



Journal of Current Southeast Asian Affairs

Pohlman, Annie (2013), Child-raising, Childbirth and Abortion *In Extremis*: Women's Stories of Caring for and Losing Children during the Violence of 1965–1966 in Indonesia, in: *Journal of Current Southeast Asian Affairs*, 32, 3, 93–114. ISSN: 1868-4882 (online), ISSN: 1868-1034 (print)

The online version of this article can be found at:
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Published by
GIGA German Institute of Global and Area Studies, Institute of Asian Studies and
Hamburg University Press.

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Child-raising, Childbirth and Abortion *In Extremis*: Women's Stories of Caring for and Losing Children during the Violence of 1965–1966 in Indonesia

Annie Pohlman

Abstract: In this paper I examine women survivors' stories about child-birth and child-raising during the period of mass violence following Indonesia's 1965 coup, as well as some accounts of abortion during detention. The focus of my research is not on children's experiences per se but rather on women survivors' accounts about what happened to their children. I discuss various aspects of these experiences, including: being pregnant and giving birth; caring for children in and outside detention; the harm and abuse of children; losing children; and forced abortions. These stories reveal much about how women cared for and lost children as well as about what happened to children during the violence of 1965. I argue that examining these experiences must therefore also be central to understanding how women and their children survived and coped with the mass violence of 1965–1966. I also argue that these stories of caring for children, as well as of how children were harmed or lost, were fundamental parts of many women's testimonies.

■ Manuscript received 10 November 2013; accepted 2 February 2014

Keywords: Indonesia, Indonesian killings, women, children, testimony

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Introduction

During my interviews over the last decade with women survivors of the killings and mass political detention which followed the 1965 coup, we often spent a great deal of time talking about children, their own and those of others, and what had happened to them.¹ In this paper, I examine women survivors' stories about childbirth and child-raising during this period of mass violence in Indonesia, as well as some accounts of abortions during detention. I discuss various aspects of these experiences, including: being pregnant and giving birth on the run or in detention; caring for children inside and outside of detention; the imprisonment of children; harm and abuse of children; giving away children to ensure their care; the loss and death of children; and forced abortions, most as a result of physical trauma.

My main argument is that by examining these testimonies by women survivors, we can learn much about the experiences of mothers and their children who were caught up in the Indonesian killings. These stories reveal new insights into how women dealt with immediate and ongoing threats to themselves and their children; how women negotiated strategies to overcome difficulties in caring for and protecting their children; and the many forms of violence perpetrated against mothers and children during the mass killings and in the detention facilities across Indonesia. The stories help us to differentiate the experiences of victims and survivors of the mass killings and detention camps by crucial categorical factors which influence experience during mass atrocities, including by age and by gender. Research into the experiences of those persecuted during genocidal campaigns, such as in Indonesia against those associated with the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI), should not subsume all victims into one group. Rather, it is crucial to distinguish

1 All names given in this article are pseudonyms, unless explicitly stated. Since 2002, I have interviewed approximately 150 women survivors of the 1965–1966 killings and mass political detentions, in addition to approximately 35 male survivors as well as a small number of children and grandchildren of survivors. These interviews were conducted by me in Indonesian and all translations are my own. The majority of these interviews were conducted between July 2005 and January 2006 in West Sumatra, the greater Jakarta area, various districts in Central Java, and the Special District of Yogyakarta. Additional interviews were carried out from July through October 2002, and in June 2009 and July 2011. I have discussed the interview process and issues surrounding recording women's testimonies of violence in Pohlman (2008). The main outcome of this research into women's experiences of violence following the 1965 coup is Pohlman (2014, forthcoming).

between victims in order to understand the broad range of experiences during mass atrocities, including how some are more vulnerable to some forms of violence while more resilient in the face of others (see Dadrian 2003; Carpenter 2006). Examining these experiences must therefore be central to understanding how women and their children survived and coped with the mass violence of 1965–1966. Furthermore, I argue that women’s testimonies about giving birth to, caring for, and losing children revealed that these experiences were critical facets of many women survivors’ lives during the violence that followed the 1965 coup. For many of the women who gave testimony about their experiences during the violence, pregnancy, abortion, childbirth and childrearing were an essential part of their identity, and there were many times when women defined their identities as women, and as adults, in terms of their histories as wives and mothers. These stories of caring for children, as well as of how children were harmed or lost, were fundamental parts of many women’s testimonies.

Women Talking about Children and the Violence of 1965

In the stories told and retold by women survivors of the violence of 1965, children almost always appear, sometimes as central to the narratives, sometimes winding in and out of stories, and sometimes their presence was felt most strongly by the fact of their absence. Some of these stories were happy ones: of reunions between children and parents after years of separation; of proud parents describing the accomplishments of their children and grandchildren in education, work or happy marriages; or of close family relations and children who took loving care of their ageing parents. Many stories, however, were ones of great heart-break and sadness: of stolen, lost and dead children; of children abused, neglected and degraded; and of the ongoing legacies of intergenerational suffering caused by the stigma and marginalisation of those tainted with being “PKI supporters”. This paper is a discussion of some of these stories.

