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Chapter Two

Some Notes on Context: "Stop Violence against Women, Period!"[1]

> In the past, the Indonesian women's movement has avoided issues of conflict and violence and has not explored the part that women can play in conflict management, reconciliation, creating a culture of peace and ensuring that women play a part in peace negotiations and new political arrangements that emerge at the end of the conflict. Nothing in Indonesia's history has prepared women for this role (Blackburn 2004, 217).

This chapter tracks the emergence of the discourse of women as victims in post-Suharto Indonesia by examining pivotal events that engaged women's activism concerning cases of gendered violence leading up to reformasi. Cases of gendered violence either by the state or individuals were not unfamiliar during the course of the New Order's administration. However, it was only after its fall—marked by an escalation of violent events, flourishing of civic organisations, and loss of state control over the press and publications—that these kinds of stories started to flood into people's lives and revealed intense visualisations of violence. Yet during the same time, women took to the streets, protested against the decaying New Order regime, and worked to support the female victims of state and mass violence. By focusing on the 'mediatisation' of women's 'return' to the political arena during this specific period, this chapter aims to provide a background context to enable exploration into how the proliferation of language and events of violence on the one hand, and the weakening of the dominating state, on the other, may have implications for the formation of an identity of women as victims in the reformasi era. It examines several exemplary events that show women's active engagement with the

[1] Among Indonesian feminists, this slogan reads: *hentikan kekerasan terhadap perempuan, titik*. See Tan 2006.

transition prior to, during and shortly after, the resignation of Suharto in May 1998, in an attempt to identify and provide an initial discussion of how the discourse of the victimisation of women began to be produced and circulated. Bear in mind, this period was not only tinted with violence and marked by the fall of an authoritarian regime, but also was inspired by a global feminist trend that brought forward the issue of violence against women as part of a larger campaign for universal human rights.

The discussion starts with a short description of how the economic crisis, instigating wider political and social turmoil, became the backdrop of the burgeoning feminist movement. While the women's movement had been political before the New Order era, still, as Susan Blackburn noted above, it had never been "prepared" to contend with crisis and "conflict". The birth of women's groups, such as *Suara Ibu Peduli* (SIP, Voice of Concerned Mothers) and *Koalisi Perempuan Indonesia untuk Keadilan dan Demokrasi* (KPI, Indonesian Women's Coalition for Democracy and Justice), that will be discussed subsequently, can also be considered to be the manifestation of how the conditions of crisis influenced the direction of feminism in Indonesia. Both of these women's groups openly demanded that Suharto resign. Following his resignation and revelation of cases of state violence against women prior to and during his fall, more feminist groups working with crisis and conflict started to openly voice their opposition to the fallen regime and to announce their support for the female victims of state violence. The defense for female victims of violence had also become the driving force for the formation of the *Komisi Nasional Anti Kekerasan terhadap Perempuan* (National Commission for Anti-Violence against Women, henceforth *Komnas Perempuan*), which reflects the intermingling of feminist activism and the reformasi administration. The subsequent section briefly reviews the history of women's movements in Indonesia since pre-independence to today, including *Gerwani* (*Gerakan Wanita Indonesia*, Indonesian Women's Movement), a woman's organisation that was banned by the New Order. The discussion of the attempt of some 'current' feminists to 'rehabilitate' Gerwani's history on the one hand, and the resistance to this by some right-wing feminists on the other, ends this chapter.

How it all Began: the Crisis

May 1998 was a momentous month in contemporary Indonesian history. It marked a crucial upheaval in the national government when Suharto announced his resignation on 21 May 1998. Chaos and unrest in the capital city of Jakarta and several other major cities occurred preceding the downfall of the regime. Student demonstrations, riots, looting, and violence contributed to a carnival of anarchy and uncertainty throughout Indonesia. These raging

protests and social unrest were the culmination of the socio-political uncertainties and economic inequalities under the ruling power. The failure of the government in handling the weakening national economy in the wake of the harsh economic crisis in the region heated social tensions.

The economic crisis hit Indonesia and the Southeast Asian region in 1997. The exchange rate of the Indonesian Rupiah in the second week of February 1998 dropped to the level of Rp10,000 to US$1.00, more than quadrupled from its exchange rate in July 1997, when the crisis first hit in Thailand. As the exchange rate of the rupiah fell, the prices of goods rose. To make things worse, some merchants reportedly stockpiled staple commodities.[2] Not only did staple goods become very expensive, they eventually disappeared from the market. The unstable currency at that time was the major reason for these merchants to stockpile commodities and delay sales. As the stocks of these commodities disappeared from the markets, people started to panic. Out of desperation, many started to loot and plunder shops and warehouses. It was reported that lower-income housewives and mothers were among those who took home goods for free. In contrast, middle-class housewives who were fortunate to have more cash, reacted to the disappearance of staple goods in the markets by rushing to stores and supermarkets to buy up entire stocks of items, such as milk, cooking oil, sugar, and wheat flour (*Gatra* 1998(a)).

While the early 1990s had witnessed a beginning of the development of a civil society in Indonesia, it is undeniable that the economic crisis and the social unrest that followed (1997-1998) marked its remarkable fruition. After being silenced for three decades, the Indonesian people found leeway to voice their aspirations and dissatisfaction of oppressive conditions, which became possible only after the weakening of the state. Students took to the streets, intellectuals delivered public speeches, and people from many walks of life demanded their right be heard. Uniformly, their primary demand was for Suharto to step down. As the state's control over the media weakened, the people's voices and the newly liberated media started to flourish in cautious harmony. Democracy was soon interpreted by some to be equivalent to freedom of the press.

Women's Movements

Women, as well as students, also participated in the civic movements. The following section discusses the Voice of Concerned Mothers (*Suara Ibu Peduli*, SIP) and the Indonesian Women's Coalition for Justice and Democracy (*Koalisi*

[2] In February 1998, police officers in Tangerang, west of Jakarta, found two companies stocking 222,471 sacks of sugar, the equivalent of 11,000 tons, in their warehouses. The two companies were PT Indonesia Nihon Seima, a sack producer, and PT Indo Keramik, which produced ceramics. See *Gatra* 1998(b).

Perempuan Indonesia untuk Keadilan dan Demokrasi, KPI). These two examples represent the beginning of the return of women to a public forum prior to and following the fall of the New Order government, with significantly strong political aspirations to promote. Although focusing on two different problems and employing different strategies, that is, protesting the rising price of powdered milk by SIP and petitioning against gender discrimination conducted by male politicians by KPI, together they highlighted the public reappearance of women after long being 'marginalised' by the state.

The Voice of Concerned Mothers

The date was 23 February 1998. The location was *Bundaran HI* (Hotel Indonesia), the roundabout circling a fountain and a statue of the revolution, flanked by the Bank of Indonesia in the heart of Jakarta. This is a famous landmark in the city and a favourite venue for public demonstrations. The event that day was a peaceful rally protesting the rising price of powdered milk for babies. The protesters were dozens of *ibu-ibu* (mothers, housewives) from across socio-economic levels joining SIP. Together, they prayed and sang the song, *Kulihat Ibu Pertiwi* (I See Our Motherland), and distributed flowers to passers-by.[3] They held posters and banners that read: 'The Love of Concerned Mothers' […], 'Healthy families with basic needs fulfilled', and 'Children should get good nutrition' (Budianta 2003: 153).

