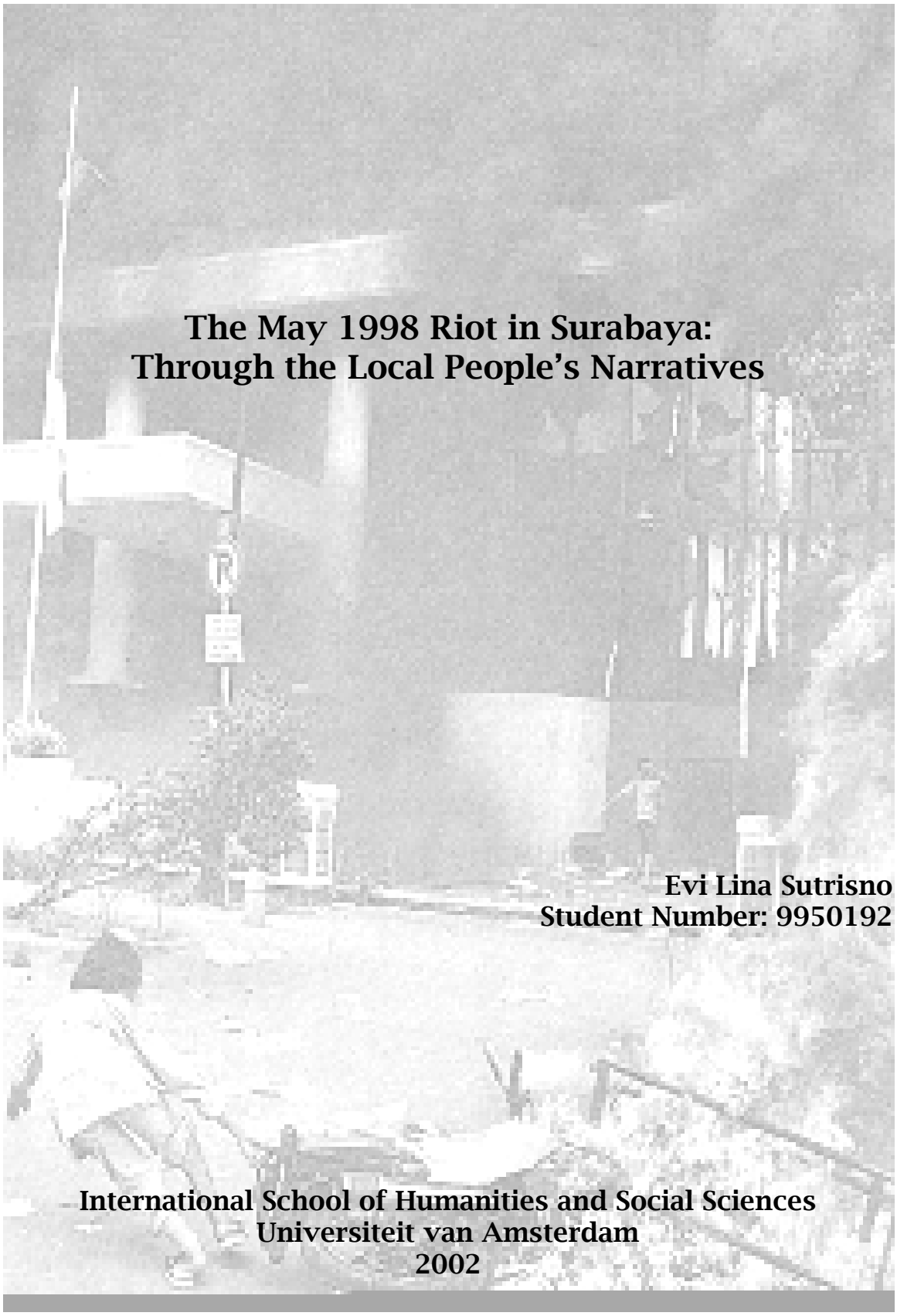

The May 1998 Riot in Surabaya: Through the Local People's Narratives

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Sajak Bulan Mei 1998 di Indonesia

Aku tulis sajak ini di bulan gelap raja-raja
Bangkai-bangkai tergeletak lengket di aspal jalan
Amarah merajalela tanpa alamat
Ketakutan muncul dari sumpah kehidupan
Pikiran kusut membentur simpul-simpul sejarah

O, zaman edan!
O, malam kelam pikiran insan!
Koyak-koyak sudah keteduhan tenda kepercayaan
Kitab undang-undang terhuyung-huyung dalam comberan

O, tatawarna fatamorgana kekuasaan!
O, sihir berkilauan dari mahkota raja-raja!
Dari sejak zaman Ibrahim dan Musa
Allah selalu mengingatkan
Bahwa hukum harus lebih tinggi
Dari keinginan para politisi, raja-raja dan tentara

O, kebingungan yang muncul dari kabut ketakutan!
O, rasa putus asa yang terbentur sangkur!
Berhentilah mencari Ratu Adil!
Ratu Adil itu tidak ada. Ratu Adil itu tipu daya!
Apa yang harus kita tegakkan bersama
Adalah Hukum Adil
Hukum Adil adalah bintang pedoman di dalam prahara

Bau anyir darah yang kini memenuhi udara
Menjadi saksi yang akan berkata:
Apabila pemerintah sudah menjarah Daulat Rakyat,
apabila cukong-cukong sudah menjarah ekonomi bangsa,
apabila aparat keamanan sudah menjarah keamanan,
maka rakyat yang tertekan akan mencontoh penguasa,
lalu menjadi penjarah di pasar dan jalan raya.

Wahai, penguasa dunia fana!
Wahai, jiwa yang tertenung sihir tahta!
Apakah masih buta dan tuli di dalam hati?
Apakah masih akan menipu diri sendiri?
Apabila saran akal sehat kamu remehkan
Berarti pintu untuk pikiran-pikiran kalap
Yang akan muncul dari sudut-sudut gelap
Telah kamu bukakan!

Cadar kabut duka cita menutup wajah Ibu Pertiwi
Airmata mengalir dari sajakku ini

W.S. Rendra
(*Jawa Pos* 19 Mei 1998)

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Preface

This study is inspired by the May 1998 riot in Surabaya, which was a part of social unrests after a severe economic crisis hit Indonesia in mid 1997. Mostly the riots were incited by high prices of nine basic goods, including rice, cooking oil, soybean, egg, wheat flour, as well as by rumours of food and kerosene scarcity. The violence reached its peak in May 1998, shortly before Suharto stepped down. Started in Medan in 5-7 May 1998, it spread to Jakarta, Solo, Palembang, Padang and Surabaya in 14-16 May 1998. The riots had a severe impact on the national economy and the lives of thousands of people living in the riot areas.

As the saying goes 'every cloud has a silver lining': this national tragedy left a deep scar in the history of Indonesia and it offered an opportunity to reflect on the relationships between the Chinese-Indonesian and other groups. Critical discussions and investigations into the discriminative policies put in place during the colonial period and continued in the postcolonial era, have been conducted. These policies led to – or even created – the vulnerability of the Chinese Indonesian in political and social sense. On the other hand, the policies created economic privileges for the Chinese. This is a good beginning as there was difficulty discussing these topics openly during the New Order regime (1966-1998).

The May 1998 riots, which disrupted – to devastating effect – the lives of hundreds of women who were raped, and other victims of sexual assaults, brought an opportunity to look closer at the gender aspects and disastrous social effects of the riots. The May 1998 riots, as well as the war in former Yugoslavia, show the different types of vulnerability experienced by men and women in a violent situation. In such situations, women run a higher risk of being a victim of sexual assaults than men do. The situation is worsened by a lack of recognition of women's voices in patriarchal societies as demonstrates repeatedly in many disaster studies and research papers. Traditional disaster paradigms in disaster studies have, for the most part, left women's lives largely unexamined (Enarson & Morrow 1998: xii), with the consequence that little attention has been paid to women's need in planning and response to disaster.

On the personal level, the riot reoriented my own academic thinking about ethnic identity. Born as a mixed Chinese-Indonesian under the New Order, the regime's derogatory attitude against the Chinese-Indonesians had an impact on my own ethnic identity. I was raised with a blurred ethnic identity: I feel neither Chinese and familiar to Chinese culture and

language, nor do I accept myself as a second class Indonesian. A clearer and promising way to reorient my ethnic identity was found during the thesis writing. Instead of being treated as a fixed culturally determined identity, ethnic identity is socially constructed and can also be reoriented. Wang (2000: 1-34) explains that the ethnic identity is a matter of choice. There are four choices available for the Chinese Diaspora. To identify one's ethnic identity, one can choose the history of the China mainland or the history of the current nation where one lives now. It is also possible to identify oneself with the history of mankind, which is certainly beyond a limited-nationalism. The other possibility is to make a personal choice, which enables one to combine several fractures of history. By identifying with a history, one is able to orient one's future, place oneself in the society, establish social relations and accept the consequences of one's decision.

The riot also influenced my social activity. Several friends and I founded a working group when we heard that there were victims of rape in Surabaya. The group, named *Gema Sukma* (*Gerakan Masyarakat Surabaya untuk Kemanusiaan* – The Surabaya Community Movement for Humanity) consists of psychologists, sociologists, medical doctors, lawyers as well as other concerned women and men. Soon, the group moved into action. An investigation to collect information and data was conducted, and help was offered. It came as a surprise that only a few survivors responded to the offer. Reflecting on this experience, I concluded that the helpers needed to improve their knowledge about the survivors' needs as well as their socio-economic, cultural, educational and ethnic backgrounds before they launched any future relief programs. It is imperative to make sure that the offer does meet the survivors' needs.

Furthermore, the experience of helping people in the May 1998 riot made me very aware of the political risk involved in such a humanitarian activity. Indeed, the controversial effort by *Team Relawan untuk Kemanusiaan* (TRK – The Team of Volunteer for Humanitarian Causes) to uncover victims of burning, looting and rape resulted in a public judgment about the failure of the state to protect its people. Under such an authoritarian regime, it is not uncommon that humanitarian activists face intimidation and interrogation by police and military officers. This experience raised my awareness of the issue of human rights and democracy in Indonesia.

This thesis tries to grasp the silver linings of the May 1998 riots cloud: I would like to pay attention to the voice of victims – particularly the women and local people – which are

very rarely heard or mentioned. Hopefully, this will be an opportunity to offer an interpretation of the riots from the perspective of the victims and to show that the official narrative usually neglects and distorts a lot of details or, even worse, by serving certain political interests, it silences the narratives of other parties.

By identifying the pattern of the riots, this thesis intends to question the ongoing paradigm of violence against the Chinese in Indonesia; a paradigm which is generally based upon explanations of the anger and explosion of frustration of the economically disadvantaged groups, who resent the economic privileges and social exclusiveness of the Chinese. As Brass (1996: 3) explains, once this paradigm exists, it does not only provide a ready context to interpret the next riot and to reinterpret the previous ones, but it is also impervious to other facts, interpretations and explanations. Using this paradigm, social scientists and authorities conveniently blame the victims for their own misfortunes and simultaneously evade the responsibility for their incompetence or conspiracy. Such blame has to be halted, as it does not offer a satisfactory solution to end the violence against the Chinese and other citizens.

During the field research and thesis writing, I received much support and generous assistance. Firstly, I would like to thank the female survivors, and other narrators – Bingky Irawan, Kyai H and MA – who were willing to share their experiences. Without their narratives this thesis would not have been existed. I would like to thank Hijri Mulianto for his generous assistance to meet his Chinese friend in *Kota Lama*, which proved of the '*jalan masuk',* first entrance, to the Chinese community there.

I am indebted to my supervisor, Henk Schulte-Nordholt for his enormous support during the thesis writing process. Without his encouragement and strict deadlines, this thesis would not have been finished. I also enjoyed the inspiring meetings, which broadened my perspective and sensitised my view of the political and social situation in Indonesia. Being raised in the educational and social system of the New Order regime, I admit that some of my values and belief were contaminated with the regime's doctrines. Therefore, I appreciate his point of view, which challenged and clarified my biases. *Terima kasih banyak*.

I would like to thank my academic supervisor, Leon Deben, who provided a support to finish the thesis, especially when I faced a deadline pressure.

I am grateful to two families, Budy-Bwee Han and Agrar Sudrajat-Atiek Sosiawati, to whom I could count on their abundant support and warmth during my stay in the Netherlands. Budy and Agrar were partners to discuss my thesis. They provided articles, books and opinions to improve the quality of this thesis. Next to them, Bwee and Atik provided care and emotional supports. *Tabah, sterkte* and *bisa… pasti bisa* were Atik's magical mantras that boosted my spirit during the difficult times of the thesis writing.

I would like to express my gratitude to Rowan Mackay who took the painful part of editing this thesis. She proved of great help, not only with editing the spelling and grammatical errors, but also with rephrasing and questioning a sentence, which could be misleading because of my language barrier.

I would like to thank my colleagues in the Anda Nugraha restaurant. In their own way, O*oms* and *Tantes* there provided support and encouragement. I am also thankful to have Dora Eflin as my *teman seperjuangan*, friend who had a similar struggle.

Furthermore, I would like to thank Andri Harianja and his brothers and sister – Agus, Rina and Hari – with whom I spent difficult times during the thesis writing. Agus gave an inspiring ring once a week from Paris to discuss the economic and political situation in Indonesia. His enthusiasm is contagious and inspiring. Rina and Hari provided an abundant emotional support. Andri did everything to boost my spirit up. His jokes, care and patience proved of great support, especially during the numerous stressful moments, prior to the deadlines. He also provided great help in reading the draft, giving useful comments, scanning research photos, and printing the thesis. But most of all: thank you for being there when I needed you.

Finally, I would like to address my very special thanks to my family. My parents wholeheartedly supported my decision to study abroad, and took care of my children, Julius and Justinus, with great patience, during my long stay in the Netherlands. Without their willingness to take over my role as a mother, I would not manage to finish my study. Furthermore, I would like to thank Ina, Pramono and Yan, my sister and brothers, for all their love, care and support. Their emails and calls were always inspiring. Without their never-ending patience to listen to my struggle, this thesis would not have been finished.

Amsterdam, March 2002

Chapter 1
Introduction

A severe economic crisis hit Indonesia in August 1997 (*Kompas,* 20 April 1998). The crisis had a devastating impact on the national economy as well as on the national politics. While the elite politicians were struggling for power, there was also a mounting tension and increased pressure on Soeharto to end his presidency. This political tension reached its peak when there was a shooting incident at the Trisakti University in Jakarta. Five students killed (*Kompas*, 14 May 1998). Apart from in Medan, which had already experienced rioting several days before, the incident sparked off mass riots in Jakarta, Surabaya, Solo, Padang and Palembang (TGPF final report 1998; Human Right Watch Report Sept 1998: 2). The riots rapidly became notorious for targeted violence against the Chinese: attacks, which did not only destroy their property but also abused Chinese women sexually.

Many studies and reports have been conducted to analyse the riots. Among those who seek the answer as to why such violent behaviours against the Chinese occurred, many have applied the 'explosion theory'. This theory promotes the view that the riots were the result of the accumulative anger and desperation of poor local people, who were resentful of the Chinese's economic privileges and social exclusivity. This theory rationalises the unpredictable eruptions of mounting frustration but fails to attach responsibility to the unprepared government and military in their failure to quell it. Furthermore, this theory fails to explain how the riots erupted in several places at the same time with a similar pattern of rioting. Thanks to the early documentation by *Tim Relawan untuk Kemanusiaan* (the Team of Volunteers for Humanitarian Causes, henceforth *Tim Relawan*), led by priest Sandyawan Sumardi, S.J., which not only provides rich details of the pattern of rioting in Jakarta, but also offers data with which to challenge the commonly used explosion theory. Confirmed in the final report of *Tim Gabungan Pencari Fakta* (The Joint Team of Fact Finding, henceforth TGPF), it was reported that the May riots 1998 were orchestrated. By then, the studies and reports of the May 1998 riots were concentrating, among other things, on identifying the involvement of the military, particularly Lt. Gen. (retired) Prabowo Soebianto and his close allies, in instigating the riots (Asiaweek 24 July 1998) and to suggest that the image of the combustible and

aggressive *massa* was constructed to incite fear among the middle class, to cover up the political violence of the state, and to displace the blame for causing the violence (Siegel 1998: 74-108).

The violence against women is also a central point of attention in many analyses and studies. For example, Primariantari (1999: 245-323) argues that the gang rape is best understood as a form of state terrorism. She adds that the gang rape was not the result of racism or the economic gap between the Indonesian/*pribumi* poor and the wealthy Chinese. Rather, the Chinese women were chosen to be the target of gang rape in order to create a climate of terror and fear in the whole society. Not very different from Primariantari, Heryanto (1999: 299-344) depicts the role of the masculine *pribumi*-dominated state in sexually assaulting its direct target; the helpless female citizens of Chinese descent, and using them as mediation to terrorize the communities. Therefore, he argues that gang rapes should be as racialised violence, rather than truly racist acts. Blackburn (1999: 434-448) points out that despite its horrific sides, the gang rapes opened opportunities to boost the campaign of anti-violence against women by non-governmental groups, which had an impact on the national level. However, since firstly, the political atmosphere in Indonesia is still male-dominated and the government shows a negative attitude towards handling the issue of violence against women, and secondly, there is rather weak coordination among feminist groups, Blackburn concludes that a long and hard effort is needed to combat violence against women in Indonesia.

With the exception of the report by the *Tim Relawan*, which reconstructs the chronology and pattern of violence in Jakarta primarily through the victims' and eyewitness' narratives, as far as I know, there are no systematic studies of violence which focus on victims' narratives. The lack of recognition of the victims' narrative has a long history. Ever since the nineteenth century, scientists from many knowledge systems (such as sociology, criminology, psychiatry, psychology, etc., as well as ideologies of protest, from Marxism to contemporary feminism) tended to ignore local voices: "(t)he power to define and interpret local incidents of violence, (and) to place them in specific contexts based on local knowledge has been removed from the local societies in which they occur" (Brass 1996: 1). Therefore, in this thesis I would like to focus on the narrative of local people from the riot area in Surabaya.

By focussing on the narrative of local people, I would like to find out not only the alternative narratives about the riots (which are different from those which are launched by the authorities), but I would also like to examine the discourse of violence: the ways in which participants and observers – local and external, activists, politicians and authorities – seek to explain incidents of violence. Particularly, I would like to pay attention to the struggle to claim the 'truth' or a legitimate interpretation of the riot between the authorities and local people.

Among the local people, I would like to invite the female victims to be the first group to narrate the Surabaya riot. They come mostly from the lower-middle class Chinese. The reasons to choose them are, first, that there is a different vulnerability between women and men during the violence. The occurrence of sexual violence against women during times of crisis shows that women face a higher vulnerability than men do. There is, however, a lack of investigation and scholarship about women's experience in disaster. This implicates a missed opportunity to understand the needs and responses to disaster through women's eyes. Consequently, there was little attention paid to the accommodation of women's needs in the planning of responses to disaster. Secondly, vulnerabilities are also influenced by social structures of class, ethnicity/race, age and physical ability, and sex and gender. Individuals and social groups carry different and disproportionate "vulnerability bundles" (Enarson 1998: 158). Those who are socially and economically disadvantaged in everyday life can be expected to be more vulnerable or more greatly affected by a disaster. The May 1998 riots show that the Chinese women from lower to middle urban classes have a higher vulnerability compared to those who come from urban elites. For the latter, the price of a ticket to go abroad or to safer places in Indonesia was affordable, while the former were forced to face the violence without any chance of escape. Moreover, vulnerability to disaster relates deeply, not only to the vulnerability in everyday life, but also to the national and international socio-economic system (ibid.: 160). In the case of Indonesia during the New Order, the economic policies that were privileging a few Chinese conglomerates ignored the majority of Chinese from lower-middle classes who were not making big profits. Nevertheless, there is a generalized image of corruption, nepotism and collusion between the Chinese businessmen and the military or authorities, which includes the Chinese as a community.

The first narrative is from Chinese women who were victimized. The second narrative is from the humanitarian activists. They are the people who willingly took the risk to challenge the official narrative. In a country where the primacy of the state is central, the authority dominates the explanation of riots and other forms of political violence. The Indonesian government, with its repressive politics, certainly permitted no challenge to the official narrative.[1] In Jakarta, the presence of the *Tim Relawan* became the greatest challenge for the government and military when it produced a different chronology of, and figures to, the riot.[2] In their report (*Dokumentasi Awal No.3* – The preliminary documentation no. 3) the team also uncovered the notorious sexual assault and rape against the Chinese-Indonesian women that occurred during the riot. The report immediately caused a debate, which threatened the victims because the government and military questioned and forced the team members to report evidence and to mention the names of the victims. Only after a long debate, and under pressure from the National Commission on Human Rights and non-government organisations (NGOs), both local and international (Surabaya Pos, 28 July 1998), the government admitted on 15 July that gang rapes had occurred (Kompas, 16 July 1998). However, the effort to silence the counter-narrative continued. It reached its peak when the daughter of a humanitarian volunteer was murdered in her house (*Kompas,* 18 October 1998).

