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The Triumph of Harmony: The Denial of Domestic Violence on Java¹

Introduction

'Each society has mechanisms that legitimize, obscure, deny and therefore perpetuate violence.' (Heise 1994, p. 1)

This paper discusses one of the most ignored, albeit most common, forms of violence, namely domestic violence, here defined as physical or psychological assault within the couple, or rather by males against their female partners. In using this definition, adapted from Davies (1994, p. 2), we recognise that violence in the home is also directed against children, elderly people (Davies 1994) and, rarely, men (Campbell 1992). However, the definition emphasises that in the majority of cases it is women who are at the receiving end of male violence within the home. In contrast to other studies, the paper does not attempt to investigate the occurrence and causes of domestic violence. However, we should state at the onset that of all the main approaches to the issue (see Campbell 1992 for a review) we support that which posit domestic violence as both a symptom of women's subordination and one of the practical means to enforce it. In other words: '... physical violence towards women draws on and serves to maintain this subordination and, indeed cannot be explained without reference to it' (Binney 1985, p. 124). Borrowing this conceptual framework, we seek to analyse the formal denial of domestic violence in Java, and relate it to dominant conceptualisations of the family and its gender associations.

The focus here are various social institutions: the State, especially the law and social services, the growing number of non-governmental organizations active in the country, and the research bodies which could provide greater information and understanding of domestic violence. Their official statements and policy responses are different. There are, for example, signs that non-governmental organizations are beginning to acknowledge domestic violence as an issue deserving public attention and intervention. However, this remains in the context of generalised discourses and practices which exclude domestic violence, and the women who experience it, from their sphere of concern.

In the paper we examine these considerations against the background of the experiences of western countries. Here the reluctance to recognise domestic violence as a social problem is often explained with reference to the opposition

¹ The opinions expressed in the paper are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent those of the institutions with which they are associated.

between the public domain of society at large (associated to men) and the private one of the family (associated to women). Analytically this dichotomy between public and private domains has been superseded by views which emphasise the links between the two domains within systems of patriarchal domination, of which physical power is both a tool and a manifestation. This shift in perception has gone some way towards influencing dominant views in the field (Hearn 1996; Hanmer 1996). Despite this, in western contexts the notion of the family as a 'haven from a heartless world' persists, and still informs the understandings and the actions of people at large and of the individuals and institutions responsible for relevant policies.

We shall argue that this explanation, relying on the idea of the family as a safe refuge from the strife and conflict of the public arena, cannot be applied to the Javanese situation. In fact, in traditional Javanese thought as well as in modern Javanese-Indonesian² ideology, family and the wider society are not contrasted, but perceived to be a mirror image of each other, both being regulated by harmonious and hierarchical relations, the latter placing men above women. This different conceptualisation does not include a more positive attitude towards the recognition of domestic violence. On the contrary, the emphasis on harmony in both private and public spheres can be seen as an even stronger incentive to ignore the existence of physical and other abuses within the family, in view of the fact that acknowledging conflict and violence in one sphere would imply the same for the other, and ultimately lead to questioning the political and cosmological order (see section 2). As conclusion we shall argue that family notions can provide relevant insights to explain the formal denial of domestic violence when they are studied within their particular socio-cultural framework, rather than being posed as universal realities.

To articulate our argument, we have divided the paper in three sections. In the first section we shall provide some general comments on domestic violence, before trying to explain briefly its formal denial in western countries. Although we fully recognise the fact that the manifestations of domestic violence are very diverse in western countries, we assume a degree of commonality in its denial, shaped by the juxtaposition between the private and the public spheres. In the second section we discuss the relationship between institutional perceptions of the family and of the broader social and political context in which it exists on Java, showing the blurring of the borderline between public and private sphere and the resulting absolute denial of domestic violence. The consequences of such denial will be examined in the third section. A conclusion will sum up the main argument and allow for a number of final comments.

2 Ideologies and policies promoted by the Indonesian state will be discussed in the paper with reference to Java, although they apply to the entire nation. We feel entitled to do so, since notions embedded in national policies are often derived from Javanese thought due to the political and cultural hegemony of Java.

1. An harmonious family in a conflictual society

When considering domestic violence two general characteristics emerge from the literature. The first is its prevalence, both in terms of its geographical spread and the class composition of the families concerned (UN 1989, p. 15). According to the World Bank:

The most endemic form of violence against women is wife abuse or, more accurately abuse of women by intimate partners. (Heise et al. 1994, p. 4)

The second is its secrecy. Titles such as 'Violence against Women; The Hidden Health Burden', 'The Hidden Problem: Domestic Violence', typical of the published material on the topic, reflect the conditions under which abusive practices against women in the family are carried out, and also one of its consequences: the difficulty of obtaining reliable and comprehensive information on the exact nature and extent of this problem.

