

Cover Page



Universiteit Leiden



The handle <http://hdl.handle.net/1887/19070> holds various files of this Leiden University dissertation.

**Author:** Sushartami, Wiwik

**Title:** Representation and beyond : female victims in Post-Suharto media

**Date:** 2012-06-12

## **The Media in Post-Suharto Indonesia: the Rise of Women's Alternative Media**

Media culture can be an impediment to democracy to the extent that it reproduces reactionary discourses, promoting racism, sexism, ageism, classism, and other forms of prejudice. But media culture can also advance the interest of oppressed groups if it attacks such things as racism or sexism, or at least undermines them with more positive representations of race and gender (Kellner 1995: 4).

When the state's power overwhelmingly circumscribes the knowledge system, the mass media, as an institution of knowledge, or in Louis Althusser's term, the "Ideological State Apparatus" (1971), is not excluded. As the Indonesian system of knowledge had for more than three decades been shaped by the authoritarian New Order government, one may presume that a close relationship existed between the 'media culture' and the regime. The sudden change in the media tradition, from the very repressed mode of operation under the New Order to the euphoric practise of a free press after its fall, suggests that the state power had indeed been a very prominent factor in the media culture in Indonesia. However, one may not forget that it was in the spirit of 'resistance' that some media elements in Indonesia actually, in Raymond Williams' classic phrase, always "renewed, recreated, defended, and modified" (Williams 1977: 112) the state's cultural and political domination. In light of the present conditions, the rapid development of a free media in Indonesia was not solely pre-conditioned by the collapse of the New Order state; it was also influenced by the struggle and resistance of an undercurrent 'alternative media' that questioned the state's flaws. In other words, "information available from the alternative media" contributed to the society's awareness of the state's transgressions (Luwarsa 1998: 93). As such, the entwinement of the flourishing of media production and the weakening of the New Order state's control over the media following the resignation of Suharto

was both the catalyst and precursor of civic movements and the changing of the political constellation.<sup>1</sup> This does not to exclude the women's movement.

In the light of the above notion, one primary concern in this chapter is to explore the relevance of the development of the alternative media during reformasi and the emergence of the discourse of women's victimisation. One possible way of doing so is by mapping the 'mediascape' (Appadurai 2000) in Indonesia during reformasi to see the correlation between women and media liberation from the oppressive structure in force under Suharto on the one hand and the prominence of violent phenomenon on the other. Within a context of emerging violent events, media openness and lavish productions, media reports of violence against women, especially those emphasising the female victims, not only work by representing what is happening, but also by re-creating an emerging 'identity' of women as victims. An important note should be made regarding media development during reformasi and women's return to the public sphere, that is that women had increasing, though not equal to that enjoyed by men, access to media production. In accordance with this premise, as the following sections will show, the introduction of a free media during reformasi had, perhaps, a contradictory yet significant role, on the one hand, in disseminating the discourse of female victimisation, and on the other hand, in improving access for women to produce and use publications as a significant strategy in the current struggle.

I will start with an overview of the changing of the general media landscape in post-Suharto Indonesia. This will be followed by a discussion of some of the impact the demand for freedom of the press had upon women, that is, the proliferation of pornography and the problem with the way news of sexual violence against women is represented in the mainstream media, and the impact of these two problems on the formation of the discourse of female victimhood. This chapter ends with a discussion of women's alternative media that gives a different colour of media presentations in Indonesia, which are heavily toned with women's own voices, including those protesting injustice, inequality and violence against women. I will present an overview of two women's organisations that produce journals as a medium to voice their, and women's, concerns.

### **The Changing of the Mediascape**

This section discusses the 'mediascape' in Indonesia following the change of government. While the discussion will focus on the development of the

---

<sup>1</sup> The opening of the public media in chorus with the collapse of an authoritarian state is not uniquely Indonesian. See Chapter One, f.n. 14, of this thesis for reference of comparative studies.

mainstream media in post-Suharto Indonesia, it will also look back at the media under the last phase of the New Order. By looking at the media operations during the New Order and comparing it to the changes following Suharto's resignation, we can see how heavily the state discourse shaped the media tradition at that time.

Arjun Appadurai writes that the term 'mediascape' refers "both to the distribution of the electronic capabilities to produce and disseminate information" in various forms and "to the images of the world created by these media" (2000: 35). "[D]epending on their mode (documentary or entertainment), their hardware (electronic or pre-electronic), their audiences (local, national, or transnational), and the interests of those who own and control them", these mediascapes supply "large and complex repertoires of images, narratives, and ethnoscapas to viewers throughout the world, in which the world of commodities and the world of news and politics are profoundly mixed" (ibid.). These series of images are "often directly ideological and frequently have to do with the ideologies of the states and the counterideologies of movements explicitly oriented to capturing state power" or "ideoscapes" (ibid.: 36). Thus, the two key words for mediascape and ideoscape are images and ideology.

Similarly, Douglas Kellner, a media theorist, argues that "a media culture has emerged in which images, sounds, and spectacles help produce the fabric of everyday life, dominating leisure time, shaping political views and social behaviour, providing the materials out of which people forge their very identities" (1995: 1). Media culture shows the power relation in the society: who holds power and who does not. In contemporary times, "the dominant media of information and entertainment are a profound and often misperceived source of cultural pedagogy" that teach us "how to behave and what to think, feel, believe, fear, and desire – and what not" (ibid.: 2). In this light, Kellner argues that "media culture is a contested terrain across which key social groups and competing political ideologies struggle for dominance and that individuals live these struggles through the images, discourses, myths, and spectacles of media culture" (ibid.). Similar to Appadurai, Kellner emphasises images and ideology when referring to the new development of media.

The relationship between media, ideology and the state has long been observed by Louis Althusser (1971) who makes a distinction between state power and the state apparatus through the distinction between the Repressive State Apparatus and the Ideological State Apparatus. While there is only one unified Repressive State Apparatus, there are many Ideological State Apparatuses. The unified Repressive State Apparatus functions "by violence", while the Ideological State Apparatuses function "by ideology". The Repressive

State Apparatus includes “the Government, the Administration, the Army, the police, the Courts, the Prisons, etc.” Meanwhile, religion, education, the family, the legal system, the political system, trade unions, the media, and cultural industries comprise the Ideological State Apparatus (Althusser 1971: 16-17). What should be kept in mind, Althusser contends, is that no Repressive State Apparatus works without ideology, and vice versa, no Ideological State Apparatus works without violence or repression. For example, although the media industry is categorised as an Ideological State Apparatus, it also functions under repressive state strategies, such as censorship and tax regulation. The communication apparatus, for example, bombards the public daily with messages of “nationalism, chauvinism, liberalism, moralism, etc., by means of the press, the radio, and television” (ibid.: 28). The operation of this state apparatus is subjected to the ruling ideology. For example, in a patriarchal society, that is, a society wherein men become the dominant cultural players, the ideology of patriarchy is one among many other prominent ideologies that the state promotes through its Ideological State Apparatuses that function as the culture industry, including the press, radio, and television. By understanding the characteristics of the Ideological State Apparatus, we can see that in fact it works for whoever is in power. We can also see that the power of the state is in the hands of its Ideological State Apparatuses. Thus, the change in society is possible only after the Ideological State Apparatuses are modified, not necessarily by the revolution of the proletariat.

The following is a more descriptive account of the media culture during and after the New Order.<sup>2</sup>

### **The Mainstream Media Reform**

Perhaps amongst the most dramatic changes concerning the liberation of the media within the last three decades was the revision of the regulation regarding the issuing of the publishing permits (*Surat Izin Usaha Penerbitan Pers*, SIUPP) by the newly appointed Information Minister, Yunus Yosfiah, in June 1998.<sup>3</sup> The Minister promised to ‘streamline procedures’ in applying for a

---

<sup>2</sup> Parts of the following section were included in my unpublished M.A. thesis (Sushartami 2000) and a paper published based on one of its chapters (Sushartami 2010).

<sup>3</sup> SIUPP is the legacy of the Old Order’s Guided Democracy regime’s strategy to control the press. In 1963, the press was required to secure publication permits under the regulation of a Presidential Directive (*Penpres* No. 10/1960). During the ‘transitional period’ before this *penpres* was substituted with 1966 Basic Press Law (UU No. 11), publishers needed a *Surat Izin Terbit* (SIT, publishing permit) obtained from the Department of Information. From 1965 through 1977, the *Surat Izin Cetak* (SIC, printing permit) issued by the military security authority, Kopkamtib, was also required in addition to the SIT. In 1982, SIT was replaced by SIUPP. See Sen and Hill 2000: 73, footnote 8.

SIUPP, avoiding an otherwise complicated process tinted with corruption and nepotism (Sen and Hill 2000: 70, Luwarso 1998: 93).<sup>4</sup> From the time the Minister's new policy was implemented through the next eight months, "five hundred permits were issued" (Sen and Hill 2000: 79, f.n. 59), compared to "241 SIUPPs" granted during the course of the New Order government (Luwarso, 1998: 93).<sup>5</sup>

In the 1980s and the early 1990s, the Information Minister held the power to revoke SIUPP publication permits by enforcing a 1984 Ministerial Regulation. The most significant recall was the revocation of the SIUPP of three news publications—*Tempo* and *Editor* magazines, and *Detik* tabloid—in June 1994. This move by the government was based on the accusation that these publications "had threatened national stability" after *Tempo* published its investigation on the "questionable financial dealings of members of the Suharto cabinet" (Luwarso 1998: 87).<sup>6</sup> These bans precipitated public protest. Many journalists blamed the *Persatuan Wartawan Indonesia* (PWI, Union of Indonesian Journalists) not only for failing to defend the publications, but also for accepting the government's action, which they regarded as comprehensible (Luwarso 1998: 88). These disappointed journalists eventually established an alternate union, *Aliansi Jurnalis Indonesia* (AJI, Alliance of Indonesian Journalists) in August 1994, a move which in turn led to stern reactions by PWI and the Information Minister.

The television industry also developed in a similar way. The history of television in Indonesia began on 24 August 1962. *Televisi Republik Indonesia* (TVRI, Television of the Republic of Indonesia) was established to broadcast the Asian Games, a sports event for Asian countries, during the Sukarno era. Since its inception, TVRI has been the state's instrument for propaganda. Under the New Order, TVRI had three main goals: "the promotion of national unity and integration; the promotion of national stability; and the promotion of political

---

<sup>4</sup> Sen and Hill, for example, noted that government ministers could secure the SIUPP easily, including BJ Habibie (then Minister for Research and Technology) for his daily newspaper, *Republika*, and Harmoko (then Information Minister) for *Pos Kota* newspaper (Sen and Hill 2000: 59).