In Surabaya, there were local people and groups, who started an investigation immediately after the riot. The case of Bingky Irawan is presented in this thesis to demonstrate further the repressive style of the military in silencing the counter narrative. Bingky Irawan is a Confucian priest, as well as the leader of the Majelis Konghucu Indonesia (MAKIN - the Board of Confucian Indonesia), who received confessions of rape victims in Surabaya. He called attention to the rape cases in Surabaya (*Jawa Pos*, 1 July 1998). Predictably, the case placed him in a risky position with regards to the government and military (*Jawa Pos*, 2 July 1998). Referring to the conventional legal perspective (i.e. the presence of eyewitnesses and evidence) to determine the occurrence of rapes during the riots, the police forced Bingky Irawan to submit the data of the rape victims, such as

[1] The G-30-S in 1965 and Malari case in 1974 are two examples when the state did not allowed counter narratives occurred.

[2] In my knowledge, the May 1998 riot is the first riot when the counter-narrative occurred and had a significant impact. The reason that it had a significant impact are (1) there were systematic observations and interviews which resulted in convincing data, (2) the report was published legally, and (3) there was a wide distribution of the report. I am indebted to Agrar Sudrajat in discussing these factors.

name, address and details of conversations. The pressure upon Bingky Irawan brought a great impact to the victims as they refused to testify.[3] The *Gema Sukma* was actively accompanying Bingky Irawan during the police interrogation to encourage him to face the threat as well as trying to convince the public that the violence against women during the May 1998 riot was indicative of a failure of the state to protect its citizens. The action, unavoidably, placed the group in a dangerous political sphere. Therefore, this thesis also addresses the efforts of the state to silence the counter-narrative. In this case, the *Kapolwil* Surabaya (*Kepala Polisi Wilayah* - the Head of Police in the Area) and his subordinates are the representation of the state in repressing civil society, which is represented by Bingky Irawan and the *Gema Sukma*.

The third narrative is from a rioter and a local Muslim community leader. In order to acquire details about the riot, the narrative of the rioter is an important tool to understand the social composition and motives of the so-called "*massa"* and their motives to join the violence. Brass (1996: 1-55) argues that there is always a competition among the authorities, such as government, military, politicians, journalists, social scientists and activists, to present a legitimate explanation of the violence. It is perceived that the model of the violence – whether it is organized or random, premeditated or spontaneous, directed at specific persons, groups, property or not – can be deduced from the interpretation of the motives of the *massa* in joining the riot. In identifying the social composition and motives of the actual participants in the riot events, the riot studies divide into two points of view. One is the "riff-raff" theory that the actual looters come from the poorest elements of society, such as the unskilled labourers, the unemployed and the criminals. Their motives in participating in the riot arise from their prejudices towards, and hostilities to, the targeted group, rather than being goal-directed towards the achievement of some kind of new order. The opposing point of view is that the rioters often come from respectable segments of society, meaning that the social composition of rioters includes a significant segment of participants who are well-informed, upholders of a faith, expressing rage against an old order, and calling for a new one towards which their riot activities are consciously directed (ibid.: 16-21).

[3] The stigmas of non-virginity and chastity effect devastatingly the live of rape victims who live in communities where gender and sexual oppressions are still commonly practiced, such as Indonesia (Heryanto. 1999: 302).

The "riff-raff" theory is likely to produce the model of explosive, spontaneous and unpredictable anger of disadvantaged people. This theory is a perfect excuse of the government and police/military for their incompetence to quell the violence. Furthermore, by applying this theory, the authority has an opportunity to blame the victims that they are responsible in provoking the mass anger by their improper behaviours. The alternative theory is likely to result in a conspiracy model of violence, which requires further investigation in order to find out the idea behind the violence, who is/are the mastermind(s), and the organization of the actors, etc.

The intention to present the narrative of a rioter and the eyewitness accounts of the violence in this paper is to open the possibilities to present an alternative interpretation which challenges the one that was launched by the *Kapolwil* and his subordinates.

The Discourses of Violence

The May 1998 riots should not be viewed as a separate phenomenon from the series of violent acts against Chinese, which had previously occurred. Several years before the fall of Soeharto, there were extensive violent occurrences against the Chinese. These began in Medan in 1994 and recurred in provincial towns such as Pekalongan in 1995, Situbondo and Tasikmalaya in 1996, Bantul, Rengasdengklok, Banjarmasin, and Ujung Pandang in 1997. By 1998, during the economic crisis, these anti-Chinese riots were erupting more frequently. There were 45 outbreaks of rioting occurred throughout the Indonesian archipelago before May 1998. In thirty-seven out of them, the rising price of oil and nine basic commodities (*sembako – sembilan bahan pokok*) was considered as the common uniting complaint. As most of the Chinese are Christian or Buddhist, it is likely that violence against them was easily bent into anti-Christian or Buddhist sentiment. Although several people died, the violence was generally directed against property owned by ethnic-Chinese as well as churches, temples, police stations and other government buildings. However, after the May 1998 riots, the violence against the Chinese almost disappeared.

Sidel (2001) argues that the pattern of violence against the ethnic Chinese from 1996 to May 1998 can best be understood by analysing the structural matrix of class relations with three coordinates in Indonesian society, which is heavily influenced by Dutch colonial policies. The violence closely linked with the first coordinate concerns

local community bonds, which has a subaltern class-consciousness and previous experience of popular mobilization in opposition to capitalism. The second concerns the ethnic Chinese capitalists (*konglomerat*) who receive privileges from the authority and military to expand their business rapidly. The third concerns the *politik aliran* (stream or pillar politics), which is based around religion and education, e.g. the Islam traditionalists [Nahdlatul Ulama], the Islam modernists [Muhammadiyah], the Catholics and the Protestant.

By applying this approach, Sidel analyses that the violence against the ethnic Chinese, which occurred in 1994 – 1998, has a close link to rapid industrialization. The sites of rioting were mostly major urban centres, where industrialization threatened the small-scale local economy. As the consequence, the violence was mostly targeting the properties of the Chinese, which symbolized an attack against the industrialization and conglomeration (*konglomerat*) rather than the Chinese people themselves.

The violence was also closely linked to the revival of Islam as a political movement in the 1990s. At this time, any case of potential blasphemy to Islam was easily sensitised in order to attack the other party, which was identified as non-Muslim. The sensitisation of potential blasphemy to Islam explains the warped logic of the riots. In Situbondo, for example, the riot was precipitated by a case of blasphemy against an Islamic leader, in which the sentence given to 'blasphemer' was considered to be too light. This case resulted in the burning of 27 churches and 1 Chinese temple when a rumour spread that the defendant was hiding in a church to avoid mass anger. Thus, the burning of churches and a Chinese temple can be seen as an assertion of the moral status of Islam. Sidel's analysis suggests that there is a need to trace the politicisation of ethnicity and social class in previous periods, mainly the colonial period, which resulted in antagonistic and potentially conflicting identities (e.g. ethnic, religious, political and social status identities) among the social classes in Indonesia.

In understanding riots, pogroms and massacres as violence produced by communities, Brass (1999: 10) argues that a series of communal violent acts is closely linked to a discourse of communalism, such as in post-colonial India or in other postcolonial states. The communal discourse usually consists of pathological sense of nationalism, fear and resentment. Since the rise of capitalism, which favoured the ethnic Chinese, this discourse has evoked feeling of anger and fear among many *Pribumi.* The

rise of Christianity in the national political landscape during the New Order also played a role since it enhanced a Muslim-Christian opposition. On other hand, for the Chinese 'minority', the discourse has stimulated a fear of Islam and the *Pribumi* 'majority' which has led them to seek the protection of state agencies and the military. Thus, the communal discourse offers a repertoire of arguments and motivations with which to start and then increase violence against 'the other'.

Following the logic of the discourse of communalism, Brass argues that it is not uncommon that incidents between members of different communities are converted into ethnic riots. This is what he calls "the institutionalised riot system." In most cases, the institutionalised riot system has engaged in the perpetuation of an environment which is capable of producing riots, and in which riots are, time and again, produced to serve the particular interests of certain political bodies, such as the dominant party or the state apparatus. When a serious challenge is mounted against the dominant party or the state apparatus, such collective violence may occur in "waves" that appear spontaneous, though they are almost never completely so. When the violence takes place, all sorts of related and unrelated conflicts come into play. Local people have opportunity to use violence to finish their own conflicts, such as neighbours having a chance to attack each other, businessmen to destroy the property of their rivals, criminals to loot, gangs from different communities to gain control over valuable resources, etc. It is in the interests of the political promoters of such violence to point to such opportunistic acts as the real "causes" of the riots, thereby displacing blame from themselves while gaining the benefit that the violence discredits their political opponents.

The Discourse of Violence against Women

While Sidel addresses violence against the ethnic Chinese in general, the violence against women during the May 1998 riots deserves individual attention. According to Siegel (in Primariantari 1999: 259) the gang rape that took place in the midst of the riot in Jakarta was unprecedented in the history of Indonesian rioting. Nevertheless, it was clear that gang rapes were not a novel phenomenon during the war. Rape represents the most severe and humiliating attack imaginable upon the intimate self and the dignity of a human being. All rape is a demonstration of masculinity. However, additional motives come into play with gang rapes. By humiliating and depersonalising their victims, the rapists

exercise their power rather than their sexual passion (Seifert 1991: 55-57). The concept of exercising power through rape becomes clear in the case of gang rapes and other sexual assaults against the Chinese women during the riots. It was reported that the rapists were provoked by the idea of "having sexual intercourse (*ngentotin*) with Chinese girls (*amoy-amoy*) whom were 'untouchable' in their daily life" (*Dokumentasi Awal no. 3* 1998: 14). The notion of raping the 'untouchable' Chinese girls derives from an awareness of class division between the victims and the rapists, in which the former is perceived as coming from the higher middle class, while the latter comes from the lower class. The upper class was seen as fundamentally separated from those below them making it impossible to create any contact on a daily and regular basis. Therefore, rape was an effort to turn these positions upside down.

Rape is also a potent tool of political violence since it highlights the 'failure' of the (male) society to protect its female members. Rape is also used as a means to spread terror and fear not only to the community where the victims come from but to the society in general (Heryanto 1999: 311-320).

The Theory of Coping

For the victims, the riot experience was almost certainly devastating and traumatic. Nonetheless, they have to cope with it and continue their life. Coping, according to Snyder (1999: 2-4), is a response aimed at diminishing the physical, emotional and psychological burden that is linked to stressful life events and daily problems. The coping response is usually categorized into emotional-focused, and problem-focused, coping. The emotion-focused coping strategies are attempts to diminish the physical, emotional and psychological burden of an event. The problem-focused coping strategies include efforts that are directed at controlling or changing the sources of the stress (for example learning new skills, removing barriers, generating alternative solutions). Specific coping strategies produce superior outcomes when used by the appropriate person undergoing a particular stress or in a particular context. With situations deemed to have the potential for instrumental change and improvement, the person who selects problem-focused coping strategies should succeed in lessening the sources of stress, and demonstrate positive psychological well-being. With situations determined not to be amenable to change, the

person who adopts emotion-focused coping is likely to encounter more positive psychological outcomes, such as less depression and anxiety.

The Research Questions

The central research questions is:

Which practices, relations and characteristics did involve in the May 1998 riot in Surabaya and what did this mean for the female survivors?

This central research question is specified by the following sub-questions:

1. Which practices, relations and characteristics did happen in the history that – produced the May 1998 riots against the ethnic Chinese in Indonesia?
2. Which characteristics, practices and relations did happen in the May 1998 riot in Surabaya?

   This second question has been specified by focusing on:

   (a) The pattern of the May 1998 riot in Surabaya:

   - In what way did the riot incited?
   - How was the pattern of looting compare to the Jakarta riot?
   - How was the military action to quell the riot?

   (b) The discourse of violence, which followed after the May 1998 riot in Surabaya:

   - What kind of discourse of violence did the authority launch after the riot happened?
   - What kind of discourse of violence did the society (i.e. the media, the social scientists and the NGOs) launch in responding the authority's discourse?
3. What did the practices, relations and characteristics involve in the May 1998 riot in Surabaya mean for the female survivors?

   This third question has been specified by focusing on:

   (a) The experience during the riot and the first days after the riot:

   - What was the chronology of the riot
   - How was the evacuation process?
   - What kind of the social support did they receive during and after the riot?

(b) The life after the riot:

- How did they build the life after the riot?
- How did they perceive their position (or the ethnic Chinese position) in the society after the riot?
- What kind of interaction did they make with non-ethnic Chinese people after the riot?

(c) The meaning of rapes and sexual assaults during the riot:

- How did they perceive their position as the ethnic Chinese women in the society after the riot?
- What did the rapes and sexual assault during the riot mean to the female survivors?

The Research Setting

The 14-15 May 1998 riot in Surabaya is presented in this thesis, as a counter-balance to the prevailing Jakarta-centric attitude in analysing the May 1998 riots. Moreover, several reports and analyses, such as the Human Right Watch report (September 1998: 1) and Heryanto (1999: 314) did not include Surabaya at all as an affected area of the violence in May 1998. As it is known, the riots in Jakarta were the most notorious in terms of casualties, raped and sexual assaulted victims, as well as having the most destructed or burned buildings, houses, offices, malls, hotels and cars. In other cities such as Solo, Surabaya, Padang and Palembang, the victims were fewer and the destruction was less. However, in my opinion, focussing intensively on the Jakarta riots without paying any considerable attention to riots in other cities (with the exception of Solo) diminishes the possibility to understand the pattern of violence on the national level, and the local aspects of the riots.

The Sampling Method

Initially the study was intended to deal with the rape victims.[4] Since none of them was willing to participate the research, therefore, I changed the subject of the study to the

[4] In July 1999, a medical doctor, who was treating pregnant rape victims, contacted two activists of Gema Sukma to seek professional help concerning the victims' psychological condition. According to the doctor, some victims were in state of depression. Based on this contact, I came to the doctor in July 2000 to offer the victims to participate on my research. I offered an indirect method of collecting data by giving a

women survivors of house looting, who have not received enough attention or been given enough support to solve problems and to recover from the destruction.

Eight female survivors of house looting in the northern part of Surabaya (*Kota Lama*) were involved in this study. The results reported here should not be seen, in quantitative research terms, as a representative sample of the female survivors' experience of the riot context in general, but rather as expressions of meanings and experiences from some of those involved. The method of selecting the narrators was by referral from neighbours and close friends and by word-of-mouth from previous narrators This 'snowball' sampling method offers advantages as well as limitations. The advantage is that through a referral by a friend, I could obtain trust easier and quicker. The limitation is that the next sample is usually a close friend or relative who lives nearby. In this study, the subjects were not representative to the three affected districts. Seven out of eight female survivors were living in one big street and one was living in a *kampung*; all of them were living in one out of the three affected districts. There were two other survivors from the other districts who were being approached but they refused to be interviewed. One was not willing to discuss the riot experience anymore, while the other, whose daughter was rumoured as a rape victim, did not want to arrange an interview.

The people in the sample share many characteristics: they are all ethnic Chinese, working- or lower middle class and able-bodied although they vary in age from their late twenties to their sixties. Four people are older than fifty; four are in the late of twenties to thirties. Some of them are family related (such as mother and daughter or sisters-in-law). One woman works as secretary, one as computer technician, one as housewife and five other are merchants.

Data Collecting Process: Interview, Observation and Documentation

Several interviews were conducted during a three months research period (July – September 2000). I visited each narrator three to five times and the duration of interviews varied from one to three hours. Before starting the interviews, I built a close rapport by visiting them one to three times. During these visits, I avoided asking about the main topic

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questionnaire through the doctor. Using this method, the victims did not have to meet me personally. Instead, they could only answer the questions and return the questionnaire to the doctor. None of the survivors, however, was willing to participate. According to the doctor, the main reason for not participating in this research was that the victims did not want to remember their traumatic experience.

of the research. Rather, we talked about daily activities, family members or stories about the neighbourhood. These visits consumed a lot of time and energy since I found the survivors reluctant to speak and sceptical about my motivation. Only after a good relationship was established, I started to address the main questions. The interviews generally followed the same pattern: during the interview the women told me about events, which took place two and half years before. I initiated my interviews by mentioning a number of subjects we could talk about, then, the narrators took the initiative and set the course of the conversation. If there was a need, I asked for clarification. The way they narrated their stories clearly indicates, as Morée (in Verzijlbergen. 1998: 18) observes, "that we are not dealing with exact reconstructions, but with subjective descriptions of personal histories". The women told me about their lives, guided at certain points by my questions, or encouraged by my non-verbal conduct. While telling their stories, narrators anticipated who they think the researcher is and what she wants to hear. Thus, the researcher is not a neutral recorder of data but a participant in a (re)construction (ibid.: 18). I found this to be true in my case.

For the female survivors, the fact that I am (half) Chinese and, I have a background as a psychologist, were the reasons for them deciding to share their experiences with me. Regarding my ethnic identity, one woman asked me to explain my family origin: I explained to her that I have Javanese blood from my grandmother's line. She considered, however, that the patriarchal line determines my Chineseness. Only after feeling sure enough about my ethnic background, she told me more stories about her life.

None of the interviews were recorded, as this was the respondents' request. During the interviews, I made few notes. After the interviews ended, I made the transcription as soon as possible. As several narrators have family ties with other narrators, I did several separate interviews to be able to get other perspectives.

Besides the female survivors, I interviewed Bingky Irawan, the Confucian priest, as the representation of the counter narrator. My main reason to interview him is that he is the leader of the Confucian community, and the individual who received rape confessions. Furthermore, he was the main target of the police interrogation after his controversial statement regarding the rape of Chinese women in Surabaya (as discussed in the preface). My activity in the local women's movement and my presence (together with several

friends) to give him support during the interrogation two and a half years ago were his reasons for discussing the topic with me.

Several interviews were conducted with friends and neighbours who helped the survivors during and after the riot. Among those who helped the victims is a local Islamic leader, a *kyai*; with whom I discussed the ethnic relationships in the riot area, the chronology of the riot, and the help offered to survivors. As some of the survivors are Catholic and received help from the local Catholic Church, I interviewed the representative of the Social desk of Gereja Katolik Kepanjen, the closest church in the riot area.

There were two additional and unexpected interviews. By referral from the *kyai,* I interviewed a rioter. He is a special figure since his daily activity is a prayer caller (*azan*). But he did join the looting and was jailed for four months. I also interviewed local pedicab (*becak*) drivers. After conducting interviews, On my return home, I used a *becak* service to get to the closest bus terminal. During the journey, I addressed several questions to the driver regarding the neighbourhood. Surprisingly, the local pedicab drivers, who recognized that I was not from the neighbourhood, interviewed me about my reasons for being in that area, with whom I made contacts, etc. Thus, a dual flow of information took place.

The Terminology

As the victims of the May 1998 riots were mostly ethnic Chinese, it is important to discuss the politically appropriate term with which to address this group. During the '*reformasi*'[5], there were debates concerning the necessity to use the term "*Tionghoa*" to refer to the Chinese-Indonesian community. Hamka, in *Kompas* (27 June 1998), asks the Indonesian society to use the term *"Tionghoa"* to refer to Chinese-Indonesians. This idea is a reaction against the derogative term "*Cina*" (Chinese), which was enforced by the New Order regime in 1966. Those who are in favour of the *Tionghoa* term argue that the Chinese-Indonesians should receive no more derogation and humiliation. Budiman (1999: 115-119), on the other hand, suggests that the discrimination against the Chinese community in Indonesia should not be reduced to terminology debates. There should be a better promotion of equality and a non-discriminative attitude towards the ethnic Chinese

of which term – Tionghoa or Cina – is used. Personally I agree with Budiman that the choice of term should not bother us, as long as there is no more discrimination against the Chinese-Indonesians. Therefore, in this thesis I would like to employ the terms of *Tionghoa*, ethnic Chinese, and Chinese-Indonesian interchangeably.

The Organization of the Thesis

The rest of the thesis will be organized as follows: the next chapter consists of a description of the long process in which the ethnic Chinese identity was constructed antagonistically by the so called "*Pribumi"* (natives). The description proves to be a fundament in understanding the politicisation of ethnic relationships, which were used by the authorities as a powerful tool. This chapter also contains two additional descriptions about the ethnic relations and the ethnic Chinese women in the research area. Hopefully, these two additional descriptions provide a better understanding of the cultural and social background of the research area. The third chapter starts with the economic and political crisis of 1997-1998, and the chronology of the riots. In this chapter, I would like to depict the discourse of violence stemming from the authorities which, through intimidation and terror, became the official narrative, and contrast it with those of the local people and their interpretation of the riot. The fourth chapter offers an interpretation of the riot, including the physical and sexual violence against women, through the eyes of female victims. It is also intended to understand their coping strategies. The fifth chapter describes the efforts of those in power to silence the counter narratives. The case of Bingky Irawan and Gema Sukma vis-à-vis the *Kapolwil* Jawa Timur and his subordinates will be presented here. An epilogue will follow the fifth chapter in order to end this thesis.

[5] Reformasi is derived from an English term "reform". Before Suharto stepped down, the student movement yelled out "reformasi" as its demand.