The cause for the protest was a very strong one. Due to the plunging value of the rupiah against the US dollar, one of the inescapable effects of the economic crisis, the price of powdered milk escalated and became inaccessible for most Indonesian families. As a consequence, mothers were forced to reduce family

[3] The song and the reading of the lyrics was also part of Karlina Leksono's, one of the three mothers arrested after the rally, defense in court. Utilising nationalist songs also became one, among other, SIP strategies to reroute political intentions via moral messages. The song reads as follows:
Kulihat ibu Pertiwi,
Sedang bersusah hati
Airmatanya berlinang,
Mas intan yang kau kenang
Hutan, gunung, sawah, lautan,
Simpanan kekayaan,
Kini Ibu sedang lara,
Merintih dan berdoa.
(I see our Motherland,
She is sad
Her tears roll down
Reminding you of gold and diamonds
Forest, mountain, farm, and sea
Are deposits of wealth.
Now our Motherland is heart-broken,
Moaning and praying.)
See Leksono, et al. 1999: 38.

consumption of basic nutritional foods, such as milk. Fearing that the crisis would be a long one and anxious over the negative effects of the inaccessibility of milk for babies, these women collected donations to buy boxes of powdered milk and resell them to needy mothers at affordable prices. Although some may have believed that SIP was mobilised purely by this social cause, other middle-class feminist activists involved strongly believed that it signified more political and revolutionary action (Subono et al. 1999). After only 20 minutes of a peaceful rally in which the women prayed and sang together, three of the activists, Karlina Leksono Supeli, Gadis Arivia, and Wilasih Noviana, were arrested and charged with "instigating social unrest". The event and the arrest of the three women caught the attention of many newspapers and magazines.[4]

The choice of action was not without consideration. Considering the tense political atmosphere at the time, dozens of middle-class feminists and academics in Jakarta gathered and discussed possible actions that were both "strategic and safe" (Budianta 2003: 152-3). It was concurrent with the government's declaration of the security status of Jakarta as *Siaga Satu*, Alert 1, a military security code declared in preparation of the People's Congress, which was to be held on 1 March 1998. During this period, that is, "eleven days before the general session, all public meetings of a political nature, including seminars and the like, were expressly forbidden" (van Dijk 2001: 140). In view of this, it was pertinent that the women present at the meeting were concerned about their safety (Subono et al. 1999). Much of the discussion on the form of the proposed action concerned whether to undertake 'direct action'—which for some was considered too radical and political—or an action "foregrounding motherhood and selling cheap powdered milk"—which for others was considered to be "subscribing to the dominant gender ideology [of the New Order] that enshrined feminine domesticity" (Budianta 2003: 153).[5] However, for Arivia, the action showed a very strong relevance between what was happening in the domestic and public areas, and that "disturbance in the domestic area" had a broader dimension in the public area (Arivia 1999(b): 15). In other words, for her, it was unreasonable to separate the domestic and public areas. While for many, including the media at that time, the protest was only about some mothers' attempts to distribute milk, for Arivia, the "milk politics" behind the action was actually an attempt to "voice the public's concern about high rising prices, the uncontrolled situation and the need for

[4] See among others: *Kompas* 1998; *Poskota* 1998; *Bisnis Indonesia* 1998; *D&R* 1998(b).
[5] From her interview with Gadis Arivia of Yayasan Jurnal Perempuan and Toety Heraty Noerhadi of the University of Indonesia, two important figures in the formation of SIP, Budianta noted that part of the debate also concerned the "strongly middle class and 'bourgeois' colour of the project", perceived to be alienating for some of the women activists (Budianta 2003: 153).

immediate political and economic reformation" (ibid.: 16). It appears that the use of the word *ibu* (mother) in SIP, rather than *perempuan* (women), was intended to redefine the concept of *ibu* as used by the New Order that referred primarily to domesticated, apolitical middle-class mothers. These organising mothers shattered the dominant definition of 'powerless mothers'. While their activities may have been seen as more practical than ideological, what is more important is that, through these actions, a mother's identity could no longer be reduced to solely her domestic role, but was broadened to become "a human who thinks, desires, is willing and cares for her environment" (Arivia 1999(a): 34).

The choice of venue for the demonstration was also political. Bundaran Hotel Indonesia, in the heart of Jakarta, had long been symbolic of political movements. The choice to hold the demonstration was reminiscent of the phenomenal demonstration conducted by Argentinian women in the Plaza de Mayo in Buenos Aires, Argentine, which symbolised political movement (Giles and Hyndman 2004: 6-7). Arivia pointed this parallel out during my interview with her.

The headquarters of SIP was initially aligned with the office of YJP. This indicates the close relationship, both structurally and personally, between SIP and YJP. However, in 1999, SIP separated from YJP. Arivia claimed that there had been a difference of opinion regarding the existence and continuation of SIP. In her opinion, SIP was, right from the beginning, a "political movement" meant to "break the silence". She further argued,

> But when it caught media attention and was represented as [a group] of mothers fighting for babies, etc., hunger, etc., I started to worry. […] I said [to them] 'In my opinion, this was planned as a political [action] from the start. We have achieved our objective, broken the silence, so, now we have to go back to our positions (work) to think about this. […] Then they held a charity programme, etc., which I didn't think fit with the journal [JP], so they found their own place.[6]

In Arivia's opinion, the shift occurred when the media, when covering the protest, focused on only one single issue rather than the broader political one, thus labelling the movement as purely social. Meanwhile, Melani Budianta, a woman activist and lecturer, who joined the board of SIP in mid-1999, had her

[6] Personal interview with Arivia, 6 November 2002. In the interview with Adriana Venny, the programme manager, she also mentioned that YJP, as an NGO working with the media, both print and electronic, both from and for women has, since its start, clearly defined its stance in contrast with other NGOs working as crisis centres or women's advocacy. In response to the question of how she positions YJP in relation to other NGOs, she used the analogy of a football team, in which every player has his/her own role (personal interview with Venny, 20 September 2002).

own thoughts about the separation. Unlike Arivia, Budianta thought that SIP should not stop once the demonstrations were over. What was at stake seemed to be the different perspectives of the nature of the SIP movement. Budianta found that:

> The informal voluntary spirit of SIP eventually clashed with the increasingly enterprising Jurnal Perempuan, when the latter included SIP in its structure. A separation followed [...] (Budianta 2003: 171).

Indeed, there was quite wide and intense media coverage of the event. The media representations of the *Suara Ibu Peduli* demonstration marked the return of the women's movement to the public arena in the late 1990s. There was a discrepancy between general media representations that positioned this rally as a cultural/social movement that emphasised the social and traditional maternal roles of *ibu* as the caretaker of the students who were demonstrating (by providing them with meals, etc.) and the feminist orientation that considered this rally to be highly political. The arrest of the three activists, along with the symbolisation of poor mothers as victims of the crisis, marked the initial discourse of women's victimhood.[7]

Indonesian Women's Coalition for Justice and Democracy: Reject Suharto!

Another groundbreaking event in the 'new' women's movement in the late days of the New Order state was the release of an on-line petition by a coalition of feminist activists called *Koalisi Perempuan Indonesia untuk Keadilan dan Demokrasi* (Indonesian Women's Coalition for Justice and Democracy, hereafter KPI) on 20 May 1998.[8] It was partly a reaction to the closed meeting held by Suharto and exclusively male politicians and prominent religious figures at the presidential palace the previous day. This marked an early open protest against the New Order state by women activists who declared their opposition to the state.

