

actions. There is no doubt that the human mind and memory are contradictory and complex, and that all of these issues may have played a part, but DuBois's book lacks some kind of analytical and interpretative framework. There now exist an abundant literature on the relationships between traumatic experiences and social memory and it would have been very useful if she had inserted her analysis in conversation to this literature. Part of the problem of the book may also be that the result of DuBois's long fieldwork has been somewhat disappointing. The author mentions the reluctance among the neighbourhood inhabitants to talk about the past and the difficulty of touching certain themes. Also her accounts of the two historical workshops do not give the impressions of a population that is greatly receptive to her interest in analysing the recent past.

Finally, and for this the author may not entirely be to blame as it may also point at the slow process of producing academic books nowadays, the views in this book published in 2005 already belong to history. DuBois's fieldwork was done in 1991! This was the period of the government of Carlos Menem, who did everything he could to bury the past and created a political climate where silence was honoured. However, this situation has dramatically changed since her fieldwork. The struggle for memory in Argentine society has nowadays become more intense than ever. Not only within society, but also in the realm of politics, the interpretation of the recent past has become a hot issue. It may well be that the silence among the inhabitants of José Ingenieros encountered by DuBois in 1991, has now been replaced by a much more urgent debate on the neighbourhood's history and the political positions taken by the various inhabitants. Although DuBois's focus on the day-to-day history of a Buenos Aires neighbourhood remains a valuable complement to our knowledge, her book may be already out of date at the moment it is published.

*Michiel Baud*

MARTYN, ELIZABETH. *The Women's Movement in Post-Colonial Indonesia. Gender and nation in a new democracy.* [Women in Asia Series.] RoutledgeCurzon, London [etc.] 2005. xi, 264 pp. £60.00; DOI: 10.1017/S0020859007102960.

In commemoration of the anniversary of the first Indonesian Women's Congress, in December 2006 the National Commission on Violence Against Women (Komnas Perempuan) organized a gathering where women active today in NGOs and mass-based organizations could meet with older women who had been victimized by the 1965–1966 anti-communist pogrom. The meeting was part of Komnas Perempuan's larger project of exploring a gender-based transitional justice mechanism to deal with past human-rights violations against women. Aside from discussing the Suharto dictatorship's persecution of members of the Indonesian Women Movement (Gerwani), the largest women's organization in the nation's history, the attendees talked about how the dictatorship also destroyed their knowledge of women's history. The post-1965 generation knew almost nothing about the experience of women activists before the 1965 debacle.

Since Suharto's fall in 1998, Indonesian women activists have revealed his dictatorship's patterns of state violence against women and its violations of women's rights. While this struggle has borne fruit in the increasing awareness and acknowledgement of violence against women as a punishable crime, it has been rivalled by powerful, conservative Islamic forces that wish to make Islamic law the national law and remove women from the public

sphere. Martyn's intention to "recover women's roles" in the crucial decade of 1950s cannot be more timely. She observes that "the meanings of democracy, citizenship and national identity in Indonesian context are increasingly debated as Indonesia enters a new period of transition and democratization" (pp. 8, 46). It is important that women today know more about the ideas and activities of the women active in the nation's early years.

This book neatly complements Saskia Wieringa's path-breaking study on Gerwani, *Sexual Politics in Indonesia* (Basingstoke [etc.], 2002). If Wieringa focused her analysis on Gerwani's own difficult blend of feminism and socialism, Martyn maps out the entire terrain of women's activism. A broad range of women's organizations (Martyn lists twenty-eight in an appendix) tried to carve out a significant role in the nation-building process. The book is based on a thorough reading of the publications of these women's organizations, especially the reports of the Indonesia Women's Congress (Kongres Wanita Indonesia) and the journal of Perwari (*Suara Perwari*). Martyn's account, providing a fuller picture of women's activism before 1965, confirms Wieringa's argument that the destruction of Gerwani led to "the retrenchment of women's political voice that they had gained during the nationalist process" (Wieringa, *Sexual Politics*, p. 48).