Chapter 2
The Historical Perspective

This chapter aims to provide a historical perspective of the construction of an ethnic Chinese identity in Indonesia, from the Dutch colonial period to the New Order era. In the description below, my first argument is that ethnicity is a result of social construction, rather than a biological given existence. Wang (1994: 4) asserts that all identities, individual or collective, are constituted within a system of social relations and require the reciprocal recognition of others. Sidel's (2001) article explains how the Dutch colonial government, through its policies and rules, created a structural matrix of class relations in Indonesian society, in which each class developed its own class-consciousness and prejudices towards other classes, which still hold nowadays. The first group or cluster consisted of popular classes, such as labourers and farmers, who, under the clove monopoly in the Moluccas and the Cultivation System in Java, were forced to do heavy work within communal land tenure and labour-sharing subsistence schemes. As a result of this authoritative control and heavy economic extraction, the popular classes developed strong local community bonds, which resulted in a subaltern class-consciousness and widespread popular mobilization in opposition to capitalism. The second group was the ethnic Chinese capitalist class, who under the political economy of the colonial government, was granted privileges of controlling opium farms, tax revenue, money lending, and monopoly franchises; which enabled the Chinese to play a crucial role in the economy of Java and the rest of the archipelago. However, this role – reaffirmed by the Dutch colonial discrete racial class policy – emphasized the nature of the ethnic Chinese as an unassimilated class, easily seen as a group of foreign capitalists and, therefore, not qualified to assert their political rights. The third cluster of groups has the character of an *aliran* (stream or pillar) based around religion and education, such as the Islamic traditionalists (Nahdlatul Ulama), the Islamic modernists (Muhammadiyah), as well as the Catholic and Protestant. Bearing their *aliran*- and group-awareness, these *alirans* and classes may establish prejudices and antagonistic relations against each other. Following this consequence, the antagonistic relations easily act as the incitement of the communal violence.

My second argument is that the construction of antagonistic ethnic identities serves the interests of those who are in power to strengthen their authority (Fearon and Laitin in Malik 2001).[1] Brass (1999: 12) explains that the ideology of the nation-state and the doctrine of national integration are factors, which India and other post-colonial countries, including Indonesia, have in common, and factors which in these countries, have exacerbated ethnic violence. In the post-colonial period, the independent nation-states, which inherited heterogeneous societies from the colonial states, face an enormous challenge to maintain the nation's integrity and unity. For the elite politicians, the ethnic violence, engineered through the construction of antagonistic identities, serves as a justification of the need for a strong central authority.

In the case of the ethnic Chinese in Indonesia, the policies, which are described below, were set to shape the distinct Chinese identity. The politicisation of the identity, by positioning the Chinese as "other" (Heryanto 1999: 97-98), creates prejudice and exclusion vis-à-vis the ethnic Chinese, in which the violence against them serves a double purpose. Firstly, the Chinese become the intermediate target, especially when the main target (i.e. the authorities) are too strong to be attacked. Secondly, the Chinese become a scapegoat for all the economic problems of society.

This historical chapter starts by discussing the relationships of the people who came from mainland China with local people before the arrival of the Dutch VOC.[2] It depicts the period as one in which there was room to manoeuvre in terms of defining ethnic identity. This period serves as a comparison to the following periods, when the colonial regime increasingly used ethnic distinctions to gain more authority. This discussion is followed by a description of the shaping of the ethnic identity from the Dutch colonial government, to the New Order regime.

The Shaping of the Chinese's Ethnic Identity

Before the Colonial Period

The process of interaction between immigrants from China and local elites in Southeast Asia began long before recorded history. Although there is no precise data accorded

[1] I am indebted to T.H. Han who sent me this article.
[2] VOC is the acronym for the Vereenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie (The United East-India Companies).

to the migration, the first recorded flow was in the late thirteenth century (Reid 1996: 17). The Song, Yuan, Ming and Qing dynasties were well aware that many Chinese regularly went to Korea, Japan, and Southeast Asia.

In the early period of migration, sojourning was not a voluntarily move. The meaning of the earlier terminology for sojourning, such as *yimin*[3], *liumin*[4] and *nanmin*[5], was very close to 'disaster', 'calamity' or 'great evil' (Wang in Reid 1996: 3-4). Although it is not specifically mentioned, in this context of sojourning, I assume that it was the most disadvantaged people who were forced to migrate. It is difficult to reconstruct what the early sojourners might have done during the *yimin, liumin* and *nanmin* migration since the influence of the Chinese Diaspora on the local groups, and vice versa, has not been documented properly.

Wang (ibid.: 6) has developed assumptions about the absence of political influence, on the basis of research on the Chinese community in Vietnam. This gap in Chinese political history was probably caused by the fact that there were too few Chinese to warrant official attention or that travellers were merely traders who stayed only for short periods. The third reason could be that before the arrival of the Europeans, the Chinese attitudes to local people were perceived as powerful and arrogant. After the arrival of the Europeans, the Chinese traders seemed to be very eager to work for the European companies; therefore, such people did not seem worthy of a place in local histories.

Reid (ibid.: 15-49) depicts the pattern of the relationship between the sojourners and local rulers, as influenced by the political attitude of successive Chinese kingdoms. In the Mongolian Empire period, the pattern of sojourn was similar to *yimin shibian.* There were thousands of soldiers sent to Java. In later periods, the pattern was more or less similar to *yimin tongcai* as the majority of the sojourners were merchants who tried to get a better income abroad.

When the early Ming dynasty (about 1368-1433) encouraged open trading with the countries in South and Southeast Asia, the political and economical roles of Chinese sojourners were even more influential. Several Chinese were put in charge as diplomats,

[3] Wang also explained that *yimin* derived from the phrase *yimin tongcai* (moving people to ease economic conditions, usually because of famine or other natural calamities) or *yimin shibian* (moving people to support border areas as military colonies).
[4] *Liumin* was used to designate people running away

emissaries and translators in the Kingdom of Majapahit, Korea, Japan and Siam (ibid.: 26-30). Based on Ma Huan's report, Reid (ibid.: 26-27) describes the prosperity and power of the Cantonese migrants in Gresik and Palembang in the early fifteenth century. The report also relates how the Chinese traders and settlers, who were occupying strong trading positions, were using their political and economical power toward the local rulers. Marriages between the Chinese and local royalty was arranged to gain more influence and strengthen the bonds between the two communities.

During the second half of the Ming period (1433-1567) the dynasty imposed a policy of isolation. The trade flows declined drastically. As the back up of the Chinese kingdom was vanished, the Chinese settlers and sojourners had to struggle for their political and economical existence alone. The strategy they chose was to assimilate with local communities. In Siam, they adopted Thai identities. In Manila, they were recognized as Luzons. In Java, they were regarded as Javanese (Ibid.: 31-32). Reid tells us that during the period of Islamic kingdoms in Java, the Islamic Chinese settlers in Java played an important role in spreading Islam.

Dutch Colonial Rule

In 1619, the Dutch VOC[6] established Batavia[7] as its Asian headquarters. In establishing Batavia as a main port in Asia, the VOC depended on the Chinese for their service as carpenters, smiths, junk-builders, artisans, farmers, fishermen, etc. (Taylor in Patirajawane 1999). There was also a notion of the usefulness of the Chinese as local experts and middlemen as they dominated inter-port networks and trade connections in rural areas. The Chinese merchants were interested in aggressive trading strategies and chose to collaborate with European traders. They also worked as Holland's unofficial ambassador in negotiating the Dutch interests with the Javanese kings.[8] In this respect, the position of the Chinese and the local rulers became antagonistic.

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[5] *Nanmin* was denoting refugees

[6] VOC was founded in 1602. It aimed to set a monopoly on trade and navigation to the east of the Cape of Good Hope and to the west of the Cape Horn. The VOC was a body with two faces. Although it was mainly aimed to be a profitable company, it was also granted authorization to wage wars, to conclude treaties and to build fortresses and trading posts, to impose taxes, as well as to govern the civilian, judicial and military services in Asian settlements (van der Brug 2000: 43-45). Therefore, especially in the archipelago (now Indonesia), it manifested itself as a state (Anderson 1990: 97).

[7] Nowadays, Batavia is known as Jakarta.

[8] Blusse (1986, p. 49-72) depicts in detail the character of Jan Con, a Dutch unofficial ambassador and Chinese captain in Batavia.

During the golden age of the VOC, from the seventeenth to the early of eighteenth centuries, the Chinese population grew rapidly. The permission granted by the late Ming Dynasty to trade to Southeast Asia between 1567-1640 increased the flow of junk trading as well as the immigration of people from mainland China. Soon, the Chinese outnumbered the Dutchmen and other ethnic groups, i.e. Javanese and Balinese in Batavia. Blusse (1988: 128) writes that in 1699 the number of Chinese in Batavia was 3,679 and the number of Dutch only 1,783. In 1739, these numbers were 4,199 and 1,276 respectively. Outside Batavia town, the population consisted of approximately 35,000 Javanese and Balinese and 10,574 Chinese. Following the growth of the Batavian population, there was an increase in the frequency of theft, robbery, murder and other crimes. Through the eyes of authorities, however, the most threatening of all was the strong tendency of the groups to unite. To prevent this blending process, the government imposed a registration of all citizens according to their ethnic group. The citizens were identified with different emblems (Simbolon 1991: 41).

The Chinese population grew even larger once the sugar planting and processing became the backbone of the VOC economy. Besides their skill in supporting the sugar industry, the Chinese planters were the VOC's main economic source in terms of tax revenue. However, when the number of Chinese was deemed too many to control, the government restricted the number of new Chinese immigrants. In 1738, the most restrictive regulation was imposed on the entire group of Chinese newcomers who were waiting for their stay permits. Each applicant was ordered to pay the fee for his stay and head-tax, not later than three months after arrival. Unless these obligations were met, the applicant would be deported. A rumour accompanied the regulation, that the newcomers would not actually be deported but simply thrown into the sea. Apparently, the rumour precipitated the riot against the VOC, which, in turn, led to a massacre in 1740, carried out by the VOC. Within three days, approximately 10.000 Chinese who lived in Batavia were killed (Blussè 1988: 141-142). After the massacre, the Chinese were not allowed to stay in the town.

In 1755 the VOC faced its decline, brought on by various factors, such as the high costs of shipping and territorial administration, bureaucracy and bad management, obscure bookkeeping and overly high dividends, increasing corruption and private trade by company employees. During this period, the enforcement of regulations designed to maintain ethnic distinctions was not very strict, which made the absorption of the Chinese into the indigenous

(*Inlander*) society a common phenomenon. Marriages between Chinese immigrants (mostly men) and the local women created a mixed culture, which is known as the *peranakan* culture. The intermarriage offspring adopted local language, dress, food and religion but also retained some Chinese values. In 1759, the government recognized the *peranakan* society as a distinct culture and treated them as a separate group. In 1773, the *peranakan* society together with indigenous groups – such as Balinese, Bantenese, Javanese, Buginese, Makassaresse, Malay, Ambonese and Butonese – were classified as "Natives". This made the structure of the Batavian society logistically simpler. The VOC acknowledged only three main groups: the Natives, the (unassimilated) Chinese and the Europeans (Simbolon 1991: 44-47).

In 1799, the Dutch government formally took over all the administrative functions of the VOC, together with all its possessions and a debt of 137 million guilders. The Dutch government also took over the administration of Batavia. Although there were changes under the new government, the old ethnic segregation of Batavia's population was still held. One of the changes was the classification (in 1818) of Chinese, Moors, Arabs, and other non-European foreigners into a new category of Foreign Asian, which was legally classified as 'Foreign Orientals' (*Vreemde Oosterlingen*) in 1906.

In 1825 the *"wijkenstelsel'* was imposed in Batavia in order to ascertain districts or neighbourhoods. This policy resulted in the creation of the so-called '*Chinese kamp'* (*Pecinan*) or Chinese ghetto, the *Kampung Arab* or the Arab descent ghetto, and the *Kampung Melayu* or the Malay ghetto. By creating these ghettos, the government controlled the society through its community leaders. In the case of the Chinese, the government relied heavily on the Chinese captains to impose regulations and taxes.

While the Chinese were classified together with immigrants like Arabs and Indians, in practice, however, the legal and administrative procedures evolved for the Chinese in a separate manner. In 1853, the *"passenstelsel"* was imposed, and was reaffirmed in 1863, to the Chinese throughout Java. The pass, which cost 0.5 guilders or, sometimes, 1 guilder, was compulsory if one travelled beyond one's domicile district (Lohanda 1999). Besides blocking the free movement of Chinese in the countryside, the policy strongly reinforced the existing concentration of the Chinese into particular areas. For the Chinese, the enforcement of the policy meant two things. First, it prohibited the chance of escaping taxation (Reid 1996: 53-54); Secondly, it controlled any political movement of the Chinese.

Despite of the myriad of restrictions that were applied to the Chinese, the Dutch granted economic privileges to them as well, for example the opium farming and money lending. An opium farm was a monopoly concession for selling opium. The monopoly was granted by a state to a 'farmer', for a limited period of time and it applied to a strictly delineated area. On Java during the nineteenth century, Chinese merchants paid dearly for this privilege. In return, they received great sums of revenue. Rush (1990: 83) points out that Chinese opium farmers formed tiny but influential elites in the colonial Java. Their families and business associates occupied the pinnacle of the Chinese community. They played overlapping roles in economy, politics and social live since the colonial government pointed them as Chinese *kapitans* or headmen. The appointment of Chinese captains and their network, well known as *Cabang Atas*, to manage the opium trading had strategic reasons. Firstly, the Chinese had broad commercial networks. Secondly, the hierarchical constellation of the Chinese community ensured the implementation of Dutch policy regarding opium farming and taxation.

However, it is clear that the opium farmers needed a support network to run their farms. To a large extent, an opium farm relied on numerous Chinese peddlers and traders who were intermediate agents between urban and rural communities as they sold countless items of necessity as well as opium to villages, and brought the harvested crops to the town. As collectors of rice and other crops, the Chinese introduced the local farmers with money lending and credit giving. Through the *ijon* system, in which farmers had to pay a high interest for their loan with unripe rice offered as security, the negative characteristics of the Chinese established and Sino phobia grew rapidly.

Besides money lending, the Chinese were already well known as tax collectors. Through their strong connections, even in deep hinterlands, the Chinese collected lucrative revenues. The tax collector job was certainly not a popular position as opposed to the local people and strengthened the negative stereotype of the Chinese.

The Pre-Independence Period

In the beginning of the twentieth century, a flood of new immigrants, exceeding 300,000 during the period of 1900-1930, arrived in the Southeast Asia. The Chinese newcomers (*singkheh*) could be classified as the sojourners who went to Southeast Asia to

earn a better income and then to return home with their savings. However, some stayed behind because they were too poor or indebted to return, others because they had found a more comfortable life. These new Chinese communities possessed more Chinese values, more dynamic, and more aggressive than the earlier Chinese sojourners did (Siauw 1981: 11-33). In their relationships to the local people, however, the *singkheh* tended to receive a low recognition in local politics (Mackie in Reid 1996: xx).

The *singkheh* influx, as well as the nationalist movement in China, influenced some resinification efforts. The efforts was taken in order to reform the customs and beliefs of the Chinese in the Dutch-Indies by relying on the precepts taught by Confucius, and to develop the knowledge and understanding of Chinese by founding a library, running modern schools, and propagating Confucian ideology. To serve this purpose, in 1900, the *Tiong Hoa Hwee Koan* (THHK-Chinese Association) was established. The association considered that this purpose could be best achieved by establishing Chinese language schools (Suryadinata 1992: 12). The association also intended to build up a stronger solidarity as Chinese rather than grouping members of particular speech-groups – Hokkien, Teochiu, Hakka or Cantonese as had been the case previously.

In the early of twentieth century, the nationalist movements in Southeast Asia – in the Philippines, Indonesia and Vietnam – mobilised local sentiments against the Chinese immigration as well as against the colonial rulers. In the meantime, Chinese nationalism, led by Dr. Sun Yat-sen, aimed to reassert the Chinese identity and to support the national self-strengthening within China (Mackie in Reid 1996: xxi). Sun Yat-sen looked for financial support and industrial investment for China among the overseas Chinese. Therefore, at that time, the Chinese or Tionghoa community was divided into three groups: (1) those who were oriented towards the People's Republic of China, and had loyal attitudes to China, i.e. to the movement of Dr. Sun Yat Sen – and later on to the Communist Party, (2) those who sided with the Dutch, and addressed their loyalty to the Dutch colonial government, and (3) those who supported Indonesian nationalism, and oriented their political interest towards the Indonesian nationalist movement by establishing the *Partai Tionghoa Indonesia* (PTI – Party of *Tionghoa* Indonesia [Siauw 1981: 35-36]).

There was, however, little awareness among the Indonesian nationalist leaders of the time about the diversity of the ethnic Chinese community. There was a common perception

that the ethnic Chinese were loyal to the Chinese Communist Party, or the *Kuo Min Tang* (Chinese nationalism), or remained neutral as long as they could do business or trade (Coppel 1993: 24). Therefore, many political parties refused to admit ethnic Chinese members or even to admit them as associate members (Suryadinata 1992: 18-23). In 1937, the *Gerakan Rakyat Indonesia* (*Gerindo* – the Indonesian People Movement) was the first nationalist movement, which permitted a full membership of the ethnic Chinese (Siauw 1981: 43-44). Thus, in this period, there was an ambiguity around Chinese identity and their political loyalty, which excluded them from the Indonesian national movement.

From Revolution to The Old Order Regime

When Indonesia reached its independence, another problem emerged for the ethnic Chinese. The ethnic Chinese who held Indonesian citizenship under Indonesian law were also regarded as Chinese citizens under Chinese law. This dual citizenship occurred because Chinese law ruled that anyone born of a Chinese father (or a Chinese mother, if the father was unknown) was a Chinese citizen regardless one's birthplace. By contrast, the Indonesian citizenship derived from the Dutch Law of 1910. This law imposed the status of the Dutch subject on any non-Dutch person born in the Indies of parents who were resident there (Coppel 1983: 26). Therefore, any ethnic Chinese who had already ruled as a Dutch subject, automatically became an Indonesian subject as a consequence of Indonesian independence.

In 1955, during the Conference of Asian and African nations in Bandung, the foreign ministers of Indonesia and China signed a treaty to end the dual citizenship. The treaty provided a mechanism by which an ethnic Chinese who held Indonesian citizenship could give up its Chinese citizenship. The failure to do so meant one was obliged to accept Chinese citizenship. During the following five years, there were debates between the two governments over the provisions of the treaty and the method by which it should be implemented. The treaty was not actually put into effect until 1960-62 (ibid.: 36).

During the transition period, many uncertainties concerning education, land law and economic rights affected the ethnic Chinese group. To many Indonesian nationalists, the Chinese dual citizenship brought their loyalty to Indonesia into question. In such a situation, it was even difficult for the ethnic Chinese to join any political movement.

The situation worsened when, in 1954, a draft law, which severely restricted the numbers of ethnic Chinese to obtain the Indonesian citizenship, was introduced to the parliament. There was also a deadline, which meant that any ethnic Chinese who failed to obtain Indonesian nationality within a certain period had to hold the Chinese nationality. The pressure contributed greatly to the spread of political consciousness among the ethnic Chinese. It also led to the establishment of the *Baperki* (*Badan Permusyawaratan Kewarganegaraan Indonesia* – Consultative Body for Indonesian Citizenship), which aimed to promote a proper understanding of Indonesian citizenship, and to eliminate the discrimination amongst the Indonesian citizens on the basis of descent, culture, customs or religion (Siauw 1981: 203-221). Thus, *Baperki* would like to promote a combination of Indonesian citizenship and Chinese cultural identity.

Another blow for the ethnic Chinese occurred in the economic sector, when the government enforced the Presidential Regulation no. 10/1959. This regulation banned the ethnic Chinese from trading in rural areas and was aimed to protect and reinforce the native traders. The regulation resulted in an exodus of ethnic Chinese from the rural areas to the cities; a move which led to various parts of the towns becoming highly concentrated 'Chinese area'. The regulation failed to serve its purpose. Unexpectedly, its enforcement created the "*Ali-Baba system*"[9] which consisted of the collaboration of Indonesians who held the trade license in the rural areas with the ethnic Chinese, who provided the capital. The system strengthened the "cunning, opportunistic and greedy" image of the ethnic Chinese.

During the New Order Regime

In 1965-1966, Indonesia witnessed huge political turbulence, in which the *Partai Komunis Indonesia* (PKI – The Indonesian Communist Party) and its allies were destroyed, the popular movements suppressed, the state apparatus expurgated, and President Soekarno removed. As soon as Soeharto came into power in 1966, the government suspended diplomatic relations with the PRC, and froze the Sino-Indonesian Dual Nationality Treaty (Storey 2000). In 1969, the new Indonesian parliament decided to renounce the treaty. The renouncement meant that children of Tionghoa citizens born prior to January 20, 1962, had to

[9] Ali was a personification of the native and Baba was a personification of Tionghoa (In Coppel, 1983, p.)

choose either Chinese or Indonesian citizenship.[10] Since the majority of the dual-national citizens opted for Indonesian citizenship, there was a debate about the political reasons behind the renouncement.

