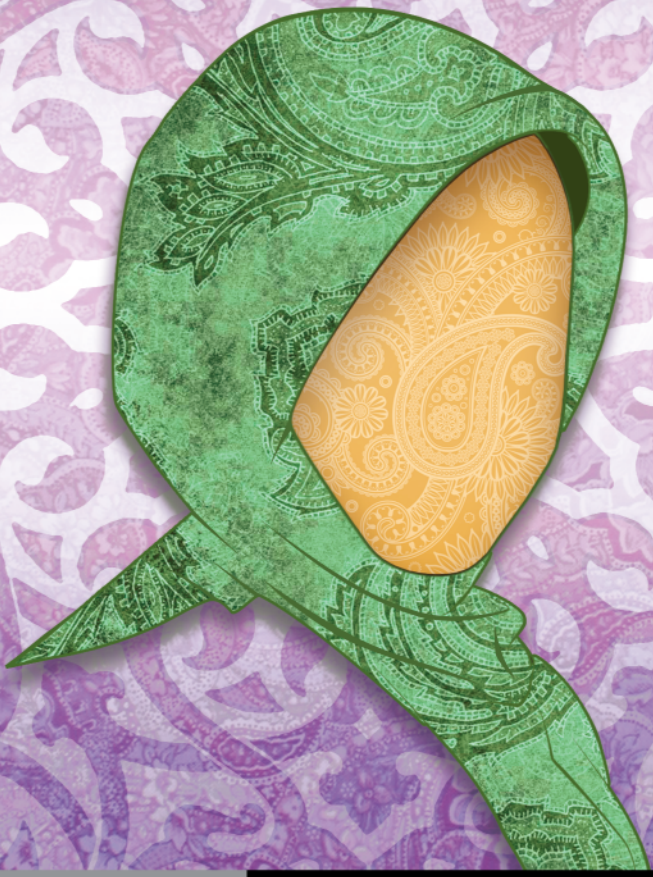
Negotiating Women's Veiling

Politics & Sexuality in Contemporary Indonesia



OCCASIONAL PAPER

N°22

IRASEC

Dewi Candraningrum

Foreword by Rémy Madinier

This study will focus on the Indonesian *jilbab*, an ubiquitous piece of cloth that covers the hair and neck of women tightly, leaving no skin unconcealed. Achievement and role of *jilbab* after the authoritarian regime of Soeharto in 1998 is hardly known. The author examines women perception but also the Sharia Ordinances and the narratives of censorship. Voices of both women and sexual minorities (transgenders, gays, lesbians, bisexuals and queers) finally demonstrate awareness of the politics of representation in contemporary Indonesia, highlighting the links between religion, politics and identity.

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ISBN 978-616-7571-15-7

NEGOTIATING WOMEN'S VEILING
POLITICS & SEXUALITY IN CONTEMPORARY INDONESIA

About the Author

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Cover and layout : Mikael Brodu

ISBN 978-616-7571-15-7

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Carnet de l'Irasec / Occasional Paper n° 22

IRASEC
INSTITUT DE RECHERCHE SUR L'ASIE DU SUD-EST CONTEMPORAINE
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Foreword

By Rémy Madinier

Beyond the tumult of an essentially political and unfinished *Reformasi*, several transformations of Indonesian society, although less publicized, deserve our attention. Among them, the *jilbab* question stands at the crossroads of several mutations, related to religion and to women's status of course, but also to the economy, culture, and politics. As a scientific work enriched with her very personal experience, Dewi Candraningrun's study constitutes a valuable contribution to the field. It shows the complex motivations and also the frequent disappointment of Indonesian women who, like the author, chose to veil themselves a few years ago. Far from the simplistic explanations often proposed in the West, this paper draws from a broad range of social sciences and a wide variety of sources, especially interviews and social networks analyses.

To be understood, the *jilbab* issue in Indonesia should be placed in a broad historical perspective. Islamic identity had long been perceived as secondary, but since the 1970s it has occupied a more visible place in society. This development is of course linked to a religious revival, but it was fueled with moral imperative and political criticism toward the New Order regime. In the early 1990s, veiling was often a free and militant action, and was part of a demand for reform that culminated at the time of Suharto's fall in 1998. This aspect of social rebellion was then exploited by a new Islamist elite who instituted themselves as censors in a society wrapped in the virtue of religion. The rebellious and unconventional dimension of veiling was thus totally overthrown and ironically laid the foundations for a new conformism. The study shows how many women were deprived of their own choice whether to wear *jilbab* at an early age, and were forced to do so through various

regulations (schools, perda sharia, etc.) and especially by social pressure. Here, as elsewhere in the Muslim world, the onus is primarily on women to maintain public morality. In what seems to be a very Mediterranean trend, men are infantilized and regarded as being unable to restrain their sexual drives.

But this paper also shows how some women were able to divert the subordination conveyed by this injunction. In a still-very-corrupt Indonesia, the moral values that are allegedly conveyed by *jilbab* allowed women to emerge as prominent politicians, breaking the glass ceiling of a traditional Asian society which, despite a more liberal appearance, confined women to subordinates positions. With the *jilbab* Indonesia seems to have renounced its claim of "Far-Eastern" specificity to mobilize Middle Eastern values. The semantic shift of the term *ketimuran* highlighted by Dewi Candraningrum is enlightening. Interestingly, the paradox is that this evolution goes along with an unprecedented Westernization of lifestyles. The veiling issue here takes on a cultural dimension in which the market plays a fundamental part. The veil issue, and beyond it all visible symbols of Islamic affiliation, through a new kind of consumerism, constitutes a patent sign of the process of symbolic reappropriation of Western capitalism in a globalized society.

Acknowledgments

This book was made possible by a research grant from Irasec. Particular acknowledgment should be made of the female activists who have inspired my work and those who have permitted me to share their wonderful images: Zillah Eisenstein (Ithaca College), Gadis Arivia (Universitas Indonesia-UI), Ayu Utami (Salihara), Bettina David (University of Hamburg), Soe Tjen Marching (SOAS London), Nong Mahmada (Freedom Institute), Mariana Amiruddin (Jurnal Perempuan), Ahmad Badawi (YLSKAR), Vera Kartika Giantari (SPEK-HAM), Chika Noya (WPF), Yulia Sugandi (Univ Muenster), Tia Pamungkas (UGM), Yayah Khisbiyah and M Thoyibi (UMS), and Tri Hastuti Nur (Aisyiyah). Writing a book requires different kinds of stimulation and support, and there have been tales of woe but also of inspiration. I would like to acknowledge my debt to my thoughtful friends.

It is clear from the title that this study was a collaborative effort. Indeed, this paper reached fruition only through the collective energy of many, starting from the time I created *Jejer Wadon* ('Narrative of Women' in Javanese), a community of local artists, feminists and activists residing in Solo, Sragen, Karanganyar, Boyolali, Klaten and Wonogiri on 8 March 2012. I am grateful to the many individuals who supported this effort, especially the students, mothers and activists who helped with the interviews. These interviews are noteworthy in their selectivity and correct implementation of effective assumptions of the meaning of the jilbab. It is our hope that this book will help everyone to understand the multivocal meanings of jilbab and make apparent the futility of imposing one single definition of this piece of cloth.

I sincerely thank Irasec for its support of and work on this project, and I must publicly acknowledge the invaluable work of Aan Rukmana and Najamudin, both from Universitas Paramadina Jakarta, whose tireless interviews made this book a reality. All my gratitude too to Rémy Madinier for encouraging me to delve into the mystery of jilbab among Javanese women politicians and for providing invaluable insight from a political science perspective. I am also indebted to Benoît de Trégoldé and Jérémy Jammes for their help with permissions and publication. With characteristic generosity, Irasec took the time to read and comment on several sections, and this attentiveness and editorial support is greatly appreciated. Finally, my deepest thanks go to Ivan Ufuq Isfahan, my autistic son, now twelve years old and still too young to appreciate what his Mum is doing.

Despite every effort to trace or conceal names of interviewees prior to publication, this has not always been easy. I apologize for any apparent infringement of names and if notified, I will be pleased to rectify any errors or omissions at the earliest opportunity. It goes without saying that any remaining errors are my own.

Solo, May 2012
DC

Introduction

1 - Politics of a Piece of Cloth

That the wonderful narratives of *jilbab* in this study should have been produced by many brilliant, elite and well-educated young Muslim women, quotidian though this piece of cloth might be, is cause for celebration for us all as Muslim women. It was our decision, our agency, following the Surah preaching during the 1980s, to wear the jilbab, a novel version of the *kerudung*. While the kerudung is a piece of cloth that covers the hair loosely, the jilbab covers the hair and neck tightly, leaving no skin unconcealed. It was something our mothers used to wear in the 1960s. This book will focus on the Indonesian jilbab, this extraordinary piece of cloth whose achievement and role in toppling the authoritarian dictator Soeharto in 1998 is less well known.

I too am a great admirer of Islam as represented by this novel jilbab. I decided to wear the jilbab in 1993. Since my personal trajectory—birth in the late years of the Old Order, beginning of my schooling under the New Order, attending of Muhammadiyah University from 1993–1997, witnessing the effects of corruption in the Soeharto era and the birth of the Reformation Era in 1998, reassessing the Indonesian Islamic identity and nationalism, and attraction to the dynamic mix of change and reformism in Islam and Indonesia—coincided with that of the jilbab, I will try to recapture just how impressive its evolution has been.

Let me first return to the portentous decision by this Muslim girl and cosmopolitan Muhammadiyah graduate to wear the jilbab and in 1998 to study Rohis (Rohani Islam or Islamic Spirituality) at my senior high school year and, in general, to study Islam—not at any faculty of

Islamic Studies but through deep soul-searching. What motivated these decisions of mine was in part the failure of secularism under Soeharto and the alienation I felt. Though he was President of Indonesia, it was not difficult to imagine him as a Javanese king. He had his spectacles smacked off his face by a loutish group singing the Indonesia Raya, and so he led the nation with ever more Javanese political jargons. The move towards Islam and the jilbab felt like an exhilarating break from the authoritarian Soeharto years. Muslim women scholarship championing the nascent jilbab, flourishing in sociocultural, political and economic dimensions, and making inroads into the marvels of Middle-East culture, proved irresistible.

The first time I was struck by the lucidity of the spirituality of the jilbab was in 1993, when I was in senior high school. I had been taught to wear the jilbab by an ITB (Institut Teknologi Bandung) student, who happened to be an alumnus of our state-owned senior high school. On returning from Rohis with a dazzling affirmation of the jilbab, I urged my mother to wear it as well—at that time she was still wearing short skirts, the formal uniform of school teachers during the Soeharto years. Then the jilbab provided for me a clear-eyed analysis of the ideological conflicts of being a Muslim woman. Its incisive revisionism of the meaning of womanhood during the 1980s marked almost all Muslim girls in debates on secularism and religion. Muslim girls wearing the head veil drew upon the aura of extraordinary spiritual power this piece of cloth commanded. In the public sphere, the jilbab was a lightning rod for controversy—from Soeharto's ban in 1975 to the spectacular political melodrama that arose when his daughter Tutut wore the jilbab in 1998 after her pilgrimage to Mecca, in a show of ostentatious piety to gain sympathy.

My formative three years in senior high school in Boyolali, Central Java began what I later labelled a sort of love affair with Islamic values and the Western model of education, marked by a stint in a *pondok pesantren*, along with a predilection for literature and friendships among Muslim students. Upon my return, I channelled my scholarship into students' newspapers, in an attempt perhaps to speak out against Soeharto's regime. I became the chief editor of *Koran Pabelan* in 1997 and advocated the jilbab as an almost universal religious clothing for Muslim women, one that commands deep emotional, intellectual and physical

adherence. I put up all these performances until Soeharto's stepping down and explained my ambivalence as a Javanese woman who felt almost totally uprooted from her culture. I argued that Javanese values were secular and simply incompatible with my belief in Islam—the *wayang* repertoire offered only Hindu values alienated from Islam and unbefitting of a Muslim women.

My attitude to my own body seemed to be cruelly disproved by my ideology and values. It was a fratricidal conflict between secularism and Islamism, and the victim was my own body, demonized by my ideology. The final chapter of my formative years had showed me how, on the tree of my Islamic culture, the leaves were dropping one by one, notably through the suppression of my own body and the moral ambiguities of a good-versus-evil dichotomy.

I wore the jilbab when I taught at Universitas Muhammadiyah Surakarta as soon as it appeared on the scene. It was an informal golden rule that every woman followed. Everyone did the same. My friends and I, who were more or less of the same age, felt that society was in a shocking mess and that Islamism was probably the answer, so we flirted with the idea of interlacing Islam and educational ethos. My own reason for not doing so in the end was that I knew myself to be too frivolous for the necessary commitment; I also felt undecided about using ends to justify the means. My other major preoccupation, the situation of women, would have appealed to me much more had it not been for the elaborate structure in which I had chosen to express it, for my tendency to overstate, and my style in the earlier formative years of my girlhood. My earlier writing in the *Jakarta Post* and *Kompas* tended to be assertive, and I agree that my assertiveness provoked resistance. I have always admired the boldness and ambition of activists, and their passion moves me, for example, *Jurnal Perempuan*, whose Board of Editors I sit on. I can say that it was a landmark in history for me.

The way Indonesian feminists rejected Sharia Ordinances with blistering honesty shocked me. I first read about it five years ago in Germany, when I was about 33 years old, and it had an overwhelming impact on me. I remember vividly my awe and dismay at how politicians controlled women's hair and bodies in the name of Islam, using the issue to hog the spotlight and have their ugly faces plastered everywhere. Unluckily for me, I had already voiced my protestations in

the press, mainly in *Jakarta Post* and *Kompas*, yet I was holding a job in an Islamic university. I received letters in 2008 calling for my dismissal due to my stance. Alhamdulillah, thanks be to God that I wrote those articles, otherwise, I might never have found my own voice. I might have gone off the rails completely. Now that I am dealing with students in classes again, I voice my rebuffs through murmurs and metaphors.

It is impossible to calculate all that Islamism has taught me, not least about discipline and spirituality, about the sense of responsibility that can keep a suicidal mother in the midst of a breakdown alive, about the efforts needed to conduct a career while rearing a child with difficulties. I have no time for pregnancies that will silence me or reduce my output.

My traditional female behavior is all the more puzzling then. I found fascinating a lifetime of preparing meals for the man I love; just as much care was lavished on his laundry. Throughout my marriage, it was I, as wife and mother, who did all the cooking and made all the cups of teas and coffees, even for men to whom I owed less than nothing. It was almost like being a protagonist in an awkward Indonesian commercial ad. And yet it seemed liberating.

Liberating indeed was all the discussion generated within *Jejer Wadon*. We just gathered out of the blue to talk intimately about sex, parenthood, creativity, work, beliefs and politics, domestic stuff, menstruation, grappling with identity and truth. Ours is not a branch of radical, misunderstood feminism; the radicalism lies in breaking away from oppression. *Jejer Wadon* does not seek to speak out through people with enormous power or importance but through a concept of intelligent private life acting as a prism for larger forces.

2 - Prophetic Jilbab

How then to explain the catastrophic turn of events that shattered us, who had been entranced by a piece of cloth? Our love of Islam prevailed, channelled through the observance of the head veil as well as the intellectual task of making sense of this taboo surrounding women's bodies. As I put it later: how to understand what a woman's body

means; how to throw off the sacredness that limited its liberty and freedom; and how, theoretically, to reconcile the jilbab with the brutal engines of global economic and political change?

The immediate result was an outburst of feminist study on the origins of the 'body coup d'état' in 2005, during my early doctorate years in Germany. This inevitably spilled over to my dissertation and teaching, through which I introduced the marvels of Muslim feminist writers such as Fatema Mernissi and Leila Ahmed. This culminated in 2008 in a publication *Mainstreaming Gender through Muslim Women Writers* (Muenster: LitVerlag). It was less a mature analysis of the coup d'état than about my determination to draw attention to the tragic turn of events in Indonesia with the implementation of the Sharia Ordinances that banned girls from showing their hair in Islamic schools.

The Indonesian women whom I had known were gone for good. They had lost in the patriarchal political battle where men were the victors. But women retained their optimism about wearing the jilbab. There was some hope of a revival of the politicization of the jilbab in late 2011 but the marginalized woman's voice was deemed as non-political. Ruling out Indonesian women's bodies remains the key feature of male-dominated politics during SBY's era.

At the end of March 2012, brilliantly controversial Surya Dharma Ali (then Minister of Religious Affairs), who likened the mini-skirt to pornography and banned it in an infamous statement, outdid himself in postulating that masculine political culture has its own political theory premised on the systematic oppression of women's bodies. He provided no logical explanation, relying instead on Islamic tradition, which he claimed to be a single monolithic truth, thus brushing aside all the traditions present in Indonesian culture. He even managed to ignore the Javanese origins of his own name—'Surya' and 'Dharma'—which come from Sanskrit. His statement demonstrated that culture matters in politics and it ignited debates on the social theory of feminism. He undermined the fundamental assumptions of womanhood and the meaning of the female body. This episode captured all too well the political climate of patriarchal superiority that dominated the twenty-first-century history of Indonesian women. There is a multi-billion-rupiah vested interest in setting up a system to monitor, physically intimidate and prey upon Indonesian women. Now politics is in a

position to demean women sexually—a potent tool in the hands of any bully.

