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**SEXUAL METAPHORS IN THE CHANGE FROM SUKARNO'S OLD  
ORDER TO SUHARTO'S NEW ORDER IN INDONESIA**

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## CONTENTS

Introduction	1
Gerwani	3
The 1 October 1965 Coup	6
Gerwani and the 1 October 1965 Coup	9
Sukarno Replaced	18
Conclusion	20
References	22



## ABSTRACT

After the 1 October 1965 coup in Indonesia a massacre followed in which probably a million leftist people were murdered. The Communist party was destroyed and President Sukarno was replaced by General Suharto. The massacre was preceded by a campaign of slander against the Communist women's organization Gerwani, organized by the military. This paper analyses the campaign and suggests that it was set up to associate communism with sexual perversion and to pave the way for rule of the military as the virile saviours of the nation.

## INTRODUCTION

A few years ago I participated in a student demonstration. When the police came and beat us up I noticed I was hit even harder than the male students were. The officers shouted at me: "Gerwani whore, we'll teach you a lesson!". I was sentenced to two years in prison; all the time I kept wondering why they called me 'Gerwani whore'. I was born after Gerwani was destroyed, and I'm still a virgin, for I realize fully well that as a political activist a woman always has to scrupulously watch her reputation.

The above story was told to me by an Indonesian student. Apparently women's political activism is still associated with both Communism and sexual perversion. Although Gerwani,<sup>1</sup> the Communist-oriented women's organization, was banned after the 'events of 1965', as the October 1 putsch of that year is often called, this association still lingers on. The spectre of Communism is still called up to justify the harsh repression of any democratic forces in the country. This is also demonstrated by the government's reaction to the riots after the elected chair of the opposition party PDI (People's Democratic Party), Megawati Sukarnoputri, was replaced by a pawn of the government.<sup>2</sup>

In this article I maintain that President Sukarto's New Order state finds its legitimation in the way it destroyed Communism. In this process women's political activism was discredited, Communism was associated with sexual perversion and by extension of social disorder, and President Sukarno, who supported the Communist party, was replaced. Although class factors obviously played an important role in the destruction of the PKI, here

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<sup>1</sup> Gerwani is short for Gerakan Wanita Indonesia, Indonesian Women's Movement.

<sup>2</sup> Megawati Sukarnoputri is the oldest daughter of the former President, Sukarno. She is one of the most popular opposition leaders. With elections in sight the government decided to replace her and her board by a dissident chairman and board. When this new board took over the party headquarters, riots broke out. An unknown number of persons were killed or imprisoned. The government accused the small, activist-oriented group PRD (Democratic People's Association) of having infiltrated Megawati's PDI, as part of a 'communist conspiracy' (NRC 29/7/96; 31/7/96).

I focus on the campaign in which Gerwani was slandered by inventing sexual metaphors. The army spread the rumours that the generals were tortured and sexually harassed while alive and their bodies sexually mutilated by Gerwani members. I suggest that this campaign, orchestrated to associate Communism with wild, perverse, sexually loose women and the Army under General Suharto as the virile saviours of a nation on the brink of destruction, should be seen as leading to the actual coup, the toppling of President Sukarno. The whole period between October 1965 and March 1967 when the actual transfer of power took place should be seen as one extended, sneaking coup. It is not by chance that women and their organization, Gerwani, were singled out for this form of slander. The association of Gerwani with the castration of the symbol of the nation's virility, its top-level Generals, was the strongest way to effect Suharto's 'mental transition'<sup>3</sup> to his New Order state. For the intention of this coup was not only the liquidation of one group, in this case the Communist party, PKI and its mass organizations, leaving statepower in the same hands. It paved the way for a change of power, the ascension of General Suharto to the Presidency.<sup>4</sup>

Little attention has been given to this crucial period in Indonesian modern history, both abroad and internally.<sup>5</sup> As John Legge wrote, 'perhaps because it was Communists who were being killed the conscience of the outside world seemed comparatively undisturbed by what must rank, in any assessment, as one of the bloodiest massacres in modern history' (Legge 1972:399). There is little doubt as to the relief the US must have felt when in the midst of the Vietnam war Sukarno, who they considered an international troublemaker who had become dangerously close to delivering Indonesia into Communist hands, was replaced by a rightwing general who put the country firmly on a capitalist road.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> One year after the coup Suharto wrote that a 'mental transition' was needed to effect the building of the New Order (Soeharto 1966).

<sup>4</sup> I thus do not agree with Vatikiotis who maintains that those around Suharto, notably younger officers and radical students 'probably pushed Suharto into seizing power' (1993:24) Suharto himself, in his autobiography, attempts to create this impression. He portrays himself as the humble villageboy who was seen by other forces as the only one to be able to save the country from the chaos in which President Sukarno, misguided by the Communists, had plunged the country (Suharto 1989).

<sup>5</sup> In a paper in 1985, entitled 'the Perfumed Nightmare' I first pointed to the way the army under General Suharto had constructed the campaign around Gerwani's alleged role in the October first 1965 coup. Recently, Leclerc in an unpublished paper picked up the same theme, focusing on the monument built at the site on which the generals were murdered, Lobang Buaya (1991). Below I will refer to this monument. Langenberg (1990) has also paid some attention to the construction of sexual images after the October 1 putsch.

<sup>6</sup> See the account Howard Jones, US ambassador to Indonesia for seven years prior to June 1965 gave of CIA involvement in Indonesian internal politics (1971).

Here I will argue that another reason why the West kept silent is its inability to comprehend the machinations behind and the ramifications of the campaign of mass unrest and murder waged after the 'first' coup of October 1 1965. In most accounts this crucial period in Indonesian history is glossed over rather too quickly to move on to the more familiar realm of political or economic analysis. A good example is Vatikiotis' study of Indonesian politics under Suharto: '...the prelude to re-establishing order and the reconstruction of Indonesia's economy was a brief but bloody period of further turmoil. The New Order exploited the highly polarized state of society left by Sukarno to dispose of its opponents and provide an outlet for some cathartic bloodletting' (1993:33).

If the West kept aloof for its own reasons, any opposition in Indonesia was battered or skilfully manoeuvred into silence by the ruthless repression of the regime. Not only were hundreds of thousands of innocent people massacred, also tens of thousands were detained, some of them for over twenty years. Only a handful of those detained were ever brought to trial. The suffering of the survivors did not stop there, for until this day these *tapol* and *napol*<sup>7</sup> are effectively barred from most kinds of employment.<sup>8</sup> Their children, grandchildren and other close relatives are also still affected by restrictions in their employment or study, as they have to produce a letter of living in a 'clean environment', that is of having no relatives who have been political prisoners, for them to be accepted anywhere. Many of the ex-*tapol* still have to report regularly to the military authorities.