Nonetheless, more information and analyses are available for countries in Europe, North America, and for Australia and New Zealand, than for developing countries (UN 1989). These information show that in countries such as the UK and the USA – despite the enormous differences in socio-economic characteristics and cultural norms – women's physical and emotional abuses of varying severity, in many cases leading to the death of the woman (Caputi and Russell 1992), have been an historical reality and continue to the present day in alarming proportions (UN 1989). For example, it is reported that in the United Kingdom one out of four women has been attacked by an intimate partner (cited in Doyal 1995). The FBI found that in North America beatings by husbands of their wives occur every 18 seconds, and that of all murdered women in the country, 30% are killed by a male partner (cited in Tieszen 1991, p. 20).

These shocking figures have not yet affected dominant thinking significantly, and public discourses and actions continue to give very hesitant recognition to domestic violence. Such reluctance is linked, in our opinion, to one of the many persistent dualisms and dichotomies in western thought, namely that which separates the public from the private domain of social life, and which associates women with the former and men with the latter. Social theories contrast 'a sheltered, affection-based, organic group and the rude, commercial aggressive world' (Allen and Barker 1976, p. 1). These notions, and those related to the gendered nature of the two spheres, also mean that the public domain, as inherently violent, teems with dangers for women who, therefore, must seek refuge within the presumed safety of the home and under the protection and tutelage of men (Hanmer and Saunders 1984). Thus social theory and social policies represent the nuclear family – i.e. 'the most basic and natural form of social arrangement' (Marcus 1994) – as both a private and a peaceful domain, and women as safely ensconced within its protective walls.

At a different level, the very essence of femininity and masculinity are identified respectively with the home and the wider world. The characteristics of femininity, as bound up with emotions and with the 'natural', are also those of the home,

where affective ties are assumed to prevail and where natural needs are said to be satisfied (Allen and Barker 1976). Masculinity, on the other hand, represents the cerebral, the social and the aggressive, typical of the public domain.

Feminist theorists have amply debated the validity of the juxtaposition of a public and a private domain. For some feminist anthropologists this framework can be extremely useful, as it offers a universal model to explain female subordination (Moore 1988). Others have questioned the strict separation of the two spheres, or more fundamentally the universality of the model itself. For those who embrace this latter position, the public-private division emerged and increased with the spread of capitalism and industrialisation, so it is culturally and historically specific (Jardanova 1985; Webb 1985).

Furthermore, many explanations of domestic violence have by-passed these considerations, and have concentrated on placing violence by men against women in the context of relations of power and subordination. For example, for Mackinnon the key to male domination is sexuality, but it is the social construct of gender which explains man's subjugation of women through forms of violence such as rape and pornography (Mackinnon 1987). Many theorists have overcome the public-private distinction by pointing to 'public' agencies (such as the State) as contributing to domestic violence both by their unequal treatment of women and by their refusal to protect them through legal means (Hanmer and Saunders 1984). More recently, they have analysed how the gendered nature of official agencies operating in this field has a direct impact on the kind of understanding such agencies have of domestic violence, hence on the policies they implement (Hearn 1996).

Despite these debates, the idea of a separation and its gendered association remains deeply embodied in western social theories and practices (McDowell and Pringle 1992). As a consequence, official responses have failed to recognise domestic violence, and thus condone it. For the case of the UK Binney (1985, p. 116) remarks: 'It seems that agencies maintained a peculiar "social blindness" to the problem, well illustrated by research into social service records'.

Undeniably some changes have taken place, and public institutions have become more willing to acknowledge the existence of domestic violence. This has usually happened because of the activities of women's organisations. Through different means and to varying extents, in many western countries women's groups have fought for changes in the law and in social provisioning and developed analyses which made it possible to re-define the terms of the debates around domestic violence (Hanmer 1996). The point of departure for such initiatives was to make the reality of domestic violence visible by challenging discursive practices. According to Tieszen (1991) the term 'family violence' was used by those unwilling to recognise that it is men who are responsible for the abuses, thus implying mutual responsibility for the violence. By introducing terms such as wife battering into the accepted language, feminists have tried to move this form of violence from the private to the public and political arena.

