

# **Family Drama in Three Acts: In Search of Ideal Family in Postcolonial Indonesia, 1950-1965**

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## **Abstract**

This article intends to map problems and debates on the conception of an ideal family in postcolonial Indonesia as a part of the national decolonization project. The nature of democracy in the newly independent country had allowed diverse opinions to participate in defining national identity in every aspect, including in the most private area, family. These perspectives were expressed by different groups, not only political leaders but also the common people. Based on the assumption that a strong family would support national development, postcolonial Indonesia witnessed divergent methods of discussing family issues. Reading through speeches and writings of statespeople reports from congress, and popular media and literature from 1950 to 1965, I argue that it was important to ensure family resilience in order to facilitate the bigger national projects that family issues were central during that time. I will look into how family issues were discussed in various realms in their own respective manner, considering the difficult situation post-Revolutionary war where families were torn apart. By plotting the problems, I will investigate how the government and other organizations and groups of people took the initiatives in solving them and how far their involvement in this intimate space gave an overview of the relation between the state and the people. Finally, I will analyse how the debates on imagining an ideal family across different political views contribute in shaping the knowledge and ideology about family throughout the era.

**Keyword** : decolonisation, family, postcolonial Indonesia

## Abstrak

Artikel ini berusaha memetakan masalah dan perdebatan tentang konsep keluarga ideal di Indonesia pada masa pasca kolonial sebagai bagian dari proyek dekolonisasi. Semangat demokrasi di negara yang baru merdeka tersebut membuka pintu terhadap beragam pendapat untuk mendefinisikan identitas nasional dalam berbagai aspek, termasuk dalam area yang sangat privat, yaitu keluarga. Beragam perspektif tersebut diekspresikan oleh berbagai kelompok, tidak hanya pemimpin politik, tetapi juga masyarakat biasa. Berdasarkan asumsi bahwa keluarga yang kuat dapat mendukung pembangunan nasional, Indonesia pada masa pasca kolonial menyaksikan berbagai metode untuk mendiskusikan persoalan keluarga. Dengan menganalisis pidato dan tulisan pemimpin negara, laporan parlemen, dan media populer serta karya sastra pada 1950 sampai 1965, saya berargumen bahwa memastikan ketahanan keluarga adalah hal penting untuk memfasilitasi proyek nasional yang lebih besar dimana isu keluarga menjadi sentral di masa itu. Saya akan melihat bagaimana isu-isu keluarga didiskusikan dalam berbagai ranah, dalam konteks dimana situasi keluarga tercerai berai setelah Revolusi. Dengan memetakan problem, saya akan menyelidiki bagaimana pemerintah, organisasi, dan kelompok masyarakat lainnya mengambil inisiatif untuk memecahkan masalah tersebut dan bagaimana keterlibatan dalam ranah intim ini memberikan gambaran tentang relasi negara dan masyarakat. Terakhir, saya akan menganalisis bagaimana debat tentang imajinasi keluarga ideal yang terdapat di berbagai pandangan politik turut berkontribusi dalam membentuk pengetahuan dan ideologi tentang keluarga selama era tersebut.

Kata kunci: dekolonisasi, keluarga, Indonesia pascakolonial

## Pendahuluan

The period from 1950 to 1965 was an important chapter in Indonesian history. As a newly born nation, Indonesia was experiencing various problems and debates in different aspects. These years were also filled with optimism and the desire of the nation's leaders to make Indonesia a modern nation, equal to the West but still with the spirit of opposing imperialism and feudalism (Vickers, 2008). The dynamics of the life of the Indonesian nation and state at that time were of course influenced by the global situation, particularly the Cold War. Thus, the spirit of building a country was in accordance with that was growing in several parts of the world. There was a force of eradicating the remnants of colonialism and opposing the power of imperialism by emphasizing nationalization in all aspects of life, and at the same time, there was also a spirit of internationalism, especially cooperating with other anti-imperialist countries. The desire to build a more advanced nation must begin with the rehabilitation of the post-Revolutionary war situation in the early 1950s, especially as a result of social and economic changes. At the same time, projects to build national identity were also encouraged. This is a practice that is quite common in countries that have just been released from colonialism. Giving identity in all aspects of life is one of the decolonisation efforts of decolonization. The efforts, however, did not escape intense debate. This was possible because the new government adopted a democratic spirit so that various groups of people could contribute to the attempt to build this national identity.