The citizenship issue was followed by an order to use the word "Cina" (China) instead of "Tionghoa" to refer the Chinese-Indonesians (*Kompas,* May 28, 1999). The term "non-Pribumi" (non-native) was also used to address them. The terms were not only aimed at humiliation, but more than that, the order was an effort to create an awareness of otherness to the Chinese-Indonesian community in a binary opposition to the so-called "*Pribumi*", i.e. native Indonesians (Heryanto 1997: 97, 100).

However, to justify its legitimacy in rescuing the country from the threat of communism, the "othering" effort directed to the Chinese Indonesian continued and took several forms. Firstly, there was the geographical argument. The Chinese were considered to be foreign as they originated from a place outside the boundary of the nation. This disregarded the *peranakan* people, which were born from mixed-parents (i.e. the Chinese and local people), and has already assimilated to the local culture. Secondly, there was the cultural explanation. The fact that the Chinese-Indonesian had been segregated from the majority of the population during the Colonial rule and there was a Confucianism revival in the early of twentieth century strengthened the image of ethnic Chinese cultural distinction to the Indonesian native culture. The exaggeration of this image played a significant role in considering the Chinese as "other" in term of religion and cultural tradition. Thirdly, there was the argument about economic determination. There was a consideration that the national economy was under control of the ethnic Chinese minority. However the paradoxical situation was that by the policy of privileging the Chinese business communities in expanding the nation's economy, the government was reducing the entire ethnic minority to near pariah status in all social spheres, culture, language, politics, public service and employment, law and education. By enforcing this paradox, the government was able to keep the ethnic Chinese community in its control while, at the same time, was benefiting from their economic skill. Fourthly, there was the myth of imminent danger. In New Order propaganda, the ethnic Chinese were suspected of being essentially communist. The suspicion came from the logic

[10] For more details, see BAKIN, 1980. *Pedoman Penyelesaian Masalah Cina di Indonesia (The Guidance Book of Chinese Problems in Indonesia)*. Jakarta: *Badan Koordinasi Inteligen Negara* (The State Coordinative Intelligent Body)

that the ethnic Chinese presumably had a close relationship to their ancestral land, China, which was governed by the Chinese Communist Party. Therefore, the combination of ”othering” efforts and the language of communist threat (such as *bahaya laten PKI* (the latent danger of communism) and *didalangi oleh sisa-sisa PKI* (being conspirated by remnant of the Communist Party)), was the legitimising myth of the New Order regime to strengthening its power and to diminish its (perceived) political enemies (ibid.: 97-98).

Following the logic of the regime, the ethnic Chinese was a primarily target group of government's assimilation policies (Storey 2000) in order to eradicate their "otherness". The assimilation is officially defined as "the eventual disappearance of the ethnic Chinese as a distinct cultural entity through absorption into the various local populations and local cultures where they have settled" (Tan 1995: 23).

The program consisted of the closing of the Chinese-medium schools and Chinese newspapers, the banning of the usage of Chinese characters and the celebration of Chinese cultural events, urging the changing of Chinese names into Indonesian names, encouraging mixed marriages between the Chinese and the Indonesians and encouraging conversion to Islam (Suryadinata 1976: 780). After years, the combination of humiliation and assimilation policy resulted in a blurred identity among the ethnic Chinese. No matter how hard they tried to accomplish to become excellent Indonesians, they remained second-class citizens as well as a vulnerable group to violence against them.

During the New Order regime, a small number of ethnic Chinese businessmen enjoyed special facilities with which to expand their enterprises.[11] They received much publicity, which made them more visible as a group. As the publicity of the ethnic Chinese tended to focus on the conglomerates and the high-class members, it implicated a bias towards the rest of the Chinese community. This bias produced the image that all ethnic Chinese were economically potent, profit-oriented, and received military or government back-ups to expand their business. However, the majority of the ethnic Chinese had to struggle to make ends meet – a fact remained obscured (Tan 1995: 22-26).

In discussing the economic benefits that were given to the ethnic Chinese conglomerates, I would like to compare the attitudes of Soeharto (the second president of the

[11] In his dissertation, Kuntjoro-Jakti (1981) discusses the practice of conglomerates in the New Order regime. He argues that the practice of conglomerates cannot be separated with the bureaucratic-authoritarian model of the New Order.

Republic Indonesia 1966-1998) and Pieter de Carpentier (the Governor General of Batavia 1623-1627) towards the ethnic Chinese businessmen. Soeharto, says in his biography (1986: 380):

> I have seen (that) the Tionghoa's capital multiplies quickly here (in Indonesia). They have (economic) skill too. We use this situation for our national economics development. Do not misunderstand! Our Government has the ability to benefit from and to manage (the Chinese-Indonesian). Why should we be afraid?

De Carpentier wrote to his subordinates to introduce Jan Con, a Chinese towkay (Blusse 1986.*op.cit.*: 50):

> Consider this man (Jan Con) well recommended by me (Pieter de Carpentier), provide him with all favours and faith, and make use of his service insofar as you deem this to the benefit of the Company. Yet, always follow the maxim that the Company's capital never should be put in Chinese hands, even if it should appear advisable to do so. In this way you always remain master of the gross of your affairs and eliminate the risk of having trust repaid with bad faith, thus will you also protect good people from making poor decision.

Both quotations show that the providing of economic benefits was followed by the restriction of political rights. Moreover, combined with a bias toward the ethnic Chinese community, the policy, which was beneficial for only a few ethnic Chinese conglomerates, disadvantaged the millions of small and middle class ethnic Chinese who have never received such privileges.

The *Dalang(s)* Play the *Wayang*[12]: The Politicizing of Ethnic Groups

Whenever the policies of authority result in antagonistic ethnic identities, there are always opportunities to play them against each other. Summarizing researches on ethnic violence in Yugoslavia, Rwanda, Sudan and Kalimantan, Malik (2000) points out four tactics used by those in power to precipitate communal violence. Firstly, sensitive issues among various ethnic groups are highlighted through political rumour and intrigue. In many cases, the poverty and wide economic gap are utilized to create tension among the ethnic groups. In other cases, the religious issues are employed. Secondly, there are efforts to increase the antagonistic ethnic identities, which create prejudice, stereotypes and fear. In many cases of majority versus minority, the minority fear of the majority group forced them to seek the

[12] The *wayang* is a puppet made by leather (*wayang kulit*) or wood (*wayang golek*). The *dalang* is the person who plays the puppets. In the politics, the *dalang* commonly refers to a mastermind of a violent event or a conspirator.

protection of the authorities or state apparatus. Thirdly, there are provocations through a *coup d'etat* issue, in which the accusation toward the perceived as threat group in sponsoring a *coup d'etat* will be a legitimate reason of state apparatus to victimize them. In 1965-1966, a justified pogrom to the PKI (*Partai Komunis Indonesia* – the Indonesian Communist Party) members, since they were accused to arrange a *coup d'etat,* is an example of this trick. Fourthly, there are efforts to employ the extremist or fundamentalist groups who incite violence against other groups. In Rwanda case, for example, the extremists of ethnic Hutu do the genocide to the ethnic Tutsi.

In the case of the May 1998 riots, the employment of the first and second tactics was explicit. During the economic crisis, the anti-Chinese sentiments, regarding of their economic privileges, were elevating (which will be discussed thoroughly in the following chapter). Then, as a result of 'othering' effort, which the distinctive identities of majority and minority, *pribumi* (native) and *non-pribumi* (non-native) were encouraged, the fear and prejudice towards groups were established. The ethnic Chinese set up close networks with the authorities or state apparatus in order to protect them from the majority. These networks caused the practices of corruption, collusion, and nepotism between the Chinese and the state's agents increased. Therefore, by attacking the protected minority (in this case, the Chinese), Brass (1999: 12-14) argues that this violence served a double purpose: firstly, it was to scapegoat the Chinese for all the economics and social problems of society. Secondly, it intended to undermine the authority of its failure to conduct good governance.

The *Kota Lama*: The Research Setting

To serve their interest, therefore, the *dalang* (mastermind(s)) will carefully select the areas and target groups, which are vulnerable to ethnic conflict. In the case of the Surabaya riot, the *Kota Lama*, notoriously known as a poor area with complex ethnic relations, was selected.

My observation of the neighbourhood was done in the three districts affected by riots, i.e. Semampir, Sunan Ampel and Pegirian districts. These districts are close to each other and are all in the oldest part of the city, the Tanjung Perak harbor area – also well known as *Kota Lama* –located in the northern part of the Surabaya Municipality (see the map, appendix A). The area is very dense meaning that no houses have gardens and there are no

spaces between the houses. The houses in the kampung area of *Kota Lama* were apparently smaller, some made from wood and others from cement.

In *Kota Lama,* there are big streets, which are the most economically important. In both sides of the streets, there are many kinds of shops, two hotels, several communication shops and one Islamic hospital. Most of them are owned by people of Arab descent – henceforth called Arabians. On the street, which most of my respondents lived, there used to be five Chinese families who run the shops. All of them were riot victims. Post-riot only three Chinese families remain. There are also petty traders who sell fruit, snacks and drinks, in front of other shops, or simply in the street. Most of the petty traders in this area are Maduranese or Javanese.

I also studied the three survivors' houses. This observation enables me, as the researcher, to interpret the social and economical level of the survivors' lifestyles and compared this to the rest of their neighbourhood. I could also obtain details of the evacuation process. All of the houses have two or more floors. Although they are permanent and have good qualities, the houses of the Chinese are not especially noteworthy. Compare to the houses of those of Arabians, the Chinese people's houses are dull and plain. The shape of the houses was important part in the evacuation or hiding process. Most families were saved or able to flee due to their having second floor houses. One family jumped from their second floor to the neighbour's second floor hotel. There were two girls hiding in the roof, above the second floor. The other family was hiding on the second floor. Only one family who was attacked from the second floor had to run to their ground floor and flee to *kampung*.





The Houses in Kampung Kebalen

The Social Relations between the Ethnic Chinese and Other Groups in *Kota Lama*

The Chinese, the Madurese and the Arabians are the three dominant groups in the *Kota Lama.* During the colonial period, the southern part was well known as the *Chinese Kamp* and the northern part as the *Maleische Kamp* (Oetomo. 1991: 3). The *Kota Lama* was intended to be a commercial area, as well as a port. Nowadays, the ethnic Chinese and Madurese are more scattered about. The Arabians are concentrated around the tomb of Sunan Ampel, which is well known as *Kampung Arab.*



The famous Masjid Ampel

In religion division, the Madurese and the Arabians are all Muslim, while the Chinese profess different religions (more than half are Christians and the rest are Buddhists or Confucianists) (Gondomono 1996: 123). In labour, the Madurese have been, for a long time, porters, gofers, night watchmen, and members of protection rackets for the Chinese merchants and small scale merchants. The Chinese and Arabian are middle-class traders.

Since the colonial period, the Madurese have lived side by side with the Chinese and Arabian families. Therefore, there is interdependence among the groups. Chinese-Madurese relations in the *Kota Lama* are contractual working relations based on the economic interests of each group. Oetomo (1991: 9-10) explains that there are two types of Chinese-Madurese relations in *Kota Lama*. Firstly, there are relationships between Chinese businessmen and independent Madurese businessmen. Secondly, there are relationships between Chinese businessmen and their Madurese employees. The former relationships are based around work but also extend to the social sphere where the businessmen are often neighbours. For the latter type of relationships, there are only working relations. However, the working relations of the second type are more intense and well-maintained. The reason for this is that the Madurese virtually depend on the Chinese for their livelihood, since their labour, at least, as far as they concerned, is only desired by the Chinese businessmen in the area.

There is another relationship that differs in nature with those outlined above, namely the relations between the Chinese businessmen with porters, night watchmen, and warehouse foremen. The porters are only employed in a casual basis. When a porter becomes so trusted by a Chinese businessman, a more permanent relationship can develop. Mostly, the porters

are permanently employed as night watchmen, who sleep in front of the Chinese' shop. The warehouse owners do not appoint just any Madurese as a foreman. It is a permanent position with better pay and is usually handed down from father to son or from brother to brother. It generally changes hands only when the old foreman dies (ibid.: 10-12)

The relationships between the Chinese and the Arabian, on the other hand, are both working and social. It is very similar to the first type of relations between the Chinese and Madurese.[13]

Despite these longstanding relationships, there are very few mixed marriages between the groups. The Madurese, living quite close to Madura Island, face no barrier in finding partners from their homeland (ibid.: 9). The scarcity of mixed marriages between the Chinese and the Arabian is caused by the wide differences in religion and culture.[14] Thus, *Kota Lama* is a perfect example of a post-colonial city as there are distinct ethnic groups, who live together with relatively little assimilation among them.

The Ethnic Chinese Women of *Kota Lama*[15]

The majority of the ethnic Chinese in *Kota Lama* are *totok* (the more Chinese oriented): this include my respondents. However, the clear division of the ethnic Chinese into *totok* (the Chinese-speaking) and *peranakan* (the Malay-speaking) groups (Skinner. 1996:) is debatable when applied to this community nowadays. Although the *totoks* of *Kota Lama* are usually the second or third generation of the Chinese who came to Indonesia at the beginning of the Twentieth century, they may understand but hardly ever speak Mandarin. Indonesian, Javanese and Madurese languages are commonly spoken.

The division is still applied, however, as they are still distinct in culture, for example worshipping ancestral souls, putting a bá-guà (an eight-sided mirror, which is believed to protect the house from danger), celebrating important Chinese events and using Chinese traditions in birth, marriage and death ceremonies (Gondomono. 1996: 40-120). However, since the older Chinese people who had most knowledge of these customs have already died,

[13] Unfortunately, as far as I am concerned, there have been no studies about the relations between the Chinese and the Arabian in the *Kota Lama.* Here I am using the information from my respondents about their relations with their Arabian neighbours.
[14] The conclusion came from interviews with several respondents
[15] As there have been no studies about the Chinese women of *Kota Lama,* this section is the result of interviews and observations about their habits and culture, which have been conducted during this study.

the younger generations can only follow the tradition without knowing the meaning behind them. Thus, the quality of 'Chineseness' in the younger generation is gradually faded.

The *totok* women are living in a patriarchal society. There is a common saying among them that "a young Chinese woman should obey her father, a married woman should obey her husband, the widow should obey her son". In such a patriarchal system, the bargaining position of the ethnic Chinese women remains weak in the decision-making process concerning the family and her life. Therefore, all of the older respondents were married to the men of their parent's choice. The younger generation has more freedom in choosing partners, although they still have to obey the main rule that the partner should come from a Chinese family. Sons receive more privileges than daughters do. Daughters received little attention and help from their parents. Even worse, when the parents are economically weak, the daughters are expected to leave the family to ease the burden. Three out of four middle-age respondents left their family when they were 8-12 years old. In the *totok* of *Kota Lama*, it was known as *dititipkan* (being adopted – *ngenger* in Javanese) by a richer family. In the new family, they served as maids. One of the respondents told me that she had to leave her family without being adopted by anybody. It was a difficult time, as she had to survive on her own. Apparently the younger generation receives better treatment from their mothers. All of them stay with their family until they get married and all received higher education. All of the younger generation finished their university or academy education, while the older generation received only an elementary education.

Conclusion

Chapter 3
The Riots

Immediately after the violence in May 1998, there were several explanations concerning the riot by the government, the military, media, NGOs and by social scientists. To explain the riots, each party was launching its own discourse of violence: from the explosion of mass anger theory to the conspiracy theory; from the racial hatred theory to the economic disparity theory.

In the introductory part of *Riot and Pogrom*, Brass (1997: 5) explains that the competition among groups to represent the riot is "far from a merely verbal game"; rather, it has several essential consequences. Firstly, the competition determines what kind of discourse of violence will be applied to be a master narrative. By setting a master narrative, a context to interpret the next violence and to reinterpret the previous ones comes into existence. In its application, the master narrative tends to be inviolable by other facts, interpretations and explanations. Secondly, the competition determines who are to be blamed. Brass (1999: 5-6) argues that the blame displacement is a process of alleging guilt, in which one explanation is distilled from among all the various factors that contribute to a riot or other forms of collective violence. This process is engaged in by practitioners of violence, the media, politicians as well as social scientists to point fingers at local businessmen and politicians, the communal prejudices of the population, the intelligence actors, and various other parties. This 'distillation process' generally ignores other factors including those, which are crucial to understand the riot. An explanation, which has been already distilled to serve a certain political interest, is a convenient tool to blame certain groups as the responsible parties for the occurrence of violence. Thirdly, the competition of various interpretations determines the resources and policies to prevent or to eliminate the violence. If violence is perceived as a mass anger against the exploitation by the minority group vis-à-vis the majority, for example, measures to cut off the privileged position of the minority should take place. On the other hand, if violence is interpreted as an attack by the majority against the minority, measures to protect the minority are in order.

This chapter aims to analyse the May 1998 riots and its discourses. In my analysis, I would like to ward off the common discourse of communal violence against the Chinese

Indonesians, which heavily relied on the explosion of mass anger theory. Instead, I would like to apply the institutionalised riot system theory, which is proposed by Brass (1997: 12-21). The institutionalised riot system shows that the violence is socially constructed and produced or reproduced by those who receive benefits from it. However, it should be kept in mind that this chapter is not intended to prove the 'truth' of the May 1998 riots. Rather, it should be seen as an effort to accommodate the alternative narratives, which are neglected by many parties.

I will first focus on the economic and political crisis, which do not only serve as the backgrounds of the riot but also as a construction of the scapegoating mechanism of the political violence. Then, I will investigate the descriptions of the chronologies of the Jakarta riot and Surabaya riot by the authorities, while the versions of the media and the local people are presented here to emphasize the multi-faced character of the violence discourses. In the last section, I will summarize my analysis.

The Economic and Political Crisis

The May 1998 riot was an upheaval after months of economic crisis and political turbulence in Indonesia. The economic crisis has started since August 1997 when the currencies of several Southeast Asian countries tumbled down drastically against the U.S. dollar. By early September, the Indonesian currency, *rupiah*, had lost about 20 percent of its value against the U.S. dollar and about 30 percent by the end of the month (Sukma 1998: 117). In January 1998, the *rupiah* reached the lowest point, Rp. 17.000 per one U.S. dollar – in comparison to Rp. 2.500 in July 1997 (Hill 1998: 80). The banking sector collapsed as well in conjunction with thousands of businesses, especially those in the property sector. Approximately 6 million people lost their jobs (*Far Eastern Economic Review,* 29 Jan 1998: 17). This number increased to 30 million in 2001 (*Kompas*, 23 October 2001a). The Gross Domestic Product (GDP) before the crisis was USD 1000, which decreased to approximately USD 400 afterwards (*Kompas,* 23 October 2001b). Thus, the people's purchasing power was decreasing while the prices of nine basic commodities (among them rice, wheat flour, egg, cooking oil, sugar, soy beans) were skyrocketing. The situation worsened because of the long drought in 1997, which had a severe impact on agricultural production. In such a situation, people were very sensitive to any rumour of food shortage. In many occasions, the urban

communities rushed to the stores in panic, as there were worries about food shortages. Despite the government's guarantee that there was enough food supply, middle class people bought food in large amounts to secure their stock (*Kompas,* 3 May 1998).

During the economic crisis, the Chinese were blamed as the cause of the crisis by the government and military officers (Human Right Watch Report February 1998). The blame was addressed to conglomerates, who deposited their dollars abroad, and to shopkeepers, who hoarded the goods and raised the prices. Some officers referred only implicitly to the conglomerates and shopkeepers, while other explicitly called the ethnic Chinese as those who have no sense of patriotism (Harsoyo 1998), as traitors and as conspirators of the economic crisis (*Republika,* 24 January 1998). The blame constructed and reinforced an image that the ethnic Chinese were responsible for the crisis without explaining the complexity of the crisis.[1] Thus, according to Human Right Watch (HRW Report February 1998), the image construction led to a scapegoating of the ethnic Chinese and placed them in a vulnerable position in case of possible social unrest. During January and February 1998, there were 35 outbreaks of violence across Indonesia (ibid.), which 27 of these outbreaks were directed against the ethnic Chinese concerning the rise in the prices of basic commodities, kerosene, and automotive spare parts.

The economic crisis in combination with other factors, such as the declination of Soeharto's health condition, the friction among the military elite, the pressure of the student movement and Soeharto's inconsistency in dealing with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) heated the political atmosphere (Lay 1998: 14). The political tension was mounting after the congress re-elected Soeharto to serve presidency for the seventh times in March 1998. The situation worsened when several cabinet ministers proved incapable to tackle the crisis. In composing his last cabinet, Soeharto appointed his oldest daughter and some cronies to serve ministries, which turned to a backlash, since they were incapable to tackle issues. At the same time, there was a strong popular demand to eradicate corruption, collusion and nepotism as well as to solve the crisis. Student demonstration urged Soeharto to step down.

