

Professional Blindness And Missing The Mark ~ Sexual Slander And The 1965/66 Mass Killings In Indonesia: Political And Methodological Considerations



ABSTRACT. Indonesia has been haunted by the “spectre of communism” since the putsch by military officers on 1 October 1965. That event saw the country’s top brass murdered and the military attributing this putsch to the Communist Party. The genocide that followed was triggered by a campaign of sexual slander. This led to the real coup and the replacement of President Sukarno by General Suharto. Today, accusations about communism continue to play a major role in public life and state control remains shored up by control over women’s bodies.

This article introduces the putsch and the socialist women’s organisation *Gerwani*, members of which were, at the time, accused of sexual debauchery. The focus is on the question of how *Gerwani* was portrayed in the aftermath of the putsch and how this affects the contemporary women’s movement.

It is found that women’s political agency has been restricted, being associated with sexual debauchery and social turmoil. State women’s organisations were set up and women’s organisations forced to help build a “stable” society, based on women’s subordination. The more independent women’s groups were afraid to be labelled “*new Gerwani*” as that would unleash strong state repression. This article assesses the implications of these events for the post-1998 period of Reformasi and reviews some recent analyses of 1965, state terrorism and violence and reveals blind spots in dealing with gender and sexual politics. It is argued that the slander against *Gerwani* is downplayed in these analyses. In fact, this

slander was the spark without which the bloodbath would not have happened and would not have acquired its gruesome significance.

KEY WORDS: Sexual politics, communism, nationalism, Indonesia, women's movement, gender

In March 2009 campaigning for the parliamentary elections was in full swing. Nursyahbani Katjasungkana, a popular member of parliament and candidate for the Muslim party *Partai Kebangkitan Bangsa* (PKB or National Awakening Party), in addition to being a well-known human rights lawyer and feminist activist, was campaigning in the district of Banyuwangi, in East Java, unfamiliar territory for her.^[1] Her adversaries mounted a gossip campaign, spreading the rumour that she defended the illegal Partai Komunis Indonesia (PKI). The association this allegation was supposed to evoke was that she was an atheist, opposing the clerical elite of the region, fighting for women's interests and, in general, looking for trouble.

These are serious issues, considering that the PKB is an offshoot of the Nahdlatul Ulema (NU), one of the two largest Muslim organisations in the country. Banyuwangi is considered one of NU's strongholds, with many Muslim boarding schools (*pesantren*) scattered across its vast area. The *kyai*, leaders of these *pesantren*, are the backbone of the NU. This was not the first time Nursyahbani Katjasungkana had been associated with the PKI or with one of its mass organisations. In December 1998, six months after the fall of General Suharto, the first national feminist conference since 1965 was held, in Yogyakarta. NKS, as she is popularly known, chaired the conference at which the Indonesian Women's Congress (Kongres Perempuan Indonesia or KPI) was established. This was the first feminist mass organisation since the destruction of Gerwani. At the time, NKS was accused of being "Gerwani baru" or a new Gerwani member. That term was reiterated by the then Minister of Women's Affairs, Tuti Alifiah in a Cabinet meeting in 1999, where she discussed her worries about the establishment of the KPI (NKS, personal communication, April 2009).

Only a few months earlier, when General Suharto was still in power, such an accusation could land one in serious trouble. But even in December 1999, with *reformasi* proclaimed, mention of Gerwani caused considerable unrest. At the congress, Ibu Sulami, a former secretary of the national leadership of Gerwani, spoke about Gerwani, its history and destruction. This was the first time Ibu

Sulami had addressed a public meeting, having been imprisoned for 17 years.**[2]** Many participants were shocked by what she said, having believed the absurd lies the Suharto regime had spread about Gerwani 's alleged involvement in the murder of the generals who were killed in the early morning of 1 October 1965.**[3]** Because of the presence of Ibu Sulami, the delegates of Aisyah , the women's organisation of the Muhammadiyah, the other large Indonesian Muslim mass organisation, withdrew in protest.

Few events have impacted Indonesian modern history more deeply than the mass murders of 1965/66 which eventually led to the establishment of the New Order under President Suharto. Yet what triggered these mass murders has mostly been hidden under deep layers of fear, guilt, horror and shame. Clearly the trauma of the "events of 1965," as they are commonly referred to, is still playing an important role in the national imagination. Other than in countries like South Africa, Chile, Cambodia, Argentina and Rwanda, where processes of truth finding have led to some reconciliation, in Indonesia there still has not been a national process aimed at finding truth.**[4]**

Many issues remain unclear, such as the role Suharto himself played and the extent of the genocide unleashed by the military assisted by religious and, in some cases, conservative nationalist forces. At the local level, some careful efforts at reconciliation are being made by the members of Syarikat Islam (Muslim Association), set up in Yogyakarta in 2003. This process means that young people are being confronted with the mysterious pasts of their parents which have created insurmountable rifts between the families of the killers and of their victims. At the very emotional meeting when Syarikat Islam was launched, members of Ansor , the youth movement of the NU, confessed to having butchered PKI members in 1965. In tears they declared they thought they had been doing the right thing at the time, "cleansing" society from the perceived communist evil. In any case, they said, they had had little choice as they had acted under threat of the military. **[5]**

The hatred and fear of Gerwani are still so strong that the shooting of *Lastri*, a film based on a series of interviews with ex-Gerwani members, but with a more romantic fictional story line, was prohibited (Nadia, 2007). Early in 2009, after protests by members of the Surakarta branch of the Front Pembela Islam (FPI or Muslim Defender's Front) a right-wing Muslim militia group, the mayor of that city forbade Eros Djarot, the director, to shoot the film on location. The

arguments used by the FPI were that the film would violate the rights of the Muslim community. The film was seen to be part of a propaganda strategy to create sympathy for communism. A press statement published by the FPI declared further that this was a similar propaganda strategy as the Jews used to enhance sympathy for Israel by stressing the suffering of the many Holocaust victims. The FPI noted that films have a great potential to sway the minds of people, particularly when they contain a love story.

FPI strongly opposed the views of the director that the present beliefs of what happened at Lubang Buaya, the field where the army officers were killed, were just a fairy tale.**[6]** As will be explained, Gerwani members present when the generals were murdered were falsely accused of sexually torturing them. The film tried to debunk these fabrications. The inhabitants of Karanganyar, where the shooting of the film was to take place, joined the protests and demanded that permission for the filming be withdrawn.**[7]** Later, students of the Himpunan Mahasiswa Islam Bogor (HMI Bogor or Muslim Students Union) expressed their solidarity with the protesters.

Using a phrase from the New Order, they feared, so they declared, that the film would stir up the "latent danger" of the PKI (Jurnal Bogor , 19 December 2008). Reformasi is apparently not such a clean break as many had hoped at the time. Old wounds were not suddenly healed; democracy and truth did not emerge out of the toxic moral morass of the New Order. Old ghosts continue to haunt Indonesian society. The association of communism with atheism, the destruction of the family, women's declining sexual morals and a loss of social harmony persists to this very day. Communism is still prohibited. An attempt to legitimise communist thought failed in the Majelis Permusyawaratan Rakyat (MPR or People's Consultative Assembly) in August 2003. When NU chairman Abdulrahman Wahid (popularly known as Gus Dur) became president, he suggested that the ban on communism be lifted and that the former members of the party be allowed to vote, a right that had been denied them since 1965. Immediately, on 8 April 2000, a mass demonstration organised by the Front Umat Islam Indonesia (FUII or Front of the Indonesian Muslim Community) marched to the presidential palace, burning the PKI flag. One of their banners read: "We are confused! We love Gus (Dur) but we hate communism and Zionism" (Jakarta Post , 8 April 2000).

In Medan and Jambi similar demonstrations were held. In Jambi three demands were formulated: continue the ban on communism, no restoration of diplomatic

ties with Israel and an end to prostitution (Kompas , 8 April 2000). It was no surprise that when the proposal to lift the ban came to the vote in the MPR, it was defeated. Only the PDI-P (Partai Demokrasi Indonesia-Perjuangan or Indonesian Democratic Party-Struggle), the party led by Sukarno's daughter Megawati Sukarnoputri, declared it was unjust that people associated with the PKI still could not vote (Kompas, 2 August 2003). When the issue of the voting rights of people associated with the PKI again was discussed in the MPR in 2004, strong opposition was voiced by an uncle of Abdurrahman Wahid, kyai Yusuf Hasyim, the leader of a big pesantren in Jombang. He said he was supported by many kyai, as they had experienced the "terror and intimidation and even the violence [of the PKI] towards the pesantren" (Tempo Interaktif 4 March 2004).

Opposition to anybody or anything associated with the PKI, and with Gerwani in particular, is less strident than during the Old Order, when anything associated with liberalism, activism and human and women's rights was considered "communist depravity." But, as Heryanto (2006: 9) rightly maintains, present-day Indonesian society cannot be understood without reference to the impact of the events of 1965 as these events continue to have a hold on people's minds and in society at large.

Suharto and his allies were able to maintain their grip on the country and terrorised many for so long by constantly reviving the spectre of communism and this has deeply influenced the texture of Indonesian society. Within this system of domination, the defamation of women's sexuality, based on the association of progressive women with unspeakable acts of debauchery, has played a large role in triggering the genocide of 1965/66. It stands to reason, then, that scholarship would pay attention to these issues and to gender issues more broadly.

While there were many mass organisations associated with the PKI, its women's organisation was the object of most hatred. Former members of the Peasant Unions, for instance, who had carried contentious actions for land reform about which the kyai were incensed, were not similarly reviled. Nor were the members of the party's Youth Wing – some of whom had contributed limited support to the plotters – the subject of such hatred and vilification. All through the New Order the word Gerwani was associated with allegedly unspeakable sexual perversions. People lowered their voices when referring to the "evil mothers of Gerwani."

The police treated women activists harshly and often sexualised their violence against them.⁸ It took enormous courage for women to set up the first feminist

organisations in the 1980s, such as Yasanti in Yogyakarta in 1982, Kalyanamitra in Jakarta (1984) and, in the early 1990s, groups such as Solidaritas Perempuan and Asosiasi Perempuan Indonesia untuk Keadilan (APIK or Indonesian Women's Association for Justice), as women's political activism was still associated with moral depravity.[9]

Schoolbooks still echo the army version of history that has the army saving the nation from the treacherous communists (McGregor, 2005; McGregor, 2007). In 2007 new schoolbooks were produced in which this army version was contested. However, this effort met with strong protests from political forces associated with the previous regime and the new books were collected and burnt. The order for this was given by the country's then Attorney General, Abdul Rahman Saleh; it was widely rumoured that President General Yudhoyono might be involved in this action, as his father-in-law, Colonel Sarwo Edhie, was the main executioner of the genocide.¹⁰

After the 1 October 1965 putsch the government went all out to associate any kind of resistance to the army with communism, feminism, sexual depravity and violence, even producing a film, which was compulsory viewing for school children on many occasions, such as Independence Day, and a novel on the topic (Heryanto, 2006: 7-9).

