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**ASEAN WOMEN CULTURAL WORKERS IN THE FILM AND THEATER
INDUSTRY AND THEIR ROLE IN ADDRESSING THE NEGATIVE
SOCIETAL IMPACTS OF TRAUMATIC HISTORIC EVENTS:
THE CASE OF CAMBODIA AND INDONESIA**

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Biographical Sketch

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Abstract

Southeast Asian societies are marked by traumatic histories: from the period of colonization, the brutal struggle for independence, the painful, nascent stages of nation- building, to oppressive dictatorships and murderous regimes. Even as these nation-states continue to forge ahead through these histories, the wounds from particularly painful episodes, such as mass killings and atrocities perpetrated by one's own countrymen, continue to change the societies and citizenship in complex and profound ways. This can manifest as intergenerational trauma, wherein the collective trauma that the society experienced remain unaddressed and is transmitted from one generation to the next. Artists and cultural workers play a key role in providing an avenue for deconstructing the histories of past political violence and restoring the severed social bonds from these events. The focus on women cultural workers is because women have played a central role in "preserving and passing on the traditions, languages, and (daily) practices from one generation to the next and in maintaining family and community relationships" (Card, 2003, p. 76). This is especially significant since traumatic events like genocide cause disruption or, in some cases, a major rupture in family and communal relations. Thus, the women cultural workers in Indonesia and Cambodia may play an important role in addressing the negative societal impacts of the Indonesian Anti-Communist Purge (1965-66) and the Khmer Rouge genocide (1975-79).

Keywords: Indonesia; Cambodia; collective trauma

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Chapter One

INTRODUCTION

A. Background and Rationale of the Study

This study concerns itself with the role of ASEAN women cultural workers in addressing the trauma resulting from the traumatic historic events in Indonesia and Cambodia in the latter half of the 20th century. Artists and cultural workers play a key role in providing an avenue for deconstructing the histories of past political violence and restoring the severed social bonds from these events. The focus on women cultural workers is because women have played a central role in “preserving and passing on the traditions, languages, and (daily) practices from one generation to the next and in maintaining family and community relationships” (Card, 2003, p. 76). This is especially significant since traumatic events like genocide cause disruption or, in some cases, a major rupture in family and communal relations. Thus, the women cultural workers in Indonesia and Cambodia may play an important role in addressing the negative societal impacts of the Indonesian Anti-Communist Purge (1965-66) and the Khmer Rouge genocide (1975-79).

The official or state-sanctioned accounts of these two events of mass killings and atrocities either demonizes women, as is the case in Indonesia, or underreports the trauma and violence inflicted on women, as is the case in Cambodia (Wieringa, 2011, p. 552; Killeen, 2015, p. 335). This study focuses on the counter-narratives presented by the works of two ASEAN women cultural workers: Indonesian playwright Faiza Mardzoeki’s *Nyanyi Sunyi Kembang-Kembang Genjer*, or ‘The Silent Song of

the Genjer Flowers' (2014) and Cambodian filmmaker Kulikar Sotho's 'The Last Reel' (2014).

In Indonesia, during and even after the pogrom, writers, artists, and cultural workers with suspected leftist leanings were similarly targeted by the military, para-military groups, and civilian vigilantes. Thus, during Suharto's New Order, fictional works that alluded to the Purge did so in the form of cautious remarks of political instability. It was only after Suharto's fall in 1998 that memoirs, novels, and stories grounded in personal experience emerged (Hatley, 2010, p. 266). Meanwhile, those who made films and performances on the 1965 conflict were overwhelmingly young and had no direct involvement with it, with the exception of Garin Nugroho, whose documentary *Puisi tak terkuburkan* or 'Poetry Does Not Die' (2000) was the first to tackle the subject in film. However, cultural texts that tackle specifically the experiences of women during and after the Purge have been sparse. In 2007, there was a botched attempt to film *Lastri: Suara Perempuan Korban Tragedi 1965*, or 'Lastri: The Voice of Women Victims of 1965.' 'Lastri,' which was based on a series of interviews with members of the leftist women's organization *Gerakan Wanita Indonesia* (Gerwani) or Indonesian Women's Movement, was cancelled following protests and complaints from the right-wing Muslim militia group *Front Pembela Islam* (FPI), the Islamic youth organization *Gerakan Pemuda Ansor* (GP), and the anti-communist group *Rakyat Anti Komunisme*. These groups arguing that the film was violating the rights of the Muslims, that it was promoting communism and stirring up the latent dangers of the *Partai Komunis Indonesia* (PKI) or the Indonesian Communist Party (Wieringa S. E., 2011, p. 546; Patung, 2008). In recent years, various groups of women survivors of the Anti-Communist Purge have come together to produce cultural

texts. These include the Jakarta-based choir Dialita, short for *Di Atas Lima Puluh Tahun*, or ‘More than fifty years old’—referring to the age of most of its members—which released its first album in 2016, and select members of KIPPER, short for *Kiprah Perempuan*, or Women’s Activities, who performed in the play *Gejolak Makam Keramat*, or ‘Turmoil at the Sacred Grave’ in Yogyakarta in 2017 (Weintraub, 2021, pp. 2-3; Dirgantoro & Hatley, 2020, p. 109).

Faiza Mardzoeki’s ‘The Silent Song of the Genjer Flowers,’ first performed in Jakarta in 2014, is significant as it is the first successfully staged play that focuses on the experience of the five women who have survived the ordeal, from their arrest and detainment due to their affiliation with Gerwani to their twilight years after being released from prison. These stories are relayed to the younger generation represented by the granddaughter of one of the women. While fictional, the play draws from the stories of 30 survivors and their families that Mardzoeki interviewed.

After the fall of the Khmer Rouge in 1979, first-person narratives of the survivors shed light on the killings and abuses committed under the regime. These included documentary filmmakers Rithy Panh (‘Rice People’ (1994), ‘S-21: The Khmer Rouge Killing Machine’ (2003), and ‘Duch, Master of the Forges of Hell’ (2012)), Roshane Saidnattar (‘Survive: In the Heart of Khmer Rouge Madness’ (2009)), and Adeline Neary Hay (‘Angkar’ (2018)). Kulikar Sotho’s ‘The Last Reel’ is significant not only as the country’s first full-length feature film by a woman, but also for its subject matter that explored intergenerational trauma through the daughter who begins to unravel the secrets of her parents and understand her traumatized mother’s experience during the reign of the Khmer Rouge. While the film is fiction, Sotho drew from the experiences

of her own mother. It should be noted that besides that the Khmer Rouge regime also nearly wiped out the Cambodian film industry, with only 30 films out of 300 surviving the destruction, not to mention the deaths of the artists and cultural workers, who were also targeted by the regime (Rinith, 2020).

These two works by these two women cultural workers were chosen for their subject matter, i.e., the counter-narrative they proposed that is rooted in women's experience, the transmission of intergenerational trauma, and the role that the younger generation plays in addressing the negative societal impacts from these deeply traumatic events.

B. Statement of the Problem

This study aims to answer the question: How can ASEAN women cultural workers assist in addressing the negative societal impacts of past political violence on women? This study takes a multidisciplinary approach that draws from literatures in the fields of genocide and postmemory studies, feminist studies, theater performance, and film to explore how women cultural workers in Indonesia and Cambodia tackle the subject of intergenerational trauma and gendered violence from the two genocidal events. This study takes on an in-depth analysis of the two cultural workers and their works through the lens of postmemory and feminist studies.

Through her research, this author concludes that the postmemory generation, the generation(s) coming after the one that directly experienced the genocidal event, plays a significant role in deconstructing history and establishing a necessary historical truth, i.e., the truth of women's experience during genocide and its aftermath, in the

specific historical/local context. Because of the specificity of certain aspects in the genocidal events in Indonesia and Cambodia, the approach of the two women cultural workers is understandably dissimilar in many aspects, notably in the direction of their approach and their perception of what is needful for the women in their societies. However, they share the commonality of the desire to restore the social bonds, the communal and family relations, that have been ruptured by genocide and the recognition that looking back at the past is an important step in order to move forward to the future.

C. Objectives of the Study

The objective of the study is to explore how ASEAN women cultural workers help in addressing and/or overcoming the trauma inflicted by the history of past political violence on women in their respective communities. This general objective can be broken down into the following specific objectives:

- a) To identify the roles that women cultural workers in the film and theater industry played in helping the citizens overcome the trauma caused by military and political conflicts;
- b) To assess the strategies they have employed using the medium of film and theater in helping reduce the traumas caused by the conflicts; and
- c) To identify the lessons that can be drawn from their works and experiences that may help improve how the ASEAN community can deal with the negative societal impacts of past political violence in post-trauma periods/situations.

D. Significance of the Study

From the survey of related literature, there is a scarcity of material on the intergenerational trauma brought about by these histories of mass killings and atrocities in Southeast Asia. Furthermore, there is a gap in the study of women cultural workers and their role in addressing the negative societal impacts of past political violence. This study aims to address these gaps.

E. Study Area

This study focuses on the works of two women cultural workers in the film and theater industry of Cambodia and Indonesia, two nations that have experienced periods of extreme political instability that had resulted in genocide and mass atrocities in the latter half of the 20th century (Mayersen & Pohlman, 2013, p. 1). It is estimated that the death toll during the Khmer Rouge's reign is around 1.671 to 1.871 million, or 21% to 24% of Cambodia's total population (Kiernan, 2003, p. 587). In Indonesia, approximately half a million were killed during the Anti-Communist Purge, with another million estimated to have been incarcerated without charge (Cribb, 2000, p. 181; Robinson, 2018, p. 3).

This author has chosen Kulikar Sotho's film 'The Last Reel' (2014) for Cambodia and Faiza Mardzoeki's play 'The Silent Song of the Genjer Flowers' (2014) for Indonesia to explore the role of women cultural workers in addressing the intergenerational trauma brought about by the Khmer Rouge genocide and the Indonesian Anti-Communist Purge. 'The Last Reel' focuses on a family, where the daughter discovers through an old film and a mysterious cinema owner the traumatic past her mother experienced and her father's complicity during the reign of the Khmer

Rouge. 'The Silent Song of the Genjer Flowers' focuses on a young woman uncovering her grandmother's painful past through the stories the latter shares, along with her friends who had survived the Anti-Communist Purge.

This author has opted to choose these two works because they tackle the transmission of trauma from one generation to the next and they both explore how the younger generation can help in deconstructing these violent histories that have deeply wounded their respective societies. For the analysis, this study examines the background of the cultural workers, the cultural texts themselves, and the reviews of the film and theater performance.

Chapter Two

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

A. Mass Killings and Atrocities in Southeast Asia in the 20th Century: The Case of Indonesia and Cambodia

During the middle of the 20th century, the region of Southeast Asia was beset with conflicts, which, according to Miner (2018), were generally viewed as either stemming from the Cold War between the United States (US) and the Soviet Union, or the continuing struggles for indigenous independence against Western imperialism (p. 5). The two are not necessarily mutually exclusive, as Goscha and Ostermann (2009, as cited in Day, 2010) posited that there was a "continuous interaction between regional decolonization and global Cold War superpower rivalry" (p. 2). It was in this context that the two of the worst mass killings in the region occurred.

1. Indonesian Anti-Communist Purge (1965-66)

The inciting event for the 1965-66 Anti-Communist Purge in Indonesia was the murder of the six army generals and one lieutenant in the early morning of 1 October 1965, by a group of lower-ranking officers, who were members of the so-called September 30th Movement. Despite the group claiming it was acting preemptively against a CIA-backed coup attempt against then-President Sukarno, the Indonesian army attributed the killings to the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI). What followed was a swift retaliation that saw an estimated half a million to more than a million people killed and a million more detained afterwards (Robinson, 2018, p. 121).

McGregor, Melvin, and Pohlman (2018) collected essays on the latest research on the Purge, including new interpretations on the causes, dynamics, and legacies of the killings. These include: the reframing of the killings from the state-sanctioned account of spontaneous collective violence in response to the supposed evils of Communism to deliberate state policy; the recognition of the silence of the international community, especially the Western States, on the matter of this massacre; the new evidence from survivors and perpetrators; and the attempts at transitional justice from within Indonesia. This multi-angled approach help provide the much-needed Indonesian context to the genocide and its impact on society. This is a worthy answer and companion to Robinson's (2018) attempt to shed light on the genocide, which suffered from misconceptions and uncertainty over even the most basic facts, such as the agency behind the killings and the number of victims killed. Robinson's contribution is particularly significant in that he identified the broad historical conditions that gave rise to the Purge and the most important observation that mass violence is not a natural or inevitable consequence of any these historical conditions. Rather, it requires an agent to articulate that conflict can and should be resolved by violence and "an institution with the inclination and capacity to do so" (p. 296). Similar to the conclusion drawn by McGregor, Melvin, and Pohlman, Robinson argued that the mass killings were not only organized by the army, but was also facilitated by powerful states and international conditions.

Miner's (2018) thesis on this subject supports this observation by focusing on the US' role in the genocide. Miner concluded that while the US was not responsible for the overthrow of the left-leaning President Sukarno, who had been vocally anti-West in his rhetoric, the US did support the anti-Communist regime of General

Suharto, who succeeded Sukarno. This support, which came in the form of covert supply of arms and medicine to the army, as well as the propagation of the military's version of events regarding PKI's culpability in the murder of the generals, inevitably included the massacre of the suspected PKI members and alleged sympathizers (p. 43).

2. Khmer Rouge Genocide (1975-79)

The Khmer Rouge's short yet deadly reign from 1975 to 1979 saw the displacement of the majority of the population in Cambodia from the cities and urban centers to agrarian communes. The implementation of the Year Zero included the closing down of schools, factories, monasteries, and hospitals; the abolition of money and wages; the disappearance of the freedom of worship, press, organization, association, and family life (Kiernan, 2009, p. 283). Schools were converted to interrogation centers, such as the Tuol Sleng, a secondary school converted to Security Prison 21 (S-21). In the course of four years, over a quarter of Cambodia's eight million population perished from targeted elimination and from the man-made famine that ravaged the country. Those targeted for elimination included the ethnic minority groups, members of the previous regime's military and political leaders, artists and intellectuals, and members of religious groups.

Ben Kiernan has produced extensive scholarship on the Khmer Rouge Genocide. In his book, 'The Pol Pot Regime: Race, Power, and Genocide in Cambodia under the Khmer Rouge, 1975-79' (1998), he contextualized the rise of Pol Pot, covering the French colonial legacy in Cambodia, the on-going war in neighboring Vietnam, and the US' economic and military destabilization of the country. In fact, he

described the last as the most important single factor in the rise of Pol Pot (p. 16). The massive destruction of the Cambodian countryside due to the US' continuous carpet-bombing and the massacre and displacement of the civilian populace due to the ongoing war became Pol Pot's recruitment propaganda, enabling the rise of the Khmer Rouge. Pol Pot also used the destruction and massacre as an excuse for his radical policies and the flushing out of the "moderate Communists" and royalist supporters (Kiernan, 1998, p. 19). His critical essay included in the 'Century of Genocides: Critical Essays and Eyewitness Accounts' (2009) summarized concisely the rise of Pol Pot, the mechanics of power and the genocide ideology espoused by the Khmer Rouge, the historical forces at work, the victims and perpetrators, the long-term impact of the genocide on the victim groups, and the international response as well as the current state of the issue. This essay provided a timely update, although more recent scholarship on the issue is scarce.

To complement Kiernan's scholarship, Fawthrop and Jarvis (2004) focused on the difficulty of bringing to justice the perpetrators of the Khmer Rouge genocide. This included acknowledging the efforts made by human rights specialists, legal scholars, academics, and Cambodians in exile in documenting as early as 1979 the human rights violations under the Khmer Rouge rule. However, the international inertia that Kiernan (2017) mentioned characterized the period meant that these efforts had made little impact (p. 2). Fawthrop and Jarvis further elucidated on the international events and interests at play that made justice elusive for Cambodia in the years after the genocide, even after the creation of the Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia (ECCC). One of the latest scholarships on the subject of the Khmer Rouge genocide is Gidley's (2019) book on the 'Illiberal Transitional Justice and the

Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia.’ Gidley further contextualized the ECCC, from its creation to its difficulties in achieving its supposed goals of “promoting democracy, ending impunity, and strengthening the rule of law” (p. 10). One of these difficulties is the Cambodian government itself as it sought to control the narrative produced by the ECCC to one that is politically beneficial while still having the appearance of independence. Fawthrop, Jarvis, and Gidley’s works then help in contextualizing the difficulties that Cambodia and its citizens are facing in attaining justice after the horrors inflicted by the Khmer Rouge in their four-year reign of terror.

B. The Legacies of Mass Killings and Atrocities

While there is still an on-going debate as to what can be considered as genocide—the Geneva Convention defines it as any systematic act intending to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial, or religious group—certain scholars, like Totten and Parsons (2009), include the mass destruction of political and social groups as genocide (p. 3). Under this inclusion, the case of the Indonesian Anti-Communist Purge, which targeted alleged members and sympathizers of the PKI, is considered a genocide. In the case of the mass killings and atrocities under the Khmer Rouge’s reign of terror, while majority of the Cambodian population were affected, there was also a systematic targeting of ethnic and religious groups, hence it is considered a genocide under the Geneva Convention.

1. Intergenerational Trauma

Southeast Asian societies are marked by traumatic histories: from the period of colonization, the brutal struggle for independence, the painful, nascent stages of nation-building, to oppressive dictatorships and murderous regimes. Even as these

nation-states continue to forge ahead through these histories, the wounds from particularly painful episodes, such as mass killings and atrocities perpetrated by one's own countrymen, continue to change the societies and citizenship "in complex and profound ways" (Pohlman, 2017, p. 196). This can manifest as intergenerational trauma, wherein the collective trauma that the society experienced remain unaddressed and is transmitted from one generation to the next (Adonis, 2016, p. 1). Because the multigenerational impact of sociocultural trauma "affects the feeling of membership and belonging within that community," addressing these traumatic histories then become imperative to resolve negative societal impacts (Mangassarian, 2016, p. 371).

2. Loss of Social Vitality

Claudia Card's 'Genocide and Social Death' posits that central to the evil of genocide is social death, wherein besides the loss of life, the communal and intergenerational relationships that give life meaning are also destroyed. For Card, genocides also imply a cultural death. Card (2003) argues that social death is central to the evil of genocide and it is what distinguishes it from the evils of other mass murders (p. 68). Social vitality, which exists through relationships, contemporary and intergenerational, are what creates an identity that gives meaning to life. Thus, the loss of social vitality is a loss of identity and a loss of meaning for one's existence. The kind of harm that victims of genocide experience by virtue of their group membership is not captured by other crimes (Card, 2003, p. 73).