These stories are vital to understanding women’s experiences of the 1965 violence predominantly because pregnancy, abortion, childbirth and childrearing were intimately tied to sexual and personal identity for many of the women who have given testimony about this period. Many of the women I have interviewed over the past decade had been in their late twenties or older when they were arrested and had already had children – in some cases, more than eight or nine. Others had been teenag-

ers or in their early twenties at the time of their arrest, and had either been unmarried or only recently married and had not had children. Still others had been in their late teens but had infants. A small number were older and had never married or had children. I talk about these women in terms of their marital and maternal status because this was often the way women talked about themselves. Many defined their identities as women, and as adults, with reference to their lives as wives and mothers.

This discussion includes testimonies about women's experiences of pregnancy, abortion, childbirth and childrearing both inside and outside detention settings. As such, the focus of this paper is on women's memories of their children and interactions with children during the mass violence that followed the 1965 coup. It also includes a brief discussion about children and their experiences, but as interviews with survivors who were children at the time of the coup were beyond the scope of my primary research, I have gathered only limited, direct information about this topic (for a study more closely focused on children's experiences, see Conroe 2012). As such, in this paper I do not recount the violence of 1965 from the perspectives of children themselves; rather, I focus on the experiences of mothers and their stories about what happened to themselves and their children. The following sections therefore offer some new insight into the experiences of the women and children caught up in the violence that followed the 1965 coup.

Children *in Extremis*

Children are vulnerable in ways that adults are not. In situations of conflict, children are increasingly vulnerable to physical and mental harm, particularly when they are separated from adult care, usually given by parents, extended family members or other guardians. During war, repression and other conflicts, children may be vulnerable but they are also resilient (Payne 2012). Children find ways of coping and accommodating themselves bodily into their changing social and physical worlds, including during times of great physical and mental stress. Research into the experiences of children during genocide and other mass atrocities is a relatively recent field of investigation, some of these studies revealing how children are in many ways disproportionately more vulnerable to some forms of violence, while at the same time, more resilient in the face of others (see Amir and Lev-Wiesel 2003; Dadrian 2003; Kaplan 2006). With more research, we will be able to learn more about children's experiences during mass atrocities, such as during the 1965–1966 massacres. In some of the stories told to me about how children survived after the

loss of parents and other adult guardians in 1965, it was clear that boys and girls of all ages developed a wide range of coping mechanisms to ensure their survival. There were also stories, however, in which children and young people disappeared or died, or were lost in other ways.

In trying to understand the lived experiences of young people's coping in highly adverse contexts after 1965, describing children's experiences in terms of either victimhood or agency cannot accurately capture the complexity of their participation in these events. Stories about children's capacities for resilience in difficult and even life-threatening situations cannot fully represent the sometimes very high cost of developing these capacities, nor the compromises and defeats suffered in the process. Many of the women who have shared stories with me about their own and other people's children spoke about young and vulnerable children who were abandoned or left with broken or missing social support mechanisms from family or community. Some did not survive. Those who did survive often did so without the stability and support of a familial or communal network, which meant they had to develop their capacities for resilience and resourcefulness, but which also meant they were exposed to much higher levels of risk and adversity.

Women's Stories of Raising and Caring for Children

Women survivors of the killings and detention camps often discussed how they cared for, or tried to ensure the care of, their children. How pregnancy, childbirth and childrearing were negotiated by women in detention depended greatly on their circumstances. The more important factors that determined how women were able to care for their children were the individual circumstances of detention, including the conditions of the prison, where and when they were detained, and how much support extended family members were able to provide. In terms of the individual circumstances of imprisonment, aside from the conditions which were fundamental in determining the level of care that a mother could provide for her child/children – such as the level of access to food – how the detention centre was run was an important factor in the fates of mothers and children. Some women were able to obtain permission to see their children, to go home on a regular basis to visit/care for them, to have family members bring children to visit them in detention, to go home to give birth, and to even (occasionally) be permanently released in order to take care of children.

In some cases, children also spent time in detention with their mothers. This often occurred when the mother was arrested and, out of necessity or because she refused to be separated from them, she brought her children with her. Especially when children were younger or still infants, they were able to remain with their mothers and be cared for in detention. There was a greater chance of this if the woman had recently given birth and was breastfeeding the baby. In all cases that I came across, children were kept with the women in detention camps and were not segregated by gender, as adults were. Older children (around ten years old and above) were less likely to remain in detention, though there were some cases of older children and even young teenagers living in detention with parents. Other women, however, were separated from their children throughout the period of their incarceration; some never saw their children again or even knew what had happened to them. Women were also forced to divide their children amongst relatives, neighbours or even strangers because they were unable to care for them or not allowed to have any contact with them. Other children, the mothers later discovered, had died because there was no one to care for them or they had been abandoned by relatives.

