

CHAPTER FOUR TWO GENERAL MEDIA STRATEGIES APPLIED BY THE DAM ADVOCATES

This chapter is the first of four chapters that focus on how the contending parties advocated their different viewpoints in the media. In this chapter I will describe two major media strategies that were applied by the dam advocates. These media strategies were first, the Javanization of Kedungombo, and second, the marginalization of the opposition. Then, I will describe the challenges raised by the dam critics to the major themes of the dam advocates' media strategies.

The Javanization of Kedungombo

The Javanization of Kedungombo, or the framing of support for the government's policy in dealing with Kedungombo's social issues in Javanese role models and terms, was the most dominant media strategy adopted by the dam advocates, especially by the Central Java Governor, Ismail. This strategy capitalized on figures and episodes from the Javanese shadow puppet, or *wayang*, tradition, Javanese heroes, mythological language, Javanese terms, and a popular Javanese slogan, *jer basuki mawa bea*.

(a) . The use of *wayang* figures and episodes

Characters and episodes from the Javanese shadow puppet, or *wayang kulit*, stories, were repeatedly used to justify the various government steps in dealing with the dam's social problems. When the Information Minister, Harmoko, visited some of these displaced people in Kayen, the first government -built resettlement site near Kedungombo, he used an episode from the Ramayana epic to justify the displacement of villagers from Kedungombo. He told the villagers that when Rama wanted to conquer

Dasamuka, the giant king who ruled on Sri Lanka, which in the story was called Alengkadireja, he first had to build a dam. During the construction of that dam, the local people also had to sacrifice. "They knew exactly that the dam was going to be used in the struggle against evil," said the minister. According to him, Dasamuka was the Symbol of poverty, evil, and stupidity. Therefore, the construction of dams was a Symbol of the effort to overcome poverty, because the Kedungombo dam would be able to irrigate 60,000 Ha of rice fields, and generate 22 MW of electricity (*Jawa Pos* , 9 April 1990).

The Ramayana dike building episode had already been used by the government to popularize the construction of two other dams in Central Java, namely Sempor and Gajah Mungkur (*Tempo* , 11 March 1978; *Jayabaya* , 27 Sept. 1981, 20 Dec. 1981). And to popularize the idea to build a dike across a bay on the island of Sumbawa, a staff person of the National Technology Research and Application Agency (BBPT) also referred to this Ramayana episode (Soesmarkanto, 1991). Hence, even critics of Kedungombo who were well versed in the Ramayana epic might have not seen anything wrong with that metaphor. Or, they might not have read Harmoko's statement in the newspapers.

However, the use of that Ramayana episode implied an important historical distortion. Identifying the Kedungombo dam with the Hanoman-built dike that helped Rama, the hero, save his wife from the hands of Rahwana, the villain, can imply that the Serang river inhabitants were living in a miserable and oppressed situation, prior to the construction of the dam. That metaphorical allusion was certainly not the case. On the contrary, the construction of the dam caused them to live in resettlement sites with unfertile soil, causing them to suffer from the 1991 draught, while

prior to the valley's impoundment, they had lived much more prosperously from the fertile alluvial soil in the valley's floor.

Apart from that Ramayana episode, a Mahabharata figure, Gatotkaca, was also used by Kedungombo advocates. During the second anniversary of the resettlement of Kedungombo villagers in Kedung Mulyo, memories of the flying hero were recalled. In a *wayang kulit* play by Ganasidi, the government-supported puppeteers (*.dalang*) association, Gatotkaca had to defend his kingdom, Pringgondani, from an uprising led by one of his uncles, Brajadenta, whose rebellion was instigated by a priest, Pendeta Durna. According to a young anthropologist's interpretation, Pringgondani symbolized the New Order, Gatotkaca symbolized the New Order's defenders, Brajadenta symbolized the small group of Kedungombo dissenters, and Pendeta Durna symbolized the Catholic priest, Mangunwijaya, a major supporter of the dissenters (Mundayat, 1991).

(b) . The use of Javanese heroes

At one important point during the Kedungombo controversy, Jaka Tingkir, a popular Central Java folk hero was used by the dam supporters to highlight a political concession obtained by protesting villagers. According to the legends, Jaka Tingkir (lit: "the bachelor from Tingkir") barehandedly conquered the ferocious crocodiles of the Solo river. After becoming an adult he changed his name to Mas Karabet, in accordance with Javanese tradition. He eventually became the son-in-law of the ruling king of Demak, Sultan Trenggana, and was appointed as principal of Pajang, a Demak dependency. In this capacity he succeeded in killing a rival, the knight Arya Penangsang of Jipang, in a battle. According to Javanese historical accounts, in the sixteenth century Mas Karabet founded the kingdom of Pajang and

assumed the name of Sultan Adi Wijaya. After the death of Jaka Tingkir's father-in-law, Pajang took over the role as the leader of the Islamic States in Java (Koentjaraningrat, 1985: 52; de Graaf, 1985: 15-17).

Memories of this historical yet legendary figure were evoked to commemorate a successful struggle between a group of villagers and the Central Java governor. The villagers were led by Jaswadi, a former official of the village of Ngrakum, and seven other villages. These eight leaders represented villagers from eight hamlets, who organized themselves into an association, *Paguyuban Masyarakat Kemusu Boyolali* (PMKB), which acted as a united front to oppose the government's drive to depopulate the reservoir periphery, by forcing the villagers to transmigrate.

After three months of tough negotiations with the PMKB leaders, who were popularly known as the "Group of Eight" (*Kelompok Delapan*), the Central Java governor agreed to create two new resettlement sites near the reservoir, above the reservoir's green belt. On Tuesday night, May 30, 1989, during the inauguration of those two new villages, a *ketoprak* (Javanese folk opera) performance was staged, which presented the story of Jaka Tingkir (*Suara Merdeka*, 15 April 1989; *Kedaulatan Rakyat*, 30 May 1989).

This *ketoprak* story was quite popular all over Java, especially the episode of the battle of Jaka Tingkir and Arya Penangsang (Koentjaraningrat, 1985: 91n). In this particular instance, however, it had a specific symbolic meaning for its immediate audience, as well as for the media readers. The immediate audience, namely villagers, had as modern-day Jaka Tingkirs successfully conquered the forces of nature and the forces of the State. After being transformed into modern-day Mas Karabets, they were ready to start a

new civilization in the former teak forests, several kilometers from their former hamlets. In other words, this *ketoprak* story transformed them from victims into "victors."

In addition to the allusion to Jaka Tingkir, a history lecturer at the State Teacher's College in Semarang identified the Kedungombo dam builder with another, much more important Javanese hero (Poerwantana, 1991). On the occasion of Kedungombo's inauguration by President Suharto, Poerwantana's article in *Suara Merdeka* compared the benefits of Kedungombo, with Chinese kings, who only gained respect from their subjects if they were able to control the floods of the Yellow River (Hoangho), and with King Airlangga, who built the Waringin Pitu dam on the Brantas River in East Java.

In that article the author also countered an opinion of Clifford Geertz, a well-known American anthropologist. According to Geertz, said Poertwantana, irrigation was introduced by the Dutch to irrigate the Dutch controlled sugar cane plantations in Java. That was part of a three-pronged strategy during the Ethical Policy, which linked irrigation with transmigration and education. But the Dutch-introduced irrigation was, according to Poerwantana, only for colonial purposes. Long before colonial irrigation was introduced, the people already knew how to grow and irrigate rice on wet fields.

This history lecturer demonstrated in that article an even a stronger sense of "nationalism" or "patriotism" than most historical references to Javanese dams written by Indonesian engineers themselves. In their articles, the Indonesian engineers acknowledged their Dutch predecessors as the first modern builders of dams and other riverine structures in the archipelago

(Notodihardjo, 1989; 5, 37; Suryono, 1987: 25). But embedded in Poerwantana's "nationalism" were several incorrect assumptions. First, he assumed that during the colonial era, irrigation facilities built by Dutch engineers were inherently for colonial purposes, such as for growing of sugar cane. This was incorrect, because even during the Ethical Policy era, which started in 1905, there were two strong currents within the Dutch hydraulic engineers, namely those who prioritized irrigation to grow rice, and another group which wanted to prioritize irrigation for sugar cane plantations.

Second, Poerwantana created a false dichotomy between sugarcane growing as a colonial enterprise, and rice growing as a populist enterprise. This was also incorrect, because the colonial as well as the independent States in Indonesia controlled both agricultural commodities.

