IRSH 53 (2008), pp. 1–35 DOI: 10.1017/S002085900700332X

The Politics of Workers' Contention: The 1999 Mayora Strike in Tangerang, West Java*

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Summary: This paper aims to examine the interplay between individual subjectivities and collective action during a strike which occurred at a moment of political transition in Indonesia from Suharto's authoritarian regime to a more democratically inclined government. It attempts to highlight some of the problems in understanding the nature of protest and collective action and the construction of workers' identities. By following the sequence of a strike, we are able to see the collaborations and conflicts between the leaders and those who are central in the protest action and those who are at the margins; between those who join and those who do not join but hope to obtain the benefits of the results. This also means that it provides us with a better understanding of the complexities involved when we refer to "consciousness", "identities", and "experiences" as analytical constructs. Such a focus can counter the often simplistic links made between action and intent, between the economic circumstances and political action.

On 20 April 1999 around 1,800 workers from Mayora, the biscuit and confectionary company located in Tangerang, went on strike demanding higher wages and better working conditions. This strike, which started in the factory precincts, eventually developed into sit-ins and demonstrations in public spaces, in front of government buildings and on toll roads within and on the fringes of Jakarta. The entire protest action lasted two months and generated a widespread response from the general public. Even though strikes had become more regular since the early 1990s, this particular

* The research for this article was made possible by a one-year fellowship at the KITLV in Leiden. I am grateful to the KITLV for this opportunity. An earlier version of this article was presented at the KITLV workshop on "Rethinking Indonesian Historiography", organized by Henk Schulte Nordholt and myself in Leiden, the Netherlands, on 21–22 June 2005. I would like to thank especially Abdul Syukur and Hilmar Farid, who were discussants for the paper, but also, among others, Henk Schulte Nordholt, Gerry van Klinken, Jean Taylor, Bambang Purwanto, and Adrian Vickers. Maria Hartiningsih from *Kompas* came to my rescue to help provide the photographs which illustrate the workers' demonstrations. The paper could not have been completed without the insightful comments of two reviewers and members of the Editorial Committee of this journal.

collective protest was quite extraordinary in the Indonesian context. State officials were brought into a position to oppose company policy. Security forces did not immediately seize public protesters and take them into custody. In fact one of the crowning glories of this collective action was the enactment of a ministerial decision which demanded that the company rehire the 1,364 workers who had earlier been dismissed because of their unwillingness to return to work.

It was stimulated and given energy by the historical moment, a period of political transition where a combination of the 1997 Asian economic crisis and a culmination of civil protest against an authoritarian regime that had been in power for more than three decades, heightened political tension between different political actors and groups, and was partly played out on Jakarta's main streets. Although there is much debate as to what was the main factor in Suharto's resignation on 21 May 1998, it is not insignificant that he resigned not long after the massive wave of protests throughout Indonesia. One cannot say that the story of the workers' strike had an entirely happy ending, since only a small number of their demands were granted, and management made further changes within the labour process to channel any possible expression of discontent into safer waters. In the two-month duration of the strike a few hundred workers ceased their involvement, and some were not even involved from the very beginning. Therefore, relations between workers were also tense after the strike.

Nevertheless, this event is not only interesting because it captured the imagination of the general public with its repertoires of resistance, as workers appropriated symbols of nationhood, patriotism, and good citizenship and turned them either into targets of mockery and ridicule or used them as moral references. It also opens up and highlights a number of analytical questions regarding strike events, the politics of contention, and the shaping of workers' identities. This paper aims to examine the interplay between individual subjectivities and collective action within a given historical moment. It attempts to highlight some of the problems in understanding the nature of protest and collective action and the construction of workers' identities.

It is by now quite commonplace to point out the limitations of an orthodox Marxist approach which views collective action as a natural response to structural inequalities or proletarianization. Many have pointed out that it is misleading to draw a direct line between structural inequalities, labour protest, and class-consciousness or to imbue workers' identities as entirely shaped by class relations.[1] Some have argued that the ideological references of workers' collective action are not necessarily

1. Sidney Tarrow, *Power in Movement* (Cambridge, 1998); Michael Pinches and Salim Lakha, "Introduction", in *idem* (eds), *Wage Labor and Social Change: The Proletariat in Asia and the Pacific* (Quezon City, 1992), pp. 1–32.

class-based but may be based more on notions of social justice and citizenship.[2] Others have argued that workers' practices and identities are also shaped by collective action and that the way protest is framed helps to generate cultures of solidarity.[3]

One particularly provocative argument, which represents the view that grievances alone cannot explain mobilization, was made by Mancur Olson, who focused on the relationship between individual decisions and participation in collective action. Olson argued that rational people, guided by individual interest, might avoid taking action when they see the risks involved and know that others are willing to take action for them. According to him this "free-rider" problem does not appear so much in small groups since individual and collective interests are closely associated, but it becomes a problem in large groups. Members of a large group will not act to advance their common or group objectives unless certain individuals within the group provide them with "selective incentives" or apply some coercion.[4] Although Olson paid attention to the question of how collective action occurred, it was considered that Olson's focus on motivation, in itself difficult to measure, was limited to material and personal incentives.[5] His framework belied also the fact that, despite the many risks involved, people sometimes did join large-scale protest movements.

In the Mayora case, externally induced force, which occasionally did occur, was not the only driving force in workers' participation in a protest that had such a long duration. Diminished income, the utilization of one's savings, if any; the withholding of remittances to the family at home; the risk of losing one's position in the factory; the physical hardship of sleeping in public terrain; confrontations with security officials and police; none of these deterred hundreds of workers from continuing their protests. Their participation was not, on the other hand, due to an automatic progression from a "class-in-itself" to a "class-for-itself", since the internal relations among workers and their relations with their political and social environment were much more complicated than is generally outlined in such a framework. In this case, leadership becomes crucial – but only to a certain extent.

2. Margaret Somers, "Workers of the World, Compare!", *Contemporary Sociology*, 18 (1989), pp. 325–329. For an excellent analysis of an Asian case see Ching Kwan Lee, *Against the Law: Labor Protests in China's Rustbelt and Sunbelt* (Berkeley, CA, 2007).

3. Donatella Della Porta and Mario Diani, *Social Movements: An Introduction* (Oxford, 1999), p. 105; see also Rick Fantasia, *Cultures of Solidarity* (Berkeley, CA, 1988).

4. Mancur Olson, *The Logic of Collective Action* (Cambridge, 1965), p. 2; see also Tarrow, *Power in Movement*, pp. 12–13; and Della Porta and Diani, *Social Movements*, pp. 104–106, for a discussion around Olson's hypothesis.

5. Tarrow, *Power in Movement*, p. 15.

The focus on this strike helps us to unpack what it really meant for individual workers and how it really happened. Participation in a collective action is indeed not an automatic response to individual grievances. One-third of the workers did not join the strike or discontinued their involvement as the company management changed its tactics vis-à-vis the workers. Through an examination of the strike process we can discern a number of things.

First, we can obtain an insight into relations not only between classes but also between workers themselves within one historical moment. This helps to remedy generalizations that see strikes merely as unproblematic expressions of workers' identity and consciousness. This case brings up interesting questions regarding the interface between individual and collective action. By looking at the different actors involved, the way policies and regulations are enacted by state institutions, the strategies of the company management to contain workers' protest actions and to create divisions among them, and the processes of coercion and persuasion underlying workers' collective action, we see the different ways in which power relations are exercised and contested. It allows a closer examination of "the subjective domain of class systems", the individual responses, and the relationship between the individual and the collective. This also means that it provides us with a better understanding of the complexities involved when we refer to "consciousness", "identities", and "experiences" as analytical constructs. Such a focus can counter the often simplistic links made between action and intent, between the economic circumstances and political action.

Second, we get an understanding of the sequencing of a strike, how it emerges, progresses, and dissipates. As Della Porta has argued "collective action is a process which develops over time, in which the motivation which leads to action, and concerns which underlie it are modified through relationships with other actors, and where the decision to remain involved is continually renewed".[6] By following this sequence we are able to see the collaborations and conflicts between the leaders and those who are central in the protest action with those who are at the margins, between those who join and those who do not join but hope to obtain the benefits of the results.

After the 1997 economic crisis, there was a period when, particularly in Java, one saw the slackening of military repression and the opening up of political space for different interest groups. Since the final years of Suharto's rule, massive student demonstrations on the main streets and around public monuments of Jakarta had become a common sight. Workers joined students and took to the streets demanding Suharto's

6. Della Porta and Diani, *Social Movements,* p.105.

resignation.[7] It was also a period of redefinition of the union's role where, on paper at least, other unions outside the SPSI (Serikat Pekerja Seluruh Indonesia or All Indonesia Workers' Union) were allowed to operate in the factories.[8] Even though there was a slight lull in the strike activities of workers by 1999 primarily because of the continuing inflation and a tightening of the job market, in various pockets there were clearly still some outward manifestations of protest.

A focus on the strike process only, where the major antagonists are identified, and the process is outlined, may lead us to ignore the undercurrents and social ramifications within and outside the strike event even when it is still happening. The everyday life of workers outside the public arenas of conflict is often invisible.[9] Considering that workers and their families still have to make sure that children are clothed, fed, sent to school, and the daily reproduction of the strikers themselves has to be guaranteed, my query involves also looking at how domestic concerns and arrangements affect their daily struggles. How would responses from parents, husbands, wives, and other family members affect their politics, and how would workers' politics affect the everyday lives of those connected with them in social networks of reproduction. In focusing on the interstices of the event and the daily reproduction of the workers outside the actual event we can see the tensions, alliances, and negotiations workers have among themselves which help to give shape to their perceptions regarding the strike and their roles in it, and ultimately to understand the processes of identity formation.[10]

7. See Vedi R. Hadiz, "Challenging State Corporatism on the Labour Front: Working Class Politics in the 1990s", in D. Bourchier and J. Legge (eds), *Democracy in Indonesia: 1950s and 1990s* (Monash, 1994) pp. 190–203; and Rachel Silvey, "Spaces of Protest: Gendered Migration, Social Networks, and Labor Activism in West Java, Indonesia", *Political Geography*, 22 (2003), pp. 129–155, 148.

