Private Moralities in the Public Sphere: Democratization, Islam, and Gender in Indonesia

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ABSTRACT   Over the past two decades, Indonesia has been transformed socially and politically by two major movements: the Islamic movement and the democratization movement. One point of convergence between these two movements has been a strong concern with establishing moral ascendancy over the perceived immorality of the previous regime and with building a new moral order as the foundation of a democratic nation. In this article, I examine how issues of gender and sexuality have become key arenas in which battles over competing views of democratization as well as Islamic morality are waged. I argue that amid an increasingly politicized division between liberal and conservative Islam, the struggle to gain symbolic control over public morality, and to acquire the political power that accompanies it, has rested in part on ideological contests between Muslim liberals and conservatives over the shifting boundaries and meanings of *public* and *private* in Indonesian society. [*Islam, democratization, gender, Indonesia, morality*]

In recent decades, the Indonesian public sphere has been transformed by a confluence of religious, social, and political movements that initially emerged under the rule of a repressive regime. Two of these broad-based movements have undoubtedly brought about the most profound changes in Indonesia. The first of these, often referred to simply as "the Islamic movement" *(gerakan Islam),* has been marked by a dramatic growth of interest in the study and practice of forms of Islam that have been purified of local heterodoxy. Starting in the late 1970s and early 1980s on a relatively small scale, and stimulated by parallel movements occurring elsewhere in the Muslim world, the Indonesian Islamic movement expanded rapidly in the late 1980s and beyond. As a result, the influence of global Islam became increasingly visible in both public and private realms. This movement has had rippling effects in virtually all spheres of social and political life, as seen in changing modes of piety, ethical decorum, social interaction, and styles of dress; in the introduction of Islamic law into local and provincial legal codes; and in the rise of both religious extremism (see, e.g., Boellstorff 2004; Sidel 2006) and a mainstream Islamic consumer culture (Heryanto 2011; Hoesterey 2008; Jones 2010; Rudnyckyj 2009).

The second major form of transformative social action has been the movement to promote democracy and human rights in Indonesia. The contemporary democratization movement began cautiously in the later years of the authoritarian New Order regime under President Suharto (r. 1966–98) and picked up momentum during the Asian financial crisis of 1997–98, ultimately contributing to the fall of the regime in 1998 and to the advent of what became known as the Reformasi, a period of political reform. The ensuing years have seen a shift toward open elections in the political arena, deregulation and expansion of the mass media, far greater freedom of speech and protest, decentralization of government, and insistent calls for improved government transparency and accountability. Although corruption is still endemic and the postauthoritarian transition has not been smooth, there remains widespread support for the ideal of democracy and considerable effort to make it work in practice.

Given the divergent origins and objectives of these two movements along with their concurrent rise in Indonesia, how have they interacted with each other? In what ways has Islamization shaped the forms and goals of the democratization movement and vice versa? In this article, I am interested primarily in the intersecting moral discourses generated by these movements, particularly those discourses that focus on issues of gender and sexuality. Within both of these movements, I suggest, there has been a strong concern with establishing moral ascendancy over the perceived immorality of the previous regime and with building a new moral order as the foundation of the nation. In the contemporary political and religious climate in Indonesia—a nation that is nearly 90 percent Muslim—debates over what constitutes

"Islamic morality," and efforts to have such moral values instituted as basic principles of the nation, have played a significant role in the democratization process. I will argue that matters of gender and sexuality, and the female body itself, have become key battlegrounds on which contests over democratization as well as Islamic morality are waged, especially between conservative and liberal Muslims. I will further propose that the struggle to gain symbolic dominance over public morality has rested in part on disputes over the shifting boundaries and meanings of *public* and *private.*

Although liberal and conservative Muslims have often been at odds with each other in their interpretations of Islamic morality, both have used the recently acquired freedoms associated with democratization to advance their interests. Many Muslim liberals and conservatives agree that Islam and democracy can be productively conjoined to create a society that is truly moral—a stance that sets them apart from more militant Muslims, who have often shunned the democratic process (see, e.g., Collins 2004; Sidel 2006). Although questions of morality in Indonesia do not exclusively concern matters of gender and sexuality—political corruption, social injustice, and the systematic violation of human rights under the previous regime have also been prominently raised as problems—the fact that some of the most contentious, high-profile political and social issues since the fall of Suharto have broadly involved gender and sexuality suggests that such matters are not epiphenomenal to the dynamics of sociopolitical change in Indonesia but have been deeply enmeshed with the process of democratization itself.

It is worth exploring, then, how moral discourses of gender and sexuality have been used by both liberal and conservative Muslims to support differing visions of Indonesia's future as a just and democratic nation. I will trace the efforts of liberal Islamic groups back to the 1980s and early 1990s, when the expansion of religious and secular NGOs in Indonesia played a key part in building civil society and in fostering the prodemocracy movement that eventually led to the collapse of the Suharto dictatorship after more than three decades. During this period, a small number of organizations and individuals laid the groundwork for efforts to promote human rights, democracy, and social justice through modes of gender activism that have continued into the post-Suharto period. They did this by endorsing liberal views of gender and sexuality that indirectly challenged both the authoritarian regime and conservative Islamic groups. Since the fall of Suharto, gender activists have been more forthright in demanding improvements in women's rights along with other forms of human rights but have also had to contend with the burgeoning political and social power of conservative Islam.

In addition to showing how some liberal Muslims have made gender and sexuality a fundamental element of democratization, I will also consider how the fall of the autocratic regime and the resulting changes in the Indonesian political system and wider society have led to an upswing in conservative gender–morality politics. These effects have included wide-ranging efforts (1) to promote the adoption of Islamic law (Shari'a) and behavioral codes, particularly concerning women's dress and movement in public; (2) to place new restrictions on materials and actions broadly deemed "pornographic"; and (3) to stop the government's interference in family matters, such as polygamous marriage or some forms of domestic abuse, which many conservative Muslims believe should be governed by Islam, rather than by the state. Underlying these efforts is a belief that democratization should lead to a future in which the nation and its citizens can embrace time-honored Islamic values unimpeded by either the state or the hegemony of Western culture—a view that runs counter to a common Western assumption that democracy can only succeed in the Muslim world through the triumph of secular liberal values (Mahmood 2006).