Third, by linking Kedungombo with the long history of irrigation of rice, it was assumed that rice was the only crop irrigated by this large dam. This was also not true. Even before its inauguration, two government controlled plantation crops -- cotton and *kenaf* - had already been introduced in the dam's command area by two State plantation companies, which resembled the colonial precedent. Fourth, the article portrayed rice growing, aided by large reservoirs, as automatically bringing prosperity to the people, which was not necessarily true. Fifth, Poerwantana's article reduced the meaning of "irrigation" to the large scale, state-controlled storage reservoirs, while ignoring a wide range of different irrigation techniques and strategies. Briefly speaking, this concept of "irrigation" ranges from centralized State controlled to decentralized community controlled

Systems, from large permanent structures to small, wooden and other temporary structures, and from water affluent to water scarce technologies.

Finally, Poerwantana's article suffered from a strong dose of Javacentrism. Since the meaning of irrigation should not be limited to State controlled irrigation Systems served by large reservoirs, Airlangga or the Brantas river system did not have to be taken for granted as the starting point of Indonesia's irrigation history. Many other cultures in Indonesia, such as the Minangkabau people in West Sumatra and the Buginese people in South Sulawesi had developed community controlled systems served by temporary structures, which did irrigate their wet rice fields effectively before the Dutch and consequently the Indonesian Public Works' engineers took those systems over (see Ambler, 1988; Ali, 1990; Gaffar, 1990).

(c) . The use of mythological language

The displaced villagers in Kemusu, Boyolali, often explained their fate in millenarian myths, as if their forefathers had already forecast that the Serang River would be dammed to create a large reservoir. This happening was predicted to bring prosperity to the local inhabitants of the respective river valleys. The governor was well aware of the mythological thinking of his subjects. Therefore, as a true Javanese and a smart public speaker, who had a strong political grip over the local media, Ismail marked every twist and turn of the controversy with mythological language.

The most popular myth, used by critics as well as by advocates of the dam, was the *iwak bader niangan manggar* (the *bader* fish eats the coconut flowers) myth. According to this myth, predominant in Boyolali, the local people's ancestors had promised that one day, when the *bader* fish ate *manggar* (coconut flowers), prosperity would come to the people in that

river valley. Certainly, after the Serang was dammed and the water level steadily raised, the *bader* fish were swimming freely among the drowned canopies of the coconut trees. So, the people found their decision to stay put on the reservoir's banks legitimate, because now they were to enjoy the promised prosperity brought about by the reservoir.

This myth was formerly used by Jaswadi and his colleagues to justify their resistance against unfair compensation and forced resettlement. But when he accepted the governor's offer to ask his followers to settle down on newly opened forestry land, Jaswadi dropped the "coconut flower eating fish" myth and came forward with another millenarian myth. He said that he had obtained a "*wangsit* " from Eyang [Grandfather] Sodo, the spiritual guardian of Cengkir Gading forest, to lead the Kedungombo people out of their miseries. In that *wangsit* , Eyang Sodo said that Kedungombo would become a prosperous place. Therefore, the local people should not move far away from the reservoir, so that they would also benefit from Kedungombo's prosperity. Based on that *wangsit*, he demanded that the government replace their flooded land with other land near the reservoir (*Berita Nasional*, 11 Febr. 1991).

As mentioned before, Jaswadi's request was granted by Ismail in May 1989. Since the governor had initially opposed giving concessions to the villagers who refused to move, he was also "forced" to provide a mythological explanation for this change in policy. When he baptized the new resettlement site "Kedung Mulyo," he said: "According to my *wangsit* and dream, Kedung Mulyo has a profound meaning. It means that the sacrifice offered by the people who were displaced by Kedungombo was a very *mulia* [noble] step. Therefore, they deserved to be called heros without

medals." Tired of seven years of confrontation with the local government and their security units (YLBHI and JARIM, 1991), the relieved villagers responded with strong applause (*Kompas* , 1 June 1989).

Both the villagers as well as the governor used the word *wangsit* . In Javanese, this term implies a revelation from the ancestors, which in Javanese political thinking indicates that one's claim to power is sanctioned by the ancestors. By using this word, the former rebel as well as the ruler attempted to legitimize their decisions.

Not all remaining villagers, however, agreed to join Jaswadi. About six hundred other families remained dwelling on the reservoir banks, only some hundred meters from the water. The struggle was for these dissenters, not yet over. They still demanded a fair process of negotiation to determine the compensation for their inundated properties, and permission to dwell permanently on the more fertile reservoir's banks. To them, Jaswadi and the eight other leaders were traitors because they had not continued to question the validity of the land appropriation process and had left the reservoir banks to settle in forestry land. This hard core of dissenting villagers held to the original *manggar* eating *bader* fish and did not believe in Jaswadi's *wangsit* . One of their strongholds was Kedungpring, a hamlet of 54 households south of the reservoir. With the support of the Indonesian Legal Aid Foundation, they took the governor and the Project manager to court. The trial lasted for six months and ended in the villagers' defeat.

Meanwhile, the governor's own public acceptance and interpretation . of that myth changed from time to time. Before Jaswadi and his followers were allowed to open forest land beyond the reservoir's green belt, Ismail's

spokesperson, Soeparman, admitted that the myth caused those villagers to stay put on the reservoir's banks (*Kompas* , 30 March 1989). But after six hundred families had resettled in Kedung Mulyo and Kedung Rejo, the governor repeatedly reinterpreted that myth to justify his decision. First, he claimed that the prediction of that myth had already been fulfilled with the establishment of the three resettlement sites (*Kartika* , 12 May 1991). Then, on another occasion he claimed that the myth meant that Kedungombo people, who formerly suffered a shortage of water due to their dry and barren environment, could now enjoy an abundance of water (*Suara Merdeka* , 16 May 1991).

During the inauguration of Kedungombo, the ruling party's newspaper further reformulated that myth. According to that daily, a Javanese mystic who had been the village head of Juwangi had foretold that one day, the "mountain" of Juwangi would collapse and a "sea" would be created. At that time, the *bader* fish would eat the coconut flowers, and "lightning will strike all the villagers." According to *Suara Karya* , those predictions were fulfilled. The mountain that collapsed was the quarry near Juwangi that had been mined to build the Kedungombo dam. In the "sea" that was created by the dam, the *bader* fish were eating the coconut flowers. This fish was often sold in the Juwangi market, caught by the settlers in Kedung Mulyo. And the "lightning" that would strike all the villagers was electricity, which was to be distributed to all the three government-sponsored resettlement sites (*Suara Karya* , 18 May 1991).

(d) . The use of *jer basuki mawa bea*

A well-known Javanese saying, *jer basuki mawa bea* , which means that "after all, good things come through hard effort," was also very

generously used by the Kedungombo dam advocates to justify the Wholesale displacement of local villagers and to demand their unconditional obedience.

This slogan was already quite popular among the Javanese people. It had been adopted as the slogan on the logo of East Java province. It had also been "Islamized" through repeated usage to underline the Islamic virtue of offering one's beloved to God, as exemplified by the Prophete Abraham's offering of his son, Ismail, following God's demand (Isngadi, 1986; *Panyebar Semangat*, 23 July 1988). The sacrifice of Ismail, which was prevented by God by allowing Abraham to slaughter a ram as a substitute for his son, is commemorated by the Islamic believers on the holiday of *Idul Adha*, or *Idul Kurban*.⁴

This Javanese slogan first found its way into the Kedungombo discourse, by being imprinted by the Jratunseluna Project on the envelopes used to distribute the compensation funds to the displaced villagers (*Pikiran Rakyat*, 13 April 1991). The biggest boost towards its popularization, however, was a strong speech presented by Soeharto on March 23, 1989 in Banjarnegara, Central Java. On the occasion of inaugurating three other dams, namely the Mrica hydropower dam near Banjarnegara, the Sengguruh hydropower dam (East Java) and the Cirata hydropower dam (West Java), he urged the dissenting Kedungombo villagers to follow the examples of the local people displaced by those dams, uttering that old Javanese saying.

⁴) '*id al-adha*' or '*id-i-ghorban*', is the Persian name for the sacrificial feast on 10 *Dhu'l-hijja* during the *Haj* pilgrimage. See Rippin and Knappert 1990, pp. 5, 63-66. In the Jewish and Christian tradition, it is not Ismail whose sacrifice was substituted by the ram, but Isaac (Genesis, 22: 1-19).

After that speech, the Javanese slogan was often repeated by Ismail. While inaugurating two new resettlement sites, Kedung Mulyo and Kedung Rejo, he stressed the need for the people's sacrifice, "which will be rewarded equally by the government." Therefore, he continued, "this new resettlement will be equipped with facilities, such as public health centers, schools, *ctcetera* " (*Kompas* , 1 June 1989). In a dialogue with Central Java student activists in March 16, 1991, he emphasized that Javanese principle again, stating that although development always needed sacrifices, it did not mean that the local government would simply step on the people's rights. Two weeks later, in a meeting with Kedungombo villagers, Ismail repeated that slogan.

