Intimacy with Postcolonial Violence:
Notes from Indonesia

Ariel Heryanto

... intimate tyranny is the very stuff of which society ... is constituted
... There is no better sign of this intimate tyranny that makes society
possible than 'language', or the symbolic, the original tyranny par
excellence, a regime of violence we escape (?)[sic] only in death
(Olaniyan 1992, 50)

The body, as a battlefield of history, is also its semantic field; historical
aggression bleeds into symbolic transgression. The entanglement
between metropole and colony is also a clash between categories.
Historical violence is inseparable from representational violence
(Coronil 1992, 105).

Separate incidents of mass violence swept across the islands of
Indonesia with almost no interruption during the second half of the 1990s.
They are neither the first, nor the worst of numerous highly comparable incidents
in the history of contemporary Indonesia. As before, the more recent cases
were widely reported and regretted, but they appear to remain largely incomprehsensible, if not misunderstood, by many distant observers. I wish to comment
on one aspect that has been glaringly visible in many of these reported incidents,
but one that most social scientists have either opted to ignore or failed to understand. I refer to the stylisation of mass violence.

The stylisation of violence is one of the very few features that many of these
diverse incidents have in common. In some of these cases, a helpless victim
was assaulted by a large group of armed adults. Instead of simply taking the
victim's life, the murderers inflicted a great deal of violence to the victim's
body in ways that can be called an 'overkill'. In other cases, prior to being
killed, the victim was first tortured in a public space. The torture was meant
to be a public display with the violence turning into a spectacle. In others,
parts of the victim's body were displayed in public spaces. Some perpetrators
posed in front of the journalists' cameras with convivial expressions, showing
off parts of the victim’s body. In still others, parts of the victim’s body were reportedly consumed communally by the perpetrators in the raw with bare hands.

To consider the importance of the style of violence is to recognise that the act of violence does not solely or primarily fulfil an instrumental or utilitarian purpose. That is precisely what most social scientists are trained not to see. The victim’s death or suffering is not the sole or ultimate goal of the violence. They are not a necessary means separated from the ‘real’ ends of the violence. What other non-economic or political functions these styles actually perform may differ from case to case and they remain to be examined. In any case, failure to understand this may generate misguided expectations that resolving or improving political and economic conditions in the troubled region would ease tensions and prevent further violence.

Journalistic reports of the violence of the late 1990s generally suggest important differences among these incidents in terms of the social identities of the actors, the localities, the magnitude of the violence, the possible interests at stake, and not least in terms of styles. Some of these reported incidents suggest they are state-sponsored and professionally orchestrated. Others appear to be largely local inter-group rivalries, or inter-ethnic or inter-religious conflicts, even though they are inevitable consequences of the national and global industrial expansion. Still others are a combination of several specifically local conflicts that converged; or of one local conflict that developed into a more complex affair in a later stage that involved more and more people of diverse interests at both the national and international levels.

To account for these heterogeneous cases in a single narrative and convert their details into a homogenising list of names, dates and numbers, is to do gross injustice to them. Their profound diversity limits the range of any sweeping statements that one can make. Unfortunately, in the absence of any serious studies, more often than not all of these incidents have been uniformly referred to as ‘riots’ in the various reports and commentaries. Most reports and analyses attempt to decipher facts and discover the sociological causes and effects, the magnitude, or the political and economic significance that are believed to lie beneath the surface of things. Investigators go out to uncover the supposedly ‘hidden’ ploy and reasons—the truth behind the events. In doing so, they often overlook the significance of the style of violence on the very surface of things.

I would like to elaborate a little further on my preliminary thoughts, not so much on the particular styles of the actual violence, but the social conditions that make such stylisation significant. I will consider the relevance to this issue of the history of language development and the politics of appearance. However, before I do so, let me suggest some of the ways my endeavour could be related
Humane Societies and Asian Values

The honour to speak to this very distinguished audience initially came to me in an invitation to discuss the contribution or challenges of the so-called ‘Asian Values’ propositions to the concerns of the symposium. I want to thank the Committee for the opportunity, and for allowing me to change the focus of my contribution.

