

**Generating History: Violence and the Risks of Remembering for Families of Former
Political Prisoners in Post-New Order Indonesia**

by

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For Karen

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Preface:
Research Setting and Methods

I arrived in Jogjakarta, Central Java in March 2005 with a broad research agenda, intending to carry out fieldwork on the links between agency, political activism, and constructions of generational identity in contemporary urban Indonesia. Stemming from my pre-dissertation research on student activism, my friendship and acquaintance with many university students from my previous stays in Jogjakarta, and Jogjakarta's reputation as a center of youth culture, my initial plan was to focus upon various student activist groups.

Upon arriving in Jogjakarta, I rented what I thought would be temporary accommodations in Nologaten, an area on the eastern side of the city along the road to the airport. (As it turned out, I stayed in my rented house in Nologaten for the full fourteen months of my first fieldwork trip.) Nologaten sits in close proximity to the small Ambarukmo Palace and (now-closed) Ambarukmo Hotel, both belonging to the Sultan of Jogjakarta. Until the mid-1980s, the neighborhood was a quiet collection of homes set amongst bamboo groves, considered a "backwater" compared to the more affluent housing complex within the grounds of the Ambarukmo. In recent years, however, the neighborhood has become a densely-populated area of lower-middle-class homes, *kos* (student boarding houses), and small shops and food stalls. At the time of my fieldwork, the character of the neighborhood was changing rapidly due to the opening of the giant

“Plaza Ambarukmo” shopping mall right at its doorstep. Although the close-knit Javanese *kampung* (neighborhood, village) atmosphere was maintained by the fact that many of occupants of the neighborhood (or their families) had been living there for decades, this was countered by a growing sense of anonymity and transience as more long-time residents converted parts of their homes into student boarding houses, and the student population of the neighborhood mushroomed.

My research focus very quickly became both narrowed and diverted: two weeks after my arrival in Jogjakarta, a friend (an artist, activist, and researcher who had been one of my co-participants in a history workshop in Jogjakarta during the summers of 2001 and 2002) invited me to attend a meeting of an organization made up of older former political prisoners and younger members (some of whom were children of former political prisoners). I was warmly received by the members of this organization¹—*Fopperham*--- and after several weeks of attending their meetings, I decided to focus my research on generational identity, memory, and intergenerational connections specifically upon former political prisoners and their children and grandchildren living in the Jogjakarta area.

My initial conversations and lengthier interviews were with older and younger members of *Fopperham*. My continuing attendance at their meetings and at larger events in which they were participating produced a ripple effect, and I came to know (and in some cases, to interview) other former political prisoners and their children who were also participating in these events. I also met several children of former political prisoners

¹At the time, I speculated that their comfort with my presence may have partly been due to the fact that the organization itself contained several other “outsiders,” i.e. those who were not former political prisoners or their family members. They had also apparently in the past invited to their meetings other foreigners who were artists, NGO workers, or activists passing through or living in Jogjakarta.

in more haphazard ways: mainly being introduced through mutual friends with whom I had discussed my research project.

Although *Fopperham* had no formal membership roster, my estimate is that approximately 25 individuals participated regularly or semi-regularly in its meetings and activities. (Attendance at the semi-weekly meetings could range from 3 or 4 to more than 20 individuals, depending on the time, the topic under discussion, and the weather). Approximately ten of these individuals (all male) were former political prisoners in their fifties and sixties. The remaining members were in their twenties and early thirties; most of these younger members were children of former political prisoners, although three or four of them were activists with no family connection to the political prisoners. The younger generation of *Fopperham* members was a near-even mix of men and women.

The older members of *Fopperham* could best be described as working class, with most earning their livings through professions such as rickshaw driver, appliance repairman, motorcycle repairman, and masseur. The younger members came from working class and lower middle class backgrounds. Some of them (especially those from former political prisoner families) worked the professions mentioned above; several others were finishing undergraduate degrees or pursuing graduate studies.

Although religion was not a topic often addressed at *Fopperham* meetings, it is notable that a majority of the members (like the majority of those I interviewed overall) were Protestant or Catholic. (Chapter Four will discuss the mass conversion of former political prisoners to Protestantism and Catholicism following the violence of 1965-66). Several other (younger) members were Muslim, while a couple of others either did not

consider themselves religious or did not feel comfortable discussing their religious backgrounds with me.

Over the course of my fieldwork, I conducted 53 interviews, ranging from brief conversations to longer life histories. Of these interviews, 17 were with individuals directly involved with or connected to the *Fopperham* organization (and these tended to be the longest and most detailed interviews). The remaining interviews were with former political prisoners and children of grandchildren unconnected to *Fopperham*, and with young (mostly twenty-something) activists who were not directly involved in advocacy for the former political prisoners, yet were sympathetic to their plight.

Although the people I interviewed were (to the best of my knowledge) all Javanese and Javanese-speakers, for nearly all of my interviews² we used the national language of Indonesian. This seemed to be the default preference for the individuals I was interviewing. In addition to being the Indonesian language in which I am most conversant, Indonesian was also the main language that the older and younger members of *Fopperham* used in speaking amongst themselves and to each other, whether in heated debate, informal banter, or procedural discussion. Conducting the interviews in Javanese would doubtlessly have yielded its own insights; yet, the use of Indonesian never felt (to me) stilted or artificial, but rather like a continuation of the conversations that had been happening elsewhere (at meetings, etc.)

Perhaps a sign that the mass violence and imprisonments of 1965-66 are no longer as taboo subjects in Indonesia as they were during the New Order, or confidence in the increasing ease of being anonymous in Jogjakarta, some of the former political

² The one exception to this (Mbak Ning) was an English teacher who preferred that our interview be conducted (mostly) in English.

prisoners and their children who I interviewed chose a semi-public location as the site for us to do so. This could range from the front room of a house (with the occasional neighbor wandering by) or a table in one of Jogjakarta's hip new cafes.

Although my interviews were for the most part conducted solely between myself and the interviewee (with occasional listening in by or questions directed to family members or friends passing through the room), on one or two occasions they served dual purposes: my initial interview with Pak Sumanto, a former political prisoner and older member of *Fopperham* was one the younger members of *Fopperham* "assigned" to me as part of an intra-organizational oral history project that never came to fruition. (Pak Sumanto voiced his approval, even enthusiasm, when I requested that I also be able to use the recorded interview for my own research.)

Pak Sumanto was, by coincidence, a neighbor of mine in Nologaten, and so my neighborhood worked its way into my fieldwork in ways I had not initially expected. Given the still-sensitive nature of the events of 1965-66 and the issues of former political prisoners, I tended to explain my research to my neighbors in a rather general way (describing my interest in activism and generational identity). As I mention elsewhere, I was also reluctant to ask my neighbors too many questions about their relationship with Pak Sumanto, unsure of the extent of their knowledge of his past and what the consequences would be for him. Yet, Pak Sumanto did not seem to share my worries. Our numerous casual conversations (sometimes about matters pertaining to *Fopperham* or to former political prisoners) took place at his insistence on stools set out in front of his house, facing the street. He was also the one to suggest, a mere several weeks after I had started attending *Fopperham* meetings, that I open up my house one evening to host a

Fopperham meeting attended by both young activists and older former political prisoners. I agreed, surprised but grateful for the opportunity. (If this caused any kind of controversy among my neighbors, I did not hear about it.)

I cannot say for certain if my interlocutors appreciated my persistent questioning and requests for lengthier interviews; yet, most were extraordinarily gracious and indulgent of my presence and my pestering. There were, however, two occasions when I directly sensed my presence to be disruptive or unwanted: the first was the inaugural meeting for a group of local female former political prisoners that I was politely asked not to attend. Since I was subsequently invited to other gatherings with same group of former political prisoners, I speculated that this was a show of caution and need for privacy at the start of an uncertain endeavor (given the relative “newness” of female former political prisoners formally organizing in the post-Suharto era, and a pronounced paucity of women in male-dominated organizations of former political prisoners in Jogjakarta).

The other occasion was around the time of local elections for *bupati* (regent officer), when a number of former political prisoners affiliated with *Fopperham* were attending the campaign rally of a candidate deemed to be sympathetic to their plight; they were planning to explain to the candidate about the discrimination they still faced, and to seek his support. I was invited by my former political prisoner friends to attend with them. However, when we arrived at the rally, I was taken aside and asked to sit in a separate building for the duration of the rally. (It was never made clear to me if the man who asked me to do so was with the *bupati* campaign or was a former political prisoner with whom I was not acquainted.) It was explained to me that it was feared (again, by

whom, was not exactly clear) that my presence would lead to accusations that this particular political candidate had “foreign connections” or “American backing.”

A difficulty I faced on occasion at *Fopperham* meetings was delineating my position as a researcher (rather than an advocate). Several times, I was asked by members of *Fopperham* (primarily the younger generation) to help with fundraising, or to act as an organizational spokesperson who could contact potential international NGO sponsors. I apologetically balked at these requests; although I felt for the sufferings of the former political prisoners and their families, I was wary of appearing too partisan or ideological (fearing that it could put at risk both my research visa and my research itself). I did however, participate in a way that I hoped was helpful by doing some translation, hosting the meeting at my house, and chipping in funds to help a *Fopperham* member travel to Jakarta.

Despite the willingness of many former political prisoners and their families to speak with me, I could not help feeling at times that our interviews were taking place within a kind of vacuum. Due to my uncertainty regarding who knew what about the individual or family’s political status, and my uncertainty of who they wanted to know what, I rarely had the opportunity to speak to these individuals about their experiences in the presence of neighbors or certain family members. Many of these individuals spoke of their pasts or those of their parents with a surprising level of ease and what appeared to be a lack of self-consciousness. I feared the consequences if I were to let my guard down and be so cavalier as to do the same.

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Glossary of Indonesian Terms

anak korban: “children of victims,” used primarily as a sympathetic term for the children or grandchildren of former political prisoners.

anak PKI: “PKI [Communist] children,” used as an epithet against the descendents of those imprisoned or killed as suspected communists in the 1960s.

eks-tapol (eks-tahanan politik): former political prisoner, most often referring to those individuals who were imprisoned as accused communists after 1965.

Fopperham (Forum Pendidikan dan Perjuangan Hak Asasi Manusia): “Forum for the Education and Struggle for Human Rights.” A small Jogjakarta-based human rights advocacy organization, founded in 2004, whose membership consists primarily of former political prisoners and their children.

G-30-S (Gerakan 30 September): “The 30th of September Movement.” A group that on September 30, 1965, staged a coup attempt that resulted in the deaths of six high-ranking Indonesian Army generals. The coup attempt was quickly defeated, and the new Army-led New Order regime was quick to lay blame for the coup on the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI). This association was solidified throughout the New Order era by referring to the coup attempt as “G-30-S/ PKI”

Gerwani (Gerakan Wanita Indonesia): “Indonesian Women’s Movement.” A leftist women’s organization founded in 1950. Following the 1965 coup attempt, Gerwani was banned, and many of its members imprisoned or killed. This was accompanied by official propaganda that (without evidence) painted a lurid picture of Gerwani members’ participation in the death of the Army generals.

korban: “victim” of crime, political violence, or natural disaster; also connotes “sacrifice” in religious contexts.

masyarakat: “society.” Also sometimes used to mean a more specific “community.”

Nahdlatul Ulama (NU): mass-based traditionalist Indonesian Islamic organization, founded in 1926, the largest of Indonesia’s Islamic organizations. During the period following the Indonesian Revolution, relations were tense between the Indonesian Communist Party and *ulama* (religious scholars) affiliated with the NU. Following the attempted coup in 1965, members of the NU’s youth militia took part in the killing of suspected communists.

pelurusan sejarah: “the straightening of history.” A post-New Order scholarly and popular effort to “correct” or bring to light Indonesian histories considered to have been “distorted” or obscured during the New Order period.

pemuda: “youth.” Often portrayed in Indonesia as simultaneously on the vanguard of political change and as a group uncorrupted by political interests and affiliations.

Pemuda Rakyat: “People’s Youth.” The youth wing of the Indonesian Communist Party, banned after 1965.

PKI (Partai Komunis Indonesia): The Indonesian Communist Party. Founded in 1920, and grew to be the 3rd-largest communist party in the world before being decimated and outlawed by the New Order regime following the 1965 coup attempt for which it was blamed. In New Order (and post-New Order) Indonesia, “PKI” referred both to the organization and its members, and more broadly to the ghostly specter of the “communist.”

Pulau Buru: Buru Island, in Maluku province in Eastern Indonesia. Usually used to refer to the penal colony on the island to which thousands of accused “communists” were sent between the late 1960s and the late 1970s. Many of these prisoners died from the harsh conditions and mistreatment they experienced there.

Syarikat (Masyarakat Santri untuk Advokasi Rakyat): “Muslim Community for Social Advocacy.” A non-governmental organization founded in 2000 by young members of the Nahdlatul Ulama Muslim organization, intended to bring about reconciliation between the Nahdlatul Ulama community and the *eks-tapol* who they had seen as their adversaries in the 1960s.

Chapter One:
Introduction: Generational Blind Spots, Intergenerational Visions

In 2005 I arrived in Jogjakarta, a city of approximately half a million people in Central Java, to begin my fieldwork on generational identity in postcolonial Indonesia. Seven years prior President Suharto, whose New Order regime had ruled Indonesia with an iron fist for thirty-two years, had resigned in disgrace amidst a collapsing economy, mass student-led demonstrations, and riots in Jakarta and other cities. I had been living in Jogjakarta, working as an English teacher, in the two years leading up to the fall of Suharto in May 1998, and so was able to directly witness the building momentum preceding his resignation. Between 1998 and 2005, the landscape of Jogjakarta had changed significantly: gated communities (*perumahan*) springing up on land purchased by recently arrived retirees from Jakarta, the proliferation of internet cafes, the steep rise in tuition prices at the esteemed Gadjah Mada University (calling into question its historic reputation as “the people’s campus”), and the opening of several more (ill-planned, in the eyes of many residents) large shopping malls across the city.

As I set out to conduct my research on generational identity, I noticed a more subtle, yet deeper, transformation that had begun during that time, one with historical roots stretching back well before 1998 that were only beginning to be acknowledged and sought out: what had begun, and was continuing during the period of my fieldwork in 2005 through 2007, was a change in the way in which certain Indonesian publics conceptualized the relationships between political and moral agency, historical memory,

and generational identity. A heroic, nationalistic narrative of generational agency and revolutionary exceptionalism, one which had been adopted and proclaimed almost by rote by student activists and their supporters in 1998, had given way to a more cynical, paternalistic view of youth as either passive consumers or an “at-risk” population vulnerable to the influence of illegal drugs, “free sex,” and other vices.

Amidst this disillusionment with the agentic power of youth (and the widespread sentiment among students, activists, and those who considered themselves victims of the New Order that the promise of transformation and reform—*reformasi*—in post-Suharto Indonesia was stalling¹), a different possibility emerged: one in which generational agency is located not in a self-contained struggle, nor as the automatic continuation of a generic, streamlined “youth spirit,” but rather as part of a sustained, critical, historically specific look backwards at the words and experiences of certain victims of Indonesian state violence which lay outside of the dominant narratives of Indonesian history. This discourse emerged primarily from the ideas, activism, and practices of marginalized victims of state violence who still, as of this writing, lack a prominent public voice in Indonesia; it is not (yet) a generalized discourse. Yet, as I argue in subsequent chapters, the very uncertainty regarding the scope and applicability of this intergenerational project

¹ In my numerous discussions with neighbors, students, activists, and friends in Jogjakarta between 1998 and 2007, I did not encounter any consensus on when exactly this “stalling” of *Reformasi* began. For some, the process itself was flawed from the beginning, representing a timid reshuffling of elites rather than a radical restructuring of Indonesian political institutions and society. Others cited Indonesia’s continuing economic woes and violent conflicts in Aceh, Ambon, East Java, and elsewhere as evidence of one of two opposing scenarios: of *Reformasi* derailed by the continuing behind-the-scene machinations of Suharto and his allies, or of *Reformasi* as a lamentable rupture from the certainties and “stability” of the authoritarian Suharto era. Still others—particularly the former political prisoners and their family members with whom I worked during my fieldwork—located the failure of *Reformasi* in the persistence of discriminatory laws and in the state’s refusal to hold accountable those deemed responsible for New Order violence or establish credible transitional justice institutions.

contributed both to its perceived potential efficacy (on the part of its supporters), and to the perceived threat that it represented in spite of the marginal position of its participants.

Slipping Between Generational Gaps: “*Korban 1965*” (“1965 Victims”)

These “victims” (*korban*²—the term they claimed for themselves in private and public arenas following the fall of Suharto)—were *tapol* (short for “*tahanan politik*,” political prisoners—later to be known as *eks-tapol*: former political prisoners) and their family members; before I turn back to the “generational narrative” that I argue obscured their experiences, it is necessary to provide the historical background to their persecution and imprisonment: the *eks-tapol* had been arrested and imprisoned (the great majority of them without trial) after a failed coup attempt in September 1965 by a mysterious group calling itself the “*Gerakan 30 September*” (September 30 Movement). The group claimed to be acting to safeguard President Sukarno and the Indonesian nation against what it alleged was a planned military takeover by a CIA-sponsored “Council of Generals”; late in the night, soldiers loyal to the September 30 movement kidnapped and killed six Indonesian army generals, dumping their corpses down a well at the *Lubang Buaya* (Crocodile Hole) site. The coup attempt was quickly put down by the Indonesian Army under General (later President) Suharto, which swiftly moved to blame the coup and the murder of the generals on the *Partai Komunis Indonesia* (PKI), or Indonesian Communist Party. Many more alleged “communists” (anywhere from 500,000 to 3 million individuals) were killed by the Army or by Army-instigated civilian militia groups, in one

² In Indonesian, “*korban*” is generally used to mean “victim” or “casualty” (whether of a crime, of directed or random violence, or of a natural disaster). Yet, stemming from its Arabic roots, “*korban*” can also mean “sacrifice” (and is indeed the term used for the religious offering of food made during celebrations of *Idul Adha*).

of the worst bloodbaths of the post-World War II 20th century (Anderson & McVey 1971; Nugroho 2008; Robinson 1995; Roosa 2006; Roosa et al 2004; Wieringa 1999)³.

The PKI had been founded in 1920, and played an active role in the fight for independence from the Dutch (including a short-lived armed rebellion against Dutch rule in 1926-27). In 1948 the PKI was decimated and discredited after a failed uprising in the city of Madiun (considered by many other factions of Indonesian nationalists to be a betrayal of the in-progress Indonesian Revolution); yet the party soon reformed under the leadership of D.N. Aidit, and won 16% of the vote in the 1955 national elections. The party grew larger and more powerful as a part of President Sukarno's "Guided Democracy" program, and by the early 1960s—with tens of millions of members and sympathizers—was the world's third largest communist party. As the PKI developed a more influential role in Indonesian politics, tensions increased between the party and the Indonesian Army. There was also by 1965 great antagonism between the PKI and anticommunist civilian groups (including some members of nationalist parties, mass-based Muslim organizations, and wealthy landlords targeted by the PKI's "unilateral action" land-reform campaign.); these civilian groups, spurred on by the Indonesian Army, participated in the post-coup massacres of alleged communists (Fealy and McGregor 2010).

In addition to those who were declared members of the PKI itself, the party maintained ties with a number of affiliated social, cultural, and occupational associations (of artists, peasants, students, teachers, etc.), whose members ranged from committed leftist activists, to those who joined for more pragmatic reasons, through those who had

³ For a summary of the various estimates of the 1965-66 dead., and an explanation of the difficulties in determining an accurate count for the number of dead, see Cribb 1990 and 2002.

the most casual relationship, attending just a meeting or two). These affiliations assumed a tragic significance following the failed G30S coup, when the massive persecution and killing of “communists” swept up many with no—or only the most tenuous—of connections to the PKI. In his recent history of the 1965 coup attempt, John Roosa employs this apt metaphor to describe how the post-1965 violence against alleged “communists” went well beyond the conflict between the PKI and the Indonesian Army:

Both sides could be viewed as boxers...[but] we are dealing with a boxer who not only knocks out his opponent in the ring but goes on to attack all of that boxer’s fans in the stadium, then hunts down and attacks his opponent’s fans throughout the country, even those living far away who had not even heard about the match (Roosa 2006: 224).

Although the Indonesian government did not keep reliable records for the number of those detained post-1965, international organizations such as Amnesty International and the British Campaign for the Release of Indonesia’s Political Prisoners estimated that up to 100,000 accused “communists” were imprisoned (Fealy 1995: 44-46). Punishment for the *tapol* was meted out according to a classification system established by the Indonesian government in the late 1960s: Those individuals assigned to “Category A” were accused of having directly participated in the G30S movement, and/or having foreknowledge of it; the government also singled these individuals out as having sufficient evidence against them that they could be officially tried. Those prisoners believed by the government to have been supporters of the coup, the PKI, or its affiliated organizations—yet for whom there was insufficient evidence to bring to trial—were marked by the government as “Category B”; the majority of these prisoners were sent to the penal colony on Buru Island (*Pulau Buru*) in Eastern Indonesia. Those assigned to

“Category C” were accused of being more loosely affiliated with the PKI, usually through one of its affiliated organizations (Fealy 1995: 5-6; Heryanto 2006: 17).

Largely as a result of international pressure and the threatened cut-off of aid, the Indonesian government began releasing *tapol* in the mid-1970s, and the majority had been released by 1979. Yet the now-*eks-tapol* were, for the duration of Suharto’s New Order regime, *persona non grata*: their identity cards (KTP) were marked with the letters E/T (for “*eks-tapol*”); they had to attend mandatory “reeducation” (*santiaji*) sessions; they were banned from the civil and armed services, and from “influential” professions such as teaching, journalism, and politics; they had to seek government permission to travel, or to change their place of residence.

Significantly (and a central component of this dissertation), the state-directed discrimination against the *eks-tapol* was also applied to their families (parents, spouses, children, and grandchildren), who were deemed ideologically suspect by association. This discrimination was codified into law in 1982 in a measure that declared that, in order to be eligible for a number of jobs and educational opportunities, individuals had to give proof that they were *bersih diri* (“clean,” i.e. not themselves affiliated with any groups deemed leftist or subversive) and *bersih lingkungan* (“from a clean environment,” i.e. not related by blood or marriage to anyone who was a former political prisoner) (Heryanto 2006: 17-18) ⁴

⁴ A 1988 government directive (collected in *Himpunan Bersih Diri dan Bersih Lingkungan dari G-30-S/PKI*) explains the kinds of family relationships that might produce an “unclean” environment if one of the family members was implicated in the 1965 coup attempt: “1) children with their parent 2) parents-in-law to their son/daughter-in-law 3) grandparents who are raising their grandchildren 4) uncles/ older siblings/ others who have supported [the children], have brought them up or provided them with assistance for a relatively long amount of time 5) wives towards their husbands, and vice versa” (*Himpunan Peraturan Bersih Diri dan Bersih Lingkungan Dari G-30-S/PKI* 1988:4)

Unable, due to their family connections, to pass a government-mandated “screening” test, children of *eks-tapol* were denied access to the same types of occupations as were their parents, and were usually not eligible to enroll at public schools and universities. On a less formal level, the children and grandchildren of *eks-tapol* were often ostracized by their peers and within their communities, tagged with the epithet “*anak PKI*” (communist’s child). The Indonesian state thus created an intergenerational historical and ideological link between *eks-tapol* and their children; as I will argue, the significance of this link was overshadowed by a more dominant “generational” narrative of Indonesian history, yet later became the basis of a challenge to this narrative, and to New Order historiography more generally.

The Generational Narrative and Acts of Forgetting

After coming to power in 1966, the Suharto regime worked to propagate its hegemonic version of the 1965 failed coup (in which the PKI was the sole culprit), and thus preempt--with an astonishing degree of success--knowledge and/ or questioning of the post-coup massacre of hundreds of thousands of Indonesians. This was accomplished through such varied projects as building an elaborate museum/ memorial to the slain generals at the Lubang Buaya well where their bodies had been dumped (McGregor 2007: 61-110; Schreiner 2005) and—in the early 1980s, the making (with government funding) of the “historical” film *Pengkhianatan G30S/ PKI* (The Treachery of the G30S/ PKI). This film which, in its gory depictions of the murder of the generals on the night of September 30, 1965 and its demonstration of how General (later President) Suharto defeated the coup and “restored order,” was screened annually at movie theaters (and

later on state television) on the anniversary of the September 30 coup attempt; attendance for schoolchildren was mandatory. Millions of Indonesian school children born after 1965 thus had one episode of violence (the murder of the generals) annually burned into their memory, yet were taught nothing about the (far more bloody and widespread) subsequent massacres (McGregor 2007: 96-100; Heryanto 2006: 6-16).

For the duration of the New Order period, the government-sponsored “memory projects” mentioned above were effective in perpetuating the silencing of the experiences of *eks-tapol* and their families that had initially been accomplished through mass violence and imprisonment. Yet there were also other, more subtle ways in which this history was (temporarily) lost from view, ones which were not as closely connected to intentional, state-directed construction of particular hegemonic historical narratives. Equally influential to this historical aphasia is a “generational” narrative, which has been tremendously influential in popular (and some scholarly) renderings of Indonesian history from colonial times up through the present day. This “generational” version of Indonesian historiography posits that Indonesian history is both made and propelled forward by historical agents who can be neatly classified in terms of distinct “generations.” This trope repeats itself, for instance, in celebrations of the *Sumpah Pemuda* (“Youth Pledge”) nationalist generation of 1928, the revolutionary “1945 generation” who fought for independence against the Dutch, the “1966 generation” of anticommunist student activists which—in a temporary alliance with the Indonesian military—helped to bring Suharto’s New Order regime to power, and finally the “1998 ‘Reformasi’ generation” of students and activists that hastened its demise. In each of these cases, so the story goes, the young generation emerges as politically disinterested

pioneers (*pelopor*) who serve as the moral conscience of the nation and point it towards its future with the unequivocal support of—and in the name of--the undifferentiated Indonesian people (*rakyat*).

The Indonesian writer and intellectual Goenawan Mohamad makes the important observation that the formation of the generation of Indonesian nationalists from various locations throughout the archipelago who came together in 1928 to make the “Youth Pledge” (for one homeland, one people, and one national language) was premised on a “forgetting” of their diverse ethnic and regional attachments (Mohamad 2001). Benedict Anderson, in his classic work on the generation of youth (*pemuda*) whom he sees the prime moving force of the 1945 Indonesian Revolution, presents the revolutionary consciousness of the *pemuda* as having deep roots in Javanese culture; yet, as we shall see, much of the *pemuda* characteristics he describes are later detached and seen as emblematic of a general “*pemuda*” spirit transcending specific historical contexts: *pemuda* as isolated and set apart from the wider society (in *pesantren*—Islamic boarding schools in earlier times, in universities in more contemporary times); *pemuda* as marked by *keiklasan* (“sincere devotion without calculation of profit and loss”); *pemuda* emerging from their isolation—with a special agentive role—in times of societal crisis and transformation, only to later return to their sequestered existence when the time of crisis had passed (Anderson 2006: 1-15).

The “agentive” generation associated with the 1960s in dominant narratives of Indonesian history is not made up of the young people who joined up with the PKI or other leftist movements (and who, after 1965, were among those killed or imprisoned in the anti-communist massacres). Rather, it is presented as being the “Generation of ’66,”

those anticommunist student activists who took to the streets with the support of the Indonesian Army after the failed G30S coup attempt, demanding (successfully, ultimately) the banning of the PKI as a political party and the end of the Sukarno presidency. (It is important to note that although the mainstream version of Indonesian history presents this generation—approvingly—as resolutely anticommunist, their being invoked as another “heroic” generation does not often segue into discussion of the post-coup mass killings and imprisonment). After the fact, the role of the main spokesperson and representative of this generation was given to Soe Hok Gie, an anticommunist Indonesian student activist of Chinese descent who died in an accident in 1969 (at the age of 27) while climbing Mount Semeru in East Java. Gie’s diaries were published posthumously (as *Catatan Seorang Demonstran*, or Observations of a Demonstrator), as was a collection of some of the newspaper articles he had written in his post-student career as a journalist. Gie’s relationship and stance towards the violence of the mid-1960s was complicated; he was strongly opposed to President Sukarno (whom he considered to be a hopelessly corrupt womanizer and squanderer of the nation’s wealth) and to the PKI, and yet he also wrote articles (some of which were never published) criticizing the mass imprisonment of suspected communists. These complexities are usually lost, however, in the posthumous transformation of Gie into an icon of a generic yet supposedly transformational “youth spirit.” Indeed, there is much in Gie’s writings that hearkens back to the *pemuda* spirit described by Anderson: he writes in a diary entry from 1962 that “a hero is someone who withdraws him/herself [*mengundurkan diri*] in order to be forgotten, just as we have forgotten those who died for the revolution.”(Soe 1983: 122). He writes in a 1964 entry that “practical politics” (involving considerations of personal

status and gain) is intrinsically “dirty,” although (much like the selfless *pemuda* temporarily entering the arena of conflict), he adds that “it seems that the moment has arrived when I must descend into the mud.” (Soe 1983: 157). In a later article, written for the newspaper *Kompas* in 1967, Gie gives a cinematic vision of the “student struggle” [*perjuangan mahasiswa*] as being comparable to

the struggle of the cowboy. A cowboy approaches the city from a distant horizon. The city is in the midst of being overrun by looting, rape, and injustice. The cowboy fights the bandit, and wins. After the bandit is killed, the grateful denizens of the city search for the cowboy. But he has already ridden off into the sunset. He has no desire for status or flattery. He will return again if there are other bandits who come along (Soe 2005: 21).

By the time the Suharto regime fell in 1998, the ideals expressed by the revolutionary *pemuda* and by Soe Hok Gie had become part of a generalized discourse on the morality, selflessness, vanguardism, and agentive power of the “young generation” in Indonesia. Yet even in the waning days and the early aftermath of the New Order, many Indonesians (activist and non-activist alike) held to a depoliticized view of *pemuda* shaped by the New Order government’s characterization of *politik* as “dirty” and disruptive. This can be seen in the 2000 publication *Mencari Kembali Pemuda Indonesia: Penuturan Para Aktifis dari Berbagai Generasi* (Searching Again for the Indonesian Youth: Reflections of Activists from Various Generations). This collection of essays by current and former Indonesian activists is intended by its publisher⁵ to present a historically-informed portrait of Indonesian youth throughout the ages that does not profess any particular ideological or political leaning, yet argues for Indonesian youth’s inherent transformational agency. In the preface to the book, the editor states that

⁵ On the back cover of the book, the publisher CYSIF (Center for Youth, Future, and International Studies) is described as “having been established from the momentum of the 1998 Youth Pledge Day celebration” and as “a non-profit organization which aims at human resources development [*mengembangkan kualitas sumberdaya manusia*] in Indonesia, especially among the young.”

“the youth [*pemuda*] of Indonesia are born to be instruments for combating injustice [*alat pendobrak ketidakadilan*]. They are always there to correct and return the Indonesian nation to its national struggle.” (Hamzah 2000: ii). He adds that “Our understanding of “youth” [*pemuda*] does not depend only on age designation and physical appearance. In our history, we discover that youth is symbolic of energy [*semangat*], passion [*gairah*], initiative, vanguardism [*kepeloporan*], courage, and other types of attitude and behavior that attach to youth.” (Hamzah 2000: vi). The book later presents an essay by S.K. Trimurti, whose very brief biography in the back of the book states that she was a teacher during the colonial era, an activist in the 1945 Indonesian Revolution, and later a Minister of Labor during the Sukarno era. In her brief essay, she describes having been given the task in 1945 of travelling around Central Java, informing different communities about the proclamation of Indonesian independence. Without providing the reader with any information about her life after 1945, she abruptly cuts off her narrative and ends her essay with an entreaty to today’s Indonesian *pemuda*:

You, the youth of Indonesia, are the ones who are continuing the struggle of our generation. We’re old, with not much time left in this world. We’re still around, but because we’re elderly, we’re not active like we used to be. Now Indonesia belongs to you. Whether Indonesia thrives or falters, it’s up to you. Repair Indonesia better than we were able to do in the past (Trimurti 2000: 3-8).

The essays in *Mencari Kembali Pemuda Indonesia* suggest another aspect of the generational narrative: the “young generation” emerges in a serial way at certain critical junctures in Indonesian history; due to this seriality, it derives part of its authority from the past. Yet it is also always responding to the perceived needs and crisis of the present moment. It follows that each new generation represents not only a break from the past, but also the taking up of a more abstract struggle.

In the broadest sense, this dissertation will look at the unsettling of this “generational” narrative in post-Suharto Indonesia, and will explore two main gaps in this perspective—first that it invalidates or ignores the experience of those who do not fit into predetermined generational categories (for example, those who were active in Indonesian political and intellectual life between 1945 and the mid-1960s, or who asserted their generational agency from the political left) and second, that its tendency to locate the agency of each generation within a temporally bounded period fails to acknowledge the possibility and value of an intergenerational, critical examination of the (national) past.

This “generational” narrative is multivalent; it can encompass the appearance of the radical, revolutionary youth consciousness of Indonesian *pemuda* who fought in the 1940s against Japanese occupation and then against Dutch colonialism. Yet, this narrative’s more recent manifestations, I would argue, point to a conservative historiography that forecloses the possibility of a critical reassessment of the (violent) Indonesian past. Others, such as Karen Strassler, have made a similar point. Strassler argues that the 1998 student movement was tied to “a mythic narrative that constructs ‘youth’ as an ahistorical subject, severing their ties to particular social and political contexts.” (Strassler 2005: 304). My interpretation of the “generational” narrative differs slightly from Strassler’s: I do not see it as involving the creation of an ahistorical subject per se, but rather facilitating an overconfidence in the smooth progression of history, offering an assurance that any act of looking back at the past will bring into view only that with which we are already familiar. If this narrative appears ahistorical, it is perhaps because those who embrace this narrative feel that the past can be dealt with in a cursory fashion. The relationship of *eks-tapol* to their children (the growing awareness of one’s

relationship to a “silenced” past) offers a sharp contrast with a more dominant Indonesian idea of “generational identity” that is connected to a sense of being deeply enmeshed in a present-day moment of crisis.

Most salient for this discussion is the way in which the “generational” narrative closes off the discursive space in which the violence and ostracism experienced by former political prisoners and their families could find its way into narrations of Indonesian history. In voicing a triumphal narrative of the role played by distinctive generational movements as the true vanguard of change and makers of history in Indonesia, and in condensing 20th-century Indonesian history into a straight line running from 1928 to 1945 to 1966 to 1998, the “Reformasi” student movement could not make room for an intergenerational reckoning with the past conducted by those most excluded from the national project during the New Order period. This explains, for instance, why the 1998 student movement that helped bring down the New Order made little or no reference to the violence of 1965 or the plight of political prisoners and their families as part of their condemnation of the New Order government.

Youth on the Streets: The *Reformasi* Movement and Generational Agency

In spite of the Suharto regime’s ferocious elimination of the Indonesian Communist Party, suppression of mass politics in favor of carefully orchestrated political theater, depoliticization of university campuses, and (initial) hobbling of Islamic-based political groups⁶, sporadic and varied acts of resistance did occur throughout the duration of Suharto’s 32 years in power. This opposition came from various sources: student

⁶ Beginning in the late 1980s, Suharto reversed his government’s policy, and began courting Islamic groups (and displaying his own Islamic credentials and religiosity) as a bulwark against declining support from the Indonesian military. See Hefner 2000.

activists, workers, intellectuals, religious activists, members of “separatist” groups, etc.; most were suppressed by the government through arrests, extrajudicial killings, and the censorship of media and literature. Political activism on university campuses was hobbled by the government’s 1978 implementation of the NKK/BKK (Normalization of Campus Life/ Body for the Coordination of Student Affairs) policy. The NKK/BKK policy, which stated that university campuses had to be “free from politics,” placed student councils under the direct supervision of the university bureaucracy and effectively drove independent campus political activity underground until the mid-1990s (Aspinall 1993:8-9). In this “underground,” student activists formed “study groups” and discussed such banned writings (often obtained at great personal risk) as the books of Pramoedya Ananta Toer, alternative histories of the 1965 upheaval in Indonesia, and works of liberation theology. Through their curiosity about and reexamination of Indonesia’s past these “underground” activists’ idea of the possibility of change did not conform to the concept of “generational” identity described above (Aspinall 1993: 25-31; Heryanto 2006: 65-73).

When I first arrived in Jogjakarta to teach (in 1996, some nine years prior to the fieldwork described here) it was only a couple weeks after the capital, Jakarta, had experienced some of its worst upheaval in decades in reaction to the government-backed takeover of the headquarters of the PDI opposition party. The government had arrested members of a small leftist party, the PRD (*Partai Rakyat Demokratik*, or People’s Democratic Party), and scapegoated them for the violence in Jakarta. These events were still being discussed when I first arrived in Jogjakarta, but by all outward appearances, the government’s veneer of *ketertiban* (order) and *keamanan* (security) had been restored.

Yet, I quickly was able to see that signs of discontent were everywhere, though one had to lean in close to hear or see them, and everyone knew the risk that came with them. Since the first internet cafés were just beginning to open and not yet widely used in Jogjakarta, those opposed to or questioning the New Order regime spread information in more improvised ways: the university students in my evening English class, momentarily fearless in front of their foreign English teacher, distributed dog-eared photocopies of such banned “underground” magazines as *Suara Independen* (Independent Voice). When I brought my tattered copy of the same magazine to a local Indonesian language school to read and discuss with my Indonesian teacher, he was eager for the opportunity to do so; we did so in lowered voices, however, and only after he had closed the door to our classroom. Another dramatic day, my upper-level English students (nearly all of whom worked for the university as public servants) erupted into peals of shocked, nervous laughter when one of their classmates joked that the solution to government corruption was “to kill our president.”

This sort of quiet, haphazard dissent found more public form with the onset of the Asian economic crisis in 1997. With the Indonesian economy unraveling, the rupiah plummeting in value and prices of basic goods skyrocketing, Indonesians—primarily university students—began to take to the streets, demanding dramatic action and change including decreases in prices and an end to corruption. Following the Indonesian parliament’s rubber stamping of Suharto’s “reappointment” as President in March 1998, the protests grew in size and became increasingly aimed at Suharto and his family (public criticism of whom had been taboo for the duration of the New Order). The scale of the demonstrations, the pushing of those demonstrations beyond the boundaries of the

university campus, and the personal targeting of Suharto and his family by activists were dramatic and exhilarating.

Yet the critical histories that had found their way into “underground” student groups of the 1980’s and early 1990s were barely seen once the movement had exited the campus and was exposed to the light of day and the glare of the public media; the protesters’ criticisms were focused on present injustices alone and did not engage with the foundational violence of the New Order regime or the violence that had kept it going. In the demonstrations I witnessed, the student publications I read, and the wider mass media coverage, the orientation and the critique were decidedly presentist: the most persistent demands of the demonstrators were for a lowering of prices and an end to “corruption, collusion, and nepotism.” When the cries on the campus and the street changed from “bring down prices” (*turunkan harga*) to “bring down Suharto” (*turunkan Suharto*), it was largely because of the President’s perceived *economic* mismanagement and malfeasance. The primary sentiment conveyed in the demonstrations was disenchantment with a regime that ruled corruptly, failed to meet the needs of the Indonesian people, and overstayed its welcome.

There were occasional fugitive signs that hinted at different and deeper kinds of political violence that had occurred under Suharto: at one anti-Suharto demonstration I attended near the campus of Gadjah Mada University, for instance, a protester brazenly displayed the flag of the *Fretilin* party in East Timor (who were, at the time, conducting a campaign of guerrilla warfare against the Indonesian occupation of East Timor). For some student activists, the writer, leftist, and former political prisoner Pramoedya Ananta Toer assumed a role as a sage advisor. One of my acquaintances in a neighboring

boarding house described to me with excitement how he and his friends had traveled to Jakarta to meet with and interview the famous man. Yet these were exceptions.

Overall, the actions and practices of the students were couched in the familiar terms of the “generational” narrative described above. For a sense of the way in which this generational language permeated the discourse of the 1998 student movement, we can look to a couple of examples from the newsletter *Gugat* (meaning “accuse”, “criticize,” or “demand.”), a newsletter put out by student journalists/ activists at Jogjakarta’s Gadjah Mada University starting in April 1998.⁷ We can see the familiar sense of newness and reference to the past only as something that must be transcended in the newsletter statement that:

The new sun shining on Indonesia will rise from the campuses, we are certain of that.... It will appear out of the sacred spirit of the young generation [*kaum muda*]⁸...a spirit that has not yet been sullied by the desire for power. A spirit that has not yet been sullied by material desires... The older generation speaks of the past, but the young generation speaks of the future. (*Gugat* 1998a)

Furthermore, the newness of a generational or activist movement is predicated on the failure of the government and the wider society to fulfill archetypal values established in some unspecified or nonspecific past, as is apparent in another *Gugat* article’s assertion:

It was in vain that the heroes [of the 1945 Indonesian Revolution] sacrificed to make this land a free country, because that freedom has been shamelessly taken

⁷ *Gugat* was a newsletter put out every few days by student journalists/activists at Gadjah Mada University beginning in April 1998, with most of the articles within written anonymously. The writers of *Gugat* present it as an “alternative media source” for those involved in the student movement. A former writer for *Gugat* informed me that *Gugat* was started in April 1998 as the student movement “gathered steam”; by that time too many demonstrations were occurring throughout Yogyakarta for a committed activist to be able to attend them all. The newsletter, then, was intended to keep students up-to-date on the activities of their fellow activists at other universities, and to create feelings of united and simultaneous action within the student movement. *Gugat* may be read as part of a discourse in the process of formation; it contains stories that the student movement was telling itself about its identity, its mission, and its potential.

⁸ The term “kaum muda” has its origins in the Islamic movements of early 20th century Indonesia.

from us by force. We are forced to start everything again from the beginning. This nation has been forced to start over from scratch (*Gugat* 1998b)⁹.

As stated earlier, the generational narrative can be multivalent. Yet its historical/historiographical blind spots apply across the ideological spectrum, and its constricting effects can be seen even in its most radical invocations: this can be seen in the homage paid to the generational narrative by the late Pramoedya Ananta Toer—writer, former political prisoner, and one of the fiercest critics of the Suharto government—in a 1999 speech he gave after being sworn in as an honorary member of the leftist People’s Democratic Party (PRD)¹⁰:

At this moment, in the midst of this spirited and enthusiastic Young Generation, I truly feel happy. This is the most important event in my life, what I have dreamed of since I was young: to witness for myself the birth of a Young Generation not burdened by bombasticism, and which is rational, corrective, critical, and all of this bound by firmness of commitment...

...I assess the Young Generation, I mean the PRD, as being of higher quality than the generations that have gone before...

If we make a comparison with the Young Generation [of nationalists] with their Youth Pledge [of 1928], also a genuinely glorious event, the PRD exhibits more ideas with greater depth. We can understand this when we remember that in the 20s only 3.5% of the population could read and write. The increase in the number of literate people began only with national independence. Taking into account this statistic we can understand the deficiencies of the Young Generation of this period.

...The 45 Generation [who fought against the Dutch in the Indonesian Revolution] was also glorious. With no self-interest, without reserve, they devoted all their body and soul, ready to die, in order to defend national

⁹ Although students were portrayed by the Indonesian media (and by the students themselves) as the guiding force behind *Reformasi*, others at the time reflected upon the promise, complexities, and contradictions of the *Reformasi* moment in a manner perhaps more nuanced than that of the exuberant student activists. Nancy Florida (2008) gives a fascinating account and analysis of an exorcistic collaboration of sorts between the well-known painter (and former political prisoner) Djoko Pekik and the writer Sindhunata.

¹⁰ The PRD, in spite of its small size and marginal position, was targeted by the New Order government soon after its inception in 1996, and was accused of being communist and masterminding the 1996 riots in Jakarta. See Heryanto 2006: 136-138.

independence on every inch of the homeland...

...The 66 Generation [of anticommunist student activists who, allied with the Indonesian Army, helped to bring Suharto's New Order to power]? Wow! there is nothing more to evaluate on them...[They] were defeated by the New Order, with tactics which are becoming classic features of our history.