The Sexual Politics of 1965/66

What triggered this putsch which ultimately led to the complete transformation of Indonesian society? In short: on the night of 1 October 1965 three officers, supported by a few troops in Jakarta, wiped out the country's top brass, apart from General Suharto and General Nasution, who was wounded. The perpetrators were selfproclaimed leftist officers who said they acted to protect President Sukarno. They apparently wanted to abduct the right-wing generals and counted on the support of President Sukarno. However, they botched the operation; the abducted generals were killed and their bodies hidden in a well (see Roosa, 2006). They were supported by a few top members of the Communist Party which, as a whole, was not informed.

Some members of the youth movement of the Communist Party were employed to guard strategic buildings around Freedom Square in Jakarta. Women were not involved and were never indicted in the trials that followed (Wieringa, 1995; Wieringa, 2002). The putsch collapsed within one day, and General Suharto, who surprisingly was not captured, gained control over the army. Afterwards a

campaign of sexual slander was launched with the help of army newspapers (the only newspapers still permitted) and the national radio. This slander claimed members of the communist women's organisation, Gerwani, were accused of having killed and castrated the generals. A genocide followed, the dimensions of which have never been fully uncovered. Probably over a million people were massacred.[11]

Thereafter the power of the then President Sukarno was so weakened that in March 1966 he was forced to hand over power to the general behind the mass murders, Suharto. In 1967, Suharto was formally installed as president. Thus, the putsch was not a real coup, it was only the prelude to the slow but exceedingly bloody campaign that destabilised and ultimately unseated Sukarno (Roosa, 2006; Wieringa, 1995).

It is important to understand the background to the putsch. By mid-1965, tensions in Indonesian society were reaching a climax. In the countryside the actions of the Barisan Tani Indonesia (BTI or the Indonesian Peasants' Front), which demanded the rapid implementation of the recently introduced land reform laws, had thoroughly disturbed social relations. Particularly the kyai of large pesantren were inflamed, as they had extensive landholdings and had been the objects of many of the "unilateral actions" of the BTI. Rising levels of inflation caused increased poverty, particularly in urban areas. The relationship between the army leaders and conservative religious, mainly Muslim, groups on the one hand and the PKI on the other, became increasingly tense, with President Sukarno leaning more than ever towards the PKI side. Only he seemed able to keep the competing factions together.

The PKI was particularly worried that Sukarno might not be able to continue to protect them in view of the six assassination attempts which had been made on him (May, 1978). The PKI had been flexing its muscles in staging large mass demonstrations (Roosa, 2006). Meanwhile, right-wing forces, led by the army, had been quietly building a mass base, which its main organiser, Brigade General Djuhartono, claimed was larger than that of the "PKI family."¹² Declassified CIA documents analysed by Simpson provide further insight into how the right-wing military prepared itself for a showdown with the PKI (cited in Roosa, 2006).

In this tense situation several middle-ranking officers of the army, led by Colonel Untung, staged a military putsch. They wanted, so they testified later, to protect the President against plans of an alleged Council of Generals, which, so they had

come to believe, intended to overthrow Sukarno on Army Day falling on 5 October (Latief, 2000). Also, they were discontented with the corrupt and decadent lifestyle of some of those generals, in particular Yani (Crouch, 1978: 38-42). Their plans were vaguely discussed in several meetings of the PKI politburo, during which some limited, but only political, support was promised to the plotters (Mortimer, 1974: 392-4). Roosa (2006) has convincingly argued that party leader Aidit was the only one in the official party organisation who was in contact with the Special Bureau, headed by Sjam, who was tasked with contacting officers supportive of the PKI.

Aidit never fully informed the other members of the politburo. Even so, Aidit had mentioned that he was about to organise a “shortcut” to PKI ideals (Wieringa, 1995; Wieringa, 2002). Roosa (2006) recently speculated on the adventurism of Aidit which made him fall with open eyes into the trap set by the generals who had been waiting for just such a move of the PKI in order to attack the party. Miscommunication between Sjam and Aidit, on the one hand, and the officers, on the other, may account for the extraordinary clumsiness with which the putsch was executed.

In the early morning of 1 October 1965, six generals and one lieutenant (who was picked up instead of the main target of the plotters, General Nasution) were killed and their bodies were thrown into a deep well known as Lubang Buaya (Crocodile Hole), at a training field for volunteers of the Malaysia Konfrontasi campaign, which had been mostly used by volunteers of the PKI-affiliated youth organisation and the women’s organisation Gerwani . The field belonged to the air force.

Before the day was out General Suharto’s forces had managed to cajole and threaten half of the rebel forces into submission (Crouch, 1978: Chapter 4). In the meantime, President Sukarno had decided not to appoint General Suharto, who was next in line to replace the murdered Chief of Staff, General Yani, possibly because he considered him too strong-willed (Anderson and McVey, 1971). Instead he appointed the more junior General Pranoto Reksosamudro. Infuriated, Suharto ignored the orders of his President. He issued his own radio announcement that he had taken over the army leadership to restore security and order (Crouch, 1978: 132). Two weeks later Sukarno was compelled to replace Pranoto with Suharto. The propaganda campaign, the massacre and mass detainment followed.

How to interpret these events?

The army immediately declared that the PKI was the dalang (puppeteer) behind the coup, through its Special Bureau, headed by Sjam. The fullest account of the army view is given by Notosutanto and Saleh (1968). The PKI, on the other hand, maintained initially that it was purely an intra-military affair. This version was supported abroad by a paper circulated since 1966 authored by Anderson and McVey (1971), two social scientists from Cornell University.

A third interpretation is that Suharto and possibly the CIA were behind a conspiracy to break the power of the PKI. Holzappel (1979), Scott (1985) and Wertheim (1979; 1991) have elaborated this view. This interpretation stresses the class aspects of both the coup and the propaganda campaign which followed it, pointing out that most victims fell in the areas where peasant unrest had been heaviest. Crouch (1978: Chapter 4) suggested the PKI played a role in what was basically an intra-army affair but gave little support for his view.

Recent research by Roosa (2006), based on an analysis of court documents, recently declassified CIA papers and some interviews, fills in many of the details that earlier researchers missed. His conclusion is that Aidit and Sjam were fully involved; Sjam carried the major responsibility as he was directly in contact with the military officers Untung, Latief and Supardjo. Between all of them, mainly through lack of communication and clumsy planning, the whole project was bungled. The army, which had long waited for an opportunity to attack the PKI and had prepared for that with the help of the CIA, grabbed its chance and began destroying the PKI (Roosa, 2006).

However, this interpretation still has major gaps. One is the role of General Suharto. It is not clear why Suharto was not captured with the other senior soldiers. If the plotters believed he would condone their action, as Latief (2000) suggested in his memoirs, they were thoroughly mistaken. Second, how was it that General Nasution and General Pranoto were sidestepped by Suharto? Third, if, as Roosa (2006: 22 and 178) suggests, the plans for an attack on the PKI had already been prepared beforehand, why was it three weeks before the killing started? Fourth, Roosa (2006: 29 and 198-200) refers to the psychological warfare the army staged, and mentions that the stories of castrations were a lie. He ignores the fact that it was sexual slander that was used in the campaign and that it was associated with women. The peasant and the youth movement were more directly involved as political actors prior to the putsch, but they were not slandered. What is the power of sexual politics in Indonesia that made these lies so effective? And who concocted them?

In my earlier analysis of the post-independence women's movement in Indonesia (Wieringa, 1995), I focused on Gerwani, the campaign they were subjected to and the role Suharto might have played. On the basis of interviews, I mostly agreed with Crouch's analysis that the putsch was an intra-military affair with support from some members of the PKI politburo (Crouch, 1979). I focused on Suharto's critical role not so much in the putsch itself, of which he was probably merely informed, but particularly in the subsequent "real" coup, the taking over of power from the nation's leader, President Sukarno. Suharto has shown himself to be a ruthless and very ambitious man and a person able to wait patiently for the right moment to strike. The information he had received from his friend Latief (and possibly through his own intelligence) may have convinced him that the coup was so clumsily planned, with so little actual support that it would be too risky to support it, while it could very easily be put down (see Latief, 2000). He would then come out as the great saviour of the nation and Sukarno would have had no other choice than to appoint him Chief of Staff instead of the abducted Yani.¹³ The start of the propaganda campaign which formed this second, "real" coup, the contours of which may have long been sketched by the army, as Roosa (2006) suggests, may have been when Sukarno appointed another officer to temporary Army Chief instead, which humiliated and enraged Suharto and made him realise that his only access to power lay in the removal of Sukarno. And that, in order to replace the President, his most powerful support group at the time, the communists, had to be destroyed (see Wieringa, 1995; Wieringa, 2002). Why else would Suharto defy the President's orders to obey Pranoto? If, as Roosa (2006) suggests, the struggle was only between communist and anti-communist forces, Pranoto could have done the job of destroying the PKI as well as any other general, as could General Nasution who was wounded but escaped being abducted. Suharto thus had to come up with a plan. The situation was extremely tense and he devised a plan which I maintain served as the spark for the powder keg, the volatile economic and political condition of the time. He thus created a situation of cosmic disorder, which in the Javanese mind, could be set straight only by ritual cleansing, which the army efficiently engineered.

Demonising Communist Women: The "Real" Coup and Suharto's Rise

Based on research conducted in the early 1980s, my reconstruction of what actually happened at Lubang Buaya is the following. On the day of the event, some 70 women, most of them young girls from the communist youth organisation, others from the trade union and the farmers' front, and a few

Gerwani members, including some wives of soldiers, were assembled at Lubang Buaya for the anti-Malaysia Campaign. At the last moment a few Gerwani cadres and some non-Gerwani wives of the Cakrabirawa palace guards, soldiers absolutely loyal to Sukarno, had been called up to join the women and girls. A few of them were given the task of sewing stripes on uniforms, presumably for members of the youth wing who had been assigned roles to support the alleged left-wing conspirators. But they had no idea why they had to sew new stripes on uniforms. This activity should have been carried out much earlier, for the youths should have received their shirts before coming into action.

