GENDER, SEXUALITIES AND CULTURE IN ASIA

GENDER AND ISLAM IN INDONESIAN CINEMA

ALICIA IZHARUDDIN

Gender, Sexualities and Culture in Asia

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Why explore gender/sex/culture through an area/Asia frame? What real-world or scholarly debates does this combination address? And, which Asia? At this stage, we intend to cast the net widely in terms of topics, and to consider Asia not through a narrow geographic lens but as part of a shifting terrain that will include diasporic Asia and West Asia. Research on gender and sexuality in Asia is growing precisely because it addresses real world questions about changing patterns of migration, changing meanings of 'family' in Asia. Chen Kuan Hsing's Asia as Method (Duke University Press, 2010) highlights the theoretical debate in understanding decolonization and deimperialization through globalization, hence highlighting inter-Asian debateson regional integration in the cold war era. Kale Bantique Fajardo's Filipino Crosscurrents: Oceanographies of Seafaring, Masculinities and Globalization (University of Minnesota Press, 2011) research on Filipino seafaring, masculinities and globalization engages in a "crosscurrents framework" where intersecting histories in the Philippines and the diaspora disturbs the usual geographical cultural context. Informed by these theoretical perspectives, wecall for a rethinking of Asia, not only in terms of a geographical location butalso within diaspora and migration flows. We want to assert our position that reading across Asian sites is actually an increasing necessity in addressing gender and sexualities.

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Glossary of Terms and Abbreviations

Azas kekeluargaan	'Foundations of the family'
Bapak	'father' or address for a man
Cadar	the face veil, sometimes known as the *niqab*
Dangdut	a popular musical genre with Malay, Arab, and Indian musical styles
Ibu	'mother' or address for a woman
Imam	male Islamic leader
Jilbab	sometimes known as the *hijab*. *Jilbab* is a headscarf worn around the head, covering the hair, neck, ears, and chest area
Kadi	Islamic judge
Kerudung	loose headscarf for women, sometimes worn like a shawl over the head
Kodrat pria	men's essence
Kodrat wanita	women's essence
Majelis Ulama Indonesia (MUI)	National Council of Ulamas
Pesantren	Islamic boarding school
Sinetron	film made for television
Syirik	sorcery
Ulama	an Islamic cleric
Ustazah	female Islamic teacher and preacher
Wali songo	Nine Javanese mystics of myth and legend

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CHAPTER 1

Gender and the Divine Pleasures of the Cinema

Since the early years of its inception, cinema has been used as a religious medium. The glow of the moving image mimics the aura of the holy altar. Figures on the screen evoke qualities of the divine: immortal(ised), beautiful, and awe-inspiring. More than a hundred years later, cinema has continued to play this role while at the same mobilising other grand themes such as motherhood, war, and nation-building. In the biggest Muslim nation in the world, Indonesia, cinema has, for decades, been a discursive arena for explicating the role of Islam and its female and male adherents in the nation. Thus, films with an Islamic message or *film Islami* are boundary makers that establish the gendered principle of inclusion and exclusion. *Film Islami* in Indonesia goes by several other names and descriptions: *film religi* or religious films, *film bernafaskan Islam* (films that breathe Islam), *film bernuansa Islam* (films with Islamic 'nuance') and film *dakwah* (films with Islamic teachings). Despite its contested allusions to being 'Islamic', *film Islami* is a helpful generic term to categorise a host of films about Muslims who try to be better Muslims. Films of this genre incorporate Quranic verses in the dialogue and a host of Islamic symbols, such as the mosque, the veil, and the Islamic boarding school as significant features of the narrative. Its Muslim male and female characters overcome a spiritual crisis and convey an 'Islamic message' about the Muslim public and private sphere within their respective rigid gender roles. Their narratives are sometimes told following a carefully considered ethic of production where the Islamic integrity of its filmmaker, actors, funders, exhibition, and filming practices are thought to legitimise the genre's purpose as a medium for *dakwah*.

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This book considers the portrayal of gender in the *film Islami* genre released between 1977 and 2011, spanning across the New Order period (1966–1998) to the post-New Order period (1998–present), to be key elements in the system of cultural representation circulating in the Indonesian public sphere. It proposes that diverse images of masculinities and femininities emerge at the meeting point between contrasting interpretations of Islam and other public discourses of (trans)-nationalism and modernity. Such images are shot through national questions of development and modernisation during the New Order and transnational geopolitical conflict in the aftermath of 9/11. It brings together new questions about representations of gender and Islam in Indonesian cinema, and with them, new methodologies. The new methodologies emerge from nascent scholarship that focus separately on cinema, Islam, and gender but seldom intersect with each other. These methodologies, which involve feminist approaches to textual analysis, field research, and the explicating of context, will bring to light power and ideology in the construction of cinematic Muslim femininity and masculinity. As I will later show, the shifts in the image of Muslim femininity and masculinity in the *film Islami* genre underline the political and social changes which align the transition from Sukarno's 'Old Order' (1945–1965) to Suharto's New Order and the end of the latter. It will also demonstrate the (mediated) diversity of Islamic practices and beliefs that make the Islamic film genre a popular forum for Muslims to contemplate the reality of Islam in Indonesia.

An important form of Islamic popular culture for several reasons, the Islamic film genre has a tendency to be big-budgeted and targeted at a mainstream, mostly Muslim audience. Once a staple during the Ramadan month throughout the New Order, films with Islamic themes in Indonesia have become an all-year-round affair due to their commercial viability and the Islamic revivalism of the public sphere. The box-office success of a few Islamic films during the New Order era and the period after can be attributed to Muslim audiences attracted to the Islamic message of the films, audiences who are new to the cinema-going experience and previously wary of the immoral connotations of such an experience (Sasono 2013a: 49). Thus Islamic films transformed the practice of cinema-watching and continue to do so. Success with a broad audience demonstrates in no uncertain terms that the Islamic film genre, as a medium for both Islamic teaching and entertainment, is compatible with Islamic consumption and consumer trends.

The growth of Islamic media has been welcomed by the pious Muslim middle classes in Indonesia who have developed a more spiritually

conscientious approach to consumerism. The increased variety of Islamic media and popular culture from the 1990s to the present day reflects the changing tastes and needs of this increasingly discerning market (Hasan 2009: 242–243; Heryanto 2011: 62). Hallmarks of Islamic popular culture include Islamic pop and rock music, Muslim women's magazines, Islamic comic books, religious television dramas, and the Islamic film genre. Made to appeal to a pious Muslim audience and youth who would otherwise be enticed by Western popular media, these different forms of Islamic media are also replete with images of idealised Muslim women and men (Brenner 1999; Ida 2008, 2009; Barendregt 2011).

Discussions of gender in Indonesian Islamic cinema have tended to emphasise the appearance of veiled female characters as an index of a film's religious qualities. On-screen veiling can be connected to the increased visibility of Islam in the Indonesian public sphere, an effect of Islamic revivalism since the 1990s (Heryanto 2011: 70–71). The 'new visibilities' (Göle 2000: 173) of Islam in the public sphere refer to the way 'citizens increasingly appeal to Islamic virtues, Muslim symbols, and Muslim (life)styles' (van Wichelen 2010: 1) which indicate the heightened piety of nominal Muslims (Mahmudi 2005: 76). It is during the period since the 1990s when the process of Islamisation became more 'gendered' in its focus on the profound impact of Islam on women. The gendered character of the Islamic public sphere is shaped through debates by Islamic and secular actors alike on the practice of veiling, female circumcision, polygamy, and female leadership (van Wichelen 2010: 93).

Gender is a powerful symbol in nationalist rhetoric, Islamic revivalism in Indonesia, and is the fault line of debates about Islam in the post-9/11 age. It is translated into representations inscribed in the cultural practice of cinema, a medium that is essentially 'allegorical' in that women and men on screen do not represent real individuals but typologies and ideas about gender. Gender also has a socio-cultural origin with an ideological purpose to 'dissimulate the difference between gender and biological sex' (Hayward 2006: 179). To illustrate an example: in the gender ideology of the New Order, socio-cultural femininity is conflated with a woman's 'natural' destiny (*kodrat*) as wife and mother. In her work on the conceptual variations of the feminine in Indonesian discourse, *Fantasizing the Feminine* (1996), Laurie Sears offers important clues for locating constructions of femininity and masculinity in the continual 'play' of history, culture, and power. Rather than attempt to discover an authentic notion of gender, one must accept the fragility and multiplicity of gender constructions that are

contingent on where, when, and how they are enunciated (Sears 1996: 24). Sears' assertion of the instability of gender at the moment of enunciation is relevant in the description of representations of shifting notions of Muslim femininity and masculinity in Islamic cinema. Building on Sears' post-structuralist concept of gender, a further discussion on the characteristics of gender as a series of iterations and as 'performance' deserves mention here.

Using the concept of performativity, Judith Butler challenges the basis for identity as a pre-social centre around which gender is attached. Rather than a stable, inert concept, gender is a performance, an 'identity tenuously constituted in time, [...] instituted in a stylised repetition of acts' (Butler 1988: 519). Therefore, through this framework of analysis, gender is not what one is, but rather what one does. If Butler is right about the idea of gender as performance, there is therefore room and possibilities for change and subversion in the 'arbitrary relation between such acts' producing 'the possibility of a different sort of repeating, in the breaking or subversive repetition of that style' (Butler 1988: 520). Butler draws from Michel Foucault's 'model of inscription' around which 'the law' of gender discipline, as it were, is incorporated on bodies, and where gendered acts are *effects* of discourse rather than the cause (1990: 135–136). Gender is therefore a 'corporeal style', an act, or sequence of acts, a 'strategy' with survival as its motivation, as those who do not 'do' gender correctly will be punished by the norms of society (Butler 1990: 139–140). Butler's concept of performativity, however, has been challenged for its focus on gender as 'surface' or discourse, rendering both the agency behind performance and the performing 'I' obscure (Salih 2002: 59). Butler addresses these issues in *Bodies that Matter* (1993) by suggesting that gender performativity does not entail the free-floating sequences of acts but instead is invariably bound to sexed bodies. Thus Butler's suspicion about the consistent core of gender identity applies in the cinematic representations of Muslim femininity and masculinity which are stylised acts that are subject to change and subversion.

Gender performativity, according to Butler, is also a 'citational practice' in which gender is not only reiterated but cites the norms of womanhood and manhood that give the presentation of gender its authority and meaning (Butler 1993: 13, 225). Rather than being the originator of ideas about gender, a woman or man that performs gender engages in a citational practice and invokes a convention that refers to a 'law' or regime of heterosexuality (Butler 1993: 225). The concept of citational practice is useful for analysis pertaining to the construction of gender in Indonesian Islamic cinema. Gender in Islamic films cites from a normative religious

project that contests the compatibility of national ideals and modernity with Islam in Indonesia. The religious project that organises the construction of Muslim femininity and masculinity is manifested most profoundly, in recent decades, in the 'upgrading' of piety (Heryanto 2011) and Islamic revivalism in everyday life and popular culture. Such a project is a feature of Islamic modernity in Indonesia which I will return to in more detail below. It is worth noting that gender is also inscribed within unequal power relations between women and men whereby men and masculinity have the power to be the unmarked gender (Flood 2002: 203). As an unmarked gender, masculinity has the power to be regarded as a universal identity while femininity is its Other, a 'problem' that requires solving. Yet, at the same time, sexual differentiation between femininity and masculinity needs to be established as visibly as possible in society (Cohan 1997: xvi). Therefore, when rendered visible as gender, masculinity is 'unmasked' through scrutiny (Chapman and Rutherford 1988). To briefly return to Sears, the act of examining the inscription of gender into cultural practice entails the unpacking of gender ideology, revealing the fact that gender does not always arrive fully formed or coherent. Instead, gender relations run up against local and globalised notions of womanhood and manhood, biological sex, and sexuality, each of which are refracted through a class, ethnic, and religious lens. Recalling Butler, there is no one true Muslim man or woman in a particular cinematic frame, but rather a series of representations or representation-as (Goodman 1976: 27–28) embedded in discourses concerning gender, Islamic practice, and class status.

A clearer definition of what is 'Muslim' is necessary here. 'Muslim' in the normative sense refers to an adherent of Islam born to Muslim parents or a person who has publicly pronounced the *shahada* or the declaration of faith with the intention of embracing Islam. However, here, 'Muslim' will be referred to as a set of culturally and historically specific symbols that are widely recognised as being associated with Islamic behaviour and Islam itself. The qualifier 'widely recognised as being associated with Islam' is important. Certain features of Muslim cultures are argued to have nothing to do with Islam or with orthodox Islamic practices. For instance, the practice of wearing the burqa and dyeing one's beard orange are culturally specific practices conflated with Islamic tradition in certain Muslim societies but not universally accepted as Islamic. It would also be important to point out that Muslim identities do not emerge as a product of religious motivations alone but out of class interests, national loyalties, and other diverse motivations reflective of human complexity. However, like representations

of gender, Muslim identities in film are narrower. This is due to the commercial imperatives of cinema and the creative and socio-political projections of filmmakers who belong to a narrow slice of Indonesian society.

Following an elaboration of this text's main aims below, the subsequent sections of this chapter will map out its theoretical and methodological framework. Starting with the critical appraisal of the relevant theoretical literature on analysing gender in cinema, I will tease out some important arguments germane to an inquiry into representations of gender and Islam in the context of Indonesian cinema. A much-needed explication of the processes of commodification of Islamic symbols follows, especially those related to popular cinematic representations of Muslim identities. This is followed by a discussion about how the field research necessary for the illumination of the object of study was conducted. Finally, this introductory chapter concludes with an outline of the remaining chapters contained in this book. When I began researching the subject of gender and Islam in Indonesian cinema, the Indonesian film industry was experiencing the boom years of Islamic cinema between 2008 and 2012. The scholarly literature on the cinematic phenomenon quickly followed suit. What I found was a lack of attention in the literature to images of gender in Islamic cinema and much less from a feminist perspective. Therefore I sought to first refine the definition of Islamic film (*film Islami*) as a genre while building on existing scholarship on the genre (Sasono 2010; Imanda 2012; van Heeren 2012; Hoesterey and Clark 2012). Current scholars have explored the history of the Islamic film in Indonesia and have proposed the formation of the genre that precedes the efflorescence of Islamic films that began in 2008 (Imanda 2012; van Heeren (2012); Hoesterey and Clark (2012). Based on this body of scholarship, I develop a more systematic analysis of the Islamic film genre in accordance with theories relating to film genre. Second, to address some of the gaps in the present literature on representations of gender in the genre. To fulfil this second objective, this study has set out to bring together previously separate approaches to gender and religion in film. When these approaches are brought together, they contribute to the emerging literature on methods and methodologies for the study of gender and religion in media texts (Lövheim 2013).

Women in films made in predominantly Muslim countries are regarded as 'absent' subjects: vehicles simply for Muslim men's concerns and anxieties about female sexuality and modernity. In her survey of Muslim women in films, Gönül Dönmez-Colin finds that women's place (and lack of it) in

cinemas of countries as wide-ranging as Bangladesh, Indonesia, Malaysia, Iran, and Egypt are directly connected to the political and cultural vicissitudes in which religion plays an important role (2004: 7). Previous studies on representations of gender in Islamic contexts have shown that clothes are immediate markers of Islamic identity (Barlas 2009; Tarlo 2010). This book, however, seeks to transcend clothing as an obvious visual marker of Islamic identity and the fixation on the Islamic veil, and focus also on visual markers of class, modernity, and (trans)-nationalism in the construction of Muslim femininity and masculinity in Indonesian cinema. The writing of this text joins studies that are '[concerned] with confronting stereotypes and highlighting variety and complexity' in representations of religion and gender in media texts (Lövheim 2013: 20).

The Islamic film genre produces various mechanisms to isolate Muslim characters from their non-Muslim counterparts while at the same time marking distinctions between the 'good' and 'bad' Muslim. I wish to demonstrate that such mechanisms behind the binaries of the Muslim/non-Muslim and 'good' Muslim/'bad' Muslim are shifting concepts rather than fixed and self-evident. As will be discussed in further detail, these shifting distinctions are achieved through narrative device, audiovisual tropes, and political discourse and governed by economic and cultural imperatives. In summary, this book focuses on film representations of femininity and masculinity in Indonesian cinema putatively assigned as 'Muslim', and asks:

1. How, when, and where do Indonesian femininity and masculinity in Indonesian film become 'Muslim'?
2. Why, and to what effect, are distinctions between representations of 'good' and 'bad' Muslims made? What other discourses are mobilised alongside such distinctions?
3. How Can Representations of Gender and Islam Be Better Understood Through Feminist Approaches to Textual and Contextual Analysis?

Finally, the two main objectives outlined above, along with the three research questions, contribute to the study of gender in Indonesian cinema by highlighting the religious dimension in cinematic representations of women and men. The objectives aim to situate this book within the wider dialogue about gender and religion in film, media, and visual culture. They also avoid an additive approach to cinematic representations of gender by

proposing substantive explanations for the importance of studying gender in film.

Why Representations of Gender in Film?

The under-representation of female filmmakers and the preponderant sexual use of women's bodies to sensationalise and 'sell' films are key signs of inequalities in cinema as a culture industry. Such inequalities habitually trickle down to the kinds of representations found in films. But this does not mean that cinema holds up a mirror image of society. In the context of filmmaking in Indonesia, Ariel Heryanto offers a cogent argument describing the intimate yet ambiguous link between cinema and socio-political contexts, in which he states:

> Commercially produced films for entertainment are of course never meant to be a true representation of any social reality. Yet, no films can be entirely disassociated from the social dynamics that bring them into existence in the first place, and within which the films are circulated and consumed. Precisely because of their nature as statements about particular aspects of social life, films (like other narratives) can be instructive for political and cultural analysis. In particular, they raise questions about which aspects of a given society are foregrounded, which are exaggerated, distorted, overlooked or excluded, or presented under erasure (and also how and why) (Heryanto 2011: 64).

In a similar spirit, Suzanne Brenner's study of representations of women in New Order print media suggests that visual and textual evocations of femininity inadvertently function as indexes of the times for print media producers and their audiences:

> Photographic and textual images of women, more than those of men, serve as symbolic representations of a burgeoning consumer culture; of the growing Islamic movement; of the moral deficits of modern society. Women not only participate fully in the processes of social change that Indonesia is undergoing, they also signify those processes (Brenner 1999: 17).

Women-as-symbol, whether of the nation, culture, or collective morality of a community, is a common trope in nationalist discourse (for a further explication on this subject, please refer to Chapter 4). However, I will disagree with Brenner here about the primacy of women as image, symbol,

and cog in the machine of social processes, for images of men must also be examined to understand how they too 'transcode' dominant socio-political discourses. Michael Ryan and Douglas Kellner describe the transcoding process in cinema as follows:

> Films transcode the discourses of social life into cinematic narratives. Rather than reflect a reality external to the film medium, films execute a transfer from one discursive field to another. As a result, films themselves become part of that broader cultural system of representations that construct social reality (Ryan and Kellner 1990: 12).

As a product of multiple compromises, especially creative and financial ones, fiction film is a relatively conservative medium. Due to the economic and socio-political constraints within society and the film industry, it may come as little surprise that compared to their male counterparts, female characters in Indonesian film are often restricted to the easy categories that popular narratives and familiar genres demand of them. The representation of gender in Indonesian film hinges as much on issues of production, institutions, and genre as on social, political, and historical contexts. Thus the restricted typologies of female characters and their narratives express, at a broader level, the complex set of limitations and opportunities available to them.

The contemporary study of gender in film is a descendent of feminist critiques of entrenched objectification and silencing of women in Euro-American film and visual culture. It is therefore necessary to reflect on the purpose of studying representations of gender through the lens of feminist film theory. Feminist theory of film began as a project to expose the phallo(go)centrism of Western culture and the recuperation of women's voices through the deployment of Freudian and Lacanian psychoanalytic approaches. Reflecting the diverse feminist approaches to film, media, and culture, feminist theory of film later developed an interest in Third World and postcolonial cinema, the critique of heteronormativity and white privilege, and audience responses. The emergence of many theoretical advances in feminisms and feminist media studies have destabilised the monolithic edifice of feminist film theory and problematised its reliance on psychoanalysis (Kaplan 2004: 1238).

Due to their specific cultural trajectories and concerns that emerge out of a masculinist postcolonial and nation-centric cast, feminist approaches to Third World and postcolonial cinema continue to be sidelined by feminist

film theory (Shohat 1991: 45). As a result, Third World and postcolonial feminist film theories often operate in isolation from 'general' discussions of feminist film theory. The question of the nation is almost always indispensable to Third World and postcolonial cinema as most films are produced within the legal codes of the nation-state, usually in hegemonic national languages through which national imaginaries are projected (Shohat 1991: 45). In contrast, the nation is less of a concern in feminist film theory. That feminist film theory rarely takes into account the nation in theoretical considerations is a reflection of Euro-American power to make and disseminate films the world over, masking feminist film theory's geopolitical specificities.