I begin with the premise that no values are universal, in the sense of transcending history. Humane values—whatever they may be—are no exception. This is not to suggest that both human beings and humane values are divided by any clear, stable and unchanging boundaries along geographical, economic, political, national, ethnic, sexual, class, religious or cultural lines, as the proponents of Asian Values seem to suggest. Most, if not all, values travel, and transcend the boundaries of their initial space and time of maturation, just like the people who invent them and are moulded by them. As they travel these values encounter other values, collide or copulate, and create new values of equal if not greater significance. Most values of importance have come into existence thanks to these travelling values and people, and the hybridity that they produce. While these processes render the notion of ‘authenticity’ or ‘purity’ laughable, they have not and will not create one homogeneous globalised world of hybrids.

The non-universality of diverse values has been attested to by perennial misunderstanding and bloody conflicts throughout human history. The so-called ‘Asian Values’, just as their implied binary opposite ‘Western Values’, are convenient and grand terms which are largely imaginary at best (Ang and Stratton 1995, 66). Even within Asia these imaginaries are no longer convincing or popular as they might have been in the past.

For all these reasons, I must confess I have learned not to take the ‘Asian Values’ debate seriously. And to the best of my knowledge, neither do most of my other Asian friends. I usually have to engage in some discussion on ‘Asian Values’ only when I travel outside Asia, where this catch phrase has found some of its biggest enthusiasts and critics.1 This should come as no surprise, as there is hardly anything particularly ‘Asian’ about the so-called Asian Values. The phrase is essentially a Westernised post-colonial attempt to revive an old colonial and fundamentally Western construction of the orient as the ‘Others’ to the Western ‘Self’.

I am not suggesting that this is simply a new revival of something old that
has no significant difference. The moment of the contemporary articulation of Asian Values is significant. A few years ago sustained economic growth in selected Asian countries boosted the self-esteem of several state officials who claimed responsibility for the success. They took the pleasure of self-orientalism in order to talk back to the patronising and hegemonic West that they both overly admired and feared. To Western ears, the recuperation of such colonial orientalism in the present can be both irresistibly titillating and embarrassing. It brings back the nostalgic past glory of the great and civilised West, but also a memory of the involuntary and never fully admitted subsidies that the colonies provided to make that industrial glory in the metropoles possible.

Asian Violence has persistently been a great deal more salient than Asian Values in the history of Asia. It is highly curious, or perhaps one should say suspicious, that the Asian Values arguments have gained a great deal more interest and critiques from social scientists, humanists, and Asian studies specialists alike than Asian Violence. Although we do not generally associate ‘humane values’ with violence and human sufferings, they are definitely related, and their relationships are more complex than mutual negation.

Material destruction and bodily sufferings in many incidents of mass violence appear to be universal and objectively measurable. However, they have not been received with as much subjective scrutiny; they have not been perceived, remembered, narrated, understood, and signified in identical ways by those involved in such atrocities. This political diversity of signifying practices derives from various sources, of which histories, a particular sense of identity, and threats to that identity, are usually crucial.²

This makes it difficult, perhaps impossible, to assign any general normative values to cases of conflicts and violence, and to relate them to the equally non-universal notions of what constitute humane values. What have often been conveniently termed as ‘riots’ in the 1990s in Indonesia were in fact many different things to those directly affected and their sympathisers. For instance, they can be articulated as state-sponsored terrorism, pogroms, subaltern upheavals, social conflicts, religious or ideological crusades, massacres, genocide, ethnic cleansing, people power, social unrest, and so on. Each articulates richly nuanced histories of relations, pain, trauma and blame.

The above complexity can be compared with the so-called ‘Asian Crisis’. Some critics of the Asian Values rhetoric pinpoint the ‘Asian Crisis’ as evidence of the self-deluding qualities of the ‘Asian economic miracle’ rhetoric. However, proponents of ‘Asian Values’ remain vehement, arguing that the so-called Asian Crisis proves that they have been right all along. They emphasise the ‘facts’ that some countries (like Indonesia or Thailand) have been more badly affected
than others (like Malaysia and Singapore). According to the defenders of the Asian Values argument, the difference is an index of how committed each of these countries has been to the magical power of 'Asian Values'.

Notwithstanding their disagreement, both critics and proponents of the 'Asian Values' agree to refer to the situation in Indonesia as the dregs of the so-called 'Asian Crisis'. They miss seeing something important. Anyone visiting Indonesia during this so-called Crisis, even with a cursory and non-professionally trained eye, would be witness to considerable complexity. There was a great deal more than just a sense of crisis, unemployment, poverty, misery and remorse. Not only has the 'crisis' been an economic windfall for some Indonesians working in export-oriented business, it has not deterred many of the top political elite from the old practices of corruption, collusion and nepotism that had been widely condemned as the causes of the national tragedy.