In Tazreena Sajjad's 'The Post-Genocidal Period and Its Impact on Women,' the focus of the study is on the atrocities perpetrated against women during periods of

conflict and genocide. Specifically, it looks into the mass rapes and sexual violence against women during these periods and their effects afterwards, both on the women and on their respective communities. Due to their roles in caring for the young, elderly, and the wounded, women are considered as protectors of the rest of the community, which, unfortunately, makes them a target, with their bodies being turned into a “battleground” by the perpetrators of genocide. The mass rape results in the “social destruction of communities,” symbolically destroying “the ability and determination to hold the community together, since the woman is seen to be the nurturer, the caregiver and the carrier of culture” (Sajjad, 2012, pp. 224-225). Sajjad’s study aligns with Card’s (2003) observation that women play a central role in “preserving and passing on the traditions, languages, and (daily) practices from one generation to the next and in maintaining family and community relationships” (p. 76). This is especially significant since traumatic events, like genocide, cause disruption or, in some cases, a major rupture in family and communal relations.

3. Violence Against Women

In H. Patricia Hynes’ ‘On the battlefield of women’s bodies: An overview of the harm of war to women,’ it provides an overview of the unique harm war imposes on women, i.e., the trauma inflicted in brothels, rape camps, sexual trafficking, and rise in domestic violence. The study presents an overview of the impacts of war on women, looking at the figures on the death and disability of women in the war, the indirect effects of war, rape and sexual violence, widows of war, and the war refugees. The study sets out to define war by looking at its full life cycle, to measure the toll of war on women’s health and identifying the limits, and to define health as more than the absence of disease.

Wieringa's scholarship on the subject shed light on the plight of women accused of Communist affiliation, particularly with the Gerwani, during and after the Indonesian Anti-Communist Purge. In her article, 'Sexual Slander and the 1965/66 Mass Killings in Indonesia: Political and Methodological Considerations' (2011), she explained that due to the campaign of slander against the Gerwani, women accused of Communist ties were rounded up and subjected to horrific torture, sexual molestation, gang rape, and coercion in confessing their alleged role on the deaths of the generals (p. 552). She further elucidated on the legacies of this sexual slander on the women and their children, who had absorbed the state-sanctioned version of history, and in the wider societal context wherein women's political participation is stigmatized. This is supported by Pohlman's study, 'The spectre of Communist women, sexual violence and citizenship in Indonesia' (2017), where the author also found that the systematic demonization and destruction of a particular Communist women's group, the Gerwani, had resulted in the reconfiguration of women's role in post-New Order Indonesia (p. 209).

Killean's article, 'An Incomplete Narrative: Prosecuting Sexual Violence Crimes at the Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia' (2015), explored the un(der)reported cases of sexual violence under the Khmer Rouge. According to Killean, cases of sexual violence against women were largely un(der)reported due to assumption that the Khmer Rouge regime prohibited and punished 'immoral offenses' and the prevailing culture of blame, which discouraged victims from coming forward (p. 335). However, survivors have been coming forward with their stories, which revealed the wide variety of rape scenarios and sexual violence that occurred under

the Khmer Rouge, including but not limited to gang rapes, rapes within cooperatives, rapes prior to execution, rape with objects, sexual slavery, sexual mutilation, abuse of pregnant women, forced nudity, and sexual exploitation in forced marriages with cadres. The last resulted in the creation of a state-enforced culture of rape and the normalization of sexual violence within marriage, with state actors compelling the violation and becoming direct perpetrators on occasion.

Sajjad and Hynes' articles shed light on the particular plight of women during wars and genocide, identifying the unique harms that women experience. Sajjad goes further in highlighting the role of women as the carrier of culture, and whose violation and death result in the social destruction of communities. This is in line with Card's observations in her article, which specifies the evils that are unique to genocide, such as the loss of cultural heritage and intergenerational connections. Meanwhile, Wieringa and Killeen provide specific instances of gendered violence against women during the Indonesian Anti-Communist Purge and under the Khmer Rouge regime.

C. Women Cultural Workers' Role in Addressing Collective Trauma

Cinema played a powerful role in Suharto's New Order in propagating the state-sanctioned version of events regarding the murder of the six generals by the September 30th Movement/PKI. This is exemplified by the propaganda film *Pengkhianatan G30S/PKI* or 'The Treason of the September 30 Movement/PKI.' The film is shown yearly on broadcast television and is compulsory viewing for school students. According to Hatley (2010), this film has traumatized generations of Indonesian citizens with its gory depiction of violence as well as the effective demonization of the PKI and the Communist women members who allegedly danced

while the bodies of the generals were dumped in wells (pp. 265-66). In Hatley's article, 'Recalling and Representing Cold War Conflict and Its Aftermath in Contemporary Indonesian Film and Theater' (2010), she observed that those who made films and performances on the 1965 were overwhelmingly young and who had no direct involvement in the events depicted.

In the anthology 'Gender, Violence and Power in Indonesia: Across Time and Space,' Dirgantoro and Hatley (2020) examined two dramatic performances that engage with the 1965-66 mass violence: 'The Silent Song of the Genjer Flowers' and 'Turmoil at the Sacred Grave.' Dirgantoro and Hatley focused on the artistic strategies and the experiential impact of these two works and their discussion, which drew from Marianne Hirsch's concept of postmemory, offered insights into the aftermath of the violence persisting up to the present and the role that cultural and artistic performances play in commemorating the traumatic events. While 'The Silent Song of the Genjer Flowers' is a straightforward narration of the experiences of the Gerwani members, the 'Turmoil at the Sacred Grove' avoids speaking about the 1965-66 events directly but balances it by having the actual survivors play the roles of the characters. Whereas the audience in 'The Silent Song of the Genjer Flowers' bears witness to the accounts of the survivors, in 'Turmoil at the Sacred Grove,' as a piece of immersive theater, involves and implicates the audience in the action, which makes the affective experience become centrally significant (Dirgantoro & Hatley, 2020, p. 112). Both performances sought to empower the women survivors and by evoking family and familial relations as a site of shared human experiences, they manage to open up a space for the audience to gain an understanding of and empathy with the survivors. Furthermore, the focus on women's stories highlights women's role in

sustaining family life, which played a key role in them overcoming their pain, maintaining resilience, and surviving through their experience of gendered violence (Dirgantoro & Hatley, 2020, p. 115).

Raya Morag's 'The new post-Khmer Rouge women's cinema, the horrific intimacy of autogenocide, and the ethics of un-forgiveness' explores the works of two Khmer women filmmakers and their contribution to the Cambodian society, i.e., the spectrum of post-genocide ethics of forgiveness (from un-forgiveness to apprentice reconciliation). Morag's work presented a view on how the arts and culture can articulate and interrogate such a traumatic event in their history and present a possible way of moving forward. In the specific case of Cambodia, it raised the question of what kind of healing or reconciliation can be had, when many of the perpetrators were people the victims and survivors knew, some of them neighbors, even family members. Furthermore, only the high-level perpetrators were tried, with the low-level perpetrators still living alongside with the survivors of the genocide. Morag focused on the role of cinema as medium, particularly meta-cinema, in articulating what could not be said outside of it, i.e., the confrontation with low-level perpetrators, the juxtaposition of the past and the present, etc. Morag's methodology involves taking two films, 'The Last Reel' and 'Angkar,' and analyzing them each, through the lens of Derrida's concept of forgiveness. Her approach is also informed by Claudia Card's concept of social death as central to the evil of genocide. Morag's study took this even further by exploring how women, who experience unique harms during war and genocide and who play a central role in preserving traditions and cultural heritage, can help in shaping the ethics in a post-genocide society. She accomplished this by examining

the works of two second-generation Cambodian filmmakers, which explores a spectrum from aporetic reconciliation and unforgiveness.

Both works by Dirgantoro and Hatley and Morag focused on cultural texts (theater performances, feature film, documentary) to analyze how Indonesian and Cambodian cultural workers engage with the traumatic events in their respective histories, i.e., the Anti-Communist Purge in Indonesia and the Khmer Rouge Genocide in Cambodia. In their analyses, the focus is on artistic strategies, experiential impact, the proposal of post-genocide ethics, and the creation of ethical communities. While women's stories are a focal point in Dirgantoro and Hatley's analysis on 'The Silent Song of the Genjer Flowers,' the same cannot be said for 'Turmoil at the Sacred Grove.' This is understandable as the latter's story does not center on women per se, but rather a whole Javanese village, though the theater performance is notable for having the women survivors of the mass incarceration during the Purge play the main roles and having their personal history inform the story. In Morag's analyses of the two films, she did not focus on women's experience specifically, but rather on the confrontation between victims and perpetrators and the proposal of post-genocide ethics from these encounters.

Thus, there is still a gap on the exploration of women's experience under genocide and the intergenerational transmission of trauma, as well as a focus on the women cultural workers behind these women-centric stories. This study then aims to address this gap.

Chapter Three

RESEARCH DESIGN

A. Research Method

For the research method, this study uses qualitative textual analysis, which, according to McKee (2001), is the central methodology of cultural studies (p. 138). Despite its name, textual analysis also involves the context in which the text is produced, or "the way in which cultural texts emerge from, and play a role in, the changing historical, political, and social context" (Saukko, 2003, p. 99). Thus, this study examines not only the text itself, i.e., 'The Last Reel' and 'The Silent Song of the Genjer Flowers,' but also the historical, political, and social context in which they are embedded. When analyzing the texts themselves, the focus of this study narrows on how they tackle the trauma inflicted by the cases of mass killings and atrocities in their respective societies and how these affected the women, in particular.

B. Data Sources

For this research, the source materials are the 2014 film by Kulikar Sotho, 'The Last Reel,' and the 2014 play by Faiza Mardzoeki, 'The Silent Song of the Genjer Flowers.' This author first accessed Sotho's film in 2020 when it was made available for online viewing and again while writing this study. It is currently available for viewing online in the video rental platform FilmDoo. This author accessed Mardzoeki's play in 2022 in the online streaming platform YouTube, where a video recording is available to date.

This study also analyzes the interviews of Mardzoeki and Sotho for their profile as well as reviews of their works.

C. Conceptual Framework

The focus of the study is to determine how ASEAN women cultural workers in Indonesia and Cambodia help address the collective trauma inflicted by the Indonesian Anti-Communist Purge and Khmer Rouge genocide on its populace, particularly the women. Central to this study are the genocidal events, with their legacies of violence and discrimination that are transmitted from one generation to the next, forming a layer of unresolved trauma around them.

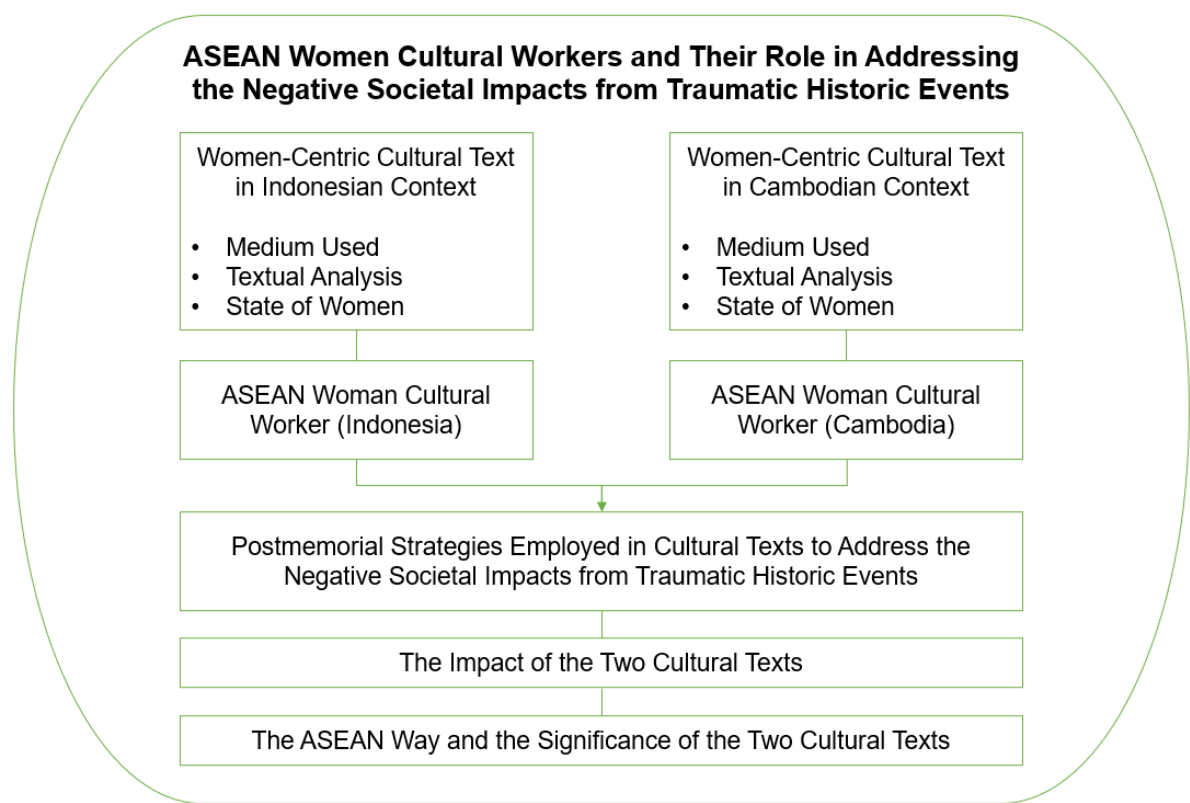
For the restoration of social order and the healing of the individual victims to be possible, remembering and telling the truth of these traumatic events are prerequisites (Herman, 2015, p. 1). Herman further identified the central dialectic to the trauma is the conflict between the will to proclaim the events and the will to silence them.

This is where the ASEAN women cultural workers come in, specifically Kulikar Sotho and Faiza Mardzoeki, as they tackled the genocidal events in Cambodia and Indonesia, respectively. For Mardzoeki, by shedding light on the plight of the Gerwani women, her narrative of events went directly against the official account perpetuated by the Indonesian government. While the account of the genocide under the Khmer Rouge's four-year reign is largely undisputed, there is still difficulty in discussing the complicity of the middle- and low-level perpetrators who still live among the surviving victims in Cambodia today. For Sotho, by tackling this complicity, she provided an

avenue for its recognition and the complexity of any type of reconciliation among victims and perpetrators today.

The discussions follow the conceptual framework illustrated in **Figure 1**.

Figure 1. Conceptual framework for the study.



Each cultural text is analyzed according to their specific historical/national context, with the analysis further divided into the medium used, the story, and the state of women in Indonesia and Cambodia. The next part then focuses on the ASEAN women cultural workers, their background, and their approach in tackling the subject of women’s experience in post-genocide societies. After that is the analysis of the postmemorial strategies employed in the texts to address the negative societal effects of the traumatic historic events, the impact of these texts, and finally, the significance of these texts in the ASEAN context.

D. Theoretical Framework

As this study focuses on the role of ASEAN women cultural workers in addressing the negative societal impacts in post-traumatic societies of the post-genocide era, it utilizes the theories of Claudia Card and Marianne Hirsch in exploring the central evil of genocide and how the postmemory generation can bring about in addressing this evil. Furthermore, as women created and/or directed the works to be analyzed in this study, which also focus on women's specific experience under genocide, the Third World feminism is used as a supplementary framework for analysis of their strategies.

1. Claudia Card's Theory of Evil

This study draws from Claudia Card's works on the theory of evil, specifically her argument that social death is the central evil of genocide. Card's secular theory of evil proposes that evil has two fundamental components: reasonably foreseeable intolerable harm to the victims and culpable wrongdoing by the perpetrators, with neither component reducible to the other (Card, 2002, p. 4). Harm, to be considered an evil, needs to satisfy the following requirements:

“(1) reasonably foreseeable (or appreciable) and (2) culpably inflicted (or tolerated, aggravated, or maintained), and that (3) deprives, or seriously risks depriving, others of the basics that are necessary to make a life possible and tolerable or decent (or to make a death decent).” (Card, 2002, p. 16)

Furthermore, evils, such as genocide, slavery, rape in war, torture, and child abuse, change the moral relationships among those involved: perpetrators, survivors, bystanders, and beneficiaries. In contrast to previous studies on evil, which focused on the perpetrators, Card focuses on the position of the victims then explores how one

can respond to and live with the evils, whether as victims, perpetrators, or those who have become both.

Genocide, which includes one-sided killing of defenseless civilians on the basis of their social group identity—be it national, ethnic, religious, or political—falls under the category of evil as it makes the lives of the victims "unbearable, indecent, or impossible, or [makes the] victims' deaths indecent" (Card, 2003, p. 66). However, the central to the evils of genocide, and one that is specific to it compared to other instances of mass killings and atrocities, is the destruction of the victims' social vitality. According to Card, social vitality is what creates an identity that gives meaning to life, and it exists in contemporary and intergenerational relationships (Card, 2003, p. 63). Thus, on top of inflicting physical death, genocide also inflicts social death to those who survived, and also to those who have been killed, as it also removes rituals, social connections and contexts that can make one's dying bearable and meaningful. Those who survived face social alienation as they are stripped of their social vitality.

This specific evil of genocide, i.e., the destruction of social bonds and intergenerational connections of the affected group, is examined in this study and how ASEAN women cultural workers have devised strategies to restore these connections through their practice and their works.

While Card employed a feminist lens in her study of genocide, she was not interested in the specific impacts of genocide on women (Card, 2003, p. 65). This is understandable given her preoccupation with the enormity of the subject of evils, not only limited to genocide; thus, to supplement this gap, this study focuses on the subject

of women's experience under genocide, specifically in the Southeast Asian context, especially since Card herself has stated that women play a central role in maintaining and preserving the social vitality of their communities (Card, 2003, p. 76). To support the analysis, this study also employs Marianne Hirsch's theory of postmemory generation and Third World feminist theory.

2. Marianne Hirsch's Theory of Postmemory Generation

While the traumatic historic events happened in the past, their effects continue to be felt in the present with the children of survivors, the second generation, growing up in the emotional power of these stories. Postmemory refers to the relationship between the second generation to the traumatic memories that preceded their birth but nonetheless transmitted to them through mediation and are powerful and deeply embedded enough to constitute memories in their own right (Hirsch, 2008, p. 106). As there can be no direct transfer of memories from one generation to the next, what happens instead is a deeply affective mediated remembrance through stories, images, and behaviors that they grew up in. This imaginative reinvestment, projection, and recreation mediates postmemory's connection with the past (Hirsch, 2012, p. 5). In the case of genocide, the intergenerational memorial fabric is severed by this traumatic historic event, thus necessitating forms of remembrance that both reconnect and reembody this fabric (Hirsch, 2008, pp. 109-110).

The hinge generation, as they hold guardianship of the traumatic historic event, transmutes the received, transferred memories into either history or myth (Hoffman, 2004, p. xv). Thus, Hirsch argues:

[Postmemorial work done by the hinge generation] strives to reactivate and reembody more distant social/national and archival/cultural memorial structures

by reinvesting them with resonant individual and familial forms of mediation and aesthetic expression. (Hirsch, 2008, p. 111)

What this means is that through cultural and artistic activities that tackle the subject of these traumatic historic events, the hinge generation is able to counteract the loss of a direct link to the past and the embodied communal and social connections. Thus, the postmemorial work, with its embodied living connection, acts as a means to address the central evil of genocide, i.e., social death, as theorized by Claudia Card.