CONTROLLING THE PUBLIC–PRIVATE DIVIDE

Recent studies of Muslim-majority societies and Muslim diasporas have shown the complex ways in which women's bodies, ethical comportment, and appearance in public space have served as the focal points for new forms of politics, struggles over national futures, and the reimagining of the public sphere (e.g., Deeb 2006; Göle 2002; Kanaaneh 2002; Mahmood 2005; Scott 2007). Nilüfer Göle, for example, suggests that as Islamic movements penetrate national public spheres, the meanings and borders of the secular public sphere are transformed through the introduction of new styles of language and dress, spatial practices, and bodily rituals associated with Islam (Göle 2002:173). She asserts that gender plays a crucial part in this transformative process, particularly in the iconic roles and performances of Muslim women. As she remarks, "In contrast with the formation of the public sphere in the West, characterized initially as a bourgeois sphere that excluded the working classes and women, in Muslim contexts of modernity, women function as a pivotal sign/site in the making and representing of the public sphere" (Göle 2002:184). Göle's point undoubtedly holds true for Indonesia, where women have borne much of the weight of publicly representing and implementing the lifestyles, rituals, and politics associated with Islamization as well as with nationalism, modernization, and globalization (Brenner 1999; Jones 2010; van Wichelen 2007).

Göle and other scholars working in countries like Turkey and France, where the principle of secularism looms large in national imaginaries, have focused in particular on the intense politics surrounding the headscarf. They have examined the controversial effects of women and girls in Islamic dress laying claim to public spaces that have hitherto been explicitly or implicitly marked as secular, such as schools, government offices, and parliament halls (Çinar 2008; Göle 2002; Scott 2007). In France, the banning of the Muslim headscarf in public schools in 2004 and the 2010 passage of a law prohibiting women from wearing the burqa or *niqab* (face-covering veil) in any public place shows the imagined danger of the veiled woman, who represents a symbolic threat to the principle of secular liberalism and who is made

emblematic of larger threats to the identity and integrity of the nation itself by her violation of the secular public sphere (Bowen 2007; Scott 2007).

Alev Çinar (2008) theorizes that the headscarf's figurative power lies in its subversion of conventional public–private boundaries. In closing off the female body from the public gaze, the headscarf inscribes the boundaries of the private on the body, thereby redefining the constitutive limits of the public and disrupting secular norms that establish boundaries of public and private. The ability to set or disrupt these boundaries, she proposes, confers political agency. This is why the state and other political actors in Turkey have been so concerned with what people wear as well as where and how they wear it (Çinar 2008:903).

Although Indonesia is quite different from Turkey or France as a political and cultural field, the larger relevance of these observations merits consideration. Here, I am less interested in debates over the headscarf per se (which have not been as emotionally or politically charged in Indonesia) than in the iconic roles of women and issues of gender, sexuality, and morality in struggles for control over the Indonesian public sphere and over the proper course that a democratic Indonesian nation should take. Rather than examining the split between secularism and Islamism, moreover, which is less politically fraught in Indonesia than in Turkey or France, I will analyze the schism between liberal and conservative Muslims—an increasingly salient and acrimonious divide—as they have contended to define the norms of both democracy and Islamic morality. Much like secularists and Islamists in Turkey, liberal and conservative Muslims have attempted to advance their causes by contesting the permeable, shifting boundaries and meanings that mark public and private spheres as well as by striving to set the moral standards that will be applied to both domains. I would agree here with Çinar and Göle that there is much at stake politically in the ability to define the boundaries and significance of the public and the private (see also Gal 2002; Gal and Kligman 2000). The power that comes from dominating the terms of debate over these matters is clearly at issue in post-Suharto Indonesia.

As Dale Eickelman and James Piscatori point out in their study of Muslim politics, "In the process of articulating symbolic politics, various forces seek to draw lines between public and private, government and civil society, obligatory and forbidden, moral and immoral. The drawing of boundaries is part of the political process" (1996:18). The relationship between public and private may be particularly loaded in the politics of Muslim-majority societies. Given the ever-shifting and contested nature of these boundaries, Eickelman and Piscatori add, it is inevitable that "various individuals and groups compete to represent the claims of Muslims" (1996:20) in such matters and to proclaim the right to control the interpretation of Islamic symbols as well as the institutions that sustain them (see 1996:5). In Indonesia, where the state for so many years treated both public and private spheres as the sites on which to build its own

corrupt power, the fall of Suharto opened up new avenues in which various factions, including liberal and conservative Muslims, could vie for moral authority over both domains and the political power that would accompany it.

There is a long history to political contests over issues regarding gender, morality, and Islam in Indonesia. Since the late colonial period, there have been recurring debates over women's rights in marriage, for example, often focusing partly or wholly on the contentious question of whether polygyny, which is legal with restrictions in Indonesia and often defended by Islamic organizations as a Muslim right, should be outlawed or permitted (Blackburn 2004; Nurmila 2009; Robinson 2009; van Doorn-Harder 2006; Wieringa 2002). These debates have been linked to larger political concerns such as early Indonesian nationalism (Blackburn 2004:123) and conflicts over whether Islamic law should be enforced by the Indonesian constitution and state. When the Suharto regime introduced a bill to regulate various aspects of marriage and divorce in 1973, which had long been demanded by secular women's organizations, riots broke out and Islamic groups protested stridently in response to certain proposed provisions, including one that would have abolished polygamy. The version of the law that was passed in 1974 was a negotiated compromise that removed the provisions most offensive to Islamic interests. It imposed restrictions on polygamy but did not prohibit it, and Muslim marriage and family law remained under the jurisdiction of Islamic courts (Blackburn 2004:131–132; O'Shaughnessy 2009:30; Sidel 2006:107).