This is why I am proud to be among you all today, you who have prepared your ideas, have started to put them into practice in the field, and smile maturely ready to accept the consequences, never mind how bitter. There is no cry more appropriate for all this than: Long live the PRD!...

...In our modern history, the Young Generation has always been, except the 66 Generation, the motor driving things forward. Even though, yes, even though with all its flaws and limitations. And the limitation which sticks out most of all: the lack or absence of courage for correction (Pramoedya 1999).

Pramoedya's speech may differ from the standard generational narrative in its withering criticism of the "1966" generation and the centrality it gives to the PRD in the demise of Suharto's New Order. However, it still hews to the familiar generational markers and—in its praise for the pioneering spirit of youth-- presents a relentlessly forward-looking position in which the past displays itself transparently, and the young generation's political and moral agency depends upon transcending said past rather than (re)engaging with it.¹¹ As will be discussed below, my fieldwork several years after Pramoedya's speech presented me with a striking concrete example of a different intergenerational relationship to the Indonesian past.

Post-Suharto Jogjakarta, The Return of "Gie," and the Limitations of "Youth"

When I returned to Indonesia (on several shorter trips) in the early 2000s, the unified discourse on youth was already being questioned or met with cynical responses.

¹¹ It is, in a way, quite curious that Pramoedya should in this instance recite the generational narrative in such a conventional way, given that his most celebrated novels—the "Buru Quartet"—are very much about how a reassessment of the (colonial) past can inspire radical political critique in the present day. (Heryanto 2006: 59; Pramoedya 1990)

This was connected to the discontent of many self-proclaimed *wong cilik* (“common people”)—food stall vendors and shop owners—in my neighborhood who had supported the student activists in 1998, but were several years later expressing nostalgia for the “calm” and economic stability of the Suharto era. Several friends of mine who had been student activists out on the street in 1998 also complained of the hedonism, apathy and consumerism that had overtaken Indonesian youth after the triumph of the fall of the New Order. There certainly continued to be sporadic street protests (against an increase in university tuition, the government’s cutback on fuel subsidies, the U.S. invasion of Iraq, etc.), yet these were small-scale and seemed to be treated by non-students as little more than an obstacle to moving through traffic.

Mbak Yeni, a young leftist activist from a *pesantren* (Islamic boarding school) background who was 26 when I spoke to her in 2005, described to me what she saw as a generational distance structured not around political or ideological differences, but around sexual mores and consumption habits:

It’s a different situation, and their cultural influences are also different than ours. There’s a difference between pre-and-post 1998. For example, for the [post-1998] generation, now consumerism is the biggest influence. Now, the popular kids [*anak gaul*], the young kids chatting at the mall, with *fashionable* clothing. This has become the trend for the teenaged generation, this has become their identity. The identity of today’s teenagers is different than that of my generation. Maybe in my generation there were some who were like that, but not like now. Maybe because they’re influenced by the numerous types of media, and ideology doesn’t really come into the picture.

Yeah, in my generation, for example, we start to see a cultural divide in Indonesia: “free sex” behavior, maybe that’s what distinguishes the previous generation [i.e., hers] from the current one. It used to be, for instance, that it was taboo for people [of the opposite sex] to kiss each other on the cheeks, but for kids these days..... It’s become totally normal.... and now right in front of me I see teenagers accustomed to doing that. And I think it’s because they’ve been influenced by consumerism.

The depictions of the young generation in the local media tended no longer to revolve around the transformational agency and heroism of youth, but rather on the question of youthful behavior. In one of the more sensational examples, in the summer of 2002 a young researcher in Jogjakarta conducted a study (the validity of which was questioned by many parties) proclaiming that 97% of female university students in Jogjakarta were not virgins. (Bernas 2002; Kompas 2002) Public attention had shifted from youth's ability to affect change to its supposed propensity for "immoral" behavior. This trend was both reflected in and belied by the way in which the public face of youth was increasingly, during the period of my fieldwork, given an Islamic hue: conservative Muslim youth and student groups rallied in support of an "Anti-Pornography" bill being considered in the Indonesian parliament (necessary, they argued, in order to protect other youth from the "decadent" behavior mentioned above); more liberal Muslim activists as well as secular groups organized rallies against the bill.¹² At the same time, young men affiliated with the hardline *Front Pembela Islam* (Islamic Defender's Front) conducted rallies and "sweepings" against what they considered to be "immoral" or "unIslamic" gatherings, places of business, etc. Yet liberal Muslim groups have also gained more prominence in the post-New Order era, ranging from student groups such as *Persatuan Mahasiswa Islam Indonesia* (Indonesian Islamic Student Organization) to the advocacy group *Syarikat* (to be discussed in later chapters)

¹² Goenawan Mohamad (2001: 127), however, indirectly suggests a link between the "deviant politics" of the New Order era and the post-New Order concern with "deviant sexuality": he makes the astute observation that the banning of leftist books during the New Order turned them into "a new form of pornography" for those trying to obtain them.

The remaining attraction (for some) of the agentive power of the young generation, the perceived “degrading” of youth, and the inability of the aforementioned “generational narrative” to give attention or legitimacy to other past moments of political agency, are all encapsulated in a much-hyped cinematic event that I witnessed soon after my return to Jogjakarta to begin my fieldwork in 2005. The film “Gie,” made by the young director Riri Riza, was a biopic of the aforementioned 1960s student activist Soe Hok Gie. The film was lauded by many for its heartthrob star and relatively high production value as well as for its supposed encapsulation of the spirit of youthful change.

In conjunction with the film’s release, Soe Hok Gie’s writings were republished and became ubiquitous in numerous bookstores around town. The anonymous writer of a preface to the 2005 republication of *Zaman Peralihan* (An Age of Change), a collection of Soe Hok Gie’s essays, makes the rather cantankerous observation that “the idealism, thought, and charisma [embodied by Soe Hok Gie] as an icon of a demonstrator have begun to fade amongst today’s young generation. The MTV generation. The “Me” [*Gue Banger*]” Generation.” He notes, however, that

at the moment that this individual who made such a major contribution to student idealism has faded from view, he’s returned to be a hot topic in 2005. This high budget film... has brought Gie back into view for today’s young generation. In this current climate of consumerism, hedonism, and capitalism, the reemergence of the figure of Gie might become a breath of fresh air and offer an alternative “orientation” for living (Gie 2005: iii-iv).

This anonymous preface-writer was far from alone in hoping that the transformational youthful spirit displayed in “Gie” could be transplanted out of its 1960s context in order to connect contemporary Indonesian youth with the broader (and less historically specific) potential of youth to act as historical agents: In an enthusiastic editorial in the

newspaper *Kompas*, the progressive historian Asvi Warman Adam praises the film as offering both a role model for the young generation and a signal to those of other generations that they should be optimistic about contemporary youth. Asvi writes that the film presents Soe Hok Gie as a figure who “viewed an incident of the past from an objective standpoint”—being critical of both the increasing authoritarianism of President Sukarno and the human rights abuses in the early days of the Suharto regime, all the while refusing to affiliate too closely with any political organization. Asvi goes on to claim that

When today’s youth seek for a “hero” who can be a role model to them, Gie is an option....*Gie* is a film made by a young [director], viewed primarily by the young generation, and demonstrating the extent to which they have not yet been poisoned by the dogma of history. When viewing this film...I am no longer pessimistic. We still have a young generation who loves the country with a critical eye, with a conscience and clear thoughts so that it won’t be tempted into perpetuating and bequeathing conflict. Youth who want to be free from the weight of the past (Asvi 2005).

Others, however, have found this type of near-hagiography of Soe Hok Gie and “Gie” (and, by extension, the agentive power of the young generation in Indonesia today) to be problematic. The anthropologist Ariel Heryanto, for instance, sees the film as replicating and reinforcing much of what it purports to criticize:

Gie was released at a time when the Indonesian public was just beginning to demythologize the official history of 1965...Previous myths about Soe Hok Gie and the commercial promotion of *Gie* raised public expectations that this was a film about an uncompromising figure in political activism fighting against state repression. What we get in the film is almost the opposite...To a significant extent, [Gie’s] overall activities in the narrative in fact represent a particular style of student life that the New Order prescribed for Indonesian youths and students: to study hard, be nationalistic, stay clear of ‘dirty politics,’ and be a moral voice of the people.

...[N]owhere in the story do we see any suggestion of the degree of the military’s complicity in the massacres of nearly 1,000,000 citizens in 1965-66...Narrated from the perspective of a loner, and exonerating the culprits of the nation’s most

serious crime, the 1965-66 tragedy...is portrayed and commented on from a distance as largely an unhappy fate for the individuals (Heryanto 2008: 87-88).

The release of the film *Gie* was one of the major pop cultural events of the period of my fieldwork in Jogjakarta. If the release and reception of a single film cannot tell us everything that we need to know about the current state of the “young generation,” the critiques of the film still hint at a kind of discursive staleness when it comes to the attempted perpetuation in 2005 of the “youth spirit” that 1998 was supposed to embody.

Heryanto articulates a critique of the “generational narrative” of Indonesian youth based in part on its inability to incorporate the story of the victims of New Order violence in 1965-66. His criticism of the myopia of the supposed transgenerational heroism connected with the “Gie” film serves as a useful hinge in this introduction, as I shift my discussion from the dominant, mainstream Indonesian articulations of the “generational narrative” to the intergenerational wrestling with history, memory, and stigmatization carried out by *eks-tapol* victims of New Order violence and members of the “young generation” (many the children of *eks-tapol*) who affiliated with them.¹³ Based on my fieldwork in Jogjakarta from 2005 through 2007, I will show how these types of interactions offer a powerful, intergenerational alternative to the constricting “generational narrative” discussed in the first part of this introduction. Yet I will also demonstrate in this and subsequent chapters the ways in which *eks-tapol* and their children found the language of generations, the agency and power of youth, and a transcendent “non-political” morality to be useful—in certain situations-- in articulating their own experiences.

Most of these children of *eks-tapol* who I got to know were born between the late 1970s and the mid-1980s.

“1965” in Post-Suharto Indonesia

In ways unrelated at first glance to the youth activism and “generational” narrative described above, following the fall of Suharto there has been a great flowering of discussion, research and evaluation of the 1965-66 violence. A number of “alternative histories” of 1965 have been published since 1998, expanding, broadening, and deepening the challenge to the official government version of events that began with the 1971 publication of Benedict Anderson and Ruth McVey’s “preliminary analysis” of the G30S coup questioning the PKI’s culpability (Anderson and McVey 1971). Some of these histories consist of the memoirs/ “testimonies” of prominent *eks-tapol*, giving a detailed rebuttal of the demonization they experienced during the Suharto era (Pramoedya 1995; Setiawan 2004; Subandrio 2000; Sulami 1999; also see Watson 2006). Other recent works use newly-gathered material to tell the personal stories of *eks-tapol* through oral histories (Roosa et al 2004), give a nuanced view of the G30S coup attempt that presents it as a bungled, disorganized affair with no one sole organizational “mastermind” (PKI or otherwise) (Roosa 2006), and investigate such under-researched aspects of 1965 as the mass religious conversions that followed the start of the anti-communist persecutions (Nugroho 2008). In addition, several important scholarly works have taken a broader look at discourses of anti-communism in Indonesia after 1965, when the PKI as an active political entity was violently disbanded, to be replaced with “PKI” as a haunting, demonic specter (Budiawan 2004; Heryanto 2006). Less attention has been given to a number of works written during and after the New Order concerning the experiences of the children of *eks-tapol*, which I will discuss in greater detail in Chapter 3

(Poyk 1966; Rustiadi 2002; Saputro 1982).¹⁴ While often treated as an offshoot of the literature of 1965, I will examine this literature of the next generation as a discourse in its own right.¹⁵

The number of published works challenging the official version of the violence of 1965 may indeed be indicative of a post-Suharto historiographic opening.¹⁶ However, it should be kept in mind that the audience and readership of these books is relatively limited to a portion of the Indonesian population—those (mostly urban, middle-class) Indonesians who have access to libraries and/or bookstores carrying these books and the material means to purchase the books. (Other Indonesians may have shunned these works because of ideological aversions to anything attached to “communism.”) A more systematic reappraisal of the official version of 1965 and the decades-long demonization of communism would have to involve a change in the nation-wide history curriculum used in schools. This was in fact attempted in 2004, with several high school history textbooks presenting multiple, conflicting narratives of the 1965 coup attempt, and referring simply to the “G30S” coup rather than the “G30S/PKI” that the Suharto government had, from the start, used to implicate the PKI as the mastermind behind the coup attempt. This revision was short-lived, however: in 2006, bowing to pressure from anti-communist groups, the Attorney General’s office ordered the banning of these revised history textbooks and a return to the 1994 (Suharto era) curriculum in which the PKI was presented as having been behind the coup (Asvi 2006).

¹⁴ Other works about the children of *eks-tapol* which will not be discussed here owing to space limitations include Abdullah 2003; Khoiriyah 2007; Massardi 1979; and Proletariyati 2002

¹⁵ For a useful, concise description of some of the publications relating to 1965 published in the first years of the post-Suharto era (through 2004), see Asvi 2004c.

¹⁶ Van Klinken (2005) gives a thorough account of some of the broader post-Suharto historiographical currents, beyond issues relating to the violence of 1965-66.

In the post-Suharto era, the *eks-tapol* and their families have won some victories in pushing for the revocation of the discriminatory laws against them: following the fall of Suharto, the government no longer required that identity cards of *eks-tapol* be marked with the identifying code “ET”. In 2000, President Abdurrahman Wahid ordered a halt to the practice of ideological “screening” for political candidates and those trying to enter the civil service. In 2004, the Supreme Court struck down a law that had limited *eks-tapols* and their children’s participation in politics; *eks-tapol* and their family members were now permitted to join any (legal) political party (the 1966 ban on parties with a “Marxist-Leninist” orientation remains in effect), and to be candidates for parliament (*TEMPO* 2004).

Despite the passage or revocation of a law at the national level, the actual implementation at the local level can be wildly uneven and depend upon the whims and sentiments of local officials. Among some of the *eks-tapol* and children of *eks-tapol* I got to know, I heard stories of those still struggling against bureaucratic hurdles in order to move across town, or to get a permanent identity card. Likewise, many children of former political prisoners seemed uncertain about the extent to which certain impediments they faced (e.g. not getting into a particular university) were related to their family backgrounds.

The 1998 fall of the Suharto regime opened the door to former political prisoners and their families and supporters being able to organize and congregate publicly in a way that would have been impossible under the New Order. This process was furthered by the discursive opening created in 2000 by then-President Abdurrahman Wahid’s (controversial) public apology to the victims of violence in 1965-66 and his (never-

implemented) suggestion to revoke the laws banning the Indonesian Communist Party and the espousal of Marxist-Leninist ideology (Suhelmi 2006). A number of organizations composed primarily of former political prisoners formed in the late 1990s and early 2000s, among them *YPKP* (*Yayasan Penelitian Korban Pembunuhan 1965-66*, or Institute for Research on The Victims of the 1965-66 Killings), *LPRKROB* (*Lembaga Perjuangan Rehabilitasi Korban Rezim Orde Baru*, or Organization of the Struggle for Rehabilitation of Victims of the New Order Regime), and *PAKORBA* (*Paguyuban Korban Orde Baru*, or Association of Victims of the New Order). 2000 also saw the founding of the Java-based organization *Syarikat* (*Masyarakat Santri untuk Advokasi Rakyat*, or Santri Society for People's Advocacy) by young members of the mass Muslim organization *Nahdlatul Ulama* who, inspired by (former *Nahdlatul Ulama* leader) Abdurrahman Wahid's apology, strove for reconciliation between *eks-tapol* and *Nahdlatul Ulama* which played a large role in their repression following the coup attempt in September 1965. This endeavor was extremely controversial within the *Nahdlatul Ulama*, with some factions opposed to any reconciliation with alleged communists (Fealy and McGregor 2010; McGregor 2009).

In spite of these gains made by *eks-tapol* and their families, and the loosening hold of the New Order's narrative of communist perfidy, the 1966 law banning the PKI and "Marxist-Leninist" teachings remains in force; anti-communist rhetoric and sentiment also remains strong in Indonesia following the fall of Suharto. This can be seen in violent incidents such as the November 2000 attack on the relatives of villagers killed in 1965-66 in the Temanggung area of Central Java, who had recovered their loved ones' remains from a mass grave and were attempting to rebury them (Heryanto 2006: 1-2;

Rambadeta 2001). Indonesian mainstream media also routinely carries stories demonstrating a continuing societal and governmental hostility towards “communism”: an *eks-tapol* resident of Solo questioned by police (and released after a “warning”) in November 2005 for displaying a banner celebrating Idul Fitri (the end of the fasting month of Ramadhan) which he had also decorated with a (banned) hammer and sickle symbol (an incident that will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 4)(*TEMPO* 2005); protests in September 2009 by a right-wing Muslim organization (Laksar Hizbullah) against a radio station in the city of Solo after the station played (unwittingly, it seems) a song (*Genjer-Genjer*) that had been banned as a “communist” song during the Suharto era (*Kompas* 2009); police in East Java in January, 2011 forbidding three local television stations from airing a film about the life of the fabled Indonesian communist Tan Malaka (*TEMPO* 2011).

My work in this dissertation is not focused primarily on uncovering new facts about the horrific events of 1965-66 themselves. Perhaps counterintuitively, in many of my interviews with *eks-tapol*, this period of time—often encompassing experiences of imprisonment, deprivation, separation from family, and torture—was the part of their lives that they were *most* prepared to talk about, the part that they presented in the most straightforward way. There are a number of possibilities for why this would be so: It could be that several of the *eks-tapol* had had the opportunity prior to our meeting to tell the story of their suffering and imprisonment at seminars and human rights forums or to magazines such as *Syarikat’s RUAS* that document the experiences of *eks-tapol*. They may also be reflecting a familiarity with the published autobiographies of prominent *eks-*

tapol such as Pramoedya Ananta Toer, Hersri Setiawan, and Putu Oka Sukanta, few of which give much attention to the period of time following their release from prison.

In any case, in a number of the interviews I had to offer gentle reminders that I was also interested in knowing about their lives following their release from prison, their relationships with their children and families, and their present-day activities. As powerful, gut-wrenching, and important for a critical rethinking of Indonesian history the stories of the *eks-tapols*' period of imprisonment are, it is also important for us to look closely at those thoughts, experiences, and relationships that are not as "easily" narrated: the life of the *eks-tapol* following the "worst" period of their suffering, after they have been reintegrated into Indonesian society (while also being kept apart and stigmatized); and, the complex intergenerational relationships (personal and organizational) that they formed with the young generation—both their own descendents and other young activists who have involved themselves with the "cause" of *eks-tapol*.

Ann Stoler (2002: 649) has rightly pointed out that an "[o]bession with getting '65 'straight' may silence another past that we have only begun to reimagine and bring into focus—one in which '65 was not inevitable or a predestined story." We should not privilege "1965" as the exclusive event to which we direct our historical lens, nor should we treat it in retrospect as an inevitable spasm of violence. Yet her note of caution can also be applied to the other end of the temporal spectrum. Just as we should not see the events of 1965 as inevitable, we should not take for granted or simplify the echoes of this suppressed history in contemporary Indonesia, or the process by which this history is coming to light.

“Straightening” History

The post-New Order emergence of “alternative” histories of the violence of 1965-66 is part of a broader movement calling for *pelurusan sejarah*, or “the straightening of history.”¹⁷ According to proponents of this “straightening,” there was “manipulation” (*rekayasa*) of Indonesian history during the Suharto era that produced a hegemonic singular version of Indonesian history that was used to legitimize the ruling regime. This official New Order history asserted the central role of the Indonesian military in Indonesian history; privileged the unitary Indonesian state over local histories (particularly those outside of Java); suppressed histories focused around questions of class, ethnicity, or religion; and sought to erase the historical contributions of leftist movements and figures to the Indonesian nationalist project while minimizing or downplaying those motivated by Islam. Most crucial for this current study is the aforementioned way in which the New Order version of history defined the violence of 1965 in terms of the attempted coup and murdered generals (for which it blamed the PKI) rather than in terms of the hundreds of thousands or millions killed or imprisoned in the aftermath of the coup attempt (McGregor 2007)¹⁸.

The historian Asvi Warman Adam is the figure who has come to be seen as one of the most vocal proponents of “the straightening of history”, and who has written a

¹⁷ Another scholarly initiative to find new ways in which to write about Indonesia’s postcolonial history came in the form of a Ford Foundation-funded series of workshops held at the Realino Study Institute at Sanata Dharma University in Jogjakarta. (I participated in these workshops as a discussant in 2001 and 2002). These workshops on “The ‘Truth’ of the Past and the Practice of History/ Historians: A Workshop on Documenting and Writing the Past for the Peoples of Indonesia Today,” were organized by Budi Susanto (the head of Realino) and Nancy Florida; they have continued on an annual basis, and are aimed at enabling young Indonesian scholars to develop and carry out historical research projects, which are later published. See Susanto (ed.) 2003, 2005a, 2005b.

¹⁸ It is beyond the scope of this study to detail all of the aspects of Indonesian history (beyond “1965”) that various scholars, activists, and political figures have wanted to see “straightened.” Van Klinken (2005) provides a thorough summary of some of the aspects of Indonesian history (and historiographical omissions) that are being reexamined and debated in post New Order Indonesia.

number of articles on the subject. (The 2004 collection of some of these articles is entitled “The Straightening of Indonesian History.” In the introduction to this collection, he attempts to answer the question of

What is the criteria for the straightening of history? What is it that is to be straightened? As I see it, the straightening of history means *rendering plural the history that used to be singular* [*menjadikan sejarah yang dulu seragam menjadi beragam*]. If there was once only one version of the G30S event, now various other versions have emerged (Asvi 2004a:19).

It is telling that Asvi chooses the events surrounding G30S as the prime example of events in Indonesian history ripe for “straightening.” While other groups on the receiving end of New Order repression have advocated this approach (Van Klinken 2005), it is perhaps the *eks-tapol* and their children and grandchildren who have most readily adopted this language and this cause as their own. During a February 2008 mock trial of Suharto held by demonstrators (consisting of “victims of the New Order”) at the Proclamation Monument in Jakarta, an *eks-tapol* is quoted insisting that “there will be no forgiveness for Suharto. All we are asking the government for is the upholding of the law and the straightening of history.” (*Kompas* 2008)

This suggestion that the Indonesian government should be the party carrying out a “straightening of history” raises the question of who are considered to be the proper agents of this endeavor. Another answer to this question was given to me by an *eks-tapol* I got to know in Jogjakarta. In discussing the work of groups such as *Syarikat* and linking this work to the “straightening of history,” he highlights the intergenerational component of this process:

Groups like *Syarikat*, they’re trying to straighten the history that had been turned around by the New Order government, like [the idea that], “Oh, *eks [tapol]* are very bad.” If someone is associated with PKI, there’s a stigma, it’s a sign that they’re the worst kind of evil. But they [the young *Syarikat* activists] are part of

the generation that's coming to realize that that's not true. Since they've gotten to know us [the *eks-tapol*], they see that we're not like the Suharto government made us out to be.¹⁹

The effort to “straighten history” (and the invoking of this project by *eks-tapol* and their children) will appear again in the chapters that follow. In the conclusion, I will address the question of how this effort can be understood in light of the “generational narrative” described above, and the intergenerational practices and communications that I will be describing.

Intergenerational (Imperfect) Organizing

I turn now to a description of one particular organization I came to know during my fieldwork in Jogjakarta, which functioned—I argue—as an intergenerational space in which issues of the relevance and proper representation of the 1965-66 violence were discussed. Soon after my arrival in Jogjakarta in 2005 (to carry out my field work) I was invited by a friend, an activist and artist, to attend a meeting of a recently established local “human rights advocacy” organization. The group, *Fopperham*, (an acronym for *Forum Pendidikan dan Perjuangan Hak Asasi Manusia*, or Forum for the Education and Struggle for Human Rights) had been formed in December of 2004 by the organizers of an exhibit of photographs taken of political prisoners on Buru Island in the 1970s. Following the success of this exhibition (which I was not there to attend), the organizers decided to hold regular meetings to continue their discussion of history and to advocate for human rights. The founders consisted of several (male) *eks-tapol*, several children of

¹⁹ It is notable that although this *eks-tapol* characterizes the work of *Syarikat* as involving the “straightening of history,” *Syarikat* itself in its publications and films seems to prefer the language of “reconciliation” to that of “straightening.”

eks-tapol in their early-to-mid twenties, and a couple of young activists without a familial connection to the *eks-tapol* community.²⁰

I introduce this organization here in the Introduction in part because it embodies many of the issues surrounding generational and intergenerational memory work which are the focus of this dissertation. My association with *Fopperham* also played a crucial role in structuring my research, providing me with an “in” to the *eks-tapol* community in Jogjakarta and sustained interactions with many of them during the sixteen months of my fieldwork. The majority of the *eks-tapol* and children and grandchildren of *eks-tapol* whose ideas, experiences, and conversations I discuss in the following chapters are individuals I met directly or indirectly through my participation in *Fopperham* activities.

Compared to other organizations that emerged after the fall of Suharto to confront the legacy of 1965 and advocate for victims of the violence (which I described above), *Fopperham* is unquestionably a small-scale operation. Decidedly local to the Jogjakarta area (whereas other groups have branches across Java and elsewhere in Indonesia), *Fopperham* lacks the resources and organizational heft of groups such as *Syarikat*. Other than the semi-weekly meetings of *Fopperham* members, the majority of the group’s activities during the period of my fieldwork consisted of “educational” discussions (for example, discussions about historical films related to 1965) and providing logistical support to projects spearheaded by other organizations such as *Syarikat* (for example,

²⁰ The gender disparity within *Fopperham* was pronounced and decidedly generational, with the older generation of *eks-tapol* who attended the regular meetings almost exclusively male, and the younger generation (some children of *eks-tapol*, some activists with no familial connection) consisting of a relatively equal number of young men and women. This gender imbalance, though immediately striking to me, seemed to be taken for granted by both young and old members of *Fopperham* and was rarely brought up as a topic of discussion. On the few occasions I asked about it, the reply was usually that “the *Ibus* [female former political prisoners] have their own needs and need their own space to organize.” Indeed, *Fopperham* helped to organize several gatherings of *eks-tapol* women in Jogjakarta, but this was portrayed by all parties as *Fopperham* networking with a group that was not part of its core membership.

helping *Syarikat* to conduct interviews with female eks tapol for research purposes and running a “trauma healing” gathering of female eks tapol funded by *Syarikat*).²¹

Fopperham’s younger members are primarily university students and recent graduates (some of whom are children of *eks-tapol*); the older members are *eks-tapol* who (due to the limited employment opportunities afforded to them because of their political status), earn a living through work as rickshaw drivers, motorcycle and bicycle repair, masseurs, and refrigerator repair.

The intergenerational make-up of *Fopperham* is part of what distinguished this organization for me and, indeed, the intergenerational component seems deeply important to *Fopperham*’s members as well. In the words of Pak Mulyono—who was a 15 year old security guard for a communist-affiliated organization when he was arrested in 1965:

Yes, the main idea from the start was so that we could continue to move the struggle along [*melanjutkan arah perjuangan*]. I, to speak frankly, am already advanced in age, using up the last bit of my energy. My state of mind is that I sometimes remember things, and sometimes don’t. If we [the older generation of *eks-tapol*] kept things up like this, just limited to us...if we just talked amongst ourselves, we wouldn’t have any offspring [*keturunan*]. So finally we decided...to move the struggle along, and to clear a path [*merintis*] for the young generation. If it were only us [the older generation] working alone, no one would know [about our experiences/ struggles]. So, in the end, we’ve cleared the path.

Pak Mulyono’s statement may remind us of the words of SK Trimurti, the revolution-era activist mentioned above who wrote to a generic “young generation” in the pages of *Mencari Kembali Pemuda Indonesia* that it was the task of the young generation to carry on the struggle of the now-infirm and inactive older generation. The question this apparent similarity presents is: does the “struggle” that Pak Mulyono describes—one

²¹ A few *Fopperham* members were in fact simultaneously active in other *eks-tapol* advocacy organizations. Several of the older *eks-tapol* regularly attended meetings of organizations such as *LPRKROB* and one of the *Fopperham* members (a child of *eks-tapol*) also had a paid administrative position with *Syarikat*.

rooted in a very historically specific experience of suffering and in political affiliations deemed anathema in New Order historical discourse—bear any resemblance to the far more general, national(ist) “struggle” invoked by SK Trimurti in her articulation of the “generational narrative”? And in what ways are discussions of “generation” within the specific context of the *Fopperham* organization related to more general and dominant (and, I argue, confining) “generational narrative” I described in the first part of this introduction? These are questions I will return to in subsequent chapters, as I describe my conversations with individual members of *Fopperham* (as well as other *eks-tapol* and children of *eks-tapol*).

In my frequent attendance of *Fopperham* meetings, I came to see that a significant point of contention between the older and younger members was the extent to which this organization should take on the markings and (perceived appropriate) language of an official organization: *Fopperham* does not (to the best of my knowledge) keep an official roll of members and attendance at its (in theory) weekly meetings could be haphazard. (The number of average number of attendees at a meeting seemed to be around ten people, though at times it could be as few as three or as many as twenty). At a *Fopperham* planning meeting in May 2005, the idea of issuing formal membership cards was proposed by one of the young activists present. This proposal was met by a strong objection by Pak Sumanto, an *eks-tapol* in his sixties whom we will encounter several times in subsequent chapters. He made the point that prior to 1965, he and the other *eks-tapol* had carried membership cards for the leftist organizations with which they were affiliated, and that this had been used as “evidence” against them when the killing and

incarceration of suspected communists began; to the best of my knowledge, the issue of membership cards was never raised again at a *Fopperham* meeting.

The necessity and means of procuring funding for *Fopperham*'s activities also seemed to create some tension between its older and younger members. When *Fopperham* was not working with better-funded groups such as *Syarikat*, funds for small projects were often solicited from members themselves at the regular meetings by a kind of "pass the hat" method. (This was done, for instance, to raise money for train tickets to Jakarta for two young *Fopperham* activists to attend the court session I will discuss in Chapter 4). When younger members floated the idea of seeking funds from international NGOs (as do larger organizations such as *Syarikat*), older *eks-tapol* members voiced their disapproval, expressing uncertainty and distrust at the "real" motives and leanings of these outside NGOs (as opposed to what they saw as *Fopperham*'s clear commitment to "human rights"; see below). In a one-on-one conversation with me, Pak Sumanto complained about the extent to which the young generation of *Fopperham* were focused on financial matters, to the detriment of everything else. Such an obsession with obtaining outside funding, he believed, was akin to "begging"; he proposed instead that *Fopperham* attempt to be as self-sufficient (*mandiri*) as possible.

Prior to one particular *Fopperham* meeting I was chatting casually with Desi, one of the younger generation of *Fopperham* members who was not herself from an *eks-tapol* family. With some exasperation in her voice, she complained about the division of labor that had become the default situation in *Fopperham*: the older *eks-tapol* men had assumed the role of "resources," while the younger members were left with the task of "organizing" (for example, fundraising, planning events, etc.). She told me that she had

been trying for the past year to involve the older generation in organizing, but that these attempts almost always failed because of bickering between them.²² The younger members of *Fopperham*, she believed, were much better at organizing. With a great amount of frustration, she told me that it was the organizations such as *Syarikat*—who had better resources, were better connected, and whose members were not themselves *eks-tapol*—who were really able to “get things done.”

Given this pre-meeting conversation, I was surprised when, during the meeting, Desi began to lightheartedly praise the strengths of *Fopperham* over other organizations working on behalf of *eks-tapol*. At the time, *Fopperham* was helping *Syarikat* to interview local *eks-tapol* about their life histories over the span of a couple months. At this meeting Desi quipped that, unlike groups like *Syarikat*, whose membership was not made up of [1965] “victims” [*korban*] and who therefore had to struggle with the best way to approach the *eks-tapol* community (going “door to door”), *Fopperham* was part of the “family” of victims. Another member of *Fopperham* joked (to uproarious laughter) that it was unnecessary for *Fopperham* to even do any research; they were so close to “*korban* ‘65” (1965 victims), and had spent so much time with them, that they already knew everything that there was to know.

Certainly, the discrepancy between Desi’s critical and flattering portrayals of *Fopperham* within a single night may simply be a question of audience: a grumbled aside to me versus a pep talk at an organizational meeting. Yet it seems that the (at times contentious) intimacy within the *Fopperham* organization—a sense of it being “within

²² Desi demurred when I pressed her for specific details on the nature of these conflicts among the *eks-tapol* members. In my own observations I did not see any sustained or particularly venomous conflict among the *eks-tapol* that manifested itself at the *Fopperham* meetings. More often, the disagreements seemed to be between the older and younger generations, as indirectly suggested by Desi’s comments to me.

the family,” close to the historical source—was a main appeal of *Fopperham* for its members, despite the organization’s shortcomings. A sense of generational incongruity and unsatisfying division of labor was coupled with a sense of closeness, intimacy, and identification with victims of the 1965-66 violence. The question of the organizational effectiveness of *Fopperham*, while a source of much grumbling and consternation among both the older *eks-tapol* and the younger activists, is less interesting for the purposes of this project than the issue of the type of intergenerational space and discourse that it represents.

From its start as the organizer of the photographic exhibit, *Fopperham*’s membership and activities have been closely (and almost exclusively) tied to the victims of 1965-66 and the subsequent persecution of accused leftists. Yet, it is striking that, despite this being the default situation, *Fopperham* resolutely resists labeling itself as an organization that deals with this specific historical injustice; rather, almost everything the organization does is framed in an abstract language of “human rights.” The older members of *Fopperham* almost all have children, but they also disavow the idea that the “struggle” that they are trying to pass on relates to a particular (leftist) ideology. This is also a concern for the younger generation in *Fopperham*; at one meeting in early 2006--following a collaboration between *Fopperham* and *Syarikat* to organize a meeting of *eks-tapol* women—Anton (a young activist in *Fopperham* who is not from an *eks-tapol* family) expressed his worry that being involved in organizing these kinds of meetings will lead to *Fopperham* being seen by outsiders as a group dedicated to “the reemergence of communism.” Pak Sumanto replied to Anton that it is precisely for this reason that *Fopperham*’s focus on “human rights” is so important and “non-debatable” (*mutlak*); he

reminded the group that “human rights have been recognized by the state” (“*HAM sudah diakui negara*”), and contrasted *Fopperham*’s clear commitment to human rights with what he perceived as being *Syarikat*’s “unclear guiding concept” (*konsep yang tidak jelas*). The constant evocation (by both young and old) of the primacy of a general, non-ideological commitment to “human rights” is a practical method of defining the purpose of the organization as separate from others of its kind; yet it also takes on a kind of incantatory power, meant to “normalize” *Fopperham* and allow it to operate publicly without arousing suspicion: at the same meeting Pak Sumanto suggested that *Fopperham* members—having just moved to a new office space—should introduce themselves to the neighborhood head (*Pak RT*) and inform him that *Fopperham* will be holding gatherings “of an educational/ scientific nature” (*yang bersifat ilmiah*). (This kind of openness would have been unlikely had *Fopperham* defined itself specifically in terms of the historical events that had so greatly shaped the lives of many of its members).

Postmemory, Intergenerational Spaces, and the Unpredictability of the Past

Beginning with my experiences with *Fopperham* (as an organization and in my interactions with its individual members), I began to see how the (re)examining of the violence of 1965-66 in early 21st century Indonesia both reinforced certain aspects of the “generational narrative” discussed above, and brought to light its contradictions. There is, on one level, a similarity between the New Order construction of *pemuda* as a “moral force” above “practical politics” and the *disavowal* of politics (as shall be demonstrated in subsequent chapters) and power among former political prisoners, their family members, and their supporters. Student movement leaders and former political prisoners

make this disavowal for very different motives, of course. Yet, much like the “generational” narrative that lionizes the role of *pemuda* that is avowedly nonpolitical but produces great (political) transformations, many of the conversations between the generations in *Fopperham* were about creating a framework for change that arose out of the injustices of the past and yet was abstracted from history.

At the same time, the way in which *Fopperham* defines itself intergenerationally hints at a kind of localized, specific intersubjective experience that belies and undermines the predictability of the “generational narrative” described in the first part of this chapter. In the latter narrative, the uncertainty lies in the future and in the “quality” of the young generation; the past which is simultaneously being transmitted to and transcended by the young generation is (ostensibly) already assured, infused with certainty, clarity, and epistemological transparency. In the former, the intergenerational subjective space that manifests itself at *Fopperham* meetings and in interactions between its members, the past (and how to situate oneself in relation to it) is still uncertain and unpredictable, something that has not been fully resolved.

In analyzing the types of intergenerational interactions—partly voluntary activism, partly forced by the New Order regime’s extension of the suffering of the *eks-tapol* to their children and grandchildren—found in the meetings of *Fopperham* and in wider interactions between *eks-tapol* and their children, I have found Marianne Hirsch’s idea of *postmemory* to be both illuminating and insufficient. Hirsch writes that:

Postmemory describes the relationship that the generation after those who witnessed cultural or collective trauma bears to the experiences of those who came before, experiences that they “remember” only by means of the stories, images, and behaviors among which they grew up. But these experiences were transmitted to them so deeply and affectively as to *seem* to constitute memories in their own right. Postmemory’s connection to the past is thus not actually mediated

by recall but by imaginative investment, projection, and creation. To grow up with such overwhelming inherited memories, to be dominated by narratives that preceded one's birth or one's consciousness, is to risk having one's own stories and experiences displaced, even evacuated, by those of a previous generation. It is to be shaped, however indirectly, by traumatic events that still defy narrative reconstruction and exceed comprehension. These events happened in the past, but their effects continue into the present (Hirsch 2008: 106-107).

The idea of postmemory has been applied most frequently to the relationship between Holocaust survivors and their children (Hirsch 2008; Kaplan 2011). If the concept is to be applied to the case of *eks-tapol* and their descendents, we must recognize important difference between the case of (the transmission of memory of) the Holocaust and the ways in which a young generation of Indonesians (both descendents of *eks-tapol* and others) are confronted with the violence of the past: unlike the case of the Holocaust, there is as of yet in Indonesia no sustained or officially authorized narrative which acknowledges the crimes of the perpetrators of the mass violence of 1965-66, or the suffering of the victims. Although such a narrative is starting to emerge outside of state renderings of Indonesian history, the stories and histories of *eks-tapol* are still seen by many segments of Indonesian society as dangerous, suspicious, and lacking any basis for sympathy. The children and grandchildren of Indonesian *eks-tapol* also experienced (and, to a lesser degree, continue to experience) systematic, institutionalized markedness by the state in a way that children of Holocaust survivors have not. Taking into account these differences (and perhaps, in the process, expanding and revising the idea of postmemory), in the following chapters I will examine different aspects of the powerful, uncertain, and (in some respects) involuntary connection to the violent Indonesian past experienced by the children of *eks-tapol*, and the effects on the Indonesian present and future of the intergenerational exchanges conducted in groups such as *Fopperham*.

Retroactive Belonging

As mentioned earlier, increased public receptiveness to the stories and plight of former political prisoners and their children—and a growing sense that a just Indonesian future requires a reassessment and rectification of the Indonesian past of the kind they are attempting—comes at a moment when the luster on the most recent “activist generation” seems to have all but faded away. From 1998 through the early 2000s, there was a giddy sense that the *Reformasi* student movement had swept away the rot of the past and achieved nothing less than the rejuvenation of Indonesia and the redemption of its history. While the term “Reformasi” is still somewhat in vogue (and is used by Indonesian politicians of all stripes), I heard very little talk during my last fieldwork trip to Indonesia of this spirit being incarnated in a particular “Reformasi generation.” This fading, while surely seen by some as merely a lull before the next Heroic Activist Generation emerges to save Indonesia, can also be seen as an opening into which those committed to an intergenerational reckoning with the past have stepped. The most essential aspect of this (incomplete) shift is, I think, an alternative way of “belonging” to the nation and recognizing oneself in its history. In this conception, it is not merely decisive and public political action as part of a cohesive group in the present (be they “Winners of Independence,” “Defenders of the Nation Against Communism,” or “Heroes of Reformasi”) through which one achieves a sense of belonging in the “*kita*”, the inclusive “we,” of the nation. Instead, one can potentially achieve this status retroactively, by wrestling with painful pasts of exclusion and marginalization.

Chapter Two: Halting History Lessons: The Micro-politics of Marginality

Michel-Rolph Trouillot (1995) suggests that “Mentions and silences are...active, dialectical counterparts of which history is the synthesis.” Implicit in this comment is a rejection of the idea that the writing of history is simply evolving towards completion, with the gradual filling in of “silences” with “mentions.” This chapter takes as its guiding questions the ways in which silences can have an active presence, the ways in which they might strategically be put to use, and the ways in which they mediate the boundaries between publicly proclaimed and quietly circumspect Indonesian histories. I ask these questions as I describe and reflect upon my 2005-2007 fieldwork encounters with the children and grandchildren of former political prisoners (*eks-tapol*) living in and around Jogjakarta, Central Java. Most of these individuals were small children or not yet born in the mid-1960s¹, when their parents or grandparents were imprisoned or killed for their alleged affiliation with the Indonesian Communist Party, or *Partai Komunis Indonesia* (PKI). Yet the state-directed violence visited upon their parents continued to deeply

¹ This was the case for all of the children of *eks-tapol* discussed in this chapter, and indeed (by my observations) for the majority of the children of *eks-tapol* participating in advocacy or activist organizations with their parents in the Jogjakarta area. Several *eks-tapol* and children of *eks-tapol* I spoke to attributed this relative lack of public presence of older children of *eks-tapol* (who had been adolescents or older in 1965) to the silencing effects of the New Order, and how these effects may have had a lesser impact on those children of *eks-tapol* who came of age in the late or post-New Order era. Another possibility (further suggested by the texts discussed in the next chapter) is that those children of *eks-tapol* who had been very young or not yet born in 1965 could more credibly present themselves—or be presented by others—as being unaware or unconnected to their parents’ (alleged) political activities, thus creating the potential for public sympathy under New Order parameters. (This will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 3).

impact their lives throughout the 32-year duration of Suharto's New Order regime, long after their parents and grandparents (the ones who had survived) had returned home from imprisonment and exile. The "communist subversion" and "treachery" of which their parents were accused was presented by the New Order state as a hereditary taint, and therefore these individuals—equally suspect in the eyes of the state and in much of New Order society—were subject to many of the same restrictions and forms of political and social marginalization as their parents and grandparents. In most cases, they were ineligible for jobs such as teachers, clergy, journalists, civil servants, parliamentarians, and performers, occupations that would give them an audible voice in the public sphere, to say nothing of steady employment and a decent wage. Some of the individuals with whom I spoke told of being able to get around these restrictions by using an assumed name, moving to a different area, or having friends in high places. Yet however subtle or incomplete the process of marginalization, these individuals described to me having grown up feeling (however vaguely, and however unaware they were of the specifics of their parents' ordeal) a sense of being different, of not being part of the "*kita*" (inclusive "we") of Indonesian nationalism. Even if they were "rehabilitated," as was the stated hope of the New Order government, they were seen as dangerous remnants of a monstrous past, excluded from playing an active place in Indonesia's future. If a nationalistic view of history is that it is an inclusive inheritance to be bestowed upon each succeeding generation, then I believe that it would be accurate to refer to them as a "disinherited" generation.

In this chapter, I will turn to the issue of the transmission of a discordant history, and how this history may (or may not) "leak" through the cracks in a seemingly

monolithic state teaching of history. In the space between a decades-long veil of silence surrounding the killing and imprisonment of hundreds of thousands of suspected “communists” in Indonesia in the mid-to-late 1960s, and the (still impeded, yet slowly progressing) emergence of these histories into the public discourse following the fall of the Suharto regime in 1998, were the slow revelations of family history to the children and grandchildren of former political prisoners (*eks-tapol*) from the 1960s. In contrast to a seemingly transparent, totalizing, and empowering transmission of official history as envisioned by the state, the learning of this history was described to me by the descendents of these former political prisoners as inherently fragmentary and full of risk.