This late allocation of tasks fits with Roosa's (2006) analysis of the poor planning of the whole adventure. The plotters could make use of Lubang Buaya as it was under the control of the air force, which was antagonistic to the conservative army staff and brought their victims there. Gerwani as an organisation was left out of the plans.**[14]**

What happened then? Where did the wild accusations come from that were later hurled at them of "naked, sexual dancing," of having "severed the penises of the generals" and of the generals having their "eyes gouged out?" How did the generals die (Anderson, 1987)?

From interviews conducted with surviving leaders of Gerwani and with women who were present at Lubang Buaya, the following account is the most likely.¹⁵ In the early morning of 1 October, the girls and women were woken up by shouts. It was still dark outside and they were all frightened. They ran to the open space where they saw a group of soldiers dragging the kidnapped generals, some of whom had already been killed. The soldiers hit the generals and finally the ones still alive were shot and all bodies were thrown into a well. The soldiers were enraged - they even rained bullets on their victims when they were already dead. Terrorised, the girls and women ran back to Jakarta, most to their homes, others to the headquarters of Gerwani, where Ibu Sujinah and Ibu Sulami, who were secretaries of the organisation as single women, usually slept. Their slumber was disturbed by the banging on their office doors. That was the first time any of the Gerwani leadership heard anything about generals being abducted and some putsch taking place, as none of them were present at Lubang Buaya in that fateful night.

The training at Lubang Buaya was meant to be routine. Nobody interviewed found anything strange in the fact that a few extra volunteers were called up to perform

tasks for the youth organisation. The whole “PKI family” at that time was used to being mobilised for mass actions or other activities.

Afterwards, the army media began circulating stories about dancing, alleged sexual perversions and the cutting off of penises. In fact, the army went to great lengths to construct the stories they decided to circulate. Witnesses were quoted in the only newspapers allowed to appear, and photographs were shown. There were television broadcasts and radio programmes on the “horrors” said to have been committed at Lubang Buaya. How did the military go about that?

The girls and women at Lubang Buaya were arrested and released several times during the first weeks of October, although nobody seemed to be able to come up with any accusations. This puts into doubt the careful planning the army and the CIA had been doing in their hope the PKI would be so stupid as to do exactly what Aidit and Sjam had cooked up with the few officers who carried out the military part in the night of 1 October, as Roosa (2006) asserts. Ultimately, in an as yet unidentified process, the idea of accusing the girls and women of sexual mutilation was conceived, the young women who were captured were horribly tortured, sexually molested, gang raped and then forced to say “yes” to anything their torturers wanted them to testify.¹⁶ A volunteer girl present at Lubang Buaya told me that she was forced to undress in prison and to dance naked in front of her torturers while they took pictures (see Wieringa, 1995; Wieringa, 2002). These shots were later used to “prove” the girls had been dancing naked some weeks earlier.¹⁷

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

A first indication that some gruesome plan was being hatched was a story in the *Berita Yuddha* of 11 October 1965. It reported on the condition of the bodies of the generals from the well. Contrary to what the autopsy revealed, the newspaper

wrote that “eyes had been gouged out, and of some generals had had their genitals cut off.”

This story was the beginning of one of the most effective mass campaigns intended to spread terror since the Second World War. Other army-derived reports tell of women dancing naked and of young women committing sexual acts with the generals (see Wieringa, 1995; Wieringa, 2003a). Spurred on by the army, the campaign got underway; the slogans of students and other groups who were demonstrating against the PKI and Sukarno included Gerwani Tjabul (Gerwani Whores), Gantung Gerwani (Hang Gerwani) and Ganjang Gerwani (Crush Gerwani). Islamic leaders soon joined the chorus. Muhammadiyah declared that the “extermination of the Gestapu/PKI and the Nekolim (neo-colonialist forces) is an obligatory religious duty” (Boland, 1982: 146). This call for a “holy war” was subsequently echoed by many Muslim leaders, who justified the killings of the communists as “the will of Allah” (see Cribb, 1990; Schwarz, 1994). An agreement was drawn up between NU leaders and the army that the youth movement, Ansor, and its armed wing, Banser, would support the army in its extermination of leftists.

The late mother of former President Wahid, Solichah A. Wahid Hasyim, was particularly active in this respect. The agreement was signed by her, and concluded at her house (interview, Khairul (pseud.), NU activist, April 2007).¹⁸ The NU had long prepared for this role. Recently, it has become known that Yusuf Hasyim, a younger brother of Gus Dur, had been studying Hitler’s *Mein Kampf* in order to find out how youth groups could be organised most effectively.¹⁹ The NU women’s wing, Muslimat, joined the aggression against anything related to Gerwani . In Jakarta, for instance, Aisyah Baidhuri, a sister of Gus Dur and a member of parliament, joined in the destruction of the Melati kindergartens which had been set up by Gerwani (Nursyahbani Katjasungkana, personal communication).²⁰

More lurid reports followed, implicating Gerwani members as having prostituted themselves routinely for PKI leaders on the instigation of PKI chairman Aidit.²¹ It is striking that, following their “confessions,” none of the women who had been present at Lubang Buaya and who had been detained was ever brought to court.²² In December, the campaign lost its vigour. Most of the killing in Java had been done, although in Bali the worst killing took place in the second half of December 1965 (Robinson, 1995; Robinson, 1996). And many were to perish in overcrowded prisons where they were detained under inhumane conditions.

Creation of Disorder

What kind of an organisation was Gerwani ? In the national revolution (1945-49) women's political participation was welcomed. Sukarno called the women's movement the "second wheel" on the chariot of the national revolution (Sukarno, 1963). Thereafter, though, they were expected to return to the "kitchen, bed, and well," (dapur , kasur , sumur , the three spaces where women were supposed to excel, according to traditional gender ideology). Gerwani , however, insisted that women still had another revolution to fight: freedom from subordination as women and for their right to act in the political arena. As members of the "left family," for instance, they assisted farmers, male and female, imprisoned for their involvement in the farmers' movement and women workers. In large demonstrations they protested the deplorable economic situation. They campaigned tirelessly against violence against women. They called themselves "progressive" women. The organisation was never formally associated with the PKI but, when they were forced in early 1965 to align themselves with one or another party, they had decided to formally join the "PKI family." That decision was to be ratified at their December 1965 congress, which due to the political upheaval, never took place (Wieringa, 2002). Gerwani 's political and social activities earned them the reputation of trouble-makers with the more traditional women's organisations, and with conservative groups in general, particularly the Muslim establishment.

The significance of the campaign of sexual slander against Gerwani lies in the deliberate manipulation of the collective cultural and religious conscience of the Indonesian population. This manipulation involved the deliberate creation of the disorder on which Suharto built his road to power. Suharto (1966) wrote explicitly that "a mental transition" had been required in a pamphlet that appeared a year after the putsch . Because of Sukarno's great popularity and the large following of the PKI, which strongly supported President Sukarno, it was not an easy task to eliminate the PKI. Yet it was necessary, Suharto felt, to destroy the party as that would be the only way to discredit the President. Another reason to go slowly and to first prepare the required "mental transition" is put forward by Suharto (1991) in his autobiography. He explains that a military coup would have been much faster, but that such drastic action might have entailed the danger of a counter-coup. It seems that a climate of disorder was deliberately created to exploit the deep anxieties of a population, which was already badly shaken by political and socio-economic tensions. This disorder struck chords with the people's fear of the

uncontrolled sexual powers of women, a religiously inspired apprehension that women's disobedience would endanger the entire social system, Hindu notions of all-female maniacal crowds and a male horror of castration (Mernissi, 1985; Tiwon, 1996).

Islamic youth groups, mainly NU's Banser and Ansor, assisted the army and especially the troops of Colonel Edhie in Java. Edhie, later to become the father-in-law of President Yudhoyono, was in charge of the elimination of the PKI and its mass organisations (Crouch, 1978; Robinson, 1995). In other places, especially in Bali, members of the conservative wing of the PNI were involved as well. Hindu Balinese saw the killing of people associated with the PKI "as the fulfilment of a religious obligation to purify the land" (Robinson, 1995: 300). Robinson argues that the killings in Bali were spurred by a campaign mounted by the local military and police authorities. In the building of German fascism, too, the exploitation of (male) sexual fears played an important role (see Theweleit, 1987). In general, control over women's bodies and sexuality is an important tool for nation building (Mosse, 1985; Wieringa, 2003a; Yuval-Davis, 1997).

Sexual Politics and Suharto's New Order

In March 1966, General Suharto knew the time was ripe for him to wrest power from President Sukarno.²³ For the next 30 years the New Order state waged a campaign of sexual imagining - posing the government against "communist whores" - a crusade aimed at presenting the army under Suharto as the virile saviours of a nation on the brink of destruction. Long after the PKI had been destroyed in one of the bloodiest transitions to power in modern times, the spectre of communism, especially as animated by its women, was still called upon to justify the harsh repression of any democratic anti-government forces. As Enloe (1990: 45) wrote, "nationalism has typically sprung from masculinized memory, masculinized humiliation and masculinized hope." Masculine memories, hopes and humiliations often centre around women's sexuality. Their "own" women's chastity has to be defined and protected, while the "other" women are either constructed as objects of rape or they are disciplined in other ways. This had wide ramifications in society, the association of evil with its dark sexual undercurrent also extended to many cultural sectors. In Java, many performers of traditional art forms were also affected. This was because the "PKI family" had its own cultural association, LEKRA, members of which supported the PKI's ideological struggles. As a PKI-associated organisation LEKRA and its members would anyhow be

persecuted in the general massacre.

However, as Agung Putri, director of ELSAM (Lembaga Studi dan Advokasi Masyarakat or Foundation for the study and advocacy of society), asserted during a seminar at the office of the National Human Rights Commission. (15 April 2010), citing the analysis of Dr Rachmi Larasati, LEKRA was specifically targeted, and the sexual savagery which was created around Gerwani helped in this campaign against them.²⁴

Sexual politics thus underlay the construction of the New Order regime. Sexual politics deal with the moral, sexual, symbolic, cultural and political codes in which individuals, families and the nation are linked, and with the interplay between sexed and gendered bodies and the socio-political realm. In Indonesia the putsch of 1 October 1965 unleashed a bitter struggle in which the military version of family life and state power prevailed over that of another patriarchal force, the Communist Party. In the process the communist “revolutionary” family was wiped out and the military family form, built on an excessively masculine power obsessed with control and women’s submission, became the dominant one. Women were no longer defined as comrades in the revolutionary struggle, but as submissive wives and devoted mothers. Suharto became the super-patriarch, as Father of the Development Family he wanted his New Order state to be.