## GERWANI

Gerwani was the women's organization associated with the PKI. Elsewhere I have analyzed its history (Wieringa 1985, 1988, 1992, 1993 and 1995). Below I will let one of its ex-

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<sup>7</sup> *Tapol* is short for tahanan politik, political prisoner, *napol* for narapidana politik, convicted political prisoner. The *tapol*, who had never been tried, were released in 1979, fourteen years after the events of 1965 and had to carry the ET sign ever since. The few convicted *napol* were released after their sentences expired. Those on the death roll are still in prison. In 1987 a Government Instruction (no 5 of that year) withheld the reduction of life sentence to twenty years, after five years of 'good behaviour'.

<sup>8</sup> Functions which are officially closed to the ex-*tapol* are the civil and armed services, and vital enterprises. They are also not allowed to take up jobs which might bring them into contact with the people, such as journalists, teachers and priests. The legal foundation for these regulations is formed by the 1975 Anti-Subversion Law (Decision of the Pangkopkamtib no 06/Kopkam/XI related to the 'Surat Keterangan Tidak Terlibat G30S/PKI', Letter of Information of not being involved in the PKI 30 September Movement') and the Instruction of the Ministry of Home Affairs no 32 of 1981 related to the 'Guidance and Supervision of the Ex Prisoners and Convicted Prisoners of the PKI 30 September Movement'.

members explain her participation in the organization.<sup>9</sup>

We would often discuss the history of our organization. I joined in the mid-fifties, after the name was changed into Gerwani. You know, Gerwis,<sup>10</sup> as it used to be called, was a bit sectarian. Very few women from the lower classes had joined. The organization was considered to be too red, too PKI, too extreme. Actually we felt that was not true. Those who knew Gerwis in the old days liked it much better than when we had grown so big. But the men thought so. So at the 1954 congress we became Gerwani, with a more flexible attitude, especially to women's issues, softer, smoother (luwes). The emphasis on women's issues declined, while economic, social, political and cultural issues gained more prominence.

What I did like very much of the work in those years was the contact we established with the peasant women. If I went to a village I would contact a woman, maybe a friend or a relative of someone I had known elsewhere, and introduce myself. I am from Gerwani do you know what that is? Usually they wouldn't know, and I would tell about the issues we fought for. Most women were drawn to our organization because of our stand on polygamy. The second issue the female peasants were interested in was their low wages. In general they liked the idea of women's freedom, for the women resented it that their wages were lower than those of the men. Once a woman had become a member she was asked to look for a friend and so on until there was a small group. These groups were the basis of the organization for in their meetings the women would start to understand their rights and the feudal system. For it is the feudal system which causes the suffering of Indonesian women.

We were proud of our organization, for Gerwani led the struggle for the improvement of women's lives, against price rises, for higher wages. It was nice to be in the forefront and to see that we really could do something.

Gerwani was also very active in the struggle against illiteracy. We set up so many literacy classes. And we fought for women's political rights, that more women would become members of the national or regional parliaments, or that they could become village head or minister as easily as men. Especially in the villages many disagreed with those rights. There were Islamic groups who felt that was very controversial. They didn't want to give women any rights at all. There were also landlords who were very conservative.

In the one-sided actions in the sixties<sup>11</sup> women joined actively. They did not just jeer from the sideline. In Kediri and in Jengkol, the women faced the tractors of the landlords who tried to oust them from their land. And they were shot at by the army.

All these actions aroused much aversion in the villages, that is true. That is probably why so many women were killed. The Gerwani members were much too independent. They hated Gerwani, wanted the women only to be active in the social field. They could hold an arisan<sup>12</sup> occasionally, that was alright, all the other women's organizations did so. But in Gerwani the women would also be politically active. Yes, that was intensely disliked.

After some years I was sent to a difficult region. It had a proud history of resistance against the Dutch and they didn't like Jakarta very much either. Islam was very strong, the men were arrogant. I, as a stranger, a Javanese woman, should not push myself at all.

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<sup>9</sup> The full interview is to be found in Wieringa 1995.

<sup>10</sup> Gerwani was originally called Gerwis, Gerakan Wanita Indonesia Sedar, Movement of Conscious Indonesian Women (Wieringa 1995).

<sup>11</sup> The PKI's Farmers' Front, the BTI, carried out radical land reform actions in the early sixties, called one-sided actions.

<sup>12</sup> Rotating credit fund.



When the women finally understood what Gerwani wanted many women strongly supported us, however Islamic they all were. They hated the polygamy of their men and they enjoyed meeting and discussing these issues. They also liked it very much to learn how to make cookies and to discuss the political situation. What appealed most to the young people was the right to marry as they liked and to the women, especially the struggle against polygamy. The women workers were also happy to be supported in their struggle and to have a crèche where they could leave their children for a very small sum.

Within the National Front we cooperated a lot with Perwari and Kowani.<sup>13</sup> All this just started to get off the ground when the events happened. It was so unexpected, so in the midst of everything.

When we understood what was happening in Java we fled to a nearby city. There my husband was burnt alive when they set fire to the PKI office. With my son I then fled to Jakarta. When I was arrested my daughter stayed with my sister in Jakarta. My son, who was at the time with me had no one to take care of him. His grandmother was too old and confused to be able to provide for him and to see him through school. He had to survive by selling newspapers and bakso on the street.

In prison many of us were raped. We were beaten and tortured with electricity, and with cigarette butts. After a few years, after the Red Cross had visited us, it became a little better. I learnt massage and made some handicrafts that I sold for a bit of food.

After my release my first concern was my son. On Saturday I was outside, on Sunday I had found out where he was and on Monday he was at school. But he was very much behind and I had to put him to boarding school. He was very embarrassed that with his nineteen years he still had to wear shorts to go to SMP (junior high school). What really makes me so sad is that my children at school learn such ugly things about Gerwani. I realized my son was holding something back for me. Finally he came to me and asked, 'Ma, why did you become a member of such a group, so morally depraved, bringing ruin to the country? Were you a whore too? Everybody said that all Gerwani members were whores and bad women.' How can I explain to him what we lived for, what our ideals were? I still see the confusion and shame in his eyes. How will he ever understand my life?

