

CHAPTER SEVEN

TWO MEDIA STRATEGIES APPLIED BY DAM CRITICS AND DAM ADVOCATES, AS WELL AS THE MEDIA

This chapter is the last chapter that focuses on how the contending parties advocated their different viewpoints in the media. After describing in the previous three chapters the media strategies in which one can still differentiate the two different camps, in this chapter I will describe the two media strategies, in which both camps and the media synergistically presented their views about Kedungombo. I call those two major media strategies the "Islamization" and the linguistic aggrandizement of Kedungombo.

The "Islamization" of Kedungombo

During the course of this controversy, Muslims on both sides of the fence heavily banked on their religious teachings to highlight their opinions in the media. Simultaneously, media workers themselves sometimes colored and framed their news stories in Islamic terminology. Hence, a significant portion of the Kedungombo debate was "Islamized."

This "Islamization" began in the student media, but was soon taken over by the mainstream media. The first student magazine to report about land problems faced by the villagers in Kedungombo was *Inovasi*, formally published by the Research and Public Service Institute of the Muhammadiyah University of Yogyakarta, which employed student press activists. In its March 1988 edition, *Inovasi* reported the activities of Artidjo Alkostar of the Yogyakarta branch Office of YLBHI, in defending the displaced villagers. However, since the mainstream media had already reported for two years on land appropriation problems in the Sragen and Boyolali districts in which the Legal Aid Institute was involved, *Inovasi* readers

probably did not need that explanation. Artidjo Alkostar himself was a graduate of the Law School of the Islamic University of Indonesia (UH) in Yogyakarta and had involved his juniors as "barefoot lawyers" in various activities of the branch office (Alkostar, 1989).

After *Inovasi* 's brief reference to Kedungombo in its March 1988 edition, the second Islamic student activists media to report on Kedungombo was *Arena* , a bulletin published and edited by student activists of the Sunan Kalijaga Islamic Religion State Institute (IAIN Sunan Kalijaga). A report in that magazine described the tense situation in the Kemusu subdistrict in Boyolali in late 1988, due to the Kedungombo land appropriation process. According to that report, Qur'an reciting (*pengajian*) meetings in the village of Kemusu were portrayed as specters of resistance by the authorities. A *peztgajian* evening in *Al-Istiqamah* , a small mosque (*langgar ; mushalla*) in Kemusu, was even prohibited by the village authorities. Participants of the regular *pengajian* in that *langgar* were branded as "members of the *Komando Jihad* ."9 The villagers of Kemusu were even forbidden to say their prayers collectively (*shalat jamaah*) in that mosque. In addition, an Islamic elementary school, *Madrasah Diniyah* , which used to meet every day in that mosque, had also to be suspended temporarily, because of the fear that the teachers would be branded as *Komando jihad* members.

Komando fikad , or the Holy War Command, was a name used to describe various fundamentalist Muslim groups in Indonesia in the 1980s. One such group in Lampung was crushed in a violent attack by the Indonesian Army in early 1989. According to persons whose relatives and colleagues worked in Lampung during the time of the military attack, at least 200 persons were killed, mostly of them ordinary Muslims who were not members of a fundamentalist group. Prior to the Lampung invasion, a number of fundamentalist and nonfundamentalist Islam activists had already been taken to court for alleged involvement in various violent political acts, such as attacking police stations , hijacking an Indonesian airplane, and bombing a bank. For further details, see Tapol, 1987.

Disregarding those accusations, the student press activists went on to organize some *pengajian* meetings in the houses of some villagers. During those meetings, the villagers told the students about the low compensation rates that the authorities had enforced upon them since 1982. This was consequently reported by the bulletin's editor, Imam Aziz, in an article issued to commemorate the 1988 Human Rights Day (*Arena* , 13 (1), 1988).

Two months later, student activists from 45 universities in Java and Lombok, including *Arena* 's editor, Imam Aziz, launched a series of public demonstrations near the project site and at the provincial and national capitals. Soeharto promptly responded to those public protests in his Banjarnegara speech on March 23, 1989, by accusing the resisters as being instigated by "Communist remnants." He also swore that "*Demi Allah* (For God's sake), it is not the intention of all that development would make the people suffer."

The Head of State's religious language, expressed during the holy month of fasting, *Ramadhan* , effected the Islamic media. An Islamic bi-weekly used Soeharto's statement as the title of its report (*Panji Masyarakat* , 1-10 April 1989). It also provided new ammunition for the district head of Boyolali, Mohammad Hasybi, in persuading the 1,700 remaining families to accept resettlement in Bengkulu, or in a new resettlement site, Kayen, built by the project near the dam. Hasbyi used Soeharto's religious pledge, printed on hundreds of pamphlets, which were dropped by Indonesian Air Force helicopters to the crowd at the Kemusu Capital, on 6 April 1989. That crowd of villagers came to listen to the Transmigration Minister, who told them to get ready for the next flight of transmigrants to Bengkulu (*Kompas* , 8 April 1989).

Although it was cast in religious terms, the district head's plea did not achieve its desired effect. The villagers promptly rushed to pick up the pamphlets, thinking that they were the daily announced fasting schedules. But when they read them, the villagers became disappointed. Signed by the district head, the pamphlets, which were mainly written in Javanese, offered to double the acreage of the housing lot for villagers who wanted to move to Kayen. Its opening statement read as follows: "*Demi Allah* , the construction of Kedungombo reservoir is not meant by the government to make the people suffer." Many villagers brought the pamphlets home, stuck them on the walls of their shacks, and scribbled cynical comments on them. One villager responded to Socharto's and Hasbi's rhetorics: "Everybody knows that the government built this reservoir to increase the people's prosperity. But *demi Allah* , we had to suffer, because of this Kedungombo reservoir. Who is responsible for it, and who is responsible that our children had to quit school?" (Zacharias, 1989: 7-8). Another villager commented: "The district head swears in that pamphlets, that *demi Allah* , the government did not intend to make the people suffer, but prosper instead. But how is that now? What kind of prosperity is this?" (Prasetyo, 1990: 302).

After that rhetoric failed, other religious terms were employed by the authorities to convince the believers how virtuous it was to move away from the reservoir site. In August 1989, an article in the magazine of the Office of the Central Java Department of Religious Affairs praised the villagers who had agreed to follow the government's instructions to transmigrate, or move to Kayen. The head of the provincial Religion Department office stated in that article that their steps complied with the Prophet Muhammad's teachings, namely that "the best human beings are those who

are useful for their fellow humans." He also praised them for following the example of the Prophet, who migrated (*hijra'*) from Makkah (Mecca) to Madinah. (*Rindang* , August 1989. A year later, the Information Minister, Harmoko, also honored the Kayen settlers as "*muhajrin* or "*hijra'* practitioners" when he joined them in their *tarawih* (evening prayers) during the *Ramadhan* (*Jawa Pos* , 9 April 1990).

The use of *hijra'* and *muhajrin* to refer to transmigration and transmigrants was not new (Iskandar, 1980; Ronggosaputro, 1982 : 52; Siddik, 1982; *Editor* , 26 Sept. 1987). Therefore, its use by the officials in relation to Kedungombo did not raise any eyebrows. Several press articles on Kedungombo also used it, prior to and after its use by those authorities. However, for Muslims well-versed in the Qur'an, *hijra'* is actually a powerful metaphor. *Hijra'* , or the migration of Muhammad from Makkah to Medinah in A.D. 622, was designated as the official beginning of the Islamic era, for political and theological reasons. It was not seen as a flight, but as the consummation of a prearranged plan with Medinese pilgrim converts. Leaving his city of birth as a despised visionary, Muhammad entered his city of adoption as an honored guest (Hitti, 1962: 10-11; Lewis, 1991: 105-106).

If one reflects carefully on the metaphorical identificadon of *hijra'* with resettlement, one can observe a similar distortion as in the idehtification of the Kedungombo dam with the Ramayana dike building episode. The "*hijra'* = resettlement" Identification can imply that the situation in the settlers' old village was worse than that in the new resettlement scheme. This metaphorical Identification can also imply that those who did not want to join the government's resettlement program, were unbelievers of infidels, just like the *jahiliah* people in Mecca during Muhammad's pilgrim-

age to Medina. Furthermore, based on the Islamic tradition, the *hijra'* = resettlement Identification may imply that the original or native people in the places where Kedungombo villagers were resettled, can be divided into two categories: the *anshar* , or helpers, who were sympathetic to the pilgrims, and the *munaſiqun* , or the hypocrites, who opposed the newly arriving pilgrims. In fact, the use of *anshar* to call the local people who welcomed the Javanese transmigrants in Irian Jaya had already been practiced by an Islamic magazine, *Amanah* , in its February 22-March 7, 1991 edition. That was only one step away from calling the local people who resisted the coming of the transmigrants as *munaſicjun* .