<sup>5</sup> After the Indonesian independence through the end of B.J. Habibie's presidency in 1999, the information state office was named *Departemen Penerangan* (Information Department). Under the brief leadership of Abdurrahaman Wahid, or Gus Dur, (1999-2001) the information state office was closed on the basis that this department had been used as a propaganda apparatus of the former government and was not in accordance with the spirit of freedom of the press. When Megawati assumed power (2001- 2004) she reopened it as the *Kementerian Negara Komunikasi dan Informasi* (State Ministry for Communication and Information). At the present time, under Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, this state office was renamed *Kementerian Komunikasi dan Informatika Republik Indonesia* (Ministry for Communication and Information, Republic of Indonesia).

<sup>6</sup> The reason for the revocation was believed to be connected to its cover story that investigated the government's plan to import used war ships from Germany and the objection of the Army to this plan. See Steele 2005.

stability" (Kitley 1997: 4). Its main programs telecast the activities of the state's officers, presidential speeches and "other special events such as Independence Day, Kartini's Day (Indonesian Women's Day), etc." (Wardhana 1997: 6). In 1980, TVRI changed its policy and began to broadcast commercials because it needed funding to improve the quality of its programmes. This change soon stirred a controversy. The effect of advertisements in encouraging consumerism was considered to be disadvantageous for people in rural areas. The following year, 1981, the state revoked this policy change and banned commercials on TVRI (Malik 1996: 179). This also maximised the function of TVRI as the state's propaganda instrument.

The first private television station, RCTI (*Rajawali Citra Televisi Indonesia*) began broadcasting on 24 August 1989. The establishment of this first private television station was followed by SCTV (*Surya Citra Televisi Indonesia*) in 1990, TPI (*Televisi Pendidikan Indonesia*, Indonesian Educational Television) in 1991, AN-teve in 1993, and Indosiar in 1995.<sup>7</sup> Initially, only the Jakarta area could receive RCTI and SCTV broadcasts via satellite disc reception. The restriction of these two private television stations' telecasts to the Jakarta area was based on similar concerns with the decision to ban commercials on TVRI, that is, to protect the rural population from consumerism. In 1993, the state gave permission to both television stations to air nationwide. The official reason given for this policy change was to enable the dissemination of information to the entire nation, however this move was essentially driven by the need for higher commercial earnings.

In 1987, the New Order state announced an 'open sky policy', by which Indonesia opened itself to the worldwide media. In that same year, Indonesia launched the first Palapa B2P satellite, followed by the second Palapa B2R in 1990, and Palapa B4 in 1993. These satellites were launched to improve communication technology in Indonesia. By 1993, CNN, HBO, NBC, and Australia Television International (ATVI), among other stations, were accessible in Indonesia (Kitley 1997: 179-80). RCTI, the first private television channel, brought commercials back to the television screen after their absence from television programming for approximately eight years. In addition to this, RCTI disrupted the monopoly of the state's propaganda broadcasts and introduced its own news programme, *Seputar Indonesia*, Around Indonesia. RCTI ceased to broadcast the official ceremonies of state's functionaries or all of

---

<sup>7</sup> The owners of all of these private television stations are closely related to the former president Suharto. Bambang Trihatmojo, Suharto's son, owns RCTI; Sudwikatmono, Suharto's cousin, is the major shareholder of SCTV; Siti Hardiyanti Rukmana, Suharto's daughter, owns TPI; AN-teve is owned by the well-favoured business company, the Bakrie Group; while Indosiar is owned by Suharto's close business associate Liem Sioe Liong. See Kitley 1997: 260. For the latest and most extensive media mapping, see Lim 2011.

the speeches by government ministers. In its initial run in the early 1990s, *Seputar Indonesia* telecast student demonstrations and protests by Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO) activists (Wardhana 1997: 19-20). Meanwhile, SCTV was once known as the *Saluran Cerita Telenovela*, Channel for *Telenovela*, a genre of soap opera imported from Latin America and dubbed into the Indonesian language. In 1995, SCTV aired six to eight titles of telenovela daily from Monday through Friday. However, during the critical period of Indonesia's democratisation process in the late 1990s, SCTV became the leading channel for news and information with its famous programme, *Liputan 6*, News 6, which was originally aired twice a day at 6 a.m. and 6 p.m.

Aside from the print and electronic media, the Internet also started to blossom in the late 1990s. The development of the Internet vis-à-vis the democratic process signifies the growth of electronic media, while at the same time shows the eager utilisation of this 'new' kind of media for civic movement (see Sen and Hill 2000; Lim 2005). A part of the society that also made use of the Internet were women. For example, KPI used the Internet to extend their electronically-mediated protest against Suharto (see Chapter Two). Although this development in the media culture in post-Suharto Indonesia may seem to have no direct correlation with how the discourse of female victimhood rose during that period, bear in mind that democratisation of the media may set very solid grounds for sub-stream voices to surface and spread. When related to the period of democratising Indonesia, voices once repressed—among others, those of women and female victims—may then be voiced and heard through the Internet. Discussions, or often abuse of mediated images, of the cases of the May 1998 rapes, for example, circulated widely and wildly, on the Internet (see Chapter Four). While some of the Internet-circulated 'stories' and 'images' of the rapes may have read and looked gruesome, they have no doubt facilitated the dissemination of the discourse of violence against women.

Before we proceed to the conditions in the post-Suharto media culture, let us look back to the mediascape of the previous regime, that is, when the state was a dominating force in shaping the identity of Indonesian women through the dissemination of its gender ideology via the mainstream media.

### ***Dominant Representations of Women in the Mainstream Media under Suharto***

Under the New Order rule, the media became a vehicle for state propaganda, including its gender ideology (see Chapter Two). Popular representations of women were constructed following the dominant prescribed models of domesticated wives and mothers. The dominant theme in Indonesian television *sinetron* (*sinema elektronik*, electronic cinema), for example, was that



of “dependent, emotional, passive, weak, and incapable women subject to the leadership of men” (Aripurnami 1996). This model was also prominent in national films. Indonesian cinema showed twisted stories of women who embraced unconventional roles outside the appeal as “wife, mother, and prostitutes” (Sen 1994). Most domestically-made films that depicted stories about prostitutes used the female body to sell the films, while at the same time used the film to condemn these women. The tragic endings of these movies, for example, the death of the prostitute, were affirmations of a “symbolic system” that could not tolerate the sexual activities of unmarried women. This treatment could also be applied to those who were not prostitutes, thus making them de facto prostitutes.

Meanwhile, in the popular print media, the most noticeable characteristics were the dominant images of women, both in pictures and texts. These images were presented mainly to “serve as symbolic representations of a burgeoning consumer culture; of the growing Islamic movement; or the moral deficits of modern society” (Brenner 1999: 17-18). In the 1980s, the representations of women in print advertisements focused predominantly on depictions of middle-class and upper-class women in domestic roles (Tomagola 1998: 42-43). These depictions helped to maintain the ideology of the ‘domestication’ of women. Recent studies of women and media in Indonesia, situated within the debates of the power of the state in shaping identity and public ideas, also reveal that images and roles of women were heavily influenced by the New Order’s discourse of female identity, that is, the image of passive, obedient female subjects (Ibrahim and Suranto 1998: xlv).

In the 1990s, the representations of “the proletariat, the rural, the provincial” women were absent in most of the popular Indonesian print media (Sen 1998: 35-36). While working women were iconised as symbols of Indonesia’s modernity in the global economy and culture, these icons were represented more by the ‘professional’ rather than the ‘proletarian’ women (ibid.: 35). The increasing prominence of professional working women in print advertisements can be a premise for an argument regarding the shifting role of middle-class women in contemporary Indonesian politics, culture and economy. In this light, the agenda for gender equality in Indonesia was created by the emergence of professional working women who were no longer bound by household tasks.

### ***The State’s Gender Ideology Challenged***

The state’s dominant gender ideology was, thus, not only produced and reproduced in the official narratives, but also in popular imagery. The process of corporation, denial, and negotiation of the official gender ideology in popular images resulted in turn in contradictory conceptions of gender and sexuality.

Although the state actively attempted to control and construct concepts of gender by policing and regulating women's bodies and sexuality, there was always dynamic resistance, negotiation, and reinterpretations of gender meanings at the ground level. In the context of perpetual tension of complex and hierarchical relations between the official and popular concepts, the negotiation of gender meanings may have expanded not only at the national, but also at "the local, ritual, and personal levels of daily lives" (Ong and Peletz 1995: 3-4). The hegemonic forms of gendered power practised by the state therefore faced perpetual contestations and negotiation by women and men in all aspects of their lives. Thus, it may be illusionary to claim "the essentialist notion of women and Indonesia", as the "margins of feminine identities in Indonesian historical and narrative tradition" were "shifting and illusive" (Sears 1996: 4). By focusing on the manifold stories and experiences of Indonesian women, we can thus challenge the authoritative "regime of representations" through which the dominant concept of femininity modelled on the domestic ideology of the middle-class and promoted by the state was circulated.

Along with the booming of economies and the burgeoning consumer culture among the 'new rich' in Asia (see Robison and Goodman 1996; Pinches 1999), explorations of the process of defining new gender identities have obviously been negligible. This is discernible as the parameter of modernity is based on large-scale industrialisation, centralised power in the hands of the state, and affluent middle-class movements, with a strong tendency to overlook and/or exclude women. However, political realities should include political practise in everyday life, such as conduct in "the kitchens, living room, bedrooms, workplaces and malls of Asia as well as in the stock exchanges and parliamentary chambers" (Stivens 2002: 3). The growing consumer culture in this region indulged the reworking of gender meanings through the politics of everyday life as consumption provided a site for the constant search for, and construction of, new identities. The emergence of new conceptions of femininity, particularly shown by market segmentation and advertising presentations that focus on female consumers in this region, can be seen as a central symptom and effect of the development of these burgeoning economies. This construction of new female identities was very much promulgated by both the print and electronic media.