On 19 May 1998, Suharto discussed the possibility of his resignation with nine people, one of whom was a law expert, Yusril Ihza Mahendra, who later served as Secretary of State under President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono. The other eight individuals were high profile Muslims, including those aligned with

[7] See the defense of the three activists in the court as they expressed their perplexities about the state's reaction to their peaceful rally (Leksono et al. 1999).

[8] I first learned about this petition by KPI in 1998 when the *Tempo* website covered the news in (http://www.tempo.co.id/sikap/perempuan.html). In 2004, I was no longer able to retrieve the news from this magazine's site, but found it in a campaign website for Megawati Sukarnoputri's candidacy for president, http://www.megaforpresident.org/main/urgent_2.htm (retrieved 15 September 2004). It is odd that archival information about this petition was irretrievable in the print media and URLs, and also that it was virtually not discussed in academic papers.

Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), Muhammadiyah, Majelis Ulama Indonesia (MUI, Council of Indonesian Ulama), and Muslimin Indonesia (van Dijk 2001: 200-2).[9] KPI objected to the sexist and 'sectarian' selection of the meeting participants.[10] The petition read:

> Those public figures did not realise that Suharto was playing the politics of division and discrimination based on religion and gender: yesterday (19/5) he invited only Islamic leaders and men.[11]

Thus, not only did this feminist coalition attack Suharto, but they also criticised the male politicians for being duped by Suharto's tactic of 'divide and rule'. Unlike the SIP's rally that routed their political intention via "milk politics", this women's coalition openly took a political stance against the ruling power by directly attacking the power symbol of the state that was Suharto. KPI's on-line petition also expressed regret that women's activism in supporting the on-going civic movement was devalued as mere provision of food for protesting students:

> Suharto has grossly discriminated against women, nullified their important roles in the process of democratisation, and perceived them as only capable of handling take-out meal distribution.[12]

Arivia delivered a similar complaint when she commented on the reductionist editorials of numerous newspapers and magazine reports that cast a shadow on the political aspect of SIP and portrayed the women's activities as purely social and charity-oriented, as discussed earlier.

When the petition was released, KPI did not have an organisational structure yet.[13] Its first General Secretary, Nursyahbani Katjasungkana, a

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[9] For further discussion of the context and process of this meeting, see van Dijk, *A Country in Despair*, 2001, Chapter Eight. Nahdlatul Ulama is an organisation of 'traditional' Muslims in Indonesia that was founded in 1926. The name means "Renaissance of Religious Scholars". NU is related to the "religious scholars who operate private schools (*pondok/pesantren*)" (see Federspiel 1995: 182). Meanwhile, Muhammadiyah "represents the 'modernist stream' in Indonesian Islam" (van Dijk 2001: 7), founded in 1912. MUI is the government-sponsored Council of Indonesian Ulama, founded "to review issues of moral, ethical, and religious concerns affecting the nation" (Federspiel 1995: 150). It issues religious edicts (*fatwa*) intended to guide the government and Muslims. Muslimin Indonesia is one of the components of PPP (Unity and Development Party), representing the modernist component (van Dijk 2001: 122, 313).

[10] Van Dijk noted that Amien Rais of Muhammadiyah also called this meeting sectarian as it only involved prominent figures from Islamic circles (2001: 202).

[11] *Para tokoh itu tidak sadar bahwa Suharto sedang melakukan politik pecah dan melakukan diskriminasi berdasar agama dan gender: ia hanya mengundang para tokoh ulama Islam kemarin (19/5), dan hanya mengundang lelaki* (http://www.megaforpresident.org/main/urgent_2.htm, retrieved 15 September 2004).

[12] http://www.megaforpresident.org/main/urgent_2.htm (retrieved 15 September 2004).

feminist-activist-cum-lawyer, was only elected to the position during the women's congress held seven months later in December 1998, which I will return to in the last section of this chapter. Eventually, forty-one high profile female activists signed the petition that demanded:

- A rejection of the whole scenario of reformation offered by Suharto and the People's Consultative Assembly released on 19 May 1998
- An appeal for Suharto to step down immediately
- An appeal for a fair general election
- An appeal for a direct election of the president
- An appeal for trials for Suharto, his family and cronies
- An appeal for a cessation of all violence by the state, especially against women.[14]

Throughout the New Order period, women's groups had never spoken out in the manner of this coalition.[15] In parallel to the nationalist women's movement during the period of resistance against Dutch colonialism, this statement showed great concern for women's issues, which was strikingly different compared to the lack of activity under the New Order. For example, we can refer to KOWANI (*Konggres Wanita Indonesia,* Indonesian Women's Congress), established in 1946, which supported the nationalist movement in the liberation of the Indonesian people from the Dutch.[16] KOWANI not only set up public kitchens and enabled communications between guerrilla groups, but at the same time also promoted equal pay and equal rights for women, reforms of the marriage law, education for women, and so on (Wieringa 1988).

What is worth noting in the KPI petition is that, while only one point of the six demands touched upon women's lives directly, it was precisely that point that was concerned about state violence against women. This signified that feminist activists again addressed victimisation of women as a major issue concerning the lives of Indonesian women during the period of unrest in the last days of Suharto's power. I will return to KPI when discussing the 1998 Women's Congress. I will first discuss, however, the resignation of Suharto.[17]

[13] KPI was established on 18 May 1998. Some of the initiators had been involved in SIP, but felt it was urgent to set up "a 'political pressure group' that could offer them a more effective means of articulating their political aspirations" (Budianta 2003: 166).
[14] http://www.megaforpresident.org/main/urgent_2.htm (retrieved 15 September 2004).
[15] In the next section I will discuss individual women who courageously protested against the state but did not necessarily advance women's causes.
[16] Later, during the New Order period, KOWANI was said to have been co-opted by the state and was only to serve the developmentalist agenda of the state that, ironically, marginalised women from public participation (see Blackburn 2004, Budianta 2003).
[17] Parts of the following sections were included in my unpublished M.A. thesis (Sushartami 2000) and a paper published based on one of its chapters (Sushartami 2010).

Suharto Resigned: the Collapse of the 'Father-Figure'

On 21 May 1998, Suharto announced his resignation as President of Indonesia, marking the end of a 32-year reign. His resignation signified the collapse of the symbolisation of the president as the ultimate father-figure (Sciortino and Smyth 2002: 102). Together with the fall of its leader, many of the New Order's gender ideologies and practises began to be challenged, and attempts were made to obliterate some, such as the institutionalised state women's organisation, *Dharma Wanita*, the coercion of family planning methods that focused primarily on women, the impediments to women's political participation, and the concealment of domestic violence behind the idealisation of harmonious private space. In order to capture the changes in the gender constellation after the resignation of Suharto, I will briefly outline the gender ideologies and practises of the New Order before moving on to the period after its fall.