[1] I have no intention to defend the ethnic Chinese conglomerates and businessmen. Blaming the ethnic Chinese as the main cause of the crisis, however, clearly disregards the complex nature of the crisis itself. There should be a diversified look at the impact of the Asia-Pacific financial crisis (see, for example, *Kompas,* 23 October 1997; Hill 1998: 77-85), on the financial, banking and developmental policies of the New Order regime (see, for example, Jomo et.al 1997: 121-152; Cole & Slade 1998: 61-67; Field 1998; 101-125; Sadli 1998: 272-280) and of the policies of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) (see, for example, *Kompas* 1 June 1998; Hadi & Basri

When the demand of the resignation of Soeharto was escalating, the friction among the military elite and political parties increased. They were forced to choose either to defend Soeharto and his cronies at all cost or to take people's side. Several former ministers (e.g. Emil Salim, Siswono Yudhohusodo and Frans Seda) and other prominent activists (e.g. Nurcholish Madjid, Ichlasul Amal, Faisal Basri and Ratna Sarumpaet) called for Soeharto to step down (Van Dijk 2001: 193) while the parliament, the majority of which consisted of Soeharto's friends and cronies continued to support Soeharto. In the meantime, the armed forces commanders were split into 'green generals' and 'red- and-white generals' (ibid. 196; Lay 1998: 15-16; Forrester 1998: 27). The 'green generals' were those who had close contacts with Islamic organisations and were advocating a greater role for Islam and the Muslim community in politics. The prominent figures of the green generals were Prabowo Subianto, Soeharto's son-in-law and the Chief of Strategic Commando of Army, and Feisal Tandjung, the former Commander of Armed Forces. The 'red-and-white generals' were those who were stressing a secular nationalist loyalty; among them were Wiranto, the Commander of Armed Forces, and Susilo B. Yudhoyono, the Chief of Staff for Social and Political Affairs.

The friction between Prabowo and Wiranto reached its peak when there was an open fire to the students on 12 May 1998 at the Trisakti University, Jakarta. Four students were killed (*Kompas* 14 May 1998). The shooting was followed by a mass riot in Jakarta and other cities. Prabowo was accused to be responsible for the shooting and riots. He was dismissed from the Army two months after.

The May 1998 Riot in Jakarta

In 13-15 May 1998, the city of Jakarta and its surrounding had witnessed severe violence. The violence started one day after the shooting of the students. At that day, the students were gathering in the *Trisakti* University to attend a memorial service of their killed fellow students. There were thousands of people outside the campus who delivered their sympathies to the students. In the afternoon, the crowd became relentless and shouted for students to join them in the street. When the students declined, the restive crowd started to smash the street lamps, vandalized cars, which were parked around the university, and set fire on two toll road booths. From the university area, they spread to nearby areas, mostly in West

1998: 3-54) on the economic crisis in Indonesia.

Jakarta, which is close to Jakarta's business centre. They looted, ransacked and burned thousands of buildings (e.g. ordinary houses, shops, private offices, bank offices, shopping malls and markets, hotels and restaurants, petrol stations, and police posts). Then, they destroyed thousands of cars, motorcycles, buses, traffic signs and lamps. Most of them were Chinese' property although there were Indigenous among the victims as well. The rioters also destroyed and burnt down the house of *Liem Sioe Liong*, who was notoriously known as a close friend and business partner of Suharto children's. The rioters took his picture outside and symbolically cut it into pieces with their knives (Eklöf 1999: 183-7). As a protection to their shops and houses, people were putting up signs that the owner was a *Pribumi,* an indigenous Indonesian or a Muslim.



The riot was also notoriously known with its numerous victims: 1,190 people were burnt to death, 91 were injured and 31 were missing (Team of Volunteers for Humanitarian Causes 1998a: 9). Most of those who burnt to death were trapped in the malls, for example, in the Glodok[2] area, Pantai Indak Kapok[3] (Pluit, North Jakarta) and Jatinegara (East Jakarta).

It was reported that during the riot there were people – labelled as provocateurs – provoked the crowd – labelled as *massa* – to do violence. The provocateurs shouted anti-Chinese or anti-police yells and burned old tyres. They urged the crowd to ransack the malls and shops. When the crowd entered the malls, they set fire and went away (ibid. 2-9). The government labelled those who died while trapped in the malls, as looters (*penjarah*), which is according to the Team of Volunteers, an effort to blame the urban poor community as the responsible party of the destruction.

During the destruction, military troops failed to overcome the critical situation. According to the TGPF (*Tim Gabungan Pencari Fakta* – The Joint Team of Fact Finding) report, there was miscommunication and lack of coordination from the Headquarter, which resulted in confusion and inconsistency among the troops on the ground. In several places there were clashes among the military troops from different units. They were mainly

[2] Glodok was known as a center for the sale of electronics, which owned mostly by the Chinese.

concentrating to safeguard strategic buildings such as government buildings, embassies, certain hotels and commercial buildings. If there were troops on the riot location, they stood passively and let the rioting happen. There were evidences that they provided service and protection in exchange for payment (The TGPF final report 1998).



During the riot, there were assaults against the Chinese people. The Chinese were dragged from cars and buses and beaten up and knifed. Some were burned to death. The report on a series of gang rapes and sexual assault on the Chinese Indonesian women was uncovered later, and absorbed much international and national public attention. According to the *Tim Relawan*, the rape was systematically arranged and targeted Chinese women and girls. In Jakarta, 152 women were being gang-raped, 20 of whom died (Team of Volunteers for Humanitarian Causes 1998b: 8-9). The TGPF verified 64 cases of gang rapes, some of them were followed by mutilation and killing, and 9 cases of sexual assault or torture. Both teams faced difficulties to establish the exact number of victims because of under-reporting. The gang rapes were generally performed on the street or in their homes, many of them were performed in front of the family, neighbours or other people and some of them were burnt to death afterwards (Van Dijk 2000: 189; Team of Volunteers for Humanitarian Causes 1998c: 6-8). Girls and women used *jilbab,* head cover of Muslim women, to protect themselves (Aspinall, Feith & van Klinken 1999: 57-58).

Except for Medan, which experienced riots from 4-9 May, other cities in Java and Sumatra, such as Solo, Semarang, Surabaya, Lampung, Padang, Palembang and Medan, faced similar brutalities from 14-16 May (Human Right Watch Report September 1998: 2; *Kompas* 18 and 19 Mei 1998). Although the destruction were considered as less than those in Jakarta, nevertheless the impact on the local economy was devastating. In those cities, the controversial rapes also occurred. From Solo, Surabaya, Palembang and Medan, the *Tim Relawan* found that 16 women were raped during the violent outbreaks (Team of Volunteers

[3] Pantai Indah Kapok was a new housing complex and occupied largely by the Chinese.

for Humanitarian Causes 1998b: 8). The local humanitarian team, *Gemasukma,* found that 15 women were raped in Surabaya (*Jawa Pos* 16 July 1998).

The Surabaya Riot

Compare to the Jakarta riot, the Surabaya riot was smaller in terms of affected areas and number of victims. The official narrative, which was provided by the Chief Commander of the Military of the *Brawijaya* regional command (*Pangdam V/Brawijaya – Panglima Komando Daerah Militer Brawijaya*) and the Chief of Police of Surabaya (*Kapolda Surabaya – Kepala Polisi Daerah Surabaya)*, was very short. It was said that the riot was instigated by 200 well-trained provocateurs whom came from outside Surabaya such as Jakarta, West Java, Yogyakarta and Solo (*Harian Surya* 17 May 1998). The main target of the provocateurs was to attack the *Tunjungan* Plaza, the biggest mall in Surabaya. However, police and military managed to halt the attack. It is also said that the local people had been provoked to join the riot. The provocateurs were the tools of the *dalangs* (the masterminds) to destroy the buildings as well as the communities. The Chief Commander also accused the provocateurs and local rioters as betrayers of the *Reformasi* (*Kompas* 19 May 1998). Although the Chief Commander convincingly provided the exact number of the provocateurs, nonetheless, none of them was arrested. Instead, 224 local rioters were arrested and sentenced to jail from one to six months.

The chronology of the riot offered by the media did not provide an explanation about how the riot started (*Harian Surya* 15 May 1998a). The media reported that on 14 May around eight p.m., a crowd of approximately 100 people, gathered in front of a Chinese owned cigarette shop, which located in front of the police office in the *Danakarya* street. Apparently, the crowd attempted to loot shop. The owner tried to protect his property and hit one of the looters. Provoked by this incident, the crowd became more brutal and hurt the owner in his forehead. Shortly after the incident, some people started to burn old tyres. They shouted anti-Chinese slogans and provoked the crowd to ransack and burn the Chinese shops and houses (*Jawa Pos* 2 July 1998). Four people were arrested and were brought to the police office. However, the crowds demanded that those four people should be released. When the police refused to release them, the crowds started to stone the office and tried to burn it down.

Without explaining further, it was reported that the crowd grew bigger to thousands of looters soon (*Harian Surya* 15 May 1998b).

Then, the looting began in three districts, Semampir, Wonokusumo and Pegirian [see the map in Appendix A]. In those areas, the looting was continued until four o'clock in the morning. The day after (15 May) at 12 o'clock the looting was spreading to the centre of the town. The targets of destruction and looting were gasoline dealers, automatic transfer machines (ATM) of various banks, and shops. At 16.30 in the afternoon the showroom of Timor automotive, which was owned by the youngest son of Soeharto, was targeted. It was destroyed and burnt down. Then, a travel agent office, *Pasopati*, was destroyed. The *Pasopati* office was located very close to the head office of the Bank of Central Asia (BCA), owned by Liem Sioe Liong. The crowd tried to enter the BCA complex by destroying the fence between *Pasopati* and BCA. However, a truck of military came and shot the air. The crowd ran away to avoid the shooting. The looting and destruction ended not long after. It was not reported how and by whom the violence was ended. The media only reported that the crowd dispersed themselves in the evening (*Jawa Pos* 2 July 1998).

As happened in Jakarta and other cities, during the early destruction in the *Kota Lama*, the presence of military in the riot location did not prove of help in quelling the riot. They only blocked the connecting street from the riot area to the other part of the city. Most of them stood passively and let the rioting happen as long as the crowd did not set on fire or hurt anybody. A reporter and his cameraman witnessed that during the riot the military suggested the rioters "Don't burn the house, don't hurt anyone, just take the goods." (*Jawa Pos* 2 July 1998). The military took action assertively only after the riot was moving to the centre of the city and targeting the important buildings.

The TGPF analysis of the Surabaya riot was brief (The TGPF final report September 1998). It stated that the Surabaya riot happened on a smaller scale in terms of material loss and victims, and had been quelled quite effectively. Although there were indications of the free riders and local provocateurs, the riot characterized by its locality, 'sporadic' and spontaneity.

To provide different perspective of the Surabaya riot, two explanations of local people are presented here. The first is from a *Kyai,* Haji H (50 years old). He is an Islamic leader in his *kampung* in district Wonokusumo, one of the affected areas in *Kota Lama,* as well as a

local politician. During the New Order era, he was a member of the ruling party, Golkar (Golongan Karya). However, after Soeharto stepped down and the multi-party system was allowed, he joined the *Partai Kebangkitan Bangsa* (PKB) of Abdurachman Wahid, the fourth president of Indonesia. His narrative is as follows:

> *In the afternoon (15 May 1998), around five or six, there were hundreds of motorbikers coming from the Kenjeran direction* (the Northern part of Kota Lama – well known as the harbour area and the marine base) *to this district. They were hanging around and made the traffic jammed. In the reformasi period, there were many student demonstrations. Therefore, we were used to see the crowds. However, I felt a little bit surprised of two things. Firstly, usually the demonstrations took place in the centre of the city, such as in the governor office and the local parliament building (Dewan Perwakilan Rakyat Daerah Tingkat I Jawa Timur – DPRD Jatim). Why were they hanging around in this area? Second, they did not look like students.* (I questioned, "In what way did they not look like students?") *They were too old and their behaviour was too rude compared to students. I did not feel familiar with them, as I have been living here most than twenty years, I really know the people in our neighbourhood.*
>
> *Several hours later, I heard that people attacked the police office of Semampir district. Around eight to nine, the head of Semampir police office called me. I knew him before the incident happened. He asked me to help the police to quell the riot. He said that he would prepare an open car and I was asked to meet the people on the street and to call upon them to maintain peace and order. I refused instantly. Who was I that the people would hear my words? Would not it be a shame if, instead of obeying my words, those hysterical people turned over and attacked me? Moreover, it was an old pattern of the police to use the ulama's words when they were in need. We were treated as firemen. When there were social outbursts, the ulamas were called to get the massa settled.*
>
> *As I refused the police call, I was standing outside my house to see the situation. I saw hundreds of people passing by. I knew many of them as they were living in this neighbourhood. All of them were carrying goods. It was so absurd to watch people walking in front of you, carrying stolen goods and greeting you as if they were on their way home after big shopping.*
>
> (I asked, "Were there any repercussions after you refused the police request?") *Not really. I was a member of the district parliament (DPRD Tk II Surabaya – Dewan Perwakilan Rakyat Tingkat II Kotamadya Surabaya) and I was representing the Golkar. At that time, I had a good relationship with the Chief of Police, or the Chief of local Millitary. Otherwise, your (political) career would be affected.* ("In what way?") *You know, they have close connections with the leaders of Golkar. If they make a movement to purge you from your position in the local parliament or other strategic position, it will*

happen quite easily. However, now, I am not representing Golkar anymore. I don't think that my refusal will have any consequence.

The second narrative is from a looter, MA (42 years old). He was an azan prayer in the local mosque. His daily job was a pedicab (*becak*) driver. His formal education background is elementary level. However, he received training and education on a *madrasah* (the Islamic school), which made him literate in Arabic.

At first, I did not know what really happened. From my neighbours, I heard that the police office in Semampir was attacked by thousands of people. Driven by my curiosity, I went to the police office. The streets were already full of people. I saw angry people throwing stones to the office. Then, there were people who started to burn old tyres. People shouted dirty words (I asked "What were the words?). *For example, "Polices are dogs" (Polisi anjing), "Chinese are traitors" (Cina pengkhianat), "Chinese are pigs" (Cina babi), or "banish the Chinese" (usir Cina). Then, I saw several people bang on the rolling door of a shop in front of the police office. It was owned by a Chinese. To my surprise, the owner opened the door. He brought a pipe and defied the rioters. He was stoned and hit in his forehead. The people entered his shops and took many goods, such as hundreds of cigarettes. Then other shops were also opened forcefully and looted. I was on my way home, when I saw the people of my kampung were opening a shop of paint, wood and glass (toko bahan bangunan). I was provoked and also took several gallons of paint. (I questioned, "What did you think at that time?) I did not think anything. I heard many people say that it was not a sin to take Chinese' property; they steal it from us, we take it back. I brought the paint home. As my house was a rent house, I planned to sell the paint, so I could get some extra money for my children. If I paint the house, then it would benefit the owner. I was keeping the paint in our room when two days later, the police came and captured me as a rioter. I was jailed for four months. I felt it was not fair. Why were the sentence applied to only hundreds of us? What was about thousands of other rioters? What happened to others who took more than I did?*

LESSONS FROM THE MAY 1998 RIOTS

From the narratives above, there are four points that can be examined. The first deals with the establishment of the discourse of violence. The second concerns with the characteristics and the motives of the rioters. The third depicts the role of the state and military during the riots. The fourth deals with the victims. The first three points will be elaborated in this chapter, while the fourth will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter.

Firstly, the acknowledgment of the crucial role of the provocateurs in insisting the riots in Jakarta, Surabaya and other cities by all narrators created "the provocative model of violence" as a new and predominant narrative in the discourse of violence in Indonesia. Previously, the authority was conveniently blaming the ex-communist party (PKI) members as a responsible party for any kind of social unrest. The blaming created a discourse that the Indonesia communities were always under threat of the communist danger and, therefore, it legitimated the excessive power of the state and the military to control society.[4] The discourse lost its influence when the socialist bloc faced its ending in the late 1980s. Therefore, the discourse of combustible *massa* was adopted to explain the violence outbursts, especially those against the Chinese Indonesians. The discourse stated that the economic privileges of the Chinese were conditioning the *massa* to develop anger, resentment and hatred against them, which would be easily provoked to initiate violence. In the political discourse in Indonesia, the term "*massa*" previously referred to the fluid crowd, which consisted of a political party's sympathisers. Therefore, the term was commonly employed during the political campaign and election period. In explaining the communal violence, however, the "massa" referred to urban poor communities or the grass-root level societies. Siegel (1998: 80-91; 102-107) explains that during the May 1998 riots, a wide employment of the term "massa" by the government, the military, politicians, media, and social scientists established a prejudice that these communities were brutal and inhuman. For the Chinese and the rest of upper-middle class, the establishment of prejudice served as a continuous threat that the underclass would be attracted of their wealth. Therefore, to decrease the possibility of mass anger, they should not show off the wealth and there was need government control to prevent public disorders.

The metaphor of combustion raises very serious problems in dealing with agency and responsibility of the riot or violence incitement (Brass 1997: 7). When the *massa* is perceived as the actors of violence, then, it is justifiable to the state agents and the military to stress the tumultuous, spontaneous and combustive characteristics of violence. Thanks to the documentation of *Tim Relawan* and the final report of TGPF, there was an acknowledgement of the role of provocateurs in initiating the violence during the May 1998 riots. Despite the

[4] The Malari 1974 case is an example of the accusation of communist danger in explaining the student protest against the Japanese economic expansion in Indonesia. For further detail, see: Arifin (1974)

recognition of the role of agency, unfortunately, the documentation failed to uncover the motives and the responsible parties in orchestrating riots. The discourse of violence, which was employed by the state agents and the military, continuously blamed the easily provoked *'massa'* (Siegel 1998: 78-91; 102-107) or 'certain parties' (*pihak tertentu)* (Sidel 2001), who initiated the violence, without carefully looking for and identifying responsible persons, who, until now, remains anonymous. In other words, the state and military tried to make the connection between the ground leaders or provocateurs, the provoked *massa* and the victims and to leave the *dalangs* untouchably.

Secondly, while applying the provocation theory to explain the riot, however, the official narrative explained neither the process of provocation nor the motivation of the "*massa"* in joining the violence. Through the reports in media and the rioter's story above, there was a strong tendency to classify the rioters into the poorest elements of the society, the unskilled labourers, the unemployed and criminals of all type in the 'riff-raff' category. Their motives to join the violence were directed by prejudices and hostilities to targeted groups rather than being goal-directed towards the achievement of some kind of new orders (Brass 1997: 17-21). It is reported that the rioters were mainly concerned to take consumer goods, such as rice, instant noodles, cooking oil, cigarettes, as well as shoes, paints and cooking utensils (*Harian Surya*, 16 May 1998 and 17 May 1998). However, after a careful reading of media reports on the second day of violence in Surabaya, a different pattern of destruction merges. On the second day, the rioters were specifically targeting the symbols of the New Order regime and its cronies, such as the BCA building, the Timor showroom and the big shops owned by the Chinese. To some extent, the Sidel's argument in explaining the pattern of violence toward the Chinese during 1994 to 1998 is adequate. He argues that the destruction against Chinese's property – and the government buildings – is a symbolic destruction, in which the people express their moral outrage against injustices and against institutions. His theory of the structural matrix of class relations in Indonesian society proposes that the class of people with a subaltern consciousness and a strong local community bonds form a potent arsenal and is ready to move or to be moved in a popular mobilization against the Chinese.

Siegel (1998: 80-91) proposes another approach of the complex and intertwined class and race problems in Indonesia to understand the rioters' motives. During the violence, the

class problems were manifested in the desire for wealth. The riots suddenly opened the opportunity for the '*massa'* (people), who were longing for luxury goods, which could only be seen in the soap opera, to realise their dream. Moreover, the racial problems, which were suggesting that the Chinese Indonesians were unassimilated others, became a justification to take the (*Pribumi's*) goods back from the Chinese. Although there were sympathies to the *massa* as the poor urban class, many demeaned them as uneducated, barbaric, looters and criminals. Therefore, these images created a legitimacy to 'educate' these communities to behave properly and rationally. It was the job of the government and the enlightened class to do so.

Brass (1997: 12-16) suggests that within the institutionalised riot system, there were the network actions, which have two persisting purposes in producing and reproducing the violence. Firstly, it is to keep the members of the rival community – in the May 1998 riots the Chinese – cowed and to enlist the support of the authorities in doing so. Secondly, it is to keep the members of one's own community always ready and alert for mobilization, for crowd action, and for violence if necessary. Applying Brass' point of view, I would like to consider the usage of propaganda and rumour to intensify both purposes. To serve the first purpose, for example, shortly before the May 1998 riots there were many rumours of assaults against the Chinese. The rumours said that the luxurious houses of the Chinese owners were signed with red paint. Within days, those houses would be targeted and looted. After the riots, there were rumours concerning sexual assaults. The rumours said that in addition to the assault against Chinese females, Chinese males and even male babies would be castrated. These rumours served as terrors to the Chinese and, unsurprisingly, led them to seek formal and informal protections[5] from the authority and military. To serve the second purpose, the blame to the Chinese as the cause of the economic crisis, the rats and traitors of the nation certainly increased the violence against them. The results of the blame were 27 violence outbreaks against the Chinese, concerning the skyrocketing prices of nine basic commodities and the shortage of kerosene, throughout Indonesia during January to February 1998. In the *Kota Lama* area, another rumour was about a Chinese organizer of a money sharing system (*arisan)*

[5] In the situation of Indonesia, I believe that there were many Chinese and the rest upper-middle class sought *beking* (an informal back-up) from the military apparatus during the political turbulence and social unrests.

who ran from his responsibility to pay the interests to the *Pribumi* members, which led resentments and local sentiments to the Chinese in general.