The bottom line of Soeharto's interpretation of the formula, however, was the absoluteness of sacrifices. When he finally inaugurated the controversial dam on May 18, 1991, after more than a year delay, he repeated several of the themes of the speeches he had given when inaugurating other dams and large development projects. According to Soeharto:

The sacrifices of the people around the Kedungombo reservoir are not useless. From these sacrifices, we will reap one progress after another. [The benefits of] your sacrifices will not only be felt immediately, but also will be felt by the coming generations. [Therefore,] I salute you for your willingness to sacrifice for the sake of development (*YNaarma Nyata* , Fourth Week, May 1991).

And concerning development in general, he added that:

Development is for the sake of the people, not the other way around that the people are for the sake of development. If it happens that the people have to be asked to sacrifice, that is for a greater interest, for the interest of more people, and for a farther long term interest (*Dharma Nyata* , Fourth Week, May 1991).

In other words, Soeharto said that sacrifices were essential to guarantee the nobility of development goals. Implicitly, he referred to an old Javanese concept of *tumbal*, or human sacrifices that had to be offered when public buildings, such as temples, bridges, and public halls, were erected.

(e) . The use of other Javanese terms

Various other Javanese sayings and words were used by the authorities as well as by the media to ground Kedungombo in popular discourse. One colloquial Javanese saying that often appeared in the Kedungombo discourse was "*nek rendeng ora bisa ndodhok, nek ketigo ora bisa cewok*". Translated freely, it means that "during the rainy season one cannot squat, due to the floods, and during the dry season, one cannot clean one's behind, due to the lack of water." After Kedungombo was completed, so it was claimed, that saying would instantly disappear from Demak and other districts in Kedungombo's command area.

Another expression with the same connotation also appeared in the media. A local newspaper's editorial welcoming Kedungombo highlighted an expression of a farmer from a district irrigated by the reservoir, who said that the "rain of tears" (*udan tangis*), which often occurred in the low lying region because of the annual floods, had been replaced by the "rain of income" (*udan rejeki*) due to the regular harvests after the dam was finished (*Suara Merdeka*, 20 May 1991). All these sayings created the image of the dam as Alladin's lamp, capable of instantly solving all the water problems in the lower lying districts.

To highlight the "greatness" of Kedungombo, Ismail also used familiar Javanese terms. He called Kedungombo, "the *mbah buyut* [great-grandmother] of other reservoirs in Central Java" (*Suara Pembaruan*, 30

April 1991). Less than two weeks later, the governor uttered a similar statement while awarding seventy five land titles to displaced villagers who had settled in government-sponsored schemes. "Since the Kedungombo reservoir is the 'grandmother' of the reservoirs in Central Java, such as the Gajah Mungkur, Wadaslintang, and Mrica reservoirs, it has to be guarded and conserved, so that it can provide the maximum benefits to the people" (*Suara Merdeka* , 13 May 1991). Two days later, the same newspaper repeated that statement.

Probably, Ismail was the most resourceful person in creating new linguistic means to obtain public support for the dam. One of those means was to reinterpret the meaning of the dam's place name, Kedungombo. In Javanese, the word *kedung* means "water hole," or "a deep trench in a river," and *ombo* means "wide." According to Ismail, the name "Kedungombo" indicated that "hundreds of years ago, our ancestors already knew that a reservoir was going to be built in this place." Why? Because the place was already called Kedungombo, "although the water in this place was only a small trickle," the governor argued (*Kartika* , 12 May 1991).

The term *kediiing* had already been popularized by the governor on previous other occasions. As discussed earlier, he had baptized the new resettlement site chosen by Jaswadi "Kedung Mulyo." Another resettlement site on the opposite site of the reservoir, where other members of Jaswadi's group had settled, was named "Kedung Rejo" by Ismail to anticipate that these settlers would become *rejo* , or "prosperous."

These two resettlement sites were established after years of persistent opposition to transmigration. The success of this long struggle sanctified the names given by their former adversary. They clung so strongly to these

names that when the Department of Education wanted to name the new elementary schools (SD) in those two new settlements, respectively SD Genengsari IV and SD Ngrakum II, in accordance with the names of the nearby villagers, the settlers protested strongly. After weeks of protests, the Education Department gave in, and the schools were officially named, SD Kedung Mulyo and SD Kedung Rejo (*Kedaulatan Rakyat* , 12, 17 Jan. and 2 Febr. 1990; *Suara Merdeka* , 5 Febr. 1990).

This school-naming debate showed Ismail's success in turning his former opponents into fanatical supporters. Nevertheless, his play with the meaning of the word "Kedungombo" was etymologically questionable. Actually, the ordinary villagers had no word in their vocabulary for a large reservoir such as Kedungombo. In daily conversation, they simply called it "*segara*," or "sea." The term "*kedhung* " applied mainly to deep but calm trenches along oxbows of the Serang and Uter rivers. Many hamlets of the 22 villages impounded by the reservoir bear the name "*kedung* ."

As far as the actual dam site was concerned, it was not a small trickle of water before the dam was constructed. It was a gorge of the Serang, which separated the villages of Kalangbancar and Rambat (Ngrambat) in the subdistrict Geyer in the district of Grobogan. During the earlier surveys done by a Dutch engineering consultant, NEDECO, in the 1970s, this potential dam was only called "Ngrambat dam," using the name of one of the nearest village as its reference point. But since the early 1980s, the name "Kedungombo" started to appear on survey reports as well as in statements of the government authorities to the media (*Panyebar Semangat* , 14 Febr. 1981; *Jayabaya* , 15 Febr. 1981). Hence, it might be that the name "Kedungombo" was intentionally created by some ingenious persons in the

Public Works Department, as a far-fledged and systematic Public Relations campaign to popularize this prospective dam.

A similar play of words was exercised again by Ismail, during the inauguration of the dam by President Soeharto on May 18, 1991. The governor claimed that the president himself had chosen that date, which fell on a *Legi* Saturday on the Javanese calendar.⁵ And playing with the meaning of words again, in line with the Javanese tradition, Ismail said that *legi* stood for "*lemu ginuk-ginuk*" (*Kedaulatan Rakyat*, 18 May 1991). That term means "fat and healthy," a term most often used for babies. Thereby, Ismail connoted that the president had chosen a lucky day to inaugurate the dam, which fell on the first day of the Javanese week, and alluded to Kedungombo as a "fat and healthy baby."

During his inauguration speech, however, Soeharto did not talk about fat and healthy babies, but used very rough language towards the dissenting villagers. He encouraged them again to join their fellow people in the three official resettlement sites near the reservoir, or to transmigrate to Bengkulu. If they did not, so Soeharto threatened them, they would go down in history as a rebellious group, or in Soeharto's term, "*mbalelo* and as those who "refused to move away," or in Soeharto's terminology, "*mbeguguk makutho waton*."

The words *mbalelo* and *mbeguguk* were actually not new in the media language on Kedungombo. Indonesia's largest newspaper had already used the term *mbalelo* to describe the determination of the villagers who

5) The Javanese calendar combines the recurrence of the seven days of the Western calendar with the five days of the original Javanese calendar, which are Legi, Paing, Pon, Wage, and Kliwon. So, Sabtu Legi, or *Legi* Saturday, is where Saturday coincides with Legi, the first day of the Javanese week. In the Javanese language, *legi* also means sweet.

had not wanted to move away from the rising water in early 1989. According to that newspaper, which was predominantly run by Javanese editors, *mbalelo* is a form of polite (*halus*) resistance in the Javanese tradition. (*Kompas*, 15 Jan. 1989). And in a much later report about the Kedung Pring villagers who did not want to move before the court solved their conflict with the government, the same newspaper used the term *mbeguguk*, simply meaning to stay put (*Kompas*, 24 March 1991)

Mbalelo, or sometimes also written *balelo* or *mbalela*, actually had a stronger connotation than simply to resist. As popularly used in the titles of *wayang* or *ketoprak* plays based on inter- and intrastate rivalries in the history of Javanese kingdoms (*Panyebar Semangat*, 23 May 1987, 30 April 1988, 4 Febr. 1989; *Jayabaya*, 12 August 1984), it meant a resistance which ultimate aim was to topple the current rulers.

Hence, the villagers in Kedungombo, were not happy with the president's speech, especially since it was interpreted by several high-ranking officials as a signal to step up efforts in persuading the remaining villagers to leave the reservoir banks. Among those high ranking officials were the Minister of the Interior, the deputy chairperson of the ruling party's faction in the national parliament, and the deputy speaker of the Boyolali parliament (*Kompas*, 2 May 1991; *Kedaulatan Rakyat*, 24 May 1991; *Suara Merdeka*, 30 May 1991).