New Order Gender Ideologies and Practises

It has been noted that the New Order attempted to regulate a normatively rigid dichotomy between men and women since the 1970s through the institutionalisation of women's groups into domesticated forms. For the New Order, the reason for the implementation of an idealistic, clear-cut dichotomy between the public and private spheres was the ambiguity of gender differences implicated in the active involvement of women in political organisations during the Old Order.[18] Suharto expressed this concern when addressing the Catholic Women's Organisation in 1976, when he stated that "the disappearance of the difference between men and women under the Old Order was one of the main features of its political and social instability" (Sen 1998: 41). As such, the government proceeded to institutionalise an ideal of gender difference through two key institutions – *Pembinaan Kesejahteraan Keluarga* (PKK, Family Welfare Guidance) and *Dharma Wanita*, which supported the notion that women's roles in national development should be in "accordance with the nature/duty (*kodrat*) and position of women as wife and housewife" (ibid.). PKK is a "functional unit of the local government, whose main task is to implement the Applied Family Welfare Programme and its many projects at the neighbourhood and village levels" (ibid.). It also functioned as a campaign agent of the ruling party, *Golkar* (*Golongan Karya,* Functional Group). Dharma Wanita is an organisation whose members are female civil servants and the wives of civil servants. This women's organisation ranks its members according to their husbands' positions in the offices. By 1974, it was

[18] The Old Order refers to the state administration under the first Indonesian President Sukarno (1945 – 1965), who proclaimed Indonesia's independence in 1945.

compulsory for all female civil servants and civil servants' wives to become members of Dharma Wanita. Critically assessing this requirement, Wieringa found that Dharma Wanita and PKK, apparently were built "on the ruins of a history of active independent women's organisations" (Wieringa n.d.).

While many argue that the hierarchical rank in these two women's organisations is influenced by military ethos (Suryakusuma 1996), it may also be said to resemble the concept of a traditional Javanese *priyayi* (aristocratic) family,[19] particularly its hierarchy.[20] Traditionally, the concept of devoted wives and mothers professed by the elite in the New Order government was rooted socially in "their [elite] lower-middle-class origins and nouveau riche achievements, but politically also in suspicion of popular movements and social mobilisation, as inevitable sources of 'instability'" (Lev 1996: 197-8). It is perhaps not surprising that the New Order bureaucracy was pervaded by a heavy preponderance of Javanese tradition, as the state's elite was mostly Javanese. The application of Javanese "ideological traditionalism", that is, hierarchy, served to reinforce the exiting power base, which was "justified by the economic success" (ibid.: 198). In this light, the model of middle-class mothers and housewives became the most suitable one that could serve both the power hierarchy and economic development.

Defined primarily as mothers and housewives, Indonesian women under the New Order's gender ideology were not only restricted from involvement in public life; at home, they also had become the objects of state regulation. "State Ibuism" became the closest correspondent term used to define the "domestication of Indonesian women as dependent wives who exist for their husbands, their families, and the state" (Suryakusuma 1996: f.n. 26). "State Ibuism" also embraced the family principle in which its members were expected to contribute to the welfare of the state-cum-family *tanpa pamrih* (without personal return). Given the image of the state as a family, it is argued that the predominant gender ideology under the New Order government was "father-motherism [*bapak-ibuisme*], with *bapak*, or father, as the primary source of power and *ibu*, or mother, as one medium of power" (ibid.: 102). The implementation of this gender ideology at the practical level was intended to maintain the desire for harmony. Later, studies found that the idea of the "harmonious private domain in Java" may "render the recognition of the existence of domestic violence even more difficult." (Sciortino and Smyth 2002: 110).

[19] For further discussion on the concept of *priyayi* and *priyayisation* in relation to women's power in Javanese society, see Djajadiningrat-Nieuwenhuis 1992: 43-51.
[20] This model is applicable, however, only for middle-class or elite *priyayi* families in Java. See Suryakusuma 1996: 101-2.

Officially, Indonesian women were considered incomplete before they became 'mothers'. Suharto, in his biography, considered it the state's task to "bring Indonesian women to their correct position and role, that is, as the mother in a household [*ibu rumah tangga*] and simultaneously as a motor of development" (Tiwon 1996: 59). However, the word *ibu* extends not only to a biological description of a woman who has given birth, but also to a social status. A single woman with high social status, for instance, will be addressed and referred to as *ibu*.

The New Order state also took a strong role in defining gender roles in Indonesia. For instance, by imposing Dharma Wanita on all wives of civil servants, the New Order not only dominated its civil servants, but also their wives. Ideologically, this regulation was mentioned in the *Panca Dharma Wanita,* the "Five Duties of Women", in which women were perceived through their participation as 'reproductive agents', regardless of their economic and political achievements. Under the official narrative of the New Order government, a woman was defined as:

1. Producer of the nation's future generation
2. Wife and faithful companion to her husband
3. Mother and educator of her children
4. Manager of the household
5. Citizen (Hull 1976: 21-22 in Sen 1998: 36).

Thus, Indonesian women were defined as: "… first a reproductive agent, then a faithful wife and mother, and an unpaid domestic worker and consumer. She is a citizen last and paid productive worker not at all" (Sen 1998: 41).

In the 1972 Matrimony Law No. 1, the state justified the rigid dichotomy of sex roles by positioning women in the private realm and men in the public realm (APIK 1999: 6). This law also legalised polygamy by giving rights to husbands to marry a second wife with court permission and the first wife's agreement. One of the acceptable reasons for a husband to marry a second wife was if the first wife was proven, or assumed, to be infertile.

The concept of the woman as the sole reproductive agent was prominently promoted to represent Indonesian women under the New Order regime. The prevalence of this conception made women vulnerable to the coercive implementation of the New Order's family planning, *Keluarga Berencana* (KB), programme (ibid.). Thus, regulation of the female body and sexuality was not only imposed ideologically, as such mentioned in the Panca Dharma Wanita, but also conveyed through the birth control programme. The Family Planning Programme in Indonesia, which started in 1970 under the *Badan Koordinasi Keluarga Berencana Nasional* (BKKBN, Co-ordinating Body for National Family Planning Programme), became a part of the development strategy of the New

Order government to control population growth.[21] This programme was supported by other state organisations, including PKK and Dharma Wanita. The implementation of family planning in Indonesia under the New Order was, in many cases, coercive because the government did not give women choices, but instead forced them to use particular contraceptive methods.

The family planning programme under the New Order government was undeniably successful in bringing down the national birth rate (Niehof and Lubis 2003). This achievement was the best selling point of the New Order government in the eyes of foreign countries. Indonesia became the model developing country that was successful in controlling its population growth rate. For some Indonesian feminists, however, the objective of the family planning programme was, rather, to achieve the government's target and did not reflect concern for women. In other words, the family planning programme, in which about 90% of the acceptors were women, became a vehicle through which the New Order government gained international credit.

The Illusive State Gender Ideology

It must be noted that the state's gender ideology, which was attempted to be implemented throughout the country, as such failed to acknowledge the local heterogeneity of gender relations. Local societies in Indonesia, as in other Southeast Asian countries, have long been perceived as representing manifold gender relations between women and men, which "demand understanding in their own terms" (Atkinson and Errington 1990: viii). While society in contemporary America, for example, emphasises the conceptions of body and sex as major attributes for gender constructions, in contrast, people in the Southeast Asian region seldom place anatomy or physiology in a central position (Errington 1990: 57). The unclear dichotomy between public and domestic spheres among the people in this region is also one reason why Western inscription fails to define gender relations. As the dichotomy is based on the social organisation and position of men and women that can be traced to "social rather than biological considerations" (Rosaldo 1974), the border between the public and domestic is thus constantly shifting and is ambiguous depending on different modes of interactions.

Within the scope of local Indonesian societies, we can find a variety of gender relations, including the matrilineal Minangkabau of West Sumatera (Blackwood 1995), the egalitarian gender relations in Wana society of central Sulawesi (Atkinson 1990), or matrifocality (or prominence of mothers) among

[21] In 1997, the government opened 16,681 family planning clinics in 26 provinces. See Statistical Yearbook of Indonesia 1997:120.

the matrilineal Minangkabau, patrilineal Acehnese, and bilateral Javanese (Tanner 1974). Gender relations in these local societies repudiate body, sex, and sexuality as the major attributes for gender constructions. Neither do these societies show a clear division between the public and domestic domains. To understand gender relations in these local regions, one must first identify local ideas of power and prestige and how, in turn, the biological characteristics of male and female are thus mapped on to those ideas.