Among some of the long-standing victims and critics of the New Order regime there was the view that the so-called Crisis principally belonged to the falling New Order regime. Of course they regretted that many innocent Indonesians had to bear the brunt of the economic plunge, but they emphasised that this was an unfortunate but necessary transition towards long due social change that they called Reformasi.

The notions of Asian Values and humane values have important similarities and differences. Unlike the phrase 'Asian Values', which emphasises particularities, its 'humane values' counterpart addresses universality. If the 'Asian Values' argument claims to have references to already existing societies, the theme 'humane societies' expresses a desire and hope for the possible in the future. But there are important similarities between the two. First, 'Asian' and 'humane' values may not be entirely illusory. If they are understood modestly as fragments of certain qualities, they actually exist in societies of both Asia and the West. However, they are not essential properties belonging to this or that 'society', or groups of people. They are qualities that come and go in varying degrees, in various moments, and are scattered across societies, historical moments, practices and experiences. They are never total, authentic or stationary. Instead of speaking of humane societies versus inhumane societies (or Asian Values versus non-Asian Values), it makes more sense to speak of moments and degrees of humane practices and experiences in existing worlds. In high abstraction, 'Asian Values' and 'humane societies' appear suspiciously utopian or ideological.

Second, the desire for (more) humane societies in the future is interesting not in itself, but in the implied message about what is absent or lacking in the existing societies in the present, just as the expression 'Asian Values' says a
lot more about a fascination with and envy of the West than it says about a complex and heterogeneous Asia. Thus, a discussion of ‘humane societies’ allows us to speak about some of the less humane, or inhumane, societies of today without having to name them as such. I would like to discuss some of these existing, imperfect and familiar societies by focussing on violence as one of their common features.

Post-colonial Violence

At least four identifiable features characterise most of the incidents of mass violence in Indonesia. First, they have the qualities of excessiveness, vulgarity, grotesqueness, spectacularity and occasionally conviviality that render the logic of political and economic functionalism inadequate. All these qualities appear as something unmarked or normalised.

Second, such normalised violence is accompanied by both a prolific and diffused production of highly elaborated images of violence, and the anticipation of its possible recurrence at any time in any place. The relationship between the actual incidence of physical violence and the disseminated images and narration of violence is not a simple one. It is not a relationship between some objective preceding reality and representation of that reality as a second order. The link between the two is not unidirectional, and their sequence can be alternating.3

Third, the perpetrators of such public violence are state agents or their proxies, who enjoyed enormous legal immunity, and the public recognises that. This is because of the fourth characteristic, namely the state power is ‘dominant, but non-hegemonic’ (Olaniyan 1992, 50: fn. 6), rendering coercion imperative and consensus artificial. Law enforcement and the institution of justice are far from passive or dormant, but they do not usually perform what they officially claim. Often they behave precisely to the contrary.4

One can conceive a politico-economic logic to the pragmatics of such violence, but such logic is far from adequate to explain the phenomenon. Let me first suggest the logic, and then its shortcomings. Because the postcolonial state is aware of its insecure or non-hegemonic position, it is compelled to take extra-legal measures to enhance its domination. Violence and coercion appear to be the logical means to these ends, apart from the extravagant display of grandeur as a sign of power. The problem with such pragmatism is that the state agents, or anyone for that matter, never really know how far such measures should go just to be effective. The line between extra and excessive is so fine that the logic can easily slip into an aesthetic, and ambition into obsession, rendering the separation and priorities of means and ends indistinguishable.

Under such circumstances, no defiance or grievances can appear in public
without the risk of an overkill retaliation. Any dissent or resistance, if it exists at all, must by definition go underground until the ruling regime clearly appears to have lost its power. Consequently, the appearance of a harmonious polity and perfect acquiescence is of prime importance in public. Elaborate eulogies to the state officials and their industrial projects are regular and exuberant.

However, these are also obscenely insincere, without any real intent to conceal anything or to deceive anyone. Beneath the thinly layered appearance of stability, order, and economic miracle lie threats of mass revenge, treachery and the unpredictable, leaving the supreme ruler in total uncertainty about who is or is not supporting him, and consequently the status of his power. Here is a case where hyper-obedience can be subversive (Heryanto 1999b). Coming full circle, a full awareness of this irremediable sense of insecurity compels the ruler to further displays of grandeur, self-celebration and spectacles of violence against his subjects.