My life has been shaped foremost by Islamic tradition, hand in hand with dying Javanese rituals. Why did all this speak to me, a young woman born under the Soeharto regime and raised in comfortable conservatism in rural Central Java? My political upbringing was shaped by Islamism, then feminism and opposition to the absurd ghost of neoliberalism and everyday consumerism, followed by post-feminism and environmentalism. My intense engagement in global politics offered a sharp relief from the bland cynicism of my generation: even while some young people and I were marching on the streets to protest against the rise of fuel prices (to little avail), many other women were busy shopping in malls. Social media debates conceive of gender as a relational issue—it is not just about women, and a particular type of woman at that (Javanese, middle-class and so on), nor is it about women versus men, but all the ways in which people struggle together through complex intersections of sex, class, race and location. In this sense, it is a mistake to claim that this study is only about feminism, for it takes the stance that "the personal is political", to borrow Betty Friedan's phrase. To be more precise, it shifts the locus of women's authority to a more inclusive space than a binary Manichean conceptualization. I probe the diversity of women's lived experiences rather than explore dull dichotomies.

After the exclusion from politics, the female body has been informed by a voracious engagement with fascism-masculinity and patriarchy. We are given to superficial generalizations about morality when it comes to the concealment of women's bodies. The Internet and social media have become the sole respite when the home becomes a prison, when the state turns to inspection. Morality is becoming the imperative language of political culture. Why is this happening? I used to think the push was led by those who profited from endless war and surveillance on women's bodies under the cloak of so-called Eastern values (*nilai ketimuran*). But now I see the struggle as a larger one. It is a race against time. Politicians realize that the Internet is a tool of empowerment that works against their interests and that they need to get ahead to turn it into a tool of control. Yet women have not lacked in creativity in their response.

What marks everything I've ever written is a spark of anger, forcing women to rethink cherished assumptions by uncovering a neglected angst or a suppressed voice. I have never been content to tell an audience what they want to hear. The intellectual scrutiny that I task myself with is to find the uncomfortable, suppressed perspectives. In spite of the discomfort, I open this book to criticisms.

3 - Chapter Outline

I anticipate readers new to this field as well as experts, and have structured the narrative accordingly. I begin by introducing key representational paradigms, building from the single narrative of a girl from the 1980s to comparative national frameworks. Chapter 1 examines aspects of the historical production of the Indonesian Muslim woman and her perception of the jilbab, specifically the contribution of women in defining the veil through their own *Weltanschauung*. I revisit the intergenerational freedom and angst of the repressive Soeharto regime, and the pseudo-liberty of the Reformation Era influenced by Sharia Ordinances, all of which prompted an ongoing battle on female corporeality between nationalist neo-patriarchal ideologies and feminist discourse in the Indonesian political landscape. I then focus on the Sharia Ordinances and the narrative of censorship. My analysis centers on the interlacing themes of the visibility of repression, patriarchy, and the voice of opposition. The gravity of the political situation after the New Order is one reason why women are more repressed now than before. The implications of this simultaneous affiliation with and distance from politics is of great concern to NGOs, as I illustrate throughout the book.

In Chapter 2, I emphasize the relevance of what Rémy Madinier has called "politics and religion". Taking into account the encroachment of religion into politics, or the links between politics and identity, is necessary because women's bodies should always be understood within a political context, a spatial and temporal context, insofar as corporeality provides a basis for representation. Recognizing that subjectivity is anchored in a located body enables me to interpret the political voice,

vision, and visibility of oppression during my interviews with female politicians wearing the jilbab. I hope to have shown, though, that their voices also demonstrate awareness of the politics of representation. I highlight the importance of transmission of women's stories, as exemplified by Ibu Rina Iriana, now Regent of Karanganyar Central Java.

Chapter 3 discusses the body in the global economy whereby memory, melancholia and mourning work as modes to convey the history of the exclusion of the female body. It has been defined, reproduced and used as a cash cow, yet displaced and excluded from morality. A palpable generational tension underpins the post-colonial Muslim market, prompting me to engage with both the enduring allegories of the jilbab and the representation of often radically disempowered sexual minorities: *waria* (transgenders), gays, lesbians, bisexuals and queers.

Chapter 4 consolidates the foregoing themes of social media and the consequences of tabooed sexuality among the youth in Indonesia, highlighting the creative transformation of sexuality from the sterile zone of Indonesian homes to Internet encounters. I emphasize the affective aspect, intimacy, adulation of self and the meaning of sensuality embedded in the jilbab. Again, I stress ways in which women reframe corporeal apprehension to conceive of personal, inter-subjective, performative and collective identities in the present. Reference to a group of youth that reflects a range of national settings allows me to demonstrate both that women's projects of individual emancipation tend to have a wider, decolonizing significance, and that a movement from the private to the public sphere, while obviously desirable in some ways, is not the only possible feminist trajectory. I end by contemplating what readers and viewers may take from this book to counter lust and angst.

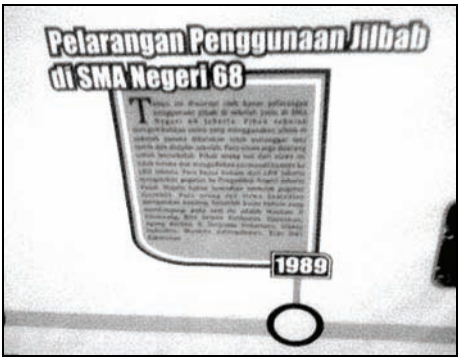
Chapter 1

Narratives of *Tudung*, *Kerudung* and *Jilbab*

1 - Historical Account

In Southeast Asian countries such as Indonesia, South Thailand, Malaysia and Brunei, the head veil is known as *tudung*, or more traditionally kerudung. In Indonesia, after the fall of Soeharto in 1998, the veil acquired a new name and is popularly called jilbab. In modern times, the meaning of jilbab has shifted along with the development of women's movements in Muslim countries (Mumtaz and Shaheed, 1987; Milani, 1992; Stern, 1939; Stowasser, 1994; Syamsiyatun, 2007; Turner, 1974; Walther, 1993; El Guindi, 1999; Abbot, 1974; Abu-Lughod, 1986; Ahmed 1992). In Indonesia, during the authoritarian New Order era, the jilbab was forbidden in state-owned schools and universities. Shortly before Soeharto's fall, a number of *Tarbiyah* (New Islamists movement) activists from state-owned universities protested against this ban. One of the issues, which constantly made the news on the grassroots level, was Islamist representation, whether in the sociopolitical or sociocultural arena. The *Al-Ziyy Al-Islami* (Islamic dress) ideology, calling for decency and conformity to the ultimate Islamic mores, is motivated more by a pretext of ethics—taking the spirit of Sharia as the ideal—than by doctrinal segregation based on the founding discourses of the Abbasid Caliphate (750–1258), with its conspicuous gender hierarchy that granted the right to divorce and polygamy, as well as child custody, to men. The Tarbiyah movement is, to some extent, the result of the upward

mobilization of the lower and middle classes. It advocates ethics such as self-discipline, autonomy and morality in the midst of a corrupting setting, and considers the economic crisis as brought about by unjust, avaricious capitalism, while a social and cultural crisis brews away, caused by immoral conduct of godless behavior. Esposito (2000) and Gellner (1994) have demonstrated the interpenetration and cohabitation of conflicting factors surrounding the practices of self-veiling, particularly in the context of modern secular capitalism.



The banning of head veils at the Senior High School 68 Jakarta in 1989.
(Photo taken by Hartoyo from NGO, Our Voice's website, www.ourvoice.org, 2010.)

This paper examines the persistent entanglement of global forces with Islam and gender relations, with a particular focus on women's agency in the self-willed veiling tradition. Religious law, religion and the gendered body, challenges to religious authority, and the complexities of freedom and submission in religious texts will be investigated in the context of Indonesian women's veiling. Case studies will draw on veiling in the last ten years, the Reformation era. Multivocal facets of veiling will be analyzed from divergent political, sociocultural, educational and economic standpoints. Female subjects were interviewed by applying quota sampling in the framework of qualitative research. This study also examines the literature related to veiling movements, for example, Islamic popular magazines such as *Annida* or

Sabili. The data will be reframed on the basis of authority, gender hierarchy and women's agency in contemporary Indonesian Islam. Questions on how global media—ideas and technical proliferation—affects local practices will be investigated.

A portrait of the evolving landscape of Indonesian women veiling was drawn by applying quota sampling methodology, in which the assembled (miniature) sample has the same proportions of women who veil as the entire population in Indonesia, with respect to known characteristics, traits or focused phenomenon. The Indonesian population is divided into exclusive subgroups. As Java's inhabitants comprise 60 per cent of the population, 60 interviewees were chosen by intersecting gender, generational gap/age, geographical location, educational background, as well as sociocultural, politic and economic stratum. This also applies to Sumatran women, who accounted for 40 of the interviewees. I then identified proportions of these subgroups in the population. These same proportions were applied in the sampling process. Subgroups were levelled based on the intersection of age and generation: women in their adolescence (15–25 years old), mid-career women (26–50 years old) and elderly women (50–years old and above). The intersection of geographical location (urban, sub-urban and rural/village) and of classes (low-, middle- and high-income) were also taken into account. The final intersection focused on educational background (uneducated, educated until elementary–middle-high school, undergraduate and postgraduate). I examine how educational background influences Indonesian women on the issue of the head veil. Finally I ensure that the sample is representative of the entire Indonesian population, highlighting manifold aspects and studying the traits and characteristics noted for each subgroup.

2 - The Price of Intergenerational Freedom

During the 1998 uprisings against Soeharto, the jilbab left a smile on every woman's face and butterflies in her stomach. The smile came from witnessing a whole swath of humanity lose its fear and regain its dignity through a piece of cloth. The butterflies came from a rising worry that

the Indonesian turmoil may have been both inevitable and too late. If any Indonesian woman did not feel these impulses, she was probably not paying much attention to what was going on around her. This uprising is at its core existential, not political. It is much more Ayu Utami, a prominent novelist, than Tutut (Soeharto's daughter, who appeared in the media in 1998 wearing the veil). The Soeharto regime had, to one degree or another, stripped women of their right and access to their own bodies. It took away their freedom and did not allow them to develop their full potential. Ayu Utami in her book *Saman* proclaimed "I am a woman"—I have value, I have aspirations, I want the rights every woman in the world has. The wearing of the veil went hand in hand with the breaking of taboos, which subsequently led to conservative control on women's bodies through the formulation and ratification of *Perda Syariah* obligating the wearing of head veils.

It is novelists such as Ayu Utami and Helvy Tiana Rosa, not political scientists, who best articulate the mood of 1998. Like the documentary films readily available in the streets then, their novels gave a voice to the rebelling woman, defending her rights against patriarchy, be it Ayu breaking taboos with her partially naked body or Helvy, fully clothed, claiming independence against the repressive military regime. "We have endured agonies beyond what any human can bear. When our ferocious anger was raised against the rottenness of oppression and darkness, our revolt was called chaos, and we were called mere thieves. Yet it was nothing but a revolution against despotism, blessed by gods." This was the clamour of student activists in 1998 when they toppled Soeharto. Yet, a decade later, the FPI, MMI and other Islamists groups (of mostly men) had emerged to control women's wearing of the jilbab. The liberty no longer belongs to the wearers, the women themselves, but to the observers, to patriarchal eyes. More surprisingly, moral polices are no longer dominated by men—there are more women controlling other women!

In the two decades since the 1998 Reformation, which allowed the wearing of the jilbab in schools, the number of girls wearing the jilbab has increased steeply. Though the the jilbab movement in Indonesia was born out of a demand for freedom and dignity, many Islamists and ultra-conservatives hoped that the movement would prompt the government to enforce a law obligating Muslim women to wear the jilbab on a daily

basis—which apparently materialized in many *Perda Syariah*. Campaigners have been trying to alert the government to the potential dangers of 'Westernization' and too much freedom among Indonesian youth, warning that it will make it harder for Indonesians to safeguard their *nilai ketimuran* (Eastern values). In Indonesia, at present, there are countless young girls who have been forced to wear the jilbab in the name of being *kaffah Muslimah*. To have a daughter is socially accepted in Indonesia—provided she does not stray from 'Eastern values'. As discussion of women's bodies becomes taboo, the number of women who voluntarily wear the jilbab will increase. Yet in our hyper-connected world, Indonesian girls are linked to each other through Twitter, Facebook and other forms of social media. The combination of having their bodies treated as a taboo subject and consequently covering themselves from head to toe, yet enjoying a certain freedom in other aspects, has fuelled a complex hybridity of being a modern Muslim woman.

An interview with a girl living in a pesantren reveals how the clampdown on freedom has increased the stress of those trapped in ultra-conservative circles. Such tales show that behind the gloss of happiness and the neatness of Muslim decorum, conundrums lurk, waiting to be unravelled. Women are now paying the price of the freedom that their predecessors had fought for in 1998 against Soeharto's surveillance on Muslim conservative groups. Even jeans (the most unforgivable being pencil jeans) have been denounced as a source of evil and a bad influence from the West. Banners promoting the wearing of loose skirts for women are found everywhere in Islamic schools and institutions. No jeans! No tight outfits! Or you will be labelled as liberal, a label that suggests misdeeds, impurity, immorality and a corrupted heart, as if it were an acute disease. Jilbab enforcement has become intergenerational, locking more girls into forced obedience.

The 'jingle' of Shariah law with its cheerful euphemism and endless religious *khutbah* (sermon) of becoming a better Muslim Woman is materialized through the wearing of the jilbab. It is a charade in which women have to convince themselves and their community that they are good Muslims, that they truly love God, and that they have dignity. Almost all those interviewed experienced sexual harassment when they were unveiled. "I suddenly became aware of how fragile I was when

unveiled, and how secure I am now with the jilbab. How peaceful my life is with Allah's *ridlo* (blessing)," a veiled student said. Harassment among girls brought on by male pressure is frequent. The little bit of security offered by a piece of cloth has been the only consolation for girls who have traded in their sense of dignity and self. Now even that trade-off has run thin as apparently even veiled women experience constant harassment in public. With or without the veil, women are cajoled, ticked off, hectored, humiliated and bullied at home or at the workplace.

The reality is more mundane. Inevitably, at a time of rising jilbab-donning among girls and women across Indonesia, attention has turned from the religious-spiritual path to the birth of a popular culture hawking an array of Islamic merchandise, highly visible at any Islamic institution, malls, hypermarts, even small shops in remote areas. Assorted forms of jilbab are on sale, for example, jilbab Krisdayanti, jilbab Inneke Koesherawaty, or a more local one in Karanganyar called jilbab Ibu Rina. The spiritual hiatus has been filled by the commodification and capitalization of the jilbab and Muslim apparel, indeed of any products with an Arab association, from cosmetics and toothpaste to foods such as kebabs, and quack healing products that exploit the Quran and Hadith.

The 1998 protesters who toppled Soeharto and menaced the SBY regime are demanding more freedom, fair elections and a crackdown on corruption. The small subversive organizations that have grown in the past 13 years played only a peripheral role compared to the new political parties created after 1998. It is the political party that shapes policies and the direction of Indonesian politics. The small organizations mostly survive as NGOs while the new Muslim organizations survive as CSOs (Civil Social Organization). Neither has promoted a distinct ideology, let alone a coherent one. These organizations choose their own paths concerning the implementation of Shariah-influenced legislation. The CSO-like Muhammadiyah, NU and other small yet important Islamic CSOs promote a more rigid enforcement of the jilbab obligation for Muslim women, particularly in their own affiliated offices and at community gatherings. Such organizations are weak due to the longstanding dearth across Indonesia of autonomous nongovernmental associations serving as intermediaries between individuals and the state. This chronic weakness of civil society suggests that viable democracy or

capable leaders for women's rights in Indonesia will not emerge anytime soon (Linz and Stephan, 1996). The more likely immediate outcome of the current silence surrounding the enforcement of religious-based informal law—which to certain degree is much more powerful than formal law—is a new set of dictators or a single-party regime. Meanwhile the woman's body remains a battlefield. Some districts, such as Aceh and Padang, imposed rigid enforcement, while other districts are still hesitating whether to join the club or not.

The creative energy unleashed by frenetic development in the post-1998 years is evident. In 1998, women who donned the jilbab of their own accord were a tiny minority; today almost 80 per cent of veiled women do so in the name of religion, compelled by parents and schools, as well as formal law. Islamic culture mixed with popular culture has created a buzz that makes its rounds through new media such as Twitter and Facebook. At the many Islamic-based universities, Muhammadiyah-based, NU-based or UIN (formerly IAIN), I spent days on end watching the students and talking to them, marvelling above all at the confidence, competence and poise of these girls wearing beautiful, vibrant veils. I had taught at one of these universities for close to 11 years, since I was 24 years old. I knew a lot about the world of these girls' grandmothers: a slow-moving world where traffic went on by foot along the paddy fields. Girls from the wealthy and aristocratic families rarely went to school. They were closeted at home upon reaching puberty, cut off from the outside world, then married off to other wealthy or aristocratic families. Girls from poor families, on the other hand, enjoyed more freedom compared to their well-off counterparts in luxurious palaces. In any traditional household, girls were forbidden from speaking out to their husbands.

During the Soeharto era, it was compulsory to send girls to school whether or not their parents agreed, and their numbers rose steeply. Elementary school photos showed boys in red pants and white cotton shirts, and pigtailed girls in a similar uniform of a short red skirt and a white cotton shirt. This applied to both state-owned schools and religious ones such as the Muhammadiyah elementary schools. Only on Friday did the girls have to wear a long blue skirt with a long white shirt and a small *kerudung*, which were also donned during the national parades commemorating Indonesian Independence. The kerudung

represented the Islamic schools, and it was a case of Islamic schools versus state-owned ones. Years later, it has become Muslim girls versus non-Muslim girls in any school, state-owned, Christian or Catholic. The jilbab has become the symbol of Muslim girls, who are supposed to look different from girls of other religions.

