *kyai* held extensive plots of land. In this campaign the PKI alienated many noncommunist forces, such as the NU. Many authors attribute the genocide of socialist people to hatred against the PKI because of this violent rural campaign (Mortimer 1974, Wertheim 1979).

leaning more than ever towards the PKI side. Only Sukarno seemed able to keep the competing factions together. The PKI was particularly worried that the President might not be able to protect them much longer in view of the six murder attempts which had been made on him already (May 1978). Rumours of his illness therefore caused great anxiety (Roosa, 2006).

In this tense situation several middle-ranking officers of the Army, led by Colonel Untung, staged a military action. They wanted, so they testified later, to protect the President against plans of an alleged Council of Generals, which, so they had come to believe, intended to overthrow Sukarno on Army Day, October 5 (Latief 2000). Also, they were discontented with the corrupt and decadent lifestyle of some of those Generals, in particular Yani (Crouch 1978). The plans of the officers were discussed in several meetings of the PKI politbureau, during which some limited support was promised to the plotters (Mortimer 1974).

During the ‘putsch’ six generals and one lieutenant were killed and their bodies were thrown into a deep well at a training field for volunteers of the Malaysia campaign. This field was located in the neighbourhood of Lubang Buaya and had been mostly used by volunteers of the PKI-affiliated youth organization and the women’s organization Gerwani. It belonged to the air force. Other groups of volunteers were trained on other fields.

Before the day was out General Suharto’s forces had managed to cajole and threaten half of the rebel forces into submission (Crouch 1978, Roosa 2006). In the meantime President Sukarno had decided not to appoint General Suharto, who was next in line to replace the murdered Chief of Staff, General Yani, possibly because he considered him too ‘strong-willed’ (Anderson and McVey 1971). Instead he appointed a junior General, Pranoto Reksosamudro. Suharto, infuriated, ignored the orders of his President. He issued his own radio announcement that he had taken over the army leadership to restore security and order (Crouch 1978: 132). Two weeks later Sukarno was compelled to replace Pranoto by Suharto. Thereafter the propaganda campaign, the massacre and mass detainment followed. Although the slander against Gerwani is usually played down, I argue it was the spark in the powder keg without which the bloodbath may not have happened or at least not have acquired such gruesome magnificence. The campaign moreover had effects that much outlasted the genocide itself.

Broadly speaking there are three interpretations of the events in October 1965 which marked the end of the ‘Old Order’. The army version is that the PKI was the *dalang* (puppeteer) behind the coup, through its Special Bureau. The fullest account of the army view is given by Notosutanto and Saleh (1968).²⁰ The PKI on the other hand maintained initially that it was purely an intra-military affair. This version was supported abroad by a paper circulated since 1966 authored by two social scientists from Cornell University, Anderson and McVey. A third interpretation is that Suharto and possibly the CIA were behind a conspiracy to break the power of the PKI. Holtzappel (1979), Scott (1985) and Wertheim (1979, 1991) have elaborated this view. This interpretation stresses the class aspects of the coup and the propaganda campaign which followed it, pointing out that most victims fell in the areas where peasant unrest had been heaviest. Recently it is acknowledged that some top level PKI cadres knew about the forthcoming ‘putsch’ (Roosa 2006).

²⁰ See McGregor (2005 and 2007) for an analysis of the circumstances under which this army view was produced.

I suggest an alternative interpretation, an elaboration of the interpretation that sees the action as a mainly intra-military affair – albeit with very limited support from some members of the PKI politbureau and the youth movement. I maintain Suharto played a critical role not only in the ‘putsch’ itself, but particularly in the subsequent ‘real’ coup, the taking over of power from the legitimate nation’s leader, President Sukarno. Suharto has shown himself to be both a ruthless and very ambitious man, one who waits patiently for the right moment to strike. The information he had received from the plotters may have convinced him that the coup was so clumsily planned, with so little actual support that it would be too risky to support it, while it could very easily be put down.²¹ He would then come out as the great saviour of the nation and Sukarno would have had no other choice but to appoint him Chief of Staff. The start of the propaganda campaign which formed this second, ‘real’ coup may have been when Sukarno appointed a junior officer to Army Chief instead, which humiliated and enraged Suharto and made him realize that his only access to power lay in the removal of President Sukarno. And that in order to replace the President, his most powerful support group at the time, the Communists, had to be destroyed (Wieringa 1999, 2002). He therefore deliberately devised a spark which he threw in the powder keg, the volatile economic and political condition of the time, creating a situation of cosmic disorder, which only could be set straight by ritual cleansing. This spark, which started with a few inflammatory articles in the army press and was followed up by radio programmes and propaganda meetings, created a huge bonfire, which up to now is still not fully extinguished.