For Hirsch, postmemory is a generational structure of transmission, which, along with the shared archive of stories and images, compose the collective imaginary in which family life, even at its most intimate, is entrenched (Hirsch, 2008, p. 114). In the field of Holocaust remembrance, she notes that the trope of maternal loss or abandonment and the fantasy of maternal recognition is prevalent and therefore plays a significant role in postmemorial work. This can be traced to Claire Kahane's argument that trauma at its most fundamental can be defined as a break in maternal object relation (2000, p. 163). Even so, Kahane encourages skepticism on the ubiquity of this trope, but Hirsch argues for its necessity as it acts as a screen to "absorb the shock, filter and diffuse the impact of trauma, diminish harm," and thus, paradoxically, reinforces the living connection between the past and the present, and the generation that experienced the traumatic event and the one that came after (2008, p. 125).

As discussed in the analysis, this trope is also present in the works of the two ASEAN women cultural workers that tackle the effects of the genocides in Indonesia and Cambodia. The focus on the (symbolic) role of the (grand)daughter in both

analyses of the text and the women cultural workers allows for a feminist postmemory work (Hirsch, 2012, p. 98).

3. Third World Feminist Theory

At its core, feminism as an ideology aims to define and establish social, personal, political, and economic equality of the sexes. Although feminism largely originated from the West, it has since developed into various strands and movements all over the world, focusing on diverse issues that relate directly to women or to gender equality. The articulations of feminism are manifold but for the purpose of this research, the focus is on Third World feminism. Third World feminism, along with transnational feminism (not to be confused with white global feminism criticized by Chandra Mohanty), developed in opposition to the second-wave feminism, which, similar to the first wave, mainly advocated for and came from the subject position of white, Western feminists, therefore ignoring the differences between women in terms of class and race.

The usage of “Third World” in this context is in line with the reclamation of the term that, despite its imprecision and inadequacy, “most clearly approximates the features of the world as we understand it” (Mohanty, 2003, p. 506). It should also be noted that the early formulation of the term “Third World” had a positive connotation and referred not just to a category of nation-states, but a movement full of potential to shape the world, similar in usage to the “Third Estate” in the French revolution, the revolutionary common people who overthrew the First and Second Estates of the monarchy and the clergy (Bevins, 2020, pp. 12-13). The term’s usage in Third World Feminism also refers to the “colonized, neocolonized or decolonized countries [...]

whose economic and political structures have been deformed within the colonial process” (Mohanty, Russo, & Torres, 1991, p. ix).

The historical development of feminism in the Third World has been intertwined with the nationalist and anticolonial independence movements, not only as part of the latter’s process of social inclusion and vital social platform for the collective mobilization of community groups, but also for the formulation of its self-representational vocabulary of nation and nationalism (Heng, 2004, pp. 861-862). However, Third World feminism in contemporary Southeast Asia has since developed into a variety of forms and movements necessitated for their survival from state and military intervention, with the most successful ones existing as small-scale groups and informal collectives (Heng, 2004, p. 872).

Theoretically, two constitutive ideas and mandates of Third World feminism are: 1) the situating of the analysis of women’s oppression and resistance in historical specificity by paying attention to the local conditions, i.e., intersections of class, race, gender, ethnicity, and nation; and 2) recognizing and respecting the historical and political agency of Third World women engaged in diverse forms of local activism (Herr, 2014, pp. 5-6). It is worth noting that Third World women’s movements tend to focus on enhancing communal conditions, improving the living standards of families and communities itself, aligning with local social movements with pro-democracy or human rights causes rather than focusing on gender equality or radical social structuring to achieve feminist goals. Despite this, women still inevitably take up the cause of gender inequality even when this is not the initial objective.

For this study, Third World feminism is used to analyze the strategies used by the two ASEAN women cultural workers in their practice to address the negative societal impacts of political instabilities.

Chapter Four

ASEAN WOMEN CULTURAL WORKERS AND THEIR WORKS

“This intergenerational trauma must be truly thought of and 'healed' as a collective struggle, a struggle for solidarity. In various ways, including works of art. It's the task of art and humanity. The task of humanity in art.”

-Faiza Mardzoeki

“We all need to understand our past in order to make sense of the present day and the future. We need to know where we came from, to know who we are and therefore where to go.”

-Kulikar Sotho

Tackling the subject of mass killings and atrocities is never easy, but it is even more difficult when many of the perpetrators have not been brought to trial and are still living alongside their victims. Another layer of complication is added when there is reticence, if not outright denial, from the government regarding these events and in the pursuance of any semblance of justice and reparation. The cases of Indonesia and Cambodia are similar and also quite distinct from the other, and this complexity is reflected in the way the two ASEAN women cultural workers chosen for this study tackled the subject in their respective works.

Faiza Mardzoeki did not have a firsthand experience of the violent events in her country's history, but through her activism in women's movements, she has met the women who did (Sabarini, 2016). This encounter inspired her to write 'The Silent Song of the Genjer Flowers.' On the other hand, Kulikar Sotho was very young when the Cambodian genocide happened, and her parents were directly affected by it. While she may not have written 'The Last Reel,' she has provided valuable insights that shaped the film.

A. Indonesia: Faiza Mardzoeki and ‘The Silent Song of the Genjer Flowers’

Faiza Mardzoeki is an Indonesian playwright who is also active in women’s movements in the country. She is the writer and director of the play ‘The Silent Song of the Genjer Flowers,’ which tackled the taboo subject of the Gerwani women, who have been demonized in the official accounts of the 1965 era.

1. Faiza Mardzoeki

Faiza Mardzoeki is the pen name of Siti Faizah Hidayati. She is based in Yogyakarta, and she is a writer, playwright, theater producer, and director. She is also the founder of Institut Ungu, an organization promoting gender equality and human rights through the medium of the arts and culture (Aurora Metro Books, n.d.). Mardzoeki is also a feminist and cultural activist who promotes women’s liberation and other social issues through creative, cultural, and artistic interventions. She has produced 15 plays and two concerts. Published four plays as books, including “The Silent Song of the Genjer Flowers,” has served as executive director of two major women’s arts festivals, and founded the Yogyakarta-based feminist bookstore and reading room called Wanita Baca (Mardzoeki, Biography, n.d.). She is also a regular contributor to the Jakarta Post.

Mardzoeki’s father was a civil servant and as such, her mother was active in the *Dharma Wanita*, an organization for the wives of civil servants (Mardzoeki, 2016). The women in the organization, who were the wives of community leaders and civil servants, were also active in the Family Welfare Movement or *Program Kesejahteraan Keluarga* (PKK). The PKK organized activities that promoted social service, family welfare, and women empowerment (Wiendijartia, Wahyunib, & Witjaksonoc, 2020, p.

393). For Mardzoeki, the PKK/Dharma Wanita promoted a conservative image of women, mainly relegated in the domestic realm, and considered as the “pillars of the state and pioneers for the motherland” (2016). In stark contrast, the Indonesian Women's Movement or Gerakan Wanita Indonesia, better known as Gerwani, has been characterized by former Indonesian President Suharto's New Order regime as an organization of evil women, responsible for the perverse mutilation and murder of the six generals on 1 October 1965.

Recounting her experience as a primary school student in the 1980s, Mardzoeki attended Pancasila Morality classes and history classes, where they were made to study the September 30th movement, known in the curriculum as G30S/PKI (Mardzoeki, 2012). The history classes repeated the state's version of the events, i.e., that the PKI rebellion was led by the party's General Secretary, D. N. Aidit and began in Lubang Buaya in the Cipayung suburb in East Jakarta and accompanied the murder of the six generals. There is a museum in Lubang Buaya that contained a diorama depicting the official version of the PKI rebellion, the statues of the generals, and another diorama depicting their supposed torture. The museum and the history classes promoted the image of the PKI as sadistic and violent, responsible for the brutal torture and murder of the generals. Furthermore, the propaganda film by Arifin C. Noor, 'Pengkhianatan G30S/PKI' or 'The Treason of the September 30 Movement/PKI,' which depicted the alleged torture and murder of the army generals and has been a compulsory viewing for schoolchildren, was the first film Mardzoeki saw in a cinema in her hometown Purwokerto (Hatley, 2010, pp. 265-66; Hamdani, 2014; Larasati, 2013, pp. 54-55).

In the film as well as in the official version of the events, the Gerwani, in particular, was demonized as perverted women who danced around naked before they mutilated the generals' genitals and gouged their eyes. Later on, Mardzoeki would read for herself the autopsy reports by the Armed Forces' own hospital made available in Cornell University's Indonesia journal. The autopsy reports, suppressed by Suharto's New Order regime revealed that the generals have not been mutilated; they had simply died by gunshot wounds and thrown into the deep well in Lubang Buaya, or Crocodile Hole (Anderson, 1987, pp. 111-112; Roosa, 2006, p. 265; Wieringa, 2011, p. 549). However, the sensationalist myth, the sexual slander against the Gerwani persisted and had resulted in the imprisonment, murder, and torture of its alleged members as well as lasting demonization of any woman purported to be connected to them (Wieringa, 2011, p. 551).

In 2011, Mardzoeki, who had become active in women's movements, met some of the surviving women political prisoners from the period in a nursing home in Jakarta. While not all of them were Gerwani members, they were all branded as such. There, she learned about the other side of the 1965 story propagated by the state from the accused women themselves and found out for herself that the Gerwani as an organization was not much different from the PKK. Like PKK, the Gerwani promoted literacy art, health, and training programs for women and children. However, the fact that the Gerwani shared the same leftist ideology as the PKI meant that its members were a target of the army. After the events on September 30, newspapers began circulating stories that the members of the Gerwani were behind the torture and murder of the army generals, propagating the image of them as "sadistic whores" (Hamdani, 2014). Women who were suspected to be members of the Gerwani were

then rounded up, imprisoned, rape and tortured, and coerced to sign confessions that they were behind the alleged torture and murder of the generals. These women were from varied background: some were professionals, housewives, mothers, students and intellectuals; the subsequent targeting of these women for their affiliation with the Gerwani had robbed them of their “homes, families, careers, and dignity” (Hamdani, 2014). Many of them died in prison or went insane; some survivors were sent to the Plantungan Women’s Prison in Central Java, a few in the prison camp in Buru Island, and others in the Lubang Buaya Monument in East Jakarta (Adam, 2019, p. 92; Hamdani, 2014).

The survivors that Mardzoeki met at the nursing home were women in their 70s and 80s, who, despite being physically frail, were optimistic and in high spirits. They were composed and smiling as they told their stories to Mardzoeki. It was this encounter that inspired her to write about their experience, tracing their stories back to their hometowns in Klaten, Semarang, Solo, Sragen, and Yogyakarta, where they were taken and imprisoned without trial. Mardzoeki also read up on the works of Saskia Wieringa, which included research and interviews with the survivors. She also visited the libraries in the Netherlands and Sweden to read up on newspaper clippings from the period.

Despite her extensive research and interviews with 30 of the survivors and their families, Mardzoeki found it difficult to write the story as she was overcome with emotion with what she had found out about the plight of the Gerwani women and other women political prisoners accused of being members of Gerwani. However, the fact that many of the women political survivors she met were getting older and were not

getting justice at all spurred her further to try to give voice to those that have been silenced (Mardzoeki, 2022). She finally finished the play in August 2013. She invited 20 veteran actresses to try out for the roles in the play, but some refused when they learned about the subject matter of the piece. This, for Mardzoeki, showed that the slander against the Gerwani still persisted to this day.

For the leading roles in the play, Mardzoeki cast Pipien Putri for the role of the 83-year-old Eyang Suhartini and Bandung actress Heliana Sinaga as her granddaughter Ming Hayati Dayanina. Also cast in the play is the veteran actress Niniek L. Karim, who was 16 years old in 1965 and had witnessed firsthand neighbors killing neighbors for suspected ties with the PKI in her hometown of Kediri. Karim, who played the role of Suhartini's former cellmate Sulahana, knew some of the victims personally and recalled seeing headless bodies in the rivers during the height of the mass killings. She also recalled that many children in her hometown lost their parents due to the purge and that these children were separated from their peers and made to study in special classrooms. Karim noted that the play portrayed the conflicting emotions of the characters: old people torn between wanting to tell stories of their youth and closing up in pain from all that they went through.

For lead actress Putri, the message of the play is to face life with a smile, similar to what the survivors in the nursing home in Jakarta did, despite the pain and trauma they went through. For Mardzoeki, she hoped that this would encourage people to seek truth about what happened in 1965 and for the government to vindicate the former Gerwani members so that they may die in peace. In 2015, a year after she wrote the 'The Silent Song of the Genjer Flowers,' Mardzoeki experienced localized

censorship when the Gianyar Regency police threatened to ban the Ubud Writers and Readers Festival for deciding to host several sessions discussing the controversial events of 30 September 1965 and the subsequent mass killings of suspected leftists, and where she was invited to read her play (Mardzoeki, 2015). Side discussions were still held in defiance, but Mardzoeki noted that serious campaigning and real commitment are needed to uphold these spaces in the face of the official state version of events still being propagated in the present and the open hostility from the more conservative elements in Indonesian society.

In the video recording of the performance uploaded in YouTube, the opening text indicated that the play was dedicated to the Indonesian women who were incarcerated following the events of 1965, as well as to the victims of sexual violence in Indonesia and all over the world (Mardzoeki, 2015).

2. 'The Silent Song of the Genjer Flowers' (2014)

The play's title refers to the folk song Genjer-Genjer, which was composed under the Japanese colonial rule in 1942 to describe the suffering of the Osing people but which gained popularity among the PKI in the 1960s. Its association with the PKI led to it being banned and for its depiction as the song that the Gerwani women allegedly sung while torturing the generals in the propaganda film 'Pengkhianatan G30S/PKI' (Ristanty, 2017). The term Genjer flower is used as a metaphor for the female victims of the Anti-Communist Purge (Sabarini, 2016).

The plot of 'The Silent Song of the Genjer Flowers' centers on Suhartini, a former Gerwani member, who is conflicted over telling her granddaughter, Ming Hayati Dayanina, about her tormented past. To help her tell her story, Suhartini invited her

friends, who are all ex-political prisoners like her. The events in the play take place in the course of two days, with the first day focusing on Suhartini and Ming, and the next day, involving Suhartini's friends.

The play opens with Suhartini calling out for her daughter Rachma in her sleep. Rachma, Ming explains to the audience, is the name of Ming's mother, who died not long after Ming was born. Rachma had died from depression when her husband left her after he found out that she was the daughter of a Gerwani woman. Through a series of monologues, Suhartini reveals that she had given birth to Rachma on 20 July 1966 while incarcerated and that she had to give her up to a distant relative so that her daughter would not grow up in prison. Suhartini had hoped that she would be reunited with her daughter after her release in 1974 but this hope faded as the years wore on. One day in 1992, the distant relative came to Suhartini's little food stall bringing with her a five-year-old Ming and the tragic news of Rachma's death five years prior. Since then, Suhartini had raised Ming.

Later that night, while sitting on the bench, Ming asks her grandmother if she ever was happy. Suhartini initially doesn't answer the question, remarking instead on Ming's beauty, which Suhartini said is just like her mother Rachma's. When Ming responds by saying that Suhartini is Ming's mother as well as grandmother, Suhartini then tells her granddaughter of the time when she was happy. It was during the early years of Indonesia's independence and Suhartini was a proud activist. She worked with the other young people in setting up daycares, organizing literacy programs, and helping out in getting rid of the rats in the fields. It was during this time that she met her soon-to-be-husband Bung Daryo, a poet and cultural activist from East Java. They

got married in 1954 although it took a decade before Suhartini became pregnant with their first child. Bung Dar suggested to name their child Rachmanina, so that she may become a great pianist like the Russian composer Sergei Rachmaninoff. The happy recollection turns into sadness as soon after that, Bung Dar disappeared in the Anti-Communist Purge following the failed putsch and he never saw his daughter. Ming then asks her grandmother the question that had been bothering her: why did people say that Nini and her friends used to dance naked? Suhartini responds by saying she does not know how or why that story came to be, only that those lies had hurt her and her friends deeply as they have been called immoral women. As she recalls how the news quickly spread all over the country, news clippings repeating the stories of the alleged torture and murder of the generals by the Gerwani were flash in the background. Suhartini laments that people still believed those lies even in the present and that no one had ever denied those lies.

The next day opens with Sumilah, one of Suhartini's friends, sitting by the dinner table and recounting her experience from before the abortive putsch and the subsequent Purge. Sumilah was a dancer who joined the volunteer training in Pasar Rebo for Sukarno's Ganyang Malaysia campaign (Ariati, 2012, p. 6). In the early hours of dawn following the events of 30 September 1965, Sumilah and the rest of the volunteers were rounded up, beaten, and forced to the field where they were made to strip naked for two days. On the third day, they were taken to the barracks for interrogation and, despite not knowing anything, were forced to answer "yes" to their questions:

1. Is it true that female and male volunteers held an orgy in front of the generals?
2. Is it true that she performed the "Perfumed Flower" dance naked in front of the generals?

3. Is it true that she and her friends then slashed the generals' private parts?

When Suhartini and Ming join Sumilah at the table, they greet each other warmly and proceed to recite the Plantungan oath. However, when Ming asks about the “night receipts” that she had heard happened at night in Plantungan Women’s Prison, Sumilah clams up and she and Suhartini enter into a brief argument. Sumilah asks what good is it to keep on reliving the terrible times to which Suhartini replies that it is important for Ming and the rest of the world to know what happened. Sumilah retorts that it is useless as nothing is going to change even when the world knows and they turn away from each other, caught up in their painful pasts. They eventually reconcile when Suhartini reminds her friend that they need to support each other to stay strong.

The rest of Suhartini’s guests arrive, first the activist duo Makmin and Tarwih, with whom Suhartini and Sumilah sing the opening verses of the folk song *Genjer-Genjer*. Sumilah reminisces that the song brings her back to the happy days of her youth, but Suhartini adds that it had become a curse to anyone who sings it. While Ming is briefly offstage, the other ladies ask Suhartini if she had told Ming of her secret, to which Suhartini replies that she has not yet, and that she called for her friends to come over to give her strength to overcome the feelings of fear and shame. Her friends comfort her and pledge their support, acknowledging how difficult it is to talk about the past, especially to one’s granddaughter.

When Suhartini's old cellmate, Sulahana, arrives, the ladies all stand up to sing the Bukit Duri anthem *Salam Harapan*, or 'Greetings of Hope.' On Ming's question if they were all members of the same organization, Sulahana tells her that Makmin, Tarwih, and Suhartini were activists while Sulahan herself was a housewife who aspired to be a painter. The conversation takes a somber turn as they recall how they were all incarcerated and moved from prison to prison, from Bukit Duri to Plantungan. Sulahana expresses his deep-seated pain, confusion, and despair for their plight, how they have been abandoned and subjected to slander, and how justice seems impossible for them now. As they finally have dinner together, they reminisce about lighter moments while in prison, such as the time when Suhartini played a trick on them all by pretending to have found meat when it was just a plant called cockscombs.