Debates in various aspects at this time have been investigated by several academics. An anthology entitled *Heirs to the World Culture: Being Indonesian 1950-1965* (2012) records the artistic and cultural life in the period by looking at the dynamics of culture both in the centre and in areas outside Java. In addition, it also discusses how artists and intellectuals interact

with each other, both within the country and with the international community. The variety of perspectives that arise in the effort to define national culture also raises debates as to what application of national culture to at the regional level (Lindsay & Liem, 2012). In the fields of literature and art, Keith Foulcher traces the ideological debates in the mainstream between Lembaga Kebudayaan Rakyat (Lekra) or People's People's Institute of Culture, who carries the spirit of art in favour of the people, and Manifesto Kebudayaan (Manikebu) or Cultural Manifesto, who upholds the values of liberal humanism. This debate, as those in other aspects, ended with the elimination of the remnants of left-leaning cultural activities after the events of 1965. Foulcher mainly draws the history of the establishment and activities of Lekra, as well as its relations with fellow branches, ideological opponents, international culture, and the state (Foulcher, 1986). The end of this debate after 1965 not only changed the life of the nation and state in Indonesia but also the practice of reconstructing past events. The New Order regime made militarism a style of writing Indonesian history. These values were applied and disseminated in such a way by building militaristic historical narratives about the nation's struggles through museums, monuments, memorials, to major historical reference books. However, this does not mean that the military was not present in the previous period, especially the Army; the military also played an important role in building efforts to build national identity (McGregor, 2008). Regarding the practice of writing history at that time, Gani A. Jaelani also traces the nationalisation of Indonesian-centric historical knowledge by summarising the various approaches taken during that period to build Indonesian history (Jaelani, 2018).

In a more private sphere, family issues are also problematic, especially since an awareness of the importance of maintaining an ideal family for the nation's strength of the nation appeared. Generally, discussions of family and state centre on marriage and the practices that follow it, including early marriage and polygamy (Blackburn, 2004). However, how the idea of the family—the sexual division of labour, marriage and divorce, the household economy—is constructed has not been widely discussed. Saskia Wieringa mentions in one chapter the ideal Manipol<sup>1</sup> family image; however, the formation of that image is based solely on reading the media affiliated with a major left-leaning women's organisation, Gerakan Wanita (Gerwani), *Api Kartini* and other leftist publications (Wieringa, 2002). Meanwhile, on the other hand, varying opinions regarding the ideal family image emerged, whether in favour of the Manipol family idea or the dissenting views. In addition, family issues do not only define what an ideal family is. More than that, the everyday problems discussed by ordinary people, not political leaders or figures, are no less important than building the vision of the ideal family itself. Questions that then arise include: how were family issues—including daily household business to larger problems, such as pressure on the government to regulate polygamy and child marriage—discussed? To overcome these problems, what efforts had been taken by various groups of people and the government to deal with fears of the collapse of the family which would affect the country's resilience of the country? What kind of family institution did the state imagine, so that it could become a pillar to realise the vision of this nascent state?

This paper draws from reading popular media published during 1950-1965 and contemporary literary works, as well as congress reports and speeches and writings of political leaders and figures. Thus, the main argument in this paper is that the development of a country cannot be separated from what happens in the private sphere. Apart from that, I would also like to point out that the issue of the family was also very central in this early

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<sup>1</sup> Manipol stands for Manifesto Politik or Political Manifesto which derives from Sukarno's speech on August 17, 1959 in which he proclaimed the Guided Democracy (Demokrasi Terpimpin) as the new political direction. The general idea of Manipol is based on the spirit of Revolution and social justice (Ricklefs, 2001, p. 323)

period of Independence. To formulate my argument, I will focus on three concepts: the family that was torn apart by the Revolutionary war and the problems that followed, the intervention of the state in family affairs to maintain family stability, and the ideal of a strong family that supported the development of a newly independent country and the various views complementing it.

## Divorced Family

In his speech on the occasion of Indonesia's Independence Day on August 17, 1962, President Sukarno referred to that year as "A Year of Triumph" in which the nation had successfully overcome the resolution of domestic security disturbances, the convening of the Asian Games, and the annexation of West Irian. This victory shows the development of Indonesia as a nation towards "self-sustaining growth or self-propelling growth". Responding to the speech, the editor of *Keluarga* magazine interpreted it as a suggestion for women to "realise their important position as the holders of control of family education and the education of the new generation." Women must have the revolutionary spirit needed for the progress of the nation and no longer compete just to dress up (*Keluarga*, August 1962). The magazine itself, although its tagline reads "Monthly Magazine for Mothers, Fathers, and Children" is more aimed at female readers, especially mothers, because most of its contents and language context refer to this group. Sukarno did not specifically mention family issues in his speech, so the editorial response of the magazine could be interpreted as the relationship between the state and the people in building the idea of a strong family to support the struggle of the newly independent nation from colonial rule.

The idea of a strong and united family emerged from a long process that took place before 1962. As a new nation, despite proclaiming independence in 1945, Indonesia still had to go through years of struggle to maintain independence until it was finally recognised as a sovereign nation. These revolutionary years were occupied with guerrilla wars that forced young and old men to leave their homes and join the struggle. Literary works published in the 1950s capture this reality. Pramoedya Ananta Toer,<sup>2</sup> for example, specifically wrote a novel about this, entitled *Keluarga Gerilya* (*Guerrilla Family*). Three of the eldest sons killed their father, who was in the Dutch Army, leaving their mother who had lost her mind and the eldest sister, who had to work in the city to provide for the family. The war divided the family who in the end had to struggle in economic hardship in the end. Young women abandoned by male family members are forced to work or undergo forced marriages (Toer, 1995). S. Rukiah<sup>3</sup> also photographs families devastated by war, especially in the short stories "Mak Esah" ("Mother of Esah") and "Isteri Pradjurit" ("The Soldier's Wife"). Women have to let go of the sadness of losing their husbands and sons to earn a living.<sup>4</sup> The collapse of family integrity and

<sup>2</sup> Prior to writing the *Buru Quartet*, which was first published in 1980, Pramoedya wrote stories describing the reality of urban society in the years after the Revolution. Other works such as *Bukan Pasar Malam* (1951) (Toer, 2004) and the short collection of short stories *Tjerita from Djakarta* (1957) illustrate the gloomy situation in the midst of uncertain economic and political conditions (Toer, 2002).