Before I continue, it is important to stress that the features outlined above are by no means uniquely Indonesian. Some argue that they are predominant in postcolonial societies. Writing with reference to African postcolonial state power, Mbembe (1992b, 130) describes the postcolonial state in ways that are strikingly familiar in many Asian postcolonies today:

In order to make itself intelligible to the greatest number of people, it [the postcolonial state] must publicise itself. It must colonise languages and sounds. It must inscribe itself in the movements of bodies ... In order to flaunt itself and to show itself off ... In order to be seen and heard by all, it does not hesitate to take on great dimensions, to resort to large quantities, to sometimes spill over in details, to swell up, to repeat itself ...

In response, its subjects have little choice but to display equally exuberant and richly stylised signs of loyalty—not necessarily in order to conceal their resentments, or deceive the ruling elite. They would do eloquently the same when the right moment of revenge comes. To cite Mbembe (1992a, 14–15) once again:

What distinguishes the postcolony from other regimes of violence and domination, then, is not only the luxuriousness of style ... Peculiar also to the postcolony is the fact that the forging of relations between those who command and their subjects operates, fundamentally, through a specific pragmatic: the simulacrum. This explains why dictators can go to sleep at night lulled by roars of adulation and support ... only to wake up the next morning to find their golden calves smashed and their
tablets of law overturned. The applauding crowds of yesterday have become today a cursing, abusive mob.

Suharto was re-elected President for the seventh time in March 1998 unanimously and with standing ovation by the General People Assembly chaired by Harmoko. Two months later, when it was evident that Suharto no longer had any real power, Harmoko was the first member of the parliament to publicly denounce him. Within days, the President fell in disgrace on 21 May 1998, following one of the largest protests in the country and a series of mass violence.

Admittedly, the term ‘post-colonial(ity)’ is highly contentious among its own main domain of usage. Critics have alleged that the term has too often been used to mark an overstated difference between particular period, history, or groups of people from others in their relations with colonialism and coloniality. The term is especially debatable when used to make far-reaching claims. When used more modestly here, and with limited reference to Indonesia, I hope the degree of its contentiousness can be reduced to a tolerable level.

The designation of ‘post-coloniality’ in my title serves to indicate links and acknowledgements. First, it acknowledges the indebtedness that Indonesia’s violence has to the colonial, pre- and post-colonial histories, including the modern and industrial West. Such acknowledgement recognises both the particular (but non-essentialist) moment of difference, as well as common similarities between the specific cases I wish to discuss and those I do not. Second, it is an acknowledgement of my indebtedness to selected writings from post-colonial studies that have provided me with the insights unavailable in Indonesian and Southeast Asian Studies to which I am more affiliated. A small selection of this literature appears in citations throughout this text.

**Non-Arbitrary Signs, and Arbitrary Representations**

The excessive-as-a-style that characterises the various instances of mass violence in Indonesia in the 1990s has a long history and thus is not bound to the economic or political particulars of the 1990s. The systematic killings of some 5,000 so-called ‘criminals’ and ‘ex-convicts’ in Java and Sumatra in 1983–1984 were one of the most shocking pogroms that took place under the New Order, not only because of the death toll and their efficiency, but more significantly because of the style with which the violence was perpetrated.

Many of these victims were shot dead with as many as twelve bullets at point-blank range in their homes and occasionally in front of members of their families. Their bodies were then displayed in some of the busiest public places: street intersections, movie houses, markets and schools. Similar styles of
violence, but on a greater scale, with multi-fold death tolls, and more varied perpetrators, took place in 1965–1966. These lay the foundation for Suharto’s New Order government, a favourite ally of the world’s major advocates of liberal democracy, universal human rights, as well as Asian Values.

Another striking feature in much of the mass violence is the prominence of one or two signs of representation that overshadow the course of events. These are either a sanctified representation of the perpetrator’s threatened identity, or a stigmatised representation of demonised enemies. The dichotomy between good and evil is in the extreme, and the urgency for killing the others in order to rescue oneself from being killed leaves no space for any doubts, restraints or remorse afterwards.