THE ‘REAL’ COUP: DEMONIZING COMMUNIST WOMEN

Based on my research in the early 1980s my reconstruction of what actually happened at Lubang Buaya is as follows: some seventy women, most of them young girls from the youth organization, others from the trade union and the farmers’ front, and a few Gerwani members, including some wives of soldiers, were assembled at the training field in Lubang Buaya for the anti-Malaysia Campaign. The plotters brought their victims there, killed those who were not already dead and threw them in a well. Gerwani as an organization was left out of the plans. What happened at Lubang Buaya? What about the wild accusations which were later hurled at the girls present there, of ‘naked, sexual dancing’, of having ‘severed the penises of the generals’, and of having their ‘eyes gouged out’? How did the generals die (Anderson 1987)?

In the early morning of October 1st the girls and women were woken up by shouts. It was still dark outside and they were all frightened. They ran to the open space where they saw a group of soldiers dragging the kidnapped generals, some of whom had already been killed. The soldiers hit the generals and finally the ones still alive were shot and all bodies were thrown into a well. The soldiers were enraged - they even rained bullets on their victims when they were already dead (Wieringa 2002).

Afterwards the army media started circulating stories about dancing and sexual perversions, and cutting off penises. In fact the army went to great length to construct the stories they decided to circulate. Witnesses were ‘quoted’ in the papers, photographs were shown. There were television broadcasts and radio programmes on the horrors said to be committed at Lubang Buaya. How did the military go about that?

²¹ Latief, who was one of the plotters, mentioned this in his memoirs (2000).

The girls were horribly tortured, sexually molested, gang raped and then forced to say 'yes' to anything their torturers wanted them to testify. A volunteer girl present at Lubang Buaya told me that she had to undress in prison and to dance naked in front of her torturers while they took pictures (Wieringa 1999, 2002). These shots, which in fact were taken weeks later, were later used to 'prove' that the girls had been dancing naked.

The campaign had a slow start. While the autopsy results had become available to the authorities, they were not made public. The autopsy demonstrated that the wounds found on the bodies of the killed generals and lieutenant were either gunshots, or resulted from heavy, dull traumas, possibly caused by clubbing with the butts of guns or the damage likely to occur from a fall into a deep well. The genitals of the generals were intact, all eyes were in their proper sockets, and there were no traces of cuts with razors. As General Suharto himself had ordered the report to be prepared it is unlikely that he had not been informed of its results before the burial (Anderson 1987).

A first indication that some gruesome plan was being hatched was a story in the *Berita Yuddha* of 11 October 1965.²² It reported on the condition of the bodies of the Generals which were found in the well. Contrary to what the autopsy revealed, the paper wrote that 'eyes had been gouged out, and of some Generals the genitals had been cut off'. This message was the start of one of the most effective mass campaigns intended to spread terror after the Second World War. Other army-derived reports tell of women dancing naked and of young women committing sexual acts with the generals. Spurred on by the army the campaign got underway; the slogans of students and other groups who were demonstrating against the PKI and Sukarno included *Gerwani Tjabul* (Gerwani Whores), *Gantung Gerwani* (Hang Gerwani) and *Ganjang Gerwani* (Crush Gerwani).

Islamic leaders joined the chorus. The Muhammadiyah declared that the 'extermination of the Gestapu/PKI and the Nekolim (neo-colonialist forces) is an obligatory religious duty' (Boland 1982:146). This call for a holy war was subsequently echoed by many Muslim leaders, who justified the killings as 'the will of Allah' (see also Cribb 1990 and Schwarz 1994). An agreement was drawn up between NU leaders and the army that the youth movement, Ansor, would support the army in its extermination of leftist people. The late mother of former President Abdulrahman Wahid, Solichah A. Wahid Hasyim, was particularly active in this respect. The agreement was signed by her, and concluded in her own house.²³ The NU women's wing, Muslimat, joined the aggression against anything related to Gerwani. In Jakarta for instance. Aisyah Baidhuri, another member of the Wahid family (a sister of Gus Dur) and a member of parliament, joined in the destruction of the Melati kindergartens which had been set up by Gerwani.²⁴

²² Lit. 'war news'. The paper belongs to the army and has a wide circulation among the general public

²³ Interview with Khairul (pseudonym), an NU activist in April 2007. I have not yet been able to see the actual text of this document. Mrs Solichah was a member of parliament from 1960 – 1982 and a leader of the NU women's organization, Muslimat NU (see also Blackburn, Susan, How do Women Influence Political Islam in Indonesia? www.qantara.de/webcom, accessed 3/7/2009).