<sup>3</sup> Siti Rukiah was one of the few Indonesian female writers in the 1950-1965 period. Her best-known works are the only novel she ever published, *Kedjatuhan dan Hati* (1950) and the collection of poems and short stories *Tandus* (1952). After getting married and working in the children's magazine *Tjendrawasih*, Rukiah mostly wrote children's stories using the name S. Rukiah Kertapati, taken after her husband's last name. Rukiah was an active writer in organizations, one of which is at Lekra, and she even held an important position in the institution in the midst of an authorship scene dominated by male writers. She was also active in the editorship of several magazines, one of which was *Api Kartini*. As the careers of most writers affiliated with other leftist organizations, Rukiah's career ended after the events of 1965. (Gallop, 1985)

<sup>4</sup> Rukiah also portrays a family torn apart by the guerilla war in which daughters leave home to support guerilla soldiers in the battlefield and refuse to marry a man chosen by their mother in *Kejatuhan dan Hati* (*The Fall and*

economic problems as a result of the revolutionary war also gave rise to a new problem, corruption. The problem of corruption is not only a matter of embezzlement of state or company money but also related to the family. The path of corruption is taken to meet the needs of the family or the needs of infidelity. The issue of corruption and family integrity is also described by Pramoedya in another novel forthrightly entitled *Korupsi*. A corrupt employee who cannot stand the suspicion of his wife who refuses the money from corruption then leaves the family seeking pleasure with his mistress (Toer, 1961). The issue of corruption and infidelity in the 1950s was also raised by Mochtar Lubis in *Senja di Jakarta*. Lubis brings up the theme of corruption as a result of pressure to make one's family happy and how family contributes to perpetuating corrupt practices (Lubis, 1992).

After the Revolution, Indonesia was in a dreadful economic state, and this affected the integrity of the household. Economic problems, whether it is lack of money or excess money, are among the main causes of divorce. In the early 1950s, family integrity was not only threatened by the loss of family members, but also because of the high divorce rate at that time. Daniel S. Lev notes the high divorce rate in Indonesia which reached around 50%, and in some areas the figure could be even higher. In addition, Lev also highlights the high number of requests for divorce filed by the wife (Lev, 1986). This at the same time, indicates the emergence of women's awareness from educated and urban circles as a result of the nationalism movement for their rights. In addition to economic conditions, the main cause of divorce in Indonesia at that time was forced marriage. This problem was more or less related to economic problems. Young women were forced to marry to become the umpteenth wife as a way to help the family's financial condition, either relinquishing the responsibility of the head of the family to someone else or as part of a debt agreement. Although it seems strange for a modern era, this problem rooted in feudalism was still practiced.

A young woman named Djasmie who ran away from home wrote an open letter in *Wanita* magazine in 1955 to her parents begging not to be betrothed to an old man who wanted to make her his fourth wife.

Dad, you forced me to marry Datuk Nan Gadang Tjangkung, the old fart. No, don't don't just repeat that word again, just one more time. I'm afraid to hear it. I refuse this compulsion, you threw rage at me, you snatched me and you got mad at me. Indeed, I will not simply obey the orders of misguided parents. Who will marry that Datuk Nan Gadang Tjangkung? You, Dad or me? What is the reason why it is up to you to decide, while I am not given the right to express my opinion? How short your decision is. (*Wanita*, June 5 June 5, 1955)

The letter is written in a sharp demanding tone amplifying the spirit of a young woman who is aware of her agency. She is able to identify self-sovereignty regardless of her position as a child, even starting when she decided to run away from home and write about her personal problems in the mass media.<sup>5</sup> The inception of individual awareness of women is also seen in the emergence of the women's movement seeking family welfare in the public sphere. A number of issues underlie this very personal letter. In addition to forced marriage, the issue of polygamy was also one of the problems that threatened the integrity of the family at that time. In the letter, Djasmie explicitly rejects the practice of polygamy; she even mentions

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*the Heart*) (Rukiah, 2017). The same theme is evident too in one of her children's books, *Pak Supi, Kakek Pengungsi* (*Supi, A Refugee Old Man*) where she tells a story about an old man living in solitary as he lost all his family members from war (Kertapati, 2018).

<sup>5</sup> Even so, it is important to note that it is unclear if the letter was written by a real person or based on a real event. Nevertheless, the fact that such a letter was published indicates the prevalence of the problem.