8. The SPSI was a reorganized version of the earlier FBSI (Federasi Buruh Seluruh Indonesia – All-Indonesia Worker's Federation), the government-sponsored workers' organization which was considered to have failed its function after the wave of strikes in the late 1970s in Jakarta and its surroundings. The SPSI was supposed to be more streamlined and centralized. Retired military officers were appointed to head some of the key local and regional posts, inlcuding the strategic areas of Tangerang, Bandung, Surabaya, and Solo. See also Vedi R. Hadiz, *Workers and the State in New Order Indonesia* (London, 1997).

9. Since the influence of feminist and social theorists such as Edward Thompson, Michel Foucault, Joan Scott, and many others, previously "non-political sites" (the workplace, neighbourhood, the family, the home) have become central to the politics of everyday life and to identity formation. See among others, Somers, *Workers of the World*; Georg Eley and Keith Nield, "Farewell to the Working Class?", *International Labor and Working-Class History*, 57 (2000), pp. 1–30. Others have also shown that households are important sites in which individual decisions to join or not to join a strike or social movement, are made. See Jan Kok (ed.), *Rebellious Families: Household Strategies and Collective Action in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (New York, 2002).

10. Silvey, "Spaces of Protest".

Unlike the documentation of events in the distant past, this event, which happened in 1999, has been relatively well-documented and accessible to scholars. The main body of work is based on a collected bundle by the local trade union which played a significant role in facilitating the workers, the SBJ (Serikat Buruh Jabotabek – JABOTABEK trade union).[11] Apart from this documentation, interviews with nineteen workers were conducted three to six years after the strike.[12] Some of these informants were involved, some were involved only for a brief period of time, and others were not at all involved in the strike. Although, statistically, the small number of individuals interviewed hardly reflects the whole, the different positions they were in at the time of the strike allow for a deeper understanding of the meaning of the strike for the broader community. Based on these available sources, one can say more regarding the workers' subjectivities even though inferences from their narratives will never escape questions of interpretation.[13]

In the next section I first examine existing studies on labour and collective action in Indonesia. This is followed by a brief look at the spatial and historical context of Tangerang, the industrial area where Mayora is located. Then a large section will be focused on the strike itself, how it evolved, and the different struggles that emerged. This includes also

11. JABOTABEK refers to the Greater Jakarta Area consisting of the cities of Jakarta, Bogor, Tangerang, and Bekasi. The title of this volume is *Kepala Besi dan Perlawanan Buruh Mayora* and consists of different types of documents: a chronology (*Kronologi Aksi Mogok* or *kronologi)*, court decisions, company announcements to workers, correspondence within the tripartite communication, press releases, ministerial decrees; newspaper coverage, and letters of solidarity from international organizations and trade unions.

12. The interviews were conducted between 2002 and 2005 by three worker activists, Totok, Abdul Rozak and Suliyem, one of who was an SBJ organizer. The questions, which were open-ended but semi-structured, focused on six areas of interest: their families, marital and educational backgrounds; their work trajectories and experiences; their roles in the strike; the running of their households during the strike; the networks they maintained, and what happened to their lives in the years after the strike. The strike event was indeed the central point of attention but narratives in and around the strike involved also looking at their daily routines. Unless the informants were unwilling, the interviews were recorded and transcripts and summaries were made. The fact that the interviewers were activists undoubtedly coloured their responses; however, looking at the transcripts, narratives reflected some critical remarks of the SBJ, and the way the strike was organized. This also did not stop those who did not join the strike to voice their comments on why they did not join.

13. See Alessandro Duranti, "Truth and Intentionality: An Ethnographic Critique", *Cultural Anthropology*, 8 (1993), pp. 214–245, 219, which looks at the problem of defining the boundaries of intentionality and action. Narratives cannot simply be seen as "bearers of truth", but depend very much on the audience, the medium used to convey the communication, the cultural context, and the actions that are represented. Therefore, in the same way, the rhetorics used in a strike-event does not necessarily reflect the state of mind of the individual workers but reflects the cultural and possibly, legal context in which such rhetoric can be accepted. See also Bert Klandermans *et al.* who examine the links between identity processes and protest participation. See Bert Klandermans, *The Social Psychology of Protest* (Oxford, 1997) , p. 44.

discussing the cultural and political dimension of the actions, namely, through the claiming of public space and the cultural repertoires used to attract public attention. The two sections that follow concentrate on the narratives of people, and on relations which were at the margins of the strike but definitely affected the workers, and were also affected by the workers who participated in the strike: the domestic arrangements of workers, and the perceptions of those who did not join the strike.

LABOUR AND COLLECTIVE ACTION IN INDONESIA

Compared with other countries, there has been a very limited amount of work done on labour history and workers' protest actions in Indonesia, although colonial archives on workers in different sectors and on popular protests linked to political organizations are certainly not lacking. Whether because of one-dimensional notions regarding "the native", who is considered not capable of undertaking collective action; or because of an awareness of the political intricacies on the ground so that controlling the different elements would be too time-consuming and complicated, colonial authorities have usually identified collective action through the identification of its political leaders and existing parties and organizations.[14] As with colonial reports in other areas, these different types of written sources defined social categories and movements in clearly bracketed terms such as the "the communist movement", "the radical movements", "the Islamic movement", "the Chinese movement" etc.[15]

An uncritical approach to reading the archives is frequently reflected in the way scholars have viewed labour politics. For instance, Nagazumi examines the pawnshop strikes of 1922 in Java and the "unnatural" alliance which occurred between the pawnshop workers and the PKI, the Indonesian Communist Party, the former considered to have adopted *priyayi* (Javanese elite) principles and therefore to have been the logical "enemy" of the party.[16] Furthermore, the study of popular politics has often been considered to be an appendage to studies on party or national

14. This is similar to Joshi's account for Kanpur, India, where colonial authorities were quick to distinguish the leaders of a strike from the ordinary workers separating them also according to their different worldviews. See Chitra Joshi, *Lost Worlds: Indian Labour and its Forgotten Histories* (Delhi, 2003), p. 181.

15. See Takashi Shiraishi "Policing the Phantom Underground", *Indonesia*, 63 (1997), pp. 1–46, for an analysis of the policing of social movements in Java in the 1920s. The rich documentation of the police secret intelligence which covers the period between 1927 and 1941, compiled by Harry Poeze for instance, is a source of valuable material which reflects how the colonial police viewed and interpreted the activities of leading political opponents. See the four-volume collection of the *Politiek Politioneele Overzichten*, I–IV (1982, 1983, 1988, 1994).

16. Akira Nagazumi, "The Pawnshop Strikes of 1922 and the Indonesian Political Parties", *Archipel*, 8 (1974), pp. 187–206.

politics.[17] Very little, however, has been written regarding workers' struggles and their internal dynamics, in particular localities, or about workers' communities, which would question one-dimensional categories of identity.

An attempt to look more carefully at workers' politics related to the different categories of workers was made in the work of John Ingleson, who examined strikes in the railway and harbour sectors in the early twentieth century.[18] Concentrating on the union's links with the different categories of workers in Semarang and Surabaya, he argued that strikes which were a manifestation of political consciousness or group awareness were most strongly manifested among skilled workers, particularly in the rail and tramway sector and in the printing and metal industries. The lowest activism, measured by whether unions could organize or not, was among sugar factory workers, dockworkers, and municipal workers. However, Ingleson is doubtful whether this group awareness actually reflected class-consciousness, since collective protest was articulated against those who were racially distinct. This ethnic differentiation was a direct result of capital's strategy to maintain divisions among workers through the process of recruitment and therefore prevented the emergence of class consciousness.[19]

The emphasis on political leaders and formal organizations in the study of collective action is to an extent a result of the resources available to the historian. However, it also reveals the tendency of scholars in general to view formal organizations as the quintessential barometer of workers' politics. For the colonial period, such politics were framed within the context of anti-colonialism and nationalism. For the early 1950s, this was part of the politics of alignment to the different factions within the government, with the military representing one pole and Sukarno or the communist party representing the other.

Similarly in the New Order period, workers' politics were seen in the context of Suharto's authoritarian regime and military repression. The working class became interesting because of the nature of the industrialization process characteristic of the period, but also because industrial workers were seen as crucial and tangible elements within the "civil society" which could challenge the power of the state. Vedi Hadiz and Douglas Kammen both look at structural conditions to explain the

17. Donald Hindley, *The Communist Party of Indonesia, 1951–1963* (Berkeley, CA, 1964); Rex Mortimer, *Indonesian Communism Under Sukarno: Ideology and Politics, 1959–1965* (Ithaca, NY, 1974).

18. John Ingleson, "Bound Hand and Foot: Railway Workers and the 1923 Strike in Java", *Indonesia*, 31 (1981), pp. 53–87; *idem*, "Life and Work in Colonial Cities: Harbour Workers in Java in the 1910s and 1920s", *Modern Asian Studies*, 17 (1983), pp. 455–476 .

19. *Idem*, "The Legacy of Colonial Labour Unions in Indonesia", *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, 47 (2000), pp. 85–100.

emergence of strikes. They both draw attention to the tensions between the capitalist class and the state apparatus in creating the space for the emergence of strikes. In most of these approaches workers' collective action was explained by the larger structural conditions or by the inherent character of the labour force, rather than by the relation between these structural conditions with the dynamics within the labouring communities themselves or even by production relations in the workplace. Others looked at the role of public intellectuals in giving shape to the labour movement.[20] We are still far from understanding local variations as well as the internal dynamics of the working class, under what circumstances workers' become involved in collective action, or how they have given meaning to such involvement.