I've always been fascinated by the short red skirt, of which I have two pieces. I knew and sang "Indonesia Raya" by heart as a child, probably because it was drummed into our young brains. As a girl I must have recognized, at any rate subconsciously, male superiority. I forced myself to get out of the *pengajian*, the religious congregation. Like me, girls were only too familiar with the realities of a world where discrimination, gender bias and inequity were commonplace.

Women and girls in Pesantren Padang Panjang in 1971.
(Photo courtesy of Professor Sakae Maotani.)

Chapter 2
Contemporary Veiling and Political Gimmickry

1 - Celebrating Identity Politics: Cosmetic and Political Gimmickry

Business is steady enough to support the mostly female vendors in the traditional markets of Karanganyar, tucked away in the dense neighbourhood of the town centre. The centre is dominated by the Regency Office, whose buildings remain whitewashed—as if the Independence Day celebrations of 17 August were approaching in a few days' time. Within reigns Ibu Rina, *bupati* of Karanganyar, who once said in an interview of her veiling: "I never noticed any trend. When I decided to wear the head veil just before my candidacy in 2003, I noticed more and more female staff members putting on their head veils as well—no doubt following in my footsteps. It's a mother-and-daughter thing, and that's all that matters." She pointed out the increase in female staff wearing the jilbab from 15 per cent at the beginning of her reign in 2003, to 90 per cent in 2011. An unprecedented increase indeed. "Her cultural attitude and curbed sexuality after wearing the jilbab has been materialized in an informal public policy in which Simbok is posited in the fashion store like a mannequin dictating a single choice," explained Ahmad Badawi, who has carried out research for *Gender and Children Data of Kabupaten Sragen 2006–2011*. (Town folk used to call her Simbok, a more intimate Javanese term for 'mother'). As a public figure, she has become a jilbab trendsetter and an icon of beauty, humility and modesty,

successfully integrating the Javanese symbol of a caring and ardent Simbok into the management of a regency. She has climbed from a modest countryside elementary school teacher to the number one woman across Karanganyar. That is certainly an achievement. Over time this 'all-giving' goddess (Ratu Adil) has somehow evolved into an 'all-gifted' mortal woman (Ibu Rina).

Ibu Rina Iriani, Bupati Karanganyar (January 2011).

To modern minds, drawing upon the authority of Allah might be unthinkable, but to Ibu Rina and many other Muslim women in power, that is perfectly sound. She conducts late-night *Tahajud*, texting all her nearly-300 staff every night to summon them to join in prayer in their own homes. Some reply while others sleep away, indifferent. She also recites the traditional Javanese spiritual pledge and cultivates the myth of Ratu Adil. Using Allah as political insurance should not be compared, some Islamists might argue, with the "low traditional Javanese queen", but be it Allah or Ratu Adil, the motives behind the practices are similar. Ratu Adil is as effective a symbol of mysticism as a machine for amassing votes and power. The most tangible advantage of believing in Ratu Adil is that she is seen as the ultimate fount of wisdom in the eyes

of Javanese leaders, who insist that she encapsulates spiritual leadership over and above all the numerous other symbols existing throughout the archipelago. She is ubiquitous in traditional prayers performed by local leaders and embodies the poise of unfettered power.

Bupati Rina Iriani's *ajudan* (assistants) opened the front door of her office in central Karanganyar for me. Across the hall, an open door offered a view of the backyard, and to the right and the left are four interconnecting rooms with three staff inside each room. We sat in her office, the green of the *alun-alun*, the wide grassy patch found in every regency building in Java, stretching into the horizon. Her assistants had permitted me to enter her office, to shield me from the gaze of staff loitering in the hallway. "The situation of women has not deteriorated since I took office. Domestic violence is even zero this year," she proclaimed proudly. "I think it is because we have done everything in our power to ensure women are fairly treated so they are not and will not be sexually and domestically harassed and abused in the future."

Ibu Rina described herself as a university graduate with a doctorate from Universitas Sebelas Maret Surakarta (UNS). "I found dignity in realizing my dream of becoming a sophisticated, well-versed student." Could I see how much Karanganyar had changed, she asked. Someone like her from the countryside could actually rise to the helm as a visionary leader. "Women everywhere want to know how I came to lead the regency. I explain that I was inspired by a passage in the memoirs of SDN Gaum. As a small girl, I never dreamed of becoming a mayor." Ibu Rina claims to welcome whatever perils may come her way, placing her faith firmly in Allah. I don't think it is an accident that it is a woman who has led Karanganyar in the last ten years. That a lowly-paid elementary school teacher has been elected is a reflection of the transformation of women's empowerment opportunities over the last 30 years in Indonesia. But for every woman who has made it, there are thousands of others trapped in dead-end jobs in an underpaid workforce.

"I was married by the age of 18 and my Indonesian Chinese husband was 25 years old. He is an entrepreneur." Ibu Rina settles into her car, adjusts her headscarf and shows me the books she is reading. "I like reading spiritual books," she says, in spite of her busy schedule. We approach the Regency Pendapa. Even before she became the

occupant of the most luxurious house in town, the issue of women leaders was a grey area. Women leaders are not banned by any formal law and in some communities are even welcomed. But to have a woman occupy the top position is something the House of Representatives and the people of Karanganyar could not have imagined. It was an unprecedented move that earned the ire of the House of Representatives, which objected to Ibu Rina taking office even though she had won the election. The House was charged with sexism and gender bias and protests were held, with the feminism movement leading the charge. Indriyati Suparno, a vocal feminist from Solo (officially called Surakarta), denounced the House's rejection of Ibu Rina: "Without a trace of irony, unsupported allegations against a female leader are levelled in tandem with the blatant use of labels such as 'dangerous feminism' and 'incapability' to advance the agenda." Indriyati commented further, "You are either with us or against us", and "if you are against us you must be sexist." She continued, "The sexist arguments against woman leadership are intellectually lazy, morally repugnant, and destructive to gender justice and humanity. What is truly at stake for our nation is equality for all, not privilege of any particular gender." Yayah Khisbiyah, another prominent Indonesian activist, feminist and psychologist based in Jakarta, warned that power, whether in male or female hands, corrupts; leaders, regardless of their gender, should deal with leadership as neither slapstick nor political gimmickry. She warned that woman leaders should not fall into the trap of too much silicon and cosmetics. Many cannot resist the spell, and political intrigues are traps for men and women alike.

Ibu Rina is leaving her house to meet the people who have elected her. This may be one of the thankless tasks that plague politicians around the world, but here in Karanganyar, it is a cherished privilege. With no fanfare, she claims her right as the first elected woman mayor of Karanganyar. Leading, says Ibu Rina, is one of women's rights; it is not the privilege of any sex. Raising her fists in a victory salute, she says, "It is a ticket for every woman. Write this down. I am the first woman elected." And she is making history as the first female mayor. She has produced an array of regulations, among which the most important protect women and children from violence: *Perda No. 20/2009: Perlindungan Perempuan dan Anak korban Kekerasan*, dated 14 December 2009. Indriyati

Suparno underlined this effort by saying that Ibu Rina is one of the female leaders that have inspired many in Central Java.

Raised in Karanganyar and now the sole woman mayor in Central Java, Ibu Rina traced for me the history of the veil in her family. Her initially bareheaded grandmother started wearing the jilbab, followed by her mother, then herself. By the early 1990s the majority of Indonesian Muslim women were once again covering up their hair. Ibu Rina, like most well-heeled Muslims, was initially dismayed by this trend and set out to understand why. The story behind the veil's resurgence is not straightforward, with factors such as Dutch colonialism, the rise of Islamism in the Middle East, the sclerotic domestic economy, the Israeli-Palestinian clash and Saudi Arabia's coffers, all playing a role. It is not simply a bandanna version of the all-encompassing, intimidating Afghan burqa that signals brainwashed submissiveness or, at the very least, a lack of choice. Yet the veil often reflects values and attitudes that have little to do with piety, for example, when it is donned as an expression of solidarity with Palestine.

When I questioned her on why she wore the jilbab, she described how a bunch of gawky men used to harass her each day on her way to teach at an elementary school. The feisty petite 49-year-old with gently curved lips and almond-shaped eyes, who was wearing on that morning a cream-coloured head veil and makeup rather too thick for official standards, exclaimed, "I have no idea why they harassed me. Some said I was a pretty teacher with a long, thick, beautiful black hair. I can dance. I am an avid classic Javanese dancer. *Saya penari* (I am a dancer)." Ibu Rina is indeed a fervent classical Javanese dancer. She grins, "Anyway, men should watch out for me—I am a respectable teacher!" She thus delivered her first reason for wearing the veil—as protection against sexual harassment.

This was also the experience of another woman who worked at a textile factory. "I feel secure with this jilbab, especially when I have to work the night shift," she told me. For Indonesian Muslim women, the days following Soeharto's fall were not harrowing, in spite of the government ban of the jilbab. Schoolgirls wearing headscarves were no longer attacked or questioned by their teachers, and mosques across the country blared the *adzan*, the Muslim summons to prayer, in triumphant celebration of the end of Orde Baru. It was clear that Indonesian

Muslims—from the cocktail-swilling secular Muslims to the mosque-attending ones—had been living with apprehension. Meanwhile, the cohort of radicals, extremists and jihadists grew, a fact that was highlighted after the 9/11 and Bali bombings.

The jilbab for Muslim women leaders is thus a form of political insurance as well as assurance of spiritual obedience from their loyal voters. The large number of Ibu Rina's 'daughters' (municipal staff) who followed in her footsteps had a multiplier effect. In an attempt to revive flagging interest in spiritual matters among women when she took office in 2003, it was decided that female staff had to appear more Islamic and more 'womanly', giving rise to an informal convention on wearing the jilbab for Muslim female staff.

Currently there is no formal ratification of the dress code. That has not, however, dampened the powerful informal law—let us call it public morality—that has forced female staff to cover their hair. Now one even sees Muslim male staff wearing the *baju gamis* and *baju koko* (popular Indonesian Muslim outfits for men) every Friday because 'Mother' has been conducting *Jumling* (*Jumat Keliling*, Friday visitations) in the last two years, dropping by at different mosques for Friday sermons. The pressure is certainly mounting, and given that their professional performance is being judged by their appearance as Muslim women and men, tension has escalated among the staff. The jilbab has undoubtedly proven Ibu Rina's sway as a trendsetter who is emulated by every female staff in her personal and professional lifestyle. No wonder Karanganyar has its own jilbab brand, jilbab Ibu Rina.

According to male officials, the Muslim dress code allows female staff to appear more feminine, professional and 'morally-defined'. "We are not trying to discriminate against women to promote morality," clarifiifed a staff, "we just want them to look feminine and morally responsible, and to be professionally competent." To think that this new form of the old kerudung is becoming the sole reference of moral order at a time of escalating crises caused by corruption! The jilbab is, he concluded, the best definition of Muslim women. It is amazing that no-one has stopped to ask, "Wait a minute, what are we doing here?", and that the rule has not been roundly criticized for what is it—blatantly sexist, with no bearing on the professional performance of civil servants. Moral pressure is also exerted through the looks cast on those still

unveiled. There is increasing interest in wearing the jilbab, Ibu Rina conceded, adding that some women are upping the stakes by wearing oversized long pants and baggy clothes. But hardly anyone notices, she shrugs. "I want to build them up to where they should be. They perform their official tasks quite well already, I just want them to look nicer and morally responsible, and this has more marketing value for us civil servants. I am surprised I received so much approval!"

When a person has his/her apparel dictated to on the basis of his/her sex, it should be offensive, but for those who have been dictated to, they do not perceive it as harassment. Indeed some have embraced the dress code. "We need to be able to differentiate between Muslim and non-Muslim female staff to bring attention to the issue," a Muslim head-veiled staff tried to convince me during an interview. "The jilbab made me feel peaceful and self-confident earlier in my career," Ibu Rina said. "I think I look prettier wearing it than not." Many female staff members also said that while they supported measures to popularize jilbab, like the offering of money, they did not consider it as an affront to be told to wear the jilbab.

The portrait of post-Soeharto Indonesia as viewed through the evolution of the veil is strikingly hopeful, full of individuals, trends and stories that show attempts to narrow the prevalent gender gap in this country. There exist feminist translations of the Quran that make a sound case against domestic violence and important conventions where Muslim authorities offer critics a platform to lambast their faith. Indonesian Muslim women activists are optimistic that the new openness will be transformative. Even if Muslim authorities and elders are merely putting up a façade of liberality to ward off political attacks, the climate is shaping a young generation of Muslims who demand a more progressive system. Though the Islamists cohort may advocate the veil as the rightful submission of women to patriarchy, many have asserted on the contrary that the veil's resurgence dovetails with a feminist spirit of activism and justice. The political, cultural and economic status for women has changed dramatically. Ibu Rina is not trying to sugarcoat something that will always reek of patriarchy to some, and you can count on the veil to stir up passionate debates on topics such as polygamy, domestic violence, sexual harassment and gender injustice.

Ibu Rina's jilbab has served her well in her brand of identity politics, one that is defined by gender, religion and ethnicity. It is politically driven and laden with self-interest. A strong belief in self is a characteristic of her image. There is even a touch of mystery, as leadership by a woman has been likened to the opening of Pandora's box, a woman's defiance of a divine command that will bring forth great calamity. Women leaders are a minority in modern politics (*Jurnal Perempuan*, 2006; *Komnas Perempuan*, 2006). For a minority leadership to make a dent in political history, the minority group must be consistent, flexible and appealing to the majority. Jilbab as identity politics has indeed been sanctioning the disenfranchised to form a dissident movement against authoritarian systemic pressure. It should not be an instrument of oppression.

2 - Negotiating Women's Multiple Burdens

Eighteen years have passed since I enrolled at Universitas Muhammadiyah Surakarta (UMS) in Solo, Central Java. I also taught there after graduating in 1997, before pursuing my studies abroad. When I finally returned from my doctoral studies at Universitaet Muenster Germany in 2008, I found that many things had changed since my last stay in 2002, before I left for my Masters degree at Monash University, but the essence of the place has remained—in the culture, the atmosphere and most of all, the Muslim women studying in the biggest private university in Central Java. Solo, officially known as Surakarta, shares the legacy of Java's last surviving empire, the Mataram Sultanate, with its neighbour Yogyakarta. Each city has its own palace (*kraton*) and a line of royals who are revered by their subjects to this day.

Like other Islamic universities in Yogyakarta, the universities in Solo are densely populated by female students wearing the jilbab, as if the influence of the Javanese past has not made itself felt. Female students are informally compelled to wear the jilbab in Islamic-labelled universities, whether NU, Muhammadiyah or state-owned. The deeply ingrained jilbab tradition does not, however, stop the city from looking forward. The mayor of Solo, Joko Widodo, has been widely praised for

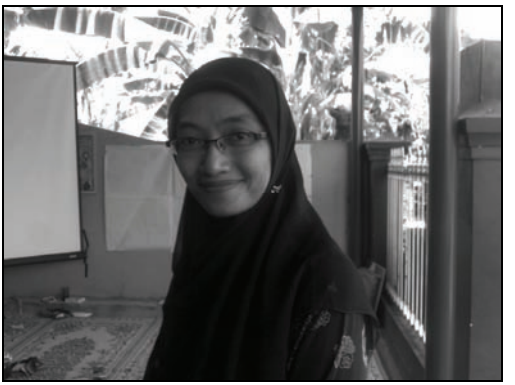
his progressive policies. He has rebranded the city with the slogan "The Spirit of Java" and is said to have implemented many positive changes on the ground to make it a better city for residents and tourists alike.

People often start their day with a stroll down Jalan Slamet Riyadi, the city's main business thoroughfare. There, surprisingly large flocks of Muslim students wearing the jilbab travel by bicycle or on foot, especially on Sundays when cars are banned from sunrise until 9 am. The wide main road is shaded by large banyan trees. Street vendors selling *jamu*, traditional herbal tonics, and *serabi*, a type of sweet coconut pancake, line the street, where the bareheaded and the jilbab-wearers mingle seamlessly. Outside the universities, there is no discrimination whatsoever, but this ends at the doorsteps of the university, for unveiled female students who dare to defy the informal iron law are not allowed in class. The car-free day introduced in Solo actually revealed subversive female defiance against the obligatory wearing of the veil in Islamic institutions. Many students put off donning the veil until they enter the institutions. This highlights the surprising degree of rebellion simmering in Muslim subculture. Some 13 years after the fall of the New Order regime, a group of Muslim female students is turning the spotlight on a surprising array of subversive and critical behaviour. Given the strict surveillance of Islamic universities across Indonesia, the very existence of this defiance is a taboo subject in these institutions. This study is part of the investigation, seeking out perceptions that deviate from the official ideological canon.