The next stage was to start providing the kind of services which until then had been totally unavailable (Fraser 1990). So, in the UK:

Women's refuges sprang up all over the country in the late 70s in a community initiated response to the refusal of agencies to respond to the most immediate emergency needs of women subjected to violent assaults by their sexual/emotional partners. (Mama 1989, p. 38)

But even when the problem has received reluctant recognition, provisions from both central government and local authorities remain poor in terms of funding priorities, and dubious in terms of becoming a means for political manoeuvring, and for strengthening repressive aspects of police work. In addition, such interventions have often been built on racist and classist assumptions about 'problem families' (Mama 1989; Southall Black Sisters 1992). According to Hearn (1996), the relative lack of radical changes in the perceptions and practices of state and other agencies is explained by the fact that those 'operate from men's definitions, men's constructions and men's definitions of violence' (1996, p. 24), with the crucial addition that such constructions are reproduced by and within such institutions.

The constant refrain in the responses provided by official institutions, still remains that these are private, 'family' matters and hence outside the jurisdiction of public agencies (Radford 1992; Southall Black Sisters 1992; UN 1989; Webb 1985). To all such responses can be applied what Schneider states for the law:

The rhetoric of privacy that has insulated the female world from the legal order sends an important ideological message to the rest of society. It devalues women and their functions, and says that women are not important enough to merit legal regulation. (1994, p. 39)

In summary, western perceptions of and reactions to domestic violence vary geographically and have changed in time, most recently as the outcome of the challenges from feminist thinkers and activists. However, notions of what differentiate the private sphere of the family from the public one of society remain at least in part responsible for official responses which are inadequate both in terms of alleviating its consequences (on the health, safety and general welfare of women) and confronting its root causes.

2. An harmonious family in an harmonious world

Contemporary Indonesia is a country characterised by diversity in ecological, ethnic, and economic features. Its sheer size, and the richness of its history and cultures defy generalisations. The New Order has ruled this disparate country since coming violently into power in the mid-1960s. It has done so as 'a military-based regime with a developmentalist orientation that has been characterised by a high level of state control over politics and policy' (Macintyre 1990, p. 3).

According to Sundari (1995, p. 6) this control has been exercised not only through violent means, but also through 'the permeation of regime values and

ideas throughout civil society'. In this section, we will look at those values and ideas promoted by state institutions which are relevant to our discussion of domestic violence and to its denial. However, we will not look at the violence exercised by the State, even when it is addressed against women. For a discussion of this, see Saptari and Utrecht (this collection).

The discursive practices presented here are normally attributed to the entire Javanese population by government institutions, and by a number of social scientists. However we should be aware that such attribution often implies a generalization of ideas held by the aristocratic class (*priyayi*) which are not always shared by other social classes. Similarly, it should be questioned whether all citizens adopt the dominant ideology in equal measure. This discussion will not be further pursued here, since we are interested in the contents of formal conceptualizations rather than their actualization.

In contrast to the western juxtaposition of a public and a private domain with different and even opposed characteristics and regulatory principles, in traditional Javanese thought we find a seamless continuum of two worlds, each reflecting the norms on which the functioning of the other is based. This unitarian principle is grounded on the notion:

of an integrated life based on the union of kawula (people) and Gusti (God, State, Leader) a concept which also implies the union of the outer and inner worlds, or the microcosm with the macrocosm. (Rahardjo 1984, p. 18)

The same notion is also employed in the national ideology of the New Order government (1965 – present) to justify the conception of the state as an organic whole where there is basically no dualism between the state and the individuals, since the state is an embodiment of people's common interest, and individuals only exist in relation to the whole. In line with this concept the principle of the family (*azas kekeluargaan*) is proclaimed wherein the state-nation is presented as an embracing family composed of a pyramid of smaller families, with the nuclear family as its smallest unit (cf. Roeksosodirdjo 1990, p. 1). According to the present government, in the family-nation, similarly to the nuclear families, social life must be harmonious, and individual interests subjugated to common ones. This is also consistent with the image of social Javanese life as 'constructed' by a number of renowned anthropologists (Geertz 1961; Cooley 1992). In their view, Javanese behaviour and thought is centred around the principle of harmony, or *rukun*.