Back to Kedungombo, in spite of the authorities' appeal to the villagers as Islamic pilgrims, only a small number of the displaced villagers opted for transmigration. In Sragen, most of them moved their entire hamlets uphill, beyond the 95 m elevation which had been declared as the upper boundary of the reservoir's green belt. While in Boyolali, half of the remaining villagers remained to live on the reservoir's banks. Another half of the remaining villagers moved into Forestry land, and demanded that the land should officially be assigned to them as new resettlement sites, apart from the one which the project had built in Kayen.

After three months of tough negotiations, near the end of the Islamic month of fasting, Ismail agreed to fulfill the villagers' demand. During the Islamic holiday of Idul Fitri or "Lebaran," about 600 families, under the leadership of a committee of eight leaders, moved into their new residential sites, and began busily reconstructing their houses with government support. Not surprisingly, two daily newspapers called the governor's decision a

"*Lebaran* Present for the Kedungombo People" (*Kedaulatan Rakyat*, 18 May 1989; *Merdeka*, 24-25 May 1989).

Calling the new resettlement sites a "*Lebaran* present" was symbolically very meaningful. For devout Muslims, *Lebaran* (colloquial) or *Idul Fitri* (formal) stands for the "feast of the victors." After having conquered thirst, hunger, and other passions for an entire month, Muslims usually celebrate this holiday as a day of reconciliation. So, on this important day, this group of Kedungombo villagers were able to come out as the victors in their struggle. In this sense, the "Lebaran present" metaphor reinforced the emotions evoked by the "Jaka Tingkir" story, discussed earlier in the section on how Kedungombo was "Javanized."

The "Lebaran present" metaphor, however, carried some additional emotional baggage. As good Muslims, they had to be willing on this feast of the victors" to reconcile with and forgive their former opponent, the Governor and the Project authorities. On top of that, as ordinary Javanese villagers, receiving a "Lebaran present" from the governor boosted their social standing and their self-esteem. Therefore, the term *Lebaran* present mixed the sense of victory, reconciliation, as well as gratitude, among these villagers who could finally settle in the places of their own choice.

Apart from using Islamic terms to persuade the displaced villagers to resettle on officially approved sites, those religiously loaded terms were also used in encouraging or discouraging Muslim intellectuals to support the villagers' resistance. As mentioned in the previous section, one of the staunch supporters of the Kedungombo people's resistance was a Roman Catholic priest, Mangunwijaya. In early 1989, when 1,700 families still refused to move out of the impoundment zone, the priest set up a committee

to save the Kedungombo children (see Chapter Six). A Muslim scholar

friend of Mangunwijaya, *Kiyai Haji*¹⁰ Mohammad Hamam Ja'far, the head of the Central Java Red Cross, Suwarno, and a professor at two universities in Semarang, Slamet Rahardjo, immediately stated their willingness to join Mangunwijaya's committee (*Kedaulatan Rakyat*, 10 March 1989).

Of all those members of the priest's committee, the participation of this Muslim scholar instantly became a source of dispute between the team and the Central Java security apparatus. When interviewed about his reason for joining the team, Hamam Ja'far recited a verse from the *Hadith*, which States that it is obligatory for every Muslim to help the weak (*Kedaulatan Rakyat*, 16 March 1989; *Editor*, 25 March 1989). The *Hadith* to which he re-

ferred consists of Muhammad's sayings and doings. Its authority is secondary to that of the Qur'an, which is believed by Muslims to be a direct w - - ' revelation from God (Hitti, 1962: 14). Hamam Ja'far's commitment to Join

Mangunwijaya's team, however, did not last long. According to the media, there were rumors that the Army commander of Magelang, the district where Hamam's *pesantren* (boarding school) was located, faced the scholar with an ultimatum: "You have to choose: to be loyal to the State, or to be loyal to Mangunwijaya." Obviously, the military commander denied issuing such an ultimatum, and claimed that he had only told the scholar that the governor, as the leader of the Central Java people, was already taking care of the Kedungombo people (*Tempo*, 25 March 1989).

The media could not publish the background story about the way the Muslim scholar had suddenly deserted his Catholic friend. According to

h)) *Kiyai* is a Javanese honorable predicate for an Islamic scholar; *Haji* (male) and *hajjah* (female) are the Indonesian predicates for persons who have done the pilgrimage to Mecca and Madinah in Saudi Arabia.

several sources, the *kiyai* was blackmailed by Army officers who told him that some of his *santri* (students) had been involved in a so-called fundamentalist Islam uprising in Way Jepara, Lampung (Southern Sumatera), on February 8, 1989 (Prasetyo, 1990:134-135). In any case, Hamam Ja'far yielded to the authorities' pressure.

This time, the Islamic scholar used another Islamic saying to justify his withdrawal from his friend's committee, a saying in the Holy Qur'an, that every believer has to obey God, His disciple, and the leaders that one has elected. And since, according to him, most Indonesian citizens, including himself, had accepted the validity of the general election, his obedience to the governor became obligatory. Consequently, as long as the governor forbade the team to work in Kedungombo, he would not do what the governor forbade. Underlining his statement, he stated that "if I violate this prohibition, I am no longer obeying [the dictates of] my religion" (*Tempo*, 25 March 1989; *Editor*, 25 March 1989). It is important to note that to justify his withdrawal, the scholar did not refer to the secondary source, but went directly to the primary source of Islamic teachings, the Holy Qur'an.

Hamam's withdrawal was a serious blow to Mangunwijaya's mission. As the chairman of the Central Java chapter of the Indonesian Council of Islamic Leaders (*Majelis Ulama Indonesia* or MUI), Hamam Ja'far could have brought the attention of other *ulama*, or Islamic scholars, to Kedungombo. And even without involving other *ulama*, the collaboration of this well-respected Islamic scholar with a popular Catholic priest had already attracted the attention of other intellectuals (*Kedaulatan Rakyat*, 14 March 1989). After Hamam dropped out, support for the committee from other Islamic intellectuals withered. Only the president of Muhammadiyah

University in Malang, East Java, Abdul Malik Fadjar, publicly criticized the prohibition of Mangunwijaya's team from working in the reservoir area. As a Muslim, he was not suspicious of the intention of a non-Muslim friend, because the Islamic concept of social solidarity is not bounded by walls of belief, ideology, or primordialism, said Fajar (*Kompas* , 14 March 1989).

After Hamam's withdrawal from Mangunwijaya's committee, the Kedungombo people's struggle was rarely covered sympathetically by the professional Islamic media. It took two events before Kedungombo received a second wind of favorable coverage in the Islamic media. The first event was the involvement of a Muhammadiyah school teacher in a demonstration by Kedungombo villagers at the national parliament in 1990. The second event was the decision of a newly formed, nationwide coalition of Islamic intellectuals, ICMI (*Ikhtilaf Cendekiawan Muslim Indonesia*), to become involved in Kedungombo, too.

After disappearing for nearly a year from the media's headlines, Kedungombo suddenly surfaced again, due to public protests by groups of displaced villagers in Jakarta. On 19 April 1990, three hundred and fifty residents of the Soko and Pendem villages in the Sragen district drove to Jakarta in five buses, accompanied by fifty student activists. Three parliamentarians listened for three hours to the villagers' three requests: first, a substantial increase in the compensation that they had already received but had found to be too low; second, improvement of their new settlements; and third, freedom from all the taxes that had still been levied on them (*Suara Pembaruan* , 20 April 1990).

This large public demonstration by Kedungombo villagers shocked the media as well as the governor. After their return, however, three Sragen

demonstrators had to pay a political price. Darto, a retired civil servant of the Information Department, who lived in Pendem, was summoned by the local police officer, who told him that his pension was going to be taken away. On May 11, 1990, Sutono (37), a social Sciences teacher at Muhammadiyah High School in Gemolong, who hailed from Soko and owned a piece of land that he sharecropped to a local farmer, was suspended from his position by the local chapter of Muhammadiyah. The suspension letter was carbon-copied to the Sragen district head. The reason for the suspension, as stated in that letter, was that Sutono violated the six basic principles of Muhammadiyah's identity and ten operational principles of Muhammadiyah's struggle. A couple months later, Partoyo, a teacher at the Public Elementary School in Soko, was moved by the governor to another Public School, 15 Km from Soko. The basis of the governor's decision was a letter from the local office of the Department of Education and Culture on May 26, 1990 (*Kedaulatan Rakyat*, 29 May 1990). The political reprisals against the three Sragen villagers drove a new but smaller wave of demonstrators to Jakarta. On May 29, 1990, eight villagers of Soko and Pendem, accompanied by some student activists, returned to protest again at the national parliament (*Kedaulatan Rakyat*, 29 May 1990).