Muslim female graduates want to have it all: a high-flying career and a successful marriage. At 56, Maryam is a professor of Indonesian literature in UMS, working over 48 hours a week and earning more than Rp 200,000,000 (USD 20,000) a year. Maryam, like many other successful Muslim women, is excelling in a world that many thought was governed by rules set and enforced by men. For the first time in the history of Muslim women in Muhammadiyah Central Java, these 'elite women' can succeed in any career they want. A new generation of bright, rich, professional Muslim women seem to have broken through the glass ceiling and have nothing to fear from the men around them. They will be just as successful. The jilbab is the very source of the discipline required to achieve victory. It is the hub that connects all resources and avenues to achievement. The veil is no longer considered as a hindrance to any

career. Equality for all translates to indifference to one's dressing, whether modern and bareheaded, or veiled. No wonder the jilbab has catapulted many so-called 'discreet women' into powerful positions at universities, NGOs, CSOs, government bodies, parliament, and age-old Islamic organizations such as NU and Muhammadiyah. The jilbab provides security. Women wearing it are spared the ignorance, stupidity, unfairness and injustice that may befall others.

Women were not obliged to veil themselves during the 1980s. Those who did, for example, Vera Kartika Giantari, Director of SPEK-HAM, the only women NGO operating in Solo, were known as the head-veiled women activists. Many of them continued wearing the head veil while others opted to take it off. Previously, during the Soeharto regime, freedom was like a fairy tale; now it is within everyone's reach. These veiled women are feminist Muslims. Many of them even work to support equality rights for LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender) movements such as TALITAKUM, the sole NGO in Solo working for sexual minorities, and Our Voice, a national NGO. Groups fighting for gender justice and rights for sexual minorities have flourished and the fervent feminist groups remain strong. These groups have earned plaudits for their fight for equality. And since women hold up half the sky, vilifying women means losing votes, so even political parties have joined in their cause. But challenges lie ahead of them, for example, the birth of FPI, MMI and other ultra-conservative Muslim groups.



Vera Kartika Giantari, Director of SPEK HAM (2005–2010).
Photo taken in January 2011.

Javanese Muslim feminists have been embroiled in fiery controversies. For myriad reasons, austere jilbab-wearering feminists are often ambushed with violent verbal attacks. Radicals refer to them as 'gangrene' to Islam, as representing an ambivalent version of Islam highly influenced by the West. They argue that the meteoric rise of this new generation of feminists who want high-powered, well-paid jobs has dire consequences for Muslim society. They claim that it has diverted the most talented away from the caring professions such as childcare; stopped them from volunteering for Islamic political parties, thus potentially putting an end to what they call 'Muslim female altruism'; turned many women off having more children; and effectively killed off Muslimah. What is true is that it signals the death of the sisterhood (*Ukhuwah-Ikhwah*), whereby women of all classes share the same major life experiences to a far greater degree than men. In the past, women of all classes were bonded by lives centred on explicitly female concerns. Now it makes little sense to talk about one blanket experience for women. The statistics clearly show that among young, educated, full-time professionals, being a woman is no longer a drag on earnings or progress.

This study argues that the most educated Muslim women will now earn as much as men over a lifetime; even with children, the gap in earnings will still be small. The desire for success is a major incentive to women who wear the head veil. Family—the care of the old and sick, and the raising of the next generation with a loving husband— remains paramount to them. The repercussions for the future are enormous. The growth of the 'because-I-am-worth-it' generation has led to the blossoming of female altruism, where women see as normal and obligatory the caregiving aspects of their lives. "If you give 100 per cent to the job—if you behave like a man—the fact that you are a woman will not be a hindrance," said Maryam. She did not mean that the workplace revolution had been a mistake and admitted she had gained from it herself. "I am not saying we should be driven back into the home and not be allowed to work. I am not suggesting we reintroduce the marriage bar (which required female teachers and civil servants to stay single or resign in favour of male workers). I am just saying there have been consequences. That there is a double burden." Maryam's views will ignite fierce debate. It is a topic that is discussed at breakfast and dinner tables, in restaurants and in *pengajian* (religious congregations) across the

country. Many Muslim women face the challenge of how to strike a balance between pursuing their careers and motherhood. Maryam's arguments have met with both empathy and vehement disagreement.

Feminists argue that the 'sisterhood' is very much alive and that women of all classes still share the same major life experiences. Muslim women are far from a homogeneous group, but one thing they have in common is the double burden they bear as career woman and family caregiver. Radicals propose polygamous marriage, which few Muslim women really support. Teh Ninih's abandoning of her intent to file for divorce from Aa Gym was a case in point. Many considered Teh Ninih as the perfect example of a discreet and obedient wife and talk shows were abuzz with how it was not Teh Ninih's failure but Aa Gym's. In one interview, the martyred wife was shown hospitalized and pondering her future while her husband was getting married in Malaysia without first asking her permission.

Muslim feminists from various backgrounds argue that the solution is to carve out a balance between men and women, and to put a value on unpaid work such as looking after the children. Women, they explain, do not really have a choice but to take on the burden of childcare because the discrepancy in pay between men and women means that it is often more economical for the woman to stop working. This is compounded by the fact that part-time work is often not available in the professions chosen by women. Others argue that there is still a glass ceiling blocking the path of young Muslim female professionals.

Feminists sometimes completely miss the point on several key issues. These days, the debate concerns not just women but also fathers, who increasingly desire to be more involved at home. Muslim women enjoy a thin veneer of equality, but that veneer often cracks once they take on a caring role. Many Muslim women with a large family and who come from the lower socioeconomic classes have difficulties finding flexible work and often end up with poor pay and reduced promotion prospects. More leave for new fathers could address the imbalance. Involvement in childcare has increased among modern Muslim men who believe that fathers play a central role in the caring of children.

The present system adopted in many Indonesian Muslim families is deeply unfair for women, according to prominent Indonesian Muslim feminist Musdah Mulia. "We will not close the pay gap until men take

time out to look after children. Then employers will not think they cannot employ a woman in her late twenties or early thirties because they cannot afford maternity leave. As a society we have not caught up yet with the consequences of women in the labour market. Women manage by holding off one thing or another; they sacrifice children or they sacrifice their career." It is a dilemma that is already haunting many Muslim women. Many women rationalize thus: "I want to have a child eventually, but I will postpone the decision until the hours become more manageable as I advance in my career." A pragmatic choice made under economic pressure and the pressures of this authoritarian patriarchal society! There is a perception shared by women and men alike that Muslim women can be professionals with a career or good women with families. They actually can have both, and the jilbab is the bridge between the past, present and future.

3 - Servility and Obedience: The Ugly Side of Polygamy

True love is ageless, declared 46-year-old Pujiono Cahyo Widianto, popularly known as Syeikh Puji, the head of Islamic boarding school, Pondok Pesantren-Ponpes Miftahul Jannah in Bedono, Jambu and Semarang (Central Java). He had just informally married a student of his, Lutfiana Ulfa, a servile petite 14-year-old student with strawberry-shaped eyes and creamy skin, in August 2008. When he announced his wedding, a media storm broke out. From Syeikh Puji to Diani Budiarto, the 53-year-old mayor of Bogor, rumoured to have romanced and married a 19-year-old cafe waitress Siti Indriyan, formerly becoming her legal guardian because she was too young to marry him and providing the financial support for her to continue her studies, relationships between older men and younger girls, even if legitimatized by polygamy laws, never fail to make us squirm. Both these men are very wealthy, one being mayor and the other, the owner of PT Sinar Lendoh Terang, a handicrafts exporter with a monthly turnover of millions of rupiah. Protested Syeikh Puji, "I am not just doing what I like. It is based on religion. It is in accordance with the prophet's teaching. You can marry a

7-year-old if you like, but you cannot have sexual intercourse until she starts menstruating."

This squeamishness is understandable: Syeikh Puji and Diani are old enough to be the girls' father, if not their grandfather. In Indonesia, a person cannot legally consent to sex until the age of 17, and individuals under 18 years of age must obtain the permission of parents in order to marry, with the legal marriage age being set at 18. Both girls have already entered puberty. Diani, massively supported by PKS, believed his controversial marriage had a legitimate basis in Islam since the Prophet Muhammad married Aisyah when she was seven. Diani's and Syeikh Puji's sexual dalliances with powerless minors illustrates the sordidness of powerful wealthy men who run after eroticized and hyper-sexualized youth.

Men, of course, have paired up with younger—often much younger—women since time immemorial. This may even make biological sense. What is different in the case of these men is how they did not shy from entering publicly into relationships with the teenagers, with the apparent approval of their brides' parents. Lutfiana's father has said that he would not have given up his daughter to anyone else, while her mother was quoted as saying, "We are totally supportive of this marriage. Syeikh Puji is a wonderful man and we love him."

While an age disparity like the 34 years between Diani Budiarto and Siti Indriyani, and the 32 years between Syeikh Puji and Lutfiana Ulfa, are by no means the norm, the recent openness about relationships involving huge age gaps in polygamous households, including a willingness to parade the nuptials in the press, suggest that they may be becoming less stigmatized among radicals who have not expressed the least bit of disapproval. Yet it is highly criticized on TV and hotly debated at *warung* (the equivalent of coffeeshops) and on Facebook and Twitter.

Entering into a relationship with an older man before turning 18—or even 20—is servility. Hordes of girls, mindwashed in gender-biased *pengajian*, voluntarily submit to polygamy. "When you start stretching decades and you are talking about young girls, under 19 or so, it is always problematic," said Ahmad Badawi, Director of YLSKAR (Yayasan Lingkar Studi Kesetaraan Aksi dan Refleksi), an NGO protecting girls and women from violence. He was deeply disturbed by the fact that Syeikh Puji's marriage had taken place only a few kilometers from his

office in Salatiga and added, "It is probably not healthy nor the most 'normal' relationship. Based on 13 years of advocacy, I don't think you are that mature at 17. You are still a kid." He feels that before the age of 19 or 20, teenage girls are still in the process of developing their maturity and understanding of social and cultural reality. Or, at the very least, shaping their individuality and learning to exert their own agency. Before they reach this critical age, teens' ability to consider and use judgment is still developing; furthermore they are easily swayed by peer pressure. Although adolescents know right from wrong and are able to understand consequences, he cautioned that "their ability to carefully consider these matters is somewhat limited relative to adults". When teenage girls marry an older man, the consequence is servility and absolute obedience.

Experts mostly agree that in contemporary Indonesian society, the potential harm to a young woman who marries an older man depends on her age and the age gap with her husband. SPEK HAM cautioned that there could be long-term emotional repercussions for teenaged girls who have sex with older men. Those whose partners are two or three decades older had higher levels of subsequent depression and lower levels of self-esteem. "If they are with a male who has more power and status, because he is older, this might make it harder for young women to say, 'No I don't want to have sex'," Nong Mahmada, a leading Muslim feminist warned. These young women may also have to deal with physical problems resulting from these sexual relationships. "Even if the girl would prefer to use some type of contraceptive, she is less likely to do so if the guy has more power in the relationship." She objected to the fact that Diani, the mayor, had exploited state incentives and apparatus to hold his polygamous marriage, which in turn raises questions of corruption and violation of public trust.

A female student from a state-owned Islamic university who had an affair with a 39-year-old lecturer disclosed that, to this day, she has no regrets. "I thought it was so romantic and glamorous and adventurous," she said. "I was not interested in having any power. I was interested in the other person being in control of everything, being the smarter one, the stronger one. I was interested in letting him drive." The 21-year-old who wears a head veil wherever she goes claimed that she never felt that any of the men she dated were manipulating her and that sex was never

the focus. She argued that these May-December relationships are too harshly criticized. For her, they were positive experiences—she even saw the potential for marriage with some of the men. Many Muslim women, though, frown upon such relationships, considering them problematic and scandalous. Only the teenagers involved do not believe they are being exploited. Girls such as Lutfiana Ulfa or Siti Indriyani will never report of being victimized. Among the perceived benefits of their relationships are admiration from their peers for their hyper-sexualized youth and their husbands' material assets. They stress the emotional advantages, saying that their older husbands are more considerate of their feelings and make them feel special. They believe their husbands would be more faithful than boys of their own age because older men have finished sowing their oats. "They really give adult men far too much credit," Muslim feminists fume. "The irony is they find out after that these men were sowing their wild oats with them."

With hindsight, older women interviewed about the relationships they had as teens felt quite differently. "They had very little good things to say when they were older; many were angry, really angry," pointed out Soe Tjen Marching, a prominent feminist from Surabaya. "They were pretty much disgusted." Feminists argue that needy girls and exploitative men are not the only factors driving these relationships. From music, videos, TV, ads, to Facebook and Twitter, the stereotype of a happy princess sits within a wider cultural context that absolutely eroticizes and hyper-sexualizes teen girls. As much as we are appalled by and concerned with these relationships, there are factors in our culture that make this happen.

4 - Plastic Surgery and Hysteria

Gimmickry in politics is the manipulation of appearances. It is not relevant to the functioning of the system and plays on novelty. Such is the role of the jilbab for women politicians, serving as a symbol of piety and religiosity, although it sometimes also carries negative connotations as the symbol of absolute obedience and dependence. Like the kebaya of old worn by *ibu-ibu* (politicians' wives), the jilbab is now an indispensable

tool in the marketing of politics and ever sleeker versions—brightly-hued or easy-to-wear ones—have emerged to woo and distract voters.

The jilbab attempts to evolve and transform itself under the aegis of *adat ketimuran* (Eastern customs). In this process of autoplasticity, the jilbab alters and is altered, dwelling in the interstices, celebrating both Arabic and Indonesian fashion codes.

The jilbab works like a spell on female voters, offering a spiritual answer in a country where half of the citizens live under the threshold of poverty. Thus the jilbab modifies itself in response to the internal environment (autoplastic adaptation), as well as strives to alter the situation in reaction to the external environment (alloplastic adaptation). It is as if *adat ketimuran*, archaic tradition undergoes 'plastic surgery' on the demand of *nilai keislaman* (Islamic values), through which emerges a unique and distinctive brand of 'Jilbab Indonesia'. The dilemma persists: to what extent should women be encouraged to adapt to a given interpretation of the Holy Quran and a 'correct' dress code? How much to change? How are women supposed to react to fashion trends flooding the media? Should women be encouraged to abandon traditional beliefs to fit in a society that values jilbab-wearers more than bareheaded women? This is the sort of negotiation embedded in an unending struggle between changing the other and effecting internal change, autoplastic and alloplastic.

A hybrid jilbab is invented and we witness a vicious circle of harsh coercion and virtuous obedience, voluntary versus self-willed, all of which is driven by a relentless high-tech rhythm. Teenaged girls cannot live without Facebook, nor can jilbab-wearers, and photo after photo of the jilbab are uploaded and displayed. The precepts for the modern woman of the twenty-first century are being defined via social media!

Not bending to the informal iron law brings humiliation and defamation. The present veiling of more and more skin represents the slow but sure motion of restraining and curtailing the discourse of the body. The female form, an object of artistry and symbol of fertility, has been reduced to porn. There have been many accounts by female students of being expelled from class for allegedly flouting Islamic law by dressing 'improperly'. Their female classmates sneer and mock while teachers exercise cruel impunity. Such tales of humiliation are so commonplace that every girl has an incident to relate. There are yet

uglier stories of groups of students being paraded in front of the class and humiliated as un-Islamic, whore-like and immoral. That is hardly surprising. In a conservative society where a woman's honour is often tied to her virtue, as indicated by the jilbab, the mere suggestion of compromised chastity is enough to render a girl an outcast. Barred from tightly controlled institutions, these humiliated girls have been forced to rely on telephone calls, tweets, Facebook posts, YouTube videos and stray secondhand testimony to piece together their experiences.

This study sought to conduct face-to-face interviews and to hear firsthand testimony. The women of jilbab form a closed society raised on absolute spirituality and unconcerned with the mundane and mortal body, a society where the secret Shariah police is on every street corner and where paranoia and suspicion reign. It is akin to a mother making up her daughters, a benevolent female imposing rules on her minors: "We are to be scanned, displayed, and checked one by one, to make sure we are wearing baggy jeans that hide our curves, baggy shirts to hide our rounded breasts, and proper head veils that cover our hair. We do not want to cause trouble so we dress properly." Overcoming the girls' fears, suspicions and feelings of shame is perhaps the bigger obstacle. I hunted down the muted women but also those living in a totally different world—women wearing the head veil in public institutions and removing it outside.

I spent a chilly night with thousands of men, women and children huddled together in the famous Solo Batik Carnival (SBC) where I enjoyed the beauty of traditional, skin-displaying costumes as well as performances of traditional dance and theatre by Solo International Performance Arts (SIPA). It was a splendid evening free from the menace of radical groups that have implanted themselves in Solo, a city that has become notorious for the arrests and deaths of Noordin Top and other terror suspects. In these traditional yet modernized performances, delicate creamy skin was on display, and the human body, unclothed and unmasked, was regarded as holy and spiritual.

Women in Indonesia are increasingly choosing motherhood over work. Indonesia lags far behind in the percentage of women in powerful positions. Despite a battery of government measures—some introduced in the last ten years—and ever more passionate debate about gender roles, only less than 13 per cent of Indonesian women occupy parliamen-

tary and executive positions, with the number in judicial and judicative chairs decreasing even more steeply. All the top companies are run by men of Tionghoa ethnicity. A single woman in Indonesia faces much difficulty in obtaining legal official documents for her children, an injustice that NGOs are trying to right by pushing for policy granting such documents to single mothers.

Low-income women are among the most impoverished and subdued group whether economically or politically. As they form the core of the informal economy, working as domestic workers or running small businesses in the service industry, they are particularly vulnerable to unjust practices. Between 1997 and 1998, the percentage of those living in poverty doubled from 11 to 22 per cent, Badan Pusat Statistik reported. These women are almost invisible. Chronic poverty is triggered by structural paucity, gender inequalities in the distribution of income, control over property and natural resources and access to credit schemes, as well as biases in the political and economic system and the labour market.