After dinner, Suhartini and Ming sit together on the bench in the center stage and there, Suhartini finally tells Ming her secret: while in prison, Suhartini was raped by the prison warden in multiple occasions, causing her to become pregnant. She gave birth to a baby boy whom she could not bear to look at as he reminded her of her tragedy. Suhartini's friends then took the baby to a village near Plantungan and gave him a way to a family. Suhartini did not know the name given to him and she did not want to find out. Suhartini then tells Ming the origins of the doll and the headband that she had been keeping with her all this time. The doll and the headband were made by Suhartini for Rachma, back when she was still hoping to see her again. Suhartini then hands over both to Ming, a symbolic handing over of her legacy to her.

In her last monologue, Ming recognizes that the dark, painful past that grandmother shared with her was one that Suhartini tried to force down inside her,

causing her immense anguish and suffering. Yet, despite the pain, Suhartini remains unbroken, raising her spirit with hopes, so that Ming can face the future with courage. Ming then says she now understands the Kabendu tale that her grandmother told her when she was still young, how despite the good not always prevailing, everyone still kept fighting. Ming then says that she will remember her grandmother's advice to keep on smiling at life so that despite the bitterness, she can stay strong and brave. The play ends with Ming holding the doll close to her chest and promising to hug her grandmother again and again, tighter each time.

B. Cambodia: Kulikar Sotho and 'The Last Reel'

Kulikar Sotho is a Cambodian woman filmmaker with more than two decades of experience in filmmaking and is the director of 'The Last Reel,' an award-winning Khmer-language Cambodian film that explores the confrontation of a painful collective past.

1. Kulikar Sotho

Sotho's extensive experience in filmmaking started with her work as a translator and fixer for Lonely Planet TV in 1999. In the following year, she worked on the set of Tomb Raider, initially as a location liaison manager but was made a second Assistant Director directing over 200 extras. Since then, she had been working as a line producer for documentaries, docu-dramas, and feature films (Palmer, 2015). It was through her work with documentaries, around 80% of which are on the Khmer Rouge, that Sotho had been exposed to the story of Pol Pot, the Khmer Rouge, and the civil war in Cambodia (Mayhew, 2015). She had met many rank-and-file KR cadre, as well as 'Brother Number Two' Nuon Chea, the chief ideologist of the Khmer Rouge, and 'Brother Number Four' Ta Mok, also known as the Butcher, a KR senior military

leader (Thul, 2019; The Associated Press, 2006). By interviewing both perpetrators and survivors, Sotho said that it helped her understand why the Cambodian people, including her mother, did not like to talk about the past. This engendered the desire “to tell a Cambodian story, from a Cambodian perspective and point of view of the new generation,” since to make sense of the present and the future, there needs to be an understanding of the past (Palmer, 2015).

Sotho wanted to tell the story for three reasons: first, to give justice to those lost during the regime, which included her father; second, to give peace to her mother and the other survivors and to herself as well; and lastly, to help make the new generation aware of Cambodian history, not just the three-year reign of the KR regime, but also Cambodia’s glorious past (Palmer, 2015).

While the English freelance screenwriter Ian Masters wrote the screenplay for *The Last Reel*, the story was one that Sotho knew intimately. Sotho added a few scenes to the script, scenes that were inspired by her family’s story. These included the flashbacks, which were based on the stories her mother told her about her and Sotho’s father’s experiences under the KR regime (Palmer, 2015). Her contributions to the screenplay were significant enough to earn her a co-writer credit (Kuipers, 2015).

Sotho’s involvement with the film was initially as a line producer for an American director, but when the project fell through, Masters approached her to be the director (Palmer, 2015). Sotho shared that the main protagonist’s driving force to discover her history, the longing for a father figure, the inability to communicate within

the family, and the deep love between the mother and daughter are experiences that were similar to Sotho's and to many Cambodians. In her interview with *Globe*, Sotho talked about the very personal importance of the film to her as her own mother had survived the genocide (Southeast Asia *Globe* Editorial, 2014). While there had been a breakdown of communication between them, Sotho eventually recognized that this shielding her from the past was her mother's way of protecting her.

Sotho was a very young child during the KR regime and at the age of two, she lost her father in one of the villages (Morag, 2020, p. 16; Palmer, 2015). She and her sister were then raised by their mother, who had endured the trauma from those years (Southeast Asia *Globe* Editorial, 2014). Sotho's mother's 35-year silence on her past became the impetus for the director to make the film (Morag, 2020, p. 16).

In an interview with *Globe*'s Daniel Besant, Sotho stated that the film's reception has been mostly positive, with the audience praising the quality of the film, the acting and the script, and its educational aspect (Besant, 2015). She did not encounter any problem with censorship from authorities since the film was based on what the government itself did, i.e., inviting the Khmer Rouge to join them in the so-called Coalition Government of Democratic Kampuchea (Croissant & Lorenz, 2018, p. 39). This is particularly evident in the main character's father, General Bora, who was a former Khmer Rouge agent but now holding an important position in Cambodian society.

Sotho envisioned Cambodians like her as the ideal audience for the film, hence the conscious attempt to have actors who personify distinctively Cambodian

features and qualities, i.e., dark skin, brown eyes, authentic Cambodian tone, a mix of friendliness, hospitality, and feistiness. When asked about the challenges she encountered in a male-dominated industry, Sotho replied that it was not just the industry, but also the society. However, she said that by communicating with them, by relating her story with theirs, she was able to gain their trust. Thus, the main difficulty she encountered was not the pushback from her male peers but finding enough film equipment for the shoot.

Adding another layer of poignancy to the film is the fact that two of its actors, Dy Saveth and Sok Sothun, had ties with Cambodia's painful past (Kuipers, 2015). Dy Saveth, who played the role of the mother Sothea/Srey Mom, is one of the few remaining actresses from the country's Golden Age of Cinema. Her grandmother and her sisters were dancers in the Royal Palace and Dy Saveth herself starred in King Norodom Sihanouk's film *Crepuscle* (Ellen, 2013). She managed to escape the genocide because she was in Thailand on March 1975 to visit her children when the Khmer Rouge came to power (Jackson, 2014). She fled to France with her two children and stayed there for 18 years. She returned to Cambodia in 1993 and learned that four of her siblings had died. Most of the artists and cultural workers were killed under the KR regime, including Dy Saveth's co-stars, colleagues Sin Sisamouth, Kong Som Oeun, and Vichara Dany (Ellen, 2013). Sok Sothun, who played the role of the projectionist Vichea, is a survivor of the genocide and has been active in the film industry since the 80s (Kuipers, 2015).

In Sotho's own words, she described the film's focus is on the legacies of the Khmer Rouge genocide of war and poverty, and especially, the trauma that has shaped generations of Cambodians:

The film focused on a broken society that is caused by trauma and the legacy of war, followed by poverty. The trauma is too dark, too deep and too painful to touch. This dark side has overshadowed their lives, through no fault of their own, and the trauma has shaped the behavior of the older generation, which in turn has had a big impact on the new generation growing up. (Southeast Asia Globe Editorial, 2014)

For Sotho, the theme of the story is reconciliation as there is a big gap between the older generation and the younger generation, with the bridging of this gap between generations is a mutual responsibility. This gap is caused by a lack of communication and diverging values—the more conservative and traditional older generation vs. the more free-spirited and disconnected from tradition younger generation. For Sotho, the younger generation needs the guidance of their elders to know about their history to make sense of the present, to understand what had shaped their parents' attitudes. This is especially apparent in the film where the main protagonist Sophoun only begins to understand her mother's deep pain and grief and her father's guilt hiding under his anger after learning more about genocide from them and from Vichea, the projectionist at the old cinema. As she uncovers the past, she is able to understand the present and conceive of a reconciliation between the perpetrators and the victims, albeit possible only through the medium of cinema. Sotho explores in the film the complex legacy of the Khmer Rouge reign of terror that includes intimate betrayal and the perpetrator as also a victim.

According to Sotho, growing up, the civil war and the KR regime was not taught at school nor discussed at home. Nowadays, the new generation has access

to textbooks, documentaries, and films though many of these do not discuss the events deeply (Palmer, 2015). Because of this, Sotho accords education through film a significant role in educating the new generation of Cambodia's history, especially since talking about it personally is still difficult for many of the older generation:

When they talk of a good time that immediately links to the bad time and lost family and friends. The effect still exists so strongly today. We have not moved on, we are trapped emotionally. This is what the film is about, we must reconcile and move on. (Palmer, 2015)

While uncovering what happened to Sothea/Srey Mom and the man she loved during the Khmer Rouge reign of terror is central to the plot of *The Last Reel*, the film also shows the other oft-overlooked parts of Cambodian history through the in-movie film 'The Long Road Home.' 'The Long Road Home' features the story of a princess betrothed to a prince but was abducted on her journey then rescued by a masked bandit. Sotho's training as a classical dancer helped gave her the basis for the look and energy for 'The Long Road Home,' which was supposed to evoke the Golden Era of Cambodian cinema. According to Sotho, a German filmmaker contacted her after the film's premiere in Tokyo and shared with her that the aesthetics of the Golden Era-film within her film was similar to an actual Cambodian Golden Era-film (Palmer, 2015). Sotho wanted to show the new generation that Cambodia has a proud history that extends beyond the KR regime and the poverty that followed.

As a woman in Cambodia, which is still a male-dominated society, Sotho faced a lot of challenges in earning the respect of her peers when making the movie. As a woman and a first-time woman director, Sotho has had to bank on her decades' worth of experience as a line producer as well as her achievements in order to gain the trust of her crew (Mayhew, 2015; Palmer, 2015).

While Sotho's perspective on the way forward for Cambodian society is to confront the past and find forgiveness in one's heart to find peace in oneself and others, Faiza's is to confront the past and articulate the silenced and/or warped history of the victims, particularly the marginalized. As the situation in Cambodia and Indonesia may be similar in terms of the traumatic mass killings of its citizens by their own people, the account of the genocide in Cambodia is largely undisputed. The Khmer Rouge is acknowledged to have committed the mass atrocities through its harsh agricultural policies, the purging of those considered enemies of the state, which had later devolved into a paranoia that saw the execution of people within their own ranks (Kiernan, 1998, p. 436). On the other hand, there is still dispute as to who were behind the mass killings during the Indonesian Anti-Communist Purge: the Indonesian army has claimed for years that it was spontaneous violence by Indonesian society although it has eventually been recognized as a product of deliberate state policy (McGregor, Melvin, & Pohlman, 2018, p. 2; Perry, 2016).

2. 'The Last Reel' (2014)

In 'The Last Reel,' Sotho employs a meta-textual approach in telling the Cambodian story through the film-within-a-film, 'The Long Way Home.' 'The Long Way Home' is a film that the main character Sophoun stumbles into one night at the abandoned cinema that doubled as a motorcycle parking space for her university. What struck her with the film is the fact that the leading lady there was her mother, who, in her youth, looked exactly like Sophoun. Upon meeting the projectionist, Vichea, Sophoun learns that the film was made in Tonle Bati in 1974, a turbulent time near the tail-end of the civil war and just before the Khmer Rouge took over the country. Sophoun also learns that the only time the film was screened was in 1975

when the cinema was opened up to the refugees fleeing the US' carpet bombing and the fighting in the countryside. Vichea played the film to comfort the frightened Cambodians taking shelter in the cinema.

At the surface level, 'The Long Way Home' is an adventure love story. It begins with the village girl and the handsome prince falling in love before the prince's jealous brother steals the village girl away. A masked peasant in the forest finds her and helps her escape and they fell in love. However, as they near the village, the village girl is torn between the masked peasant who rescued her and the prince who was waiting for her. The film ends abruptly here, as Vichea claims that the final reel has disappeared. When pressed about the ending, Vichea instead replies with what else does Sophoun expect? The village girl would obviously go back to the prince, to which Sophoun reacts with defiance. For her, the village girl should have ended up with the masked peasant who rescued her, which aligns with Vichea's desired ending. With Vichea as the director and her as the star, she Sophoun out to re-make the last reel of 'The Long Way Home' with this ending in mind. This insistence for a new ending is informed by Sophoun's desire to remind her ill mother of her glamorous past and how she need not be bound by the Chbab Srey tradition, which had seen her as a quiet and submissive wife to her violent husband.

However, right after Vichea has been identified as the one who betrayed his brother Sokha, the man that Sothea/Srey Mom loved, Sophoun finds the supposedly missing final reel. As she watches it, the film-with-the-film mirrors the events of the film, with masked peasant unmasking himself to reveal Vichea's scarred face. The village girl leaves the masked peasant as she goes back to her prince, who is revealed

to be played by Sokha, Vichea's brother and the man Sothea/Srey Mom loved. Then, the projector bursts into flames, destroying the final reel. After all the revelations and the unmasking of lies, Sophoun is conflicted on how to move forward, not only with the film, but also with her life.

This conflict and the resolution that Sophoun chooses to make are the heart of 'The Last Reel.' For the ending of 'The Long Way Home,' Sophoun is torn between the original, traditional ending, which saw the village girl end up with the prince and the ending, and the modern, more romantic ending, which would have seen the village girl defying expectations and choosing the masked peasant who rescued her. As she tells her boyfriend Veasna, Sophoun hates the original ending and loves the new ending they were in the middle of filming, but the former was the truth, and the latter was a lie, and she cannot find it in herself to pursue either. However, after being comforted and encouraged by Veasna and after having an open conversation with her mother, Sophoun forges a third ending, an ending she herself wrote and informed by the painful episode in Cambodia's history: the Khmer Rouge genocide.

The 'Last Reel' ends with the premiere screening of the film-within-the-film 'The Long Way Home' with its new ending 40 years after it was first made. Sophoun dedicates the film to Sokha, the original director, and to Vichea, the scriptwriter. The new ending sees Vichea joining the *sangha*, with Sothea/Srey Mom watching as he prays over the *stupa* in Tonle Bati for the victims of the Khmer Rouge regime, including the brother he betrayed, blurring the lines between the fictional setting of 'The Long Way Home' and the reality in 'The Last Reel.' As the ending plays out on the cinema

screen, Sophoun's family is seen watching it together, with Sothea/Srey Mom and Bora holding hands. The film ends with thunderous applause from the audience.

After the last scene, 'The Last Reel' flashes a somber dedication to the film stars and directors who died or went missing under the Khmer Rouge, and for the director, Kulikar Sotho, she dedicated it to her parents, her father Om Channy and her mother Ang Seantho, and to their love that could not be extinguished. Om Channy did not survive the Khmer Rouge regime and Sotho lost her father at a very young age.

Chapter Five

ANALYSIS

A. Countering the Central Evil of Genocide in Post-Genocide Societies in 'The Silent Song of the Genjer Flowers' and 'The Last Reel'

According to Card, central to the evils of genocide is social death or the loss of social vitality, including the loss of intergenerational connections (Card, 2003, p. 73). This destruction of social bonds and intergenerational connections is what differentiates genocide from mass murders. Arguably a fate worse than death, this loss of social vitality severs the connections that binds people with each other, rips asunder the very fabric of families and communities. Furthermore, there is a unique aspect to the harm inflicted on women, i.e., the especially cruel, disproportionate gendered violence committed against them, and rapes have been used to destroy family and community bonds (Hynes, 2004, p. 431; Bevins, 2020, p. 155; Card, 2018, pp. 17-18). This specific evil is evident in the works of Faiza Mardzoeki and Kulikar Sotho, in the way that the women who had survived genocide in their respective countries find themselves cut off not only from their communities, but also from their own kin.

In 'The Silent Song of the Genjer Flowers,' Suhartini, a Gerwani survivor, has been cut off from her own daughter, physically and socially, for fear that any association with her would compromise her child. Later, when her granddaughter Ming was left to her care, Suhartini is mired in shame and fear from her experiences as well as the sexual slander propagated by the state, and she finds it difficult to tell Ming of her past. In 'The Last Reel,' Srey Mom's traumatic experiences under the Khmer Rouge regime has made her retreat inside herself, going despondent and listless for

periods of time, and made her keep details of her past to herself. Despite her children's evident love for her and her love for them, there is a divide between them as Srey Mom remains fixed in her past, isolated from her surroundings, while her children do their best to care for her and forge ahead with their own lives. These symptoms that Srey Mom exhibited match the ones that are identified among Khmer Rouge survivors who are experiencing *baksbat* or 'broken courage,' a Cambodian cultural-based trauma syndrome. These symptoms of the broken courage cluster result in the "loss of solidarity (*samakipheap*) or sense of being together among people," a kind of social death, as theorized by Card (Chhim, 2012, p. 655).

In both cases, the apparent issue is the destruction of social bonds and intergenerational connections and therefore, the remedy should be the restoration of these bonds. However, the restoration of these bonds does not come easily, as they require countering the prevailing narratives surrounding the victims of genocide. It is not only a personal act, but also a social one.

1. Indonesia's 'The Silent Song of the Genjer Flowers'

a. Pervasiveness of the Past through Theater

In 'The Silent Song of the Genjer Flowers,' Faiza Mardzoeki maximized the use of the stage by dividing it into three chambers: the Past, the Present, and Soliloquy. The Past is the area on the left, where Suhartini's bed is; the Present is the area on the right, with the dinner table; and the Soliloquy is at the center of the stage, where there is a bench. There are no hard boundaries among the three, and the characters move from one to the other fluidly. Each area is not necessarily restricted to their designation and there are frequent overlaps, like when characters musing about the

past can do so while being present with what is happening at the moment. This can be seen when the group of friends talk about the past with each other. Or when Sumilah goes into a monologue, sitting on a dining chair, while she is alone. According to Mardzoeki, the partitioning of the stage into three chambers is intentional so that the audience is able to see what is going on in the past, the present, and inside the characters' heads (Hamdani, 2014).

Figure 2. On the left side of the stage where her bed is located, Suhartini reminisces on her days as an activist while perusing an album, with pictures of the Gerwani women flashed on the screen behind her and the song *Salam Harapan* playing in the background.



Figure 3. Suhartini animatedly talks about her days as an activist before the Purge to her granddaughter Ming, seated in the bench, in the middle area of the stage.



Figure 4. On the right side of the stage, the five women survivors gather around the dinner table to share with Ming the stories about the past.



Source: Screenshots taken from the uploaded filmed version on [YouTube](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=...).

The set pieces also function as markers of intimacy, like in the case of the bench, where Suhartini and Ming sit when the former shares about her past. The dining

table is where the friends gather to eat and share stories, while Suhartini's bed is markedly her own space, even when Ming comes in and sits with her grandmother.