Despite that strong speech, criticisms from many villagers as well as their urban supporters did not cease after the dam was inaugurated. Hence, Ismail resorted again to his Javanese play of words. He appealed to them with a Javanese problem-solving slogan, "*ono rembug dirembug*" (*Kedaulatan Rakyat*, 23 Nov. 1991). He had stated that slogan before, when

he was shocked with the public protest of 289 Kedungombo villagers at the national parliament in Jakarta in April 1990 (*Suara Pembaruan*, 21 April 1990). What he meant by that was that it was better to negotiate peacefully, to come to a consensus on how to solve the problem. Public and mass expressions of dissent should be avoided. Because, as Ismail put it, "in principle, the Government does not mean to harm its people, even a single thread of their hair." And he also believed that the people of Central Java highly appreciated the development programs in their province. Still, protests about certain development projects in Central Java continued. Probably, the people concerned had not received enough explanation about the objectives of those projects, Ismail claimed.

The marginalization of the opposition

While the first media strategy set the tone for the entire debate on Kedungombo, the media strategy that I call the marginalization of the opposition was more specifically aimed at making the opposition "look bad" in the eyes of the general public. It consisted of four components which were very closely related and overlapping, namely: first, blaming of the victims, second, ridiculing of the victims' intellectual capacity and political awareness, third, labeling the victims' supporters, and fourth, reducing the extent of the grass roots resistance. In the following section each sub-strategy will be described separately.

(a) . Blaming the victims

The victims of the dam, namely the displaced villagers, were constantly portrayed as being the ones responsible for delaying the completion of the dam and its reservoir and causing all the trouble for the

dam builders. Some of these "blaming the victim" accusations came from the authorities and were then amplified by the media, but some accusations also came directly from the media, who were no less impatient to see the dam operating in full glory.

In fact, the media itself was among the first to blame the victims. In 1986, many villagers in Sragen and Boyolali started refusing collectively to accept the low compensation offered by the project. They requested legal assistance from the Semarang and Yogyakarta legal aid offices. When this early resistance started to trickle out through two Semarang daily newspapers, *Suara Merdeka* and *Wawasan*, the local government in both districts started a witch hunt to persuade those dissenting villagers to accept whatever decisions had already been made by the land appropriation committees of both districts. The two newspapers not only reported this witch hunt, but also used other terminology that added fuel for the government. For instance, on August 29, 1986, *Suara Merdeka* referred to the dissenting villagers in Boyolali as a "development obstruction group" (*kelompok penghambat pembangunan*). And in October 1986, the same newspaper mentioned that the villagers in Sragen, who were suspected of having complained to the legal aid Office were practicing a "mouth-shutting movement" (*gerakan "tutup mulut"*) because they did not want to talk to the journalist (*Suara Merdeka*, 7 Oct. 1986).

Describing the dissenting villagers in such language gave them a sinister quality, which in the Indonesian political language was mainly reserved for the underground communist movement. It emphasized the accusations that had already been expressed by the authorities in Boyolali, that the dissenting villagers were members of the outlawed Indonesian

Communist Party. These people were referred to by the abbreviations "E.T." (*ex tapol*, former political prisoner) and "O.T." (*organisasi terlarang*, forbidden organization). In April 1986, seventeen villagers in the village of Ngrakum who renewed their Identification cards at the office of the Kemusu subdistrict head, suddenly found a mark on their new LD.s, that had not been there before: "E.T." (*Kompas*, 23 March 1989).

Lending more political weight to the accusations, in his notorious speech at Banjarnegara on March 23, 1989, President Soeharto stated that as former Army commander of Central Java, he knew that the reservoir area was formerly a base of the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI). Soeharto could indeed lend some credibility to his accusations that the villagers were Communists, or "Communist remnants," for the public had been conditioned to thinking of the three districts on the slopes of the Kendeng mountain range as being a base of Communist guerillas. In 1968, a wave of killings of supposedly underground Communist guerillas in the Grobogan district shocked the media (Cribb, 1990: 195-226). Five years later, an underground Communist movement in the teak forests was reportedly discovered by the Central Java army command in the three bordering districts, Grobogan, Boyolali, and Sragen (*Tempo*, 3 March 1973).

Adding salt to the wound, the ruling party's newspaper editorialized Soeharto's accusation by stating that the reservoir area was also the region which had been terrorized in the 1950s by a group of outlaws known as "the Merapi-Merbabu Complex," or "M. M. C." (*Suara Karya*, 27 March 1989).

(b) . Ridiculing the victims' intellectual capacity and political awareness

Apart from blaming the victims, the authorities also attributed the villagers' resistance to their presumed 'underdeveloped' intellect and political awareness. In early 1989, the Minister of the Interior, Rudini, stated that "the Kedungombo problem emerged because of the communities' low level of knowledge. They do not believe that their hamlet could be inundated by the reservoir water" (*Suara Pembaruan* , 29 Jan. 1989). The Minister of Social Affairs, Supardjo Rustam, a former Central Java governor, explained Kedungombo's resistance in a similar way. According to Supardjo Rustam, there had also been some resistance to other dams in Central Java in the past. But the opposition to the Gajah Mungkur dam was limited to a stubborn village leader who did not believe that the reservoir water could reach the height of his place. Similar types of villagers who also did not believe in the advanced technology that could turn valleys into lakes also existed during the construction of the Sempor and Wadaslintang dams. Therefore, he felt that the problems in Kedungombo could also immediately be solved (*Suara Pembaruan* , 17 March 1989).

Another way of ridiculing the local villagers' intellectual capacity which was practiced consistently by the dam builders and their political supporters from 1987 until 1991 was to describe them as being very vulnerable to provocation by outsiders. In 1987, the dam's project officer, Meduk Subiyanto, stated that the villagers in Boyolali refused to release their land, because there was a third party who provoked them for the benefit of those persons (*Pelita* , 2 Nov. 1987). Two years later, Ismail accused "outside individuals" of influencing the Kedungombo people, to

not follow the government's persuasion (Tempo , 25 March 1989). The next year, when 300 Sragen villagers protested to the national parliament, the governor attributed the demonstration to "certain individuals, who told the villagers that they might obtain higher compensation if they demanded that in Jakarta" *{Suara Pembaruan , 21 April 1990}*.

The political consciousness of the Sragen villagers was systematically trivialized by the authorities by attributing all their political actions to outside provokers. When 200 Sragen villagers drove again to Jakarta in early 1991, Ismail furiously stated that if it had not been for "outside provokers," the villagers would have complained to the 24-hour complaint posts set up by the provincial government (Berita Nasional, 27 Febr. 1991). The governor's press officer, Suparman, also accused the "driving engine" *{motor penggerak }* behind the demonstration of disturbing the peace of the villagers *{Berita Nasional , 28 Febr. 1991}*.

Some national parliamentarians also joined this campaign to ridicule the villagers' intellectual capacity. In response to three waves of demonstrations by Sragen villagers, five parliamentarians from Jakarta eventually paid a visit to those demonstrators right in their district. Krissantono, secretary of the ruling party's faction, who had been visited by Sragen villagers in the past, joined that team. After a day of discussions with the villagers, Krissantono and his colleagues went to see the district head of Sragen. Concluding his visit, Krissantono stated that the Kedungombo farmers were actually "simple and obedient small people" *{Kedaulatan Rakyat, 22 March 1991}*. It was amazing to see how the Jakarta politician patronized the Sragen villagers, when two days before, they had threatened to refrain from voting in the 1992 election if their requests were not fulfilled. Those threats

were expressed in front of Krissantono, the local government officials, and the media (*Suara Merdeka* , 20 March 1991).

(c) . Labeling the victims' supporters

Consistent with the idea that the dissenting villagers were "vulnerable objects" of "outside provokers," the victims' supporters were also constantly labeled by the authorities as well as by the media. These "outside provokers" were repeatedly described with various labels. In March 1989, when Governor Ismail forbade Mangunwijaya and his friends to rescue the children of the displaced villagers, he accused them of trying to play "guardian angels" for those dissenting villagers. Those guardian angels, Ismail claimed, were actually the ones who caused all the noise about Kedungombo (*Media Indonesia* , 16 March 1989; *Jakarta Post* , 17 March 1989; *Tempo* , 25 March 1989).