Of all those political reprisals, Sutono's suspension received the widest media coverage. Reactions from Muslim activists in Yogyakarta, the seat of Muhammadiyah's National Board, were prompt. Emha Ainun Najib, a young East Javanese poet, theatrist, and outspoken preacher, wrote an angry column in *Yogya Post*, formerly an Islamic newspaper, *Masa Kini*. "It seems that all this time I did not know anything about Muhammadiyah. How ignorant am I, that I did not know that this famous association has ba-

sic principles which prohibits *amar makruf nahi mungkar*. What do those six bloody pieces of Muhammadiyah's basic principles contain, that a *mujahid*, who was defending the lot of the *mustadh'afin*, had to be muffled?" said Emha (Yogya Post, 1 June 1990). These words of the young poet were reprinted in a magazine of students of the Indonesian Islamic University (UII), *Himmah* (July-Aug. 1990).

Infuriated by Sutono's suspension, and probably also provoked by Emha's column, on June 7, 1990, ten students of the Yogyakarta Muhammadiyah University visited the headquarters of Muhammadiyah to demand Sutono's reinstatement (*Kompas and Wawasan*, 8 June 1990; ... *Kedaulatan Rakyat*, 9 June 1990). Eventually, Sutono was reinstated by Muhammadiyah's national board and was permitted to teach again at the organization's high school in Gemolong (PPM-FKMY, 1990).

____. 7 Sutono's reinstatement was probably driven by the board's embarrassment at not being seen as defenders of justice. That was exactly the motto of the organization, which Emha ridiculed in his column — *amar makruf, nahi mungkar*, or "enjoin good and forbid evil," with a stress on "*nahi mungkar*." Although it literally means "forbid evil," it had been popularly interpreted as "fight injustice." This slogan is the basic rule for Muslim social and political life and is popularly believed to be a shared responsibility of the State and the individual (Lewis, 1991: 29, 129). Therefore it was imperative that at least, the organization itself should not do injustice to its own members and personnel. Besides referring to that popular Islamic slogan, by calling Sutono a *mujahid*, or "fighter" (Lewis, 1991: 74), Emha addressed all radical Muslims, beyond the confines of any specific organization. This was also done by referring to the dissenting villagers as *mustadh'afin*, or "the

oppressed" (Lewis, 1991: 15), which implied that the government was "the oppressor."

Three important Islamic media, however, did not cover Sutono's suspension and the reactions it invited. Those were *Pelita*, the only Islamic daily newspaper that was still allowed to be published in Indonesia, *Suara Muhammadiyah*, the official monthly magazine of Sutono's organization, which was obviously based in Yogyakarta, and *Adil*, a monthly magazine, published and read by Muhammadiyah members in Solo. Probably, they did not want to hang Muhammadiyah's dirty laundry in public. On the other hand, Emha's outrage was published in a *Yogya Post*, a daily which was previously called *Masa Kini*, and was closely affiliated with the Yogyakarta Muhammadiyah branch.

After the storm over Sutono's suspension subsided, a second event increased Kedungombo's coverage by the Islamic media: the attempt of an Islamic Scholars Association, ICMI, to solve the controversy. This event was initially triggered by the people of Mlangi. This hamlet community in Kemusu had accepted the project's compensation in the mid 1980s, but was also preparing to take the government to court, with the assistance of YLBHI's Semarang branch. They had also developed a good relationship with Mangunwijaya. But since Mangunwijaya was a Catholic priest, while the Mlangi villagers were devout Muslims, they asked the priest to bring them an Islamic preacher (*ustadz*) who could lead them in their religious deliberations.

Mangunwijaya immediately passed the request on to Emha, who was a good friend of his. After suffering a political blow after his informal school in Kedungpring was closed down by the Boyolali authorities on February 23,

1991, Mangunwijaya rested certain hopes on Emha's shoulders. The priest feared, that if no independent outsider would continue to pursue the role his group had played in the reservoir region, the desperate villagers might eventually be provoked to resort to violence (*Suara Pembaruan* , 3 March 1991; KSKPKO Distrik Semarang, 1990; Mangunwijaya, 1991). If that happened, the military answer would be mass retaliation as happened in the province of Lampung in Southern Sumatera, where hundreds of so-called "fundamentalis! Muslims" were killed.

Besides fearing a "Lampung-style" crackdown on the dissenting villagers, Mangunwijaya also realized his own controversial position as a Catholic priest among a majority of Muslim villagers. Hence, he explored possibilities for initiating more permanent roles for Islamic social workers in the reservoir area. He hoped that his young Islamic colleague, Emha Ainin Najib, might be able to fill that role. Having heard a lot about Kedungombo, the young poet saw the invitation as a golden opportunity to see for himself what was really going on around the reservoir. During the fasting month of *Ramadhan* 1991, he led the *tarawih* prayer and *pengajian* in Mlangi.

Deeply touched by this experience, Emha brought the case to a plenary meeting of the national board of an Islamic scholars association, I. C. M. I. (*Ikatan Cendekiawan Muslim Indonesia*),¹¹ where he was the head of the Art and Culture Division. The poet urged his colleagues to help the Kedungombo people by emphasizing that Kedungombo could be a test case

11) This organization was set up with the blessing of President Soeharto on December 8, 1990 in Malang, East Java. It was a coalition of various factions within the Islamic elite, led by Baharuddin Jusuf Habibie, a German-trained aeronautical engineer whose daily function was Minister of Research and Technology. For further information see Allocita, 1991, p. 11.

for ICMI to show its dedication to the poor Muslims, not only by preaching in words, *orkhotbah bil lisan*, but also through deeds, *orkhotbah bil hal* (*Kompas*, 2 April 1991). The board decided to accept Emha's suggestion, and a team was set up specifically to deal with the Kedungombo issue. It was chaired by Sutjipto Wirosardjono, deputy director of the National Bureau of Statistics and a well-known columnist who was also active in several Islamic and secular organizations. Emha himself was appointed as the team's link with the Kedungombo people.¹²

Immediately after its installation, ICMI's Kedungombo team started to do its job. Sutjipto Wirosardjono flew immediately to Semarang with two colleagues, and met Governor Ismail, the dam's Project Officer, lawyers of the Semarang branch of YLBHI, Mangunwijaya, and representatives of the Kedungombo hamlet communities. The results of these talks were reported by Emha and Sutjipto to ICMI's chairman, Habibie on a flight from Surabaya to Jakarta (*Jakarta Post*, 3-4 June 1991; *Salam*, 14-20 June 1991).

ICMI's decision created a new wave of interest in this issue by the secular as well as Islamic media. Emha himself was somewhat carried away by this euphoria. In a seminar with Islamic students in Yogyakarta, the young poet challenged the Islamic mass organizations, whom he accused of neglecting to defend the displaced villagers. He stated that no Kedungombo villager had come to the headquarters of Muhammadiyah or Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) to complain about their lot (*Kedaulatan Rakyat*, 11 March 1991).

Emha's accusation, however, was inaccurate, since many Islamic organizations and activists had actually supported the displaced villagers in

¹²) Interview with Sutjipto Wirosardjono, Jakarta, July 1991.

various ways before the formation of ICMI. As mentioned before, in 1988, Islamic students from IAIN Sunan Kalijaga, Muhammadiyah University, and the Islamic University of Indonesia (UII) in Yogya developed some interest in supporting the Kedungombo villagers. Meanwhile, from 1988 until 1991, many Islamic student activists in Yogya, Solo, and Semarang, studying at Islamic or non-Islamic universities, supported the displaced villagers through public rallies and their bulletins, such as *Arena* , *Himmah* , *Keadilan* , *Amanat* , published by students of the State Islamic Religion Institute (IAIN) in Semarang, and *Pabelan* , published by students of the Muhammadiyah University in Solo, as well as through incidental Kedungombo Information leaflets. Former members of the Islamic students associations also assisted the displaced villagers through various professional organizations in Yogya, Solo, and Jakarta.

Apart from those student activists, older Islamic intellectuals had raised their voices directly or indirectly in support of the Kedungombo people. In January 1987, three members of the Islamic party in the national parliament, Moh. Akil, Ismail Mahmud, and Ismail Mokobambang, were • some of the early ones who raised their concerns about land appropriation problems in Kedungombo and Wadaslintang, another dam in Central Java, during their visit to their constituency in Central Java (*Kompas* , Jan. 1987). After news about the student demonstrations broke out, a member of the Islamic party in the national parliament, Yusuf Syakir, openly stated his support for the students (Prasetyo, 1990: 175). Another Islamic politician in the national parliament, Mohammad Husni Thamrin, stated his suspicion that the additional strip of land acquired by the project above the planned

water level might lead to land speculation (*Media Indonesia* , 20 March 1989).

A year later, an Islamic monthly magazine reported the suggestion of two Islamic scholars, Soedirman, a retired Lieutenant General, and Kuntowijoyo, a professor at Gadjah Mada State University, that the displaced villagers should be provided by the Jratunseluna Irrigation Project with shares (stocks), according to the size of their land that had been appropriated by the Project for the reservoir. Thereby, if they could not yet benefit from the project, at least their children would, said Soedirman. In addition, Kuntowijoyo suggested that the displaced villagers should be provided with employment opportunities and be resettled in places that were socially and economically suitable (*Media Dakwah* , Febr. 1990, Kuntowijoyo, 1990).