Clash of Masculinities

In this clash of masculinities both sides had their own version of the ideal family. The PKI had built a hybrid construct called the “Manipol” family, composed of nationalist-Sukarnoist and socialist rhetoric. The word “Manipol” comes from Manifesto Politik, Sukarno’s 1959 Independence Day speech. Women in these Manipol families supported their men as revolutionary fighters for a bright socialist future, while struggling along in their own women’s organisation, Gerwani, which also claimed a role in the national political arena. The women combined political, socialist and nationalist activities with their duties in the household (Wieringa, 2002).

In Suharto’s Development state women were responsible for the strict obedience of the family as a whole to the patriarchal, authoritarian national ideology Suharto imposed on the nation (Blackburn, 2004a; Suryakusuma, 1996; Wieringa, 1985). For this project women’s sexuality had to be controlled and state-controlled women’s organisations had to be set up in order to ensure that women behaved with the required obedience. The legitimacy of the New Order state thus rested largely on the measure of control it exercised both over its “own” women,

as well as over the “abject” communist women and the “enemy” men who were portrayed as being responsible for the “perverse,” “inhuman,” “primitive” behaviour of “their” women. These abject women were so powerless that even after they had been released they could be used as sexual slaves (Nadia, 2007; Susanti, 2006).

Throughout Suharto’s rule the PKI was associated with these two words: *penghianat* (“traitor”) and *biadab* (“savage”). The PKI was thus excluded from the nation and even from humanity as such. The alleged “savagery” of the PKI rested in large part on the accusations of sexual debauchery of women associated with the party.

The regime tried to keep the fantasy it had created alive by building an enormous museum, called “Museum Penghianatan (Betrayal) PKI,” on the site where the generals were murdered. It contains huge murals of photographs, composed of pictures taken, amongst other places, at the well of Lubang Buaya. Strikingly, the pictures of the bodies of the generals, terrible as they are, show no signs of razor blade cuts, and there are no bloody patches on the places where the castrations should have taken place. All the crotches, as far as visible, are intact. The uniforms of the murdered generals, also on display in a room of the same building, show no damage where castrations would have taken place, while the blood from shot wounds in other parts of their bodies is visible (see Wieringa, 2002).

The monument on the same site is called “Monumen Pancasila Sakti (sacred) Lubang Buaya .” It is a huge semi-circular construction in front of a pillar and a statue of the Garuda, the national bird. Statues of the slain generals and lieutenant in a vigorous attitude, and in full military attire, are placed on a platform. Below them the history of Indonesia since 1945, according to Suharto, is presented in a mural. It is here that the full ideological weight of the way the New Order regime was built on the subordination of women and the manipulation of sexual symbols becomes clear (Wieringa, 2002; Wieringa, 2003a; McGregor, 2007). The central part of the mural is devoted to the events at Lubang Buaya (Figure 1). The generals are being clubbed and thrown into the well. They are surrounded by representations of women. To the left three women are standing. One of them is dressed in a sexual manner and argues defiantly with a man. The arguing couple is very ugly. Beside her two dancing women are arranged, one of whom has a wreath of flowers (representing the so-called “Dance of the Fragrant Flowers,” by means of which the unfortunate generals were allegedly seduced).

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

The central element of the ideological fury unleashed around women's involvement in the murders of Lubang Buaya is that Gerwani in its "communist," "perverted" madness had the major hand in torturing and killing the generals, dancing naked and cutting off their penises. The clash of masculinities that formed the core of the internecine struggle between a patriarchal army and a differently patriarchal communist party was played out over women's bodies. The male, militarised honour was constructed as being defamed by communist women and Gerwani's rebellious women were demonised. The control over women's sexuality thus became a matter of prime national concern.**[25]**

As the army was victorious, a militarised masculinity obsessed with control over abject forms of masculinity became the hegemonic ideological force in the New Order state. The femininity that went with that model entailed a return to a conservative kodrat wanita (women's code of conduct), referring to the well-known shadow play figure of the meek, obedient Sumbadra, in contrast to the wayang figure adopted by Gerwani, the warrior-princess Srikandi.**[26]** Those women who had been branded as "communist" or who had somehow been caught up in the cruel aftermath of the "events of 1965" were tainted as abject. Even today, 45 years after the putsch, it is meant as a deep insult to be branded "new Gerwani," as happened to Nusyahbani Katjasungkana.

Reformation or Restoration?

Can we really speak of a period of "reformasi" (reformation), as the present political post-1998 elite claims? School books that question the army version of 1965 are burnt, the making of a film on Gerwani is sabotaged and book bannings are back, including the book by Roosa on the 1965 plot. The women survivors of the genocide against the left prefer to live together in old-age homes, as they do not want to embarrass their grandchildren by having a former Gerwani member living with them, as one of them, Ibu Lestari, explained in an interview (15 April

2010). The association of Gerwani with prostitution is still alive. As Agung Putri, who courageously attempted community reconciliation for many years, said, "their families don't dare to be honest about who their mothers were, and the mothers also are afraid to announce their identities" (Kompas, 23 April 2010). The launch of the Indonesian version of the author's 2002 book *Sexual Politics in Indonesia* on 15 April 2010 had to be announced with great circumspection (Wieringa, 2010). The launch was to be accompanied by a television programme, hosted by Kick Andy, on Metro TV, but that was cancelled two days prior to the event due to fears that the strongly anti-communist and anti-gay Muslim militia Front Pembela Islam (Muslim Defenders' Front) might become involved (communication from Stanley Ruhoro, commissioner, National Human Rights Commission). The preview of the film by MajWechselmann, entitled "The Women and the Generals," which took place at the same event, could not be publicly announced, as the organising committee also feared the Front Pembela Islam. As Nursyahbani Katjasungkana, a former member of parliament who spoke at the event, maintained, the "Indonesian state still allows the continuation of this physical, psychological and symbolic violence, and thus causes a silence in which the civil rights of millions of its citizens are still denied" (Kompas, 23 April 2010). With the police unwilling to defend human rights activists, and the rise to power of several prominent generals known to be involved in human right violations, I suggest that the 1998 reformation period has turned into a regime in which increasingly old powers are restoring their influence (see Robison and Hadiz, 2004). In this process of restoration, sexual politics again play an important role. Hard-line Islamic groups, such as the Front Pembela Islam and the conservative Majelis Ulama Islam (Muslim Clerics Council or MUI), but also many regional parties and groups, increasingly base their claims on legitimacy and their bids for political power on control over women's behaviour and dress codes, various forms of control over sexuality in general, and over women's sexuality, in particular (see Katjasungkana, forthcoming). Indonesian women's groups fight this growing influence, which they attribute to the growth of an alien, "Arabic" form of Islam (Wieringa, 2009). Particularly the proliferation of regional by-laws since the beginning of reformasi, the so-called perda (peraturan daerah lit regional by-laws, qanun in Aceh, the only part of the country in which Islamic law is allowed) contains several articles which control women's bodies and sexuality and violate the country's national laws (Noerdin et al., 2005). State officials and senior politicians seem unwilling to confront these violations of the constitution. The legal situation for women is worsening. The most recent examples are the review

of the request for a judicial review of the 2008 anti-pornography law in which women's bodies are targeted and the 2009 health law which contains various clauses that restrict women's control over their own bodies.[27]

Conclusion: Role of Scholars

Do scholars of Indonesia pay sufficient attention to gender analysis in this political process? The above analysis bears on a number of topics that are hotly debated among scholars. In the first place on the never-yet-resolved riddle of who exactly triggered the actual coup of 1966, the transfer of power from President Sukarno to General Suharto. Roosa (2006) has done most of the detective work in unmasking the plotters. At the same time, he has hardly touched on Suharto's rise to power and the explicit use of sexual slander. He mentions "psychological warfare" a few times and dismisses the rumours of castration as nonsense, but he does not reflect on the question of why these rumours were created in the first place and what effects they had in Suharto's creeping coup. Why were women's bodies and sexuality singled out?

Secondly, a gender analysis is relevant to theories of the formation of the modern Indonesian nation and on nation building in general. If nation building in modern times, as Anderson (1983) maintains, is a project of the imagination, what kind of masculinist imagination has been at work here? Third, this gender analysis of violence is interesting for those who are working on the roots of violence, particularly in Indonesia. Fourth, scholars of the Indonesian women's movement and of gender relations in Indonesia, Asia and elsewhere will find certain elements they can use. It is striking that only this last group of scholars regularly refer to Gerwani's history and the ramifications of the sexualisation of persecution in 1965/6 (see Blackburn, 2004a). The other three groups of scholars have generally maintained silence.

One might hope that 30 years after the basic insights into the workings of gender relations became available (e.g. Rubin, 1975; Scott, 1989) scholars would have incorporated this body of work into their basic tool kit, as has happened with many other theories of social transformation and nation building that have been developed since the 1970s. However, this is not the case. Apart from Roosa's book, discussed throughout this article, I provide two other examples of studies which would have been immensely enriched had they dealt with gender relations and sexual politics.

In 2002, Colombijn and Lindblad published an anthology, entitled *Roots of Violence in Indonesia*. Of the twelve chapters none is devoted to Gerwani and the

1965/6 massacres, although several articles refer to the putsch and its aftermath to discuss other moments of violence. This is in itself surprising, as with about one million people murdered it ranks as one of the major bloodbaths in modern history and the largest one in Indonesian modern history. It is striking that an analysis of gender relations and the sexualisation of violence is missing, even where the putsch is discussed. How is it possible to analyse the “roots” of violence if this critical aspect is ignored? Gerwani itself is only referred to twice. Cribb (2002) mentions that Gerwani members were among the major victims of the violence unleashed by the Suharto group. He gives no sources and does not elaborate. He does note that the PKI is “demonized,” but he fails to mention the sting of this demonisation, its sexual overtones.