The above interview gives an impression of the history and activities of Gerwani. For the purpose of this article I will complement this picture only with an indication of the way Gerwani differed from other women's organizations of its time and strayed from the women's kodrat, their intrinsic nature and religiously-inspired code of conduct.

Although all women's organizations had displayed a considerable amount of political activism during the prolonged struggle for Indonesia's independence, they were supposed to leave the political arena once that goal had been reached (Vreede-de Stuers 1960; Wieringa 1995). Women's anti-colonial activities had only been tolerated because they could be associated with women's motherly qualities in giving birth to the nation and with the model of wifehood, as faithful companions of their warrior-husbands. Apart from Gerwani, most women's organizations thereafter only busied themselves with activities commonly classified as 'social'.

The kodrat of Indonesian women prescribes that they should be meek, passive, obedient to the male members of the family, sexually shy and modest, self-sacrificing and nurturing, and that they find their main vocation in wifehood and motherhood. The

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<sup>13</sup> Perwari is a nationalist women's organization which was particularly strong in the early fifties; Kowani is the name of the national federation of Indonesian women's organizations.

Indonesian term ibu means both wife and mother.<sup>14</sup> In fact women are so strongly perceived as always being in relation to their husbands and children, that unmarried women are generally seen as 'potential wives' (Tiwon 1996). This is not inconsistent with a certain degree of economic autonomy.<sup>15</sup> Javanese women in particular are supposed to be like Sumbadra, the shy and obedient wife of the wayang hero Arjuna. Gerwani on the other hand upheld a model of womanhood which was more in line with the figure of Srikandi, Arjuna's warrior-wife. Although the organization never questioned the primacy of women's motherly role, they propagated a model of militant motherhood, fusing women's maternal functioning with political activism. This deeply antagonized conservative forces in society (Wieringa 1995).

## THE 1 OCTOBER 1965 COUP

The change from Sukarno's Old Order state to the New Order of President Suharto was introduced by the so-called 'October 1965 events', instigated by the 30 September Movement. There is a vast body of literature on this crucial period in Indonesian history.<sup>16</sup> Although there is general agreement as to what actually happened on the night of October first, various interpretations of what was behind the 'coup'<sup>17</sup> are offered. An even greater controversy exists on the campaign which accompanied the mass murder of some one million Communist and leftist people after which Suharto came to power.

It is important to discuss what happened during this crucial period, the last months of 1965, for two reasons. In the first place the campaign had major consequences for especially the women's movement. Gerwani was totally destroyed. And the space within which the other women's organizations could manoeuvre was severely restricted. Since then the New Order state would define what interests women's organizations should take up (see also Wieringa 1985, 1992, 1993).

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<sup>14</sup> While in aristocratic nineteenth century Java aristocratic women were trained to be wives rather than mothers (Tiwon 1996), at present the motherly function receives more emphasis.

<sup>15</sup> Since the publication of Hildred Geertz's *The Javanese Family* in 1961 there is a lot of debate on women's supposed autonomy versus their subordination. See for some views on gender ideology Mather 1985, Sears ed. 1996, Sullivan 1994, Wieringa 1995 and Wolf 1992.

<sup>16</sup> See for instance Anderson and McVey 1971; Crouch 1978; Gunawan 1968; May 1978; McVey 1971; Mortimer 1969, 1974; Pauker 1969; Pluvier 1973; Southwood and Flanagan 1983; Törnquist 1984; Utrecht 1970; Wertheim 1979, 1991.

<sup>17</sup> The present government usually speaks of the October 1 'coup'. I prefer the word 'putsch' for this event, as its intention was not to replace the legal president, but to effect a leftward swing of the government.

In the second place the campaign hit the underbelly of Indonesian society, linking Communism (and later liberal, critical thinking in general) with women's frightful sexual powers once unleashed. This is both associated with Islamic concepts of sexual disorder,<sup>18</sup> and with a pre-Islamic, Hinduistic worldview. Both in the Kakawin Bharata Yudha, one of the major texts related to the popular Javanese wayang play and in certain hikayat, Malay stories, there are scenes in which crowds of frenzied women forsake husbands and children (Tiwon 1996). I suggest that Gerwani was singled out as the ideological repository of resistance against the virile order of the military and of conservative forces because of its insistence on women's political activism. This was seen as an unacceptable form of rebellion. According to Mernissi women's disobedience is so feared in the Muslim world, as its implications are enormous. In such societies, 'rigid sex-role stereotyping is so fundamental to hierarchical order, that when women challenge the status quo, they threaten not only patriarchal power (their relation to the husband) but the very existence of the entire system (and more specifically God's claim to obedience' (1996:111-2). Mernissi's analysis is based on Morocco, but her views also enlighten the situation in Indonesia, which has a similar rigid system of gender ideology, women's kodrat. These Islamic notions fall on fertile pre-Islamic ground.

Below I offer a discourse analysis of the events during the last months of 1965,<sup>19</sup> based on a gender perspective. This gender analysis allows me to view the October 1st putsch as a prelude to a much more fundamental change of order which laid the political and moral basis of the military regime of President Suharto. This second coup, in which the actual change of Presidents took place,<sup>20</sup> was founded on a careful manipulation of sexual symbols. The PKI became associated with disorder symbolized by women's sexually perverse behaviour. From this state of chaos society could only be saved by a systematic cleansing of Communism and the resubordination of women. As the symbol of virility, the army and President Suharto in particular took care to emerge from this episode as the only force capable of restoring and maintaining an orderly society. Their continued power is justified by consistently recreating the myth of the perverted Communist Beast. Women's subordination, their 'proper' behaviour, is one of the pillars of New Order society.

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<sup>18</sup> According to Mernissi the Arabic concept of fitna refers to the kind of disorder and chaos which is associated with women's sexual attraction that makes men lose their self control (1975:4). In Indonesian fitna has come to mean slander in general.

<sup>19</sup> The most extensive account is that by Southwood and Flanagan (1983) who briefly refer to the way Gerwani was implicated in the propaganda campaign waged by the group around General Suharto.

<sup>20</sup> Pohan (1988) calls this second coup the 'creeping coup' in which Suharto wrested power from Sukarno, but fails to refer to the manipulation of sexual symbols which created the atmosphere in which this 'creeping coup' took place.

By mid-1965 tensions in Indonesian society were reaching a climax. In the countryside the BTT's unilateral actions had thoroughly disturbed social relations. Rising levels of inflation caused increasing poverty. The relationship between the army leaders and the PKI became increasingly tense, with President Sukarno leaning more than ever towards the PKI side. Only the nation's leader seemed able to keep society together. The PKI was particularly worried that the President might not be able to protect them much longer in view of the six murder attempts which had been made on him already (May 1978). Rumours of his illness therefore caused great unrest.