A critique of feminist film theory's limitations addresses how feminist film theory often neglects the changing modes of cinematic production, distribution, and exhibition and the way these changes may be gendered. The rise of Third World cinemas and new technological means for filmmaking renders the unified Eurocentric and deterministic theory of film untenable in a globalised world of cultural production. But this is not to suggest that feminist film theory is to be wholly rejected because there are numerous continuities between feminist film theory and social theories that are important to preserve. For instance, social theories share critical lineages with the foundational frameworks of feminist film theory such as the critique of ideology and the acceptance of cultural constructivism of social categories.

Studies of men in film emphasise the diversity of masculinities but also more significantly, the antidotes to traditional models of masculinity, especially those that signify masculine passivity and fragility (Cook 1982; Neale 1983). Narratives of men defeated and seemingly emasculated by war, violence, and economic and social deprivation signalled a recognition of representations of masculinity in crisis. Men can also be the object of the gaze but unlike women, men deflect the gaze through aggressive facial expressions and intense acts of physical violence. The deflection of the feminising gaze suggests the erotic repression and disavowal by the (straight) male spectator of associations with male homosexuality (Neale 1983). Other studies on masculinity as spectacle suggest that men can be looked at in a fetishistic way, especially when dressed in highly stylised clothing (Bruzzi 1997: 67–68).

Demetrakis Demetriou (2001: 346) argues that within the framework of multiple masculinities developed by Raewyn Connell (1995), discrete configurations of masculinity are still too homogeneous and inert in their relation to other masculinities. Connell's notion of multiple masculinities is nonetheless useful so long as fluidity of identities and relationality are

taken into account. But perhaps importantly of all, Connell's masculinities are most helpful in mapping out the 'big picture' of gender relations compared to the often contradictory individual masculine subjectivities (Pringle 2005: 267). The big picture of gender relations situates images of men in relation to other men and women as a broad canvas from which to draw other relational categories such as religion, nationality, class, and sexuality.

Commodification of Islam and Gender in Islamic Modernity

This section's theoretical considerations will add to the current literature on Islamic films seen as part of the rise of 'pop Islam' and religious commodification in Indonesia (Widodo 2008; Imanjaya 2009a; Sasono 2010; Heryanto 2011; Hoesterey and Clark 2012). It will also consider concepts of Muslim publics and Islamic modernity as the social, political, and cultural condition conducive to religious commodification and the rise of Islamic popular culture. And finally, it will discuss the significance of gender in relation to these concepts. It suggests that the production of gender in Islamic cinema should be understood within the context of Islamic modernity, the rise of Muslim publics, and religious commodification in Indonesia. No one strand alone can meaningfully portray the context of gender in Islamic cinema—it is the linkages between them which provide the theoretical basis.

Illuminated here, in conceptual terms, are trends that became more entrenched since the late Suharto years of the 1990s. This might suggest that Islamic films made in the 1970s and 1980s are outside the remit of the concepts considered in this section. I would hasten to say that this is not entirely untrue. Religious commodification was already evident during the New Order and as discussed below, became a point of contention during this period. However, the development of Muslim publics and Islamic modernity in recent decades mark a new phase in religious commodification in terms of scale and importance to the public sphere. A similar point can be made about gender. Scholarship on the development of Muslim publics and Islamic modernity cite the significance of gender in more recent decades of religious commodification than in the 1970s and 1980s (Göle 2000, 2002). The construction of gender is an *effect* of Islamic modernity conceived through political ideologies and cultural debates about the 'woman question' in Muslim societies. Debates about women's rights and education,

veiling, and polygamy coincided with contestations between 'progress' through modernity and preservation of tradition and religious orthodoxy (Kandiyoti 2009: 91). These concerns are transcoded in cinema and in other commodified ways, through a range of popular visual and audio media for the contemplation of a nation.

Commodification refers to 'the action of turning something into, or treating something as, a (mere) commodity; and the commercialisation of an activity, and so on, that is not by nature commercial' (OED 1989: 563). In the case of religious commodification, aspects of religious practices and symbols are rendered exchangeable in commercial terms. Historically, the commodification of Islam and its role in the production of Islamic cinema can be traced to transformations in Islamic behaviour in Indonesia over the last 40 years that have culminated in a public sphere in which Islam 'is everywhere' (Fealy 2008: 15). A public sphere in which 'Islam is everywhere' is illustrative of a phenomenon whereby Islam can be seen to have entered more deeply into the lives of Indonesian Muslims in more commodified ways than ever before. Investigations into religious commodification have challenged theories of secularisation in modern society demonstrating that far from a wholesale decline in public belief in God and religious membership, certain modern and rational societies, in particular those in Asia and the United States, continue to embrace religion and imbue public life with notions of religious symbolism. However, as Ariel Heryanto rightly notes, religion's relevance in an increasingly secularised world is maintained through its willingness to enter into 'dangerous liaisons with the logic of the capitalist market' (2011: 77).

Following Heryanto's cautionary view, questions about religious commodification and its relation to Islamic cinema need to be raised. What happens to religious symbols when they enter the discursive circuit of cinema? Do they cease to be sacred and become objects of entertainment? Or are they simply a commodity bereft of any spiritual meaning? Can they be both sacred and a source of entertainment? There is considerable debate among practitioners and scholars about the effects of commodified forms of Islam. Some have praised the increased presence of Islam in the spiritual marketplace as it encourages the incorporation of Islamic values into the everyday practices of Muslims. Others have been less celebratory of Islamic commodification, arguing that the commercialisation of Islam appeals to superficial expressions of piety (Fealy 2008: 16).

The circulation of Islamic symbols outside the formalist domains and authority of the state and religious institutions and into the market and the

media coheres with Eickelman and Anderson's (1999) concept of the rise of Muslim publics. Facilitated by increasing access to new modes of communication and popular media, the creation of the Muslim public sphere challenges the authority of conventional religious institutions and fosters the building of a civil society and the 'global *ummah* (community)' (Eickelman and Anderson 1999: 2). The Muslim public sphere is cultivated by Muslim actors who utilise secular and religious idiom in public debates transformed by an eruption of religious issues where, among other things, Islamic films have become a popular subject of cultural criticism (Göle 2002: 173). The development of Muslim publics conducive to the rise of Islamic commodification is a feature of 'Islamic modernity'. Islamic modernity is a political and cultural sensibility whereby modernity is embraced alongside a commitment to Islam as a project of modernity in itself. The concept of Islamic modernity departs from the view that positions modernity and Islam as mutually exclusive and in opposition to each other. Rather, Islamic modernity develops its own approximations to Western notions of modernity (Göle 2000: 92). In short, not only are Muslim publics a product of Islamic modernity, but the former rely on the sensibility of Islamic modernity to develop as a site for continuing contestations, not least the contest of Islamic gender relations in the public and private spheres. Nilüfer Göle's notion of Islamic modernities adopts a postmodern suspicion against the grand narrative of Western modernity in favour of a more hybrid and reflexive modernity. An Islamic modernity engages critically and creatively with Western ideas of modernity, destabilising fixed ideas about Islam versus the modern 'West', the secular and religious spheres, and the (gendered) private and public domains. Islamic modernity has elements of an Islamist utopia where Islamic values inform aspects of public culture and everyday life. But as an Islamist utopia, it departs from the key premises of Western modernity in distinct ways: rather than forward-looking it is past-oriented—towards a lost golden Islamic age, and it is committed to collectivism rather than autonomous individualism (Göle 2002: 175).

Indonesia, however, is not an Islamist utopia. Instead, it has features that Göle anticipates in Islamic modernity; of being in a situation where Islamism is losing its revolutionary edge, otherwise known as post-Islamism. Göle also speaks of post-Islamism whereby the actors of Islamism have diversified beyond political and religious ranks and are represented in intellectual and artistic arenas who contribute to the production and dissemination of Islamic visions and ideals. The production and dissemination of such visions and ideals relate to the consumption of Islamic media and Islamic forms of consumerism

that exist, not without friction, alongside purist Islamic beliefs and practices. Göle's argument that in 'Muslim contexts, women's participation in public life, corporeal visibility, and social mixing all count as modern' (2000: 177) is echoed in observations on the convergence (or clashes) between modernity, Islam, and gender relations in Indonesia (Brenner 1996; Bennett 2005; Rinaldo 2008; Robinson 2010). Gender, which underpins Islamic modernity (Göle 2000, 2002), is made more visible by Muslim women's participation of the public sphere. I would argue further that the gendered characteristic of Islamic modernity is fostered by the embrace of consumerism by the pious Muslim middle classes and gendered Islamic consumption.

If one should consider the relationship between the commodification of Islam and gender in film, the question is less about how gender became a commodity in the marketisation of Islam than what kinds of gendered representations are used as commodities in the Islamic marketplace. The question of why only certain kinds of representations of Muslim women in Indonesian film and other forms of mass media are emphasised begs the suggestion that such representations sell. Studies on the rise of 'popular' Islam in Indonesia frequently cite the capitalisation of the headscarf, whether through advertising, fashion, music, or indeed film (Heryanto 2008, 2011; Hasan 2009; Sasono 2010). The preponderance of the headscarf's associations with consumerism signals the recognition of pious Muslim women as an attractive consumer group and the headscarf's powerful visual quality. As the most visible of Islamic symbols, the headscarf or Islamic veil is a marker of Islamic difference and a symbol with multiple meanings that cut across religious, political, and class lines. Here, the headscarf is understood as a commodified symbol that is very closely associated with Islamic femininity. Commodified aspects of Islamic masculinity are less obvious and deserve more attention. This book will demonstrate aspects of commodified Islamic masculinity as featured in Islamic cinema and contribute to the nascent discussion on gender at the intersection of Islam, popular culture, commodification, modernity, and the public sphere. The identification of commodified Islamic femininity and masculinity may point to narrow representations of gender in Indonesian Islamic cinema, underlining the regular use of stereotypes in the genre. However, post-structuralist strategies in 'reading' audiovisual texts can illuminate the multiple layers of representation of gender. Approaches to studying representations of gender in Islamic cinema require an anti-essentialist view of gendered Islamic identity and gender in cinematic texts more generally if a historical and cultural understanding of such representations is to be gained.

Ways of Making Meaning

The approaches of the methodologies/theories mentioned here are built on particular epistemological foundations such as the interrogation between 'representations' and 'reality' and how meaning is generated. This section begins with an introduction to ideological critique as a way of examining the link between cultural representations and society in the maintenance of unequal social relations. A salient example is the use of ideological critique to illuminate the link between cultural representations of gender and socio-political ideals of gendered behaviour in order to ascertain the mechanisms of ideology (Gill 2007: 54). Ideals and expectations relating to gender are reproduced through ideologies of nationalism, developmentalism, and political Islam that dissimulate heteronormativity as something natural and to be desired. However, ideological critique, based on Gramscian analysis of domination, emphasises a one-way 'hypodermic needle' model of meaning production and reception. Such a model for understanding how meaning-making works neglects creative and dissenting readings by the 'ordinary' recipient of representations. As discussed below, semiotic and post-structuralist feminist analysis approaches address this reductive understanding of how representations work through a focus on film as text and the unlocking of multiple meanings embedded in the text. Furthermore, post-structuralist feminist approaches depart from the notion of ideology that appeals to the unified subject and engage instead with differences within and between subjects that become the target of ideology in film texts. That said, however, ideology is still a key concept when examining the function of representations and its relation to power and discourse.

Gender is understood as an ideological function that is replicated through cultural practices, institutions, and texts. Ideology is understood as the dominant set of ideas and values which imbues a society with 'social behaviour and representative texts at a level that is not necessarily obvious or conscious' (Nelmes 2007: 233). Ideology, however, requires constant re-establishing through hegemony, the means through which dominant groups maintain control over subordinate groups by making ideas and practices culturally entrenched and 'common sense'. However, rather than being fixed and unchanging, hegemony has the propensity to transform and be open to negotiation and challenge (Gill 2007: 55). With the notion of gender as ideological function reproduced in cinematic practice, one needs a framework to peel away the layers of signification contained in the images and sometimes, film sound, to unpack the representations of

women and men. The framework in question is a semiotic-based approach that treats films as text and as having language-like qualities, allowing the scholar to identify structural principles of the cinematic experience.

The semiotic-based approaches to film texts is also influenced by post-structuralist approaches to representation. Post-structuralist approaches to representations of gender are concerned with the way gender is constituted through media representations—as images and other texts—rather than mirroring pre-existing categories of femininity and masculinity (Gill 2007: 12). Such an approach is based on the post-structuralist suspicion of universalisms and emphasis on cultural and discursive constructions of gender. The adoption of post-structuralist feminist approaches also means a shift away from focusing on gender stereotypes towards diversity in representations of gender (Gill 2007: 12). A combination of semiotic text analysis with an emphasis on feminist post-structuralism results in the acceptance of the 'polysemic' quality of gendered subjectivities (Lövheim 2013: 17) and the possibility of identifying beyond oppressive and empowering cinematic representations. The adoption of a combination of approaches above may augur well as a method for studying Indonesian cinema and a critique of feminist film theory. Such a combination coheres with the idea of 'middle level research' (Bordwell 1996: 26–30) and a piecemeal approach (Carroll 1996: 38–39) to studying cinema. The two strategies privilege a more historical and culturally contextualised look at cinema while developing micro theories in the process. But more importantly, middle-level research and the piecemeal approach demonstrate that film research can proceed without employing the psychoanalytic framework routinely mandated by the film studies establishment (Bordwell and Carroll 1996: xiii).

Middle-level research and the piecemeal approach promoted by Bordwell and Carroll address the value of empirical research of cinematic text found in trade journals, newspapers, court cases, and other print materials generated around the film trade (discussed in the next section). Other aspects of empirical research of film fall under the rubric of middle-level research and piecemeal approach, such as the political economy of film. The political economy of film is less about individual films than about the commercial imperatives and principles of management behind film production, distribution, and exhibition. And finally, Bordwell argues for due attention by middle-level researchers to 'film syntax' (1996: 28) which refer to filmmaking techniques—the use of sound, camera movement, editing styles—as devices unique in cinematic storytelling. The strength of middle-level research and piecemeal approaches is found in its ability to combine traditionally distinct spheres of inquiry and to

cut across traditional boundaries between film aesthetics, institutions, and audience response while maintaining coherence and rigour in analysis (Bordwell 1996: 28).

Notes on the Field Site

Working in the field sites of Jakarta and Yogyakarta for seven months between December 2011 and July 2012 enabled an immersion into the debates about *film Islami* with Indonesian film critics, film scholars, filmmakers, and film producers. Interviewees or informants in the Indonesian film industry are regarded as primary sources. Contact with them was established through a snowballing technique initiated by friends in the Indonesian and Malaysian film industry. Meetings with informants for recorded interviews were negotiated mainly on the phone, by text messaging, and face-to-face meetings. A lightweight sound recording device was used to interview film critics, scholars, and filmmakers in Jakarta and Yogyakarta with their explicit permission. All recordings of the interviews were taken and saved in a Sony IC voice recorder and a notebook for personal note-taking. The timing of the field research influenced the emphasis of discussion surrounding the state of Islamic cinema in Indonesia. When the interviews with critics, scholars, and filmmakers were conducted, the Indonesian film industry was experiencing significant fluctuations in the number of cinemagoers. From a respectful one million viewers enjoyed by successful films in 2010, filmmakers in late 2011 could only expect a modest half a million viewers. Production values of current and future films, and the subsequent distribution and quality of DVDs reflect the slump as well. For instance, DVD buyers can purchase more cheaply made original DVDs with thinner plastic cases or without the casing at all at a lower 'economic' price.

Audiovisual material used in the writing of this text include films in DVD, VCD, and VHS format obtained and viewed at SOAS University of London and at the Indonesian film archive, Sinematek, in Jakarta. 16 films released between 1977 and 2012 were chosen for analysis based on their financial success, critical acclaim, and significant media attention. The films were also selected in order to display the diversity of Islamic themes found in the genre, ranging from the myth and legends of the arrival of Islam in Java, the merging of pop music and Islam, biopics of Islamic revolutionaries, polygamy, women's rights, poverty, and religious minorities in Indonesia. Printed sources consisting of newspaper and magazine film reviews and features on many of the selected films from the New Order period and thereafter

(between 1977 and 2012) were drawn from the archives of Sinematek. Derived from a variety of national and regional newspapers and magazines, these sources offer some information on the critical press reception contemporary to the films' release mainly from film critics and in the case of a few films, from the National Council of Ulamas, MUI. However, not all of the newspaper and magazine reviews and features collected from Sinematek were concerned with all the films analysed in this text. The magazine and newspaper clippings obtained from Sinematek also include promotional reports about films in the production stage and interviews with filmmakers and well-known actors who star in them. These reports illuminate the apparent motivation of the filmmaker behind the making of their films as a means of promoting them to discerning Muslim audiences.

Jakarta is the capital of the Indonesian film and media industry and functions as the main site from which the discourse on gender and Islam in audiovisual media flows. During the field research in Jakarta, I had the opportunity to speak with influential film critics and scholars of Indonesian cinema because of their direct involvement in the film industry as consultants in the writing of a few *film Islami*. Their views about *film Islami* reveal competing definitions and functions of the genre upon which the objectives of this study builds. Film critics have important roles in the success, and often prior to that, the production of a film. As influential actors in the film industry, critics actively affect the viewing decisions of film audiences in the early run of a film and as predictors, they can predict the box-office success of a film (Basuroy et al. 2003: 103). However, the usually sophisticated views of critics do not always translate to widespread popularity and box-office success. The class and institutional privilege of the critic is symptomatic of this disconnect between film criticism and mass audiences. But it is the same privilege that has traction in the discursive arena of scholarship in film and popular representations of Islam. In Indonesia, film critics lament the circular logic of insubstantial horror and sex in films that is continually reproduced because of the favourable market for such themes. However, their often disdainful views of such films have comparatively little impact on the high audience numbers these films receive.

Indonesian filmmakers and producers of films with Islamic themes do not always make them with the intention of conveying explicit statements on gender relations. However, as will be discussed in further detail below, interviews with the filmmaker Aditya Gumay and film producer Putut Widjanarko can prompt conversations that can lead to the production of new knowledge about gender in Islamic films. Other informants who were

interviewed, however, such as the filmmaker Nia Dinata and feminist activists Debra Yatim and BJD Gayatri were more explicit about their views on gender and Islam in Indonesian cinema and the role of women in the industry. The value of obtaining a diversity of views about gender in Indonesian cinema cannot be overstated, as it provides a snapshot of how ideas about not only gender, but also modernity and Islam are contested among Indonesia's tastemakers and intelligentsia. An interview with the Islamic scholar Noorhaidi Hasan in Yogyakarta on the rise of Islamic popular culture offered further insights into the emergence of Islamic cinema and its representations of gender. Influenced by the work of Nilüfer Göle, Hasan argued that Islamic popular culture is less a product of the Islamisation of culture than of the prevailing reality of Islamic modernity.

During the field research, I found that most of the informants I interviewed were not just significant actors in the development of discourse on film, Islam, and gender in Indonesia. They were also members of the cultural elite who were committed in campaigns that champion civil liberties and anti-extremism. Each informant may have specific demands towards these ends, but they coalesce to form members of Indonesian civil society. A term utilised by Alexis de Tocqueville in his writings about the process of democracy in nineteenth-century United States, civil society refers to intermediary groups outside the government comprising of non-profit, human rights or religious organisations, women's groups, cultural initiatives, and other associations that manifest the interests and will of citizens (Hefner 2011: 23). I argue that my informants are part of 'networks of civic engagement' (Putnam et al. 1994) in post-Suharto Indonesia. Since Suharto's resignation in 1998 and the rise of the *Reformasi* movement that endeavoured to reinstate democracy in the nation, a surge of new political parties, women's non-governmental organisations, religious groups (political or otherwise), and media and cultural industries began to participate in the newly unfettered public sphere. The decentralisation of political authority following the end of Suharto's regime witnessed aggregates of groups and individuals who form networks of civic engagement independent of the state taking on greatly contested public matters (Hefner 2011). Networks of civic engagement are produced in the seemingly self-governing horizontal collaboration between the aforementioned groups who aim to make 'democracy work'. However, not all horizontal collaborations are meant to instil democracy in society as right-wing and extremist groups also employ similar modes of engagement to rally for their cause in society (Hefner 2011: 24).

Interviewing Indonesia's Cultural Elite

In-depth interviews with Indonesia's cultural elite help forge scholarly and industrial narratives about gender, Islam, and cinema into a dialogical knowledge production process between the researching interviewer and interviewee. The interviews with those who are active in the filmmaking industry and scholarship on Islam, gender, and cinema add to the building and clarification of the categories of 'gender' and 'Islam' in the discourse of Indonesian cinema. Interviews with film critics, producers, directors, and scholars also facilitate discussions on the definition of a film genre, and in this case, the *film Islami* genre. Individuals interviewed for this research depart from the more common forms of ethnographic-oriented interview in that they represent the small group of high-status, influential elites who are the decision-makers of Indonesia's cultural industry. They also control various aspects of the Indonesian film industry and are experts in the field of Islam, media, and gender in Indonesia. Elites are commonly invoked in qualitative research, but are less frequently interviewed compared to 'ordinary' members of society over whom power is exercised. The reasons for the comparative lack of in-depth interviews with elites are the practical constraints involved. They are often protective of themselves and their interests making them more difficult to access and as a result researchers would usually need to get past gatekeepers such as personal assistants, advisers, and security guards (Odendahl and Shaw 2001: 299). These constraints underscore the unequal power relations in favour of the respondents that lie in wait for the researcher (Burnham 2004: 205).