For women whose children were imprisoned with them, many talked about the strategies and methods they used to take care of them in difficult prison conditions. Most of these revolved around making sure children were protected from guards and that they were given enough food. In order to achieve these aims, some interviewees highlighted how women prisoners cooperated to ensure the care of children. This cooperative childcare had to be balanced with the other tasks that detainees were required to perform, such as forced labour, food preparation and cultivation. For example, the testimony of Ibu Tati, who was imprisoned in Sumatra along with her newborn baby, is illustrative of how women cooperated to take care of children. During our interview, she spoke at length about how the women in the camp worked together to both obtain enough food and take care of the children.

What we suffered, it was hard, I'm not trying to exaggerate, but really it was tough. One woman would have a small child, and we mothers in the same prison would take it in turns [to look after the children. We would say], "You go out, today. And then tomorrow, you can look after my children while I go. You look after them today." So we would leave all the children with her [the woman in charge of taking care of the children that day]. She would have children as well. There were many kids, so she would have all of the children. So there would be many. Anyway, on any

one day there would be two or three women [staying behind] to take care of the children. So then the other women were the ones who could be put to work, they would be in the rice paddies.²

By taking it in turns, the women rotated taking care of the children in detention with other labour tasks. Ibu Tati then explained that the women had to do other work in order to get food or goods that they could sell in order to obtain food for themselves and the children. They worked as free labour in fields, but also gathered materials and food from the hills and forest near the detention centre which they either ate or sold to buy rice and other essential food items. As she explained,

You must understand, to find wood and things, we would go high up into the mountains and then come back down to sell it, to buy a tin of rice or something, and other things. Imagine that. One tin of rice, but it was better than not eating at all. All the mothers suffered like this.

Ibu Tati went on further to talk more about the labour the prisoners had to undertake, and the difficulty of carrying it out while also taking care of her children.

There was a field of chilli bushes, a field of corn that we had to work on for [the guards]. We women would work in the fields, carrying our children. I took two children with me [...]. Then I had to take the corn back to the head [of the guards]. He didn't give us any food! Imagine that! [...] And we didn't get [paid] at all. We had to find our own food for us and the children.

Harm and Abuse of Children

The conditions for children in detention were often extremely harmful to not only their physical wellbeing, but also their mental and emotional health. In terms of their physical health, children were subject to the same conditions as their parents with regard to often very limited access to food, very poor hygienic conditions (such as often being forced to live in unclean, very cramped spaces with poor access to sufficient cleaning and sanitation needs) and forced labour. Although I came across only

2 My interview with Ibu Tati and Nary Yenny, West Sumatra, September 2005. Please note that all informants have been allocated pseudonyms, and other identifying details have likewise been obscured.

rare stories of children being physically tortured, they lived in the same environment of fear and intimidation as their parents.³

The story of “W”, recounted in a report on gendered forms of violence during 1965–1966 by the Indonesian National Commission for Women’s Rights, Komnas Perempuan, illustrates a number of points: how children tended to follow a parent, usually the mother, into detention; how detainees cared for children in incarceration; the conditions of that incarceration for children; and importantly, how terrifying and damaging it was for children to be held under those conditions. W was seven years old when her mother, “V”, was arrested and detained. Her father had disappeared some time before and when V was arrested, there was no other choice but for W to accompany her into detention, mainly because none of their relatives were willing to take care of W. The report begins by describing their detention this way:

Each time her mother was interrogated, W was taken care of by other women prisoners. W remembered that each time her mother returned from interrogation, her body was always black and blue and bleeding. Then the other women in the cell would take care of her mother with great care. W would stay silent in the corner of the cell, listening to her mother groan in pain. This happened every night for a week (Komnas Perempuan 2007: 59).

W’s story then takes a more frightening turn; the way in which W recounts the following events highlighting the distress she felt as a child: “On the tenth night, her mother returned with tears pouring down her face and took W from [one of V’s] friends who had been caring for her in the cell. Throughout the night, her mother held her like she would never let her go. W asked her mother, ‘Why do you keep crying and holding me so close? Are they going to shoot you tomorrow?’ Her mother just cried harder.” The story then retells W’s miraculous explanation for what happened to V:

W then had a dream in which she met an old woman who told her, “You are going to hurt a great deal, but do not complain and cry because your pain will help your mother. So you must remain calm.” Then truly, as the evening turned into night and her moth-

3 One story that I heard from a number of sources was of one of the daughters of Sri Ambar (her real name). After her arrest in late 1966, Sri Ambar was tortured repeatedly for information about PKI members, which she refused to give. Two of her children were then taken into detention, her younger daughter tortured in front of her in order to make her talk. Her daughter was then taken away by one of the army officers.

er was to be executed, W became violently ill with convulsions, and blood poured out of her nose and ears. But [the old woman] was right; because she had been in pain, her mother was not executed (2007: 59).