There were then multiple meanings of femininity in Indonesian media presentations. While the New Order state tried to enforce its official gender conceptions of feminine, passive women, this does not mean that there was no resistance. A proliferation of images of Indonesian women in a variety of themes in the growing media industry challenged the state's hegemonic gender ideology. This media culture, although loaded with certain ideas, provided a

venue for debates on the fluidity of gender meanings in its presentations. As such, gender meanings cannot be considered fixed systems, but must rather be perceived as sites where contradictory ideologies are contested and perpetually create new conceptions of gender relations. Through the interaction between the state's gender ideology and the proliferation of images presented in the media, people produce and reproduce new meanings, which are influenced by their social, political and historical contexts. The media has also been considered as "a dynamic site of struggle over representation, and complex spaces in which subjectivities are constructed and identities are contested" (Spitulnik 1993: 296). Broader public views on gender are presented through the burgeoning of female images in newspapers, magazines, tabloids, radios, television programmes, and the Internet, and, consequently, the state gender discourse is contested, resisted, and negotiated. How would the representations of women evolve following the change of governments?

### **Reformasi and Change**

As mentioned above, reformasi has been a major impact on the mediascape in Indonesia. One of the most important changes people refer to following the weakening of the state's power and deregulation of media industry is the freedom of the press. However, did this freedom result only in positive developments and not precipitate any negative effects?

### ***Freedom of the Press: Pornography and News of Sexual Violence against Women***

It must be noted that the most recent developments of women's movements in Indonesia occurred in tandem with the explosion of media productions. Both women's movements and media development are part and parcel of the process of redefining identity. However, media development during reformasi has been related to the freedom of the press, or as in the popular Indonesian phrase, *kebebasan media yang kebablasan*, "freedom of the media that goes too far" (see Chapter One). Below, I will discuss how freedom of the press influenced the proliferation of pornography and how cases of violence against women are represented.

### ***Pornography and Women***

The issue of pornography started to stir the mass media since the 1990s. For some people, pornography is seen as an excess of the loosening of cultural values and religious norms in the face of the explosion of media with global perspectives. For others, pornography in Indonesia has political dimensions. There was an argument that the proliferation of sexual genres of popular

culture, such as pornographic movies, commercialised sexual consultation rubrics in popular magazines, and the mushrooming of erotic discotheques in urban areas, cannot be disentangled from the New Order state's attempt to repress social movements (Ibrahim 1997).

Throughout the period after the fall of the New Order, there have been several major social controversies concerning pornography. The earliest occurred in 1999, in the midst of relentless multi-dimensional tension immediately following the downfall of the New Order government. Concern arose, primarily in the urban areas of Jakarta and other big cities, over displays of semi-naked female bodies on popular magazine covers. On 24 June 1999, the police interrogated Sophia Latjuba, a top Indonesian model, regarding her allegedly promiscuous picture on the cover of *Populer* magazine (Bernas 1999). Other female models, male photographers, and editors were also interrogated.

The issue of pornography created a vigorous public discourse involving the female models, the government, the enraged community, women activists, intellectuals, and the media. Arguments varied and pornography was analysed from many angles. Some viewed pornography as an art form, while others saw it as a reflection of bigotry. It was also argued that the issue of pornography was only another strategy to enshroud larger issues, such as corruption (*Tempo* 1999). The media industry denied that they were disseminating pornography. Meanwhile, hundreds of veiled Muslim women in Jakarta protested against the magazines and the female models (*Detikcom* 1999a & 1999b). Members of the Indonesian press society were in the midst of the confrontation. They resisted the attempts to compromise the issue of pornography with the issue of freedom of expression for which they were fighting. They found that the issue of pornography had been overtly blown up in the media and were concerned that it may endanger the process of the democratisation of the media (*Tempo* 1999).

In the second half of 2001, the issue of pornography again stirred the Indonesian public media community. This time the debate was focused on television programming. As a result of the proliferation of new television stations, most criticism focused on the uncontrollable quality, or lack thereof, of the broadcasted programmes.

The issue of pornography also led to the formation of a new alliance among women's organisations. An anti-pornography demonstration, loosely using the loan phrase 'class action', was held by a coalition of 20 Islamic women's organisations under then name of *Badan Musyawarah Organisasi Islam Wanita Indonesia* (BMOIWI, Council for Indonesian Women's Islamic Organisations) in observation of both the Islamic New Year and International Women's Day (*Media Indonesia*, 1 March 2002). BMOIWI, through an open letter published in *Media Indonesia* daily newspaper on 5 March 2002, expressed their support for

the *tausiyah* (Ar., suggestion) by the Council of Indonesian Ulama (*Majelis Ulama Indonesia*, MUI) dated 19 February 2002, to protest pornography in the media, especially television, as it had the broadest media audience. The key phrases used in this war against pornography ranged from “the degradation of cultural values”, “the negative effect of western liberalism”, “against the *sharia*”, “sexual harassment against women”, “the degradation of the younger generation”, and “class action”. There was still, however, the risk of exposing the religious conflict behind the issue of pornography, as sexual freedom was sometimes loosely associated with western culture and, thus, Christianity; hence, the war against pornography became a war of religions and a war against moral degradation, which was an effect of modernity. The stance against pornography became a symbol of holiness.

In 2004, the pornography controversy was revived with a widely publicised dispute between an emergent dangdut star, Inul Daratista, and the dangdut ‘king’ Rhoma Irama. This controversy even stimulated the demand for the implementation of anti-pornography legislation. After prolonged public debates on the draft, and amidst vigorous protests by artists, activists and a cross-section of the public, the House of Representatives finally legalised a draft of the bill on 30 October 2008. Further discussion of this controversy is presented in Chapter Nine.

#### *Rapes in the Media: Troubled Association*

The Indonesian legal system as contained in the Indonesian Criminal Code (*Kitab Undang-undang Hukum Pidana*, KUHP) and Indonesian Criminal Procedure Code (*Kitab Undang-undang Hukum Acara Pidana*, KUHP) does not provide a clear definition of rape. For example, marital rape is absent in the legal definition because wives are not seen to be potential victims of abuse by their husbands. Many feminist activists have proposed that marital rape be included in the legal definition, thus spurring attempts by feminist organisations to revise the KUHP.<sup>8</sup> It is also problematic that penetration of the vagina by certain objects, as occurred during the May 1998 gang-rapes, may not fall into the legal definition of rape (Heryanto 1999: 310).

In the media there are several Indonesian terms used to refer to rape. A study on the media reports of rape cases in Yogyakarta and Central Java in two local daily newspapers, *Kedaulatan Rakyat* and *Suara Merdeka*, throughout 1994-1995, found that there have been approximately 20 words used to

---

<sup>8</sup> The revision of KUHP and KUHP had not been finalised as of November 2011. However, after quite strong insistence from some members of the House of Representative (DPR, *Dewan Perwakilan Rakyat*), marital rape was eventually included in the 2004 Anti-Domestic Violence Law. See Munti 2005(b).

describe rape (Abar and Subardjono 1998).<sup>9</sup> The formal Indonesian word, *perkosa*, does not refer exclusively to the act of rape for most Indonesian speakers, let alone for those who only speak their own local regional languages.<sup>10</sup> In the cases covered by the two local dailies, the lack of the ‘visual metaphors’ to describe rape is substituted by the use of other words that, for various reasons, may clarify the meaning of the word *perkosa*. However, some of the corresponding words fail to emphasise rape as an act of transgressing another person’s sexuality by means of forced sexual contact. For example, the word *digarap* (Javanese, to be worked on or cultivated) has a closer implication with the act of cultivating land. Replacing the word *diperkosa* with *digarap* brackets rape together with the work of land cultivation, which has connotations of being productive, rather than destructive. This also applies to other examples of vague corresponding Indonesian verbs used to refer to rape, such as *menggitukan* and *dianuin*, which are based on the root words *gitu* and *anu*, both of which vaguely refer to an unspecified act. Thus, *menggitukan* means somebody does something unnamed to somebody else, and *dianuin* is similarly unspecific but in passive form. The meanings of these two words, however, often have sexual connotations.

The narrations of cases of rapes and other sexual abuses against women as reported in the newspapers are usually careless about the perceptions of the raped women. The choice of the words used in the report influences how the victims are positioned in the narratives. The descriptions of the victims as ‘beautiful’ and ‘sexy’ suggest that they deserve to be raped.<sup>11</sup> The raped women sometimes have to face a ‘second rape’ when reporting the crime to police officers who then accuse them of prompting the rapes. The victims are often blamed that their “actions, physical appearance or clothing” caused the rapes (Baso and Idrus 2002: 204). Based on these accusations, the newspaper reports also often emphasise the sensual aspects of the rapes by describing in detail the physical appearances of the raped women.<sup>12</sup>

---

<sup>9</sup> The Indonesian Thesaurus (Endarmoko 2006) lists more than 15 words associated with the verb *perkosa* (to rape), including *makan* (eat, a metaphor), *melalap* (engulf), and *meniduri* (to sleep on). However, the word *perkosa* often is also used to refer to words associated with violation of (others’) rights.

<sup>10</sup> *Perkosa* is the root word. It can also act as a verb, usually with either the prefix *me-* or *di-*, thus forming *memperkosa* (active) and *diperkosa* (passive). Its noun form is *perkosaan*.

<sup>11</sup> Media sensualisation of the female victims is not only restricted to cases of rape. In the murder cases of three women that allegedly involved state functionaries in the 1980s, the media presented the victims as ‘sexual’, while the perpetrators as ‘asexual’. For further discussion, see Sunindyo 1996.

<sup>12</sup> Baso and Idrus found, for example, a report in *Fajar*, a Makassar daily newspaper, that “three young men ruined the beautiful body of the girl” (12 January 2000). The word ‘ruined’ was translated earlier in this article as *diobok-obok* (Baso and Idrus 2002).

Concealing the names of victims of sexual violence by using initials or pseudonyms is common.<sup>13</sup> In Indonesia, the use of initials or pseudonyms to hide the identification of rape victims complies with journalistic regulations.<sup>14</sup> The *Kode Etik Wartawan Indonesia* (Indonesian Journalists' Code of Ethics) states that in reporting cases of rape or sexual harassment, journalists should not mention the identities of the victims in the interest of protecting and guarding the victims' reputations (*tidak menyebutkan identitas korban, untuk menjaga dan melindungi kehormatan korban*).<sup>15</sup> However, since the code of ethics does not regulate what kinds of pseudonyms are allowed or ethically recommended, the choice to use initials or particular words as a pseudonym is personal or dependent on a current trend among journalists. As opposed to the use of initials, which usually consist of one to three first, or combined, letters of the victims' names<sup>16</sup> or first letters of each name if their complete names consist of more than one name, the use of specific words with specific connotations that are used as pseudonyms can influence the entire tone of the narration.