²⁴ Personal communication from NKS.

More lurid reports followed implicating Gerwani members as having prostituted themselves routinely for PKI leaders on the instigation of PKI chairman Aidit.²⁵ It is striking that after these ‘confessions’ none of the women who had been present at Lubang Buaya and who had been detained were ever brought to court. In December the campaign lost its vigour. Most of the killing in Java had been done, although in Bali the worst killing took place in the second two weeks of December 1965 (Robinson 1995 and 1996).

CREATION OF DISORDER

What kind of an organization was Gerwani? During the national revolution (1945-1949) women’s political participation was welcomed. Sukarno called the women’s movement the ‘second wheel’ on the chariot of the national revolution (Sukarno 1963 orig. 1947) Thereafter they were expected to return to the ‘kitchen, bed, and well’, (*dapur, kasur, sumur*, the three spaces where women were supposed to excel, according to traditional gender ideology). Gerwani however insisted that women still had another revolution to fight: freedom from subordination as women and for their right to act in the political arena. As members of the ‘left family’ they assisted women workers and farmers, male and female, imprisoned for their involvement in the farmer’s movement. In large demonstrations they protested the deplorable economic situation. They fought against violence against women. They called themselves ‘progressive’ women. The organization was never formally associated with the PKI but, when they were forced in early 1965 to align themselves with one or another party, they had decided to formally join the PKI family. That decision was to be ratified at their December 1965 congress, which due to the political upheaval never took place (Wieringa 2002). Their political and social activities earned them the reputation of trouble makers with the more traditional women’s organizations, and with conservative groups in general, particularly the Muslim establishment.

The significance of the campaign of sexual slander against Gerwani lies in the deliberate manipulation of the collective cultural and religious conscience of the Indonesian population on which Suharto built his road to power. Suharto himself wrote explicitly that ‘a mental transition’ had been required in a pamphlet that appeared a year after the ‘putsch’ (Suharto 1966). Because of Sukarno’s great popularity and the large following of the PKI it was not an easy task to eliminate the PKI and shove aside President Sukarno. Another reason to go slowly and to first prepare the required ‘mental transition’ is put forward by Suharto himself in his autobiography (1991). He explains that a military coup would have been much faster, but that a drastic action like that might have entailed the danger of a counter-coup. It seems that deliberately a climate of disorder was created exploiting the deep anxieties of a population which was already badly shaken by the political and socio-economic tensions of the period. This disorder struck chords with the fear of the uncontrolled sexual powers of women, a religiously-inspired apprehension that women’s disobedience will endanger the entire social system, Hindu notions of all-female maniacal crowds and male horror of castration (Mernissi 1985, Tiwon 1996). Islamic youth groups, mainly NU’s Banser and Ansor, assisted the army and especially the troops of Sarwo Edhie in Java (Crouch 1978; Robinson 1995). In other places, especially in Bali, members of the conservative wing of the PNI were involved as well. Hindu Balinese saw the killing of people associated with the PKI ‘as the fulfilment of a religious obligation to purify the land’ (Robinson 1995:300). Robinson

²⁵ One of the more spectacular accusations was that Aidit would have given the ‘golden horse’ award to a Gerwani girl who would have sexually serviced most PKI cadres (Wieringa 2002).

argues that the killings in Bali were spurred by a campaign mounted by the local military and police authorities.

SEXUAL POLITICS AND THE NEW ORDER OF PRESIDENT SUHARTO

In March 1966 General Suharto knew the time was ripe for him to wrest power from President Sukarno's hands.²⁶ Since then for over thirty years the New Order state has waged a war of sexual imagining - posing the government against 'communist whores', a campaign aimed at presenting the Army under General Suharto as the virile saviours of a nation on the brink of destruction. Long after the PKI had been destroyed in one of the bloodiest transitions to power in modern times, the spectre of communism, especially as animated by its women, was still called up to justify the harsh repression of any democratic anti-government forces in the country. As Enloe wrote 'nationalism has typically sprung from masculinized memory, masculinized humiliation and masculinized hope' (1990: 45). Masculine memories, hopes and humiliations often centre around women's sexuality. The 'own' women's chastity has to be defined and protected, while the 'other' women are either constructed as objects of rape or they are disciplined in other ways.