The increasing endorsement of local communities as sites of heterogeneity and contestation results in the shift of orientation where the state is perceived as the force of "cultural homogenisation and gender oppression" and equated with the normative and consolidated official regulation (Steedly 1999). These plural indigenous gender notions bearing on gender equality and various criteria of prestige and power have been vastly reworked before the process of nation building. Constituted from an "imagined community" (Anderson 1983), nation building demands not only an imagination of a shared experience in identifying with an extended community, but also historical practises in which social difference is perpetually invented and performed. Yet, despite the nationalist ideology bearing on the idea of common unity, nations have ascended to the sanctioned institutionalisation of gender difference. In this way, nationalism augments the people's identities through social contestations that are always "gendered" (McClintock 1997: 89).

The above discussion shows that the New Order state's attempt to subjugate women was part of its strategy to gain and legitimise power. However, this totalitarian imposition of gender ideology and practises was not without challenge. In the context of modern Indonesia, the contradictions between the state's development-driven gender construction, the plurality of traditional gender values, religious discourse, and the burgeoning global consumer culture led to complex negotiation and contestation resulting in 'plural' gender constructions. There were attempts to challenge the state's definition of women solely as mothers and housewives. In the late 1970s through the 1980s, the biggest challenge came from, not surprisingly, the imperatives of development in Indonesia, which nonetheless could not deny its need for women's participation in the labour force. Meanwhile, in the years that followed through the very end of the New Order period, challenges came from many more directions, such as economic pressures, women activists, and foreign influences. These, as we shall discuss later, contributed to the reshaping of the state's gender policy.

The Shift of the State's Gender Policy

Since 1977, the state appointed a Junior Minister for Women's Affairs, thus marking an inevitable shift in the New Order state's gender policy. In 1983, a

cabinet level position of Minister of State for the Role of Women was created in response to the United Nations (UN) project, International Decade of Women (1976-1985). The government's overall policy adjusted to the developments. While in 1978, the Broad Outline of the Nation's Direction (*Garis-Garis Besar Haluan Negara,* GBHN) emphasised that the "woman's role in national development must be in harmony with the development of her responsibility and role in the family's health and welfare", in 1983, the GBHN added the need for women's education. The 1993, the GBHN "removed the reference to women's specific role in child-rearing" that had formerly always appeared in the GBHN. Since 1978, practically and officially, there has been greater attention to women's paid and productive role in the economy (Sen 1998: 41-43).

Since then, the propaganda of *peran ganda wanita*, the dual role of women, has become popular. Thus, although Indonesian women's engagement in economic activities is becoming increasingly acceptable, it is still not acceptable for women to deny their 'essential nature'. Concerning the retention of women's roles as mothers and wives, Suharto emphasised that it is:

> [*our* task] to bring Indonesian women to their correct position and role, that is as a motor of development…*We* must not forget their essential nature [*kodrat*] as beings who must provide for the continuation of life that is healthy, good and pleasurable (emphasis added).[22]

We find here that the definition of Indonesian women, which is related to their nature or *kodrat*, was officially designated in the New Order state policy. In other words, the concept of *kodrat* was used by the New Order to understand and further legitimise the gender ideology they sponsored and sanctioned. Although the concept of *peran ganda* was popularly accepted within the context of Indonesian society, what was more commonly accepted was the dependence of women on men. In this sense, the segregated domains for men and women were reinforced not only through the economic market, but also socially, culturally, and ideologically.

The New Order's concept of female domestication had always been in itself ambiguous and eventually shifted in response to modernisation factors that required women's participation in the labour force. The dual role of women in fact concerned both the state's ideology of domestication and its exploitation of

[22] In *Suharto: My Thoughts, Words, and Deeds: Autobiography as Told to G. Dwipayana and Kamadhan K.H*. quoted from Tiwon 1996: 59. By using the "proprietary word *our* [kita]" this autobiography shows not only that Suharto "externalises women and makes clear that his preferred audience is male", but also underlines that women's lives are in the hands of the men.

female labour that best supported the state's agenda toward National Development that demanded obedient subjects and stable politics. However, resistance began to emerge. In the late 1980s and 1990s, a 'new-wave' of Indonesian women's movements emerged contestating the New Order state's gender ideology and social regulations. Women started to transgress the state's rhetorical boundaries of women as obedient female subjects and, necessarily, workers in Indonesia.

Challenging Voices

Beginning a few years prior to the fall of the New Order regime, Indonesian women's movements started to significantly challenge the state's gender ideology. While some argue that this phenomenon was driven by urban middle-class women, others suggest that women's movements were no longer restricted to urban areas or to the middle-class. Many Indonesian women's organisations were established and led by young intellectuals who migrated from rural to urban areas. While many of them may not have had access to consumer goods due to their lower economic power, some demonstrated such possession of intellectual capital that they were considered to be members of the middle-class. In the nineties, women's movements became popular among working women. At least two names are worthy of mention when referring to labour movements: Marsinah, a woman labourer who was murdered in 1993, and Dita Indah Sari, a labour activist who was imprisoned in 1995 and released after the fall of the New Order in 1999. While Dita's incentive to organise a massive strike in Surabaya in 1993 was inspired by her reading on socialist movements, Marsinah became politically aware through her experience as a woman labourer (Sen 1999: 15).

Marsinah, who worked in a watch factory, was found murdered about a week after she helped organise a strike of five hundred workers (Weix 1997). The strikers called for a daily supplemental payment for food and transportation for all workers of PT Catur Putra Surya, whether or not they reported for work or took menstrual leave. Marsinah's death became a major news item. There were many narratives concerning the motives of her murder—for example, the involvement of the military following her threat to report corruption in the company. Aside from the political subterfuge, this labour dispute case became a feminist issue when it was found that her body had been genitally mutilated (ibid.).[23]

[23] "Feminisation" of issues with potential political dimensions also occurred when male victims of the state were involved. Yet another state attempt to sexualise political allegations emerged in the case of the slaying of a local journalist in Yogyakarta in August 1996. In this case, Fuad Mohammad Syafrudin, or Udin, the slain journalist, and the accused, Dwi Sumaji or Iwik, were the casualties of power and dominance, which characterised the New Order regime. Udin was murdered after his

Under the New Order, the sexualisation of political issues was a common strategy used to subdue women's potential power and to help shield their own nefarious political manoeuvrings. Megawati Sukarnoputri, the daughter of the first Indonesian president, Sukarno, was formerly a popular symbol of opposition against the New Order.[24] In 1987, the opposition party, Indonesian Democratic Party (PDI, *Partai Demokrasi Indonesia*), recruited her to help improve its standings in the polls. As former president Sukarno's daughter, she fitted well to public expectations and helped resurrect to the 'Sukarno myth' in order to "boost the number of seats held by the Party in parliament". In the 1993 election, PDI increased its number of seats in the House of Representatives from only 24 in 1982, and 40 in 1987, to 56. In 1993, at a special party convention (*Konggres Luar Biasa*, KLB) in Surabaya, East Java, Megawati was elected to be the leader of the PDI, replacing Soerjadi, the PDI leader at that time. Her prediction that the Party would be able to win 80 – 85% of the vote in the 1997 election threatened the ruling party, Golkar, and the government. In 1996, the New Order government backed a special PDI Party Congress held in Medan, North Sumatera, with "the hidden objective: to remove democratically elected Megawati Sukarnoputri as the Party's head" (Mann 1998: 33). The campaign against Megawati and her followers culminated with the seizure of the PDI headquarters by Soerjadi's supporters, allegedly backed by the government, in Jakarta in 27 July 1996.