Due to the various barriers to interviewing elites, studies have recommended that researchers draw on their institutional affiliations, use personal connections where possible, and obtain the endorsement of a project's sponsor that can ensure cooperation from the interviewee (Ostrander 1993: 9). In any study with elites there is a kind of understanding of wealth and power in society and in this particular case, the Indonesian cultural elite have substantial power in the development of public opinion and intellectual discourse. The cultural elite are commonly identified by abstract notions of power and privilege, but their identification is less straightforward and is criticised as reinforcing dualism of the 'powerful' and the 'less powerful others' (Ostrander 1993: 10). Studies on members of the elite have defined this group primarily by their occupations (Lerner et al. 1996: 10), educational pedigree, and lineage (Schijf 2012: 37). Earlier studies of Indonesian elites (Mysbergh 1957; van Niel 1970) defined the

group as Jakarta-based, Dutch-educated, urban, articulate, and descendants of the aristocracy who 'claim to know and speak for the people; yet often present a misleading impression of national homogeneity' (Mysbergh 1957: 38). There are few contemporary accounts of Indonesian elites other than about those who belong to the inner sanctum of politics and high-ranking military officers. But in everyday parlance, there is an easy recognition and self-acknowledgement among my informants of being part of the cultural elite in Indonesia. The use of the term 'cultural elite' is used here as a mutually reinforcing shorthand between my informants and others like themselves as representing a small group of individuals with decision-making roles in the film industry and intellectual expertise.

Positionality

My position as researcher and the interactions developed with respondents did not occur in a vacuum. Rather they were constituted in specific social relations and historical conditions. The relative ease with which I was given the access to and time with my interlocutors may be attributed to a host of possible factors; my Malay identity, gender, age, academic affiliations, social connections, the ability to communicate in the local language, and a flexible attitude. The relative openness of members of the film industry to outsiders is also an important determining factor in my success to gaining access to them. Seeing as gender and sexuality are conceived through power relations, it is important that it is couched in feminist approaches to the research process, analysis, and the writing up. Feminist approaches to research mobilises a critique of the positivist researcher and requires an acknowledgement of the researcher's partiality. The researcher's partiality impacts on the research process and knowledge produced in numerous ways. For instance, a researcher's identity, assumptions, and interests will be reflected in the selection and conceptualisation of topics for an enquiry, formulation of research questions, the interactions between researcher and participant, and the presentation of the research (Archer 2002: 109). Feminist researchers must also address the potential problems of exploitation, privilege, and subordination within the research process particularly when participants from less powerful or marginalised social groups are studied and whose lives are interpreted by researchers from socially dominant groups (Haw 1996: 320).

In response to the power imbalances between researcher and participant, arguments have been made about the many advantages of 'matching'

researchers and participants in terms of social backgrounds and life circumstances. However, the 'matching' strategy for research perpetuates notions of essentialism that individuals from similar social groups share the same world views and life experiences. The strategy has also been criticised for being rigid when identities are argued to have the potential to be shifting and multiple, often crossing the boundaries of social categories (Yuval-Davies 1994; Bhavani and Phoenix 1994). The way forward to developing anti-oppressive feminist research is through the recognition that the subjectivities of the researcher and participant are interdependent (Henwood and Pidgeon 1995: 115) and by employing feminist reflexive practice. Reflexivity here refers to 'self-critical sympathetic introspection and the self-conscious analytical scrutiny of the self as a researcher' (England 1994: 82) as a method towards situating knowledge production. The recognition of dynamic subjectivities and reflexive practice allows for the delineation of differences and similarities between researcher and participants that contribute to particular types of knowledge and the consequences for both parties (Maynard and Purviss 1994). It is at this juncture where the researcher must locate herself in relation to her participants and clearly spell out her values/politics and the procedures used to carry out the research (Edwards 1990; Gill 1995).

As a Malay female scholar of Indonesian cinema, my presence at several field sites was welcomed for the very fact that a Malaysian was taking a keen interest in Indonesian popular culture. Malaysia and Indonesia share a number of historical, cultural, and linguistic links that facilitate transcultural exchange. The bilateral relationship and notion of kinship shared between Indonesia and Malaysia are encapsulated in the idea of *serumpun* (common stock or 'race') (Liow 2004: 2). However, since their national inception in the middle of the twentieth century up to the present day, the two countries have had a volatile political relationship on a number of occasions. Cases of abuse against Indonesian migrant workers in Malaysia and the cultural 'theft' committed by the Malaysian Tourism Board of regional traditions from Indonesia and relabeling them as uniquely Malaysian count as one of the many un-neighbourly crimes perpetrated by Malaysia. The assumption that perpetuates this divide is that Malaysia may be economically affluent but it is culturally poor and xenophobic towards its Indonesian neighbour. The subject of the various abuses and controversial cultural claims committed by my compatriots would crop up with some regularity in conversations with my research participants, which demonstrates that I cannot escape my national positionality in discussions about my scholarly interest in their

cultural affairs. With all things considered, the production of this study owes a great deal, at the macro level, to the specific historical moment in Indonesian history and the manner in which it impacts on its national cinema, public religious practices and markets, and gender relations and at the micro level, to my positionality and timing as researcher and the interactions with my participants.

Outline of Chapters

This introductory chapter began with a discussion about the need to study representations of gender in Indonesian Islamic cinema in its social and historical contexts. There has been, to this date, minimal but increasing research on this subject. And while there have been a few studies reviewing the history of religious representations in Indonesian cinema (Sasono 2013a, b), very few focus on the gendered dimension of such representations (Paramaditha 2010; Hoesterey and Clark 2012). By heeding the call for such a study, several issues about how the categories of 'gender' and 'religion' in cinematic representations should be addressed are also called into question. This chapter introduced theoretical approaches underpinning commodification of gender and Islam before discussing the methodological frameworks for the analysis of film text and field research.

The definition of the Indonesian Islamic film genre is considered in detail in Chapter 2 based on an analysis of recurring themes and narrative structures, audiovisual conventions, production ethics, and modes of distribution and exhibition. There is as yet no official guideline to making an Islamic film, but many filmmakers have nonetheless found ways to sanctify the film production, whether through consultation with the highest religious authorities or adhering to strict Islamic laws in visualising characters in film. The poetics of Islamic film production is considered from an industrial perspective: how the need to visualise Islam has ebbed and flowed throughout the history of Indonesian cinema following the tide of geopolitical vicissitude and burgeoning Islamic consumerism. Filmmakers of religious film must also contend with censorship and the government's uneasiness regarding representations of Islam, politics, and history.

Chapter 3 considers the history on gender in Indonesian cinema, in particular its theoretical ramifications and scope. It will present an overview of the historical context of the Indonesian film industry, namely from an angle that focuses on its inception, the relationship between censorship and representation, and the rise of women filmmakers in the post-Suharto

period. It then reviews the scholarship which highlights gender as a key organising principle in studies on Indonesian cinema of the New Order and post-New Order period while also addressing the gap in the scholarship on the intersection between gender and Islam in Indonesian cinema.

Chapter 4 discusses the preoccupation with the proto-nation in Islamic films during the New Order, not least nationalist struggles and release from colonial powers and the Indonesian nation's development into a modern state. This chapter will explicate how the rise of Islam as an anti-oppressive force is embodied in the masculine figures of the Javanese mystics in *Sembilan Wali* (The Nine Holy Men, 1985, dir. Djun Saptohadi) and Pangeran Dipogenoro in *Pahlawan Goa Selarong* (Warrior of Selarong Cave, 1972, dir. Lilik Sudjio). The men are also shown as founding fathers of a proto-nation that predates the establishment of the Indonesian nation-state. Chapter 4 will also explore two other films about men as bearers of modern Islam, *Al-Kautsar* (Abundance, 1977, dir. Chaerul Umam) and *Perjuangan dan Doa* (Struggle and Prayer, 1977, dir. Maman Firmansyah), as an illustration of Muslim men's primary role in national development and progress.

In contrast to the portrayal of men as founders of the proto-nation and bearers of modernity is the depiction of women in the latter half of Chapter 4. The first of the two films on femininity and its relationship to the proto-nation, *Tjoet Nha Dhien* (1988, dir. Eros Djarot), concerns the eponymous revolutionary campaigner for the freedom of Aceh in Northern Sumatra from Dutch forces at the turn of the twentieth century. The second, *Para Perintis Kemerdekaan* (The Pioneers of Independence, 1980, dir. Asrul Sani), aligns colonial subjugation with the oppression of women under literalist Islamic marital law in early twentieth-century Dutch-occupied Sumatra. This section of Chapter 4 examines more closely the theoretical assumptions surrounding the representation of women in nationalist discourse.

Chapter 5 will discuss how post-New Order Indonesian filmmakers use films as a representational arena to challenge negative stereotypes of Muslims in the world after 9/11. Produced mainly by young male filmmakers, the films portray highly educated and working Muslim women and female converts to Islam who have agency to lead a life of piety on their own terms. Their faith and resoluteness however are tested through a series of domestic struggles and family relations on the verge of collapse. These may be melodramatic conventions typical to films about women (Kuhn 1984; Gledhill 1987), but as films that deliberately portray women who take

control over their personal lives and religious choices, they can be described as part of 'oppositional cinema'. The concept of agency runs throughout the chapter as central female characters of Islamic films of this period activate personal choice via-à-vis self-subordination and violent abuse. Agency is also problematised as young women participate of their own volition in radical Islamism for the purpose of self-actualisation. Chapter 5 closes with a study on the rise of Islamic female stars in Indonesian cinema, a cultural phenomenon unique to the post-New Order period.

In Chapter 6, the sexual excesses of the male polygamist in *Mengaku Rasul* (Self-Proclaiming Prophet, 2008, dir. Helfi Kardit) is examined to identify the contours of failed Muslim masculinity. This is followed by a look at the notion of masculinity in crisis through an Islamic lens. A nation still recovering from the Asian economic crisis of 1997, a high unemployment rate and the obscenely vast gap between rich and poor in Indonesia represent the backdrop of two films, *Emak Ingin Naik Haji*, (Mother Wants To Go On the Hajj, 2010, dir. Aditya Gumay) and *Kun Fayakun*, (God Wills It, And So It Is 2010, dir. H. Guntur Novaris). The two films demonstrate the way masculinity in crisis is recuperated through charity and the power of prayer. The theme of failed Muslim masculinity continues in the gentle rural-based drama *3 Doa 3 Cinta* (3 Wishes 3 Loves, 2008, dir. Nurman Hakim), which injects nuance into the 'explanation' of why young Muslim men may be drawn into radical and militant versions of Islam.

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Pahlawan Goa Selarong (Warrior of Selarong Cave, 1972, dir. Lilik Sudjio)
Perjuangan dan Doa (Struggle and Prayer, 1977, dir. Maman Firmansyah)
Sembilan Wali (The Nine Holy Men, 1985, dir. Djun Saptohadi)
Tjoet Nha Dhien (1988, dir. Eros Djarot)

CHAPTER 2

Dakwah at the Cinema: Identifying the Generic Parameters of Islamic Films

During the fasting month of Ramadan, all Muslims are expected to engage in spiritual reflection and the enhancement of their piety through various rituals. Ramadan is also a period inundated with Islamic consumer and media products to appeal to a presumably more pious market than other times of the year. Films with Islamic content featuring characters on a quest of spiritual fulfilment would be broadcast on television and played in cinemas throughout Ramadan in the New Order period. But after the success of *Ayat-ayat Cinta* (*Quranic Verses of Love*, dir. Hanung Bramantyo) in 2008, films about spiritual struggle and other Islamic themes began to step outside the once-a-year 'niche' market and become part of an all-year round, mainstream cinematic experience. *Ayat-ayat Cinta* and the films that followed in the footsteps of its success are also different from their New Order predecessors in their themes, style, and mode of marketing and exhibition.

The spillover of popular representations of Islam in film beyond the month of Ramadan is an effect of the rise of Islamic symbols in the public sphere and popular culture since the late 1990s. Prior to the success of *Ayat-ayat Cinta*, films with Islamic themes were considered risky ventures. Besides lacking the promise of commercial viability, the potential treatment of Islamic matters as entertainment would prove controversial for film-makers and audiences alike. Somehow, such views have shifted towards a commercial embrace of Islamic popular culture particularly in the years after 1998. The meteoric rebirth of *film Islami* during the post-New Order period precipitated by *Ayat-ayat Cinta* signalled the culmination of

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Islamisation of Indonesian popular culture. *Ayat-ayat Cinta* became one of the most successful films in Indonesia's history, with 3 million viewers within three weeks of release and spurred a stream of other Islamic films. In the following year, two Islamic films, *Ketika Cinta Bertasbih* 1 (*When Love Glorifies God 1*, 2009, dir. Chaerul Umam) and its sequel *Ketika Cinta Bertasbih* 2 (*When Love Glorifies God 2*, 2009, dir. Chaerul Umam), attracted 3.1 million and 2.0 million viewers, respectively, making them the two most successful films of 2009 (Imanjaya 2009a). Costing 40 billion rupiah (£2.6 million) to make, *Ketika Cinta Bertasbih* 1 was also the most expensive film in Indonesian history.

A number of authors agree that the rise in Islamic media and youth consumer trends are also in dialogical relationship with the emergence of a more pious Muslim middle class since 1998 (Fealy 2008; van Wichelen 2010; Heryanto 2011). Since the late 1990s, Islamic piety in Indonesia has become emblematic of an elite social status and political affiliation invigorated by a global phenomenon characterised by the revival of both cultural and political Islam (Hasan 2009: 231). It can be argued here that the *film Islami* genre emerges from the plethora of Islamic cultural products made for a pious but nonetheless acquisitive Muslim middle classes. In this chapter the questions of when, what, why, and how of *film Islami* will contribute to a better understanding of popular representations of Islam in Indonesia. This chapter will begin with a historical overview of the commercialisation of Islamic teachings or *dakwah* in Indonesian cinema before going into an in-depth analysis of defining the Islamic film genre. In defining the Islamic genre, we can better understand the character of Islamic symbols on-screen. Islamic principles and Quranic verses used by all Muslims to lead a spiritual and Islamic life are believed to be divine and unchanging. But the need and opportunity to turn these features of Islam and Muslim life into cinematic representations are contingent to specific historical, social, and economic contexts. As much as cinema is a cultural product it is also an economic product whose *raison d'être* and success are subject to lucrative trends for maximised profit. And as I will discuss below, not only is the economic reality a key determinant in the making of *film Islami* but so too is the need for 'authentic' representations of Muslims and their spiritual lives.

While a number of scholars and critics have written on aspects of *film Islami* in Indonesia (Imanjaya 2009a, b; Sasono 2011a, b; Heryanto 2011; Hoesterey and Clark 2012), there has not yet been a systematic attempt to define *film Islami* as a genre. To address the lack of a detailed exploration

into the genre, this chapter sets out to identify the shared features of certain films that contribute to its generic category. A modest attempt at formulating the characteristics of the genre, although not an exhaustive one, is imperative here despite two negating factors: first, the elusive categorical boundaries of the genre and second, the reluctance on the part of filmmakers to categorise their films as Islamic for fear of pigeonholing their work and alienating certain audiences, Muslim and non-Muslim alike. Below, *film Islami* from the New Order period and thereafter will not only be defined within its diagetic boundaries such as its narrative structures, themes, and visual and audio aesthetics. Other elements beyond the film text are also considered, namely the publicity strategies and its production ethics. Islamic films of the New Order and post-New Order period share many similarities in purpose, narrative form, and visual and audio aesthetics. However, the use of music soundtracks, YouTube video clips, and DVD packaging as promotional strategies were common only in Islamic cinema from the 1990s onwards.

This chapter will also build on Katinka van Heeren's view that nascent efforts in the development of Muslim visual ethics in the Reform years mirror the agenda of oppositional Third Cinema (van Heeren 2012: 121–122). As an oppositional cinema, the Islamic film is a reaction to the perceived assault on Islamic values by immoral elements in mainstream film and the misrepresentation of Muslims in Western media (van Heeren 2012: 122). Finally, this chapter will outline the challenges filmmakers of Islamic films face through institutional barriers and censorship. Islamic groups as well as the state often exert pressure and threaten to put a stop to film representations of 'hot button' issues that are intertwined with ideas of the nation, Islam, and security. Indonesia may be home to the largest Muslim population in the world, but that does not necessarily facilitate the production of Islamic cinema. This chapter will show that the opportunity to present Islamic themes in film is made more complicated when placed in an obstacle course of political and ideological barriers, market forces, and censorship.

Between the Purity of *Dakwah* and Market Forces

What is the purpose of Islamic films? How did they come into being? How do Islamic films reconcile their spiritual purpose with commercial ones? The answers to these questions are organised around the concept and practice of *dakwah* or Islamic preaching. This section is part historical overview of the

history of Islamic cinema in Indonesia and part analysis of debates surrounding the meaning of films made for *dakwah*. Indonesia is not unique in its filmmakers' quest for turning cinema into a mass medium for religious preaching. The rise of Pentecostal 'video-films' in Ghana, the success of Hollywood films such as *Ben-Hur* (1959, dir. William Wyler) and *The Passion of Christ* (2004, dir. Mel Gibson), and the popular reception of *Karunamayudu* (Ocean of Mercy 1978, dir. A. Bhimsingh), a Telugu retelling of the story of Jesus, watched by over 10 million in South India are but a few examples testament to the bankable marriage of popular representations of religion and economic know-how (Nayar 2012).

Turkey, Iran, and Egypt have been producing their own brand of cinema with Islamic aesthetics in recent decades (Abu-Lughod 1995; Dönmez-Colin 2004: 3). Films with overt Islamic themes earned attention in Turkey as 'white cinema' in the 1990s when Islamist parties gained political dominance (Dönmez-Colin 2004: 14). A distinctively Islamist cinema that adhered to *fiqh*-based ideology (Islamic jurisprudence) was promoted in Iran after the 1979 revolution but lasted only until the mid-1980s[1] (Dönmez-Colin 2004: 40). The role of Islam in Indonesian cinema can be traced back to the period of Sukarno's 'Old Order' (1949–1965) when Islamic art and cultural organisations were influential in the development of a Muslim aesthetic in filmmaking. These organisations, such as the Association for Islamic Arts and Culture (HSBI)[2] and the Cultural Association of Indonesia, (LESBUMI),[3] emerged in the spirit of pan-Islamism and anti-imperialism spreading across Indonesia and other newly independent Muslim postcolonial nations (Chisaan 2012: 282). The need for an Islamic cultural expression also arose from the heightened political tensions between the competing ideological strands of Sukarno's political policy—nationalism, religion, and communism or *Nasakom* (Chisaan 2012: 283). It was during this period of Muslim consciousness in Indonesian culture when the first Islamic film, *Titian Serambut Dibelah Tujuh* (*The Narrow Bridge*,

[1] For a discussion on Islamic cinema in post-revolution Iran, see Naficy (1995).

[2] Founded in 1956 and affiliated with the modernist Islamic party, MASJUMI (*Madjelis Sjura Muslimin Indonesia*, Consultative Council of Indonesian Muslims), HSBI, (*Himpunan Seni Budaja Islam*, the Association for Islamic Arts and Culture), was a pioneer in promoting the development of Islamic culture in Indonesia.

[3] *Lembaga Seniman Budayawan Muslimin Indonesia* (LESBUMI, Cultural Association of Indonesia) was founded in 1962 and was the cultural arm of the main traditionalist Islamic organisation Nahdlatul Ulama.

1959, dir. Asrul Sani) was made. A few years later, a film about the revolutionary potential of Islam, *Tauhid* (*The Oneness of God*, 1964, dir. Asrul Sani), was produced by Djamaluddin Malik with the backing of the Ministry of Information and Ministry of Religion and President Sukarno (Chisaan 2012: 99; Imanda 2012: 92). *Tauhid* is not only an Islamic film with political undertones made during Sukarno's presidency but, like the documentary film *Panggilan Nabi Ibrahim* (*Ibrahim's Calling*, 1964, dir. Misbach Yusa Biran) is also an educational film about the hajj.

An important practice closely associated with *film Islami* is *dakwah* or Islamic preaching. *Dakwah* is widely regarded to be central to the function of Islamic cinema and media. Derived from the Arabic term *da'wa* to mean call or invitation, *dakwah* in the Indonesian context is a general term to denote efforts to propagate Islam in society. Although *dakwah* is used to convert non-Muslims to Islam, the term is more commonly invoked for the strengthening of the Islamic faith and guiding Muslims to live by Islamic principles (Meuleman 2011: 236). The use of cinema for *dakwah*, however, is more vague in its execution. Nevertheless, it was embraced by Indonesia's pioneering filmmakers Asrul Sani, Djamaluddin Malik, and Misbach Yusa Biran who made films for the purpose of *dakwah*. Clerics and religious commentators have often tended to define the *dakwah* film in terms of what it is not, in that it does not have the 'immoral' elements of Hollywood cinema and the preoccupation of Indonesian cinema with horror, the supernatural, and eroticised display of women (van Heeren 2012: 117).