Some Central Java Islamic politicians had also shown their sympathy for the displaced villagers as well as for the students who protested on the villagers' behalf. For instance, in mid-February 1989, *Haji* Karmani, the vice chairman of the provincial parliament who also chaired the provincial branch of the United Development Party (PPP = *Partai Persatuan Pembangunan*), publicly stated his approval for the student demonstrations (*Kedaulatan Rakyat* , 13 Febr. 1989). A colleague of his, *Hajjah* Chodidjah, j who chaired the provincial parliament's agriculture commision, was often interviewed by the local press for her opinions on Kedungombo. She suggested another resettlement option for displaced villagers who wanted to stay in farming: they could be resettled in the downstream districts such as Grobogan and Kudus, where 450 Ha new rice fields would be irrigated by Kedungombo. She also opposed the Forestry Department s plan to demand •

new forestry land as a substitute for the forestry land that was flooded by Kedungombo, since that could mean that an additional number of villagers would face the risk of their land being appropriated. Instead of appropriating villagers' land, she suggested that the villagers should be trained to plant trees on their land, if the Forestry Department was afraid of losing Java's forest cover (*Kartika* , 9 April 1991).

The support for the displaced villagers was not limited to press statements, but also extended to writing letters to the World Bank. On April 26, 1989, a coalition of Indonesian and non-Indonesian nongovernmental organizations, INGI (the International NonGovernmental organizations forum on Indonesia), wrote a protest letter to the World Bank about Kedungombo. At that time, three Islamic organizations were among the letter's signatories: Institut Pabelan Muntilan, a subsidiary of the *pesantren* led by an assistant of Kiyai Hamam Ja'far; Yayasan Swagiri Tuban, an Islamic education institute in Tuban, East Java, led by the secretary general of NU; and Lembaga Studi Agama dan Filsafat (Institute for the Study of Religion and Philosophy), a Jakarta-based Islamic research institute which was directed by M. Dawam Raharjo, who later became a board member of ICMI.

In addition to signing the INGI letter to the World Bank on Kedungombo, the same Islamic organizations had signed two other INGI documents, the 1988 Aide Memoire and the 1989 Aide Memoire, both of which criticized the human rights violations in Kedungombo. These documents were addressed to a larger audience, namely all the members of the funding consortium for Indonesia's economic development, or IGGI (InterGovernmental Group on Indonesia). Although it was not publicized

in the Indonesian mass media, the 1988 Aide Memoire had already raised attention within the Indonesian government, causing participants of the 1988 INGI meeting in Zeewolde (the Netherlands) to be summoned by the State Secretary, Moerdiono, right after the Indonesian INGI delegation returned to their home country. Among those summoned by the Minister were Abdurrachman Wahid, Soetjipto Wirosardjono, and Adi Sasono.

Hence, numerous Islamic organizations, politicians, intellectuals, and social activists had been involved in Kedungombo. Nevertheless, the high media profile of Father Mangunwijaya pushed them completely out of the picture. As discussed earlier, the high media profile of Mangunwijaya was caused by Mangunwijaya's own background, by the dominance of the Catholic-owned or controlled media, and by the projection of Mangunwijaya by the Catholic community as a symbol of that community's concern for the poor and the oppressed. There were, however, some other political factors external to the Catholic community that resulted in pushing Mangunwijaya to the forefront and the Muslim activists and intellectuals to the background of the media coverage. First, stronger military pressure was exercised on the Islamic scholar, Hamam Ja'far, than on the Catholic priest, because of the broader political resonance that the Islamic scholar's involvement might create for the cause of the displaced villagers. Second, the mass killings of so-called fundamental Muslims in Lampung, Southern Sumatera, had left a stigma on many Muslim activist that made them feel more comfortable in struggling under secular rather than Islamic banners. Third, some of those Islamic study groups had left their traditional Islamic teachings and had even adopted a more Marxist approach in their analysis as well as their praxis (Utrecht, 1987: 224-241, 237-239). With this background, they obviously

were more inclined to, or felt more comfortable working with, fellow Marxists. And finally, the high visibility of Mangunwijaya, who worked closely with the equally high-profiled legal aid organization, YLBHI, was tactically useful for other social activists, regardless of their religious or political inclination, to move more freely in the reservoir area.

Regardless of the role of so many Muslim activists in Kedungombo prior to ICMI's involvement, ICMI's decision to defend the displaced villagers was still a source of pride to many Islamic intellectuals. They were obviously not aware of what was actually going on in the field. Hence, when Sragen villagers came to complain at the ICMI headquarters in Minister Habibie's Office, a Jakarta newspaper reader welcomed that event wholeheartedly. "This is the first step for ICMI to defend the *mustadh 'afin* , which is in accordance to the an-Nahl verse in the Qur'an. ICMI should follow the example of bees described in that verse, which extracts the nectar of a flower, without shaking it. This type of preaching (*da'wah*) is what the community of believers (*umat*) have been waiting for, in this era of globalization," wrote the enthusiastic reader in *Kompas* of April 26, 1991.

Many Muslim and non-Muslim intellectuals, however, responded less enthusiastically to ICMI's decision. The strongest attack came from Arief Budiman, a Harvard-trained sociologist who had formally converted to Islam but was more well known as a Marxist scholar and a role model for many Marxist-inclined Muslim student groups. He stated that since Kedungombo had already become a national and even an International issue, ICMI decided to get involved in this issue to gain from the issue's popularity. However, he did not mind if that was indeed ICMI's motivation, as

long as they could assist the Kedungombo people's transformation (*Berita Nasional*, 11 March 1991).

As it turned out, Arief Budiman's analysis had indeed been the case. Within six months, the villagers' honeymoon with ICMI was over, after their patron, Emha Ainun Najib, withdrew from the organization. As in the case of Hamam Ja'far's withdrawal from Mangunwijaya's committee, Emha's withdrawal was also cast in religious terminology. In his letter of resignation, written on Indonesia's Independence Day, August 17, 1991, he expressed his regret that ICMI could not function as a catalyzer to solve the Kedungombo issue. His withdrawal was "at least, my moral obligation to a group of Kedungombo villagers," said Emha in a confidential letter, which was leaked by *Berita Buana* on August 22, 1991. Emha also claimed that his decision was based on his "moral obligation to the *ayidah* [belief] of this problem." To prevent further *kemudlaratan* [harm], he had promised in his letter to the ICMI functionaries to prevent publicity of that decision. But since publicity could not be prevented, he had to explain his position to the media (*Jawa Pos*, 24 August 1991).

This news sent a shock wave of comments through the media. As in the case of the media coverage of the Mangunwijaya - Ismail disagreements, Emha's withdrawal from ICMI was also presented as a conflict between different personalities. No journalist interviewed and exposed the feelings of "the group of Kedungombo villagers," to whom Emha claimed to have a moral responsibility.

Emha's withdrawal from ICMI, which was couched in religious language, cast a shadow over ICMI, which came to be seen as taking sides with the government and not with the villagers. It reinforced an image which

Emha himself had criticized, namely that Islamic mass organizations had not done their job in Kedungombo. Hence, during the association's first anniversary in December 1991, a board member found it necessary to counter that negative image. "Emha withdrew from ICMI, because he was impatient," said M. Dawam Rahardjo, a vice president of ICMI's council of experts. He admitted that ICMI's decision was premature, because ICMI was new born. "Now, after ICMI is one year old, ICMI will be more daring to face a challenge such as Kedungombo, even if we have to face the rulers" (*Sriwijaya Post*, 5 Dec. 1991).

Raharjos optimism was unfounded. The association was still too weak to face the rulers, since the rulers were part of the association, not only in Jakarta, with its prolific intellectual community, but even more so in Central Java, where most of the academes were civil servants and more prone to the government's intervention. Before Emha's withdrawal, Governor Ismail himself had already taken steps to undermine ICMI's involvement in Kedungombo. After hearing about ICMI's decision, he urged the Central Java MUI branch to follow the steps of ICMI. At that time, Mangunwijaya's friend, Hamam Ja'far, had already been replaced as the council's chairman by another *kiyai*, M. A. Sahal Mahfudh, who had a much better relationship with the governor.

This decision, however, did not trigger much enthusiasm from Islamic intellectuals and politicians in Central Java. It even raised strong doubts. "MUI Jateng's decision to go down to Kedungombo is putting the role of this institute as the filter between the *umaro* (government) and the *umat* (believers) at stake," commented Ircham Abdul Rochim, chairperson of the Islamic Party faction in the provincial parliament. He questioned the

intention of the MUI branch to focus on the educational needs of the Kedungombo people. "What about the compensation problems? And how can the educational problems be separated from the economic problems of the local people in Kedungombo?" he questioned. Basically, he felt that the Central Java MUI branch was risking its reputation in the eyes of the Islamic community in the province if it failed to solve those problems in Kedungombo, or if it let itself be used to cover up those problems (*Berita Nasional and Kartika*, 5 April 1991).