Thirdly, despite the debate of Prabowo's involvement in orchestrating the riots and the student-shooting incident in the *Trisakti* university, to my knowledge, there were a few evaluations of state agencies' and the military's role to quell the riots and their failure to protect the victims. Related to the role of the state and the military in the eruption and control of racial and communal rioting, Brass (ibid.: 26-32) indicates that the differential roles played by the police and the military is critical. The military usually, though not always, act consistently in a decisive, unprejudiced, and effective manner in controlling riots that have gone beyond the abilities of the police. Also, the application of disciplined, decisive, overwhelming force will always bring rioting to an end with fewer injuries and fatalities than more cautious approaches. These indications would be seen to free the state itself from culpability. Its local police agents may be incompetent and inefficient, but the military or government's ability and efficiency finally halted the riot when they finally are called for.

Concerning the military and police role during the May 1998 riots, there were evaluations provided by some media, the TRK and the TGPF.[6] In the case of the Surabaya riot, the evaluation was insufficient. However, there were some sources that can be used here to evaluate the role of police military during the Surabaya riot.

According to the media and the victims, many requests to the police to rescue the victims during the riot were going unanswered. In addition to this complain, the reporter of the *Jawa Pos (2 July 1998)* wrote:

> *At first, I did not understand why the police became so permissive to the crowd's action of looting. They said 'Just take the goods, don't burn the house, don't burn the people'. However, I thought the permissiveness was probably due to the scale of the riot... (Jawa Pos,* 2 July 1998)

The police incompetence was due mainly to the attack of the local police office, which compelled the local police to protect their office first. Without indicating the time, it was reported that there was back up from the navy and firemen. Although the myth of effective

[6] Although the TGPF final report (September 1998) clearly indicates the involvement of elite military and politicians in insisting the riots, it takes a long research to find the conspiracy network behind violence. In this section, I would like to focus mainly on the issue of the responsibility of the state and military to quell the riot and to protect the society.

military intervention was used to build an image of the competent state, the reports on the Surabaya riot show that the navy did the least effort to quell it. They blocked the streets, which were connecting the riot area to the other part of the city and let the rioting happen. They fired several times in the air, but it had no significant impact to quell the riot.

It is interesting to notice of how the riot ended. The media reported that in the first night of riot, the looting in the *Kota Lama* ended approximately at five o'clock in the next morning. It was reported that the crowd was dispersed by themselves (*menyurut* or *bubar sendiri* (*Harian Surya* 15 May 1998)). The similar ending was took place on the second day of riot. By stressing that the violent crowd was dispersed by themselves, in my opinion, the report strengthened the image that the violence was evoked by the anger and hatred. The violence served as emotional outlets. Therefore, after the negative emotions were released, the crowd disappeared. When the military was using the similar perception, it was justifiable to stand passively and let the rioters did their emotional catharsis.

Chapter 4
The Women Survivors' Narratives

The victims in riots are usually a central focus in the representation of the riot story, together with the chronology, the actors and the quelling actions of police or military descriptions. The representation of victims, according to Brass (1997: 21-26), is influenced by the application of a certain discourse of violence. Those, who see the riot as an organised and motivated violence, by which the actions of the crowd are directed purposefully against a certain group, label the injured or killed people as target. When on the other hand, the riot is perceived as a disorganised, chaotic and leaderless violence, by which the actions occur randomly to anybody of whatever rank, status, sex or age, the injured or killed people are labelled as victim. However, Brass acknowledges that most riots contain elements of organisation and of randomness, in which any actor can pursue both his personal target and act at random. It is a matter of political interests when the authorities, journalists and social scientists represent those personal agendas rather than the broader meaning of the riot.

Although there were victims from other communities, it is acknowledged that the Chinese were the most vulnerable group during the riots in Indonesia. In 1994-1998, they were the main targets of various outbreaks of violence. Sidel (2001) analyses that in that period the violence against the Chinese property had a main message of an attack against rapid industrialisation and the marginalisation of local economy rather than against the Chinese themselves. The situation worsened by the revival of the *politik aliran* (the stream politics), which sensitised the relations between Christian and Muslim groups (e.g. the Nahdlatul Ulama and the Muhammadiyah), and the various religious based groups of students and scientists. Being commonly perceived as the non-*Pribumi* (non-indigenous), the capitalist and the non-Muslim, the ethnic Chinese became vulnerable to any racial, economic and religious sentiments.

It is also commonly noticed that the Chinese victims have no power, politically or physically, to protect their lives and properties. In facing a violent threat, therefore, they have to seek protection from local authorities or the military. This effort significantly raises another negative image of the Chinese. This pattern serves as a scapegoat mechanism, by which the Chinese victims are blamed to invite their own misfortune by creating collusion. The pattern

of seeking protection from the authorities or the military serves as a blame displacement that makes the ethnic Chinese a buffer to any resentment directed to government or military.

During the May 1998 riots, a novel type of violence occurred. It was the sexual assault against the Chinese women. Brownmiller (1975: 11-86) argues that rape is a notion of masculinity. When women are viewed as objects and properties, it justifies the acts of destruction and assault on their body to send a message of the men's failure to protect their society. Not far different from Brownmiller's point of view, Heryanto (1999: 307) explains that the rapes during the May 1998 riots had a message to spread fear to the society through the women's body.

The victims of rape and sexual assaults, particularly of the May 1998 riots, had to cope with tremendous problems after the assault, which were related to the process of physical and psychological recovery and cultural values about virginity and chastity. Living in a male-dominated society like Indonesia, the victims faced the stigmas of loss of virginity, and sexual promiscuity in their daily lives (ibid.: 302). There were, moreover, damaging debates, in which the authority and the military questioned the occurrence of rapes during the riots. They put pressure to the humanitarian groups and helpers to expose the identity of victims (Human Right Watch Report September 1998:). As the debates were widely published, they serve to terrorise the victims and their families.

The media also published the stories of victims. Eager to obtain the head news quickly and to meet their readers' demand, the media paid attention to the most dramatic part of the stories.[1] Focusing mainly on the sexual assault and the male-biased response of fiancé or husband, these stories were fragmented. Therefore, this chapter represents the women's narratives of the May 1998 riots in Surabaya with three aims. Firstly, it aims to understand the victims' point of view about the riot, which includes their perception about the riot incitement and the police actions to quell the riot. Secondly, it depicts their coping strategies during and after the riot. Thirdly, it focuses on the women's perception about the occurrence of rape during the riots. To some extent, it attempts to know how the women recognise their vulnerability during the violence. I will start this chapter with one interview of a victim,

[1] See, for example, *"Kisah Getir Amoy-amoy Korban Perkosaan" (*The Bitter Stories of Rape Victims Chinese Girls*), Aksi,* June 16-22, 1998, p. 4-5; "*Sekarang, Pacar Saya pun Merasa Jijik: Jeritan Hati Korban Pelecehan Seks Tragedi Jakarta*"(Now My Boyfriend is Revolted: The Cry from the Heart of a Victim of Sexual Harassment in Jakarta), *Nyata*, June 4, 1998, p. 6-7

followed by an analysis and comparisons with other seven narratives.

The Narratives

Mrs. H provided the first narrative. When the riot happened, she was 28 years old and not yet married. She was living in a *ruko* (*rumah toko* – a united shop and house residence) together with her mother, two brothers and two sisters. The *ruko* consisted of two shops, which faced the big street and one house, which faced the *kampung*. One of the shops was looted while the other shop and the house part were saved.

> *The noon before the riot, I was going to the Pasar Atum[2] to buy some products for my shop. When I reached the Pasar Atum, none of the merchants or distributors was willing to do a transaction with me. They said that they would close their shops soon. But, I still did not have any alarmed feeling. So, I went home with a bit of a disappointed feeling. On my way back, I saw many military and tanks in the streets. It was my stupidity that I did not think anything about them. We still opened our shop until eight p.m. and the situation at that time was usual. It was our neighbour, a retired policeman, who warned us that there is chaos in Polsekta Semampir[3] and that the people were marching and reaching our area. He suggested us to close the shop.*
>
> *We heard his word and closed the shop. I called my best friend, SF, who lived only five houses from here to suggest her family to close their shop. I called other neighbours as well.*
>
> *Then, with help from our neighbours, mostly of Arab descent, we were moving the LPG tubes from the shop to the house. We had 100 LPG[4] tubes, 50 of them were full. The idea to save the tubes came from our neighbours, which proved of a prudent suggestion. They were afraid of fire. You can imagine what would have happened if the rioters set fire on those LPG tubes. They were very explosive and devastating. The whole kampung would be affected. Thank God, with the help of our neighbours, we could move the tubes within 30 minutes.*
>
> *All of us, including our two maids, then, were sitting down on the stairs and waited for what would happen. Around 9 p.m. we heard the sound of hundreds of motorbikes in the street. We heard they were shouting "*Serbu*" (raid), "*Serang*" (attack), and "*Bakar*" (burn). Not long after, there was the sound of people who were trying to open our shop door. However, the door was made of metal, so it was very durable. They could not open it no matter how hard they tried to. They also stoned the door. You can imagine how loud the sound was. The stones hit the metal.*
>
> *The situation was very tense inside. We did not know what we should do. I called the police to ask help. But, my calls were never answered. I called SF to check*

[2] Pasar Atum, literally in English: Plasticware Market, is one of the central trade areas in Surabaya, where big distributors of any kind of products open their stores or offices.

[3] *Polsekta Semampir* is the office of the local police in Semampir area. It was only 3 kilometers from the house of Mrs. H

[4] The LPG (Liquid Propane Gas) tube is a metal tube consists of natural gas for cooking and heating. Nowadays, it is a common phenomenon that middle class Indonesian families change their method of cooking from the kerosene to LPG. The tube is around 15 kilograms and the gas is around 17,5 kilograms.

the situation. Not very different to our position, they also could only wait inside.

*It was around 12.00 when we heard that somebody shouted "*Lewat kene*!" (through here). Unexpectedly, the* massa *could find a small wooden door which connected our shop with the* kampung*. I believe that they found the door with the help of local* preman*, who knew exactly the circumstances in this area. They chopped the door and came into the shop. When we heard that the rioters came in, we decided to flee.*

My oldest brother was leading the evacuation. At first, my mother objected to leave the house. However, while hugging her, my oldest brother said, "Mom, we should not be desperate (by the situation). The most important thing is that the family is saved. The goods and money can be earned again." (Ma, kita tidak boleh kecil hati. Yang penting sekeluarga selamat. Barang dan uang bisa dicari lagi). *After that, my mother obeyed his words. All of us ran to the third floor. It was an open floor, which was intended to dry clothes. My oldest brother climbed the fence and jumped to our neighbour (which was a hotel owned by a Javanese) to borrow a ladder. My youngest brother was waiting here to accompany us. After the ladder was here, we climbed the ladder one by one. When it was my second sister's turn, it became difficult. She was mentally ill. She was not aware what was happening and she refused to climb the ladder. When we pushed her, she was struggling and resisting. She kicked my youngest brother who wanted to help her. It was the most difficult time as we knew that the rioters were already in the shop and they possibly tried to open the (connecting) door (between the shop and the house) to chase us. We also heard that they stoned the window glass of the second floor. I remember clearly how it felt to see thousands of people crowding in the street, just like thousands of ants (*seperti ribuan semut*). It was so scary.*

After we reached the hotel, we felt saver. However, my mother was still regretting what happened. She was shocked. During those three days, she hardly could eat. My oldest brother once again calmed her. He said, "We have good brains and able bodies (Kita punya otak, dua tangan dan dua kaki). *If we work hard, someday we will reach success (*kita akan jaya lagi*), even greater than what we possess now. So, let them take our goods. I promise that we will be successful someday." We stayed in the hotel for three days.*

*The morning after the riot, my brothers went to see our shop. It was empty. Nothing was left. Totally empty (*habis bersih, kosong melompong*). Rice, milk powder, instant noodles, sugar and plastic ware were looted. We found that the looters were smart. They selected and took all the valuable goods, while they left the worthless things such as the empty tea and soft drink bottles. They also took the empty LPG tubes, while thank God the full tubes were saved in the house part. The empty tubes were expensive, you know.*[5] *However, we have never imagined that the rioters could enter the shop. If we knew that it would have been happened, we would also move the empty tubes to the house, too. We could not open the metal door as it was bent. When we saw the door, we assumed that apparently the rioters were using metal pipes and other tools (in their effort) to break it.*

On the second floor, all the windows were broken. We collected several carts of stones when we cleaned the rooms. However, the rioters could not enter the house. Thanks to the sturdy teakwood door, which was connecting the looted shop and the house (and also the another shop). Our car was also saved from the looting as it was placed in the next garage. You have to enter the connecting door to reach the garage.

[5] At that time, one empty LPG tube was Rp. 225.000 to 300.000. To make a comparison, one kilogram of rice (medium quality) was Rp. 1.500

You can see the scratches here. The axes of the looters caused them.

During our stay in the hotel, our Arab neighbours were very attentive. They brought us food and comfort. They said many consolations such as that they could not accept this brutality, that they were happy to see all the family saved and they hoped that we had enough courage to reopen our shop. One of the touchiest was "Do no longer worry about your goods. They (the looters) will not be rich by that (the looting). Instead, God will bless you with more successes." It was also our neighbours who stopped the rioters to burn our house. They were afraid that the fire would spread to the entire kampung.

After three days in the hotel, my mother, my ill sister, my youngest brother and the maids stayed in the house of mom's sister in Karang Asem[6]. *My youngest sister and I stayed with our relative in* Darmahusada.[7] *My oldest brother stayed with his mother in-law. We stayed with our relatives for one month.*

Two months after the riot, we reopened our shop. We started from scratch. My mother refused offers for help, including those from her in-laws in Hong Kong and her sister. It was her principle to use our own resources, no matter how little it was, instead of using other's with an obligation to return it. We supported the mother's decision since we owned a small-scale retail shop that did not acquire a big capital to run it. For the first couple of months, we were really struggling. It was so discouraging (ngenes – in Javanese) to see that our shop was operating on a small scale. However, with hard work, my oldest brother could run the shop efficiently. Two years after the riot, we see that the shop brings more profit than before.

My youngest brother decided to go to the USA not long after the riot. He said that it was no good to stay in Indonesia. He wanted to seek his luck there. All of us agreed with his plan. So, although we had not had enough profit from the shop, we saved money for his ticket. Now, he is struggling there and doing physical job. But, he is very young. He has plenty of time to save his salary, and think about further education.

We send my ill sister to the mental hospital after the riot. She is living there and receives treatment. We were no longer capable to take care of her here. Everyone was busy. I, myself, for example was married after the riot and started to run my own shop. My mother was busy in handling the household matters and helping my brother to run his shop. Although the cost of the treatment was expensive, we were trying to meet it. My youngest sister was married four months ago and now she is living with her husband.

(How is daily live after the riot? Do you find it different?) *O yes, it has never been the same. A lot of changes happened. Before the riot, I was not afraid of going out at night by myself. After the riot, I am thinking several times to go out at night. Before the riot, we had a large amount of supplies. After the riot, we reduced it into an amount, which is enough for one week. Before the riot, we were assertive to our clients, especially when my father was still alive. He taught us to be confident and firm whenever we know that we are right. After the riot, we also became more cautious in serving them. If there is a quarrel or disagreement between the client and us, we yield. It is hard to yield each time the problem occurs. Especially, when the client knows that you are afraid of them. Once, I was angry uncontrollably. It was when a man bought a toy in my shop one evening. The next morning, he complained and returned the toy in a broken condition. I said to him that we could not accept any*

[6] *Karang Asem* is an area which is outside *Kota Lama.*

[7] *Dharmahusada* is one of the richest real estates in Surabaya. During the riot, this area was free from violence and carefully guarded by the Navy.

returned toys as we have already made a poster here stating that you have to check a toy carefully before you buy it, as it is not returnable. Then the client threatened, "If you refused to receive this toy, I will burn this shop." Hearing such words, I spontaneously replied, "Just do it, if you dare to do so. We've already experienced many difficulties. To experience (such a difficulty) once more does not make us meek. Instead, we will prove that we will survive and reach success even bigger than now!"

*After the incident, my mother asked me to be sober. She said that it is difficult to continue our life as Chinese here. However, we do not have any alternative (to continue life in another place). It is even more difficult as people make a generalised stereotype about the Chinese. You see that wealthy Chinese showed off with their beautiful dresses, luxurious houses and cars. They were also discriminative and disrespected ordinary people. Therefore, the ordinary people grow jealous and resent them. Unfortunately, they think that all Chinese are alike so that we, the lower middle class Chinese, became the target (*sasaran*) in any social unrest.*

Although the life after riot was difficult and required struggles, however, I always think that our burden was lesser compared to those who lost their houses or have been raped. Many people were injured during the riot. We also faced a lesser trauma since we did not meet the rioters directly. Our neighbour, an old lady, was hurt by rioters, when they asked her to hand her golden ring. Since she was fat and the ring was attached to her finger, she had difficulties to give it. But, the rioters thought that she refused to hand it. They hurt her arm when they tried to snatch it. I could not imagine how hard their burden was. I have to be thankful that our family was saved.

(Do you hear about the rape during the riot?) *Yes. In the beginning, we didn't believe that it (the rape) happened. However, I heard from my friends that there was a young family who lives in Karang Tembok. The rioters raped the wife, who was a young mother of a baby. They left the house after the riot and we never know where they were moving. There were many stories about the rapes.*

(Do you have any idea of why they happened?) *I don't know. My mother said that the wealthy Chinese girls provoked the jealousy of the Pribumi. You know that they were always showing off with their sexy appearance. Therefore, my mother reminded her daughters to be modest. My oldest brother said that the riot generally was intended to throw us out of Indonesia. They always think that we do not belong to this country. However, he said that he intends to show resistance whatever they do to us.*

From the story above, I would like to discuss two aspects of the Surabaya riot. The first is about the pattern of the riot. The narrative above and others support the idea of an institutionalised riot, which is discussed in the chapter three. The role of a certain group who led the crowd to attack, raid and burn the targets was obvious. This group, according to Brass (1997: 12-13), is known as actors who specialise in the conversion of small riots into bigger ones.

Another respondent, Mrs. SL (62 years old), who faced the rioters directly, strengthened the theory of the institutionalised riot system. She told her story as follows:

*When they succeeded to open our wooden door, my husband and I were facing the rioters directly. We saw they were ransacking our small shop. They also came to the inside (the house) and our bedroom. Besides the electronics, they were looking for the money. It was such a mess. You can imagine what had been happened if hundreds of people ransacking your small house. My husband and I struggled to defend our properties. It was my greatest regret when they took our motorcycle. I was defending it and grabbed its back part, while the rioters dragged the front part. But, they were too many vis-à-vis both of us. (*Fortunately they did not hurt you) *Oh no, they did not bring any weapon.* (How did they open the door without any weapon or tool?) *They came in several groups. The first group had weapons and tools to open the doors. After they succeeded to open the door, they went away and targeted another Chinese house. Then, the second group came. They were the looters without the weapon.*

The story supports the argument of the TRK (The preliminary documentation no. 1 June 1998), in which the violence occurred according to a certain pattern. According the TRK, there was a group of people, who were unfamiliar to the local people, provoking the crowd to attack or ransack the malls or shops. When the crowd was entering the buildings, they set fire or went away. Thus, a similar pattern was found in the Surabaya riot.

Mrs. SL continued her story:

*(*Did you recognise the looters?*) Yes. Some of them were familiar to us. They were the Madurese thugs (*bajingan*) and* premans *who were living nearby. In the daily life, they frequently came to us to ask some money. They were the ones who led the people to ransack the shop. Some of them organised a mini truck and pedicabs (*becak*) to carry the goods.*

The story of Mrs. SL acknowledges the role of local *preman*[8] to lead the crowd into violence. The TRK provided similar evidence for the riot in Jakarta. Furthermore, Schulte Nordholt (2000: 12-30) finds a striking resemblance of violence organised by the state during the Dutch Colonial and the New Order era. He acknowledges the co-optation of criminals and *preman* to serve the state sponsored violence. The pattern of the criminal and *preman* co-optation to orchestrate violence is well-known in other conflict areas, such as East Timor, Maluku and Poso. Another important point to consider is the precision in targeting the Chinese. During the riot in *Kota Lama* (15 May 1998 from 8 p.m to the next morning at 6 a.m.), the targets were clearly the Chinese buildings, shops or persons. The high precision indicated that the attack was already well planned and there was a role of local people in guiding the raid.