In addition to these challenges, women have to grapple with the issue of the jilbab at work. The wearing of the jilbab is often dictated and enforced by institutions and societal pressure. When a woman has to put on the jilbab in order to secure a job in an Islamic institution, it is as if her worth depends solely on a piece of cloth; for veiled women, to remove their jilbab for the sake of a job constitutes harassment or marginalization. Both types of enforcement are actually a soft form of policing induced by politics, which expediently categorizes the population into the *ummah* and the non-*ummah*. Why should women have to sacrifice themselves? Does the decision to wear the jilbab not belong to a woman herself? The Ministry of Women's Empowerment seeks to develop a multipronged approach to promoting women's development, yet the discourse on women's dressing in the office remains stuck in the domain of 'Eastern law' for which skin is taboo. Laws may help change mentalities, but effective law enforcement is a different story. Cultural norms and patriarchal expectations actually have more sway and reach than formal ones.

The Healing Circle, a Muslim feminist group, advocates monogamy, believing that any discourse on marriage and sexuality is dishonest without equality and monogamy. Monogamy also protects women against sexual diseases and in paternity matters, and is better for their

emotional well-being. Head-veiled women also speak out loud against polygamy while still affirming Islamic values in their lives. It is not uncommon to find veiled students who religiously perform *salat* while carrying on an adulterous relationship at the same time. The jilbab is not a guarantee of honesty before Allah. The stereotype of the jilbab-wearer as an obedient wife is totally erroneous but is so widespread that it gives ammunition to religious and cultural forces. Religious authorities call for a more flexible attitude within polygamous marriage—with the caveat that the first wife's permission must be obtained, a permission that is in many cases forged. The jilbab autoplastically alters the wife to be cheated who then has to return piously to Allah or else be outcast as an atheist! The law destroys more women that it saves. What it saves is the male libido but not gender equality. The jilbab has been a site of tension, struggle, interpretation, theorization and identity politics that women would like to get a word in. Mushrooming polygamy is overturning the stable nuclear family. The dutiful wife wearing her refined jilbab sitting next to her husband forms the very picture of a happy family, but what lies beneath? Never-ending disputes, jealousy, pressure and tension!

Chapter 3

Corporeal Market and Discourse of the Private

1 - Corporeal Market: Solemnity versus Banality

Bettina David, a researcher of Islamic fashion, has observed that the market for the jilbab has undergone a dramatic transformation since Soeharto's fall. In Islamic thought, the corpus is considered as inferior to the *ruh*, the spirit or the soul, and the jilbab has been employed to sanctify the corpus. Yet it is very much a player in the capitalist market, and immeasurable gimmicks have been used to boost its sales. The marketplace, with the invisible hands of God, allows the pious consumer to 'serve Heaven'. Vulgar consumerism is not limited to worldly here-and-now stuff but also includes 'spiritual goods'.

The last 13 years have been witness to an explosion of the jilbab market, proving that it was not merely a novelty. It has penetrated every nook and cranny, from vendors in traditional market to malls and hypermarkets. It has built on and superseded the market for the traditional kebaya. Now there is even a jilbab version of the kebaya, which accounts for the majority of sales; trendy and *gaul* (funky) jilbab, though increasingly popular with the youth, has a relatively small market share. The jilbab is no longer the exclusive privilege of the religious but has been embraced at all levels of society. Islamic magazines such as *Annida*, *Sabili* and *Noor* prescribe rightful behaviour in many aspects including language usage, food and apparel. The

fashion of Islam is a *kaffah* choice, offering total redemption under the rule of the market.

This type of market, or call it simply Islamic capitalism, is driven by spiritual fervour, peer pressure and probably even a desire to stray beyond secular norms—funky jilbab as counterculture. This is a windfall for the capitalists! Even the non-Muslim capitalists are rejoicing. What started out as a minority trend has gained strength, fuelled by many religious congregations aired on television (for example, those of Mamah Dedeh, Ayu Qowantinah, Hajjah Luthfi, Hajjah Masenah and Neno Warisman), firmly anchoring the jilbab in society. From absence and scarcity in the 1980s to its shaky beginnings after the 1998 movement, the spread of the jilbab has been aided by technology.

The meaning and symbolism of the jilbab has also evolved. In the 1980s the jilbab-wearer was haunted by fear and the jilbab was not considered as high culture. Then it was the kebaya, as personified by Ibu Tien, that was widely favoured, affirmed and reproduced among Indonesian women. It was as if the Javanese kebaya were the very definition of Indonesian formality and state ceremony. Today the tables have been turned and the jilbab has entered popular mass culture. It is not difficult to see why—the jilbab is not something dictated by the outsider, much less the West. It is authentic culture for the women in Indonesia, a local variant that is unique and locally designed. Solo, especially, has emerged as a hub for designers and batik creators of the jilbab.

There are so many ways to define the Muslim woman, yet with the arrival of the novel jilbab in the 1990s, the Muslim woman is often defined solely by her donning or not of the jilbab. There is no doubt a political dimension to Islamic popular culture and we can observe in this a manifestation of the Gramscian hegemony theory. Funky jilbab is the site of struggle between subordinate groups in society and forces of incorporation operating in the interests of dominant groups in society, which I call the major Muslim group. The jilbab no longer vacillates between high and popular culture but is a here-to-stay fashion code that interlocks *nilai keislaman* and *nilai ketimuran*.

There is a discernible crisis in Islamic culture evident in the displacement of spiritual culture by the dictates of entertainment. Hannah Arendt called it a crisis while Susan Sontag lamented it as

undermining standards of seriousness. In the 1980s the jilbab-wearers were activists who fought for a democratic Indonesia at their own risks. Dete Aliah (former director of 4INDEV, a Jakarta-based organization working for development) and Vera Kartika Giantari (former director of SPEK-HAM) were part of this group of women. Present jilbab-wearers are likely to be indifferent to critical engagement against a failed government, living as we do in a dumbed-down culture where we are immersed in trivia about celebrities and asinine soaps on TV. The bling-bling jilbab as fashion statement has replaced the jilbab as political statement. Activists have lamented the replacement of the critical attitude and authentic ethos of 1998 with the mass manufacture of a tasteless, industrialized artifact of Islam in order to satisfy the lowest common denominator. The young are alienated from others, from reality and from themselves.

Many feminists, activists and educators have argued that the quality of the output on television has been diluted as stations pursue ratings, focusing on the glitzy, the superficial, the popular and fluff. The tack, it seems, has changed from creating formulaic shows to pandering to mainstream Islamic values and fears. Unhealthy TV soap operas labelled as Islamic—*Puteri Yang Tertukar*, *Anugerah*, *Wanita Solehah Yang Didholimi oleh Suaminya*, *Nada dan Cinta*, *Cinta di antara Dusta*, to name but a few—flood homes. The plots of these soaps are often too simplistic, using a standardized template with minimal dialogue. Characters are black-and-white, shallow and unconvincing, more symbols than real characters. Values of humanity are subdued by archaic text that does not match reality. The world of these soaps is a Manichean one. It is always a conflict between dark and light, good and evil, reflecting none of the complexity of the social, economic and political problems of our world. Worse, they reinforce fears of hell, prejudice against other faiths (Christians and the Ahmadiyah), paranoia and aggression.

It is a game of who can scream louder, who can be heard above the din. Even mosques are not exempt. Almost all mosques now compete to make the *adzan* call louder and louder. The sacred call has been degraded as sobriety and solemnity give way to pride and chauvinism. It speaks volumes about the state of Islamic popular culture today, one that has encroached into every realm of collective experience. For

instance, instead of discussing the very real problem of poverty, most media devote and sell poverty as one of its commodities.

Islamic popular culture is not merely a symptom and side effect of mass consumerism. It has its own vibrancy and vitality, but is characterized by a fundamental paradox—advances in technology and cultural sophistication, combined with an increase in superficiality and dehumanization. Nonetheless, it should still be seen as having a totality of ideas, perspectives, attitudes, images and other symbols approved by the mainstream. Islamic popular culture is thus authentic and original. It is certainly related to other Muslim countries in Central and South Asia as well as the Middle East and North Africa, but stands distinctively as Indonesian. It also acts as a unifying factor in a land where race, ethnicity, gender, customs and traditions are so diverse. The cultural icon of the funky but *syar'i* jilbab conveniently draws these streams into one ocean of Islam.

2 - Under the Shadow of the Male Governor

Ibu Rustriningsih was born in 1967 and was elected Bupati Kebumen when she was still a 33-year old single in 2000. She was belittled by her political rival as *cah wingi sore* (merely a child, immature). She was also undermined due to her sex—not unlike the treatment received by Ibu Rina Karanganyar. Yet she has won an "Outstanding Women in Local Government and Recognition" award from the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, as well as strong support from her people in the second election of 2010, garnering 77.8 per cent of the votes. Her arduous work building infrastructure and a clean government during her first term had paid off. It is no mean feat that she has been profiled by CNN, *New York Times* and the *Straits Times* for her clean image while Indonesians are increasingly frustrated with the corrupt rule of their leaders. She even became and remains vice-governor of Semarang. The fact that her status has plummeted stems from the decreasing authority of provinces compared to regencies in the face of regional autonomy. She really ought

to have been leading Kebumen rather than residing in Semarang—much to the regret of people in Kebumen.

Ibu Rustriningsih and her husband, H. Soni.
(Photo courtesy of Suara Merdeka News, 2004.)

"There was one golden rule in politics—'only the tough make it'—and I was not regarded as tough due to my sex and age," said Ibu Rustri wryly. Tough need not mean ruthlessness; it could mean steadfastness and stamina, in which case, she thinks women have every right to be in power. "And women can learn from testosterone-fuelled politicians like the Gubernur Pak Bibit Waluyo! When I came into politics, I was the good girl from Kebumen, graduate of Universitas Gajah Mada. The years in office have toughened me up," she confesses. As Partai Demokrasi Indonesia (PDI) leader in Kebumen, certainly she is not as easily intimidated as she used to be. When she was younger, she was impressed by raised voices and table banging, but as she got older, she realized this was just meaningless bluster. Now people even say that she has become a relatively cold politician. She considers this a compliment rather than a criticism. If she thinks something is right, she will try to push it through politically. She has bravely revised political decisions that were criticized by the people. During her time in power, she built and renovated the infrastructure of 695 elementary schools and raised the PAD (Pendapatan Asli Daerah/Regency Gross Income) from Rp 6 billion to Rp 23 billion. Nothing has been heard on her vision for

empowering local women but there is no doubting her bold ambition as a female politician.

Ibu Rustriningsih has declared that women should not apologize for being ambitious. When she was new to politics, she was stuck when asked how she could manage three children and a husband. Such questions arise from disbelief that a woman with three children could possibly seek a powerful position. This is why she no longer likes talking about how she organizes her days, only about her political objectives. Her husband, she stated, let her be the leader, and that is enough for her to go full steam into politics, representing PDI (Partai Demokrasi Indonesia), a party known for its secular mission, as compared to PKS (Partai Keadilan Sejahtera, representing the Islamic Brotherhood). The veil, exhorted by PPP (Partai Persatuan Pembangunan, a political party in close affinity with the Muslim community) has since 2000 been adopted by even the most secular Indonesian parties such as PDI. Ibu Rustri herself is more stringent in the wearing of the veil than even Ibu Rina, who can sometimes be seen singing a *Campur Sari* song on local television (TATV and Jogja TV) wearing a simple head veil that covers only her hair, leaving her neck bared. Ibu Rustri is all in favour of women conforming to proper *adat ketimuran*; sexy dressing has no place in the office—for men or for women.

She used to think that female leadership is a sort of style: women communicate better, show more compassion and are better at getting people to follow them. She went on Kebumen Radio Indraloka FM every morning in a programme called "Selamat Pagi Bupati" to listen to the complaints, stories and input from the people, and became an expert at talking to the public. But the older she gets, the more she feels that it is not about a uniquely female leadership style, but something expected of both men and women, to be practised on a daily basis. She believes that men in particular fall for the cliché that leadership requires toughness and a rough attitude. Women are at a disadvantage in that they cannot use classic power gestures as they lack the build and deeper voice of men. Many female politicians make the mistake of speaking loudly and end up sounding shrill, although the problem resolves itself as their voices become rougher and deeper as they age. She believes that the country and the economy would be better off if there were more women in the upper echelons of power. She was recently quoted as saying that

the corporate Indonesian politician is like an old Javanese man. Many Indonesian girls want to be outstanding, and the route to fame is faster and less arduous as a model than as the president or a political party leader, heart surgeon, professor or rector. Many look up to Inneke Koesherawaty, a clever businesswoman, but it is thanks to Ibu Rustri and Ibu Rina that young women can now imagine becoming *bupati* one day. And the good news is that more and more women are becoming role models through their achievements in traditionally male-dominated fields.

Indonesia has made real progress in recent years. Women have reached the top of the political ladder, and almost 30 per cent of the members of parliament are women. In addition, there has been a mushrooming of family-run companies and SMEs led by women. It is only in share-listed companies where big money and power come together that there has been little or no progress for years. Management and supervisory boards have always been male strongholds in Indonesia and little has changed. Quotas should be introduced in Indonesia; equal opportunity will only mean that women have to negotiate harder with their husbands about who looks after the family. The traditional role ascribed to women as caretakers is still intact in our modern era. By becoming a top leader while also nurturing her family, Ibu Rustri has made a great impact on women. Her success in reforming the political system to lead the cleanest, almost corruption-free, regency in Indonesia is exemplary for other woman leaders, and Ibu Rina Karanganyar, Ibu Risma Surabaya and Ibu Atut Banten are following in her footsteps.

Women politicians face key challenges that may adversely affect their career. Because women have only recently gained access to positions of power, they are relatively lacking in training and training. As a result, women politicians face a serious shortage of competent, experienced cadres. This is a fact acknowledged by women activists, as well as senior movement leaders. Women are not being trained to become strong political actors or efficient administrators. Many activists complained in interviews that the readings the movement routinely provides for its female members are outdated and fail to address the challenges and problems faced by women today. These readings still emphasize their roles as wives and mothers. Much of the administrative training has been taken out of the curriculum assigned to female

students, on the basis that women are not represented in the political movement hierarchy. Despite these obstacles, some women activists—Dete Aliah, Vera Kartika Giantari, Indriyati Suparno, Soe Tjen Marching (of Lembaga Bhinneka) and Nong Darol Mahmada—have proved themselves capable of playing leading roles. Their success, however, has been the result of their individual efforts and abilities, not of an institutionalized process to prepare women for leadership. The rise of a new generation of young women activists has sparked a debate on the type of training and socialization that women activists receive.

While debates on women's rights and empowerment taking place in the broader society or even internationally are important, it is internal pressure that will determine if attitudes and perceptions are to change. Although some women maintain that their roles and influence cannot be measured by the size of their representation, other strong voices contend that representation cannot be ignored. In 2000, Central Java province got its first female *bupati*, Ibu Rustri. This paved the way for other female leaders such as Ibu Rina from Karanganyar, Bu Ambarwati Kabupaten Semarang and female *bupati* of Kendal and Demak. It also revived old debates about the extent to which these developments are expanding and challenging the traditional Javanese vision of women: that they serve the cause best when they fulfill their customary roles as mothers and wives, summed up by the old Javanese sayings "*macak*, *manak*, *masak*" (making up, giving birth, and cooking) and "*olah-olah*, *umbah-umbah*, *isah-isah*, *korah-korah*" (cooking, washing the clothes and dishes).

The experience of this sole female candidate from the 2000 elections up to the present time shows that women who managed to overcome internal resistance in the community faced yet more formidable opposition from other political organizations and, above all, from the state. Many skeptics felt that this was just an election stunt and that it did not reflect a genuine will to allow women politicians a broader space in politics and power-sharing inside the government. Other political party leaders, mostly male, dismissed the claims, citing security risks as the reason why women are not pushed to the frontline.

Vice-Governor Ibu Rustriningsih with Governor Bibit Waluyo.
(Photo courtesy of Rimanews, 2011.)

Women activists' struggle to carve a niche inside the political arena with its myriad power structures reflects a close interaction between structure and agency. As an increasing number of women leaders and activists have become aware of their contribution to the movement and of the centrality of their role as political actors, they have demanded more recognition. Almost all the female *bupati* and *gubernur* are jilbab-wearing Muslims who uphold the view that Islam is a religion that has done women justice. Any injustices inflicted upon them, they insist, are due to cultural, political and social realities. A review of the general cultural values governing the movement's outlook regarding the role of women as political actors show that they are not far from the truth. A conservative culture, coupled with an oppressive sociopolitical environment, is responsible for women being denied the representation that would reflect their actual contribution to the political struggle. Women activists therefore choose to engage in the mass politics of presence to make up for their absence from the elitist politics of representation in the higher echelons of the state. An important

conclusion emerges from long hours of talking with and interviewing many women activists. Despite their awareness of the significance of their contribution to the movement's survival and political influence, and despite their demands for a wider role and positions of power, they remain unwilling to go so far as to sacrifice home and family.

3 - The Personal is Political: New Social Media and the Discourse of the Private

An engrossing collection of girls' narratives can be found in new social media such as Twitter and Facebook, with a constant flux of riveting cries and mesmeric proclamations of identity. The power of these girls lies in their stories. "This is not theory, these are real lives that are being shared," said Dini, a 19-year-old student of Universitas Muhammadiyah Surakarta. She shares veiled photos of herself with friends across Indonesia and Malaysia. Contrary to Dini, Tabitha was subjected to cyber assault from her ultra-orthodox male peers for displaying photos of herself bareheaded and in sexy apparel. Tabitha has to wear the head veil in her Islam-labelled university but goes unveiled otherwise. Sexist comments and Quranic verses litter the comments box of her account but she is indifferent and goes angst-free.