A limited number of studies has indeed highlighted the role of religion, ethnicity, and gender in shaping labour relations and the propensity for political activism. In the 1980s Celia Mather showed how women from the then newly emerging industrial area were still constrained from political participation because of patriarchal Islamic ideology existing within the community propagated by the religious leader, the *kyai*.[21] Focusing on another area, in central Java, Diane Wolf provides a more complex picture showing the domestic tensions underlying women's entry into the industrial labour force and urban life, contradicting the good-daughter image and filial piety portrayed in other Asian case studies.[22] Elmhirst, in her study of Lampungese factory workers in Tangerang shows the role of ethnically based social networks on migrant women workers, the trans-local links, and how these have constrained the participation of women workers in political activism.[23] Silvey shows how location influences the nature of women workers' predispositions in workers' activism by comparing two industrial areas, one in the vicinity of Jakarta, Indonesia's capital, and the other in the vicinity of Bandung, the provincial capital.[24] If the case studies of Mather, Elmhirst, and Silvey focus mainly on young (but not necessarily single) women, Grijns and Smyth examine the divergence between women workers and argue that those who were less inclined to join collective protest were the older women.[25] In looking at

20. Michelle Ford "Challenging the Criteria of Significance: Lessons from Contemporary Indonesian Labour History", *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, 47 (2001), pp. 101–114.
21. Celia Mather, "'Rather Than make Trouble, It's Better Just to Leave': Behind the Lack of Industrial Strife in the Tangerang Region of West Java", in Haleh Afshar (ed.), *Women, Work and Ideology in the Third World* (London, 1985). pp. 153–182.
22. Diane Wolf, *Factory Daughters,* (Berkeley, CA, 1992).
23. Rebecca Elmhirst, "Labour Politics in Migrant Communities: Ethnicity and Women's Activism in Tangerang, Indonesia", in R. Elmhirst and R. Saptari (eds), *Labour in Southeast Asia: Local Processes in a Globalised World* (London, 2004), pp. 387–406.
24. Silvey, "Spaces of Protest".
25. Ines Smyth and Mies Grijns. "*Unjuk Rasa* or Conscious Protest? Resistance Strategies of Indonesian Women Workers", *Bulletin of Concerned Asian Scholars*, 29 (1997), pp. 13–23.

the cigarette industry, I also look at the predominantly married and older cigarette women workers but do not accord labour activism or inactivism to the age factor but to the workplace cultures and different labour regimes of individual factories.[26]

In examining the political process which shaped how the Mayora strike evolved, we can avoid falling into the trap of static ideological classifications or utilizing unidimensional factors to situate workers' collective action. However, we can also learn much from these studies and see how workers' identities and their political participation were influenced by a combination of factors, among others: the political leadership involved; the framing of protest within a particular historical conjuncture; the extent in which ethnic or other social networks play a role; the location of the industrial production unit; the workplace politics and labour regimes; and the extent in which there is solidarity or contention between workers in particular moments. In the following section we will briefly look at Tangerang, the industrial site which provides the context in which the Mayora workers live and build part of their social existence.

THE INDUSTRIAL COMMUNITY IN TANGERANG

Tangerang is a classical example of an industrial site which grew rapidly in response to changing national and international priorities. Situated just three kilometres from Jakarta, it became a clear example of the "suburbanization of industry" as industrial establishments tried to escape the high costs of land and labour in Jakarta.[27] Within a few years one could see agricultural land and rain-fed paddy fields and rubber plantations rapidly transformed into industrial sites. If in the early 1970s a few factories could be found adjoining these agricultural lands; by 2005 around 1,407 industrial units occupied an area of 13,671 hectares of land.[28]

Local *hajis* and *kyais* (religious leaders) who sold land to the private estates shifted their economic investment into housing for the workers and migrants who entered the area as a result of the bustling economic activities stimulated by these industrial zones.[29] Migrants from west,

26. Ratna Saptari, "Rural Women to the Factories: The Cigarette Industry in Java" (Ph.D., University of Amsterdam, 1995).

27. J. Vernon Henderson, "The Dynamics of Jabotabek Development", *Bulletin of Indonesian Economic Studies*, 32 (1996), pp. 71–95, 85.

28. The decree which classified Tangerang as an industrial area was only introduced in 1976 (Presidential Decree no. 13, 16 July 1976), but prior to this, construction of individual factories had already taken place. Unpublished report written by Akatiga for a European Union-funded project on unions in Tangerang, West Java and Pasuruan, East Java.

29. As one old petty trader recalled the area of Jatiuwung for instance was previously a rubber plantation and many of the names of the small streets became named after those local elite who became the brokers between the estates and the local communities. Interview by Suliyem, 28 November 2005.

central, and east Java, and from areas farther away such as south Sumatra, came to fill the labour demand emerging from the various large foreign and domestically owned companies, many of them specializing in garment, textile, footwear, and food production.[30] Through the deployment of social and familial networks, workers came in and lived in rented rooms, usually not larger than 2.5 x 3 metres in area, which were adjoined to each other and owned by local residents.

The growth of industrial sites and the increasing concentration of a large industrial work force was not immediately accompanied by the emergence of workers' industrial action.[31] It took almost two decades after the establishment of an industrial site in the district of Tangerang before any significant industrial action took place. From the interviews, we can see that most of the workers had some relative or friend who was already working in Tangerang, either as factory worker or as small entrepreneur.[32] For some, Mayora was not their first factory experience. Many left their previous factory positions because the wages were too low, the work was too heavy or too taxing for their physique, or the factory decided to move location. Some notion of individual choice can be seen in workers' accounts of why they left their old factory jobs.

Individual creativity can also be seen in their strategies to find employment. Applying to Mayora quite often involved manipulation of their personal data: their ages, school diplomas, marital status, whether they had a child or not, would be adjusted according to what they thought was required. One woman who was sixteen when she applied for a job at Mayora reported that she was seventeen because this was the minimum age required to enter the factory. When strikes were connected to the higher education of the workforce and companies preferred less educated workers, those who already had a senior high school diploma (SMA – Sekolah Menengah Atas) would say that they had a junior high school (SMP – Sekolah Menengah Pertama) diploma.[33] One couple said they did not have any children, although they did. One assumes that in many cases, factory personnel were aware of these forms of "misinformation" but in most cases they turned a blind eye.

30. From the interviews with the workers of Mayora, their origins range from Tangerang itself, to Lampung and Palembang, in south Sumatra; Banyumas in west Java, Wonogiri, Purworejo, Pemalang in central Java and Bojonegoro in east Java. See also Hadiz, *Workers and the State in New Order Indonesia*.

31. Basu shows for instance that the growth of industrial suburbs around Calcutta in late nineteenth century was immediately accompanied by frequent industrial action. See Sobhu Basu, "Strikes and Communal Riots in Calcutta in the 1890s: Industrial Workers, Badralok, Nationalist Leadership and the Colonial State", *Modern Asian Studies*, 32 (1998), pp. 949–983.

32. For the young women workers – having a kin member in Tangerang was often a condition made by parents for allowing their daughters to migrate.

33. Interview by Totok, 17 August and 24 August 2002.

In their everyday relations workers mainly identified two groups, namely the Sundanese and Javanese.[34] However as we will see later, these ethnic markers did not seem to become a basis of identification for the workers of Mayora.[35] Although terms such as *pendatang* (migrant) or *orang asli* (local) became markers of difference, this did not have much effect on social interaction, possibly also because there was some intermarriage between these social categories.

When Mayora started its operation in Tangerang in 1977, some say that initially the workers were mainly men.[36] They were recruited to make biscuits but at the same time the male workers were asked to undertake construction work in the factory as well. It is not clear how the gender composition changed, but at the time of the strike and up to the time of writing, around three-quarters of the workforce consisted of women. Most of the men were in the "skilled" sections, which meant that they had a senior school education, but some of them had also the same level of education as the women. In the late 1990s Mayora was divided between two main sections, the biscuit section and a smaller confectionary section. The women were mainly operators of the machines and worked on the mixing of the dough, and the men were mainly in the technical sections, to guarantee that the machines were operating. The biscuit section was divided into two shifts from 7.00 to 19.00; and from 19.00 to 7.00. This meant twelve hours of work with three hours of compulsory overtime.[37] With such working hours, factory workers had hardly time to spare for social activities in the community.

As with most migrant families where household structures were constantly in flux, even for the "locals" family arrangements had already been "unconventional", as Celia Mather also notes in her Tangerang study of the late 1970s, and therefore family restrictions seemed to be insignificant in workers' decisions.[38] Even though family structures were loose, attempts to control women's sexuality and maintain cultural moralities were still present. The behaviour of young women, especially

34. Based on the interviews conducted for this study.

35. In contrast to what Elmhirst found in her study, the workers interviewed in this study did not mention any ethnically based networks or associations. This contrast is interesting to examine further since Elmhirst's study was made at approximately the same time as the strike. See Elmhirst, "Labour Politics in Migrant Communities".

36. Interview by Totok, 31 August 2002.

37. In contrast, the cooking section – where the dough was then put in the oven, was from 7.00–15.00. thus following normal working hours. This information was obtained from the various interviews.