Government Regulation No. 19 of 1952 in favour of polygamy. In the streets, rejection of this regulation even sparked demonstrations. The regulation controls state funding for polygamous employees in which multiple wives may take their shared husband's pension fund (Vreede-De Stuers, 2008). It also proves another link between economic and family problems. This practice, if supported by the state, increases the funding burden for polygamous employees. In addition, wives who are economically dependent on their husbands will also bear the financial burden while the situation does not support women having families to earn a living. It is at this point that polygamy, even though the number is actually small, becomes a problem that demands great attention from the state.

Polygamy was one of the important issues fought for by the Indonesian women's movement in the 1950s and 1960s. The push for the abolition of this practice grew stronger when in 1954, President Sukarno took a second wife. The government at that time was considered less concerned with the issue of polygamy. Apart from being seen from the presidential decree, the reluctance to conflict with Islamic groups and the weak economic condition of the country, showed that efforts to abolish polygamy seemed difficult at that time (Blackburn, 2004). Polygamy was one of the strongest reasons for filing for divorce besides incompatibility, economic hardship, and a moral crisis (Vreede-De Stuers, 2008). The moral crisis is deemed to be related to the emergence of infidelity. A person wrote a letter in the family consultation column "Nenek Hajati"<sup>6</sup> in *Wanita* magazine, which said that they had witnessed "Mrs. A playing crazy [*main gila* – having an affair] with Mr. B and Mrs. B "understood" their relationship, but kept silent". The answer to this question is that even though it is a personal matter, the questioner is encouraged to take part in stopping the act, even suggesting to "bust" the cheating pair (*Wanita*, July 15/July 15, 1960). The suggestion to intervene in private matters like this shows a concern about affairs that can threaten marriage.

The years after the Revolution were indeed marked by the dynamics of debate in the public sphere for various aspects, including marriage and family matters. This debate had come to advocacy efforts to ensure the state guaranteed the protection and resolution of community problems. Women, in particular, gained the space to move in public spaces. The involvement of women had become complex because of calls from the government, including the president, for women to participate in nation-building, but at the same time, they were also required to ensure the integrity of the household and education at home. To help with this double burden, the women's movement was pursuing initiatives, such as child care and maternal and child health care centers, to ensure that their domestic roles can be lightened so that they can work outside the home (Wieringa, 2002).

The emergence of discourse about family in the public sphere, including in literature and mass media, in the 1950s was a common phenomenon for a newly independent nation. The opening of opportunities for discussion of real problems that were voiced by people who experienced them first-hand then led to recommendations, pressures, and demands for the government to facilitate the resolution of these problems. The fear of family separation has shifted from the loss of family members due to war to the damage to family resilience due to the crisis following the aftermath. This problem was then considered a kind of friction in an effort to build a new country. At this point, the state realised the importance of ensuring the integrity of the family to secure the economic and political stability of the country, formulating its identity and direction. The state then took initiatives and policies that guaranteed strong households that would support national development.

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<sup>6</sup> "Nenek Hajati" ("Grandma Hajati") is a regular rubric in *Wanita* magazine where a persona named Nenek Hajati acting as a wise old woman answering problems addressed by the readers impersonating a clueless *tjutju* (grandchild). She would respond to any kind of inquiry, from infidelity to cooking tips.

## Family and the State

The 1974 Marriage Law was the result of a number of efforts whose origins can even be traced to the end of the colonial period. This legal product shows the importance of the state ensuring the integrity of the family, and being faced with a number of family problems is a precondition for state involvement. The high number of divorce cases has become a serious concern. One of the efforts to deal with the issue of divorce is the regulation of the practice of marriage itself through a government regulation as the basis of attempts to realise a marriage law. Prior to the enactment of the 1974 Marriage Law, a number of actions from several groups, especially those of women, to secure protection in marriage had been carried out. In her memoir, Maria Ulfah Subadio recounts her experience as a member of Panitia Penyelidik Peraturan Hukum Perkawinan, Talak, dan Rudjuk (Committee to Inquire about the Marriage Law, Divorce, and Reconciliation), which was established at the urging of women with the main task of drafting regulations related to marriage in the spirit of the new nation. The regulation in question regulates the age limit for marriage, the consent of husband and wife to avoid a forced marriage, polygamy, divorce, and considerations of family health. The work of this commission faced opposition from religious groups, both Muslim and Catholic, which then resulted in the formation of a second project in 1954-1955. Only three years later, the commission's recommendations were discussed by parliament (Subadio, 1981).

The problems of child marriage and polygamy were tenacious issues in the struggle to make the law. These two affairs were also considered as among the causes of the high rate of family divorce. With the involvement of the government through marriage regulations, it was hoped that it would reduce the divorce rate because in the law, the practice of child marriage and polygamy no longer had a place. Perwari was the organisation that was most aggressively fighting for the realisation of this marriage law. This organisation was also one of the toughest to challenge the practice of polygamy. The existence of the law is considered as an effort to legalise the prohibition of the practice.