This fluidity of movement and overlap, combined with set design of old newspapers papering the walls and the occasional flashing of old photographs in the background, the pervasiveness of the past. Even when the characters are not actively recollecting past events, their actions and reactions are still informed by it. Through the medium of theater, Mardzoeki is able to portray the pervasiveness of the past in the lives of these elderly Gerwani survivors.

b. Breaking the Walls of Social and Intergenerational Isolation through Stories

The main action of the play centers on Ming and her grandmother Suhartini and the latter's attempt to share about her life, that of a Gerwani woman who had been demonized by the state since the alleged abortive coup d'état on 30 September 1965. To help her tell the story, Suhartini enlists the help of her friends, who were also incarcerated with her in the Plantungan Women's Prison in Central Java.

Each of the survivors has their own story to tell and the way they deal with the past varies from person to person. The duo activists, Makmin and Tarwih, are able to recollect lighter moments in captivity, such as the fake meat prank that Suhartini had played on everyone in the camp. Sulahana, who was a housewife learning how to paint when she was captured, still harbors pain and confusion over what happened and there is a weariness to her as she tells her friends that she finds herself wishing to be reunited with her lost husband. Sumilah, a dancer who joined the practice drills

for Sukarno's Ganyang Malaysia campaign and who was captured soon after the murder of the generals, is filled with so much pain over the torture, the rape, and the humiliation during her ordeal that she refuses to talk about it.

Suhartini was an activist like Makmin and Tarwih. Like Sulahana, Suhartini's husband, who was also a political/cultural activist, has been disappeared, with no way of knowing of his fate. The impetus behind Suhartini's decision to share her story, along with her friends', with Ming is threefold: first, to forge a genuine connection with her, as grandmother and granddaughter; second, to share with her the truth of her and her friends' experience as Gerwani or suspected Gerwani members; and third, to prevent the repetition of Rachma's tragedy.

Suhartini's generation suffered a devastating loss of bonds with their communities and with the succeeding generations due to the sexual slander propagated by the state and the army after the events of 30 September 1965. Adding to the loss of lives, deprivation of freedom and bodily autonomy, loss of dignity, robbed of their dreams and their future, the women survivors of the genocide have also been shunned by their remaining families and communities. Even decades after the alleged abortive coup and years after Suharto's fall from power, the Gerwani is still being associated with prostitution and "perverse forms of women's sexual behavior" (Wieringa S. E., 2000, p. 441). Many of the women survivors opt to live the rest of their lives alone, away from their families so as not to embarrass them, particularly their grandchildren, by having a Gerwani member living in the same house (Wieringa S. E., 2011, pp. 556-557). The lingering confusion and fear over their plight, combined with

the feeling of resignation that they will never get any semblance of justice, has made Sulahana long for reuniting with her lost husband in death.

In Suhartini's case, she had already been separated from her daughter Rachma, who was raised unaware of who her mother truly was. This was done to ensure that Rachma would live a normal life. However, the truth still came out and it ended in tragedy for Rachma, as her husband left her upon finding out about her mother's affiliation with the Gerwani. Rachma dies from depression, herself cut off from society by the stigma on her mother and from her own intergenerational bonds—from her mother whom she had never known and from her child she could not bear to raise by herself, not with the mark on her as a daughter of a Gerwani woman. Thus, for Suhartini, keeping her past secret from Ming is no guarantee of happiness. Instead, she decides that sharing stories about her past, which is intertwined with Indonesia's past, may help Ming understand her own life.

While she may not have been able to restore the bond between her and her daughter, Suhartini, by sharing her and her friends' stories, is able to connect with Ming in a truly authentic manner. The truth may be dark and painful, still Ming recognizes her grandmother's unbroken spirit despite her struggles, strengthened by her love for Ming, in the hopes that this will also give Ming courage to face the future. In turn, Ming is also able now to give her grandmother the succor that has long been deprived from her. Even though justice may still be elusive for the survivors, the act of storytelling, itself an act against despair, carries with it a hope for healing and an end to the emotional isolation between them and the younger generation.

In this sense, Mardzoeki's play plays a similar role to the sharing of stories by Suhartini and her friends, in that it opens up with the audience, as well as with the actresses, the stories of the stigmatized Gerwani women. In a behind the stage video, the actresses who played the roles of the women survivors, expressed their admiration for the actual survivors, whom they have met a few times as they prepared for their parts (Kusuma, n.a.). They remarked how despite the women survivors are now weaker physically due to their advanced age, they were still brimming with courage and strength of spirit and these, in turn, inspired the actresses to help tell their stories, acknowledging all the while the limitations of what they could do for them. The premiere performance of 'The Silent Song of the Genjer Flowers' in Goethe Haus in Jakarta in 2014 was attended by some of the women survivors. The women survivors, many of them in their twilight years, expressed their happiness in having their stories heard and gratitude to the younger generation for caring about them and their plight. For some of them, this was the first time since their lives were shrouded with stigmas that they were able to see the truth of what happened, and that this performance was not just for them but also for the younger generation who wanted to know the truth. The audience in the premiere performance was a combination of women survivors and their families and members of the younger generation. A young woman of the younger generation interviewed in the video expressed her mingled sympathy for the survivors and anger at what they had experienced. After the premiere performance, the actresses, the younger audience, and the women survivors come together, singing Salam Harapan, a symbol of solidarity among women across generations, bridging the decades-old ostracization of the Gerwani women.

As the stories shared with Ming were meant to help her understand her own life, so to the stories of the Gerwani are meant to help the younger generation understand Indonesia's history so that they may create a better future for themselves and the future generation.

c. The Two Kinds of Womanhood in Indonesia After 1965

Though women's movements in Indonesia largely emerged from anticolonial movements, they were independent partners of the nationalist organizations (Heng, 2004, p. 865). While various individual women's groups came together for the anticolonial struggle, rifts widened post-independence, particularly between Muslim and secularist-socialist groups, reflecting the cleavage in the political landscape (Schröter, 2014, p. 2). The revolutionary and anti-imperialist Gerwani, which was closely linked to the PKI, ran into conflicts with various Muslim women's organizations and the nationalist women's association, the *Persatuan Wanita Republik Indonesia* (Perwari), or the Indonesian Women's Association, due to the latter's membership that drew mainly from the bourgeois, intellectual elite. The Gerwani, which at its peak had over 1.5 million members, organized not only middle-class women, but also women workers and peasants. After the attempted putsch of 30 September 1965, the Gerwani was specifically targeted for elimination as rumors spread of the alleged role of Gerwani members in the torture and murder of the generals. These rumors affirmed the Muslim majority's worst fears, resulting in the capture, rape, torture, and murder of thousands of Gerwani members by angry mobs, incited by the state and military (Wieringa S. E., 2011, pp. 553-554; Schröter, 2014, p. 2).

The sexual slander against the Gerwani resulted in the organization's elimination from the social and political sphere in Indonesia. Under Suharto's New Order, the Gerwani began to represent the perverse, immoral women. In contrast to the Gerwani woman is the conservative ideal of womanhood shaped by the values espoused by Suharto's political party, the Golkar, and indoctrinated through the PKK and Dharma Wanita. The New Order defined women as creatures of the domestic sphere and servants of the family and the state and did not encourage their political participation (Mardzoeki, 2016). Women were no longer comrades in the revolutionary struggle but, instead, were submissive wives and devoted mothers, with Suharto as the super-patriarch in his New Order society. The two types of womanhood in this period are best exemplified by the two figures in Javanese *wayang*: the meek and obedient Sumbadra (New Order's model of femininity) and the warrior-princess Srikandi (the figure adopted by the Gerwani) (Wieringa S. E., 2011, pp. 555-556).

Women's activism experienced a resurgence in the 1980s, with the issues of domestic violence and the violent treatment of female factory workers and peasants coming to the fore (Schröter, 2014, pp. 2-3). Women also played an important role in the call for Suharto to step down during the Asian financial crisis of 1997-98, although this was not without violent retaliation from the regime.

Some of the women survivors of the Anti-Communist Purge were released in 1970s and '80s, although they still had to report regularly to the police and live in cautious fear well until Suharto's fall from power in 1998 (Wieringa S. E., 2000, pp. 442, 453). While some of the survivors, like Ibu Sulami, a former secretary of Gerwani, were able to set up a foundation to investigate the truth behind the 1965-66 massacres

after Suharto's fall and the proclamation of *Reformasi*, there is still a strong stigma attached to the Gerwani, to the point that it is still used to discredit politically active women advocating for progressive causes (Wieringa S. E., 2011, pp. 544-545). The vocal protests and complaints that led to the failure of filming 'Lastri' in 2007, a film that also focuses on the experiences of the rape victims of the Anti-Communist Purge (apart from the fictional love story), exemplifies the strong sentiment against revisiting this period from the perspective of the Gerwani women.

In the succeeding years, various groups and individuals, including lawyers, activists, artists, and even the survivors themselves, have become more active in the public discussion regarding the 1965-66 Anti-Communist Purge. Despite these developments, Faiza Mardzoeki still set in place security measures to ensure that the play would be staged successfully, without backlash. Their strategy was to keep a low profile, strictly guarding all the processes, and preparing various volunteers, which included lawyers. It was staged in GoetheHaus in Jakarta and the show went smoothly. However, due to the budget limitations, the play has only been staged once but it was filmed, and the recording was uploaded in YouTube. In 2015, Mardzoeki encountered a case of localized censorship from the police during the 8th Ubud Writers and Readers Festival, where the topic of the 1965-66 Anti-Communist Purge was supposed to be discussed in open forum. Nevertheless, the filmed recording of her play has been screened in various venues, such as at the 3rd ASEAN Literary Festival held at Jakarta in 2016, and in Amsterdam, Melbourne, Los Angeles, Seattle, Singapore, and Malaysia.

'The Silent Song of the Genjer Flowers' reflects the prevalent sentiment regarding the Gerwani in present-day Indonesian society, even decades after the fall of Suharto's New Order regime. When asked by Suhartini if she fears the word 'Gerwani,' Ming responds by saying it does feel strange to say it and Ming asks if there was any truth to the stories circulated about the Gerwani, if they truly were women who danced around naked and performing sadistic acts. While Suhartini is unable to explain why such lies have been circulated, she could only relay how these have affected her and her comrades. However, even though Suhartini and her friends have shared their painful past and lingering confusion with Ming, they have also shared with her their idealism and social commitment prior to their capture. Despite the hopelessness that they may feel for their situation, together they are able to recall the brighter moments of their youth as they sing verses from Salam Harapan and Genjer-Genjer. Thus, Ming is able to also uncover this facet of these women survivors, one that had been distorted by the official account and hidden by the trauma of their subsequent humiliation, incarceration, rape, and torture. By hearing their stories, Ming, as well as the audience, is able to replace the image of the perverse, immoral women of the Gerwani that the official accounts have been maintaining since Suharto's New Order.

It is worth noting that 'The Silent Song of the Genjer Flowers' premiered during the International Women's Day in 2014. In the opening text of the filmed version uploaded in YouTube, the play is dedicated to the women political prisoners following the 1965-66 Purge, and the victims of sexual violence in Indonesia and all over the world. Thus, the play was not only situated in the memorialization of the 1965-66

tragedy but also in the context of women's activism in Indonesia and globally (Dirgantoro & Hatley, 2020, p. 114).

2. Cambodia's 'The Last Reel'

a. The Cambodian Story through Film

The film-within-the-film 'The Long Way Home' can be read as a metaphor for Cambodia's history after its independence, one that showed a promise of happy future back to its royal grandeur (embodied by the prince) after escaping the tribulations caused by those who would seek power (embodied by the prince's evil brother), through the help of the people (embodied by the masked peasant). However, the original ending, the return to royal grandeur, was destroyed when the Khmer Rouge came to power, and this destruction becomes literal when the final reel caught fire. The film was left without an ending, with its future uncertain, much like how the future of Cambodia became uncertain after the genocide. They could not go back to the way things were (the original ending) or pursue a new ending that ignored the genocide (the proposed ending). Thus, Sophoun's choice to create a new ending that is incongruent with what the story had been so far, but one that acknowledges and accepts the difficult period in their history that had altered their country and its people for good is revolutionary. It is a wiser, more mature, and nuanced take of what they, as a society, needs to do to move forward.

The Khmer Rouge genocide was a devastating aberration that had profoundly changed Cambodian society in the deepest level. There was no going back, and no moving forward without acknowledgement of the painful genocidal event. Sophoun had initially envisioned an ending where the village girl ended up with the masked

peasant, in defiance of traditional expectations, as a gift to her mother, thinking it was what Sothea/Srey Mom needed to heal from her pain. Sophoun had thought that what had ailed her mother was simply a matter of being restricted in the patriarchal conditions of the Cambodian society. Through her journey working on the film and in discovering more about the Khmer Rouge regime, Sophoun has come to realize that what her mother—and the older generation who suffered under the KR— needed, was something more complex. Thus, in her new ending, Sophoun preserves continuity by having Sothea/Srey Mom and Vichea reprise their roles instead of recasting them, and at the same time, have their stories play out to incorporate what they had experienced in their real lives outside of the film. By doing so, she gives both the opportunity to see through the end of their stories, their reel and real lives, something that they had not been able to do because of the difficult roles and situations they found themselves in during and after the genocide.

There is no sweet, simple ending to the story, as Sothea/Srey Mom silently participates in a ceremony where Vichea, who had entered the sangha to atone for his sins, is praying before the memorial stupa in Tonle Bati. Sothea/Srey Mom leaves on a boat being rowed in the lake. With this ending, Sophoun also erases the line separating fiction from reality, showing a type of encounter that can only be achieved through film between victim and perpetrator (albeit qualified as a one-time collaborator under torture): an acknowledgment of an attempt at atonement for the sins committed. However, it should be noted that this ending leaves out a confrontation with another perpetrator, the person guilty of the crime of actually murdering Sothea/Srey Mom's beloved and others, and worse, someone who lives with her intimately: Colonel Bora. The ending of 'The Last Reel' shows Colonel Bora sitting with his family, holding hands

with his wife, who remains unaware that he murdered her beloved Sokha. Sophoun knows this and she is the one who tells her father that Sothea/Srey Mom did not need to know, showing an awareness that some things may be beyond one can live with.

In 'The Last Reel,' there are no scenes depicting forgiveness or reconciliation, not between the survivors and perpetrators, only a confrontation and a silent acknowledgment. The writer and director tread a careful line in presenting a way forward, one that recognizes and actively encourages the confrontation of the past while also acknowledging the difficulty of forgiveness and reconciliation in the face of such a devastating episode in Cambodian history. The most that was given is the acknowledgment Sothea/Srey Mom gave to her lover's betrayer's attempt at atonement for the sin of giving up his brother's name under torture. Thus, Sophoun's decision to keep her father's culpability in Sokha's death, which is graver than Vichea's, from her mother is understood to be an act of mercy—less for Bora, but more for Sothea/Srey Mom.

The intimacy of having a KR perpetrator within the family alongside a victim of the regime presents a complex dynamic that mirrors the state of Cambodian society, wherein perpetrators and victims live side-by-side, in communities and neighborhoods, and within families. Even after decades since the KR regime was ousted from power by Vietnamese forces, its legacy can still be detected in contemporary Cambodian society. This can be seen in the way Bora has his men take Vichea from the cinema, blindfolded and with hands tied, to a deserted spot just outside the city. There, Bora threatens him with the first part of the hauntingly familiar KR slogan: "To keep you is no gain; to kill you is no loss." The KR legacy can also be

detected in the violence lurking beneath Bora's exterior, his lack of remorse for his other victims, and the compounding of domestic violence in Cambodia, which will be explained later in this chapter.

The film itself, 'The Last Reel,' is an ode to the victims of the Khmer Rouge genocide. It ends with a text recounting the 1.8 million people killed during the Khmer Rouge reign from 1975-79, the loss of 90% of the 300 films made the decade before, and the targeting of the filmmakers and actors by the regime.

b. Forging Connections through Generations by Confronting the Past

As with Mardzoeki's play, each of the characters in the film who were alive during the Khmer Rouge genocide has their own stories to tell: Sokha's victimhood, all the more made tragic by his brother's betrayal; Vichea's intertwined victimhood and complicity that puts him squarely in what Primo Levi called the "gray zone"; and Bora's past as a KR cadre responsible for Sokha's murder, among others (Levi, 1989, p. 42). However, the centerpiece of the film is Sothea/Srey Mom, the object of love and desire by all three men of the older generation and the source of inspiration and motivation for her daughter Sophoun.

For most of the film, Sothea/Srey Mom alternates between assuming the role of a model mother and wife, as per the Chbab Srey, and entering a listless, despondent state, retreating within herself and not speaking of the past, showing symptoms of a trauma-based Cambodian cultural syndrome of distress, the baksbat. Baksbat, while overlapping with PTSD, includes elements outside of its criteria, such as the erosion

of the self, submissiveness, passivity, or reluctant to fight back, and being mute or deaf or feigning ignorance (Chhim, 2012, p. 654; Chhim, 2013, p. 164). Both her children are concerned over these “attacks” but are unable to find a solution for it as they themselves do not know the exact cause of it since they are kept in the dark with regards to their parents’ past. The impetus for Sophoun’s decision to pursue re-making the ending of the film that starred her mother in her youth is the desire to save Sothea/Srey Mom from what is ailing her.

Sophoun’s attempt to help her mother is well-intentioned but lacked nuance, as she had naively thought that she could save her mother by simply reminding her of her glamorous past as a film star and by presenting an alternate ending that saw her mother’s character choosing the masked peasant over the prince. This assumption is informed by Sophoun’s limited understanding of her mother and her parents’ marriage. For Sophoun, she perceived her mother’s submissiveness to her father, despite his bouts of anger and violence, as a product of a clinging to tradition that promotes a subservient type of femininity. Sophoun does not believe that her mother loves her father, and thus, by showing Sothea/Srey Mom an ending where her character defies traditional expectations and marrying for love, she would see another way and, in Sophoun’s view, a freer way of being. It is only when Sophoun had learned about the past, i.e., the period of turmoil under the Khmer Rouge that saw intimate betrayals and real and symbolic fratricide, through encounters with the survivors and perpetrators, that she comes to an understanding of the complex nature of her mother’s pain, her relationship with her husband that is tied in with the KR regime, and the pain of the Cambodian society in the present. Sophoun moves from an individualistic ending to one that is historically and socially grounded, and, in the process, is able to break

down the barriers that had separated her generation from the one before. Furthermore, this reconnecting of the past enables her to also connect with the future generation, as evidenced in the final scene of the film. For her mother Sothea/Srey mom, Sophoun also managed to restore an aspect of her past through film. Thus, Sophoun manages to restore intergenerational connections that have been ruptured by the Khmer Rouge genocide by learning about the past and taking what she had learned in forging the path ahead for her generation and the next.