What remains distinctive about Indonesian newspapers is the almost ubiquitous use, in both local and national newspaper reports,<sup>17</sup> of the names of certain flowers as pseudonyms for victims of sexual violence, such as, most prominently, *mawar* (rose) and *melati* (jasmine).<sup>18</sup> Historical tracing of when the media started to use flower names as pseudonyms for female victims of sexual violence appears to be impossible.<sup>19</sup> This trend among journalists to use

---

<sup>13</sup> This is also true in the news reports about the rapes during the disintegration of the former Yugoslavia. See Zarkov 1999.

<sup>14</sup> Initials are also commonly used to conceal the names of criminals in newspapers. James Siegel finds that in the case of *Pos Kota*, a Jakarta based crime newspaper, the use of initials, which is reasoned by law, together with the photographs of cross-bared faces of criminals on its front page, remains typical for this paper, although not for others. See Siegel 1998(a).

<sup>15</sup> The interpretation of the Indonesian journalists' Code of Ethics, Article 4 (<http://pwirjabar.4t.com/kodepen.html>).

<sup>16</sup> As a note, many Indonesians only have one word in their names.

<sup>17</sup> I am concerned less with the quantitative account of use of these pseudonyms than with their manifestations that can be found in various newspapers. The examples discussed here are taken from my readings of hundreds of newspaper pieces in *Kompas*, *Media Indonesia*, *Koran Tempo*, *Republika*, *Kedaulatan Rakyat*, and *Pos Kota* on rapes that occurred between 2001-2004. My sources are not only the news clippings provided by YJP, but also those that my assistants and I collected during my field work in Indonesia, and those that I downloaded from the Internet during my stay in the Netherlands. The clippings cover not only rape cases, but also other kinds of violence against women.

<sup>18</sup> My Dutch friends recall that local and national Dutch-language newspapers in the Netherlands usually refer the victims of rapes as *de vrouw* (the woman, the lady).

<sup>19</sup> There has not been any study that exactly pinpoints the period when the use of this kind of pseudonym became common. The sources that I analysed, although commenting on the use of these pseudonyms, also did not pinpoint when exactly the practise began.

flower names to conceal the identity of female victims of violence is, of course, not a violation of the code of ethics.<sup>20</sup>

Women are generally associated with flowers. The resultant connotation that women and flowers share certain characteristics has wide currency in print media and popular culture. In Indonesia, phrases such as *kembang desa* (lit., 'flower of the village', referring to the most popular and attractive women in a village) and *janda kembang* (lit., 'flower widow', referring to a young, attractive widow) are commonly used. Those phrases have an exclusive connotation with the sexuality of young, fresh, attractive women. These phrases, which have become widely used in the print media and popular culture, have contributed to the building of the socio-historical gender identity of Indonesian women. The logic behind this association is that if women are flowers, then naturally, men are the bees that are attracted to them and suck the nectar out of the flowers. When the names of flowers are used to refer to female victims, they are in effect constructing a whole narration, and its logic, of the rapes and female victimisation. In fact, use of flower names to emphasise the myth of 'women as flowers' is ironic in this case, as the female victims no longer exemplify the characteristics of flowers: they are no longer fresh, sacred (as *melati*) or fragrant (as *mawar*). Perhaps they were similar to these flowers prior to the rape. Or perhaps they are like flowers that are plucked and thrown away, short-lived and fragile. Here the association, or perhaps myth, as Barthes describes it, functions "to talk about them [the rapes]; simply, it purifies them, it makes them innocent, [as innocent as picking flowers] it gives them a natural and eternal justification" (Barthes 1972: 143).

By emphasising the loss of virginity, these newspapers also reproduce "the stigmas of illegitimate loss of virginity" (Heryanto 1999: 302).<sup>21</sup> By positioning the rape victims as individuals who have lost their virginity as a result of the attack, the media has in effect duplicated the violence against the victims. The stigmatisation against rape victims, based on the perception that the victims have lost their virginity, which is described by the metaphor of 'deflowering', has its political import. This particular play of associations is possible only in a

---

<sup>20</sup> One study about the use of these pseudonyms, was conducted by a trainee at the Yogya Institute of Research, Education and Publications (LP3Y) and printed in their 2002 newsletter covering their programmes for AIDS, gender and reproductive health, reported on the tendency of the newspapers, referring to local ones during the period of 2001-2002, to use the names of flowers as pseudonyms in the cases of rape and sexual harassment of female children. The article points out that names of flowers are used to refer predominantly to *perempuan belia* (very young women) victims of rapes and sexual harassment. See LP3Y 2002.

<sup>21</sup> This stigma was also prominently circulating in the cases of the May 1998 rapes, see Heryanto 1999. More discussion is presented in Chapter Four.



society that still, however hypocritically, perceives virginity as the sole signification of a women's sanctity.

In the above discussion, I argue that the association of women with flowers has contributed as much to the way female victims of rapes and sexual violence are represented in the Indonesian press, as to how it has duplicated the violence against those women through its mechanism of building a narration around it. It means that in order to stabilise this association, or myth, of the female victim with a flower, the narration about how the bee sucks the nectar out of the flower is an unspoken assumption. This is the point where, according to Barthes,

[...] myth is experienced as innocent speech: not because its intentions are hidden—if they were hidden, they could not be efficacious—but because they are naturalized (Barthes 1972: 131).

Since flowers are associated exclusively with women, the use of the flower names *mawar* and *melati* applies only to female victims of sexual violence, although there may also be male victims of these crimes.<sup>22</sup> This practise has further marked a difference between males and females where the identities of the female victims are uniformly determined and naturalised as victims. I found no indication of subsequent loss of male victims' futures, whereas female victims, by losing their virginity, not only lose their futures, but are also robbed of their sense of beauty and value.

According to the editor of *Swara*, there is a popular parallel drawn between women and flowers as represented in popular songs.<sup>23</sup> While Ninuk Pambudi notices that the use of flower names is common in newspaper reports, she rejects the suggestion that there is an agreement amongst journalists. If there is indeed an increasing use of the practise, it should be seen more as a trend than a consensus. She further acknowledges that those journalists who prefer to use this kind of pseudonym:

[...] may not be aware that what they do is disadvantageous for women and intentionally do that to put them in a disadvantageous position. [...] but because of the stereotyping of [women as flowers], this [using of flower

---

<sup>22</sup> Although cases of sexual violence are also reported to happen to male victims, both adult and children, the references to the male victims usually use the victim's initials or common names as pseudonyms.

<sup>23</sup> For example, two songs entitled *Mawar Berduri* (Thorny Rose) and *Melati Suci* (Sacred Jasmine). The song *Mawar Berduri*, tells a story of a woman who likes to tempt men, but in the end, hurts their feelings. Here, *mawar* symbolises something beautiful and fragrant, but dangerous. Meanwhile, *Melati Suci* shows the jasmine flower as a symbol of sacred offerings to Mother Earth. The composer of this song, Guruh Sukarno Putra, the youngest son of the first President of Republik Indonesia, dedicated it to his mother, Fatmawati.

names as pseudonyms] is to provide an intensifying effect (*efek penyngatan*), and perhaps also subconsciously to dramatise it because flowers are [associated with] something beautiful and if ruined the damage is irreparable.<sup>24</sup>

Meanwhile, a male columnist and novelist, Veven SP Wardhana,<sup>25</sup> is more apologetic concerning the practise. While acknowledging that journalists, like most members of the Indonesian society, still ‘imagine’ (*dalam bayangan*) that the condition of a rape victim is not ‘rehabilitatable’, either physically or emotionally, he considers the use of such pseudonyms (that is, flower names) as an effort to demonstrate sympathy, “or even empathy”. He suggested that the phrase *bunga dipetik* (plucked flower) may be a euphemism among the journalists to mean “not yet ripe, but already shaken off the tree” (*belum matang tapi sudah dirontokkan*).<sup>26</sup>

According to the director of the *Lembaga Penelitian, Pendidikan, dan Penerbitan Yogya* (LP3Y, Yogya Institute of Research, Education and Publications), Ashadi Siregar,<sup>27</sup> the use of pseudonyms follows the journalist code of ethics that conceals the identities of the victims of sexual violence. However, he also acknowledges that as practised, ironically it reflects the journalists’ lack of gender sensitivity as they often unintentionally “abuse” the victims through the nature of their reporting.<sup>28</sup> He suspects that most Indonesian journalists are still not aware about the violence implicit in the reduction of the identities of rape victims to the metaphors of plucked flowers. In addition, he mentions that the basic objective of LP3Y training is intended to raise ‘gender awareness’, primarily concerning the use of *bahasa dalam peliputan*, the language of news coverage, including the use of appropriate pseudonyms in reporting cases of sexual violence against women.<sup>29</sup> These corresponding arguments and disagreements show that there is a contestation about what is proper and improper in media representation according to a feminist perspective.

---

<sup>24</sup> Email correspondence with Ninuk Pambudi, 14 August 2004.

<sup>25</sup> As a note, Wardhana joined the group, *laki-laki feminis* (male feminists), an activity sponsored by Yayasan Jurnal Perempuan.

<sup>26</sup> Email correspondence with Veven SP Wardhana, 14 August 2004. His perception that the pseudonyms refer to female child victims of rapes is in line with that proposed in the LP3Y newsletter.

<sup>27</sup> As one who is actively involved in training journalists, especially with a programme for gender mainstreaming in media, Siregar is familiar with feminist issues and is gender-aware.

<sup>28</sup> Adriana Venny, the Programme Manager of YJP also finds similar concern over how cases of rape are presented, such as by use of the word *menodai* (tint), which does not convey the seriousness of the crime. She further argues that the victim, in this case, will be victimised the second time. Interview with Adriana Venny, Programme Manager of YJP (20 September 2002).

<sup>29</sup> Email correspondence with Ashadi Siregar, 25 August 2004.

It is also noteworthy that analysing these pseudonyms also reveals the political economy behind journalism in Indonesia during reformasi. Hand-in-hand with the jargon of *kebebasan pers* (freedom of the press) is, in fact, *kebebasan yang bertanggung jawab* (accountable freedom) that is manifested in the vivacity of media watch organisations and public figures to monitor whether the journalists and the media industry are responsible in acting within the newly acquired press freedom. As the state regulations on the press and publications were revised (as discussed earlier), the state relinquished control over the media. Monitoring of media production shifted to public institutions and individuals. The new energy in the Indonesian press has been accompanied with rapid development of media technology, running streams of information from foreign sources, and dynamic cooperation between local and foreign non-government organisations. However, in order to catch up with these new developments, much must be done, including formulating clear guidelines and training for journalists who, according to Siregar, are lacking in gender-awareness.<sup>30</sup>

Above, we discussed the drawbacks in the development of the mainstream media during reformasi, in which freedom of the press was often misinterpreted as “everything is possible”. Below, we will discuss the rise of alternative media for women that utilise the democratisation of the press as an evolving opportunity to voice their own concerns. While, on the one hand, simply speaking, the rise of pornography and vicious representations of violence might be seen as the drawbacks of reformasi, on the other hand, reformasi also introduced opportunities for more progressive media produced for, and by, women to emerge.