The discussion on the marriage law was also placed in relation to the UN charter of human rights. One of the points discussed in it was the right to equal rights to marry and divorce, as well as that the practice of marriage had to be carried out on a consensual basis. At least, this is what can be read in an article written by someone with the initials Sj. in commemoration of the six years of the human rights charter. In the article, they stated that women in a country that were a member of the United Nations must fight for what was their right. On that basis, the Indonesian state must also have a set of rules related to marriage demanded by many women to achieve with the aim of achieving social justice. According to Sj., "That is why, in welcoming and commemorating this December 10th, it is important for Indonesian women to put their trust in and be firm in their hearts and emphasise to the Government and the People's Legislative Assembly to immediately resolve what will become one of the pillars for the health of the community, in this is the family, is the Marriage Law" (*Wanita*, December 5, 1955). Thus, in Sj. 's's view, Marriage Law was a prerequisite for achieving public health because there is family certainty. If this was not realised, then a great danger was ready to threaten the community. It is at this point that the marriage law became increasingly important. However, despite the overwhelming support of women to implement this marriage law, the government's own reaction was not very enthusiastic; it was not a matter of priority. However, that does not mean that the government did not intervene in family matters to ensure its integrity which will affect the strength of society and the nation.

Government intervention in family matters can be seen through the existence of the Islamic Religious Courts (Pengadilan Agama Islam). The institution that functions to register marriages is also faced with many divorce issues from conflicting couples. More than that, it primarily functions to protect women against the arbitrariness of men in marriage through the existence

of a *ta'lik talak* pledge which must be read out by the husband after the marriage contract takes place. The Regulation of the Ministry of Religious Affairs No. 1 of 1955 explained the terms of marriage, starting from registration to filling out forms to the matter of referring if there are problems in the future, including those regulated. Interestingly, this 1955 regulation also contains what is known as *ta'lik talak*. This pledge incorporates a number of promises which if not kept, the divorce to the wife will fall automatically. *Ta'lik talak* is a very important practice, because a woman can appear before a religious court to demand divorce by only showing evidence that her husband used to make *ta'lik talak*. Such practice was adopted even before the Independence, but the content varied in different regions. Subadio recalls her composition of *ta'lik talak* used in Batavia, which later used by the Ministry to print the pledge in the marriage certificate.<sup>7</sup> In practice, the bride-to-be can also add new points to it, on the basis of an agreement with her husband-to-be, such as the prohibition of remarriage for the husband (Vreede-De Stuers, 2008: 199). However, in practice, women do not see much of the importance of this pledge, and only understand it as a basis for divorce. Whereas more than that, it is very important to provide a legal basis for protection for women in the institution of marriage (Lev 1986: 182). Moreover, the Ministry of Religion through a special section called the NTR (Nikah, Talak, Rujuk) or Marriage, Divorce, Reconciliation, has the duty and responsibility of fostering domestic life. This means that this institution mainly takes care of the cases of those who are about to get divorced, acts as a mediator, and looks for a way out so that divorce does not occur. Religious arguments often arise in this regard. However, giving this kind of advice does not always succeed in maintaining the integrity of the household, at most it only delays the occurrence of divorce (Lev, 1986: 184–185).

It was these preconditions that became the basis for the establishment of the Badan Penasehat Perkawinan dan Penyelesaian Perceraian (BP4) or Marriage and Divorce Settlement Advisory Board in October 1954 in Bandung. This institution was formed at the suggestion of S. M. Nasharuddin Latif, the Head of Kantor Urusan Agama (KUA) or Religious Affairs Office in Jakarta, who was concerned with this issue. Before this institution was enacted, he himself had formed an advisory body in the KUA Jakarta to give advice to husband and wife, to provide counseling regarding the reasons couples resort to divorce, with the aim that the couple will reconcile. Structurally, it is not part of the Ministry of Religion, but it is an institution under its care. Recommendations from this institution then become a prerequisite for couples who file for divorce. In other words, the KUA can no longer accept divorcing couples, unless they have received a recommendation from BP4 (Lev, 1986: 190–192).

The establishment of BP4 clearly shows the government's attention through the Ministry of Religion to overcome the eminent divorce issue. In practice, this institution receives assistance from the Ministry of Social Affairs and other social institutions to prevent experiencing a shortage of funds. In addition, the consultation is not only addressed to Muslims, but also to those who are Christians, considering that some of the members of this institution are from Christian circles. Thus, although a marriage law had yet existed, as an indication of the government's involvement in private affairs, the establishment of BP4 can be regarded as an effort to intervene by the government to ensure family resilience. To a certain extent, this institution was also preferred by Islamic political parties who disagreed with the marriage law. That is why, in Lev's view, this institution is politically an attempt to divert the direction of statutory demands (Lev, 1986: 191).

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<sup>7</sup> Subadio's version would include promises not to abandon the wife six months in a row, to provide for her, not to physically hurt her, not to neglect her, not to perform extra-marital sex, not to drink, use opium, or gamble, not to be charged for a crime for two years or more, not to take another wife, and not to engage in unresolvable dispute (Subadio, 1981, pp. 12–13).