In his 1965 essay entitled '*Film sebagai dakwah*' (Film as *dakwah*), the distinguished filmmaker Usmar Ismail urged other filmmakers to 'make films a media of [national] struggle and a media for Islamic proselytising' (Ismail 1983: 100). *Dakwah* films, he asserts, need not be religious or commercial akin to the 1956 Hollywood blockbuster *The Ten Commandments* but should affirm Muslims as subjects of God. A fellow contemporary of Usmar Ismail, Asrul Sani, however, held a more critical view. Sani argued that all *dakwah* films made during the New Order and the period after were misguided in their approach. For Sani, Indonesian *dakwah* films are preoccupied with ritualistic and dogmatic Islam with the intention of substituting the role of the *kyai* or religious leader. He even rejects the term 'Islamic film', arguing instead that 'all films that go beyond the surface of life are [actually] religious films' (Sani 2000). Cinema as a tool for *dakwah* has also been praised by intellectuals outside the film community. In an article

written in 1983, the Muslim intellectual Abdurrahman Wahid[4] or as he is more popularly known, Gus Dur, argued that film should be a medium to spread the Islamic faith. He compared the films he had watched while in Egypt in the 1960s with those that were made in Indonesia and found that Indonesian filmmakers presented Islamic matters in a formalistic way that emphasised the facile deployment of Quranic verses (Wahid 1983: 53). For Gus Dur, the audience of the *dakwah* film in Indonesia 'is a congregation attending a sermon about the subordination of science to religious truth' (Wahid 1983: 53).

The role and moral influence of film in Indonesian society were first officially discussed by Indonesia's National Council of Ulamas (MUI) in 1983. The *ulama* condemned the preponderance of violent and sexual content in films produced in and imported into Indonesia during the New Order. Even the very act of cinema-going was regarded to be morally suspect. Most clerics maintained that the darkened ambience of the cinema would encourage illicit sexual behaviour (Bintang 1983; Jasin 1985). But as a sign of compromise with the film industry, they suggested instead that films should be used for *dakwah*. As a cinematic model for Islamic preaching, the *ulama* were shown Chaerul Umam's 1982 remake of Asrul Sani's *Titian Serambut Dibelah Tujuh* (The Narrow Bridge). The MUI's consensus on films shifted by the mid-1980s when the first of a string of Islamic 'mission' films on the early Islamic preachers in Java was released (van Heeren 2012: 116). Questions about the winning formula of producing Islamic films and the role of religious authorities began to animate the print media and conferences from 1989 onwards (van Heeren 2012: 117). While there was an agreement that as experts on Islam clerics have an important role in Islamic filmmaking to ensure the 'correct' portrayal of Islam, there was uncertainty about the extent of their involvement in the production of a film. Do the *ulama*s only perform as consultants to filmmakers, or do they have a greater leverage in the filmmaking process by deciding what films to make and even becoming actors themselves? (Cahyono 1989: 20). As a sign of their approval, a number of clerics have acted in 'mission' films to attract spiritually discerning audiences. An example of a *dakwah* film receiving the approval and praise of clerics is *Sembilan Wali* (The Nine Holy Men 1985, dir. Djun Saptohadi).

[4] Abdurrahman Wahid was also the president of Indonesia from 1999 to 2001.

The course of *dakwah* in Indonesian cinema did not always run smoothly as Islamic preaching was a sensitive subject during the New Order. The massacre of Communist *abangan* or nominal Muslims during the 1965 coup and subsequent transition into the New Order resulted in the suspicion and rejection of Islam in parts of Java (Hefner 1987: 540). In their response to heightened tensions towards Islam, promoters of *dakwah* employed subtle, non-violent strategies for proselytising. This 'soft' approach to *dakwah* in the 1970s and 1980s was directed towards Muslims who identified as 'Islam KTP' (*Islam Kartu Tanda Penduduk* or Muslim identity card holders), a post-1966 description for non-practising Muslims (Cederroth 1991: 7). Thus *dakwah* in Indonesian films is targeted mainly at Muslim audiences who are by default in need of spiritual improvement. The care taken to present a friendly and peaceful image of Muslims in Indonesian popular culture for the purpose of *dakwah* also resulted in the refashioning of the notion of *perjuangan* (struggle) from its connotations of fighting and warfare to the emancipation of the masses in popular representations of Islamic history and figures (Soenarto 2005: 54). With the suppression of political Islam during the New Order, the use of Islamic symbols in public discourse was exercised with sensitivity. Carefully selected cultural signs of Islamic piety such as well-rehearsed Quranic phrases and non-provocative images of mosques were used in popular representations of Islam.

Besides the 'mission' films, the television broadcast of Islamic music programmes was another sign of the successful incorporation of *dakwah* into popular culture in the 1980s. Among the biggest stars of the Islamic pop music scene is the flamboyant Rhoma Irama and his band Soneta Group who inflected Islamic teachings into their brand of *dangdut* music. Popular among working class Indonesians, *dangdut* is a hybrid of Malay, Arab, and Indian musical styles (Ishadi 2011: 25). *Dakwah* is central to Rhoma Irama's music and later, films (see Chapter 4 for a further discussion). He acknowledges the 'unconventional and controversial' combination of music and proselytising, which is why he feels duty-bound to clearly explicate how *dakwah* in music and cinema is accomplished (Irama 2011: 185). Despite his best efforts, however, Rhoma Irama's oeuvre has been dismissed as low class, trashy, and bizarre by Indonesian cultural and political elites (Frederick 1982: 124). Towards the late 1990s and early 2000s, the formula of *film Islami* as a serious medium for preaching would regularly absorb elements of horror and the supernatural. An Islamic teacher or *kyai*-cum-exorcist would often make an appearance in *dakwah* films of the period defeating evil spirits and restoring the moral order (van Heeren

2007: 213). Similar to the role of the Catholic priest in Hollywood religious horror, the image of the *kyai* became commonly associated with the guardian of the spiritual world, protecting the masses from supernatural evil. He is ready for supernatural warfare, armed with Quranic verses and steely determination to defeat ghosts and demons that threaten the masses. The inclusion of the *kyai* in horror films in the 1990s and 2000s stems from a regulation by the National Film Council to ensure that the 'devoutness and glorification of the One and Only God' prevails in a conflict between good and evil (Van Heeren 2007: 214).

Films such as *Ayat-ayat Cinta* in 2008 and the others that shortly followed were seen as filling the moral vacuum created by a mass media dominated by elements of sex, horror, and superstition. The popularity of *Ayat-ayat Cinta* in 2008 is therefore argued to be a testimony to the public's anxieties about widespread moral corruption in the media (Widodo 2008). Ariel Heryanto (2011: 75), however, holds another view. He suggests that the youthful and middle-class characters in *Ayat-ayat Cinta* struck a chord with its biggest audience who were similarly young, middle-class, and religious. By this point in Indonesia's film history, there have been many films tackling a diversity of Islamic themes prompting scholars to argue that as a genre, Islamic cinema had come of age. In what ways is *film Islami* a genre? What makes a *film Islami* Islamic? Cynical film critics in Indonesia argue that a film becomes Islamic when veiled characters are featured prominently. The next section, however, makes a case for an Islamic film genre beyond the depiction of veils and even turbans. The aesthetic and narrative patterns associated with films of an Islamic nature, along with their promotional strategies, are examined to further refine the definition of the genre.

Film Islami as a Genre

Film Islami goes by several other names and descriptions: *film religi* or religious films, *film bernafaskan Islam* (films that breathe Islam), *film bernuansa Islam* (Islamically nuanced film), and, lastly, *film dakwah*. Despite disagreements between filmmakers and critics on what counts as 'Islamic', *film Islami* is a helpful generic term to categorise a host of films about the gendered struggles of Muslim subjectivity. There is as yet no consensus on what constitutes *film Islami* as a genre. Drawing from cinematic conventions of films from the 1970s to 2012, this section aims to define the Islamic film genre in a more exploratory sense, without dividing

the genre into two periods; the New Order and post-New Order. This section is written with evidence that Islamic films from the two periods share many similarities unless demonstrated otherwise. One common denominator is the genre's apparent function and effect. Following the controversy of the anti-Islamic films *Fitna* (Theo van Gogh, 2004) and *Submission* (Geert Wilders, 2008) in Europe, Tito Imanda argued that *film Islami* should be made to be more than 'a representation of Muslims practising their faith' (2012: 91). Another film critic, Ekky Imanjaya, believes that Islamic films must leave a deep spiritual impact on its audiences, guiding them towards good Muslim behaviour and strengthening one's faith (Imanjaya 2009a).

In light of the anti-Islamic sentiments emanating from right-wing politics in Europe and the United States in the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks, Eric Sasono takes a different view by suggesting that Islamic films should portray Islam and its adherents in a positive light (2011a: 2–3). Sasono argues that the Islamic film genre's aim can be achieved in two ways. First, in order to qualify as an Islamic film, teachings about the Islamic faith should be woven into the narrative to give the viewer a better understanding of the religion. Second, such films should encourage the viewer's emotional connection to the Islamic values and empathy for the spiritual development of the characters in the film (Imanda 2012: 91). In contrast, the producer of *Emak Ingin Naik Haji* and the director of Mizan Publications,[5] Putut Widjanarko asserts that films about Muslims enhancing their spirituality are actually more universal in their themes and should not be labelled as 'Islamic'.[6] For the purpose of a more comprehensive analysis, the definition of *film Islami* will be expanded beyond its audience or effects-oriented definitions. Defining *film Islami* based on the purpose of religious indoctrination echoes the early media theory of the 'hypodermic model' of reception. The model proposes that audiences receive media messages in a unilateral way and become passively affected by its reception (Hodkinson 2010: 73). Following this view, film is regarded as a neutral medium upon which religious messages are imprinted. Furthermore, this definition of *film Islami* also negates the multiple and often opposing views of what is 'Islamic'. For instance, the widely regarded 'Islamic' film *Ayat-ayat Cinta* has been

[5] Mizan Production is a leading visual and print media company of Islamic films, television programmes, and books based in Jakarta.

[6] Interview with Putut Widjanarko in Jakarta on 28th December 2011.

criticised by some Muslim clerics and audiences as having nothing to with Islam at all (Heryanto 2011: 94).

This section will present the case for my definition of the Islamic film genre: films made for the purpose of *dakwah* through the display of diagetic and extra-diagetic audiovisual and commercial conventions that mark them as 'Islamic' by filmmakers, critics, and audiences alike. As this section will show below, the *film Islami* genre exhibits a pattern of iconography that emerges out of repetition and extends beyond its intended spiritual effect on audiences. The element of repetition and hence its recognisability are central to the identification of a film genre. But the differences between films under the same generic rubric are also crucial for the development and longevity of a genre (Neale 2000: 173). Rather than a genre principally defined to portray Muslims in a highly favourable manner and guide its audiences down the straight moral path, the generic definition of *film Islami* is drawn from a corpus of films about an individual or a group of people who, at risk of being outsiders to the faith, overcome their spiritual struggle through Islamic principles. The Islamic film genre can be recognised through the incorporation of Quranic verses in the dialogue and the direct engagement by its characters with a set of Islamic symbols, such as the mosque, the veil, and the Islamic boarding school. For most other film genres, the spiritual ethics of production is barely considered as an element that contributes to the genre's recognisable attributes. In the case of *film Islami*, the Islamic integrity of its filmmaker, actors, funders, exhibition, and filming practices are sometimes considered crucial to the film's association as a medium for *dakwah*.

The commercial success of *Ayat-ayat Cinta* prompted the production of a string of big-budgeted films with Islamic content with unprecedented frequency: four a year in 2009, three in 2010, and four in 2011.[7] These films which share many conventions and elicit similar commercial responses from audiences can be seen as belonging to a genre. Film genres with a relatively lucrative track record usually generate the production of other similar films. The making of a film in a similar style ensures 'a financial guarantee' for filmmakers, as 'generic movies are in a sense always pre-sold to their audiences because viewers possess an image and an experience of the

[7] In 2009; *Perempuan Berkalung Sorban*, *Ketika Cinta Bertasbih* 1 and 2, *Emak Ingin Naik Haji*, and in 2010: *Khalifah, Sang Pencerah*, and *Dalam Mihrab Cinta* in 2011: *Tanda Tanya*, *Ummi Aminah*, *Hafalan Shalat Delisa* and *Di Bawah Lindungan Ka'abah.*

genre before they actually engage with any particular instance of it' (Maltby 1995: 112). Therefore, the 'drives of genre are primarily industrial, and genre films lay bare the poetics of the marketplace' (Williams 2005: 17). For the time being, the identification of *film Islami* as a genre appears robust. With regard to Hollywood cinema, Jim Collins has identified three stages in genre formation: consolidation, the 'golden age', and decline, in which 'the played out conventions dissolve either into self-parody or self-reflexivity' (Collins 1993: 246). The sporadic release of films with Islamic content between 1959 to 1998 in Indonesia may point towards the genre's consolidation. By virtue of the trail of generic films their success generated, *Ayat-ayat Cinta* and *Ketika Cinta Bertasbih* 1 and 2 can be regarded as definitive Islamic films making the films made between 2008 and 2011 representative of *film Islami*'s golden age. However, it remains to be seen how the genre manifests in its decline as many films of the *film Islami* genre continue to be made with impressive regularity although now with less headline grabbing fanfare. Genre films must also be an interplay of textual familiarity and innovation with a strong and clear generic structure that the target audience can recognise. Genres tend to be recognised not just by the corpus of similar films but through their advertising, reviews, and merchandising before one watches a film because, as Richard Maltby argues, the generic categories 'have a broader cultural resonance' (1995: 107). How does the *film Islami* genre demonstrate its cultural resonance beyond an individual film? All films in the *film Islami* genre prominently feature very recognisable Islamic symbols—such as the mosque, Quranic recitations, prayer, and Islamic ethics of everyday behaviour, and their incorporation, both explicit and implicit, into the narrative of the film (Imanjaya 2009a; Imanda 2012; Sasono 2012).

Clothing offer important visual codes to cinema audiences of the culture, time, and space of where scenes in a film are set. For Rachel Dwyer, the Islamicate Indian films exhibit three main characteristics that are associated with Muslim cultures—Urdu language and its historical court culture, *qawwali* and *ghazal* songs and music, and 'Islamicate' clothing—small caps, the *sharwani* (a type of frock coat), fez hats, and the *purdah* (Dwyer 2006: 110–111). In a similar way, Indonesian cinema with Islamic themes utilise sartorial codes through the types of veils, turbans, and tunics worn by its characters to emphasise their piety and social status. The veil and its more specific forms in Indonesia, the *jilbab* (tightly worn headscarf), *kerudung* (loose headscarf), and *cadar* (face veil) are the most recognisable signifiers of Muslim female identity. Each of the veil types have different cultural and

political connotations in Indonesia and have come to signify the level of piety and religious affiliations. Perhaps as a way of defying conventions, not all films feature characters who demonstrate their piety through Muslim attire. Films such as *Cin(T)a* (Love 2009, dir. Sammaria Simanjuntak) is about an interfaith romance between a pious Muslim woman and Christian man but there are no characters who habitually wears the headscarf, not least the main female character. Films that defy this particular Islamic film convention are rare and considering that *Cin(T)a* is rarely credited as an Islamic film by critics, the press, and audiences, it should certainly not be considered exemplary of the genre.

When and where films are exhibited indicate further characteristics of a film genre. Such a case for *film Islami* can be made here. Although Islamic films are now shown in cinemas throughout the year, certain big-budget films are still released as special events during the Islamic celebration of Eid ul-Fitr after the fasting month of Ramadan. *Ketika Cinta Bertasbih* and *Sang Pencerah* premiered on Eid Ul-Fitr in 2009 and 2010, respectively. Older Islamic films are usually screened on television during Ramadan as a spiritual respite from a year of spiritually unproductive entertainment. Films with Islamic content have been known to be shown for prayer congregations within the vicinity of a mosque.[8] According to film critic Eric Sasono, cinema audiences of Islamic films expect cinema spaces to reflect the Islamic spirit of the film. Some viewers of *film Islami* have complained that women and men sit together in the cinema theatre. Instead, they argue that gender segregation should be imposed and that women and men enter through separate entrances. To discourage covert mixing between the sexes, they recommend that film theatres be bright rather than conventionally dark during a screening.[9]

Many Islamic films display visual conventions of the genre right from the outset of the film through the depiction of mosques and holy sites. Films that begin with scenes showing places of worship communicate to audiences that sacred spaces are the characters' primary surroundings or at least have a particular significance to them. Often, the buildings emerge before the characters themselves, underscoring the centrality of Islamic holy sites to the film. The opening scenes of Islamic 'mission' films from the New Order period are preoccupied with Islamic places of worship. In the films about the

[8] Interview with Aditya Gumay on 3rd February 2012.

[9] Interview with Eric Sasono, on 30th January 2012.

nine holy men of Java made in the mid 1980s, the building of the Great Mosque in Demak, a symbol of Islam's establishment in Java, and the shrines to the holy men, dominate the opening scenes. In these films, the monuments of worship visually anchor the characters to a spiritual space. For instance, *Sunan Gunung Jati* (1985, dir. Bay Isbahi), about the eponymous Javanese mystic, begins with lingering scenes of shrines in Cirebon erected in the memory of various mystics. The scenes are accompanied with haunting gamelan music, melding together local culture with mysticism, Islam, and ideas about the nation. *Ummi Aminah* (Mother Aminah, 2011, dir. Aditya Gumay) begins with aerial shots of a mosque and then scenes of the titular character giving a sermon to her all-female congregation. The aerial shots continue to hover above her congregation, a sea of headscarves, emphasising her influence as a popular preacher among pious women. The opening credits of *Emak Ingin Naik Haji* (Mother Wants To Go On the Hajj, 2009, dir. Aditya Gumay) are imposed over tightly shot scenes of the Ka'abah in Mecca being painted with oils by the main character of the film, Zeinal. Street vendor Zeinal and his elderly mother are too poor to finance a pilgrimage to Mecca, the final wish of his mother before she passes away. So distant is the dream of pilgrimage from her grasp that images of the various holy sites in Mecca that Zeinal's mother flicks through in a picture book are enough to bring her 'closer' to Mecca and the act of pilgrimage.

Extra-diagetic chanting or *zikir* may occur during a particularly dramatic, tense, or suspenseful scene, signalling a moral conflict on the verge of resolution. It also accentuates the religious 'mood' of the film. The near-constant chanting in the soundtrack of Chaerul Umam's *Al-Kautsar* (Abundance 1977) accompanies nearly every major turning points in the film. In a gripping scene, the amoral thug in *Al-Kautsar* suddenly regains his moral direction, prays to God to the bewilderment of his family, and then sets out to punish his treacherous boss by burning his hut down. Throughout this astonishing climax, the film is set to the repetitive Islamic chanting of 'There is no God but Allah', as if redeeming the villain who later redeems himself. In the climax of the 2009 film *Emak Ingin Naik Haji*, Zeinal's desperate inner voice chanting his praise to God after winning a lottery ticket to Mecca dominates the audio-sphere of the film. But this rousing soundtrack of Zeinal's inner chanting comes to an abrupt end when he is suddenly hit by a passing car.

Often the film title alone implies the religious character of a film. For instance, there are film titles that indicate some engagement between the characters with holy structures: *Di Bawah Lindungan Ka'abah* (Under the Protection of the Ka'abah, 2011, dir. Hanny Saputra), *Dalam Mihrab*

Cinta (Inside the Mihrab of Love,[10] 2011, dir. Habiburrahman El Shirazy). The 2008 film title *Kun Fayakun* (God wills it, and it is so, dir. Haji Yusuf Mansur) is a popular Quranic verse on divine will and fate. Other film titles are peppered with terms for rituals and objects with Islamic connotations such as the *sorban* (turban worn by religious male leaders), *tasbih* (rosary), *syahadat* (vow of the faithful), and *doa* (prayer). They do not necessarily appear in the film but are enough to fulfil expectations of the genre.[11] The times when Quranic verses are delivered in a film and to the audience indicate the moment when a *film Islami* as a medium for *dakwah* becomes apparent. When a religious dilemma is at stake, a character will dispense Quranic words of wisdom in a direct address to the audience. Such scenes break the fourth wall as the character appears to be speaking to the audience of the film. For instance, the direct address occurs in *Para Perintis Kemerdekaan* (*Pioneers of Independence*, 1980, dir. Asrul Sani) when the influential teacher, Haji Wali (played by the director himself), makes a case for the peaceful coexistence of different religions. In a close-up towards the audience/camera, he recites the Quranic phrase, 'Your faith is your answer, and my faith is mine.'[12] A similar tightly shot scene of Islamic advice takes place in *Ayat-ayat Cinta* when the leading man Fahri seeks the consultation of his best friend about polygamy to save the life of a woman. Looking slightly away from the audience, Fahri's friend sagely reiterates a decree from the Qur'an, to 'only take another wife if you can be fair to each of them'.