In this tense situation several middle-ranking officers of the Army 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's Day, October 5. Also, they were discontented with the corrupt and decadent lifestyle of some of those Generals, in particular Yani (Crouch 1978). The plans of the officers were discussed in several meetings of the PKI politburo,<sup>21</sup> during which some limited support was received.

During the putsch six generals and one lieutenant were killed and their bodies were thrown into a deep well on Lubang Buaya (Crocodile Hole), a training field for volunteers of the Malaysia campaign, which had been mostly used by volunteers of the PKI-affiliated youth organization and Gerwani. This field lay on the grounds of the military airport, Halim.

Before the day was out General Suharto's forces had managed to cajole and threaten half of the rebel forces into submission.<sup>22</sup> In the meantime President Sukarno had decided not to appoint Suharto, who was next in line to replace the murdered Chief of Staff, possibly because he considered him too 'strong-willed' (Anderson and McVey 1971). Instead he appointed a junior General, Pranoto Reksosamudro.

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 by Suharto. Thereafter followed the massacre and mass detainment.

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<sup>21</sup> See testimonies of Peris Pardede (Gunawan 1968), Nyono and Sudisman (for instance Crouch 1978; May 1978 and Mortimer 1974:419).

<sup>22</sup> Crouch writes that the coup group had failed to ensure supplies of food and drink for the soldiers in the square (1978:130).

Broadly speaking there are three interpretations<sup>23</sup> of the events in October 1965 which marked the end of the 'Old Order'. The army version is that the PKI was the dalang (puppeteer) behind the coup, through its Special Bureau. The fullest account of the army view is given by Notosutanto and Saleh (1967).<sup>24</sup> The PKI on the other hand maintained initially that it was an intra-military affair. This version was supported abroad by a paper circulated in 1966 authored by two scientists from Cornell University, Anderson and McVey.<sup>25</sup> A third interpretation is that Suharto and possibly the CIA were behind a conspiracy to break the power of the PKI. Holtzappel (1979), Scott (1985), Utrecht (1970) and Wertheim (1979, 1991) have elaborated this view. This interpretation stresses the class aspects of both the coup and the campaign which followed it, pointing out that most victims fell in the areas where peasant unrest had been heaviest.

Another interpretation which I put forward is that Suharto has shown himself to be both a ruthless and very ambitious man and a person able to wait patiently for the right moment to strike. The information he had received<sup>26</sup> 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. He would then come out as the great saviour of the nation and Sukarno would have had no other choice than to appoint him Army Chief. The start of the campaign which formed the second, actual October coup may have been when Sukarno appointed a junior officer to Army Chief instead, which humiliated and enraged Suharto and made him realize that his only access to power lay in the removal of President Sukarno.

## GERWANI AND THE 1 OCTOBER 1965 COUP

In the middle of the eighties I interviewed some of the main surviving Gerwani leaders who had just come out of prison, as well as some ordinary members who had been associated with the events around 'Lobang Buaya'. They found themselves in a surrounding in which they

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<sup>23</sup> I will not consider here a fourth interpretation, provided by Dake (1973), who maintains that Sukarno was behind the whole affair. His view is based on the testimony of Bambang S. Widjanarko, an adjutant of President Sukarno (see also Crouch 1978:119-22). See Manai Sophiaan (1994) for a carefully-argued refutation of Sukarno's involvement in the first 'coup'.

<sup>24</sup> In 1974 Notosutanto became the head of the History Section of the Armed Forces (Klooster 1985:134-6).

<sup>25</sup> It was first circulated anonymously to friends and colleagues. The full version was finally published in 1971.

<sup>26</sup> Colonel Latief met Suharto on the eve of the putsch, see for instance Wertheim 1979 and 1991.

and their former organization had become associated with amoral, anti-religious conduct, with sexual perversions and atrocities, based on the story which the army constructed of what had happened in the night of September 30 and October 1 1965.

On the basis of these interviews and the newspapers I studied I will provide a gender analysis of the events of late 1965 which is the more timely as this dimension has been almost totally neglected by the established scholarship. Some authors<sup>27</sup> ignore the significance of the presence of women, members of both the youth organization Pemuda Rakyat and Gerwani, at Lobang Buaya. Many others (Utrecht 1970; Wertheim 1979) present the massacre as a revenge for the one-sided actions. McVey holds that the 'high degree of social tension in the countryside made it easy for the liquidation campaign to become a major massacre' (1971:28).

By stressing the class aspects of the campaign, which indeed formed an important component, gender aspects are ignored by most authors. Yet this leaves a wide gap in the interpretation. Apart from Southwood and Flanagan (1983) and Leclerc (1991), who mention the campaign against Gerwani, only Van Langenberg (1990) discusses the sexual aspects of the mass campaign in some detail. The manipulation of gender ideology however was a much more central factor in the birth of the New Order state than these authors maintain. More attention should be given to the following questions: Why were women and their organization singled out for the media campaign? Male members of the PKI-affiliated youth organization had also been involved in the military manoeuvres of the putschists. Yet the campaign against the youth organization was not as bitter as that against Gerwani. And the women at Lobang Buaya, although most of them belonged to the youth organization and not to Gerwani, and others were wives of soldiers, were generally associated with Gerwani, not with the army or with the youth organization. And how come the imagination of the military led them to conjure up 'pornographic dancing' and sliced-off penises? And, if the one-sided actions were the most important origin of the murders, why weren't members of the PKI-associated farmers' association seen as devils? Or the members of the leftist cultural association, because of their ideological work? There were members of the Communist trade organization too at Lobang Buaya. Why wasn't this 'revolutionary vanguard' in PKI eyes framed for the killings?

In my view the significance of the campaign lies in the conscious manipulation of the collective cultural and religious conscience of the Indonesian population on which Suharto built his road to power. To do so, the PKI and Sukarno had to be eliminated. But because of Sukarno's great popularity and the large following of the PKI that was not an easy task. Another reason to go slowly and to first prepare a 'mental transition' is put forward by

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<sup>27</sup> For instance the early account of Gunawan (1968). But also Pohan, who provides one of the most sophisticated analyses of this history from a 'progressive' Indonesian perspective, and who dwells at large on the 'creeping coup' which brought Suharto to power, ignores the impact of the campaign of slander waged against Gerwani.