There has been a growing amount of important research, especially since the fall of Suharto in 1998, on the dynamics of the mass killings of 1965-66, and on their immediate aftermath.² In this chapter, I am less focused on uncovering additional aspects of “the event itself” than on the ways in which the aftermath of “the event” weighed upon the childhood and adulthood of those touched indirectly but profoundly by this violence, the children of former political prisoners. (I will henceforth refer to them by the Indonesian term *anak korban* (“children of victims”, a term many use to refer to themselves). I will examine how living with this traumatic past and stigmatized present has involved, both in the recent New Order past and the Reformasi and post-Reformasi present, an intergenerational wrestling with and reformulation of the past on the part of *anak korban* and their parents, one that moved through and between family and public spaces. In using the term “intergenerational,” I refer to the ways in which parents who were former political prisoners could not participate in a straightforward one-way transmission of the “past as legacy” to their children. Instead, the former-political-

² See pp. 26-27 in Chapter One for a list of these works.

prisoner parents saw the withholding or the revelation of certain hidden “truths” of Indonesian history (namely their imprisonment and, in some cases, their political activism and affiliations prior to September 1965) from/to their children as key determinants of their children’s present and future. At the same time, many of the *anak korban*, by virtue of their family histories, felt the experience of being gripped by a violent, silenced past which they could not quite access, and which their non-*anak korban* contemporaries would not, or were not equipped to, contend with.

Slow Histories

In the next chapter, I will discuss the post-1965 construction of “*anak PKI*” (communist child) as a social category, and the kind of discursive space this occupied for various Indonesian publics. First, however, I wish to venture into less-public territory and convey some of what was told to me by *eks-tapol* parents and *anak korban* regarding the dynamics of knowledge transmission (or lack thereof) within their households during the repressive period of the New Order, at a time when discussion--and indeed knowledge--of the hardships faced by their parents and the nature of the ostracism experienced by their family, was still an extremely risky activity.

Some *eks-tapol* parents tried to avoid this risk by revealing nothing about their experience to their children. In some cases, this silence has persisted up to the present day, and several older former prisoners admitted to me that they had still not told their children.³ This type of decision was explained to me by an *anak korban* born in 1974

³ The question arises how an *anak korban* could grow up unaware of his or her parent’s past, given the *eks-tapols*’ being visibly subject to state repression through special marks on their identity cards, mandatory attendance at monthly *santiaji* rehabilitation sessions, etc. I found no conclusive answer to this question during my fieldwork; however, none of the *anak korban* with whom I spoke cited these signs of state

who works for the organization *Syarikat* as a researcher and advocate for *eks-tapol*. As she put it,

Their children...they want to spare them. They think, don't let what happened then occur again'...They become...cautious about telling them these stories....They don't want their children to know that their parents are former political prisoners. So it's better that the parent's identity is hidden...and even now the children still don't know....The majority of the parents feel 'It would be a pity [*kasihan*] for the children if they knew...

We can see this as an active and protective silence, an attempt to guarantee the future through an obscuring of the painful past. It is also a quietly defiant answer to the view that the young generation must "properly" know history in order for the sake of the nation's progress and for securing their own futures. This parental silence is an expression of the absurdity of trying to teach children about a history of violence that has not secured their place within the body of the nation, but rather marks the near-destruction of their family life.

One *eks-tapol* with whom I spoke explained to me the fears that prevented him and his wife (also an *eks-tapol*) from speaking to their son about their past:

Ah, that's been a problem for me. Really, up to this day, I haven't spoken candidly about my past. Why not? I think I'm still afraid that if I tell the stories, he'll become [politically] *militant*. But there's also the possibility of outside influence, that he'll feel inferior [*minder*] because of the stigma attached to having "G30S /PKI parents". So I haven't yet told him; I'll speak openly to him about it when it's the right time....He's still single, so I don't think this is the right time yet.... Later, when he has a family.

The parents here are constrained by the seemingly contradictory worries that their son will be rendered passive by the scorn of outsiders, or that he will mistakenly (since

repression as the way in which they first learned of their parents' political status. (Several stated that as children they had been confused by their parents' regular departures for rehabilitation sessions, but they claimed to not have understood the significance of this at the time). Instead, a number of *anak korban* recalled specific taunts or hostility within their *communities* (by schoolmates, teachers, neighbors, etc.) as providing them with the first indications of their family's stigmatized position. (This is especially striking given the way in which some *eks-tapol* actively asserted the *lack* of contentious relationships with their neighbors, as will be discussed in Chapter 6.)

neither of his parents present themselves as particularly radical) see himself as the inheritor of a family-based militancy. Yet, interestingly, they present the subsequent lengthening of the chain of family descent (when their son has children of his own) as the event that will eventually free them to reveal their family history. The possibility of future, ongoing transmissions of family history becomes the precondition for the (delayed) initial passing on of this knowledge.

While some *anak korban* have never been told directly of their parents' past, many others described to me a history that was passed between parent and child cautiously, haltingly, and fragmentarily. Following the end of the Suharto regime, when a number of Indonesian-language scholarly and popular books were published on the once-taboo topic of the 1965 coup attempt and subsequent violence, this transmission gained an intertextual component. A number of *anak korban*—particularly those who were born in the early 1980s and still in high school when Suharto fell in 1998—told me of books and periodicals relating to the violence of 1965 and/ or to leftist politics that were left around the house (or presented to them directly) by their *eks-tapol* parents.⁴ These works could supply historical knowledge not provided by reticent *eks-tapol* parents, or could reframe the personal stories of parents within broader contexts and discourses. This tendency was illustrated in the comments of Mas Sigit, an *anak korban* born in 1983, whose father had been imprisoned on Buru Island for his involvement with the *Pemuda Rakyat* organization. Throughout Sigit's childhood and early adolescence, his father had

⁴ In most of these conversations, the *anak korban* would only mention reading "history books" or "books about 1965," declining to give more specifics. The several specific works mentioned to me, however, included: a collection of speeches by Indonesia's first president, Sukarno (which had been difficult to obtain during the New Order period); an Indonesian-language translation of Benedict Anderson and Ruth McVey's *A Preliminary Analysis of the October 1, 1965 Coup in Indonesia* (which presents an alternative view of the 1965 coup attempt as an internal military affair, rather than as masterminded by the PKI); issues of *RUAS*, the magazine of the organization Syarikat (which will be further discussed in Chapter 4); and an Indonesian-language translation of Marx's *Das Kapital*.

attempted to hide his *eks-tapol* past from his son; when the father had to attend his monthly *santiaji* “rehabilitation” sessions, he would tell his children that he was going “squirrel hunting.” Sigit’s father began speaking to his children about his past imprisonment after the fall of Suharto, which coincided with Sigit’s entering high school. However, although in our conversation Sigit explicitly linked his acquisition of knowledge about the violence of the 1960s to his ability to help and support his father, he saw the most significant sources of this knowledge as being the newly-published books about 1965 rather than stories from his father about his personal experiencing of these events:

I read books, all kinds of books about G30S, and then I compared them with the history I was being taught in high school. Because when I was in high school, it was during the Gus Dur [Abdurrahman Wahid] era.⁵ The history of the 1965 incident was already different than before: it wasn’t called G30S/ PKI any longer, just G30S⁶. And so I wanted to find out more about G30S... I had a great desire to know, because the New Order version of history had been shown to be untrue. I had to find out more. I wanted to help my father, you know? Give support, because my father is the silent type, he doesn’t talk much... He’ll tell a lot of stories about his experience [as a prisoner] on Buru Island, but he’s never spoken

⁵ Many *eks-tapol* and *anak korban* described the period of Abdurrahman Wahid’s presidency (1999-2002) as a turning point for them, due primarily to his apology for the role his Nahdlatul Ulama organization had played in the 1965-66 killings, his suggestion that the ban on Marxism-Leninism be lifted, and his more general calls for national reconciliation. However, the same people felt that Wahid’s good intentions (stymied by his impeachment by his political foes in 2002) had not translated into a more systematic easing of the discrimination against them or acknowledgement of the victims of the 1965-66 violence.

⁶ The differing terminology used to refer to the 1965 coup attempt reflected the politics of attributing responsibility for the event and divergent interpretations of the event and its aftermath: Suharto and the Indonesian military had immediately attempted to link the PKI to the coup attempt by referring to the movement that carried it out as “G30S/PKI” (the 30th of September Movement/ PKI); this terminology (and interpretation of events) became the hegemonic one for the duration of the New Order, and to a lesser extent to the present day. In the immediate aftermath of the coup attempt, President Sukarno sought to deemphasize or deny the PKI’s alleged involvement by referring to the movement as *Gestok* (*Gerakan Satu Oktober*, or the October 1 Movement). Although this terminology has largely failed to make it into popular parlance, it is used today by some *eks-tapol* as a mark of defiance of the New Order historiography of 1965. (For instance, the writer and former political prisoner Hersri Setiawan titled a 2003 book describing the terminology surrounding the coup attempt and its aftermath *Kamus Gestok*, or “Gestok Dictionary.” There have also been recent attempts (for instance, in a revised school history curriculum in 2004) to convey the contested nature of the history by using the more politically neutral term “G30S” (without “PKI” attached); this change encountered harsh opposition by those political, military, and religious factions who maintained the PKI’s guilt in the coup attempt, and in 2006 the “G30S/ PKI” term was returned to the school history curriculum.

much about the straightening of history [*pelurusan sejarah*]. Maybe because he doesn't know about it. Or maybe he knows, but he's still hesitant [*setengah-setengah*], thinking "I'm just a political prisoner. What if [as a result of talking about the straightening of history] I'm insulted and stigmatized by the community?"

As will be demonstrated in later chapters, the plight and experiences of *eks-tapol* families have been used by those of various ideological leanings as triggers for asking broader questions about Indonesia as a nation: the proper or just way in which to come to terms with Indonesia's past, and the way in which this coming to terms will shape Indonesia's present and future. What we see in Sigit's comment is a reversal of this dynamic: the ways in which an *anak korban* presents the accessing of broader national discourses (the straightening of history) as being important for conditioning himself to be a source of support and advocacy within his *eks-tapol* household. There is an ambiguity in Sigit's comment as to what it was that signaled to him the "falseness" of New Order versions of history: was it the personal stories of his father's imprisonment that he heard at home, or the texts he encountered that presented alternative histories abstracted from his personal family situation? In either case, we see that "silence" and "knowledge" here are complex phenomena, with Sigit considering certain forms of articulation and knowledge (his father's personal stories) to be less efficacious in both "helping" his father and contributing to farther-reaching rethinkings of Indonesian history. (This devaluing of the utility of personal stories may also explain why Sigit describes his father as considering them to be "safe" articulations, contrasted with the potential risks of associating himself with the "straightening of history" project.⁷

⁷ The distinction between those *eks-tapol* and *anak korban* who related to the violence of 1965-66 and its aftermath primarily in terms of personal/ family experience, versus those who did so as part of wider (national) discourses such as the "straightening of history," does not seem to have a clear-cut generational component. I encountered a number of *eks-tapol* who were comfortable speaking of their plight and

As Sigit's example suggests, some of the individuals with whom I spoke did hear detailed stories of their family history directly and regularly from their parents or grandparents. Yet even in these instances, the parents often made it very clear that the audience for these stories was to be extremely circumscribed. One *anak korban*, an economics student born in 1981, described to me the way her father revealed his status as a former political prisoner:

Yeah, slowly. So we wouldn't be shocked, and we could more comfortably accept it. Maybe if we had still been in elementary or middle school and father had said that we were PKI children [*anak PKI*], if father had told us directly, maybe I would have felt inferior [*minder*]. With my friends, I would have felt...different. And I would have felt...that they know it, that the PKI is evil and that I am a PKI child...and they would say... 'hey, isn't that just like a PKI child.' That would be very painful. If it had happened when I was in junior high school, I may not have been strong enough to withstand it.

Some *anak korban* described to me how they grew up with stories of an innocent geography of their parent's past, images of a parental journey far from home, without a sense of the suffering and exile this entailed. This is what the economics student mentioned above heard from her father about the Nusa Kambangan prison island where he was incarcerated in the 1960s:

As for my father, he told his story by way of Nusa Kambangan. Like, "you know, at Nusa Kambangan there's a lot of scenery. There are caves, there's a beach, there's...and so on. So this is how my father told it, talking about the environment there. It was only later that I knew that this was an internment camp.

experiences in terms of wider discourses of human rights, rehabilitation, and the "straightening of history"; at the same time, I encountered *anak korban* who had some awareness of their parent's past, but did not seem invested in more abstract language and affiliations. It is possible, however, that active involvement in *eks-tapol* advocacy organizations such as *Fopperham* and *Syarikat* made *anak korban* and *eks-tapol* more comfortable with connecting their personal experiences with broader contexts. Sigit, for instance, is an active member of *Fopperham*, whereas his father (though apparently sympathetic to the cause of *eks-tapol* advocacy organizations) did not actively participate due to physical infirmities.

Given the fact that all of the *eks-tapol* and *anak korban* with whom I spoke are Javanese, one possible explanation for this type of selective recounting of the past (as suggested by a non-*eks-tapol* Javanese friend) is that it is the manifestation of a stereotypical Javanese indirectness, a desire to maintain an atmosphere of *tenteram* (calm) by avoiding discussion of painful subjects. Yet giving such explanatory power to this ahistorical and supposedly uniform “cultural trait” does not do justice to the specific historical and political conditions that informed these hesitations and silences.⁸

Similarly, there seems to be a “matter-of-fact” explanation here where parents would want to spare their children the knowledge of graphically violent history, and to spare them the humiliation that awareness of the stigma carried by their family would bring. And yet again, the context renders this explanation simplistic and vague, for a parent’s attempt to shield his or her child from the harshness of a violent past was undermined by the way in which the New Order state systematically inculcated a bloody version of the Indonesian past in which the *anak korbans*’ parents were the perpetrators, rather than the victims, of violence. The most blatant example of this was the New Order state’s mandating the showing of the graphically violent film *Pengkhianatan G30S/PKI* (“The Treachery of the September 30/PKI Movement”) to all Indonesian schoolchildren starting in the early 1980s. This film, which presents a supposedly “objective” depiction of the PKI’s involvement in the 1965 coup attempt in which several senior army generals were killed (subsequently used to justify the mass killings and imprisonment of leftists), was seen by the New Order state as the ideal vehicle for imparting the knowledge of “communist treachery” to a younger generation who were not alive or old enough to have

⁸ See Stoler & Strassler (2000) for an excellent discussion of the creation and effects of certain silences in colonial and postcolonial Javanese contexts.

experienced “the event” directly. In addition to the annual showing of the film to schoolchildren, it was frequently run on Indonesian TV to serve as a reminder of “PKI treachery” for the general public (Heryanto 2006).

What the filmmakers and New Order government may not have anticipated was the way in which many former political prisoners would turn around the imposition of this film and use it as a counter-memory device to convey to their children (however obliquely) pieces of painful family history that ran counter to the version of Indonesian history presented in the film. It was striking to me that a number of the *anak korban* with whom I conducted interviews remembered their first viewing of the “Pengkhianatan G30S/PKI” film as having inspired their parents to speak for the first time about the violence of 1965-66. In some cases, this involved only a general refutation of the film’s presentation of PKI guilt, without revealing the parent’s own past experiences and suffering. In other instances, however, a parental refutation of the film resulted in more personal histories being revealed. This was the case with one *anak korban* who described to me how her father, upon learning that she had seen the film, sat down with her and told her in detail about his past as a political prisoner on Buru. He then pulled out familiar photographs of “family friends” (whom she had never met) and revealed to them to be his estranged children from a former marriage, one that ended with his lengthy imprisonment on Buru. Her father also showed her for the first time a collection of small objects he had brought back from Buru: a piece of coconut shell on which he had engraved the names of his children from his first marriage, and an embroidered handkerchief. She described this moment to me as one where familial and national histories flowed into one another, and the confluence revealed each of them as being radically different from what she had

previously perceived them as being: “At the end of this I knew which side was in the wrong...that there was a different version of history that was different from that which was in the books, that which I had been studying at the time. That’s how it was.” What we see here, in essence, is a counter-history lesson that instructs by means of defamiliarizing the ostensibly straightforward (the film’s account of “PKI treachery,” the photographs’ depiction of “family friends”) and recontextualizing it within that which it does not say. In other households of former political prisoners, however, the deceptive familiarity of photographic traces of parents’ painful pasts rendered the details of those family histories dormant, to be revealed at some future date. This was the photographic equivalent of the case I mentioned above, in which a father told his daughter of the “beautiful scenery” of Nusa Kambangan long before he revealed to her that he had been there as a prisoner. I found an example of this in the home of the *anak korban* whose description of her parents’ “slow” revelation of their past I quoted earlier. Growing up with her three younger siblings, she was familiar with a collection of family photographs that included ones of “*bapak di hutan*” (father in the forest). Despite the fact that “the forest” was part of the prison camp on Buru Island, this was not revealed to the children, they did not think to ask, and the photographs depicting their father’s imprisonment and exile faded unobtrusively into the family collection. These photographs, it was explained to me, were examples of many taken of prisoners meant to show to the outside world that they were being well-treated. Most were taken by prison officials in the last several years of imprisonment, when health, sanitation, and food provisions had indeed improved markedly compared to the first years after 1965 marked by starvation, sickness, and deprivation. Copies of the photographs were given to (some) prisoners for them to keep

or (with permission) send home along with letters to their families. Since all photographs leaving the camp were strictly censored to ensure that they only depicted “happy events” in the lives of the prisoners (volleyball games, religious services, etc.), the photographic archive of prison camps such as Buru or Plantungan (a women’s prison) is an overwhelmingly sanitized one. Like the film and the photographs mentioned earlier, their ability to convey a hidden history depended on the extent to which those displaying them attempted to convince the viewers that there was a truth beyond, and in contradiction to, what was being displayed.

Parents and Children Telling Stories

I turn now to a selection of the detailed interviews I conducted with former political prisoners and their children and grandchildren during my fieldwork in Central Java. Using material from three interviews with *eks-tapol* parents, and three with the children or grandchildren of *eks-tapol*, I focus upon the ways they talk about the transmission of knowledge of this family past within their households, and how this transmission structured (and was structured by) their family life. In providing lengthy quotations from these interviews, I hope to convey what is often lost in general, triumphal narratives of grand historical transformations and reversals: the uneven rhythm and pace of the transmission of historical knowledge, and of the transformations of historical consciousness.

As will become evident, these are often fragmentary narratives, with certain key details omitted, concealed, or vaguely rendered. Even though I developed ongoing, trusting relationships with most of the individuals I interviewed, particular details of their

and their parents' experience may have been withheld from me as a foreign researcher with uncertain affiliations. Yet I believe that this vagueness has an existence independent of our interview context, and it is important to note its social, political, and historical role. This is especially true when the vagueness is contrasted to the minute attention to detail given in other articulations of the history of 1965 and its aftermath: the gruesome (though maliciously falsified) details given of the arrest, torture, and deaths of the generals that became part of the national mythology.

Pak Sumanto (1943-2008)⁹

Pak Sumanto lived down the street from the rented house in eastern Jogjakarta where I lived for the duration of my fieldwork. In addition to being my neighbor and the owner of a *bengkel* (motorcycle repair shop) in front of his house, Pak Sumanto was an *eks-tapol* who had been imprisoned from 1965-71. He was quite active and outspoken in the local *eks-tapol* community, participating in events and meetings sponsored by groups such as *Fopperham*.¹⁰

A wiry, energetic man, Pak Sumanto was born in Klaten in 1943, and moved to Jogjakarta in the late 1950s to attend high school. In the early 1960s, while a high school student in Jogjakarta, he became involved with the leftist *Pemuda Rakyat* (People's Youth) organization. (His interest, he told me empathically, stemmed not from a commitment to "communism," but from his attraction to the "cultural activities" of the local *Pemuda Rakyat* group.) Owing to this affiliation, Pak Sumanto was arrested in November 1965, when soldiers came looking for him at his home. They came fully armed, as if he were, as he put it "a leader of the rebellion". He was out of the house

⁹ Pak Sumanto passed away in the Spring of 2008, after a short illness.

¹⁰ See the Introduction for a description of the *Fopperham* organization.

when they arrived, paying a condolence call for a neighbor. Upon hearing that soldiers were looking for him, Pak Sumanto did not run away; he returned to his house and put up no resistance. During our interview he portrayed this not as a sign of passivity or defeat, but as proof of his innocence: “So I came home. The soldiers were looking for me, but I didn’t run away. Why not? I hadn’t done anything wrong. I hadn’t done anything.”

Pak Sumanto told me that he later discovered that it was one of his neighbors who reported him to the military in 1965 (although he claims to not know who specifically this individual was). In telling me this part of his story, however, Pak Sumanto emphasized that he bore no malice toward this anonymous neighbor:

It’s not possible for me to want to have vengeance on him. Because, as I see it, he was acting on false information. He was a victim of information [*korban informasi*]...and then I became a victim of the victim of information. We were both victims, and because of that I don’t hate him. In fact, if I could I would invite him to work together with me to develop our country.¹¹...Let’s move on from this point, because you are also a victim. Let’s unite in order to develop our nation. You shouldn’t be suspicious of me, and I am not going to hate you...The ones I accuse are those who make the rules.

I draw attention here to the way in which Pak Sumanto attributed power and importance to the flow (and possible distortion) of “information”; as we will see, it represents a sharp contrast with the way in which he chose to withhold (or, at least, refrain from articulating) information about his past from his children.

Pak Sumanto was released from prison in 1971, although the reasons behind this timing were unknown to him (He speculated that it was due to international pressure on the Indonesian government.) Following his release, he moved back to the Nologaten neighborhood on the eastern outskirts of the city and survived for several years by

¹¹ Pak Sumanto’s statement in Indonesian “Mari sama-sama kita bersatu untuk membangun bangsa” is a curious invocation or appropriation of some of the New Order’s sloganeering about the need for “pembangunan” (development)

illegally selling lottery numbers. Finally, with the money he earned from this operation and some assistance from a fellow *eks-tapol* friend, Pak Sumanto was able to open up the small bicycle/ motorbike repair shop (*bengkel*) in front of his house that is now run by his adult son.¹²

Noting Pak Sumanto's passionate way of speaking about his prison and post-prison experiences¹³—and the plight of *eks-tapol* in general—to me and in the context of *Fopperham* gatherings, I asked about how he had discussed such things with his children. He admitted to me that he had never directly told them of his experiences or their family political status. At the same time, somewhat surprisingly, he suggested that they discovered the truth without him, through a “natural process.” This meant that somehow they had access to the proper information that would allow them to recognize the constraints placed upon their lives, and develop an appropriately “self-sufficient” attitude:

I've never discussed that matter [with my children]. So my children know that I'm an ex-political prisoner; they figured it out themselves. I didn't tell them. The kids came to know about their father through a natural process [*mengerti secara alami*]. By way of a slow process. So, my children grew to understand this, through this process... Who knows when, exactly? Maybe I don't even know. I've never discussed the matter. What I've told [them] is how I've educated my children so that at the very least they feel a sense of responsibility towards themselves. I place more of an emphasis on making sure that my children have a good work ethic [*semangat kerja*]...so that they can take responsibility for themselves, and not become dregs of society [*menjadi sampah masyarakat*]. If they can take responsibility for themselves, then they can help other people. Including employing other people. That's been my hope all this time: that my children focus on their work in order that they can recruit a workforce.

¹² Pak Sumanto's son, Mas K, lived with his father along with his wife and toddler son. Mas K and I were on familiar and friendly terms, but we never had the opportunity to sit down for a real conversation. Most of the times I stopped in to chat with Pak Sumanto on plastic chairs set up in front of his *bengkel*, Mas K was hard at work dealing with the business of the *bengkel*, and directing the other workers.

¹³ Although Pak Sumanto provided me with a sketch of his life prior to 1965 in our interview, in general he did not seem as comfortable discussing this time with me or in *Fopperham* meetings, as compared to his time in prison and his post-prison life.

I asked Pak Sumanto if his children had ever experienced discrimination in seeking employment. He replied:

Because of the way in which I've taught them to be independent, my children have never found themselves in an uncomfortable situation when it comes to looking for a job. Their approach to job hunting maybe comes from the fact of knowing that they're *anak PKI*, or maybe it's the self-reliant spirit I've raised them with. I don't really know. But what's clear is that my son has never sought [outside] work. He's helped me out here [in the repair shop], and now he's taken over the business. But, in fact, my daughter has found work at restaurants...moving all over the place....Just two days ago, she moved to Solo to work in the kitchen of a restaurant. So, yes, she applied to work at a private business [*swasta*], but she couldn't be hired by a big business. Because, you know, all the big businesses at the time were controlled by the Suharto government. So she wouldn't dare try for a private business [of that type].

This sense of Pak Sumanto's that his children will require the necessary information about the past through a kind of osmosis, without narration, is in sharp contrast to the way in which he described his interactions with the younger members of *Fopperham* (who consist of both "outside" activists and *anak korban*). Transmission of knowledge in this context, it seems, required actual practice and intentionality. When I asked him what he thought of the nature of the relationship between the older (*eks-tapol*) and younger members of *Fopperham*, he replied:

Yes, of course there has to be regeneration [*regenerasi*], but it can't be forced... It has to be adaptable as the situation develops... The older and younger generations have to interact with each other, not be separated. Then, the contribution of the older generation can be to tell stories of [our] past experiences. Because those of us here were imprisoned without trial, imprisoned without knowing our crime, freed also without having been put on trial, set free from prison but still imprisoned within our communities. All of this has to be told to the younger generation so that they don't come to repeat these [injustices] later, for instance if they come to occupy important positions in Indonesia. If there are people who break the law, try them according to existing laws.'

The second thing I expect from the younger generation is that they have a strong desire to struggle on behalf of the older generation who, even today, are still

economically and politically marginalized. I myself am politically marginalized. The goal should be to struggle so that we have the same rights as everyone else.

Now, what are the youth's (*pemuda*) expectations of the older people? You should go ahead and interview the young people: 'What are your expectations? Why did you develop this organization [*Fopperham*] along with the older people?'

Pak Sumanto did not make explicit the relationship between these three types of "information": the false information from a neighbor that led to his arrest in 1965, the information about his past imprisonment that that he withheld from (or at least declined to articulate to) his children, and the information that he hoped to impart upon the young activists in *Fopperham*. Yet, there are clear differences in the effects and consequences of these different forms of information: the retroactive designation of the consequential information that led to Pak Sumanto's arrest as "false" serves to redirect agency and assuage suspicion of harbored desires for vengeance. In doing so, it blurs the line between victim and perpetrator, even as it redefines as perpetrator the mysterious source of this information. In his relationship with his children, Pak Sumanto saw the possible negative consequences of his failure to provide "information" to them as offset by "independence" he instilled; it seems as if the teaching of a certain comportment and disposition becomes an efficacious substitute for knowledge and information, yet Pak Sumanto was also acknowledging another unknown source of information through which his children *had* become aware (to some extent) of their family past. Finally, in the relationship where Pak Sumanto saw there being a free flow of information (between the *eks-tapol* as a collectivity and a young generation of activists), this information served the dual purpose of connecting the young generation to the past (by establishing them as

inheritors of the *eks-tapols*' struggles) and preventing them from repeating it in an imagined future where they occupy powerful positions.

Bu Marni (b. 1946)

Bu Marni was born in 1946, in the Sleman area of Jogjakarta. Her father was a farmer, active in the *Barisan Tani Indonesia* [Indonesian Peasants' Front]¹⁴, and she described being brought up with a “progressive revolutionary” spirit. When she entered a teacher's college, her father encouraged her to join the *Ikatan Pemuda Pelajar Indonesia* [Association of Indonesian Youth and Students] organization¹⁵. Bu Marni noted in our interview that some considered this organization to be affiliated with the PKI, but she denies that this was the case. At the same time, she also joined the campus branch of the *Perhimpunan Mahasiswa Katolik Indonesia* [Association of Indonesian Catholic Students].

In December 1965, both she and her father were arrested, she because of her status as “a former member of *IPPI*.” Yet, just as her involvement with this organization incriminated her, so did her membership in the Catholic student organization, and specifically the intervention of a priest, allow her to be released after just a few months. With her father still in prison, she helped her mother support the family by selling goods at the market, and in 1967 was able to get a job teaching elementary school. Fearful of telling her teaching colleagues that her father was in prison, she told everyone that he had abandoned his family.

¹⁴ The *Barisan Tani Indonesia* was a peasants' organization affiliated with the PKI. Active in the PKI's land reform campaigns of the early 1960s, the BTI's ranks were decimated alongside those of other PKI-affiliated organizations after the coup attempt in 1965. See Kasdi 2001.

¹⁵ For an account of the *IPPI* organization written by one of its former chairmen, see Sasongko 2003.

In 1968, in Bu Marni's words, "the 1965 tragedy returned again." Soldiers came to her boarding house in Jogjakarta, looking for someone she did not know. Angry at not having found the person they were looking for, the soldiers searched her room, found the letter of release from her previous time in jail, and took her away to the army post. There she was accused of being a PKI member, interrogated, tortured, sexually humiliated, and then sent to Wirogunan prison. She was subsequently transferred to Plantungan women's prison in 1971, where she spent several years, at times being unable to contact her family. After a final move to Bulu prison in Semarang, she was released without advanced notice in 1978.

Upon being released in Semarang, Bu Marni was met by her boyfriend Ari, whose mother had been a cellmate of hers in prison. As she explained it to me, Ari's mother had been released before her, had visited and established close ties with Bu Marni's family, and had arranged for a "match" between Bu Marni and her son. Bu Marni's father, reminding her that she was "*sudah tua*" (already old), pressured her to marry Ari. They experienced a long period of economic difficulty, with Bu Marni having to sell her wedding ring for money to help her husband open a small business, but their economic situation improved over time, and they went on to have two children together.

Bu Marni became one of the most outspoken of the former political prisoners that I met while in Jogjakarta. She had in the past told her story in various forums: at an international human rights conference in Bali, at an exhibition of photographs from Plantungan in Jogjakarta, and in an article for RUAS, the magazine of the organization *Syarikat*. On the couple of occasions I heard her speak to groups of *eks-tapol*, she stressed how important it was for them to not hide their identities from their children, but

rather to be open in sharing details of their pasts. When I asked her during our personal interview about her own experiences with this kind of storytelling, she spoke at length: her response evoked a domestic storytelling space that was able to subsume the political (where stories of 1965 violence slipped inobtrusively into “normal” bedtime stories she told to her children); at the same time, the stories she described telling her children were notably external to her own family life; they had as their basis a refutation of the official government narrative of the 1965 coup, with its false accusations of sinister *Gerwani* members mutilating the bodies of the generals before they were killed:

After my children were in primary school, I got to thinking that these children are different than the other kids; that was the burden they carried. So I thought that I had the key...I held the key to open the door of their hearts so that we could be close in that way, in this outward way [*secara lahiriah*]. I also conditioned them in an inward way [*secara batin*]. I was also pushed [to talk to them] by the fact that my children were critical, asking ‘Why, mother, do you choose to live in these miserable conditions? Why do you choose to be a street peddler, rather than opening up a big store? These questions challenged me. I had to give [an answer], figure out a way to start. So, every evening I would tell them stories, stories I had composed. The main thing was, I had a mission to make them understand that their mother and father were *these* kind of people, in fact...The climax was the first time they watched a screening of the G30S film [*Pengkhiatan G30S/PKI*]. That night they asked, and I elicited their reactions, because by that point it had become a habit for me to tell them stories right before bedtime.

Yes, the key thing is that these stories were necessary in order for us to have a close mother-child relationship. And most of these stories were my own creations. The thing was, how to make my kids laugh, amuse them, stir up their passion? That’s what my creations were for. I knew my kids’ personalities, and how to present these stories. If I went a while without telling them a story, or if I cut off a story at a dramatic point and told them to wait until the following evening, they’d be craving [*ketagihan*] the rest of the story. So, the end result was, they had an image of their mother as someone who could be trusted, as someone who was a friend, as someone to whom they could turn for protection. So they didn’t have the image that “my mother is evil” or “my father is evil.” We laid down a strong foundation for their character, and after they saw that film... after I was them talking about it, I asked them leading questions (*saya pancing*): What was the film, what was the story about the *Gerwani* women who sliced at the generals with razor blades? And then I asked my son: “Son, if you get hit in the crotch it hurts, doesn’t it?”. “Yes, it hurts!” And (my son was still very young) I’d go on

“and maybe your penis can detach, right? Maybe after a while it will fall off?” “No, no, it just hurts.” “So, if it can’t just fall off like that, it means that it’s still attached. Son, if you have a penis, it goes with you everywhere. How could it be sliced off? That’s impossible.” I would talk to them like that. “And [how could this have been done to the generals] by women? The *Gerwani* were all women. How difficult that would have been! The soldiers [generals?] had weapons, they could have captured these women, shot these women. Especially if the women had only been armed with razor blades! The women would have been arrested and their razor blades wrestled away from them. And the generals would have been safe, no harm would have come to them. It’s not possible.” The children thought about this. And eventually I would tell them “This [the *Gerwani* violence as portrayed in the G30S film] is not true.” And slowly I would begin to speak to them “Know that this is a lie.” But they were still sick at heart, for instance when they were called “PKI child” or “child of a whore,” it was still painful, especially for my daughter.”

The stories that Bu Marni told her children were intended to fulfill expected storytelling conventions and to respond to stories told by the state about the events of 1965. In asking them to imagine themselves within state-created narratives that she knew to be false (i.e., the mutilation of the generals killed in the G30S coup attempt), she attempted to demonstrate the absurdity of these narratives. She expected that this revelation of the truth of Indonesian national history (if not her own story) would work a domestic effect in bringing her closer to her children. Her manifestly antagonistic readings of the “external” stories of the state were meant to condition her children “internally” and shape the dynamics of her family’s domestic life. Like Pak Sumanto, she described the process of raising her children in an *eks-tapol* household as involving the teaching of certain outward comportments (*lahir*) and inner states (*batin*).¹⁶ In both cases, these were taught

¹⁶ *Lahir* and *batin* are important paired concepts within Javanese thought and culture. Their most common contemporary public use is in the Idul Fitri (end of the Muslim fasting month) greeting “*Mohon maaf lahir dan batin*.” (I ask forgiveness outwardly and inwardly). Yet the terms have deeper resonances within Javanese mystical and religious thought. Geertz (1960: 232) offers this explanation: “*Batin* means ‘the inner realm of human experience,’ and *lair* ‘the outer realm of human behavior.’ . . . *Batin* refers not to a separate seat of encapsulated spirituality detachable from the body but to the emotional life of the individual taken generally—what we call ‘the inner life,’ or ‘the subjective’; it consists of the fuzzy, shifting shapes of private feeling perceived directly in all their phenomenological immediacy. *Lair*, on the other hand, refers to that part of human life which strict behavioral psychologists limit themselves to

without recourse to their own specific sufferings, with Pak Sumanto declining to discuss personal and national pasts with his children and Bu Marni instructing by way of counter-narrative to the stories of the state. Bu Marni's ultimate goal was the cultivation of personal intimacy within the parent-child relationship, and yet (as she conceded in our interview) her ability to create comfort and a sense of security for her children was limited and (somewhat) hindered by outside forces (e.g. the epithets directed against them) that she could not control.

Pak Joko (b. 1936)

Pak Joko was born in Semarang, and grew up primarily speaking Dutch at home. His father was a Dutch-educated engineer, and his mother a graduate of an elite Dutch school. Although his parents were nominally Muslim, Pak Joko said that they considered Islamic piety and the Javanese language to be “hick” (*kampungan*). He suggested that this was behind his parents' decision to send him to a Catholic school in Semarang, which they considered to be a superior school “where people wore shoes and uniforms.” Feeling out-of-place as the only Muslim at the school, he asked his parents for permission to convert to Catholicism. They agreed, on the condition that he convert back to Islam when he finished high school. Upon, completing school, however, he had firmly embraced Catholicism to the point where he refused to convert back; as punishment, his parents threw him out of the house.

studying—the external actions, motions, postures, and speech of the individual. These two sets of phenomena, the inner and the outer, are conceived as somewhat independent realms to be put into proper order separately, or, perhaps better stated, sequentially. The ordering of the outward life leaves one free to turn to the ordering of the inward.”

Pak Joko was vague in discussing with me the next period of his life. Like many *eks-tapol*, he was reluctant to be pinned down on his political activities and affiliations prior to 1965; he only stated curtly that “I was registered [*tercatat*] as a *Pemuda Rakyat* member.” He was arrested in 1965, interrogated, tortured, and forced to make a false confession of involvement in the G30S coup. He was given a “B” level prisoner classification, and sent to Pulau Buru. (He noted to me the arbitrariness of this designation, saying that “vagrants, criminals, soldiers, Muslims, members of the PNI [Nationalist Party]” were all swept up in the post-coup crackdown.)

Shying away from describing his years spent on Buru, Pak Joko leapt ahead to his release from prison in 1979. (This, for him, seemed to be where the real story began, with the rest as prologue). He returned to Jogjakarta (where he had been living when he was arrested). The local Catholic Church assisted him in paying for him to take a course in auto mechanics; he thought this would help in his longer-term goal of securing work as an auto mechanic. A good friend of his (and fellow *eks-tapol*) was already working as a driver, and hired Pak Joko as his assistant.

In the process of working for this *eks-tapol* friend, Pak Joko began a relationship with the friend’s daughter Eti, twenty-six years his junior. (My conversation with her will be discussed below). Despite her parents’ disapproval of the relationship, Eti and Joko were “*kuat*” (strong) and stood their ground; they married in 1983.

From that point onwards, Pak Joko was able to make a living through a series of short-term driver jobs. After several bad experiences, he began to get relatively steady work as a driver/ guide for Dutch tourists in the Jogjakarta area. The Dutch language of his childhood (which he claimed he abandoned in favor of Indonesian during the Sukarno

era) now could be used as an asset; he was one of the few Indonesian tourist guides at the time who could speak fluent Dutch. Pak Joko became a popular guide; almost none of the tourists he was hired by knew of his *tapol* past, and yet they felt sympathy for the economic struggles of his family. Many of them, Pak Joko claimed, gave him donations to help him pay for his children's schooling.

When I asked Pak Joko about the process of talking to his children (who, at the time of our interview, were in their teens and early twenties) about their family history, he noted their relative lack of interest, and initially shifted the question to talking about his wife (also the child of *eks-tapol* parents) and her slow process of learning about the past:

My oldest child, in particular, knows, that I was in prison, that I was sent to Pulau Buru. But she doesn't ask about it. So what am I supposed to do about it? So I stopped trying...I feel like it's not yet the time to tell them about it. I mean, my wife herself, she was only three years old in 1965. She was only told that her mother and father had been in prison. And then I came home from being imprisoned on Pulau Buru. So yes, from my talking, from my attitudes and from the political viewpoints that I express to my friends...little by little she came to know. And all of this time I've never heard a word of protest from her. Meaning, disappointment that I was a "PKI person," or for instance, saying to me 'you shouldn't get together [with your *eks-tapol* friends] anymore.' She's never done that.

In response to my questioning, Pak Joko noted that his children never experienced any different or prejudicial treatment within their schools. No one at any of their schools, from elementary up through university, "knows that their father is an ex-PKI [*bekas orang PKI*]." ¹⁷ He moved from this fact back to his own efforts to convey his experiences to them:

¹⁷ I did not have the opportunity to speak to Pak Joko and Bu Eti's children to get their version of their experiences. Regarding the question of how they were able to avoid the *bersih lingkungan* (clean environment) laws that prohibited the family members of *eks-tapol* from attending state universities, it

I feel as if I've tried to explain it to them, and I feel as if they—especially the older one—are just not that interested... The political views that they have, they get from television, for instance, [stories about] corruption, and the misuse of the people's money... But they seem to not pay attention to much else. They're more interested in *sinetron*, in trendy things.

Much as Pak Joko presented his children's understanding of their family past (and a suppressed Indonesian political past) as being crowded out by the distractions of “trendy” pop culture and a generic (and present-oriented) focus on government corruption, he lumped the very particular problem of an *eks-tapol* parents speaking to his or her children about family history in with more typical uncomfortable topics that come up (or are avoided) in conversations between parents and adolescent children:

There are several things that I have difficult talking to my children about. [The first is] political stances [*sikap politik*], although I've conveyed this to them a little bit. The second thing is matters related to sex. When it comes to talking about sex, I always go to their mother and encourage her to talk to them. For me to do it...well, they're girls, you know? So it's awkward for me.

At the same time, he linked his awkwardness in speaking to his children about his *tapol* past to a wider failure and dysfunction within the older *eks-tapol* community. He also made explicit what he saw as the implications of his personal awkwardness with this topic (repeated many times over in other *eks-tapol* households): the failure of Indonesia as a nation to come to terms with its violent past:

The next generation, for 30 or 40 years they've been force-fed the idea that this [the September 1965 killing of the generals] was the work of the 'evil PKI'. So it's our obligation to make them aware [of the truth], but this is not as turning over the soil [*membalikkan tanah*]. So I always say, we have to clarify things for them, but we ourselves also need to be virtuous [*baik*]. Just as it is in terms of religion, repairing the world begins with [fixing] one's own self. How can we talk about politics, corruption, and so on and so forth, when we ourselves aren't true [*benar*]? So hey, we ourselves, who have the duty to explain things to the younger generation, are not yet cohesive, are not yet unified. We've been out of prison for twenty-five years now, and we're still not unified.

seems most likely that by the time they began their post-secondary education (after the fall of Suharto) such laws were no longer being as readily enforced.

Why is it that on a national level my generation has not yet found the courage, or is not yet able, to clarify things for the next generation? This goes down to the smallest thing: I haven't yet found the courage to talk to my children. It's, it's because of cultural factors: it's better to keep things calm than to cause an uproar [*Daripada ramai lebih baik damai*].

Pak Joko saw there being a distinct contrast between the experiences of his wife (who directly experienced her two parents being imprisoned, and was therefore inwardly prepared to be part of a “PKI family”) and his children, who received different sorts of political and social information from television; he saw mass media as having the power of crowding out the interest that his children should have in their family history. He saw this as especially consequential, since the successful transmission of *eks-tapol*'s stories of their past to their children does not just shape the subjectivity of the younger generation; it establishes the moral authority of the *eks-tapol* themselves (In other words, this authority does not come “naturally” by virtue of the parents' sufferings, but must be established through conveying this experience to the younger generation.)

Bu Eti (b. 1962)

Bu Eti is Pak Joko's wife, and is herself the daughter of two *eks-tapol*. She was born in 1962 in the Kulon Progo region of Central Java. Her father was a teacher prior to September 1965, but in our interview she claimed not to know what, if any, her parents' political or organizational affiliations were in those days. Both her mother and her father were imprisoned for a number of years after 1965, though she was vague on the details and timing of their respective imprisonments. By 1968, both her mother and father were

in prison, and she went to live with her grandmother until her parents came home in the 1970s (again, she was vague on the exact dates).

At different points in our interview, she gave contrasting details regarding the information she received about her parents during their imprisonment, and how she perceived them: she remembered hearing early on in their imprisonment primarily the details of their being moved from prison to prison:

Yes, the main thing was moving, moving.... I didn't get all the details, but I remember [they were moved] from Magelang to Ambarawa then to Nusakambangan. I didn't really understand it, just that it was busy at my grandmother's house [each time my parents were moved].

She said that her parents would come up in conversation only when her grandmother would begin a statement with "Later, when your father has returned home..." Again vague on chronology and details, she told me that her father was able to periodically leave prison and visit his family, after securing a job as the private driver of a military officer. Yet, in spite of these mentions and brief encounters, she suggested that she did not really understand that her parents were her "real parents" until their release from prison in the 1970s:

The truth is, it wasn't until I was a bit older that I knew that I was the child of this mother and this father. The thing is, since I was little I lived with my grandmother and grandfather. Only later was I told, 'That's your father. That's your mother.' What I had thought up until then was that I was the youngest child of my grandmother and grandfather.

When her parents came home, they struggled to find work to support the family (three children, and three more born after they returned from prison). Her father was unable to find work as a teacher, but took a series of jobs as a driver. Her mother earned some money with some seamstress work. Her parents separated briefly over "domestic problems" [*masalah rumah tangga*], but soon reconciled.