Film genres are more than just about the films themselves but also about the public and commercial discourse in which the films operate. The public and commercial discourse constitute the discursive environment that John Ellis calls the film's 'narrative image' (Ellis 1992: 13). A film's narrative image refers to indicators of a film's characteristics built by the discourses of a film's publicity. A film's narrative image emerges from the 'inter-textual

[10] *Mihrab* refers to the alcove or niche inside a mosque where the imam or head of the mosque would lead prayers.

[11] However, in some rare examples, film titles which contain the term 'doa' are not explicitly Islamic at all. Usmar Ismail's historical film *Darah dan Doa* (Lit. Blood and Prayer, or The Long March, 1950) is about the Siliwangi Division of the National Army's long retreat from Yogyakarta to West Java in 1948 and the eventual establishment of the Indonesian republic in 1950. The film does not make a reference to the positive role of Islam in nationalist struggles and not regarded by scholars and critics alike as an Islamic film.

[12] '*Bagi mu agama mu, bagi ku agama ku*' from the Qur'an (109: 1–6).

relay' (Lukow and Ricci 1984: 29) that occurs between the film and labels generated by public expectation and critics. Intertextual relay is formed through the 'discourses of publicity, promotion, and reception that surround films, [which] includes both trade and press reviews' (Neale 2000: 2). Elements of a film's narrative image including advertisements, trailers, pre-release publicity, stills, theme songs, and film posters, perform as indicators of the general characteristics of an Islamic film. Like films of other genres, an Islamic film would be written about and reviewed in print and online newspapers, magazines, and blogs. Big-budget Islamic films by well-known filmmakers enjoy media attention well before their release through the publication of articles detailing events behind the scenes. Both *Ayat-ayat Cinta* and *Ketika Cinta Bertasbih* enjoyed heavy press coverage before release and took advantage of the prevailing promotional strategies of contemporary Indonesian films. As pre-release publicity, nearly all films in the post-New Order period have brief trailers or previews available for public viewing on official websites or on the video-sharing website YouTube.

Equally common in the marketing of films with Islamic themes is the soundtrack and more significantly, the theme song of the film performed by a popular singer or group. Theme songs and soundtrack albums operate as cross-promotional tools that financially benefit filmmakers, production houses, music performers, and record companies. The identification of a specific song with a film is a useful commercial device and if the song is popular it allows for an immediate aural identification with the film (Beeman 1988: 10). Films with Islamic content in the post-New Order period depart dramatically from their New Order counterparts through their more consistent use of the cross-promotional properties of soundtrack albums and theme songs sung by popular singers and bands. The reliance on theme songs and soundtrack albums used for the promotion of a film is a reflection of the contemporary global trends and structures of film marketing. Theme songs now feature prominently in marketing strategies alongside posters and trailers of the films, reinforcing allusions to the genre's characteristics.

Rather than the traditional Islamic music genre of *nasyid* or *qasidah*, the theme songs of many if not all films of the post-New Order *film Islami* genre adopt the mainstream pop musical form but come incorporated with lyrical references to God and Islamic belief. And following the convention of pop songs in the post-MTV age, theme songs of Islamic films are also performed in often lavishly produced music videos. The titles of the film's primary theme songs are often the same as the film titles themselves as in the case of

Ayat-ayat Cinta and the *Ketika Cinta Bertasbih* films. Both song and film titles evoke love (*cinta*) and longing for God. Love is mentioned numerous times in Quranic verses, but the expression of love is a devotional one ascribed to God rather than a romantic form of love between people.[13] Whether intentionally or not, the films and their theme songs can exploit the slippage between devotional love and romantic love for another individual as a means of appealing to audiences who have enjoyed secular love stories such as *Ada Apa Dengan Cinta* (What's Up With Love, 2002, dir. Rudy Sodjarwo) and *Eiffel I'm In Love* (2003, dir. Nasry Cheppy). Furthermore, the preponderance of love in film titles and romantic plots in *film Islami* may be a reflection of a need for an Islamic version of popular films about young love.

The lucrative potential of the Islamic film genre has attracted the contributions of popular singers and songwriters who had not previously been associated with Islamic music. Melly Goeslaw, one of the bestselling singer-songwriters of film soundtrack albums, has produced songs for several Islamic films, including *Ayat-ayat Cinta*, *Ketika Cinta Bertasbih*, and *Cinta Suci Zahrana* (*Zahrana's Sacred Love*, 2012, dir. Chaerul Umam). Goeslaw has also collaborated with Opick, a popular male singer of Islamic music in the production of film theme songs. Before writing and performing theme songs for Islamic films, Melly Goeslaw was more well-known as a singer-songwriter of theme songs in secular mainstream Indonesian films. After her conversion to Islam, Goeslaw claimed that she had been inspired by her pilgrimage to the Middle East to write songs for Islamic films (Mustholih 2011). By writing and singing lyrics of an Islamic nature and professing her spiritual motivations behind doing so, Goeslaw's media persona is 'born again' from an edgy singer-songwriter to a softer one and more in touch with her spiritual side.

Film posters and DVD covers of the Islamic film genre are not just for the purpose of advertising, but represent a singular visual, if highly stylised, snapshot of the film's content. Krishna Sen (1982: 18) and Karl Heider (1991: 117) found that advertising for New Order films often exploited

[13] An excerpt from the lyrics of *Ketika Cinta Bertasbih* by Melly Goeslaw:

> Whisper my prayers, In the beads of my rosary, I convey my wishes to you, Great Love, I cannot coerce [it] even as my heart cries out (my translation).

> *Bisikkan doaku, Dalam butiran tasbih, Kupanjatkan pintaku padamu Maha Cinta, Tak bisa kupaksa walau hatiku menjerit.*

eroticised images of women's bodies to sell films with the promise of sexual intrigue for the male gaze. The advertising that aimed to fulfil this promise usually featured images of women in provocative poses and various states of undress reflecting the inequality of gender and sexuality at work in the Indonesian film industry. In contrast to the sensationalised depiction of women in Indonesian film posters to titillate audiences, promotional posters of Islamic films are purposefully more sedate. The depiction of women in *film Islami* posters do not follow the visual logic of the film posters and advertising described by Sen. Instead of focusing on the female body and its sexualisation, posters of the *film Islami* genre may also feature the upper body or only the face highlighting the headscarf of the female protagonists. An interesting example is the film poster for *Perempuan Berkalung Sorban* which features the central character in an active pose, rather than a passive, eroticised one. In the poster, the protagonist Annisa is on a rampant horse, a heroic posture reminiscent of portraits of emperors, kings, and war generals of centuries past. Annisa's triumphant pose is at once a remarkable and deliberate promotional gesture to suggest what the film has in store for audiences.

In the case of Nurman Hakim's *Khalifah* (2011), the promotional poster features a face behind the face veil with only the eyes of the eponymous female character visible. The poster aims to showcase the novelty of the film's subject matter, the face veil, but reinforces aspects of Orientalism. An image of a Muslim woman reduced to a pair of eyes is a touchstone of Orientalist and Islamophobic assumptions of the way the veil erases the personhood of its wearer. It is similar to images that connote the Islamic Other in other non-cinematic visual media, such as book and magazine covers, and news articles on Muslim women and the Arab world. Through its visual link with other forms of visual media, the film *Khalifah* best illustrates the way film posters may construct the narrative image of the film (see Fig. 2.1). In other instances, Islamic films follow the visual logic of posters of television dramas, with the main characters next to each other in the manner of a theatrical production (Fig. 2.2). The posters of Islamic films with romantic overtones prominently highlight the spiritual glow of the romantic couple while featuring little to no physical contact between them.

The DVD packaging are spaces for Islamic endorsements. If we were to pick up a DVD copy of *Mengaku Rasul* (Self-Proclaimed Prophet, 2008, dir. Helfi Kardit), *Perempuan Berkalung Sorban* or *Emak Ingin Naik Haji* for instance, we may find no synopsis of the film as one would normally expect on the back of an Indonesian DVD sleeve. In lieu of a synopsis is a list

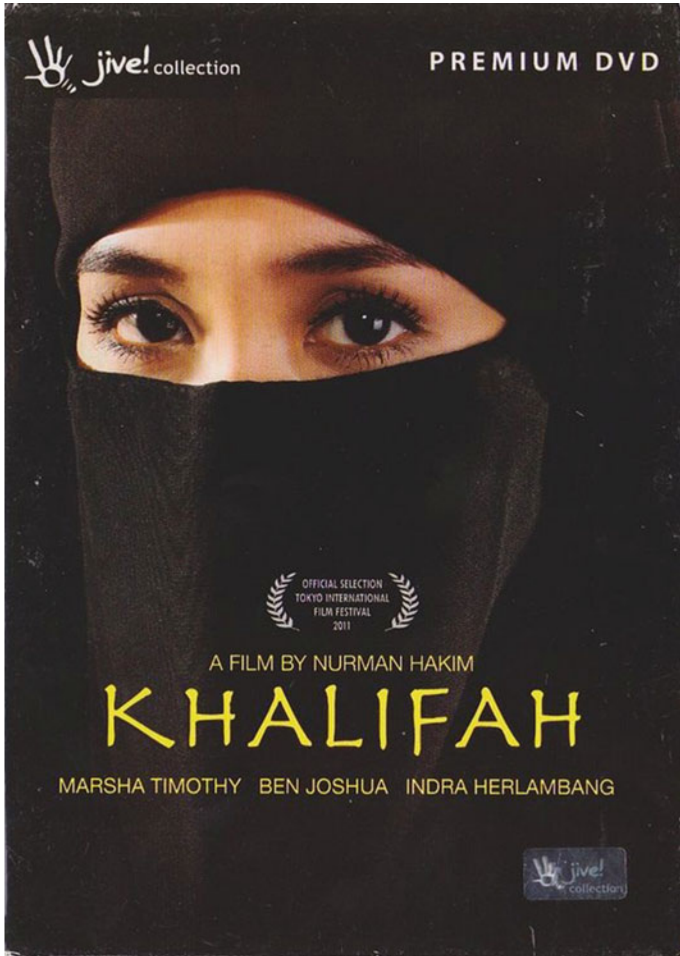

Fig. 2.1 DVD cover of *Khalifah* (2011, dir. Nurman Hakim) Source: author's own photographic reproduction

of endorsements by professional preachers, clerics, and politicians on the film's superior quality and 'realism'. Like the carefully selected text on film posters, sound bites or snippets of praise on the DVD sleeve are crucial to selling a film. Because of their brevity, snippets of text praising the film's fine

Fig. 2.2 Film poster for *Ketika Cinta Bertasbih* (When Love Glorifies God, 2009, dir. Chaerul Umam)

delivery of the Islamic message immediately appeal to discerning consumers who are looking for a quality Islamic film.[14]

It may seem as if a wide net is cast across films that share significant distinguishing features. But the boundaries of genre are far from fixed or precise. Films with Islamic content have the capacity to 'respond' to the

[14] Examples of sound bites include*:

'This film is extraordinary. Hopefully it will be included into the canon of Indonesia's best films'—Ustaz Jefri Al-Bukhori on *Mengaku Rasul*.
'This is excellent. One of its strengths is its Islamic message of change and appreciation for women'—Prof Din Syamsuddin, the chair of Muhammadiyah on *Perempuan Berkalung Sorban*.
'I cried seven times when watching this film'—the entertainer Helmy Yahya on *Emak Ingin Naik Haji*.

*All my translations.

media environment characterised by a shift in audience expectations, narrative procedures, and stylistic emphasis. Also, films that may be recognised as characteristically Islamic can sometimes fall under different categories of film genres depending on their shared attributes with other films that do not have religious themes (Sasono 2011b: 174). The marketing of films such as *Ayat-ayat Cinta* and *Ketika Cinta Bertasbih* as films adapted from bestselling novels place them under the same marketing rubric as *Eiffel I'm In Love* (2003, dir. Nasri Cheppy). New Order Islamic films such as *Tjoet Nha Dhien* (1988, dir. Eros Djarot), the holy men subgenre or 'mission' films, and *Para Perintis Kemerdekaan* (Pioneers of Independence, 1980, dir. Asrul Sani), also belong to the historical film genre or historical biopics. As highlighted earlier, the horror or supernatural genre in the 1990s and early 2000s became linked with representations of Islam (van Heeren 2007: 212). The ability of Islamic films to absorb elements from other genres confirms that genres are actually less categorical and more open-ended. Frank Krutnick (1991: 8) reminds us that 'the boundaries between genres are by no means fixed and precise, and moreover a genre cannot simply be defined in terms of the elements it contains'. He adds:

> Rather than seeing genre as a strictly rule-bound context, then, one should stress that any process of generic designation locates very broadly defined sets of discursive configurations, narrative procedures and stylistic emphases (Krutnick 1991: 8).

A film may be Islamic because it adheres to an ethical framework of production. The ethics of film production is a unique feature of the Islamic film genre as a means of legitimising its 'Islamic' status and promotion as a film for *dakwah*. The next section outlines the various attempts at developing a Muslim ethic of filmmaking in the New Order period up to the years of Reform and thereafter. It discusses how the Islamic ethics of film production was thought to be a solution to moral decay in the media. How does one make films the Islamic way? Who can make and star in them? How are they financed?

Making Films the 'Islamic' Way

All films in Indonesia are subject to production regulations to protect citizens from consuming material deemed blasphemous under Islamic law. Because of the restriction in Islam against the visual depictions of God, the prophet Muhammad, his family members, and other prophets, Indonesian

films with Islamic elements are rarely about divine beings, prophets, or even stories from the Quranic texts. For these reasons, Sasono (2013b: 43) argues that Indonesian films about the lives of Muslim individuals and communities are not commensurable with the typologies of Indian Hindu and Hollywood Christian films which bring into focus gods, prophets, and tales from sacred texts. One filmmaker, however, managed to circumvent production regulations regarding the depiction of Islamic prophets and their family members. The first Indonesian film to be based on Quranic stories about prophets was the 1988 production *Kisah Anak-anak Adam* (*The Story of Adam's Children*, dir. Ali Shahib). *Kisah Anak-anak Adam* is a retelling of the story of Adam's rivalrous sons, Qabil and Habil, who fight over their sister, Iqlima, with tragic results. The film's release coincided with the issuing of a fatwa[15] by the MUI on 30 May 1988 against the depiction of Islamic prophets and their family members in the media and film (Sukoyo 1988). Ali Shahib, the film's director, evaded the fatwa by showing only the silhouettes of Adam and Eve in the beginning of the film though the actors playing Adam and Eve's four children were on full display. Curiously, the depiction of the prophet Adam's four children; Qabil, Habil, Iqlima, and Labuza, were permitted by the National Fatwa Council without censorship. Ali Shahib took pains to establish the touchstones of Islamic filmmaking for the purpose of *dakwah*. Before the shooting of the film *Kisah Anak-anak Adam* began, the director led the actors and members of the production crew in prayer (Sukoyo 1988). He was motivated to make a cinematic sermon, incorporating Quranic verses into the film with the belief that cinema can be used for preaching (Sukoyo 1988). Film, he asserts, is an alternative, if more popular, way of preaching to audiences who would be more keen to go to the cinema than to the mosque.

Films about the lives of the early disseminators of Islam in Java, more commonly known as the nine holy men or *wali songo*, were released in the mid-1980s to a warm reception and plentiful coverage by the press. As described earlier, these films were also made with the purpose of *dakwah* in mind (Sasono 2013b). One film in particular, *Sembilan Wali* (*The Nine Holy Men*, 1985, dir. Raam Soraya) was deliberately made to adhere to a kind of 'Islamic criteria' involving the casting of pious Muslim actors to play the protagonists, while actors who were non-Muslim and Muslims who

[15] A fatwa is a legal edict or learned interpretation on issues pertaining to Islamic law that a qualified Islamic jurist or mufti can issue.

were less observant were given the role of antagonists (Hindun 1989: 46). But even when it endeavoured to abide by an Islamic filming criteria, the film still attracted controversy. Scenes in the film depicting the holy men employing supernatural powers to defeat their adversaries were criticised by the MUI for associating sorcery (*syirik*) with Islam. Although the subject matter of the Javanese holy men in film had in general won the approval of the country's highest ranking clerics, the MUI, the red tape involved in the production of *Sembilan Wali* and other films about the holy men was just as labyrinthine as for other secular films. In addition to the bureaucratic barriers of obtaining filming permissions from the Department of Information, Ministry of Industry, and the Court, filmmakers of the *wali songo* films were required to consult clerics who vetted the script before filming (Hindun 1989: 40). The intricate New Order bureaucracy and need of endorsement from clerics were likely to have discouraged many filmmakers from producing Islamic films.

Despite the often elusive and reductive label of 'Islamic film', there have been attempts to make films in what is perceived to be the most Islamic way possible. Concerted attempts to create Islamic filmmaking organisations were established in 1996 by the mass Islamic organisation, Muhammadiyah. Muhammadiyah's ambition to develop an Islamic ethics and aesthetic in filmmaking emerged from the organisation's political victory against the government's proposal to forbid the formation of private religious media companies (van Heeren 2012: 118). Their victory encouraged the formation of Islamic filmmaking clubs based in Muhammadiyah universities throughout Indonesia where young Muslim filmmakers were trained in the art of cinema (Haryanto et al. 1996). In addition to the Muhammadiyah Islamic filmmaking organisations are other organisations founded for the training, screening, and discussions of films by Muslim filmmakers. Formed during the period of post-1998 Reform were M-Screen Indonesia (Muslim Screen Indonesia), Muslim Movie Education (MME), Fu:n Community, and the Salman Filmmaker Club, a film community connected to the Salman Mosque in Bandung (van Heeren 2012:119). In 2003, the collaboration of film companies and Islamic boarding schools established the now defunct Morality Audio Visual Network (MAV-Net),[16] whose main

[16] MAV-Net was comprised of six Islamic film communities and institutions: Fu:n Community, M-Screen, Kammi, Rohis Mimazah, IKJ, MQTV Bandung, and a representative from the Pesantren Darunnajah (van Heeren 2012: 120).

objective was to challenge the dominance of foreign films and strengthen the role of Islamic 'visual ethics' in filmmaking (van Heeren 2012: 120–121).

MAV-Net's view of Islamic films departs from the Ramadan offerings on television. Films deemed 'Islamic' by MAV-Net instead exist on the fringes of the mainstream media industry in the form of pirated VCDs of feature films and documentaries about warfare and military training from abroad (van Heeren 2012: 121). These film organisations flourished during the period of *Reformasi* as more Islamic institutions welcomed the training of young Muslims in film and media production and the use of media as a medium for preaching (van Heeren 2012: 84). However, despite the rise of Islamic film communities during this period, only one film was actually made by these Islamic film communities and with little financial success.[17] According to van Heeren, MAV-Net's manifesto of Islamic filmmaking mirrors the tenets of oppositional Third Cinema[18] in its rejection of the hegemony of Hollywood cinema and local copy-cat films (2012:121). By the late 1990s, conspiracy theories of Zionist domination through imported media representations became another incentive to produce images that inspired Islamic and anti-Zionist fervour in Indonesia. MAV-Net's manifesto symbolised their membership of and responsibility towards the global Muslim community in battling Zionist misrepresentations of Muslims that weaken the Islamic faith of Muslims who consume Western media (van Heeren 2012: 122).

MAV-Net eventually disbanded when its own ethics for what was allowable on screen became too complicated. The portrayal of romance and what female and male actors can and cannot do in a film such as holding hands were hotly contested. In terms of financing, MAV-Net was interested in producing independent films to a wide audience through modest means. But with the success of films like *Ayat-ayat Cinta* in 2008, filmmakers under the auspices of MAV-Net felt they could not compete with the broad appeal of big-budgeted commercial Islamic cinema.[19] Without the existence of MAV-Net and its oppositional ambitions driving its filmmaking

[17] Interview with Katinka van Heeren on 25th January 2012.

[18] Coined by Argentine filmmakers Fernando Solanas and Octavio Getino, Third Cinema is the final stage of a three-step process towards the liberation of cinema from the hegemony and appropriation of Hollywood cinema. Third Cinema would incorporate guerilla sentiments and the dismantling of the Eurocentric grammar of cinema (Gabriel 1985: 355–369).

[19] Interview with Katinka van Heeren in Jakarta on 25th January 2012.

practices, are Islamic films made post-MAV-Net still considered oppositional? It can be argued that Islamic film as oppositional cinema could be further refined as being oppositional not only towards anti-Islamic representations from the West but also oppositional within Indonesia. A few post-New Order filmmakers use the medium of cinema to oppose the Westernisation of local Indonesian cinema and its preoccupation with the morally tainting elements of sex and the supernatural. And as the discussions in Chapters 5 and 6 will demonstrate, post-1998 Islamic films are arenas for contesting subjectivities and projecting public anxieties about Islam within Indonesia while also opposing Islamophobia in the post-9/11 age.