Suharto himself in his autobiography. He explains that a military coup would have been much faster, but that might have entailed the danger of a counter-coup, as violence may breed violence.<sup>28</sup> Therefore deliberately a climate of disorder was created on the basis of the deep anxieties of a population which was already badly shaken by the political and socio-economic tensions of the period. This disorder struck chords with the Islamic fear of the uncontrolled sexual powers of women, a religiously-inspired apprehension that women's disobedience will endanger the entire social system, Hinduistic notions of all-female maniacal crowds and the male horror of castration. Assisted by the army, and especially the troops of Sarwo Edhie (Crouch 1978; May 1978; Robinson 1995; Utrecht 1970) Islamic youth groups were the major killers,<sup>29</sup> assisted in some places, especially in Bali, by members of the conservative wing of the PNI.<sup>30</sup> As Utrecht reports, also the Hinduistic Balinese people saw the killing of people associated with the PKI 'as the fulfilment of a religious obligation to purify the land' (Robinson 1995:300).

Apart from the elements mentioned above the atmosphere created by the manipulation of sexual symbols around 'Lobang Buaya' struck a familiar chord in particularly Javanese minds. A central element in every wayang performance is the gara-gara, a scene performed at the beginning of the second act.<sup>31</sup> In a full performance the gara-gara scene is played at midnight. It connotes a disturbance of the equilibrium in nature which can only be solved when the hero, often Arjuna, withdraws to gain inner strength, for instance by visiting a hermit. Usually the gara-gara is accompanied by a fight between the two brothers Petruk and Gareng. Hereafter the hero, who has acquired the needed superior powers, has to conquer the lower drives of humanity in the perang kembang. The hero always wins, as the higher

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<sup>28</sup> See chapters 24 - 26. In his autobiography he ignores the mass killings. When he speaks of violence in this context he only refers to military action against other military units, not against civilians.

<sup>29</sup> Manai Sophiaan quotes an interview in Editor of September 1993 with the chair of one of the major Islamic parties at the time, the NU, K.H. Abdurrachman Wahid, who said that 'Islamic people alone slaughtered 500.000 ex-PKI' (1994:311).

<sup>30</sup> The massacre was strongest in East Java, Central Java and Bali. For Bali see Crouch (1978:152), Schulte Nordholt (1991) and Vickers (1989). Robinson recently revealed that in Bali notions of Gerwani's sexual depravity were imported from Java. Rumours were spread that Gerwani members in Bali had been instructed to 'sell' themselves to army men 'in order to obtain weapons for the PKI, and having done so, to murder and castrate the soldiers they had seduced' (1995:293).

<sup>31</sup> The wayang performance is typically divided into three acts. The wayang, the Javanese form of shadow puppet theatre, is extremely popular in Java, and is one of the main transmitters of cultural values.

self always has to conquer the lower lusts.<sup>32</sup> The test of the mental strength of humanity as played out in the gara-gara restores the order of the world which is essential for the survival of humanity. Fighting between 'brothers', the conquest of elements from hell and a mental transition were thus phenomena to which Javanese people were accustomed.

The last months of 1965 can be seen as one huge gara-gara scene, manipulated by one of the most skilful dalang of Indonesian history, General Suharto. In this metaphor the army is the all-conquering, righteous hero, the PKI and especially Gerwani, the lower instincts which have to be conquered for Indonesian society to regain its balance. By manipulating these fears and emerging as the virile hero able to restore order, the army set up itself as the only legitimate powerholder in society.

The central element of the ideological fury unleashed around women's involvement in the murders of Lobang Buaya is that Gerwani in its Communist, perverted madness had the major hand in torturing and killing the generals, dancing nakedly, cutting off their penises. Women members from Pemuda Rakyat and Gerwani had indeed been assembled at the training camp. My investigation shows however that Gerwani as an organization was not involved and that the accusations of sexual debauchery are totally unfounded. By that time the organization had become so closely allied with the PKI that there were direct links of command between the PKI leadership and individual Gerwani members mainly through the PKI members of Gerwani.

My reconstruction of what happened at Lobang Buaya is the following: some seventy women, most of them young girls from the youth organization, others from the trade union and the farmers' association and a few Gerwani members, including some wives of soldiers, were assembled at Lobang Buaya by the plotters. What happened then? What about the naked, sexual dancing, the cut off penises, the eyes gouged out? How did the generals die?<sup>33</sup> One of the assembled wives:

A few days before the coup I was picked up by a female party member to be engaged in some extra

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<sup>32</sup> See Clara van Groenendael (1985) and Ras (1976) for a fuller account of wayang and the significance of the gara-gara scene. Ras in his translation of the Soebadra Laroeng play provides a beautiful example of a gara-gara scene, some fragments: 'The mountains, which used to support the earth as wedges, are staggering and the earth, its equilibrium distorted, collapses. What a misery! One earthquake follows another...the dead are everywhere;... the strong ones assault the weak. The order of the Middle World is destroyed...The crisis in nature reaches its zenith. The world has a sad appearance and deep darkness reigns all over. Flashes of lightning cross, a furious storm rages through the atmosphere. The tail of the Holy Snake Anantaboga strikes to and fro; the Holy Cow Andini puts up her horns; it is as if the cauldron of hell is being stirred so that it overflows and its seething mudpulp spreads over the earth, increasing its misery...The mind of the Creator is pleased. He has put to test the Middle World to remind it of Him who created the world...' (Ras 1976:167-8).

<sup>33</sup> This is the title of an article by Ben Anderson (1987) who has studied the autopsy reports composed by a team of five experts in forensic medicine who examined the bodies of the seven murdered military men.



activities at Halim. She never disclosed what was up, but as usual I joined. Once there I was asked to sew stripes of various colours on uniforms to distinguish friends from enemies. It was a lot of work and we worked until late at night. So on the morning of October 1st I was sleeping heavily when we were woken up by shouts. It was still dark outside and we were all frightened. We ran to the open space where we saw a group of soldiers dragging those kidnapped generals. It was quite a noise, for they kept shouting 'kabir'<sup>34</sup> at them. In fact that was quite a common word, we used it all the time. The soldiers hit the generals and finally they were shot and thrown into the well. The soldiers were enraged, they even rained bullets on them when they were already dead. Only then, terrified, we also walked to the well.

Afterwards they started circulating stories about dancing and sexual perversions, and cutting off penises. All that is bare nonsense. Those generals were deadly scared, they couldn't even get them up! And the girls were scared too, they huddled in a corner!