In her narrative, W reveals her fear for her mother's life after having seen her return each night from torture and interrogation sessions beaten and in pain for over a week. The fantastic and the magical have an important place in all stories, not only as a means of telling but also as an attempt to understand events. Certain that her mother would be killed, the intervention by the old lady in W's dream showed her how to save her mother. Decades later, W told the story of how her mother was saved, and that she was able to help save her mother in this way, by following the dream woman's advice and taking on her mother's pain in order to spare her life. The traumatic experience of living in the detention camp where her mother and others were tortured makes W's story one of existence overshadowed by violence, the telling of the story being a means of confronting and understanding that experience.

W's story is not uncommon when researching stories about the physical conditions of imprisonment in which many children were kept and which were sometimes made worse by exposure to deeply disturbing events happening around or in front of them. As with W, who saw the results of her mother's torture, there were other interviews in which I heard of children being witness, either seeing or hearing, to physical torture and its results. On one occasion, I interviewed a mother, Ibu Wanti, and her daughter, Ibu Suwanti, about their experiences in detention. Ibu Wanti was arrested in 1966 in Jakarta, many months after her husband disappeared. For the first six months after her arrest, Ibu Wanti's seven children, including Suwanti, remained in detention with her. As Ibu Suwanti explained, "We were all in jail for about six months, the whole family together, the seven children. We didn't want to be left behind so we had to go in as well."⁴ Suwanti, the oldest of the children, was nine years old at the time. When I asked Suwanti about what she remembered about this time, she described the family all being taken to the district military post in an area of Jakarta. She described how their family had been kept separate from the rest of the prison population, in an office room. This room must have been in the central part of the military post, because Suwanti further described how she could see

4 My interview with Ibu Wanti, Ibu Suwanti and Ibu Lia, Jakarta, November 2005.

where they kept the male and female prisoners, as well as where the interrogation room was.

We were imprisoned at the military headquarters, the military headquarters on B___ road [...]. That's where people were tortured. In the night, they'd be called and tortured, then in the morning, they'd come out. Because the office was really close, we could always see [them ...]. The men were on that side and the women were over here, and I could see all of it. Both the men and the women who'd been interrogated were in a bad way [injured] and we could see it all. My younger brothers and sisters were really too young to remember any of it, so they're OK, but the three of us who were older, myself and my two younger brothers, we still remember.

When I asked Ibu Suwanti more about what she had seen from the office where she, her mother and her siblings were kept, she said, "All of it. What happened to all of them, everything." When I asked her how this had affected her, she thought for a moment then said how she and her siblings had been "put to work" while in detention. As Suwanti explained,

Even though we were still little, in the mornings, we'd have to clean out the office which had been used for the torturing. So I saw the implements, the whips and the metal things, and lots of blood stains. In the mornings I'd have to clean off the table.

Terrified by what she and her siblings had seen and been forced to do, Suwanti said that her memories of their time in the detention centre stayed with her and "affected" her and the older children; the younger children in the family did not remember these events and so were less "affected".

In another case, Ibu Siti, whose testimony is discussed in HD. Harjo Sasongko's book, *Korupsi Sejarah (The Corruption of History)*, describes how her two young children were forced to watch torture sessions (2005: 60–64). Ibu Siti was a nurse who worked in numerous hospitals around Java, following her husband, whose job in the military saw him posted to different locations. When the coup happened, her husband disappeared and she was shocked to find out that he was a high-up member of the PKI. A month or so later, her house was ransacked and looted by "security services" personnel along with militia members while they questioned her over the whereabouts of her husband. When she told them that she had no idea where he was, they came back again the following day and destroyed the house, forcing Ibu Siti and her five-year-old twins

to flee to a friend's home. After this, they moved around from one place to another for a while until they were finally caught and Ibu Siti was forced to "report" to the district military post once a week.

Soon afterwards, Ibu Siti and her twins were taken to the interrogation centre on Gunung Sahari Road in Jakarta. Although Ibu Siti herself was never physically tortured, she and her two young children were repeatedly forced to watch torture sessions over a period of months. As she discovered, this "required viewing" was part of the planned mental abuse of detainees. Kept in a small room, she and her children were often woken during the night, taken to interrogations, and forced to watch. After months of this treatment, Ibu Siti was separated from her children and taken to the Bukitduri women's prison. Not knowing what would happen to her two five-year-olds, it was only later that Ibu Siti found out that her younger sister had come and collected them from the interrogation centre. In 1971, she and a group of other women political prisoners were transferred from the prison to the Plantungan women's camp in Central Java. Ibu Siti was not released until 1979 (Sasongko 2005: 64).