In many of the violent incidents of the 1990s, such signs took the form of ethnic and religious identities. In the 1983–4 violence, the central signs were tattooed muscular bodies of the alleged ‘criminals’ and ‘ex-convicts’. In 1965–1966, various icons associated with Communism and the Indonesian Communist Party were the targets and led to mass murders, arrests, tortures, witch-hunts, stigmatisation and bans, as well as productions of endless narratives, movies, monuments, propaganda, gossip, jokes and so on. In many of these events the war over stigmatised signs had not only gone too far, but also taken on a life of its own, making the logic of the economic and the political redundant. 7

While stylised violence often requires the work of the tyranny of signification, the reverse may not be the case. In Indonesia under the New Order, this tyranny periodically found its best expression every five years during the so-called ‘Campaign Period’ of the general elections. 8 During this period, supporters of the three officially sanctioned political parties often attacked each other’s party’s banner or posters, or harmed each other’s bodies in defence of those signs that are supposed to represent their parties. Because each party has opted for a particular colour, hostility and violence broke out in a war of colours with no other overt reference to parties.9

In some ways, the periodic incidents remind one of sports hooliganism. The difference is that supporters of parties during the New Order’s elections were alienated from the party politics during the five-year span between two elections. Furthermore, these anonymous masses frequently changed colours and allies during the campaign period with or without intentions to maximise material and non-material benefits from the rare occasion.

It was the festivity of Bakhtinian-style topsy-turvy and intimacy with disorder and violence that seemed to constitute the main attraction to the crowds. Thus the paradox: although the New Order government were in full control of the results of the elections prior to the voting day, the masses were interested in
the elections’ campaign periods for entirely different reasons, without consciously ‘resisting’ or ‘opposing’ the ruling government. The whole event turned into an intimate juxtaposition of political farce, merry making, outburst of signifiers, and deadly violence. All of these have no bearing upon the predetermined results of the elections.

Once every five years these politically alienated and economically exploited masses became the supreme anonymous subjects that dominated the public space. They celebrated such triumph with the same discursive repertoire they learned from the state machinery, such as very elaborate colours, loud sounds, mass rallies, displays of masculine strength and aggressive violence that the state monopolised on most other occasions.

All were articulated in and subsumed to the structure and logic of communicative signs of intimate representation. For instance, mass rallies have always been a basic and regular grammar of such celebrated festivity. Convoys of motorcycle riders in elaborate costumes and accessories roaming the cities and violating traffic rules were the standard trope of articulating their presence. These motorcycles had no mufflers, making the roaring sounds characteristically masculine, down-to-earth, populist and vulgar.

The state was the first to initiate such political rites in an attempt to mobilise the masses and validate the legitimacy of the incredible elections. Unsurprisingly, state security officers were much more perceptive than university academics in understanding the profound significance of the mass response to the state’s politics of spectacle. Politics, style and spectacles are inseparable; without style and spectacles there would no mass action. The medium is the message.

In 1992, when the Yogyakarta local police banned the muffler-free motorcycle convoys, the anonymous and unorganised mass was devastated. Most withdrew totally from the theatre of elections, thus threatening to invalidate the legitimacy of the elections. Others rescued the populist tradition by hiring becaks (tricycles for local transportation), going around the city, blaring the pre-recorded sound of muffler-free motorcycles from cassette players (Susanto 1993, 37). Technically speaking they broke no laws, although abiding by the laws was never their major concern.

During many of the incidents of mass violence in the 1990s, as before, similar modes and repertoires of discourse came to the fore. Powerlessness, revenge, conviviality and violence were all juxtaposed. But above all else was the display of one or two sanctified signs, or destruction of the demonised ones. Emblems and logos on headbands, T-shirts, or buildings determined who and what must be attacked and how seriously. The sound of muffler-free motorcycles, its audio recording, declared the presence of the sovereign but alienated masses. In the
1999 elections a young lad was reportedly assaulted in the centre of the city of Yogyakarta for watching a rally while wearing a shirt of the wrong colour.

In the 1980s, tattooed bodies brought death to the thousands without trials. Images of hammer and sickle, or what appeared similar to them, provoked one of the largest massacres in modern history and deprived a million others of civil rights and liberty. Writings on the wall of houses and buildings such as ‘Islam’, ‘Indigenous’, or ‘Reformasi’ could presumably save the owners from mass attacks, looting, or arson. Army uniforms used to mean unquestionable power that enjoyed impunity from laws or exemptions of fees in public affairs. Since 1967 Chinese writings have been declared illegal, because the state decided they were inherently Communist. In 1999 in Australia many Indonesians were furious upon hearing that their ‘national’ flags were being torn or burnt in the aftermath of the East Timor’s vote for independence.