Sexual politics thus underlie the construction of national states, such as the New Order regime.²⁷ Sexual politics deal with the moral, sexual, symbolic, cultural and political codes in which individuals, families and the nation are linked and with the interplay between sexed and gendered bodies and the socio-political realm (Wieringa 2003a). In Indonesia the 'putsch' of 1 October 1965 started a bitter struggle in which the military version of family life and state power prevailed over that of another patriarchal force, the Communist Party. In the Indonesian Communist 'family', the party provided the leadership, and the women's organization was seen as an auxiliary force. At household level this translated in the model of a dominant father who was a party member, while his wife was subordinate to him, a good mother and simultaneously active in Gerwani (Wieringa 2002). In the process the communist 'revolutionary' family was wiped out and the military family form, built on an excessively masculine power obsessed with control and women's submission became the dominant one. Women were no longer defined as comrades in the revolutionary struggle (though as helpers of the men who were considered to have superior insights), but as submissive wives and devoted mothers, who taught their children obedience and no longer fiery ideas of social justice and equality. General Suharto became the super-patriarch, as Father of the Development Family he wanted his New Order state to be.

CLASH OF MASCULINITIES

The change from Sukarno's Old Order state to Suharto's New Order state was not only an intra-military conflict, it was also a fratricidal struggle, a clash of masculinities. Both sides had their own version of the ideal family. The PKI had built a hybrid construct called the 'Manipol' family, composed of nationalist-Sukarnoist and socialist rhetoric. The word 'Manipol' comes from Manifesto Politik, Sukarno's 1959 independence day speech. Women

²⁶ President Sukarno was forced to hand over power to Suharto by signing the Supersemar (Surat Perintah Sebelas Maret, Letter of Instruction of 11 March). The association with Semar is critical. Semar is a *wayang* puppet signifying the trusted servant of the gods, and loyal to superhero Ardjuno.

²⁷ See Mosse (1985), for an analysis of the sexual politics underlying the creation of nation states in Europe.

in these Manipol families supported their men as revolutionary fighters for a bright socialist future, while struggling along in their own women's organization, Gerwani. Though they were called comrades, they were comrades of a lesser order, to be guided by the politics of the Communist party and their husbands. Yet they were not the meek housewives that other women's organizations propagated. Gerwani members also claimed a role in the national political arena. They combined political, socialist and nationalist activities with their duties in the household (Wieringa 2002). It was their political activities which earned them the wrath of noncommunist forces, including the noncommunist women's organizations. In Gerwani itself the communist and the feminist wing were engaged in an internal struggle, which was won by the communist side (Wieringa 2002).

Suharto's Development State consisted of families in which women were first of all loyal wives, and educators of children. They were not supposed to play any political role in the public arena. They were responsible for the strict obedience of the family as a whole to the patriarchal, authoritarian national ideology Suharto imposed on the nation (Wieringa 1985). For this project women's sexuality had to be controlled and state-controlled women's organizations had to be set up in order to police women to behave with the required obedience. The legitimacy of the New Order state thus rested to a large part on the measure of control it exercised both over its 'own' women, as well as over the 'abject' communist women and the 'enemy' men who were portrayed as being responsible for the 'perverse', 'inhuman', 'primitive' behavior of 'their' women. These abjected women were so powerless that even after they had been released they could be used as sexual slaves (Nadia 2007, Susanti 2006). Throughout Suharto's reign the PKI was associated with these two words: *penghianat*, 'traitor' and *biadab*, 'primitive', 'pagan'. The PKI was thus excluded from the nation and even from human culture as such. The justification for this degradation was the alleged sexual perversion of Gerwani members.

The regime tried to keep the memory of the fantasy it had created itself alive by building an enormous museum, called '*Museum Penghianatan (Betrayal) PKI*' on the site where the generals were murdered. It contains huge murals of photographs, composed of pictures taken, amongst other places, at the well of Lubang Buaya itself. Strikingly enough the shots of the bodies of the generals, terrible enough as they are, show no signs of razor blade cuts, and there are no bloody patches on the place where the castrations should have taken place. All the crotches, as far as visible, are intact (Wieringa 2002).