Ismail's attack on the protesters was immediately supported by his patron, President Soeharto, who added another label onto the protesting intellectuals. In his well-known Banjarnegara speech, Soeharto mentioned that there were persons who were like the Javanese saying, *welas tanpo asih* , pretending to help, but actually wanting to push the people into misery. A Jakarta newspaper promptly editorialized Suharto's new label, giving the critics a sinister character by stating that "God certainly knows bad intentions" (*Merdeka* , 25 March 1989). Two years later, the term *welas tanpo asih* , abbreviated by the governor as WTA, was still used in a public statement of the chairperson of the provincial parliament (*Berita Nasional*, 6 March 1991).

Meanwhile, Ismail had added another label for the social activists, namely *waton suloyo* , meaning, wanting just like to quarrel or disagree. He

abbreviated this Javanese expression, WTS, which had a derogative meaning, because it stood for *wanita tuna susila*, or prostitute.

Ismail's favorite labels to disparage the Kedungombo activists were WTA, WTS, and "*pahlawan kesiangan*" or people who come on the battlefield after the fighting is over and claim to be heroes. This label were frequently reproduced by other officials in their public statements. In the meantime, as a good publicist, Ismail kept creating new labels. After the third demonstration by Sragen villagers at the national parliament, he stated that the villagers were provoked by persons who stood "beyond the Panca Sila system" (*Kartika*, *Kedaulatan Rakyat*, and *Jawa Pos*, 27 March 1991). This was a very serious accusation, because it implied that those persons were against the State, or subversive.

Serious, highly politicized labels were regularly interchanged with humorous labels, which guaranteed continuous media spotlights for Ismail. In an interview about the demonstration by Kedungombo farmers, he stated that the villagers were politicized by outsiders. Asked by the journalist whom he meant, Ismail replied; "Didn't you interview Pak Mangun [Father Mangunwijaya] three or four days ago? Ask him, maybe he knows!" To dilute his accusation, he quickly added that if there were no "*kutu loncat*" "jumping fleas" behind the screen, the villagers would certainly have expressed their complaints to the 24-hour centers which he had set up (*Berita Nasional*, 27 Febr. 1991, 2 March 1991).

By using the term "jumping fleas," Ismail evoked the rural people's memory of a plague that had destroyed thousands of fast-growing firewood trees a couple of years earlier. For urban dwellers, however, it only had a funny connotation. Another label that Ismail popularized had a funny

connotation for urban as well as rural peoples. When eleven Sragen villagers went to see the World Bank representative in Jakarta, Ismail stated that there were still many "bakul sate" (vendors of *sate*, or shish-kebab) in Central Java. Because the 1992 national election was approaching, the "satay vendors" became busier "fanning" the local people. Not only in Kedungombo, but also in other places, where farmers protested against what they regarded as unfair land appropriation practices, said the governor (Berita Nasional, 13 April 1991; Wawasan, 10 July 1991).

(d) . Reducing the extent of the grass roots resistance

Three types of grass roots resistance occurred in the Kedungombo region, namely resistance to the unfair land appropriation process, resistance to transmigrate, and resistance to vacate the reservoir's green belt. All these types of resistance were systematically reduced by the authorities in their press statements, as will be discussed further in this section.

(1). Reducing the resistance to the land appropriation process

Compared to the news from Boyolali and Sragen, one might still obtain the impression, that, in Grobogan the land appropriation process had gone very smoothly. This impression was further deepened by a statement of the Director General of Irrigation, Soebandi Wirosoemarto, in preparation for the inauguration of the Kedungombo dam and its auxiliary weirs. He said that 292,731 Ha of land had been appropriated by the Jratunseluna Irrigation Project in Grobogan, without any problem. He saluted the villagers in Grobogan for not being influenced by their friends in Boyolali and Sragen. Hence, he said that Grobogan, where land alienation for the project did not cause any problems, could serve as an example (Suara Merdeka, 15 May 1989).

Table 4.
Cases of villagers' protests against adverse impacts of the Jratunseluna irrigation facilities, downstream of the Kedungombo dam

Year	Brief description of case
(1)	(2)
1982	<p>In August, twenty residents from Berahan Kulon village in Wcdung subdistrict, Demak district, complained to the Central government, about corruption of the compensation which they were supposed to receive from the Jratunseluna Irrigation Project. According to them, the compensation that was corrupted by their village head amounted to about Rp 15 million. That compensation was for their fish ponds, which was partly appropriated due to the Wulang river channel improvement, for which they were supposed to receive Rp 600 per sq. m. The village head subtracted about 7.5 % from the compensation for each land owner, which was unilaterally decided by the village head in a meeting with the land owners. The land owners stated that they were forced to accept that decision. But in an interview with a journalist, the village head rejected that accusation. He said that the land owners had voluntarily donated money in no fixed percentage of the compensation to his wife (Pikiran Rakyat, 25 August 1982).</p>
1983	<p>In November, Haji Anwar alias Mardi (60 years) and Rubawi (40 years), two farmers from the village Betah Walang in the subdistrict Bonang in the district of Demak, sued the Jratunseluna Project general manager. They were represented by a defense attorney in Semarang. They felt that in acquiring their land for the widening of Kali (River) Jajar, the total compensation amount was unilaterally determined by the authorities, without informing them about the rate as well as the total area of the land that had to be appropriated (Suara Merdeka, 18 Nov. 1983).</p>
1987	<p>Twenty villagers of Talun, Kayen subdistrict, Pati district, complained to the district head about the corruption of the compensation for their 790,000 Ha of land that was appropriated to "normalize" the Juana river to function as a primary irrigation canal for the Jratunseluna irrigation System. The corrupted funds, which ranged from Rp 150,000 to 450,000 per person, was allegedly carried out by three village officials. On November 28, the twenty villagers were summoned to the subdistrict Office by the subdistrict secretary, and told that if they did not want to receive the money, it would be returned to the Jratunseluna Project (Fakta, 1 March 1988).</p>
	<p>In May, a semi-governmental legal aid body, BKPH MKGR of Central Java, wrote a letter to the Minister of Interior, Soepardjo Roestam, reporting an unfinished compensation case in Kudus district. The letter was written on behalf of land owners in Bulung Kulon village in Jekulo subdistrict, whose land was appropriated for a Jratunseluna irrigation facility (Prasetyo (1990), p. 370).</p>

(continued on next page)

(continued from previous page)

(1)	(2)
1988	In February, villagers in the subdistrict Karanganyar in the district of Demak complained to their district parliament, about the corruption of compensation by the village head of Kotokan for their land that was appropriated for Jratunseluna's irrigation facilities. But according to the village head, the report of those "frustrated people" was not true (Prasetyo 1990: 381).
1990	In June, villagers in Sukolilo subdistrict in the district of Pati protested against the construction of a secondary canal through their land. A villager in Cengkalsewu put a sign prohibiting that construction on his land, because the Project had not paid compensation according to his wish. In three other villages, Baturejo, Gadudero, and Wotan, the canal was repeatedly destroyed at night (<i>Suara Merdeka</i> , 4 and 9 June 1990).
1991	<p>In mid January, water from the Lusi river started to fill the Dumpil weir in Grobogan district. 56 out of the 107 households in three hamlets in Ngaraparap village in Ngaringan subdistrict still had to be relocated. They refused to transmigrate, although the gardens of three houses in Kagok were already under water. In March, the district government agreed to relocate 121 households near the weir, on land owned by the village. Every household obtained 200 sq. m. of land to relocate their houses. Prior to that local relocation demand, the villagers had also insisted on negotiating the compensation rates for their inundated land, which became Rp 1,000 persq. m. of housegarden land, Rp 850 per sq. m. of irrigated farm land, and Rp 750 per sq. m. of dry farm land.</p> <p>A year after relocating in the new village, 119 household heads received their new land titles in early May 1992. The weir inundated 200 Ha of land at the elevation of 49 m. The Rp 16 billion project was 100 % funded by a grant from the European Community, while the 808 Ha land acquisition was 100 % financed by the Indonesian government (<i>Suara Merdeka</i>, 9 and 13 Febr., 4 May 1991; <i>Kartika</i>, 2 and 22 March 1991; <i>Kedaulatan Rakyat</i>, 11 May 1992).</p> <p>In April, problems related to Dumpil's irrigation canals started to emerge. Between 83 to 126 villagers in the hamlets of Gareh and Bladok in Ngabenrejo village, Grobogan subdistrict, complained that Rp 21 million of the compensation for their land was withheld by their village authorities. After a couple of days of continuous media exposure, the lot of the Ngabenrejo villagers seemed to improve. After 126 villagers told the media that they wanted to report their case to the Central Government, the village head, SS, returned Rp 19 million compensation money to the 126 villagers. He also received a strong reprimand from the Grobogan district head, who promised to issue a sanction on SS (<i>Kartika</i>, 28 March, 3-4 April 1991; <i>Suara Merdeka</i>, 30 March, 1 April 1991; <i>Kedaulatan Rakyat</i>, 28 and 30 March, 6 April 1991).</p>

(continued on next page)

(continued from previous page)

(1) (2)

1991 Some villagers in Jono village in Tavvangharjo subdistrict, Grobogan, rejected the compensation offered by the Grobogan district land appropriation committee for their land that was going to be appropriated for the Right Dumpil drainage channel. They claimed their land was undervalued compared to their fellow villagers. Sulrman, for instance, claimed that compensation for his land was rated at Rp 1,500 per sq. m., while an adjacent piece of land owned by his sister was rated at Rp 1,750 per sq. m. (*Kartika*, 3 April 1991).