In the cases of W, Ibu Siti and her children, as with Ibu Wanti and her daughter Suwanti, being forced to watch and clean up after numerous torture sessions may have had a wide range of effects. When I interviewed Ibu Suwanti and her mother, she said that she could "still see" the torture room that she had been forced to clean up, shutting her eyes when she described what it had looked like. For Ibu Siti's five-year-old twins, being forced to watch another person being tortured, let alone their repeated and prolonged exposure to such violence over a period of months, is likely to have had adverse consequences on the children's immediate or longer-term health, and probably also on their psychological and social development. As Ibu Siti stated, forcing detainees to watch the torture of other detainees was a part of intentional mental abuse; being forced to watch torture is a form of torture. The fact that her two young children were forced to watch the torture sessions along with their mother was probably also an intentional way of abusing both the children and their mother, the children's distress meant to further abuse the mother. It also speaks to the fact that although young children were, for the most part, spared direct physical violence in detention settings – although not spared starvation and some forced labour – they were mentally abused along with the rest of the inmates.

The effects of this abuse on young children, however, may have differed from those felt by older children and by adults. There has been very little research done on the effects of torture, and witnessing torture,

on children. Of this research – most of it done in clinical settings with survivors of trauma – post-traumatic stress disorder, various other psychiatric disorders and emotional problems manifesting in a wide range of symptoms have been observed (see Van Bueren 1998; Amir and Lev-Wiesel 2003; Quiroga 2009). Whether they were directly exposed to torture or not, children who were incarcerated following the coup, as well as those who lost parents and other caregivers, are likely to have experienced a wide range of short- and long-term effects in terms of their health, development and well-being.

Losing Children

When women were arrested and detained following the 1965 coup, on some occasions, as elaborated above, their children accompanied them into detention. In most cases, however, mothers were separated from their children. Oftentimes, these children were sent to stay with relatives. Some successfully integrated into these extended family networks. Sometimes they were abandoned by relatives and left to fend for themselves. After months or years of detention, when mothers were released, many described immediately setting out to find their children. Some had no idea of what had happened to their children or had lost contact with them for various reasons. Stories of reunions were happy ones; stories of lost children were often described as the worst times in their lives.

Ibu Astuti, a former Gerwani leader in Sumatra, lost three children after the coup. At the time, she had two daughters, aged five and three, as well as a baby son. When the propaganda began to spread and incite violence against PKI supporters in early October 1965, she and her husband (also a local PKI organisation leader) decided to go on the run. As they knew they would be in danger, they left their two daughters with Ibu Astuti's mother in her home village and then fled with the baby (because he was still being breastfed) into the mountains to hide, a place where, according to Ibu Astuti, hundreds of PKI members had gone to in order to escape the killings. Ibu Astuti, her husband and her friends were hunted “like pigs” in the forest by anti-PKI forces. Some were slaughtered in the forest, others captured and either detailed or killed once they were taken to detention centres or military posts and police stations.

After a few months hiding in the forest, Ibu Astuti's group were spotted by a group of vigilantes, chased down and caught. She was separated from her husband while they were fleeing and later found out that he had been killed. She was caught while trying to escape with another

PKI leader. As he was someone whom the mob had been looking for, they decapitated him but left Ibu Astuti alive so that she could carry his head back to the military post and so that they could interrogate her. At that point, her baby son was taken away by a man in the army and she never saw him again. After this, she was detained at a centre some distance from her home and so had little contact with her mother or daughters. Within two years, however, Ibu Astuti's two daughters died.⁵ After years of imprisonment, she was rejected by her family because were frightened by what had happened to her and fearful that they would also be harmed. Thus, with no family to return to, she married a soldier, left the detention centre, and later had another daughter with him. When I met Ibu Astuti, her second husband had passed away and she was living with her daughter, taking care of her grandchildren.

When I interviewed her in 2005, Ibu Astuti talked sadly about the loss of her first two daughters and the kidnapping of her son. Losing them, she explained, was the worst experience in her life. Ibu Astuti said that she knew the name of the soldier who had taken her son, but not where he had gone. She then spoke about how she wished she could see her son again, to see what kind of man he had become and if he had a family of his own. She wondered about him, saying; "He'd be thirty-eight by now. A man. He'll never be returned to me. I know [I will] never see him again."

Over the last ten years, I have come across many stories of lost or stolen children. Some children, however, were fostered out by mothers who were to spend many years in political imprisonment. Sometimes this fostering process occurred with the consent of the mother, in the hope that her child would have a better life and a good education. At other times, mothers were coerced into giving up their (usually very young or infant) children, or children were taken from them without any form of consent. From the stories told to me about cases of child removals, it appears that women who became pregnant during imprisonment, often as a result of rape, were particularly likely to have their children taken from them.