Bu Eti did not remember her parents ever talking to her or her siblings directly about political issues or about their experiences in prison:

“No, no, they never specifically talked [to me] about it. Only if there was *santiaji* [indoctrination sessions required for former political prisoners]¹⁸ or if they were socializing with friends would the subject be touched on a little bit: ‘Back then, back then...’ Like that. But not in any detail.”

What did provide her with some knowledge of her parents’ status, however, were the rituals of repentance required by the state for all *eks-tapol*: the *santiaji* indoctrination sessions where *eks-tapol* were supposed to be made into good citizens mindful of the Pancasila national ideology:

What I was aware of was that they were often summoned by the subdistrict office [*kecamatan*] in order to assemble [*apel*] for *santiaji*... The *santiaji* summons would often disturb their work routine, since they worked outside of Jogja... So the summons would often come at the last minute... There wasn’t a set schedule. The summons would come and say “report tomorrow.”... I never went to *santiaji* with them... so I didn’t really know what *santiaji* was like... I didn’t really understand any of it. All I sensed at time was how suddenly and without warning the *santiaji* day would come.”

With the help of the Catholic Church, Bu Eti attended a Catholic school, where she claimed she faced no discrimination as the child of an *eks-tapol* (in part because she was not attending a public school where such matters could become an issue). While still in high school she met Pak Joko, an old friend of her father’s who had just been released from Pulau Buru. When the two of them wanted to get married, her parents initially disapproved (Bu Eti speculated that it was because of the age difference, and the fact that

¹⁸ Setiawan (2003: 259) offers the following more elaborate definition of *santiaji*, based in part upon his own experiences as an *eks-tapol* on Pulau Buru: “An Old Javanese word that means worship and praise [*puja-puji*] or a prayer for well-being [*puji keselamatan*]. It entered into the “refined” Indonesian of the New Order to mean a briefing or *juklak* [?]. It entered into the vocabulary of G30S political prisoners as meaning indoctrination and chewing out. In the Buru penal colony, *santiaji* was led by an official from the military command... or by a special team from Jakarta. This team included clergy from three religions: Muslim, Protestant, and Catholic. Buddhist or Hindu clergy did not come, or maybe were not sent from Jakarta.” Also see Nugroho 2008: 106-107.

he—like them—was an *eks-tapol*). After they had children, however, her parents came to accept the relationship. As mentioned above, her husband was able to support the family through various jobs as a driver and guide. Bu Eti worked for a while at a Nestle factory, left in order to raise her children, and has in recent years been working at a local foundation that helps street children.

Bu Eti's account of talking to her children about their family history (on both sides of the family) was rather different than her husband's, and she seemed far less troubled than her husband by her children's lack of knowledge. She said that she had never spoken directly to her children about her parents' or husband's *eks-tapol* status. What they did know, she claims, they learned from overhearing when Pak Joko had other *eks-tapol* friends over, or by her telling them not to try to get jobs in the civil service sector (jobs off limits to *eks-tapol* and their family members during the Suharto era). She herself did not often ask her husband for stories about his time on Pulau Buru. When he told stories to her, she would sometimes ask simple questions such as “what unit he was in” but she would not “try to pry out secrets.” She told me that “I only ask him about incidental things, and only at certain moments when it seems appropriate.” This mirrors her continuing reluctance to ask her own parents about their experiences, for fear that it would harm their relationship or dredge up painful memories of the past:

Yes, how could I not know about their past. I mean, I don't know any of the details. If I came to know more about it, but it ended up damaging our relationship, that wouldn't be good, that wouldn't be good for me at all.

Bu Eti's claim of knowing about her parents' past does not depend on her knowing a tremendous amount of detail; indeed, she denies that there is an intrinsic good in

“knowing more”, arguing that the familial relationship should take precedence over the acquiring of accurate information.

Mbak Ela (b. 1986)

Mbak Ela is originally from the Central Javanese city of Salatiga, and was at the time of our 2006 conversation a student in the Psychology Department at Jogjakarta’s Gadjah Mada University. As we sat sipping coffee amidst the bustle of the nighttime crowd at a popular student cafe, she told me her family history: her grandmother had been imprisoned for eight years in the late 1960s and early 1970s for her membership in the leftist women’s organization Gerwani (*Gerakan Wanita Indonesia*). Ela’s father was eight years old when his mother was imprisoned, and he assumed much of the responsibility in caring for his younger siblings. Others in Ela’s family were also victims of the anti-communist campaign: her maternal grandfather (an army officer loyal to the left-leaning President Sukarno) was imprisoned for several years, while her great-uncle and great-aunt were tortured and killed in prison. The effects of this history are felt in Ela’s family today: her father, whom Ela described as extremely intelligent but lacking in formal education due to the disruptions of his childhood found it very difficult to gain steady employment.

Ela’s grandmother was alive through much of Ela’s childhood, yet rarely talked to her directly about her experiences and her family history. Instead, Ela became versed in her family history (and in the political context that shaped it) through stories told by her father and her grandmother’s friends. (This “indirect” transmission of stories was something described to me by many of the *anak korban* I knew). While Ela knew some

details of her grandmother's life quite well, on others her knowledge was vague: she did not, for instance know whether her grandmother was attracted to Gerwani because she was a committed communist, or if she was simply drawn to the organization's "progressive" stance on women's role in politics and society. Her grandmother's reticence in discussing such specifics is understandable in light of the stigma attached to communism since 1965; what is notable here is the fact that, in speaking with me, Ela did not seem troubled by the fragmentary nature of her family history, and did not experience it as a lacuna. Instead, in a context where the Indonesian government applied the "communist" label quite liberally, and with deadly results, it is easy to see a kind of defiance and challenge in her shrugging off of the relevance of (and need to know definitively about) her grandmother's party affiliation.

Unlike many of the other *anak korban* with whom I spoke, Ela described the process of learning her family history as (relatively) non-traumatic: her father would tell her and her sister stories from quite a young age, and would refute the government account of the history of 1965 that they received in school or through films such as *Pengkhianatan G30S/PKI*. She described growing up in a community that included many other families whose members had been imprisoned in the 1960s. (This, according to Ela, resulted in interesting situations such as a local *lurah*—village chief—who had reported a number of people in his community to the authorities in the 1960s as suspected communists subsequently being subjected to "reverse stigmatization" when those people returned to their communities in the 1980s).

Yet, at the same time Ela's father related to her stories of their family's past, he was careful to demarcate the boundaries of "safe" community, and to issue caveats as to the contexts in which knowledge of this family history would prove dangerous:

My father would warn me: 'Ok, I'm telling you the way it is, but don't tell this to your friends, don't tell this to your teachers,' because there was still fear. As for the people around us, we only talk to those who had shared our fate, those who thought the same way that we did.... but to those outside of this group, especially if we knew they were Golkar [the ruling New Order political party], we would be silent..

Despite her relative level of comfort with her family history, Ela was more reluctant to claim any kind of overtly political mantle from her grandmother: she mentioned that her father was involved in a recently-established small leftist political party, but could not remember the name of the party and seemed fairly uninterested in her father's political activities. As for her own relationship to political activism, she replied:

No, I'm *ordinary people* [spoken in English]. But it's important for me to know the truth, and I'm going to begin with myself, I'm going to become an activist for my own self... For the moment I'm not joining any kind of organization even though I've been approached about joining LMND [*Liga Mahasiswa Nasional untuk Demokrasi*, or National Student League for Democracy, a leftist student organization]...In my opinion it's better to compare personal experiences in order to awaken collective consciousness. I think that if our personal idealism is insufficiently strong, then [political activity] is going to be useless...For that we need personal maturity, and I don't feel like I'm mature yet. Maybe I can't change the world, can't change Indonesia, but I can begin by changing some small things.

Rather than see this as youthful apathy or narcissism, or simply as the after-effect of the New Order effort to "depoliticize" Indonesian society, we can see a particular conception of "the political" embedded in these thoughts, developed out of Ela's particular family history: it traces the (potential) efficacy of political action back to personal inner states and outward comportment, and to small scale transmission of one's own life

experiences.¹⁹ There are faint echoes here of Pak Joko's insistence that achieving political authority and efficacy (in his case, on the part of the *eks-tapol* community) depended upon the ability to transmit experience of a stigmatized past. In Ela's case, however what exactly this "experience" was meant to encompass is less clear (and, it seems, did not in her view need to be entirely clear): was it the story of her imprisoned grandmother (many of the details of which Ela is admittedly unaware) or her own experience growing up amidst fragments of these stories?

Yet Ela's conception of the political does not involve a retreat into the private. In our conversation, Ela made an explicit link between the process of opening up about her family background and a more public and politically charged act of uncovering: the discovery (and attempted excavation) of mass graves of victims of the 1965-66 massacres near her hometown of Salatiga. It is, she suggested, the latter—public-- act of uncovering that creates the discursive and political spaces necessary for the more personal laying claim to her family history:

Now almost all [of my school friends know about my family history], and I became more *open* [English term] after hearing that in my hometown, in Salatiga and the surrounding area, there are many *killing fields* [English] that have not yet been dug up. And I was very excited to hear that Syarikat Indonesia wanted to open it [the mass graves? the suppressed history of 1965?] up and provide an education that would straighten history [*meluruskan sejarah*]. I really support this, and as time goes on I'm more like "Yes, *this is my identity*," there's nothing wrong with that. And I'm really *proud of my grandmother* [English] and....I want everything to be made truly straight [*benar-benar lurus*] because even now there are still many people who have a New Order way of thinking.

¹⁹ Although Ela claimed no affinity to Islamic social or political movements (and is not herself Muslim), the emphasis she placed upon the personal as a basis for wider political action recalls the "personal piety" of the *Gerakan Tarbiyah* (Education Movement) that emerged among young Indonesian Muslim students and activists in the 1980s and 1990s. This movement "reflected a deep disillusionment among younger Muslims about existing about existing Islamic parties and organizations in Indonesia [and] placed emphasis on personal piety, high academic and professional achievement, community service and the gradual Islamization of society through predication and education." (Fealy and Hooker 2006: 438) I thank Nancy Florida for pointing out this similarity to me.

Having made this linkage, however, Ela took a step back and distanced herself from the idea that the uncovering of suppressed Indonesian histories and the so-called “straightening of history” (*pelurusan sejarah*) are grand, public projects. Without rejecting the larger-scale political goals and implications of such histories being brought to light, she presented the process as inescapably small-scale, personalized, and fragmented. Although Ela was not herself active in advocacy groups or NGOs taking up the plight of *eks-tapol* and their families, she imagined a conversation that she might have with other *anak korban* about the need for them to lay claim to their family histories:

Come on, let’s share our thoughts. We can’t just be silent and sad. At the very least, we can follow history [*menurut sejarah*], straighten history slowly by spreading it from person to person [*mulut ke mulut*]. At least we ourselves know, and the people close to us know. That’s important. And then there are the people around us, and [the stories] will spread, if there is different information. Maybe it will happen in an individualistic way, because each person’s experience is different...but there’s one thing that the same: thinking, that kind of thinking. There’s political gain to be had there, and I feel that the country will have *to know the truth* [English].

Mbak Ela’s story sets out a scenario where the same information produces very different consequences: the family becomes a space where knowledge of the past is conveyed freely, yet a crucial part of that family transmission that she received from her father was the knowledge of the safe parameters of discourse, and the dangers of speaking “outside” about an *eks-tapol* past that found free articulation at home. At the same time, she seemed to define personal and political “maturity” as learning how to extend these family stories beyond the aforementioned safe parameters of discourse.

Mbak Ning (b. 1975)

Mbak Ning is from the Central Javanese Klaten area. She now lives in Jogjakarta, where she works as a teacher at a local English school²⁰, with her husband and young daughter. Introduced by a mutual friend, I interviewed Ning in her cramped office at the language school.

Ning claimed that there was much about her family history that she did not know, and what she did know had come to her from various sources over the years. Her paternal grandfather had, prior to 1965, been active in the Klaten branch of the leftist *BTI* (*Barisan Tani Indonesia*, or Indonesian Farmer's Organization).²¹ His wife, Ning's grandmother, was a "good businesswoman," and together they built and owned a rather large store. Ning's grandfather, despite being illiterate, was an important figure in the local branch of the *BTI* and was known for making rousing speeches at meetings. Soon after the G30S incident, her grandfather was arrested and spent the next five years in prison in the Klaten area. Ning did not know many details of his imprisonment, but heard stories (from a friend of her father's) that he was imprisoned "in really bad conditions" where "people were forced to drink their own urine." Her grandfather died in 1993, but Ning portrayed their relationship as a distant one, saying that he had a "feudal" attitude and had wished that he had a grandson rather than a granddaughter.

Ning's father was born in 1947 and was a student at a technical high school in 1965; he had been involved with the *Pemuda Rakyat* leftist youth organization in Klaten,

²⁰ Ning is a fluent English-speaker and, as was her preference, our interview was conducted primarily in English. Sentences and interjections spoken in Indonesian (which I have translated into English) are italicized. I have chosen not to correct her sometimes idiosyncratic English, except for several instances where it impedes clarity.

²¹ See Cribb 1990: 122-157 for a report (from an anticommunist perspective) on political tensions in the Klaten area leading up to the 1965 massacres. The report (conducted by the Center for Village Studies at Gadjah Mada University) focuses on the *aksi sepihak* (direct action) campaign of the PKI and BTI in the early 1960s to implement land reform laws. It does not, however, mention the massacres of suspected PKI following the Sept 1965 coup.

and was also deemed to be *terlibat* (involved) with the PKI and was arrested in 1965.

Though he spent just a couple of months in jail, Ning described the dramatic effect this has had on her family up to the present day.

After that, it seemed as if his life was in misery...He suffered a lot because he couldn't join *pegawai negeri* (civil service), and everything done at the time was done by *pegawai negeri*, at least for people who wanted to have a prosperous future.

Kept out of many jobs by his family history, Ning's father began to earn a living as a livestock trader, often spending long periods of time in Jakarta and Sumatra. Although not rich, he was able to make a decent living, and established useful connections with influential Chinese-Indonesian businessmen. According to Ning, he was somehow able to find a way to travel and conduct business transactions without making use of his identity card (*KTP*), which would have borne a mark identifying him as a former political prisoner.

In contrast to many cases of *eks-tapol* being shunned as potential marriage partners, Ning's father was set up with a young woman whose parents were impressed at his [relative] prosperity. However, as Ning described it, the basis for the relationship was (political) naïvete and the withholding of information about political stigma:

My mother's family wanted my mother to marry my father... *They didn't know* [about his *eks-tapol status*], because my mother's family were naïve and very *simple [lugu]*. *They didn't know anything about that kind of background. They [her mother and father] married not long after being introduced.* My mother was forced to marry him.

After my mother moved to my father's house [in Klaten]... and everybody talked about him... And she told me that she became really angry with the situation, that he was a PKI, that he used to be a PKI member. But she got pregnant at the time. ...and she kept [that anger] hidden away inside, her anger at being lied to like that.

Ning described her own fraught relationship with her father, claiming that ever since she was a child, he neglected the family, and displayed a stinginess in providing for their

needs. Significantly, she gave this tendency of her father's a political twist, alluding to her family background and wryly stating that "he acts as if maybe the family will be taken care of by the [Communist] party." She continued:

Whenever I asked for money for my books, etc., he always complained blah blah blah. But *always*, if there is a guy [in need], he always gives money. He always thinks about people, people, people all the time, instead of the family. And maybe because of that, my mother suffers a lot, feeling like she's neglected by my father.

Ning did not seem to want to go into too many details as to how exactly she learned about her father and grandfather's political background. She said that only at age 15 did she learn that her father and grandfather had been in prison, although at the time she was not told what for. She had heard people around her village speaking of *other* people, saying "Oh, that one's PKI," and eventually she pieced together her own family's story. She was much more adamant in stressing how, long before she knew the specific details of her family's history, she felt different, like "the strange child in the neighborhood." She felt ostracized at school and at the Catholic church she attended, where she says people "never wanted to have me as one of their members." It wasn't until she entered (a private) university in 1992 that she realized that these people had shunned her because "their parents had told them that I was the daughter of a person like that." The ostracism she felt due to her family's political status extended to her romantic life:

I found a guy, but unluckily, we lived in the same *kecamatan* [subdistrict area], and his father was the *lurah* (head) in the village. And when I went to their house, they knew it was me [i.e. her family background], and the mother was really pissed off, and she acted really funny in front of me...[It turns out that] they were from Golkar, and didn't want to be *mambu PKI* ("stinking of PKI")...and after that, I was really careful about falling in love...When I met my other boyfriends, I mentioned that, and they were shocked. The relationship usually didn't go well after I mentioned that.

She had better luck, however, when she met her now-husband, a graduate of the Indonesian Arts Academy now working as a professional chef at a luxury hotel. She noted, half-seriously, that it was an auspicious marriage for ridding her of her family stigma:

(Laughing). It was kind of a bonus when I married him....When I met him, he was an activist, and...was always being chased after by the police....I was proud to fall in love with him at that time, because I thought...he would have a different understanding of my background. He's also the son of a Golkar member and a *civil servant*, so I thought, in the back of my head, I want my children to be saved from my background by having his blood, the *civil servant* blood. (Laughing). *I heard a lot of stories growing up where children of PKI looked for spouses who were not PKI. Or who travelled far away and became a civil servant, in order to be "clean."*

Ning framed the burden of her family history in terms of individual psychology and family dysfunction: She told me that

my father is the one who went to prison, but the one who treated us like PKI children is my mother. Because sometimes she hit us and beat us when she had a conflict with my father. But I only really understood that when I grew up, that kind of invisible energy transferring here and then moving around in the family. And I really want to break that circle, I don't want to transfer it to my family....

Quite apart from her reflections on her family life (and the way in which it was influenced by the aftermath of 1965), Ning described to me the experience of growing up in Klaten surround by horrific stories of post-coup massacres.

Whenever my father gathered with his friends, *usually they would talk about those things....But sometimes I was home when they were talking, so by chance [kebetulan]I would hear too.*" For instance, 'you remember the time when you were asked by the TNI [Army] for help to bury the corpses?' And I got stories from those old people. I just overheard, actually... that the people who were accused of having anything to do with the PKI were forced to dig a one meter by one meter hole, dig it by themselves. And then fifteen people were put there

together, inside, and then the soldiers just shot them from above---*ratatattat*—and buried them, not treating them like human beings. Even if they are old people, funny people, beautiful girls trying to be naked in front of the soldiers to save their lives... And, from when I was a child until I went to university, that part of my village became a kind of spooky place. And it became quite famous for drivers who cross the street. It's the only way to get from Jogja to Surabaya, right? *And if you pass down that road*, there are a lot of myths and ghost stories about it."

I remember too, my father talking about this to his friend: just a couple days after they finished burying the PKI members, it seemed as if nature was not so happy about it. There was a flood. It was the first and the last flood in that small river. And again, the village must be suffering from that. *There were dogs running this way and that with [human] bones*, while people were talking. Then suddenly (gasps) *there was a head lying in front of them, stuff like that*.

There's a guy, my father's been friends with him for quite a long time. They sometimes *travel together*... So, my mother told me that his father *had been killed*, if you can imagine, by being nailed on the head [sic]. And when he was dying, *he was carried around the village, as a kind of entertainment [tontonan]*... I think the feeling of killing each other, *it was very easy*."

When I asked her the conditions under which these stories were told to her, she replied "Very casually [*santai-santai aja*], or suddenly someone would recall: "Do you know Karto?" for example. "Oh yeah!" And then it would somehow come to that story."

Although these stories were told within a domestic space so deeply impacted by the violence of 1965 and its aftermath, the telling and content of these tales seemed peculiarly disconnected from her own family life. The tellings were calm, the speakers unspecified, and Ning was vague on to what degree people were describing things they had actually witnessed. There is a disconnect between the way in which she discussed the horrific stories floating around her home village, and the highly individualized, psychologized way she describes growing up in an *eks-tapol* family. I got the sense in the interview that the connection was not one that was obvious and settled to her, but one that she was still thinking through in the process of our discussion. Ning's experiences

demonstrate a different kind of silence regarding the violence of the past: one based not on the absence of speech and stories (of which there were plenty in her home and her village), but rather on the uncertain relationship between the brutally tangible signs of this violence in the social (and physical) landscape, and the “invisible energy” that shaped and scarred her home life. Given what Ning considered to be her fortuitous marriage choice (and, perhaps, she and her husband’s successful careers that have allowed them to move to the “big city”), she felt it possible that she might escape the uncertain effects of the violence of 1965-66 that extended beyond those who were “directly” impacted.

Conclusions

Carol Kidron, writing of her research with the children of Holocaust survivors in Israel, notes that “forms of knowledge appear to be at work in the survivor home that are not conditional on commensurable existential experience or verbalized historical knowledge.” (Kidron 2009: 16) Kidron reflects upon the comments of the daughter of a Holocaust survivor who grew up not knowing any factual information about the Holocaust, yet claimed that “I knew it was about what I didn’t know”: Kidron argues that this is “a new alternative category of knowing... a knowing without words, narrative, or history... all silent practices and tacit knowing.” (Kidron 2009: 5)

Writing of the intergenerational transmission of memories of violence, Rosalind Shaw (2010: 253-255) argues that there is often an “instability in which one form of memory transmutes into another, sometimes shifting back and forth between predominantly discursive and non-discursive forms, remembering and forgetting,

commemoration and erasure.” She further notes that anthropological studies of violence can challenge the “universalizing discourse” of trauma and PTSD where “silence is pathologized,” demonstrating instead how “[n]either silence nor forgetting are necessarily pathological ‘symptoms’ . Rather, there are different modes of silence and forgetting, produced by different kinds of memory work.”

Both Shaw and Kidron provide important critiques of the equation of silence with pathological trauma, repressed memory, and/or the absence of knowledge. Their arguments are applicable to the narratives of *eks-tapol* and *anak korban* that I have focused upon in this chapter. Yet the narratives reveal other factors that we should account for when analyzing intergenerational “silences” and “mentions” in the aftermath of violence. They demonstrate the complex ways in which the relationship between personal/ family histories and national histories can be understood, and how one can provide a “mention” in light of a “silence” on the other: for instance, in Pak Joko’s linking of silences within *eks-tapol* households to larger types of silences, Bu Marni’s creation of parent-child through the telling (and refutation) of national stories, or the connection Mbak Ela saw between the uncovering of mass graves and her own evolving understandings of her relationship to the violence of 1965. This relationship may also structure the assertion or development of moral authority: Pak Joko’s fear that it will be lacking in *eks-tapol* unable to transmit their experiences to their children, or Mbak Ela’s granting of such authority to her grandmother in spite of the gaps in her knowledge. Furthermore, building off of Shaw’s argument for the non-pathological nature of silence, we can look more specifically at the strategies utilized in order for silence to *not* be considered pathological. This may involve an awareness of other sources of knowledge,

other external “mentions” that are used to justify or mitigate this silence (We can see this, for example, in Pak Sumanto’s certainty that his children are receiving knowledge from elsewhere, even as he inculcates certain habits and expectations in them through his silence). We can also, in the case of Ning, turn the equation around to understand a situation where pathology is located not in silence, but in the uncertain effects—the “invisible energy”—of community violence that finds its way into the household.

Finally, the narratives that I have presented here suggest that we cannot view “silences” and “mentions” as temporally static. There are two dimensions to this: one, that the ways in which they interact—and the ways in which they are understood and valued—can change dramatically over time; two, that the “silences” and “mentions” present within the *eks-tapol* household do not merely involve the static presence of the past. They may (potentially) keep the past at hand as a resource and a reference while ameliorating or avoiding the harmful consequences of this past. Trouillot (2000: 174), writing about collective historical apologies, notes how they create a sense of “pastness”: “[A]pologies are premised on the assumption that the state of affairs to which they refer does not, or should not, obtain in the present of the actors involved. In claiming a past, they create pastness.” I suggest that this kind of potential bracketing of the past also pertains to the shifts between “silences” and “mentions” within *eks-tapol* households. This can be seen in the accounts of Pak Sugi, Bu Eti, and Bu Marni: those things that are provided to children in the absence of direct access to the parental past (the teaching of certain dispositions, harmonious family relations, and stories from “outside,” respectively) keep the harmful effects of the past at a distance. The next chapter will

examine how such “bracketing” could operate on a public or national level through the contradictory figure of the “communist child.”

Chapter Three: “Communist Children,” The Bracketing of the Past, and the Production of Sympathy

In the previous chapter, I examined the ways in which the presence of a violent past structured the domestic spaces of *eks-tapol* and their children. I turn now to an examination of some of the ways in which a public focus upon the children of accused communists (referred to pejoratively as “*anak PKI*”¹ or “communist children”) was seen as capable of stimulating or freeing individuals and collectivities from traumatic memory, opening or closing off certain discursive spaces, and solidifying or blurring identities and culpabilities.

Saya Shiraishi (1997: 76-77) argues that, not only was New Order society organized according to a strictly hierarchical family model where “Soeharto reigns as the powerful *bapak* [father],” but as the key event that brought the New Order to power, “the coup and the mass killings that took place in its aftermath had long been couched in the New Order family language... The national language has turned a hugely important national political event into family affairs.” In the period following 1965, representations

¹ I have chosen to use quotation marks for any mention of “*anak PKI*” in order to signify that this term tends to be applied (often pejoratively) to the children of former political prisoners by those outside of the community and its sympathizers. (As has already been mentioned, the children and their *eks-tapol* parents tend to prefer the term “*anak korban*” (children of victims))

of the murder of the generals focused upon their roles as fathers and the loss to their spouses and children.²

A rather different kind of “family language,” I argue, was a crucial aspect of societal representations of the *victims* of New Order violence, those suspected “communists” killed or imprisoned for their alleged role in the coup and their stigmatized family members. In this chapter, I trace the ways in which *public* representations of the children and grandchildren of *eks-tapol*—and ideas of the kinds of knowledge, politics, and stigma transmitted to them from their parents—have developed from just after the 1965-66 violence up through the present day. The texts I am examining in this chapter will show that this is not a perfectly linear narrative. Yet, I argue that at a time when “communists” were presented by the Indonesian government and large segments of society as unambiguously evil and repellent, their family members occupied a much more ambiguous and liminal space, positioned between the “*kita*” (inclusive “we”) of the idealized and loyal Indonesian *masyarakat* [public or society] and the profound “evil” of “the communists.” Even in the middle of the New Order, there was a sense by some that “*anak PKI*” were deserving of some kind of sympathy. What was being contested was the nature of (and reason for) this sympathy, its parameters and boundaries, and its social and political implications.

Although my argument is that the experiences of children and grandchildren of *eks-tapol* can be analyzed discretely from those of the “1965 victims” themselves, I am

² James Siegel (1998a: 87) suggests that in contemporary Indonesia, “[t]he traditional family is now merely customary while the Indonesian family is an effect of the nation, deriving its legitimacy and its form from outside itself... The family is a site of potential disruption.” Yet, taking into account the subject of this chapter—the various public representations of “communist children” in New Order and post-New Order Indonesia—we may ask if Siegel overlooks the ways in which the idea of the family as “disruptive” space was contested and questioned.

not suggesting that the suffering of and discrimination against “PKI children” has somehow been exaggerated, or that the New Order anticommunist rhetoric and practice was less repressive than writers (Pramoedya 1996; Setiawan 2004) and scholars (Asvi 2004; Budiawan 2004; Heryanto 2006) have described it to be. Rather, I am tracing through several texts, interviews, and fieldwork observations the development of “anak PKI” as a post-1965 social category. This category of individual could be, and often was, conflated with that of their “communist” parents, to be vilified and hated. Yet, I will also show that it was fully possible for one to both subscribe to the official narrative of the events of 1965 and to write or speak sympathetically of “*anak PKI*.” At a later moment after the fall of Suharto, when the speech and writings of former political prisoners and their children were able to become public, the role of “*anak PKI*” became more complex: they could present the intergenerational bond with their parents as an ideological one as well as a personal one, yet they could also configure themselves as victims of the New Order without necessarily contesting the justness of the punishment meted out to their parents. Furthermore, the *eks-tapol* themselves saw new possibilities for reconciliation and the rewriting of history by securing the sympathies of the “younger generation,” and particularly through the lack of distinction that could emerge in public address between their *own* children as addressees and a more broadly conceived “young generation” not beholden to New Order propaganda.

Looking at 1965 and its aftermath from the perspective of the public discourse on “*anak PKI*” troubles our assumptions: 1) that New Order anticommunist discourse was monolithic and undifferentiated (in fact, this discourse’s sense of justice was dependent upon the cultivation of certain sympathies and exemptions, including in certain cases, that

children were innocent of their parents' alleged communist activities); and 2) that, given these exemptions, the injustices and distortions of history perpetrated under the New Order can be simply and systematically undone through a straightforward "straightening of history."

From the very early days of the New Order, the fate and sufferings of the families (especially children) of political prisoners was a matter of public concern. This concern did not necessarily have as its basis any assertion of the innocence of "anak PKI," much less of their imprisoned "communist" parents. Writing in the newspaper *Kompas* in 1969, the journalist and former anticommunist student activist Soe Hok Gie argued that:

The issue of political prisoners has emerged as a social issue in Indonesia itself. The prison camps have ultimately become Communist Party schools, bringing up more hatred toward the Soeharto-Nasution regime, and indoctrinating the communist ideology. Bad treatment [of the prisoners] is also going to leave its trace on their families. The number of haters in our society is going to keep increasing, and this will in the end boomerang back to Indonesian society itself. This kind of society will ultimately become fertile soil for totalitarian ideologies, including communism." (Soe 2005)

Although Soe Hok Gie was an early critic of the New Order regime (until his death shortly after the publication of this article), we can see in this brief statement the beginnings of what would become a dominant state discourse of the New Order (and beyond): a sense that in spite of the decimation of the PKI (and its real or alleged sympathizers) through direct physical violence, legal restrictions, and the cultivation of societal antipathy, "victory" against communism was far from assured. The *bahaya laten komunis* ("latent danger of communism," which became one of the catch-phrases of the New Order) meant that imprisoned "communists," their families, and their supporters—even in their apparent weakness and defeat—possessed an awesome agentive power, all

the more dangerous for not being easily perceived or understood. What we see in the excerpt above from Soe Hok Gie—and in subsequent examples given in this chapter—is a belief that the mistreatment of family members could in fact boomerang back and *increase* the attractive power of the parents: if not as individuals, then in their (imagined) capacity as disruptors of societal harmony. The flipside of this also pertains: compassionate treatment of and the cultivation of sympathy for those of doubtful culpability was capable of producing a break from the violent past that could put to rest traumatic memory and fears of vengeance.

To illustrate the conditions of this sympathetic treatment of “*anak PKI*”, I turn first to three examples from the New Order era:

“A Woman and Her Children”: Early Articulations of the “Anak PKI”

The discursive role of “PKI children” in a humanistic yet resolutely anti-communist view of the violence of 1965 comes to us by way of a short story written by Gerson Poyk³ and published in the Indonesian literary journal *Horison*⁴ in September 1966, less than a year after the G30S coup attempt and subsequent massacres. Like other short stories written close to the events of 1965-66, this one does not shy away from the fact of the brutal violence directed at suspected PKI members. It presents this violence

³Gerson Poyk is an Indonesian writer, b. 1931, originally from Rote in the Nusa Tenggara Timur. He was a reporter for the *Sinar Harapan* newspaper in the 1950s, and has since then published a number of novels, short stories, and poetry.

⁴The first issue of the literary journal *Horison* was published in July, 1966, after the decimation of leftist cultural organizations such as LEKRA. *Horison*'s political leanings were resolutely anti-communist, with many of its contributors associated with the anti-communist *Manifesto Kebudayaan* (Cultural Manifesto) or the 1966 anti-Sukarno and anti-PKI student movement. (Hill 1993)

alternately as a regrettable but necessary fact, or as an uncontrollable force that seems to exist independent of human agency and society. The main character, an anticommunist lower-level civil servant named “A.,” has just attended the execution of his archrival “K.,” a prominent local PKI leader.⁵ We learn early on in the story of the complex relationship between A and K.: A was in the past a rejected suitor of Hadijah, the woman whom K. eventually married. Subsequently, for reasons not explained in the story, K. falsely accused A. of corruption. A. spent time in prison and his child died during his absence. After the coup of September 1965, K. is arrested and executed. In response, A. seems convinced of the justice (or at least the inevitability) of K.’s fate, and is ready to forget; it is only the thought of K.’s widow and children that keeps the memory alive:

A. attempted to push to one side and forget that which was gnawing at his mind. He had just about succeeded when suddenly the thought of K.’s wife entered his mind. This woman was the mother of five children. Both mother and children were still alive. They were not corpses. They were not part of a formless mass that blended together like grass. They were human beings who had been dealt a bitter fate. He had to help them (139).

A. imagines that he hears K.’s voice speaking in his head: “‘I have sinned against *Pancasila* [the Indonesian state ideology] and deserve to die. Hadijah and the children do not. Forgive them.’ The words roared in his ears, and he found it difficult to tell whether it was K.’s voice or his own.” (139) Here, the innocence of K.’s children not only distinguishes them from their father’s generation, but momentarily blurs differences between political enemies as A. hears K.’s voice as his own.⁶

⁵ Poyk does not give any specific setting to the story, perhaps intending to suggest the widespread nature of the 1965-66 violence.

⁶ Given that Poyk is from the majority-Christian island of Rote, this section of the story can perhaps be read as reflecting a Christian language of forgiveness. (I thank Webb Keane for this observation).

As the story continues, A. visits K.'s widow and their five children at their home. Hadijah, K.'s widow, begs A. to adopt her children and take them with him back to Jakarta, as she is no longer able to provide for them: "If you still feel the need for revenge against me, I hope that you will forgive these children... I don't want these children to grow up to be like their father, digging Holes⁷ [sic] to accomplish what they want, and then falling into those holes themselves." (141) The specifics of her plea are important to note, as it encompasses the motifs of personal betrayal, ideological treachery, and reassertion of (communist) parental guilt that would feature strongly in the public discourse surrounding "*anak PKI*" in subsequent decades.

Touched by Hadijah's plea (even as his perception of her swings between seeing her as victim and as a manipulating accomplice to her late communist husband), A. spends much of the rest of the story visiting friends and acquaintances and asking them to help take care of Hadijah's children. Without exception they decline, citing either insufficient financial means or fear of being politically tainted by association with the children of "communists." Yet as they do so they encourage A. to do what they themselves are unwilling to do, and stress that what is at stake in the fate of these children is the very stability of Indonesian society. A.'s old friend O., a history teacher, encourages him to:

educate the children so that they can be human beings, not [members of a] party. Because for their entire lives, they will be susceptible to a disease: the disease of revenge and hatred [*dendam*]. If they are not taught about God, religion, and morality, then our history will be marked by a tragic dialectical process (142).

⁷ The phrase here in Indonesian is "menggali Lubang² untuk mencapai tujuannya," obviously intended as a kind of pun on the specific *Lubang Buaya* (Crocodile Hole) into which the bodies of the slain generals were thrown.

Voicing similar fears and sentiments, a military commander who is an acquaintance of A's tells him to "gather up these children. What's important is not having enough to feed them and raise them as if they were livestock. It's educating them so that they don't someday perpetrate [another] *Lubang Buaya* [crocodile hole]"⁸ (144).

Finding those within his social circle to be equally adamant as to the social necessity of keeping the "anak PKI" within acceptable political and ideological boundaries, and unwilling to contribute to this task themselves, A. resolves that he will adopt the children of K. and Hadijah, and return with them to Jakarta. This decision confers both supernatural and societal protection to A., suggesting the construction of normality in the wake of the turmoil and violence that followed the coup attempt.

Towards the end of the story, we find A:

Walking in the dark night caused visions of corpses to emerge again. But this time, the fear was gone. His thoughts were on human beings, not corpses... In a few instances, he was suspicious of passersby who looked his way, thinking that they might be G30S members still on the loose. But in the face of all of this, he was convinced that God was protecting him. Wasn't he tackling the problem of the innocent children? That night, in any case, he walked along with more courage than fear (142).

This is a picture of post-1965 social reality quite distinct from the official narrative of the New Order government, which stressed a return to "security" and "normalcy" through a society-wide rejection of communism and submission to repressive government measures. In Poyk's story, the threats to security are the familiar bogeymen of the New Order. Yet, questions of security and danger are individuated, and redemption can come from clearly distinguishing the guilty from the innocent, and acting accordingly.

⁸ See above (note 7); the bodies of the slain generals were thrown into a "crocodile hole"

While “A Woman and Her Children” is a short story with what may have been a limited circulation at its time of publication, I suggest that it is far more than a literary curiosity or an idiosyncratic rendering of the aftereffects of the 1965 violence. If it does not itself create the Indonesian social category of “*anak PKI*” (PKI child), it ably reflects many of the dynamics and contradictions of this social category that would come into play in decades ahead as the nature, identity, and imagined threat of “*anak PKI*” were discussed in media and in public forums. The story offers an example of how the generational rupture between unquestionably guilty parents and their children, who are ideological blank slates, can force a man like A. to remember the violence against the “guilty” parents. On the one hand, the innocence of the children is asserted, but in doing so, the guilt of their parents is reinforced by holding a mirror to their parents’ actions. The guilt of the parents is all the more obvious and evil in contrast to the innocence of their children.

“When Mother Raised Us”

Although most of the written accounts of the experience of “*anak PKI*” were written after the fall of the Suharto regime in 1998, an earlier prototypical autobiographical “*anak PKI*” essay can be found in the 1982 publication *Perjalanan Anak Bangsa (The Journey of the Nation’s Children)*. The book was published by a prominent Indonesian publisher of social science books (*LP3ES*) with the assistance of the Indonesian branch of UNICEF and the endorsement of a government minister. It compiles essays written by young Indonesians from throughout the archipelago in which they write of their childhoods and upbringings. One of these essays, “*Bila Ibunda*

Membesarkan” (“When Mother Raised Us”) by Ari Saputro (1982), describes the hardships that were suffered by the author and his family after his father was arrested and imprisoned in 1965: their house is looted and destroyed by unspecified “demonstrators,” his classmates in elementary school bully and beat him—causing him eventually to drop out of school—and the family finds it difficult to get by on his mother’s meager income. Perhaps unsurprisingly for an essay written at a time when the Suharto regime’s version of the events of 1965 was still largely uncontested, Ari Saputro’s autobiographical writing steers clear of issues such as the justness of his father’s arrest and imprisonment, innocence or guilt, or political affiliations. His father, in fact, is almost completely absent from the narrative. The story instead becomes one in which Ari Saputro describes how the fortitude and determination of his mother (with the help of a school principal sympathetic to the family’s plight) helped keep the family together and enabled him to attain his current status [at the time of publication] as a student of dentistry at a respected university.

The fact that this essay is in a mainstream book, produced with the endorsement of the Indonesian government at the height of the New Order, suggests that the reader is intended to sympathize with the plight of Ari Saputro, to see him as another of the “nation’s children” (*anak bangsa*) struggling to survive and prosper in spite of hardships and obstacles. This contextualization of being the child of a “communist” political prisoner as just another depoliticized “life obstacle” to be overcome—at the exact moment when the New Order regime was codifying its “clean environment” laws that formalized discrimination against relatives of former political prisoners—is remarkable,

and suggests that the New Order could endorse a narrative of “*anak PKI*” as victim, even as it passed laws that contradicted this.⁹

Looking in greater detail at some of the ways in which Ari’s story is told, we see from the beginning of the story that the focus here is the sorrows, tribulations, and space of family life; the 1965 coup and subsequent violence is an initially distant event that intrudes into this family space. As Ari writes: “The incident occurred one night in 1965, when our family was in a state of mourning because of the death of our youngest sibling.” (148) The coup is not in the forefront of the family’s life.

When Ari raises the allegations that led to his father’s arrest, his tone is one of mimicry, as if to highlight the absurdity of the accusations and/or the unknowability of his father’s guilt. He writes that:

Oh, but they were cruel. They said that my father was like this and like that [*begini dan begitu*]. Then our house was destroyed and they also stole our possessions. They also destroyed my future, and that of my siblings, and my entire family (150).

This sense of the absurdity of his stigmatization continues in his account of when, in order to earn money for his family, he tries selling fried bananas outside of the school. A group of his schoolmates spit on his wares and tell the other students “Don’t buy those fried bananas. He’s an *anak PKI*. There’s poison in that food.” (157) He presents these accusations as ridiculous, paranoid hindrances to his attempt to help his family survive.

Without directly contesting the official version of the 1965 coup and its aftermath, Ari’s account insists that those accused of being PKI could still be capable of good deeds. He also hints, in the form of a misunderstanding, that those with whom one has everyday, nonpolitical relationships could have fallen victim to being accused of being PKI. This

⁹ For a very similar account from a fictional perspective, see Massardi 1979.

comes out as Ari expresses the confusion that he and his mother felt at a schoolmaster who was being exceptionally kind and generous to them: “Mother then asked him why he was so attentive and sympathetic to our situation. It appears that he understood what was behind this question. In order that there be no misunderstanding between us and him, in the end he showed us his [identity?] card.” The implication is that the schoolmaster’s identity card does not mark him as a former political prisoner. The schoolmaster is addressing a possible accusation of collusion by asserting his own innocence. He also explains his desire to help as being due to Ari’s good marks in school and the fact that in the past his father had helped in building the school. The schoolmaster is clear that his is a non-political sympathy (159-160).

Ari’s story ends on a hopeful note, with the schoolmates who had beaten him up on previous occasions approaching him, shaking his hand, and expressing remorse for their behavior. (Apparently, this change of attitude was due to the children being admonished by the aforementioned kind schoolmaster.) This creates a template by which societal attitudes towards the families of accused “communists” can change.

At the time he is writing his account, Ari is on a successful career path, studying dentistry at a university in South Sulawesi. He ends by telling the reader that “this is all due to Mother’s efforts on our behalf.” (His father, though spoken of sympathetically throughout the narrative, is given no formative influence on his life).

At times Ari’s account feels slightly too polished, and it is impossible to verify the veracity of his autobiographical story. Yet, I emphasize again here that the main significance is that in 1982, the Indonesian government was willing to put its stamp of

approval on an account that so clearly criticizes the treatment of *anak PKI*, while not actually contesting the government's version of the violence of 1965.

This New Order account of the plight of an anak PKI is also notable for the way it touches on the gender(ed) violence of New Order Indonesia. A key component of the New Order demonization of "communists" was the dissemination of images of *Gerwani* members as sadistic torturers, as the sexualized and politicized antithesis to the "proper" Indonesian woman. (Wieringa 1995). In "When Mother Raised Us," the father's true political leanings (and the complicity they would imply) remain beyond the comprehension of the innocent *anak PKI* and, thus, can be presented as irrelevant. Yet, equally important to the story is the seeming nonexistence of the mother's politics. She is instrumental in shaping the stigmatized *anak PKI* into the ideal New Order subject. In doing so, she simultaneously reinforces the New Order image of the depoliticized *Ibu* (mother) (Suryakusuma 1996: 101-102) and secures the innocence and development of her (potentially ideologically tainted) offspring. By seeing Ari's mother as defined by her nurturing and apolitical role within the family, the figure of the innocent anak PKI serves both to counter the image of the violent, hypersexualized "communist" woman by demonstrating instead how said individual conforms to New Order ideal of the "good" (motherly, nurturing, non-political) woman. Here, the ideal New Order woman is contained within the "communist" family.

From "Cleanliness" to "Influence": Late New Order Anxieties

In the late New Order period, the issue of PKI family influence evolved into farther reaching anxieties over the nature of "communist" influence that could transcend

the bounds of the family. In the late 1980s and early 1990s, the issue of the 1965 “G30S” coup was frequently seen in the Indonesian news. What was being hotly debated at this point was not the facts of the coup itself, nor the nature or justness of the subsequent mass violence (which was, by this time, almost never acknowledged publicly). Rather, it was the coherence, logic, and effect on social stability of the “clean environment” (*bersih lingkungan*) policy that the Indonesian government had put in effect in 1982. This law, as summarized in a 1990 article in *TEMPO* magazine, stipulated that screening of potential civil servants will include “aspects of one’s environment that can influence a person’s attitudes or ideology, including the family environment. What this means is that it is not just the person being screened who is not involved with the PKI (*tak terlibat PKI*), but also his or her family.” (*TEMPO* 1990; Heryanto 2006: 34-47).