The monument on the same site is called '*Monumen Pancasila Sakti (sacred) Lubang Buaya*'. It is a huge semi-circular construction in front of a pillar and a statue of the Garuda, the national bird. Statues of the slain generals and lieutenant in a vigorous attitude, and in full military attire are placed on a platform. Below them the history of Indonesia since 1945 according to Suharto is presented in a mural. It is here that the full ideological weight of the way the New Order regime was built on the subordination of women and the manipulation of sexual symbols becomes clear (Wieringa 2002, McGregor 2007). The central part of the mural is devoted to the events at Lubang Buaya. The generals are being clubbed and thrown into the well. They are surrounded by representations of women. To the left three women are standing. One of them is dressed in a very sexy way and argues defiantly with a man. Both of them are ugly. Beside her two dancing women are arranged, one of whom with a wreath of flowers (representing the so-called 'Dance of the Fragrant Flowers', by means of which the unfortunate generals were allegedly seduced).

Above the well one woman is portrayed, leaning against a tree. She is clad in uniform trousers and a very sexy blouse, which clearly reveals her full breasts. A knife is stuck in her belt. Her posture again is defiant. More to the right the scene is dominated by the overpowering figure of General Suharto. Under his left arm two women are standing, heads down, attitude demure, one of them is carrying a baby. The figure of General Suharto has intervened and turned those defiant, seductive, dangerous and castrating women into the very symbols of obedience and motherhood. The last scene shows the all-powerful General and President Suharto in front of what is presumably a courtroom. The absolute military and legal power is his.

The central element of the ideological fury unleashed around women's involvement in the murders of Lubang Buaya is that Gerwani in its 'communist', 'perverted' madness had the major hand in torturing and killing the generals, dancing naked, cutting off their penises. The clash of masculinities that formed the core of the internecine struggle between a patriarchal army and a differently patriarchal communist party, was played out over women's bodies. The male, militarized honour was constructed as being defamed by communist women, and Gerwani's rebellious women were demonized. The control over women's sexuality thus became a matter of prime national concern.²⁸

As the army was victorious, a militarized masculinity obsessed with control over subjugated forms of masculinity, demonised by the alleged perversions of Gerwani members became the hegemonic ideological force in the New Order state. The femininity that went with that model entailed a return to a conservative *kodrat wanita*, (women's code of conduct). It was symbolised by the well-known shadow play figure of the meek, obedient Sumbadra, in contrast to the *wayang* figure adopted by Gerwani, the warrior-princess Srikandi.²⁹ Those women who had been branded as 'Communist' or who had somehow been caught up in the cruel aftermath of the 'events of 1965' were tainted as abject and their suffering continued.

RESEARCHING EVIL

Even now, more than 10 years after Suharto was deposed, school books are burnt and the making of a film about Gerwani is sabotaged. The truth about the 'events of 1965' and the role the campaign against socialist women played can still not be discussed openly in Indonesian society. I was doing my research into the military manipulations which resulted in the construction of 'the evil mothers of Gerwani' in the 1980s, at the height of the New Order repression. When Ibu Sudjinah, a recently released member of Gerwani's central secretariat, knocked on the door of my guesthouse in September 1981 and asked me to investigate the history of Gerwani and the 'events of 1965' we both knew what was at stake.³⁰ That evening I heard for the first time in what cruel conspiracy Gerwani had been caught up. I must confess Ibu Sudjinah had to repeat the story several times, as far as she knew it, as I couldn't believe

²⁸ It is interesting to compare the way Schreiner, a male historian, deals with the Lubang Buaya monument and McGregor, who is a woman historian (Schreiner 2005, McGregor 2007). Schreiner totally misses the gender elements of the monument, while McGregor provides the most lucid account of the monument I have read so far, incorporating a gender analysis.

²⁹ Both puppets are wives of the popular shadow play hero Arjuno. Srikandhi is the incarnation of a male character, Amba.

³⁰ I still don't know how she had traced me down. She has passed away now without revealing this. I assume that it was because I had secretly made a film on the miserable conditions of women batik labourers in Central Java, which had been prohibited. Gerwani had been much interested in batik labourers as well.

my ears and thought I misunderstood it due to some deficiency in my knowledge of Indonesian. Ibu Sudjinah herself knew only bits and pieces at the time, as she was not allowed to travel to interview witnesses and could not access any archives to find out what role the media had played. We struck a deal that night. I would investigate the story, and would be responsible for the analytical content of my book, while I would not publish anything without them first checking it, for security reasons. Several Gerwani members, among whom Ibu Sulami, were still in jail, and all were under strict surveillance and would face severe police repression if they were caught talking to foreign researchers.