The linguistic aggrandizement of Kedungombo

This media strategy consisted of three substrategies, namely: first, the exaggeration of the dam's physical properties; second, the exaggeration of the dam's usefulness; and third, the exaggeration of the lessons learnt from the Kedungombo controversy.

(a) . The exaggeration of the dam's physical properties

For more than ten years, a myth has been constructed by the media that Kedungombo is one of the largest dams, if not *the* largest dam in an ever-expanding region. Long before the dam was even built, a Public Works' spokesperson declared that Kedungombo would become "the largest reservoir in Central Java" (*Pelita*, 7 Dec. 1979). Two years later, a Javanese language weekly magazine, *Jayabaya*, stated that the capacity of that Kedungombo reservoir would be the same as the capacity of the Wonogiri, or Gajah Mungkur reservoir in Central Java (15 Feb. 1981). Ten years later, Governor Ismail proudly declared that "the 6,000-hectares Kedungombo reservoir is now the largest reservoir in Central Java" (*Suara Pembaruan*, 30 April 1991).

The belief in Kedungombo's magnificence overwhelmed the media. It was called interchangeably "the largest project in Central Java," "the pride of the Central Java people," "the largest reservoir in the island of Java," "the largest reservoir in South East Asia," and even "the largest reservoir in Asia."

The dam's critics were also not short of exaggerations of Kedungombo's "greatness." In 1988, a lawyer who had assisted the displaced villagers in suing the governor and the dam's project officer, also called it "the largest reservoir in Indonesia" (Nusantara, 1988: 15). The next year, a student activist called Kedungombo "the largest reservoir in Central Java" (Denny J. A., 1989). Two years later, another student activist wrote a similar statement (Zaluchu, 1991).

Table 7.
Kedungombo's physical dimensions,
compared to some other major dams in Central Java

Name of Dam	Height (m)	Reservoir Size			Year completed
		Area (Ha)	Volume (mem)	Shoreline (Km)	
Sempor	54	2,700	52	n.d.a.	1978
Gajah Mungkur	32	8,600	440	110	1981
Wadas-lintang	120	1,460	443	n.d.a.	1987
M rica	95	1,500	137	52.7	1989
Kedungombo	61	4,600	634.6	193.3	1989

n.d.a. = no data available

Apart from its inconsistencies, all these statements about the dam's "greatness" obviously needed some qualification (see Table 7, p. 194). Its reservoir area (4,600 Ha) was only about half the area of the Gajah Mungkur reservoir (8,600 Ha). The dam's height (66 m) was nearly half the height of Wadaslintang (120 m). Its electric power capacity (22 MW) was only 14% of Mrica (180 MW). Only in terms of shoreline and command area,¹³ could Kedungombo beat other dams in Central Java. Kedungombo's 193-Km shoreline was the longest of all Central Java reservoirs, which might have made it extremely attractive for the tourist business. Similarly, Kedungombo's command area of 58,421 Ha, was larger than all other Central Java dams.

Since even in Central Java, Kedungombo was not the largest dam at all, members of the construction industry may have laughed until they cried reading all those positive exaggerations, especially coming from the dam's critics. In addition, these exaggerations might have caused a more serious consequence. There was a strong sense among Indonesian rulers, that sacrifices correlate positively with the ranks of development goals, as discussed earlier in Chapter Four in the section on the Javanese saying, *jer bu suki mawa bea*. So, if Kedungombo did indeed boost Central Java's status in Indonesia and in the region, higher numbers of people to sacrifice would also be tolerated than if it was just one of those ordinary small dams.

(b) . The exaggeration of the dam's usefulness

Hand in hand with the exaggeration of the dam's physical properties, the media also exaggerated the dam's usefulness. Flood control, irrigation, drinking water, and electric power generation were the four most often cited

¹³) The total area irrigated by the water from a dam's reservoir.

benefits of the dam. AH or most of those four main benefits were often described by the media, as if they would be enjoyed simultaneously as soon as the dam was completed.

Many critics of the dam, who were the mainstream media's favorites as well as those who wrote in the non-mainstream media, also bought into that idea. As it turned out from a more thorough reading of all the press clippings, that portrayal of those four instant and simultaneous benefits of Kedungombo, which was alluded in numerous headlines and lead paragraphs, was simply a myth.

First, flood control in Kedungombo's command area depends on the quality of the canals built by Jratunseluna Project contractors and on floods that did not originate from Kedungombo's watershed. As it turned out, the quality of the Jratunseluna irrigation and drainage canals was very poor. During heavy rains in January 1990, water seeping through the cracks of a canal in Demak district, combined with heavy rains, flooded the road between the district Capital and Semarang, stranding thousands of passengers in buses that were stuck on the road. The flood took human lives, drowned hundreds of farm animals, and destroyed thousands of hectares of rice fields, which were supposed to benefit from the Kedungombo irrigation water.

The poor quality of the Left Klambu canal also caused the rice fields in two subdistricts in Demak, Karanganyar and Gajah, to be flooded (*Kedaulatan Rakyat* , 26 and 29 Jan. 1990). During the next year, however, the farmers' ricefields in those two subdistricts suffered from lack of water, since the Left Klambu canal had not yet functioned well (*Kedaulatan Rakyat* , 25 Nov. 1991).

Apart from the additional flood risks and irrigation disorders, the Kedungombo dam on the upper Serang river can impossibly control the floods that are caused by the runoff from the Muria Mountain, which also contributed to the annual floods in the Lusi and Juana river valleys (*Panyebar Semangat*, 1 April 1978). Second, the achievement of Kedungombo's capacity to irrigate 60,000 Ha of rice fields depends on four factors. As in the case of the dam's flood control capacity, it depends on the construction quality of a complex network of weirs, barrages, and three levels of canals (primary, secondary, and tertiary); it depends on the appropriation of land from hundreds of farm households to construct all those irrigation facilities; it depends on how much agricultural land has been converted into residential and industrial areas. And finally, what ever agricultural land was left had to be shared with another government-controlled crop, cotton.

Probably the critics as well as the advocates of Kedungombo believed that since the farm households downstream of Kedungombo were the ones which would receive the dam's irrigation water, they would easily give up their land to the Jratunsluna Project. As it turned out, from carefully reading all the press clippings about the construction of those irrigation facilities downstream of the main dam, that was not the case. Two years after the dam was completed, many villagers in Grobogan were still facing the local authorities and Jratunseluna officials, to obtain better compensation and resettlement deals. And since Grobogan is the district where not only the main dam, Kedungombo, but also most of the main distributing weirs were located, it might take some more years, before the projected command area of approximately 60,000 Ha can be achieved.

In the mean time, more agriculture land in Kedungombo's command area may have been converted into non-agricultural purposes. Nearly a decade ago, this factor was raised by a Central Java parliamentarian, J. B. Soekarno, before the construction of the dam was started (*Suara Merdeka* , 6 Nov. 1983).

What ever agricultural land will be left in the future, was certainly not only to be used to grow rice or other food crops alone. Last year, a State plantation company, PTP XVIII, strongly promoted cotton growing in Grobogan, claiming that the district was producing the best quality of cotton in the entire country. By the end of May 1991, forty six farmers groups were already inter-cropping cotton in 4,500 Ha of rice fields in Grobogan. Two groups in the subdistricts of Tambirejo and Candisari had reportedly produced a record crop of 6.3 ton of cotton per Ha (*Suara Merdeka* , 15, 27- 28 May 1991). How much cotton-growing drive in Kedungombo's command area would affect the soil, which had only recently been exposed to year-round irrigation, was still to be seen.

Third, the transportation of the 22.5 MW of electric power from Kedungombo to the consumer, who are mostly located in and around cities, such as Semarang, would also need main electric terminals, high power transformers, and miles and miles of transmission lines, which in turn would also involve land appropriation, too. Not until three years after the dam s completion did the trial runs of Kedungombo's hydropower turbines begin (*Jawa Pos* , 27 May 1992).

Fourth, supplying drinking water to the city of Semarang is even further down the road. In May 1992, the municipal government of Semarang was still negotiating terms of cooperation with a team of British companies

on how to channel the water from Kedungombo to the city (*Suara Merdeka*, 15 and 18 May 1992). Meanwhile, funds to finance those additional investments still have to be raised, and still have to include the costs of compensating the land of villagers for all that additional construction work. Hence, the headline of Semarang's afternoon daily, *Wawasan*, on March 27, 1991, which read that in 1993, Semarang citizens would already be able to drink Kedungombo's water, was certainly misleading.