Some filmmakers in the post-Suharto period also prioritise the piety of their actors when making an Islamic film. In the pre-production stages of *Ketika Cinta Bertasbih*, a 'reality' television competition was broadcast to audition potential actors for the film. In addition to demonstrating their acting skills, young acting hopefuls went through a Quranic recitation and Islamic values 'test' that determined their spiritual suitability for a role in the film (Imanjaya 2009a). The auditioning of pious actors echoes *Sembilan Wali* of the New Order era, as if the actor's religiosity was instrumental to her ability to act as a pious character. Moreover, the actor's religiosity is assumed to paint the film's publicity in a favourable, 'divine' light. Conversely, there are fears that a non-Muslim actor playing a venerated Muslim character would be disastrous for the film's reception. When the actor who played Ahmad Dahlan, the founder of the Muhammadiyah movement, in *Sang Pencerah* (The Enlightener, 2010, dir. Hanung Bramantyo) converted from Islam to Christianity during filming, his new religious identity was kept a secret until after the film's first screening. The film would have lost the backing of its funder, the Muhammadiyah organisation, if it was revealed that an apostate had starred as the organisation's most revered figure (Sasono 2013a: 45). Although an exceptional case, concerns about the actor's offscreen religious identity demonstrate the moral responsibility attached to actors when playing key figures in Indonesia's Islamic history.

The faith of film producers and funders who back the making of Islamic films, however, is of little ethical consequence. The producers of *Ayat-ayat Cinta*, Dhamoo and Manoj Punjabi, are not Muslim, but have an interest in making profitable films with a 'wholesome' message. The director of *Emak Ingin Naik Haji* and *Ummi Aminah*, Aditya Gumay, collaborates with Catholic investors to produce films for 'family consumption'. Rather than an Islamic filmmaker, Gumay contends that his films convey good and

universal values that also happen to be Islamic values.[20] By shunning the exclusivity of Islamic filmmaking, Gumay displays commercial and socio-religious savvy crucial to the axiom that Islam is not just ‘everywhere’ (Fealy 2008: 15) but is for ‘everybody’. There are aspects in the production, exhibition, and marketing of other Islamic films that are not explicitly ‘Islamic’ in terms of ethics. Instead, they share many characteristics in these respects with other non-Islamic films. Filmmakers who make Islamic films also make non-Islamic ones. In fact, many, like Hanung Bramantyo and Hanny Saputra, have started their careers directing secular teenage-oriented films and even sex comedies. Like non-Islamic films, Islamic films are not just financed by non-Muslim producers, but also shown at cinemas alongside non-Islamic films, and promoted in mainstream print media and video-sharing websites. For this reason, the Islamic film genre can be said to be part of the mainstream film industry rather than operating as a niche genre. And as part of mainstream cinema, Islamic films are subject to institutional obstacles and censorship.

Obstacles and Censorship

Censorship has long been a powerful force of state intervention on the Indonesian film industry since its inception under Dutch colonial rule (Sen 1994: 69). Although the first locally made feature film was released in 1926, films about Islam were not made until Sukarno came into power (Imanda 2012: 92). During the colonial period, Islamic themes in films were restricted as they were perceived to be potentially threatening to the Dutch and the ruling elite. Further restrictions on Islam continued under the New Order regime. In 1978, the Indonesian government had enacted a ban on media content that could stoke ‘primordial’ tensions between ethnic communities (*Suku*), religions (*Agama*), races (*Ras*), and socio-economic class backgrounds (*Antar-golongan*) (Sen and Hill, 2006: 12). Commonly referred to as ‘SARA’, the ban became useful in limiting news reports of ethnic-religious tensions and controlling the public discourse on political and social conflict. The restrictions against invoking the elements of SARA in the media also extended to film. However, some films with Islamic content were let off the hook and were allowed to be produced and exhibited because they propagated the government’s ideology and did not

[20] Interview with Aditay Gumay in Jakarta, 3rd February 2012.

portray religious tension.[21] During the New Order, it is the politicised manifestation of Islam that the government was more concerned with suppressing. In fact, even subtle cinematic references to political Islam could fall foul with the New Order government resulting in a change of film title, censorship, delay in release, or outright ban on filming altogether.

Although political or ideologically 'extreme' Islam was actively suppressed by the New Order regime, depictions of radical political Islamists were allowed so long as they were villains and defeated by 'moderate' Muslim heroes. One example is the portrayal of the Islamist militia and campaigners for the constitution of an Islamic state in Tasikmalaya, West Java in *Mereka Kembali* (They Have Returned, 1974, dir. Nawi Ismail). In *Mereka Kembali*, the militia are depicted as thieves and rapists who label the national army infidels for supporting the formation of a 'non-Islamic state' (Sasono 2010: 50). In stark contrast to the militia, members of the national army belong to a variety of religions, underscoring their religious tolerance and unity in diversity. As pious men, the national army perform their prayers before beginning the long march from Yogyakarta to Bandung after the Renville Agreement was signed by representatives of the Indonesian and Dutch army in 1947. In other cases, filmmakers face institutional barriers to exhibition when they convey implicit support for the New Order regime's Islamic opponents. The General Election in 1981 created obstacles to the scheduled release of Asrul Sani's Islamic nationalist film *Para Perintis Kemerdekaan* for two main reasons. First, several scenes from the film that suggested sympathy for an Islamic political party had to be removed from official release. Second, the film's title had to be changed from *Di Bawah Lindungan Ka'abah* (From Under the Protection of the Ka'abah) to *Para Perintis Kemerdekaan* because the Ka'abah, a sacred site in Mecca, was the logo of the Islamic political party contesting at the 1981 General Election. Fearing the political influence it might inspire, the film was denied a release in Jakarta before the 1981 General Election (Sen 1996: 75). But following its delayed release, the film enjoyed only a limited distribution in East Java and West Sumatra.[22] As a result of political circumstances, *Para Perintis Kemerdekaan* did poorly and was quickly forgotten by the general public.[23]

[21] *Dr Siti Pertiwi Kembali ke Desa* (Dr Siti Pertiwi Returns to the Village, 1979, dir. Ami Priono) features Islamic preachers whose corruption is protected by the ruling political party.

[22] *Media Indonesia*, 9 June 1992.

[23] Interview with Eric Sasono in Jakarta on 30th January 2012.

Films that were not in keeping with the New Order regime's official position on history also encountered the blunt force of censorship. In 1981, permission to shoot a historical film on the power struggle between rival Islamic powers in early nineteenth-century Sumatra was denied by the Censorship Board under the recommendation of the Department of Education and Culture. The film in question, *Perang Padri* (War of the Clerics), was based on the anti-colonial Islamic wars between 1800 and 1837 in West Sumatra. But its complex retelling of civil war between competing religious leaders and the demonisation of local customs was deemed to be too politically sensitive and threatening to ideas of national unity (Sen 1994: 79–80). Even though the competing Islamic forces eventually fought together in alliance against the Dutch after 1820, it was feared that the first half of *Perang Padri* might revive tensions between local customs and Islam. The film was not meant to be a film about the role of Islam in the military and ideological struggle against the Dutch. Instead, the screenwriter Arto Hadi argued that the film would have been a profitable addition to the string of historical films that were popular with audiences at the time (Sen 1994: 79). But as it turns out, historical accuracy is not a prerequisite for a historical film. The report issued by the Department of Education and Culture forbidding the shooting of the film explained that historical films should be made with contemporary audiences and present-day social and political circumstances in mind (Sen 1994: 81). In other words, a manipulation of the past was necessary for the sake of national security.

During this same period, the *dangdut* singer and actor of Islamic films Rhoma Irama was subjected to a decade-long ban from appearing on television because of his support for the United Development Party, an Islamic opponent of the New Order regime. He was also placed on the government blacklist for refusing to support Suharto's political party (Imanda 2012: 93). But being a *persona non grata* of the state did not dampen his popularity. State censorship against Rhoma's body of work made him a political figure among Islamic groups that were becoming increasingly disaffected with the New Order regime (Hanan 2010: 114). Later in the early 1990s when government regulations over Islamic symbols were relaxed, Rhoma Irama went on to star in the political *dakwah* film *Nada dan Dakwah* (Tone and Commune 1991, dir. Chaerul Umam) that was critical of the New Order regime with Asrul Sani as scriptwriter, and the popular cleric Zainuddin MZ as fellow actor. By the post-New Order period, Marshall Clark (2008: 39) identifies an 'Islamic' turn in new forms of censorship pressurised by Islamic groups in Indonesia. Two events

ushered the Islamic turn in state censorship: the first was the outrage over a Danish newspaper publication of cartoons depicting the prophet Muhammad on 30 September 2005. The second event concerns the controversial launch of the Indonesian edition of *Playboy* in 2008. To appease various protesting Islamic groups, the Indonesian legislative assembly revived a broadly defined 1999 anti-pornography bill termed the Anti Pornography and Porno-action Bill (*Rancangan Undang-undang Anti Pornografi* dan *Pornoaksi*) in 2006 even though laws regulating blasphemy and pornography were already in existence. The bill would prohibit the production, distribution, and consumption of anything deemed 'pornographic'. Critics of the bill feared that a more repressive censorship law signalled the 'Islamification' of Indonesian society, culture, and politics (Clark 2008: 40).

The outrage over the religious themes in Hanung Bramantyo's 2011 film, *Tanda Tanya* (Question Mark) or simply '?' is further evidence for the 'Islamic' turn in censorship. In August 2011, the broadcast of *Tanda Tanya* on the Indonesian terrestrial television SCTV on the night of Eid ul-Fitr was pulled after threats by members of the extremist group Islamic Defenders Front (FPI, *Front Pembela Islam*) outside the SCTV television station in Central Jakarta.[24] SCTV's decision to cancel the film's broadcast was criticised for giving in to the extremist group and raised concerns about the lack of security to protect the television station from a potentially violent attack.[25] The film had been screened in cinemas around Indonesia in April 2011 without calls for its ban. However, the FPI protested against television's ability to reach a mass audience across the country and into their homes compared to the relatively limited reach of cinemas in urban centres.[26] The basis for the censorship of *Tanda Tanya* on television may be on the surface an Islamic one, but it is actually in tension with greater creative and political liberties in cinema and rising extremism in Indonesia.

Tanda Tanya is a multiple narrative film heavy with political and religious messages about religious pluralism, apostasy, and interethnic strife between indigenous Indonesians and ethnic Chinese Indonesians. Since the issuing of a fatwa against liberal interpretations of Islam, secularism, and religious

[24] 'FPI pulls scalpel on Hanung Bramantyo's pluralist film'?", *Jakarta Globe*, 29 August 2011.

[25] 'SCTV widely criticised for giving in to FPI', *Jakarta Globe*, 29 August 2011.

[26] Interview with Ekky Imanjaya on 27th December 2011.

pluralism by the MUI in July 2005, films and other mass media material which were brought to the council's attention as contravening the fatwa would be classified as forbidden or *haram*. Kyai Cholil Ridwan, the head of the MUI's Department of Culture condemned the 'blasphemous' statement on religious pluralism at the outset of the film: 'Each person walks from different points [of belief], but in the same direction; in search for the same thing with the same purpose, which is God' (*Republika*, 2011).[27] The film also faced objection from the largest Muslim organisation in Indonesia, Nahdlatul Ulama, for its portrayal of a church bomber who belonged to the organisation. We should, however, note that there have been moments when the MUI played a role in protecting the commercial interests of the film industry and the intellectual property of filmmakers by declaring a fatwa against film piracy. Since 2005, the illegal counterfeiting, distribution, and utilisation of films were declared forbidden by the MUI[28] to safeguard the profits of the film industry by encouraging instead the purchasing of original DVDs and tickets at licenced cinemas. In Indonesia, fatwas are decrees issued principally by the MUI and by the two biggest Muslim organisations, the Muhammadiyah and Nahdlatul Ulama (Hosen 2008: 159). Because they are not legally binding, complying with a fatwa becomes a Muslim's moral responsibility. The desired effect of the fatwa on piracy is not simply to deter consumers from buying and consuming illegal DVDs and downloaded films but to raise feelings of moral guilt and sinfulness.

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[27] '*Semua jalan setapak itu berbeda-beda, namun menuju ke arah yang sama: mencari satu hal yang sama dengan satu tujuan yang sama, yaitu Tuhan.*'

[28] MUI Decree No.1 MUNAS/VII/MUI/15/2005 concerning IP protection.

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Tjoet Nha Dhien (1988, dir. Eros Djarot)
Ummi Aminah (Mother Aminah, 2011, dir. Aditya Gumay)

CHAPTER 3

Visualising Muslim Women and Men: A Longue Durée

What does it mean to study the representations of gender and Islam in Indonesian cinema? How have the scholarly debates been animated by issues relating to such representations? In what ways have the debates been informed? Finally, how have the debates changed over time? This chapter engages with these questions and ends with a reflection on how the debates can create new insights and questions for looking at gender and Islam in Indonesian cinema.

Marginalised within the study of gender in Indonesian cinema is the Islamic dimension of such representations. Its marginalisation may be attributed to the relatively recent entry of pious and bourgeois Muslim women and men into the 'new modernity' sweeping Indonesian society (Brenner 1996: 673) coupled with the dearth of studies dedicated to gender and Islam in Indonesia (Blackburn et al. 2008: 8–9). Meanwhile, the study of gender in Indonesian cinema, particularly that of women, has long been part of the scholarly repertoire on Indonesian cinema. A preoccupation with representations of women in Indonesian cinema may be reflective of Western feminist film theory's influence on scholars studying Indonesian cinema in the 1980s. But much has changed since then. There has been a broadening view of gender in Indonesian films in the last ten years with interest in cisgendered[1]

[1] As the converse to transgender, cisgender refers to the match between an individual's biological sex and psychological and social gender identity.

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masculinity and transgender subjectivities.[2] However, the focus on femininity in Indonesian cinema continues to predominate.

Previous studies on the representations of gender in Indonesian cinema have been based on comparisons between the regimes of representation[3] and ethnographic findings or 'social reality' (Heider 1991; Aripurnami 2000; Nilan 2009). The crux of such comparative studies is based on the assumption that film representations of gender are a distortion of 'real' women's lived experiences. Following this logic, films should be reflective of the gamut of femininity. Other studies have taken film texts to task as an ideological site of gender reproduction by subjecting such images to close readings. These textual analyses tend to be combined with a focus on the cultural context of the film studied and deploy a feminist or other critical theoretical framework (Sen 1994; Clark 2004; Sulistyani 2010). Other studies offer a mélange of approaches to analysing representations of gender in Indonesian cinema combining textual and cultural analysis but with few references to Western film or cultural theory (Hoesterey and Clark 2012).

As with any methodological approaches to studying representations of gender in Indonesian film, there are strengths and limitations with regard to each approach. By making a comparative analysis of cinema and the 'real world' necessary, there is an assumption that cinema should reflect the real world, and perhaps vice versa. If cinema mirrored ethnographic data and social reality, one would find a diverse representation of Indonesian women in cinema. But such an expectation elides the fact that cinema is produced for commercial purposes and reflects the economic interests of a small handful of people who are mainly men. Furthermore, a commercial product aimed at a mass audience needs to present images of women that audiences are assumed to understand, empathise with, and enjoy to watch. Thus the resulting product of audience expectations and commercial compromise is often a limited and distorted image of women in general. A study that criticises the chasm between cinematic representation and social reality may well highlight the gender disparity in the film industry and sexism in society.

[2] For an example of a more extensive study of transgender characters in Indonesian cinema see Ben Murtagh's Genders and Sexualities in Indonesian Cinema (2013).

[3] Adopted from Stuart Hall (2003), 'regimes of representations' refer to the broader cultural frameworks of power that determines the representation of individuals, groups, and things. Regimes of representation exert symbolic power through representational practices.

Scholars who adopt Western theoretical approaches to gender in Indonesian cinema do so to question the regimes of representation behind the constructions of gender. This line of questioning leads to the examination of the nature of picturing gender in Indonesian visual culture itself. In this respect, Felicia Hughes-Freeland (2008: 160–161) argues that representations should be theorised 'as situated in relation to a political process of contestation and assertion'. This means asking 'whose representations are being deployed, and for what purposes, and how representations determine and reproduce experience' (Hughes-Freeland 2011: 422). A searching theoretical evaluation of Indonesian cinema and representations of gender can be a resource for the undoing of much relied-on hegemonic Eurocentric theoretical frameworks of gender relations and sexuality. If Hughes-Freeland is right, then we can take into account the layers of context, produced by historical, cultural, economic, and political specificities behind the image.

Until recently, the scholarly focus on gender in Indonesian cinema has been mostly with 'secular' or non-religious films. *Ayat-ayat Cinta* (Quranic Verses of Love, 2008, dir. Hanung Bramantyo) elicited discussions about the emergence of a 'new' kind of Muslim man (Paramaditha 2010; Hoesterey and Clark 2012) and a man symbolising the nation in democratic transition (Heryanto 2011: 75). The new kind of Muslim man in post-New Order Indonesian cinema is also said to be peaceful and pro-women (Nilan 2009; Hoesterey and Clark 2012). *Ayat-ayat Cinta* became equally significant for the first depiction of a romantic heroine who wears the face veil. Representations of veiled Muslim femininity in Indonesian cinema are said to hinge on the symbolic potency of the headscarf during a period of heightened tensions between the United States and the Muslim world (Heryanto 2011: 63). These images, both new femininities and masculinities, have risen from the aftermath of 9/11 to counter the often essentialist Western hegemonic rhetoric on Islam and Muslims.

This chapter will outline and engage with the breadth of literature on gender in Indonesian cinema. It will first describe the historical, political, and economic context in which the Indonesian film industry developed since its inception in 1919. This context will shed light on how representations of femininities and masculinities may have been produced within and influenced by the interlacing contexts. This is followed by a discussion of the literature on representations of women in Indonesian cinema that will bring together findings that propose a prevailing trend of negative stereotypes in New Order cinema and the inhibiting circumstances within the film

industry for images of women and female filmmakers. A review of the emerging studies on masculinity in Indonesia cinema will follow and assesses the shifting images of men and how they relate to those of women. The literature on gender in Indonesian cinema will then segue into looking at a new mode of expressing gender through an Islamic lens. Ultimately, this literature review addresses a largely unexplored area pertaining to conditions for the production of gender in 'Islamic' Indonesian cinema.

Gender as a Product of State Ideology and Censorship

To better understand the political and economic history of Indonesian cinema that gave rise to the representations of gender on its screens, a relevant overview of the Indonesian film industry is in order. Such an overview will shed light on the formal regimes of representations whose role is to control the kinds of images produced in Indonesian cinema. Because the Indonesian film industry is founded as a male-dominated cultural practice, women's roles in films have been mainly confined to the front of the camera. New Order regulations on film products and the class-defined culture of filmmaking contributed to maintaining gender ideology in almost equal measure. The laws and bodies relating to censorship inherited from colonialism but reworked during the New Order have shaped the kinds of representations of gender that were tacitly promoted and suppressed during the period. Film production was regulated under various state apparatuses and viewed as a form of mass media equal to radio and television in its function and influence (Sen and Hill 2006: 139).

The story of cinema in Indonesia began in 1900 with the arrival of moving pictures from abroad. Control of gender and sexuality was at the heart of the kinds of films imported into the colonial Dutch East Indies in that films needed to portray white European women as morally upstanding in lieu of images of femme fatales or prostitutes who might threaten the moral superiority of Dutch people (Sen 1994: 14). Locally made films in the first decades of the twentieth century under Dutch colonialism were made by Europeans and ethnic Chinese filmmakers. It was during the Japanese occupation of the Malay archipelago in 1942 and the Japanese takeover of the Dutch government film production company, *Algemeen Nederlandsch-Indisch Films* (ANIF), that indigenous Indonesian filmmakers began making films to the exclusion of the Chinese and Dutch. Indonesian filmmakers were taught filmmaking techniques and production organisation by the

more skilled and knowledgeable Japanese and under their tutelage, Indonesians learned to make politically motivated propaganda and documentary films (Sen 1994: 17).

After achieving political independence from the colonial Dutch government in 1949, the 1950s became a high point for Indonesian cinema with the establishment of its indigenous film industry before its collapse during political conflicts between the first president Sukarno and the army in early 1965. After the military coup and instalment of Suharto as the new president in 1966, the Indonesian film industry was revived between the 1970s and 1980s with the release of between 60 and 70 highly commercial films a year (Hanan 2008: 107). Suharto's regime lifted the ban on imported American films and initiated the oftentimes half-hearted rebuilding of the local film industry. The flood of Hollywood and Hong Kong film imports during the 1970s and 1980s threatened the production and marketability of local films. Although embroiled in an unfair competition with the behemoths of Hollywood and Hong Kong, local filmmakers were nonetheless greatly influenced by them. Aspirational Western-style lifestyles and dress and kung fu-inspired fighting scenes are hallmarks of transnational influence in New Order Indonesian cinema.