Elson (2002) goes a step further, writing of stories of “sadistic tortures and mutilations,” using the term “sexual depravity.” But he too neglects to refer to any sources that analyse this campaign, and he bases himself not on the most direct primary sources, the army press, but on the much-toned down articles in other periodicals and newspapers. Unable to understand the ramifications of this campaign of “sexual depravity,” he concludes that “it is difficult to decide” whether “Suharto really believed . . . that the PKI was ultimately responsible for Gestapu. . .” (Elson, 2002: 180). Why else would Suharto go to such lengths as to construct such gruesome tales and to fabricate “proof” of the alleged depravities of the girls by filming them naked in the prison, some weeks after the murders took place? In the next paragraph, he states that “Suharto must bear final responsibility for the massacres . . .” but this conclusion is based on a post-facto analysis of the ways the military and their allies went about the killings, not on who masterminded the stories of “sexual depravity” in the first place.

Elson seems reluctant to recognise that Suharto and his allies had deliberately construed the “sexual depravity” of which Gerwani was accused. He writes: “. . . Suharto and his followers made much capital out of the sadistic tortures and mutilations allegedly visited upon the dead or dying generals” (Elson, 2002: 180). The key word here is “allegedly.” Who orchestrated the belief in these so-called tortures, if not Suharto himself? Elson’s statement is more interesting as on the previous page he had described Suharto being present when the bodies of the murdered generals were uncovered. Thus, he must have seen very clearly at that moment that their crotches were still intact and that no eyes had been gouged out.

This is also borne out by the display of the uniforms of the murdered officers in

the museum erected at Lubang Buaya. All blood stains are still clearly visible. Yet no blood is found on the crotches.

Another example is a recently published study of state terrorism in Indonesia, by the well-known political scholar Ariel Heryanto (2006). Heryanto's book is an incisive analysis of the consequences of the 1965/6 mass killings in Indonesia. He gives many examples of how only by understanding how the spectre of communism is manipulated one is able to analyse the social and political dynamics in Indonesia. He supports the thesis that the mass killings of 1965/6 laid the groundwork for the military, authoritarian rule of General Suharto. Fully aware of the power of ideology, he examines two key texts in the continued production of terror in Indonesia, a novel and a film produced in the 1980s. Their title is the same, "The Treason of the 30 September Movement/the Indonesian Communist Party." They are based on the army version of the putsch and the violence that followed it and demonised the PKI, legitimising the rule of the army as the saviour of the nation.

Millions of students and other citizens were obliged to watch the film. Both film and book thus played a similar role as newspapers and the radio played in 1965/6.**[28]**

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

This failure has two major consequences. First Heryanto is unable to explain why the women's movement, haunted by fear of being called "new Gerwani" was so weakened under the New Order. Women's political agency became suspect, an issue that would be strengthened in later years by the rising tide of Muslim fundamentalism. Second, by ignoring the sexual overtones in the perpetuation of the "spectre of communism," Heryanto cannot explain convincingly the continued power of this "spectre" in the national imagination.

What are the consequences of this neglect of a gender analysis? The most obvious

are:

- (i) the neglect of one of the most pervasive relations of inequality in Indonesian society;
- (ii) an inability to understand major social phenomena which are greatly influenced by gender relations, such as nation building, violence, social movements, regionalisation, globalisation;
- (iii) contributing to the continuation of the genderblindness of the social sciences;²⁹ and
- (iv) an inability to contribute to the emancipation of all sectors of Indonesian society.

Gender studies within Indonesian studies is still seen as something about women and by women, as if studies on rural relations could only be written by peasants about peasants. Hence, while it is expected that scholars of women's studies are well versed in the literature produced by their "male-stream" colleagues, "male-stream" Indonesianists hardly cite the literature that they considered "women's literature."

Why the "male-stream" is seemingly unable to cite from the wider literature on gender remains unclear.

The same silence reigns regarding the beginning of the mass unrest that forced Suharto to step down in May 1989. All accounts dealing with this critical transition mention the student demonstrations and the May riots. In these events sexual politics - in this case the mass rapes of Chinese women - play a significant role.

Indeed, it is barely remembered that women marched first to protest against the effects the economic crisis of 1997/8 had on ordinary people (Forrester and May, 1998). On 23 February 1998, these women demanded affordable food and milk for their children. This was a strong attack on Suharto, for as the self-proclaimed "Father of the Nation," he could not be seen to be unable to provide for the nation's babies. After that, women's organisations, such as Suara Ibu Peduli (SIP, Voice of Concerned Mothers), were among the first to forge an anti-Suharto coalition, though they were later eclipsed by the students (SIP, 1999; Wieringa, 2002).

Gender relations and sexual politics can no longer be neglected by the scholars dealing with this deep trauma in Indonesian history. In the bulletin *Setelah Nonton Film Pembantaian* (After seeing the film on the massacres, 14 September

2000), Balinese poet Putu Oka declared: “the mental construction of the community has been destroyed” by the events of 1965/6. Sexual politics form the core of this process of moral decay. Therefore, only with a careful analysis of the sexual metaphors created by the army and used by them to spur on conservative organisations to kill many thousands of innocent people can a process of reconciliation begin.

NOTES

1 Nursyahbani Katjasungkana was the first secretary-general of the Koalisi Perempuan Indonesia (KPI or Indonesian Women’s Coalition) from 1998 until 2004 and is co-founder of the Association for Women’s Justice (APIK), which by 2010 had 15 local branches. In 2010 she was also the president of the Kartini Asia Network, an Asia-wide network of feminist activists and academics.

2 Ibu Sulami was one of four members of Gerwani and PKI-associated associations to have been tried following the 1965/66 events. These four were not convicted because of their alleged involvement with the murder of the generals, but for their involvement with a movement alleged to have supported the then deposed Sukarno. Copies of their testimonies before the court are held by the author.

3 The author spoke in the same session, having been permitted to return to Indonesia after being blacklisted since 1986. At the session the author presented autopsy results showing the lies about the castrations of the generals. Anderson (1987) was the first to draw attention to the document.

4 Recently the National Human Rights Commission has begun an investigation into the extent of the genocide. By mid-2011, no results have been made public.

5 This information was gleaned from several conversations with Syarikat Islam members in 2004 and 2006. Similar sentiments were voiced by a former leader of Banser, the military wing of Ansor and Heavily involved in the mass killings in Probolinggo (interview, April 2008).

6 The links to this are: <http://www.fpi.or.id/artikel.asp?oy.sik-24> (downloaded 18 May 2009; no longer available). See also <http://www.indonesiamatters.com/3059/lastri/>.

7 See <http://www.kabarindonesia.com> (downloaded 29 November 2008). See also <http://nasional.kompas.com/read/2008/11/19/0025295/unjuk.rasa.mendukung.film.lastri> [Demonstrate Support of the Film Lastri] of 19 November 2008. Director Djarot believes that the “spontaneous protesters” in the countryside were paid by the secret police to sabotage his film. They created such an uproar that the

political leaders prohibited shooting of the film (interview Djarot with Swedish film maker Maj Wechselmann, March 2009).

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

9 Yasanti was set up by Muslim feminists. Kalyanamitra was initially mainly a women's documentation centre. Solidaritas Perempuan focused on women migrant workers. APIK is a network by women's legal aid bureaux set up by Nursyahbani Katjasungkana.

10 The allegation is made by Asvi Warman Adam, from the Indonesian Institute of Sciences (see Australian Broadcasting Corporation, 2007).

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

12 See the author's interview with Djuhartono (Wieringa, 1995; Wieringa, 2002). The main portent of his information is used in a scene in my novel *Lubang Buaya*, where the murders of the generals took place (Wieringa, 2003b).

13 Roosa (2006) provides evidence that strongly suggests that this kind of abduction was a tactic often used in Indonesian history and which led to loss of face for those abducted; Suharto, who was Yani's temporary replacement, would thus probably replace him in full. When it turned out that Yani was murdered, Suharto must have been even more convinced that this was his chance for power.

14 All members of the national leadership interviewed emphatically denied that they had in any way been informed of an impending putsch. None of them has ever been formally accused, while they all spent many years in prison.

15 For the full interviews, see Wieringa (2002). For the atmosphere within the "PKI family," see the Sources cited in Wieringa (2002) and Roosa (2006), especially Hindley (1966), May (1978) and Mortimer (1974).

16 In my novel on *Lubang Buaya* I took the liberty to fictionalise the construction of this process. There is no proof of who else besides army intelligence was involved. I suspect, however, based on many discussions with survivors of the

massacre and people close to the NU and to the rabidly anticommunist Catholic clergy, that NU cleric Subchan and Catholic priest Father Beek may have inspired some of the thinking that went into the fabrications of the lies of sexual torture (see Wieringa, 2003b; Wieringa, 2007).

17 The Swedish filmmaker Maj Wechselmann recently took other interviews with survivors of the camps who told similar stories. Her film ‘‘The Women and the Generals’’ was recently released. See the film’s website, <http://thewomenandthegenerals.wordpress.com/2010/01/28/the-film-the-women-and-the-generals/>.

18 The author has not seen the actual text of this document. Mrs Solichah was a member of parliament from 1960 to 1982 and a leader of the NU women’s organisation, Muslimat NU (see Blackburn, 2004b).

19 This sensational revelation is contained in an interview with Yusuf Hasyim in which he explains what he learnt from Mein Kampf in ‘‘The Women and the Generals’’ by Maj Wechselmann, cited above.

20 Melati means jasmine. It was the symbol of Gerwani, and the kindergartens which the organisation set up were named after this flower.

21 One of the more spectacular accusations was that Aidit would have given an award to a Gerwani girl who would have sexually serviced most PKI cadres (Wieringa, 2002).

22 The author has copies of the court testimonies of the four women leaders who were tried. Ibu Sulami and Ibu Sujinah were members of Gerwani, the others belonging to the women’s wings of the progressive peasant and labour unions. They fled and were captured only when most of the killings were over. They were only ever charged with supporting the pro-Sukarno movement, which was underground as Suharto had banned it. They were all tortured horribly and spent many years in prison. They related the details of their torture in their interviews with the author.

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

24 This seminar was held on the occasion of the publication of the Indonesian translation of *Sexual Politics in Indonesia* (Wieringa, 2002).

25 It is interesting to compare the way Schreiner (2005), a male historian, deals with the Lubang Buaya monument compared with McGregor (2007). Schreiner totally misses the gender elements of the monument, while McGregor provides

the most lucid account of the monument I have read so far, incorporating a gender analysis.

26 Both puppets are wives of the popular shadow play hero Arjuna. Srikanthi is the incarnation of a male character, Amba.