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Based on all that scattered, low priority news coverage, it is safe to say that only after 5 to 10 years will some but certainly not all four main benefits of the so-called "multi-purpose dam" be approached. Most of the dam critics, however, only focused their attention on the immediate displacement effect of the reservoir. None of them wondered about the more macro effects of the dam, for instance, that the Indonesian people would have to pay interests on the loans of the World Bank and the Exim Bank of Japan for many years after the dam was completed, without tapping the dam's full capacities.

In addition, some of the most popular dam critics were also instrumental in popularizing the image that thousands of households downstream the dam were benefiting, while the relatively few households near the reservoir were suffering from the dam. When Kedungombo hit the headlines in March 1989, Lukman Sutrisno suggested that the people living downstream of the dam should be asked to donate to increase the compensation to villagers displaced by the reservoir (*Editor*, 25 March 1989).

(c) . The exaggeration of the grass-roots' resistance

The dam advocates, critics, and the media jointly popularized the myth of Kedungombo as the first major case of grass-roots resistance against

large dams in Indonesia. The high peak of all this admiration was March 1989. In its editorial, an Indonesian business bulletin, *Business News*, contrasted the Kedungombo unrest with the quiet construction of another large dam in Central Java, Mrica (22 March 1989). An English language newspaper, *Jakarta Post*, stated in its editorial that "In the entire history of the construction of relatively large hydropower dams since Jatiluhur in West Java in the early 1950's, the Kedungombo scheme seems to be the most controversial" (31 March 1989). A Jakarta weekly magazine, *Tempo*, contrasted the Kedungombo dissent with the construction of Gajah Mungkur in 1978, where there were "no problems, even with the compensation rate, which was much lower than the local market price of land" (25 March 1989). In the same issue, a World Bank official in Jakarta, Willem Struben, was quoted as saying that Kedungombo was "the largest social case among World Bank energy projects, including Cirata [hydropower plant] and Suralaya IV [steam power plant]" (25 March 1989).

During the following years, the same admiration prevailed. A Jakarta-based crime magazine that covered the 1990 Kedungpring trial stated that "this is the first time, the people had taken the Central Java governor to court" (*Detektif & Romantika*, No. 1391). A year later, a Jakarta afternoon daily quoted Mangunwijaya, who in turn quoted a World Bank consultant, William Partidge, that Kedungombo was a "unique case in the world, where hundreds of farmers completely rejected any form of compensation and were not afraid to face any form of horrible intimidation" (*Suara Pembaruan*, 3 March 1991). Another Jakarta daily quoted the priest as saying that "maybe, Kedungombo is the first experience in relation to compensation for dams in Indonesia" (*Kompas*, 24 March 1991).

Foreign journalists and writers who covered Kedungombo also seemed to be infected with this aggrandizing virus. In March 1991, an Australian journalist wrote that: "with assistance from an Indonesian non-government legal aid body, 34 illiterate farmers from Kedungpring have created history. They took the governor of Central Java to court for failing to negotiate adequate compensation" (Davis, 1991). Another Australian writer wrote that "there have never been charges of such a serious nature brought against a governor in Central Java" (van Klinken, 1991b), which was echoed by an American journalist, who called it "an unprecedented move" (Schwarz, 1991).

All those claims made by the media and in the media, seemed to be uncritically reproduced by former student activists turned journalists. A former student activist who had become a professional journalist, reiterated the statement of the World Bank representative, Willem Struben, that Kedungombo has become the biggest social problem among World Bank funded energy projects in Indonesia, such as Cirata and Suralaya (Prasetyo, 1990: 291). Another former student activist-turned-journalist reiterated Mangunwijaya's citation from Partridge's letter, that the resistance of the Kedungpring hamlet community was unique (Buntomi Wh, 1991: 15).

Most of those claims were exaggerated. The majority of the villagers who took the governor to court were not "illiterate farmers." Many of them were seasonal migrants who had lived in cities in Java, holding temporary jobs or selling teakwood furniture. Some of them had met Wonogiri villagers and former student activists in Solo and Yogya who had been involved in the 1978 compensation refusal in Gajah Mungkur. Others had joined and returned from transmigration sites in Sumatera and Irian Jaya.

Some former student activists who had supported the grass-roots opposition to the Gajah Mungkur dam in Central Java and the Asahan dams in North Sumatera also turned into supporters of the Kedungombo people.

As Table 8 (pp. 203-207) shows, the 1990 Kedungombo court battles were also not the First ones of their kind in Indonesia. Utilizing the legal assistance they could obtain, local villagers in many parts of Indonesia had defended their land and water rights during and after the construction of many similar projects in Indonesia prior to Kedungombo. Some of those *cases* lasted as long as, or even longer than, did Kedungombo.

Contrary to what the World Bank consultant stated, on an International scale, the Kedungombo resistance was still a minor case compared to similar cases in the Americas, Africa, India, Australia, or even in other Southeast Asian countries, such as Thailand, the Philippines, and Malaysia. The resistance to the Narmada dams in India received wide media coverage in Indonesia's mainstream media (Chandra, 1986; Bajpai, 1989; Joshi, 1989; Penna, 1990). In addition, the anti-dam movements in the Philippines, Thailand, and Australia were also well known among Indonesian environmentalists and student activists (Anwar, 1984; Priyambudi, 1988; Purnomo, 1989).

Hence, it is safe to say that Indonesian anti-Kedungombo activists were to a certain extent inspired by earlier anti-large dam resistance movements in Indonesia's neighboring countries. In other words, the grass-roots resistance against Kedungombo launched the Indonesian urban-based, middle-class intellectuals quite lately into the International anti-large dam

movement.

Table 8.

A chronology of cases where Indonesian villagers took government officials and agencies as well as dam-building and river-dredging agencies to court, apart from cases related to the Jratunseluna Project

In 1973, many farmers whose villages were flooded by the Riam Kanan hydro power dam in South Kalimantan protested against the low compensation rate for their properties and the lack of support in removing their ancestors' graves. Some took the project and local authorities to court, and even demanded compensation for unflooded land, and won. Meanwhile, a thousand other villagers appointed a private lawyer to demand Rp 14 billion compensation, but the lawyer disappeared, and two villagers were taken to the court instead, being accused of forging signatures.

In March 1978, thirty nine villagers in Kwangen, one of the hamlets of Baron village in Gresik district (East Java) took the manager of the Lower Solo River Project, Ali Kuntoro, to court. Since 1977, they had protested against the destruction of their land due to the river channel improvement project, which was carried out by a contractor, Waskita Karya Ltd, before the land owners had accepted the compensation rates. They demanded Rp 240 to Rp 300 compensation for each sq. m. of their land, while the project only agreed to pay them Rp 60 per m². The villagers found the compensation offer for their land to be too low, compared to compensation provided for land in other villages appropriated for the same irrigation project as well as for a petrochemical plant in the same district. In those other places, the compensation ranged from Rp 125 to Rp 500 per m². The district authorities, however, argued that it was logical that the land price in each place differed. They urged the villagers to accept the compensation and to transmigrate.

The trial in the Gresik Low Court turned out to be to the villagers' disadvantage. The credibility of their lawyer, S. Sockardikoen, was questioned by the court. Prior to the trial, Sockardikoen had already been summoned to the district government Office on 29 September 1977, where it was claimed that he had agreed to drop the case. The credibility of the mandate letter of the 39 household heads to the lawyer was also questioned by the judges, since that letter was signed by most of the villagers, although they claimed to be illiterate. Finally, only two villagers, Sarkoen and Kasoban, were legally accepted as plaintiffs, because they had only put their thumb prints on the letter. And while the two villagers claimed to represent the other 37 household heads in their capacity as the hamlet's head and secretary, the court only allowed them to represent themselves. The chief judge, Hensjah Sjahlan, urged them to accept that compensation and to use it to buy new land, although a spokesperson of the villagers argued in that the compensation rate was only enough to buy four cheap cigarettes.

Finally, on March 13, 1978, the court ruled itself to be legally incapable of deciding that issue, and returned the dispute to the district and provincial government. The judges based that decision on clause No. 8 of Interior Minister Regulation No. 15 of 1975 on Land Appropriation. Frustrated and angry toward the judges and their passive lawyer, the farmers turned to the Surabaya Legal Aid Institute (LBH Surabaya) to continue their legal battle. Abdul Thalib of LBH Surabaya, enthusiastically promised to do that, arguing that the Interior Minister's regulation was wrongly interpreted to abort the villagers' demand for fair compensation. The Baron villagers' resistance was reported in a plenary session of the national parliament (DPR-RI) in 1978.