In the early 1990s, however, the Suharto government decided to enact a public shift away from a policy of a “clean [family] environment” (*bersih lingkungan*) towards one of looking in a broader sense at an individual’s “influences” (*keterpengaruhannya*). This new policy abandoned the assumption of automatic ideological contamination by “communist” family members, but sought to look at a wider range of societal and community-level “influences” that could determine a particular person’s ideological correctness. As explained in the *TEMPO* article mentioned above, “what is being investigated is the applicant’s involvement in G30S-PKI and other banned organizations with ties to the PKI. So, not the involvement of one’s father, mother, grandfather, siblings, and so on, as has been the case in what has been known as “clean environment” [laws].”

The systematic discrimination against those deemed to have been “involved” in the G30S coup, as well as those deemed to be ideologically “unclean” or “in an unclean environment,” had been a fact of Indonesia’s political and social life for a number of years at this point. What seems to have spurred this change of terminology (and, ostensibly, of government policy) in the late 1980s and early 1990s was that the climate of suspicion and accusations of “unclean environment” had moved beyond the confines of the Indonesian *masyarakat* [people, public] and was becoming a political tool used by rival factions within the government.¹⁰ Issues of ideological “cleanliness” cropped up in the 1988 General Meeting of the Indonesian Parliament (*Sidang Umum MPR*), when several figures within the ruling Golkar party were fired for allegedly having been “involved in G30S activities.” Around the same time the head of the local East Java parliament, one Nyonya Asri Soebarjati Soenardi, was pressured to step down because she was discovered to have been from an “unclean environment”; her father had been “involved with the PKI.” The accusations reached all the way up to the Vice President at the time, Sudharmono, who was rumored to have past ties to the leftist Pesindo party (Heryanto 2006: 40-48).

The smearing of these political figures was, however, symptomatic of the effects of a wider ambiguity and lack of clarity in the government’s response to the “latent communist” danger. The *TEMPO* article described the situation in this way: “Many workers in both private and government offices still inquire repeatedly, and don’t receive a consistent reply: Can the children of former PKI members become *dalang* [shadow puppeteers], priests, journalists, or cashiers at a media company?”. The article cites the

¹⁰ The main conflict here was between government officials close to President Suharto and certain elements of the Indonesian military loyal to Defense Minister Benny Moerdani. (Heryanto 2006: 40)

1982 Interior Ministry decree stating that former political prisoners are banned from the above professions. However, “this policy only pertains to former PKI detainees, not to their children, nieces or nephews, or other siblings. And in terms of its implementation on the ground, there have been excesses, apparently because of differing interpretations [of the law].”¹¹ Citing data from the Interior Ministry, the article reminds readers that there are more than 1.4 million Indonesians deemed by the government to have been “implicated [*terlibat*] in G30S-PKI.” The article does not dispute this designation, but adds that

if their children, grandchildren, nieces and nephews, son-and-daughters-in-law, and close family are considered to be people who have committed a sin, then it’s understandable if the air around us seems stuffy because it feels as if they will always be among us. This presidential decree is truly a breath of fresh air, one that can make us breathe easier. The air around us is also cleaner... In this way, while maintaining our national vigilance towards the threat, challenge, obstacle, and disturbance of the latent communist danger... we can concentrate more upon national development. After a quarter century, it truly feels time for the trauma of G30S-PKI to be swept away.

This change in policy—which the TEMPO article alternately suggests is substantial or cosmetic—was presented by some New Order figures not merely as correcting a misused government approach to communism, but in shifting the nation’s relationship to its past. Nico Daryanto, at that time Secretary General of the Indonesian Democratic Party (PDI)¹², presented the change as an “effort at political development.”

¹¹ This ambiguity and lack of clarity is consistent with what I heard from many of the *anak korban* with whom I spoke who came of age during the late New Order: they were either unsure of the extent to which their family background played a role in career and educational obstacles, or—if they did not experience these obstacles—how they had managed to get around them. If the discrimination against family members of *eks-tapol* was applied in an uneven fashion, I got the impression that the *de facto* assumption of many *eks-tapol* was that these restrictions would apply to their children; the parents thus urged their children not to attempt to obtain government jobs, and to seek their living in the private (*swasta*) sector.

¹² The PDI was one of the two legal “opposition” parties during the New Order, comprised mainly of members of Christian and nationalist parties that were consolidated into one party by Suharto in 1971. (The other “opposition” party was the PPP or United Development Party, a similar consolidation of Muslim

He continued to explain that as a result of the change and the clarification/modification of government policy, “our society is no longer as weighed down (*dibebani*) by the matter of G30S-PKI. We no longer need to be too worried about that matter.” He contrasted this to the recent “problems” that the government’s lack of clarity had caused: “Many people have been afraid to step this way or that way, [out of fear of] being accused of being the child or grandchild of a PKI member. The fact is that this gave rise to feelings of insecurity (*rasa tidak aman*).” In a New Order context where “security” and “order” were touted by the government as ends in themselves, this acknowledgement that the government itself could be threatening security—through its overzealous search for “communist” influence—represented another example where “*anak PKI*” were positioned at the boundary between “legitimate” and “illegitimate” anti-communism.

There is also the sense conveyed in these articles that the new policy was meant to imply a new sense of one’s (political) agency and responsibility: a government minister (Secretary of State Moerdiono) was quoted by *Editor* as saying that “The essence of this [new policy] is that a person is responsible for his or her own deeds, and is not responsible for the deeds of another person, whether it be their father, sibling, or uncle.” Brigadier General Todo Sihombing was similarly quoted as explaining: “The first thing we look at is with whom one is associating. For example, say that one’s father is *PKI*, but at no point was he raised by his father. It’s not a problem. He’s not *PKI*, and not subject to special investigation... But if his father isn’t *PKI*, and he’s reading books on Marxism-Leninism, then he’s under the influence [*dia terpengaruh*]. What we’re looking at is just his attitudes and deeds.” (*Editor* 1990b)

political parties.). In practice, these parties offered only the most minimal opposition to the ruling Golkar party.

Yet rather than this change in government policy lifting the burden of the violent past, other reactions suggest that it confirmed even more uncertainty as to how to measure the effects of the past; if in some ways it did away with the assumed guilt and taint of “*anak PKI*”, in other respects it transplanted the suspicions that had been cast upon the families of accused PKI onto a wider society. Another *Editor* article (1990a) detailed why this may have been the case:

It is [no longer] only former PKI members and their families who can be netted in the special investigation [*penelitian khusus*]. Rather, youth who were born after the G-30S/ PKI incident in September 1965, and who are not from leftist families, can be investigated. This is the case if the person involved is, or is going to become, a civil servant. Of course, this individual is not being accused of being implicated in that subversive movement. Also, of course, it’s not that they’re considered to have participated in the prologue to that bloody episode. Instead, this has to do with the epilogue, the period of time that stretches up through the present day. Signposts which are used to measure this are: whether one is under the influence of G-30-S/ PKI...The problem is, influence is an abstract concept...which leads many people to ask, how does one measure this influence?

The article quotes Colonel Y.M. Saleh, the chief officer in the *litsus* [special investigation] division, who conceded the difficulty:

It’s true, it’s not easy determining whether someone is under the influence. You can read Marxist-Leninist works—even though this is against the law—as a reference [*referensi*]. You can read that at the library. This is permissible for the sake of comparison. After that, we look at your mindset [*pola pikir*], are you under the influence or not?

Colonel Saleh elaborated further upon how “influence” is to be determined, specifically in evaluating the results of the “clearance test” given to potential civil servants:

“What we’re evaluating is not the correctness or incorrectness of their answers. Instead, we’re trying to understand why an individual is giving the answers that they are,” states Saleh. It is through the interview that they try to evaluate matters of influence. For example, an individual answers a question and admits that he received this opinion from his father. “In that case, we investigate who his father is. It could be that this individual admits that his father’s whereabouts were unknown between 1965 and 1970. Only then would we take a closer look. This

person has the same mindset as his implicated [terlibat] father. Well, only then are we talking about influence.”

Blood ties to a “communist” alone were no longer enough to make one ideologically suspect; what mattered now, in theory, was if and how such an individual talked about such ties. The inheritance of stigma, then, went from being a biological fact to a product of discourse.

The change from “clean environment” to “influence” I have described above was never fully implemented, and widespread accusations of “communist” affiliations continued throughout the last years of the New Order (and, as we shall see at the conclusion of this chapter, well after the New Order’s demise). In practice, the “old, and now officially expired concept of *tidak bersih lingkungan* [unclean environment” continued to be in use (Heryanto 2006: 43). Yet, while the policy change may have been little more than a “road not taken,” the statements and debates surrounding it revealed the continuity widespread unease concerning the uncertain culpability and potential disruptive status of “*anak PKP*”; others saw the potential exoneration of the “*anak PKP*” as a sign that New Order Indonesian society could transcend and decisively make a break from the violence that marked the New Order’s inception.

Picking Up The Scattered Debris: The Conditionality of Innocence

Even as the New Order came to an end, and public interest grew in reevaluating or revisiting the history of the mid-1960s (in spite of still-significant opposition to such endeavors on the part of anti-communist groups), the figure of the “*anak PKP*” remained for some a source of uncertainty and anxiety. I turn now to a 2002 book by M. Sri

Martani Rustiadi in which she recounts her work in the 1970s caring for a number of children whose parents were imprisoned after 1965. The book, *Picking up the Scattered Debris (Memungut Puing yang Berkeping-Keping)* gives few details of Rustiadi's personal biography or background. We learn that she worked from 1973-1980 as part of a "spiritual center" [*pusat rohani*, or "*pusroh*"] affiliated both with the Protestant clergy and the Indonesian military.¹³ Despite the involvement and approval of the Indonesian military in her activities, she describes her work as a needed correction to widespread indifference towards the plight of "*anak PKI*": "There was no one from the government or the community speaking out about the fate of these children of political prisoners, who don't know anything about the matter of their parents and don't know anything about political issues." (Rustiadi 2002: 1) This statement towards the beginning of the book establishes the logic that persists throughout the work: the "*anak PKIs*" misfortunes have been caused by the alleged misdeeds of their parents, and yet they are worthy of attention and sympathy precisely because of the gulf in knowledge and experience that separates them from their parents.

Accompanying this view is an acknowledgement that the "*anak PKI*" have an unresolved relationship to the past, one that goes beyond their social and economic welfare in the present. Rustiadi, hearkening back to the sentiments expressed in Gerson Poyk's story from the 1960s, warns of the social consequences of insufficient care and management of the population of "*anak PKI*". She acknowledges the fear that "*anak PKI*" may want revenge. Yet this revenge is a step removed, based not upon the direct

¹³ Willis (1977), a Baptist missionary to Indonesia who presided over some of the mass conversions to Christianity post-1965, writes an account of the conversions that is both sympathetic to the *tapol* converts and deeply hostile to the PKI.

experience of the children or their families, but on how and by whom these events are subsequently explained and interpreted for the children:

They experienced an event that stung their hearts, and that made them sick. Heartbreak that piles up over time will later turn into 'vengeance'. Could this really be the case? The answer is, it's very possible. And against whom would these children want revenge? It depends who answers their questions, and what these answers contain. Why has all of this happened, and what exactly is [the situation] that they've received? (vii)

Rustiadi later describes herself taking on the role of answering these difficult questions for her young charges, thus (as she sees it) preventing the emergence of feelings of revenge:

The children often asked why their parents have been punished and imprisoned, what wrong had they committed? I had to be truly careful in answering them, neither lying to the children nor provoking feelings of revenge [*menimbulkan perasaan dendam*] in response to how their parents had been treated by the government or society, or even revenge against their own parents. They had to be given an explanation that would help them understand, in an age-appropriate way (16).

Yet, as we can see below, the explanation that she chooses to give to the children contains a complex array of implications: conveying some degree of sympathy for the parents, while denying them agency; conceding their lack of culpability, while still suggesting that the punishment they received was natural, inevitable, and appropriate:

Sometimes I gave an explanation by using the metaphor of a human body: if one part of the body does something wrong, like a hand bumping into a glass that falls and shatters, then the person herself is rebuked. It's not just the hand that's scolded. It's the same way with their parents: they were members of a group that was like a body. One part of this body committed a wrong, and so their parents who were part of this body were lumped in with that other part, and were held responsible and punished. By using that metaphor, the children could begin to understand their parents' situation. Of course they may have not found my explanation to be 100% satisfying, but at the very least they felt the need to understand. Prior to this, many of them had sought answers by skipping school and going to the bookstore and looking for history books or books having to do with the plight of their parents; they thought that maybe they could find the answers there (17).

This work provides one account of the plight of children of political prisoners who were separated from their families. However, the real insight that the book provides is the cultivation (and conditionality) of sympathy towards “*anak PKI*” in those who placed themselves at a remove from the historical situations that created the “*anak PKI*.” Amidst the number of memoirs of former political prisoners and children of former political prisoners published after the end of the Suharto regime, this book can rightly be understood as the autobiography of an outsider, a representative of the Indonesian public compelled to tackle the “problem” of the “*anak PKI*”.

The author’s sympathy for the “*anak PKI*” is countered by the unease-bordering-on-disdain she holds for their parents. One of the most striking aspects of this work is the author’s portrayal of the *eks-tapol* household following the parent’s release from prison. Almost without exception, she presents the children leaving her “family” to return to their parents’ houses as a kind of “trauma” comparable to the initial separation of child and parent. In contrast to the love, patience, and guidance she depicts the children receiving in her care, her description of the home lives of returned *anak korban* amounts to a litany of family dysfunction: neglect, abandonment, physical and verbal abuse, and the consequences of adultery.

The author tells the story of Anis, one of the teenagers whose parents were arrested, and who she mentored and counseled:

Anis was extremely disappointed and regretful with the incident of the G-30-S rebellion, and with how her parents followed along [*ikut-ikutan*] with the result that they had to abandon her. I explained to her that joining a particular organization was one’s right, and if that organization subsequently commits and act that is considered wrong, its members run the risk of being held responsible (47).

At another point, Rustiadi rejects the idea that the *eks-tapol* parents themselves could become a reliable source of information and explanation for their “confused” children:

In witnessing the actions of the government, the attitudes of the community, and the close family who pass judgment on their parents, these children are going to join in judging their own parents. This will, in the end, cause them to be heartsick and wanting revenge against their parents.

But what if their parents or other family members respond to this unwisely? For instance, saying that ‘Your mother or your father struggled so that you and your friends could receive free education, but why were we arrested and punished?’ or ‘Your mother and father only wanted us not to be poor, and for all of the people [*rakyat*] to be free from poverty, so who knows why your mother and father were arrested and punished.’

The children will be confused by this sort of answer. Because that answer is not untrue, but the reality is that their parents were punished. Punishment was handed down to their parents. So it’s clear that their parents are guilty, or considered to be guilty. But what is their crime?

According to the version given by their parents, they were fighters who struggled for the interests of the many, for justice, and for the people’s prosperity. So if this was the case, why were they punished?

All of this makes the children confused and disoriented, stressed out and sick (viii).

What stands out in Rustiadi’s account are the exclusions that it makes in the process of (and perhaps, as part of the conditions of) establishing the innocence of these children: in a work replete with examples of *eks-tapol* family life there is, for instance, no mention of the ritual humiliations that *eks-tapol* must endure: no mention of *satiaji* indoctrination sessions, the requirement to regularly report to the police, or the marking of identity cards,.

There is also a lack of acknowledgement by this author, despite her writing in 2002, that there has been any post-New Order shift in the debate over the violence of 1965, or the mobilization and articulations of its surviving victims. For Rustiadi, sympathy can

only be maintained by freezing in place the events that caused the suffering in the first place. She argues for the important social effects of her work, reminding the reader that millions of these children “are spread throughout our land, in a state of instability; isn’t it then the case that the environment in which they’re located is also going to be unstable?” (83) And yet, through her writings, she furthers the idea of “*anak PKI*” as a social problem, rather than a political one. The potential threat posed by “unstable” *eks-tapol* can be solved by proper care of each individual “*anak PKI*”, but there is no room in her account for addressing the systematic discrimination faced by *eks-tapol* and their families.

My next set of examples involves a series of semi-public gatherings in which “communist children” played a prominent role: in one case as self-proclaimed agents of national reconciliation, and in the other as an assembled audience meant to be suggestive of a wider Indonesian young generation that needed to come to terms with the violent past.

The Nation’s Children’s Friendship Forum (*Forum Silaturahmi Anak Bangsa*)

In 2003, a number of the children of prominent Indonesian political figures who had been in conflict with each other in the turbulent 1960s, met in Jakarta to establish the organization *Forum Silaturahmi Anak Bangsa* (The Nation’s Children’s Friendship Forum). The stated goals of the group, according to their mission statement, were to: “bring into being an Indonesian society based on mutual understanding, and to respect differences and diversity of our nation’s children together as a dignified Indonesian nation.”

Those in attendance at the opening ceremony included Amelia Yani, the daughter of one of the army generals killed in the 1965 coup attempt (General Ahmed Yani), Ilham Aidit, the son of the Indonesian Communist Party chairman DN Aidit (who was captured and killed by the military in 1965), the son of the leader of CGMI [*Central Gerakan Mahasiswa Indonesia*, or Central Movement of Indonesian Students], a communist student organization banned after 1965, as well as children of Kartosuwirjo, the leader of an Islamic-based separatist movement in the 1950s and 1960s. This face to face meeting of the children of historical adversaries was intended to be viewed by (and to be an example for) an Indonesian public still facing ideological, ethnic, and religious divides. The meeting received extensive coverage in the Indonesian press, and the opening ceremony was filmed and posted on the group's website.¹⁴

In the ceremony, the attendees one by one introduce themselves by stating the identity and political affiliation of their parents. There is both an employing of family language (although the connection is not explicitly made, “children of the nation” replacing the stigmatizing language of “communist child”.) and simultaneously a severing of ties to the political activities of one's parents: one of the daughters of an army general killed in 1965 states emphatically that “We can't choose who are parents are, and what they were like. But we know that our parents had a role in building this nation, and that this was steeped in conflict. We need to take a more mature view of this conflict.” Only once in the opening ceremony is this certainty regarding the affiliations—and conflicts—of their parents (and the attendant need to transcend these divisions) questioned. This exception is quick, but jarring: when introducing himself, one of the attendees begins simply by stating that his father was a “teacher”. He pauses, smiles, and

¹⁴ <http://www.fsab.or.id/fsab/video-acara-pembentukan-fsab>

continues... “and so the story goes [*ceritanya*], I want to emphasize so the story goes, he was a leader of CGMI” (the communist-affiliated student organization).

With its emphasis on reconciliation and optimism that sociality and nationalism can be projected into the future in spite of historical animosities, the FSAB creates a prominent public role for the children of victims—and perpetrators—of past Indonesian violence. It involves “communist children” in the process of reconciliation, but their actions are premised on the assumption of the basic knowability of the Indonesian past: an exact knowledge of one’s parents’ political affiliations, and an acceptance of the intrinsic dichotomy of “communist” and “non-communist”. Such terms of reconciliation, I suggest, exclude the vast majority of “communist children” who possess an incomplete knowledge of uncertain relationship to their parents’ pre-1965 political affiliations.

Reunions: Knowing and Not Knowing

There were other gatherings, however, where uncertain knowledge was publicly displayed. I turn now to a pair organized *reuni* (reunions) that brought *eks-tapol* from across Java together in meetings that were “private” but nonetheless designed to attract media attention. In looking at a pair of *reuni* that occurred in the Jogjakarta area during the 2005-2006 period of my fieldwork, I treat these events as social practices that traverse the ambiguous space between public and private remembering. On the one hand, the *reuni* were presented as intimate and private affairs, meant only for the rekindling of relationships between *eks-tapol* who already know each other and had in common the tragedies of the past. On the other hand, some of these events were staged with an awareness and expectation that they were being watched, that their reunions signified

something greater, and that the histories being brought to light with this “private” gathering had the power of attraction and repulsion within the public discourse.

This pair of *reuni* held in Jogjakarta in July and November 2005 were intended as much for public viewing (through media reports) as they were for the private interactions of the *eks-tapol*. Sponsored, funded, and organized by the NGO *Syarikat*, both of these events brought together female *eks-tapol*, many of who had been imprisoned together at Plantungan prison (in Central Java) in the 1960s and 70s after being accused of membership in the leftist *Gerwani* (*Gerakan Wanita Indonesia*, or Indonesian Women’s Movement) organization. I was unable to attend the first *reuni* in July 2005, and so am basing my description of this event (and my analysis of its “packaging” for public witnessing) on a commemorative booklet put out by *Syarikat* which contains an introduction written by several women’s rights activists who attended the event, a reprinting of several newspaper reports of the *reuni*, and quotes from several of the *eks-tapol* who took part in the event. This booklet was distributed to participants and observers at the second *reuni*, which I attended in November 2005, which suggests that it was designed to offer a prototype as to how the *reuni* could become an ongoing process.

As quickly became apparent in my witnessing of *reuni* and my assessment of media reports, these events did not just bring into focus the ambiguous relationship between the *eks-tapol* and a wider Indonesian public sphere; they confronted the thorny issue of where the *eks-tapol* stood in relationship to their families. Many of the *eks-tapol* used the occasion of the *reuni* as an outlet for their frustration at the limited picture their children had of their family history, or at their unwillingness to accept it: one attendee at the *reuni* in November 2005 stood up and lamented the fact that her family was divided

in terms of the extent to which her history as a political prisoner was known or accepted. Her two sons “knew and understood the experiences of their parents,” but her married daughter had not told her husband that her parents were *eks-tapol*; she feared that they could not accept it. Another elderly woman told of how there had been partial revelation of the past in her family; her children knew that her husband had been a political prisoner, but not that she had also been one. It was only after her husband died (shortly before the July 2005 *reuni*, which they had planned to attend together) that she told her children about her time in prison.

Yet, a different kind of parent-child relationship was also on display for the *eks-tapol*, for observers, and for the “audience beyond” whose construction I discussed above. In addition to the stories told of family alienation, there was much evidence of family members and children of *eks-tapol* being brought into the circle of the *reuni*: the *reuni* I attended in November 2005 included a significant number of *anak korban*. In addition, the commemorative booklet for the July *reuni* contained quotes that the *eks-tapol* had written in a comment book, and many of them were praise or appeals for the “young generation” and for their own children. (I will discuss these “comment book quotes” further below). The *anak korban* were accorded a special place within the social constellation of the *reuni*, acting as a kind of bridge between the *eks-tapol* themselves and the (intended) public audience for the *reuni*.

The ambiguities and anxieties surrounding “knowing and not knowing” were very much part of the semi-public *reuni* in July and November 2005. The commemorative booklet from the July 2005 *reuni* contains several pages in which the “impressions and messages of the participants” (*kesan-pesan peserta*) recorded in a comment book at the

time of the *reuni* are reprinted. Many of these contain reminders to an outside audience (the women's children, or a wider general public) that the assembled *eks-tapol* were not “in the know.” One Sri Unung from Banyumas writes

For [our] children, hopefully you can continue the struggle of your mothers and fathers so that that the stigma attached to us can quickly be repaired. Please believe, we didn't/ don't know what actually happened. Don't give up in facing the obstacles, because those obstacles must be overcome.

Another *eks-tapol* attending the *reuni*, W. Sulastri from Purwokerto, writes in the comment book: “Let's hope that our children are not traumatized, and that they don't blame their parents, because we are victims of politics.”

This defense of “not knowing anything” about politics was also mentioned a number of times at the *reuni* I attended (and indeed is an assertion commonly made by *eks-tapol* in meetings I attended, conversations and interviews I conducted, and writings I have encountered). The unspoken assumption that is the flipside of this—that those politically “in the know” may be somehow more guilty and deserving of their fate—is usually not addressed. Significantly, however, this potentially contentious issue was raised at the November 2005 *reuni*. Towards the end of a discussion session, an elderly woman stood up and explained that her background was very different from many of the stories she had heard from other *eks-tapol* over the course of the weekend: she had, she said, heard many of her friends that day state defensively that they “hadn't known anything.” She would not include herself in this category; looking around the room, she proclaimed proudly that “I was in the know.” [*Saya tahu*]. She continued that there was no need for her to hide this fact, as the [political] organization in which she participated in the 1960s was “positive.” Her brief testimony ended there; she did not elaborate upon

the nature of her “knowledge” or organizational affiliations, nor did anyone in the room seem to expect her to. However, her statement struck a very definite positive chord among the other *eks-tapol*, with heads nodding and murmurs of approval.

While one of the intended effects of the *reuni* was to resolve this tension between “not knowing” and “being in the know,” it seemed to only do so by “having it both ways.” A significant level of ambiguity was left in place: on the one hand there was a display of a shared history of suffering between those “in the know” and those who “didn’t know,” and the assertion of their common identity as victims. At the same time, there was the continued assertion of an “absurdity” and “senselessness” in the fact that both categories of *eks-tapol* received similar punishment, or (presented as even more absurd) that someone “in the know” could end up with a lighter sentence than some who “didn’t know anything.”

I suggest that this kind of *reuni*, stemming from its emphasis on absurdity, senselessness, and arbitrariness of state power, operated as a kind of quiet refutation of the idea of *eks-tapol* maintaining an continuous political or organizational identity from past to present. The picture that was presented was not that of a strong, developed, organized, growing political entity that stretches across historical eras, but rather of a gathering together of atomized, severed threads, individual lives that had been led *without* the kind of commonality of purpose that might come from a political organization. This refutation, perhaps seen as necessary to counter accusations that the *reuni* represented a “resurgence of communism in Indonesia,” may also have been the condition of possibility for the public sympathy expected to result from public display of these *reuni*.

Becoming ‘Anak PKI’ In Public: Conversations with ”Communist Children”

I turn here to my conversations with three children of former political prisoners (two of whom are sisters) who have, to different degrees, created or asserted their “*anak PKI*” identities in public, through practice and discussion:

Mas Eko (b. 1981)

Mas Eko’s father had been a teacher at a technical school in Jogjakarta in the early 1960s, and a member of a teacher’s organization (*Persatuan Guru Republik Indonesia, or Teachers’ Union of the Republic of Indonesia*) that was seen as being affiliated with the PKI. Between 1965 and 1970, Eko’s father spent two relatively short stints in jail, but his having been “*dicap merah*” (marked as a communist) was enough to put an end to his teaching career. Unable to find work, he opened a *bengkel* (motorcycle repair shop) in front of his house in Jogjakarta (a business that Mas Eko eventually took over from his now-elderly father).

Eko’s parents divorced when he was seven years old. Both parents remarried, and Eko went to live with his mother in Wonosari. He completed high school there, but in 1999 his mother died after an illness, and Eko accepted his father’s invitation to return to Jogjakarta to live with and work for him.

Eko claimed that his father spoke to him quite openly about his past and about the history of “1965” in Indonesia, and encouraged him to study national and global history. Eko was a founder and active member of the *Fopperham* organization. Despite lacking the university education that many of his friends and fellow activists had, Eko prided himself on being self-educated and well-versed in the “big picture” history that he saw as

providing an explanation (at the national and global levels) for the violence of 1965.

Contrary to those who valorized the perspectives and insights of the older generation of *eks-tapol* themselves, the “witnesses of history” to 1965, Eko presented himself as a far more qualified source of information; he was almost dismissive of the “long-windedness” of the *eks-tapol* in telling their stories. Despite the ways in which his identity as an “*anak PKI*” has shaped his life, opportunities, interests, and activism, Eko negated that identity even as he asserted it:

So when other people ask my brother about something [regarding the history of 1965], he’s become a little braver about talking about it. And then he says, ‘If you want it explained more clearly, go talk to my older brother. He knows more than I do.’ And then, if they come discuss things with me, there are a lot of things they will discover about the history of 1965.”

[Why, I ask, should they prefer to talk to him rather than one of the *eks-tapol*?] Yeah, if they try to ask the *bapak* [“old men”] about it.... The 1965 people [*orang ‘65*] don’t have a good grasp of it, academically. [*tidak menguasai secara akademik*], you know. And if they tell stories about it, sometimes they’re too long-winded. They’re insubstantial. They don’t get to the heart of the matter. For example, they’ll start talking, “Back on Buru Island.....”. They’ll talk for a whole week, and still not be done! Andy, maybe you’ve experienced this yourself...”

But then, if they come to me for information, I can explain to them about the post- World War Two era, the Cold War, the political situation at the time....My focus is more on the global context [rather than the particular experience of his family], because our society has a very constricted [*sempit*] understanding of communism. They don’t see the wider picture. I make them aware of the global political constellation. I tell them, for example, about the history of the French Revolution. We open up with the idea that there’s a basis to [what happened in 1965]. Why did 1965 happen?

Much like Sigit, the *anak korban* encountered in Chapter 2 seeking outside historical sources about “1965” that he believed would allow him to better support his *eks-tapol* father at home, Eko privileged the “objective” authority of texts over the “longwinded” familial stories that he heard at home. However, while Sigit sought this outside information in order to better help his father at home, Eko sought to establish himself as a public expert on “1965,” communism, and leftist movement. He attempted to sever his

public expertise from the family history that may have pushed him towards seeking such expertise in the first place.

Rini and Nuniek

Rini and Nuniek are sisters, close in age, born in the early 1980s and raised in Jogjakarta. Both of their parents are *eks-tapol*: their mother, accused of being a *Gerwani* member, was arrested and imprisoned at the Plantungan women's prison; their father, who is a painter and was a student at a Jogjakarta arts academy in 1965, was arrested because of his membership in a left-wing student organization; he was eventually sent to the penal colony on Buru Island, where he spent ten years (1969-1979). Rini and Nuniek were both told by their parents about their family history in their late teens, once their parents deemed them sufficiently mature and able to accept the information. They both described to me the period before this "full revelation" as one full of signs of difference and exclusion, but ones that they understood only in vague terms: hearing her father talk about time spent "in the forest" (in other words, on Buru Island), being called "*anak PKP*" by a neighborhood child, or watching her parents go to *santiaji* indoctrination sessions. Nuniek described this period of time where she and her siblings were trying to piece together their family past as *meraba-raba* (groping around, or feeling one's way).

Unlike many children of former political prisoners, neither Rini or Nuniek experienced any hindrance in getting accepted to a state university, and they both attended the prestigious Universitas Gadjah Mada (UGM) in Jogjakarta. (They could not tell me why or how they managed to avoid being effected by this informal discrimination, though it seems like that the fact they were entering university after the fall of Suharto

meant that the discrimination had slackened somewhat). Rini and Nuniek's father decided to fully reveal the family history to them right around the time they entered university. From their account, it seems that it was precisely his daughters' level of education that their father used to gauge when it was appropriate to reveal family history: Nuniek told me that while she was still a junior high and high school student, her father was afraid that telling her of his experiences as a political prisoner would contradict what she was studying in her history class; this, he feared, would confuse her, impede her progress in school, and further mark her as different from the other students. Once they advanced to university level, their father felt that their knowledge of their family history was suddenly a necessity. This new attachment to a wider suppressed Indonesian history in fact gave Rini and Nuniek a special authoritative status among some of their friends and classmates at Gadjah Mada University. Both Rini and Nuniek told me that among the friends who knew about their family background, they were seen as especially knowledgeable and reliable historical sources. Rini's friends in the Philosophy Department were intensely interested in the idea of "straightening" Indonesian history, and she invited them to her house to talk to her father. Nuniek began discussing her family history during the two-month period of *KKN (Kuliah Kerja Nyata*, a period of community work required of all university students), when she came into contact with students from a variety of academic disciplines.

At the same time, Nuniek told me that her first reaction was skepticism when her father was invited (by other former political prisoners as well as a few young activists) to set up the *Fopperham* organization in 2004. She worried that the older *eks-tapol* participants would end up being economically exploited for the benefit of the younger

activists. (This had apparently happened in the past, when her father had painted pictures that were used by young activists but had—according to Nuniek—not received payment commensurate with the amount of work that he had put into them). What reassured her about the *Fopperham* project was when she realized that there would be other *anak korban*, around her own age, involved:

Rini: We began to join in the meetings...That was when we met Mas Eko [mentioned above] and [B.] [another *anak korban*], and we were like “What’s your father’s story?” “What’s your father’s story?”. So, we traded experiences...

Nuniek: We only just met them at *Fopperham*, from the exhibition. We also just then realized that there were *anak korban* the same age as us...So we felt more comfortable...chatting, at then at the exhibition we became even closer...starting from when we were attaching the photos, enlarging the photos, we worked at Pak [M., a former political prisoner]’s place making frames for the photos...We would often gather there. That’s what made us interested in getting involved. With [other] *anak korban*... we also became close to them. So this was one of the big influences in bringing us closer together.

Yet, in spite of the fact that their participation in *Fopperham* gave them a sense of kinship and community with other families of former political prisoners, it also highlighted a disjuncture between the attitudes of the *anak korban* and the historical and political sensibilities of the older *eks-tapol* in the organization. Nuniek experienced this in what she views as attempts by a couple of older *Fopperham* members (former political prisoners) to “indoctrinate” the younger generation and tell them what they should and should not be doing. This, according to Nuniek, made the younger members of *Fopperham* experience “*maido*” (dibeliief or doubt), and a reluctance to participate in the engagement with the past in the perceived dogmatic way that he older members of *Fopperham* would like them to. Nuniek and Rini described the conflict in this way:

Nuniek: So, in the past, people didn't like things half-hearted, in the middle...Left was left, and right was right! That's how it was, no middle ground. But maybe because I'm not like them...I didn't agree. For example, if they say "under socialism, the people are always prosperous [*makmur*] and so on and so on...", well we need to read outside of that that under conditions of socialism, there's not always prosperity. There is sometimes, but not everyone is prosperous. What the older people tell us, I sometimes don't believe it, sometimes reject it. Because I've also read other sources.

Rini: ...But if we're going to have a relationship with members of a different generation than our own, we have to....we can't take everything from that. Even though to them it's correct, according to their era....we can't pick up all of it, can we?

How are we to interpret the tensions that Rini and Nuniek expressed here, and the histories behind them? There are a couple of reasons why the context complicates the standard narrative of a younger generation defining itself against the strictures and mores of a parental generation: for one, there is the fact that the New Order state—and many segments of Indonesian society—in effect nullified the presence of a “generation gap” between the *eks-tapol* and their children: the possibility of ideological differences, or of any kind of divergence caused by temporal distance, a different set of experiences, influences, or affiliations, or simple personal choice was denied. It is also significant that the staunchly leftist ideologies that Rini and Nuniek portray as the simplistic and outdated ways of “the older generation”—unsuited for the complexities of their generation—ceased to have any organizational referent in Indonesia after 1965. Rini and Nuniek were, in effect, rejecting an ideological commitment that had already long ago been forcibly repressed and defined by the state as synonymous with the worst kind of existential evil.

At one point in the conversation, Nuniek told me that her peers at Gadjah Mada University “don’t really care” (*tidak terlalu peduli*) about what happened in 1965-66, or about the “communist” taint that the New Order regime attached to the families of those arrested or killed. In other cases, this alleged apathy and “historical amnesia” on the part of young Indonesians has been seen as something to lament, something that would make these young Indonesians more susceptible to the state’s version of history. Interestingly, though, in Nuniek’s case she saw this “not knowing or caring” on the part of her student peers as a lack that could in fact be (politically) empowering and which could produce new possibilities, cleared of the obstructive biases of the past. The oft-lamented post-New Order “apathy” towards the history of 1965 was, here, interpreted as having a paradoxically political potential.

Conclusion

The examples I have provided in this chapter show that the discursive placements of “*anak PKI*,” attached to a past by virtue of family history, contain implications for the present-day society: the figure of the “*anak PKI*” is often associated with a particular anxiety (from a variety of political, social, and ideological positions) that a classification systems will go awry and that clearly defined categories (the complicit and the innocent, the communist and the non-communist) cannot be maintained. The “*anak PKI*” are demonstrably marginal figures, and yet they have been represented as having the potential to destabilize the country or allow it to move past its violent history. In post-New Order Indonesia, there is a certain investment in portraying stories of “1965” and its

victims as newly emergent. In fact, however, societal sympathies for “*anak PKI*” preceded the post-Suharto “straightening of history,” and these types of sympathies were not always seen as being discordant with New Order histories and ideology.

Epilogue

In early 2011 a spokesperson from Indonesian President Susilo Bambang Yudoyono’s Democrat Party caused a media stir as he entered a debate on whether or not the late President Suharto deserved to be recognized as a “national hero.” Ruhut Sitompol was sharply critical of the activists and political factions who had—successfully—opposed Suharto receiving this honor, claiming that “only *anak PKI* [communist children] would oppose Suharto being named a [national] hero.” Several of the activists who saw themselves as the targets of Sitompol’s accusations—led by M Chozin Aminullah, head of the *HMI* (*Himpunan Mahasiswa Islam*, or Muslim Students’ Association)¹⁵—responded by suing Sitompol for slander and defamation of character. (At the time of this writing, the case has not yet been resolved). Interviewed for a newspaper article, Aminullah explained the logic behind the lawsuit: “The damages are tied to Ruhut’s accusations and slander, that those who disagreed with Soeharto being named a hero are *anak PKI*. Even though none of us are *anak PKI*.” (*RakyatMerdekaOnline* 2011). As the trial commenced, one of the expert witnesses called to testify was the historian Asvi Warman Adam. Asvi’s testimony focused not upon the PKI as a past political entity, but on the dangerous power of the looser associations attached to “PKI” in the New Order and post-New Order eras: he is quoted as telling the

¹⁵ The HMI is one of the student organizations who, following the 1965 coup attempt, agitated for the ouster of President Sukarno and for the banning of the PKI. This history, one imagines, heightened the indignation and sense of absurdity felt by the activists at having the “*anak PKI*” label attached to them.

court that “The term ‘PKI’ is one of the coarsest words that can be directed at an individual or a group. ‘PKI’ can mean that one is a traitor to the nation, a prostitute, an infidel, or anti-God.” (*detik.com* 2011).

. The dynamics of this case reflect the fact that “*anak PKI*” is, in today’s Indonesia, a term that manages to simultaneously be considered an eye-rolling anachronism and a designation with potentially catastrophic social consequences.

Chapter Four: Religion, Rupture, and the Shaping of Identities Across Generations

The November 7, 2005 editions of the *Tempo Interaktif* and *SoloPos* newspapers reported on the case of Martono, a resident of the Central Javanese city of Solo (Surakarta) whose unique commemoration of the end of the Muslim fasting month-- *Idul Fitri*-- brought a swift response from authorities: Martono, a 70-year-old *eks-tapol*, hung a banner above his small shop. It featured the common *Idul Fitri* greeting “*Minal Aidin wal Faizin, Maaf Lahir dan Batin*,” (“Happy Returns, I ask for forgiveness within and without”) but this seemingly unremarkable sentiment was flagged on each side with a hammer-and-sickle symbol and the identification “*eks-tapol PKI*”. Police quickly came to confiscate the banner. Though 2005 was apparently the third year in a row in which Martono had hung this banner for the occasion of *Idul Fitri*, the police let him go with a warning. Speaking to the media, he gave a striking defense of his actions:

I am indeed an *eks-tapol PKI*, and what’s the harm in my celebrating and sending good wishes for *Idul Fitri*? Is an *eks-tapol* not allowed to send *Idul Fitri* greetings in the same way as others are?...I’m glad that, having been labeled an *eks-tapol* and detained and tortured for about 5 years, I’m still alive. This is what’s motivated me to hang this banner with the words “*eks-tapol*”. I want to live just like the general community. I’m not doing this as a sign of my pride in being an *eks-tapol*, but as a reminder to my children and grandchildren that there was cruelty in the past.... One’s assessment of another person should not be based solely on whether or not he is an *eks-tapol PKI*. Yes, it’s true that I’m an *eks-tapol PKI*, but I’m also a citizen [*warga*] who follows the laws. If others can celebrate and give *Idul Fitri* greetings, then so can I.” (*TEMPO* 2005)

Martono used this public display of the communist symbol not to signify an (outlawed) political identity, but rather to assert his belonging to a religious and national community, to publicly display his *eks-tapol* identity and to send an inexplicit warning to his children and grandchildren of the potential repeatability of the injustices inflicted upon him.

The articles seem to highlight the juxtaposition of his similarity to the mainstream (“in the same way as others are”) and the glaring “strangeness” of the hammer and sickle, and yet there is a very particular logic at work here that is, I suggest, not unique to this particular incident. The realm of religion—in this case, a very specific practice of offering *Idul Fitri* greetings to the community—became a place from within which the stigmatized “difference” of *eks-tapol* identity can be articulated. Furthermore, by Martono’s own explanation, the intended audience of this audacious display was not (as would seem to be the case) the government or his neighbors, but rather his own descendants. Martono’s asserted Muslim identity, rather than covering over or displacing his stigmatized political identity, by his own design served to highlight it. It also conveyed messages seemingly distinct from, but undergirded by, this profession of religious identity: conveying his history of imprisonment and stigmatization to his children. (We do not know if Martono had in the past conveyed this information to his children in other ways, yet his attempt to do so by means of the banner served to render public this intimate act). It would be a mistake, however, to describe his profession of a Muslim identity in purely instrumentalist terms, as a means to affirm a more “real” identity or affiliation; the compatibility of these different identities (Muslim and *eks-tapol*) and their simultaneity (i.e. one not preceding or causing the other) is part of what was being demonstrated.

One of the key components of anti-communist discourse in pre-New Order, New Order, and post-New Order Indonesia has been the equation of communism with atheism, and the accusation that Indonesian communists (real and accused) were enemies of religion. This automatic pairing of communism and atheism, which became hegemonic in New Order Indonesia, effaces a history that speaks otherwise: the coexistence (and overlap) of Islamic and leftist politics within the early 20th-century Sarekat Islam (one of the first mass political organizations in the Netherlands East Indies), and the involvement of a number of observant Muslims in the postcolonial Indonesian Communist Party.¹

There seems to be no single point of origin for this automatic assumption that Indonesian communists were atheists. Fealy and McGregor (2010: 51) attribute it to rising tension between the PKI and the *Nahdlatul Ulama or NU* (Indonesia's largest Islamic organization) starting in the 1940s originating in political and economic rivalries rather than in matters of religion and piety. They point out that, up until its 1965 demise, the PKI's position was that religion was a "personal choice," and that—while it opposed itself to certain specific religious leaders based upon their perceived exploitative economic practices—it never maligned Islam or any other religion as a whole. Lyon (1970: 60-62) argues that the conflict in the 1960s between the PKI and the NU—initially about class and land—took on a religious dimension because "religious symbols were the ones most available to the different sides of the conflict." The fact that many PKI supporters at the time were *abangan* ("nominal" or "syncretist") Muslims²—who many

¹ A couple of these "Communist Muslims" have put out memoirs (published by *Syarikat*) since the fall of Suharto, contesting the equation of communism and atheism. (Raid 2001; Moestahal 2002; see Budiawan 2004 and Watson 2006 for analyses of these autobiographies)

² The literal meaning of "Abangan" in Javanese is "red". Many Javanese peasants who were abangan Muslims affiliated with the PKI and its related organizations, and hence suffered mass persecution in 1965-66. See Hefner 2000: 230n; Geertz 1960; Beatty 1999.

more pious Muslims did not consider to be truly religious—furthered the sense by some in the *NU* that this conflict was one where Islam was opposed to atheistic communism.

After the G30S coup attempt unleashed a wave of anti-communist massacres across Java and Bali, the youth militia of the *NU* (*Banser*) was an active participant in the killings, particularly in East Java. Fealy and McGregor (2010: 57-58) argue that, while some current *NU*-affiliated groups (including *Syarikat*) maintain that *Banser* only participated in the massacres under compulsion from the Indonesian military, they in fact did so with the blessings of the *NU* leadership at the time.