38. She observed that divorce, remarriage, and polygamy were common and children moved between the homes of their separate parents, grandparents, siblings, and so on. See Mather, "Rather Than Make Trouble", p. 161. This is also in line with Diane Wolf's study a decade later in central Java. See Wolf, *Factory Daughters.*

in their relationships with men, were of particular concern to local leaders and the landlords who rented out rooms or houses to the workers. One man who was reputed to be very religious and earned the title of *Ustad* (Islamic scholar) rented out rooms to workers and stated to one of the interviewers:

> Because my *kontrakan* (rented-out rooms) is squalid and cramped and even though I also was young once, I usually let them stay in my rooms on three conditions. The first is that if they chat then they must not close their doors. This is not that I am suspicious, but just in case somebody wants to spread some bad gossip and [even though] you have done nothing wrong you will not be able to do anything. Secondly, if you chat at night the light should not be turned off. Thirdly, the latest I allow someone to chat and receive guests is 22.00. This is also because the next day you will not be able to work, you will be sleepy, and also if you chat too late your neighbours will be disturbed. So that is the discipline [...] well [...] we have to respect each other. Also one should not forget to do the *sholat*, apart from the three conditions I mentioned.[39]

Whether these conditions were expressed for the benefit of the interviewer or were indeed carried out, in the case of the massive strikes which occurred in the 1990s (where women were also involved) the moralities behind some of the religious figures in Tangerang did not have much leverage in constraining women's activism. In fact in the late 1980s, Tangerang was already characterized as an area where strikes often occurred. According to Kammen, three-quarters of all strikes occurring in 1989 were concentrated in Tangerang.[40] The most dramatic was the strike simultaneously held by workers from factories of the PT Gajah Tunggal Group in 1991, involving some 14,000 workers.[41] This strike was followed by others in Bogor, Semarang, Solo, and Surabaya. Many of these strikes were large in scale, involving workers from several companies within close proximity of each other. They also involved a large number of women workers. Besides the Gajah Tunggal strike, other strikes in Solo (January 1994), involved 11,000 workers and in Medan 20,000 workers from 21 factories. To a certain extent this wave of strikes was partly a response to some slight openings in the repressive structures of the state. After earlier pressures from the international world, and the United States in particular, in 1990 Cosmas Batubara, the Minister of Manpower at the time, announced the "Year of the Wage" (Tahun Upah). This was a symbolic

39. *Sholat* means prayer. Interview by Suliyem, 28 November 2005. For a study of the tight control that the company has on the residents of a factory dormitory, see D. Suziani Djajusman, "Di Seberang Gerbang pabrik: Asrama Buruh perempuan" (Across the Factory Gate: the Workers' Dormitory), *Prisma*, 21(1993), pp. 51–58.

40. Douglas Kammen, "A Time to Strike: Industrial Strikes and Changing Class Relations in New Order Indonesia" (Ph.D., Cornell University, 1997).

41. Their main demand was a wage increase following the regulation stipulated by the Minister of Manpower; *Pikiran Rakyat*, 2.8. 1991.

gesture that workers' right to reasonable wages was also a government goal.

Possibly not because of this government change in orientation but as a response to it, various student groups and NGOs became increasingly involved with the organization of factory workers in and around the area of Tangerang.[42] Since the early 1980s the Institute of Legal Aid in Jakarta for instance, had been handling workers' complaints regarding working conditions and cases of dismissals.[43] Discussion groups were regularly conducted to deal systematically with violations in the right of workers to earn a proper income and the right to organize.[44] At that time there was also a strategy to make use of the SPSI as an instrument, in situations when that was possible, but this seldom succeeded.

The public nature of the strikes and women's participation in them, on the one hand may disprove the assumptions about women's "passivity" and the arguments used to explain such passivity; on the other hand, one must be reminded of the fact that militancy among factory workers was highly uneven either between different locations, between factories or within one factory (as the Mayora case shows).

Mayora itself had also experienced strikes in its recent past. Workers recorded strikes from 1994 onwards.[45] These strikes would last at the most six days, all of them revolving around demands for wage increases, and food and transport allowances. It seems that this history of strikes had created a "culture of protest", which, although not followed by all

42. See Ratna Saptari and Artien Utrecht, "Gender Interests and the Struggle of NGOs Within and beyond the State", *Journal für Entwicklungspolitik*, 13 (1997), pp. 319–339; Ford, *Challenging the Criteria of Significance*; Hadiz, *Workers and the State.*

43. In conjunction with the activism of NGOs and student groups, labour organizations also started to appear since the 1990s with the much media-highlighted roles of labour organizations such as Setiakawan, SBSI (Serikat Buruh Seluruh Indonesia), and FNPBI (Front Nasional Persatuan Buruh Indonesia). However, long before that, namely in the early 1980s, LBH (Lembaga Bantuan Hukum, Legal Aid Institute) based in Jakarta had already conducted discussion groups either at the office or in the industrial areas. In the latter case such activities were disguised under the name, *arisan*, or other social meetings to prevent security raids by local officials or military district commands. These activities later on culminated in the founding of SBJ (Serikat Buruh Jabotabek). It is from such discussions as these among others, which started with what was termed as "normative" issues – that to a certain extent prepared the way for workers' awareness of their rights.

44. This account is based on my own observations with LBH at the time together with accounts of various key persons which were involved in the Mayora strike.

45. Three strikes prior to the major 1999 strike were recorded from the interviews. The 1994 strike demanded a wage increase, protested against extra charges for the use of working shoes, and questioned the money that went into health insurance. The 1996 strike, apart from the demand for a wage increase, demanded also the reinstatement of a worker who had been dismissed, unjustly according to the workers. The demand for a wage increase occurred again in a strike in 1997 which resulted in only a minor increase. Interview by Abdul Rozak, 28 March 2004.

workers, became a reference point of action for many. This meant that feelings of discontent were easily channelled into action. However, this culture did not immediately translate itself into participation in collective action. Workers had different reasons for engaging in collective protest – whereas, as we shall also see, some decided not to join the strikes.

THE MAYORA STRIKE: FOLLOWING THE PROCESS

The chronology (*kronologi*) written by the workers' representatives and the Serikat Buruh Jabotabek (the Jabotabek Workers' Union) quite clearly outlines the procedures they followed in articulating their demands.[46] Each date that an important event happened was recorded and given a commentary. Based on this chronology, the two-month long strike can be divided into three main stages. The first stage consisted of the initial articulation of workers' demands and the responses that followed up to the strike itself. The second stage was when the collective protest shifted to locations outside the factory, bringing the dispute into the public streets of Jakarta. The third stage was the phase leading towards the intervention of the Minister of Manpower, who vetoed the decision by the arbitrary body to dismiss the workers who were on strike, and what happened afterwards.[47]

From this *kronologi* the linearity of the narrative allows an overview of these procedures but at the same time leaves out some important dynamics. First of all, one cannot see how the first steps towards collective action were made.[48] For instance, as will be shown later, the stages where coercion was used to get others to strike are not recounted in the *kronologi*. Also, the personal experiences of individual workers showing ambivalence and doubts are not portrayed. The first stage of the strike process started formally on 7 April 1999, when workers' representatives from each line (who were selected by the SPSI), representatives of management, and of

46. Since the major part of the account of the strike is based on material and documents compiled by the SBJ (Serikat Buruh Jabotabek) a brief note on this source is warranted. The volume entitled *Kepala Besi dan Perlawanan Buruh Mayora ("Iron Head" and Mayora Workers' Resistance*) consists of four main parts: a chronology of events; correspondence between the company, the Ministry of Manpower in Jakarta, and its district office in Tangerang, and the workers; newspaper clippings; and letters of support from unions and organizations abroad. It was compiled for two audiences, union members, and the "outside world". Because of the diversity of these sources, one can compare the accounts and the arguments made.

47. These stages are rather arbitrarily constructed and represent my own categorization based on the changing configurations of power.

48. Some of this information, however, could be obtained through the interviews. One woman recounted how, in the various strikes that had occurred in the past, one could recognize the same people involved. From the biscuit section she mentioned two activists, and from the candy section she mentioned three persons. These people were already active in the strike of 1997. Interview by Totok, 31 August 2002.

the SPSI met to talk about wage increases and a minimum wage.[49] The workers demanded that wage increases should be a minimum of 30–50 per cent because the cost of living had increased by 100 per cent. However, in the meeting the SPSI was quick to accept an 18 per cent proposal by management.[50] On 13 April an announcement was placed on a factory wall stating that management had had negotiations with the SPSI and that the SPSI had agreed on an 18 per cent rise.[51] Those who did not agree with the wage rise of 18 per cent should inform management and if they did not respond on 15 April at the latest they would be considered to have accepted the 18 per cent increase.

After some deliberation among the workers in consultation with SBJ activists, on 20 April workers went on strike in front of the factory. The strike lasted for six days and involved all the factory workers (between 1,800 and 2,000 workers).[52] Even though not all workers joined the strike for the whole two months, it is not entirely clear how they could all be mobilized to go on strike. One worker recalled that they succeeded in forcing workers from the sister company of Mayora to join in the strike. This was through banging on their doors and turning off their electricity panels.[53] Workers also hijacked buses which picked up workers to be brought to the factories. This combination of persuasion and coercion resulted in a (near) total work stoppage.

The District Office of the Ministry of Manpower attempted to mediate by recommending a wage increase of 20 per cent (and not 18 or 30 per cent) and a food allowance of Rp. 2,000 instead of 1,000 or 4,000.[54] Although most workers were willing to go along with this last recommendation, the company management did not respond to this. The management gave an ultimatum to the workers: those who wanted to go back to work were requested to re-register on 28 April 1999 at the latest. Those who did not re-register were considered to have resigned. Because of this threat from

49. The fact that this happened in the month of April reflects also the timing regarding the annual wage increase which was supposed to happen in this month. According to one informant who had worked in Mayora since 1994, the SPSI unit in Mayora was established in the year she entered. There was no other union until after the strike, when many of the workers who were against the SPSI became members of SBJ in late 1999 and 2000.

50. Letter from Karyawan PT Mayora Indah to Pimpinan Perusahaan Mayora Indah, 20 April 1999.

51. Announcement by the factory management to all the workers of the Biscuit Candy Division, 13 April 1999 in *Kepala Besi.*

52. The exact total is rather unclear; at some point 1,800 is mentioned, at other points 2,000 is mentioned as the total number of workers.

53. Winardi was one of the fifteen workers who were chosen to be in charge of the safety of the workers; interview by Abdul Razak, 9 March 2004.

54. Laporan Hasil Perantaraan – by Pegawai Perantara M. Marbun, SE diketahui oleh Kepala Kantor Depnaker signed on 20 April 1999.

the management, some of the workers who feared they would not get any jobs elsewhere decided to go back to work.[55]

In the meantime, the day before 28 April the company had already mobilized security officials to approach the workers in their houses. Informants recalled that "certain people" (*orang-orang tertentu*) namely people from the military, came to workers' homes to "persuade" them to sign a letter of intent to go back to work. This strategy resulted in a situation where around ten per cent of the strikers gave their signatures.[56] However, when the workers who had signed up tried to go to work, the factory refused to open the factory gates to them, saying that that had to wait for the summons first. Even when on 29 April, workers' representatives wanted to meet with management, the latter refused.