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On Thursday, April 5, 1979 thirty eight residents of Pegagan village in Losarang subdistrict in Indramayu district (West Java), took the Public Works minister and the district head in court. Represented by a private lawyer, M. Adil Sinulingga, they accused the government of unilaterally deciding the compensation for their land that had been appropriated for the Rentang Irrigation Project. That project consisted of a weir on the Ci (River) Manuk and two primary canals that were planned to irrigate 90,000 Ha of rice fields. In addition to being predetermined by the local government authorities, the villagers were also unhappy that the low compensation was corrupted by their own villages. Hence, the villagers demanded that the government pay them an additional compensation of about Rp 8 million to cover their losses. The Minister of Public Works, Purnomosidi Hadjisarosa, appointed three lawyers — Sugiantoro, Nurwaskilo, and Ali Muhammad — to represent him in the court, while another lawyer, Djadja Sudjana, was appointed by the district head of Indramayu, Police Colonel Djahari Aksam, to represent him. No information had been obtained about the outcome of this case.

In early 1980, six hundred and forty four household heads in five subdistricts — Stabat, Secanggang, Tanjung Pura, Hinai, and Padang Tualang — along the Wampu River in Langkat district (North Sumatra), appointed H. Syarif Siregar, a lawyer from the provincial capital, Medan, to represent them in demanding fair compensation from the government for their properties. At the end of May 1980, Siregar intended to take the local government to the Low Court in Binjai, Langkat's capital. They had initially asked for assistance from the Legal Aid Bureau of North Sumatra University (USU)'s Law School to file their complaints to the governor. These riverbank dwellers had resisted the land alienation process for the Wampu River Project since 1976. This project was planned to free 42,700 Ha of land from the annual flooding of the Wampu river, financed by a 2,323 million Yen loan from Japan's Overseas Economic Cooperation Fund (OECF). It involved dredging nearly 15 Km of the Wampu river channel and 12.7 Km of its tributary, Batang Serangan. It also involved building of 58.30 Km dikes along the Wampu river and 43.88 Km more dikes along two tributaries, Batang Serangan and Sungai Basilam. It further involved the construction of drainage canals, weirs, and other irrigation facilities, as well as reforestation of 14,500 Ha of land in another district, Karo, which constituted Wampu's watershed.

Most of the farmers, however, were reluctant to give up their ancestral land. According to Kamahiddin Lubis, the former head of the Medan Legal Aid Institute (LBH Medan): "Land was confiscated by the government, which unilaterally fixed the compensation dues." There were also many problems reported in the compensation process. For instance, villagers were forced to sign blank forms. The villagers' resistance to such manipulations was not only faced by civilian clerks, but also by local police men. On April 10, 1979, Zulkarnain Dalimunthe, a resident of Pantai Cermin village in Tanjung Pura subdistrict reported to the provincial Police Headquarters in Medan that he was beaten by a Langkat police for inquiring about the compensation anomalies. Despite the intimidations, only 150 out of the 700 households affected by the project accepted the predetermined and corrupted compensation. On December 3, 1979, their struggle received some moral support from a national parliamentarian from North Sumatra, Sjufri Helmi Tanjung, who reported their case to the parliament's plenary session.

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Due to those compensation anomalies, parts of the new dike of the Wampu River that had not been completed broke down during the monsoon rains of 1980-1981. About 10,000 people had to be evacuated due to this man-aggravated natural disaster. No information has been obtained about the final outcome of the villagers' request for fair compensation.

Later in 1980, ninety-five households who lived on the bank of the Towuti Lake in the district of Luwu (South Sulawesi) took Inco Indonesia Ltd, a subsidiary of the Canadian International Nickel Company (INCO), to court for flooding their mosque, houses, rice fields and coconut gardens, after the Larona river which flows out of the lake, was dammed to generate 130 MW hydropower for INCO's nickel refinery. The Buginese villagers, who were defended by two private lawyers, Mustamin Daeng Matutu and Ali Abbas, demanded Rp 750 million compensation for their inundated properties. The case was settled outside the court, after INCO agreed to pay a large compensation, which included the costs of moving the mosque to higher and drier grounds.

In 1982, Idris Siahaan, a farmer of Dolok Nauli village in North Tapanuli district (North Sumatra), took Inalum Ltd, the operating agency of the Asahan hydroelectric power project, and the local government to court in the district's Capital, Tarutung, for destroying his rice fields by dumping the material dredged from the Asahan river on his land, while paying a very low compensation for the damaged land. Although he was supported with legal advice by lawyers associated with KSPPM, a local community development organization, and the Legal Aid Unit of the Nommensen HKBP University, he lost the case. Unsatisfied with the Low Court's decision, he appealed to the High Court in Medan, the province's Capital. After the high court confirmed the low court's decision, he appealed for justice to the Supreme Court in Jakarta. PT Inalum is a joint venture between the Indonesian government and the Japanese private companies which built the dams and the aluminum smelter. In 1991, the Supreme Court had not yet taken action about this case. The company he was fighting, Inalum, is a joint venture between the Indonesian government, Japanese private companies and the Japanese government's Overseas Economic Cooperation Fund (OECF), operated the project to supply energy for a Japanese controlled aluminum smelter in Kuala Tanjung, on the banks of the Malacca Straits.

In early 1984, eighty residents of Pao hamlet in Todokkong village in the district of Pinrang (South Sulawesi), took the contractor of the Bakaru hydro electric dam project, Hutama Karya Ltd, to court, demanding Rp 4.9 billion compensation for their land, crops, and properties, which they claimed were destroyed due to the construction of a new road to the project site. The villagers were represented by lawyers of a national legal aid organization, Pusbadhi, who had already sent a complaint letter to the Head of Pinrang's Low Court on 25 February 1984. Meanwhile, the contractor was represented by another legal aid organization, Kencana Keadilan. After a lengthy trial which dragged on for more than a year, the court ruled on November 18, 1985, in favor of Hutama Karya and turned down the villagers' demand.

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In 1985, Somad and six other villagers in Cililin subdistrict in the district of Bandung refused to accept the Rp 21 million compensation assigned to them by the district's land compensation committee for their land that had been appropriated for the Saguling hydro power project. Through a lawyer from the Bandung Legal Aid Institute (LBH Bandung), Didin S. Maolani, they took the official of the State Electricity Corporation (PLN) in charge of Cirata and the local government officials to court. Through their lawyer, the dissenting villagers claimed that the Rp 600 compensation rate for each square meter of wet rice field and Rp 400 for each m² of dry land, was not based on negotiations with the land owners. This claim was countered by lawyers hired by the defendants, who pointed at the fact that all the other land owners, except Somad and his colleagues, had accepted that compensation. They also added, that the Rp 21 million compensation allocated for Somad *et al.*, was kept for them since 30 August 1986, at the Bandung Low Court. In March 1989, the Low Court in Bandung had not yet come to a conclusion about this case.

In 1987, ten villagers from Wanadadi subdistrict in Banjarnegara district (Central Java), whose villages had been inundated by the Mrica reservoir, took a cooperative manager, Parno, to the court. They were represented by a local lawyer. These displaced villagers had transmigrated to Muara Bungo in the province of Jambi, Central Sumatra. But before they left, at Parno's suggestion, they deposited Rp 15 million of their compensation money at the Civil Servants¹ Cooperative (*Koperasi Pegawai Negeri*) of the Wanadadi Teachers' Association. The cooperative had offered them a 2% interest rate per month. But since that money, which was lent out to 25 schoolteachers in the district, was never repaid, the cooperative did not only fail to pay interest to the ten villagers, but they also lost their bitterly earned compensation money. The case was settled on 30 April 1987, with the court ordering Parno and his 25 colleagues to return the money they had borrowed from the displaced villagers. But because in four years less than Rp 1 million was repaid, in November 1991, the ten villagers came again from Sumatra, to take Parno *cum suis* for the second time to court. No information have been available about the outcome of the court case.

Meanwhile, in 1986, villagers whose compensation funds had been deposited at the Market Bank of Banjarnegara in 1982, started to suffer difficulties in receiving the interest for their deposits. In 1988, no interest was received by those villagers due to the mismanagement of that semi-governmental bank. Hence, villagers whose compensation funds were still deposited at the Bank, took the bank's director, Mrs. Sri Sumirah, to court, to force the bank to return their deposits. They won the case, but until early 1991, the bank had not yet returned most of the deposited compensation funds. Due to their anger of losing their compensation money, and also due to their lack of agricultural land, in September 1990, it was reported that some displaced villagers had cut more than 27,000 *caliandra* tree seedlings that the project had planned to protect the reservoir's watershed.

On June 8, 1988, the Semarang Legal Aid Institute (LBH Semarang) sued the Solo River Improvement Project (*Proyek Pelurusan Bengawan Solo* = PSBS), on behalf of 96 families in ten villages in Sukoharjo district (Central Java), who inhabited the river banks. On June 22, 1989, the project agreed to pay the compensation the villagers had demanded.

