

**THE POLITICS OF TRAFFICKING IN INDONESIA:
GENDER, NATIONAL RHETORICS AND POWER**

WAHYUNINGRUM

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THESIS ADVISORS: COELI BARRY, Ph.D., VARAPORN CHAMSANIT, Ph.D.

ABSTRACT

This study centers on discourses concerning trafficking after the Palermo Protocol in Indonesia (2000-2007). In doing so, the study poses two questions regarding debates on trafficking. The first is about the current shifting focuses in the debate and the second concerns dominant discourses. This study employs documentary research to reveal the cultural, historical and political construction of the trafficking concept in Indonesia. In order to answer these two research questions, respondents were interviewed and texts from newspapers, parliament's political statements, governmental and NGO reports, minutes of meetings, and seminar papers were analyzed. This study also includes observations based upon a seminar that attempted to explain the way trafficked victims are gendered and characterized.

The discussion of shifting focuses in trafficking reveals: (1) gender negotiation concerning the phrase "women, children and persons"; (2) the interaction between global and local dynamics; and (3) the criminalization of trafficking. Nevertheless, the contemporary debate as it is reflected in Law No. 21 (2007) continues to reinforce stereotypes of women as passive victims.

The dominant discourses concerning trafficking in contemporary Indonesia highlight sexual exploitation and the abuse of migrant workers. In this regard the discourses repeat and continue the discourses from the 1980s. The dominant discourses are characterized by notions of 'national dignity' and 'international images'. The discussion on human rights and domestic workers is marginalized and the debate on male domination, sex work and women's agency is eclipsed.

The acceptance of the Palermo Protocol influences the "what" and the "how" trafficking should be conceptualized in Indonesia. However, a foreign government's intervention contributes to the "when" trafficking should be defined. Through the analysis of documents and of interviews, this study concludes that it is not 'women' who are the target of protection under national law but the majority-imposed set of values and the nation's dignity. Textual analysis and the observations reveal that the law actually reinforces the paternal power of the state over women. Finally, the study's conclusion is that the new way of debating trafficking has been utilized as a vehicle to idealize women as wives and mothers.

KEY WORDS: TRAFFICKING/ SEXUAL EXPLOITATION/ DISCOURSE/
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