27 Women's groups, such as Komnas Perempuan, APIK and the KPI, are fighting these issues, but they seem powerless to change this trend. In a speech which Nursyahbani Katjasungkana delivered at the opening of the V Film Festival in Jakarta on 21 April 2010, she dealt with the impact of these laws. She clearly linked this continuing (and growing) violation of women's rights to the fate of Gerwani.

28 The film was also shown on television every anniversary of the 30 September putsch.

29 In 1977 I published my first article on Indonesia, a critique of the androcentrism of one of the major texts on Indonesian history, Wertheim's 'Indonesian Society in Transition' (1956). At that time a critique on androcentrism was new. By now gender analysis has become a widely used theory and methodological tool.

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Professional Blindness And Missing The Mark ~ The Anthropologist's Blind Spots: Clifford Geertz On Class, Killings And Communists In Indonesia



When I first went to Indonesia for research in 1972, I was not well prepared at all. The decision to go to Indonesia had been made at short notice. Soon after I discovered that I would not be allowed to go to Burma, I met Clifford Geertz after he had given a lively seminar at Columbia University and he suggested that I shift my interests to Indonesia. Like many graduate students of this era I had been impressed by Geertz's *Agricultural Involution* (1963a). Unlike PhD candidates from universities with strong traditions of teaching and research on Indonesia like Leiden, Wageningen, Amsterdam,

Cornell, Berkeley or Yale I had taken no courses in Indonesian studies, knew only a few words of Indonesian language, and had read only a very few books on Indonesia. Among them was a curious and disturbing booklet called *Indonesia*

1965: The Second Greatest Crime of the Century (Griswold 1970). This booklet gave stark details of the orchestrated anti-Communist backlash after the crushing of a bungled leftist coup attempt in Jakarta (in which twelve persons in total had been killed) and the massacre of hundreds of thousands of alleged communists and communist sympathizers in Java and Bali in late 1965 - early 1966. It also gave a quite different version of the background and course of the massacres than what was to be found in the US Government Printing Office's semi-official *Area Handbook for Indonesia*.

During my stay in Indonesia I found little to read, and few people willing to talk, about the killings or the events of 1965-66 more generally. In the village in Kulon Progo (Yogyakarta) where I lived during 1972-73 there had been no killings, although people were aware that there had been killings in other parts of the district. On two visits to Jakarta the confident young expatriate staff of the Ford Foundation - always a good source of gossip - seemed to hold to a version of the events of 1965-66 that was close to that of the *Area Handbook* and the Indonesian government.

When I returned to New York and had decided more or less to make myself into an Indonesia expert, I was of course curious to learn more. One of the first authors I turned to, not surprisingly, was Clifford Geertz. Besides numerous articles and chapters on Indonesian religion and rural society, Geertz had published five books on Indonesia during the years 1960-1968: *The Religion of Agricultural Involution, Peddlers and Princes, The Social History of an Indonesian Town*, and (after new fieldwork in Morocco in 1963) *Islam Observed: Religious Development in Morocco and Indonesia*. He had also edited a sixth book, *Old Societies and New States* (Geertz, 1963c), on politics in the newly-independent countries of Asia and Africa, which included his much-quoted essay 'The Integrative Revolution: Primordial Sentiments and Civil Politics in the New States'. He was, simply, the world's best-known authority on post-colonial Indonesian society at the time, and it was hardly possible to discuss any aspect of Indonesian society, culture or politics without reference to Geertz's work.

Geertz had undertaken long periods of field research in both Kediri (East Java, 1953-4) and Bali (1958), two regions in which the bulk of the killings had occurred and which had been marked by violent political conflicts both before and after his fieldwork.

While his long field visits both took place several years before 1965-66, a few

years after the massacres Geertz had the opportunity to revisit both his Balinese and Javanese field research sites. In his Balinese field research village, he learned that the killings had taken place in a single night, when 30 families were burned alive in their houses; in Pare (Kediri) the killings had gone on for about a month (Geertz 1995: 8).

In 1971, while on a consulting mission for the Ford Foundation, Geertz had spent time in social science faculties on several Indonesian university campuses; in some of them as many as one-third of all staff had lost their jobs in the anti-communist purges of 1966-7. During this visit he had also spent time in Jakarta as guest of the Ford Foundation, an agency which, having close connections to the US embassy and the CIA as well as the Indonesian military and cabinet, was well in touch with the emerging facts about the involvement of the US government and the Indonesian army in orchestrating the anti-PKI campaigns of 1965-66.

For all these reasons, Geertz was, at that time, probably as well informed as any foreign scholar about the actors and processes of Indonesia's massacres, both at national and at local level. Like many others, I expected that Geertz would sooner or later decide to put this knowledge to use in one of the typical, reflective essays for which he had become so famous, to help us understand this extraordinary and dreadful tragedy in Indonesia's post-colonial experience. So far as I know, however, no such essay exists. In the twenty years that followed the killings Geertz alluded to them in only a few scattered references.

Geertz's avoidance of any serious discussion of the Indonesian mass murders of 1965-66, and what they mean for our understanding of Indonesian politics, is both puzzling and revealing. This does seem to be a good example of what Wertheim in his later years called the "sociologists' blind spots", or the "sociology of ignorance" [Wertheim (1984) (1975)]. One dimension of this, about which Wertheim has written, is Geertz' chronic blindness to class inequalities in Javanese society. Many young researchers of the 1970s, both Indonesian and foreign, had become convinced that the picture of harmonious, poverty-sharing village communities established in such writings as *Agricultural Involution* was not right. As Wertheim remarked, Geertz's vision of rural Javanese society mirrored the blindness of colonial and post-colonial élites, whose idea of the harmonious and homogeneous village community was derived from, and promoted by, the village élite themselves (Wertheim 1975: 177-214; cf. Utrecht 1973: 280). There is certainly a striking lack of fit between Geertz's accounts of

Javanese homogeneous rural and small-town culture and the many violent political conflicts in the region both before and after his fieldwork.

But the few scattered comments on the killings which Geertz did make during these years (and which we will summarize below) suggest also the weaknesses of a reliance on cultural explanations of Indonesian collective political violence. This was the type of explanation prevailing at the time among Western media and semi-popular authors; an outbreak of mass communal frenzy, based on pent-up resentment at the leftists' undermining of core (Balinese or Javanese) values of harmony and order. In most accounts, the killings burst suddenly on the scene, and then stopped just as suddenly; see for example the accounts of journalist John Hughes (1967), Rand Corporation and CIA author Guy Pauker (1968) or the later memoirs of Marshall Green, who had been US Ambassador in Jakarta at the time of the coup (Green 1990).

In 1966, in a short article called "Are the Javanese mad?" Geertz had criticized one type of (psycho) cultural explanation, as offered by Herbert Luethy. Geertz alluded to an estimate of 100,000 dead (following the US embassy's estimates, to be seen in the now-declassified US Department of State archives). In 1972, in an after word to the edited book on *Culture and Politics in Indonesia* (Holt, Anderson and Siegel 1972) - a book whose chapters do not mention the killings, having been written some years earlier - Geertz alludes to a quarter of a million killed, showing again that he was aware of the emerging reports and new estimates; he offers little by way of explanation but writes a general defense of 'cultural' theories of Indonesian politics, the general idea that "a country's politics reflect the design of its culture" (Geertz 1972:319). The savage aftermath of the bungled October 1 coup, he writes "brought to open view the cultural disarray fifty years of political change had created, advanced, dramatized, and fed upon". He also remarks that none of the eruptions of great domestic violence seen in the Third world (in India, the Congo, Biafra, Jordan) have been "more shattering than the Indonesian, nor more difficult to evaluate" (1972: 332).

The following year, in a 1973 postscript to his (pre-1965) article on primordialism, Geertz described the "several months of extraordinary popular savagery [...] directed against individuals considered to be followers of the Indonesian communist party [...] Several hundred thousand people were massacred, largely villagers by others villagers (although there were some army executions as well) and in Java at least, mainly along ... primordial lines — pious Moslems killing Indic syncretists" (Geertz, 1973: 282).

In the same year Geertz wrote a chilling footnote, almost an aside, in the landmark 'cockfight' article on Bali, where the killing had been relatively more severe than in any other region:

"That what the cockfight has to say about Bali is not altogether without perception and the disquiet it expresses about the general pattern of Balinese life is not without reason as attested to by the fact that in two weeks of December 1965 [...] between forty and eighty thousand Balinese (in a population of about 2 million) were killed, largely by one another [...] This is not to say, of course, that the killings were caused by the cockfight, could have been predicted on the basis of it, or were some sort of enlarged version of it with real people in place of the cocks - all of which is nonsense. It is merely to say that if one looks at Bali ... also through the medium of its cockfights, the fact that the massacre occurred seems, if no less appalling, less like a contradiction to the laws of nature" (ibid.: 452).

For those who manage to find their way through this tortuous prose, it is clear that Geertz is suggesting that the killings do somehow express the same deep, suppressed cultural lust for cruelty and violence that he had discerned in the Balinese cockfight.

Such 'cultural' accounts of the massacres, in both Java and Bali, became increasingly untenable as the years passed and more information became public. There is a stark contrast between Geertz's apparent ignorance or blindness on these events, and the careful explorations and analyses of the killings at local or regional level by other scholars, like Robert Hefner (1990, Ch. 7) and Geoffrey Robinson in Bali (Robinson 1995). On Bali, Geoffrey Robinson's historical account of political conflict along class, caste and ideological lines offers a powerful counterpoint to *aliran*- and 'primordiality'-centred views (Robinson, 1995; Sidel, 1997). Robinson, and more recently John Roosa have shown clearly that the army was not only present at, but actively orchestrated the killings, whose onset coincided with the army's eastward progress through Central and East Java and Bali. The killings were supported by a powerful propaganda machine which disseminated myths about the depravity of communist men and women, and the existence of death-lists drawn up by the PKI: "it is clear that the military bears the largest share of responsibility and the killings represented bureaucratic, planned violence rather than popular, spontaneous violence" (Roosa, 2006: 28).

It was about three decades after the massacres that Geertz finally wrote more than a few lines about the killings, devoting a few pages to a description of the

killings in and around Pare in the autobiographical book *After the Fact* (1995). By this time quite a number of authors had written accounts of the killings in the Kediri region, some based on first-hand experience (for example Walkin 1969; Rochijat 1985 ; Young 1990). Geertz had read, and cites (1995: 172 n.7), Young's account and Cribb's edited volume (1990) which summarized available information on the killings.