This brought the protest action to the second stage, when the workers started to shift their location of protest beyond factory vicinities. This brought the struggle into a more public mode, highlighting the conflicting roles of the Ministry of Manpower and the company, PT Mayora.[57] It was not coincidental that this shift occurred on the Labour Day commemoration on 1 and 2 May, days which, since the downfall of Suharto, had become a public event when street marches filled much of the agenda of labour and labour-linked organizations. The Ministry proposed the reinstatement of the 1,376 workers who were suspended by the company and that the company should pay the workers from the very moment they were willing to go back to work.[58] These proposals were rejected outright by the company.

Two courses of action had to be taken by the workers' representatives (*perwakilan*).[59] The first was to continue the demands concerning wages and allowances. The other was to save the fate of the workers who were dismissed or considered to have resigned because they did not re-register.

55. It is not clear how many went back – some said 500, others said 700 workers. What might be more certain is that 1,361 workers maintained their position in rejecting the management's decision to provide only an 18 per cent increase in wages, as this number of workers was mentioned repeatedly in letters from the district office and the Minister of Manpower, Fahmi Idris. The experiences of those who re-registered are illustrated in the section below.

56. This percentage is according to the *Kronologi Aksi* prepared by SBJ. Again the percentage is unclear. Ten per cent of the workforce would be around 200 – therefore if workers say between 500 and 700, this is much higher than the 10 per cent. Thus, either not all workers went on strike from the start, which may mean that the statement that "in the beginning all the workers went on strike", could be questioned.

57. Letter of Complaint and Appeal for Protection (Hal Pengaduan dan Permohonan Perlindungan) to the Minister of Manpower, Fahmi Idris from "Workers of PT Mayora Indah" dated 1 May 1999.

58. Which meant that they should not be paid during the official seven-day strike at the factory.

59. Many of the workers interviewed referred to the workers' representatives as *perwakilan* (Indonesian for "representatives"). The use of the term *perwakilan* was meant to distinguish those who were from the SPSI and those who were central in organizing the strike.

Each path involved confronting different state institutions. The decision regarding the workers' dismissal case was postponed from 17 May to 24 May.[60] The first path, which focused on the issue of workers' wage increases, food allowances, and the tax obligations of the workers, went through the P4D (Panitia Penyelesaian Perselisihan Perburuhan Daerah – Regional Labour Disputes Committee) the court session which was to take place on 19 May.[61] Therefore, a separate delegation went to Bandung, where the P4D west Java office was. This did not bring much in the way of results since the wage increase was fixed at 18 per cent, and not 30 per cent as requested by the workers; the food allowance was increased from Rp. 1,000 to Rp. 2,000, and not Rp, 4,000 as requested by the workers, and the workers still had to pay income tax, which they had requested not to have to pay.

The second course of action meant staying at the Ministry of Manpower's office in Jakarta to persuade this body to pressure company management to change its decision regarding workers who were dismissed. As the section below shows, this brought various clashes between Ministry employees and factory workers. However, it was characteristic of the post-Suharto period that workers were allowed to remain there for so long.[62] On 24 May, the day when their case would be decided in P4P, 200 people from the Urban Poor Commission (UPC) led by Wardah Hafidz, a well-known NGO activist, managed to enter the Ministry precincts through the rear entrance.[63] It was at this point that NGO activists started to be involved in the workers' struggle. The presence of these NGO activists was to put more pressure on the Minister to take the Mayora workers' case seriously. In the end, because there was no response from the Ministry, through sheer frustration the workers moved to block the Jakarta–Merak

60. Court was held with representatives from each side present. According to the *kronologi*, fifteen people from the workers's side, four from SBJ, two from LBH Karya Setia; five from the company (including two legal representatives), and eleven persons from the P4P attended this court assembly (*kronologi*, p. 11). During these talks, the workers' representatives demanded that they should be paid their full wage during this whole dispute. On 18 May the management agreed only to a 50 per cent payment during the dispute process: Document B 283/M/KP4P/1999 issued by the P4P on the Bipartite Negotiation between PT Mayora and Sugondo esq (1,376 workers).

61. Since the enactment of labour legislation in 1951 to control the arbitration process, labour disputes had to be handled through the Panitia Penyelesaian Perselisihan Buruh Pusat (P4P, The Central Labour Disputes Committee), or its equivalent institutions at the different administrative levels, i.e. the P4D (Regional Labour Disputes Committee). See Everett D. Hawkins, "Labor in Developing Countries in Indonesia", in B. Glassburner (ed.), *The Economy of Indonesia* (Ithaca, NY, 1971). pp. 196–250.

62. Public condemnation of military intervention had grown together with the wave of student demonstrations that targeted Suharto's military rule.

63. The Urban Poor Commission was initially an organization which provided support for the urban poor to claim the right of settlement and employment in urban pockets where the urban poor mainly worked in the informal sector.

toll road. Lorry drivers who had to transport their goods to and fro were extremely frustrated because they also had their work schedules; the police tried to negotiate with the workers and finally succeeded in getting them off the road.

When finally P4P came out with the decision that all 1,361 workers were to be dismissed there was a temporary halt to the protest actions as the workers' representatives and the SBJ organizers deliberated what to do next. Almost a week later, on 1 June, they then blockaded the toll road of Jalan Gatot Soebroto, a road that was crucial in linking the traffic from the western part to the eastern part of Jakarta and where many office buildings were also located. This blockade started at 13.00 in the afternoon and received much press coverage.[64] At 9.30 am on the day when the workers were blocking the toll road the Minister of Manpower, Fahmi Idris, issued a decree which stated that the company had to re-employ the workers within fourteen days.[65] This decree was, however, challenged by the company who then brought the case to PTUN (Pengadilan Tata Usaha Negara). During this process the factory gates were still closed to the strikers.

Between 3 and 9 June the workers shifted their location and went to the headquarters of Mayora in Tomang Raya where the Mayora bank was also located. On that same day the anti-riot police came in full force to disperse the demonstrators.[66] They were all brought to police headquarters and divided into three groups: 434 people were made to wait in the police parking lot, 95 went into cells, and 42 students were separately interrogated. For many of the workers interviewed such experiences are strongly etched in their minds. One of the 95 workers who was detained said that she felt like a "first class criminal – pushed around with a gun in her back" (*penjahat kelas kakap – didorong-dorong pake senapan*). She recalled that they were then split in two groups, the men's group and the women's group. But because they all protested and wanted to be together, in the end they were brought together again. Their names, ages, and addresses were written down by the police.

Although in most of their actions workers emphasized economic interests, subtexts which are gendered at times can be seen in the reporting. For instance, the *kronologi* reports that women police were involved in their detention, and when in the evening the workers were not given any food although they were all hungry, the women workers shouted at these policewomen saying that "policewomen have never had children and were

64. The actual number of workers who joined this blockade is debatable. The *Warta Kota* reported that 1,300 workers were present, *Republika* came up with the number of 800 workers; *Kompas*, 1,000 workers; *Warta Kota*, 2 June 1999; *Republika*, 2 June 1999; *Kompas*, 2 June 1999.
65. Kep 102/Men/1999 dated 1 June 1999.
66. *Kronologi* 1999, p. 19.

Figure 1. "Workers United Cannot Be Defeated".
Photograph by Johnny TG from Kompas, *16 June 1999. Used with permission.*

born of stone – that is why they do not have any feelings towards their fellow humans!" (*Polisi perempuan tidak pernah mengeluarkan anak dan lahir dari batu – pantas tidak punya rasa kasihan sama manusia!*). The short detention period was also an opportunity for the police to scare the workers and therefore prevent their future involvement in "deviant behaviour". This was the case when the next morning Supriyatin and many others were forced by police officials to walk through the cells and look at the prisoners who were in them.[67]

Even after these interrogations, the protest actions did not abate. On 14 June, some workers went back to the factory to see if there were any changes in the company position and to discuss the Ministerial Decree which instructed the company to re-employ them.[68] However, the Company refused to meet them and these workers went home. On 15 June their venue for protest shifted to the office of the BAPPEPAM (Badan Pemeriksa dan Pengawas Pasar Modal), the government body that gave licenses to companies to invest in Indonesia, in Lapangan Banteng, at the heart of the Jakarta business centre, where the Patung Pembebasan Irian Jaya (statue of the Liberation of Irian Jaya) was situated. Since Mayora had "gone public",

67. She stated that there was a "professor" who was jailed for corruption and his hands were tied; interview by Abdul Razak, 27 March 2004; interview by Toto, 31 August 2002.
68. It is not clear why they waited five days from the time of the police interrogations before they went back to the factory vicinities.

they demanded that BAPPEPAM, which was a body within the Ministry of Finance, would review its permit to Mayora because of the violation of the rights of 1,376 workers to go back to work.[69] Between 600 and 1,000 people,[70] consisting of workers from Mayora Indah, SBJ, student volunteers, UPC (Urban Poor Commission), one or two persons from PKB (Partai Kesatuan Bangsa – The National Unity Party), and Sosial Demokrat (an activist group) marched to the location.

Figure 1 opposite shows some of the demonstrators leaning against a fence with a banner reading: "Workers united cannot be defeated" (*buruh besatu tak bisa dikalahkan*), and "Without workers you don't mean a thing" (*tanpa buruh kau tak berarti apa2*). Figure 2 overleaf also shows demonstrators with a banner reading: " A great nation is a nation that respects its workers" (*bangsa yang besar adalh bangsa yang menghargai buruh*). The purpose of this demonstration was also to demand that BAPPEPAM should exert pressure on Mayora to accept the workers back into the factory after being "neglected" (*ditelantarkan*) for two months.[71]

When finally the state officials were willing to consider meeting the demonstrators, there was a verbal tussle regarding where the meeting with the BAPPEPAM officials should take place. Workers insisted that all of them should be present in the discussions – which meant that it should be a public meeting, a suggestion which was rejected by the officials. When deadlock was reached and the workers refused to budge from their position, the police started to force workers to evacuate the area with the bus transport that they had managed to muster.[72] In the end, the workers and their supporters were all brought to Police Headquarters.[73] The workers refused to give any statements until they could have legal representation from LBH APIK (Legal Aid Institute of Women Lawyers for Justice) and other human rights organizations. The whole procedure lasted until 11.00 pm and then the workers were all transported in twelve trucks (double-carriage) with very tight police patrol guards to the factory location, which was also under tight security.