The army went to great length to construct the stories they decided to circulate. Witnesses were 'quoted' in the papers, photographs were shown. There were television broadcasts and radio programmes on the horrors said to be committed at Lobang Buaya. How did the military go about that? One of the volunteer girls who had been present at Lobang Buaya:

I was sixteen and was a member of the Pemuda Rakyat. I had been trained at Cipete and had joined many exercises for the Malaysia confrontation so when I was asked to come to Lobang Buaya I naturally joined. I witnessed the soldiers kill the generals and ran home afterwards. I was arrested at nine o'clock in the morning and put in prison for two weeks. I was beaten and interrogated. They forced us to undress and to dance naked in front of them while they took pictures. Then I was released. After a little while I was captured again, and released again. In total I was captured five times before they finally decided to keep me in prison. That was at the beginning of November 1965. I was released in December 1982.'

The campaign had a slow start.<sup>35</sup> While the autopsy results had become available to the authorities, they were not made public. The report only became known widely when Anderson got access to it and published it in 1987. The autopsy demonstrated that the wounds found on the bodies of the killed generals and lieutenant were either gunshots, or resulted from heavy, dull traumas, possibly caused by clubbing with the butts of guns or the damage likely to occur from a fall into a 36-foot well. All the genitals were intact, all eyes were in their proper sockets, and there were no traces of cuts with razors. As General Suharto himself had ordered the report to be prepared it is unlikely that he had not been

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<sup>34</sup> Acronym to denote capitalist bureaucrat. This word was especially used to discredit the army officers who had become the managers of confiscated Dutch and British properties, and who had amassed great wealth.

<sup>35</sup> For the development of the campaign against Gerwani I made mainly use of direct army sources, that is the papers Angkatan Bersenjata (AB, Armed Forces), Berita Yudha (BY, Army News) and Duta Masyarakat (DM, Envoy of Society). These newspapers had a general and broad circulation. For most articles referred to below the army is directly stated as the source. Another newspaper referred to is the Protestant SH, Sinar Harapan (Ray of Hope). Unfortunately I had no access to the radio programmes and television broadcasts which were the major transmitters of news to the masses of the population.

informed of its results before the burial.<sup>36</sup>

Until October 11th the accounts of Gerwani's involvement in the murder of the generals only referred to the fact that the murders happened 'under the nose of Gerwani' (AB 6\10\1965 and 8\10\1965).

The first indication of the way in which the deeper layers of the Javanese, Islamic consciousness would be manipulated is on October 11th. A small article appeared in the AB which opened with 'Spirits in broad daylight'. The word used for spirit was kuntil-anak, the name of a spirit of a woman died in childbirth who appears as a beautiful woman with a hole in her back. This is a particularly frightful spirit which hovers around at night. 'It has been reported', the story continued, 'that people belonging to (the word used is kalap, meaning 'possessed by an evil spirit') Pemuda Rakyat and Gerwani, umbrella organizations of the PKI-Aidit,<sup>37</sup> are committing several terrorist acts. Unknown women have visited the houses of our Heroes, wearing veils as if they belonged to Islamic organizations. Their movements aroused suspicion, for it was clear they were Gerwani members. Fortunately their evil plans became known before they could commit any evil actions towards the families of the Heroes of the Revolution.<sup>38</sup> We have to be very careful' (AB 11\10\1965).

The same day an article in the BYM reported on the condition of the bodies of the Generals which were found in the well. Contrary to what the autopsy revealed, the paper wrote that 'eyes had been gouged out, and of some Generals the genitals had been cut off' (BYM 11\10\1965). Other papers took up the campaign as well. It was reported that the Indonesian Council of Churches expressed its feelings of great distress, as 'it truly could hardly believe that certain persons in our Pancasila state are capable of executing actions such as rapes which are beyond human boundaries' (SH 9\10\1965). The Duta Masyarakat carried a short article entitled 'Gerwani was Immoral'. After mentioning that Gerwani members 'touched the genitals of the Generals and exhibited their own', the article continued: 'even, according to sources which can be believed, Gerwani danced in front of their victims nakedly, which act reminds us of cannibalist ceremonies executed by primitive tribes centuries ago. Let us leave it to the women to judge the womanly morality of Gerwani which is of an immorality worse than animals' (DM 12\10\1965).

In November the first press conferences were reported in which prisoners 'testified' about their experiences. The AB of November 3rd carried a picture of two young, scared girls, with the statement of a male member of the youth organization that he saw 'thirty

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<sup>36</sup> See also Anderson 1987.

<sup>37</sup> Aidit was the chair of the PKI.

<sup>38</sup> This refers to the military men killed on October 1. Sukarno had them promoted and called them the 'Heroes of the Revolution'.

Gerwani members shouting, torturing and playing with the already unconscious General Yani' (AB 3\11\1965). The following day the BY carried a story about beautiful Gerwani members who were ordered to sell themselves. 'Documents', the report said, 'had proven the existence of a 'Black Cat' group which had been entrusted with burning the houses of non-Communist people, as well as the woods, and to destroy vital installations. Linked to this was a group called 'Black Button' consisting of Gerwani members with beautiful faces who had had to sell themselves and align themselves with the leaders of other parties to induce them to support the PKI programme' (BY 4\11\1965).

Then all papers brought prominently the 'honest confession' of fifteen-year old, three-months' pregnant Djamilah, nicknamed the 'Srikandi of Lobang Buaya'. It was reported that both her husband and Djamilah herself were members of the Tandjung Priok branch of the youth organization. On September 29th she was picked up by a PKI leader for some exercises in Cililitan. 'That day and the following day we exercised ...and at about three o'clock we were woken up ...we were instructed to crush the kabir and Nekolim.<sup>39</sup> There were some 500 people collected there, 100 of whom were women. The members of Gerwani, including Djamilah, were issued small knives and razor blades....From far we saw a short fat person entering; he was in his pyjamas. His hands were tied with a red cloth and red cloth was also tied over his eyes. Our leader Dan Ton ordered to beat up this person, and then they started stabbing with those small knives at his genitals. The first one, as we noticed, to beat and stab the genitals of that person was the chair of Gerwani Tandjung Priok, called S., and Mrs Sas. Then other friends followed... after that we ourselves joined in torturing that person. All 100 of us joined in this activity. ... Then he was dragged to the well by men in uniform...but he still wasn't dead. Then a uniformed man ordered Gerwani to continue. The Gerwani women continued as before, stabbing and slicing his genitals and his body until he was dead'.

