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Violence in the day-to-day lives of women plantation workers in Central Java, Indonesia

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Preface

Gender violence is encountered by many women everyday; sadly but true, it can occur anywhere and under any circumstance, in the home as well as in the workplace and in the wider community. Even though we regularly hear or read about gender violence, the phenomenon remains understudied. The research presented here aims to contribute to a better understanding of gender violence, both as a social phenomenon that must be overcome as well as an object of scientific inquiry, linking the occurrence of domestic violence to gender violence in the workplace, in this case in the distinct, yet limited environment of a Central Javanese plantation community.

The choice of research topic was the result of a long engagement with contemporary gender issues in the Indonesian academic and political worlds. I first encountered the topic in the early 1990s through my involvement in a project on women in rural industries in Java followed by my own MA thesis on a similar subject. It was only in 1996, however, when I worked in a project on Reproductive Health, Population and Development in my home institute, the Center for Population and Policy Studies at Gadjah Mada University (CPPS-GMU) in Yogyakarta, that I came across gender and reproductive health issues. In 1997 I had the chance to join a project on Violence against Women in Public Spheres which was conducted in four provinces in Indonesia. This experience sharpened my ideas on gender violence and allowed me to be more confident in my further study of this matter. My involvement in these two Ford Foundation projects brought me to the Netherlands in September 1999 to develop my research proposal as the initial stage of my PhD. I am grateful to Prof. Dr. Anita Hardon, Dr. Ria Reis and Dr. Rosalia Sciortino, the former project officer at the Ford Foundation Indonesia, who arranged my position at the Medical Anthropology Unit of the University of Amsterdam, for giving me this opportunity. The ten-months stay was difficult, both in terms of the development of my research proposal as well as in personal matters resulting from being so far away from my family.

I wish to thank Anita Hardon who helped me focus on everyday forms of gender violence and the selection of the plantation community as a research site. Plantations have always been inseparable from my life. The mere mention of the word elicits grateful childhood memories as I grew up on a plantation where my late father worked. As a young girl, I was exposed to gossip and rumors about class-based and gender-related violence among plantation workers which I only came to fully grasp more than twenty years later. These experiences motivated me to unravel real life conditions on the plantation and to give women workers an opportunity to speak up and be heard.

At the end of writing my proposal, I approached Sjaak van der Geest to be my supervisor for the rest of my PhD project. Without yet knowing me or my work he accepted me. He was there when I was desperately looking for someone who would give me strength to continue my project. I left Amsterdam for the field in mid 2000. Since then, Sjaak has been influential in my work. His supervision, questions and remarks have inspired me, and his appreciation of the progress of the work has strengthened my confidence. When I returned from the fieldwork in September 2002, I met Annemiek Richters from Leiden University. She has helped me make my dream come true. I profited greatly from her professional competence in supervising my work. Her critical remarks and careful readings sharpened my views and arguments.

I honestly admit that writing this thesis has not always been enjoyable, but I was inspired by the struggle of the women plantation workers whom I worked with and to whom this thesis is dedicated. During my PhD project, many people supported me directly and indirectly, personally and professionally, and I can only mention a few of them here. First and foremost, I am sincerely grateful to my parents who gave me courage through their love and prayers. My father passed away when I had just finished my fieldwork. It was a very difficult time for me knowing that one of my biggest supporters had gone before I reached the end of the struggle. He left me to continue my work with warm support and care from my mother and other family members. *Terima kasih mama dan papaku*. I also am indebted to my husband, Sahat Parlindungan Sitompul, and my son, Yeremia Yobelanno Sitompul, whose company I have had to sacrifice so often to complete this thesis. My husband took care of our only son during my repeated absence from home for fieldwork on the plantation and writing in Amsterdam. Both have always been a source of strength and inspiration for me. Without their love, prayers, encouragement and patience, my work would never have seen the light of day. *Terima kasih sayangku*.

Center for Population and Policy Studies of the Gadjah Mada University granted me a study leave financially supported by the Ford Foundation which enabled me to devote full time to my work both at the university of Amsterdam and in the field. I am grateful to both institutions. I would like to express my gratitude to the big family of CPPS. To mention a few, Prof. Dr. Agus Dwiyanto, Drs. Sukamdi M.Sc., Dr. Muhadjir Darwin, Dr. Irwan Abdullah, Dr. Faturochman, Dr. Suhatmini Hardyastuti, and Ibu Irawati Singarimbun, have given me their enduring support and assistance. I also wish to express my sincere gratitude to my colleagues and friends at the Department of Anthropology, Faculty of Cultural Sciences, Gadjah Mada University. Special thanks goes to the deans of the faculty and the heads of the department who provided me with both official permission and personal support which allowed me to accomplish my work.

During my two-year writing period, with a six-month leave for the second field visit, I was given an opportunity to be part of the Amsterdam Research Institute for Global Issues and Development Studies (AGIDS) and the Netherlands Research School for Resource Studies for Development (CERES). There Prof. Dr. Isa Baud of AGIDS provided me with all the necessary facilities for research, writing and editing. Many

thanks to Gert van der Meer and other friends at the secretariaat Guida Morais, Clinton Siccama, Barbara Lawa, and Pia Teeuw. I appreciate and thank Lothar Smith, Miriam Kabki, Udan Fernando, Nahro Zakarya, and Kees van der Geest for facilitating the lively working atmosphere when we shared S15.

Some of my colleagues also read drafts and gave helpful suggestions. In the Medical Anthropology Promotion Club, Dr. Els van Dongen, Dr. Diana Gibson, Winny Koster, Trudy Gerrits, Francine van de Borne, Getnet Tadele, Josien de Klerk, Shifra Kisch, and Christine Dedding were influential. In the Trauma Reading Club in Leiden, I benefited from Marian Tankink, Marianne Vysma, Cora Dekker, Leyla Cinibulak, and Esti Neeman.