### ***Women’s Alternative Media: Voicing the Unheard***

As discussed earlier, during reformasi, there was an explosion of print media, much, but not all, of which, related to women. One example of the positive impact of the liberation of the press for women is in the publication of *Swara*, a weekly insert in the national daily newspaper, *Kompas*. The editor-in-chief of *Swara*, Ninuk Pambudi, explained that *Swara* was introduced in the late 1990s, the crucial time for the women’s movement, on the brink of change in political administrations following the resignation of Suharto. Initially, it appeared as a tabloid consisting of approximately 12 pages, however after about eight months, this form was regarded too as costly and its publication stopped. *Swara* reappeared again a few months later, no longer in the form of a separate tabloid, but as a supplement in the daily paper. Besides the reduction in cost,

---

<sup>30</sup> Email correspondence with Ashadi Siregar, 25 August 2004.

another advantage was that *Swara* became more embedded within the mainstream media.<sup>31</sup> Reflecting the issues concerning women in Indonesia, *Swara* focuses on features of local women, descriptive reports of women's events, and also academic/theoretical writings on women's studies fitted to a newspaper format. Articles in *Swara* also show the shift in the media focus towards more plural, region-based and current issues on women.

Another consequence of the media explosion is that more events and stories are adopted and covered as news pieces. The media, of course, needs material for their news coverage and feature articles. In the case of crime news, the escalation of women's organisations after the fall of the New Order contributed to the coverage of cases, such as marital rape and domestic violence that had formerly been tabooed from press coverage. Newspapers began to report studies of those cases, as well as the endeavours by women and social groups to address these issues. Journalists can access reports of rape cases that are filed in both the Women's Crisis Centres (WCC) and police offices. All activists need media coverage to convey their concerns to the general public and, more relevantly, to disseminate data about violence against women. These presentations can be in the forms of posters, postcards, newsletters, journals, and websites. Rifka Annisa WCC in Yogyakarta, for example, has a monthly updated list of cases of violence against women.<sup>32</sup> There was also an increase in women's organisations with other focuses. After 1998, many publications on women appeared, including those focusing on urban, consumer-oriented ideas and living styles, such as popular magazines, tabloids, and novels, as well as those offering more progressive and self-consciously feminist ideas and approaches. These latter offerings are referred to as alternative media (see Chapter One).

The emergence of the new wave of feminism in Indonesia has to a significant extent contributed to the proliferation of new media, but presumably also builds on this proliferation. Media becomes the bedrock of protests and demonstrations expressing and producing collective identities. Collective action always requires a shared collective ground, yet also produces or consolidates that same ground. While under the New Order regime, these actions were always directed against the state power through a quite parallel oppositional mode of movement. After the fall of the New Order, the movement needed new grounds from, and to, which to act. Among many possibilities for alternative grounds, symbolic actions may have the potential to shake the old

---

<sup>31</sup> Interview with Ninuk Pambudi, editor of *Swara*, 11 November 2002.

<sup>32</sup> Rifka Annisa was established in 1993, and was initially concerned only with the issue of advocacy for the victims of violence against women. Recently they have included the development of human resources for the elimination of violence against women in their programme. They disseminate their data, through reports on their website ([www.rifka-annisa.or.id](http://www.rifka-annisa.or.id)).

grounds of the practical oppositional mode of movement. New words of dissension as symbolic means of protests, which colour the latest developments of women's movements in Indonesia, may be among those various symbolic actions that in themselves can decentre the traditional kinds of political practises of protest and dissension against the state.

The following section describes two women's organisations and their publications. This discussion presents an overview on how the weakening of the state resulted positively in the development of women's movements and media production. I take two examples of the alternative women's media produced by two women's organisations, i.e., Rahima, a Muslim women's organisation, and Yayasan Jurnal Perempuan (hence YJP), a highbrow women's organisation focusing specifically on publications for women. Rahima has a regular journal called *Swara Rahima* (SR, *Voice of Rahima*), while, YJP has various productions, including the bi-monthly journal, *Jurnal Perempuan* (JP, *Women's Journal*). I find these two women's organisations and their respective publications representative of the progressive women's media and their sympathy for women, particularly female victims. During my field research in Jakarta, I concentrated my time and attention on these organisations,<sup>33</sup> which will be discussed in the following section. In Chapters Six and Seven, I will focus more on the discursive and content analyses of, though not exclusively, the *Swara Rahima* journal and a video produced by YJP that focuses on women in conflict areas.

#### *Swara Rahima: "Islamic Media for Women's Rights"*

Rahima is an Islamic women's organisation that has roots in *Fiqh an-Nisa* (FN, Interpretations of the Koran concerning Women's Issues), a division of the *Perhimpunan Pengembangan Pesantren dan Masyarakat* (P3M, Indonesian Society for *Pesantren* and Community Development) that works on issues concerning women and Islam in Indonesia. From 1994 to 2000, under P3M, FN worked primarily with *pesantrens*, Islamic boarding schools. However, in response to the growing demand to extend their work beyond the *pesantren*

---

<sup>33</sup> I also conducted a study of the State Ministry of Women's Empowerment and interviewed some of the officials there. However, due to the vastness of the ministry's organisational structure that had poor coordination within the internal departments, it was extremely difficult to incorporate a discussion of this office's media production with the other organisations, not to mention the spatial limitations of this report. It should also be understood that while this office has undergone a vast change in its policy direction, initiated under the leadership of then minister Khofifah Indar Parawansa (1999), its nature as a state institution characterises it differently from non-governmental organisations in terms of, among other matters, policies, financial resources, and media genre. However, based on the reasons presented above, this office deserves its own study. Some of the data collected during my observations at this office will be referred to occasionally throughout this thesis.

community, FN found it necessary to develop an independent institution that would focus on the issues of women's empowerment within Islamic discourse. Its main objective was to build a new discourse on women and Islam that highlights the principles of justice by striving for women's rights as a precondition for democracy in a wider scope.<sup>34</sup> It was for this reason that Rahima was established.<sup>35</sup> The following section will discuss the establishment of this organisation, their vision and approaches for action, and the prominent figures in the institution.

The choice of the name 'Rahima' for the new organisation was based on practical, as well as conceptual, reasons. In practise, it was inspired by the name of the former discussion forum in the women's division of P3M, *Forum Rahim* (FR, Womb Forum), which held regular monthly or bi-monthly discussions on women's issues in Islam among the members of P3M. Conceptually, the name Rahima takes on the meanings of its Arabic roots, *rahima a* (to have compassion) and *rahim* (womb).<sup>36</sup> The combination of meanings of the words 'womb' and 'compassion' was more ideological than literal. It should be pointed out that the members of P3M were known to be moderate and progressive young Muslim intellectuals and activists. P3M was considered to be "the most important institute to facilitate the intellectual development, through discourse, of young *kiai* (or *kyai*)" who were "far more responsive towards new ideas and challenges of modernity, including democratic reform, than their seniors" (Effendi 1997). The fact that they regularly organised *halqah* (seminars or workshops addressing social issues from a religious perspective) indicated that they were well aware of social and political changes. As such, it is not surprising that Forum Rahim discussed women's issues in Islamic discourse in a more progressive manner in which, for example, women's rights of sexuality were effectively addressed.

According to the External Director, Ciciek Farha, Rahima was established based on the ideals of 'experimentation' with, first, its organisational structure where the management was based on collective leadership in order to avoid a centralisation of power. She considers this to be 'democratising the organisation', where men and women are equally involved in the decision-making process. Democracy in this sense, she is hopeful, will be 'gender-

---

<sup>34</sup> During the period of my fieldwork with Rahima, I heard that the separation of Rahima from FN was precipitated when one key figure in FN decided to marry a second wife, or in other words, practise polygamy. According to one source, the advocacy for women would not be effective [through FN] because of a significant difference in perspectives on this issue.

<sup>35</sup> The financial support for both Rahima and FN remains the same. Interview with Syafiq Hasyim, 10 October 2002.

<sup>36</sup> Interview with Hasyim, 10 October 2002. The Arabic and English references here are from Cowan (ed.) 1994: 384.

friendly'. Secondly, Rahima's 'experiments' with strategic context in promoting the perspective that gender issues and feminism are the concerns of everyone, including religious institutions, in this case, pesantrens and other Islamic schools. Rahima's experimentation with this aspect is manifested in their endeavour to 'engender' the school curriculum in these educational institutions.<sup>37</sup>

In order to realise the above ideals, Rahima works with two main target areas, i.e., pesantrens and the broader public community. Within the pesantren community, Rahima's main strategy is to restructure and socialise the Islamic educational systems with a gender-sensitive perspective. They also facilitate discussions on Islam and women's rights for religious leaders/teachers that are usually referred to as *halqah*. The participants of the training programmes range from *santri* to *kiai* and *nyai* (respectively, male and female teachers in pesantren) and other key Muslim figures. Rahima realises that these groups of Muslim leaders are the most strategic targets in promoting changes within Islamic circles. However, they admitted that promoting Rahima's ideals to some rather conventional Muslim leaders is not an easy task.<sup>38</sup> Traditional teaching approaches in pesantrens sometimes place the *kiais* in a position that is beyond any challenge, not only in their pesantrens, but also in the surrounding communities. Resistance against a 'new' perspective of the position of women in Islam, such as that promoted by Rahima, arises in various forms.<sup>39</sup> *Kiai Hussein Muhammad* found resistance from the *kiais* to be the most insidious and difficult. Sometimes, even after the *santris*, the students at the pesantrens, participated in the Rahima training, upon return to their pesantrens they found that their *kiais* objected to what they had just learned. This resistance presents an enormous obstacle for Rahima's entire mission. Even a well-known *kiai* like *Kiai Hussein* is sometimes still discriminated against or rebuked by other *kiais* when he campaigns for more progressive ideas concerning the lives of Muslim women.

Meanwhile, the activities related to the wider public community focus on an open campaign for women's rights in Islam through public forums, such as dialogues, seminars, workshops, and publications. Aside from frequent collaborations on projects or programmes with other NGOs, both Muslim and non-Muslim, Rahima also acknowledges the importance of media presentations to convey their ideas to the public. *Swara Rahima (SR)*, a quarterly journal that first appeared in May 2001, is one of Rahima's media productions that targets the general public and whose distribution extends across gender, religious,

---

<sup>37</sup> Interview with Ciciek Farha, 16 January 2004.