I have four accounts of this story, AB 5\11, DM and SH 6\11 and BY 7\11, 1965. It is striking that the wording is exactly the same in all four articles. This suggests that the text was prepared beforehand. Two papers carried a picture of Djamilah which again are the same. The source of the story was stated to be the army. It seems that the army didn't trust the 'honest confession' of Djamilah enough to let her tell the story herself to the press. This account was highly inflammatory and it became widely known.<sup>40</sup> After this story the slogans of the students and other groups who were demonstrating included Gerwani Tjabol (Gerwani Whores), Gantung Gerwani (Hang Gerwani) and Ganjang Gerwani (Crush

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<sup>39</sup> These terms are part of the rhetoric of the last years of Sukarno's Old Order; for kabir see note 30; Nekolim refers to neo-colonial forces.

<sup>40</sup> See for instance Vittachi 1967.

Gerwani).<sup>41</sup> Terms which are still echoing in Indonesian society, as the introductory interview demonstrates.

Islamic leaders spurred on the massacre which now began to unfold. The Muhammadiyah<sup>42</sup> held an emergency meeting on November 9-11 at which it was declared that the 'extermination of the Gestapu/PKI and the Nekolim is an obligatory religious duty' (Boland 1982:146). This call for a holy war was subsequently echoed by many Muslim leaders, who justified the killings as 'the will of Allah'.

Then in the papers a picture appeared of a frightened girl called Sujati, nicknamed Jossy. A fierce-looking bearded man in a uniform was towering over her. The subscript said that she confessed to have been involved in shooting one of the kidnapped officers, general Yani, both in his home and at Lobang Buaya.<sup>43</sup>

'This Gerwani member<sup>44</sup> and high school student is another proof', the papers reported, 'of the evil acts of the Gestapu/PKI, 'poisoning our young buds... We should never again allow our new generation which is still clean to be poisoned and provoked by the traitors of our nation'' (AB 19\11\1965). In relation to her a few weeks later the first mention was made of the 'Golden Horse Award'. This award, Jossy is reported to have confessed, 'was promised by Aidit to anyone who managed to kill a General... The Lobang Buaya executioner', the account continued, 'acknowledged that she had been trained for six months at Lobang Buaya Barracks and that everyone there had received the amount of rupiah 120.000, excluding food, clothing and military equipment. Also, she said that women and men were engaged in free relationships as they already had received indoctrination that in communism there are no differences between men and women' (MB, second week of December 1965).

President Sukarno in the meantime tried to stem the tide of violence. He decided to publish the results of the autopsy on the bodies of the generals which, as Anderson's article clarified (1987), revealed that the reports which held that the genitals of the generals were cut off and their eyes gouged out were false. He called on the journalists to keep themselves to the facts and to refrain from publishing lies. Only one paper published this announcement (SH

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<sup>41</sup> See Buku Putih (1994:2).

<sup>42</sup> Islamic Reform Movement.

<sup>43</sup> According to May, Yani was captured by a squad of some 200 palace guards who shot him in his house. He died in the truck that brought him to Lubang Buaya (1978:95). This story is corroborated by an account of Yani's death in BY 5-12-1965.

<sup>44</sup> Neither Jossy nor 'Saina', see below, had belonged to Gerwani, as my sources testify (Wieringa 1995).

13\12\1965).

But to no avail. A few days later the same paper carried the 'confession' of Saina. This 17-year old 'member of Gerwani', 'with a child and husband'... told the investigating team that she had been 'injected several times while training for 6 1/2 months at Lobang Buaya after which she felt wild sexual urges'. 'According to the Head of the Interrogation Team of the Pepelrada<sup>45</sup> West Java, Major A. Danamihardjo S.H., Saina, during their 6 1/2 months of training, had been competing together with 199 other Gerwani members to sexually serve 400 men who were also being trained there in the hope to win the 'Golden Horse Award' which D.N. Aidit had promised them'. Saina had often been injected 'which had aroused her to engage in these indecent acts'. She had told the team that 'Aidit had once given a speech at the camp that PKI volunteers did not need to feel constrained by religious rules but that they should have free sex amongst each other'. At the question how it was possible that she 'as a woman could engage in murdering the Generals', Saina explained that 'she could engage in such acts after hearing a speech of Aidit in which he explained that women should be as courageous as men' (SH 8\12\1965). Women's 'courage' thus and their independent behaviour is directly associated with sexual perversion and murder.

The stories of sexual abuse said to be committed at Lobang Buaya were now reported to be wider than only at that particular night of September 30th. A girl named Julie 'confessed weeping that some 40 women had been following a training in Lobang Buaya in September. But she was betrayed for she had been raped there by members of Pemuda Rakyat' (BY 30\11\1965).

Another aspect of the 'training' the women were alleged to have received at Lobang Buaya was 'revealed' by Sakinah. 'Apart from sexually serving Pemuda Rakyat members', she was quoted as having said, 'they were also taught to cut the genitals of a cat. Then they were given the task to cut up two soldiers of the Diponegoro division and two traders in Tegal, who they attracted first by behaving as prostitutes'. In relation to this, the article continued, 'Brigade General Sutjipto hopes that Muhammadiyah would accept the challenge to fight against these evil acts' (AB 15\12\1965).

It is striking that after these 'confessions' none of the women who had been present at Lobang Buaya and who had been detained were ever brought to court. How much propaganda would it have yielded to the military if these girls in the public space of the courtroom would tell these stories! Trials were held on much less 'evidence'.<sup>46</sup>

In December the campaign lost its vigour. Most of the killing in Java had been done, although in Bali the worst killing took place in the second two weeks of December 1965

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<sup>45</sup> The Pepelrada were the Regional Authorities to Implement Dwikora (Pengusaha Pelaksana Dwikora Daerah). They were abolished in July 1967 (Crouch 1978).

<sup>46</sup> See Amnesty International (1977) and Southwood & Flanagan (1983) for trials which have been held.

(Vickers 1989; Schulte Nordholt 1991; Robinson 1995).

## SUKARNO REPLACED

The traumatic 1965/6 period in Indonesian history marks the change from the Old Order of President Sukarno to the New Order of President Suharto.<sup>47</sup> The New Order state is built on a military, male model of discipline and repression in which any reference to social inequality is denounced as being inspired by or related to 'Communist subversion'. The myth of the birth of the New Order was consciously created by General Suharto and is continually recreated, in campaigns of indoctrination in which amongst others a film of the so-called 'betrayal' of the PKI is shown. This campaign was built on sexual metaphors, especially the male fear of castration, which in particularly gruesome colours depict the role the women's organization Gerwani, which was linked with the PKI, allegedly played in that coup.