In the light of what was known by the mid-1990s in these and other publications (which, as already noted, Geertz had certainly read) Geertz's general account of the character of the conflicts and killings in Java and Bali is quite extraordinary:

"The failure of the palace guard coup in Jakarta at the end of September 1965 [...] led to a series of small-scale iterations of it as its example spread, place by place, across Java and on to Bali, west to east. In each place there was the initial uncertainty, lasting a day or two at most, about which way things would go. Then there was the realization on all sides, usually in the space of hours, as to which way, always the same way, things would go. Then there were the killings, halted after a while by the army" (1995: 8)

The idea that the Jakarta coup was replicated all over Java and Bali in a series of mini-coups initiated by leftists, - and that the killings of communists were therefore a response to earlier communist aggression - is unique to Geertz, and bizarre. The bold statement that the army's role was to *halt* the killings - with no mention of their role in starting them, and in the killing itself - is also extraordinary.

Geertz' account of the killings in Pare relies mainly on the 1971 account of a retired Nationalist Party leader, reproduced verbatim in a long, two-page quotation. From the old man's account, the army's involvement in, and orchestration of, the killings was clear.

"The whole population of a village would be herded onto the public square in front of the District Office by the army. They were then told to point out who was an activist and who was not. The activists were then delivered back to the people to take home and execute, or, more often, handed over to people of neighboring villages in exchange for their victims...

"In the beginning, things could have gone either way. Each side was trying to kill the other side first, and when the Communists saw that the Muslims had the upper hand, they just gave up. There was no resistance from the Left at all, once the killings began. The army ... just let the Muslim youth have their head, at least

for a while, after which they called a halt and began just arresting people and carting them off to Buru [a prison island in eastern Indonesia] or somewhere” (Geertz, 1995: 10).

In relaying the old nationalist’s account — the only version that Indonesians were permitted to parrot under the new regime — without critical comment, Geertz appears virtually to endorse the official view of the Indonesian army and the CIA, that it was a matter of ‘kill or be killed’, that the slaughter of Communists was a matter of self-defense in the face of Communist aggression, and therefore justified (Reyna, 1998). Accounts of such contested matters, however, require critical *interpretation*, which means the ethnographer has to be more than ventriloquist of his informants, but to reflect on their statements and why they may have given a particular account, and to have - or at least, to help the reader arrive at - a point of view.

What causes sociological blindness? To answer this question, we should not only look to the author’s personal politics, but also to the limitations of his analytical framework. In general, Geertz had avoided the trend in the 1970s to place issues of class, power and history more centrally in anthropology, and had stuck to a vision of cultures as systems of locally-shared symbols (and associated practices), blinding him to questions of social differentiation, social conflict, and associated negotiations and contestations over meanings. When this variety of ‘interpretive anthropology’ confronts the evidence of army orchestration of, and significant foreign intervention in, a multi-sited mass murder of these proportions, local cultural explanations are at best auxiliary, and at worst redundant, as Adam Kuper has observed.

“Geertz was surely aware of these external forces, but his analytical framework could not cope with the interplay of local, national and international politics. These matters were beyond the scope of ‘local knowledge’. The coup in the capital [...] had little to do with the local cultural and political trends that were evident in Mojokuto. Nor can the violence that it triggered even in remote areas be explained purely in local terms. [...] The massacres began only after the soldiers had spread across the country and encouraged violence, even supervising the killings. They exploited local hatreds, and found willing collaborators, but there would have been no countrywide massacres without their intervention [...] More generally, these terrible events expose the limitations of a cultural analysis of politics” (Kuper, 1999: 95-6)

For young generations, inside and outside Indonesia, who wish to learn and reflect on Indonesian history and society, these issues are still important; *Reformasi* has not removed the state-enforced 'ignorance' of the events of 1965-66. In March 2007 Attorney-General Abdul Rahman Saleh ordered the banning and burning of fourteen history textbooks, which had challenged "accepted facts" by not stating that the PKI was responsible for the September 30th Movement. Meanwhile, numerous history texts that do not even mention the killings are approved and available in bookshops (Tan, 2008).

Sociological 'ignorance' and 'blind spots' are perhaps too passive as metaphors for what has been discussed here, where the researcher/author is not unaware of things but makes a choice not to include them in his frame of reference. The blind and the ignorant, in general, are not busy making themselves or others blind and ignorant; what Wertheim drew to our attention, in contrast, was a process by which elites, and scholars, *choose* to describe societies and history in ways which make both themselves and others blind to social reality.

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Professional Blindness And Missing The Mark - Postscript



In this book we presented six short studies on political crises that occurred during the first two decades of the existence of the Republic of Indonesia. The articles are mainly based on source material that until recently had escaped the attention or had only been analyzed selectively. In all these cases ignorance played a role, resulting either from lack of knowledge or unwillingness to take note of relevant information. From a wider range of possible options, four of the most important causal factors are discussed in the present volume.

The first factor (I) is formed by the policy of governments (and other owners of information) of closing their more sensitive archives and other sources of information for political reasons for a given period. Normally, a way out is offered by the handling of fixed terms and legal facilities such as the US Freedom of Information Act. The researcher may be able to speed up the opening up of the archives he wishes to see by calling on those kinds of acts. Some leeway may be created this way, depending upon the democratic disposition of the authorities in charge, or the sensitivity of the material. When this does not work, we come upon a second and more serious category (II), that is to say the world of secrecy, where the powers that be try to hide their involvement in morally or politically reproachable affairs in the past, or present them in a form more amenable to their actual interests. This brings us to the third category (III), made up of academics and the like that for reasons of opportunity or fixed convictions tend to look away when confronted with evidence that does not fit in with earlier hard won and widely accepted theories. These are found in all walks of academic life. Linked to this, but defined here as a fourth category (IV), are the sentiments of participants in past events, who tend to reject analyses that do not fit their personal memories. Often, journalists can be found in in this same group.

We derived the Ignorance concept from Wertheim's last Master Course from 1972/1973, when he warned his master students against the neoliberalism that was entering social sciences at the time, by taking the individual as the starting point for the comparative study of society. Although the term neoliberalism has different meanings in different fields of research, Wertheim focused on the neoliberal fixation on the trading individual and its rejection of structuralism in the study of history. He dived into the history of the sociology of knowledge and made students aware of the arguments behind these constructions. He argued that they had been helpful in analyzing the historical roots of social inequality and oppression, and illustrated this with examples from ignorance cases from the history of the Netherlands Indies. In these articles we follow the trail a bit further into the first decades of Indonesian independence.

The early stages of the Indonesian revolution created a multitude of ideologically driven political and military groups, under the umbrella of a president who desperately tried his best to keep the fragments together and provide them with a view of the country in order to unite them under the flag of independence. At the time, Indonesia failed to create a centralized and institutionalized state system.

Policy making was a matter of networking, trading and sharing power with activists that claimed imagined institutional positions, as well as manipulating information and managing rumors to mobilize followers and supporters for their aims. After 1950, the political, military and cultural fragments that survived the war against the Dutch continued to wage their own battles. They did so up to 1965 and after. The Cold War context was the framework in which these battles took place. It provided the groups with plenty opportunities to try to get foreign support for domestic action, either threatening the president's position or supporting it. All crises studied in this book were domestic affairs indeed. Any links of revolutionary movement members to the outside world were of an opportunistic nature, united only by a drive towards independence. They all strived after some form of independence, but it was always one of their own making. The leaders of the 1948 Affair and the initiators from the GK30S had a decidedly different state in mind than the various Papuan concepts of Independence. So there was ample room for disagreement and internal rivalry. President Sukarno in particular excelled at changing partners for the sake of keeping upright the values of Revolution and Independence as he saw fit during the first twenty years of Indonesia's existence.

Now let us take a look at the articles. To start with, we plainly asked the authors to discuss an event from the first decades of the Indonesian state, where the aspect of 'ignorance' or 'blank spot' might be relevant. This 'free for all' - approach worked out well. Ignorance showed up in different forms and in all four categories mentioned above. To begin with the research on the Indonesian camps for Indo-Europeans, founded by the Republic of Indonesia during the Bersiap period (1945-1946). For most of the inmates it had been a time of misery and separation from friends and family that bereft them for months and even years from a return to the normalcy they had hoped for after the end of the war with Japan. After their repatriation (or emigration) to The Netherlands, the memories to these camps were pushed away as much as possible. From 1969 on, when the Dutch archives were gradually opened up, these camps were studied seriously for the first time, however only summarily, and more often than not in the margin of the broader story of the demise of the Netherlands Indies. It led to rather negative judgments as to the physical and moral qualities of these camps, in line with the material consulted. They were described as internment camps, mainly set up by the Indonesian leaders to prevent the Indonesian youth from joining the Dutch army in their struggle against the Indonesian pemudas, and in order to use

them and their parents as hostages in negotiations with the Dutch. This negative judgment rang a bell with many camp survivors living in The Netherlands, since it confirmed their bad memories. This remained the case until only recently, when the topic was picked up by Mary van Delden, resulting in a dissertation in 2009. Van Delden had more archival material at her disposal than her predecessors did for her study, complemented with a series of interviews with former inmates and a number of talks with Indonesians who had participated in running the camps. The result was a decided revision of the earlier views. Her overall impression was that these camps were created upon orders of the Republican leadership to protect people against the aggression of the young Indonesian revolutionaries and to demonstrate to the Allied command on Java that they were quite able to operate as a responsible government. Understandably, this more positive point of view annoyed former inmates while at the same time being satisfactory to surviving Indonesian freedom fighters. Apparently, the voices of the Indonesians involved, together with a more lenient judgment on the part of some of the former Dutch prisoners, had led the author to come up with this revisionist approach. However, it was also the result of a better reading of the available archives and documentary editions. Viewed from the vantage point of our study of ignorance, we can say that in this case most markers point towards the factors III and IV as the main causes of this reversal. The greater distance in time, as well as a willingness to listen to the other party, must have led to a more complete interpretation of material that has been available for a long time. Although this is probably not the last to be said on the subject, the new interpretation will definitely play a role in the future debate.