As an example of this, I heard from a number of sources the story of a couple of babies being taken from mothers who were held in Central Java at the women political prisoners' camp, Plantungan, in the early 1970s. Ibu Rini, a former member of Gerwani who was moved from a prison to Plantungan, was one woman who gave testimony about the

5 It is unclear from either Narny Yenny's 2002 interview transcript or from my own interview with Ibu Astuti in 2005 exactly how she found out about her husband's death or the cause of her daughters' deaths.

removal of these children.⁶ In her testimony, Ibu Rini described two women at Plantungan who were raped by soldiers and who became pregnant. It was unclear from her testimony whether these soldiers were at Plantungan or from the detention centres in Jakarta where the women had previously been held. As she explained,

There was a lot [of violence against women]. At Plantungan, there were a number of women who'd been in Jakarta, who were pregnant, who had children, because they were raped. They'd been forced to work for them [the soldiers] in the mess, and in the end, they got pregnant. There was nothing they could do [...]. Then they [the babies] were taken away.

Ibu Arti, another woman who was detained at Plantungan, also talked about at least one of the girls being forced to work for the “commandant” at the camp. She said that the girl was raped by the commandant and that she had a baby as a result. The midwife who delivered the baby, also a prisoner, was a friend of Ibu Arti and told her about what had happened to the girl. When Ibu Rini was asked about what happened to the baby of one of the women who had been pregnant, she replied that,

After the baby was born, the church took it, a woman from the church at P___, if I'm not mistaken. P___ or [a nearby town]. I heard later that the child grew up well, turned out well and good. Because we were often visited by people from the church.⁷

Whether the baby was given up voluntarily for fostering/adoption with the full consent of the mother or whether there was any coercion on the part of the prison officials or church members is unknown.

Ibu Jusufa, who was detained and interrogated because of her involvement in Gerwani in Sumatra, told me about how her friend had also had her baby taken away. This friend, Ibu Tri, who was detained in the women's barracks along with Ibu Jusufa, had been raped a number of times by a man who was high up in the local government.

One of the [women in prison] with me was my friend, Tri, who was raped, and so had a baby. The name of the man who raped her was M___, who was [high up in the government], that's who

6 Ibu Rini is a pseudonym. The transcript of her interview (carried out in a town in Central Java) was given to me by the Indonesian Institute for Social History (Institut Sejarah Sosial Indonesia), Jakarta.

7 Ibu Arti is a pseudonym. The transcript of her interview was also obtained from the Indonesian Institute for Social History, Jakarta.

raped my friend. And so then she gave birth, and the baby was taken away by [him].

When I asked what had happened to the baby, Ibu Jusufa did not know what had happened, just that the father, M___, had taken the baby away and that Ibu Tri had been unable to find out what had happened to her after that. Ibu Jusufa explained how her friend was given no choice in what happened to her baby, as she was in detention and the man who had raped her was a government official.⁸

Pregnancy and Abortion

During the course of this research, I discovered a number of stories of women becoming pregnant through rape and various coerced sexual relationships. As described above, some of these children remained with their mothers, others were taken away or fostered out. In rare cases, however, pregnancies resulted in forced abortion. These abortions were unsafe, and most appear to have been attempted through intentional injury to a woman's abdomen: punching, kicking and even beating them with implements, such as rods and poles.

The testimony of one woman, "D", who was repeatedly raped while in detention, is an example of how some women were forced to abort foetuses (Komnas Perempuan 2007: 58). In this case, however, the soldiers at the camp where she was detained called for a *bidan* (midwife) to perform the abortion. The dangerous and harmful methods used by the *bidan* to force the abortion nearly cost D her life.

One day I discovered that I was pregnant. When they [the soldiers] found out, they asked me to have an abortion. They called a midwife to come to the camp to perform the abortion. [The midwife] repeatedly pushed extremely hard on my stomach until I bled. There was so much blood that I needed to be taken to the hospital in M___. I was given a blood transfusion and was in recovery for eight days. I wasn't really well recovered, but I had to go back to the camp. They started to rape me again, and the bleeding came back. I got pregnant a second time. I asked them for permission to let me take care and to let the pregnancy grow. Unfortunately, the baby was born physically deformed. [He] was so weak, he died when he was one (2007: 58).

8 Interview with Ibu Jusufa and Narny Yenny, West Sumatra, September 2005.

The fact that Ibu D was taken for medical treatment after her forced abortion at the nearby hospital was unusual. Access to any form of medical care for political prisoners was rare and, in almost all cases, services were charged to the prisoners and their families. In other cases told to me about forced abortions, injuries intentionally inflicted to bring about the destruction of the foetus were left untreated and the mother either recovered or died as a result.