As in all societies, these dominant notions are not always coherent and coexist with other, possibly contradictory, ones. For example in Java the practice of divorce is widely accepted. Divorce remains very common in Indonesia, though divorce rates in Java have been declining (McNicoll and Singarimbun 1986). Moreover, as we are arguing in this paper in relation to domestic violence, practice might be totally disjointed from formal notions. We have mentioned earlier that the nature of the State in Indonesia does not exclude violence. On the contrary, the use of violence by the State to control and repress opposition is justified exactly in the name of the social harmony it is trying to maintain. As one reviewer of a previous version of this paper noticed, it is quite striking that:

despite the existence of the so-called notions of 'harmony' ... practices of mass violence have occurred and state adoption of repressive violence has been condoned by the general public. (author unknown)

In addition, it should be clearly said that cultural norms are not unchangeable, nor sealed from external influences of all types. As Hull states, in Indonesia the penetration of western values and material goods are creating a situation where 'Traditional moral principles and practices are meant to guide Indonesians in making decisions in a modern environment' (Hull 1989, p. 21).

These idiosyncrasies and contradictions, which have the potential to undermine the very concept of harmony, are however not taken into consideration by dominant conceptualisations. In its effort to establish overall stability and control, the New Order government proclaims a strong distaste for open conflicts both within the family and the state, since conflicts expose the failure to live in agreement and harmony. Needless to say, in such political and cultural framework exposure of domestic violence is despised, since it expresses a double failure, namely the failure to live in harmony within the family as well as within the state.

The same ideas are promoted, and to a certain extent manipulated for political aims, in recent statements which place the family firmly at the core of the Indonesian development efforts. Recently the Ministry of Population and Head of the National Family Planning Board (BKKBN) has launched a national campaign to promote the 'happy, prosperous family to serve as the cornerstone and the pillar of the just and prosperous Indonesian society' (Suyono 1995, p. 2; cf. PP no. 21 [1994]). Two components of such a campaign are important from the perspective of this paper. One is that harmony is presented as an inherent characteristic of the family, as also sanctioned in the Law no. 10, 1992. This states that the family consists of complementary and harmonious (*selaras*) relationships between its members, and between the family, the society at large and the environment (BKKBN 1995, p. 11). The other is that the promotion of harmony is seen as one of the eight basic functions of the prosperous family. The family ought to provide an affective environment and to create an harmonious sphere for its members. If it fails to do so, it has to be 're-educated' (*membina*) in that direction (idem, p. 15), since internal conflicts are an obstacle to development. Following the same line of thought, family conflicts are also perceived as a danger to public health, and young couples who 'disagree with each other' are considered at risk from AIDS and as needing special attention (BKKBN 1995b, p. 27).

The preached ideal of social harmony in national and family life does not rely on equal relations. On the contrary, it is grounded on a hierarchical chain of power structured along a paternalistic gender ideology reflected again in the *azas kekeluargaan*. The *Bapak* (father/man) is therein considered the primary source of power, and the *Ibu* (mother/woman) a subordinate medium to channel that power (Djajadiningrat 1987; Suryakusuma 1991, p. 51, 1991b, p. 8). Whereas the President is the ultimate father-figure (*Bapak*) of the nation, at a lower

organisational level, it is men who head their families, counting on the support of their wives as subordinate companions. To put it more abruptly: wives exist in function of their husbands, or as an old Javanese saying claims '*swarga nunut neraka katut*' (= if he goes to heaven she will follow, if he goes to hell she will be dragged) meaning that the happiness and the sadness of a wife depends on the will of her husband (Ahmad 1993, p. 50).

In fact, New Order's ideology could be said to have 'domesticated' women. In the 1970s, an entire new set of laws and policy were stipulated that privileged the role of women in the household, and attributed to them as obligatory and natural five functions, namely: wife, household manager, child bearer, educator and, at last, citizen (Nadia 1996, p. 240). In this vision, women's main and most valuable role in the national development process is seen to be within the family (Wieringa 1992; Bush 1994), and to consist of the provision of assistance to their husbands, helping them to fulfil their private as well as their public functions. The pursuit of the fulfilment of this role necessitates women's ability to maintain harmony (Cooley 1992) by being *lemah lembut* (soft and weak) and denying their own individual interests or alternative aspirations (Wieringa 1992). According to the dominant view, by providing an harmonious family life women enable men to carry out their public duties and in this way contribute to national development. Conversely, family problems would obstacle men in the realisation of their duties and consequently endanger the development process.