The view on the importance of maintaining the family as part of defending the country has also become a topic of discussion in the public sphere. Tan Fay Tjhion, a journalist and anthropologist graduated from Leiden, wrote in the 1959 *Starweekly* about the relationship between the family and the women's movement. In this article, he discusses a lot about the progress made by women, from the opportunity to get an education to employment outside the home. More than that, women also began to be involved in various movements to fight for their people. According to him, on the one hand, this is progress, but on the other hand, it is also a threat to the integrity of the family. That way, women will be more active outside which will therefore forget the obligation to take care of children. These children will then be the responsibility of the state. It is at this point that he sees that this children's lack of education has a bad effect on the family whereas family integrity is very much needed for the strength of the state (*Starweekly*, February 28February 28, 1959). Tan Fay Tjhion worked as a part-time lecturer at Padjadjaran University, Parahyangan University, and IKIP Bandung. As a teacher, he was also an active writer on *Starweekly* (Setyautama & Mihardja, 2008: 350). As an anthropologist, he also had a fairly serious concern regarding family issues, especially in relation to community resilience. That is why he noted the relationship between the family and the women's movement is in a dilemma. On the one hand, the progress of women is important, but on the other hand, abandoning children's education is also dangerous for the unity of society.

In the same year, he also published writings in the same vein. This time he criticised the institution of the family in two communist countries, the Soviet Union and China. In his view, for a communist state the family is an institution formed by capitalist society that is not in accordance with communist ideals. One of the principles is the practice of free sex, which results in easy practice of marriage and divorce, no civil registration is required, and there are no sanctions against it. According to him, this fact is threatening, especially for women because there is no longer legal protection in marriage. This ideal is considered a failure because the social order becomes irregular. Thus, he argues, “with a fiery spirit the communist comrades wanted to conquer the family at first, but in the end, it was they who fell to their knees” (*Starweekly*, April 4April 4, 1959).

Tan Fay Tjhion's writings, of course, must be read in the socio-political developments in Indonesia at that time. These articles were published several months before President Sukarno announced the Presidential Decree in July 1959, which became the starting point of the Guided Democracy period. However, in fact the foundation of Guided Democracy itself had been built two years earlier. One thing that became increasingly distinctive during this period was the strengthening of the Partai Komunis Indonesia (PKI) or Indonesian Communist Party as a political force. As a party adjacent to the authorities, it is natural that there will be concerns about the dominating communist ideology that will change values in society. Tan Fay Tjhion'sTjhion's critique must thus be seen in this regard.

### **Conceptualisation of Ideal Family**

In the general report of the PKI central committee to the PKI National Congress VI on 7-8 September 1959, DN Aidit who was the general secretary of the PKI CC, alluded to the success of the People's Commune movement in China. Regarding this success, he said that “against this new social organisation the people's enemies shouted as if the People's Commune was destroying family life. The screams of the US imperialists who slandered the PRC were also followed by the shouts of reactionary groups in Indonesia like Hatta, who simply couldn't see anything really good for the people” (*Dokumen-Dokumen Kongres Nasional Ke-VI Partai Komunis Indonesia, Djakarta 7-14 September 1959, Jilid I, 1960, p. 68*), a statement which was then followed by laughter from the audience. Criticism of the People'sPeople's Commune as

a threat to the family institution is quite common, as Tan Fay Tjhion put it a few months earlier in *Starweekly*. What Aidit said may not be a direct answer to the criticism, but rather an answer to those who criticise communism as a threat to the family institution.

Meanwhile, Suharti, who was the deputy chairperson of Gerwani's central branch, also made a speech at the congress. She started her speech by underlining Aidit's statement about the position of women who were the most oppressed from the economic and social crisis that was being experienced by Indonesian society at that time. In the family institution, the conditions are not much different. Most of the women in the household are very dependent on the income of their husbands, which often cannot meet their daily needs. That is why, according to her, the people's cooperative development plan that Aidit mentioned in his report is very important to alleviate their needs. In her speech, Suharti also mentioned the fact that not a few educated women after marriage then only take care of the household and then depend on their husband economically. In fact, as educated people, they can contribute knowledge for the betterment of society, if they are not too bothered by household matters. That is why, "By paying attention to their interests as wives, mothers and workers, the Party has an obligation to improve the work of intellectual women, especially in terms of overcoming their difficulties, and developing their talents, so that they together with the people participate in the struggle for women's emancipation," she said (*Dokumen-Dokumen Kongres Nasional Ke-VI Partai Komunis Indonesia, Djakarta 7-14 September 1959, Jilid II, 1960: 599*).

In that statement, Suharti clearly highlighted the importance of women's involvement in the movement which could not be maximised because of their double burden in the household. She even saw a contradiction in the existence of women in this movement, between the organisation and taking care of the family. In this regard, according to her, "the Party must resolve the contradictions that exist among the female cadres, namely the contradiction between work and study by taking care of children and taking care of the household, and the contradiction between duty and old-fashioned obstacles that stand in the way." Furthermore, she also said that "women cadres themselves must also be good at organising members of their household, dividing them into household work and educating and raising children" (*Dokumen-Dokumen Kongres Nasional Ke-VI Partai Komunis Indonesia, Djakarta 7-14 September 1959, Jilid II, 1960: 603*). What Suharti said is important enough to give an overview of family problems, especially considering the position of women as wives and also as activists. The women's dilemma presented by Tan Fay Thjion was slightly answered by the involvement of the Party to overcome this contradiction. Indeed, what is conveyed is indeed very theoretical and abstract, but the discussion about the family at this time has become closer to the state, and the idea of the family must be in line with the vision of the state.