In a few cases, women were injured during torture to the extent that they were unable to have children afterwards. These injuries seem to have been caused by rape, both penile and with various objects, or by severe trauma to the abdomen that caused damage to reproductive organs. In one account of a meeting in 2005 of women *eks-tapol* (ex-political prisoners) in Yogyakarta, for example, a group of women were surprised, happy and emotional to discover that their friend, who they thought had been injured too badly from rape and torture to ever become pregnant, now had three grown children.⁹

The story of Ibu Mukinem, recounted in the collection *Kembang-Kembang Genjer* (*Genjer Flowers*), is one case of a woman badly injured in such a way (Susanti 2006: 11–25). In the mid-1960s, Ibu Mukinem was a kindergarten teacher in a village outside Yogyakarta. Early one morning in 1965, she was taken from her home by soldiers and escorted to the local military post. There they questioned her about her involvement in Gerwani, but released her later that day. She was, however, forced to quit her job as a teacher and became a vegetable seller for a brief time. One of her former students came to see her one day to tell her quietly that the man she was going to marry, a university student in Yogyakarta, had been arrested and killed.

In 1967, Ibu Mukinem was again approached by some soldiers who said she needed to “clarify” some things and was taken this time to a house next to a sugar factory outside Yogyakarta. She was then taken into the factory for interrogation where she was beaten, kicked, stripped naked and electrocuted. This torture happened many times, and after each time, she was thrown back into a cell in the house next door on her own. On one occasion, her interrogators thought she had died from the torture, but when they realised a while later that she was not dead, they left her in a back room for three days without food or water. She was then returned to her cell. A few days later, Ibu Mukinem was moved from her solitary cell to the front of the house where about eighty male

9 From a typed report about the discussions held at a “Tutur Perempuan” meeting, held in Yogyakarta in July 2005. Given to me by staff at the Institute Sejarah Sosial Indonesia, Jakarta.

detainees were being kept. In there, she was dressed up “like a whore” and was

ordered to act as a prostitute. She was ordered to hug and kiss the men. The scene was set up and photos taken by her torturers. These photos were spread around [the region], even in the village where Mukinem had been born. The message from the photos was clear: Look at the Prostitute! (cited in Susanti 2006: 19).

Several times after that, Ibu Mukinem was again taken away to the sugar factory and tortured. On these occasions, she was once again stripped naked, electrocuted, hung up against a wall and beaten. When she was taken back to the large men’s cell after one of these beatings, she began continuously menstruating.

After that torture, I started continually menstruating for four months, it wouldn’t stop. The eighty men who were detained with me started making sanitary pads made out of their clothes and socks and giving them to me (cited in Susanti 2006: 20–21).

This abnormal uterine bleeding could have resulted from any of the physical trauma she endured during torture, all injuries apparently having been left untreated. From the information provided in her account, it is unclear whether, and unlikely that, Ibu Mukinem was given access to medical care.

Eventually, Ibu Mukinem ended up in the women’s detention camp, Plantungan, where she remained until 1979. Not long after her release, a friend who had been imprisoned with Ibu Mukinem introduced her to her future husband, a widower with five young children. Ibu Mukinem raised the five children as her own but was unable to have any children herself. As she believed, she was unable to become pregnant after her torture at the sugar factory. Ibu Mukinem’s husband passed away in 2002, but she is now the grandmother of many and is visited often by her children and grandchildren.

Ibu Mukinem’s testimony reveals a number of aspects of how some detainees were treated while in the custody of anti-PKI forces, particularly with regard to the denial of essential conditions for physical and mental health and well-being. While it seems incongruous to expect a basic level of care after she was intentionally physically and mentally harmed and left to die for three days after one torture session, the denial of medical care is another facet of the pathologised power relations between detainees and those responsible for them during incarceration. As she described, individuals experienced being treated “no different than an animal” by those who had become seemingly accustomed to treating

detainees with a callous disregard for their survival. For Ibu Mukinem, severe physical trauma during torture and lack of medical assistance meant an inability to have children, a loss which she describes in stark terms. She recalled lying in the dark, naked in her cell, continually menstruating: “It was then that I knew that I would never have any children of my own. Physically and mentally, I was truly destroyed” (cited in Susanti 2006: 13).

Some women were also murdered when they became pregnant. Over the last ten years, I have been told a few stories of women who had either been raped repeatedly in detention or forced into sexual slavery, and had become pregnant as a result. In these cases, when it was discovered that they were pregnant, they were murdered. For some, forced abortions were attempted but resulted in severe loss of blood and eventually death. For others, once the women were pregnant, they were murdered – particularly, it seems, in cases where the assumed father of the baby did not want to be burdened with having to take responsibility for the child.

Some such cases are documented on a “verified” list of “people raped and killed” in a few regions of Sumatra, given to me by Ibu Wanti whom I met in Jakarta. On this list are two examples of women who were killed after becoming (because they were) pregnant. The first, the short description on what happened to Ibu Lutfi, describes how an attempted forced abortion caused her death. As the description cites:

She was raped and then was pregnant. And when it was found out that she was pregnant, her stomach was kicked and trampled on, so she had a miscarriage and was bleeding and died in 1967.