When the anti-communist New Order came to power in 1966, a law was passed decreeing that all Indonesians were now required to belong to one of the five state-recognized religion: Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, Catholicism, and Protestantism (Pointedly excluded from this definition of religion were the nominally Muslim, “animistic” practices and beliefs of the *abangan*). The government also gave missionaries from all of the state-recognized religions permission to proselytize to those who were “still without a religion.” (Nugroho 2008: 4)

If religiosity (sometimes specifically Islamic, sometimes more generically “monotheistic”) is commonly presented as an essential feature of Indonesian identity and Indonesian nationalism (and a belief in “The One and Only God” is in fact the first principle of the official state ideology of Pancasila³), then accusations of “atheism” against those deemed not to have a religion were not only intended as commentaries upon

³ : The *Pancasila* national ideology establishes, through its first principle mandating “Belief in the One True God,” the fundamental—yet non-specific—religiosity of the Indonesian nation. This first principle was put forward as a compromise between the nationalist and the Islamic-based political parties at the moment of Indonesia’s independence. (An initial amendment to the 1945 Indonesian Constitution that would have obligated the enforcement of *sharia* law for all Indonesian Muslims was omitted in the final drafting of the constitution, to the dismay of some of the Muslim political parties who had supported it).

the fate of their souls but rather were intended to place them outside of the realm of civilization and nation, negating the possibility of their role as citizen or neighbor (Kipp and Rogers 1987; Ramstedt 2004).

The flipside to this was that, in a context of tremendous fear and personal and political instability, a newly-asserted/acquired religious identity could serve a redemptive and (re)integrative function, offering membership in imagined and actual communities that might override or elide earlier stigmatized (political) associations. Soon after the start of the anti-communist killings on Java, mass conversions to Christianity and Catholicism began by those seeking refuge from potentially fatal accusations of “atheism” and “communism.” Some of the converts were adherents of non-state-recognized religions and some were in fact, atheists. Yet many Javanese (including many Muslims) converted in reaction to the role that Muslim groups (the NU in particular) played in the killings of suspected “communists.” Many of those imprisoned after 1965 converted for similar reasons, and because they felt abused and humiliated at the hands of Muslim clergy in prison. Many political prisoners experienced Catholic and Protestant clergy as more sympathetic to their plight. (This ignored the fact that soon after the G30S coup attempt, some Christian groups had also taken part in anti-communist violence, and some Christian leaders had vigorously denounced the PKI) (Nugroho 2008).

In this chapter, I will examine the complex roles that religion (*agama*) and ideas of (the presence or absence of) religiosity (*keagamaan*) have played in the lives, positioning, and (self) representation of the *eks-tapol* and *anak korban* whom I encountered during my fieldwork. Much of the scholarship focusing upon the experiences and professions of religiosity on the part of survivors of the 1965-66 violence in

Indonesia describes grand processes of mass conversions instigated by state coercion, zealous clergy of various religious denominations, and large numbers of political prisoners and their families seeking safety and succor from state and societal repression (Hefner 1993; Nugroho 2008; Willis 1977). Indeed, Hefner (1993: 102) cautions against a view of conversion that treats it as an individual transformation, suggesting instead that we need to look at how it resituates the individual within specific social and political contexts. While Hefner's point is well taken, my conversations with *eks-tapol* and their family members demonstrated to me that we should also take seriously the ways in which they individuated their religious experiences and identities, the shifting nature of the communities with which they affiliated, and the ways in which they alternated between presenting their religious identity as a central fact of their subjectivity, and as something eminently changeable and/ or irrelevant to their social relations. Furthermore, we need to look at how these individuals talked about the *timing* of their assertions of (and changes in) their religious identities, the types of affiliations these assertions make possible or preclude, and the ways in which they see this identity as something connected to or external to their histories of imprisonment and subsequent marginalization. Finally, while keeping in mind that religious identity suggests membership in a distinct, bounded community with access and exposure to specific discourses, practices, and institutions, it should be noted that the *eks-tapol* and their family members live within religiously diverse families and communities, and self-consciously situated themselves within this terrain.

How did the (supposed) constancy of a religious affiliation—with its simultaneous entanglement in very specific social and political contexts and its

suggestion of an (ostensibly!) metasocial or metapolitical “spiritual” identity--come to be seen as important in a context of uncertain loyalties, ostracized populations, and the life-or-death nature of certain political identities? In a New Order context where *politik* was presented as almost inherently disruptive and divisive (and often conflated with “subversive” leftist politics), how was religion (*agama*) constructed as a realm that directed and disciplined social relations, but was (again, ostensibly!) the opposite of divisive *politik*? How did “religion” and religiosity function as signs of inclusion or exclusion for the *eks-tapol* and their families? How did religious affiliations mediate or complicate the movement of the *eks-tapols*’ experiences from “counter-memory” to public discourse that was underway during my period of research? Finally, how did these victims of New Order violence see the adoption or rejection of particular religious beliefs and practices as a kind of protection against further violence?

The ethnographic material for this chapter consists primarily of a number of interviews I conducted with *eks-tapol* and the children and grandchildren of *eks-tapol* living in the Jogjakarta area. I will also look at the intertwining of religious/Islamic themes and an ethos of reconciliation, rehabilitation, and sympathy towards the *eks-tapol* reflected in RUAS, the publication of the *Syarikat* organization (introduced in Chapter 1),.

Religiosity Past and Private: Pak Sumanto and Pak Joko:

In a context in which the religiosity of the accused PKI political prisoners was being called into question, or in which their religious identity was seen as being malleable in order to prove their rehabilitation, what was the significance of possessing

(or professing?) a consistent religious identity, long predating one's period of imprisonment?

In one of our earliest conversations, my neighbor Pak Sumanto stated his religious affiliation very matter-of-factly. Yet, as he did so, he laid out a definition of his religious identity that seemed to sever it from social relations even as he acknowledged it as a shared phenomenon:

I'm a Protestant Christian. Since before I was arrested I've been a Christian. Back then there wasn't a church [in this area], and so I went to the church in Gondokusuman... I usually went there in the evenings, when they had the Indonesian-language sermons. But as I said earlier, when it came to social matters, to hopes for the nation, I was more attracted to the communist model. More attracted, but I didn't really understand anything about it. [laughing]. Why was I more attracted [to communism]? Because of [the way in which it involved] working together [*kerja bakti*], mutual aid [*gotong royong*], and a high level of social awareness... But in matters of the spirit [*masalah keyakinan surga*], I was more inclined towards Protestantism. Because of that, when I was "inside" [prison], I also practiced Protestantism.

The distinction he made between been "social matters" and "spiritual matters" is a rejection of the dominant association made between communism and atheism, and seems to imply that religious and political identities form and operate independent of one another. Yet, Pak Sumanto also suggested a persistence of his Protestant religious identity from "outside" prison to "inside" prison following his arrest in 1965. As our conversation continued, it became clear that this constancy of religious identity in prison (which, he seems to suggest, was commonly brought in from "outside" rather than cultivated from within) creates its own basis of social relations within the confines of the prison: between the prisoners themselves (in the form of joint worship), and between them, the Indonesian government, and (foreign) clergy:

Now, a few years into my imprisonment, there was a change. A Catholic pastor was allowed to enter the prison. From that time onward, there was change, where

religious freedom was provided [*diberi*] by the government... So this pastor, maybe he was Dutch, I didn't know his name. Maybe the pastor saw the inhumane conditions we were living in. Maybe he did something, I don't really know. But there was a change. Maybe there was some kind of international pressure. But every Sunday the Christians and Catholics were allowed to worship. Every Friday the Muslims could pray. This was a change, where there was now freedom to worship. And there were many religiously observant [prisoners]. They had religious convictions [*keyakinan*] when it came to matters of heaven [*dalam hal surga*]. There were Christians, Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists, practitioners of *kebatinan* [Javanese mysticism]. But in matters relating to society [*kemasyarakatan*] they chose—*maybe* they chose—to affiliate with PKI. In societal matters: the shape that the nation should take.”

What most stands out in this narrative of Pak Sumanto's is the certitude with which he pinpointed his own and others' orientation towards “matters of heaven,” while simultaneously emphasizing the provisionality and speculative nature of identities and orientations relating to “matters of society.” (This includes a playfully self-deprecating assessment of the substance of his own political orientation towards the “communist model.”) We can see in this an inversion of the state's certitude in identifying “communists” as targets of imprisonment and killing and doubt regarding the accused communists' religiosity (and thus, their fitness to participate in Indonesian society).

We should also note the way in which Pak Sumanto's account began with his identification with a specific religious identity—Protestantism—yet quickly slipped into to a different sort of identification where various religious identities are equivalent and—in spite of their supposed detachment from “matters of society”—produce a common set of experiences for the multi-religious prison population of which he was a member.

Pak Joko (b. 1936, who we also encountered in Chapter 1) told a similar story of pre-1965 religiosity that has carried across to his contemporary experience as an *eks-*

tapol. Unlike Pak Sumanto's story, Pak Joko's involved a conversion, yet it is one predating and distinct from the mass conversion that occurred post-1965:

My father had a Dutch education. He was an intellectual, an engineer. My mother was Buginese; my father was Sundanese. I was educated at a school in Semarang that was established in order to bring progress to the "natives." I was born during the Dutch era, and Dutch was my first language. In my parents' view, Javanese was a "hick" language, and Islam was a "hick" religion. So they sent me to Catholic school, not because that was their [religious] conviction, but because from an intellectual perspective, they thought that the best schools were the Catholic schools. The Muslim schools were "hick" schools, and the public schools were "schools without shoes." The Catholic schools were the best, with shoes, uniforms, and all that...

My parents had a Western education, whereas Islam was a "native" religion, so... They called themselves Muslims, but in practice they never prayed. So I never heard anything about God [*Tuhan*] at home. I knew we were Muslim, but I didn't know what Islam was. I only began to know about God when I went to school....

... I was asked at school what religion I was, and I said I was Muslim. This created problems for me. They called me "Muhammad's kid." I cried, and told my parents about this. They gave me permission to convert to Catholicism. After I finished high school, they said "You don't need that religion anymore." They wanted me to convert back to Islam. I didn't want to, and they kicked me out of the house.

Joko's parents associated the institutions of Catholicism with modernity⁴, and thus enrolled him in Catholic school. They even allowed him to convert to Catholicism, with the understanding that it was an external (and reversible) change for the purposes of social integration, not representing a change in belief or subjectivity. When Pak Joko made it clear to them that he had converted in a "substantial" way, they effectively disowned him. In our conversation, Pak Joko did not give a full explanation as to why his parents—who, he insisted, were the most nominal of Muslims—should react so strongly

⁴ In light of recent important work highlighting the connections between religious conversion and a sense of the modern (Keane 2007; van der Veer 1996), it is worth noting that the draw of the institutions of the "modern" does not always include the expectation that one will fully commit to the identity associated with these institutions; hence the surprise and anger of Pak Joko's parents when his conversion turned out to be more "sincere" and interiorized than they had expected.

to his refusal to return to a Muslim identity. Yet, perhaps the following comment of Pak Joko's serves as an illumination of sorts: he was, in his decision to remain Catholic, insisting on a definition of religion very different from the one focused on outward forms that his parents adhered to:

...The way I see it now, religion is for our own personal benefit [*kepentingan diri sendiri*], not for influencing other people. Because, usually, if a person tries to influence another person through religion, they've got evil intent. So, religion is for one's own self. The way I translate my religion is through my deeds. I do good deeds in accordance with my religion. But religion is for oneself alone [*untuk pribadi*]. So I don't have to attend church. I don't attend church because someone orders me to, or to keep up a good appearance. I go to church because I want to.⁵

In a way very similar to Pak Sumanto above, Pak Joko insisted upon a definition of religion severed from social relations (despite the fact that his original motivation for conversion to Catholicism was in order to conform within a new social milieu). Yet, like Pak Sumanto's account of prison life, Pak Joko stressed that the religious identities that prisoners brought (in Pak Joko's case, to Buru Island) were significant insofar as they produced social practices that led to the blurring of religious boundaries or the commensurability of different religious identities:

When we were on Buru Island, when someone wanted to build a mosque, no one cared if [the builders] were Muslim, Protestant, or whatever. As long as they were able to do carpentry, they would help build the mosque. Together we'd build churches, build Buddhist temples, and so forth.

Like Pak Sumanto, Pak Joko made a sharp distinction between identities pertaining to "matters of heaven" and those pertaining to "matters of society." He explained the two as diverging not only in his pre-prison life or as a general phenomenon, but very specifically

⁵ Pak Joko's comment here contradicts what has been written by writer, journalist, and former Buru detainee Hersri Setiawan, "In prison and in the internment camp, religion was not at all a private matter relating to the obligation of human beings—if we may use the words rights and obligations—towards God in "the sky." Religion was more like a matter of obligation by the defeated to the victors, by the small to the great, by the weak to the powerful. This religion was called *politik*. And what people now refer to as "*politik*" was often pounded into the head of one's enemy in the name of "religion." (Setiawan 2003:49)

within what was (by the prisoners) considered to be acceptable discourse within the confines of Buru Island:

But we couldn't mix religion into our discussions about political organization and ideology... Trying to bring up religion there would have been a dead-end [*buntu*]. We needed to talk about dialectics, about history, about materialism. If someone had started talking like "yes, that's destiny [*nasib*]", or "yes, that's fate [*takdir*]", well, that would have been the end of the discussion. So, religion is for one's own self [*untuk diri sendiri*]. Just because we didn't discuss religion in those kinds of open forums doesn't mean that we're irreligious.

The sense that both Pak Sumanto and Pak Joko give is that the religiosity of *eks-tapol* is something that is autonomous from their political identities. If the state fails to recognize the religiosity of the *eks-tapol*, according to their logic, it is because of its irrelevance to the matters of society.

Food, Identity, Conversion: Pak Parman and Pak Yanto

The two accounts above demonstrate how a religious identity predating the tumult of 1965-66 could be used to articulate wider claims about the proper relationship between the religious and the social, and about how this division helped to structure prison life for the *tapol*. In moving now towards two accounts of conversion to Christianity that occurred in prison, I suggest that it is important to move beyond the conclusions of large-scale studies of the post-1965 religious conversions (Willis 1977; Hefner 1993; Nurgroho 2008) to look not only at individual accounts (rendered in retrospect) of how and why a particular conversion occurred, but also at the consequences or implication of the conversion as described (again, in retrospect) by the converted.

While it would be presumptuous to assert that the *eks-tapol* who converted during their period of imprisonment did not contend with questions of theology, belief, doctrine,

or practice, I found that such concerns were often downplayed or bracketed out of their accounts of their conversions (usually from Islam or “no religion” to Christianity or Catholicism).⁶ Instead, perhaps unsurprisingly given the hardships they endured, the rewards and punishments associated with belonging to a particular religious community were given a very concrete materiality in a number of the interviews I conducted with *eks-tapol*:

The first account is by Pak Parman. Born in Jogjakarta in 1939, he became involved in the *Pemuda Rakyat* organization in the early 1960s. He was arrested in 1965, and spent the next several years moving between prisons on Java, until in 1969 he was sent to Buru Island, where he spent the next ten years.

Our conversation turned towards matters of religion only when Pak Parman mentioned a pair of shoes that he had been given on the ship taking him back to Java from Buru Island, in 1979, and which he takes out occasionally only to wear to church. He continued, describing the process of his conversion:

I’m a [Protestant] Christian. I was baptized in 1972, once I was over there. Before that, I was Muslim... This is how it happened: I bunked with a Christian man, we were close. And he told me stories about the good-heartedness of Christians, he told me about this and that. And then at one point while I was there, I suffered from poisoning after cooking with fern leaves. I was poisoned and paralyzed. At the time, I didn’t believe that it was the fern leaf that had paralyzed me. When I wanted to sleep, I couldn’t even move my foot. So then a Javanese friend of mine from another unit gave me *jamu* [traditional medicine], gave me vitamins, and I recovered. I still didn’t believe that eating the fern was what had made me sick, so I ate it again and, wouldn’t you know it, it paralyzed me again. It was because of this incident that I became a Christian: I remembered the words of my acquaintance, and I asked Lord Jesus to help me. And in my sleep, I repeated these words, I asked ask for God’s help to cure my sickness. And then the next morning, hey, I could walk! It was strange that Lord Jesus could help me just like

⁶ Hefner (1993: 117) suggests that while a number of Javanese may have converted to Christianity for “political” (i.e. protective) reasons, without much knowledge or interest in beliefs and doctrine, the converts could change their views of their conversion as time passed, and their new religious identity could become a kind of “moral mission.”

that, and I became a Christian, that's what I told people. I joined in the catechism. I became Christian, from when I was baptized in 1972 up til now.

Pak Parman described his conversion as stemming from personal acquaintance with other prisoners and from individual hardship, rather than as something encouraged or coerced by religious or state officials. Yet, the repetition in his conversion story is striking: his second recovery (from divine intervention) came after a (seemingly equally effective) cure through non-divine medicinal means. Although this was unspoken in Pak Panut's narrative, it seems that divine intervention became important and necessary only when the desperation of being a prisoner led to a disbelief in the harmful nature of the plant, and to repetition.

Pak Parman located the impetus for his conversion to a very specific moment of his imprisonment, yet it is notable how he circumscribed this new religious identity on the "outside" once he returns home from Buru. In describing to me the institutional assistance that he received from the church, he separated it from the circumstances that caused him to convert in the first place:

The Church helped me out, not because I'm an *eks-tapol*, but because I was impoverished [*tidak mampu*]. [My son] got help from the Church for his schooling, and so did his younger sister. There's no connection with my being an "ex." It's just because of our economic situation, nothing to do with politics. Probably the Church wouldn't have been willing [to help] if we'd been playing politics.

Although he presented his conversion as one that ultimately structured his family's religious identity, he suggested an alternative scenario where it could have remained an individual choice:

My wife also used to be Muslim. When we married, I had become a Christian, and she was still Muslim. So I said to her, "do you want to stay a Muslim, or to join me [in converting]? If you want to stay Muslim, I'll buy you prayer equipment [*perangkat sholat*] and all of that, but if you want to convert to

Christianity... It's all up to you, I won't force you." And my wife joined the catechism, and was baptized, I forget the year. So our family, we're all Christian.

The next account of the concrete materiality of prison conversion is from Pak Yanto, a Jogjakarta resident born in 1947 (currently making his living as a *becak* driver) who had been arrested in 1965 for his involvement in the youth organization IPPI (*Ikatan Pemuda Pelajar Indonesia*, or Union of Young Indonesian Secondary School Students) and imprisoned for a total of thirteen years first at Wirogunan prison and then on the penal colony on Buru Island. In the middle of telling his story of his imprisonment, he launched into a story that prefaced the explanation of his conversion from Islam to Catholicism: while at Wirogunan, on the occasion of Idul Fitri, and number of the prisoners were given *gaplek* (dried cassava) that had been poisoned with pesticide. While no one died from the poisoning, a number of prisoners were made severely ill. Pak Yanto then immediately contrasted this to the decidedly non-poisonous food that the prisoners received on Christmas and Easter: a basket of rice with *krupuk* (shrimp crackers) and chicken. There is an imbalance in the attribution of agency in this account: Pak Yanto evaded mention of who he suspected of poisoning the *gaplek*, but was quick to reply that the special foods they received for Christmas and Easter came from "the church".

Between one religion and the next there's only one Allah. Allah is supreme, right? Supremely good... You [presumably addressing here the unnamed party who poisoned the *gaplek*] study about Allah but hey, then you want to kill me. But then there's those there who spoke of what's known as love and sympathy.... The form it took was the little basket of rice. There was a little rice, and a little meat too. And powdered milk, just a little bit. This was already getting my attention... It was just a little thing. These people know Allah, right? And those people also know Allah. One of them wants to kill, and the other wants to revive. This is a contradiction, right? This means that Allah is contradictory, that's what it is. One Allah is in competition with the other. Now, this automatically makes a person stop and think... I chose the one that had given us rice. And had given us milk.

That's true love and sympathy. This is truly, truly, a God who loves His followers.

This seemed to be Pak Yanto's attempt to reconcile a Pancasila-ist ecumenism that allowed him to respect a variety of religious traditions with the lived experience that (he felt) forced him into a position of choosing, and of seeing one religious community as protective and the other as malevolent.

The Religious, The Political, and the Social: Pak Roni and Pak Hari:

In this section, I turn to two examples that contrast with the insistence of Pak Sumanto and Pak Joko above that “the religious” is a personal concern with completely different ends than one's political affiliations. Here I present two individuals—one the son of an *eks-tapol*, the other an elderly *eks-tapol*—who depicted their religiosity as a starting point for their political activities and sensibilities; they did so in ways that were closely connected to the violence of 1965-66, and yet they established origins for these current actions and sensibilities which are quite distinct from their past.

Pak Roni was born in 1957 in the Central Javanese city of Semarang. His father was the head of the local branch of the leftist PGRI (*Persatuan Guru Republik Indonesia*, or the Indonesian Teacher's Union); he was arrested in 1965 and spent the next thirteen years in prison, first at Ambarawa Prison and later on Buru Island. As the son of a political prisoner, Pak Roni was able to avoid some forms of discrimination and ostracism by presenting himself as his maternal grandfather's child. Yet the teasing he experienced in school led Pak Roni—who was raised Muslim—to decide to convert to Catholicism:

Starting in junior high school, I myself chose [to convert to] Catholicism. I saw... well, my friends, the kids in my *kampung*, were all Muslim. But I saw that they were always saying “*anak PKI, PKI, PKI, PKI.*” Well, then, at some point I met a pastor. I saw that he was a good person. I entered the Catholic junior high school. Only I and one of my siblings (10 years younger) converted to Catholicism. The rest remained Muslim.

I asked Pak Roni to talk about the ways in which Catholic organizations in Indonesia were helpful to former political prisoners and their families. He qualified his answer:

In general, yes. But there were two...really, there were two methods: the Catholics, usually they helped out, *it's ok*. Helping, and that was that. But for the Protestants [*Kristen*], it was different: you had to convert [*masuk*] [in order to receive assistance]. Their reasoning was that it was easier to keep track of the support—and to keep control—if the person converted. But that wasn't the case for the Catholics. [Their attitude was]: “Go ahead. Join us or don't join us, either is fine.

I mentioned that I had heard other stories of how many political prisoners and their families had become Catholic because they had felt “protected” (*dilindungi*) by the Church. He corrects me: “Oh, it wasn't a matter of protection back then. It was a matter of being provided with food... It wasn't a political matter.

Yet despite this claim of Pak Roni's, the Catholic church (rather than his family background) became the basis for his social and political activism. He went to university at Gadjah Mada University in Jogjakarta starting in 1977, and didn't have trouble getting in because he presented himself as his maternal grandfather's child. At Gadjah Mada University, he became a student activist, and studied political science. He also did activism with the church, with priests “helping the underprivileged” in the slums near the Code River.. In his early twenties, Pak Roni obtained a job working overseas in the Philippines for the International Catholic Organization (ICO). When he sought a passport to go abroad, he didn't reveal that that he was the son of an *eks-tapol*. The Catholic Church covered for him, stating that he was going abroad to study to be a pastor. As Pak

Roni puts it, “As an activist, I was working under the Church. I used the name of an activist from Jogja, an address from Jakarta, the name of my grandfather. I escaped! Safely.” (Pak Roni later received his MA in Economics in the Philippines)

Pak Hari was born in Surabaya, East Java, in 1928. His father, a train repairman, moved the family to Jogjakarta when Hari was still very young. Pak Hari claimed to have been active as a Boy Scout in the Indonesian Revolution (though he was vague on his specific activities). In the early 1960s, Hari received a degree in Education from Gadjah Mada University. He told me that although he felt “sympathy” towards leftist professors at the time, he himself was not involved in leftist politics. Soon after the 1965 coup attempt, he was arrested, not, he maintained, for any kind of political activities, but because someone else at his school turned him in in order to save themselves. He spent the next nine years in Wirogunan prison. He told me of how prison altered his religious convictions, and led to his decision to convert to Catholicism. At the time of his arrest in 1965, he was “Islam *abangan*.” (He claimed that at the time, religion was a “private” matter; he explained the essence of *Islam abangan* as “don’t perform negative actions; there is no [holy] book, but you have to have good conduct [*berbuat baik*]. “

Pak Hari then explained what led him to convert to Catholicism in prison, and how this structured his life once he left prison in 1974:

During my fourth year in prison, there began to be religious studies permitted: ‘Come on! On Fridays, those who are Muslim should come to pray!’ I joined in, but what happened when I got there? The religious teacher (*ustad*) chewed us out: ‘You’re PKI, blahblahblah!’ What was that about? So I said goodbye. We were downtrodden people, and when we came to pray, we were being accused. So I went over to a Catholic pastor, and that was a very different experience.

The attitude of the Catholic clergy was very different! They were very gentle. They would say ‘Only God knows why you ended up here in prison. Don’t harbor feelings of revenge. Have a patient attitude... Wanting revenge will be self-destructive for you.’ So, Islam[ic leaders] were harsh, oppositional... For three years, I was given the Bible by the Catholic clergy. I read it. And I was baptized. There was no compulsion. When I got out of prison, I wanted to internalize [*mendalami*] what I’d learned. I took [religious] courses for two years, and then the pastor asked me if I wanted to be a religious teacher.

Yet Pak Hari described his version of Catholicism as significantly different than the “real” [*sungguhan*] version practiced by his non-*eks-tapol* friends:

I chose to follow Catholic teachings, and now I’m active in the Church. But maybe I’m different than “real” Catholics. If I’m discussing issues of faith [*iman*] with friends who are pro-clergy [*pro-diakon*], they tend more towards the abstract, while I’m more concrete... Mainly, in approaching situations through the perspective of the Bible, they’re just like “Let’s pray. Let’s pray for this.” Not me. Besides praying, I’m thinking about how we can change society, so that we don’t have to be victims for too much longer...

As I see it, the church community is a place for me to socialize [*mensosialisasikan*] unconventional ideas. If we’re just plain Catholics, the result is going to be that we’re just supplicants, without any concern for the outside situation, which is actually quite dangerous.

The examples provided by Pak Hari and Pak Roni demonstrate the way in which certain converts subverted the “political neutering” effects of religious conversion as intended by the New Order government. Rather than presenting religion as a realm distinct from politics (as we have seen in the cases of Pak Sumanto and Pak Joko), the two examples above suggest the ways in which religiosity can generate its own politics.

Pak Roni and Bu Sri: Religion, Family, Community

Many converts came home to, started, or became part of families (or communities) that were religiously plural. The next example, again from Pak Roni,

shows how religious differences within an *eks-tapol* family could help to determine who could be told what about a parents' past imprisonment. Raised Muslim, Pak Roni's eventual decision to convert to Catholicism (unlike the majority of his siblings) gave him and his children (raised Catholic) privileged access to stories of his *eks-tapol* father's past. When I asked Pak Roni if his father talks to his grandchildren about politics and about his experiences as an *eks-tapol*, Pak Roni replied:

Not all of them. Because some of them are Muslim... Among my siblings, some of them are Muslim. There are people in my family who are [*long pause*] orthodox, you know? They married people who are orthodox. My father sometime talks to my children, and there's no problem. But he doesn't talk to some of his other grandchildren, even though they know that their grandfather was PKI.

However, in other cases, the practice of religious ritual could mute or soothe the family and community (religious) divisions produced out of the 1965-66 violence. We see this in the case of Bu Sri, who was in her early 60s when I interviewed her in 2006. She grew up in Jogjakarta, and in the early 1960s was active in the leftist arts organization *Lekra*. Her mother was a member of the leftist women's organization *Gerwani*, yet Bu Sri downplayed her mother's politics, depicting her as a socialite and a gracious hostess who opened their house to such prominent figures as DN Aidit, the head of the PKI. Both Bu Sri and her mother were arrested and imprisoned in 1965; Bu Sri spent five years in prison, her mother an unspecified longer amount of time than that. During her and her mother's imprisonment, some of Bu Sri's younger siblings were sent to Jakarta to live with a foster family who happened to be Muslim, and these siblings converted to Islam during this time. Bu Sri and her parents were adherents of Protestant Christianity. (In our conversation, she was vague as to whether her family was Protestant prior to their arrests, or whether they subsequently converted.)

Bu Sri's mother died three years prior to our 2006 conversation. She describes to me the ceremony marking the 1000th day since her death that was held shortly before our interview. She presents it as an event that demonstrated the continued community respect for her mother, but also as one that brought together through intertwining religious commemorations those who had been divided by the violence of 1965:

It's been a thousand days since my mother died. I and my husband are Christian, my mother and father were Christian. My younger siblings are Muslim, so they carried out the [thousand day] commemoration. Christians don't have to commemorate these particular anniversaries, but rather just remember. I remembered my mother, but didn't commemorate the anniversary of her death. So on that first day, when they recited the *tahlilan* [Islamic confession of faith], many people attended along with my younger siblings. They all know that I'm Christian, but they and the Muslim neighbors all came for the *tahlilan*. And then on the second day, there was prayer [*sembahyangan*], and many people were there. So things were good between us, there were no problems. When my mother died, we didn't cover her with a [Muslim] burial shroud, and people were okay with that."

Religion, Marginality, and the Nation: Mas Eko and Pak Bari

My next set of examples involves two children of *eks-tapol* who framed their own religious identities within the wider constellation of Indonesian nationalism, both referencing and moving beyond their own stigmatized identities:

Mas Eko, introduced in Chapter 3, was born in 1981; he is a practicing Muslim, the son of an *eks-tapol*, and one of the founders of the *Fopperham* organization; he makes a living running a motorcycle repair shop started by his father. In one of our many conversations, Eko described at length his views on Islam:

For instance, I'm a Muslim. But, you see.... Islam in Indonesia is old-fashioned and conservative (*kolot*). The version of Islam, the version of history, that we get is that of the government. But, my perspective is: the world is changing, and we have to adapt. Why did my father give me those books? To be references for me,

so that I could be broad-minded. We know about Islam, and I've also got the Christian Bible, I've got it. I've read Marx. I've got Mao Ze Dong's books, which I've also read. In order to be broad-minded. Why did *Bung* Karno come up with the idea of *Nasakom*⁷? Why wasn't he just concerned with Islam, since he himself was a Muslim? Because he was able to see what Indonesia is: there are Muslims, there are Christians, there are nationalists, there are those who have no religion, there are atheists, there are communists. But all this time, there are ignorant members of our society [*masyarakat awam*] who can't distinguish between atheists and communists. The problem is indoctrination from the government, that for 32 years we were indoctrinated with false history.

Mas Eko, very much the bibliophile (see Chapter 3) articulated a vision of a combined Indonesian political and religious space where the sacred texts (one prerequisite for a belief system to be recognized as a "religion" by the Indonesian state) would have to make space for the works of Marx and Mao.

Eko continued:

Here's the problem: I'm really disappointed with Muslim organizations, because many of them act like they're blind, blind about history. Many of them are unwilling... Maybe NU [the Nahdlatul Ulama] is the only one of them that wants to uncover history... In Indonesia, you know, there's still suspicion, still conflict between Indonesians. Actually, if we *flashback* through Indonesian history, [we see that] the PKI isn't the only organization that has rebelled. The Darul Islam/Tentara Islam Indonesia⁸ movement has also revolted, and nowadays the Free Aceh Movement⁹ has rebelled. These [groups] are all Muslim, so why don't people say "Oh, the Indonesian Muslims are all rebels"? Because this is narrow, conservative thinking. If we say that certain PKI members were implicated [*terlibat*], then the focus should be just on those people; everyone in Indonesia shouldn't be muzzled. So if the Free Aceh Movement rebels, those involved will be the ones who are arrested... There's no way that Muslims in Jogja will be

⁷ *Nasakom* is a political formula of Sukarno's from the late 1950s and early 1960s, in which he sought to demonstrate the congruence of Nationalism (*Nasionalisme*), Religion (*Agama*), and Communism (*Komunisme*). The concept quickly slipped out of political discourse following the elimination of the PKI and the rise of the New Order. Since 1998, I have heard renewed interest in the term from several leftist activists of various (or no) religious persuasion, but the term is by and large treated as a historic relic of the early 1960s.

⁸ The Darul Islam movement was West Java-based rebellion led by Sekar Madji Kartosuwiryo, which rejected the authority of the Indonesian government and attempted to set up an Islamic state. The rebellion began in 1947, and continued through 1962. When Kartosuwiryo was arrested and executed.

⁹ The Free Aceh Movement had been fighting since the 1970s for independence for the Indonesian province of Aceh in North Sumatra. The conflict between the Indonesian military and the Free Aceh Movement ended with a peace treaty signed in 2005, after the Indian Ocean tsunami devastated Aceh.

arrested. When the Darul Islam revolted in the 1950s, the organization was broken up. There were Muslims involved, but Sukarno didn't outlaw the "ism" or the ideology... We have to think clearly here, and make a distinction between the organization and the ideology."

Mas Eko's criticism of Muslim groups in Indonesia here is two-fold: that they're "blind" about history, and that they've *acted* in history. He stresses the need to extricate identity from particular historical acts (and the fact that this can be done is what allows him to be both a practicing Muslim and a practitioner of leftist ideas)

Pak Bari was born in 1947 in Panggang Wetan village in West Java. His father was active in the local branch of the Indonesian Peasants' Front *Barisan Tani Indonesia* (BTI), and was imprisoned for five years. In 1965, Pak Bari was a student at a technical high school; he was "detained" and interrogated "like all of the youth there," but was released after fifteen days.

Pak Bari informed me (without giving specifics) of how he was ostracized as the child of an *eks-tapol*, and how his societal marginalization resulted in spiritual developments that both brought him into line with Indonesian Pancasila ecumenism, and enabled him to reject the religious institutions that he saw as contributing to his marginalization:

I used to daydream that I would be president someday. Those hopes... those hopes could reach as high as the sky.... And things felt good during that time. But then, yeah, it's history, history. We had to wrestle with that, had to engage in a mighty struggle, and ended up as exiles [*manusia buangan*]. We felt forced into a corner, sidelined by society. But despite all of that, we experienced the greatest sort of happiness. Due to our having been marginalized, we didn't participate in social activities. So, hey, I thought to myself, I was friends with God, but not friends with humanity. [*jadi teman saya itu Tuhan, bukan temannya manusia*].

I put my faith in God Almighty, the one found in Pancasila. Am I wrong to do this? When I ask the faithful [*orang-orang beragama*], they have no answer for me. What is the name of this country's God? [*Siapa nama tuhan bangsa ini?*]. His name is Allah... That's God for Muslims. For Catholics, it's Jesus, for Hindus it's Hyang Widi, and for Buddhists it's the Buddha. But I want to ask: what's the name of the God of the Indonesian nation? The answer is Allah who is All... Actually, the answer is The Almighty, who is officially stamped [*tertera*] on Pancasila, the basis of our nation. It's true, isn't it?....Tell me where you can find a religious person who can answer [my question].

When I asked Pak Bari, whose wife and children are Catholic, if he ever participated in church activities or services, he looked disgusted, and grunted "I have no desire to." He joked that church worshippers must think that "God is hard of hearing... because they use a microphone to speak to God."

Pak Bari's notions of spirituality and relationship with the divine place him within the mainstream of Javanese mysticism [*kebatinan*] movements, which stress a direct experience of the divine unencumbered by formal religious institutions (Stange 1986; Picard & Madinier 2011). What is notable in Pak Bari's narrative is how he connected these spiritual tenets so closely with his personal family history, and used this combination to form an indictment of what he sees to be the false religiosity of the majority of Indonesians. While the "God of Pancasila" could be seen as emblematic of the coercive religious policies of the New Order, Pak Bari appropriated this (transcendent, but still distinctly national) manifestation of the Divine and claimed almost exclusive access, over and above those Indonesians who consider themselves pious.

Advocacy and *Agama*

As mentioned earlier, although Catholic and Christian institutions (whatever their motivations) were perceived by the *eks-tapol* as being sympathetic to their plight and

welfare, many *eks-tapol* described Islamic organizations as more prone to affix to them the label of atheistic, communist enemies of the nation, resulting in treatment that ranged from indifference to their welfare to hostility and ostracism to outright physical violence. The organization *Syarikat* was founded in 2001 by young activists from the *Nahdlatul Ulama* (some of whose parents or grandparents had been active in the Banser militia which took an active role in the 1965-66 massacre of suspected communists) in a conscious attempt to offer an alternative to this antagonistic relationship. Suddenly, an organization with bona fide “Islamic” roots was advocating for the *eks-tapol* population and promoting reconciliation and their full reintegration into Indonesian society. The members of *Syarikat* considered themselves to be both heirs to the violent acts of previous generations of *Nahdlatul Ulama* youth and espousers of a liberal and tolerant Islamic humanism. Guided by this ethic, they sought to make amends, bring histories of violence to light, and begin to heal the social and political rifts that had divided Indonesian society for decades (Budiawan 2004: 172-178; McGregor 2009).

In doing so—and I believe that this is key to understanding the contradictions and ambiguities surrounding the attempted “reintegration” of the *eks-tapol* into Indonesian society and Indonesian historical narratives—*Syarikat* has grounded its own motivations in a Islamic-based ethics, but has taken a shifting and at times agnostic approach to the question of the religious convictions/identities of the *eks-tapol* for whom it is advocating. In *RUAS*, the bi-monthly publication that is meant to be the “public face” of *Syarikat*, a number of short articles describe the lives and tribulations of various *eks-tapol*. The tone of the writing is overwhelmingly sympathetic, intent on showing the *eks-tapol*—despite what he or she suffered in the past—enmeshed in kin and communal relations. At times

these articles directly reference the religious identities of their subjects—showing men and women in Islamic garb, entitling articles “The Convictions of a Muslim *Gerwani*¹⁰ Member” or “The Testimony of a Christian”. The argument here is, in essence, that one can be on the political left (or an *eks-tapol*, since the two are not always one and the same) and still be a deeply religious Indonesian (and possess a deeply rooted religiosity, rather than being a new or recent convert.). Yet, taking a more extensive look at the material in *RUAS*, one comes away with the impression that this kind of information may simply be one variety of biographical data provided along with others having nothing to do with religious affiliation. Other articles in *RUAS* define (and humanize) their subjects through descriptions of their families and their professions, for instance. It seems, then, that while the writers of *RUAS* are countering the automatic association of leftist politics with hostility to religion, they are not making a sweeping counter-claim: either that a majority of the *eks-tapol* are deeply religious, or that being considered “fully Indonesian” should not be contingent upon the embrace of a theistic worldview within the parameters of Indonesian state guidelines. In a context where atheism/ unbelief is still seen by many as completely incompatible with Indonesian identity/ citizenship, this type of characterization still leaves the *eks-tapol* in an ambiguous place even as it seeks to “reintegrate” them.

¹⁰ *Gerwani*, short for *Gerakan Wanita Indonesia* (Indonesian Women’s Movement) was a leftist women’s organization in the 1950s and early 1960s. Following the killing of 6 Indonesian generals in the attempted coup of 1965, lurid stories—since proven to be patently false—emerged of *Gerwani* members as licentious and sadistic communist women who sexually humiliated and tortured the generals before they were killed. *Gerwani* (along with all other left-leaning organizations) was banned in 1966, and many of its members were imprisoned or killed.

Chapter Five: “Moments of Proximity”: The Politics and Histories of Accountability

In the aftermath of the fall of Suharto’s New Order regime in 1998, Indonesians of various ideological orientations who had come together under the banner of *Reformasi* heralded the emergence of a new Indonesian “civil society” (*masyarakat madani*) that would—among other things-- hold the Indonesian state accountable in ways it had not been during the Suharto dictatorship: new democratic policies would be put into place, the Indonesian military’s role in politics would be phased out, and endemic “corruption, collusion, and nepotism” would be swept away. This expectation of a new type of state accountability, oriented toward the present and future conduct of the Indonesian state, overshadowed—and, to a certain degree, muted—demands for the Indonesian government to be held accountable for *past* human rights abuses and acts of violence. Furthermore, even some of the most vocal supporters of holding the Indonesian state to a new standard of accountability for its present and future conduct were not necessarily proponents of calling on the government to account for its past (mis)deeds. In some of these cases, the past conduct of the Indonesian government was justified as a necessary (if regrettable) response to the perceived threats of communist subversion, religious extremism, or national disintegration.¹ Others explained that, even though Indonesia’s past was marked by atrocity and violence, it was outside of the purview of the state, a consequence of ethnic, religious, or political tensions among the Indonesian *masyarakat*

¹ For an early New Order expression of the idea that the violence of 1965-66 was regrettable but necessary, see Usamah 1969.

(society) to which the government had merely been a passive bystander.² The end of the Suharto regime also produced confusion as to whether the post-Suharto state was an extension of the New Order state, the manifestation of a continuous identity, or a new entity not to be held accountable for the actions of the New Order state.

When I began my fieldwork in Central Java in 2005, seven years after the fall of Suharto, it became clear to me that a change had begun at the discursive level in terms of ideas about the relationship between state culpability and coming to terms with the (violent) Indonesian past. In newspaper editorials, as well as in progressive and academic circles, there were frequent calls for *pelurusan sejarah*, or “the straightening of history.” Public seminars, performances, and exhibitions also provided opportunities for the past victims of state violence to share their experiences, and to call upon the state to acknowledge their suffering and provide restitution.³

This kind of discursive opening did not translate into action on the part of the Indonesian state in accepting responsibility for past violence. There were, however, moments in which victims of New Order violence achieved a proximity to the Indonesian state that would have been unthinkable prior to the fall of Suharto. I am using the term “proximity” in this chapter to suggest a sense of closeness operating on multiple levels: 1) a physical proximity where *eks-tapol* and their families travel to Jakarta from destinations throughout Java (and the archipelago) to encounter symbols and agents of

² In a 1971 speech, Suharto stated that “Thousand fell victim in the provinces because the people acted on their own, and because of nasty prejudices between social groups that had been nurtured for years by very narrow political practices.” (quoted in Roosa 2006: 24)

³ For example, in December 2004, just prior to the beginning of my fieldwork in Jogjakarta, *Fopperham* organized a public exhibit of photographs from Buru Island (consisting largely of photos contributed from the personal collections of *Fopperham* members). A similar exhibit in April 2006 sponsored by the group *Syarikat* featured photos taken in the 1960s and 70s at the Plantungan women’s prison in Central Java; a number of the women featured in the photographs were present at the opening of the exhibition to describe their experiences to an audience consisting mostly of university and high school students.

state power (e.g. the courtroom, and the Presidential Palace as a site of protest) in ways significantly different from how they experienced state power during their years of incarceration and subsequent social/political marginalization); 2) a political/symbolic proximity wherein the state (in the personified forms of its presidents) could be constructed in unprecedented ways as audience, as interlocutor, and as accused.

In this chapter, I will examine one such “moment of proximity” that took place from April through September 2005: the class-action lawsuit brought by Indonesian *eks-tapol* (former political prisoners) imprisoned for years under the Suharto regime for their alleged “communist activities”, against Suharto as well as the four heads of state who had served since he stepped down (BJ Habibie, Abdurrahman Wahid, Megawati Sukarnoputri, and the current president Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono). In their lawsuit, assisted by the advocate group *Lembaga Bantuan Hukum* (Legal Aid Foundation)⁴, the *eks-tapol* made the following demands of the Indonesian state: a full restoration of their civil and political rights⁵, the “rehabilitation” of their good names, an apology from the government to be issued through national media, and monetary compensation for their past suffering at the hands of the state (*Kompas* 2005; *TEMPO* 2005b)

The *Lembaga Bantuan Hukum*’s document detailing the class-action lawsuit lists seven categories of *eks-tapol* plaintiffs who were bringing the lawsuit against the heads of state: 1) those who lost or were forced out of their jobs post-1965 because of their alleged affiliation with the PKI; 2) those who had been civil servants in 1965, and have yet to

⁴ For the history of this legal aid organization, see Lev 2000a.