All the above can be found in many, perhaps all, other societies. They run especially high in societies where signs are strongly believed to be inseparable from what they represent. In theorising the origin and early spread of nationalism, Benedict Anderson (1983, 21) argues that nations as imagined communities could come into being only when such a belief in the unity of signs and referents (or language and the world) was seriously eroded by the expansion of print capitalism, the rise of novels and newspaper.

Anderson is probably correct in theorising the nature of nations and the historical conditions that brought about such novel cultural artefacts. However he may have overstated the solidity of such imagining with empirical reference to countries like Indonesia. As a sovereign and limited political community, as Anderson defines a nation, Indonesia may have not existed as solidly and massively as the nationalists and their theorists have suggested. Perhaps it did but it has been gravely eroded, or largely ceased to exist.

In theorising the power of national imagining, Anderson (1983, 16) argues that the ‘deep, horizontal comradeship’ among fellow nationals ‘makes it possible, over the past two centuries, for so many millions of people, not so much to kill, as willingly to die for’ the nation. Contrary to Anderson’s observation, in more than the past thirty years Indonesians have in fact collectively assaulted and killed primarily other Indonesians. If this is insufficient to question the existence of Indonesia as Anderson theorises nations, we should once again note the tyranny of signs that do not recognise the arbitrary links between language and the world, between signs and what they represent. Anderson is correct to suggest that under such tyranny, no nation can exist. This tyranny makes it possible for so many murderers to elaborate the style of violence and to dehumanise their victims.
Conclusion

Having noted all this, I claim to stand by the age-old perceptions that many of the seemingly pre-national oriented and pre-modern societies lack no generosity, hospitality, solidarity and civility—all qualities that one can easily associate with contemporary notions of humane values. All of these are not anathema but coexist with the stylised violence. What distinguishes these real societies from those idealised in modern social theories is a lack of familiarity with and acceptance of the notion of universal humanity, the notion of signs totally separated from reality, or style from substance. ¹⁰

Expressions of humane values and practices survived in the course of economic crisis in violence-torn Indonesia. These heartening experiences were fundamentally hampered, however, by the tyranny of signs that divides the world and humans into several essentialised dichotomies of being (e.g., Indigenous/Non-Indigenous, Dayak/Madurese, Ambon/Buginese, Westerners/Asian Natives, males/females, Islam/Christian, nationalist/Communist, Old/New Order, and New Order/Reformasi). The idea of human as universal, autonomous, rational, individualised beings, as discovered by Europe’s Enlightenment and inscribed in the state ideology of the Republic of Indonesia, remains novel and foreign to many in the population and denied by the New Order state for many decades. Such a phenomenon is not unique to Indonesia. It is more pervasive world-wide than generally admitted.
Endnotes

I wish to thank Tan Joo Ean for various editorial suggestions and comments on an earlier version of this paper.

1. My first and perhaps last attempt to write about Asian Values was when I was invited to make a contribution to the conference on ‘Asia-Pacific Economic Integration and Cultural Identity’ held by the New Zealand Asia Institute (see Heryanto 1999a).

2. For more on this, see Coronil and Skurski (1991).

3. I have discussed this at length in Heryanto (1999b).


5. Excess and glamour are by no means peculiarly postcolonial, as Trouillot (1992, 78) notes: ‘Vulgarity is inherent in power—unless power denies itself... From pharaohs to popes, from armadas to stealth bombers, power feeds on exorbitance: a higher horse, a majestic panache, a tiara, a lavish banquet, golden faucets in the bathroom. The imagery of power is excess. Excess, in turn, breeds vulgarity... Power cannot live without its imagery and that imagery begs for exuberance’. However, the paradoxical combination between such extravaganza with paranoia is more symptomatically post-colonial.


7. For details, see Heryanto (1999b).

8. Anthropologist John Pemberton (1986; 1992; 1994) has seriously examined the events. For additional notes in Indonesian, see Susanto (1993); Heryanto (1996).

9. The most important colours were yellow for the ruling Golkar party, green for the Islamic-oriented Unity Development Party, red for the nationalist-dominated Indonesian Democratic Party, and white for the urban-middle class sponsored boycott-campaign.

10. Studying signs and representations in the Indonesian island of Sumba, anthropologist Webb Keane (1997, 8) observes that ‘[a] medium of representation is not only something that stands “between” those things that it mediates, it is also a “thing” in its own right’.

References


———, and Skurski, Julie, ‘Dismembering and Remembering the Nation: The Semantics
44 Ariel Heryanto