<sup>38</sup> Interview with *Kiai Hussein Muhammad*, 10 October 2002.

<sup>39</sup> Interview with *Kiai Hussein Muhammad*, 10 October 2002.

class, and geographical boundaries. It presents research, opinions and reports on the discourse of Islam and women. This journal is distributed to other Islamic organisations, universities, the mass media, public institutions, and visitors. The symbolism of the word *swara* (the Indonesian standard spelling is *suara*), or voice, is not uncommon in Indonesian public discourse of liberal political movements.<sup>40</sup> When the loss of one's authority or power is related to the loss of access for one's voice, the establishment of a medium to convey one's concerns becomes significant. The use of the word *swara* thus denotes Rahima's attempt to speak on behalf of women and to provide a space for women to speak.

Aside from *SR*, Rahima also uses the Internet to disseminate information through its own website, which Farha believes has a broader readership than the journal. In a tribute to the website, in one of the readers' letters published in *SR*, vol. 2, August 2002, the reader, who was from Kupang, East Nusa Tenggara, expressed her relief that she could have easy access to "information about the development in Islamic feminism discourse" through the website. The website is basically an electronic version of *SR*, but it also announces Rahima's activities and provides an interactive rubric where netters can discuss *fikih perempuan* (*fiqh*, jurisprudence, for women). Rahima also has a collection of books on the issues of Islam and women in their library, which is open to the public in its office in South Jakarta. However, for reasons of limited space, the present discussion will focus only on *SR*.

Combining the spirit of pluralism, democracy and justice for women, Rahima promotes the discourse of progressive Islam, especially concerning women's rights. Aiming at developing the discourse of a just Islam for the public, Kiai Hussein asserted that ideally the future Rahima would be as:

[...] one of the centres for the discourse of justice, especially concerning women with a religious perspective. [...] Whoever wants [to know about] Islamic discourse, what the Islamic perspective concerning women is...Rahima can provide an answer. Of course, with the perspective of justice.<sup>41</sup>

The courageous attempt to introduce and sustain discourse on the female body and sexuality in the perspective of sexual justice for women within the

---

<sup>40</sup> As mentioned earlier, the weekly insert of a section devoted to women's issues in a national newspaper, *Kompas*, is also entitled *Swara*. This rubric does not reflect any religious affiliations and, in my observations, provides more space and possibilities for more diverse 'voices' to be presented. There is also an Islamic women's magazine called *Suara Muhammadiyah* that is published by the women's faction of Muhammadiyah, the second largest Islamic organisation in Indonesia.

<sup>41</sup> Interview with kiai Hussein Muhammad, 10 October 2002.



Muslim public in Indonesia is the most outstanding characteristic of this women's journal. Born within the traditional Islamic educational system, *pesantren*, which has long been identified with paternalistic-cum-patriarchal ideology and practises that place all authority into the hands of the *kiais*, this new gender-equal education and religious reinterpretation offers not only hope for change for the young female Muslim generation, but also awaits a challenge.

As an institution working on promoting new perspectives of gender equality among Muslims, *Rahima* needs a medium to disseminate these ideas to the wider public. *Rahima* considers *SR* to be its most effective media, or *corong* (lit., loud-speaker), to convey its concerns.<sup>42</sup>

*Rahima* is run by highbrow Muslim activists and academicians. The editor-in-chief, Ciciek Farha, has long been a feminist activist and Muslim scholar. The significance of a medium to convey one's opinion (that is symbolised by a *corong*) highlights the intent of *SR* to be a space for women to express themselves in public. The interaction between the medium and its readers is represented by the "personification of a real/unmediated conversation" between *Rahima* (the main character in the cartoon presented on the back cover of *SR*) and Muslim/non-Muslim women readers of *SR*.

This longing for a space to voice women's concerns was also presented in *SR*'s initial publication. In its first edition, which was named *Rahimah*, a comic strip about a smart, young, critical Muslim woman also named *Rahimah* (in latter editions, this comic strip was renamed *Celoteh Ima*, Ima's Chat) was placed on the back cover of *SR*. *Rahimah*'s question of why women did not have any access to voice their own concerns and discuss problems was situated in the marginalisation of women in their religious lives, in this case, within Islam. Significant in this discussion is the personification of 'who is talking' via the character of *Rahima*, as the quote below shows:

*Rahimah*: "How can women be willing to talk if their voices are still to be considered *aurat* [part of the body that should be covered when outside the house]? And if that is so, why are they invited to the *Bahtsul Masail* [Ar., a discussion forum]?<sup>43</sup> And stranger still ... even though the topics discussed are women's problems...why are the female participants in the minority? ... or does it mean that *fiqh* [interpretation of the Koran] is indeed only in the men's domain? (back cover of *SR* 1)

---

<sup>42</sup> Interview with Ciciek Farha, 16 January 2004.

<sup>43</sup> *Bahtsul Masail* is a forum to discuss problems that appear in the society that have no reference in Islamic law. The forum usually involves *kiais* and others who have good knowledge about *fiqh* (Ar., Islamic jurisprudence). For a discussion about *bahtsul masail*, please visit <http://www.gusmus.net/page.php?mod=dinamis&sub=7&id=67>, a webpage of a notable *kiai* Mustofa Bisri, known as Gus Mus (accessed 3 September 2011).

Rahimah's questioning the absence of the right of women to speak may reflect the organisation's criticism of the injustice that Muslim women often encounter in their social lives.

*SR* features discussions on various topics. The themes may arise from current issues or those related to Rahima's programmes. For example, *SR* volume 2, which concerned the controversy over the position of women in Islamic *sharia* (Islamic divine law), was rooted in Rahima's assessment programme of the demand to implement *sharia* in some provinces, which arose in the wake of the implementation of regional autonomy (see Chapter Seven). Meanwhile, the theme of *SR* volume 6, which focused on Islam, women and HIV/Aids, was chosen because the disease has gained wide public attention and there was a prolonged debate on how Islam and Muslim society should react to the situation. What underlies all of these topics is that Islam is used as the language of reference. By examining the above-mentioned aspects, I find that *Swara Rahima*, as the voice of Rahima has, on the one hand, represented the identity of Rahima while, on the other hand, positioned it in the general trend in which the boundary between the public and private has been blurred by voicing the private and making it accessible to the wider public. The combination of feminism, religion and "the spirit of caring", a point to which I will return later, thus characterises the presentation of this women's journal.

Since its readership is broad and reaches out to various groups of people, "from lecturers to activists to santri (students in the pesantren)", according to its editor-in-chief, the language used cannot be "journalistic [or academic], however neither can it be popular".<sup>44</sup> However, I will refer to *SR* as a journal since its contents read more seriously or academically when compared, for example, to popular women's magazines or bulletins.

As the corong for Rahima, the themes addressed in *SR* cannot be separated from either the general views or the specific activities of Rahima. Its first edition, for example, focused on the history of Islamic women's movements. It was based on a dialogue with other Islamic groups about Indonesian Muslim women's movements. This dialogue was intended to build cooperation between women's organisations and other social groups that are concerned with issues of women in Islam. The second issue of *SR* (August 2001) brought to light the controversy over the position of women in *sharia*. The implementation of *sharia* in some regions in Indonesia as a result of the demand for regional

---

<sup>44</sup> Interview with Ciciek Farha, 16 January 2004.

autonomy after the fall of the New Order is one of the main issues discussed in Rahima.<sup>45</sup>

In 2003, when this data was collected, the circulation of *Swara Rahima* had reached 3,500 exemplars per edition. This number reveals only part of their readership since most of the issues are distributed, some of these for free, to institutions, organisations, pesantrens, and other social groups. This is Rahima's strategy to 'mainstream' women's issues in Islamic discourse. In comparison to other Rahima programmes, such as, the training for santri, *SR* has been more effective because it has moved beyond the boundaries of a specific religious community. This development also reflects the sense of 'experimentation' that Farha emphasises, as mentioned earlier.

As commonly used in feminist activism and other social movements, the use of symbolic expressions, such as the catch-phrase of a journal like *SR*, can also be definitive. The catch-phrase for *SR* is "*Media Islam untuk Hak-hak Perempuan*" (Islamic Media for Women's Rights). Indeed, the preference for the word *perempuan* here, rather than its synonym, *wanita*, recalls the argument for the stronger connotation as discussed in the previous chapter.<sup>46</sup> This phrase also reflects the inclusive character of the journal. The positioning of the word 'Islam', which is attached to the word 'media', and not 'women's rights', implies that the journal undertakes an Islamic perspective in addressing problems of *all* women, regardless of their religion.

*SR* aspires to be accepted in non-Muslim circles without losing its Islamic identity. Farha is fully aware that an attempt to attract 'others' is possible only by presenting the 'real face' of Islam, which is peaceful, caring and not '*meden-medeni*' (Jav., to scare).<sup>47</sup> The edition concerning the controversy around the formalisation of sharia (vol. 2, August 2001) highlighted the side effects of the implementation of Islamic law on women, where their access to the public would be limited. This edition was based on the studies conducted by Rahima on the formalisation of sharia in two districts (*kabupaten*), Garut and Tasikmalaya. Rahima also conducted studies in two other regions—Banten, now a province (*propinsi*), and Cianjur. The controversy over the formalisation of sharia parallels the issue of decentralisation as part of the national scenario of reformasi. This edition became important because it offered an 'alternative

<sup>45</sup> The later themes, such as women's leadership in Islam (vol. 3, November 2001); women and jihad (vol. 4, February 2002); female sexuality in Islam (vol. 5, July 2002); Muslim women and HIV/Aids (vol. 6, Desember 2002); Muslim women and education (vol. 7, May 2003); incest (vol. 8, August 2003); and women's mortality rate (vol. 9, November 2003), all are based on the debate concerning women's leadership.

<sup>46</sup> Compare, for example, with popular women's magazines *Ummi* that uses the phrase "*Identitas Wanita Islami*" (Identities of Islamic Women) as its slogan, and *Amanah* that uses "*Majalah Keluarga*" (Family Magazine).