I managed to get a research visum for a project on the history of the Indonesian women's movement in general and returned the following year. Due to the extreme caution I had to exercise, many interviews were conducted in semi-public spaces, such as taxis, hotel lobbys and the offices of sympathetic NGO's. None of the Gerwani leaders or ordinary members could be seen with a foreigner; spies were everywhere. So I carried out my official research into the history of the Indonesian women's movement as a cover, and in the meantime tried to collect as much information as possible on Gerwani and the 'events of 1965'.³¹ All documentation in Indonesia on Gerwani was destroyed, so that research had to be done later.

At one time, in Padang, I came into major trouble myself. I wanted to interview a pastor of a church which had been supportive of the PKI prisoners. I had gotten the address in Jakarta, but when I arrived there a new pastor had recently been installed, which I was not aware of. Though I was suspicious, I decided to broach the topic. He immediately called the colonel of the local branch of the military intelligence, who arrived within ten minutes with five jeeps full of soldiers. Fortunately they let themselves be convinced of the stupidity of a foreign woman researcher coming all the way from Holland to find out something about the women's movement, which, as the colonel boasted, stengun on his lap, boots on the table, he 'had organized himself here in Padang'.

I was not only subjected to intimidation in Indonesia. The powerful Indonesia studies group of Leiden university tried to censor me as well. At a conference they organized in 1988 I wrote a paper about Gerwani (without revealing any names or sensitive information). When this was communicated to Indonesia, it created an uproar in Jakarta (the Indonesian participants were initially prevented from attending the seminar, only through interference of the Dutch embassy were they allowed to go, on condition that a spy from the Indonesian embassy in Bruxelles attend the closed meeting). But not only the Indonesian intelligence tried to shut me up, the editors of the conference proceedings refused to include my article in their book (Van Bemmelen, Djajadiningrat-Nieuwenhuis, Locher-Scholten and Touwen-Bouwsmas 1992).³² It was made clear to them that the safety of the Indonesian contributors could not be guaranteed if my article were included. The editors did not sit down to discuss their dilemma with me, but unilaterally decided to exclude my chapter.

I received a death threat and was blacklisted. I could not finish my dissertation, as I couldn't check the draft with the Gerwani members, as I had promised. I could only enter Indonesia again in 1994, on a diplomatic passport. We hurriedly convened a meeting with Ibu Sulami, Ibu Sudjinah and some other friends. They read every page of my dissertation and cut down

³¹ In fact I was doing a third layer of research as well, into the prohibited lesbian movement (Wieringa 2000).

³² Only one editor subsequently apologized, and explained they had not been able to resist the pressure of the Indonesian authorities. After the conference I received a death threat.

many sections, which might have endangered my narrators. I only could add those passages again in the commercial edition of my dissertation in 2002.

Since publication of my book and several articles I have been surprised at the divergent reactions I got. In Indonesia women's organizations like Kalyanamitra, APIK, KPI and others welcomed the analysis. Surprisingly the international Indonesian studies specialists ignored the gender analysis I presented. Baffled by the continuation of this blind spot both in Indonesian society, in Indonesian studies and in wider social sciences, and stimulated by my desire to write fiction (during the research I had felt like a detective) I eventually wrote a political thriller on the 'putsch' and the massacres: *Crocodile Hole*.³³

LESSONS LEARNT?

The above analysis has bearings on a number of topics that are hotly debated among Indonesianists. In the first place on the never-yet-resolved riddle of who exactly was/were behind the military action of 1965 and who triggered the actual coup of 1966, the transfer of power from President Sukarno to General Suharto. The 'missing weeks' (in some cases such as Bali months) between the military 'putsch' and the beginning of the genocide can only be explained by the time it took for the slander campaign to get underway. Secondly it is relevant to theories on the formation of the modern Indonesian nation and on nation building in general. The question why the socialist women's movement is so much more demonized than the farmers' union that organized the inflammatory unilateral actions cannot be ignored. If nation building in modern times, as Anderson (1991) maintains, is a project of the imagination, what kind of masculinist imagination has been at work here? Third this gender analysis of violence is interesting for those who are in general working on (the roots of) violence, particularly in Indonesia. Fourth scholars of the (Indonesian) women's movement and of gender relations in general in Indonesia, Asia and elsewhere will find certain elements they can use. It is striking that only this last group of scholars mentioned here regularly refer to Gerwani's history and the ramifications of the sexualization of persecution in 1965/6 (see for instance Blackburn 2004). The other three groups of scholars mentioned above generally maintain silence on the topic.