The phenomenon of historical blindness to information that has been available for a long time is apparent in all the other papers as well. We see the process at work in Coen Holtzappel's article on the so-called 1948 coup, summarizing the analysis by General Nasution who played an important role in this event. During his retirement in the 1980s, Nasution wrote a well-documented study on the Indonesian war of independence, including the Madiun Affairs of 1948. Nasution's analysis differs from existing ones in four ways. First, he called the 1948 event an insurrection and not a coup. It was a point of view that violated President Sukarno's original coup condemnation and drew attention to the military roots and side of the Madiun Affairs. The coup accusation proclaimed at 19 September 1948 referred to a communist setup, when the communist party PKI actually had no part in the local seize power that was the Madiun Affair. Second, the

movement from which it resulted was a combined military and political affair with definite military roots. Third, Nasution created a reconstruction of the prologue of the affair and its aftermath from a military as well as a political viewpoint. Fourth, Nasution showed that the president's coup accusation was primarily a preventive measure. The communist party PKI had not proclaimed a coup d'état. Instead the president used the local seize power to put a stop to the escalating military and political efforts to pressure him into quitting negotiations with the Dutch and launching an all-out guerrilla war against the Dutch troops. The president did not give in and a few commanders of the 29th Brigade seized power in Madiun in September 1948. They called on the people to follow their protest. Sukarno's coup accusation focused on the Communist Party PKI that tried to organize support of the military protest, but was not involved in the seize power.

There are many conceivable causes for the unfamiliarity in the West with Nasution's reconstruction of the Madiun Affair. Most of them he mentioned himself. One of them certainly is that his original analysis is rather voluminous and was written in the Indonesian language and was never translated. It did not get much attention outside of Indonesia. Another reason might be that due to bad memories, left wing critics saw, and still see, Nasution as a communist hater, the man who crushed communist party PKI in 1948. There is just no way he could be impartial. According to Nasution himself, he followed the president's orders to devise a plan of action against the protesting troops and the PKI, that subsequently was accorded by an emergency session of the cabinet and implemented by loyal troops, including Nasution's Siliwangi Division. His analysis is well documented and touches on all aspects and groups that played a role in the prologue of the Madiun Affairs, in particular the ministry of defense, the regional army commands, the village militias and the PKI. Other factors might have contributed to his obscurity among left wingers, such as his Dutch education, his Sumatran decent, and his creation of the much-hated West Java based Siliwangi Division that won the president's trust, whereas units from other regions remained in the background. In this article we mostly see Ignorance Mark II, III and IV: The Indonesian government that sticks to the official coup accusation, academic fixations and bad memories of surviving victims.

The Thirtieth September Movement (G30S) of 1965 discussed by Holtzappel offers another example of the docility of analysts regarding authoritative political judgments, but a much more complicated one. Holtzappel's re-study points at

three cases of ignorance. First, local commander General Suharto, who made his first grab for power on the same day the G30S began, 1 October 1965, styled the movement as a communist coup right from the start. His example was followed by most Western analysts up to the present day, even when they had doubts about the tenability of the accusation. The accusation was a major political fact in itself. Second, by taking that stand, they refused to take note of the defense evidence provided by the leader of the movement - palace guard commander Untung - as well as CC PKI Politburo member Njono who supported the movement from the outside with civil auxiliary units. Their evidence, contained in their recall of their initial and enforced coup confessions, showed that the G30S had support from authorities and government agencies that belonged to the president's entourage. The movement opted for an action against the suspected Council of Generals that planned a coup. Even General Suharto played a role in it, since he helped Untung collect reliable elite troops for the G30S. Third, PKI leader hacked Untung's action to rebuild it in a broad military-political front against the Council of Generals called the Thirtieth September Movement G30S. The plan for the operation focused on a suspicious army doctrine called Tri Ubaja Sakti (TUS, Three Holy Promises) accorded by the president earlier in 1965. According to PKI leader Aidit, in some aspects it threatened the implementation of the state and political reform accorded in the Bogor Declaration of December 1964. The ignorance history in this case showed several stages. General Suharto discredited the recalls of Untung and Njono's earlier coup confessions, by calling them perjury and lies. Western analyses still balance between Suharto's coup accusation and the recalls of the two suspects that are still doubted by Western analysts and communists. Ignorance types III and IV apply to this case.

Drooglever shows in his article that Papua history offers a fourth instance of ignorance, a result of the limited interest among researchers for the meaning of Papua nationalism. For a long time it was mainly regarded as a plaything of Dutch foreign minister Joseph Luns, only accepted as a living force years later, after the downfall of president Suharto. Here as well the reasons for that ignorance are manifold. For long, the fixed focus of academics and much of the reading public was on the struggle for independence of the Indonesian state at large, and the idea of conflicting notions of statehood ran counter to the concepts of the Indonesian authorities as well as most foreign academics. The former effectively closed off the territory and its related archives to academic researchers, and the latter hardly protested. The ongoing unrest in West New Guinea, if noted at all, was easily cast aside as the result of ill-advised Dutch policies. So, Papua life

became a hidden factor as soon as the first Indonesian troops and administrators entered the picture in October 1962, and still today it is a tricky endeavor for a student to enter the field and cope with the wrath of the Indonesian authorities. Here, a mixture of intimidation, fixed research agendas and opportunism combine to isolate the Papua world. From 1962 onwards, factor II must be regarded as the main explanation for the ignorance, but never alone. The forces of opportunism (III) are always present.

A fifth instance of ignorance could be brought forward in the study of the 1965-1966 massacres. Up to now, interest in the ordeal has been rather meager. Moreover, students of the episode have ignored or denied the atrocities against members of the communist women organization Gerwani in a specific gender aspect of the mass murders. They also ignored how the Suharto regime subsequently legitimized its existence by the imagery on the national monument for the murdered generals. At that prominent place, Gerwani women are imagined as an uncivilized wild creature not worthy of existence, whereas the docile Javanese housewife is shown to be the proper pillar of the Suharto regime. A clear case of Ignorance Marks II and III.

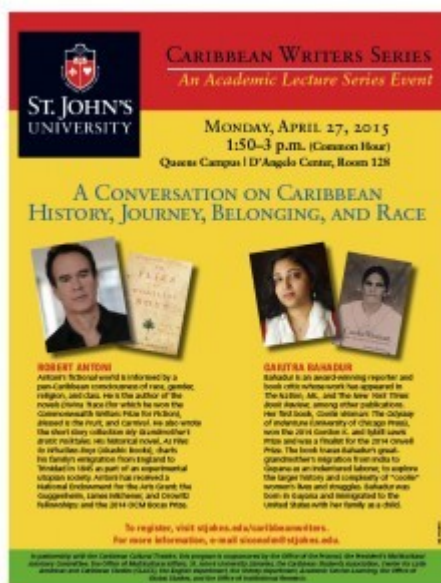
Our last case of ignorance regards the misunderstanding of a renowned American cultural anthropologist who refused to instantly condemn the Bali massacres of 1966 as immoral until he had found what triggered the murders according to his informants. His final conclusion matches the findings from the revisit of the G30S. Yet, the researcher's initial reluctance to condemn the massacres as immoral perplexed colleagues who expected a fast moral condemnation. It can of course be argued that it is the task of historians and other social scientists to sharply divide proper factual analysis from moral condemnation. They represent two different paths of action that should not be mixed up. That being said, we may still feel entitled to discern the forces of Ignorance Mark III at work in this case.

So far our six cases. From this hasty survey we may deduce that in nearly all of them the element of Ignorance played a deciding part, and that its prevalence can be attributed to a combination of factors. It should be stated that it is not an easy task defining which was more important in each given case. Human life, and therefore human history, is a complicated matter, and difficult to compress in fixed schedules. Moreover, our schedule is far from complete, and when all relevant factors are taken into account the result will become unmanageable, and nevertheless incomplete in the end. Time and context are just as important as

factual information, and interpretation by the human mind will always be necessary to keep our work within the borders of academic decency.

So we may allow some credit to the traditional preference (be it neoliberal or not) for 'facts' and the role of the individual, and accept a limit to the drive for structural ambitions. However, good history writing is impossible without a critical mind and systematic thinking, and that is certainly a lesson Wim Wertheim wanted his students to learn.

The Caribbean Commons



Welcome to the *Caribbean Commons* blog. Begun as part of the Caribbean Epistemologies Seminar at the CUNY Graduate Center, this blog primarily announces Caribbean Studies CFPs, events, and publications of interest to those in the Northeast US. It also archives information from the CE Seminar. Blog run by *Kelly Baker Josephs*.

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NTR ~ Caribisch Nederland, 3 jaar later ~ Bonaire

19 oktober 2013. Toen Bonaire een bijzondere gemeente van Nederland werd, onstonden er 2 eilanden. Er was het kleine pittoreske Bonaire waar iedereen elkaar kent, en een nieuw snel Bonaire van Nederlandse migranten.

Zie: http://www.uitzendinggemist.net/Caribisch_Nederland

Jan Sneep - Einde van het stenen tijdperk - Bestuursambtenaar in het witte hart van Nieuw-Guinea



Jonge bestuursambtenaren maakten maandenlange verkenningstochten naar een van de laatste nog nooit door blanken betreden delen van het onherbergzame centrale bergland, het Sterrengebergte in toenmalig Nederlands Nieuw-Guinea. Snee beschrijft de eerste tochten van zijn collega en vriend Hermans, die een vliegveldje aanlegde en een pioniersbivak bouwde, het begin van de eenvoudige bestuurspost Sibil. Van daaruit trokken zij verder het bergland in en maakten kennis met bewoners in afgelegen valleien die eerst wat schuchter, maar al snel heel nieuwsgierig, vriendelijk

en gastvrij de witte mensen in hun dorpen ontvingen.

De dragers deden 's avonds aan het kampvuur verslag van hun ervaringen van die dag, wat vaak tot hilarische taferelen leidde.

Snee heeft vervolgens een belangrijk aandeel in de voorbereiding van de laatste grote wetenschappelijke expeditie van het Koninklijk Nederlands Aardrijkskundig Genootschap (KNAG) naar het Sterrengebergte en neemt daar namens het Bestuur gedurende zes maanden ook aan deel. Hij beschrijft zijn ervaringen en de vele problemen waarmee de expeditie te kampen had.

Aansluitend vergezelde Snee de Frans-Nederlandse filmexpeditie van de cineast Pierre Dominique Gaisseau die in zeven maanden van Zuid- naar Noordkust trok, door goeddeels onbestuurd gebied. Behalve tot dan toe onbekende bergbewoners ontdekten zij ook een Nederlandse pater die zich met zijn Papua geliefde in het geïsoleerde oerbos had teruggetrokken. Het boek *Einde van het stenen tijdperk* is in 2005 bij Rozenberg Publishers verschenen. ISBN 978 90 5170 927 8.

Nu online:

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[Naar Nieuw-Guinea](#)

[Video: Interview Pierre Dominique Gaisseau](#)

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