<sup>47</sup> Interview with Ciciek Farha, 16 January 2004.

perspective' of Islam, which is, as Farha asserts, "unlike those in the newspapers or *Sabili*".<sup>48</sup> Here, one meaning of 'alternative' is in the self-conscious assumption of oneself that diverges significantly from other perspectives that may be more generally held. Apparently, its alternative nature was important also because, coincidentally, it was circulated in the midst of the resurgence of Islamic fundamentalism epitomised in the aftermath of the 9/11 tragedy. Based on these considerations, this special edition was reprinted and distributed to "non-Muslim women friends through churches and our network", so that Islam could be seen in a more pluralistic perspective.<sup>49</sup> This account shows that in order to reveal its identity to non-Muslim groups by focusing on the real face of Islam, that is, loving and peaceful, Rahima, through its publication, distanced itself from fundamentalist Muslim groups. *SR* is the medium that Rahima uses to distinguish the 'us' and the 'them', although as Farha emphasises, defining 'them' is complicated, as "now the mapping of the 'enemy' is scattered, varied, and abundant [...] Dialogue is one of non-violent ways" to surmount disagreement.<sup>50</sup> Such a dialogue is made possible through a publication. This is, presumably, what underlies the concept of *SR* as a "concerned media" (*SR*, volume 1, 2001).

*Jurnal Perempuan: "For Enlightenment and Equality"*

*Jurnal Perempuan (JP)* is the first academic women's journal in Indonesia. It is produced by Yayasan Jurnal Perempuan (YJP), which started its activities in 1996. The period from the 1980s through the 1990s marked the blossoming of women's NGOs in Indonesia, although they were suppressed below the state level, publicising and focusing on various concerns, such as women's health, economic issues, education, and political participation. Advocacy groups and women's crisis centres for victims of domestic violence were also established. However, few of these NGOs paid attention to books or other forms of publications about women. For this reason, in 1996, YJP began to focus on publishing the then only feminist journal in Indonesia, *Jurnal Perempuan*. Currently, YJP does not only publish the bi-monthly journal,<sup>51</sup> but also produces a radio programme, *Radio Jurnal Perempuan* (started in 1999), books on women, and documentary videos, and also organises seminars and workshops

---

<sup>48</sup> *Sabili* is a 'hardline' Islamic magazine.

<sup>49</sup> Interview with Ciciek Farha, 16 January 2004.

<sup>50</sup> In reference to the popular sentiment shared by most feminist activists that I spoke with, after the fall of the New Order, most feminist groups lost their focus since the 'shared enemy' had fallen.

<sup>51</sup> Originally a quarterly, since 2001, the journal has been published as a bi-monthly until the present time.

focusing on women's issues.<sup>52</sup> However, according to Adriana Venny, the programme manager, regardless of the changes in style and variation, YJP media products will continue to be 'alternative media', that is, non-mainstream. Here, again, 'alternative' is a characteristic this organisation claims for itself and is interpreted as a rejection of the mainstream, or generally accepted, perspective.

According to Gadis Arivia, the founder of YJP and later executive director, this foundation was established without careful planning; it was initially intended only to support academic activities. In fact, she explained, it was formed by 'accident'. Arivia started YJP when she was offered an opportunity to teach a course on "Women's Studies' Paradigms" at the University of Indonesia in 1989. It was a new subject at that time. As sources were difficult to attain then, she collected the resource materials for her subject by translating books written in English into Indonesian. The students, by their own initiative, collected the copied materials and bound them. The bound copies were then displayed at the students' co-operative and sold there. When Gramedia, one of the biggest publishing companies and bookstore chains in Indonesia, proposed to sell the 'bulletin', in 1997, the Ford Foundation offered to fund the production of the journal in order to fill the vacuum of academic journals following the seizure of *Prisma*, a prominent alternative social-political journal that had started in July 1970, but disappeared in 1998.<sup>53</sup> In order to receive legal funding from the Ford Foundation, as is the case with any other institution, Arivia had to first establish a foundation. Thus, YJP became a formal legal organisation, although, as the decision to establish the foundation was

---

<sup>52</sup> Although according to Adriana Venny, YJP's programme manager, *JP* is still the 'core business', in the sense that the other products are very dependent on funding projects. When I conducted this interview in September 2002, *JP* was sold for Rp. 13,500 (less than US\$2 at the time). This is seen as one attempt to sustain its production. Interview with Venny, 20 September 2002.

<sup>53</sup> *Prisma* was published by the Lembaga Penelitian Pendidikan dan Penerangan Ekonomi dan Sosial (LP3ES, Institute for Social and Economic Research, Education and Information), a non-profit organisation set up by highbrow intellectuals bringing forward an "alternative politic" aimed at "challenging any potential power that tended to be mainstream politic". *Prisma* "functioned to anticipate the emergence of the New Order and the development of modernisation". The 1970s marked the initiation of New Order hegemonic power. After the bloody regime change from the Old Order (1945-1965) to the New Order (1966-1998), the new state's propaganda of stability and development was widely embraced by the Indonesian people. In this situation, *Prisma* voiced an alternative paradigm, balancing the growing power of the state and guiding the people to resist state hegemony. However, things started to change. LP3ES's main institutional funding support from Friederich Naumann Stiftung, a German-based foundation, which helped to establish *Prisma*, ended in the early 1980s. The institution had to look for other financial sources. The social and political changes of the 1990s stimulated a discourse of modernisation promoted by the New Order that began to stir broad and strong challenges from many corners of the state. Students, once their strongest market, became more inspired by the popularity of postmodern studies and began to see *Prisma* as obsolete and unable to free itself from the shackles of the paradigm of modernisation, which had been strongly related to the New Order. *Prisma* succumbed in October 1998, five months after Suharto resigned. See Sudibyo 2001.

sudden, she hastily recruited other 'founders' from acquaintances who happened to be on campus at that time.<sup>54</sup> Over the years, YJP has received funding from various institutions.<sup>55</sup>

Regardless of the 'tragic' end of the once prestigious academic journals, *Prisma* left a feeling of nostalgia for highbrow academia. Thus, regarding *JP* as a 'substitution' for *Prisma* may have added to the value of this women's journal. Daniel Dhakidae, a prominent academic who was once the editor-in-chief of *Prisma*, said that to some extent *Prisma* and *JP* shared a similarity: as academic journals, both deal with "problems, research and analysis". However, they were different in the sense that *JP* includes an advocacy aspect that *Prisma* lacked (Report on YJP Workshop, August 2001). He also indicated that whereas *Prisma* emerged at the right time in the right place, that is, when the issue of development was the hype in Indonesia, *JP* emerged when women's studies was new and when "there was no single newspaper in Indonesia that understood women's issues" (ibid.).

YJP's main objective is to provide a medium that represents women and to use it to raise public consciousness about women's rights. This idea is expressed in their slogan: "Empowering Women through Media". Media presentation is perceived as the most reliable medium to channel their concerns and awareness of women and gender equality. In their words:

Yayasan Jurnal Perempuan is aware of the importance of gender equality in all aspects of life, information, therefore, plays an important role in empowering women and members of society in general (Annual Report July 2000-2001, p. 1).

According to the programme manager, YJP is in line with the non-radical women's movement and has no inclination to any religious organisation. With this perspective, she added, YJP can reach a broader audience. The significance of media presentations to empower women is further translated into various segmented forms. As mentioned previously, in its development, YJP also produces a radio programme (RJP), publishes books, organises events, such as seminars concerning women's issues, and workshops for journalists, runs a bookshop, and produces documentary videos. While *JP* is considered to be useful for "the circles of academicians, parliament, NGOs, and the grassroots", the radio programme, on the other hand, is targeted for "listeners of the lower-

---

<sup>54</sup> Interview with Gadis Arivia, 6 November 2002.

<sup>55</sup> In its 2000-2001 annual reports, it is mentioned that the following institutions have funded YJP's programmes: Ford Foundation, CIDA, UNIFEM, Dutch Embassy, Australian Indonesia Institute (AII), Internews, UNDP, AUSAID, The Body Shop, PT Rio Tinto Indonesia, PT Freeport Indonesia, and Laundrette.

middle class" (YJP Annual Report, July 2000-June 2001, p. 1). However, the journal remains to be its main focus.<sup>56</sup>

*JP*, and other YJP products, indeed read political, and in fact that is one of the aspects of its "general style of writing".<sup>57</sup> Indeed, even the use of the word *perempuan* in its title, *Jurnal Perempuan*, rather than its synonym *wanita*, is highly political, which is common among non-state women's organisations (see discussion above).

In 2001, *JP* reached a circulation of 5,000, of which 451 were for regular subscriptions (see 2000-2001 YJP Annual Report). At that time, most of its subscribers were professionals (41.69%). Economic independence may explain why the majority of subscribers come from this group of women. The second largest group of subscribers were academics or/and Women's Studies Centres. *JP* is currently also available in 150 bookshops throughout Indonesia. As an academic journal, *JP* follows 'standardised' guidelines in the sense that the articles should "be reliable, original and contain credible references" (Yayasan Jurnal Perempuan 2002: 1).

*JP* adopted themes for each issue beginning with Volume 04 (August-October 1997), with the theme of "Whose womb is this?" Earlier editions were basically collections of various articles and debates concerning women and feminism.<sup>58</sup> From Volume 17 (April 2001) onwards, YJP used the word *perempuan* in its themed title, for example "*Perempuan Lokal Bicara*" (Local Women Speak).<sup>59</sup> The choice of the theme for each edition was, and is, based on the 'trend' of issues.<sup>60</sup> Starting with Volume 14 (September 2000) with its theme "*Gerakan Perempuan Sedunia*" (Women's Movements around the World), *JP*'s format changed from magazine-size to book-size format. Following marketing evaluation conducted by YJP, the new book size format allowed it a longer display period on the bookshop shelves. Also, it elicited a positive response by becoming more practical, smaller and lighter to hold.<sup>61</sup> It was hoped that this would help to increase the sales of *JP*.

<sup>56</sup> Interview with Venny, 20 September 2002.

<sup>57</sup> The 2000-2001 YJP annual report mentions the general style of articles in *JP* as: "provocative, analytical, political, consciousness rising, thematic, and [using] women's perspective" (p. 4). Beginning with and continuing after the fourth edition (August-October 1997), *JP* focuses on one theme in every issue.

<sup>58</sup> Volume 01, for example, discusses various issues starting with violence against women. Volumes 01 and 02 also include one article written in English.

<sup>59</sup> Personal communication with Yoke Sri Astuti, one of the editors, 16 September 2002. Volumes 22 and 23 are exceptions, with the themes "*Memikirkan Perkawinan*" (Thinking about Marriage) and "*Perspektif Gender dalam Pendidikan*" (Gender Perspective in the Education [System]).

<sup>60</sup> Interview with Astuti (16 September 2002) and Venny (20 September 2002). Astuti explained that they determine the trends in issues by clipping articles from newspapers and other media sources.