⁵ At the time of my 2005-2007 fieldwork, some of the more odious restrictions on *eks-tapol* (such as the mandatory *santiaji* indoctrinations they had to attend, and the prohibition against them or their descendants becoming legislative candidates) had been lifted. Yet many of them still faced restrictions upon their freedom of movement (e.g. needing special permission in order to change residences) and their employment.

receive their civil servant pensions because of their *eks-tapol* status; 3) those who were deemed guilty by association to the PKI (“*tidak bersih lingkungan,*” or “from an unclean environment”), which was the basis for much of the discrimination against children and other relatives of *eks-tapol*; 4) veterans of the Indonesian revolution who did not receive their veteran’s benefits because of their *eks-tapol* status; 5) those whose land, homes, or property were destroyed or seized by the military; 6) those who were unable to continue their education after being accused of (directly or indirectly) being affiliated with the PKI; 7) writers and artists whose creative work was curtailed, banned, or destroyed post-1965 (this group of plaintiffs included the writer Pramoedya Ananta Toer⁶). Suharto is accused of planning, implementing, and keeping in place the system of imprisonment, discrimination, and stigmatization experienced by the *eks-tapol* during the New Order. The four post-Suharto heads of state are essentially accused of malign neglect: carrying on the policies of the New Order state through lack of concerted effort to “rehabilitate” the *eks-tapol*. Notably, very little mention is made in the document of the army-directed 1965-66 killing of up to three million alleged PKI members and affiliates; the focus of the lawsuit is very much on lives disrupted and ruined—reaching up to the present day—rather than on lives lost. In doing so, the document (and the lawsuit) refuses a sort of closure that would question the relevance of the 1960s for present-day Indonesia, and would make no claims upon the post-New Order state for the deeds of the state in the Suharto era.

⁶ This was not Pramoedya’s first attempt to seek redress from the Indonesian courts: in the mid-1990s he and his wife (along with the widow of another *eks-tapol*) fought (unsuccessfully) for the return of their houses, which had been confiscated and occupied by the military following their detention in 1965. See *Forum Keadilan* 1996.

I attended the final session of this court case at the Central Jakarta District Court (*Pengadilan Negeri*) on September 14, 2005, in a courtroom packed with elderly *eks-tapol* and their younger family members and supporters. With the speeches and slogans of anti-communist demonstrators (consisting largely of teenagers demonstrating under the banners of groups such as the *Front Pembela Islam* (Islamic Defender's Front) and the *Front Anti Komunis Nasional* (National Anti-Communist Front) audible from the street outside of the courthouse, the committee of judges dismissed the *eks-tapol* case against the current and former presidents, arguing that their court did not have the authority to handle such a case.

Given the notorious corruption of the Indonesian justice system, the *eks-tapols'* decades-long socio-political marginalization, and the political and legal protections possessed by the current and former heads of state, the *eks-tapols* faced daunting obstacles from the beginning. It would be extremely presumptuous of me to say that all of the *eks-tapol* involved in this court case entered into it with full knowledge that it was going to go nowhere, and without any real hope that their concrete demands for accountability and reparation from the Indonesian state would be fulfilled. While many did recognize (and acknowledge) the quixotic nature of what they were attempting to do, it was also clear from my observations that the case was invested with great symbolic importance, and struck deep emotional chords on both sides: the exhausted and anxious former political prisoners (many of them elderly) who filled the courtroom, and the (mostly pre-adolescent and adolescent) participants in the "anti-communist" rally outside of the courtroom. What was the nature of the powerful symbolism with which this court case (and the "anti-communist" protests against it) was invested, seemingly out of

proportion in terms of 1) the “danger” posed by a group of aging former political prisoners, and 2) a cause that—at least in the short term—had very little chance of succeeding?

I argue that we can gain insight into contemporary (Indonesian) debates on the agency/culpability of the state, the agency/actions of victims of state violence, and the politics of “invoking history” (extending notions of guilt and complicity backward or forward in time) by looking at the dynamics of this particular court case *apart from* questions of formal legal success or failure; that is, the actions and statements of the *eks-tapol*s as well as those of their declared opponents can be seen as performative, attempting to bring into being or buttress certain representations of both the Indonesian state and its victims against the backdrop of the court case against the current and former Indonesian presidents. The ways in which the *eks-tapol* attempted to personalize the state by means of the class action lawsuit are reminiscent of other “personifications” of state violence I encountered in the *eks-tapol* community in Jogjakarta: for instance, viewing the violence of 1965-66 exclusively through the prism of Suharto’s machinations. There is also a tendency among both *eks-tapol* and advocacy groups such as Syarikat and Fopperham to focus on executive accountability for the 1965 violence as a way to downplay the larger, social, collective nature of the violence (See Chapter 6). What is novel about this court case, I argue, is the way in which it became for the *eks-tapol* a hoped-for spatial and temporal compression of (personalized) state identity within the synchronic context of the courtroom. As I argue below, the idea of the continuous identity (and complicity) of the state becomes for the *eks-tapol* a mirror image to the continuous discrimination experienced across generations of *eks-tapol* families.

Using this court case as my starting point, I explore the question of how the *eks-tapol*, their families, and their opponents viewed and represented the Indonesian state. How did they experience and imagine its capacity to inflict violence and mark them as “separate”? What forms of authority did they believe the Indonesian state could exercise in “rehabilitating” them and in owning up to its own past culpability? What new role did they expect that the state would take on?⁷

On the one hand, the experience of those involved in and attending this court case can be seen as a point on a continuum, part of much longer histories of violence and struggles over contested historical memory. On the other hand, I believe it is also useful to see it as an exceptional moment, a time and space set apart where new possibilities and publics were imagined. As I will argue below, this involved three sets of relationships that were (and continue to be) still in flux: 1) the relationship of the *eks-tapol* to the state, and the conflict within that relationship between the state as a personalized and historicized entity, and as a faceless, bureaucratic, rationalized body; 2) the relationship of the *eks-tapol* to an abstract “Indonesian public” (*masyarakat*), constructed against the backdrop of state violence and alternately imagined by the *eks-tapol* as a potentially sympathetic external audience that they must woo, as a social entity from which they have been unjustly separated and to which they wish to return, and as a group whose susceptibility to state propaganda has proven (and could continue to prove) dangerous to the *eks-tapol*; 3) the relationship of the (mostly) elderly *eks-tapol* to a young generation

⁷ The expectation by the *eks-tapol* that the Indonesian courts could be used to hold to account the personified Indonesian state (in the form of the presidents) is especially striking, given the historic lack of independence of the Indonesian judiciary. (Lubis 1993: 96-109; Lev 2000b: 329). As Lev states it, “the demand for an independent judiciary in part responds to the reality that Indonesian courts are politically bound, their judges civil servants like any other with responsibility for implementing the will of the regime... [T]he political significance of courts lies in their symbolic link to the suprapolitical idea of ‘impersonal’ law and their separability from political authority and potential as a means of confining it.”

(*generasi muda*) that was not yet born at the time of the event that altered the lives of the *eks-tapol*, consisting of both those hostile and sympathetic to their long ordeals as prisoners. I will suggest that these sets of relationships should not be treated as discrete: rather, the “proximity” of/to the state stemming from the court case became a necessary backdrop against which the nature of these other sets of relationships could be contested.

Conjuring and Dismissing the State (an interlude)

The filing of the class action lawsuit against current and former heads of state was in one sense an act the very possibility of which represented a break from the past, and an unprecedented expression of the collective agency of the *eks-tapol* and their families. Yet the symbolic importance of the court case can be traced back to the everyday individual musings, conversations, and recollections of *eks-tapol*. Before returning to the specifics of the court case, I want to highlight two brief bits of conversation from two of my ethnographic interviews with *eks-tapol*. These bits of conversation, I suggest, hint at how many *eks-tapol* saw the court case as merely the apotheosis of a much deeper and more sustained desire to have their speech recognized by the state, and to have the (symbolic, if not actual) power to assemble the state before them (as a way of defying the many years in which they had to present themselves before the state):

The first quote comes from Pak Sumanto, whom I discussed at length in Chapter Two. In a part of our conversation where he discussed the long effort by *eks-tapol* to have their civil rights fully restored, he opined that *eks-tapol* must first address the injustices of the past through the legal system. Only when this had been done, he said, could they turn to “academic” questions of the rewriting of history:

We don't yet feel free. It's true that we can speak freely, but the reality on the ground is that our speech has not yet reached the ear of the government. That means, you know, that this freedom that I've been given is not yet complete. If there are those who say "Oh, at Sanata Dharma [a Catholic university in Jogjakarta], those PKI people can speak freely," well, that's just in an academic context. But in the context of the state? Ha ha ha, the state context is still too far away.

In much the same way as *eks-tapol* and their families and supporters expected that assembling and confronting the state within the confines of the courtroom could produce radically transformative effects, so did Pak Sumanto express the grandiose expectation that a "complete" freedom for *eks-tapol* will result from their voices "reaching the ear" of the government; hearing here implies subsequent action and transformation.⁸

The second quote is from Pak Joko, whom we also encountered in Chapter Two. In the middle of our interview, he recounted for me (his version of) a humorous incident that occurred several years earlier: the Suharto regime had fallen, but *eks-tapol* were (for a short time) still required to attend *santiaji* indoctrination sessions at the local military post. Pak Joko considered it to be a new era, and no longer took such requirements seriously, so he abruptly stopped attending *santiaji* sessions. After repeated (and relatively benign) prodding by the police for him to attend, he received an official "letter of summons" from the district government office. Pak Joko dressed well and borrowed a friend's cell phone so that he could appear "dashing" (*gagah*). His description of the encounter makes it seem as if *his* power assembled the state, that the state was presenting itself (insufficiently) before him:

⁸ Siegel (2006: 159) makes the argument that during the New Order, Indonesians found recognition by the state to be "reassuring, because it means that one does not make up a part of those who the state, in its omniscience, finds menacing."

Joko (recounting the story to me): I entered and reported: ‘*Pak*, I was summoned.’ [They replied] ‘Oh yes, *Pak*, please!’ There was a large room with many chairs. After a short while, the *camat* [subdistrict head] came, the police official came.... There was bread, there was tea, complete! After that, it was time to open the proceedings:

Official: ‘Gentlemen, it’s time to begin the event.’ ‘

Joko: ‘In this letter, it’s written that I must face Lt. Col. Suhartoyo...’

Official: ‘Oh, he’s been delayed by another matter; he can’t be present, and I and the other gentlemen here are representing him.’

Joko: ‘Oh, and what’s your position?’

Official: ‘I’m the treasurer here.’

Joko: ‘So you’re not my level! Gentlemen, since the proper official is not present, I have no obligation to be here! Excuse me, I’m going home!’

Joko (to me): And none of them stood up! Not one of them tried to stop me!

There is surely a bit of hyperbole to be found in Pak Joko’s bragging account of “assembling” and then telling off and summarily dismissing the government officials who had, in fact, summoned *him*. This scenario, however, should not be seen as mere escapist fantasy: rather, it can be seen as representative of a particular assertion of agency on the part of *the eks-tapol*, the logical culmination of which is the class action lawsuit against the heads of state in Jakarta.

Stories of the State (Inside and Outside):

As mentioned above, the court case (and, ultimately, the failure of the class action lawsuit) became an opportunity for the *eks-tapol* to reassess the nature of their relationship to the Indonesian state, the *masyarakat* (community/ society) and the *generasi muda* (young generation) who were seen as inheritors of their historical burdens

and experiences. Much of this deliberation took place outside of the courtroom, but in gatherings formed specifically for the purposes of determining the significance of the court case.

Before I move on to the specifics of the situation I encountered when attending the final session of the court case, by way of prelude I want to trace the transmission of stories of previous court sessions, and to reflect a bit upon the dynamics of the transmission as I witnessed it in Jogjakarta, prior to my trip to Jakarta. My first real exposure to the court case came from discussions at several of the semi-weekly meetings I attended of the local Jogjakarta organization *Fopperham (Forum Pendidikan dan Perjuangan Hak Asasi Manusia)*. As described in earlier chapters, this organization consisted primarily of (male) *eks-tapol*, their young adult children, and a few college-age activists who were not from *eks-tapol* families. As the court case developed, it became a frequent topic of conversation at the *Fopperham* meetings that I attended. What struck me as interesting as I attended these meetings was the reliance upon “local” and “inside” sources for information about the court case. The court case was receiving sustained (if not extensive or especially substantial) attention from Indonesian newspapers and television, yet there was next to no mention of these as sources of information at the meetings I attended. What was preferred by the older generation of *eks-tapol* (most of whom could not themselves travel to Jakarta to attend the trial due to health or financial reasons) was eyewitness reporting from the one or two younger members of *Fopperham* (mostly children of *eks-tapol*) who had been given the task of traveling to Jakarta to attend the trial. This was, in practice, a two-way process of transmission between the older generation of *eks-tapol* and the younger members of *Fopperham* that served to

consolidate and delineate their status as intergenerational victims of New Order violence: the younger members who had traveled from Jogjakarta to the trial and back brought news of the formal court proceedings, but also of the (largely informal) deliberations between the *eks-tapol*, activists, and lawyers assembled in Jakarta. (These included an appeal for *eks-tapol* to “unite to struggle together for their rights...and to “no longer be divided or give priority to private or group interests”; also, a suggestion made by the lawyers from *Lembaga Bantuan Hukum* for the community of *eks-tapol* to take a “non-litigious approach” (*jalur non-litigasi*) of “putting pressure on the judges” by sending them letters affirming that the court has the authority to try the case, reminding the judges that they are asking for monetary compensation and for the restoration of their rights, and stating for the record what their occupations were prior to the “1965 incident” that resulted in their incarceration). These “emissaries” returning from Jakarta were, in effect, advising the *eks-tapol* far from Jakarta on how to organize and comport themselves in relation to the state.

In addition to the practical information, however, the young *Fopperham* activists also wanted to construct a tableau of the courtroom scene for those of the older generation who had been unable to attend. In preparation for the August *Fopperham* meeting they typed up a one-page report of their observations, which they then distributed and proceeded to summarize orally. The focus of this short description is in part a rote description of the various groups present within the courtroom: the judges, the lawyers from each side, the (mostly elderly) *eks-tapol*, and the anti-communist demonstrators who eventually entered the courtroom and disrupted the proceedings. Yet in addition to the reportage, their report also places great importance on the behavior

and comportment of the various groups attending the court session: it notes that as the deliberations between lawyers and judges took place, “the former political prisoners who filled the courtroom paid close attention to the proceedings, and did not create any disturbances.” The report contrasts the stoicism of the *eks-tapol* throughout the court session with both the unruly, threatening behavior of the demonstrators and the emotional reaction by the authors of the report:

Eventually, a number of the demonstrators entered, and several tried to cause a ruckus and to provoke a strong reaction [*emosi*] from the *eks-tapol* within the courtroom....Fortunately, the elderly men and women [*eks-tapol*] were not provoked and stayed silent, because of the approach suggested by LBH: don't resist or give any commentary. Meanwhile, we [the two young authors of the report] stepped away, afraid of being carried away with emotion, because the things shouted by the demonstrators included, among other things: “We're going to carry out a *sweeping* of PKI children.”

The advice that the older generation of *eks-tapol* at the meetings gave in response was how to act in relation to ambiguously-placed non-state actors with the presence of the state (in the form of the court and the absent presidents) acting as a backdrop: although the court case revolved around the relationship between the state and the *eks-tapol*, much discussion among the *eks-tapol*, their family members, and younger activists affiliated with them concerned a third side of the relationship: the vocal protestors from the anti-communist groups that surrounded the courthouse during each court session and made their presence felt through intrusions in the courtroom. (This was, indeed, one of the few times at a *Fopperham* meeting where I witnessed open discussion regarding the potential of violence between the *eks-tapol/ anak korban* and other elements of Indonesian society; the rest of the time, much of the focus was on discrimination and repression from the state). In the meetings I attended in Jogjakarta where the vocal protests were discussed, the *eks-tapol* presented themselves as a moderating force against

what they saw to be the misguided actions of the anti-communist protests. One older *eks-tapol* cautioned the younger members of *Fopperham* attending the court session that they should keep cool heads, and not allow themselves to be provoked by the demonstrators. This practical advice should, I believe, be seen as a retargeting of an accusation that had historically been leveled against the PKI and the phantasm “PKI” by the New Order government: that of disruptors of security (*keamanan*) and order (*ketertiban*). In this reframing, performed through the notable stoicism of the *eks-tapol* and their supporters gathered in the courtroom, the “security disruptors” were those gathered outside (and inside) the courtroom calling for the heads (or, at least, the continued ostracization) of the *eks-tapol*.

At the same *Fopperham* meeting, another *eks-tapol* lamented the fact that, as he saw it, the protesters were misguided: the court case, he insisted, was not about whether or not the PKI should be allowed to become a legal party after forty years of being illegal; it was a question of human rights. If “PKI” had—through New Order propaganda—become a sign of the threatened disruption of state authority, then “human rights” here is put forward as an alternative mode of identification/motivation, a medium and a process through which the state could correct itself and account for its past.⁹

⁹ Lubis (1993: 48-85) traces a history of the emergence of the concept of “rights” in 20th century Indonesian. He explains that in the nationalist struggle against the Dutch, “rights” most often referred to political independence as well as collective social and economic rights. In 1945, as Indonesia was approaching independence and its constitution was being drafted, a debate emerged on whether “citizen’s rights” should be included in the constitution. Sukarno argued that there was no need for this inclusion, because such rights were already implicit within the “family principle” upon which the state was based. Other members of the constitutional committee, mainly Mohammad Hatta and Muhammad Yamin, argued that such guarantees of citizens’ rights were necessary to avoid an authoritarian state. In the interest of haste in drafting the constitution, a compromise was reached where the constitution would contain provisions on citizens’ rights, yet these rights were not absolute and could be restricted if the state saw fit. See Lev 2000b; Eldridge 2002 and Herbert 2008 for legal approaches to human rights in the New Order and post-New Order periods.

Despite the relatively small numbers of the anti-communist demonstrators, the *eks-tapols* were very obviously intimidated by them, and this came through in the meetings I attended in Jogjakarta following the first court session. The raucous yells and chants of the *Front Pembela Islam* demonstrators laid bare the uncomfortably ambiguous link in the minds of the *eks-tapol* between (the memory of) state violence and the possibility of a perpetually hostile society. At almost all of the *Fopperham* meetings I had attended prior to this, discussion of the precarious situation of the *eks-tapol* and their families had pinned responsibility on the vertical violence directed against them by the Indonesian government; very little mention was made by the *eks-tapol* of the ways in which certain elements of Indonesian society had historically (and presently) participated in their oppression and stigmatization. In a scenario where the *eks-tapol* had located the source of violence in the personalized state—the five presidents who stood accused in their lawsuit—here was a reminder that acts of violence could come from elsewhere, and they were uncertain that the Indonesian state could be counted on to shield them from this violence. (Indeed this lack of protection for the past forty years was one of the grievances around which their class action lawsuit was based).

At the same time, the older *eks-tapol* saw this encounter as a way to reposition themselves in the public eye. They saw part of the problem as being that their ongoing stigmatization was based on their alleged past misdeeds in the 1960s, whereas they felt that the relevant historical frame was that of the deprivations they had experienced post-1965. As one *eks-tapol* at the meeting put it, the demonstrators were “misguided...This court case is not about whether or not the PKI should be legal; it’s about human rights.” In a court case where one side was pushing for a thorough re-examination of the past,

here was an appeal to a less-historically grounded mode of identification and sympathy. One could, by this argument, come down on the side of the *eks-tapol* for the hardships they had experienced post-1965, while remaining agnostic on what had occurred previously. (This can be understood, perhaps, as an attempted public expression of the vagueness with which some *eks-tapol* describe their past political affiliations and experiences).

When the *eks-tapol* and the younger activists encountered the *Front Pembela Islam* demonstrators, they were hardly dealing with an unknown equation: the FPI has been one of the most prominent and notorious of the militant Muslim organizations that emerged following the fall of Suharto. The *FPI* was founded in August 1998 by Habib Muhammad Rizieq Syihab (b. 1965), a member of Jakarta's *habaib* (Arab ancestry, believed to be descendents of the Prophet Muhammad) community who completed his studies in Saudi Arabia. In a founding speech at an Islamic boarding school in South Jakarta, Rizieq framed the FPI's mission in explicitly Islamic terms: "promoting the old ways (*manhaj salafi*) in order to lead the people toward good and away from evil (*amar ma'ruf nahi munkar*)." (Laksamana.net 2001)

Yet as Jahroni (2008) points out, the framework within which the *FPI* sees itself as operating is distinctly nationalist. (This is a contrast with other militant Muslim organizations operating in Indonesia such as *Laskar Jihad* and *Hizbut Tahir Indonesia*). Since its formation, the FPI maintained close ties with elements of the Indonesian government and military¹⁰; the military provided FPI with financial support and training,

¹⁰ The Suharto regime, after decades of repressing the "political Islam" that it considered a threat, began to court and ally itself with Muslim organizations in the late 1980s and early 1990s. This was meant as a bulwark against challenges to Suharto from within the military, and Suharto burnished his Muslim

“in anticipation of emergency situations.” (Jahroni 2008: 18). Such an “emergency” came several months after the fall of Suharto, as demonstrations by students and pro-democracy activists increased against Suharto’s successor B.J. Habibie, In November 1998, the government and military employed FPI members to be part of youth militias (*Pam Swakarsa*) to “guard” the special session of the People’s Consultative Assembly against demonstrators. Armed mainly with bamboo poles, the *Pam Swakarsa* fought with student demonstrators in clashes that left many injured and several dead. In the years since 1998, the FPI gained notoriety for its vigilante attacks on bars, brothels, and other places of “vice,” which it claimed to be doing in order to enforce the laws that police were unwilling to enforce.¹¹ It also staged demonstrations with a more political character: these included an attack on the offices of the National Human Rights Commission (*Komnas HAM*) in protest of what the *FPI* considered to be an inadequate investigation into the 1984 military shootings of Muslims protestors at the Tanjung Priok harbor in Jakarta; a rally demanding the reinstatement of the Jakarta Charter (which mandated that Indonesian Muslims follow Islamic law) to the Indonesian Constitution; and attempted “sweeping” of American expatriates and tourists as a protest against the U.S.-led wars in Afghanistan and Iraq (van Bruinessen 2002:145). Following President Abdurrahman Wahid’s 2000 proposal to lift the government ban on Marxism-Leninism, the *FPI* directed its energies at preventing what it characterized as the “resurgence” of the PKI:

credentials through going on the *hajj* pilgrimage and allowing the formation of the reformist Muslim organization ICMI (*Institute of Indonesian Muslim Intellectuals*) (see Hefner 2001: 128-166)

¹¹ Van Bruinessen (2002: 145) writes that the FPI is “widely perceived to be more like a racket of mobs for hire than a genuine Islamic movement”. In a more sympathetic account that serves as an apologia of sorts for the FPI, Jahroni (2008) explains that the FPI turned towards vigilante actions “because the government did not demonstrate a strong commitment to solving community problems.” (26)

these included anti-communist rallies in Jakarta (during which they carried banners reading “We Are Ready To Slay Communists”) (*Jakarta Post* 2001)

In all of these actions, the FPI claims itself to be an agent of law enforcement, reminding the state of its obligations, laws, and past punitive actions, rather than attempting to represent or create an alternative source of authority. In other words, even as it claims to be acting under the banner of Islamic piety, the FPI is attempting to address other audiences with other justifications. This dynamic could be seen on the day of the court case that I attended: in some respects—wearing green headbands or long white Islamic robes, shouting “*allahu akbar*” upon bursting into the courtroom following the judge’s dismissal of the case, the FPI and other anti-communist demonstrators make their “Islamic” identity quite explicit. Yet, it is also significant that the messages conveyed in the FPI and other anticommunist groups’ banners outside of the courthouse (as well as the fliers they distributed, discussed below) have little or no distinctively “Islamic” tone, focusing instead on how the PKI is a threat and an affront to a wider (Indonesian) collectivity: “PKI is the Source of Misfortune”; “PKI is Anti-Democracy”; “PKI Brings Misery to the Common People”; “Don’t Dream of Having a Party Whose Basis is Communism.”



Figure 5.1: Eks-tapol at the Central Jakarta District Courthouse (photograph by the author)



Figure 5.2: Young anti-communist demonstrators outside the Central Jakarta District Courthouse (photograph by the author)



Figure 5.3: Anti-communist banner outside the Central Jakarta District Courthouse. The banner reads "The PKI Brings Misery to the Common People"

Although I was unable to speak personally to any of the young demonstrators protesting the *eks-tapol* from outside of the courtroom, I was able to get a sense of their language and approach from several fliers that they were distributing to passerby outside the courthouse (and which were obtained and subsequently brought back to the Fopperham meeting in Jogjakarta by the young members attending the court session). The most striking feature of these fliers is the way in which they mirror and, to some

degree, replicate the scenario put forward by the *eks-tapol* in reference to the court case. Like the *eks-tapol*, they lament the fact that certain historical facts are being ignored (albeit different ones than the *eks-tapol* are suggesting), and are appealing to the state to take into account this history in order to render an appropriate decision. The flier distributed on the street by the *Front Anti Komunis Nasional* is in fact a reprinting of a letter that they (ostensibly) had sent to the head judge overseeing the class action lawsuit. They open this letter by stating that “We [*kami*] are compelled by our deep concern to deliver this letter. It seems just a short time ago that we [*kita*] suffered from the actions of a group that referred to itself as the Revolutionary progressives [i.e. the PKI].” The letter then proceeds to list a number of atrocities allegedly committed by the PKI and affiliated organizations (including the murder of *kyai*—Islamic leaders—in East Java during the Madiun Rebellion in 1948, and the torture of a *lurah*—village chief—who resisted the PKI’s attempts at land reform in the early 1960s), all of this culminating in the *G30S* coup attempt of 1965. This can be seen as a contestation of relevant/ irrelevant histories: just as the *eks-tapol* wanted to keep the attention (of the state and of the *masyarakat*) focused on the violation of their rights post-1965, so the anti-communist groups placed 1965 as the culminating point, after which nothing need be recounted or judged (in reference to the PKI). More interesting is what is being accomplished (or attempted) in the quick opening shift from exclusive “we” (*kami*) to inclusive “we” (*kita*). *Kami* are constructed as those for whom the past seems very close (this despite the fact that the teenagers distributing these leaflets on the street were born decades after 1965), who see themselves as taking on the didactic and prophetic roles of teachers of history, stressing the present and future risks inherent in an “insufficient” understanding of the

past. *Kita* is a national “we” that is being expanded to include the judge being addressed in the letter (i.e. the Indonesian state, in its judicial manifestation), as well as the Indonesian public (*masyarakat*) who, it is hoped, will read the leaflet and be spurred to action. It pointedly *excludes* the *eks-tapol*, whom it seeks to define as a group that cannot properly be addressed, only “dealt with” or presented as the villains in a (sinister) recounting of Indonesian history.

It is also significant that the *Front Anti-Komunis Nasional* places a personified Indonesian state (in the form of the judge addressed in the leaflet) as audience and addressee, while seeming to ignore the *eks-tapols*’ personification of the state in the form of the five Indonesian presidents standing accused in the lawsuit. The refutation of the *eks-tapols*’ accusations does not involve an assertion of the state’s innocence or of the virtues of the five heads of state standing accused; what is attempted instead is a denial that the *eks-tapol* can claim the status of “victim” (*korban*), or that they have the right to take on a (dehistoricizing?) framework of *hak asasi manusia*, or human rights. Yet, while the Indonesian state is being personified here, it is also being imagined as a neutral, blank slate, without attachment to any particular narrative of Indonesian history. This can, it seem, be either promising or dangerous: the state can be convinced of/taught historical “truth,” but it is also susceptible to being tricked and deceived.

In another leaflet distributed by the group *PINTAR* (*Pergerakan Islam untuk Tanah Air*), there is an attempt to collapse distinct generations into a perpetual, constant “communist menace.” After reminding the reader of the pre-1965 (ostensibly destructive) actions of the PKI, the leaflet goes on to warn that “in this age of Reformasi, various Young Communist activists have turned up with great bluntness and audacity. Including

the audacity and the nerve to demand compensation and rehabilitation of their good name, which they consider to be a violation of their basic human rights.” [*sic*, in Indonesian]. The perceived presence of the state (as an audience that must be reminded/taught about the salient facts of Indonesian history) does not create this continuity between (“communist”) generations, but it exposes it and brings it into public view.

Authority/Authorities in the Courtroom

My own direct experiencing of the court case was confined to September 14, 2005, the day the judges dismissed the case. I arrived on the overnight Jogjakarta- Jakarta train with my two *Fopperham* friends in the early morning, and we made our way over to the court building (*pengadilan negeri*) while things were still relatively calm and quiet. Crowds of elderly *eks-tapol*, young activists and lawyers, journalists and cameramen filled the courtroom. (The five presidents were--unsurprisingly--not in attendance, but were represented by their lawyers). As we were safely ensconced inside the courtroom, we could hear—and see just a little—the teenagers from the anti-communist groups beginning their demonstrations outside. The court session began and proceeded for nearly an hour, with the judges going through the case and eventually dismissing the case. As the decision was read, a handful of young men from the *Front Pembela Islam* entered quickly from the demonstration outside the courtroom, one holding a sign showing a hammer-and-sickle with a slash across it. They shouted “*Allahu Akbar!*” several times, and were then escorted out of the courtroom (without incident) by security guards.

While the court case was very much about such oft-cited abstractions such as justice, truth, and citizenship, it was also very much about physical presence, about (the potential of) physical bodies opposed to each other in a physical location. In witnessing the emotion of the *eks-tapol* crowding into the courtroom, what came to mind was the frequently-voiced comment that the *eks-tapol* made to me: they had been condemned to imprisonment, and subsequent stigmatization, without ever being brought before an Indonesian court. Now they wanted to see “the state” physically present as part of a process that would lead to a legitimate justice. Subjecting “the state” to the court trial that they had been denied was therefore simultaneously an act of condemnation and (as they seemed to see it) an act of generosity that they had not been afforded prior to their imprisonment.

For the *eks-tapol*, the ideal situation would have been to have present in the courtroom the main embodiments of state authority, the heads of state from Soeharto through Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono. However, they and their families/supporters were not so naive as to be surprised when the current and past president’s lawyers showed up in lieu of the actual heads of state. The distance of these *eks-tapol* from the power of the state was displayed even as they tried to narrow this gap. And yet, I will argue, they saw the contrast between their physical presence and the absence of the Indonesian presidents in another way, not just as a defeat: their presence reflected a resilience and determination; the absence of the heads of state meant a symbolic victory of sorts, in terms of presence.

Afterwards

The culminating meeting occurred several hours after the dismissal of the court case. Accompanied by a couple of friends of mine from Jogjakarta (one herself a child of two former political prisoners, and the other a student and self-styled “human rights activist”), I made my way across town from the court building to a *panti jompo* (“senior citizen’s home”) inhabited by eight elderly women who had been active in the Soekarno-era women’s organization *Gerwani*, and subsequently vilified as “sadistic communists” and imprisoned by the New Order. This sparsely-furnished, normally quiet home set back on a small side street was the place where many of the out-of-town *eks-tapol* were staying in Jakarta, and it was the chosen place of assembly after the dismissal of the court for reflection, discussion, and assessment of what had occurred that morning. When we arrived, we found the house full of elderly *eks-tapol* (the men sitting on sofas and chairs, the women *lesehan*-style (sitting on mats laid out on the floor) as well as a much smaller contingent of young human rights activists, lawyers with the *Lembaga Bantuan Hukum*, and family members of the *eks-tapol*. As we helped ourselves to the *nasi sayur* (vegetables and rice) and *tahu tempe* (tofu and tempeh) that had been prepared for the guests, the discussion began. In contrast to the tense silence with which the *eks-tapol* sat through the court proceedings earlier that morning, in this setting they turned loquacious, and discussed the court’s decision in an atmosphere of calm defiance. On one level this was a straightforward strategy meeting, and yet it also displayed the performative qualities—the active restructuring of identities and relationships—characteristic of the court case as an ongoing phenomenon. This began with a number of the *eks-tapol* speaking in turn about their experiences of 1965, their imprisonment, and their lives upon

their return home. Notably, very little detailed biographical information was given here. Instead, what was expressed was a series of intentionally general statements that could be applicable to most or all of the assembled crowd: professions of innocence, of “not knowing a thing” (*tidak tahu apa2*) about the “communist treachery” of which they had been accused. An elderly man, his voice trembling with emotion, declared that “those of us making the charges [against the past and present presidents] are the victims of stigmatization.” (*Yang menggugat ini adalah korban stigma.*)

I believe that this stating/staging of “the obvious” should not be understood merely as catharsis. Instead, it is important again to consider the context: these comments were made in a meeting that also included anxious discussion of the divisive effects of the proliferation of *eks-tapol* groups all claiming to speak for the whole. The use of the term *korban* (victim) here is an attempt at unity based on a shared experience of state repression. It is a re-labeling of the state-created category of “PKI” --a menacing and spectral presence binding together individuals from a multiplicity of social and ideological backgrounds as opposed to the ostensibly more “concrete” Indonesian Communist Party—into an inclusive category of *korban* (victim). At the same time, this assertion of *korban* identity—while inclusive to a limited degree—was perhaps also meant to be exclusive against the assertion of some non-*eks-tapol* political activists that the whole of Indonesian society, the entire *masyarakat*, had become *korban* under the New Order state.

At this meeting in the *panti jompo* in Jakarta, there was palpable disappointment and frustration, but also a sense of possibility that the state could still somehow be held accountable in a different sort of way: one elderly *bapak* stated that if the regular law

channels don't work, they would have to initiate a "People's Court" (*pengadilan rakyat*). One of the lawyers from LBH representing the former political prisoners suggested that it may be useful to seek international support. He claimed that the Aceh conflict would "never have been fixed" without international support and pressure. These conversations represent a dynamic that I saw repeated in my conversations with former political prisoners and their families: a simultaneous desire to reinforce the view of the Indonesian state as the primary guarantor of *kebenaran* (truth) and *keadilan* (justice), and the imagining of alternative frames of justice that radiate "outward" (internationally) and "from below" (the idea of a "people's court"). The immediate audience for these all of these statements was the other *eks-tapol*, and yet it seemed to me that these statements were also made with the Indonesian state as an imagined audience, one who the class action lawsuit had in fact *compelled* to be an audience.

Pulling Inward

The rhetoric of the New Order--as well as the accounts of many former political prisoners—downplayed the internal variations within the group that suffered violence, imprisonment, and punitive action in the aftermath of 1965. Whether as long-suffering *korban* (victims) or scheming, malevolent "communists," these individuals (and their family members) were treated with the assumption of a certain degree of knowledge of one another's personal histories. (Viewed as victims, they were perceived to participate in a shared post-1965 experience of violence, imprisonment, and stigmatization; viewed as malevolent "communists," they were seen bound together by ideology and politics prior to 1965). Yet, the court case that is the subject of this chapter could draw in those of a

younger generation who had previously not recognized themselves as part of the *eks-tapol* community, and create a new sense of affinity and community. This was demonstrated to me during my stay in Jakarta by my conversations with Pak Ari.

I first met Pak Ari, a middle-aged businessman living in Jakarta, at the gathering of *eks-tapol* and their supporters immediately following the dismissal of their court case. Ari was born in 1966 and grew up in Kalimantan, where his father had worked for the state oil company Pertamina from 1954 through the early 1970s. In an interview I conducted with Pak Ari at my Jakarta guest house a couple weeks after the last court session, he described to me how the events of 1965 had affected—albeit belatedly—his father and his family: in 1972 his father, after undergoing a government-mandated “screening,” had been classified as falling within “Category C2” of those associated with the 1965 coup; this category was for “sympathizers” who were not directly involved.

I just found out about it recently, by chance. My dad, you know, wasn't one of those who were imprisoned. My dad didn't affiliate with that group. Maybe because my father was in Balikpapan, and it's a different situation there than in Java. There aren't really a lot of [*eks-tapol*] organizations there, so there's not the same kind of socialization, or whatever. I actually just found out about it when I arrived here.... In fact, I found out about the court session from Pak Gatot [lawyer with *Lembaga Bantuan Hukum*]. He would call sometimes to give me news: 'Look in the newspaper', and so on and so on. So I found out from that. See, because my dad's no longer in great shape, because if he gets too tired, he'll often pass out. So I said to myself, okay, if dad can't come [to Jakarta], then I'll just come. Later I'll tell him about how it works out.”

[Was the meeting several days prior the first time he had interacted with *eks-tapol* families as a group?, I ask him.] Yes, I felt that I was together with other victims, and that we were free to share our experiences. Because, the truth is, prior to this I hadn't ever... asked questions, or whatever. Only now am I realize, wow, there really are a lot of victims!”

In previous chapters, I have discussed the phenomenon of *eks-tapol* who refrained from telling their children about their experiences in prison. One thing the court case revealed was that there were other forms of “dissociation” from the past that was being brought

into view by the class action lawsuit, and that the lawsuit—the anticipated act of confronting the personified state with its own actions and misdeeds—could have an attractive pull.

Moving Outward

Just as the effects of the court case spread across time and space into the smaller spaces where it was discussed (meetings in Jakarta, Jogjakarta, and elsewhere), its dynamics also expanded *outward*, into public space. This was most evident two weeks after the dismissal of the court case—and a couple of days before the anniversary of the “G30S” coup that had been the prelude to the darkest chapter in the lives of the *eks-tapol*—when a number of *eks-tapol* and their family members held a small demonstration in front of the Presidential Palace in Jakarta. This continued the “personalized attack” on the state that the court case had embodied. It was not just a “facing down” of the Presidential Palace with it as a generalized symbol of state power; it was instead demanding attention and action from the five distinct individuals accused in the lawsuit. At the same time, this “taking it outside the courtroom” presented the realization that there were other grievances buzzing in the public sphere: as the *eks-tapol* staged their demonstration, they brushed up against a much larger group of demonstrators protesting the recent drastic rise in fuel prices. The *eks-tapol*, who had grown so used to seeing themselves portrayed as “Public Enemy #1” (reinforced by the demonstrations against them outside of the courtroom), suddenly found themselves in the confounding (if temporary) situation of being ignored.

The Role(s) and Face(s) of the State

The court case was part of an attempt by the *eks-tapol* to reinforce the idea of a radical separation between the Indonesian state (past and present) and the greater society, the *masyarakat*. Much of the “reconciliation” work attempted by *eks-tapol* along with groups such as the NU-affiliated Syarikat Indonesia was aimed essentially at mending and rewriting history with no expectation that the Indonesian state would play a constructive or important role in the process. Furthermore, the *eks-tapol* attempted a very specific way of representing the state that emphasized its culpability in their oppression as a *replacement* for assigning blame to their neighbors, friends, and other non-state actors who may have been caught up in the violence of 1965-66. This became clear to me in my fieldwork as both *eks-tapol* and their children and grandchildren emphasized that they had consistently had good relationships with their neighbors since returning from their period of imprisonment; in this version, it is only the continued actions of the state that maintain their stigmatization and impede their full re-integration into the *masyarakat*. (Due to my concern that I would inadvertently cause difficulty for the *eks-tapol* I knew were I to ask their neighbors about their relationship, I do not have the ethnographic evidence to corroborate or refute this assertion.) What is interesting here is the forcefulness with which the *eks-tapol* and their families promote this view, the energy they invested in isolating the state as denier and potential restorer of their place in Indonesian history and in the Indonesian nation.

Yet, rather more complex is the *eks-tapols'* perception of the state's relationship to historical “truth”. On the one hand, they accused the New Order state of obscuring history and painting them as villains. On the other hand, the former political prisoners

and their allies believed that it was the state's duty to put its seal of approval upon the *pelurusan sejarah*, the "straightening of history," occurring in Indonesia since the fall of Suharto in 1998. In challenging the personified state's past treatment of them and their families, they were at the same time granting the Indonesian judiciary legitimacy by imagining a new role for it: that of arbiter of historical truth.

Also significant is the fact that the lawsuit was not merely against Suharto. (This was criticized as overreaching at several meetings I attended). In this one sense, it was against the state as a depersonalized entity, and it stressed a new version of complicity, expanded beyond the obvious target of the Suharto regime. In many ways, this was refusing a "generation gap" view of the state, one where the current state apparatus could maintain a state of innocence or neutrality in reference to the violence of the past. At the same time, it was insisting upon a multi-generational definition of state complicity.

Yet, the *eks-tapol* also seemed to sense that the Indonesian state could put forward its depersonalized, routinized, bureaucratized face as a method of denying its culpability. Much as the Indonesian government sought to absolve itself of responsibility for the violence of the mid-1960s (to the extent that it acknowledged it at all) by displacing responsibility onto a justly-motivated (if overly zealous) anti-Communist Indonesian society when faced with the class-action lawsuit it put forward a view of the state that was rationalized, depersonalized, bureaucratic, and faceless, a natural and ahistorical emanation from the 1945 Constitution (*Undang-Undang Dasar 1945*) that was treated as a near-sacred document by the Suharto regime. In response to this, the *eks-tapol* countered with a view of the state that was highly personalized, with attributable agency located in the readily-identifiable figures of Indonesia's five post-Sukarno presidents.

The effect of this, I argue, was to put forward a multi-generational narrative of state complicity, one that demanded accountability for state violence from those not directly involved in perpetrating it. At the same time that the lawsuit demanded that the Indonesian government put forward its “personalized” face in the form of the five presidents who were the defendants, it also sought to pluralize and to some degree abstract the locus of state complicity away from the singular target of Suharto. This was, I believe, the flipside to the fact that the *eks-tapol* were concerned with the projection of their own experiences and histories across generations, whether in the form of their children, grandchildren, and other sympathetic young activists, or (as a kind of photographic negative) the young anti-communist protesters meant to serve as historical reminders of a past they had never directly experienced.

Tying this into themes of generational divide and generational identity (and the contested nature of the meanings assigned to these), I suggest that the “backdrop” or presence of the state becomes seen as necessary for conversations about how those not directly experiencing the past (the *generasi muda*) should receive and react to it. It seemed to me that the *eks-tapol* with whom I spoke perceived the demonstrators not as the source of violence against them, but as those who have become antagonistic after accepting at face value the stigmatization originating from the state. The *generasi muda* here becomes not a destroyer of the old order or a propulsion device into the future, but a voice of warning that (possibly) has a certain credibility they would not have if they were older.

What we may be seeing here is an alternative concept of “generation,” one that does not necessarily entail a disassociation and divide from that which and those who

preceded it. In these cases, the *generasi muda* can actually see itself (or be seen by others) as *better positioned* to perceive or to react to the past than those who may have actually lived through the events under consideration. For the *eks-tapol*, the danger was that in conferring this upon the *generasi muda* (their children and grandchildren, and young activists who voiced support for them), who are seen as inheritors to their particular experiencing of history, this could also confer authority upon other *generasi muda* (e.g. the young anti-communist demonstrators) who also see themselves as uniquely positioned to “remind” Indonesians of their past.

Chapter Six: Stepping Around History: Landscapes, Danger, and Distributions of Memory

In June, 2007, I was riding my motorbike along Jalan Parangtritis, a busy thoroughfare in southern Jogjakarta. As I paused briefly at the red light of an intersection, I glanced upwards at the variety of cloth *spanduk* (banners) strung across the road: most were advertisements or announcements, but one stood out: it read *Hancurkan Narkoba AIDS/ HIV dan PKI Gaya Baru dengan Baju Baru* (Smash Illegal Drugs, AIDS/HIV, and the New Type of PKI in New Clothing). I stared for a few seconds, thinking about the curious (but certainly not unprecedented) conflation of the dangers of vice, disease, and a perceived “political blight” returning to afflict the social body. I noted the lack of mark of authorship on the banner, thus suggesting that it expressed a “common sense” sentiment that was so true that it did not need to be associated with a particular group.¹ Then the traffic light turned green and, with the honking of horns and the revving of motorcycle engines surrounding me, I was pushed onward, this particular landscape of fear and politics receding behind me.

This chapter looks at the form and force of suppressed and dangerous histories insofar as they are parts of physical, social, and political landscapes. While I will not

¹ Budiawan (2004: 72) writes that such anti-communist banners began to appear in large Javanese cities (Jakarta, Jogjakarta, Surakarta (Solo), Semarang, and Surabaya) in 1999, at the same that *eks-tapol* were beginning to publicly organize in groups such as YPKP and LPRKROB (See Chapter 1). He notes (72, note 77) the anonymous authorship of most of these banners, yet suggests that unspecified “*ad hoc* committees who have adopted Islamic terminology” may be responsible for them. (From my own observations in Jogjakarta, such banners tended to use language that was more often nationalistic in tone than Islamic). He also cites a personal communication with the historian Asvi Warman Adam in which Asvi speculates that—given the close proximity of many of the banners to police and military stations--- the Indonesian military may be involved in the creation and display of the banners.

glibly suggest that messages or traces of political violence in Indonesia can be approached, glanced at distractedly, and left behind as casually as one would leave behind a billboard advertising shampoo at a busy intersection, I do believe that a scholarly focus that limits itself to those deeply implicated in or committed to the retrieval, dissemination, or repudiation of a certain historical “truth” threatens to obscure the sometimes fleeting, prosaic, or “uncommitted” way that many individuals *not* directly invested in this history may nevertheless come into contact with it and experience appeals to their “sympathy.”