The second point to discuss here concerns the actions of the state and its agent to quell

[8] *Preman* is derived from the word 'free man'. By Mrs. SL, the word is used to label the local criminals.

the riot or to protect the citizens in the riot area. Mrs. H. and her family received no response to their calls to the police. Other respondents share their experience:

> *My sister and I climbed the roof of our shop when we heard the rioters coming in. It was so very tense that we could not remember how we managed to climb it. I just remember that we could not climb it down afterwards. During the riot, both of us saw thousands of people in the street. With an open car and a loudspeaker, the police instructed the people to 'Do not take the goods that are not your belongings (*Jangan mengambil barang yang bukan milik Anda*). It was ridiculous. Do you think that the people would hear such words? So, the riot was going on and they (the police) did nothing to quell it. When there were rioters setting fire, the police shot in the air to warn them not to do so. Both of us, sitting in the roof, were afraid that the bullets would hurt us.*
>
> *Although I was in a state of panic, fortunately, I did not forget to carry our wireless telephone to the roof. From there, I called our families and friends. One of them was my brother who was living in Dharmahusada. He was responding my calls and organised the evacuation. After several hours looking for policemen who were willing to evacuate us, he found two of them who picked us around six in the morning. The situation had already become less tense. The crowd had already dispersed. They brought us to a police car and asked us to lay down as they were afraid that the massa would attack them when they saw two Chinese girls sitting in their car. My brother did not want to discuss how much money he should spent to rescue us. I asked him once and he answered that our safety was more important then the money (he had to pay the policemen).*
>
> SF, 32 years old

Another respondent told her story as follows:

> *When the rioters finally came into our house, nobody helped us. However, the next morning, around six o' clock, a commandant of the navy came to our shop. He was looking around and commented, "It has already been looted thoroughly" (Sudah bersih semua rupanya…). Then, he offered us a group of his people to guard our shop. We thought that it would be useless as we had already experienced it (the looting). However, we were afraid to say so. We accepted his offer and they guarded our shop for one week, day and night. There were around 12 people in one group. We had to provide them meals and cigarettes. We spent around one million rupiahs to serve them. It was a big amount for us.*
>
> Mrs. B, 52 years old.

The eyewitness stories repeatedly indicate the incompetence of the police to quell the riot. The stories of Mrs. B. and SF support the TGPF findings that there were indications the police and military on the ground were exchanging their service and protection for money.

The Coping Strategy

There are several points to discuss concerning the victims' coping strategy. The first

point deals with the alertness in facing the danger. "When and how did the survivor being alerted to the danger" is an important question that influences the following strategy to cope with a hazardous situation. According to Mrs. H, she did not realise the danger until it reached her at a very close distance, which is less than two hours. Most of the other victims were also unprepared.

> *I did not realise that there was a riot until we received a phone call from H (the first narrator). It was around eight. She suggested us to close the shop, as the rioters would come soon. Then I called my brother in law who was living in the kampung to warn them about the riot.*
> Mrs. SL, 60 years old
>
> *I received the call from H. If I were not receiving any warning, the rioters would have reached my shop openly.*
> Mrs. R, 57 years old

The people in the riot area did not expect the riot to happen and were alerted only a few hours before. In my opinion, there are several reasons to understand this phenomenon. Firstly, the economic crises received wider attention than the political crises. Started in August 1997, the Indonesian economy has experienced a drastic downfall. The heightening of the political atmosphere came next and reached its peak when the bloody shootings of students happened at the *Trisakti* University, Jakarta (Kompas, 14 May 1998). While the students and activists were engaged with their own political agenda, the people were absorbed into economic activities to meet daily demands and subsistence life (Oei-Gardiner. 1997: 79-90). For the small and middle scale merchants, the declination of the national economy put an adverse impact on their business. Their activities were concentrated on the survival of the shops as their main source of income. For Mrs. H, her attention was dedicated more to economic matters than the security situation, although, later on, she regretted her ignorance of the presence of the army and tanks.

Secondly, there is an impact of the "floating mass" (*massa mengambang*) policy of the New Order. It was a policy, which aimed to depoliticise the masses. Under this policy, the regime discouraged the grass root people to have a political concern. The policy was based on the contention that political development in the past had partly failed as political parties manipulated the grass root population for their political goals and neglected the people's real interests. Thus it was argued that the grassroots population would be better off if they were

left untouched by political parties and the task of both political education and mobilisation belonged ultimately to the state apparatus (Hikam. 1995: 130). Like Mrs. Rjn, two other respondents made similar statements.

> *I have never gone to school. I don't understand about politics. So, I didn't know what was likely to happen… I am very busy. Just as you see, I have to manage the shop and household matter. No time to think about politics.*
> Mrs. Rjn, 54 years old

Thirdly, they were locked into a 'prison of experience' (Kates in Fordham. 1998: 131) and expected the present and the future to be like the past. For the older women, they experienced smaller scale riots as much as three or four times during their lifetimes. However, none of those experiences show that the rioters were able to enter the houses. Three of the older women said, "In the riots before, there was a crowd of people in the street. They hung around, yelled out dirty words, threw stones to our houses. But, that's all. After several hours, when they got tired, the crowd was dismissed." So, their hazard perception was governed by that experience.

Fourthly, there is an aspect of distance involved in the May 1998 riot series. The past experience shows that there was a "domino tendency" in riot series. When riots exploded one after another, it was likely that the next riot occurred in the nearest town.[9] The May 1998 riot certainly did not follow this tendency. Jakarta, Solo, Palembang and Surabaya, which are far apart, witnessed riots within one day (Human Right Watch Report. 1998: 2). Therefore, in responding to my question "Have you heard about the Jakarta riot one night before?" all of the respondents answered positively. However, none of them expected that the riot would happen in their area.

> *I saw on television that there was a riot in Jakarta. I saw people ransacking and looting goods from malls and shops. I kept asking myself "Why has such a bad behaviour to be shown on television? Would it be a bad example for the people?" However, I did not think that it would happen in Surabaya. Mosok seh…?*
> Mrs. B, 52 years old

[9] In the May 1963 riots, the first riot broke out in Tegal. Then, the next occurred in Cirebon in the following days. After the Cirebon, riots occurred in Sukabumi and Bandung. All those cities are in the area of Jawa Barat (West Java). Source: *Far Eastern Economic Review*. The Riots in Java. Golden Years Edition 1986, p. 66.
The other example is the riot in Solo in 1980. The riot broke out firstly in Solo, which affected Yogyakarta and Semarang as well. The three cities are in Central Java. Source: *Far Eastern Economic Review.* Small Fights with Big Results. Dec 5, 1980, p. 10-11

Although there was an awareness that people might imitate what they saw on television, the last sentence, which was said in Surabaya dialect "*Mosok seh…"* (literally, it means "is it possible?"), expressed her doubt that similar incidents would happen in Surabaya.

Fifthly, the hazard perception is governed by a myth that the higher one's socio-economic class, the more vulnerable she/he is.

> *I was very upset that night as my sister in law called me that the rioters were reaching her shop. My older brother's shop, which is located in front of the Polsekta Danakarya, had been looted as well as my younger brother's. When I called my older brother, I received info that he was injured. A rioter hit his forehead. He was brought to the hospital. However, one of my sons said " We should not be worried, Mom. We are not their target as we are living in the kampung[10]… They (rioters) will likely target the shopping malls."*
> Mrs. B

From the quotation, two indicators, which refer to one's vulnerability, emerged. The first indicator was the area of living (*kampung* versus main streets or city) and the second was the economic class (*warung or* small shop versus shopping malls). The *kampung* is a symbol of the lower class. Under the developmental programs during the New Order regime, there is a widening gap as well as a conflicting relationship between *kampung* and city. While the elevated highways, high-rise towers, shopping malls and real estate housing might be seen as successful results of development, the *kampung* represents itself as a marginalised area. The *kampung* versus the city also represents the contradiction of the formal and informal economies, for instance the *warung* serves as an affordable place to eat or to buy miscellaneous for workers (Kusno 2000: 144-148). In short, it is understandable that those who live in the *kampung* have never imagined that they would be target of the riot. As the lower class society, they have nothing valuable. The myth is challenged by the fact, however, that the highly vulnerable populations are those who are extremely poor, migrants and refugees, subordinated racial populations, the disabled, the children and the elderly (Enarson. 1998: 159).

Despite the time limit in preparing to face the riot, it is interesting to note that people in a vulnerable situation tend to exchange information. The exchange process through the

[10] According to the standard dictionary, Echols and Shadily (in Kusno, 2000), *kampung* is the residential area for lower classes in town or city

telephone showed the responsibility and solidarity among neighbours. It is also an effort to verify and up-date the latest information. Mrs. H called her best friends and neighbours to warn them for the riot. And so did other respondents.

Furthermore, most respondents adopted the problem-focused coping strategy when they had to encounter the threat of disaster. Closing the shops, moving valuables into safety, collecting important documents were the effort to safeguard the properties and minimise the loss. One family did a safety precaution effort by moving the 50 highly inflammable LPG tubes out of the store to a safer place to avoid explosion in case of fire.

However, none of the respondents was prepared to move to a safer area as they were governed by past experience that the crowd only expressed their anger and would not endanger their life. None of them organised the defence.

> *After closing the shop, we were waiting at home, which is in the backside of the shop. We heard that the people began to throw stones to the door. But, my mom said, "Just let them do it. They won't dare to enter (the shop). So we spent time by watching television."*
> *Ms. SF*

Most respondents made the decision to flee when the danger was in front of the door. As Mrs. H and her family, Mrs. Rjn fled together with her three children.

> *When we heard that the rioters were climbing our second floor, I ordered my daughter, accompanied by my oldest son, to run away to the kampung from the back door. I was still here. When the wooden door was chopped and broken down, my youngest son and I ran down the stairs and fled away to the kampung.*

However, there are two families who decided to stay. Although they saw that the rioters were ransacking the house, they chose to face them. They were Mrs. SL and her husband, and Mrs. B family.

> *We did not have any choice to leave the house since there were thousands of people gathering in front of our two main doors. So, I guided my daughter, my sister and a mentally ill niece to hide at the second floor when the rioters came into the house. My sons and husband also ran after us.*
> Mrs. B

In several families, especially those headed by the mother, the role of sons in deciding or protecting the family was significant. The phenomenon was a common thing in the *totok*

family.

The first days after the riots, except one family, all of the victims were leaving their houses, which were evacuated by their extended families or friends. They stayed in their relative's house for a couple of weeks before returned to their own houses. All of respondents went back to their houses and started their lives and business again.

All the reactions during the danger above can be classified as problem-focused coping strategies, which are concerned with controlling and diminishing the threat. According to Snyder (1999: 10), social comparison is a form of emotion-focused coping. It has been generally assumed that upward comparison (to those doing better than the self) produce negative effects and that downward comparison (to those doing worse than the self) produce positive effects. Buunk et al (1990: 1238) maintain that, under conditions of threat, downward comparisons are more likely to occur because they generate the positive effect, which is essential for self-enhancement. Downward comparisons appear to boost self-esteem and positive emotions and reduce anxiety. This finding is relevant to the victim's strategies. It is a common phenomenon among victims that they refuse to recognise their own stress, panic, or fear in the riot situation. Rather, they compare themselves with other victims to cope with the difficult feeling and situation. Most of them were doing downward comparisons. By doing so, they felt better and luckier than others. The description below is one example of the emotion-focused coping.

> *I am used to riot situations. I had the several experiences in the past. When I was not yet married, my stepparent's house was looted. When my oldest son was a toddler, our house was thrown by stones. I saw my uncle's house when it was looted. So, for me the May 1998 riot was not a surprise anymore. But, my oldest daughter, she was the most frightened among us. After she married, she had no courage to open her own shop away from here, so she lives with me and runs her shop here, next to her brother's shop.*
> Mrs. R, 50 years old

In this case, Mrs. R did the downward comparison by comparing her emotional state to her daughter. On the other hand, her daughter did a similar thing by comparing downwardly her situation to her mother's.

> *I remembered that my mother was the most shocked at that time. She was stunned, and crying. She spoke not a word. My brother had to calm her down. He hugged my mom and said very gently that we should be strong and thankful as all of our family members were saved. He also said, "We have arms, legs and brains so we will*

> *overcome the trouble by working hard." But for mom, it seemed too hard for her to see that we had to start from the very beginning again.*
> Mrs. H (the oldest daughter of Mrs. R)

Another informant said:

> *Our family was quite lucky as our house was only partly looted. Other friends had to face worse conditions. Some of them had to run with only the clothes on their bodies, while others had to see how their houses were burned down.*
> Mrs. B, 52 years old

For many Chinese in Indonesia riots against them are an unavoidable disaster. During the twentieth century there were several riots against them.[11] Facing such a difficult situation, yet, they have to cope with it. Although it is unlikely a common insight, one of the informants adopted *benefit-finding* as her emotion-focused coping strategy. Using the *benefit-finding* as an active effort to recall benefits during the difficult times, she explained:

> *Experiencing a riot was difficult. However, from such an experience we, the Chinese, could take a lesson. After the riot, I see that many Chinese pay more attention to the political situation. They also become more self-controlled and careful in dealing with people. They build the houses permanently and strengthen the doors. In short, the riot made them smarter.*
> Ms. L., 27 years old.

Reactions towards the sexual violence during the riot

The research on the occurrence of sexual violence during riot was very problematic. Heryanto (1999; p. 303) notes that men do not simply rape women. Under strong patriarchy, they dominate the construction of female sexuality, and hold women responsibility for the sanctity of female virginity/chastity. This consequence leads into victims' silence. Among the victims of rape, the coping strategies consisted of denial whenever I tried to talk about the topic of sexual assault. All of the respondents heard about the rapes. However, their opinions were ambiguous. Some of them considered the rapes to be a rumour, but the rest believed that it was actually happened, but luckily enough, it did not happened within their families or

[11] Some of big riots were documented on The Riots in Java, *Far Eastern Economic Review,* Golden Years Edition 1986, p. 66; Putting Credibility in the Dock, *Far Eastern Economic Review,* Aug 16, 1974, p. 27; Small Fights with Big Results, *Far Eastern Economic Review*, Dec5, 1980, p. 10-11; Shattered Confidence, *Far Eastern Economic Review,* May 28, 1998, p. 20-23.

neighbourhood.

> *There was a rumour that my niece, who lived with her parents in other street, was raped during the riot. But, it was impossible, wasn't it?* (My answer: It could be...). *No, certainly it was NOT possible. It was just a rumour made by a jealous neighbour. When the situation was calamitous, the neighbour ordered his employees, all of them were indigenous, to see the situation outside and to protect the shop from the looters. Then, they reported that my niece was raped. It couldn't have happened.* (I asked: Why?) *The neighbour called me to report the finding. I called my niece and talked with her. She told me that her father was wounded in the forehead. It would be impossible if she'd been raped. If she got raped, how could she talk with me on the phone? (the tone voice of my interviewee became higher and higher)*
> Mrs. B, 52 years old.

> *We heard that a wife of a friend of my brother-in-law was raped during the riot. But, we don't know them.*
> Ms. SF, 30 years old.

Heryanto (1999: 311) notes that political rapes are displayed for public consumption and the reproduction of fear in both private and public in the form of gossip, speculation, interviews, nightmares and household conversations. In other words, for the society, it does not matter anymore whether the rapes actually happened or not. The rapes during the riot were intended to spread fear. For women victims, the rape and violence issue made them limit their activities and avoid certain areas or situations or, forced them to flee.

> *Before the riot, my friends and I went out together very frequently and had parties or went out to do window-shopping. I was not afraid if I had to go home quite late, let say around 11.00 p.m. After the riot, I felt frightened when I was still in the street at 7 p.m. I avoid going out at night without company.*
> L, 27 years old

> *My daughter went to America and worked there. She just could not stand the violence in Indonesia anymore. Her first experience of violence was the May 1998 riot. Then she moved to Bali as she thought Bali was much safer than Java. After working there for a while, Bali was shocked by the PDI-P riot in October 1999.*[12] *She was crying and crying and wished to go away.*
> Mrs. Rjn, 54 years old

To make matters worse, there was not enough support for women victims from the religious or community leaders. The lack of gender sensitivity from those who was leading

[12] The PDI-P (Partai Demokratik Indonesia-Perjuangan; *The Indonesian Democratic Party- Struggle*) riot was a mass anger against the result of the Presidential election in October 1999. Instead of Megawati Soekarnoputri who was the PDI-P leader and the winner of the General Election, Abdurahman Wahid was elected to be the fourth Indonesian President.

the groups or society made them did not know what to do or comment toward the women victims.

> *Recently, I went to vihara to pray. On the way home, several friends, the Buddhist priest and I were in the car. When we passed a house, a friend of mine told us, "Look, this was the house of a rape victim two years ago. The wife was raped and the husband and their sons were forced to see it."... The priest then said, "For the wife, it (the rape) was not a problem as she was not guilty. The husband had already grown up, so he could accept (the reality) and forget about it (the rape). But, the young children were the most pitiful as they would record and remember it along their lives."*
> Mrs. B, 52 years old

For the priest, forgetting and accepting reality are the only ways to cope with the trauma. He expressed no emphatic feelings for the sexual assault victim by simply saying that it was not a matter for the female victim to experience such an assault and ignored the trauma or mental burden after the assault. His perception of the rape as a forgettable experience shows his shocking lack of knowledge about the lasting impact of this humiliation on women.

Chapter 5
A Contest of Narratives

The debate of the May 1998 riots reached its most controversial part when it arrived at the issue of gang rapes against the Chinese women. The issue of rapes during the riots raised international concern and condemnation (*Jawa Pos*, 28 July 1998, *Harian Surya*, 15 July 1998). Within Indonesia, however, the issue had created divisions among the government, military, journalist, social scientists, religious leaders and human right advocates. Denials were many and acknowledgements were few. Those who were particularly denying that such rapes had occurred came mainly from two groups, namely the military and the Muslim fundamentalists. The military questioned the evidence used and at various occasions attempted to discredit the humanitarian team. Applying the legal procedures, the military and police requested the team to provide the number of victims and to reveal their identities. The fundamentalists were enraged because the rapes against the Chinese had, intentionally or not, discredited the name of Islam, especially since several victims' confessions told openly that the rapists were shouting '*Allahu Akbar*' (Allah is Great) before and during the rapes.

On the other side, the *Tim Relawan* was defending that its data was reliable. The data were obtained by interviewing the victims, the relatives, professional helpers and close neighbours. Besides the number of the victims, the report consisted of an analysis of the pattern and the targets of the rapes. The anonymous report was intended to protect the victims and their families. The *Tim Relawan* urged the government and its agents to investigate seriously the violence against women during the riots and to bring the perpetrators to court.

In Surabaya, a similar debate was taking place. Bingky Irawan's statement in the media that there had been rapes during the riot in Surabaya invited counter reactions from the military and the police. He faced a series of interrogations to prove his statement. During the period of interrogations, a group of humanitarian volunteers, *Gema Sukma*, who did a field investigation shortly after the riot, encouraged him to face the pressure. The group also intended to raise the public awareness of violence against women and the failure of the state in protecting its citizens during the riots. By taking this position, the group also received a similar pressure as Bingky Irawan did. On other side, the military and police insisted to apply the formal logic of criminality report, which was that they would only acknowledge the

occurrence of rapes on the basis written and conduct further investigations on the basis of written evidence. However, rape cases are always difficult to uncover and the instigators are very seldom brought to court. Moreover, this situation was especially difficult, under the political turbulence of Indonesia at that moment.

The reactions of the military and the police, who acted on behalf of the state, can be understood in its relation with the ability of the state to determine its official narrative. In his essay "The Victim's Tale: The Memory and Forgetting in the Story of Violence", Peter van der Veer (1997: 189) argues that "although there are many interpretative versions of violence, there is only one version, which gets an official status, which becomes part of the state's archive." The narratives of *Tim Relawan* and Bingky Irawan are examples of challenges to the power of the state to regulate and dominate the history of its society.

The contest of narratives between state and human rights groups and victims causes one to reflect on the dominant discourse of the nation-state. The struggle to inscribe the victim's narrative in the official version illustrates that the nation-state is not a single entity. Rather, it shows that there is a boundary between the state and the nation, which allows both of them to externalise each other. The struggle of *Tim Relawan*, Bingky Irawan and *Gema Sukma* demonstrates the effort of the people to externalise the state's interpretation that the society was violent. The report of *Tim Relawan* and the narrative of the local people strongly suggest that the violence was not orchestrated by local people. Rather, they showed that another agent outside the neighbourhood provoked the violence.

By depicting the contest of narratives between the state and the victims and humanitarian volunteers in this chapter, I would like to demonstrate the struggle to set the boundary between the state and the nation. However, it should be kept in mind that shortly after the May 1998 riots, the state was falling apart. Indeed, there was a vacuum of legitimate power at that moment. Soeharto, the second president, stepped down and Habibie, the third president successor, was stumbling and struggling for legitimacy. In this situation, the factions in the military were competing to influence the new government. Despite the factions within the military, there was still a solid front between the military and the police to counter the society. Therefore, in this section, the notion of state refers to the *aparat* (the military and the police). The struggle depicts how did the *aparat* attempt to repress and silence the narrative

from “the below”, from the people and how did the people resist the repression and formulate their narrative to gain the national and international attention.