Another important contribution of this book is its preliminary exploration of women's activism outside Java. Martyn raises the query about "the extent to which women in the regions were integrated into this [women's] national movement and its imaginings of Indonesian womanhood" (p. 174). Contrasting the experience of women in Bali, south Sulawesi, and Minahasa, Martyn correctly points out how women's exposure to Western education and close proximity to the emerging nationalist movement was influential in increasing their level of political consciousness and sense of public responsibility. But, issues of concern to regional women organizations, such as the tourist industry's exploitation of bare-breasted Balinese women, the neglected fate of Westerling massacre victims in south Sulawesi, or the involvement of women in the Permesta rebellion in Minahasa never reached the attention of women's organizations in Java. Martyn argues that women's magazines in Java showed that "Indonesian womanhood at the national level was constructed in contrast to women of other nation-states rather than including or confronting its own ethnic diversity" (p. 179).

In the introduction, this book promises that it will not only recover "images of women as political actors" (p. 4) during a little-known decade in Indonesian history, but will also theorize the relationship between women and the nation. The theoretical side of this book, however, is not as strong as its descriptive side. The fifteen-page section of the introduction "theorizing" women and nationalism reads more like a literature review than an explanation of the precise theory the author intends to use. This "theorizing" (actually more of a pointing to a general area of concern) does not allow the author to say much insightful about the material she presents or get at the subjectivity of the women she writes about.

Why did women become committed nationalists in the first place? Martyn describes the emergence of women's organizations during the Dutch colonial period and their formulation of an "agenda" for "women's interests". The underlying picture is of women organizing on their own, and then supporting the nationalist movement because they saw an overlap between their agenda for "women's interests" and the national agenda for independence. Moreover, they expected a quid pro quo: "Women expected that their grievances would be addressed in recognition of their participation in and contribution to the nationalist struggle" (p. 50). This picture is quite misleading. One element of the

picture that Martyn misses is women's often coded struggle just to get out of the house, do something besides taking care of household chores, and see more of the world. That was Kartini's struggle and it was one that was partly fulfilled during the revolutionary years of 1945–1949. Martyn, focusing only on formal women's organizations as signifiers of women's political consciousness, misses the experiential side of history. This leads her to the odd conclusion that women's movement had made few advances by 1949: "Although national independence had been achieved, the demands of the 1949 [women's] congress were much the same as the first articulation of women's aspirations recorded in Kartini's letters of the early 1900s" (p. 50). However similar the demands, the women of 1949 were not confined to the house like Kartini.

Martyn recognizes that women activists in the 1950s prioritized the expansion of women's education and health care – services that the new state was expected to organize and finance. She also recognizes that the political system of the new nation provided women with unprecedented liberties. Women had the right to vote, form organizations, publish magazines, and protest in the streets. For Martyn, women working on education and health care were merely pursuing "practical gender interests", i.e. activities that "involve no challenge to gendered constructed roles" (p. 12). Such a judgment suggests that Martyn has little sense of Indonesian society at that time and little sense of women's lived experience. By organizing schools and clinics, becoming school teachers, lobbying government officials for more resources for education and health care – again, just by getting out of the house – women *were* challenging gender roles. Martyn did interview some former women activists but her book conveys very little of the behind the scenes, informal world of women's political organizing.

Martyn's judgement seems ill-informed on one of her study's main issues: "the extent to which Indonesian women were able to translate participation in the nationalist movement into political influence in the new state" (p. 29). She argues that women, despite their contribution to the nationalist movement up to 1949 and the nation-building process post-1949, were betrayed by the men who offered "little reciprocation" (p. 207). When it came to "strategic gender interests" (those that challenged women's subordination), such as revising the marriage law and implementing a family planning program, women faced much resistance. The parliament's voting down of a bill revising the marriage law is cited as evidence that "democracy and independence did not fulfil women's strategic gender interests" (p. 144). Such a judgment is rather odd when one could just as well argue that "democracy and independence" did not fulfil anyone's interests; the Indonesian postcolonial state became non-democratic and militaristic. So many of the expectations and interests of nationalists, both men and women, went unfulfilled, for a bewildering variety of reasons.

Martyn argues that the inability of women in the 1950s to gain greater power in parliament, political parties, and government offices is attributable to their inability to form a "power bloc". One would indeed be surprised if Indonesian women had done something women in no other country had done. Where have women yet overcome all of their differences and formed a unified political force?

As a descriptive account, this book is a valuable contribution to the literature on Indonesian women's history. Its analytical framework, however, is misleading. The limitations of this book indicate where more work needs to be done.

*Agung Ayu Ratih*