Censorship regulations enacted to preserve the national culture and control the circulation of explicit violent and sexual images dominated the narrative form of Indonesian cinema in the 1970s and 1980s. The archetypal narrative form promoted by the New Order regime comprised of the 'order-disorder-resolution of disorder' cycle as a means of demonstrating the redemptive power of the state (Heider 1991: 38). Government directives ensured that outlaws in film narratives must be punished and the police or army not represented in a bad light (Sen and Hill 2006: 142). As common as these narrative forms were during this period, there were films that elided the archetype thanks to the emergence of new and competing communication technologies, political dissent, and influx of global imagery (Sen and Hill 2006: 160). In the early 1990s, the Indonesian film industry experienced a nadir. The number of companies making celluloid films for cinema fell from 95 in 1991 to only 13 in 1994 (Sen and Hill 2006: 137). This steep decline can be attributed to three main factors. First, privatised television stations and the boom of home viewing media such as video and laser discs forced the film industry into even stiffer competition. Greater financial investment in television production marginalised the production of cinema due to falling sources of funding. Second, the monopoly of cinemas by the Suharto family ensured that profitable American films were screened

to the detriment of local cinema. Third, repressive censorship laws curbed the creative liberties of filmmakers from producing innovative films. Seemingly defiant of censorship, exploitation films that depended on the sensationalist mix of sex and violence filled the creative dearth of the industry during this period of decline. These trends appear to be at odds with the 1992 New Order regulation on film production, which decrees that 'cinema is defined as a form of mass communication to develop national culture and to improve national security' (Paramaditha 2007: 43).

Although state censorship regulations and other directives on film narratives have been consistent throughout the New Order in restricting a host of 'dangerous' subjects, it would not be helpful to assume that censorship was the main driving force behind the limited representations of gender for three reasons. First, the New Order regime had been primarily prohibitive towards films that might stoke ethnic, class, and religious tensions and political dissent (Sen and Hill 2006: 141). Second, the New Order regime did not wield its power to curb images of women that deviated from the state ideal of womanhood. Third, self-censorship appeared to be a powerful deterrent to producing complex representations of gender for Indonesian film audiences (Soh 2007: 85). Self-censorship became the path of least resistance for filmmakers who were required to face stringent pre-shooting consultation with the Directorate of Film in the Department of Information (Sen 1991: 66). The occasionally weak enforcement of the New Order's guidelines on the depiction of violence and sexual acts can be attributed to economic imperatives found in profitable sensationalist material, further underlining the censorship board's 'hands-off' approach to gender. Byungkuk Soh (2007) makes an interesting observation on the connection, or rather the disconnect, between the New Order's ideology on modernising women and its codes of censorship and film regulation. Both are state tools that control the reproduction of social identities. However, Soh finds that the government's view of cinema as 'a medium [that] exerts great influence on the development of the nation's attitude, character, and civic virtues' is discordant with the promotion of the image of the modern Indonesian woman it promotes in its marriage laws, government-sponsored women's organisations, and publications about women's roles by the government (2007: 84–85). In summary, state bodies that regulate film production do not have a duty to assert diverse and 'positive' images of women to fulfil cinema's social function.

After 1998 and no longer within the grip of Suharto's authoritarian policies, the mass media and popular culture experienced both expansion

and an increase in sexualised and 'Western' content. They ranged from highly erotic stage performances and television programmes to soft-core pornographic content in men's magazines and often subversive exploration into female sexuality in novels by a new generation of young women authors (Heryanto 2011: 67). Islamic groups and socially conservative commentators expressed concerns and alarm at the media phenomenon that posed a serious moral threat to Indonesian society (Hatley 2009: 46). The mass media expansion also provoked a dramatic reconsideration of national identity, gender, sexuality, religion, and class (Paramaditha 2007: 42). These renegotiations of previously circumscribed social identities rejuvenated the film industry in the *Reformasi* period (or the period of political transition post-Suharto) and propelled the production of more daring and provocative films throughout the ensuing decade. The new kind of censorship represented by the broadly defined anti-pornography bill tabled in 2006 to tighten the control of gender and sexuality evinces a reaction to a public sphere that was seen to have overstepped multiple moral and sexual boundaries. Contained in the bill are laws that forbid public acts or images of kissing, dressing in 'immodest' clothing, lewd language, and bodily conduct. The anti-pornography bill was ratified in October 2008 to much protest by non-Muslim and liberal Muslim Indonesians who saw the bill as not only a sign of repressive Islamisation but also a creeping breach of freedom of expression (Heryanto 2008; Hatley 2009; van Wichelen 2010). The anti-pornography bill was also criticised for its potential to effectively curb the movement of women and girls (van Wichelen 2009). Rising anti-American sentiment in Indonesia brought about by the US-led war in Iraq galvanised support for the bill and protest against another moral lightning rod, the launch of the Indonesian edition of *Playboy* magazine in 2008. Women's bodies became a site of contestation for clerics, feminist activists, and media producers, each with diverging agendas. Debates that verged on moral panic were provoked by the furore over Inul Darasista's musical career and signature derriere-'drilling' dance, disputes over Megawati's ascendancy to national leadership, and the aforementioned anti-pornography bill. These issues have contributed to the formation of what Rachel Rinaldo describes as the 'feminisation' of the Indonesian public sphere, whereby 'more women were becoming more numerous and outspoken in NGOs, religious organisations and the media' (2008: 1798). However, the feminised public sphere is not necessarily a progressive climate that pushes for greater equality seeing as equality is not the goal for all Muslim women activists from a wide ideological spectrum, from liberals to conservatives (Rinaldo 2008: 1798).

The end of Suharto's dictatorial regime in 1998 saw the advent of new film genres and innovative works by independent filmmakers and the increased participation of women as directors and producers in Indonesia's film industry. The gradual rise of women filmmakers in contemporary Indonesian cinema is part and parcel of the greater involvement and influence of Indonesian women in the arts, literature, politics, and Islamic institutions. Upper middle-class women who possessed skill, vision, connections, and capital in particular benefited greatly from these shifts of power from the government centre to the periphery. The first independent film to be released from the ashes of the New Order's collapse, a portmanteau film, *Kuldesak* (Cul-de-sac 1998), was directed by two women, Mira Lesmana and Nan T. Achnas, and two men, Riri Riza and Rizal Mantovani. Of the 184 film directors who made films between 1998 and 2009, only 19 are women (10 %) (Sasono 2011b: 118). This is a modest increase from the four female directors during the New Order; Ratna Asmara, Citra Dewi, Ida Farida, and Sofia W.D. (for a fuller discussion on female filmmakers and their films in the New Order period, see Michalik 2013). However, as Sen (1994) has noted, the female producers and directors during the New Order were either the wives or daughters of male filmmakers. In other words, access to the New Order filmmaking industry was granted on male-centric terms. In contrast to women's subsumption in the New Order, Sen (2009), Sulistyani (2010) and Hughes-Freeland (2011) found that the higher number of women filmmakers from 1998 onward has substantially redefined the aesthetics of post-New Order Indonesia cinema and the political economy of the industry.

Outside the domain of Indonesian fiction film are young female filmmakers who are making inroads into documentary filmmaking (Hughes-Freeland 2011). They bring to light the plight of women who are unfairly impacted by Sharia laws in Aceh and Sulawesi (Kusumaryati 2010) and of those who work in Malaysia, Hong Kong, and the in Gulf states as domestic workers. The first V Film Festival in Jakarta in 2009 was established as a collaboration between liberal and female-dominated institutions: Kalyanashira Films; Komunitas Salihara (Salihara Community); *Jurnal Perempuan* (Women's Journal); Kartini Asia Network, and Kineforum. The festival, which used to take place annually on Kartini Day,[4] on

[4] 21 April is the birthday of the famed Javanese princess and pioneer of women's rights to education, Raden Ajeng Kartini, who lived between 1890 and 1901.

21 April, showcased local and international films about, directed by and for women. Although now defunct for lack of funds after running for two years, the V Film Festival was groundbreaking in its response to male dominance in the film world both in Indonesia and beyond its borders. The V Film Festival served as an important reminder of the marginalisation of women behind and in front of the camera in Indonesia and the difficulty women often faced to secure a comfortable role in the industry. Does the emergence of female-directed and produced films spell a more diverse and nuanced representation of women in cinema? How much has changed for women on-screen since the end of the New Order? How are the issues about gender and sexuality ignited in the post-New Order public sphere imagined in cinema? These are the questions that have animated and helped frame the literature on images of femininity in Indonesian cinema, to which I now turn in the next section.

Stirring Slowly from Passivity: Femininity in Indonesian Cinema

Commentary on gender in Indonesian cinema has lamented the limited range of female characters in film. During the New Order, women were assigned as not only procreators of the state but also as an index of what defines the state, as demonstrated in the many minor and non-speaking/symbolic roles for women (Sen 1995: 94). Furthermore, women's images in film were often used for either sensationalistic purposes or as personifying the nation's moral order. If the moral order is challenged by liberated female sexuality or non-heteronormative behaviour, it would typically be restored by the end of the film through the punishment of female characters who strayed from their traditional gender roles (Sen 1994: 138). If female characters were not idealised as dutiful and self-abnegating mothers and wives, they were idealised as beautiful mute women, a blank slate onto which men inscribe their ideas, desires, and aspirations (Sen 1994: 141–144). There are, however, exceptional examples of alternative femininity whose lack of convention goes unpunished, but they apply to non-Indonesian women or women who are sexually objectified (Hughes-Freeland 2011: 421). The limitations placed on representations of women have been attributed to the aesthetic judgement of film critics and judges of film festivals. Images of passive and merely symbolic femininity in New Order cinema were reinforced through local film institutions, festivals, and

awards. Krishna Sen found that New Order films that preserved the status quo through restoring normative or 'correct' femininity and the patriarchal division of labour were usually awarded the Citra, the most important filmmaking award in Indonesia (Sen 1994: 148–149). In contrast, films that depicted women who were in full control of their destiny and exerted their independence outside a heterosexual relationship were not critically acclaimed. Instead, they were criticised for being unrealistic in their portrayal of women's superiority over men (Sen 1994: 140).

Hughes-Freeland argues that femininity in New Order cinema was usually reduced into a dichotomy, where on one hand a woman is a victim, and on the other hand she is the uncontrollable virago (2011: 420). Sita Aripurnami (2000) identifies a range of sexist representations of women in key films during the New Order succinctly captured in the title of her essay, 'Whiny, finicky, bitchy, stupid, and revealing'. In essence, women have been portrayed in Indonesian cinema as domineering, unreasonable, and prone to wild emotional outbursts in stark contrast to their often stoic male counterparts (Aripurnami 2000: 55–57). Although filmmakers have access to a wealth of data on the diversity of women's lives, Aripurnami argues that women were nonetheless reduced to one-dimensional images in film. The richness of Indonesian women's lives is said to be 'buried under the "impressions" created and captured by filmmakers, scenario writers, directors, directors, actors, and by the audience' (Aripurnami 2000: 60). The 'real' Indonesian woman is said to exist in national discourse and at times oscillates precariously between the Kartini model and the maniacal throng of women in New Order mythology (Tiwon 1996: 65). Sylvia Tiwon argues that the cultural and social barriers to self-actualisation and articulation that women face result from the organisation of their womanhood around the model/maniac binary. A woman must aspire to fulfil the idealised image of the perfect *ibu* (mother and/or married woman) modelled after the Javanese princess and first Indonesian campaigner for women's rights Raden Ajeng Kartini. But when she gains more agency to express herself more freely, she risks falling into the condemned category of the wild and immoral maniacal caricature of Gerwani activists[5] (Tiwon 1996: 66).

The ideal woman according to the gender ideology of the New Order is one whose role is primarily confined to the domestic sphere to produce

[5] Gerwani was a much demonised women's Communist organisation during the New Order for their purported association with sexual perversion (Wieringa 2000).

healthy and productive Indonesian men.[6] This role is reiterated in other government directives, such as the *Panca Dharma Wanita* (The Five Obligations of Women) and the *Garis-garis Besar Haluan Negara* (GBHN, Broad Guidelines for State Policy). *The Panca Dharma Wanita* is the foundational guideline for the *Pembinaan Kesejahteraan Keluarga* (PKK, Family Welfare Movement), while the GBHN is for the government. To foster a 'happy family' (*keluarga sejahtera*) according to the PKK, a woman must fulfil five roles, in order of importance: as wife who stands by her husband, manager of the household, mother, educator of her children, and finally as citizen of Indonesia (Oey-Gardiner and Bianpoen 2000: 58). Scholars of representations of gender in Indonesian cinema usually note the various state programmes and government-sponsored organisations dedicated to the development of women as exemplifying the official line for the correct behaviour of all women and its power to somehow influence film narratives (Aripurnami 2000; Imanjaya 2009b; Hughes-Freeland 2011: 418–419). But they do not usually establish their rationale for doing so, as if such state directives on women's roles have influence on cinema in a straightforward way.

Little is said about how the control of gender roles and sexuality during the New Order were steeped in notions of class. Although not stressed enough in her groundbreaking thesis on State Ibuism (State Motherism), Julia Suryakusuma's discussion on the role of the government and state constitution in maintaining unequal gender relations among civil servants is ultimately a question of class as a function of gender and sexual monitoring (Suryakusuma 1996). Civil servants were expected to be role models for the rest of Indonesian society by swearing allegiance to the *Pancasila* (the state philosophy) and having their private lives regulated by the state (Suryakusuma 1996). By implication, the greater one's status, the greater the moral burden one must carry. Women of the bureaucratic class were especially burdened by double oppression; oppressed by their inferior status in the bureaucratic hierarchy and their inferior position to their husbands (Suryakusuma 1996). Thus in a discussion about the invasive ways the state entered the private sphere of its people, Suryakusuma was interested in how state gender ideology was imposed on the bureaucratic class and not how it affected those lower in the social hierarchy or at the margins of Indonesian society. Despite the regime's best efforts to homogenise a diverse and

[6] The Women of Indonesia, 1985: 57–58.

populous nation into the binary model of *kodrat pria* (men's moral code or essence) and *kodrat wanita* (women's moral code or essence), ethnographic studies on gender relations during the New Order demonstrated a variety of gender regimes. Individuals across Indonesia demonstrate a reasonable level of autonomy over their gender identities which often deviate from the official line on correct gendered behaviour (Robinson 2010: 11). Nevertheless, the gendered nature of social organisation, the *azas kekeluargaan* (foundation of the family), however symbolic, is incited most acutely during political crises.

Not all authors are of the view that the New Order's repressive policy on gender produces restricted images of women in cinema. Soh's (2007) analysis of the images of women in New Order cinema departs from Hughes-Freeland's opinion that a feminine binary prevailed during the period. Although there are certainly many films that circumscribe female characters to traditional gender roles, Soh argues that not all female protagonists were punished for deviating from the role of subordinate mother and wife. Instead, Soh suggests that the variety of women's images in Indonesian cinema is legitimised by a blind spot of the New Order regime to account for the 'unity in diversity' philosophy in cinema (2007: 81–83). Reflecting the leap into modernity in the 1980s, there have been films of career women who are independent and divorce their husbands without social repercussions. Women in horror films may often be victims of sexual violence and murder, but they return with a vengeance to terrorise both men and women (Soh 2007: 74). Soh goes on to argue that the national ideology, *Pancasila*, and guiding tenets of organisations and national programmes dedicated to developing the ideal Indonesian woman have little bearing on the film industry which produces a more diverse range of feminine representations. Although strongly directive, Soh argues that the New Order regime's preoccupation had been less on women in film than a vision of national unity.

Although criticisms of the recurring dichotomy of feminine representation in Indonesia are an important commentary on the lack of diversity of women's images, they also suggest that there is a positive feminine 'essence' that female characters fail to achieve in cinema. Images of women identified as mute, passive, submissive, and desired as an object of the gaze follows the patriarchal discourse of sexual difference that constructs Woman from a distillation of feminine tropes: enigma, nature, or evil (De Lauretis 1987: 19–20). But such a preoccupation with this restrictive feminine binary limits our view of other kinds of images of women. To examine the variety of

gender representations, if one is to follow Teresa De Lauretis's critique, one must move away from sexual difference, the notion of women as different from men, female from male. Less a biological or social difference than difference defined in signification and discursive effects, sexual difference positions women in negative relation to men. In psychoanalytic terms, sexual difference characterises women as lacking in relation to the phallus. De Lauretis argues for the theorisation of gender in cinema that departs from reproducing the patriarchal formulation of Woman; the distillation of patriarchal definitions of femininity as mother, virgin, or whore; and towards embracing differences *between* women. I would argue that the rigid binary schemas of 'bad' and 'good' femininity are often at work in Indonesian cinema. But rather than arguing that they occur as a rule in Indonesian cinema more generally, I contend that they are depicted as such in individual films and should be analysed on a film by film basis. Furthermore, such oppositional binaries are contextual to the historical moorings during which the films were made. This view follows De Lauretis's rejection of feminist film theory's deployment of sexual difference and of the universality of women's experiences. Instead, she argues that representations of gender are not found in a finished or coherent way but rather produced through discursive practices and social relations.

Refashioning Foucault's technologies of sex to account for gender, De Lauretis proposes that the technologies of gender, at times regarded as discursive practices, produce gendered subjectivities. To further elaborate this view, representations of gender emerge from the social, political, and economic conditions that allow, restrict, and promote certain, often narrow, images of women. De Lauretis's view marks a shift away from classical feminist theoretical conception of film as a closed system of meaning that consisted of fundamental modes of address—camera technique, narrative arc, editing, lighting—that oppress women. A corollary argument would be that classical feminist film theory provides a limited and often deterministic interpretation of film that commercial films are irredeemably sexist. In other words, there is more to film than text. Hughes-Freeland (2011: 421) notes that the highly sexualised depiction of women became common and more explicit in the 1990s than in previous decades when government media regulation was in decline. The sexual and violent content that pervaded Indonesian cinema was a reflection of a declining film industry that was desperate to attract audiences on the basis of sensationalism. But it also demonstrated that graphic depictions of female sexuality were economically determined by market imperatives. This is to say that sexual objectification

of women to appeal to the male gaze is not an ahistorical and essentialising evidence of women's inferiority in society or that Woman stood as both image to be looked at and symbolic repository for sexuality (Mulvey 1975; Doane 1991). Images of women who were either victims of sexual violence or engaged in consensual sexual acts akin to insatiable viragos (Hughes-Freeland 2011: 421) triumphed in the 1990s, a significant shift from older images of women who were punished for their sexuality.

The focus on the production of 'women's films', films about and by women, has arisen from feminist criticisms of the history of cinema and androcentric definitions of the auteur. Women have been active and prolific producers of cinematic material since the beginnings of the medium but their contributions have been devalued by many male film scholars and critics. Feminist film critics have rediscovered and re-evaluated the works of female directors and 'women's films'—mainly the melodrama to recuperate the value of women's contributions in cinema and pleasure as spectators (Kuhn 1984; Gledhill 1987). However, 'corrective' representations of women are not necessarily to be found in 'women's films' either. Krishna Sen found that New Order *film wanita* (women's films) that were sold as films made for and by women about women's issues were actually mainly filmed through the male gaze, spoken by male 'voices', and ultimately about men's concerns and insecurities about female sexuality (Sen 1994: 43). In order to succeed in the film industry, female filmmakers during the New Order needed to adopt elements of mainstream sexist culture in the making and marketing of their films.

Several authors have commented on the shifts in representations of women in the post-New Order period towards increasing diversity and social awareness of women's status in Indonesian society (Sen 2008; Hughes-Freeland 2011; Sulistyani 2010). As mentioned previously, the higher number of women in the film industry as directors, producers, and writers during the period post-1998 has made headway into representing women engaging in issues that would have been unheard of in New Order cinema. Media liberalisation made it possible for the making of female-centred films on polygamy, female homosexuality, and abortion in more enlightening ways than what would have been permissible previously. One must be careful, however, not make a causal connection between media liberalisation and a more women-friendly film industry with a complete break from older regimes of representation. As Soh observes, 'change of any kind is difficult to locate or mark off as if it has precise boundaries [...]

for it is usually uneven, hidden, or presents itself in such a wide variety of manifestations so as to defy control' (2007: 69).

With regards to the women's films produced during the post-New Order period, Hughes-Freeland states that they demonstrate 'where a creative exploration of gender relations will be found' (2011: 420). Adopting Raymond Williams's approach to understanding cultural flows, Hapsari Sulistyani argues that post-New Order women's cinema is an expression of a struggle between 'residual' gender ideology of the New Order and 'emergent' ones of the Reform period (Sulistyani 2010: 161). According to Sulistyani, the depiction of female characters in women's cinema or female-directed films such as *Pasir Berbisik* (Whispering Sands, 2001, dir. Nan Triveni Achnas) and *Berbagi Suami* (Love For Share, 2006, dir. Nia Dinata) implies that women cannot completely escape the influence of patriarchal ideology when 'they return to the expected subject position for women' (Sulistyani 2010: 162). However, both films refuse to naturalise patriarchal values. Rather, they depict those values for what they are—'a set of rules that serve the interest of men and entrap women in a state of hopelessness' (Sulistyani 2010: 164). Both *Pasir Berbisik* and *Berbagi Suami* critique many dominant ideas about the construction of female subjectivity in Indonesia, such as women's position in the 'normal family' that reinforces the dominant presence of the father as essential while mothers are asexual beings (Sulistyani 2010: 164). Sulistyani argues further that both films posit a contrasting distinction between motherhood and wifehood in contrast to New Order films that routinely conflated the two (2010: 165). Although the films challenge many elements of New Order filmmaking, the female protagonist in *Pasir Berbisik* falls back into a more stereotypically feminised female subject position by the end of the film. Sulistyani asserts that the films manage to subvert the male gaze by denying sexualised representations of passive female characters,[7] demonstrating that Indonesian female film-makers have a cinematic medium to express their political opinions to a high artistic standard (2010: 165).