Social media has brought together many veiled and bareheaded girls to share their private stories and connect with people they would never have met in the real world. The Muslimah girl circle considers this media as being invented in the West, as if it has emerged out of nowhere with no previous technological precedent. Among the ultra-conservative, hate speech and misogynist messages are as prevalent online as in real life. Other more progressive and rational girls credit social media for changing the dynamics in their country, down to the provinces. They believe that social media and digital media will bring positive changes and manifold benefits in their lives. Nonetheless, they also acknowledge the pitfalls of social media—the laying bare of lives, voyeurism, jealousy, and potential addiction. "Voyeurism is widespread and creates addiction," Dini and Tabitha confessed.

"I could not have known about global warming without social media. The world would not have known. Youth like me would not have been able to obtain the information without Google," enthused Tissa Sasnida, a 20-year-old Jakarta resident who describes herself as passionate lover of water and caves. During the floods of 2011 in Jakarta, she began using Twitter extensively to disseminate information on the ecological problems of Ciliwung River. She spammed her peers to drive into them the message of tackling global warming through their own behaviour. "All the female members of my family wear the head veil but me. I didn't adopt it. My mother used to force me but I have ways and means to counter her," she recounted. In a panel on "Youth Defending Water", Tissa declared, "Now the girls are outspoken in social media because it is the cheapest and most affordable tool. Moreover, there is no censorship from either the government or the family. It is a means to experience liberty and freedom of speech in a way that is impossible in the real world." She continued, "It is always difficult to talk to family members or classmates. We've had clandestine discussions on sexual and reproductive health with senior feminists and others who know more than us. Or even about boyfriends. Many of us even get boyfriends via Facebook. Having a boyfriend from Facebook who is also a schoolmate is not dangerous anymore, it's not like airing it on television."

Girls are blessed to have social media, especially in a country where discussions on the body are still very much taboo. Women's bodies are battlefields, and girls are aware of this through underground discussions with their peers. They thrive on social media since many of their parents are technology-illiterate but have bought laptops or home computers for their children. Some parents are unaware that their girls are already well-versed in topics that are taboo at home, for example, sex and contraception. Tissa shared a moving story about how she met one of her favourite feminists on Twitter and how she learnt a lot about women's bodies via @JurnalPerempuan, a leading feminist journal. The tomboy felt lost until she found these outlets. Inspired, she spread the word among other girls so they could learn how to defend themselves at home and in school, and how to speak out against molesters and classmates who harassed them sexually. "There is no law prohibiting women from denouncing sexual abusers whoever and wherever they

are," said Achi Dwi Astari, a close friend of Tissa. Many girls now join her in her efforts, calling themselves young feminists and running an earth protection campaign.

From Tissa Sasnida, a young Indonesian feminist who has organized several youth circles on- and offline protests over the past two years, to the influential PRD activist Dhyta Caturani, who posted a half-naked picture of her tattooed body on her Twitter account, @purplerebel, to boldly claim her right to freedom of expression, women have adopted and adapted new media technologies in the pursuit of personal and collective independence and freedom. They challenge the different ways in which patriarchy oppresses every person who does not fit the norm. Veiled women, unveiled ones, tattooed women, covered-up ones—women of all stripes have taken to new media with audacity. The convergence of networked media and street protests have helped women shatter cultural taboos. Women are disproportionately the globe's migrants, refugees and displaced persons, suffering most profoundly from injustices. Given the changes in the global economy, feminism must be revised and must recognize the complexities (class, race, practices) of womanhood while also embracing doubt. Vigorous debates take place online. Several of the human rights groups, including @Indoprogress, @Salihara and @PrakarsaRakyat Initiatives, have admitted that they struggle with how to respond to this freedom, but largely defend women's right to freedom of expression, regardless of the content women choose to publish online on their blogs, Twitter or Facebook. Dhyta believed that this should not be the right of a privileged few; everyone should have the opportunity to create social and economic justice for women.

There was consensus on the issue of quotas (30 per cent) for women in parliamentary elections, although some argued that elected representatives should be the best candidates regardless of gender while others asked why we should accept quotas of less than 50 per cent given that women make up half of the population. The intriguing debate and profound critical arguments that were generated by this issue have been well documented in the social media. The past year has been momentous for women activists in the regions outside of Jakarta since the 2000 Law on Autonomy has redistributed power from Jakarta to the regencies. One of the most remarkable achievements was the issue of many edicts

protecting women's rights—even as they were being undermined in other ways. As the percentage of Internet users who are on social networking sites continues to climb, women continue to flock to the Internet to participate in discussions they are unable to have in real life. Yet Mariana Amiruddin, Director of Jurnal Perempuan, a prominent feminist from the 1990s, worries whether the gains made by the women who took to the streets in 1998 and continued their fight via social media, will be sustained because the message in social media is extremely instant and short-lived. She is concerned that the spirit may not live on. "Women's participation was valued during the 1998 revolution, but now, as top government positions are awarded to a corrupt regime, a female voice is seldom heard," said Mariana.

It is apparent that compared to women, it is mostly men who are creating the programmes and developing the social media universe. There is no female equivalent of Mark Zuckerberg. Social media is thus the product of masculine muscle in which women are setting the conversational tone in their own ways. Girls, for example, are extensive users of emotional cues—emoticons, smileys, cursive typefaces, expressive language, etc. This expressive style has also been embraced and practised by much older women, but not men. For women and girls, social media is their public diary. Yet more women are now talking about politics and social issues, especially activists, reformists, feminists and even those working for conservative religious alliances. Especially of concern to them is the rampant corruption they witness. Mariana is aware of these developments, she only laments the indifference of users who are taking this means of expression for granted. She feels that social media is no longer the means of revolution it used to be in the late 1990s; it is more about indulgence and excess today. It is no longer political, spreading the message of justice.

Women's communication style in social media has evolved; what has not changed is how they remain wary. Their circle of friends online is tightly controlled, with only the trusted confirmed. The type of language used depends on subjects. Women do not shy from details or very emotional language when recounting tales of abuse and sexual violence that are otherwise hidden from view. The pain and agony in these accounts are very real, and so is the solidarity that they arouse. This helps in the healing process.

Indonesian girls in schools have come under the tyranny of *adat ketimuran*, which has extended to covering up the body, although historically many traditional ethnic costumes exposed even more skin. Balinese, Papuan and Javanese women traditionally bared their heads, arms and even breasts. Today girls face the prospect of being labelled a whore should they disobey the rules, and videos of arrogant men terrorizing frightened girls are widely available on YouTube. Vulgar sexual intercourse among youth is also widespread on the Internet and became the flashpoint in what some call a struggle to purify the soul of the country. The infamous law against pornography was passed, resulting in rampant, unbridled censorship, the suppression of much talent and creativity, and the curbing of freedom of speech. What is it about women that men and women of deeply conservative religions find so threatening that it justifies killing off creativity? Men of orthodoxy and corrupted politicians will not be getting together any time soon to swap philosophies since it is considered as *haram* or forbidden, which is a pity as they might find that they actually have a lot in common. In their subjugation and abuse of women, they are brothers united.

4 - Narrative of Manipulation of a Piece of Cloth

Would you believe that even Catholic schoolgirls are still being forced to wear the head veil in several municipalities and districts in Indonesia? Since the move towards decentralization in 2000 and increased autonomy for the provinces, hundreds of legislation has sprung up, motivated by a rigid implementation of the Sharia. This includes obligatory wearing of the head veil for schoolgirls and female civil servants, as well as the prohibition and penalization of adultery, prostitution and alcohol consumption. Padang, Indramayu, Maros in South Sulawesi have also enforced the study and observance of the Quran as a condition for entering the civil service and for marriage, while Padang, Solok and Banten have imposed the head veil on women and girls in public spheres. In Padang, the mayor Fauzi Bahar has even passed a municipal bylaw requiring non-Muslim schoolgirls to wear a headscarf covering their hair, ears and neck, while schoolboys are

required to wear the *baju koko*, a long-sleeved shirt and long pants. There is no bylaw, however, against corruption.

Malinda Dee (left) suddenly wears the jilbab!
(Photo courtesy of Detiknews, 2011.)

When it comes to corruption, no lawmaker and none of the houses of parliament have ever given it much thought, even though it is a matter that affects the state much more than the covering or not of bodies. In 2005, a Catholic high school student, Nova Hingliot Simarmata, was forced to wear the head veil. As a non-Muslim, she felt humiliated and odd with the head veil, but was harassed when she took it off. Her father, who was in the same quandary, tried to ease her distress by urging her to think of it as just an accessory. All this affected her learning at school. Bonafisius Bakti Sirergar, a teacher in a Catholic school in West Sumatra, informed me that since 2005, many Muslim girls who refuse to wear the head veil have actually enrolled in Catholic schools, and that many girls attending the state school are there only because they could not afford to attend the Catholic schools or lacked the academic qualifications. In Catholic schools, girls are allowed to go bareheaded, yet the city mayor still insists that the Muslim schoolgirls in Catholic institutions abide by the jilbab rule. It seems that wherever Muslim girls live and study, they will not be let off the hook!

The fate of schoolgirls have also befallen female civil servants, who are asked to wear the head veil as a parameter of their professionalism—an unprecedented phenomenon in Indonesia. Via bylaws and city mayors' or governors' edicts, women have had their say over their own

bodies taken away. The jilbab is no guarantee of morality of course; on the contrary, it has served as a masquerade on many occasions. Nunun Nurbaeti, Malinda Dee and Angelina Sondakh, who were convicted of corruption, were canny enough to abide by the head veil rule in public or cover their heads each time the camera was pointed at them—a perfect example of the jilbab being used as a sign of repentance and meek obedience.

When it comes to corruption, women are no more honest than men, although they are usually not the masterminds. In most cases, they serve as the middleman. Although the increased presence of women in politics is seen as having a positive effect in the fight against corruption, the many cases of graft involving women in high office have damaged the reputation of women in public service. It is a backlash and a slap in the face for the young Indonesian women movement that, less than a decade after the 30 per cent quota was approved, many women politicians have been mired in cases of fraud. Even as NGOs and women's groups are working with the local government to address grave inequalities in the government budget process as well as to implement gender-sensitive budgeting, shocking evidence of bribery, fraud and graft have been uncovered. Millions of rupiah have been spent on toiletries, mobile phone bills, official cars and other dubious items while only hundreds are allocated for improving public nutrition or to support mothers and babies. It is patent that women's aspirations are absent in decision-making whether at the central, regional or village level. Only recently have women started engaging in the public budgetary process, raising issues such as health care, education, and access to natural resources, water and gas. It is heartening that since 2012, the percentage of women working on policy and budget allocation has nearly doubled.

More sinister is the rising trend of women implicated in corruption. Indonesia's recent score on the Transparency International's Corruption Perception Index is 2.8, on a scale of 0 (most corrupted) to 10 (least corrupted). This is a slide from its previous score of 3.0. Bribery is so common that it is becoming culturally acceptable. The decentralization of governance and the introduction of direct elections for local and regional officials have created another major loophole in the government. For instance, a new programme called *musrenbang* has been implemented at the local level, designed to incorporate local input in the

planning of the budget and improve on the opaque budgeting process at the central level. Aside from budget illiteracy, locals do not realize that they have every right to participate in the process and to watch over the transparency of allocation. Corruption is indeed rampant and rooted, and women in power are falling into the trap. In 2011 alone, there were some ten cases of women involved in bribery, money laundering, graft and other petty corruptions. Nor is corruption limited to the capital. Many other regions and *kabupaten* headed by female governors and *bupati* are similarly plagued. Ibu Rina Iriani, Bupati of Karanganyar has been charged with corruption, and so has Ratu Atut, Governor of Banten.

Many of the head-veiled players in the game of corruption are only receiving a small slice of the pie. Women tend to play the role of the loyal entourage in corruption cases, such as shielding the party leader in the case of Angeline Sondakh, or protecting the husband in the case of Nunun Nurbaeti. Women are good at lobbying and being the middleman, which is why those involved in corruption cases are not really the ones pulling the strings compared to their male counterparts. Their skills in communication and stylishness have also been deployed to climb the echelons and amass money. Women are relatively new to corruption but they are already learning how to steal the money bit by bit.

They are also new to gender budgeting, which they have only started to grapple with in the past five years. Feminists recognize that there is a need to study how budgets impact women and men differently due to differing needs. They argue that Gender-Responsive Budgeting (GRB) should be implemented alongside the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Both are highly contextual exercises requiring sensitive analysis and execution. GRB is a powerful empowerment tool and an efficacious use of public funds. There are signs of change everywhere. Budgets have been put aside for victims of domestic violence, building schools and health clinics, for reproductive health, etc.

Women wearing the jilbab and found to be involved in corruption have given new meaning to the jilbab and put it back in the limelight. The donning of the jilbab by Nunun and Malinda signified a hijacking of the veil. Once again, the jilbab is used as evidence of professionalism and piety. It is as if by hiding behind the veil, the criminals were apologizing

to society, seeking forgiveness from Allah, and hoping that this would exempt them from serving time in jail; as if the jilbab can restore their lives and reputations. The jilbab has entered the courtroom with a bang, seen on the heads of not only the prosecuted but also the female judge. One jilbab-wearer persecutes another. The jilbab is indeed multi-faceted.

The raising awareness of money has influenced the way activists and feminists condemn women involved in corruption. Even the head veil cannot shield them from public condemnation. There is much sexism in the media, all too apparent in the different ways in which public figures involved in corruption are treated, depending on their sex. There is more focus on Malinda Dee's jilbab and breast implants than on her misdeed. A look at some of the articles from the *Jakarta Post* confirms this: "These women are attractive, alluring and ultimately know how to use their charm to their advantage. But it doesn't stop there: they also know how to bribe and take a bribe." Or this: "The public was mesmerized when graft suspect Nunun Nurbaeti returned home for the first time since fleeing the country nearly two years ago, sporting a Louis Vuitton scarf to cover her face." And the following: "Malinda is accused of stealing $5 million from the bank's customers, money she used to finance an indulgent lifestyle that included the purchase of two Ferraris, a Hummer SUV and a Mercedes-Benz."

The discourse of the jilbab has re-emerged, cutting across the different political, social and economic classes. Those who wear it give it new meaning. In this narrative of manipulation of this piece of cloth, the latest twist appears to be the jilbab as a shield against misdeeds!

5 - Can *Waria* Wear the Jilbab? Under the Rites of Heteronormativity

"In corruption indictments women can take part as both performer and prey," a transgender in Pondok Pesantren Waria Yogyakarta commented when I interviewed her. She preferred to be called *Mbak*, the feminine form of address, rather than the masculine *Pak*, and to wear the head veil and white robe or *mukena* while performing *shalat* rather than the *sarung* and *baju koko* for men. Fatimah, a member of the boarding

house for transgenders, the only one in Indonesia that does not enforce any particular attire for its boarders, said she would like to be in tune with her religion, Islam, as a woman. The transgender community has been offended by the *ustadz* and *ulama* forcing them to wear men's clothes. When Islam is reduced to symbols, Fatimah feels that they are being discriminated against. Sexual minorities are vulnerable groups, and the battle of the sexes over the jilbab has touched them. As religiosity and spirituality gain in ascendance, the discourse of the jilbab has reached the *waria* (transgenders) as well, who have also succumbed to its spell, donning it enthusiastically with matching lipstick and accessories.

If the West has terms such as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and Intersexual (LGBT), Indonesia also has its own terms such as *carok*, *warok*, and the more pejorative *bencong*, *banci* or *gombreng*. Historically, Indonesia has welcomed sexual minorities. They were not ostracized but lived side by side with the community. Even in *pondok pesantren*, homosexuals or *mairil*, as they were called, were accepted. Intimacy, sensuality and sexuality were acknowledged and carried none of the stigma that it does in the West. Such traditions are on display in the *ludruk*, a form of traditional East Java drama, with characters such as Bissu, Serat Centhini, Warok-Gemblak (man/boy lover), Sepeten (gay), and Induk Jawi-Anak Jawi (in Minang tradition). It was the arrival of the Dutch that brought along Western notions of homophobia.

Islamic boarding house for *waria.* (Photo courtesy of Chika Noya, 2011.)

The 'Mother' of the Transgender Islamic Boarding House.
(Photo courtesy of Chika Noya, 2011.)

Tafsir and interpretation reform, with a more progressive and contextual system of understanding and the inclusion of more points of view, will improve the lives of those frowned upon by the religious mainstream. This is important if religion is not to repel sexual minorities. A more accepting environment will encourage the *waria* to embrace Islam. Whether it is part of the trend towards religiosity fanned by the media or merely an aberration, religion could offer a haven for this group of people who already face rejection by their own families, and to some degree, by the state, which does not acknowledge their status (jobs in the civil service and the army are out of bounds to them). Many workplaces are also not accepting of homosexuals unless they are able to conceal their sexual orientation. As such, they often end up in the service sector or as designers or artists.

Waria taking part in a Quran recital competition.
(Photo courtesy of Chika Noya, 2011.)