One of the woman workers who was actively involved from the very start, stated that for her this was the most unforgettable episode of the whole strike process. This was because, according to the *kronologi*, around 1,000 workers were evacuated by the district police and brought to headquarters. This was around 1 am. And they were forced to stay for 24 hours. "We were very pissed off and hated to be there. We shouted at the

69. *Warta Kota*, 16 June 1999.

70. The figures vary. The *kronologi* mentions 1,000 people whereas *Kompas* mentions around 600 people (in the caption to the picture shown above), and *Republika* mentions 500 people.

71. *Kronologi*, p. 21.

72. With the police there was then a negotiation to be brought to the Panacasila University or to Tangerang.

73. This consisted of three students, four members of SBJ, and five workers.

Figure 2. "A Great Nation Is a Nation that Respects its Workers".
Photograph by Johnny TG from Kompas, *16 June 1999. Used with permission.*

police and had a verbal fight inside. But what could we do, we were already there?"[74] All the workers, students, and NGO activists were interrogated, and their personal data were noted down. Some of them were allowed to go home by 15.30 in the afternoon yet others – who were considered the ringleaders – were still detained until almost midnight.[75] On 16 and 17 June, the media was full of this incident and the role of the police. The NGO activist Wardah Hafidz was central in accounts of the arrests. Headlines such as "BURUH MAYORA DEMO KE BAPPEPAM" ("Mayora Workers Demonstrate to BAPPEPAM");[76] "KETIKA 500 BURUH MAYORA BERUNJUKRASA"("When 500 Mayora Workers Demonstrate"), "WARDAH HAFIDZ DITANGKAP DENGAN TUDUHAN MENGHASUT"("Wardah Hafidz Detained and Accused of Libel") filled the various national newspapers.[77]

With all the publicity, the threat by the NGO activists to boycott the products of Mayora, and the various stoppages in production, eventually the company made some concessions. The workers went back to the factory gates and at 11.00 the company asked ten representatives of the

74. Interview by Totok 31 August 2002.
75. In the *kronologi*, some names were mentioned, among them eight men and three women workers who were the *perwakilan buruh,* p. 23
76. *Warta Kota*, 16 June 1999.
77. *Republika*, 16 June 1999; *Republika*, 17 June 1999; *Kompas*, 17 June 1999.

workers to enter the factory precincts and negotiate. The result of the negotiation was that the workers were allowed to return to work in the factory and take the remaining 50 per cent of their wages from the month of May. However, they had to re-register themselves and agree to refrain from any further action that "transgresses the law". Workers who did not want to return to the factory would get severance money of one and half months extra pay (*uang kebijaksanaan*).[78] On 21 and 22 June workers started re-registering, and on 25 June they went back to work. From the 1,330 workers who re-registered, 830 went back to work and 500 resigned.

CLAIMING PUBLIC SPACE

A major feature of the collective protest actions by the Mayora workers was that most of it was conducted outside the factory precincts. This was particularly the case because at an early point in the actions, the company management had closed down all possibility of the striking workers entering the grounds. But more importantly, this was because negotiations and the entire labour dispute took a long time, because both company and workers maintained their different positions. Quite often, both sides embarked on a show of force, using various symbols to enhance their differences or standpoints. The choice of locations by the workers and other activists were also important as symbolic targets. The blocking of major toll roads and the taking over of sites around public buildings were both an attempt to confront their opponents and also to demonstrate to the general public the complicity of their opponents. Government institutions, such as the district office of the Ministry of Manpower in Tangerang, the main office of Ministry of Manpower in Jakarta, the toll road between Jakarta and Merak, the Bank of Mayora, and the BAPPEPAM (Regulatory Body for Capital Investment) also became the public sites of workers' protests.

The decision to choose one location instead of another was quite often spontaneous and decided upon by the handful of organizers who were mainly the "line representatives" (*perwakilan buruh*) in alliance with the Serikat Buruh Jabotabek.[79] Most of the rank and file did not have any idea of how the decisions were made. And some of them were only made aware of the point of the demands when they were already at the location, although the general line had been discussed in the various discussion groups which were established among them. For instance, one woman

78. This agreement was signed by ten workers' representatives and five representatives from management.

79. According to Asmah, who had worked in Mayora for four years before she joined the strike, there were nine people who could be referred to as *perwakilan* (representatives). They were actively involved in organizing the workers; interview by Totok, 24 August 2002.

worker felt that she agreed with the demands and yet she only knew about the details of the demands when they were engaged a sit-in in front of the Ministry of Manpower. And this was only when pamphlets were circulated among them listing the points of their demands.[80] On 3 May, the workers shifted from the factory to the Ministry of Manpower main office in Jakarta. The workers' stay at the Ministry was to be one of the most evident forms of workers' resilience on the one hand and a sign of the new political era where military heavy-handedness was not visibly condoned. Three weeks later the workers were still there. Various attempts were made by the authorities to get them off the official precincts or to follow the regulations. However, the workers refused to comply, claiming their right to maintain their presence and to use their own rhetoric which clearly ridiculed the authority of the Ministry.

For instance, the *kronologi* reports that on 19 May, the security coordinator of the P4P, accompanied by an official from KODIM (Military District Command) and the police, assembled the workers and told them that all the clothes that were hanging out to dry in the office yard had to be brought down or moved to the back near the tennis courts. The place was to be used for a practice of the commemoration of the "Day of National Awakening" (Hari Kebangkitan Nasional). The workers refused and said that if they moved the clothes they would be stolen. In the end, the rehearsal of the Depnaker employees was conducted within the circle of hanging laundry. In fact, after the ceremonial practice was finished, workers did their own mocking imitation of the ceremony by raising what they called the workers' flag (which was actually their headcovers), reading the workers' demands and reading out the *Pancasila*,[81] but replacing the term *kemanusiaan yang adil dan beradab* (just and civilized humanitarianism) with the words *kemanusiaan yang tidak adil dan tidak beradab* (unjust and uncivilized humanitarianism). This was followed by the "workers' anthem" which they themselves created.

At midnight, however, the security officials came again and asked the workers to leave because the next day the real ceremony attended by the Minister of Manpower would be held. The security officials said that the workers would be taken back to Tangerang in buses. The workers refused, stating that they wanted to join in the ceremony too. There was much negotiation and, in the end, the workers were allowed to stay, on the condition that all hanging laundry would be taken down before the morning and that the workers would help to clean the yard which was to

80. Another woman, mak Surah, who was already in her early fifties when she joined the strike, had never had a strike experience before. Having not even finished her primary education, she was often dependant on others to explain the decisions made by the workers' representatives in consultation with the different groups. Nevertheless, she joined the strike from beginning to end. Interview by Totok, 23 February 2004.

81. The national symbol constituting the five pillars of the nation.

be used for the ceremony. The next morning all the rows were made ready and each row was given a board inscribed with the name of the group section. Therefore, there were boards for the "Music Division", and "Dharma Wanita" (Women's Association). And there was also a board inscribed "Employees" (*pekerja*). The workers refused this term and insisted that *buruh* (labourers) should be written instead, but the organizers refused to comply. In the end, the workers threw away the board and made their own with *Buruh* written on it.[82]

During the ceremony, speech after speech was given and finally the minister gave his speech. However, the workers were disappointed that the minister did not once mention the case of the Mayora workers. As a result, many of the workers demonstrated disappointment by walking around and smoking, falling out of their rows. Afterwards, when the official ceremony was finished, they started their own ceremony. One worker pretended to be the minister, another pretended to play the trumpet using a street marker. An old woman worker, mak Surah, went and raised the flag but using a blanket as a flag. Seeing this spectacle, many of the ministry officials could not help laughing. At the conclusion of their ceremony, the workers hung up their laundry again.

The toll roads were also the centre of collective action. The media was in general sympathetic to the plight of the workers, and individual women workers were interviewed to explain why the workers were blocking the road. They also reported some incidents (which were not reported in the *kronologi*) where workers were throwing stones at the factory and at workers who had, much earlier in the process, decided to go back to work; or that some telegraph poles were brought down.[83] What was not reported by the media which the *kronologi* reported, however, was that 300 anti-riot police were sent to evacuate the workers.

The choice of BAPPEPAM was also symbolic as it was the body which gave permits to investors. For this occasion, 200 masks were made from cardboard and gold-coloured paper, 5 banners (90 x 600 cm), and 18 posters were carried by the workers. The newspaper, *Warta Kota*, showed a picture of the people wearing these masks standing under the Statue of the Liberation of Irian Jaya – with the caption, *Patung Pembebasan Buruh* (Statue of the Liberation of Workers).[84] In *Republika* the focus was on a 60-year-old woman worker, Ibu Surah, who was seen as a prototype of a worker who had served most of her working life for the company and yet did not get the acknowledgement that she expected. The location was highly strategic, Lapangan Banteng, which was not only the central point

82. Since 1983, the term *buruh* (labour) was considered too closely linked with old communist propaganda, therefore it was changed to *pekerja* or *karyawan* (employee).
83. The toll road was in front of the Ministry's Office.
84. *Warta Kota*, 16 June 1999.

of public transportation terminals but was also an area considered to be high on the list of those that needed tight security (*lingkar satu*). Symbolically, the move to this government building showed that the protestors wanted to highlight the nature of capital investment and were aware of the formal procedures of entry. How the decision was made to choose this building is difficult to ascertain, but the consequences of the decision had great influence on the collective memories of the workers.

In examining the protest actions in all these public sites, the planning and the actors behind the strike is less important than the effect that the collective action had on its participants. Even though the workers were of different backgrounds, the experience of being classified together as "workers" in confrontation with the symbols of power became the foundation upon which a common identity was built. Despite these public displays, and the excitement that such experiences produced in those who joined the strike process, we still come back to the question of why some did not join the process.