In relation to the family and the state, the editorial of the *Keluarga* magazine enthusiastically responded to Bung Karno's independence speech as presented at the beginning of this article. The monthly periodical, which basically discusses more about everyday issues, was then interested in placing the family in the development of the country. This issue was also still being discussed at the Constitutional Court the following month in the women's front congress (*Keluarga*, September 1962). The October editorial delivered an interesting presentation, continuing the previous discussion. This time, they discussed more intimate family issues, the necessity of wives to support officers in war. Moreover, wives should not be the ones who tarnish the stars of the officers by living extravagantly. This statement presupposes the fact that there are wives who are not in line with what the state requires by becoming parasites in the household (*Keluarga*, October 1962).

Despite efforts to increase women's involvement in the movement and as educators in the household, contradictions continue to grow. Actually, this is not a new problem. Rukiah, one

of the few women writers at the time, described this issue in one of her story “Antara Dua Gambaran” (“Between Two Images”) as follows:

But Immy, if I choose the Kus now, how? Of course I was supposed to be an ordinary woman whose usual work of taking care of the house was limited by day and night. I have to do sewing, cook, receive big feudal guests, and choose the colour of clothes every day to go to gathering parties, this I can say frankly: I can't. And in Kus, he's an ordinary man! Ham was completely different. He understands my ideals. And once I was scolded by my mother because I couldn't embroider, Ham said earnestly: “There are so many women who can embroider that they can't be counted anymore. But a woman who can write a book and get a Nobel Prize for writing, or a woman who is a political expert in a country can only be counted on one hand. And you can choose, where you want to go, whether to the large group of women embroiders, or to the circle of writers and state experts who are only one or two in number?” (Rukiah, 1958: 120–121)

It is a record from 1952, when Indonesian society was reorganising its order. Ten years later, when family matters were increasingly on the political agenda, things were not much different.

At the Extraordinary National Congress of the Indonesian Communist Party VII in April 1962, Suharti again expressed her views on contradictions. According to her, not all Party committee members have been able to find a solution which results in difficulties in their mobilisation. “As also experienced by other women, household chores that are trivial and boring are very tiring and waste time and strength for women,” she said. This problem was not experienced by bourgeois women because they are used to handing over all household work, children's education to their maids. Quoting Lenin in a conversation with Clara Zetkin, she mentioned the importance of the role of husbands in the household to lighten the burden of wives. She further said:

Our party must gradually be able to solve these particular difficulties, by seeking practical forms to lighten the burden of the female cadres. For example, undertaking childcare experiments in an incidental or permanent form, enlivening mutual assistance between families in the spirit of Communist solidarity, encouraging husbands to always be able to make allowances for their wives to attend Party meetings or carry out Party duties. In addition, female cadres themselves need to learn from each other to organise the family as a revolutionary family, to divide household work between family members, husband and wife to continuously cultivate Communist morals, and so on. (“Agreed!” Applause). Also, the problem of not having a helper and having many children as well as multiple jobs are things that hinder the progress of women cadres. Therefore, in a wise way, these things need to be addressed” (*Madju Terus! Dokumen-Dokumen Kongres Nasional Ke-VII (Luar biasa) Partai Komunis Indonesia, Jakarta, 25-30 April 1962*, 1963, p. 133)

There are two suggestions that Suharti put forward to overcome this problem. First, the involvement of the Party in observing the development of the number of male and female cadres must be a comprehensive plan without any discrimination against any one of them. Second, there should be an appeal that is more directed at women, so that they are more confident, dare to be honest in expressing their opinions, not easily offended or discouraged - weaknesses that are considered to be rooted in bourgeois ideology (*Madju Terus! Dokumen-*

*Dokumen Kongres Nasional Ke-VII (Luarbiasa) Partai Komunis Indonesia, Djakarta, 25-30 April 1962, 1963:134*). These two steps, in her view, could more or less balance the movement's roles as wives and activists. Suharti's view reflects in part an ideal family that can balance between the domestic and public spheres. In a period where people are required to contribute widely, what she conveys makes quite a bit of sense. A further description of the morals of a communist concerning individuals, parties, and families can also be seen in Peris Perdede's speech at the conference as follows:

Trying with all their might to be an example in everyday life means that every Communist must strive so that in their daily life they do not exploit other people, do not enrich themselves, do not commit corruption, do not commit immorality, do not gamble, do not like to drink, be simple, economical, and so on. In marriage the Communists do not like divorce unless there are reasons that have been carefully considered and fully accounted for as Communists. (*applause*). Just as every Communist must love and uphold their Party, they must also love their wife or husband and equally uphold the good name of the Communist family both as a wife and as a father or mother. Communist family households still face daily financial difficulties. In the face of such difficulties, the Communists are not stupid, do not hold their chins like misfortune, do not despair and give up hope, but they strive with optimism for a bright future and always try with joy to make their families useful to society. (*applause*). This is the Communist morale, every member of the PKI has always been highly devoted to their party, to the people, and to the homeland. (*Madju Terus! Dokumen-Dokumen Kongres Nasional Ke-VII (Luarbiasa) Partai Komunis Indonesia, Djakarta, 25-30 April 1962, 1963: 219*)

Thus, this is the ideal image of a communist family who can serve the members of the family, society, and the state. In connection with the political agenda of the Guided Democracy government's Manipol/USDEK, then emerged the so-called "true Manipol family". This idea arose from the anxiety of mothers with revolutionary zeal who found it difficult to divide domestic and public roles, a problem that revolutionary men did not face. The issues discussed revolve around everyday life, such as who takes care of the children when the mother has to attend events outside the home. To realise these ideals, a fair sexual division of domestic labour is the path that the Manipol family must take. All family members must have high political awareness, and women, particularly, are the guides of their family members on the revolutionary path. In addition, women must be strong in facing economic problems and be optimistic about the bright future of socialism. The original Manipol family formulation was first agreed upon by Gerwani members: all family members join revolutionary mass organisations, develop family literacy, go directly to the working community, promote folk arts, cooperation between family members and the surrounding community needs to be improved, and inculcate the spirit of love for the nation, love of work, and love of the working people must be instilled in the younger generation (Wieringa, 2002: 259–260). However, this idea is not always ideal in practice, especially when faced with economic problems. As Wieringa's interview with former Gerwani member Sukoni notes:

We were a true Manipol family. My husband worked full-time in SOBSI, for which he only got his expenses paid. I was the chair of Gerwani in Jakarta and assistant to the PKI faction in Parliament. To make a living I also worked as a receptionist with two consecutive governors of Jakarta. I arranged their meetings and later joined in giving Manipol courses to social workers who were working in the neighborhoods.

The salary I received for that work was barely sufficient to clothe my family and to send my two children to school. Our food I earned by sharing a food stall with a friend. Of course, I never had somebody to help me with the domestic work. We were all supposed to be equal, weren't we? I never understood how some of the *priyayi* Gerwani women accepted the services of a servant. We who were more concerned with sharing the lives of the poor could never accept that (quoted in Wieringa, 2002: 260–261)

From the interview above, household economic problems are considered not to be a barrier to struggle. The communal spirit among members is a supporter of the movement so that activists can still work and their household needs are guaranteed. Adopting feudal practices such as employing domestic workers was considered against the ideas of the Manipol family.

The idea of the Manipol family is the ideal vision of Guided Democracy. Such a family model was considered the most capable of sustaining the political agenda at that time. What Sukoni conveyed was an ideal image; however, on a practical level, the balance and equality she describes is not easily achieved by all groups. The issue of feudalism and patriarchy is often seen as an obstacle to this, even among Gerwani activists who come from *priyayi* circles. That is why the image of a progressive family like this then became without a trace when the 1965 political tragedy that destroyed Gerwani and made all women who move despicable occurred.

## Conclusion

Indonesia in the 1950-1965 period experienced paralysis due to the large number of incomplete family members as a result of the physical Revolution. This problem is then faced with the condition of the people who are also searching for new values while leaving the old ones, including in family matters. From changing household furniture because it was considered old-fashioned, to an affair with a young wife involving corruption, were problems that often arose in the early 1950s. The fact that resulted in the high divorce rate made the government then intervene by strengthening the Ministry of Religion which deals with marriage and divorce. By doing this, the government realised the importance of a family order that would underpin the political agenda of this nascent country.

In this period, the idea of the ideal family image and all its contradictions began to be discussed in the public sphere. In a sense, the political nature provided a special space in the popular media to voice it. On the other hand, efforts to define this new society must also be supported by redefining an ideal family that will support the political agenda, as reflected in the so-called Manipol family. At this point, the discussion of the family becomes highly political because it will be closely related to the way in which the relationship between husband, wife and children is regulated in the interests of the state, an issue that will also be quite important in the future. To a certain extent, this political family is also a precondition for the emergence of a number of misappropriations of public officials, because almost everyone who commits corruption, for example, uses family needs as the reason. This, however, should probably be another study.

Family issues are not only discussed in political forums, but also in the more popular media so that voices from various circles are recorded. The diversity of voices also raises dynamics related to the idea of an ideal family that does not consist of one voice only. Fear of family separation is considered to have an impact on nation-building, so efforts need to be taken to ensure its integrity. From here, the ideal family was conceptualised through various perspectives, although the complete concept had not been realised due to major changes after

1965. The issue of the family became central to the importance of building a new national identity because the family is considered the place where political and moral education begins in accordance with the ideals of the nation. The call for family members, especially women who hold moral and educational control in the family, to participate in the nation's struggle is a sign of the people's full involvement in building a new national identity, something that was suddenly uprooted by another political agenda.

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