Apart from the common analogy made by many linking the suppression of Megawati and repressed democratisation, she has been nevertheless emblematic of the rising status of Indonesian women in recent years. The fact that she is a woman often draws public debate. Following the victory of her newly transformed PDI-Struggle party (PDI-Perjuangan, PDI-P)[25]—renamed in the wake of the intra-party attack and resistance in mid-July 1996—in the 1999 election, with almost 40% of the votes, her political rivals started to emphasise the issue of gender. Public opinion was divided into those for and against her, although many denied that her being a woman was the basis for rejecting her political candidacy. Of particular importance in this dispute was the use of Islamic doctrine to reject her and all Indonesian women as political leaders. This debate involving democracy and religion drew public attention. Some

tell-truth reports of corruption involving funds for the Underdeveloped Villages Programme in Bantul, Yogyakarta, threatened the prevailing power at the time. A plot of a triangle-love affair between Udin and Iwik's wife was forged by the prosecutors to 'sexualise' the case and to evade enquiries into political motivations that might be involved in this killing. See Boaventura 1997.

[24] This paragraph is culled from Mann 1998: 7-58.

[25] After Suharto resigned and the three-national-political-party regulation was lifted, Megawati declared the formation of a 'new' PDI by adding "*perjuangan*" (struggle) to the name to set it apart from the former PDI, which by then was led by Soerjadi and backed by the New Order government. Megawati has been the Chairperson of PDI-P until the present time.

Muslim leaders and Islamic political rivals insisted that the Koran and Hadith (traditions) do not allow women to be leaders. The use of religious doctrines to confront women's roles in public was not unusual in the history of the New Order, such as in the case of the banning of Gerwani, which will be discussed later. This demonstrates how 'womanness' can be so easily evoked for political purposes in Indonesian society.

The tension between the state's and feminist gender ideology might also be apparent in the choice of words that refer to women, i.e., *perempuan* and *wanita*. Semantically there is no difference in meaning between *wanita* and *perempuan*, as both refer to the female biological entity. However, both words are inflected with different histories. Under the New Order's gender policy the word *wanita* was used and sponsored by the state with a connotation that it was more respectable than *perempuan*, with a close association to the middle-class, domesticated concept of womanhood. The use of the word *wanita* under the New Order regime was a part of its mechanism to reproduce its gender ideology that placed women in the domestic sphere. During the New Order, *perempuan* was often used in a derogatory manner in comparison to *wanita*. As such the state's sponsored organisation was named Dharma Wanita.

Feminist activists point out that *perempuan* is rooted in Sanskrit and means 'the empowered one', whereas *wanita* can be dissected into the Javanese phrase *wani ditata* that means 'dare to be ruled' (see for example, *Jurnal Perempuan*, edition 1). The word *perempuan* became a "more popular option in women's activism" because its "etymological origins in the root word *empu* meaning 'master' or person occupying a high respectable position", was preferable to its synonym *wanita,* which "is derived from the word *betina* or 'female', thereby […] underscoring the biological and sexual nature of women" (Budianta 2003: 175). It is at the core of the women's movement that, politically, the use of the word *perempuan* shows an oppositional stance to the state's women's institution and its whole hegemonic meaning of domestication.[26]

In 1999, the name of the state's office *Kantor Menteri Peranan Wanita* (State Ministry for the Role of Women) was changed to *Kantor Menteri Pemberdayaan Perempuan* (State Ministry for Women's Empowerment). Of importance to note here is that this change occurred when the office was headed by Khofifah Indar Parawansa, an activist-turned-state-minister under Abdurrahman Wahid's (popularly known as Gus Dur) administration. The political dimensions of using

[26] I found that use of the words *perempuan* and *wanita* tended to reflect the level of the interlocutor's gender awareness. Women activists in NGOs and other social groups rarely used the word *wanita*. Meanwhile, the state officials I spoke with during my fieldwork sometimes juggled between *wanita* and *perempuan*. The compliment of *perempuan* is *laki-laki* (men), while the compliment of *wanita* is *pria*. Use of the later pair risks ridicule of being "very New Order".

the word *perempuan* rather than *wanita* demonstrated a distance from the New Order regime. The change of words from *peranan* (role) to *pemberdayaan* (empowerment) was no less political than the change from *wanita* to *perempuan*. Parawansa, while paying no attention to the difference between the word *perempuan* and *wanita*, writes that the change of name of the state's women's ministry was reflected more in the change from the word 'role' to 'empowerment', and "heralded a renewed determination to achieve more equitable treatment for women in the family, society, and nation" (Parawansa 2002: 73).

In the meantime, the fall of the New Order regime, amidst riots and calls for political reforms in 1998, gave way to women's return to politics. Two initial yet exemplary events were the protest by SIP and petition by KPI, mentioned earlier. What was most significantly appealing in this phenomenon was the utilisation of cases of crimes conducted by the New Order state against women as a rallying cry. The resignation of Suharto that was both preceded and accompanied by episodes of violence against women symbolised the failure of the hitherto state-sponsored gender ideology and practise that aimed at 'domesticating' women (Sciortino and Smyth 2002: 103). This was soon followed by the widespread demands by women, mostly activists, to dissolve Dharma Wanita and the protests condemning the coercion of the family planning programme.

The state's overt emphasis on harmonious gender relations allegedly modelled on the elite Javanese was not only criticised as insignificant in protecting the women from domestic abuse, but even more hindered the violence from being acknowledged, and by the same token, censured. With the fall of the regime and the increasing public demand to bring light to cases of gendered violence, there were also escalations of feminists' insistence to redefine and reposition women, both in the public and domestic spheres. It is this point that becomes the focus of the next section.

Violence against Women and the Quest for Reformed Identity

One of the important developments following the revelations of the May 1998 rapes was the establishment of the Indonesian Commission of Violence against Women (Komnas Perempuan). Meanwhile, the fall of the New Order regime opened the way for the ex-members of Gerwani (*Gerakan Wanita Indonesia*, Indonesian Women's Movement), a pro-communist women's organisation that was eradicated prior to the establishment of the New Order, to re-appear in public.

May 1998 Rapes and the Formation of Komnas Perempuan

Following the riots in Jakarta on 13-15 May 1998, thousands of Indonesians of Chinese descent, mostly women and children, fled the country to neighbouring Singapore. The cases of rapes were first brought to public attention by *Tim Relawan untuk Kemanusian* (Volunteers for Humanity, TRuK), led by Father Sandyawan, a Catholic priest. This team presented a series of reports, which soon broke through the public's lack of awareness about the rapes. On 13 July 1998, in finalising their report to the National Committee for Human Rights (Komnas HAM), the team concluded that the riots and the rapes were instigated by the same network. The government under then president Habibie denied the reports by TRuK and even accused TRuK of having fabricated the stories of the rapes (Siew Min 2006: 42).[27] On 15 July, after meeting with a group of feminist activists and intellectuals, President Habibie announced his regret of his previous statements and condemned the rapes (Tan 2006: 234-5). The announcement was broadcast on the television evening news programmes. In addition to their demand for Habibie to acknowledge the rapes, these women also requested him to form a team that would investigate the riots and rapes, and establish a women's commission as part of the existing Komnas HAM. On 22 July, the government agreed to the formation of Komnas Perempuan and announced the establishment of *Tim Gabungan Pencari Fakta* (Joint Fact-Finding Team, TGPF) that was allotted three months to conduct the investigation. Saparinah Sadli of the University of Indonesia was appointed chairperson.