These notions are echoed in the most influential public pronouncements about women or for women. PKK, the national women organisation based on the state ideology (*Pancasila*), provides conspicuous illustration of the links between dominant ideas of harmony, the family and women's responsibilities. The very name of PKK is symptomatic, since it stands for *Pembinaan Kesejahteraan Keluarga*, or Family Welfare Movement. The first of the five central duties which women are supposed to perform is that of being a 'loyal supporter of the husband'. The ten fields of endeavour through which women can participate in the development of the nation are, in their turn, headed by that 'of maintaining harmony within and between families' (cited in Bush 1994). Similarly in the work program of the *Dharma Wanita*, the civil servants wives association whose organisational structure mirrors the husbands' hierarchy, it is stated that the main duty of a wife as a faithful companion is:

to support the official duties of her husband by creating a harmonious atmosphere, to avoid anti-Pancasila behaviour in order to create a state official who is authoritative and clean. (In: Suryakusuma 1991b, p. 6)

From the above argument it derives, somehow ironically, that women who experience domestic violence are seen to have failed to fulfil their most basic role of promoters and custodians of harmony. This failure is considered disruptive to their family and, even more seriously, as threatening the social order, by their posing a challenge to the *rukun* ideology. As we will see below, this environment is not conducive to an open discussion of domestic violence.

3. The manifestations of the denial

The upholding of the ideal of harmony in social and family life, and its gender associations, leads government bodies, academic institutions and public services to deny the occurrence of domestic violence. Such denial manifests itself, among others, in the absence of an exhaustive body of laws, in the unavailability of social services to protect and take care of those who suffer at the hand of abusive men, and in the scarcity of relevant research.

The Law

As far as the law is concerned, it can be said that crimes within the family are not sufficiently elaborated, being grouped under the category of *penganiayaan* (maltreatment; Articles 351–355 of the Criminal Law) without explicit differentiation between different kinds of violence (such as beating, screaming, psychological torture) or indeed between domestic and organisational violence (cf. Nursyahbani 1995). Consequently legal statistics cannot be consulted, since they use the category *penganiayaan* to refer to both domestic and public violence. No special statistics are kept about domestic violence by any of the relevant legal institutions. A report drawn in 1991 by the Legal Aid Association for Women and Families (LKBHuWK) for example merely stated that '*cukup banyak*' (a sufficiently large number of) cases were submitted during the course of the year regarding both psychological and physical violence in the family, mostly perpetrated by husbands against their wives (LKBHuWK, p. 5), without being able to quantify their occurrence.

Similarly police statistics, when available, are not very useful, again because they use the general category of *penganiayaan*. Moreover, they can reveal only a negligible proportion of the real incidence of domestic violence, since they refer only to the most extreme cases of marital conflicts, namely those leading to the woman's suicide or murder. These statistics are however instructive in confirming that of all forms of violence perpetrated by men within the extended family, violence by husbands against wives is the most frequent (Fauzi Elhakim 1991, p. 9). For example, in Jakarta in 1990 alone ten women were killed by their husbands: this represents more than the sum of all other killings perpetrated by men within their family (idem, pp. 8–9).

Even if domestic violence was clearly defined in the law and in police records, it is questionable whether all forms of violence against women by their partners would be taken into account. Considering that for the Indonesian law only legally married couples form a family, only assault of wives by their husbands would be considered domestic violence, while violence which occurs within other unions would be ignored, making the suffering of unmarried women even more invisible in the eyes of the law.

Furthermore, the existing articles do not include sexual violence. More specifically, marital rape is not considered a crime, since the law states that rape

occurs when 'women are forced to have intercourse *outside* their marriages' (Article 285 of the Criminal Law; our emphasis). The conceptual difficulties inherent in accepting the reality of marital rape and more generally domestic violence, because of the existing conceptualisation of the family, clearly transpires from the words of the Minister of Justice, Oetjo Oesman as reported by a daily newspaper:

The proposition to include an article on marital rape in the new Criminal Law is derived from a Western prospective, suitable only to Western countries ... Western society is individualistic, husband and wife holding their own personal rights. In Western countries marriage is a legal affair, and they even allow a child to proceed against their parents. This is different in Indonesia. Here, husband and wife cannot be separated since they have become one in the family. According to our Eastern view, a wife is an integral part of her husband's soul. (Republika 1993, p. 1, our translation and emphasis)

Similarly, the Minister for Women's Affairs has claimed that the inclusion of an article on marital rape 'is against *Pancasila* and the Indonesian culture' (Editor 1993, pp. 18–19). Given these notions, it is not surprising that in 1993 the possibility of introducing a legislation which could recognise rape in marriage was dismissed, and is today extremely remote: a man forcing his wife is seen as a transgression of existing sexual ethics rather than rape.