The Dumpil irrigation system also triggered secondary land appropriation problems. Since the Right Dumpil drainage canal took up some Forestry land, the Jratunseluna Project had to compensate the Forestry Department with an equal amount of land. Hence, the project tried to purchase some land in Jatipohon village, Grobogan subdistrict, from 29 land owners. After negotiating with the land owners, the project agreed to pay Rp 5,500 per sq. m. of hard land (*tanah keras*), and Rp 3,300 per sq. m. of dry farm land (*tanah tegalan*). In June, Yatmo, one of the land owners still rejected the compensation rates. He demanded Rp 15,000 per sq. m. for 600 sq. m. of his dry land, arguing that his house and its relocation costs also needed to be compensated. The district's land appropriation committee refused to fulfil his demand, and only paid Rp 5,500 per sq. m. for another piece of Yatmo's land. In May 1992, the committee decided to cancel the appropriation of the land of Yahmo and another villager, Darsi, who both reportedly demanded Rp 20,000 for each sq. m. of their land. The official compensation rates had meanwhile been reduced to Rp 5,000 for each sq. m. of hard land and Rp 3,000 for each sq. m. of farm land (*Kedaulatan Rakyat*, 11 and 14 Febr., 1 June 1991, 14 May 1992).

In March, twelve officials of Ngrambat and Kalangbancar village governments in Geyer subdistrict, Grobogan district, complained that since the Kedungombo dam and the Sidorejo weir were built, they had lost their traditional income from the village land assigned to them. But since the two Jratunseluna reservoirs inundated their 'salary land', or *tanah bengkok*, in 1988, they had not yet received new salary lands due to the difficulty to find alternative land in the same subdistrict. Hence, the Rp 280 million provided by the Project to buy new salary land was deposited at the local branch of the Provincial Development Bank. In 1991, however, only Rp 225 million was left in the bank's deposits, since Rp 65 million had been used to build a new elementary school to replace the old one that was inundated by the Sidorejo reservoir (*Kedaulatan Rakyat*, 26 March 1990; Kflrrita, 9 March 1991).

In late March, between 73 to 91 residents of Tunggu village in Penawangan subdistrict, Grobogan, claimed that their land had been wrongly measured by the land appropriation committee, and thereby they claimed to lose millions of rupiahs in compensation. That land was appropriated for the Left Sidorejo

(continued on next page)

(continued from previous page)

(1) (2)

primary irrigation canal. The villagers claimed that only eight land owners had received less than what they were due to receive, while eight other villagers had not yet received any compensation at all. The entire sum of compensation which had not reached the rightful land owners amount to tens of millions of rupiahs. These complaints, presented in a letter by the villagers to the district head of Grobogan and also exposed by the media, prompted the Jratunseluna Project and the district government officials to investigate these anomalies (*Kartika* ,1-2 April 1991; *Pikiran Rakyat* , 1 April 1991; *Kedaulatan Rakyat* , 2 April 1991; *Suara Merdeka* ,2-3 April 1991).

In May, another land appropriation problem occurred in the construction of the Left Sidorejo tertiary irrigation canal. About fifty household heads in Genukrejo village in Purwodadi town in Grobogan district, opposed the construction of that canal through their land, since it would destroy hundreds of their bamboo trees on that land. Those bamboo stands functioned as wind breakers during strong winds, as they experienced during the previous year. Only if the Jratunseluna Project paid a compensation for those bamboo trees, according to their wishes, would they be willing to give up that land (*Pikiran Rakyat* , 23 May 1991).

In March, plans to rehabilitate the Ngampo irrigation weir in the village Sridadi in the subdistrict Rembang in the district of Blora created a controversy among the villagers. Some villagers opposed the project, stating that the weir would inundate a *punden* , a sacred pilgrimage place for villagers who followed the Javanese traditional belief system. This resistance hindered the local branch of the Public Works' Irrigation section to rehabilitate the weir, which was planned to irrigate 400 Ha rice fields in Sridadi, Gedangan, Padaran, and Pasarbanggi villages (*Kartika* , 30 March 1991).

1992 On March 23, Maryono, a resident of Kedungjati subdistrict in Grobogan district wrote a letter in *Suara Merdeka* , to confirm rumors concerning the Jratunseluna Project's plan to dam the Tuntang river. He asked when the feasibility study of that dam was to begin and when the dam was actually to be built. In the wake of the coming election on June 9, 1992, he urged the Jratunseluna Project, or the Director General of Irrigation, to confirm those rumors.

Actually, Jratunseluna Project's plans to build the Glapan barrage on the Tuntang river had already been officially announced by the Director General of Irrigation, Subandi Wirosumarto on May 3, 1991. He stated that the project had to acquire land owned by 4,300 households. A team from the Gadjah Mada University, who surveyed the population at the project site of the project that would inundate 12 villages in Kedungjati and Gubug subdistricts, found out that 75 % of the population, or about 3,000 households, preferred to be relocated within the district (*Kedaulatan Rakyat* , 27 March 1992; *Suara Merdeka* , 5 April, 4 May 1991, 23 March 1992).

The statement of the Director General, however, was certainly misleading, if one takes a more critical look at all the news clippings on the Jratunseluna facilities in the Grobogan district. The potential for land appropriation problems in Grobogan was also higher than in the other two districts, because not only was the actual Kedungombo dam located in this district, but also other Jratunseluna irrigation facilities, including the Sidorejo weir and its canals, the Dumpil weir and its irrigation canals, the Glapan Barat weir, the Right Klambu canal, and the prospective Jragung and Tuntang barrages.

As one can see from Table 4 (pp. 100-103), many farmers in Grobogan and other downstream districts protested against Jratunseluna's land appropriation practice, long before it started in Sragen and Boyolali. And while the protests in Boyolali and Sragen were taking place, the villagers in Grobogan and the other downstream districts also did not remain calm and quiet, as the Director General's statement might have led the *Suara Merdeka* readers to believe. Grobogan, in particular, was the district from where most of the news of protests against the land appropriation process came. And by counting the number of hamlet communities and village officials who protested, one can say that the number of dissenting villagers in Grobogan was no less than the number of dissenting villagers in Sragen and Boyolali.

(2). Resistance to transmigration

During the last three years (1989-1991), the authorities repeatedly claimed that only a handful of villagers in the Boyolali district, and especially the subdistrict of Kemusu, resisted the government's offer to transmigrate to Bengkulu. This image could be constructed due to the

underreporting of news of resistance to transmigration in the Sragen and Grobogan districts.

In the case of Sragen, the villagers frequent public protests showed that many of them had actually resisted transmigration. In the case of Grobogan, the villagers' attitudes might not have counted much with the media, since they only represented two of the 22 villages that were directly affected by the dam and its reservoir, namely Ngrambat and Kalangbancar in the subdistrict of Geyer.

The authorities' attempts to underplay the resistance to transmigration in Grobogan district, were often supported wholeheartedly by the media. For instance, a reporter who covered the ceremony marking the blasting of Kedungombo's diversion tunnel stated that hardly any local villager were present during that ceremony. "They had already left for the transmigration site," said the reporter, without reporting whether s/he had checked if that her or his hunch was actually true (*Aktuil*, 18 Febr. 1984).

By delving deeper into the data, however, it appears that many, if not most, of the residents of Ngrambat and Kalangbancar had not transmigrated, and had remained instead in their original villages.

First, on several occasions the media published news of the training of 500 Grobogan farmers to become fishers, who would utilize the waters of Kedungombo as well as other Jratunseluna irrigation facilities in the districts. One of these news items mentioned specifically that farmers from Ngrambat and Kalangbancar were among those who were trained to build and use floating fish pens (*Kedaulatan Rakyat*, 18 March 1991).