On 4 November 1998, and after prolonged debates on whether there were organised gang-rapes during the May 1998 riots, TGPF released their final report of the investigation (Komnas Perempuan 1999). This team noted that sexual assaults occurred during the riots in Jakarta and its surrounding areas, as well as in Medan in North Sumatera and Surabaya in East Java. Through the investigation, which was conducted through interviews with the victims, medical doctors, parents, nurses, psychiatrists, priests, and other witnesses, the team found that there were 152 victims of rape, fourteen victims of rape with battering, ten victims of sexual assaults, and nine victims of sexual harassment. Not all, but most, of the victims were of Chinese descent.

Komnas Perempuan, in its leaflet that was released following Presidential Decree Number 181/1998 concerning its establishment, clearly states that it "was set up in response to Indonesian women's outcry against the sexual assault and violence during the May 1998 riots" (Tan 2003: 236). Although this

[27] For more details on the contesting narratives about the rapes, which never resulted in a single complete narrative due to the lack of 'political authority' from any of the contesting social actors, see Sai 2006.

commission receives funding from the State Secretariat to run its office, Komnas Perempuan is an independent body, which means it is autonomous. It serves the general public and provides them with report findings. Its programmes are very much related to the issues of violence against women, such as the projects of "Mapping of Violence" and "Service for Survivors" (Tan 2003: 237). Komnas Perempuan continues to take a role in combating increasingly violent conflict and domestic violence.

The discourse of the May rapes also resulted in the flourishing of *Ruang Pelayanan Khusus* (Special Treatment Rooms, RPK) provided at the regional police stations (Polri). This programme was first established by the State Ministry for Women's Empowerment under then minister Khofifah Indar Parawansa (Parawansa 2002: 75). In 2004, 28 RPK throughout 28 provinces in Indonesia handled 4,456 cases of violence against women that included domestic violence, household and community violence, and trafficking (Komnas Perempuan 2005: 3).

Indonesian Women's Congress and the Voices of Silenced Women

The resignation of Suharto also opened up a space that had been closed for so many years for those implicated in 1965 as members of the Indonesian Communist Party (*Partai Komunis Indonesia,* PKI). Later, this opening was eventually formalised by then president Abdurrahman Wahid, who attempted to recall the bill that banned the communist party in Indonesia. It was the women's congress held in December 1998 that marked the revisiting of the defamation of those related to the communist party. In the congress, ex-Gerwani members were invited and given an opportunity to speak and disclose the state's injustice against them. Before we move to this event, let us look first at the historical context around the women's congress and Gerwani.

The first national Indonesian women's congress, *Kongres Wanita Indonesia*, was held in December 1928 in Yogyakarta. The congress established a 'federation' of all women's organisations under the name of *Persatuan Perempuan Indonesia* (PPI, Association of Indonesian Women). The following year, this name was changed to *Perikatan Perhimpunan Isteri Indonesia* (PPII, Federation of Indonesian Wives' Association), as during this period women's roles as wives within women's movements was the common creed.

In 1930, a radical women's organisation, *Isteri Sedar* (Alert Wife), was established.[28] This women's organisation totally rejected polygamy and divorce. However, during the Japanese occupation (1942 – 1945), all women's

[28] More about the history of the women's movement in Indonesia from the colonial to post-colonial times, see Wieringa 1988: 73-83. The following is culled from this book.

organisations, except one, were banned, including Isteri Sedar. During this period, the only women's organisation that was allowed to exist was the Japanese-sponsored *Fujinkai*, which was concerned with the eradication of illiteracy and other social work. The members of Fujinkai were mainly wives of civil servants and it ranked its members following the hierarchical positions of their husbands in their respective offices, as the New Order would later rank Dharma Wanita members. Fujinkai was one of the functional organisations of the Japanese colonial administration intended to mobilise the Indonesian people to support the Japanese vision of a 'Greater Asia'.

In 1950, *Gerakan Wanita Sedar* (*Gerwis,* Alert Women's Movement) was established. Ideologically, *Gerwis* was a descendant of *Isteri Sedar*. The members of *Gerwis* were, for the most part, highly educated and politically conscious women. In 1954, *Gerwis* was transformed into *Gerakan Wanita Indonesia* (*Gerwani*, Indonesian Women's Movement). The change of name was intended to make the group accessible to as many women as possible in the masses, which at that time aligned themselves with the policies of PKI. *Gerwani* became the biggest women's organisation at that time. The membership grew from 500 in 1950, while still under the name of *Gerwis*, to over half a million in 1956. Gerwani was basically a grassroots 'communist-oriented' women's organisation that worked for rural women. Gerwani was also active in campaigning for female literacy, democracy in marital law, heavy penalties for rapists, and other social and economic activities for female workers and peasant women. Through its two periodicals, *Api Kartini* (The Light of Kartini), which was directed at middle-class women, and *Berita Gerwani* (News of Gerwani), an internal newsletter, Gerwani wanted to attract middle-class women to help peasant women and workers.

In its development, Gerwani's socialist approach was in line with President Sukarno's view that "female equity with men could only be realised after a truly socialist society would have been created, through a common struggle by women and men" (Wertheim n.d.). In 1964, the government instructed all organisations to associate themselves with a political party. As Gerwani considered itself to be closest with PKI, in its December 1965 congress, it planned to officially affiliate itself to the Party (Wieringa 2002). However, this planned affiliation of Gerwani to PKI later brought about its demise as the New Order came to power following the eradication of the communist party in 1966.

The years 1965-1966 mark an important period in the political history of Indonesia—the inauguration of a new regime: from the Old Order (1945 – 1966) to the New Order (1966 – 1998). On 30 September 1965, six army generals and one lieutenant were killed in the incident called *Gerakan Tigapuluh September Partai Komunis Indonesia* (G30S-PKI, 30 September Movement of the Indonesian Communist Party). Following the alleged coup,

General Suharto was granted an order popularly known as *Supersemar* (Surat Perintah Sebelas Maret, Order of 11 March) on 11 March 1966, by which he was assigned authority to take necessary actions to curb the insecurity and instability caused by the abortive coup. The purported communist coup became the grounds for General Suharto, the second president of the republic, to justify the mass killings of "hundreds of thousands" of people who were suspected of being connected to the Communist Party in early 1966 (Vatikiotis 1998: 34). As a member of the communist family, Gerwani was condemned by the New Order state and implicated in the coup of September 1965 (Wieringa 1996: 1). Members of Gerwani were accused of taking part in the kidnapping, torture (brutally mutilating the victims' genitals) and killing of the army generals and lieutenant. These women were sent to jail without trial and it was said that many were tortured and sexually assaulted by the officers while in detention. As a result of Suharto's and the military's heavy-handed actions, 500,000 to one million communist members and sympathisers were killed. Meanwhile, the debate on how the generals were killed remains unresolved (Anderson 1987).