The aforementioned “anti-communist” banner hung across the road does not quite belong in the category of overt, state-supported, widely-disseminated propaganda produced during the New Order, which was an essential part of maintaining the idea of the PKI as demonic and of legitimizing violence and stigmatization against its victims. Yet, neither does it signify a verifiable absence of that specific danger, a guarantee that the violence of that past is over or nonreplicable.

None of the descriptions of “prosaic” treatment of the history/ memory of the violence of 1960s Indonesia that I give in this chapter are intended to minimize or cast doubt upon the very real physical, material, social, and emotional suffering experienced by victims and their families. Nor should they be read as a palliative statement that full “reconciliation” or “rehabilitation” of *eks-tapol* and their families have already occurred. Rather, I treat this “prosaic” aspect as something provisional, uneven, and dangerously uncertain, the constructed nature of which must be closely examined rather than taken for granted. This display or enactment of “prosaic” memory is not necessarily indicative of a corresponding sense of physical and social safety.

Given the scale of the violence in 1965-66, the centrality of the suppression of the G30S Movement (though not the subsequent massacres) to New Order historiography, and the tremendous changes brought about by the New Order, there has been an ongoing attempt by scholars to assess the extent to which these events permeated and shaped New Order society. Cribb (1990: 39-43) suggests the possibility, given the relatively small percentage of the Indonesian population who consider themselves “survivors” of the 1965-66 killings, that the majority of Indonesians are “psychologically unaffected” by the killings, and they may not define the Indonesian “national consciousness” in the way that, say, the Cambodian genocide under Pol Pot defines contemporary Cambodia. Taking a decidedly different stance, Ariel Heryanto argues that the mass killing of 1965-66 “has been a crucial force in the formation of the subject identities, fantasies, and everyday activities of this nation for decades, and it has outlived New Order rule itself.” (2006: 3). In this chapter, I attempt to rethink the terms of this discourse. It seeks not some kind of “final reckoning” as to the extent to which the violence of 1965-66 and the subsequent experiences of the victims “mattered,” but a recognition of this “relevance” as unstable, situated, and differently distributed: something emphasized or downplayed, sometimes within single narratives, sometimes even by those who directly experienced the violent effects of the anti-PKI crackdown.

What I wish to problematize here is the assumption—both scholarly and popular—that automatically conflates or presumes a causal relationship between *knowledge* (of particular historical facts, narratives, and actors) and (political and ideological) *commitment*. More specifically, this chapter challenges three separate—yet connected—assumptions: 1) the assumption that having been exposed to New Order historiography,

cultural logics, and propaganda will automatically produce a citizenry that uniformly mimics the repressive activities and antagonistic stances of the state²; 2) the notion—conceived of and propagated by the New Order state—that the spread of “subversive” ideologies could be understood in epidemiological terms, as a form of contagion: simple proximity to “communists” (or their families) was assumed to produce a concomitant commitment to the same ideals (and any sympathy directed towards the travails of the *eks-tapol* and their families could be construed as *ideological* sympathy)³; 3) the converse assumption by left-leaning activists and advocates who insist that the mere *presence* of alternative, “straightened” histories and the voices of outspoken, newly-emboldened victims within the public sphere will be embraced by the public and uniformly produce a revolutionary change in public consciousness.⁴

The question being addressed here is not whether “1965” and the trauma associated with it are, forty-six years later, dominant or determining features of the Indonesian social landscape. Rather, I question the assumptions behind the idea that its significance could be uniformly distributed, and that a diverse population could be mobilized to assimilate or disassociate from knowledge and experience of this history—either in terms of a sympathetic commitment to rectifying the errors of the past and reassessing history, or a defensive commitment to being on guard (*waspada*) and a shared sense of the lessons of 1965.

² See, for instance, Siegel 1986; 1998a; 1998b. Although his work provides remarkable insight into the cultural logics of the New Order, we may question the way in which it presents these logics as all-pervasive, as if there were no “outside” or uneven distribution to them in New Order Indonesia.

³ See Heryanto 2006 and Budiawan 2004 for thorough accounts of this anti-communist discourse that was a key feature—and which outlasted—the New Order. Also see the texts discussed in Chapter 3 of this dissertation.

⁴ For example, I am thinking here of how many of the *eks-tapol* and *anak korban* with whom I spoke seemed to draw a direct potential casual link between setting the history of 1965 “straight,” and achieving a full restoration of their rights.

Active Assertions of Belonging in the *Kampung*

To give a sense of how “1965” and its aftermaths could be narrated as a feature of the landscape, moving in and out of conversations with varying degrees of caution and comfortableness, I return once again here to my interactions and conversations with my neighbor Pak Sumanto, whose experiences I discussed at length in Chapter 2. Pak Sumanto, it will be recalled, became involved in the leftist *Pemuda Rakyat* (People’s Youth) movement while a high school student in Jogjakarta in the early 1960s. He was arrested in 1965 and sent to Wirogunan prison, where he spent the next five years as a political prisoner.

I got to know Pak Sumanto several weeks after I had moved into my rented house in Nologaten in early 2005; not initially through neighborhood connections, but through the *Fopperham* group whose meetings I had recently began attending. Pak Sumanto was one of the many Jogjakarta-area *eks-tapol* whom I got to know, and with whom I conducted formal interviews on several occasions. Unlike the others, however, I was able to spend a considerable amount of time with Pak Sumanto in neighborhood contexts that were not based upon the strategies and necessities of the *eks-tapol* community. Due to my proximity to Pak Sumanto and my involvement in neighborhood activities, I was able to observe Pak Sumanto not only as the passionate, at times prickly, crusader for the restoration of the rights of the *eks-tapol*, but as a quiet and unassuming neighbor earning a living through the *bengkel* (motorcycle repair shop) run by his son, and participating in neighborhood activities.

My attempts to ascertain exactly how long Pak Sumanto had lived in Nologaten, and the conditions under which he returned to the neighborhood following his release from prison, were met with somewhat vague responses: he would only say that he had lived in the neighborhood since the early 1960s, had rented a room following his release from prison, and had eventually saved enough to build his current house and open his *bengkel*. The sense that I got of Pak Sumanto's relationship with his neighbors was, for the most part, necessarily one-sided: for the sake of his reputation and social standing (if not his physical safety), I could not directly approach our neighbors and inquire as to their knowledge of and attitudes toward Pak Sumanto's *tapol* past. I could, however, ask him about how he was received in the neighborhood, and observe his interactions with his neighbors.

The constraints I felt in trying to ascertain Pak Sumanto's place in the nexus of neighborhood social relations were frustrating; at the same time, I believe that the process and the lacunae that I encountered were instructive, hinting at the not-entirely-predictable rhythm and timing of the emergence of the past, the contexts in which it could be discussed, and the other events and associations that attach to it.

As part of the group of male heads of household (*kepala keluarga*) in the neighborhood, Pak Sumanto regularly participated in neighborhood celebrations of religious and national holidays. These included in November 2005 a *Syawalan* ceremony marking the end of the Muslim fasting month (yet attended and used as an opportunity for neighborhood socializing by residents of all religious denominations, including Pak Sumanto, a Protestant)⁵. In August 2007, Pak Sumanto was one of the hosts and speakers

⁵ The fact that Pak Sumanto's participation in an Islamic ritual should be a sign of his acceptance within the neighborhood is particularly interesting, given that (as noted in Chapter 4), he saw religion as relevant

at the neighborhood “Friendship Night” (*Malam Keakraban*) celebrating Indonesian Independence Day. In the course of these events, both of which I attended, at no point did Pak Sumanto’s political status come into play, nor did he or his family seem to be treated any differently than the other assembled participants.

Pak Sumanto was uncharacteristically open with me in referring to “1965” and his activities with other *eks-tapol* in contexts outside of the formal meetings of the Fopperham organization. The most notable of such moments came one Tuesday night when Pak Sumanto, the neighborhood head (*Pak RT*), a couple of other neighborhood men, and I were traversing the neighborhood as this particular evening’s *ronda* (neighborhood night watch) team.⁶ As was the custom, following the very cursory rounds in which we collected the coins left in small pouches in front of each of the houses in the neighborhood (to be used to fund neighborhood projects and celebrations), we retired to the raised wooden *pos ronda* to sip tea and chat late into the night. We moved fluidly from topic to topic, starting with their frustration at the affluent Jakartans who were retiring to Jogjakarta and buying up the land there. We moved onto the topic of education, and several of them complained about the price and poor quality of education in Indonesia. Our conversation drifted to race and ethnicity in the United States, and to the history of the civil rights movement.

primarily in terms of “matters of heaven,” and felt that matters of “society” were best addressed by the leftist ideas he espoused.

⁶ For a description of how the centuries-old tradition of the *ronda* was transformed under the New Order into a means of surveillance and component of the “security state,” see Barker 1998 and 1999. From my experience participating in the *ronda* on a semi-weekly basis during my 2005-2007 fieldwork, it seemed as if the *ronda* in my neighborhood was treated as a formality rather than a means of surveillance; the primary purpose was to collect the coins for the neighborhood fund; while the *ronda* groups did sometimes stay up late socializing in the *pos ronda*, they were just as likely to go home to bed after the neighborhood rounds were completed. When, on some nights, no one showed up to carry out the *ronda*, this did not seem to be a matter of much concern.

Throughout this conversation, Pak Sumanto maintained an air of authority, and the other men in the group (who were 20-30 years his junior) deferred to him as the oldest of the group. Pak Sumanto did not repeat any of the personal details of his life and imprisonment that he had revealed to me in private interviews, but he did refer to it: obliquely, but not as obliquely as one would expect from an *eks-tapol* supposedly living in fear of ostracism and stigmatization. He mentioned certain debates about education that had been common in Indonesia in the early 1960s, concerning whether it preferable for Indonesians to study abroad or for foreign “experts” to come to Indonesia, and then added that these debates ended suddenly when “1965” happened. He also offered a good amount of meta-commentary on our discussion-in-progress, alluding several times to the recorded interviews I had conducted with him not long before this occasion, and encouraging me to ask the group a lot of questions, just as (he said) I had done in our interviews. This last comment would be innocuous enough if the assembled neighbors had no knowledge of Pak Sumanto’s past and status as an *eks-tapol*. However, it seems highly unlikely that this was the case, especially given that one member of our group was the elected *Pak RT* (neighborhood head). Pak Sumanto’s willingness to voice these potentially incriminating—at the very least, suspicious—comments are, I believe, a good example of a somewhat audacious assertion of the prosaic nature of the violent past, and simultaneously of a social identity *not* defined by his status as an *eks-tapol*.

In the several recorded interviews I conducted with Pak Sumanto, we were able to discuss at length how he perceived his relationship with his neighbors in light of his stigmatized *eks-tapol* status. He seemed reluctant, for understandable reasons, to

elaborate upon his relationship with specific neighbors or families, and spoke (at least initially) of the neighborhood as an organic, undifferentiated social formation.

What was most notable in my conversations with Pak Sumanto about his treatment in the neighborhood was the way in which he sought out the “ordinary” grounds of (supposedly) harmonious neighborly relations as a way to construct a coherent narrative cutting across tumultuous periods, social suffering and dislocations, and fractured ties. Pak Sumanto portrayed the *Pemuda Rakyat* movement in which he participated in the early 1960s as barely distinguishable from an “organic” *kampung* community of mutual assistance, or from a patriotic national citizenry:

Pemuda Rakyat... We were pemuda, you know? In the kampung it was the same as everyone else. Mutual assistance (gotong-royong), road construction, cleaning out ditches, or maybe if there were women cleaning up the neighborhood (membersihkan desa), we would also join in. So in those days, Pemuda Rakyat members were the same as anyone else. When August 17th [Indonesian Independence Day] rolled around, for the sake of the country, they also joined in Independence Day activities. Yes, they were Pemuda Rakyat, but they also commemorated August 17th.

Despite the political and social tumult of the years between the early 1960s and the early 1970s, Pak Sumanto described entering a very similar situation following his release from prison in 1971. This “neighborhood spirit” was invoked by Pak Sumanto to connote a space outside of history and change, a dynamic that endures even when the Indonesian state marked him as irrevocably outside the social body. Although at other points in our conversations—and at *Fopperham* meetings-- Pak Sumanto asserted himself as an authoritative voice on Indonesian history and (leftist) politics, in describing his relationship with his neighbors, he denied (political) affiliations and agency that might place him beyond the boundaries of neighborhood belonging:

Fortunately, the neighbors here were still good-hearted, maybe because they saw that I wasn't up to anything [*tidak berbuat apa-apa*]. They had me marked as someone who was no expert (leader?) [*orang bukan ahli*], but I was a pretty active participant in neighborhood activities... community work, receptions, wedding feasts, I helped out. Maybe they noticed this...so they felt pity for me.

When I asked Pak Sumanto about his current place within the neighborhood and his relationship with his neighbors, he continued to portray himself as *actively* belonging, but here it occurred with a couple of variations and caveats:

For me, it hasn't been a problem. [I say to them] 'I'm a person who isn't like you [*kamu*].' ⁷ I want to prove that I'm a person unlike what's reported in the news. Ha, now people can evaluate. [*menilai*]. What am I, in this neighborhood? Maybe people like me are said to be bad, but I'm better than those people in the younger generation there. Just take a look at this young generation. Both locals [youth] and boardinghouse residents [*anak kos*], they're all the same. There are many *anak kos* who aren't familiar with community volunteer work [*kerja bakti*]. Many of these *anak kos* are very selective in whom they socialize with. If I'm part of the Muslim group, the Christian group, the PDI group, the PPP group [nominal opposition political parties during the New Order], that's who I'll associate with. What for?...If you choose the PKI, that's a political choice. You choose Islam because that's a religious choice. I'll socialize with all of them, they can pass judgment on me, please pass judgment. I'm not like that...

Pak Sumanto appeared more uncertain in describing his present-day status within the neighborhood, as compared to the certainty and confidence with which he asserted his unobtrusiveness when recounting his youth and the days following his release from prison. He challenged the familiar stereotype of those on the Indonesian Left as fundamentally (and unpatriotically) partisan, but he transferred these negative attributes onto a generalized "young generation" (with shallow roots in the neighborhood). We can see very clearly here how Pak Sumanto's status and experience as an *eks-tapol* places

⁷ It is not entirely clear to whom Pak Sumanto is referring when he addresses "you." However, my assumption is that he is attempting to differentiate himself from those who—he claims—structure their social relationships around sectarian affiliations, rather than social bonds established through proximity within the same neighborhood.

these utterances in a very different category than a more general cantankerous lament (of which there was no shortage among some of the older, established residents of the neighborhood) regarding the antics and perceived shortcomings of neighborhood youth. When Pak Sumanto referred to “the young generation” here, he was really invoking one of three aged-based relationships, three ways in which he positioned and defined himself in relation to those born after his prison ordeal: there were the transplanted, allegedly rootless, boarding-house-resident youth of the neighborhood, to whom he could favorably compare himself. Yet these *generasi muda* (members of the young generation) needed to be distinguished from the young members of the *Fopperham* organization of which Pak Sumanto is a member. These young activists—who were close to “1965” either by family affiliation or by choice—were, as Pak Sumanto often described to me, the best hope that the aging *eks-tapol* had for overcoming their past stigmatization and reclaiming their social, economic, and political rights. (In other words, the act of these young activists becoming implicated in traumatic political events that occurred before most of them were born would enable Pak Sumanto to *free* himself from being defined in terms of those events, and therefore to establish different types of social relationships within the neighborhood). Finally, there was Pak Sumanto’s relationship with his own children: his daughter living in the nearby city of Solo, and his son who ran the *bengkel* repair shop at which Pak Sumanto fixed bicycles. Although I did not get to know his children personally, and very rarely saw Pak Sumanto interacting with them, one point on which he was adamant in his conversations with me was the correctness of his decision not to talk to his children about his past political affiliations or his time spent as a prisoner.

Pak Sumanto's simultaneous ability to articulate the profound injustices against him and the other *eks-tapol*, and to deny any rift with his neighbors and eschew the pariah status so commonly associated with *eks-tapol* do not point comfortingly to a "not-so-bad" scenario, but rather to the uncertainty of discursive spaces created amidst the fraying strands of an authoritarian command of the past. Pak Sumanto asserted the existence of a discursive (and physical) space where "1965" and his history of imprisonment could be casually and openly spoken about, yet *not* be the basis of (or a disruption to) his relationship to his neighbors.

An objection could be raised here that Pak Sumanto could have been quite aware of the affiliations, prejudices, and attitudes of his individual neighbors, and that it was disingenuous of him to suggest otherwise. Yet, what is of most interest here is not the "absolute truth" of the extent of Pak Sumanto's knowledge, but rather in how the very possibility of sociality here was constructed through concerted *denial* of such knowledge.

These moments of inclusion do not necessarily represent the full-scale "rehabilitation" of *eks-tapol* as envisioned by groups like *Syarikat*; they are nurtured by silences, uncertain and unofficial. And yet, I seek to present them as imperfect product of sometimes-tacit agreements and understandings. In certain contexts, "1965" and imprisonment occupied a central place in Pak Sumanto's self-understanding and self-presentation. In other situations, it faded back into the landscape: not forgotten, inconsequential, or fully-reconciled, but judged to be quotidian enough for a modicum of "normal" sociality to occur within the neighborhood.

A Landscape of Caged Books: Arbitrary Access, Decoy Archives, and Half-Hearted Censorship at the Yogyakarta Provincial Library

The inconstant relevance attached to “1965” could also be found worked into the architecture of the city library (*Perpustakaan Daerah Yogyakarta*), located incongruously on the main thoroughfare Jalan Malioboro amidst shops selling batik, cheap textiles, CDs, and other goods. The library maintained a disorganized, poorly-maintained collection of books, newspapers, and magazines dating back to the 1940s. Despite the noticeable disorganization of the magazines and newspapers at the *Perpustakaan Daerah*, it was easy to recognize the relative absence of material dating from the time of the G30S coup attempt, the mass killings, and Suharto’s rise to power (1965-1968). At the same time one noticed, toward the back wall of the library, a small room closed off from the main room with a metal grille that one could just barely see through. The gregarious librarian, Pak Bowo, in his crisp blue-grey civil servant uniform, said that the cage contains “G30S” and “1965” material. For the first several times I visited the library, he opened the cage without comment and let me explore freely. The papers and documents contained within were brittle, yellowed, and scattered haphazardly. There seemed to be nothing remotely related to the G30S coup, to communism in Indonesia, or even to some of the major leftist figures in Indonesian history. Instead, I found material such as issues of Russian children’s magazines, a biography of the late North Korean leader Kim Il Sung, and a tourist’s guide to Bulgaria from the early 1960s. Pak Bowo, responding to my repeated inquiries, professed to have little knowledge of (and, it seems, little interest in) of the source of this material, the policy that decreed it be locked up, and the reasons

for doing so. Yet on one occasion, he told me that while the material used to be locked up for ideological reasons, it was now placed under restricted access simply “so that it won’t be stolen” (*supaya tidak diambil*).

I made several more trips to the *Perpustakaan Daerah* during which the inconsistency of their policy toward the “caged books” became apparent: on one occasion, I brought along a friend—a student journalist from Universitas Negeri Yogyakarta (Yogyakarta State University)—who had long been curious as to the contents of the “cage,” yet had in the past been refused access by the librarians. This was one of the days on which Pak Bowo allowed me access to the “cage” and he raised no objection as my friend, sitting next to me at a library table, perused the material that I brought out to the table. However, after several more “successful” visits to the *Perpustakaan Daerah*, I was one day informed by Pak Bowo that he had received new instructions from the head of the library, and that visitors were no longer to be given access to the material in the “cage.” He did not offer any explanation, patiently insisting that he was simply following the orders he had been given.⁸

This is, to be sure, on one level a minor drama. This was a space that is marginal to opposing—yet complementary—narratives of a near-totalitarian suppression of information, on the one hand, and a liberating and enlightening “opening” or “straightening” of history, on the other. The *Perpustakaan Daerah* was a poor place to go in search of profound knowledge of either the efficient repressive apparatus of the state, or the heroic assertion of counter-histories and suppressed knowledge by victims of the

⁸ It is certainly possible that there is a causal connection between my sharing the “caged” material with my friend and subsequently being refused access to the room. However, given that I was allowed access on subsequent trips to the library (after the one with my friend), and that a period of several months elapsed between that trip and Pak Bowo’s announcement of the “new policy,” this seems unlikely.

New Order. Yet, the library presented a small space within which the fickle (but not benevolent) force of the post-authoritarian state appeared in an unassuming form.

Inside and Outside the Landscape: Assumptions of “Complete Knowledge”

During the New Order period the state, while constantly demonstrating its repressive apparatus to *eks-tapol* and their families, addressed itself to a constructed Indonesian public (*masyarakat Indonesia*) as if said public were positioned well outside of and distinct from those who posed the “communist threat.” The nonstop reminders given to the Indonesian public in schoolbooks, newspaper editorials, and speeches by government officials to “be on guard against the latent danger of the Indonesian Communist Party” (*waspadai bahaya laten PKI*) was both an act of distancing (with the *eks-tapol* and their families being defined as dangerous features of the Indonesian landscape that must be “watched out for,” rather than being part of the social body doing the “watching”) and of assuming that the *eks-tapol*—and their families, children, grandchildren—were fully cognizant of the history and the actions for which they were now being punished.

This “externalizing” dynamic, once directed against *eks-tapol* and their families as objects of revulsion and fear, persists in the post-New Order era where some have instead come to see them as objects of curiosity, sympathy, respect, or pity (even as they remain objects of revulsion and fear for certain other groups). There is a widespread sense that the public is encountering a history that is already fully-known to those “implicated” in it, whether they are seen as victims or perpetrators. In post-Suharto efforts at *pelurusan sejarah*, or “the straightening of history,” those who personally

experienced the violence of 1965-66 and its aftermath are seen as “sources” to be mined for information; yet, this often is accompanied by an obscuring of the ways in which they can—and do—also function as *observers* and students of (the writing of) the history that has so directly impacted their lives.

This tendency to present the *eks-tapol* and their families as features in an Indonesian historical landscape—as important figures to be “discovered” by an external Indonesian public hungry for gaining access to this history—is certainly present in many recent Indonesian media accounts of *eks-tapol* that present them as *saksi sejarah*, or “witnesses to history.”⁹ However, it can also be found in recent scholarly work focusing on the post-Suharto “reckoning” with the history of 1965. McGregor (2009), for instance, gives a nuanced account of the origins, development, and goals of the Nahdlatul Ulama (NU)-affiliated *Syarikat* organization that is seeking to bring to light the suppressed history of 1965 victims while effecting reconciliation between victims and perpetrators. Yet, she presents the debates surrounding *Syarikat* as internal to the NU, and the primary audience for *Syarikat*’s activities to be members of the Nahdlatul Ulama itself. What McGregor overlooks is the fact that *Syarikat* does not merely bring together *eks-tapol* and NU activists for potential reconciliation; to some degree, it blurs the distinction between the two. Several of the researchers, writers, and staff at the Jogjakarta headquarters of *Syarikat* are themselves children of former prisoners. Furthermore, as mentioned in Chapter 2, my interviews with *eks-tapol* and their children and grandchildren revealed that many of them turned to material (books, magazines, films) produced by *Syarikat* and

⁹ See, for example, the articles “Potret-Potret Keluarga Retak” and “Emas di Hari Tua” in the 9 Oct. 9, 2005 edition of *Tempo* magazine, “ “Menggugat Senyap” (*Kompas*, July 30, 2005), “Kisah Para Perempuan Korban 1965” (*Sinar Harapan*, July 29-30, 2005), and the various “Saksi Mata” (Eyewitness) portraits of *eks-tapol* in the *Syarikat* magazine RUAS.

similar groups in order to “educate themselves” and gain knowledge of alternatives to the state’s version of what happened in 1965-66. It is precisely this process of investigation (based on a sense of *incomplete* knowledge) of the forces and histories that have shaped their lives that the *eks-tapol* and their children feel to be liberating.

Alternative Connections and PKI-less Genealogies

One of the ways in which the New Order government sustained a climate of fear and intimidation was to link any kind of leftist movement—or indeed any kind of movement that opposed the government-- to “1965.” This “inflated agency” given to the PKI (well beyond the actual history, efforts, and activities of the party itself) was a powerful ideological tool for the New Order and its supporters. It also forestalled the emergence of other conceptions of Indonesian history and tracings of political, social, and ideological genealogies that may have denied the PKI, the “G30S” coup attempt, and the massacres of 1965-66 such a central place. This downplaying of the relevance of the PKI, and of the violence of 1965-66, can sometimes be found in the narratives and (political) self-definition of those very figures the New Order state (and post-New Order anticommunist stalwarts) would be quick to label as “communist.” In this section, I focus upon my conversation with a young Jogjakarta activist from the leftist PRD (*Partai Rakyat Demokratik*) and discuss the ways in which she situated herself in relation to the Indonesian past by disregarding, diminishing, or ignoring the centrality of the post-Revolution PKI, the violence of 1965-66, and the subsequent ordeal of prisoners:

Mbak Yeni was born in 1979 in Lampung, South Sumatra, and was educated in a *pesantren* (Islamic boarding school) in East Java before coming to Yogyakarta in 1998 to

attend Universitas Cokoroaminoto. She is the youngest of nine children, and the only woman in her family to have received a university education. While a student in Yogyakarta, she became involved with the liberal Muslim student organization PMII (*Persatuan Mahasiswa Islam Indonesia*), and later with the more radical, leftist-oriented PRD (*Partai Rakyat Demokratik*).

Yeni's grandfather, whom she never knew, was a member of the *Laskar Hizbullah* civilian militia during the war against the Dutch.¹⁰ She told me that, although she felt "proud" (*bangga*) about her grandfather's contributions to the independence struggle, she did not in any way see her own political activities as a continuation of her grandfather's activities.

I asked Yeni why only she, out of all of her siblings, had become politically active. She explained the initial condition of possibility as being structural and familial, preceding any sort of choice or ideological attraction on her part:

Maybe it was because I had the opportunity.... When [my older siblings] were in high school or at university, we had limited economic resources at home. This forced them to quickly finish school, finish university, and find jobs. And, as luck would have it, I was the youngest child... Our economic situation had improved, so I had the opportunity [to become an activist].

When she did move the conversation to her own personal attachment to leftist politics, the initial draw seemed to be an internal party ethos, rather than the wider goals of the party:

Of the things that attracted me to the PRD, the first was that they had a strong ethos of equality: they didn't differentiate between male and female, between the older and younger [activists], based on who had been a PRD member longer... We were all the same.

¹⁰ Hizbullah was a Islamic-oriented militia organized and trained by the Japanese in 1944 which became affiliated with the Masyumi party following the declaration of Indonesian independence. (see Cribb 2001: 75-76 and Kahin 2003 [1955]: 163)

Yeni applied a wider historical, political and social frame of reference to the attractive “equality” that drew her to the PRD. Yet, it did not originate from the assumed genealogical connection between the PRD and the PKI. Rather, she found it in an reinterpretation of her own religious background, informed by works of scholarship that enabled her to establish alternative genealogies:

I was initially inspired when I read Adullah Amin Annain’s book about “deconstructing Syariah.” Reading that, I began to understand that religion teaches equality, teaches justice, teaches us to value others. It’s this spirit of religion that’s gotten lost as time goes on... Religion has been turned into a instrument for the interests of the present moment. Then I read Takashi Shiraishi’s book about “An Age in Motion,” a history of those from a religious background who ultimately affiliate themselves with leftist politics. ...The strategy of creating the justice and equality that’s called for in religion is a political strategy, and there’s a political choice there. And why did I choose [to affiliate with] the Left? I don’t see the two [religion and leftist politics] to be in opposition to each other. In fact, they support each other. I’m certain that the true teaching of my religion, Islam, is equality and justice. And my political choice—the Left—also goes in that direction. So, I see religion as being like my soul [roh], my *spirit*.

Yeni’s equation of leftist ideals and religious values (or perhaps the subsuming of the former to the latter) echoes in many ways the connections between the two made by *eks-tapol* and their children (described in Chapter 4), and to attempts by the group *Syarikat* to show the congruence between the two in the pursuit of reconciliation between *eks-tapol* and the *Nahdlatul Ulama*.¹¹

Yet her account differs in a significant way from these others, in that it does not frame the overlap in terms of the violence of 1965, or the political and ideological conflicts leading up to it.

¹¹ *Syarikat*’s depiction of the political beliefs of the *eks-tapol* in its documentary films and its magazine RUAS does not define them as “leftist,” but rather identifies them as humanistic values to which all sides can (in theory) subscribe.

This is consistent with Yeni's broader aversion to associating her political beliefs and activism with those who were killed or imprisoned after 1965. She was well aware of the efforts of others to establish connections and continuities between contemporary leftist groups such as the PRD and the postcolonial Indonesian leftist movements that came to a bloody end in 1965. She, however, was adamant in refusing this connection, and only defined the relevance of the PKI for current political action in negative terms of its "failure.":

There are some former members of the PKI and their mass organizations [*ormas-ormasnya*]... who take the view that PRD is actually the party that can bring into being [*mewujudkan*] the ideals that they strove for when they were still young. There are some who take that view. But for us it's a different story.... The thing is, the conditions are really different. And they failed, you know? They failed, in 1965 they failed, and we don't want to repeat that failure."

In describing her personal acquaintance with several *eks-tapol*, she denied that the relationship contained any sort of political communication or significance, with the "social" nature of the relationship premised upon her assumption of a kind of denial of political coevalness:

On a personal level, I've had the opportunity to hold discussions with several former members of the PKI and their affiliated organizations, drop by their houses.... There are several that I know. But, you know, I think that between their era and now, the context is different. So [our socializing] wasn't anything more than a friendly visit.

When I asked her to elaborate on what she saw as being the key differences between these two eras, she seemed to suggest a historical gulf that rendered irrelevant what she conceded to be ideological affinities:

The conditions and the political situation are different, and the present-day context is different than the past. So if, for example, I met with an activist from the 1950s or 1960s... maybe we have the same viewpoints [*pandangan*], maybe

the philosophy of our thinking is the same. But maybe our political movements [*gerakan*] are different, because the social conditions now are different than in their era.

Yet, if Yeni refused to grant the PKI (and, consequently, those on the Left who survived the injustices of the Suharto era) a prominent place in the landscape of Indonesian history, she nevertheless deftly incorporated other past political struggles in order to legitimize the ones to which she was currently committed. She explained that when she first became politically active as a student, her father objected: not, she explained, on ideological grounds, but because he did not think activism to be a proper activity for a young woman. Yeni described how she set up the defense of her activities that (she claims) brought him around: as quick as she was to reject any practical affinity with the PKI, she invoked a more general Indonesian past for the purposes of convincing her father. She did so by recounting events that occurred before she was born, but probably within the lifetime of her father. And yet, she took on the role of the younger generation giving a history lesson to the older generation, explaining the relevance and necessity of present-day political struggle as a continuation of a more “familiar” past:

As far as ideology goes, my father had no problem [with my activism]; he was relatively in agreement with what I was doing. So the discussions I had with my father when I came home went something like this...: “In the past, father, we were colonized by the Dutch, and then there was Japanese colonialism. So now we’re being colonized [again], you know what it’s called, don’t you? Our industries are being bought and sold by foreigners, we’re colonized by [foreign] capital. Now we’re fighting this, father.” Usually this is what I say to my father, and my father doesn’t have a problem [*nggak keberatan*] with that.

One might speculate that Yeni’s lack of attachment to the PKI as an organization, or to the violence of 1965 as a central fact against which a post-New Order politics must define itself, was a matter of generational perspective, a sign that a young leftist activist

in 2005 had different points of reference than her ideological forbears. Yet, what her comments make clear is that she was very intent upon forming a genealogical connection for her present-day activism, and in finding certain useable pasts, both for situating and contextualizing her own politics, and for justifying her beliefs and practices to an older generation. The absence of the PKI and the violence of 1965-66 in her political and personal genealogy was not rooted in lack of knowledge regarding this past, or ideological antipathy, or even social distance (as she had established friendships with a number of *eks-tapol*); rather, she ascribed an alterity to the social and political context of the 1960s—premised upon the “failure” of the PKI—which necessitated looking to other historical moments and to a supposedly transhistorical “religion” for commonalities with the present.

Memory Accidents (Ning’s wedding)¹²

In the final example of this chapter, I turn to a haphazard, accidental invocation of the violence of 1965. The incident in question was related to me by Ning; as described in Chapter 2, Ning was born in the Central Javanese town of Klaten in 1975, and she now lives in Jogjakarta (where she works as an English teacher) with her husband and daughter. Her grandfather was active in the leftist BTI [*Barisan Tani Indonesia*, or Indonesian Farmer’s Association], and was imprisoned for five years after 1965. Her father, active in the *Pemuda Rakyat* [People’s Youth], also spent a brief amount of time in prison. One of the most animated parts of our interview was when Ning described in great detail the circumstances and consequences of her wedding ceremony:

¹² As was the case in my interview with Ning in Chapter 2, italicized parts of her monologue were originally spoken in Indonesian, while non-italicized parts were originally spoken in English.

I married a student from ISI [Indonesian Institute of Arts]. People from ISI are usually considered to be artists. My father is also considered to be a local *artist* [*seniman*]. So, when we were about to get married, months before that, we had already prepared the gown and the black suit... But only two days before the marriage, we just changed our minds, and we didn't really understand why. He said 'Can you tell your parents that we are going to wear peasant dress, farmer's dress? And I'm going to change all the decorations' (because he did the decorations by himself).

So, it's a kind of harvest time...and there's a cart in the backyard, and there's corn [plants] around, and a haystack here and there...And when we went to church, I was wearing the traditional clothes, only farmer's clothes, very simple ones. And I was bringing up the *tenggok*, the bag usually used by farmers. And we were wearing *caping* [conical bamboo hats]...and we went not by beautiful cars, but by truck, decorated like we are having a harvest, something like that. Our friends were wearing the farmer's clothes, too. We enjoyed the party...until, almost at the end of the party, someone was crying loudly. And then, we had a really hard time getting him to calm down. [laughing]. He was a grown-up, but he was crying at the party. *He was a friend of my father's. When he finished crying, he said "I wanted to bury it deep inside my soul, I didn't want to talk about it, I didn't want to think about it. This is just the way it was when my father was slaughtered by people who called him PKI." He had seen his father being killed in a horrifying way, after a party like this one... a BTI party in 1965...He told that story to everyone in attendance [at our party] and everyone was like "Oh my god, we've been doing something really funny, right?"*

And then I was thinking, *why did my husband suddenly decide for us to wear clothing like this*, and everybody said 'Okay!'"? We heard funny stories that, for example, along the way to go to church, actually there was only one truck. But people *on the side of the road saw the procession [pawai] of people wearing traditional dress*, just like the PKI's dress. It was *BTI dress, actually. And most of the people who had died [in 1965] on that bend in the river were BTI...My husband didn't choose the wedding clothes with this in mind, it was just a spontaneous decision, like "We are going to have a really strange wedding!"* [laughing]... And one thing I heard from the cooks [for the wedding] was that they felt extremely tired, *not because of their work*, but because it felt as if something was behind their back. One thing I felt is that after that, the village became not as dark as usual. So, it seemed as if our wedding party was a kind of celebration for the souls to be free, ya?

And to make the story complete: after a wedding, we usually find a gift in the village. Usually we give the bride sugar or tea... but when we finished [our celebration], my father found a bag of vegetables...at our door, and my father was really surprised. *In the old days, people in the village usually gave vegetables as a wedding gift.* But that was about forty years ago; it's not a common practice

anymore. It seems that in order to legitimate, those spirits came and gave thanks by leaving those vegetables. *Or so they say*. Ever since that weird wedding, we never heard about ghost stories.

What is being shown here is an alternative conception of the way in which the violent past can manifest itself. Rather than being revealed through a concerted and organized attempt at fact-finding, truth-telling, or witnessing, the past here emerges in a haphazard, wholly unintentional way. There is another notable facet of Ning's story: it obtained its meaning collectively, with the wider community witnessing the appearance of the ghosts. It was—at least in Ning's interpretation—a cathartic, even joyous event, despite its accidental nature.

The crying man's story of the slaughter that followed an identical party in 1965 hints at the potential for violence at this wedding party many decades later; yet in the aftermath of this party, although the appearance of the ghosts of victims serves as a dramatic reminder of the violence of 1965, the emergence of this traumatic memory contained the possibility of its transcendence.

Conclusion

In Chapter 2, in the stories of *anak korban* needing to look beneath the surface to the “truth” of parental pasts, the “ordinary” appeared as something fraudulent, the forced smiles in a photograph sent home from prison. Yet, the examples in this chapter suggest other understandings of the ordinary. Veena Das and Arthur Kleinman (1997: 8) write that, in analyzing the aftermath of violence,

we need to interrogate our idea of the ordinary. Is the ordinary a site of the uneventful, or does it have the nature of something *recovered* in the face of terrible tragedies?....The grounds on which trust in everyday life is built seem to

disappear, revealing the ordinary as *uncanny* and in need of being recovered rather than something having the quality of a taken-for-granted world in which trust can be unhesitantly placed.

The examples I have provided in this chapter echo the questions posed by Das and Kleinman, yet also suggest others that build off of theirs: who is authorized to set the terms of the “ordinary,” and to define the boundary between it and the “uncanny”? How do victims of past violence (or those close to them) perceive the uncanny; can it potentially be ignored or minimized (like a banner at a busy street corner, or whispered rumors in one’s neighborhood)? Can the uncanny become a parody of itself (like a decoy archive in a dusty library)? Or can the intrusion of the uncanny into the ordinary change suddenly from a painful trauma into a joyful and potentially liberating visitation (like uninvited ghosts at a wedding)?

Chapter Seven:
Conclusion: Generations, Uncertainty and the Seductiveness of Straightened Histories

In this dissertation, I have attempted to write an ethnography of the experiencing of historical and epistemological uncertainty. In seeking to understand the ways in which historical and social actors accept or construct certain narratives of the past, we may pay insufficient attention to the ways in which these actors experience the past as unknown, up in the air, of uncertain significance. In examining the experiences, practices, and self-presentations of *eks-tapol* and *anak korban*—and the public renderings of the threatening or redemptive figure of the “*anak PKI*,” I have sought to understand what actions can be taken, what identities assumed, and what affinities and relationships made in the face of demonstrated *inaccessibility* of knowledge, or a knowledge that reveals itself circuitously.

Here I attempt to think through the relationship between interrelated currents that have run through the previous chapters: the division of (Indonesian) history into distinct agentive generations, the intergenerational subjective space reflected in the activities of *Fopperham* and the narratives of *eks-tapol* and *anak korban*, and the wider “straightening of history” project that encompasses (perhaps uneasily) such intergenerational endeavors. How accommodating is the effort to “straighten history” to the types of tentative knowledge I have described in these chapters, to the “slow histories” described in Chapter 2? Can a “straightening of history” approach account for the accepted opacity

within the *eks-tapol* household that does not necessarily impede action and self-understanding? Or is there something intrinsically intergenerational about the impulse to “straighten history”?

One of the difficulties in addressing the questions above is that there are very different ideas among those committed to some form of “straightening history” as to what that entails and what it is striving towards. In Chapter 1, Asvi Warman Adam is quoted as interpreting it to mean the pluralizing of formerly singular versions of history or an historical event. Yet Hilmar Farid, an Indonesian social historian and activist, is skeptical of the democratizing tendencies supposedly contained within the “straightening of history” project. He notes that “to have a ‘straight’ history you have to have an authority that establishes and fixes its straightness.” (Farid, quoted in Vickers and McGregor 2005: 8) We have seen both tendencies demonstrated in the previous chapters: calls by *eks-tapol* and their family members for the Indonesian government to assume the role of a straightener of history, and praise by *eks-tapol* for more grassroots, democratic efforts by groups such as *Syarikat*.

Dwyer (2010) offers another skeptical voice in her account of an unsuccessful attempt by a group of young activists in Bali to enlist community support for a “1965 Park” to commemorate those who died in the violence there. She notes that the older generation who lived through the violence of 1965-66 had a “less positivist” approach to the past than did the young activists, and (couching their narrations in ritual and religious language) were unable or unwilling to tell their stories in ways deemed suitably linear by the younger generation. For Dwyer, this generational disconnect reveals the limits and exclusions of the post-Suharto celebration of “straightened” or plural histories:

The widespread euphoria that followed Soeharto's resignation, when the public domain seemed willing to accommodate a plurality of political viewpoints, in fact often served to mask the marginality of those who told their tales in culturally unrecognizable or politically perilous languages (241).

Dwyer's argument raises the question of whether this kind of stilted attempt at intergenerational remembering is particularly non-amenable to the logics of "straightening history." Karl Mannheim has written (1952: 294) that generational progression "serves the necessary social purpose of enabling us to forget." One wonders, however, if a more accurate assessment might be that it enables us to remember the past too well and too clearly, with what may be a false confidence in temporal distance.

The attempts by young activists in Bali to "straighten history" by creating a space for intergenerational memory may have been a failure, as Dwyer suggests. Yet the more sustained intergenerational memory work that I witnessed at *Fopperham* and which was told to me in interviews and conversations, suggests an ongoing, twisting process that is not so easy to assess definitively as a success or a failure.

The research that I have carried out with *eks-tapol* and their children contains lessons, and opens up questions, for contexts far removed from Indonesia where large-scale, public rethinking of history are taking place: this dissertation calls into question the idea that there can be a wholesale revealing or silencing of stories and narratives of political violence. One of my overriding arguments is that in these situations, we need to pay close attention to the working assumptions regarding how much people know, how they know it, and what they *should* know. This is as much a part of the story as a supposedly abstract and impersonal passing on of historical knowledge.

This research also provides an example of how any assessment of the salience of generational categories and/ or intergenerational connections must take into account the

social and political context in which they emerge. Similarly, assertions or denials of intergenerational connections or complicity have their own historical genealogies. However, recognizing the contexts in which such categories and understandings emerge does not mean that we can predict or easily assess their trajectories. The particular intergenerational relationships that obtained between *eks-tapol* and their children and grandchildren may have been an effect of the Indonesian state's accusations and constructions of family complicity. However, these linkages and categories have also been used by those placed within them to present a challenge to the state's authority and historiography.

Finally, this research raises questions of how we are to understand the construction of moral authority in processes of historical revision or "straightening." The stories of *eks-tapol* and their children have suggested uncertainty and contestation regarding whether such authority stems from experience (of imprisonment, oppression, and ostracism), *lack* of experience (the frequent assertion of many *eks-tapol* of their having "not known anything" about the events of September 1965 or the leftist politics of the day), knowledge (of intricate historical facts, and of parental experience), or the successful *transmission* of knowledge and experience (between *eks-tapol* parent and child).

Even as I raise questions over how we are to interpret calls for "the straightening of history" and the kinds of exclusions or omissions the project may entail, I cannot help but acknowledge its attractive power for many of the *anak korban and eks-tapol* I interviewed and conversed with. What I hope to have captured in my research, in a small way, are modes of being in the world *before* history (by whatever means) becomes

“straight.” The *eks-tapol* and *anak korban* with whom I worked may be striving for a history made straight, controllable, and clearly visible, and may be suffering for the lack of one. Yet they have also found ways to live, and to see, in the space of blind curves.



Figure 7.1: Attendee at September 2005 demonstration at the Presidential Palace in Jakarta calling for justice for *eks-tapol*. (The sign reads: "Straighten History"). Photo by the author.



Figure 2: Eks-tapol demonstrating outside of the Presidential Palace in Jakarta. Her sign reads "Reveal the Truth" Photo by the author.

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