Their vibrant jilbab—on which they pin their hopes, trying to find acceptance and a serene life in whichever city they may drift to, under whichever identity they have taken on—often belies a grim existence. Many *waria* live in squalid slums across Indonesia and subject themselves to dangerous silicon breast, cheek and nose implants in a bid to transform themselves. The jilbab is adopted for the same reasons as the silicon—the pursuit of an idealized feminine beauty and the quest for an identity and acceptance. The juxtaposition of poverty, beauty and religiosity has produced a complex discourse on the definition of womanhood. "I have to earn a living. And no man would ever want to sleep with me if I have no breasts. So I went for implants, which, as I've just found out from you, are made of industrial-grade silicon. It hurts most of the time, these alien elements inside of me. Yet, somehow, I'm still proud of my silicon despite its risks and dangers," said Sonia stoically. Sonia is one of the *waria* I've come to know after four years of befriending them and learning more about their lives. I've heard my share of the heartbreaking stories of these men and women who eke out a living as sex workers, threatened by HIV/AIDS, cancer from silicon

implants and attacks by radical organizations such as FPI (Front Pembela Islam), which regularly harass sexual minorities and prevent them from expressing their identities, much less earn a living as a normal person.

In December 2011, men from FPI attacked members of Talitakum (an NGO for lesbians) and Gessang (an NGO for sexual minorities) during a futsal match. The radicals smashed their ball and motorcycles, punctured the tyres, and hit them in the face and head with rocks. A crowd gathered, including the police, but no-one stepped up to help. Anyone could have easily informed the press of the dramatic incidents, but no-one did so. The oppression of sexual minorities is present in all cultures, driven particularly by orthodoxy and carried out under the protection of the state. The oft-stated justification is that they are protecting honest, law-abiding, God-fearing citizens, but in reality, these marginalized men and women could well be our sons, daughters, brothers, sisters, aunts, mothers, uncles or fathers! So why do conservative religious cultures feel so threatened by the sexuality and empowerment of homosexuals? What would happen if the *waria* were free to choose their sexual orientation and express themselves? Would a free and active sexual minority group bring down a society or dramatically strengthen it?

The religious right argues that society would be led astray. For them the obvious solution is to beat these men and women down and lock them away, converting them to who they *should* be. Those with penises are called men and should not be allowed to wear the jilbab. Thus *waria* are attacked in the streets for being prostitutes and rejected from formal office jobs unless they are dressed as men. They are browbeaten into conforming to norms as men.

It is no wonder that sexual minorities hope to find sanctuary in a piece of cloth. The jilbab represents an escape from families and communities that have cast them out, from the plight of poverty and rejection by the formal economic sectors. The accommodation of ultra-orthodox groups since the fall of Soeharto is a worrisome trend in Indonesian politics. As these groups occupy more formal positions in the government, they are in the position to impose beliefs on society. Recently, ultra-orthodox elements, labelled "thugs" by the Indonesian media, have prevented sexual minority groups from holding fashion

shows—events that are used to take place with no impediments at all! Fear of the sexuality of minority groups often takes Indonesia from control to savagery, with a violent collision between the imperative to repress and the cultural power of shame that appeared only after the arrival of the Dutch. The appearance of the term "homosexual" in Indonesian's discourse of sexuality carries homophobic associations that are actually alien to traditional Indonesian culture.

Another argument holds that a combination of religious belief and a culture of gender normativity causes deep sexual anxiety among Indonesian religious believers. They formally reject sexual minorities but informally accept them within the community. They are against choice and ambiguity—one is either male or female according to what is indicated on one's identity card—and believe that if sexual minorities are not allowed to express their sexual orientation, there will be no comparisons and what they call 'sexual identity shopping'. Sexual minorities are also seen as bringing shame to families, as being corrosive, manipulative and corrupting. Heteronormativity cleanses through spectacularly violent coercion—the kind that not only delivers punishment but also causes enduring psychological damage to boys and girls trapped in wrong bodies.

The *waria* cannot turn to a religion in which repression is alive and given to ultra-right interpretation. Against a backdrop of rapid socio-economic change and modernization, conservatism is on the rise and sharp curbs on freedom of expression of sexual orientation, association and religion have been imposed. Religious militias, paramilitary groups and the state also clamp down on homosexual groups, and the government, via Tifatul Sembiring (from the PKS Party), censors the Internet and maintains highly repressive policies towards homosexuality (Ramage, 1996).

It cannot be denied that the situation of human rights in Indonesia has improved significantly; however, homosexuality is still used as a unifying factor and scapegoat by the religious community. In fact, it has found a new line of attack—converting homosexuals and making them redeem for their sins (*tobat*) is now considered a religious accomplishment! Thugs have swooped down on sex workers, forcing them to repent and ask for God's mercy. Even the government has got into the act in East Java, closing down the notorious Dolly red-light district in 2011. Dolly

had been the home of as many as 3,000 commercial sex workers and 350 pimps, including *waria* from Surabaya, Sidoarjo, Malang, Blitar, Mojokerto, Lamongan, Jember, Jombang, Pati, Jepara, and as far as Sumbawa. There are approximately 7,000 PSK (Pekerja Seks Komersial/ Commercial Sexual Workers) and over 1,000 pimps in East Java. The MUI (Indonesian Council of Ulema) sent *dakwah* (preachers) there and pressured East Java governor Soekarwo to force the sex workers into repentance and to undergo training to become food vendors, tailors or salon owners. The government sent the sex workers home and many pimps were indicted under the law of human trafficking. The ulema were pleased to see many 'repentant' workers adopting the jilbab. The whitewashing capacity of the jilbab has once again been put to use.

"Not men, not the state, women should decide their fate. Our bodies are our basic right." This chant was one familiar to feminists rallying on the street and has been used effectively in speaking out against Governor Fauzi Bowo (popularly known as Foke), when he blamed mini-skirts for rape cases in Angkot in 2011. Today this chant takes on new relevance when it comes to the expression of sexual orientation. The cost of wearing the jilbab for the *waria* has escalated as his/her life could even be at stake.

Chapter 4

Cacophony of Sensuality and the Changing Meaning of Sexuality

1 - Changing Notions of Sensuality

Hijab fashion shows have often been held in big cities in Indonesia in the last five years. This is the manifestation of high-end fashion embedded into the discourse of the veil in a context of a battle of economic imperatives. Formerly, the jilbab trade was dominated by Muslims but today it is the merchants of Tionghoa ethnicity who lead the market as vendors and distributors. Expensive, deluxe jilbab have been created to appeal to the sophisticated and discerning consumer. Not just a large selection of jilbab made from the finest fabrics but also sets of prayer shawls, *hijab amira* for children, caps and pins, and for women, long skirts, trendy flared trousers, harem pants, long tunics, dresses, sweaters etc., are available in markets, boutiques and online.

Young Muslimah (Muslim women) who are avid users of social media, especially Twitter and Facebook, now feel inadequate without this high-end Islamic fashion item. They pair Western and Korean fashion with the jilbab, in a cacophony of hybrid and conflicting fashion. At the same time, skinny jeans have been banned in many universities and schools, and girls have taken to social media to express themselves. Most of them are 15–30 years old, from urban middle-class families and have little experience of activism. They insist that what they are doing is apolitical, that they are united only by repression. “We are not against the law prohibiting girls from wearing skintight attire; it’s just irrational

hating jeans in such a way," explained Danty Sofie Karin. These girls have been criticized by teachers for being too sexy and sensual. Sensuality and sexuality have been stamped upon but can never be completely denied, and debates rage on between those who deny their own curves and those who accept nature's gift. There are those who hate their bodies and allow the community and the holy text to decide its fate, and then there are those who love their bodies and want to decide for themselves.

Just like the rainforest and the ozone layer, girls' hair has been disappearing from sight in most Islamic schools and universities. Girls' hair, which was still visible in the 1980s, must be hidden from the public gaze. It is clear to all that things have changed. The disappearance of women's hair says much about womanhood, the state of self and love, and the relation of body and soul. A woman's hair is an intrinsic part of her body. Whether it is set free or concealed under a piece of cloth sends a message about a woman's relation to her body—whether she loves or rejects it. There are myriad variations of such 'body construction' and self-definition. The informal law on girls' dressing has morphed into the removal of hair. To go unveiled is to ruin one's reputation as hair has come to symbolize intimacy, sensuality and sin. Hairlessness and the jilbab mark the divide between girlhood and womanhood, but it always distinguishes the demonic from the angelic. The bareheaded are closer to the demonic, flaunting sensuality and intimacy in a cheap way, while femininity is now located in the observance of the veil. The image of the fashionable jilbab with nary a display of hair also shapes the sexual imagination of legions of young men. The jilbab is taken as a sign of safety—a veiled female does not engage in extra-marital sexual relationships. Thus, the veil has, perversely, come to define erotic desirability.

Sensual poses have become embedded into the jilbab. The female teen jilbab fetish has gone mainstream. The jilbab might not be feminist but it can be feminine. This is reminiscent of women's fascination with cosmetics and luxurious branded bags and shoes. Magazines for young women such as *Annida* or other secular long-existing magazines frequently feature jilbab fashion shows, a perpetual reminder that if you are Muslimah, you are defined by the jilbab. Never during the 1990s did the question, "You are a Muslim woman right? Why don't you wear the jilbab?" ever arise.

Photo courtesy
of @ayulittleone.blogsome.com

Photo courtesy
of www.luluelhasbu.blogspot.com

The high-end jilbab has also come to signal sexual maturity and availability, not unlike how lip gloss is used to signal a girls' kissability, except the jilbab offers a sexual fantasy that is legitimate and halal. Throughout history, women's legs, hair and curves have been regarded as erotic and taboo. The same is now happening with hair. Even women who are about to deliver babies insist on wearing the head veil! "Everybody is going to be in that room," one expectant mother explained to me. "I don't want them to see my hair." Private space has become public space. Because women can now exercise the right to wear the jilbab, once veiled, she expects to be acknowledged as dignified and demands of her community a reciprocal respect. In a society that has hidden all female hair from sight, such as in Aceh province, it is no wonder that even the smell of a woman's hair has ceased to be a common experience. Hairlessness, like wearing the jilbab, advertises that a Muslimah has been purified for male and religious favour.

On the other hand, it marks a disdain for nature and the female body—its form, smell and very nature. Beneath a women's desire to look

'religious' lies the implication that her natural body is 'dirty'. In wanting to be an instrument of religious chastity, the fact that the female body is built for birth and reproduction has been overlooked. There is a deep irony here: Muslimah are pursuing sexual pleasures that were made possible by a feminism that also asserted the beauty of the feminine body. Sex is no longer dirty, but hair and skin are. It is a discourse of gaze. When the public gaze is prohibited, what can women do to celebrate their bodies if not high-end make-up and fashion items? Websites specializing in the sale of Eastern and Islamic fashion have mushroomed since 2005. These advertise a new collection of jilbab for every season, cotton being de rigueur for tropical Indonesia. Elegant caftans and Indian-style women's apparel are also available.

The Muslim factor has extended beyond the fashion industry. Books on initiation to Islam are doing brisk sales, as are DVDs and multimedia materials for children and women, covering prayers, Islamic educational games, learning Arabic, etc. One can go full tilt with Moroccan slippers that have actually become essential clothing for children, who also have their jilbab, hijab, *kamis* and pants. Widely available too are beautifully crafted Moroccan decorative items such as sconces, wrought iron lanterns and luminaries, and mirrors, as well as pens and bookmarks. There are also health care and natural products such as Argan oil, prickly pear, black soap, Aleppo soap and the indulgent *kassa* horsehair glove. The immersion is total.

I have been surveying Muslimah student eroticism for several years now and one thing is clear: young women who don't love and don't feel loved tend not to wear make-up. For them the jilbab constitutes a gateway to academic success and a holy path to Allah. Even though it means capitulation to fashion, the jilbab is a portal to fuller affection. It is a mark of female sexual availability to men on par with rites of submission for 'secular' women. Just as women are achieving academic predominance and breaking into field after field as the economic order increasingly seeks the verbal, social and emotional skills they have to offer, the terms of trade are turning against them in their own bodily expressions. Educated Muslim women must increasingly submit to the sexual demands of a shrinking pool of suitable men. And ironically for women, despite all their progress in the classroom and boardroom, it is increasingly only their bodies that set them apart. The religious look is

feminine. It is the accepted code for pretty, like the smooth cheeks on their faces. The religious body pushes aside the sensual function of the body—corporeal denial to be precise. The disappearance of femaleness, of skin and of hair is a hot issue in the changing notions of sensuality and sexuality in contemporary Indonesia.

2 - Sexuality and Women's Skin

There are women who expose their neck but cover their hair, or reveal their arms and legs but hide their hair, attesting to the dissonance and contradictions evident in the universe of the jilbab. Even commercial sex workers wear the jilbab—a practice that is common in the Middle East where the jilbab originated, but not in Indonesia where it is still considered sacred. Pressure and enforcement have made women insert their own meaning into the jilbab.

Girls' helplessness and confusion in the face of all these contradictory messages should be heeded—they are the new generation and legitimate voices of progressive forces that will define the future of Indonesian Islam. Enthusiasm among girls for social media in Indonesia has overshadowed their apprehension of Islam. Many Indonesian artistes, while on pilgrimage to Mecca, have their outfits faithfully documented and broadcast by TV, thus unintentionally becoming models of Indonesian Islamic fashion. Jetti R. Hadi, editor-in-chief of *NooR*, a magazine specializing in Muslim fashion, explained that Indonesian Islamic fashion, with its sophisticated and up-to-date look, has attracted many women in the Middle East, especially in Mecca and Medina. They comment that Indonesian women manage to be attractive and pious at the same time; this is something they cannot find at home since creativity is so restricted. Indonesia has been called the Mecca of Islamic fashion, with Pasar Klewer, Solo and Central Java being the driving forces. According to Jetti, Muslimah apparel and accessories constitute 20 per cent of the Indonesian fashion industry, worth approximately USD 1.7 trillion in 2008 alone. While the Middle Eastern fashion industry is dominated by Morocco and Turkey, Indonesian Muslimah fashion styles are influenced by traditional Javanese batik and *kain ikat*. With

their exuberant motifs of flora and fauna, intimacy and sensuality manage to find their way back into Islamic fashion.

The scary image of Islam is being attenuated by this vibrant Islamic fashion, displacing the narrative of suicide bombs and deaths. The growing market of Islamic fashion has even touched mainstream fashion designers who had never designed Muslim wear previously, for example, Itang Yunasz, Ghea Panggabean and Sebastian Gunawan. From tightfitting jilbab to loose ones covering the chest, diverse concepts crop up every year with celebrities setting the trend. The jilbab goes down well because one can abide by the law and be fashionable at the same time! A rigorous promotion of Bandung-based Up2date and Solo-based Bilqis have taken two of Indonesia's most popular brands overseas, gaining a following in Southeast Asian countries like Singapore, Malaysia, Brunei and Thailand, where Muslims reside. Bilqis sells mainly elegant batik pieces from Solo while Up2date offers a mishmash of Parisian and Korean styles.

Supermarkets such as Carrefour, big businesses, banks, insurance offices and department stores have discovered that being Muslim-friendly is good for business. The case of a female staff of BCA (Bank Central Asia) who was rejected because of her veil and who tried to expose what she claimed was the Islamophobia of the bank is notorious. Now all banks, for example, BNI Syariah Bank, BPD Syariah Bank and Mandiri Syariah Bank, are competing to establish Bank Syariah, which has brought in trillions of dollars. Not only is Muslim apparel now permitted in banks, the jilbab is even a must for all female staff at Bank Syariah—something unthinkable in the 1990s. The corporate world never used to be Muslim-friendly, but attitudes have changed dramatically. Where previously presenters were prohibited from wearing the jilbab, some 90 per cent of national television now bans discrimination on the basis of the jilbab, with only one TV station, Metro TV, bucking the trend. The Commission of Human Rights has urged workplaces to accept jilbab-wearers unconditionally. Jilbab-wearers who faced difficulties in finding jobs during the Soeharto era have seen the tides turned. Women labourers in the textile industries, for example, are now required to cover their hair.

Jobs in banks and the top positions in government service are filled by jilbab-wearers. The industry has accepted them on the basis of their

professionalism. Department stores and malls compete with each other to produce the most imaginative Muslim-friendly policies. What has caused this corporate revolution? We can put it down to sweeping changes in attitudes that have reduced the liabilities and raised the rewards of being Muslim-friendly. A generation ago, during the New Order Era, creating a Muslim-friendly workplace might have upset the regime; now it probably won't. On the contrary, failing to treat jilbab-wearers equally is likely to drive them elsewhere. Since they make up perhaps 80 per cent of the national talent pool, bigotry makes a firm less competitive.

The Islamic revolution in the workplace is remarkable. In most places, companies are more liberal than governments. In the coming years, the revolution is likely to gather pace. Younger businessmen are far more relaxed about the jilbab than their parents were. Indeed, many of them, whether Muslim or Tionghoa or Christian, would feel uncomfortable if the jilbab-wearer were treated indecently. Companies vying to recruit employees bear this in mind. The mindset that the jilbab is connected to bigotry has changed and the jilbab-wearer is judged on her potential. The jilbab-wearer has also 'come out of the closet' and now pursues a career just as ardently as her non-jilbab wearing counterpart since the veil is no longer synonymous with domesticity. Paradoxically the show of skin among jilbab-wearers is scandalous. The more women opt for Muslim wear, the more they find ways to contravene the iron law of covering-up: more skin is shown in offices, bare feet are exposed instead of hiding them in stockings, the official outfit is donned but in a body-clinging design that shows off curves.