One might hope that 30 years after the basic insights into the workings of gender relations became available (Rubin 1975, Scott 1989) scholars working on social theories would have incorporated this body of theories in their basic tool kit, as has happened with many other theories of social transformation and nation building that have been developed since the 1970s. Incorporation of the sexual undercurrents of the Indonesian social imagination and a gender analysis of major socio-political processes would immensely enrich analyses of the emergence of fundamentalism, the resistance to liberalism and a human rights discourse. However this is far from the case: even Heryanto who argues that any analysis of Indonesian modern history cannot ignore the impact of the consequences of the 'putsch' and the genocide ignores the sexual dimensions of the processes he discusses, and omits Gerwani's defamation and the demonization of women's political agency.

³³ Published in Dutch as 'Het Krodillengat' by LaVita Publishers, Utrecht, 2007.

Another example of a study which would have been immensely enriched had they dealt with gender relations and sexual politics is Colombijn and Lindblad's anthology entitled: 'Roots of Violence in Indonesia' (2002). Of the twelve chapters none is devoted to Gerwani and the 1965/6 massacres, although several articles refer to the 'putsch' and its aftermath to discuss other moments of violence in Indonesia. This is in itself surprising, as with about one million people murdered it ranks as one of the major bloodbaths in modern history and the largest one in Indonesian modern history. But it is even more striking that an analysis of gender relations and the sexualization of violence is missing, even where the military action is discussed. How is it possible to analyse the 'roots' of violence if this critical aspect in Indonesian history is ignored? Gerwani itself is only referred to twice. Cribb just mentions that Gerwani members were among the major victims of the violence unleashed by the Suharto group. He gives no sources and does not elaborate. He does note that the PKI is 'demonized', but he fails to mention the sting of this demonization, its sexual overtones. Elson goes a step further, talking about stories of 'sadistic tortures and mutilations', using the term 'sexual depravity'. But he too neglects to refer to any sources that analyse this campaign, and he bases himself not on the most direct primary sources, the army press, but on the much-toned down articles in other periodicals and newspapers. Unable to understand the ramifications of this campaign of 'sexual depravity', he concludes lamely that 'it is difficult to decide' whether 'Suharto really believed...that the PKI was ultimately responsible for Gestapu...' (Elson 2002:180).³⁴ This statement, made in 2002, is surprising, in view of the publication of Latief's memoirs two years previously.

In the next paragraph he states that 'Suharto must bear final responsibility to the massacres...' but this conclusion is based on a post-facto analysis of the ways the military and their allies went about the killings, not on who masterminded the stories of 'sexual depravity' in the first place.

Elson is reluctant to recognize that Suharto and /or his allies had deliberately constructed the 'sexual depravity' of which Gerwani was accused. Listen to the following remarkable quotation: '...Suharto and his followers made much capital out of the sadistic tortures and mutilations allegedly visited upon the dead or dying generals...' (ibid). Who orchestrated the belief in these so-called tortures if not Suharto himself? This statement of Elson's is the more interesting, as on the previous page he had described Suharto being present when the bodies of the murdered generals were uncovered. Suharto must have seen very clearly at that moment that their crotches were still intact and that no eyes had been gouged out. Elson's gender-blindness thus makes it impossible for him to analyse who masterminded the campaign that triggered the mass murders.

Let's discuss in some more detail the already mentioned study of state terrorism in Indonesia, by the well-known political scholar Ariel Heryanto (2006). Heryanto's book is an incisive analysis of the consequences of the 1965/6 mass killings in Indonesia. He gives many examples of how only by understanding the way that the spectre of communism is manipulated that one is able to analyse the social and political dynamics in Indonesia. He supports the thesis that the mass killings of 1965/6 laid the groundwork of the military, authoritarian rule of General Suharto. Fully aware of the power of ideology he examines two key texts in the continued production of terror in Indonesia, a novel and a film produced in

³⁴ Surprisingly he uses the term Gestapu (Gerakan 30 September, 30th September Movement). This is introduced by the military leaders, to refer to the Nazis. A more neutral term is Gestok, (Gerakan satu October, first October movement).

the 1980s by the army. Their title is the same, ‘The Treason of the 30 September Movement/the Indonesian Communist Party’. They are based on the army version of the ‘putsch’ and the violence that followed it and demonized the PKI, legitimizing the rule of the army as the saviour of the nation. Millions of students and other citizens were obliged to watch the film. Film and book thus played a similar role as newspapers and the radio played in 1965/6.³⁵

Though Heryanto mentions that the film deliberately uses the ‘horrifying violence in the killings of the seven officers’ (2006: 15) to demonize the PKI and to portray the murdered officers as ideal fathers and husbands, the author fails to note the sexual overtones of the violence presented. In his definition of state terrorism and in his further analysis of the impact of state terrorism on Indonesian society a gender analysis is conspicuously absent. Although he concedes that this mass terror has been ‘a crucial force in the formation of the subject identities, fantasies and everyday activities of this nation for decades’ (2006: 3) he does not dwell on the implications of the creation of the myth of sexual depravity.