The Suharto regime also relied heavily on ideologies of gender, family, and morality to promote particular views of national citizenship and development, to encourage social order and stability, and to reinforce the power of the regime over any competing forces, including those of religion or ethnic allegiance (see, e.g., Blackwood 1995; Boellstorff 2005; Brenner 1999; Dwyer 2000; Suryakusuma 1996). The regime used iconic figures of female citizenship—omnipresent images of devoted wives, self-sacrificing mothers, and dutiful participants in the state's family-planning program, for instance—to fortify its control of both public and private spheres and to blur the distinctions between them. The state portrayed itself as having the right to intervene in and manage the family just as it had the right to exercise its authority over public institutions.

Some critics of the regime, both during and after its reign, indirectly challenged its power by making the family, gender relations, and the female body sites of moral and political contestation. These included conservative and liberal Islamic activists, among others. Although a good deal of the literature on gender, sexuality, and nation has focused on how traditional images and restrictive ideologies of femininity and the control of women's sexuality are deployed toward conservative political ends (Mayer 2000; Yuval-Davis 1997), it is important to ask as well how liberal factions have used ideas about gender and sexuality to oppose forces that they perceive as repressive and to advance progressive causes

(cf. Dwyer 2000:28). In the following section, then, I turn to the topic of liberal Islamic gender activism in Indonesia to show how it has been linked to democratization and civil society during and after a dictatorial regime.

ISLAMIC GENDER ACTIVISM IN INDONESIA

In spite of the atmosphere of political repression under the Suharto regime, the 1980s and 1990s saw the steady growth of both NGOs and Islamic activism in Indonesia. Participation in secular as well as religious organizations offered Indonesian citizens a variety of choices for social action beyond the heavily scripted programs and organizations under state control. Although activists had to tread very carefully to avoid direct conflict with the government, these organizations nonetheless served as sites in which evolving opposition to the state could take shape and in which alternatives to the regime's developmentalist ideologies could be collectively envisioned. Some of the new NGOs were incubators for the democratization movement that burst onto the scene in 1997–98. Islamic activism also provided the ground from which to launch an oppositional discourse; participants ranged from ultraconservatives, who wished to see the full implementation of Shari'a in Indonesia, to liberal Muslim intellectuals and grassroots activists, who advocated far-reaching democratic political and social reforms (Brenner 1996; Hefner 2000). Although the state did not tolerate any apparent threats to its power and was quick to crack down harshly on anything that resembled political Islam, from the 1980s on the rising influence of the Islamic movement on the social and political scene was irreversible.

Some of the many NGOs that emerged during this period were dedicated partly or entirely to the fostering of women's rights and gender equality. By the mid-1990s, many organizations, including some Islamic ones, were instituting "gender training" to raise members' awareness about gender inequality and the need to improve women's positions in society. This trend was encouraged by Western agencies that provided funding to Indonesian NGOs; by Indonesia's participation in a series of international conferences dealing with women's issues hosted by the United Nations, such as the Beijing Conference of 1995; and by the incorporation of Indonesian activists and NGOs into the transnational feminist networks that were developing rapidly during this period.[1] Gender issues were increasingly linked to ideas about human rights and democratization more generally, and activists in liberal women's organizations maintained a dialogue with members of other NGOs that were concerned with social justice, political reform, pluralism, and human rights. More organizations were devoting their efforts to raising public awareness about problems like domestic abuse, sexual assault, and the exploitation of female workers—problems that they felt were being inadequately addressed, or even exacerbated, by the government. Although these problems are not necessarily religious in nature, many activists found that in the context of Indonesian society, where religion pervades almost any discussion of gender issues, morality, or family life, they could not gain adequate public attention and support by taking a purely secular approach to these matters.

Additionally, members of a young generation of liberal Muslim activists were insisting on the need to address women's problems and social injustice more generally within an Islamic framework. Convinced that Islam is a religion based on justice, and that the Qur'an affirms the equality of all believers, male or female, in the eyes of God, a relatively small but dedicated group of activists worked to overcome what they saw as the patriarchal tendencies of Islam that had developed over the course of its transmission (e.g., Dzuhayatin 1996; Munawar-Rachman 1996; Munir 1999). Many felt that the original spirit of the Prophet Muhammad's teachings and the wisdom of the Qur'an had been corrupted by generations of interpreters whose cultural biases had led them to assert male superiority and the need for women to be controlled by men. Activists argued that it was high time to reexamine the corpus of Islamic writings for the cultural baggage that they smuggled in the name of religion and to look not always to the letter but, rather, to the spirit of the Qur'an to understand how it should be interpreted and applied in the context of modern society, using a hermeneutic approach. They also believed that, by promoting an egalitarian understanding of Islam, they could more effectively fight social problems related to gender inequality. Some were alarmed as well at the spreading influence of conservative and fundamentalist Islamic views on women and gender relations and felt the need to counter those views through an alternative theological approach.

In 1996, I attended a group discussion in Yogyakarta on gender and Islam that was attended mostly by female Indonesian university students. The discussion leader, a petite but strong-minded woman in Islamic dress, began by asking the group,

> Does the concept of gender [equality] exist in Islam? It's a controversial issue. The term *gender* isn't Indonesian or Arabic, some people say, so why should we adopt it? It's from the West, not from us . . . What comes from the West has to be refused—or it will ruin our culture, they say. But why is it that we can accept many *other* Western ideas and terms without a problem, like "economy" *(ekonomi)* or "politics" *(politik)* but not "gender" *(gender* or *jender)*? Why is the concept of gender so controversial in Islam? [field notes, August 16, 1996]

The speaker, Siti Ruhaini Dzuhayatin, was a young scholar at a respected Islamic university who was known for her outspoken views on the need to reinterpret Islamic texts from a feminist perspective. She believed that Islam had reached its highest point during the life of the Prophet Muhammad, whom she described to me on another occasion as "the most feminist man in the whole world" (interview, Siti Ruhaini Dzuhayatin, July 30, 1997). After he died, the initial spirit of the religion had been lost, she asserted. "Islam was originally a system of moral guidance," she informed the group. "Only centuries later did it become concerned with laws, with building a legal system. The Prophet urged

men to treat women well. But his ideas got turned around in the handing down of the Qur'an" (field notes, August 16, 1996). The Qur'an was used as justification for legitimizing the social order as it was, she continued. Rules were devised to try to keep women in their place: "'You have to obey your husband. You have to do this and do that.'" She felt that she and others needed to try to uncover the original intent of the Prophet's teachings, which she insisted were fundamentally humane and liberating to women. "We can harmonize feminism and Islam," she stated firmly, "because both are concerned with improving women's position."