However, it should be noted that this restoration of intergenerational bonds is made possible by acknowledging that there are irreconcilable aporias, e.g., the daughter keeping the secret of her father's crime from her mother to keep the peace and, implicitly, to keep her alive (Morag, 2020, p. 6). Forgiveness and reconciliation may not be possible for many, if not most, of the survivors, especially since the decision to try only the perpetrators in the highest echelons meant that many of the mid- to low-level perpetrators still live side-by-side with their victims, not facing any accountability for their actions. The father in the film exemplifies this: his crimes go unremarked, and he even enjoys a good standing in the military in present-day Cambodia, despite his complicity as a KR cadre during the genocide. Furthermore, an acknowledgment of one's complicity may not come as easily as it did in the film, as there is still that reluctance to revisit this painful period of Cambodian history.

Even so, Sotho's film is a brave attempt to open up this conversation and offers up a more nuanced understanding of the complex situation of living in a post-genocide society.

c. Two Contrasting Views on Femininity in Cambodia and the Effects of the Khmer Rouge Genocide on Women

In 'The Last Reel,' two contrasting types of femininity are portrayed: the traditional, conservative type as exemplified by Sothea/Srey Mom and the modern, progressive type exemplified by her daughter Sophoun. Similar to Indonesia, Cambodia has a strong state-promoted sense of morality, backed by a cultural tradition and enacted through "morality projects" (Hoefinger, 2016, pp. 177-178). There are double standards for men and women, and a scene in the film exemplifies this, when Sophoun quotes a popular Khmer proverb, "Men are like gold; women are like cloth" to her brother. By this, she means that men do not lose their value so easily, or at all; but for women, once they are "stained," they lose their value. She tells him that there are different standards for men and women in their patriarchal society, that as a woman, she is subjected to much harsher standards of proper femininity. She also has limited choices for her future, apart from becoming a wife and a mother.

This traditional and conservative ideal of womanhood can be traced to the centuries-old text that offers a guide to the proper conduct of women: the Chbab Srey. Penned as a mother giving advice to her daughter, the Chbab Srey instructs women to be quiet and submissive to their husband, reinforcing the "cultural traditions of inferiority and subservience of women" (The Cambodian Committee of Women, 2007, p. 7). The text is also disseminated by mothers, as can be seen in the scene in 'The Last Reel' when Sothea/Srey Mom hands a copy of the Chbab Srey to Sophoun the morning after her father found her coming home late from a night out. Besides being disseminated by mothers, the Chbab Srey is also embedded through socialization and education, thus seeping into the everyday lives of women in Cambodia (Brickell, 2011,

p. 481). Besides prescribing a code of conduct, the Chbab Srey also warns women that any indiscretion on their part, e.g., ignoring their husband's wishes, would have the effect of inducing disruption in family and communal life. Because of this, the Chbab Srey plays a role in the complex problem of domestic violence in Cambodia (The Cambodian Committee of Women, 2007, p. 7). In the film, this can be seen when Sothea/Srey Mom, who religiously abides by the Chbab Srey, endures the bouts of violence from her husband and consistently takes his side when Sophoun criticizes him and his violent past and actions.

In contrast to her mother, Sophoun openly defies this conservative ideal of femininity promoted by Chbab Srey. Sophoun regularly goes out at night with her gangster boyfriend Veasna, either enjoying the fair in Koh Pich or singing at a beer garden. She wears skin-tight and revealing clothing and rides a motorbike, which has been viewed as a metaphor for gendered mobility, i.e., by riding a motorbike, women have the same freedom to move as men (Brickell, 2011, pp. 451-452). Sophoun does not take the snide remarks from her classmates silently and has a retort ready for when each member of her family reprimands her or tries to make her follow the conservative ideal. Sophoun is keenly aware of the double standards for men and women in Cambodia and she does not view domestic violence as something that should be borne silently. However, Sophoun's defiance of the ideals for women in the Cambodian patriarchal society is limited to these small, individual acts of rebellion. As with the ending of 'The Long Way Home,' it is only when Sophoun learns about her country's history that she is able to envision another path for women besides returning to the traditional, conservative ideal or the individualistic acts of defiance that ignores

the past. By becoming aware of the wider social and historical context does she begin to embark on a genuinely progressive feminist approach.

Under the Khmer Rouge, the core rules of traditional Khmer hierarchy, including the teachings of the Chbab Srey, have been abolished, at least officially. What this means is that the period under the KR regime can be argued as the most gender-equitable period since the preclassical times in Cambodia, as women were mobilized alongside men as a workforce for nation-building (Brickell, 2011, p. 439). However, this superficial construction of equality did not exempt women from being subjugated to specific gendered violence, including a wide variety of rape scenarios and sexual violence, which also included sexual exploitation in forced marriages with cadres (Moore, 2015; Killean, 2015, p. 335; Gidley, 2019, pp. 45-46). This forced marriage, which was aimed at boosting the then-flagging population of Cambodia, is what happened between Bora and Sothea/Srey Mom in 'The Last Reel': after Sokha's death, Bora married Sothea/Srey Mom in a mass marriage ceremony stripped of traditional, familial, and spiritual elements, with the intention of saving Sothea/Srey Mom from further dangers and death. This is what both Bora and Sothea/Srey Mom keep on repeating to Sophoun whenever she criticizes her parents' marriage and their dynamic, which had seen her mother quietly submitting to Bora, even when he was violent. A closer look into this institution of forced marriage reveals that it had resulted in the creation of a state-enforced culture of rape and the normalization of sexual violence within marriage, with KR cadres spying and even assisting the husband in raping the wife to ensure consummation (Killean, 2015, p. 336). While this particular aspect of the forced marriage is not explored in the film, the legacy of violence still reverberates in the marriage and family life of Bora and Sothea/Srey Mom, with Bora

occasionally flying into rage, yelling, and shaking his wife. In the period following the ousting of the Khmer Rouge from power, there was a reassertion of tradition, i.e., the ways of life before the conflict, through conservative literature, which included the codified codes of conduct, as a means to reconstruct the Khmer nation after the violent devastating period in their history (Brickell, 2011, p. 439).

Thus, the Chbab Srey ideal of womanhood is not only a relic of a Cambodia's past before colonization and the Khmer Rouge, but it is symbolic of an attempt to go back to the way things were before the rupture under the KR regime. Sothea/Srey Mom's clinging to the Chbab Srey can be read not only as a result of the teachings that have been inculcated into her since before the KR took over, but also as a way of reasserting traditional continuity with the past. However, as with the dilemma on the ending 'The Long Way Home,' going back to a time before the genocide is no longer possible; this tragedy has irrevocably changed Cambodia and its people. The KR institution of forced marriage and the state-enforced culture of violence against women have worsened the domestic and sexual violence already condoned by tradition. In fact, one of the trauma symptoms of baksbat identified among survivors of the genocide was increased submissiveness (Chhim, 2012, p. 643). Despite the ousting of the Khmer Rouge regime, its legacy has seeped into almost every aspect of contemporary Cambodian society. The relationship between Bora and Sothea/Srey Mom bears the obvious marks of this legacy: she submissively takes her husband's rages and stands up for him despite his violence, not only because of the Chbab Srey code of conduct, but also out of gratitude to him for saving her life. The last one takes primacy over the ethical complications of his role as a KR cadre responsible for the enforcement of the inhumane rules of the regime and for the murder of his fellow

Cambodians—not including the fact that he also murdered the only man his wife had ever loved since this detail is kept secret from her. The KR legacy of forced marriage can also be seen in Bora's insistence on replicating the arranged marriage dynamic, i.e., matching up his daughter with a military man or a son of a military man. Part of this insistence can be viewed as rooted in Bora's desire to curry goodwill from his superiors, but this is also a product of his awareness that there is safety in arranged marriages with men with connections to state/military power, like how, as a KR cadre, he was able to save Sothea/Srey Mom through marriage. Thus, this arrangement of forced marriage can be seen as another legacy from the Khmer Rouge regime.

With the pervasiveness of KR ideology in present-day Cambodian society, individualistic acts of defiance uninformed of the past are less likely to be successful in effecting lasting social change in the conditions for women. It is not simply a matter of upending the conservative ideals promoted by the Chab Srey, but it involves an understanding of the complex gender dynamics engendered by and worsened under the KR regime. Furthermore, due to the devastating effects of the genocide on a personal and social level, and specifically on women, feminist advocacy for the older generation may be limited in scope, considering the unique effects of trauma on the affected person. Thus, at the end of the film, while Sothea/Srey Mom is able to confront at least one of those who was responsible for her beloved's death, she still follows the Chbab Srey ideal of femininity and she remains unaware of the extent of her husband's intimate betrayal. This is understood that, under the specific Cambodian context post-genocide, this is the most that could be afforded to her in her situation.

For the second-generation represented by Sophoun, there are more possibilities for action. When Sophoun begins to comprehend the complex dynamics, the unique harms inflicted by the civil war and the genocide, and the intersection of her fight as a woman for equitable treatment with that of her parents' generation's struggles, she also begins to see a way forward, not only for the women in Cambodian society or for her generation, but also for the men and for the generations before and after hers. Her struggle evolved from individual, personally motivated acts of rebellion to one that saw her basing her actions on what would help offer a semblance of reconciliation among the victims and perpetrators of the Khmer Rouge genocide, albeit made possible only through the cinematic medium. Sophoun's feminist advocacy transformed from individual to social action that transcended division lines, while still acknowledging the complexity and specificity of their situation. This exemplifies the qualities of Third World feminism by situating women's oppression and resistance historically in the Cambodian post-genocide context. Furthermore, the decision to improve the condition of the family and the community is reflective of the characteristic of Third World women's movements (Herr, 2014, pp. 5-6).

B. The Role of Women as Cultural Workers in Post-Genocide Societies

As cultural workers, Faiza Mardzoeki and Kulikar Sotho maximized their chosen medium in presenting the counter-narratives that are rooted in women's experience of the traumatic events and their lingering effects. The role of cultural workers is important as the cultural texts they create are informed by and inform the changing historical, political, and social context of their respective societies (Saukko, 2003, p. 99). Works by women, for women, and about women—which is the case for the works made and directed by the ASEAN women cultural workers chosen for this study—are

especially important as they capture a specific type of experience that is often overlooked. In particular, the subject of women's experience in post-genocide societies has come up in a limited number of texts, and even fewer still, tackling the topic of intergenerational trauma, and fewer still within the context of Southeast Asia. Furthermore, Faiza Mardzoeki and Kulikar Sotho, as members of the hinge generation, perform the process of what Hirsch calls the imaginative investment, projection, and creation to actively engage with the past, thus embodying them with living connections and countering the loss of communal and social bonds resulting from the traumatic historic events in their respective societies (Hirsch, 2008, p. 107). Thus, as ASEAN women cultural workers tackling the subject of women's experience under the Anti-Communist Purge and the Khmer Rouge genocide, Mardzoeki and Sotho simultaneously reclaim space for women in the historical narrative of events as well as aid in the restoration of the social, communal, and intergenerational connections ruptured by these traumatic events.

1. Faiza Mardzoeki

With a civil servant father and a mother active in state-aligned women's organizations Dharma Wanita and PKK, Faiza Mardzoeki's background does not show any affinity to the PKI and the women's movement associated with it, the Gerwani. Like many Indonesian children raised after 1965, Mardzoeki was grew up with the official account of the 30 September 1965 and that the Gerwani women were perverted women who committed lascivious acts, tortured, and murdered the six army generals and one lieutenant (Mardzoeki, 2012). However, despite the pervasive state propaganda against the Gerwani, Mardzoeki was able to find out for herself the truth of their story through her work as a feminist activist. In 2011, Mardzoeki met Ibu Umi

Sardjono, the former head of Gerwani, then aged 87, in a nursing home in Jakarta. Ibu Sardjono was lying in bed, very sick and very poor, with no one to care for her, but when she began talking about her past as a Gerwani member, she became animated (Dirgantoro & Hatley, 2020, p. 105). This encounter became a catalyst for Mardzoeki to learn more of the truth about these women political prisoners from the period.

Through 'The Silent Song of the Genjer Flowers,' Mardzoeki sought to open the space to clear the name of the members of the Gerwani, the women's organization specifically targeted by Suharto's New Order for the alleged torture and murder of the army generals. Through her research and interviews with the surviving members, Mardzoeki had found Gerwani to be an organization similar to the PKK, which promoted women and children's rights and literacy, but was also cross-sectoral in its advocacies, such as supporting the poor local farmers (Mardzoeki, 2016; Bevins, 2020, p. 66; Ariati, 2012, p. 9). While Mardzoeki may not have a direct relationship with the Gerwani women, as a feminist activist, the Gerwani, a women's organization that promoted gender and social causes, can be considered as her symbolic forebearers. In this regard, Mardzoeki, along with the rest of the younger generation of women taking up feminist and social causes in their activism, is part of the hinge generation, who is put to task into transmuting the received knowledge into either history or myth (Hoffman, 2004, p. xv). Furthermore, as there had been a prolonged period of ostracization of the Gerwani women that did not end in their release in the 1970s and 80s, this process of transmutation has similarly been delayed. While some of the women survivors of the Purge have attempted to reclaim their stories as early as the 1980s, it was only after fall of Suharto in 1998 that they have become less afraid (Wieringa S. E., 2000, pp. 442, 453). Unfortunately, it still took almost two decades

before their stories could be given the space for open public discussion, with the staging of 'The Silent Song of the Genjer Flowers' in Jakarta in 2014 marking a significant milestone in breaking the stigma around the Gerwani women and women political prisoners, in general, some of whom were not affiliated with the Gerwani but were nonetheless victimized by the labeling of them as evil and immoral women (Mardzoeki, 2022).

Mardzoeki's attempts to preserve the memories of the Gerwani and pass them on to the younger generation is an act of defiance against the destruction of collective memory on the Gerwani women, which decades of slander and silence has facilitated (Cribb, 2002, p. 652). While the Indonesian government under President Joko Widodo has organized a national symposium in 2016 to discuss the Purge, it has been criticized for focusing on reconciliation without trying to find out the truth behind the massacres (Kwok, 2016). Thus, even before considering reconciliation, finding, acknowledging, and speaking the truth behind the traumatic event, especially one that has been shrouded in aggressive propaganda, are a prerequisite. This is where Mardzoeki's work comes in as she challenges the official narrative of the events surrounding the Anti-Communist Purge, especially with regards to the Gerwani women. Her strategy of using theater performance for the fictional retelling of events based on actual stories from the women survivors and framing it as a conversation between a granddaughter and her grandmother enable emotional identification with the survivors while at the same time providing enough distance to prevent the "injurious power of traumatic affect" (Heckner, 2008, p. 70).

Overcoming the challenges of pervasive state propaganda, Mardzoeki found out for herself the truth behind the sexual slander against the Gerwani women. Furthermore, as a feminist and cultural activist, she used her platform to facilitate in telling the stories of the women survivors through the dynamic intergenerational transmission characteristic of postmemorial work. Through her work, she is able to challenge the official narrative, provide a space for the Gerwani women to reclaim their stories, and aid in the restoration of their connections with their communities and the younger generation.

2. Kulikar Sotho

Similar to how the main character Sophoun was motivated by her love for her mother and a desire to understand her painful past in re-making the ending of the film-within-the-film 'The Long Way Home,' so was Kulikar Sotho when she made 'The Last Reel.' Sotho's parents were directly affected by the Khmer Rouge genocide, with her father not surviving the ordeal. In the aftermath, Sotho had noted that her mother did not speak of the past for 35 years and it was this, along with the interviews with both victims and perpetrators, that became a catalyst for her to make a film that tells a Cambodian story for a Cambodian perspective. This personal connection informs Sotho's approach with the film, which made it, at times, feel like a semi-autobiographical story, with the parallels of Sotho and Sophoun using the medium of film as a way to come to terms with Cambodia's painful past.

Like Mardzoeki's project, Sotho understands the necessity of knowing one's past to make sense of the present and one's identity, so that one may know where to go and how to move forward. In an interview, Sotho shared that the trauma that the

generation before her experienced from the genocide overshadowed their lives and those of the next generation (Southeast Asia Globe Editorial, 2014). Even when the past was wrapped in silence, in what Sotho had come to understand as her mother's way of protecting her, it still influenced the behaviors of the older generation, which in turn, affects the younger generation. This is evident in the film in the tense and heavy atmosphere in Sophoun's household, despite the silence of both Bora and Srey Mom regarding their painful past. In fact, this silence becomes a barrier between the parents and the children, as the latter could not comprehend why their mother would go on trance-like episodes nor their father's rage and violence, both of which have their roots in the unspoken past.

Recognizing that Cambodian society is currently trapped emotionally due to the complex legacy of the civil war and the genocide, Sotho wanted to express through the film the need to reconcile so they could move on (Palmer, 2015). However, as Morag noted in her analysis of the film, there is no reconciliation with the past; considering the atrocities and devastating intimate betrayals that occurred under the KR regime, what is possible is an aporetic reconciliation (2020, p. 6). The pervasiveness of the KR ideology, values, and rhetoric in Cambodian society subverts any normality, and to keep the family, which can be read as a metaphor for the community, intact means having to accept there are irresolvable aporias (Morag, 2020, p. 6).

Sotho's nuanced take on the current state of Cambodian society, burdened by its traumatic and horrific past, shows a grounded understanding of the complexity of her people's situation. There is no easy resolution to their situation and any proposal

of reconciliation has its caveats. It is worth noting that Sotho's subject position as a second-generation female filmmaker informs her approach in tackling this difficult subject. The sense of confusion and responsibility, and the desire to repair, which are characteristics of children of the second generation, are present in the film as well as Sotho's experience as a woman carving a space for herself in the male-dominated filmmaking industry. Prominent in the film is Sophoun's struggle against the sexist standards in Cambodian patriarchal society. This struggle, however, is weaved into the plot of the film, with Sophoun's distinctively female perspective shaping the new ending for 'The Long Way Home,' echoing what Card, Dirgantoro, and Hatley had said about women's role in maintaining family and community relationships and sustaining family life (Card, 2003, p. 76; Dirgantoro & Hatley, 2020, p. 115).

Confrontations with low-level perpetrators are not always possible, nor feasible in actuality, but by mediating these confrontations through imaginative fictional portrayals, Sotho is able to facilitate in expressing the complex emotions that come with victims and perpetrators living side-by-side, sometimes within the same family. Similarly, this fictional portrayal also articulates what may not be possible for the people directly affected by the genocide to say, such as the unspeakable pain that the mother is carrying even decades after the event. By doing so, Sotho facilitates the restoration of social bonds that have been severed by intimate betrayals and horrific cruelty during the genocide and of the intergenerational connections ruptured by trauma.

C. Addressing the Negative Societal Impacts in Post-Traumatic Societies in through Postmemorial Work

Postmemorial work concerns the dynamic intergenerational transmission of trauma, i.e., a generation-specific response to a traumatic historic event that seeks to represent the experience of the directly affected generation in new ways (Heckner, 2008, p. 67). Through the process of imaginative investment, projection, and creation, postmemorial work embodies a living connection to the past as well as intra-generational horizontal contemporaneous identification, thus, counteracting the loss of social vitality that exists through contemporary and intergenerational bonds, which is the central evil of genocide (Hirsch, 2008, pp. 114-115; Card, 2003, p. 63).