THOSE WHO DID NOT JOIN

During the first half of the strike, around one-third of the workers went back to work. No clear line can be drawn between workers who remained steadfast in their convictions and those who changed their minds. The explanations given by those who did not continue as to why they stopped are difficult to interpret in structural terms. The narratives highlight a combination of factors: e.g. a realization of limited social and material capital, such as low education and poverty, and yet these factors existed also for those who joined the protests. One woman mentioned the fact that she was worried about applying for a job in another factory because her education was too low (SMP level). She feared she would not get employment elsewhere. This same reason was stated by another woman who had not even finished her primary school education, and neither had her husband. Looking to her husband for support, she said:

> Mayora is constantly demonstrating. I was going to have a child [...] and getting morning sickness. Also we were building a new place. My husband said "My education is only primary school, now it is difficult to get another job, anyway we are both getting older" – that's what he said. As a woman I just follow what he says. He said, "We should not imitate those who are clever. We are just stupid people (*kita orang bodoh*)". So I just follow what he says.[85]

For these workers, working in a factory where the majority of the workers were on strike was not easy. In contrast to the periods when there were no disputes, when hierarchical boundaries were often quite rigid,

85. Interview by Suliyem, 30 November 2005. Umi Juariyah, thirty years old, was married and had one child. Her husband also did not finish his primary school education.

workers unsurprisingly obtained much support and cooperation from their supervisors. Whenever they heard that the noise from outside became increasingly thunderous (*gemuruh*), as workers heightened their yelling, shouting, and clangorous noises, making speeches and occasionally crying out *Allahu Akbar* ("God is Great"), they became terrified, worrying that at one point the walls would fall down. Since the people outside were in the majority, the supervisors would tell them to shut down the machines so that no sound could be heard indicating that they were working as usual. The supervisors also did not push the workers to work at high speed and, according to one worker, the supervisors even joined in when they saw that workers could not catch up.

Olson's argument of the tendency to "free-ride" can be found in these examples. A worker recalled how the supervisors often explained to the workers that there was no sense in joining the strike, pointing to the fact that, if the demonstration succeeded, they would also get the benefits anyway.[86] Mimicking the supervisors, she quoted: "See, it is very hot outside. It is much better if you stay inside. What is the use of joining that demonstration? If they succeed you will get also a raise anyway!" Many of the non-striking workers used the rear exit when they went home in fear of retribution from striking workers. Some security officials (from the military) were hired by the company to guard production inside – and as one worker stated: "Yes, we just chat in a relaxed way here at work and luckily the guard is Javanese, so we can enjoy work". Here the worker, who was also Javanese, indicated the ethnicity of the person as a common factor reducing the social barriers. The negative consequences of the choices that the opposite group made was translated in practical terms. As one worker said:

> It is better to work. If we follow the others (*ikutan*) and the result is dismissal we would be out of a job. They (the strikers) were in the end the ones who often borrowed money. I would be too proud to do that, borrowing from those who didn't join the strike, because they wanted higher wages.

Or,

> Well if they want to strike, let them. But they should not block other people's way. They should demonstrate on the side so others don't have to be stopped from doing what they have to do. But I cannot talk about this, I just think it (*dalam hati saja*).

One woman recounted that they thought their names would all be ruined as workers of Mayora because Mayora would get such a bad reputation. Nobody would want to hire anyone from Mayora. The various modes of protest, the rhetoric used, and the theatrics involved created

86. In this interview the worker apologized to two of the interviewers who had actively participated in the strike.

necessary public attention which operated within the political framework of the time. Although most of this rhetoric was, to a large extent, formulated by the more experienced worker activists, together with the NGO and student activists, and did not come from the rank-and-file – through the acting out of such gestures, many of the workers obtained new experiences and strengthened their consciousness as workers as they used whatever channels they could to obtain their goals. The economic and political were fused into one framework, although the consequences would not necessarily have direct political significance. The internal conflicts and emotional tension was also felt by the non-striking workers in the communities where they lived. One worker stated:

> We are pressurized both at home and at work. [After the strike] when I went to work and met those who joined the demo I felt very embarrassed. It is as if, when they see me they think, "Oh, that's the one who didn't join the demo". That is very embarrassing.

These illustrations highlight the analytical problems involved when one reduces workers' identities to class positions or structural factors as this cannot be used to anticipate workers' individual and collective actions.

IN THE SHADOW OF THE STRIKE: HOUSEHOLD ARRANGEMENTS AND FAMILIAL NETWORKS

The role of households and social networks as a reference point for the daily actions of wage workers and their participation in collective action has been subject to much debate.[87] The question often asked is: How do family and household interests sustain or weaken workers' struggles and participation in the strike? From the various illustrations below, I would like to show that workers are neither simply implementing "household strategies", nor are they totally detached from the interests of their family members.[88] Even though Mayora workers were not necessarily "biographically available",[89] they were still able to participate in collective action

87. For a discussion of the literature, see Marcel van der Linden, "Introduction", in Jan Kok (ed.), *Rebellious Families: Household Strategies and Collective Action in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (New York, 2002), pp. 1–23.

88. For the first approach, see the critical discussion by Wolf, *Factory Daughters* and for the latter approach see Rosanne Rutten,"High-Cost Activism and the Worker Household: Interests, Commitment, and the Costs of Revolutionary Activism in a Philippine Plantation Region", *Theory and Society*, 29 (2000), pp. 215–252. Rutten argues, in the case of hacienda workers in the Philippines, that "it was against the will of their parents and against the interests of their households at large" that sons and daughters decided to engage in the costly activism of full-time revolutionaries', p. 172.

89. McAdam uses the term to refer to "the absence of personal constraints that may increase the costs and risks of movement participation, such as full-time employment, marriage and family

by negotiating division of tasks and material support with fellow workers and family members either in the area or at a distance.

As mentioned above, upon entry into the Tangerang area, men and women migrant workers became immediately embedded in a multitude of domestic relations which opened up different possibilities for combining "work" and "home". A number of patterns can be seen among the workers. There were single unmarried workers, who were siblings who jointly rented a room or a small house (*kontrakan*). There were male workers who shared rooms with other male workers while their wives and children stayed with parents or parents-in-law. There were workers whose mothers came to take care of household affairs. And there were also older women who had married children to deal with their daily survival needs. Even though gender and age played a role in the division of tasks, there were no strict and fast rules.

For instance, a male worker who lived in rented accomodation around 300 metres from the factory with his younger sister was dependent on his sister for the domestic chores that needed to be done. His sister was the one who did the cooking, washing, ironing, and cleaning the house. He was the one who paid the rent and electricity. Apart from paying the rent, he also laid money aside to finance his sister. Even when the sister moved to other rented accommodation, she still prepared his food. And he also sent his dirty clothes for washing to his sister. This arrangement was maintained from the period of the strike until the sister left to get married three years later. However, the strike forced more flexibility into the division of labour as he often had to wash his own clothes.[90]

A woman worker shared a rented house with her younger sister when the strike started. At that time her sister had just started working in Mayora whereas she herself had already worked for four years.[91] When the strike occurred her sister also joined in. But occasionally the worker would ask her sister to go back and check on their rented place. Both her parents were agricultural wage workers in Palembang, south Sumatra. During the strike, she still received 50 per cent of her wage. But because this wage was not enough for her survival, she had to spend the earnings that she normally used for going home to the village before the *Idul Fitri* (end of the Islamic fasting month). Also, she stopped sending money home to help her younger siblings who were still at school. She could have had some

responsibilities", and this allowed individuals to be involved in high-risk activism. See Doug McAdam, "Recruitment to High-Risk Activism: The Case of Freedom Summer", *The American Journal of Sociology*, 92 (1986), pp. 64–90, 70.

90. Interview by Toto, 28 February 2004.

91. Before entering Mayora, she had already worked in other factories, since 1992. First in a textile factory, PT Mercu Prima, where she worked for two years (1993–1995). She resigned because her wage was below the basic minimum wage. This means that she was able to express her dissatisfaction with working conditions.

money saved prior to the strike because she had a double income. After working hours she sold snacks (*empek-empek*) from which she sometimes earned more than in Mayora. Both occupations contributed equally to paying the rent.

Another arrangement often seen is where a married couple, upon their settling down in the industrial area, would send their children to live with their parents because life, and especially schooling, was expensive in the city. This was the case with one male worker who was an active organizer in Mayora and whose wife was also a factory worker.[92] He and his wife lived in the housing complex of PT Gajah Tunggal, which was strictly guarded because of the previous large-scale workers' strike.[93] Their children were taken care of by his parents-in-law in Rangkas Bitung, west Java. Sometimes the children came to visit, but most times the couple travelled to visit the children. During the strike, his wife lived in Rangkas Bitung with her parents to take care of their second child. Their first child lived with his parents in Banjarnegara.[94] Therefore, at that time he shared a house with a fellow worker. They shared the payment of the rent and electricity equally. For other tasks, such as cooking and shopping, there was no clear division of work. What they did separately was to wash their own clothes and iron them. During the strike, they went home only to wash their dirty laundry.

Another male worker who started work in Mayora in 1993 and was placed in the Biscuit Division, lived with his wife and younger brother, who worked in another factory in Tangerang.[95] Their two children lived with his parents in Wonogiri, central Java. Even before the strike, he did not have any savings, since all spare money was usually sent to his parents for the care of the two children. His wife came to the strike location every two days bringing food and clean clothes for him. His brother and wife did not have a clear division of labour in their rented accommodation during the strike. However, his brother, who previously never did chores in the house, helped his wife to clean and do the shopping as well as wash his own clothes. His brother was the one who provided financial support during the strike. This made it possible for them to retain their rented lodgings and maintain a basic food supply.

Another type of arrangement was when a parent (mother) lived in the house to take care of household chores. For example, one woman, originally from Banten, was left behind by her mother who had worked in

92. Interview by Totok, 9 March 2004.

93. Although Purwono himself was active during the strike, his brother had repeatedly warned him not to hold any meetings in the housing complex.