Indonesian Muslims, of course, have not been alone in making these arguments.[2] Many Muslim gender activists and intellectuals in other parts of the world have embraced similar views (see, e.g., Ahmed 1992; Badran 2009; Majid 1998; Mernissi 1992; Ong 1999; Wadud 1999). Although the coupling of feminism and Islam might appear unlikely to some, the case can be made that feminists and Islamic activists often share a broad common goal: to refocus critical attention on and ultimately redefine the relationship between public and private spheres in modern society as well as to demand that the same moral standards be applied to both domains. As Lila Abu-Lughod (1998:3) has observed, veiled Muslim feminists in Egypt and elsewhere are critical of the Western-based division between public and private spheres, maintaining that the same democratic principles that should ideally guide leadership in the political sphere should also be brought to bear within the family. Writing about the popular religious movements that emerged in full force during the 1980s, including Islamic movements, José Casanova notes, "religion, leaving its assigned place in the private sphere, had thrust itself into the public arena of moral and political contestation" (1994:3). Might one not say almost the same thing of feminism, which has always worked to bring matters of gender out of the confines of the home and into the domain of public scrutiny and political debate? Although many Muslims see feminism as discordant with Islam, there are also those who wish to see them linked in a critical discourse that aims to bring about a transition to a more just and democratic society.

DEMOCRATIZING THE PRIVATE SPHERE

Examples from several Islamic NGOs in Indonesia illustrate this effort to apply democratic principles to private matters and to bring them to public light. The first crisis center to open in Indonesia for female victims of domestic violence, rape, and other forms of abuse was inconspicuously located in a quiet neighborhood of Yogyakarta. Called Rifka Annisa, an Arabic-derived phrase meaning "Women's Friend," this NGO was established in 1993. Besides giving counseling and advocacy to abused women, its staff also engaged in outreach activities in the community and published a weekly advice column in a newspaper, eventually also working toward public education and policy change regarding gender-based violence at the national level. From the beginning, the cen-

ter had employed people who were skilled in interpreting Islamic texts as well as those who were equipped to deal practically with gender-based violence. Although the center's founders had an Islamic orientation, they welcomed clients of any religion.

A student who was studying Islamic family law at an Islamic university and volunteering at the center was eager to share his views on why Rifka Annisa's work was important. "The basic spirit of Islam is the spirit of justice," he declared—"total social justice" (personal communication, August 4, 1997). The spirit of "ideal" Islam, he explained, is not the same as the distorted "cultural" Islam *(Islam kultural)* that has been passed down over time. "The spirit of ideal Islam is the same as the spirit of feminism that has developed in the West," he asserted. Even though he was raised in a strongly Muslim and, by his account, very patriarchal part of Indonesia, he had wondered for a long time why women were treated as only "half human" *(setengah manusia).* Through basic training at an Islamic organization on campus, he had learned about gender issues and become interested in problems of oppression *(penindasan),* which eventually led him to volunteer at the center.

Despite its dedication to Islamic ideals, Rifka Annisa was often criticized for endorsing imported Western concepts and behaviors that contradicted Indonesian or Islamic values (see van Doorn-Harder 2006:186). At "Kekerasan dalam Rumah Tangga," a large public seminar on domestic abuse in Yogyakarta that was cosponsored by Rifka Annisa on August 3, 1997, some women in the audience voiced their skepticism toward the organization's methods and goals. One middle-aged woman accused Rifka Annisa of advocating divorce as the answer to domestic violence, even though Islam urges people to avoid it. Others in the audience saw Rifka Annisa as interfering with the God-given hierarchy that places husbands above their wives. In support of one attendee's remark that "men's nature/destiny is to be above women" *(kodratnya pria ada di atas perempuan),* another woman in the audience reminded those present that, during the obligatory daily prayers, "women are always behind men"—in other words, that men have a divine right to be leaders over women. A number of people in the mostly female audience applauded in response.

What really seemed to provoke suspicion and hostility toward Rifka Annisa was that it was forcing into public view certain issues, such as domestic abuse, that many people saw as properly belonging to the private sphere. For those Muslims who believed that a husband had the right to unqualified obedience from his wife, spousal abuse was an issue that should be governed by religion and the sanctity of marriage and that should remain inside the privacy of the home and family (Blackburn 2004:195; van Doorn-Harder 2006). Liberals' attempts to convince the government to pass a law against marital rape in the early 1990s, for instance, had been rejected with the justification that the concept of marital rape was a Western one that conflicted with basic elements of Indonesian and Islamic culture (Blackburn

2004:203). But Rifka Annisa kept pushing its point by using very public means to try to convince Indonesians that any form of abuse was counter to fundamental human rights and democracy as well as to the spirit of Islam. The organization has continued to pursue its programs in the post-Suharto period and was active in lobbying for the anti–domestic violence bill that was finally signed into law in 2004 by President Megawati Sukarnoputri after years of effort on the part of women's rights activists.