Few analysts have paid attention to the gender aspect of the establishment of the New Order regime. Saskia Wieringa was the first to elaborate on this topic. According to Wieringa, the story of the perverse behaviour of the Gerwani women that was spread in military newspapers, *Angkatan Bersenjata* and *Berita Yudha*, was not only a campaign against Gerwani in particular and communism in general, but also the fundamental act of the New Order. By associating "Gerwani with the castration of the symbol of the nation's virility" that is, the top-level generals who were killed, this image-creation revealed "the strongest way to effect Suharto's mental transition to his New Order State" (Wieringa 1996: 2). Thus, the New Order regime was born not only out of the suppression of communism, but also on the 'destruction' of women's movements. By associating radical women's movements with communism and sexual perversity, the New Order regime not only castigated leftist women's movements, but also demonised women who stepped outside of their expected social and familial roles. The campaign against the members of Gerwani coloured the "residual feelings" about this period (Wieringa 2002: 5). Indeed, such residual feelings were supported not only by repressive action by the army, but also by the production of the social belief that the members of Gerwani and their actions were subversive.

Throughout its rule, the New Order kept repeating the horrific story of these 'sexually-loose' women. This image was kept alive in the popular memory by the compulsory annual screening for students of the film entitled "*Pemberontakan* G30S-PKI", or "The Communist Party Coup of 30 September". This film was shown every year on national television for the commemoration

of *Hari Kesaktian Pancasila* (Pancasila's Victory Day).[29] In the film, members of Gerwani were depicted as playing a role in the coup.[30]

It is, thus, relevant to understand that the subordination of women is one way through which President Suharto built the totalitarian New Order state (Wieringa n.d.). The phantom of Gerwani's involvement in the killing of the generals during the alleged coup was still present in December 1998 when Wieringa was compelled to "quote from the autopsy" reports of the murdered generals and lieutenant in the presence of 500 young women activists during a meeting of feminists in Yogyakarta to convince them that Gerwani was not "evil" (Wieringa 2002: 342).

This congress was organised by the Indonesian Women's Coalition for Justice and Democracy (KPIKD). It involved approximately 500 women from all over Indonesia. It was a new experience for women to gather and hold a meeting where everybody was granted freedom to speak. The women attending the meeting were from various backgrounds and represented the political spectrum of the last 30 years. It was, thus, understandable that the congress turned into "a battlefield of ideological differences and disagreements on technical or procedural matters" (Budianta 2003: 167).[31] What is relevant to note here is the 'battle' between members of KOWANI (*Konggres Wanita Indonesia*, Indonesian Women's Congress) and the ex-members of Gerwani, whose representatives happened to be on the same panel. As mentioned above, KOWANI had historical connections with the nationalist women's movement and the first women's congress held in 1928, however, under the New Order, it had been "co-opted" by the government (Budianta 2003: 167). The confrontation continued when the Minister of Women's Affairs reported to President Habibie that the congress "was 'infiltrated' by communists" (Budianta 2003: 167).[32] The Congress organisers, however, insisted on their vision that all of the women should be granted the right to have a voice and be heard. The Congress eventually managed to elect a Presidium, consisting of 15 interest groups, including those of "sexual minorities, the urban poor and the less

[29] *Pancasila* is codex of the five basic principles professed to be the national ideology of Indonesia, namely the belief in one God, humanity, unity, democracy, and social justice.

[30] The portrayal of the members of Gerwani as sexually loose women is also immortalised on the reliefs on the monument at the site where the generals' bodies were found, *Taman Lubang Buaya*, (Garden of Crocodile Well) and *Monas* (*Monumen Nasional*, National Monument).

[31] For further detailed information on how the members of the congress debated over the name, format, and political leaning of their coalition, and also on how the members "fought to grab the microphone when discussion was opened to floor", see Budianta 2003: 166-9.

[32] Budianta writes that the atmosphere of the meeting "was filled with prejudice and suspicion". The congress was also suspected as resisting "the domination of men and Islam" since it invited "transvestites and lesbians" aside from the ex-Gerwani members. On the other hand, the organisers suspected that individuals from rightist groups were "intentionally sent" by the state's intelligence "to disrupt the congress" (Budianta 2003: 167-8).

advantaged indigenous communities", and Nursjahbani Katjasungkana, a noted lawyer and women's activist, was selected as Secretary General (Budianta 2003: 168). The discord between members of KOWANI and Gerwani, however, seems to have remained unresolved.

Conclusion

When situated around the May 1998 riots, the most crucial symbol of Indonesia's reformasi, the above-mentioned events can be positioned chronologically as preceding, concurrent with, and following acts of violence. Examining these events provides a context for the discussions in the subsequent chapters. Each of these events embodied its own meanings and had its own impact on the positioning of the New Order vis-à-vis Indonesian people, especially women, who are the focus of this study. First, those events that happened prior to the resignation of Suharto, i.e., the protests by SIP and the KPI petition, marked the return of women's political participation to the public arena after 30 years of silencing and domestication by the state. They were also effective in pointing out the failure of the New Order state. They became part of the initial civic movements that helped push for the fall of the regime. Second, the disclosure of the May rapes and other forms of violence against women soon after the fall of the New Order highlighted the legacy of state violence against women. The deposing of the regime was then deemed legitimate when 'proofs' of its atrocities were made public. Finally, the reappearance of the ex-Gerwani members, who decried the New Order's sham in fabricating the story of their involvement in the alleged coup by the communist party, further and critically questioned the legitimacy of its power from the very beginning, although one may question its effectiveness given the fact that reading from the autopsy report was needed to assure other groups of women.

The women's actions that flourished in 1997-1998 shared characteristics with other forms of the burgeoning civic movements in the respective period, i.e., uniting to topple Suharto. However, there were specific characteristics of the women's protests. First, they used a feminist perspective in viewing the problems related to the socio-political crisis. The use of 'women's language' also resulted, to some extent, in the debate as to whether their actions were more social or political in nature. SIP's fund-raising to sell powdered milk inexpensively resembled many activities of other women's groups that acted on the "grass-roots level and on economic 'bread and butter' issues" that sometimes easily corresponded with "their traditional roles […] to feed, shelter and clothe their families within patriarchal, racist and classist constraints" (West and Blumberg 1990: 15, in Budianta 2003: 152). However, as Budianta

argues, in the case of SIP, it did not commence "merely from 'survival' or 'charity' impulses, but from a conscious discursive strategy of urban middle class women that resulted unexpectedly in the cross-alliance and empowerment of women from all social backgrounds" (Budianta 2003: 152).[33]

Second, by employing the issue of violence against women and using symbols of women as victims of violence, these actions set the ground for, and draw on, the discourse of women's victimisation. Here, this chapter, indeed this thesis, proposes a different perspective in analysing the emergence of women's activism during reformasi, for they did not only articulate women's political consciousness, which has been the focus of a number of studies on Indonesian feminism in the post-Suharto period (Budianta 2003; Blackburn 2004; Tan 2006), but they also served as a milestone for both the public recognition of violence against women and the positioning of women as victims respectively. In other words, the 'material conditions' of reformasi have attributed to the feminists, and possibly other groups that support human rights, a canonisation of female victims—a point that will be elaborated upon in the subsequent chapters.

Finally, the approach of women's victimisation—of which women's activism is apparently eager to align with—corresponded well, not only with the current local atmosphere that applauded the media leaning towards marginalised groups, such as victims of state's violence, but also with the global feminist trend that focused much of their attention on the issues of violence against women as part of the broader campaign for human rights (Blackburn 2004: 216; Purdey 2004: 204; Tan 2006: 234).

[33] That this women's protest was considered to be "from all social backgrounds" may be overstated if we consider who was capable of raising funds to buy expensive milk only to resell it at cheaper prices, that is, middle- and upper-class women.