This has two major consequences. First he is unable to explain why the women’s movement, haunted by the fear of being called ‘new Gerwani’ has been so weakened under New Order rule. Women’s political agency had become suspect, an issue that would be strengthened in later years by the rising tide of Muslim fundamentalism (Wieringa 2003a and 2006). The Islamists focus on the control over women’s bodies, such as their dress codes, and behaviour.³⁶ I argue that the ease with which the present form of Islamism is accepted in Indonesia does not only rest on the persistent stream of fanaticism in the country but also on the way liberal thought has been associated with communism in the New Order, and the sexualized images this association continues to evoke. Second, by ignoring the sexual overtones in the perpetuation of the ‘spectre of communism’ he cannot explain convincingly the continued power of that image in the national imagination. The sheer terror imposed by the mass murders, and the continued impunity by which the military committed murders and made opponents disappear is fed by the fear of being associated with sexual sins if one is suspected of leaning towards socialist or even liberal thoughts.

Summarizing, what are the consequences of this neglect of gender analysis in the work of these present-day scientists? I’ll just mention the most obvious ones.

1. Neglect of one of the most pervasive relations of inequality in Indonesian society, women, oppression;
2. Inability to understand major social phenomena which are greatly influenced by gender relations, such as nation building, violence, social movements, regionalisation, globalization;
3. Contributing to the continuation of the gender-blindness of the social sciences³⁷;
4. Inability to contribute to the emancipation of all sectors of Indonesian society.

³⁵ It was also shown on television every anniversary of the 30th September putsch.

³⁶ The imposition of syariah in Aceh is a striking example. Step by step the control over women’s bodies is increased. Starting from 1 January 2010 for instance women will be banned from wearing trousers in the region of West Aceh (Jakarta Post 13 November 2009).

³⁷ In 1977 I published my first article on Indonesia, a critique of the androcentrism of one of the major texts on Indonesian history, Wertheim’s ‘Indonesian Society in Transition’. At that time a critique on androcentrism was new. By now gender analysis has become a widely used theory and methodological tool.

Linked phenomena to the above are that gender studies within Indonesian studies is still seen as something about women and by women as if studies on rural relations could only be written by peasants about peasants. The referencing circuits for instance are rather closed. Male-stream Indonesianists hardly quote literature that is considered 'women's literature'. While it is expected that women's studies scholars are well versed in the literature produced by their male-stream colleagues (and rightly so); but why the reverse is not considered important is beyond me.

The same silence reigns on the beginning of the mass unrest that forced President Suharto to step down in May 1998. All accounts dealing with this critical transition mention the student demonstrations and the May riots. Hardly anybody seems to remember that women marched first to protest against the effects the economic crisis of 1997/8 had on ordinary people (see for instance the anthology of Forrester and May, 1998). On 23 February 1998 women, organised as SIP (Suara Ibu Peduli, the Voices of Caring Mothers) demanded affordable food and milk for their children. This struck Suharto hard, for as 'Father of the Nation' he could not be seen to be unable to provide for the nation's babies. After that, SIP members were in the forefront of the anti-Suharto coalition, though they were later eclipsed by the students (SIP 1999).

CONCLUDING REMARK

In the words of the Balinese poet Putu Oka 'the mental construction of the community has been destroyed' by the events of 1965/6.³⁸ Sexual politics form the core of this process of moral decay. Therefore only through a rigid analysis of the sexual metaphors created by the army and used by them to spur on conservative organizations to kill many thousands of innocent people can a process of reconciliation be brought about. However gender relations and sexual politics are generally neglected by the Indonesianists dealing with this deep trauma in Indonesian history.

³⁸ Quoted in the bulletin *Setelah Nonton Film Pembantaian (after seeing the film on the massacres)* 1965 by Tim Redaksi Wahana, 14 September 2000.

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