An example of Rifka Annisa's insistence on bringing private issues out into the public can be found in one of its newspaper advice columns from 2003, not long before the domestic violence bill, which criminalized marital rape, was passed. It includes a letter from a woman seeking advice about how to respond to her abusive husband. In her letter the woman writes:

> The truth is that I'm ashamed to say this publicly, but I can no longer stand to serve him. Every day he blames me for things, he speaks coarsely and humiliates me, and what hurts me the most is that he often forces me to have sexual relations with him in the most repulsive way whenever he feels like it . . . I am afraid to try to stop him because he says that as a woman I should always be submissive and ready to serve him. Each time he approaches me, my body trembles because I'm afraid and feel that I have already been, and am again going to be, raped by my own husband. [*Kompas* 2003]

In reply, Rifka Annisa's counselor states that this is indeed a form of marital rape that should not be tolerated. She explains that such power differences between men and women are in part because of "a patriarchal culture that places men in the superior position in which they receive special rights and are considered more important [than women]" (*Kompas* 2003). Toward the end of her reply, the counselor adds,

> Unfortunately, this sort of behavior is tolerated by society, particularly in the context of the household, because a husband's abusiveness is seen as part of his obligation to "educate" his wife. The result is that . . . society is going to consider this [type of abuse] as a normal problem. Especially because at this point the family is still considered part of the private sphere, which should be free of other people's interference. [*Kompas* 2003]

The language that is used in this column signals a striking shift in public discourse on certain private matters. The candid discussion of a topic like marital rape in a national newspaper suggests a deliberate breaching of public and private boundaries. It also runs contrary to the belief of many Muslim leaders that a wife should not refuse her husband's sexual advances (van Doorn-Harder 2006:263). By speaking out publicly against private abuses, Rifka Annisa has violated social and religious taboos and broken new ground, maintaining that the perpetuation of social inequality is no more acceptable in the family than it is in the wider society—and that matters formerly considered private should now be regarded as issues of public concern.

THE FEMALE BODY AS A SITE OF DEMOCRATIZATION

The idea that the private sphere, gender relations, and the female body itself can serve as sites for democratization in Indonesia can also be seen in the activities of other Indonesian NGOs that have focused on women's rights from an Islamic perspective. One of the first of these organizations in the Suharto era was the Society for *Pesantren* (Islamic boarding school) and Community Development (Perhimpunan Pengembangan Pesantren dan Masyarakat), commonly known as P3M. Founded in Jakarta in 1983, the institute had the broad goal of promoting social justice and "social transformation through a socio-cultural approach based on a religious vision."[3] From the start, its members worked against the improper use of Islam to legitimate the interests of the dominant socioeconomic classes (Sciortino et al. 1996:89), fostering critical thinking among *kiai* (pesantren leaders and Islamic scholars) about social issues. In the early 1990s, P3M began to organize workshops to discuss matters of women's sexuality, reproductive health, and rights; domestic violence; and women's treatment in *fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence). The perspective of this program, spearheaded by prominent gender activist Lies Marcoes, encouraged careful reexamination of Islamic texts with the explicit objective of advancing women's rights through a progressive theology.

When I spoke in 1997 with P3M's director, Masdar Mas'udi, about the goals of the organization and its program on women's reproductive rights, he said that he had long been concerned with democratization *(demokratisasi)*, which he defined as "respect for the equal rights of all persons" *(penghormatan hak-hak yang setara semua orang)*. He added:

> In democratic life, each person has to have room to participate in collective life. But it's not just limited to public life. There's another reality that some people, especially in this case women, not only don't have a say in decisions about public affairs—it's still a problem for them even to make decisions that concern their own lives. Concerning their own bodies. How can we talk about the problem of democracy that is outward, public, while for them it's still so hard even to make decisions that involve their own selves? *That's* the issue. For women, reproductive rights themselves are something that's extremely fundamental if we want to talk about democracy in full, as a totality . . . We want to rebuild a religious discourse that is more empowering toward rights that until now have been diverted, that's all. [interview, Masdar Mas'udi, August 18, 1997]

The staff at P3M saw gender equality, including women's intimate right to have control over their own bodies, as a cornerstone of democratization and human rights. They were also part of a growing network of liberal Muslims who believed that social reform in Indonesia could be implemented effectively through an Islamic medium because Islam itself is based on an ethic of social justice. These people faced many critics, however. Masdar Mas'udi and others with similar ideas were accused by conservative Muslims of undermining the principles of their religion with Western-derived ideologies like feminism. P3M itself later underwent

an internal shake-up when its staff learned that Masdar had secretly engaged in polygamy, despite his avowed support for women's rights. Some staff members who left P3M in protest joined or formed other NGOs, such as the Islamic women's rights organization Rahima (see below).

More recently, another figure known for his staunch advocacy for women's rights as a key element of sociopolitical change is Kiai Husein Muhammad, an Al Azhar–trained Islamic scholar who has earned the nickname "Kiai Gender" for his activism. In 2000, he founded the Fahmina Institute, an Islamic NGO in Cirebon that promotes social justice, democracy, pluralism, and women's rights.[4] In the introduction to a collection of his essays on Islam and women, he draws explicit connections among democracy, human rights, and women's rights. He describes his awareness of these linkages in terms that suggest an awakening of a liberal Islamic consciousness:

> In the past I, too, refused the idea of justice and equality for women, because I still thought that this concept was in conflict with the teachings of religion; at the time I was still conservative *(saya masih konservatif)* and still afraid of those sorts of ideas. . . . The basis of my thinking is actually democracy and respect toward human rights; my thinking about the study of women came more incidentally when I was introduced to the problems of women, which turned out to involve a great many violations of human rights. . . . And then I studied intensively and undertook a critical analysis based on the paradigms of justice and democracy. From there women's problems could be viewed as highly strategic for the development of humankind. [Muhammad 2004:xxxi–xxxii]

Husein Muhammad, then, also sees his concern with gender issues as a logical extension of his interest in democracy and social justice. He also draws a distinction between Islamic conservatism and liberalism, clearly placing liberalism on the side of social justice.