Second, during the visit of a World Bank vice president, Moeen Qureshi, to the dam, the district head of Grobogan, Mulyono, had to admit

that 45 households from the Geyer subdistrict had not yet transmigrated. They came from three villages, Sabo, Kalangbancar, and Bayat, and were scheduled to transmigrate in 1992. He quickly added that "it is not because they do not want to transmigrate, but only because of other constraints, such as that the budget has not been provided" (*Suara Merdeka* , 28 Jan. 1991).

Third, in news of the preparations to promote tourism in the reservoir, the involvement of Grobogan villagers was repeatedly mentioned. One news item showed a picture of 'floating kiosks' owned by Geyer people, near the dam (*Suara Merdeka* , 1 May 1991). Another news item referred to frequent drownings of Grobogan villagers in the reservoir. Ngrambat villagers asked the government to station a "search-and-rescue" (SAR) team at the dam site, because each time someone drowned, a SAR team had to be brought in from outside (*Suara Merdeka* , 22 May 1991).

Fourth, on March 12, 1991, twelve village officials of Ngrambat and Kalangbancar complained that, since the Kedungombo dam and Sidorejo weir had been built, they had lost their traditional income from their salary land (see Table 4, p. 102). So, if the village officials were still present in their original villages to file those complaints, then most likely the rest of the villagers were also there.

(3). Resistance to the depopulated green belt policy

After the Kedungombo controversy had shifted in mid 1991 from a compensation issue to disagreements over whether the reservoir's green belt really needed to be vacated, there was a deliberate attempt made by the authorities to have the media portray one hamlet as the hotbed of the rural dissidents and ignore all the others. To set the stage for this media strategy, Soeparman, the Public Relations officer of the Central Java government

criticized the media for distorting the Information about Kedungombo. According to him, the news about Kedungombo did not come from the villagers but from outsiders. "This creates an incorrect public opinion about Kedungombo," said Soeparman. He then proceeded to give a breakdown of the Kedungombo villagers, differentiating between those who had left and those who still refused to leave the green belt.

Of the 5,266 households who had been affected by the dam, 4,892 households, or 94.89 %, had left the project's location. Of the remaining households, 322 households had already accepted the compensation, but were still staying in the "danger zone." Finally, there were 54 households who had not yet received their compensations, and were still staying in the green belt. Looking at these data, Soeparman stated, "obviously, those who still stay put in the green belt are a relatively small group, or only 6.11 %." This small group became the topic of news coverage, while the majority of the villagers, namely the 94.89 % who had left the location, were not covered by the media. Concluding his briefing, he relayed the governor's appeal to the media to cover the issue more objectively (*Wawasan and Kedaulatan Rakyat* , 26 March 1991).

However, despite the authorities' persistent attempts to minimize resistance to the depopulated green belt policy, the media continuously pushed the numbers higher by covering other hamlet communities, that were also struggling to obtain the rights to inhabit and cultivate the reservoir banks. All those hamlets, however, were located in the subdistrict of Kemusu of Boyolali district. This created the image that villagers in another district that was widely affected by the reservoir, Sragen, had happily

vacated the reservoir's banks, and particularly, the green belt. As I discovered in my fieldwork, this impression was actually incorrect.

In three hamlets in Gilirejo — Sendangrejo, Gadeg, and Pringapus — villagers reported that they had not yet been compensated for their land, which was located between the "red land marker" (*patok merah*, high water level) and the "yellow land marker" (*patok kuning*, upper boundary of the green belt). The yellowland markers were placed after the impoundment of the Kedungombo reservoir began in January 1989. Some of them stated that they found yellow markers on their land in mid-1989, others in October 1990. They were shocked to discover that their houselots were suddenly located within the project's territory, and felt that the project was illegally encroaching upon their land because the project had not yet acquired that extra land from them. In December 1990, the project's encroachment onto their land became even more obvious when workers came to dig holes in the newly acquired green belt land to start a greening (reforestation) project in that area. Furious at that behavior, the villagers chased the workers off from what they considered to be legally still their land.

The villagers' resistance to the greening activities on what they still considered to be their land soon brought them in conflict with the local officials. On March 26, 1991, Suranto, the subdistrict head of Miri, was summoned by the head of the Sragen district government's Political Section. Suranto was ordered to clear the reservoir's green belt of any remaining villagers. On March 30, Suranto sent a letter to the Gilirejo village head, Kamdi, requesting that by the end of April, all the dissenting villagers would leave the green belt. To prove that Kamdi had executed the order, he had to

report to the subdistrict head on April 7 with a written statement by the villagers that they had agreed to leave the green belt. Following his superior's order, Kamdini ordered four villagers — Gatot Ratmoko (37), Kartodinomo (35), Aris (23), and Harjo Kardi (53) — to come to the village office on Thursday, April 4, to sign a letter stating their willingness to leave the green belt. On that day, the four passive resisters came to the village office and stated that they refused to move before they had been compensated for their land in the green belt. Nonetheless, the village secretary, Yoso Suwarno (45), persuaded them to sign a letter stating that they agreed to move but could not do so due to technical reasons.

Feeling that local officials were breathing down their necks, Gatot and five colleagues hurried to Yogya to ask for legal protection from the local YLBHI branch office. They claimed to represent 48 villagers, whose land was claimed as the project's green belt. Their protest immediately became widely publicized by the media. After that brief news flurry, the media resumed its overall silence about Sragen's green belt problems.

The sudden publicity flurry created by the Gilirejo villagers, however, might have increased their political clout. They were not evicted from the dwellings they occupied or stopped from the agricultural activities they practiced in the green belt. However, the compensation they demanded for their redesignated green belt land, was also not provided by the project. The project's seedling planting activities also proceeded as if all the green belt land had already been legally acquired by the project. Some farmers challenged the status quo, though. In the middle of the night in July 1991, villagers in four hamlets in Gilirejo -- Tanggulrejo, Sendangrejo, Gadeg, and Gilirejo — pulled out the seedlings planted by the project in the green belt.

They did not waste those seedlings, but replanted the seedlings in their undisturbed land beyond the green belt.

Besides expressing dissatisfaction of the villagers with the project's negligence in compensating them for their redesignated land, these resistance acts were also driven by other motives. First, some of the seedlings, which included legumes (to fertilize the green belt's soil) and nonlegumes, such as *sengon* and *randu* (kapok) trees, interested the farmers professionally. Second, they were unhappy that the project had subcontracted the greening activities to some favored villagers with the help of Agriculture students from the 11 March State University (UNS) in Solo. They were unhappy that those favored villagers and students received a Rp 100 fee for digging each hole and planting a seedling in each hole, ignoring all the members of the self-help groups that had emerged in Gilirejo. In other words, the pulling out of the seedlings was not only a symbolic act to assert the villagers' rights over their uncompensated land, but also a protest against the unfair redistribution of the Rp 1 billion reforestation budget (*Kedaulatan Rakyat* , 18 May 1991).

Meanwhile, although most Gilirejo farmers did not live in the green belt for fear of inundation, most of them did not give up their right to cultivate parts of the green belt, which they considered legally still to be theirs. Many of them, including newcomers who had moved to Gilirejo after the reservoir's impoundment, continued to demand increases in the compensation for their land in their former villages, which they felt had been undervalued and undermeasured. As discussed in the previous chapter, this compensation refusal movement involved 422 household heads in the former Gilirejo, Lorog, Porangan, and Pilangrembes villages.

On top of that there were also 20 former Pilangrembes villagers who in April 1991 pleaded the district head of Sragen to correct what they considered to be an undervaluation of their land during the compensation process.

A different approach was taken by 16 farmers in Ngroto, one of Gilirejo's hamlets. With the support of field workers from the 11 March State University (UNS), in September 1991 the project authorities allowed them to cultivate the green belt. That permission was granted after the greening activities, carried out by the project, had failed, due to the lack of care for the young seedlings (Christanto, 1991).

Opposition of the dam critics to the advocates' media strategies

In general one can say that a very weak "Javanese" linguistic opposition was offered by the intellectuals who were on the side of the displaced villagers. Very few of those powerful cultural symbols were used by very few critics, on very few occasions, and with a very limited impact.

A well-known Javanese heroine, Nyi Ageng Serang, literally, "the Great Princess of the Serang region," was one of those symbols used. This figure in Java's modern history was a national heroine, who fought under Prince Diponegoro against the Dutch, during the Java Wars from 1825 to 1830. Her battle terrain was the Serang River valley, which is now inundated by the Kedungombo reservoir. Her tomb was formerly located in the village of Nglorog, Sragen, but was relocated to Yogyakarta, a couple of years before the reservoir's impoundment. The origin of many names of the hamlets and villages in the Serang River valley could be traced back by the villagers to events during the battle of Nyi Ageng Serang's troops against the Dutch occupying army (Prasetyo, 1990: 9-14).