The slander campaign against Gerwani and the PKI not only facilitated the actual change of power, but it also laid the ideological foundation for the continued military rule of the New Order. As Mortimer writes, 'the legitimacy of the Suharto government rests strongly upon the acceptance of the political public that the PKI committed treason against the state and that by encouraging Communists and trying to shelter them even after their treason Sukarno forfeited his right to lead the nation' (1974:420). The form this 'treason' took however was not just the Untung putsch. It was the assault on the very basis of morality and religion and thus of the social order itself that Gerwani was accused of. Since then any resistance to the military could be blamed on some 'PKI remnant', or the 'latent danger' the PKI represented.<sup>48</sup> It was made clear what that would lead to: chaos in the state and at home, women's sexual powers unleashed, the minds of children poisoned and innocent Islamic men seduced or castrated even.

As President, Suharto tried to make sure that the Lobang Buaya stories were portrayed not as the lies they are but in a scientific light. To that end the Study Center of Sciences of the Society published a booklet full of footnotes and other scientific paraphernalia. Quoting army sources, the following version of what happened at Lobang

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<sup>47</sup> The major step in this change of power was the instruction Sukarno was manipulated into giving to Suharto, in which Suharto was entrusted with wide powers to restore orders. The instruction is been given the acronym of 'Supersemar'. Semar is a principal *wayang* figure, both a God and the main servant of Arjuna. Suharto then purged the highest body in the country, the MPRS, from supporters of Sukarno. In March 1967 when the MPRS met, Suharto was promoted to Acting President.

<sup>48</sup> See for instance Manai Sophiaan (1994:244). Even until the nineties regularly newspaper reports appear with some reference to the 'latent danger' the PKI is supposed to represent.

Buaya was provided:

To heat up the atmosphere the Gerwani dancers stepped up their dancing. They danced the Dance of the Fragrant Flowers, which they used to do every night after their exercises at Lobang Buaya. There were no moral borders. Not at all. In a primitive manner the members of Pemuda Rakyat, the BTI and SOBSI were permitted (to do what they liked) with the Gerwani members by the leaders of their military exercises...Then occurred the torturing which was carried out by members of the Gerwani, Pemuda Rakyat, BTI and SOBSI. One of the torturers was Djamilah, at that time only seventeen years old. She hit the prisoners. It was all totally beyond the borders of humanity. It is not fitting that their cruelty is told in more detail (LSIK 1983:92).

Government sources kept hammering on the same theme. In 1982 the National Army History Services wrote that during the fateful night of September 30 1965 the waiting Gerwani women 'had already taken their special injections...and were crying hysterically... Several Gerwani women went up to the unlucky generals... and were dancing as if they were possessed by devils...(the generals) were butchered by bloodthirsty people who don't know God...Satan reigned there...A feast of the hell took place at Lobang Buaya' (Dinas 1982:126/7).

Until today the PKI is associated with these two words: penghianat, traitor and biadab, primitive, pagan. The PKI is thus excluded from the nation and even from human culture as such.<sup>49</sup> Recently the regime has been constructing a monstrous monument and museum at the site of Lobang Buaya. The well itself was under reconstruction when I last visited Jakarta in 1994. It was being turned into a marble shrine complete with a temple roof intended for the veneration of anti-Communism. The enormous museum is called 'Museum Penghianatan (Betrayal) PKI'. On its two vast floors models of wood and papier maché show every incident in which the PKI was involved since 1945 behind glass windows. It is the museum of the victors of 1965/6, intended to create the impression of a treacherous, murderous and thieving PKI, which is all the time confronted by the sincere, invincible army, the true defender of the people. It also contains huge murals of photographs, composed of pictures taken amongst others at Lobang Buaya. Strikingly enough the pictures of the bodies of the generals, terrible enough as they are, show no signs of razor blade cuts, and there are no bloody patches on the place where the castrations should have taken place. All the crotches, as far as visible, are intact.

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 is being built on the subordination of women and the manipulation of sexual symbols becomes clear. The center part of the mural is devoted to

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<sup>49</sup> See Leclerc (1991) for an elaboration of this theme.

the events at Lobang Buaya. The generals are being clubbed and thrown into the well. They are surrounded by representations of women. To the left three women are standing. One of them is dressed in a very sexual way and argues defiantly with a man. Beside her two dancing women are arranged, one of whom with a wreath of flowers (representing the so-called 'Dance of the Fragrant Flowers'). Above the well one woman is portrayed, leaning against a tree. She is clad in uniform trousers and a very sexual blouse, which clearly reveals her full breasts. A knife hangs on 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-President Suharto in front of what is presumably a courtroom. The absolute military and legal power is his.<sup>50</sup>

## CONCLUSION

Communism as expressed by the PKI in the fifties and sixties confronted religious, and especially Islamic and Hinduistic groups, in more ways than only the gender aspect. But I suggest that apart from the class struggle, the fear of the bold and free way in which Gerwani women spoke up and fought for what they perceived to be their interests struck a deep chord of anxiety in conservative parts of the population. This facilitated the military manoeuvres of especially Sarwo Edhie to organize the mass murders. This anxiety had definitely sexual overtones and it was these fears that the campaign Major General Suharto mounted spoke to. Men, especially the military and conservative men, became so terrified of what they saw as the castration of their voice by the articulateness of Gerwani that they translated this fear into the castration of that other organ of male power over women, their penises. Afraid of becoming speechless by the voice Gerwani gave to women their fantasy turned out the myth of the sexual castration of military men. The restoration of order which General Suharto brought about means the return to male domination, with women obediently following women's kodrat Indonesian patriarchy has long constructed. Women's political ambitions have been discredited and are channelled into the powerless organizations the military have established for them.<sup>51</sup>

By neglecting a gender analysis the extent of the massacres in Indonesia and the ramifications it has into the present cannot be gauged. By constructing the lies surrounding

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<sup>50</sup> Leclerc (1991) was the first one to point to the ideological messages this Monument conveys.

<sup>51</sup> See also Wieringa 1985 for an elaboration of this point.



the events at Lobang Buaya Suharto played into certain deep fears of the Islamic and Hinduistic population, namely that the 'Communist Beast' would pervert 'their' women and that these politically and sexually powerful women would castrate them. This manipulation of the consciousness of the Javanese and Balinese masses has been so successful that it has become one of the major ideological underpinnings of the New Order state. Until this day, almost thirty years after the 1965 coups, obedience to the Suharto government is enforced by a combination of military, virile power, fear of the 'Communist Beast' and women's subordination.



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