Husein Muhammad has close ties to Rahima, one of the most visible Islamic gender-rights organizations to emerge in the post-Suharto era. Founded in Jakarta in 2000, Rahima's vision "is to realize a democratic society [that] is marked by the fulfillment of women's rights as human rights"; it sees women's rights as "a prerequisite to the establishment of democratization in Indonesian society."[5] Like its predecessor P3M, Rahima has actively promoted women's empowerment, democracy, and social justice by encouraging a new Islamic discourse based on revised interpretations of Islamic texts. Its staff addresses a wide range of issues, including the following: violence against women, sexuality and reproductive rights, polygamy and women's rights in marriage, the introduction of Shari'a-based laws in local and regional legal codes, and female leadership in religion and politics.

Farha Ciciek, a founder and the first director of Rahima, reflected on some of the accomplishments of the organization and the Indonesian women's movement more broadly since the end of authoritarian rule but also on the newer problems that have arisen for the movement (interview, Farha Ciciek, September 9, 2005). On the one hand, the fact that women's activists had been successful in getting the bill against domestic violence passed was a real coup, she remarked, because they had been unable to accomplish that under Suharto and had faced stiff opposition all along from conservative groups and media. Another positive note was that gender issues had increasingly entered the mainstream of public awareness and discussion—no longer were they confined to elite circles. On the other hand, the substantial rise in Islamic fundamentalism since the collapse of the Suharto regime had contributed to what she considered an "anti-woman climate" in Indonesia, which she felt was becoming stronger. Ciciek speculated that the growing popularity of fundamentalism was linked to its populism. Fundamentalist groups provide a strong feeling of community to their members, she observed. They also give a sense of certainty, especially regarding eschatological matters, which is not provided by pluralism, in which "everything is relative," she conceded a bit ruefully. She also admitted that gender activists had made some mistakes, including moving too quickly to push for certain changes that were particularly sensitive for Muslims—a point that will be discussed further in the next section.

THE RISE OF CONSERVATISM IN THE POSTAUTHORITARIAN PERIOD

It is clear that the postauthoritarian period in Indonesia has brought new challenges for gender activists at the same time that it has provided a more open climate in which to press their agendas (cf. Wieringa 2006). Since the fall of Suharto, organizations like Rahima have increasingly focused their efforts on countering the growing influence of conservative and fundamentalist Islam; Islamic gender activists, like others associated with liberal Islam, have often found themselves on the defensive as they are harshly accused of being anti-Islam or "Islamophobic." The fact that liberal Islamic NGOs often receive significant funding from foreign agencies like the Ford Foundation adds fuel to conservatives' allegations that they serve Western rather than Islamic interests.

How has democratization spurred the surge of conservative and fundamentalist Islam? The newfound freedoms of the postauthoritarian period combined with the dynamics of global Islam have together incited a conservative backlash against liberalization in the cultural sphere and allowed for the growth of fundamentalism. The loosening of the state's suppression of political Islam has led to a revival of earlier calls for the implementation of Shari'a in Indonesia's legal codes. It has also enabled the appearance of militant Islamist groups, some of which have physically attacked a variety of targets including churches, nightclubs, upscale hotels, and gatherings of gay and transvestite Indonesians (Boellstorff 2004; Sidel 2006).[6] Less radical forms of conservative Islam have made headway in the realm of democratic politics, as evidenced by the rapid rise of the Islamic political party Partai Keadilan Sejahtera (PKS, Prosperous Justice Party), which has its roots in campus student groups inspired by the Muslim Brotherhood and has attracted many middle-class people to its ranks (Rinaldo 2008b).

Not surprisingly, issues of gender, sexuality, and morality have become key points of contention in the ongoing

power struggles between conservatives and liberals. Although liberals of both secular and Islamic orientations have sought substantial reforms on gender issues, conservatives and fundamentalists have often worked hard to derail these efforts and have used the freer political atmosphere to promote their own objectives. Islamic conservatism may in fact have been energized by the increasingly confrontational style of proponents of liberal Islam in the post-Suharto period and by their efforts to institute changes that many moderate as well as conservative Muslims believe violate Islamic doctrine (Fealy 2006).

One liberal Islamic proposal that provoked a strongly negative reaction was the Counter-Legal Draft to the Indonesian Compilation of Islamic Law, which was put forward in 2004 by the Gender Mainstreaming Team of the Department of Religion, led by feminist Islamic scholar Siti Musdah Mulia. The draft, which aimed at a more gender-equal and pluralistic approach to Islamic law, included the recommendation of a complete ban on polygamy and a number of other very controversial proposals, such as mandatory equal inheritance and equal rights for women and men in marriage and divorce. The proposals in the draft caused such an uproar, particularly among Muslim conservatives and fundamentalists who considered them contrary to Islamic law, that the Department of Religion soon withdrew the document from consideration (see O'Shaughnessy 2009:38). Gender activists Ciciek and Husein Muhammad acknowledged that the proponents of the Counter-Legal Draft had made a strategic error by proposing dramatic changes rather than incremental ones. As Husein Muhammad put it:

> About the Counter-Legal Draft, I suggested that they should move slowly. Issues that were extremely sensitive, that would encounter a lot of resistance, should be postponed. Leave those alone for the time being, just do what you can do. Don't be too provocative. To say that polygamy shouldn't be allowed, that it's *haram* [forbidden by Islam]—it wasn't the time for that yet. You need conditioning first *(Kondisioning dulu).* [interview, Kiai Husein Muhammad and Farha Ciciek, September 8, 2005]

Indeed, many Muslim conservatives, as well as some moderates, defend the practice of polygamy (specifically, the right of a Muslim man to have up to four wives at once) as a right that is granted in the Qur'an, adamantly rejecting any attempts to ban it. Some have gone further to argue that the restrictions on polygamy that were put in place by the Suharto regime already interfere with Islamic law and should be completely rescinded. Both advocates and opponents of polygamy have linked their viewpoints to the advancement of democracy in Indonesia, with proponents holding that they should be free to practice Islamic traditions unhindered by the government, and antipolygamy activists maintaining that polygamy, which clearly discriminates against women, has no place in a modern, democratic society. Debates over polygamy have raged in the post-Suharto period, fueled by a number of factors, including the rise of Islamist politics, a wealthy entrepreneur's much-publicized campaign to promote polygamy, and the notoriety gained by certain celebrities whose polygamous marriages have come into the spotlight (see Brenner 2006; Hoesterey 2008; Nurmila 2009).