The image of the lost mother and the fantasy of her recovery is a very potent trope in mobilizing the work of postmemory (Hirsch, 2008, p. 120). This trope can be noted in the two works by Mardzoeki and Sotho: in 'The Silent Song of the Genjer Flowers,' the loss of the mother is literal (Rachma's death and Suhartini's estrangement), and in 'The Last Reel' the loss is symbolic (Srey Mom's traumatized state). The impetus for the recovery of the lost maternal connection comes from different directions in the two works: from the (grand)mother to the (grand)daughter in 'The Silent Song of the Genjer Flowers, and from the daughter to the mother in 'The Last Reel.' In both accounts, the connection is recovered by learning what the (grand)mother went through. While each centered on one family and can thus be construed as individual stories, it should be noted that individual memories include more than what the individual per se experienced; rather, with individuals as part of social groups, these memories, especially once verbalized, then become part of the collective memory (Hirsch, 2008, p. 110). Thus, the intimacy of the family stories can

gain a wider collective significance and thus can become an effective strategy in addressing certain negative societal impacts of traumatic historic events.

For Claudia Card, victims are not helpless or passive, nor an identity, a state of abjection; they are a target or recipient of harm (Meyers, 2018, p. 154). However, effecting change can be very difficult for the victims, who sometimes find it too painful to talk about their past, or in many cases of the survivors of the Indonesian Anti-Communist Purge and the Khmer Rouge genocide, who are already in their advanced age. For victims of gendered violence, shame adds to the difficulty in sharing their stories with others. Thus, the role of the younger generation, whether connected directly or indirectly to the survivors, is important in presenting a counter-discourse for the prevailing official narrative that either excludes or marginalizes the voices of the women survivors. However, it is not enough to simply relay the painful and traumatic experiences of the victims of the genocide; they also need to empower them, in the sense that they are also portrayed beyond their victimhood.

In 'The Silent Song of the Genjer Flowers,' the women survivors share with Ming their days as activists during the early years of Indonesia's independence. They talk about their past with pride, the social activities they did together with the other young people, with the aim of uplifting the communal living standards. In 'The Last Reel,' Sophoun gets a glimpse of Cambodia's glorious past before the civil war through the film-within-the-film 'The Long Way Home.' Here, Sotho's familiarity with the classical aesthetics due to her background as a classical dancer helped imbue the film-within-the-film with the Golden Era looks and energy. With the multi-faceted portrayal of the victims, Mardzoeki and Sotho do not fall into the trap of further

victimizing them by only showing their abject suffering and humiliation, but instead, they also facilitate in restoring their dignity. This is a key aspect of postmemorial work that does not seek to retraumatize, but to counter the ruptures caused by traumatic historic events through the embodiment of living connection.

Mardzoeki and Sotho employed the postmemorial strategy of imaginative storytelling to address the negative societal impacts in post-traumatic societies through fictional conversations and encounters that may be difficult to do in real life: the receptiveness to hear about the truth behind the slander against the Gerwani women in 'The Silent Song of the Genjer Flowers' and the confrontations between victims and perpetrators in 'The Last Reel.' The dedications of these works to the female victims of political persecution and sexual violence in Indonesia and globally and to the victims of the Khmer Rouge genocide, particularly the artists and cultural workers, are evidence of their attempts to contribute to the discussion regarding these traumatic historic events. While there are significant changes in their approach as warranted by their specific historical/national contexts, both ASEAN women cultural workers exhibited critical and conscientious examination of the possibilities of reparation, reconciliation, and reconnection. The endings of the two works are grounded in the material realities of the current state of Indonesian and Cambodian societies, even in the optimistic ending note in 'The Last Reel.'

There is a self-awareness on the limitations of these cultural texts in proposing the way forward: the ethical implications of having women survivors retell their traumatic stories in 'The Silent Song of the Genjer Flowers' and the complex post-genocidal ethics in 'The Last Reel.' While these two works do not seek to provide

cathartic relief, they instead aspire to provide something more significant: the necessary historical truth (Morag, 2020, p. 7).

D. The Impact of ‘The Silent Song of the Genjer Flowers’ and ‘The Last Reel’

Both cultural texts were released in 2014 and have been staged and screened in various local and international venues. While there have been fewer online reviews and articles written about ‘The Silent Song of the Genjer Flowers,’ Mardzoeki had noted that the audience response to both the staging and the screening of the video recording has been positive. ‘The Last Reel’ has been screened in various film festivals and has received many online reviews praising its cinematography and its relevance to the Cambodian post-genocide generation.

1. ‘The Silent Song of the Genjer Flowers’

The premiere staging of ‘The Silent Song of the Genjer Flowers’ in March 2014 at GoetheHaus in Jakarta was held over four nights, with each night full house, and reached an estimated 1,600 audience members (Mardzoeki, 2022). As the term ‘Gerwani’ still has negative connotation, Mardzoeki avoided cancellation and backlash by keeping a low profile, strictly guarding all the processes involved in the preparation of the play, and preparing various volunteers, which included lawyers. She was determined that the performance in Jakarta would push through. Since staging a theater performance for a full season is difficult in Indonesia due to expensive costs of the production and in renting the building, Mardzoeki had to maximize the four-day performance at GoetheHaus in 2014. She had multiple cameras installed beforehand to record the play so that it could be uploaded in YouTube.

In an interview, Mardzoeki said that having the film version of the play uploaded on YouTube, which is the most popular video-sharing platform in Indonesia, helped her reach remote audience (Parahita & Yulianto, 2020, p. 59). As of September 2022, the film version has garnered over 13,221 views in YouTube. This number does not include the film screenings held in various locations, such as Amsterdam, Melbourne, Los Angeles, Seattle, Singapore, and Malaysia. At some film screening venues, Mardzoeki invited some of the survivors for discussions with the audience. The audience reception has been positive both locally and internationally. Mardzoeki noted that in Indonesia the reception was very emotional, with the audience expressing shock and wanting to know more about the Gerwani. In contrast, audiences abroad asked more historical questions and about the creative process.

Online reviews and articles about the play itself have been scarce, with only three available for access: Sylvia Hamdani's interview with Mardzoeki regarding the play published in the Jakarta Globe on 28 February 2014, Proditia Sabarini's review published in Jakarta Post on 22 August 2016, and Wulan Dirgantoro and Barbara Hatley's chapter in the anthology *Gender, Violence and Power in Indonesia Across Time and Space* published in 2020.

Hamdani's interview with Mardzoeki was published before the premiere staging of 'The Silent Song of the Genjer Flowers' to promote the event. In this interview, Mardzoeki shared about the background of the play, the pervasive sexual slander against the Gerwani women and their plight at the hands of the Indonesian army, which included torture, mutilation, and decades-long incarceration (Hamdani, 2014). In the interview, Mardzoeki also talked about her encounter with the surviving 1965-66

women political prisoners, who were already 70s and 80s but who still showed strength and vigor, despite their horrific experiences. The interview also included some of the actresses in the play, Pipien Putri who played the role of Eyang Nini and Niniek L. Karim who played the role of Sulahana, Nini's former cellmate.

Sabarini's review, which came two years after the staging of the play in the Goethe Haus in Jakarta in 2014, described the act of storytelling in the play by Eyang Nini and in the real world by Mardzoeki through the play is an act against despair that carries with it a faint hope of healing. In her review, Sabarini contextualized the play in the contentious part of the Indonesian history, from the failed putsch of 30 September 1965 to the Anti-Communist Purge that quickly followed and the era under Suharto's New Order regime that propagated the lies against the Gerwani women and their alleged role in the putsch. With this, she highlighted the significance of Mardzoeki's work, for the women political prisoners who have been victimized and slandered for decades, for the younger generation in Indonesia today, and for its contribution to the conversation surrounding a traumatic episode in Indonesia's history.

Dirgantoro and Hatley's article in the anthology examined the artistic strategies and the audience impact of 'The Silent Song of the Genjer Flowers' and another Indonesian play, 'Turmoil at the Sacred Grove.' This academic examination looked into the use of theater performance as a strategy to explore the impact and relay to the audience the horrific events and aftermath of the 1965-66 Anti-Communist Purge. Dirgantoro and Hatley narrowed their focus on the theme of maternal loss and restorative acts through the lens of Hirsch's theory of postmemory generation. This academic approach underscored the importance of the play in the academic and

artistic conversations regarding the play and its role not only in correcting the frightening images of the PKI and the Gerwani women propagated for decades by state actors such as the Indonesian army, but also in generating positive memories to be carried in the future (Dirgantoro & Hatley, 2020, p. 109).

Despite the limited number of reviews and articles written about 'The Silent Song of the Genjer Flowers,' the audience impact after its premiere staging showed how the play had resonated with both the younger generation unaware of the truth behind the Gerwani's experience and of the women political prisoners themselves, who are already at an advanced age (Kusuma, n.a.). There is still difficulty in raising awareness on the plight of the women political prisoners of Indonesia especially since the stigma of being one and the automatic assumption of being a member of the Gerwani is still present. Thus, further reviews, articles, and studies will be helpful not only for the better visibility of this play but also for the women it depicts.

2. 'The Last Reel'

In making 'The Last Reel,' Kulikar Sotho wanted to convey a universal message of humanity and to depict the progress the post-genocide generation has made in the years after the genocide (Sotheavy, 2015). Through her background as a classical dancer, Sotho was able to capture the spirit of Cambodia's Golden Era in the 1960s through the aesthetics, the vocals of folk dancer and singer Sophea Chamroeun, and the casting of Dy Saveth, an actress from the Golden Age of Cambodian Cinema. Sotho spent two years working on the film, financing 99% of the project, and in 2014, 'The Last Reel' premiered at the Tokyo International Film Festival (TIFF), where it won

the Spirit of Asia Award. Since then, it has been part of the official selection of 24 film festivals, winning awards for Best Film, Best Screenplay, Best Director, among others.

In the online database IMDb, the film has an average rating of 7.6 out of 10, out of 126 user ratings (IMDb, n.a.). In the review aggregator site, Rotten Tomatoes, the film has two reviews posted: Jessica Kiang of IndieWire and Katie Smith-Wong of Flick Feast (Rotten Tomatoes, n.a.). Kiang gave it a B rating, describing it as more story than style, with its educational and emotional impact best felt in the latter portion of the film (Kiang, 2014). Smith-Wong gave it a 4 out of 5 rating, commenting on the film's lack of originality, stereotypical characters, overly sentimental script, overindulgent plot twists, but praised the acting and cinematography (Smith-Wong, 2019). Smith-Wong believed that the film was better off as a pseud-documentary rather than a drama, but she acknowledged that as a celebration of Cambodian cinema and a bold, unflinching account of a dark chapter in Cambodian history, 'The Last Reel' shone.

In Letterboxd, a social platform for film discussion, the film has 20 user reviews and an average rating of 3.2 out of 5 from 80 user ratings (Letterboxd, n.a.). The reviews posted in the site varied in the elements of the film they enjoyed and the ones they found lacking. Elements that were praised include the film's homage to Cambodian cinema, its tackling of the brutal past under the Khmer Rouge regime, the cinematography, complex characterization, and the tackling of the moral and ethical complexities of post-genocide Cambodia. Some elements that were criticized were the stiff delivery of the lines, the convoluted plot though others criticized the narrative as too straightforward, and the lack of a satisfying conclusion. Some users were made to reflect about the past and how to move forward.

In Clarence Tsui's review for the Hollywood Reporter, he described the film as an engaging, humanistic piece about the power of art in understanding the past and the present. Tsui recognized that Kulikar intended for the film to remind the younger generation of Cambodians of their country's glorious past—the classical Khmer culture and cinema featured in the film-within-the-film 'The Long Way Home'—before the Khmer Rouge came to power and he identified the metatextuality as the film's trump card. With the cast's bright performances, Tsui ended his review by saying that 'The Last Reel' felt like part of a new, exciting beginning, a step back to the consolidation of the national cinema in Cambodia (Tsui, 2014).

Stephen Palmer writing for Eastern Kicks noted that while the film has its occasional uncomfortable and clumsy parts with some plot points not going anywhere, it was still a classily made and thought-provoking film. Palmer noted that the project was ambitious in its scope and did not lack style and while the characters were complex, it was the medium of the film itself and history that are the driving force of 'The Last Reel.' Recreating or rewriting history was not an option, as Sophoun herself found out; what was important was to learn from the lessons of the past and while the darkness may not have gone, there is the path towards a new era (Palmer, 2015).

Writing for Far East Film Festival, Paolo Bertolin described the film as a deeply honest and generous film, albeit a little naïve and sentimental in its melodramatic moments. Bertolin noted that Sotho has great faith in the medium of film, especially in its healing power, and this was shown in the final scene of the film, where Sophoun

expressed her hope that new stories could now be told by the future generation (Bertolin, 2015).

In Richard Kuipers' review for *Variety*, he wrote that with the events set in present-day Cambodia, the horrors of the Khmer Rouge genocide are brought into a contemporary context. The film tackled the questions such as how collective memory is shaped and what is the price to pay when buried truths come out. Some details points for criticism include the at times prosaic dialogue, Veasna's sudden transformation, and the final part of the film feeling overcrowded with resolutions, but Kuipers added that these were not to any serious detriment of the film. Kuipers also praised the cinematography by Bonnie Elliott and the subtle score by Christopher Elves (Kuipers, 2015).

Among the reviews posted online, only Hemal Shringla's review for the *Leaflet* identified the forced marriage aspect in the film as a legacy of the Khmer Rouge regime that Colonel Bora attempted to replicate with Sophoun and the Cambodia-specific syndrome of distress experience by the KR survivors, *baksbat*, that Srey Mom was experiencing. Shringla also noted that the revival of the Cambodian cinema is rooted in the trauma of genocide and an obsessive excavation of the past, citing John Pirozzi's 'Don't Think I've Forgotten' and Rithy Panh's 'The Missing Picture' but noted that Sotho's film is significant as it is the first told from the viewpoint of the post-genocide generation. 'The Last Reel' also sheds light on the intergenerational transmission of trauma from the survivors of the Khmer Rouge to their children and its presentation of cinema as a means for renewal is a particularly original concept

(Shringla, 2019). The only parts of the film that Shringla criticized are the wide breadth of topic it sought to cover and its length.

Jeremy Sing of SINDie noted that due to the film's attempt to combine many elements, it suffered from contrivance, with a lot of serendipitous encounters. However, the film's commitment to complete the character arcs and the reminder at the end of the film of the Golden Age of Cambodian Cinema and that 'The Last Reel' is a love letter to it saved the film for him (Sing, 2020).

Pedro Morata of Asian Movie Pulse described the film as honest, beautiful, and personal. He praised the film's honesty in portraying Cambodia's violent past. While acknowledging that Ian Masters, a foreigner, wrote the screenplay, Morata revealed that the story for 'The Last Reel' was Sotho's idea, based on her parents' experience, to whom she dedicated the film. While the film took a while to get going, Morata described the experience as emotional and memorable, giving a special mention to Bonnie Elliott for the cinematography. Morata concluded his review by saying that 'The Last Reel' had love inside its core, both for the cinema and for life in general. He lauded the film as a breakthrough for Cambodian cinema (Morata, 2021).

In the academic field, Raya Morag wrote an analysis of two films by second-generation Khmer female filmmakers that explore the spectrum of post-genocide ethics of forgiveness, from un-forgiveness to aporetic reconciliation: 'The Last Reel' and 'Angkar.' For Morag, 'The Last Reel' proposes an aporetic reconciliation between the victims and perpetrators, based on irresolvable aporias. The film examined the contradictions animating the post-genocidal morality of the post-genocide generation.

Morag identified the melodramatic spectacle employed by the film, which served to provide a historical truth, rather than closure or cathartic relief (Morag, 2020, p. 7).

Based on the survey of reviews and articles written about 'The Last Reel,' it is evident that it has good visibility locally and internationally. While many have commented on the melodramatic and sentimental nature of the plot, the film's significance as an examination of the intergenerational transmission of trauma in post-genocide Cambodia and as a harbinger of a new era of Cambodian cinema is widely recognized.

E. The ASEAN Way and the Significance of 'The Silent Song of the Genjer Flowers' and 'The Last Reel'

The ASEAN way of regional cooperation and intra-state relations is anchored on *musyawarah* and *mufakat* among its member-states, and non-interference. The consensus achieved in the informal discussions (*musyawarah*) becomes the starting point of formal discussions with the end goal of a unanimous agreement (*mufakat*) (Collins, 2000, p. 114). It should be noted that this system is not a problem-solving mechanism, but instead one of conflict avoidance that aims to prevent disputes between ASEAN member-states (AMS) from affecting regional stability, and to prevent disputes between AMS and non-ASEAN states from "affecting intra-ASEAN relations" (Weatherbee, 2009, p. 128). The consensus norm is a conscious effort to prioritize focus on noncontentious areas of interests in order to survive the inevitable "conflicting interests and divergent strategic perceptions" and this practice has played a vital role in keeping the peace and stability in the region (Weatherbee, 2009, p. 92).

However, the principle of non-interference of a member-state's internal affairs out of respect for their sovereignty meant that the other AMS are often reticent in commenting—if not outright refusing to comment—on humanitarian issues concerning a particular member-state, unless it is affecting its relations with the other AMS. Though in recent years, the ASEAN has shown some flexibility towards its engagement with the member-states, such as the organization's stance towards the crisis in Myanmar following the February 2021 coup d'état that saw the Tatmadaw depose the ruling party, the National League for Democracy. However, it should be noted that despite the efforts of the ASEAN, primarily led by Indonesia, in devising and implementing a plan to resolve the crisis, this has been ignored by the military-backed Special Administration Council (SAC) (Al Jazeera, 2022). Furthermore, despite the increased flexibility in engagement, the organization has been careful in pronouncing further statements, much less sanctions, on the ongoing crisis as the ASEAN needs to abide with its principle of consensus. This is difficult to achieve when there is opposition from other AMS as doing so has implications for their respective regimes, opening themselves up for scrutiny and further action from the organization. Thus, this incident with Myanmar only highlights the limitations of the ASEAN in intervening in a member-state's internal crisis, even if this has raised humanitarian concerns.