More broadly, it is widely accepted that solutions to conflicts within the family should be sought within the family, *secara kekeluargaan* (in a family way), and not through a legal process in court (KR 1993, p. 2). As Nursyahbani Katjasungkana, the then director of the Lembaga Bantuan Hukum (LBH, Legal Aid Association), put it:

Research done so far indicates that physical assault of wives by their husbands occurs in daily life. However it is never openly discussed. Besides the absence of a proper body of law, in our culture we do not support wives who want to expose domestic violence. (Media Indonesia 1993, p. 12, our translation)

The proper solution advocated for all familiar problems is the restoration of harmony via internal mechanisms. The scant literature available about the ways women cope with domestic violence strongly emphasises the enormous social, cultural and economic obstacles women have to overcome when they try to expose domestic violence or put an end to it by divorcing their husbands. Although divorce is widely accepted on Java, as mentioned earlier, women do not easily choose to resolve their marital problems in such a way, though they can and do so on occasions (Nakamura 1983). While the economic consequences of divorce on women and their dependents vary according to circumstances, the social stigma attached to it explains this reluctance. Women who divorce or are divorced (*janda*) are often seen as women of dubious morality, an easy conquest for men and a potential danger for other married women. It is as if their perceived inability to maintain harmony in their own family, render them a threat to the social order, by the envisaged risk they pose to the harmony of other marriages.

Similarly the decision to go to court is rarely taken and mostly only after recurrent, long-term battering episodes. As one journalist put it:

women are not inclined to go to court. To do so would mean for a woman to lose face, by revealing her family secrets. She is afraid that she will be judged by the surrounding society as unable to carry out her marital duties and to serve her husband unconditionally if they find out what has occurred. (Wahyuni in Kompas 1994, p. 19, our translation)

Moreover, as the leaflet of one women NGO explained:

women who become victim of domestic violence think that to tell other people about the violence they have been exposed to is TABOO and will ruin the good name of their husbands. (Rifka Annisa 1996, our translation)

Running the risk of being seen as the 'guilty' parties, women do not feel encouraged to expose domestic violence. Fear of being considered a threat to social stability, by not having lived up to social norms and ideals, motivate women to hush up and gloss over domestic violence. In the words of Gelles and Strauss: 'human beings are less fearful of violence and injury than of the violation of social order' (in Richters 1994, p. 75).

Besides having to overcome their own reluctance to 'confess' to themselves and to others that their families do not comply with the upheld ideal of harmony, they have to deal with social pressure and control from their immediate environment. Women find that one of the most difficult obstacles they encounter is contravening the social norm of solving domestic conflicts and violence *secara kekeluargaan*. This is demonstrated by the many cases of women who – according to the director of the Legal Aid Association for Women and Families, Nursyahbani Katjasungkana – after starting legal actions against their husbands, are persuaded by their parents or other relatives to withdraw their accusations and try to resolve the problem with their help. Ironically their timid efforts to break the curtain of silence often trigger other forms of violence. A woman, for example, confessed that she had to endure years of battering by her husband because her parents prevented her from going to court. Her father had even tried to murder her since he could not accept her daring to expose her marital problems outside the family (idem, p. 24).

Social services

Even if a battered woman finally finds the courage to expose her experience by going against her relatives, tradition and national ideology, she will not be able to find much assistance. Since domestic violence is not defined as a social problem, the state does not provide any special service to address it, prevent it, or to protect and support the women who suffer from it.

Until recently a similar silence and absence of services characterised the position of all non-governmental organizations (NGOs) towards sexual violence and its survivors. It should be said in advance that while Indonesian NGOs have

always been differentiated by size, type of activities and format, in recent years many have also become much more critical of the State, advocating radical changes to social structures. As a response, the State has unleashed against them an array of legal and illegal (and violent) repressive measures (Rochman 1995.)

Women's groups too have multiplied, very diverse both in their general features and in the position they take in relation to domestic violence (see Saptari and Utrecht in this Issue). Although the idea of establishing a women's crisis centre was launched by women activists in Jakarta already in 1990, it was only in 1993 that a Women's Crisis Centre was founded in Yogyakarta by a group of concerned Moslem women (Jawa Pos 1993, p. 2). The Centre aims to provide assistance to local women who experience difficulties (not exclusively domestic violence) in their families. The services provided, in line with dominant discourses, are directed at restoring harmony rather than searching for solutions which would increase conflict and challenge traditional norms. The staff usually encourage women to return home and work at improving their relationship with their husbands. Only in the most extreme cases, divorce is recommended and women are helped to find temporary housing. Such a conservative approach may change in the near future, due to the staff's growing awareness of its shortcomings.