Another indication of the headway made by conservative factions has been the introduction of Shari'a-influenced bylaws in various parts of Indonesia in the past decade, most notably in the semiautonomous province of Aceh. The ability of local and provincial governments to implement such laws stems from the decentralization of government that has occurred in the postauthoritarian period and the movement toward regional autonomy that was formally instituted in 2001 (see Salim 2003:222–224). Many of the local and regional bylaws focus disproportionately on women's dress, movement in public space, and behavior, with implicit or explicit connections to sexual morality, leading gender activists to complain that the laws in Aceh and elsewhere discriminate against women (interview, Sandra Hamid, September 9, 2005; Viviani 2001). In parts of Java, Madura, Sulawesi, Sumatra, and elsewhere, bylaws have been proposed or passed requiring women to wear modest Islamic dress in public places such as schools, banks, and offices and subjecting them to curfews that prohibit them from going out alone in public late at night. In some cases, women who have violated the curfews while on their way to or from work or while visiting relatives have been harassed and humiliated or even arrested after being falsely accused of illicit behavior such as prostitution (Noerdin 2002; Robinson 2009). The most extreme measures have been undertaken by the provincial legislature of Aceh, which, for example, passed a bill in 2009 that would impose the punishment of stoning to death for adultery and prison terms of up to eight years for engaging in homosexual behavior (*Jakarta Post* 2009).

Although conservatives' efforts to implement Islamic law nationally have not been successful, the passage of a hotly contested antipornography bill by the Indonesian House of Representatives (DPR) in October 2008, after several years of intense public controversy and a walkout by more than 100 legislators at the time of the vote, shows that conservative factions have had an impact in regulating public morality at the national as well as local level. Although the version of the bill that was passed in 2008 was toned down from the original draft bill, it has still been loudly decried by women's rights activists and others, including many non-Muslims, for the broad and vaguely defined range of activities, images, artistic forms, and dress styles that it could potentially outlaw in the name of morality; for its discrimination against women; and for its imposition of conservative Islamic moral codes on a plural society (see, e.g., *Kompas* 2008).[7] On International Women's Day in 2006, thousands of women marched to protest the draft version of the bill, which was pending before the Indonesian legislature. However, many conservative Muslim women, including those affiliated with the Prosperous Justice Party (PKS), strongly supported the bill; they carried out demonstrations of their own to endorse its passage and celebrated when it was finally ratified after a protracted battle (Rinaldo 2008a).

The antipornography bill was a conservative response to the sudden deregulation and opening up of the mass media that took place during the period of Reformasi. Shortly after the fall of the Suharto regime, which was notorious for its strict censorship of the media, national laws were passed to guarantee freedom of the press and democratization of the media (Kitley 2008:88–89). These measures led to rapid media expansion and diversification, including the new availability of erotic material that had not been legally accessible in the past (Kitley 2008; van Wichelen 2007). Conservative and fundamentalist groups, including the Indonesian Council of Ulama (MUI), condemned the circulation of this material as harmful to Islam and to the nation. In 2006, when a relatively mild, Indonesian-language edition of *Playboy* magazine (which contained no nudity) was introduced, conservative Islamic organizations such as the MUI protested strongly and the militant Front for the Defenders of Islam (FPI) vandalized the publishers' offices (Kitley 2008). Although the editor was initially acquitted of public indecency charges in 2007, the Supreme Court ultimately sentenced him to two years in prison in 2010 (Zilberg 2010). The publication of the Indonesian-language *Playboy,* a potent symbol of Western degeneracy to many conservative Muslims, fed the growing demand for an antipornography bill (Kitley 2008; van Wichelen 2007:112).

Why have issues like pornography received so much attention in the years since 1998? As Philip Kitley notes in his analysis of the *Playboy Indonesia* controversy, the sudden deregulation and liberalization of the media following Suharto's resignation, which were discursively tied to concepts of democratization and freedom *(kemerdekaan),* led to heightened concerns, especially among conservative Muslims, about the dangerous effects of Western-style globalization on Indonesian society. These anxieties have been manifested in political and cultural struggles over matters like pornography. A further source of concern for conservative Muslims, he adds, is the way that pornography appears to blur boundaries of public and private. He points out that some of the conservative Muslim witnesses who testified at the *Playboy* editor's trial emphasized that their primary objection was not to the actual content of the magazine, which they felt was acceptable to be read in private by a husband and wife, but to the access that others, such as children or unmarried people, would have to it through its public distribution. Material that should have been kept to the private sphere and the conjugal bond, as they saw it, was being allowed to circulate freely in public, thereby causing moral harm (Kitley 2008:97–99).

In a recent, greatly publicized case that also tested the discursive boundaries of public and private, Indonesian pop star Nazriel "Ariel" Irham was sentenced in January of 2011 to three-and-a-half years in prison for violating the 2008 antipornography law after two personal videos that he had made of himself having sex with female celebrities were stolen from his laptop and widely circulated on the Internet and via cell phone (Belford 2011; Zilberg 2010). His le-

gal team, along with liberally inclined media, organizations, and individuals, had argued that to punish him for making a video intended solely for his personal use, which would not be considered a criminal offense according to the 2008 law, would amount to an unacceptable intrusion of the state into citizens' privacy (Belford 2011; *Jakarta Post* 2011; *Tempo* 2010). The judge who sentenced him nevertheless held him criminally liable for allowing the videos to reach the public through his negligence, additionally penalizing him for his failure to admit guilt and show remorse (*Tempo* 2011).[8] In short, the case against Ariel turned on whether his roles in making the videos and inadvertently allowing them to escape the private sphere were defined as "private" or "public" acts; the conservative view that Ariel's actions constituted an offense against public morality prevailed. In contrast to liberals' dismay at his conviction, Muslim conservatives and militants were reportedly angered by what they saw as the leniency of the sentence (Belford 2011).[9]

Each of these highly divisive matters—pornography, the anti–domestic violence bill, polygamy, Shari'a-based laws, and the Counter-Legal Draft to the Compilation of Islamic Law, among others—has served as a touchstone issue crystallizing the rifts between conservatives and liberals in the postauthoritarian period. Each issue has involved ideological clashes over the unstable boundaries and meanings of *public* and *private,* with both conservatives and liberals defending the private sphere against the incursions of the state in some cases and attempting to push matters formerly seen as private into the public domain of government regulation and moral surveillance in others. The intensity of these debates points to deeply conflicting interpretations of how Islam should be practiced in a democratic society and how, in turn, democracy should be realized in a Muslim-majority society.