The chapter starts with a description of the contest between Bingky Irawan and *Gema Sukma* vis-à-vis the military and the police. Then, there is a description of the community reactions, which followed shortly after the struggle between Bingky Irawan and the state took place. This section serves not only as a description of reactions from society about the rapes. Rather, it shows the dynamic and divisions among the society into those who assertively challenged the state, those who followed the state’s hegemonic interpretation of rape occurrence, which was through the eyewitness and evidence, those who posed themselves into a ‘grey area’. The chapter will be closed with a brief analysis.

The Contest

On 1 July 1998, Bingky Irawan launched a statement that the rapes against the ethnic Chinese women had taken place in the northern part of Surabaya (*Kota Lama*) during the riot (in the night of 14 May 1998). As a Confucian priest, he received the confessions and reports from the victims and their families, some of whom came from his religious community, the *Boen Bio* temple in Kapasan (Kota Lama). He explained that many women were raped in front of their parents or husbands. Although he did not mention the exact number of the rape victims, he said that the victims of Jakarta outnumbered those in Surabaya. According to him, there were tens of women raped. As the victims were shocked, he intended to send female volunteers to encourage them in facing the difficult time. He expected the volunteers to collect more data and details about the rapes. Although he was pessimistic that the rapists could be brought to the court, Irawan closed his statement by expecting the police and military to protect the safety of the ethnic Chinese (*Jawa Pos*, 1 July 1998; *Harian Surya*, 1 July 1998).

On the same day, there was a reaction from the *Kapolres* Surabaya Utara (*Kepala Polisi Resort* – the head of local police of the Northern Surabaya). He was surprised by Irawan’s statement since he had received no report of rapes. “What does he want? (*Maunya apa?*)” was his first statement when he was asked for an reaction by journalists. He explained that the Surabaya riot was not similar to the one in Jakarta. The Surabaya riot was smaller in scale and shorter in duration. He added that by joining forces, the police, navy and army

successfully had halted the riot within hours. He had also evacuated several ethnic Chinese and families who had asked for protection during the riot. As he commanded the troops, he was convinced that he would know if the rape had occurred (*Jawa Pos*, 1 July 1998). In the same article, however, the reporter wrote his experience during the riot. He said that thousands of people were enraged. They burned and destroyed the buildings owned by the ethnic Chinese. Many of them looted the houses and shops. In several spots, the military and police could do nothing to quell the riot. Therefore, they could only suggested the crowd "to take the goods but don't set any fire or hurt anybody." However, the report was ended by the reporter's conviction that the police would assertively shoot if the rioters tried to do so.

When it reached higher echelon of police and military, Irawan's statement invited severer reactions. The *Kapolda* Surabaya (the Head of Police in the Area of Surabaya) stated that he would ask Irawan to provide the witnesses and evidence of the occurrence of rapes. A failure to do so would lead Irawan to the court with an allegation of fabrication. The Kapolda interpreted the Irawan's statement as an accusation of the state and its agents' failure to protect its citizen (*Jawa* Pos, 2 July 1998).

On 5 July 1998, accompanied by three women activists of Gema Sukma, Irawan went to the *Kodam V/Brawijaya* (*Komando Daerah Militer V/Brawijaya* – The Fifth Territorial of the Military Command/Brawijaya) after receiving an informal invitation. Although they mentioned the visit, Irawan and three activists evaded explaining to journalists by whom they had been invited and what kind of discussion they had (*Jawa Pos*, 6 July 1998). The day after, The Chief Military stated that Irawan should be responsible for his statement. He was using an argument that Indonesia is a nation ruled by law (*Indonesia adalah negara hukum*). Therefore, Irawan should follow the rules by providing evidence and witnesses. However, he denied that he had invited Irawan or met him in his office (*Jawa Pos*, 7 July 1998).

After visiting the *Kodam*, on the same day, Irawan faced the first interrogation. During the interrogations, the police repeatedly demanded Irawan to provide the identity of victims. Irawan was evading the demand with the argument that he was under an oath of the priest. As a Confucian priest he was not allowed to expose a religious confession. The second interrogation took place three days later. The similar demand was made during the interrogation. Even worse, the police set a deadline to Irawan that he should provide the evidence and witnesses within one week.

On 13 July 1998, the third interrogation took place. During this interrogation, Irawan kept refuse to mention the identity of victims and eyewitness. He continuously explained that he was a religious leader and under an oath to keep all of confessions confidentially. The interrogators, then, attempted to stamp out Irawan's argument by mentioning the state's legal acknowledgement of religions in Indonesia. It is known that the state acknowledges only five formal religions (Islam, Catholic, Protestant, Hindu and Buddha). As the Confucianism was not acknowledged as a formal religion, in the interrogators' view Irawan's role as a religious leader was not legitimate. Therefore, Irawan was still obliged to reveal the names of the victims. Being trapped by the police arguments, Irawan could only asked more time to conduct a further investigation. The series of interrogations ended when on 15 July 1998, President Habibie formally condemned the rapes against the ethnic Chinese women during the riots in Jakarta and other cities and planned to establish a team to investigate the May 1998 riots (*Kompas*, 16 July 1998).

The Society[1] Reactions of Rapes

During the period of interrogation, Irawan received significant supports and encouragement from many concerned organisations. The first support came from the *Gema Sukma* group and the members of the *Boen Bio* temple. In responding to the violence, *Gema Sukma* set up two groups. The first one was to carry out a field investigation about the riot and the victims. The second one was to provide counselling and medical care to the victims. Both groups received reports from victim's families, close friends, neighbours and doctors about the rapes. However, none of the victims was willing to tell their experience directly. For the group, a dilemma emerged in relation to the initial request of victims' families and friend for secrecy. The group was torn between the urge to provide an endorsement to Irawan and to campaign publicly against these acts, and the desire to respect the request to protect victims from the effects of publicity. As there was abundant pressure from the police and media, the

[1] In this section, the term of 'society' is employed to refer the elements, which are representing the *rakyat* (people). These elements are human right activists, social scientists, students, professionals, housewives and other concerned persons.

group hastily reported their investigation result anonymously. On 5 July 1998, they reported that there were rapes against 4 Arab women[2] and 6 Chinese women.

On 16 July 1998, the verified number of victims was established at 15 women. The group also explained that in defining the rape cases, they were not following the Indonesian legal law of rape definition. Instead, they were using the definition of rape from the United Nations' declaration anti-violence against women. By applying the international declaration, the group acknowledged wider types of rape, i.e. the domestic or marital rape, the rape in social life, including those which happened in streets, work place, schools, prostitution and other institutions, and the rape sponsored by state. By using the international definition of violence against women, the group defined any physical, sexual and psychological violence against women, such as striping and caressing the victims, as rape (*Jawa Pos,* 6 July 1998).

Several prominent figures also provided data. The prominent priest, Sandyawan Sumardi SJ, said that during his visit to Surabaya, he received a confession from a victim (*Jawa Pos*, 13 July 1998). However, he refused to reveal further details, except that the victim was a Catholic Chinese. The leader of *Gerakan Pemuda Ansor* in Surabaya (The youth movement of Ansor, which is part of the Nahdlatul Ulama), Choirul Anam, also testified that he met a victim and her doctor (*Jawa Pos*, 14 July 1998). Anam urged the government and the military to assure the safety of ethnic Chinese. He asked them to stop the interrogation of Irawan and to accept his statement. Both Sandyawan and Anam understood that the victims refused to report their cases to the police as they were in traumatic condition and because there was no assurance of their safety. They also feared revenge from the rapists if they testified the details of the rapes.

[2] The report of rapes against the Arabian women came from a *kyai,* who was living in the next two doors. He saw tens of people came into a house of four young Arab women. The oldest was a mother of a six months old baby, the two other women were her younger sisters and the fourth was their sister-in-law. Apparently, the male members of the family were not at home at the moment. The people was gang-raped the women. When the *kyai* came, he asked the people to stop the violence. After receiving the report, *Gema Sukma* faced difficulties to do further investigation. The victims moved without any notice and the house was empty. The rapes against Arabian women were uncommon although the Surabaya riot took place in *Kota Lama* (which was known as the Arabian settlement). Many refused to acknowledge the rapes against Arabian women. Kyai H (one of the narrators in chapter 3) doubted that the rapes against Arabian women had occurred. He said that there were cultural values that protected the Arabian community in *Kota Lama*. One of the values was due to a perception (of the Madurese and the Javanese) that the Arabians possessed higher 'blood' than they did. Therefore, they should respect the Arabian more than other communities. According to him, this value made the Arabian save and invulnerable during the riots. To some extent, people could draw a deduction of the meaning of rapes against the ethnic Chinese women, while the meaning of rapes against Arab women remained mysterious.

Two prominent lawyers, Trimoelja D. Soerjadi[3] and Munir, the director of *Kontras* (*Komisi untuk Orang-orang Hilang dan Anti-kekerasan* – The Commission for Missing People and anti-Violence). Both of them criticized openly the military and police interrogation of Irawan. They acknowledged Irawan's statement as reliable information and urged the police to do a further investigation. They also asked the police to end the interrogation and the pressure against the victim to report the cases. They openly condemned the threats and intimidation, which were continuously directed at Irawan and Gema Sukma activists. Rather, in their opinion, the state should admit its failure to protect its citizen (*Jawa Pos* 14 and 19 July 1998).

Although receiving encouragement and support, Irawan also received many criticisms of several Madurese community leaders. Generally, they were protesting that the Irawan's statement indirectly acted as an accusation that the Madurese community was responsible for the rapes as they formed the majority in those riot areas (*Kota Lama*). By launching his statement, the Madurese community leaders perceived that Irawan was inciting a new hatred among the Madurese to the Chinese (*Jawa Pos*, 7 July 1998). Some of the leaders warned that the Madurese would be enraged if they were cornered by Irawan's statement (*Jawa Pos,* 8 July 1998). There was only one Madurese leader, who admitted that the rioters came from the Madurese community. This fact made him embarrassed. Therefore, he invited other 50 prominent leaders from Madurese communities in Surabaya and Bangkalan to restore law and order after the riot and to prevent the occurrence of a similar disaster in the future (*Harian Surya,* 16 May 1998). However, this progressive leader did make any comment about the rapes.

During this controversy, there were also those who placed themselves in a 'grey' area. What I mean as a 'grey area' is a position that one acknowledges the rapes but blames the victims for the violence. One example of this category was an anthropologist of Airlangga University, Dr. L. Dyson, MA. He agreed that the rapes could possibly have happened during the riot. However, he argued that the rape occurrence was incited by a racial reason. According to his opinion, there was an unconscious proud when a *Pribumi* male could marry a Chinese female. Therefore, the rapes were manifestations of an unconscious curiosity to

[3] Trimoelja D. Soerjadi was a lawyer in the murder case of Marsinah, a women labour activist from Surabaya, who were killed in 1996 after facilitating a demonstration in her workplace. In 1998, Trimoelja won the Yap Thiam Hien award (an award for the lawyers with a humanitarian perspective in Indonesia).

have sex with Chinese females. Moreover, Dyson explained that the curiosity was fertilized by the attitude of Chinese female who were provocatively showing off with their sexy dresses and make up (*Jawa Pos,* 7 July 1998).

The Analysis

This analysis will address two points. The first is about the reposition of the boundary between state and nation. The second concerns the game of numbers, which followed after the official admittance that rapes had happened during the riots.

The boundary between State and Nation

The contest of narratives above demonstrates the struggle for power between the state and societal groups to define a story of violence. The struggle is crucial as it has several implications. Firstly, it repositions the boundary between the state and the society. Citing Timothy Mitchell, van der Veer (1997: 193) argues that the state is a temporarily arrangement, which has a functional specification in the field of supervision and surveillance. By legitimating these functions, the state differentiates itself from the society. The essence of modern politics, however, is not only based on the formation of policies by the state vis-à-vis the society but also relied on the production and reproduction of this line of difference. The cases of Irawan and the *Tim Relawan* in Jakarta were certainly efforts to leap over the boundary. Therefore, rather than focusing on directing an investigation, the military and the police held a series of interrogations, which can be understood as an effort to assert their legitimate power over the society. The question of the *Kapolres Surabaya Utara* to Bingky Irawan "What does he want? (*Maunya apa?*)", shows a judgment that Irawan (the society) should not challenge the common pattern that, in his view, the state provides the official story and the society receives it obediently.

As elaborated in the chapter 3, in May 1998, the political situation in Indonesia was turbulent. The friction among military elites and political parties was increased. The competition between Wiranto (*Panglima ABRI* – the Commander of Armed Forces) and Prabowo (*Panglima Kostrad* – the Chief of Strategic Commando of Army) became apparent, especially in the last days before Soeharto stepped down and in the first days after Habibie

served presidency.[4] During this crucial moment, the struggle for power was very intense. Wiranto won the struggle. The day after, he fired Prabowo and continued to form consolidation among his loyal troops and allies. The rivalry among the military elites shows that, inside the state, there were groups, which set their boundaries against each other. In my opinion, therefore, the production and reproduction of boundaries were not only occurred between the state and the nation, but also, occurred within the state and within the nation.

In evaluating the role of state vis-à-vis society, the argument of Rajni Kothari, a leading Indian political scientist, is important. He argues that "even the repressive character arises out of the fragility of the modern state rather than its power, especially in post-colonial societies. The more fragile and ineffective and powerless a given state, the more repressive it becomes." (van der Veer. *op. Cit*.: p. 193). This argument is applicable to analyse both the national and local army. In Jakarta, shortly after winning the competition over Prabowo, Wiranto sent troops to remove the students, who still occupying parliament in an attempt to force radical change. Dismissing the student demonstration was a part of his effort to remove a potential threat to his still fragile position. In Surabaya, the state and its agents transform themselves into an institution of terror. As it was reported, the military in Kodam Surabaya invited Irawan informally. During the meeting, Irawan and the three women activists were 'warned' not to create any social unrest.[5] However, the day after, the Chief Military Commander was denied that he had invited or met Irawan in his office. Such a denial shows that the army was involved in intimidating alternative discourses. The 'warning' to Bingky Irawan and *Gema Sukma*, in my opinion, was also an effort to restrict any evaluation of the military performance during the Surabaya riot. If the military performance during the riot were effectual, the threat and intimidation against Bingky Irawan and the activists would have not been occurred.

Secondly, the contest of narrative has a serious implication to the present and the future social relations between state and society. Learning from the experience of state's oppression to PKI members and its hegemonic interpretation of communism, the dominant institutions in the state conveniently define who or what the national threat is, who the state's rivals are and what kind of policies or restrictions should be applied to them. In the case of the

[4] For further details on the competition among the elites of the military and political parties, see Aspinall, Feith and van Klinken, eds (1999) and Geoff Forrester & R.J. May, eds (1998)
[5] I obtained this information from the internal meeting of *Gema Sukma*.

May 1998 riots, the state continuously charged the aggressive, uneducated and uncontrollable *massa* to be responsible to the violent acts against the unassimilated and greedy Chinese. By mastering this narrative, it is convenient for the state to reproduce the discriminative rules against the Chinese, as well as to put restrictions to "the aggressive *massa*", by setting a law against demonstration, for example.

The fact that the victims and helpers should face oppressive situations forced many parties to choose the "gray" area as a safe position to play. In the case of the Surabaya riot, the journalist of the *Jawa Pos*, who was an eyewitness of the violence wrote two articles about the riot (*Jawa Pos* 1 and 2 July 1998). Although he clearly mentioned that the police was not able to function effectively to quell the riot, he closed both articles with the conviction that the police did not allow the rioters to burn any building or to harm anybody. His conviction was, unfortunately, not attained. The similar attitude was adopted by Dr. Dyson. He believed that the rapes happened. However, he blamed the victims for the violence. The opinion of Dr. Dyson strengthened the hegemonic discourse of the state about the Chinese. In my opinion, both examples have a close relation with the severe treatment by the state in the past to groups in society who attempted to leap the boundary.[6] By retreating into a grey area, the state perceived them as an unimportant threat. Therefore, they could escape the oppression.

The game of numbers

When President Habibie finally admitted that the rapes had happened during the riots, the debate was bent into a game of numbers, which was strikingly intensive. Van der Veer argues that the fetishization of numbers in the debate of violence occurs when the violence had undeniably happened. However, certain parties would like to minimize the degree of severity by manipulating the number of victims. In the case of May 1998 riots, the number of rape victims was reduced significantly when it was reported on the TGPF final report. In their report, the *Tim Relawan* stated that there were 152 rape victims in Jakarta (Early Documentation no. 3 1998: 9). Gema Sukma stated that they verified 15 rape cases in Surabaya. The TGPF, however, verified only 52 rapes, 14 rapes with torture, 10 cases of

[6] The trial cases against Budiman Sudjatmiko with his Partai Rakyat Demokratik (PRD) and Sri Bintang Pamungkas concerning with the humiliation against the President were two examples of state punishment to the citizens who had different vision to state's.

sexual violence/torture and 9 cases of sexual harassment occurred in all riot affected cities (TGPF final report 1998).

Unlike the number of death victims, the number of rape victims was extremely difficult to be verified. There was a strong demand to provide evidences and testimonies, in the form of a survivor willing to report to the police or to speak openly to the press. The demand certainly placed the victims and their helpers into an extremely difficult position. The first difficulties concerned with the psychological condition of the victims, which were traumatized by the violence[7]. The second was connected to the social construction of virginity and chastity that would place the victims into an everlasting shame. The stigma of lost virginity and promiscuity caused the victims to silence and denied the rapes. In this sense, rapes impacted devastatingly on the victims not only because of the violence that the rapists inflict on the bodies of victims but also because of the systematic and continuous reproduction of the social stigma (Heryanto 1999: 301-305). The other difficulties to open the rape case are closely related to the intensive terror, which was experienced by victims and the helpers. One victim from Surabaya said that she was continuously received phone calls from an unknown person. Although the person did not pose any open threat, she felt insecure as the person repeatedly asked what was happened to her family during the riot, what kind of goods were looted, how much money she had to pay for the navy protection and so on. The helpers, even worse, received open threats by phone. The messages varied from a threat to harm or kidnap their children to to harm or rape the helper.

Reflecting the debate of rapes during the May 1998 riots, Saptari (1998: 13) argues that it has become more a 'state vs civil society' issue rather than a 'state vs women' one (Saptari 1998: 13). To some extent, Saptari's argument is not far different from Heryanto's. Heryanto convinces that the rape has a message to repress and control the civil society through the assault of women's bodies rather than a simply sexual or racial assault against the Chinese women.

[7] In many cases, the psychological condition of victims was unable them to tell their experience or feeling about the rape even in the front of the closest family members. A medical doctor, who was a volunteer in *Gema Sukma*, testified that he was visiting a looted house of his friend the day after the riot. He found that his friend's wife in bruises. Her husband told the doctor that several unknown people raped the wife in front of him. However, the wife could not speak any single word. Her face was blank and she shook his head as if she wanted to negate her husband story. In other case, both the husband and wife negated the rape. However, the neighbours convincingly testified that the rape was happened.

Epilogue

Reflecting to the data and analysis in the previous chapters, I would like to conclude this thesis into several points. Firstly a series of violence against the Chinese in Indonesia during the economic crisis (1997-1998), which reached its peak on the May 1998 riots, shows that the position of the ethnic Chinese in Indonesia is problematic. Reflecting to the history of the ethnic Chinese in Indonesia, it suggests that there were continuous and antagonistic construction of ethnic identity of the Chinese vis-à-vis the local communities. Even worse, there was a construction of a matrix with three structural layers, which created a proletarian class, which was easy to mobilize, a Chinese capitalist class and groups with strong awareness of various political and religious *aliran* (stream or pillar). The construction had taken place since the Dutch Colonial Rule to the New Order regime and formed in various ways. The distinct ethnic, group or *aliran* identity, which is accompanied by a strong prejudice towards other groups, is the arsenal of the May 1998 riots.

On the other hand, there were significant roles of the military and political elites in inciting the May 1998 riots. In the case of the Surabaya riot, the analysis in Chapter 3 and 4 show that the local people did not incite the violence. Rather, there were roles of the so-called provocateurs to provoke the people to join the violence. The pattern of riot in Surabaya also shows a similarity to those in Jakarta. These findings support the hypothesis of the *Tim Relawan* and the TGPF that the May 1998 riots were orchestrated or, by using Brass' terminology, they were institutionalized. However, further investigation is in need in order to find out the masterminds of the Surabaya riot (and other riots during May 1998).

The coping pattern of the female victims in Surabaya during and after the riot shows that their strategies were closely related to the patriarchal culture. In the critical moment, fathers or sons took decisions and led the evacuation. Neighbours and close relatives provided support and help during and after the violence. All respondents adopted problem- and emotional-focused coping.

During the riots, there were rapes against the Chinese women. Although there were many speculations about the intention behind the rapes, in my opinion, the rapes had a message to terrorize the Indonesian society. Nonetheless, there were denials from the government and

(especially) the military concerning the rapes. The interrogations and intimidations in the name of the application of legal procedure (*menurut hukum yang berlaku*) to those who provided alternative narratives were discouraging to efforts in diminishing crimes against humanity in Indonesia.

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