Support from advocacy groups has also been limited. Women's groups located in Jakarta, such as Kalyanamitra, Perempuan Mardika and more recently Solidaritas Perempuan and the Women NGO Forum have tried to expose various forms of violence against women. They have, however, not focused on domestic violence, prioritising its most public forms, especially state violence, violence in the family planning program, and abuse against female workers. Furthermore, marital rape and domestic violence have been barely touched upon during the major anti-rape campaign of Kalyanamitra and other women's NGOs, launched in 1995 in the wave of a number of multiple rape cases occurred in the capital. Hence, the efforts to expose domestic violence have been few and limited to Jakarta-based organisations. Moreover, although significant in starting discussions of domestic violence in intellectual circles through seminars and in the press, women's NGOs have been unable so far to reach the women who most need support, provide them with a new awareness of their condition, and empower them to deal with it. According to a well known woman activist, this problem is not limited to domestic violence. She argues that women NGOs in general have been unable to realize their empowering mission due to their elitist attitude and the lack of democratic space in society (Nadia 1996, pp. 242-243). In this regard it would be instructive to compare present-day women NGO with women's organizations existing prior to 1965, such as Gerwani and Perwari (cf. Wieringa 1995 for an history of the Indonesian Women's movement prior to the New Order). It is to be hoped that newly founded organisations focusing on violence against women, such as the Asosiasi Perempuan Indonesia untuk Keadilan (APIK or Association of Indonesian Women for Justice), the Komite

Perempuan Anti Kekerasan (Women's Committee against Violence) and Solidaritas Perempuan Anti Kekerasan (Solidarity of Women against Violence, SPEAK) will finally be able to deal with this unrecognised issue.

Research

Finally, the denial of domestic violence in discursive practices is also revealed by the scarcity of relevant research on its occurrence on Java, and more generally Indonesia, as the following quotations by social scientists reveal:

In our society we are inclined to think that the husband holds all the rights over his wife. Therefore if she is wrong, he has the right to beat her. In Indonesia this problem is not yet recognised as a social problem. Maybe for this reason, till now no research has been undertaken on domestic violence. (Ihromi 1990, p. 38, our translation)

In Indonesia we do not know yet how many women are beaten by their own husbands. We have to admit that, apart from the abundance or scarcity of cases, we are reluctant to discuss these cases openly since we see them as 'family matters' ... Till now academics have not addressed these cases. (Nugroho and Nugroho 1990, our translation)

Written sources that testify to the existence of domestic violence on Java, are press reports and a limited number of qualitative studies, while reliable quantitative data are totally lacking. In our search for relevant material we have been able to find a large quantity of news coverage on individual cases of domestic violence, and a very limited number of studies undertaken with small samples of respondents (Adrina et al. 1998; cf. Sabaroedin 1991; UI and DepSos 1992; Hariadi 1993; PSW UNS and DepSos 1993).

Although the information presented is fragmentary, it is sufficient to show the typical pattern of violence against women, revealing that the majority of those who carry it out are either husbands, lovers or friends. Furthermore, it indicates the multifarious (declared) causes of domestic violence, among others: husbands entering into polygamous relations, husbands' unwillingness to listen to wives complaints, and husbands' dissatisfaction with the 'services' rendered by his wife (LKBHuWK 1991, p. 1)

The available case studies also show that domestic abuse can be found in all societal strata, including the wealthier ones. For example, a university lecturer is described as beating his wife frequently and for trivial reasons, with the wife unable to seek a solution for fear of being left destitute with her small children (Adrina et al. 1989, p. 8). While in most parts of Indonesia married women remain economically active and thus retain a degree of financial autonomy, this depends on age and class (Grijns et al. 1994). Furthermore, though both the law and tradition allow the wife a proportion of the conjugal property, this is often difficult to claim. Finally, as mentioned earlier, in some parts of the country the stigma attached to the status of divorced woman may be a stronger disincentive to divorce than the prospect of destitution, especially for wealthier women.

Another example consists of a senior military officer who frequently tortured his wife, because she refused to submit to his sexual demands (Editor 1993b, p. 25). The wide variety of age and socio-economic backgrounds of women who have experienced domestic violence is particularly well-documented in the press report with the expressive title of 'The Hell in the Household' (idem, pp. 24–26). Young girls of 15 years old, women of 65 years, housewives and professional women share this common experience.

Despite the usefulness of the sources presented above, we cannot but conclude that they are not sufficient to provide a full picture of the scope and nature of domestic violence. In other words, although we could learn that domestic violence exists in Java and in the country as a whole, the social construction and the discourses surrounding social harmony prevent women from exposing it, and us from appreciating its very extent.