This is relevant to the current study as the issues tackled in the two cultural texts concern the negative societal impacts of political crises in two ASEAN member-states. While both cultural texts have been featured in ASEAN festivals¹, there has been a limited effort in looking into the actual subject of these texts, i.e., the state of

¹ The book form of 'The Silent Song of the Genjer Flowers' was launched in the 3rd ASEAN Literary Festival in 2016 in Jakarta and 'The Last Reel' was screened at the ASEAN International Film Festival and Awards (AIFFA) in Kuching, Sarawak in April 2015, the Bangkok ASEAN Film Festival in August 2015, and the Tingin ASEAN Film Festival in Manila in November 2018.

the women in Indonesia and Cambodia post-genocide. This can be attributed to the fact that while there is an acknowledgment of the excesses and the victims of the 1965-66 Anti-Communist Purge, the Indonesian government has ruled out any official apology and has been reticent in finding out the truth about the massacres (Kwok, 2016). Furthermore, the women political prisoners of the period, especially the Gerwani women, have yet to have their names cleared from the pervasive sexual slander propagated by the army. It should also be noted that the founding of the ASEAN is enmeshed in both the internal subversions of the nation-states and the external Cold War politics of the region, with the alignment of the reactionary capitalist regimes cooperating to defeat the key threats to their rule, namely the internal subversive struggles and the Communist revolution (Jones, 2007, pp. 524-525).

In the case of Cambodia, the ASEAN has played a significant diplomatic role in the events following the 1978 Vietnamese invasion that ousted the Khmer Rouge regime. The ASEAN response to the 3rd Indochina conflict included the sponsorship of resolutions calling for ceasefire, yearly lobbying at the UN to condemn the Vietnamese occupation, and the facilitating of the creation of Coalition Government of Democratic Kampuchea (CGDK), which brought together the three Khmer resistance factions, i.e., the Sihanouk-led Khmer People's National Liberation Front (former pro-Lon Nol forces), the royalist FUNCINPEC (*Front uni national pour un Cambodge indépendant, neutre, pacifique, et coopératif*), and the Khmer Rouge (Croissant & Lorenz, 2018, p. 39). This response had the effect of raising the level of political and security cooperation among the AMS (Emmers, 2003, p. 21). However, it should be noted that this intervention was fueled by the specter of the spreading revolution and, when compared to other interventions (e.g., Tanzanian intervention in Uganda, Soviet

invasion of Afghanistan), is revealed to be deeply political in nature, rather than a principled stance as the ASEAN had argued (Jones, 2007, pp. 526-528). Furthermore, the prevailing narrative built by the Vietnamese-installed People's Republic of Kampuchea (PRK) that only the top leaders of the Khmer Rouge regime are responsible for the atrocities was to counter the international—and regional, in the form of the ASEAN—support being extended to the ousted KR regime (Gidley, 2019, pp. 44, 56). The PRK's creation of the People's Revolutionary Tribunal to try Pol Pot and his cohorts for the crime of genocide became the distant predecessor of the Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia (ECCC).

Thus, in both cases of Indonesia and Cambodia, three factors can be identified that contribute to the lack of support from the ASEAN in looking into the state of the women political prisoners from the 1965-66 Anti-Communist Purge and into the women survivors of the Khmer Rouge genocide:

- 1) the ASEAN principle of non-interference;
- 2) the Indonesian government's refusal to look into the truth behind the massacres and the Cambodian government's decision to focus on only the top Khmer Rouge leaders; and
- 3) the history of ASEAN as an organization founded in part to cooperate against the Communist and internal separatist threats in the region.

While the ASEAN may be limited into what it can do to look into the state of the women affected by the Anti-Communist Purge and the Khmer Rouge genocide due to its very politically charged nature, it may be helpful for the organization to approach this subject from the angle of advancing women's rights in general. The organization

has instruments that promote the rights of women: the ASEAN Committee on Women (ACW) and the ASEAN Commission on the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Women and Children (ACWC). The ACW and the ACWC lead the coordination on implementing the women, peace and security agenda across the three ASEAN Community pillars and the development of the regional plan of action (The ASEAN Secretariat, 2022). Under the pillar of ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community, the ASEAN highlights the human rights, security, labor, climate, and gender issues that women and children in the region face (The ASEAN Secretariat, n.a.). The state of the women survivors of the Indonesian and Cambodian genocides can then be accommodated under these instruments. However, there should be a conscientious effort to recognize that there are specific issues unique to the experiences of these women survivors, issues, such as the ongoing stigmatization of the women political prisoners of Indonesia due to the sexual slander against the Gerwani and the complex interplay of the violent legacy of the Khmer Rouge and the traditional ideals of femininity in Cambodia. Thus, any endeavors developed to assist them should be cognizant of these issues in order to be effective.

In terms of visibility of these issues, the ASEAN has provided avenues for ASEAN cultural workers to present their works. However, as mentioned earlier, there was a lack of effort into contextualizing these works, thus, highlighting the need to raise awareness into these traumatic histories in the region. This is where ASEANology comes in as a more concerted effort in the educational system to examine the impacts of these mass killings and atrocities in Southeast Asia on women is needed if the rights of women in the ASEAN are truly and meaningfully promoted.

Chapter Six

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The denial of the truth of the experience of the Gerwani women in Indonesia and of the women victims of the Khmer Rouge genocide did not make them disappear; on the contrary, this suppressed collective trauma, even when unspoken, is still transmitted to the post-genocide generation and threatens to overshadow their lives. Faiza Mardzoeki and Kulikar Sotho, through their works, aim to bring these suppressed memories to fore, as both recognize that looking back to the past is necessary to understand the present and the future.

As creators of cultural texts, Faiza Mardzoeki and Kulikar Sotho preserved the memories of the (slandered and silenced) women directly affected by the genocide and facilitated the expressing of complex emotions of living in a post-genocide society through cinematically mediated confrontations between perpetrators and victims. Both Mardzoeki and Sotho employed postmemorial strategy of imaginative storytelling, using the potent trope of the lost mother and the fantasy of her recovery, to imbue their works with a living connection to the past and to restore the ruptured social bonds.

As evidenced by the analyses of these two cultural texts by ASEAN women cultural workers, postmemorial work can be an effective strategy in exploring the possibility of restoration of the ruptured social bonds (intergenerational and contemporary) and reclaiming space for women and their experiences during and after a genocidal event. However, there is a need to situate these works in the specific historical/national context; even though there may be similarities in the histories and

experiences of Southeast Asian nations, there are still distinct differences and nuances that need to be respected for these strategies to be effective. Mardzoeki and Sotho have employed strategies reflective of the current needs of their respective post-genocide societies. The simple and direct narration of events in 'The Silent Song of the Genjer Flowers' reflect the need to acknowledge the truth of the Gerwani's women's experience. The sophisticated and layered approach in 'The Last Reel' reflect the complex dynamics and delicate situation that survivors of the Khmer Rouge genocide. Because of these critical approaches in storytelling that are grounded in the specific context of their respective societies, Mardzoeki and Sotho are able to produce significant and highly relevant cultural texts that address the specific needs of their communities.

Card and Hirsch have described the perspective that they employed in their study of genocide and postmemory generation as *feminist*, in the sense that they do not necessarily focus exclusively on women's concerns, but on social issues that are neglected or overlooked in current social theories, such as relationships that define one's identity that are under attack in genocides (Card, 2003, pp. 63-64; Hirsch, 2008, p. 108). Thus, Mardzoeki and Sotho's projects, with their focus on social vitality, the loss and attempts at counteracting the loss or restoring what is lost, are decidedly feminist in their approach. Their focus on specific women's concerns and employment of the feminine perspective on these concerns, through the characters of Suhartini, Ming, and Sophoun, further support this, especially in the light of the fact that the experiences of women are often lost in historical narratives, whether intentionally or unintentionally. Thus, Mardzoeki and Sotho's works hold special significance as

women speaking up for women about distinctively female concerns in these traumatic, horrific episodes in their respective histories.

Postmemorial feminist strategies that are grounded on the unique historical and social context of their respective society, such as those employed by Faiza Mardzoeki and Kulikar Sotho, can be an important resource for ASEAN cultural workers seeking to engage with the subjects of women's experience under genocide and restoring the ruptured social bonds. As evidenced by the response to both cultural texts, there is an interest among the younger generation in knowing more about these traumatic histories.

Recommendations for Further Studies in ASEANology

At the beginning, this study aimed to answer the question: how can ASEAN women cultural workers assist in addressing the negative societal impacts of past political violence on women? In answering this question, this study also identified the gaps in the current studies in ASEANology regarding the plight of women survivors of genocide in Southeast Asia and how their experiences and their trauma are transmitted to the next generation. The significance of pursuing further studies in this subject is twofold: 1) women experience a unique kind of harm, that of gendered violence aggravated by patriarchal norms and traditions, and 2) genocide, in contrast to other instances of mass killings and atrocities, also present a unique harm, that of social death. Thus, women victims of genocide occupy a distinctive position of experiencing these unique harms, and in the context of Southeast Asia, their experience is still undertheorized.

To an extent, the ASEAN recognizes that women in the region face a variety of issues, ranging from human rights, climate, labor, and gender, and that to advance and promote women's rights, special bodies have been created: the ASEAN Committee on Women (ACW) and the ASEAN Commission on the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Women and Children (ACWC). However, as mentioned, women's experience under genocide in Southeast Asia remains a subject rarely touched on in ASEAN studies. It is important to highlight that all women in the ASEAN should be included in the efforts of the ASEAN and, in the academic discipline, in ASEANology. One cannot understand ASEAN without understanding women, and the key to that is to pursue further studies in areas where women are most vulnerable. Women occupy an important space in advancing ASEANology.

To aid in the further studies on the subject, this author proposes the following research questions:

1. How can the ASEAN through the ACW and ACWC aid in advancing the rights of women in the ASEAN affected by past political violence?
2. How can ASEAN cultural workers and cultural texts help bring about healing and reconciliation in post-genocide societies?
3. How can postmemorial strategies be employed in an ASEAN-specific context to help address the intergenerational transmission of trauma in post-genocide societies?

As an examination of the two cultural texts tackling the subject of women's experience of intergenerational trauma in post-genocide societies and the ASEAN women cultural workers behind these texts, this study is merely a starting point for

more studies on the subject. The articles by Dirgantoro, Hatley, and Morag are important resources to which this study is much indebted. While the aforementioned articles are analyses of two works in one AMS, this study sought to place the works in a regional context to highlight the commonality and differences of the experiences of ASEAN women in post-genocide societies. By doing so, this study hoped to further the field of ASEANology on the subject of women's experience during and after traumatic episodes of past political violence in an AMS and how these affect the generation after them.

GLOSSARY OF NON-ENGLISH TERMS

<i>Angkar</i>	“The Organization,” the ruling body of the Khmer Rouge regime
<i>Baksbat</i>	“Broken courage,” a Cambodian cultural syndrome of distress that describes psychological responses to severely traumatic events experienced by Cambodian people under the Khmer Rouge regime
<i>Chbab Srey</i>	“Rules for Women,” a significant piece of Khmer literature that was initially passed down orally from 14 th and 19 th century before being codified in written form by Krom Ngoy, considered to be the father of Khmer poetry
<i>Consentrasi Mahasiswa Indonesia (CGMI)</i>	“Indonesian Student Concentration,” a communist-affiliated student group
<i>Dharma Wanita</i>	“Woman’s Duty,” an Indonesian organization composed of wives of civil servants founded on 7 December 1999; main objective is to promote the family welfare of the civil servants to achieve national welfare
<i>Di Atas Lima Puluh Tahun (Dialita)</i>	“More than fifty years old,” a Jakarta-based choir composed of former political prisoners, their families, and supporters
<i>Front Pembela Islam (FPI)</i>	“Muslim Defender’s Front,” a right-wing Muslim militia group
<i>Front uni national pour un Cambodge indépendant, neutre, pacifique, et coopératif (FUNCINPEC)</i>	“National United Front for an Independent, Neutral, Peaceful and Cooperative Cambodia,” a royalist political party in Cambodia founded in 1981 by Norodom Sihanouk
<i>Ganyang Malaysia</i>	“Crush Malaysia,” an Indonesian campaign to oppose Malaysia, which President Sukarno believed was becoming the British’s neo-colonial base
<i>Gejolak Makam Keramat</i>	“Turmoil at the Sacred Grave,” a play that depicts the disruption of the daily life of a Javanese village with the building of a factory on a sacred grave of a revered local saint; the central tension is between the desire to speak out against wrongdoing despite the threat on life and the Javanese value of dignified silence and acceptance of life’s troubles

<i>Genjer</i>	<i>Limnocharis flava</i> , an edible plant common in Java and eaten by peasants during times of hardship
<i>Genjer-Genjer</i>	A folk song from East Java that focused on the struggles of peasant life and of persevering through hardships; gained political context during the Japanese occupation then became associated with the PKI; banned by Suharto's New Order
<i>Gerakan Pemuda Ansor (GP)</i>	"Ansor Youth Movement," the youth wing of <i>Nahdlatul Ulema</i> (NU)
<i>Gerakan Wanita Indonesia (Gerwani)</i>	"Indonesian Women's Movement," a PKI-affiliated women's organization that promoted gender and social causes
<i>Khmer Rouge</i>	"Red Khmer," the popular name of the Communist Party of Kampuchea (CPK)
<i>Kiprah Perempuan (KIPPER)</i>	"Women's Activities," an organization composed of female survivors of the Anti-Communist Purge
<i>Koh Pich</i>	"Diamond Island," a district of Phnom Penh located by the Mekong and Bassac rivers
<i>Kodrat Wanita</i>	Women's code of conduct
<i>Lastri: Suara Perempuan Korban Tragedi 1965</i>	"Lastri: The Voice of Women Victims of 1965," an unfinished film based on a book of the same name written by Ita F. Nadia; based on a series of interviews with ex-Gerwani members but featuring a fictional love triangle involving teenaged members of the communist-affiliated groups Gerwani and the CGMI, and a young soldier
<i>Lubang Buaya</i>	"Crocodile Hole," a suburb in East Jakarta, where the six army generals and a lieutenant were murdered
<i>Mufakat</i>	"Consensus," one of the two guiding principles of the ASEAN inter-state relations and regional cooperation
<i>Musyawarah</i>	"Consultation," one of the two guiding principles of the ASEAN inter-state relations and regional cooperation
<i>Nahdlatul Ulema (NU)</i>	"Revival of the Ulama," one of the two largest Muslim organizations in Indonesia, with a membership ranging from 40 million to 90 million
<i>Nyanyi Sunyi Kembang-Kembang Genjer</i>	"The Silent Song of the Genjer Flowers," a play written by Faiza Mardzoeki based on her interviews with and research on the Gerwani women

<i>Partai Komunis Indonesia (PKI)</i>	Indonesian Communist Party
<i>Pengkhianatan G30S/PKI</i>	“The Treason of the September 30 Movement/PKI,” a propaganda film depicting the official accounts of the murder of six army generals and a lieutenant on 30 September 1965; a required viewing for schoolchildren
<i>Persatuan Wanita Republik Indonesia (Perwari)</i>	“Indonesian Women’s Association,” the largest nationalist women’s association, which initially came together to support the anticolonial cause
<i>Program Kesejahteraan Keluarga (PKK)</i>	“Family Welfare Movement,” an Indonesian organization that promotes family welfare, from the capital to the district level
<i>Rakyat Anti Komunisme</i>	“Anti-Communist People,” an anti-communist organization
<i>Reformasi</i>	“Reformation,” refers to both the movement to dethrone Suharto from power and the transition period characterized by more open and liberal socio-political environment
<i>Salam Harapan</i>	“Greetings of Hope,” a song composed in Bukit Duri prison, conveying a message of hope and tenacious survival
<i>Samakipheap</i>	“Solidarity,” or sense of being together among people
<i>Sangha</i>	Buddhist monastic order
<i>Stupa</i>	A dome-shaped ceremonial burial mound erected by Buddhists
<i>Wayang</i>	Shadow puppet plays

ANNOTATED MAPS OF INDONESIA AND CAMBODIA

A. Indonesia

Figure 5. Map of Indonesia with annotations of places mentioned in ‘The Silent Song of the Genjer Flowers’ and Faiza Mardzoeki’s accounts of her interviews with the surviving 1965 women political prisoners.



Source: [Google Maps](https://www.google.com/maps); annotations by this author.

While the traumatic 1965-66 mass killings and atrocities occurred all over the Indonesian archipelago, it occurred with special ferocity in the islands of Java and Bali, the major centers of the country’s population (Ariati, 2012, p. 12). Lubang Buaya is the site of the murder of the six generals and one lieutenant and where their bodies thrown into a deep well. It was an air force training field used by volunteers from PKI-affiliated organizations, including the Gerwani, practicing for the Ganyang Malaysia campaign (Wieringa S. E., 2011, p. 549; Ariati, 2012, p. 6).

The folk song, Genjer-Genjer, was written by Banyuwangi composer Muhammad Arief in 1942 to describe and criticize the plight of the Osing people under Japanese colonial rule. Prior to that, the Genjer plant was considered a weed fit only

for cattle feed, but due to the hardship under the Japanese, the Osing people resorted to eating it to assuage their hunger. The song experienced a resurgence in popularity after singers Bing Slamet and Lilis Suryani covered it in 1962 and was used to criticize the people's suffering under Sukarno's Guided Democracy. However, it also became popular with the PKI and was used for their campaign, and its association with communism caused it to be banned by Suharto's New Order (Ristanty, 2017).

In her hometown in Purwokerto in Central Java, Faiza Mardzoeki watched the first film she saw in a cinema, the propaganda film, 'Pengkhianatan G30S/PKI' or 'The Treason of the September 30 Movement/PKI,' which was then required viewing for schoolchildren. She is currently based in Yogyakarta in the southern part of the Java Island, and she interviewed the surviving 1965 women political prisoners in a nursing home in Jakarta. These women were from all over the island of Java: Klaten, Semarang, Solo, Sragen, and Yogyakarta. Like in the play, not all of them were members of the Gerwani, but they all were branded the same. Semarang in Central Java was also the place where the Gerwani organization was founded on 4 June 1950. The prison camp in Buru Island was created to hold the Category B prisoners, i.e., the tens of thousands arrested and never put on trial but were still considered dangerous to society (Adam, 2019, p. 85). Buru Island was considered because of its distance to the political center in Jakarta, had few inhabitants, and possessed fertile lands that could be turned into productive farms.

In 'The Silent Song of the Genjer Flowers,' Suhartini was originally from Solo before moving to Jakarta with her husband, Bung Daryo. When she was captured by the military, she was first taken to the prison in Bukit Duri in South Jakarta before she

was transferred to the Plantungan Women's Prison in Central Java. Sumilah was in Pasar Rebo, participating in drill practices for the Ganyang Malaysia campaign, when she and her colleagues were rounded up following the event of 30 September 1965.

B. Cambodia

Figure 6. Map of Cambodia with annotations of the locations featured in 'The Last Reel.'



Source: [Google Maps](https://www.google.com/maps); annotations by this author.

The opening scene, where Sophoun and Veasna were having fun at a night fair, was filmed in Koh Pich, an island district in the capital, Phnom Penh. However, the derelict cinema featured in the film is the Prasat Meas Cinema located in

Battambang. Another major location in the film is Tonle Bati, a lake located 30 km from Phnom Penh and the site of two ancient temples, the Ta Prohm of Bati and the Phnom Chisor. In Tonle Bati, there is also a charnel house containing the skulls and bones of genocide victims collected from a nearby mass grave.

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