94. During the strike he was still able to come home once or twice, at the end of the week to see his wife and children.

95. Interview by Abdul Razak, 9 March 2004.

Mayora since its establishment.[96] When she was old enough to find employment in the factory, she applied to Mayora and was accepted. She was not an activist but she joined the strike in 1999. During the strike, the division of work at home was not an issue. Her mother, who was at that time ill, was not too concerned about household chores. She sometimes bought food, and sometimes a relative would bring food to her. Fetching water from the hand-pump or washing clothes were chores which sometimes her mother's brother did for her. Her five-year-old daughter was still too young to do errands. She was not too worried because she knew that there would be some family member who would come and help. What worried her mother most was how to survive from day to day while she herself was ill. However, this did not prompt her to tell her daughter to stop participating in the strike. When she ran out of money, she would borrow from her older brother. And if he himself had no money available they would borrow from the nearest neighbour. They were not too worried about their own needs, because they could usually get food from their neighbours if need be.

One woman was already in her fifties when she joined the strike and had worked for nineteen years in Mayora. She lived with her daughter and son-in-law in the house that she owned. Because her daughter did not work, she was the one who took care of the daily routine such as cooking, washing, and cleaning the house. Even before the strike she did not do these tasks any more. At 5.30 in the morning she would leave the house brought by her son-in-law by motorbike to the place where Mayora workers were fetched by the company bus. After work, at 15.00 in the afternoon she went home by minibus as far as the entrance to her village where her son-in-law would already be waiting with his motorbike. Even though this was her son-in-law she would sometimes pay him but often she did not pay. She recalls that, when the strike was going on, she had only her savings and the fifty per cent of her wage which was eventually given to her during the actions. Apart from that she and another older woman worker in her sixties sometimes received donations from students. Even her neighbour gave her pocket money occasionally.[97] The sympathy she got from her neighbours, according to her, was because they always followed the process on TV.

One woman who was active in the organization of the strike and also participated in the earlier strikes, obtained money from her younger sister who was at that time pregnant and brought food to her; an older sister provided some money for a week's living expenses. Her parents lived in a

96. Interview by Abdul Razak, 27 March 2004. Supriyatin was three years old when her mother started working there. Since Supriyatin's father had died when she was three, her mother sent for her. But then she was taken under the wing of her uncle who lived also in Tangerang but some distance from where her mother worked.

97. Interview by Totok, 22 March 2004.

village in central Java and were informed by telephone about the strike. They were deeply worried, thinking that things would escalate, such as the "Semanggi affair",[98] and instructed her to come home. When they followed the strike, as reported on television, and they saw the workers blocking the toll road in the centre of Jakarta, they cried. However, the parents' wishes were left unheeded.

Since the strike was to a large extent covered by the newspapers and television, images of how the large-scale protests disrupted the functioning of public life, through road blockages, the hanging of laundry during official ceremonies, and the arrests of workers, were followed by those on the margins. From those who joined the strikes stories of support from their family members seemed to characterize the situation, despite the fear and anxiety that were also stimulated by these images. As workers were practically living in the courtyards of public institutions or being absent from their homes for long periods of time, those who were directly dependent on their income and on their work at home, also had to adjust to this disruption from the usual running of everyday life. However, as the illustrations above show, workers negotiated different arrangements which were not necessarily confined to what was morally found to be correct.

The strike itself highlighted the abnormality of the situation, but this operated on relationships that were already flexible by default. Migration was not a new phenomenon and household arrangements were always malleable. Physical separation from parents in rural areas allowed workers more freedom to make their own decisions, but this did not mean social or emotional detachment.[99] Financially, the strike meant much hardship. The fact that workers said that they had to use their savings meant that they had previously managed to save, as many of them obtained income not only from the factory but also from petty trading after working hours.

THE AFTERMATH

Even though for many who joined the strike it was seen as a success (mainly because management had to reverse its decision to fire the workers) actual material gains were quite limited. Apart from their re-employment, workers were only given an increase in their food allowances and the amount was not what they had asked for. The composition of the workers also gradually changed. Three years before, the company had introduced the contract system based on periods of three-, four-, or six-month contracts. When the contracts had expired they were extended or

98. This was a situation where student protests around the Semanggi bridge in Jakarta resulted in some students getting shot.

99. Rutten , "High-Cost Activism and the Worker Household", p. 172.

the workers would be asked to reapply. The exception was in the mechanical or technical divisions where (male) workers were more skilled and difficult to replace. The number of "permanent" workers were now 1,200.

Although the union, SBJ, which had stood by the workers during the whole period of the strike, was formally still registered with the District Manpower Office they were not recognized by the company, nor by the SPSI. Instead, the company chose to recognize a reformed SPSI which would not go against their policies and yet satisfy the workers to a certain extent.[100] Many of the SBJ members are not active any more. However, in making decisions, the company was very careful not to violate earlier agreements since former activists were still working. Unlike before the strike, the company was not so relaxed about dismissing workers. In the past, when workers did not come in to work for five days in a row they would be immediately sacked, whereas now the grace period has been extended to one week. Wage increases followed government regulations which were still lower than the workers' earlier demands. Differences between those who had worked for a long time and those who had just entered were very small. As with most other companies, various allowances were given only if workers turned up for work or if production targets had been achieved.[101]

Since 1999 there have been no more strikes. On the one hand, workers have said that management seemed to provide a better working atmosphere, it was more willing to listen, grievances were discussed more often at the negotiating table and supervisors were much more careful in reprimanding workers. However, in structural terms, the plight of workers did not become more favourable. Not physical repression but legislative manipulation was the mode of control. After the fall of Suharto, unionism has been given a more marginalized place – hidden in a twilight zone of semi-existence.[102] Many workers said that they did not regret joining the strike; however, some said they would have done it differently, and others

100. The SPSI unit was reorganized three times. The last reorganization was because it was discovered that the committee had embezzled the members' monthly membership fees (iuran). The monthly fee was Rp. 2,000 per month

101. Food allowance was by 2005, Rp. 4,000 per day, which was the amount demanded in 1999. Attendance premium was Rp. 35,000 per month and if the workers did not attend for two days their premium would be cut in half; if there was no attendance for three days they would not get the premium. Production target premiums were between Rp 20,000–Rp. 120,000 per month, and this varied between the different categories of workers. Menstrual leave (two days) in the past involved a physical check (a smear) by clinic staff but after the strike workers got leave even without a smear. However, when in one case a woman worker took her menstrual leave money and later on it was discovered that she was actually pregnant, the company reinstated the physical check.

102. Unwritten report by Surya Chandra. See also Ford, *Challenging the Criteria of Significance.*

said that they now had more courage to face their employers if there were any problems.

CONCLUSION

The Mayora strike has allowed us to examine the debates regarding the interplay between individual decisions and collective action through the mobilization process and the sequencing of collective protest actions. Indeed, neither the structural positioning of workers nor the rational choices of individual actors determined workers' participation in collective protest. The reasons behind one's involvement may not be traced to one single factor and may also change in time, as the account above has shown.

The Mayora strike occurred in a particular moment in Indonesia's political history. It was a time when the Indonesian government was trying to rehabilitate its battered image to the international world and gain more trust from the general public as democratization became a significant slogan in the maintenance of political life. Despite ethnic and gender differences, the workers' identity as a class was stimulated first of all through workplace grievances enhanced by the language of workers' rights and minimum wages which had already circulated. The role of labour activists and student movements in the Tangerang area and other parts of the country further stimulated the idea of workers as part of a class.

Metropolitan Jakarta, with its long history of Indonesian nationhood, neutralized ethnic diversity for most of the workers. However, workers' awareness of their position, which at first was influenced by workplace conditions, was then sharpened by their confrontations with the power-holders and the frustrations of not being treated seriously, despite all their sacrifices. Therefore, the strike process itself became a strong mobilizer of workers' self-awareness. By capitalizing on cultural repertoires that had already been employed by others they managed to link workers' issues with issues of human rights and justice. In this process the ethnic dimension was not considered to be a factor; however, we can see the gendered undertones of collective action through direct confrontations with police officials, through media coverage, and even through gossip among the workers themselves.

Examining tensions and solidarities during a strike allows us also to give space to individual idiosyncrasies, which are difficult to place within neat conceptual boxes. We can see the divisions between the workers, especially those who joined and those who did not. What induced some workers to agree quickly with the small concessions of management? No statistical evidence can be given to look at the backgrounds of workers; however, the reasons they used to explain their non-participation, such as family responsibilities or their fear of not getting a job, were resolved by other workers who joined the strike in different ways.

Indeed, as many have argued, workers' identities are not based on essentialist qualities, but neither are they without any material foundations. It is a combination of these two dimensions that shape workers' views of themselves and it is through collective action that this self-perception becomes more enhanced. The various modes of protest, the rhetoric used, and the theatrics involved helped workers obtain in new experiences the consciousness of being part of a larger group.

Focusing on the strike only, however, may create a reified notion of workers' consciousness as battles are fought on the basis of stark delineations of opposing groups. The focus on one event does not allow us to look at the temporal and spatial nature of workers' consciousness. Experiences shape workers' self-perception but these self-perceptions may fade and become distorted through space and time. This study has attempted partially to address this disadvantage in two ways. One is to focus on the networks of reproduction and how practical affairs needed to be settled to allow the continuation of workers' participation in the strike. This helps us also to have an idea of how family ties and social networks are manipulated within a moment of political confrontation and intensity. At the same time, we have an idea how the strike is perceived by families in rural areas who are often in charge of the children of these factory workers. Another way is to look at non-participants in the strike. From the few examples, we can see that the link between individual and collective is not self-evident, even though from the outside we would place Mayora's workers within one type of collectivity.

Four or five years after the strike some changes have occurred in the factory and in the lives of these workers. The most striking is that the company's strategy vis-à-vis workers has clearly changed. With the current shift towards liberalization, many workers are now contract workers and, most significantly, the independent union does not play a big role in factory politics because the company's strategy to control workers through the labour process reduced the existence of unions. These processes, within and outside the strike event itself, should be taken into account in our attempt to understand the dynamics of strikes, but also their consequences for the shaping and redefinition of workers' identities and consciousness.