Conclusion

That domestic violence is a social evil present in all strata of society world-wide is only recently receiving public recognition at the level of international institutions such as the UN. While the causes of such violence remain a debated topic, there is agreement that its consequences on the physical and mental well-being of women are extremely serious and long-lasting. Equally serious are the consequences for children, hence the future generations, and society at large.

Despite this recognition, in most countries the issue of domestic violence remains poorly understood. This paper has argued that both in the western and in the Indonesian-Javanese context there is a great reluctance to fully acknowledge the severity of the problem and to intervene with preventive measures, with punitive ones in relation to perpetrators, or with remedial ones for the survivors. In this paper we have also argued that one of the root causes of this reluctance lies in the specific understandings that respectively in the west and on Java, are promoted in discursive practices with reference to the nature of the family, its place in society and the position women occupy in both. Paraphrasing Heise, it could be said that we have treated family notions as one of the mechanisms that legitimise, obscure, deny, and therefore perpetuate violence.

By examining the notions dominant in Java against the background of those found in the west, we have opted for a relativist approach, which recognises the explanatory value of certain conceptualisations only as far as they are applied to their particular historical and cultural contexts. We have rejected the universality of the division between the conflictual public domain and the harmonious private domain for Java, and have instead indicated as dominant ideology the harmonious unity of family and society. The recognition of these cultural differences has helped us to explain the more extreme denial of domestic violence in Java. In our opinion, the Javanese-Indonesian conceptualisation of the relationship between family and society – with its contradictions, changes and

external influences – render the recognition of the existence of domestic violence even more difficult. An indication is the fact that in Indonesia the formal admission of the problem is more recent, reluctant and slow, hence there is even less debate and less provision than in many Western countries.

Abstracts

Dieser Beitrag beschäftigt sich mit der institutionellen Verleugnung von häuslicher Gewalt in den verschiedenen sozio-kulturellen Zusammenhängen von Java (Indonesien) und in der westlichen Welt, mit getrennter Berücksichtigung der Bereiche Recht, sozialer Versorgung und sozialwissenschaftlicher Forschung.

Die Kernaussage ist daß in Java, gleich wie in westlichen Ländern, häusliche Gewalt nicht als soziales Problem wahrgenommen und erkannt wird. Daher wird auch wenig unternommen, um sie zu bekämpfen und den von ihr Betroffenen zu helfen. Diese Zurückhaltung wird im Westen mit Bezug auf den Gegensatz zwischen der öffentlichen Sphäre (die Männern zugeordnet wird) und der privaten, familiären Sphäre (die Frauen zugeordnet wird) erklärt. Im westlichen Kontext wird die Familie als sicherer Zufluchtsort vor den Konflikten der öffentlichen Sphäre betrachtet. Eine Folge davon ist die Verleugnung der Existenz häuslicher Gewalt. Im Gegensatz dazu werden im traditionellen javanischen Gedankengut und auch in der modernen javanisch-indonesischen Ideologie Familie und Gesellschaft nicht als Gegensätze dargestellt, sondern als jeweilige Spiegelbilder betrachtet, die wiederum von harmonischen und hierarchischen Beziehungen geprägt sind, wobei letztere Männer über Frauen stellen. Die starke Betonung der Harmonie sowohl in der öffentlichen als auch in der privaten Sphäre schafft einen noch grösseren Anreiz, das Vorhandensein von körperlicher und anderer Form der Mißhandlung innerhalb der Familie in den Bereichen Rechtsschutz, sozialer Versorgung und Forschung nicht wahrzunehmen.

This paper analyses the institutional denial of domestic violence in the different socio-cultural contexts of Java (Indonesia) and the western world. The focus of this analysis is the official statements and responses to domestic violence, with attention to the separate fields of the law, social provisions and social research. Our argument is that in Java, as in Western countries, domestic violence remains unrecognised as a social problem, and thus very few steps are taken in either places to combat it and assist those affected by it. This reluctance is explained in the West by the opposition between the public domain (associated to men) and the private one of the family (associated to women). In the Western context the family is viewed as a safe refuge from the conflicts of the public arena. The denial of the existence of violence in the home is a consequence of this. In contrast, in traditional Javanese thought as well as in modern Javanese-Indonesian ideology, family and the wider society are not contrasted, but perceived to be a mirror image of each other, both being regulated by harmonious and

hierarchical relations, the latter placing men above women. The strong emphasis on harmony in both private and public spheres is an even stronger incentive to ignore the existence of physical and other abuses within the family in the three arenas of legal recourse, social provisions and research.

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