The film and entertainment industry has not been spared either. Artistes faithful to the jilbab such as Inneke Koesherawati, Aminah Cendrawasih, Nani Wijaya, Desy Ratnasari are part of an increasing number who crowd Indonesian screens. The Islamic revolution is far from over. Nearly half of national film production is embedded with Islamic themes, for example, films such as Sang Pencerah, Ayat-Ayat Cinta and Mata Tertutup, with established director Hanung Bramantya leading the game. The censorship of sexuality and intimacy in Islam-branded movies has given rise to a particular genre of films that, incredibly enough, tops the box office. Fashion designers serving the film industry design clothes that not only cover the body but are also

artistic; it is a tricky business to provide conservativeness and sensuality at the same time. Sensuality thus has to be represented by the quietness and gentleness of the artistes wearing the jilbab, and cannot rely merely on the exposure of skin. Indonesia has become a hub of Islamic film production that not only sells religiosity but also sensuality with a dash of conservativeness.

With images of head-veiled girls flooding social media, and the changing attitude towards private life as public display, there is mounting skepticism towards the jilbab—formerly acknowledged as a religious cachet, it is turning into a meaningless piece of cloth that any woman can take on and off. The act of putting it on when entering schools and universities, and taking it off just as soon upon exiting, is a political act, a way to for girls to exercise power that has been taken away from them in the classroom. Girls have come together to form cliques to protect each other and devise strategies to break the religious stronghold. Such cliques have been boosted with the emergence of many Islamic-based militant organizations targeting and recruiting students.

Until now, women have been required to observe the jilbab only when entering mosques and during religious congregations. Feminists have spoken out against the extension of the rule. "Everywhere we are asked to observe Jilbab. This is not imposed on men," charged Lies Marcoes Natsir, a leading feminist based in Jakarta (Bush, 2002; Candraningrum, 2008). Proponents of the jilbab are wary that the movement rejecting the jilbab is really aimed at secularizing the nation. "We are not stupid; we know that the jilbab is now the top political prop. Many politicians and civil servants are now observing the jilbab. We will be vigilant against the misuse of the jilbab for non-religious objectives. We do not want our girls to be corrupted by the West," they warned.

Fellow pro-jilbab movements such as Aisyiyah and Fatayat Nadhdlatul Ulama have pledged to monitor television advertising using veiled women. An example of such gratuitous use of the jilbab is a shampoo advertisement that, ironically, does not even show hair. Kelompok Pengajian Ibu-Ibu (Religious Congregation by Mothers) notes the persistence of references to the jilbab without justification and has asked parents and schools to eliminate as much as possible such images.

Over the past few decades, as more and more women have embraced the jilbab, the authorities, in the name of the Muslim family,

have waged war against pornography and sex. Abortion is strictly prohibited and crackdowns are common, with the police and media carrying out raids to catch illicit lovers in motels or hotels, something unheard of in contemporary Western countries (Lewis, 2002). Abandonment of contraception and condoms is becoming widespread among militant religious groups such as LDII (Lembaga Dakwah Islam Indonesia) and mosque officials promote natural family planning: women are advised to track their cycle and abstain from sex on all but their least fertile days. They cast artificial contraception as an affront to God's will, a gateway to abortion and a threat to public health. In their minds, condoms are abortifacients and family-planning campaigners are propagandists of a culture of death.

This type of thinking has led several *ulama* and *ustadz* to try to curb the use of modern contraception. Many PKS politicians, for example, Yoyoh Kusroh, have a minimum of seven children (Ramage, 1996). This has also led to a rise in maternal mortality, unwanted pregnancies and injuries caused by clandestine abortions. It is obvious that a conservative approach to reproductive rights can and has hurt women. Behind the Manichaean religious rhetoric espoused by reactionary Muslims hides plain truths about public health: access to contraception decreases maternal mortality and lowers the number of abortions. The birth control programme has become a vicious battlefield—something that never happened during the Soeharto era (Mujani, 2003). A comprehensive study by the World Health Organization confirmed that abortion rates in countries that prohibit or restrict legal abortion are no different from abortion rates in countries with liberal abortion laws; the only reliable way to reduce abortion is through the provision of affordable, accessible contraception. In addition, there has been a surge in births outside marriage, the greatest rise being among poor girls around the age of 18 with some high-school education. More than quarter of births to women under 30 years of age now occur outside of marriage. Is this really a time to try to limit contraception? What about the reckoning of human lives? The reckoning of human lives—and saving them too!

The jilbab is powerless before the rising mortality of mothers during childbirth and the numbers of girls being sold into prostitution, even jilbab-wearing ones! According to a 2012 report by UNICEF, 100,000 children (predominantly girls) and women are trafficked in Indonesia

every year. The United Nations defines child trafficking as the recruitment, transportation or receipt of children with the purpose of exploiting them. Poverty, lack of economic opportunities, low social status, high demand for cheap labour and commercial sex, weak law enforcement, conflict and discrimination are the prime reasons for child trafficking. Apart from prostitution, girls are sold for as little as Rp 100,000.00 into servitude in private homes, as street beggars and factory workers. The trafficking of girls, besides drugs and guns, is a lucrative business in tourism hubs such as Bali, Batam and Jakarta, pandering to tourists from countries governed by stricter laws. Girls from poor rural areas are being sold in these places and other big cities in Indonesia such as Surabaya, Medan, Makassar and Semarang.

The last decade has seen some spectacular incidents involving women: a family in Jakarta was convicted for killing four female relatives, a woman was allegedly strangled by her husband in Kediri, and a high-profile charity decided to withdraw funds for cervix cancer screening. There are two striking aspects about these events and news coverage about them. Firstly, in all these cases, different as they may be, women were being punished for being women. The Jakarta killings were allegedly motivated by the girls' dating and wearing of girly clothes. The woman in Kediri was supposedly killed because she was having an affair with her neighbour. And it is hard to think of a gesture that more clearly penalizes women for just being women than defunding screenings for cervix cancer. The second remarkable aspect about these events is that many people expressed outrage, making me feel tentatively optimistic about the future for women's rights.

Despite the fact that many women are the sole or main providers for their families, and despite women's advances as middle managers, women continue to be under-represented in top leadership roles. This can be attributed in part to assumptions about women's 'nature'—less assertive than men, and lacking in vision and strength. It is telling that many job advertisements add the line that qualified women are encouraged to apply: men, this seems to imply, are qualified just by being male. What makes the situation worse are the punitive laws related to women's sexuality.

Societies have viewed and regulated women's sexuality differently since time immemorial. Semitic religions, Christianity or Islam, expect

women to be chaste and demure; punished or ridiculed are those who were not (Hitti, 1940; Epstein, 1967; Brenner, 1996; Hasyim, 2006). Today, laws punishing women for having sex with the wrong persons at the wrong time for the wrong reasons persist in almost all countries in the world, ranging from the criminalization of female adultery and abortion, to laws that punish drug use during pregnancy and social services provisions that penalize poor unmarried women with more than one child. At the basis of all of these laws is one main notion: women should not really want to have sex. As long as women are undervalued, expected to bear the entire price of reproduction, and at the same time required to be outwardly asexual, the world will see more women and girls killed or maimed and their health needs neglected. Feminists continue to fight for women, Indonesia being one of their top concerns with its rife trafficking of children. Regions that thrive on tourism such as Bali, Batam and Jakarta being the hotspots of child exploitation. Child trafficking is one of humanity's most terrible crimes and Islam slumbers on, impervious to this blight.

3 - Intimate Photos and Adulation of Self

One question I wanted to answer in the undertaking of my research was "What does sexuality look like to young Muslim women wearing the head veil?" In order to find out, I did some virtual travelling through photos displayed on Facebook and Twitter and conducted interviews. Women's perception of sexuality is moulded by messages sent by society, school, the media and, most importantly, family. Sex and reproductive health education has been recognized to be of prime importance, yet remains taboo in Indonesia. Instead, a patriarchal family ethos based on clearly segregated male and female roles, underlined by conservative attitudes towards gender sexuality and reinforced through religious education, dominates.

The masjid yields great influence on the perception of sexuality. In Indonesia, Islam as the national religion is one of the core ingredients of ethno-national identity. It is a marker and vehicle of social mobilization. The Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono regime has strengthened the role of the

masjid in society. The rise of religiosity among Indonesians since 2000 has led to the gentrification and localization of norms and mores from the community into the mosques. The influence of the masjid as the ultimate moral authority has strengthened conservative viewpoints and policy initiatives on abortion, sex education, homosexuality, gender roles, woman leadership and violence against women. With the installation of a more liberal media at the same time as the rise of conservatism, tolerance of sexual freedom is still in its infancy, thus the adulation of the self through social media as the sole means of expression.

What does this mean for young women in Indonesia? Is the masjid the lens through which they view sexuality? Or are they nonetheless affected by the global trend of freedom on sexuality? I have come to conclude there is no one notion of sexuality. The hyper-sexualization of the media is influential in shaping mentalities for both male and female adolescents in Muslim families in Indonesia; yet the lack of sexual education has resulted in an incomplete understanding of sexual behavior, underdeveloped communication skills and fragmented knowledge on sexual issues. This means greater exposure to abortion, risky sexual behavior, sexual infectious diseases, as well as unrealistic expectations and distorted views of one's own sexuality and of sexuality itself—all of which is increasingly articulated through social media by young men and women.

Marriage is a primordial consideration for Indonesian youth and is inseparable from issues of sexuality—this is something that Western scientists should take into account. Indonesian youths are expected to finish high school or university and then get married. On the other hand, Indonesia is no different when it comes to how these same youths are bombarded by hyper-sexualized images in the media. Female sexuality is defined and reproduced to sell and manipulate viewers. It is also being explored within the private-public realm of Facebook and Twitter. Who am I? How is my body perceived? How powerful is the act of seeing, or of being seen? How naked am I? Am I going beyond the boundaries, or am I staying within the normative mores? Questions such as these cross every girl's mind when she displays her photos!

Girls who avidly post their photos seem to have all the control yet latent overarching norms are ever present, curtailing their self-expression. Masculine and feminine archetypes of sexuality and intimacy are also

very much intact. The Kantian golden rule of sexual segregation is very much present. Sexual identity is still being constructed by a socially defined gender role. So the male archetype remains that of a physical creature, a hunter, all muscles and mass. It is translucent, vibrant and tangible, with no real magic or mystery. Women, on the other hand, are depicted as contemplative and mysterious creatures. Feminine sexuality should be invisible and timid; at the same time, hyper-sexualized images of the female flood the media in an unprecedented way. Too much exposure, too much money, too much skin, too much fashion—all this has contributed to the cultural relocation of the meaning of sexuality.

4 - Lust and Angst

Conservatives see the restriction of bodily expressions and the limitation of sex education as ways to bolster Indonesian values. One consequence of this is that marriage is becoming a ticket to sexuality—the less educated and the less well-off are more likely than others to get married, and at a younger age. Meanwhile, divorce rates for much of the rest of the population have increased in the past five years, nearly doubling. From the perspective of the conservatives, the volatility of sexuality is related with that of marriage; however, pushing young people who are not ready into marriage is not the solution. Youth sexuality is not getting enough play in the debates on school curriculum. It remains a taboo and is constantly denied. Reopening the debate on sexuality is not possible, much less in schools.

Girls' bodies are seen as moral corruption incarnate, likely to flame the revolution of free sex and cause the downfall of Indonesian values. In order to maintain these so-called values, it is girls' sexuality rather than boys' that must be curbed: in cases of rape, girls are the ones investigated and scrutinized and judged to be guilty of *zina* (illegal sexual intercourse)! We are indeed in a woeful state. While grassroots feminist democracy campaigners point fingers at government corruption as the cause of the misery among the poor, the poor put the blame on women, leading to the sexual repression of women.

Interlacing religion and sexuality will always result in the locked terminology of taboo. As small children, girls discover the boundaries

between their bodies and the sacredness of religion, but they are unable to glean any information from schools. Sexual intercourse or abortions are whispered about. They are alluded to in roundabout metaphors. Girls are silenced. They cannot speak about their abortion, divorce, slavery or fight for freedom. Sacred images of womanhood are widely disseminated to promote a proper dress code that allows for no engagement, much less criticism. It is only online that girls can have a conversation and share their perspectives. Likewise, secret erotic oases are created so that amorous couples can steal a few kisses—a hidden little dead-end street in Solo, the Balapan railway station, cars parked at sunset. Some of the girls don the jilbab, but that does not prevent them from wearing skin-tight, long-sleeved tops and heavy make-up with bright cherry-red lipstick. The boys are like boys everywhere, placing their arms around their girlfriends' shoulders and even sliding their hands into their blouses. Much lust is on display, but much angst as well, for all this is considered subversive. Condoms thrown on the beach must be burnt or the illicit lovers will be condemned as depraved sinners if caught. Jepara coast is the scene of such drama every morning. Many resort to the wearing fake wedding rings. As for homosexuality, it is, needless to say, verboten. Yet homosexuals are tolerated. Stoning and lashing were introduced in 2010 but were massively rejected. Nonetheless, much debate continues on the legislative level, and a law on stoning gays or lesbians to death might be possible in the future.

Lust and passion are being enacted with prudence and discretion. That is the sole option when they are seen as endangering pillars of religious beliefs. Prohibitions have been successful in suppressing everyday sexuality, and religious censors in Aceh are desperately trying to put a stop to what they call corrupted morality, yet little is being done to curb corruption. Corruption is halal! Any failures of the government are conveniently overlooked while feminism is to be countered. If caught by the hated Sharia police, illicit sexual intercourse is punishable by a jail term, and the couple is forced to get married within a few months. It is sexually frustrating and youths are being denied their own bodies by politicians' extreme bullying. Many youths suffer from broken hearts, or else frigidity. Even sitting next to a member of the opposite sex has become impossible with the separation of sexes in classes!

On the other hand, tourists from the Middle East living for a couple of months in Indonesia can enjoy *nikah sirri*, a temporary, short-term marriage for pleasure. Everyone knows that it is sexual sinning hiding behind a halal label and feminists have spoken up boldly against it, alerting the public to the fate of these temporary wives. Sadly, anything of Arab origins, even when it is related to sexuality, is permitted while anything that reeks of the West is disallowed, such as Valentine's Day. Though Allah has been described in the Quran as *al Wadud* (the Loving) in Surah Al Buruf, Muslim youth are forbidden from celebrating this so-called pagan satanic festivity. The conservatives have lumped it with illicit lovers and fornication. All that is Western is Christian, and that is reason enough to ban it. As such, this innocent and harmless celebration is regarded as dangerous, satanic and harmful to youth morality.

Lust and angst are two sides of the same coin. The body that is used in performing *shalat* is also used in sexual intercourse. It is a battlefield where pleasure and purification coexist, except pleasure is prohibited and to be avoided, which is why orgasms are taboo and women's bodies are to be covered up, lest they tempt males and endanger the faith. Girls are taught to decrease their attractiveness as well as sexual desire, with the onus placed on women, not men, to minimize the libido. This corporeal hatred turns to mental angst among girls.

"I cover my hair, yes, but I also show my curves. I have to at least be fashionable," a student of Universitas Paramadina told me in an interview. Karina has a boyfriend and indulges in clandestine kisses, stopping short only of sexual intercourse. Thus she does not consider herself a sinner. This is the way she bends religious values and accommodates modernity at her own discretion. Karina and her boyfriend create their own definitions of sin and of hell, a creative hybrid of attitudes towards lust, intimacy and sexuality—not necessarily with the acknowledgement and consent of their parents or their teachers! This is how youth in Indonesia deal with love and lust under religious dogma. Karina confidently reveals her tabooed femaleness while still embracing Islam passionately, religiously performing *shalat* five times a day.

Representations and expressions of the body, of lust and love, in social media is a form of protest. The Internet has been used to resist the power structure and explore the individual's place in popular culture

and in the observance of Islam. By violating traditional taboos on sexuality, lust, cross-dressing, intimacy and adulation of the self, women's voices often empower the tabooed body while redefining family structure and values. Repression is still leading the way, but peel away the outermost layers and you will find rich expressions of lust and love being voiced without fear. Apprehension and trepidation are tangible on the faces of girls in schools, but this vanishes once online. Euphemisms are the linguistic devices that women employ to express lust and love, and angst is a fertile ground for generating euphemisms and metaphors of intimacy and sexuality.

Women's bodies have been reproduced in art and popular culture and is very vulnerable to stigma—lines indicate aging, lumps of fat are seen as unattractive, even the fairness of skin and the shape of the nose are scrutinized. Debunking stigma and demystifying physical beauty, instead of promoting airbrushed images of women on billboards, is a step towards honest discussion of femaleness.

The stigma attached to lust and sexuality has indeed created suffering. Youths perceive it as torture, creating much angst. Society's double standards are especially punitive for women. They are sold and nullified as amoral, almost at the same time. Women's tales of woes—be it of marriage, divorce, abortion or plastic surgery—are tales of petrified, unhappy beings. How women negotiate the jilbab, interpret the body and access justice is not equal across the board. Women's bodies are being devalued, revived and reread as part of the religious memory. To speak of women's special responsibility, their duty and obligation to maintain a high standard of appearance, femininity, self-respect and pride, and yet oblige them, in the name of religion, to not reveal any skin and hair, signs of sexual availability, is pathetic.

Femaleness is a commodity that comes in for heavy stigmatization in the arena of religiosity. The stigma surrounding lust, attached solely to femaleness, has undermined the diverse experiences of women around the globe. Women shall define beauty based on their own horizon, one that is fair and equal. Love, lust, intimacy and sexuality are legitimate and are experienced by women—the bareheaded and the jilbab-donning alike. It should be a source of strength to fight for a religiosity that is not suffocating, petrifying or murderous.

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