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On October 6, 1989, eighteen villagers whose land was appropriated for the Riam Kanan irrigation project in South Kalimantan took the Public Works Department's and district government's officials to court. They had appointed a local attorney to represent them. After that, 68 other villagers followed their examples by suing the same officials for paying incredibly low compensation for their land which was already being dug and dumped with sand and soil by Riam Kanan irrigation project contractors. Some of the local villagers put signs on their land, prohibiting those contractors from continuing their work, before agreeable compensation had been paid. Two years later, fourteen out of the eighteen villagers of the first group were still resisting the Martapura Low Court which had turned down their request, and were still waiting for the reply of the Supreme Court to their appeal.

On December 20, 1990, Haji Abdul Latif (40 years), a resident from Karangkedawung village in Mumbulsari subdistrict, Jember district, took the local Public Works' Irrigation officer and his village headman, to court and demanded Rp 11 million compensation. He sued the authorities for ordering river dredging activities, without noticing him and negotiating compensation for his damaged land and crops. A private lawyer, Abdusshomat, represented him in the Jember Low Court. He demanded compensation for his client's losses of 500 m² land on the river banks and the cassava and coconut trees on it, plus his client's "moral losses." No information have been obtained about the outcome of this case.

Source: Appendix I and II of this thesis.

It was also not the first time that the Central Java governor was taken to court by ordinary villagers. In June 1987, on behalf of 40 fish-pond farmers, the Semarang branch office of YLBHI took the same governor to court for allowing the Central Java Recreation and Development Fair (PRPP) to appropriate the farmers' fish ponds without negotiating the compensation. The farmers lost the case, since the court ruled that PRPP had to pay the same rate which it had already offered to the farmers, namely Rp 1,500 per sq. m. To prevent bad publicity, however, some private entrepreneurs who had invested in the project helped the project manager to double the actual compensation paid to the farmers. This case was only covered by a crime magazine, *Detektif & Romantika*, and the bulletin of YLBHI's Semarang branch, *Pribadi*.

As far as the Jratunseluna Project was concerned, this Public Works agency also had had its share of resistance from farmers — and fishers — in the dam's command area (see Table 4, pp. 101-104). And recently, 75 % of the 4,000 villagers in Grobogan whose homeland was going to be inundated by one of the Jratunseluna dams, the Glapan barrage, stated to researchers from the Gadjah Mada University, that they wanted to be relocated within the same district (*Kedaulatan Rakyat* , 27 March 1992). This anti-transmigration feeling predated the Kedungombo resistance. Studies carried out in the late 1970s on other dams planned in the Jratunseluna and South Kedu irrigation regions in Central Java had already shown a strong antipathy toward transmigration. Those feelings were mixed with a strong desire to resettle near the prospective reservoirs to enjoy the benefits created by those potential reservoirs (LPIS-UKSW 1976: 106, 110-111; LPIS-UKSW, 1978: 24-27; Engineering Consultant 1978: IX-105 - IX-107).

Other Public Works projects in Java had also faced resistance from villagers, who did not always act nonviolently, as they did in Kedungombo. On July 10, 1976, fourteen residents in Luwihaji, a village in the subdistrict of Ngaho in the district of Bojonegoro, East Java, attacked and killed their village head. The killing was driven by the villagers' reluctance to transmigrate to other islands. Isnafsiran, the deceased village head, strongly supported the transmigration of his fellow villagers to enable the government to build the Jipang dam, which would impounded 16 out of the 22 villages in the subdistrict. After three months of deliberations, on October 4, 1977, the Bojonegoro Low Court sentenced the fourteen defendants to serve from 20 months to 13 years in prison (*Detektip & Romantika* , 20 Nov. 1976, 25 Nov. 1977).

After contemplating a change in the original design of the Jipang reservoir by allowing the usage of the reservoir area for farming as a solution to the resettlement problem (Tjitradjaja, 1987: 39-40), the Public Works Department finally cancelled the whole project. Considering the strong antipathy toward transmigration, the Department decided that displacing 50,000 people for that reservoir was too risky. As a substitute, a movable weir, that was also intended to halt sea water intrusion would be built at Sembayat in Gresik district, East Java.

The cancellation of the Jipang dam, announced by the Director General for Water Resources Development in a seminar at the 11 March State University in Solo in November 1990 (*Pikiran Rakyat*, 23 Nov. 1990), was one of the rare cases in Indonesia where the local people's resistance actually forced the government to cancel a dam project. The only other case I have been able to come across was the plan to dam the Citanduy River in Karang Kamulyan, a cultural reserve in Ciamis district, West Java. The district's inhabitants and even the district government strongly opposed that project, because it would inundate what the Sundanese people believed to be the habitat of a mythical monkey, Ciung Wanara. Due to this local resistance, the Public Works Department and the project's prospective financier, the USAID, had to cancel the project. As a substitute, the Citanduy River Project built a movable weir at Manganti, near the border of West and Central Java.

By overly emphasizing the uniqueness of the grass roots resistance at Kedungombo, the media created several misconceptions. First, it reinforced the myth of the Javanese people as being very *nrimo* (acceptive of their fate) or docile, although in reality they often rebelled against injustice.

Second, it discouraged Kedungombo activists from learning from other anti-dam resistance cases. Third, it provided a free Public Relations campaign for the Indonesian dam building industry, because it cast Kedungombo as exceptional rather than commonplace in Indonesia's dam building history. This enabled the industry to get away with all its previous mistakes. Fourth, it also created some public tolerance for the government's hostility toward the Kedungombo opposition.

W)- The exaggeration of the lessons learned from Kedungombo

The publicity created by the Kedungombo controversy spilled over to various other large development projects constructed or promoted after Kedungombo was completed. It spilled over not only to other large dams, but also to large construction projects that involved the appropriation of large tracts of land from local villagers. Advocates of these projects repeatedly assured the public that the problems of Kedungombo would not re-emerge in the projects of which they were in charge or of which they were promoting. On the other hand, critics of those projects highlighted their criticism by reminding the public about the mistakes from Kedungombo.

This rhetoric of "preventing another Kedungombo" was first raised by the Public Works Minister, Radinal Mochtar, in a press conference in April 1991. He stated that the solution to Kedungombo's problems was considered to be serious, and those problems were to be avoided in other dams, especially those projects that involved funding from the World Bank, the Asian Development Bank, and other foreign funding sources (*Berita Nasional*, 10 April 1991).

This rhetoric of "preventing another Kedungombo" was most frequently raised in the debate about the Kotopanjang hydropower dam on the

Kampar Kanan River in Riau. Before the construction of the 114 MW hydropower dam on the island of Sumatera even began, various parties involved were already referring to Kedungombo. The pessimists stressed, that, to prevent another Kedungombo, it would be better to cancel Kotopanjang completely. On the other hand, the optimistists emphasized that the social conditions in Riau and Central Java were completely different, that Kotopanjang could not possibly become another Kedungombo.

So, the publicity of Kedungombo has turned a dam's name into a metaphor, a Symbol, meaning two different "things" for two opposing positions. For the local residents and their supporters, the verb "*di-Kedungombo-kan*" or "Kedungombo-nized," means to be intimidated by security agents to accept predetermined compensation rates and resettlement sites. On the other hand, for the dam builders, "Kedungombo" was shorthand for the problems they might face, when local villagers' protests get publicized in the media and when the protests of Indonesian dissidents resonate in the corridors of the international dam-financing agencies.

This rhetoric, however, created four misconceptions. First, it created an impression that, prior to Kedungombo, there was no significant grass-roots resistance to and local intellectual criticism of large dams, reservoirs, or other river modification projects in Indonesia. This impression was certainly not true, as shown by the cases reported in Appendix I and II. Second, it created the impression that the dam builders and the authorities have indeed learned the lessons from Kedungombo, and are keen to prevent similar problems from emerging in their project sites. This was also not the case. Third, this rhetoric framed the debate concerning the social impact of the later dams by focusing only on the land compensation issues. This land

compensation bias pushed other important social impact issues out of the picture.

Fourth, aided by this rhetoric, the International agency with the highest involvement in financing Indonesian dams was able to select the dam on which it wanted to focus the attention of the media and the dissenting intellectuals in Indonesia and abroad. That financing agency was the Overseas Economic Cooperation Fund (OECF) of Japan. Since OECF only applied the magic formula to Kotopanjang, it misled the public to imagine that problems similar to those of Kedungombo only occurred in Kotopanjang, although what was happening at another dam financed by OECF, for instance, the Bilibili dam in South Sulawesi, was no less problematic.

Summary

In this chapter I have described the two media strategies through which the dam advocates, the dam critics, and the media synergistically (mis)presented Information about the Kedungombo dam. Those two strategies were the "Islamization" and the linguistic aggrandizement of Kedungombo. The latter consisted of three substrategies: first, the ^{exa}ggeration of the dam's physical properties; second, the exaggeration of the dam's usefulness; and third, the exaggeration of the lessons learned from the Kedungombo controversy.