<sup>61</sup> Interview with Nur Iman Subono (YJP Vice Director), 20 September 2002.

Although the new format was not meant to signal a change in 'style', as mentioned by YJP vice director Nur Iman Subono, it indeed looked more 'popular', in that it had more pictures, some quite bold,<sup>62</sup> and more colours used in the background.<sup>63</sup> The new *JP* also added a slogan under its title on the cover, "*untuk pencerahan dan kesetaraan*" (for enlightenment and equality), to reveal the basic ideal of this women's journal. The table of contents have remained basically the same. Each issue opens with a prologue written by Arivia, on pages 4 and 5, followed by the *topik empu* (master/main topic), consisting of a few articles concerning the issue's theme that are written by both YJP journalists and outside contributors, women's profiles (usually foreign feminist thinkers and activists), a glossary, survey of gender research, opinions, clippings, book reviews, literature (poems and short stories), and miscellaneous items, such as readers' letters and a list of the contributors for that issue.

*JP*'s production has been supported primarily by the Ford Foundation. However, as YJP requires more funding to run its other programmes, they also have to sell other products,<sup>64</sup> including both media products, such as *JP*, books, cassettes of RJP programmes, and VCDs, and 'services', including organising seminars, providing speakers or trainers for seminars or workshops held by other organisations.<sup>65</sup> While the YJP management is selective in placing in advertisements in their products, it is difficult to find companies to advertise in the journal. The most likely possibility to enhance product sales is by 'intra-media' advertisement. For example, each edition of *JP* carries advertisements of YJP's other products. Advertisements for their printed products, *JP* and other books, and information about where to get them are always placed on the inside cover pages, both front and back.<sup>66</sup>

---

<sup>62</sup> This may represent my own interpretation, however, I do find some pictures to be provocative, such as an illustration for an article entitled "Technology and Women's Bodies" that shows an art installation featuring a woman's torso that is exposed in the front, where a Barbie doll is placed (*JP* Volume 18, p. 42).

<sup>63</sup> The graphic designer, a young man, told me that they always try to keep up with the trends of layouts, such as the collage of photos on the back cover, titles of articles, and upper-border used as a space for brief descriptions of the authors' profiles and images. Personal communication with Aji, graphic designer for *JP*, 16 September 2002.

<sup>64</sup> Arivia said that YJP needs approximately Rp 800 million (US\$ 95,000 in 2002) a year to run YJP. About 80% of this budget is derived from international funding institutions and the rest from product sales. Arivia also explained that programmes funded by these institutions are usually based on proposals for programmes and formalised with a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). Interview, 6 November 2002.

<sup>65</sup> YJP's staff members are not allowed to receive money for journalism, either when they act as sources or for their own writing. As speakers, their honorariums are given to the institution. Interview with Arivia, 6 November 2002.

<sup>66</sup> Each journalist also has the obligation to distribute subscription forms to the sources they interview (*Yayasan Jurnal Perempuan* 2002: 11).



Keeping up with the market can be a dilemma for an institution that insists on maintaining its position as an NGO, while at the same time is urged to increase its production. Considering that the markets for JP are basically urban-based, middle- and upper-middle-class women, YJP became concerned about how to reach the groups outside this category. Radio is considered the best medium to reach a potential audience from the 'lower class'.<sup>67</sup> In September 1999, YJP started to produce RJP to fill in this market gap. YJP hopes that they can broaden their public through radio programmes.

By 2002, the RJP programme was broadcast in 148-partner radio stations throughout Indonesia. This weekly programme uses magazine-style features, profiles, and thematic discussions. Every programme runs about 15 - 20 minutes. The themes vary, but the guidelines are constant, i.e., "presenting women's issues and gender problems around Indonesia" (Guidelines for Programme Division Staff, 2002). Although the language used in RJP may be different from JP, Arivia states that there is no difference in content between the print and electronic presentations.

None of the 148 partner radio stations that air RJP is located in Jakarta. This is because the radio stations in Jakarta ask for an airtime fee, which YJP finds too expensive.<sup>68</sup> This, in fact, also influences the style and content of the radio programme, which targets a middle-to-lower class audience outside Jakarta.

Besides JP and RJP, YJP also publishes books on women. However, like the production of documentary videos, the publication of these books does not follow a regular schedule. In order to broaden its readership, YJP posted their website in 2003. This website features more day-to-day issues about women in addition to academic articles.

In short, we can see from the above description that production of media that concerns both ideals to empower women and at the same time strives to reach a broad market can be very dynamic. This dynamic shows a complex nexus composed of many aspects, such as feminist ideal versus market, and voluntary spirit versus structural organisation. At the same time, we can neither overlook the fact that this dynamic exists in wider social, economic and political complexities. YJP was established and developed by young intellectuals whose exposure toward western feminist ideas and international institutions have no doubt shaped their understanding of the local contexts.<sup>69</sup> On the other

---

<sup>67</sup> Interviews with Venny (20 September 2002) and Arivia (6 November 2002).

<sup>68</sup> Radio stations based in Jakarta ask for 4-6 million rupiah per airtime at the time I conducted this field research (Interview with Venny, 20 September 2002).

<sup>69</sup> For example, Arivia, who defended her doctoral thesis in philosophy from the University of Indonesia (UI) in 2003, lived and studied in France; Subono is a lecturer at UI and worked for *Prisma* before joining YJP; Venny is a PhD student in the philosophy department at UI, where she, like the others, were exposed to books and articles about western feminists and feminist thought.

hand, the way they digest the western feminist ideas is significantly shaped by the contextualised perceptions of issues due to their positions as locally engaged feminist activists. YJP is obviously aware that the feminist theories that they are examining, which originate mostly in the West, have yet to be contextualised in an Indonesian context. Besides claiming to be an NGO, YJP is also persistent in their claim that their foundation's spirit is "*keberpihakan pada perempuan*" (sympathetic towards women).<sup>70</sup> The tension surfaces when the 'spirit of volunteerism' collides with the drive to improve media product sales due to the need for self-sustainability. Beyond all these complexities, the question of whom they are claiming to represent, how and why, will be decisive in the way they voice the concerns of those women they claim to represent.

### Conclusion

This chapter discusses media development during reformasi in order to provide a picture of the mediascape in post-Suharto Indonesia. The above discussion shows that there has been a shift away from the state's control over media production under the authoritarian regime and, concurrent with the liberation of the media, towards the 'wealthy' bourgeoisie and knowledgeable individuals.

On the other hand, it can be said that the 'new' media tradition in Indonesia during reformasi is still 'young'. The fall of the New Order state's power, which was accompanied by an outbreak of violence and revelation of state-sponsored violence—as part of the mechanism in devaluing its power—has caused a "crisis of meaning". As the state weakened, those who once were suppressed started to grow in strength and, as a consequence, "spoken and marginalized forms of knowledge begin to weave new networks of representations that, ultimately, must be addressed—responded to" (Rotker 2000: 10). Yet, in relevance to the tradition of the media reporting on violent events, in comparison to the media in Latin American countries, as Susana Rotker writes, the present media still suffers from a "deficient mechanism", in that most news reports on violence lack "precise data" (ibid.: 11). Adds Rotker, "facts about violence are usually published in the form of public opinion polls, a few specialized studies (most of which, in turn, are based on the media and opinion polls), and, more recently, first-person accounts of violent crime, whether witnessed or experienced as its victims" (ibid.). As such, "'rational' knowledge of violence is being created in part by these stories, by subjectivity" (ibid.). A

---

<sup>70</sup> Personal communications with Uung Wijaksana, one of the reporters, (5 September 2002) and Astuti (16 September 2002). Interviews with Subono (20 September 2002), Venny (20 September 2002) and Arivia (6 November 2002).

study on newspaper reports on crime in two local daily newspapers based in Yogyakarta and Central Java, for example, found that most crime news reports were based not on the journalist's field research, but on their interviews with police officers (Abar and Subardjono 1998).

Gender-awareness training for journalists has been one of the many issues that receive vigorous attention from media practitioners, in line with the liberation of the media in the reformasi era.<sup>71</sup> Newspaper reports of rape cases, for example, have been considered inconsistent with the spirit of a better press and have stimulated awareness about the need to 'train' journalists to become more gender sensitive.<sup>72</sup>

For women, reformasi has had two contradictory effects: on the one hand, it has been liberating in the sense that there are more forms of alternative media for them to express themselves, but on the other hand, it has been repressing, considering how pornography has increased and how the press reporting of violence against women is still demeaning.

While both women's organisations discussed above, Rahima and Yayasan Jurnal Perempuan, show similar discursive frames when fulfilling the need for women to have their own media to convey their own voices, each follows a different path. *Swara Rahima* uses Islam as their language of reference, while Yayasan Jurnal Perempuan leans toward a more liberal, western approach. Although both organisations do not always explicitly express that they are focusing on the advocacy of female victims in their media, through the representations and tones of their leanings towards justice for women, or providing a medium for women's voices, they implicitly note that they still find women in disadvantageous positions. Along with the 'media culture' during reformasi, various media forms are used to deliver counter-ideology of the

---

<sup>71</sup> Training to improve gender awareness among journalists has also become one of YJP's annual programmes. The training is called *Training Jurnalisme Berperspektif Gender* (Training in Gender Perspective in Journalism). An introduction to feminist theories is part of this training. The module for the 2002 training, for example, describes feminist issues on media representations and profiles Western feminism and feminists, including liberal, radical, Marxist, psychoanalytical, and postmodern, which are taken from past editions of *Jurnal Perempuan*.

<sup>72</sup> Raising gender awareness among journalists can be achieved not only through training, but also through publications in the forms of guidebooks, modules, and edited volumes. *Lembaga Studi Pers dan Pembangunan* (LSPP, Institute of Press and Development Studies), for example, launched a series of 'guide books' based on the convention on the eradication of all forms of violence against women, as an effort to help Indonesian journalists to write news reports that are gender sensitive (*sensitif gender*). See *Konvensi tentang Penghapusan Segala Bentuk Diskriminasi terhadap Perempuan. Panduan bagi Jurnalis*. Jakarta: LSPP, 1999. This 'pocketbook' is part of a series of guides for journalists. Another institution that is active in training gender awareness for journalists is the Yogyakarta Institute of Research, Education and Publications (LP3Y). Its publications include: Siregar et al. (eds.) 1999; Sumandoyo 1999; and Siregar et al. (eds.) 2000.

state, or even of the mainstream media. Even new modes of mediatisation, such as the Internet, are also used by these women's organisations.