Nyi Ageng Serang's symbolic power, however, was only used on two occasions. Once was in an imaginary interview by a critic who used a pseudonym, and was published in a campus newspaper (Tawang Alun, 1989). The second time her name appeared in a leaflet from student activists inviting the public to attend the reading of the verdict on the case of the 54 Kedungpring Household heads at the Low Court of Semarang on December 20, 1990. The students called themselves on that leaflet "children and grand children of Nyi Ageng Serang." In both instances, the heroine's name did not create any debate in the mainstream media.

In addition to the limited use of historical role models, also very few wayang characters were used by the Kedungombo critics to attack the government's policy. Its usage was also only limited to very few individuals and on very few occasions. One Satya Wacana Christian University professor, Liek Wilardjo, used debates about patriotism from the Ramayana and Mahabharata epics to attack the government's labeling of Indonesian human rights activists as unpatriotic, when they sent a letter to the World Bank about Kedungombo. Based on those *wayang* episodes, Wilardjo argued, that criticizing the government could also be seen as an act of true patriotism (Wilardjo, 1989).

One of the dam critics who knew his wayang pretty well was a young poet, Emha Ainun Najib. His use of wayang metaphors was, however, only limited to support his own oppositional stance. He often referred to himself as Antasena (*Panji Masyarakat*, 21-30 Sept. 1991), a character from the Mahabharata, who lives literally under the ground. And when he was asked to join ICMI, he initially refused, stating that it would be impossible for Antasena to cooperate with Gatotkaca, the flying hero of Mahabharata.

Emha was referring in this metaphorical language to Minister Baharuddin Jusuf Habibie, the chairman of ICMI, who was an aeronautical engineer by training. This metaphor, however, could also be interpreted as meaning that as a "flying hero," Habibie rarely "touched the ground," or was not aware of what was really going on among the poor masses of the Indonesian society. So, as Gatotkaca's brother who lived with the masses, Emha alias Antasena finally gave his consent to Habibie alias Gatotkaca, to join ICMI. After all, Antasena and Gatotkaca were both sons of Bima, the giant hero of Mahabharata. However, after disagreements with Habibie and the other "flying heroes" in ICMI on how to solve the Kedungombo problem, as it will be discussed in Chapter Seven, Emha withdrew from the organization. The underground hero did not manage to cooperate with his flying brother.

In addition to rarely using Javanese symbols of their own choice, the critics of Kedungombo rarely attempted to demystify the Javanese symbols used by the authorities. One example is the absence of opposition to the use of the Jaka Tingkir figure. No opposition was offered by the critics when Minister Harmoko used the dike-building episode from the Ramayana epic as an analogy to building the dam. No opposition was offered too when a government-sponsored wayang performance portrayed Mangunwijaya as Durna, the wicked brahmin in the Mahabharata. Critics familiar with the wayang stories could have easily attacked that symbolism by using the figure of Semar, for instance. This most venerable of all the *punakawan* (clown) figures in the wayang folklore is believed to be a god descended to earth to watch over the Pandawa family by providing "loyal criticism." Semar was also the village head (*lurah*) of Karang Tumaritis, where he

dwelled most of his time with his three sons. Recasting Mangunwijaya as the good *lurah* of Karang Tumaritis might have simultaneously undermined Ismail's favorite media image as the *lurah* of the Central Java people.

Ismail's use of Javanese language games to interpret the inauguration day of Kedungombo as a lucky day, was indirectly challenged by our popular writer, J. C. Tukiman Taruna. Using the Javanese art of interpreting numbers and dates, called *primbon*, he interpreted the inauguration date, May 18, 1991, as meaning "*akeh lungguhe*," which he interpreted as meaning that on that date people had to sit a lot to discuss the matters (Taruna, 1991d).

In contrast to those unchallenged Javanese metaphors, the *jer basuki mawa bea* slogan drew the most frequent opposition from the dam critics. A Roman Catholic priest of Javanese origin, Mangunwijaya, stated that the *jer basuki mawa bea* principle could be applied during war and natural disasters, but not in all cases' including Kedungombo. In this case, there should not have been any victims because the dam was a World Bank project, not the project of a market bank in Temanggung, a remote mountain town in Central Java. The World Bank had already allocated the dollars to tackle the social cost of Kedungombo. Besides, the bank was accountable to the parliaments of democratic States, which respected the principle that if a project was regarded as feasible, there could be no sacrifices, since all parties had to benefit (*Editor*, 1 April 1989). Other dam critics also criticized the use and meaning of that slogan. For instance, Lukman Sutrisno, the Gadjah Mada University rural sociology professor,

stated that the Javanese slogan was intentionally used to get the villagers to willingly sacrifice their land rights (*Berita Buana* , 3 Oct. 1991).

Their criticisms, however, lacked convincing arguments to support their opposition. Apart from *impromptu* replies to journalists' questions, these critics did not publish their articles in the media to explain the historical origin of that slogan to introduce the readers with the political setting that give birth to that Javanese slogan. They also did not question the parallel between the Javanese slogan and the moral of the story of Abraham's sacrifice, which several authors had used to ground the Javanese slogan in the Islamic tradition.

And although one of the critics, Mangunwijaya, repeatedly opposed the Javanese concept of *tumbal* in his writings (Mangunwijaya, 1989; Mangunwijaya, 1990), he did not clarify the major differences between that Javanese concept and human sacrifices in defending one's religion or one's country. Underlining this difference was important, because Soeharto intentionally refrained from using the word *tumbal* . From my reading of the text it seemed that Soeharto intentionally hid the Javanese concept of *tumbal* in a "softer" and much more acceptable term, namely *pengorbanan* , or "sacrifice," thereby covering it with a religious and patriotic veneer.

The popularization of *jer basuki mawa bea* in other dams built prior to Kedungombo was also not touched upon by the critics. The monument to the "uprooted villages" at Gajah Mungkur had stood in Wonogiri for nearly one decade and been visited by thousands of local tourists, without anybody questioning whether the *jer basuki mawa bea* principle was rightly applied to the sacrifice of the nearly 60,000 villagers displaced by that dam. In fact,

one village head had lost his job for leading a resistance to the unfair low land compensation rate of this project.

Likewise, the dam critics did not challenge Soeharto's claim that the people displaced by the Mric, and Cirata dams had willingly sacrificed their land. Many displaced villagers in these areas had demanded fairer compensation for their inundated properties and had resisted transmigration, similarly to what the Kedungombo villagers had done. A young villager in Cirata who tried to investigate the compensation manipulations was even assassinated by the local security apparatus (see Appendix One, p. 321).

In contrast to the weak challenge to the Javanization of Kedungombo, the dam critics repeatedly criticized the blaming the victim language adopted by the authorities. However, most of those challenges were expressed in the nonmainstream media which only had low circulations. The main theme that was criticized by the dam critics was the labeling of the dam victims as Communists or Communist sympathizers.

On very rare occasions, the protests of the dam critics were published by the mainstream media. "Those accusations are ridiculous," said Jaswadi, before his group's request to settle on forestry land near the reservoir was honored by the governor. As a former village official of Ngrakum, he testified that that was the first time the "E.T." initials had been imprinted on the LD.s of Ngrakum villagers (*Suara Pembaruan* , 25 March 1989). Jaswadi's statement was supported by Mangunwijaya, who stated that the accusations were fabricated because the villagers refused to accept the compensation (*Tempo* , 18 March 1989).

Outraged by the accusations of being members or sympathizers of the outlawed Communist party, two residents from Kedungwiyu, a hamlet in

Boyolali, fought back. In July 1990, with the support of the Semarang branch of YLBHI, they took the district head of Boyolali to court. They demanded the E.T. mark be removed from their I.D.s by the district head. They also demanded that the district head and the Kemusu subdistrict head apologize for those accusations in the mass media, and pay them Rp 1 billion compensation. The court rejected the villagers' demands. However, when they had to renew their I.D.s, they found that the E.T. marks had been removed. This new development was not covered by the media.

Summary

In this chapter I have described the two major media strategies applied by the dam advocates, namely the "Javanization" of Kedungombo and the marginalization of the opposition. The first strategy consisted of the use of figures and episodes from the Javanese shadow puppet stories, Javanese heroes, mythological language, Javanese terms, and a Javanese slogan, *jer basuki mawa bea*. While the second strategy consisted of four components that were very closely related or overlapping, namely: first, blaming of the victims, second, ridiculing of the victims' intellectual capacity and political awareness, third, labeling the victims' supporters, and fourth, reducing the extent of the grass roots resistance. After that, I described the challenges raised by the dam critics to the major themes of the dam advocates' media strategies.