For the facilities made available to me during the field study, special merit goes to the headquarters board of directors of the PT Perkebunan Nusantara IX (Persero), particularly to former human resources and general affairs director Ir. Agust Tiwouw and the Kaligua plantation management. I thank the plantation administrators, Ir. Nugroho and Ir. Saryono, their staff Drs. Sunardi, Drs. Haryono, Bp. Sutiyoso, and Bp. Nasir Noor, and many others that I cannot mention but remember for their kindness. My deepest appreciation for the hospitality and cooperation of the Pandansari village head and other community members who became my friends during my stay in the field. To Mbak Sri and Pak Nyamo who accepted me and my research assistants as members of their household and provided a pleasant workspace.

Any mention of the fieldwork instantly reminds me of Vita. She acted as more than a research assistant, and stayed with me both in happy and frustrating times during the data collection. To her and other young anthropology graduates who assisted me in the survey, I convey my heartfelt thanks. I will always remember how Erwan Agus Purwanto, Pujo Semedi, Pande Made Kutaneegara, Susi Eja Yuarsi, Budi Wahyuni, Wini Tamtari, Ambar Widaningrum, Inge Magdalena, Roos Kities Andadari, Ani Margawati, Ramaniya Sampurno, Linda Savirani, Carlos Bosch and the Bosch family, Lanny, Tante Betsy and my flat-mate Dessi Russinova and other Indonesian students in Amsterdam gave me courage in different ways and times throughout my project. My life in Amsterdam was also enriched by the company of my brothers and sisters at the Gereja Kristen Indonesia Nederland, especially experiences in the choir which I joined for several months and which allowed me to escape from my loneliness.

With regard to the finishing touches of this manuscript I would like to thank Thea Nelson for her excellent editing. She gave me the good times I needed during the final stage of my work with her support and prompt work. Sri Suharti of the CPPS-GMU also deserves my appreciation for her timely responses to my requests on technical matters.

I thank my sisters, brothers, nieces and nephews for their enduring love and prayers. Special thanks to my parents-in-law, Ompung Yerry Doli and Boru who never forgot to name me in their daily prayers hoping to see their son and grandson united with me once I had completed my thesis.

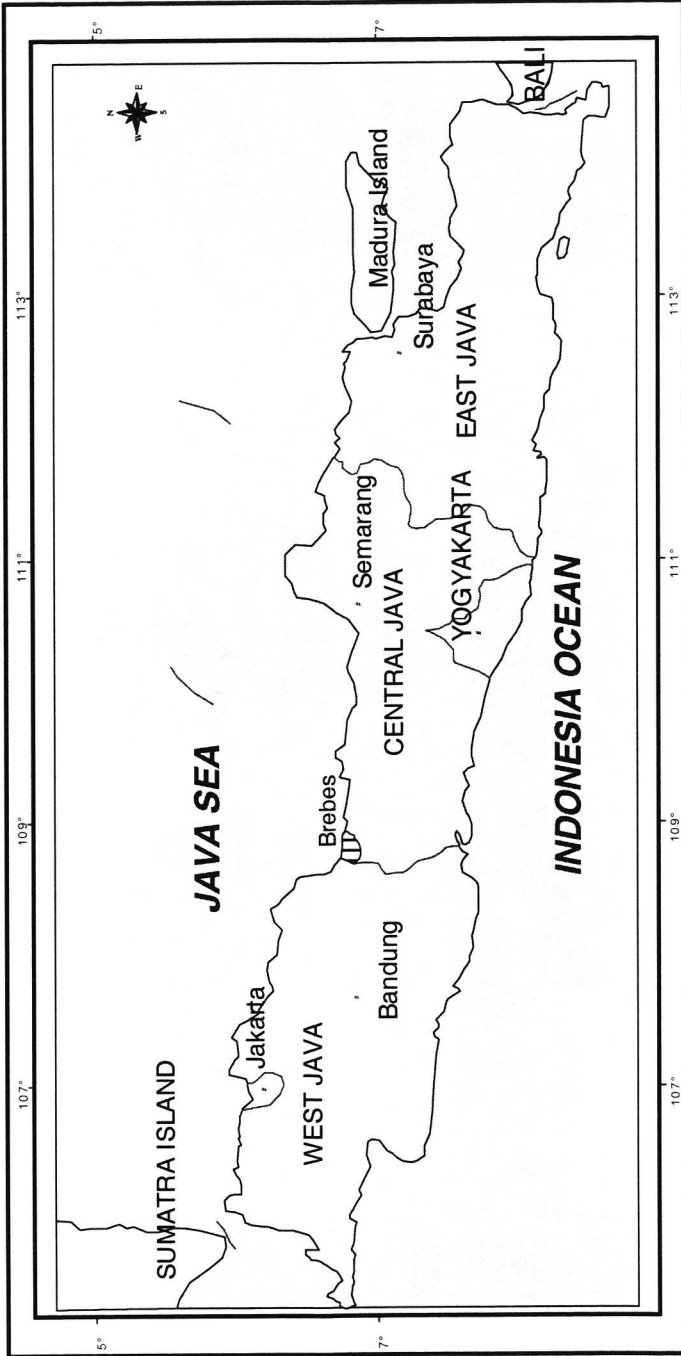
In this thesis, the real name of the plantation is used, but personal identities and names are kept confidential. With a few obvious exceptions, the actual positions of management and labor hierarchy staff have not been revealed.

I have mentioned many institutions and names of people, but none of these are to be held responsible for this thesis. I only hope that this thesis is worthy of the support and assistance that each gave to me over the past years.

Anna Marie Wattie,

Amsterdam, October 2004

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