In the second description, of the case of “Diah, aged 20”, the young woman is executed because the father of the baby decided to kill her:

In 1966 she was caught at [the local military command post] and detained, then a [soldier] made her a servant in his household, but seven months later she was pregnant, so her parents asked the soldier to marry her. Then a few days later, Diah’s parents were told that Diah had run away from the soldier’s home. Five days later the body of Diah was found near [the town] in the coffee plantation with gunshot wounds to the head.¹⁰

10 Institute for the Rehabilitation of the New Order Regime’s Victims (Lembaga Rehabilitasi Korban Rezim Orba, LPRKROB), “List: People Raped and Killed in the 30 September 1965 Event in the ___ Sumatra Area which have been Verified”, photocopied partial document, passed to me by Ibu Wanti, Jakarta,

For both Lutfi and Diah, becoming pregnant, in both cases the result of rape, led to their death. In Ibu Lutfi's case, once her pregnancy was discovered, an attempted abortion through the infliction of direct physical injury to her stomach resulted in her bleeding to death, though it is unclear from this short description as to whether the direct intention of this violence was to induce an abortion or to kill her. For Ibu Diah, on the other hand, she was forced into sexual slavery by a soldier, which resulted in her pregnancy. It is probable that this soldier murdered her in order to avoid dealing with her, her parents and his unwanted child.

In an interview with Ibu Yusufa and Ibu Moeliek, two women survivors I met on a number of occasions in West Sumatra, they described an incident involving a pregnant woman. As Ibu Yusufa explained, the woman was one of the detainees being transported to a local detention centre. During the transfer, she went into labour. As Ibu Yusufa's testimony reveals, the pervasive and even routine nature of violence against those arrested after the 1965 coup by anti-PKI forces resulted in an arbitrary act of violence against the woman and her baby.

One time there was a man from T____, he was on one of the trucks, one of the cars. There were lots of people on the truck. And his wife was about to give birth, so he said, "Stop for a bit, driver! My wife is about to give birth!"

"You can't!" is what [one of the soldiers] said.

And she was just shot. She was just killed then and there. His wife was about to give birth, and he was just asking permission for [her to do so] from the man in charge, "Please, sir, my wife is going to give birth."

"You can't!" he said. He shot her. Just shot her in the head. She's in one of the mass graves now. The person who saw this happen was [imprisoned] with me. That happened. He saw that happen. She was shot then and there on the truck.¹¹

Conclusion

In a December 1971 report by Amnesty International on the "most serious social tragedies" of the plight of children whose parents had been arrested or killed following the 1965 coup, the (unknown) author details

October 2005. Please note that all names have been obscured or de-identified by the use of pseudonyms. I do not know the process by which this list was compiled or its purpose.

11 Interview with Ibu Yusufa, Ibu Moeliek and Narny Yenny, September 2005, Sumatra.

cases of individual families separated by death or detention. In the report, these cases include children, from infants to teenagers, who were left to fend for themselves after one or both of their parents were killed or imprisoned and who were abandoned by relatives either too poor or too fearful to foster them, the author stating, “I have repeatedly heard of even close relatives being too scared to help children in such circumstances, which is only an indication of the fear and stigma attached to political detention in Indonesia” (Amnesty International 1971: 1). The ever-expanding sphere of influence that the taint of affiliation with former members of the PKI and political prisoners had during the New Order meant that these *anak PKI* (“PKI children”) were left without protection (see Lemelson, Supartini, and Ng 2010).

Stories about children caught up in the violence of 1965 were a major part of how women spoke about their experiences during this period. For some of the women who spoke about their children, they were able to tell stories of happy reunions, triumph over adversity, and supportive families who rebuilt their lives with their children after months and years of separation. These stories were told joyfully, and I was always happy to sit and listen to proud mothers and grandmothers talk about the accomplishments of children and grandchildren. These joyful stories, however, sit alongside so many other stories without happy endings. There were many stories about lost, abused or dead children told by women survivors of these events.

Whether the stories that women survivors told about their children ended with joyful reunions or great loss, what happened to their children played a crucial role in many of the decisions that women made during this period. Women often had to cope in situations of great physical and mental difficulty, still managing to find ways to care for children in those conditions. They also lost and grieved for children whom they could not protect or save. The stories that they tell about their children’s resilience and resourcefulness, often in highly adverse contexts, also reveal the wide range of circumstances and forms of violence which children found ways to manage and negotiate, or to which they succumbed.

In this paper, I have argued that the experiences of caring for and losing children were essential parts of women’s testimonies about this period in their lives. By examining these testimonies, I also argue that the lived experiences of violence for mothers and their children affected by the violence of 1965 are crucial to understanding the patterns and legacies of these mass killings. What happened to the mothers and their children during the genocidal violence of 1965–1966 must not be subsumed within research on the general victim population. In order to

understand the patterns and features of mass violence better, we must differentiate between groups by age, gender and other factors, in order to discern how and why these groups were more vulnerable to, and more resilient in the face of, different forms of violence (see Dadrian 2003). As such, I argue that it is vital to learn more about how children and their mothers coped with the often less visible but pervasive aspects of the mass violence of 1965.

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