CONCLUSION

Since the 1990s, there have been significant—and at times, unexpected—convergences between the Islamic movement and the democratization movement in Indonesia. One point of intersection has been the conspicuous preoccupation of both movements with moral issues and their implications for the future of the nation. Given the social and political upheavals and uncertainties involved in the transition from decades of dictatorial rule to an incipient democracy, it is not hard to see why grappling with moral issues might seem urgent for a nation that is seeking a roadmap for how to proceed. Democratization raises pressing questions about the values that the nation should embrace; the laws, institutions, and practices that it should foster or condemn; and the ideal type of citizenship that it should endorse—all of which involve morality at some level. It balances liberalization and citizens' rights against what some might see as too much freedom and the resulting breakdown of institutions and guidelines that have hitherto brought order to society.

Islamic movements have similarly been concerned with charting a course that offers moral certainty in the uncertain terrain of modernity through the establishment of Islamic

values and practices in both public and private spheres of life. In this article, I have shown how Indonesian Muslims with palpably different political and theological orientations have used the opening up of civil society and the larger political arena to promote their moral visions for Indonesia's future through an Islamic medium. Both liberal and conservative Muslims have made issues of morality, particularly involving matters of gender and sexuality, central to their efforts to forge a democratic society. The very meaning of *democracy* itself has been passionately contested through these issues, particularly in the wake of a repressive regime that designated itself as the ultimate arbiter of the nation's collective morality for more than 30 years. Amid an increasingly politicized division between liberal and conservative Islam in the post-Suharto era, Muslim conservatives and liberals alike have used politically charged issues surrounding gender and sexuality to claim the moral high ground and to assert their right to speak for Indonesian Muslims more broadly.

Although Muslim liberals and conservatives may be sharply at odds over what actually constitutes "Islamic morality," many Indonesians on both sides share an understanding of Islam that sees it as embodying a unified moral system that bridges public and private spheres. They believe as well that democratization should be effected through the transformation of both public and private life. Where they often disagree, however, is on the question of where the boundaries of "public" and "private" should be drawn—an ideologically laden distinction that constantly shifts according to context (Gal 2002)—and on the proper role of the state in regulating aspects of life that are typically associated with the private sphere, such as matters of marriage, sexuality, and family. Conservative Muslims tend to believe that the state should facilitate the observance and enforcement of Islamic law in daily life, or at least not interfere with its practice, especially where the family is concerned. Many liberals, however, feel that a democratic state should be based on the principles of individual human rights, pluralism, and social equality, including gender equality, and that these principles should be applied equally to private and public domains—even if it means limiting the purview of Islamic law, at least as it has traditionally been interpreted in Indonesia.

In their work on the politics of gender in postsocialist East Central Europe, Susan Gal and Gail Kligman (2000) argue persuasively for the importance of focusing on gender as an analytic category as well as on the changing meanings of *public* and *private* for the study of democratic transformations. Ideas about gender, they suggest, "shape the ways in which states are imagined, constituted, and legitimated" (Gal and Kligman 2000:4), a point that is highly relevant for Indonesia. Contests over issues of gender and morality have played a pivotal role in Indonesian politics and the envisioning of the nation since the colonial period. In the current era of democratization and Islamization, the ability to dominate the terms of public discourse over matters of gender and sexuality, the boundaries and meanings of public

and private, and the moral issues that entwine them is, more than ever, a high-stakes political game.

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NOTES

1. In 1997, I was told by Oxfam representative Mansour Fakih that from 1985–90 most major international funding agencies began to insist that if local NGOs wanted grants for their activities, they would need to pay greater attention to gender issues.

2. Indonesian gender activists in the 1990s were inspired by the writings of such scholars of Islam as Fatima Mernissi, Riffat Hassan, and Asghar Ali Engineer, which were translated into Indonesian (van Doorn-Harder 2006:35).

3. The information presented here on P3M is based mostly on interviews that I conducted at P3M in 1997 and on Sciortino and colleagues 1996. For a more detailed discussion of P3M, its objectives, and its programs for women, see van Doorn-Harder 2006, especially pp. 189–194.

4. See Fahmina's website (www.fahmina.or.id).

5. Taken from Rahima's website, http://www.rahima.or.id.

6. Writing about the attacks on gay and transvestite men, Tom Boellstorff argues that gay men are perceived as a threat to national masculinity and thus become the target of attacks "when they appear to stake a public claim to civil society; that is, when they appear political" (2004:479). This can be seen as an example of how the struggle over boundaries of public and private and the liberalization of the public sphere have led to backlashes in the post-Suharto period.

7. The law defines *pornography* as "pictures, sketches, illustrations, photos, writings, vocal expressions, sounds, moving pictures, animations, cartoons, conversations, bodily movements, or other forms of communication through various forms of mass media and/or public displays, which contain indecency or sexual exploitation that violates the norms of morality in society" (Republik Indonesia 2008).

8. The person who stole and circulated the videos was also sentenced to two years in prison (Belford 2011).

9. I am grateful to Jonathan Zilberg for providing me with copies of media reports covering Ariel's conviction and for drawing my attention to Kitley's (2008) article.

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