Relational to representations of women are those of men. Existing discussions on women and men in Indonesian cinema tend to position the two

[7] I am less certain about *Pasir Berbisik*'s alleged success at subverting the male gaze. The film is centred around a troubled mother-daughter relationship that is thrown into crisis when the daughter, Daya, played by the popular actor, Dian Sastrowardoyo, becomes a victim of sexual abuse. The abuse is played out in a prolonged scene with Daya forced to masturbate in front of her male abuser, whose view of the event is aligned with the audience/camera.

genders as antagonistic: in relations where men are powerful and domineering, while women are submissive and oppressed under male domination. Conversely, 'strong' women are paired with 'weak' men (Heider 1991; Clark 2004). But I argue that an oppositional framing of the sexes turns women and men into one-dimensional and static components of what are dynamic and ever-shifting characters within an individual film, a corpus of films, genre, and in the film industry as a whole. A more sensitive examination of masculinities in Indonesian cinema sheds light on the differences along class, religious, ethnic, and sexual lines between men in film, providing a context-rich tableau of representations of gender.

'The Film Industry Is Masculine': Masculinities in Indonesian Cinema

Addressing masculinity in Indonesian cinema requires some reading against the grain. Like heterosexuality, lack of disabilities, and whiteness, masculinity is often referred to as an unmarked social category in which male dominance has been historically treated as the 'norm'. Gender meanwhile is often taken to be a shorthand for women's issues (Clark 2008), with women as the 'problematic' gender. In the spirit of Richard Dyer's description of male sexuality, it is often difficult to see masculinity and talk about it, as it is 'like air—you breathe it in all the time, but you are not aware of it much' (Dyer 1985: 28). Masculinity's invisibility may have to do with the fact that most Indonesian films throughout the New Order and thereafter have been about men and when they do feature prominent female roles, the women merely become vehicles for men's concerns or 'spheres of action' (Sen 1994: 116–133). At other times, women in Indonesian film fulfil merely a subsidiary role. Hence, men's narratives are often the standard for cinematic storytelling. Films that focus on women are 'women's films', while those about men are simply films. The inability to notice masculinity demonstrates how deeply influenced we are as film viewers by the dominant discourses regarding gender relations in society. We can argue that an examination of masculinity is more than just studying the men in films, but recognising the tropes or conventions male characters habitually exhibit and how the particular concerns expressed by the male characters drive the narrative of the film. Remarking on the relative invisibility of Indonesian masculinity as a construct and analytical category, Dédé Oetomo contends that masculinity arises as an issue during discussions regarding gender

inequality, men's roles as the head of the family and chief breadwinner, men's rightful participation in the public domain, and their dominant role in heterosexual relations (Oetomo 1996: 260).

Existing theories of hegemonic Indonesian masculinity point to the construction of upper-class Javanese *priyayi* (aristocrat or nobleman) manhood as the aspirational model for men during the New Order period (Aveling 2001: 162). The hegemony of aristocratic Javanese masculinity is a reflection of Javanese cultural dominance in Indonesian public policy since the inception of Indonesia as a postcolonial nation under Javanese-dominated rule. The emotional restraint of the *priyayi* man is often held up as an ideal disposition for a man and is distinguished from the uncouth loose cannon of a man who is liable to go *amok* (Clark 2004: 118). But given the vast diversity of cultures, languages, and socioeconomic differences between Indonesian men across the archipelago, the Javanese *priyayi* masculinity remains simply a model achievable by the very few. The New Order period was characterised by a repressive form of development which went to great lengths to circumscribe the dominant ideological gender regime, one represented by the monogamously married heterosexual man who is a responsible breadwinning father (*bapak*) and the obedient and supportive wife and mother (*ibu*). The foundations of the family or *azas kekeluargaan*, a concept upon which the New Order gender regime rested, became a basis for the revitalisation of Javanese culture at the turn of the twentieth century. According to Kathryn Robinson, the *azas kekeluargaan* 'symbolically anchored the militarised hegemonic masculinity and disguised its violent character through the image of the benevolent *bapak*' (2010: 68). The nuclear family was seen as a replica of the state. As a hierarchical parent-child/master-slave (*kawula-gusti*) model of relations, the state is in turn symbolically a family consisting of the 'wise father, the caring mother, and their children who know their place' (Shiraishi 1997: 84).

Derived from elite Javanese discourse on hegemonic masculinity and the masculine counterpart of Ibuism, 'Bapakism' (Father-ism) became the guiding principle for secular male leadership. At the pinnacle of masculinities is the ultimate *bapak* (father), the archetypal male leader of the nation personified by Suharto during his presidency (Suryakusuma 1996). Suharto's bapakism became the gendered ideological centre around which the bureaucracy of the New Order organised. Suharto even declared himself *Bapak Pembangunan*, the father of development (Rahim 2001; Scherer 2006), which underlines the nature of his paternally and paternalistically driven authority. The authority of the *bapak* is perceived as natural

and God-given as he is the head of his family, community, businesses, and nation-state. Suharto's bapakism appears to be a deliberate and oppositional construction to the image of hegemonic masculinity embodied by his predecessor Sukarno. Sukarno projected himself as '*Bung*' (Brother) or 'Comrade', an appellation of equality and brotherhood in contrast to Suharto's hierarchical terms of address. Communist masculinity, which Sukarno was associated with, was viewed as 'chaotic and orgiastic' while bapakism, in contrast, was viewed as symbolic of restraint and composure (Paramaditha 2007: 45). The flip side of the prevailing discourse on the restrained New Order masculinity was men's power to commit grievous violence in the name of the nation. Primary examples of men's dominance were manifested in the bloody purge of Communists committed during the 1965–1966 military coup, and the state-sponsored gendered violence such as the rape and murder of women during the military unrest in Aceh between 1990 and 1998 (Wandita 2000). Since the end of the New Order, control over the prevailing gender regimes became more fragmented thanks to three major shifts in the political and socioeconomic landscape. First, a combination of the Asian economic downturn of 1997 and the upward credentialising for access to jobs (Elmhirst 2007: 232). Second, the growth of knowledge-based sectors in the national economy (Bayhaqi 2000), and third, the tremendous expansion of access to global media and information technologies (Nilan and Utari 2008) affected ideas about gender that without doubt impacted men and their relation to women.

The literature on masculinity in Indonesian cinema has to some extent captured the prevailing themes of men, power, and the lack thereof found in ideology and socioeconomic context. Films about national heroes, irrespective of who is narrating Indonesian history, are replete with images of competing masculinities. In the government-sponsored propaganda film, *Pengkhianatan G30S/PKI* (Treachery G30S/The Indonesian Communist Party, 1984, dir. Ariffin C. Noer), an image of nationalistic masculinity is carved out of the contest between the military under Suharto and the 'others': Communist men and female Communist activists of Gerwani, who represent dangerous female sexuality. Rising above them all, both morally and ideologically, is the figure of the military general in *Pengkhianatan G30S/PKI* whose masculine power and authority transcend the man himself. Without the presence of the hero-general, his military paraphernalia in his home is enough to exude his authority and act as his stand-in as leader, husband, and father to his family (Paramaditha 2007: 26). Intan Paramaditha's analysis demonstrates that clothing is an

important feature in signalling aspects of masculinity even without the appearance of the man. She goes further to suggest that scenes depicting the torture of military generals by members of the PKI indicated their 'feminised' victimisation which required the eventual recuperation of their masculinity through the Indonesian Communist Party's defeat. Produced by a member of the presidential office and features President Suharto himself in a heroic role, *Pengkhianatan G30S/PKI* is a propaganda film *par excellence* which functioned to construct members of the Indonesian Community Party as a bloodthirsty and unscrupulous lot. The figures who uphold national order, in this case the generals under the leadership of Suharto, are foregrounded as the upstanding men who lead, suffer, die as martyrs, and triumph in their battle with Communists.

The end of Suharto's New Order heralded the recuperation of long-repressed and vilified images of Chinese Indonesians in cinema, most notably in Riri Riza's biopic *Gie* (2005), about the anti-Sukarno student activist Soe Hok Gie. Ideas about hegemonic masculinity are completely dismantled in the figure of Gie when contrasted with the sexual excesses of the womanising President Sukarno. Played by the young Eurasian actor and matinee idol Nicholas Saputra, Gie is emotionally and sexually repressed in the company of women who desire him. Instead, his most intimate relationship is with his male best friend. Needless to say, the homoerotic undertones of their relationship did not go unnoticed by Indonesian film critics who expressed mixed views on the matter (Paramaditha 2007: 5). Because Gie is unable to perform the valorised heterosexual virility and dominance in the manner of Sukarno, the figure of Gie subverts any notion of 'nationalised masculinity' (Paramaditha 2007: 54). Gie's anti-heroism has been criticised for its 'weakness' and sexual impotence and not playing up to the audience's expectations of a leading man (Paramaditha 2007: 52). This may be due to the origins of Gie's depiction by the director, Riri Riza. Riza was influenced by representations of flawed and sensitive men in American films and his favour for such representations is later imbued in Gie's character. In fact, Riza became inspired by the conflicted and emotionally complex role played by the British actor Jude Law in the 2004 Hollywood film, *Closer* (Paramaditha 2007: 52). *Gie* is a critique of Sukarno's repressive rule and corrupted hegemonic masculinity featuring a male anti-hero who is in many ways flawed and 'unproductive' according to the New Order's definition of the ideal man whose responsibility is to marry a woman and provide for his family. Furthermore, Riza describes Gie as 'less an action hero' and more an intellectual who is able to exert his powers

through writing rather than the traditional masculinised tropes of compulsory heterosexuality and asserting dominance over other men through fighting.

The sexual ambiguity and reluctant heroism of Gie are akin to the images of masculinities in the 1998 film *Kuldesak* (also directed by Riri Riza, alongside three other filmmakers). Both films portray men who play reluctant heroes in the traditional sense. Moreover, the films demonstrate the fluidity and instability of men's subjectivities during the post-New Order, a deliberate departure from previous celebrated images of masculinity of the New Order. The shift towards ambiguous masculinity and male sexuality is not a willful one expressed in the 'democratic euphoria' of post-1998 *Reformasi*. Rather, masculinities that were granted authority and prestige by the ideology of the New Order regime were becoming 'undone' or dismantled, revealing the masculinised violence done in the name of the nation. In his assessment of *Kuldesak*, a portmanteau of four parallel narratives set in contemporary Jakarta, Marshall Clark (2004: 122) finds that the men in the film are hardly realistic nor remotely admirable. Nonetheless, the film provides a wide range of masculine tropes that weave in and out of global popular culture references, New Order ideology, and Javanese mythology. As a film, *Kuldesak* was in many ways groundbreaking. It was the first independent film whose time of release and tone strongly resonated with the euphoria of the New Order's sudden end. The main male characters of the film, a grunge slacker who drifts aimlessly in his highly privileged but degraded lifestyle, a film buff and director wannabe, the depressed and alienated gay man, and the businessman who rapes his female employees, are 'wooden caricatures who represent various models of masculinity' (Clark 2004: 122). The other supporting male characters act as either foils or the 'alternative masculinity' to the primary anti-heroes. Minor male characters such as the madman who the grunge slacker Andre consults is an allegorical figure who, like the buffoons of the iconic Javanese *wayang kulit* (shadow play), Semar and his sons, act as guardians of truth and justice (Clark 2004: 127).

The focus on many competing masculinities continues in post-New Order cinema and is informed by ethnography and other mass media. Pam Nilan (2009) has identified three distinct 'styles' of youthful masculinities in contemporary Indonesia: the bearded male evangelists and all-male *nasyid* (Islamic a cappella) music groups, the hip but sensitive young man, and the belligerent *preman* (thug). They arise from the tensions created by 'familial and pedagogic discourses that call them towards the role

of the steady worker and reliable provider' (Nilan 2009: 328). But at the same time, the young men are drawn towards 'compelling discourses of macho bravado deriving from both local and global sources that create pressure to construct their identity in terms of quite different kinds of masculine cultural practice' (Nilan 2009: 328). The three images of masculinities delineated by Nilan all make prominent appearances in current Indonesian film and other mass media. The three styles of masculinity are coded hypermasculine as they exhibit the prevailing and persuasive reiterative performances that connote social influence, aspiration, power, dominance, and the ultimate antithesis to femininity (Nilan 2009: 329). As young hypermasculine men, they challenge the authority of older men whose masculinity is defined and legitimised by New Order bapakism. The hypermasculinities that Nilan identifies are not static as the young men gradually shift towards a hegemonic centre around which further status is granted through ageing and acquisition of a family and full-time employment. Inevitably, the hypermasculine young men eventually become reconfigured versions of the *bapak*.

The emergence of sensitive men in Indonesian cinema did not, however, signal the end of the triangulated link between power, violence, and masculinity. Marshall Clark (2008) has explored the ways in which men and masculinities in post-New Order films reflect socioeconomic trends and anti-authoritarian sensibilities in two popular films directed by Rudy Soedjarwo; *Mengejar Matahari* (Chasing the Sun, 2004,) and *9 Naga* (9 Dragons, 2006). In these two films, the grittier, more violent representations of men accentuated by their grimy, poverty-stricken surroundings take centre stage. These representations are taken by Clark as masculine expressions of rage and powerlessness with regard to their poverty and disenfranchisement in society. According to Clark, the scenes of violence in the two films are far more graphic than previous Indonesian films signalling a new aesthetic towards hyperrealism and reassertion of 'what it means to be a man' when traditional elements of manhood—power, money, admiration—are beyond the reach of struggling young Indonesian men. For Clark, the rise of hyperreal violence of the two films expresses an anxiety set in a 'masculinist cast' towards the double threat of male homosexuality and the feminisation of the public sphere in the post-New Order period (Clark 2011). *9 Naga* also raised a different kind of anxiety in censors when its promotional poster prominently featured the buffed-up body of one of its heroes (played by Fauzi Baadila) along with a subversive tag line, 'The best people in Indonesia are criminals' (Clark 2008: 50). The censorship

board demanded the offending half-naked body be covered up and the tag line amended into something less incendiary. Objections against Fauzi Baadila's naked torso may be related to concerns that the emerging queer culture in Indonesia may 'spill' into mainstream media and heterosexual men's spheres of action.

Through these different instances of masculinity, Nilan and Clark's studies suggest that the construction of competing hegemonic masculinities has become an important feature in postauthoritarian Indonesian film and public discourse. It is pertinent to remember, however, that representations of hegemonic masculinities are not fixed states but a 'configuration of gender practices' implicated in a struggle for dominance and contingent on context (Connell 1995: 84). The contingent aspect of masculinities will play a significant part in the analysis of 'new' Muslim masculinities in this book, particularly those relating to socioeconomic class and Islamic contestations. Clark notes quite rightfully that the notion of masculinity and violence cannot be considered unproblematically because more 'positive' representations of masculinity—the military figure and action hero in particular—are also prone to resorting to violence when provoked to fight (Clark 2011: 49). Perhaps what sets the 'negative' images of men in post-New Order films featuring violent thugs and impoverished leading men apart from 'positive' male heroes of yore are the former's outburst of *amok*, the frenzied and often violent reaction to *malu* or shame. Furthermore, the men in *9 Naga* and *Mengejar Matahari* inhabit an environment that is perpetually on the brink of violence and chaos, with danger looming over them at every turn accentuating the definition of their masculinity around violence.

When 'new' femininities—educated, independent, and assertive—are introduced in the new wave of religiously inflected filmmaking in post-1998 Indonesia, different strands of 'new' masculinities also emerge in relation to them, albeit in more implicit ways. Changing gender dynamics resulting from women's increasing, and at times empowering, presence in the public sphere inadvertently transform men's relationships with women. In Indonesia, little is noted of the relationship between women's gradual emancipation during a period of socio-political upheaval of *Reformasi* and the feelings of male disempowerment that have driven some men to seek solace in Islam and its radical, sometimes violent, versions (Clark 2008; Heryanto 2011). The concept of masculinities is chosen as it takes into account the multiplicity and fluidity of masculine gender performance and different ideas of what it means to be a man. The representation of

masculinities in post-New Order Indonesian cinema is less about 'newness' whereby 'older' images of masculinities have been replaced than it is about recurring tropes that are enmeshed with masculinised anxieties and uncertainties of the post-New Order period. There are indeed enduring themes pertaining to New Order masculinity, such as its dominance in relation to femininity, and the subordination of homosexual masculinity that are not new but persist in films of recent years. But there are a few new and emerging themes unique to post-New Order masculinity that blend nonetheless with older masculine tropes. With that in mind, I would like to propose herein, and in the chapters that follow, the construction of new configurations of older representations of masculinity in Indonesian Islamic cinema.

Gender Through an Islamic Cinematic Lens

How are Islamic femininity and masculinity represented in Indonesian cinema? What have been the economic and political imperatives that brought about their emergence? The scholarly focus on Islamic identities in Indonesian cinema is relatively new and was spurred by the release of films about polygamy, namely *Berbagi Suami* (Love for Share, 2006, dir. Nia Dinata) and the highly successful *Ayat-ayat Cinta* (Verses of Love, 2008, dir. Hanung Bramantyo). Although there have been film portrayals of Muslims throughout the history of Indonesian cinema, few have been studied as Muslim characters, much less as Muslim women and men. Thus with respect to the discourse on gender in Indonesian cinema, the image of the 'Muslim woman' and 'Muslim man' did not emerge until the post-New Order period marking a new phase in representations of gender in Indonesia. As will be discussed in further detail, their emergence coincides with the moral panic brought about by media liberalisation following the end of the New Order and the rise of Islamic media consumption by the pious Muslim middle classes (Heryanto 2011: 67). Much of the early attention on Muslim identities in post-New Order Indonesian cinema has focused on how women are visually constructed and how the visualisation of women's bodies are contested in the public sphere. The construction of the Muslim woman, referred here as an image rather than a referent signifying a living flesh and blood Muslim woman, is a historical construct. Like representations of the Muslim woman in Western discourse, she is a 'product of specific moments and developments in culture' (Kahf 1999: 2). The image of the Muslim woman has taken on different meanings in the history of Indonesian visual culture and although

there have been more images of women signified explicitly as 'Muslim' (in a headscarf, face veil, praying) in the mass media since the 1990s, such images do necessarily not signal the Islamisation of Indonesian women.

This review of Muslim women in Indonesian cinema is therefore about a category produced through visual and narrative conventions. Such a review demands a more specialised attention to representations of women in the medium. Hence, a further delineation of what the 'Muslim woman' as a category means is required. To begin with, the 'Muslim woman' in Indonesian visual discourse is marked by a familiar article of clothing and metaphor: the veil. Beyond the veil, the Indonesian 'Muslim woman' is conceived through the contestations concerning women's roles in the public sphere. This is a refinement of the category 'Muslim woman' employed by the pioneering review by Gönül Dönmez-Colin (2004) of women in films produced in predominantly Muslim countries such as Turkey, countries in Central Asia, Iran, Indonesia, Malaysia, Pakistan, and Bangladesh. Dönmez-Colin sought to identify the representational patterns of Muslim women in films between 1917 and 2003 to locate the ways in which women's roles in cinema are 'directly linked to social and political evolutions in which religion and religious customs play an important role' (2004: 7). In nearly all the films, Dönmez-Colin identifies the negative portrayal of women characterised by the recurring exploitation of women's bodies and marginalisation of their voices and vision. Far from being absent from the cinematic screen, women in these films are presented mainly to be 'seen'. Obversely, the dearth of female directors across the board means that women do far less of the 'seeing' than men (Dönmez-Colin 2004: 187).

While there are vast differences between predominantly Muslim societies to be considered, Dönmez-Colin argues that these societies share continuities in image production through what is a thoroughly male-dominated activity, in that films were made by and for men (2004: 9). In early twentieth-century Turkey and Iran for instance, cinemas were places of entertainment and leisure for men from which women were forbidden. The appearance of female actors in silent films became an issue of moral contention in Turkey, India, and Iran when the medium of cinema first arrived in the respective countries. A female actor's moral virtue and reputation were often questioned, particularly when they played the role of 'fallen women' on screen. Issues relating to women, Islam, and cinema are therefore evoked not only within cinematic representations, but behind the camera and in relation to the private lives of female actors. Popular images of Muslim Indonesian women have a history that preceded cinema.

The rise of popular representations of the Muslim Indonesian woman coincided with a new 'historical consciousness' during the 1990s that embraced both modernity and Islam (Brenner 1996: 673). This new phase of Islamic modernity welcomed veiled women into the public sphere as, among other things, workers, leaders, and consumers. The production of 'veiled bodies' in the Indonesian media (van Wichelen 2007: 93) is legitimised by two contrasting discourses. On one hand, the consumerist veiled body is embraced by the Muslim middle and upper classes and on the other hand, the politicised veiled body prevails among the working class through images of Islamic street protests (van Wichelen 2007: 94). The politicised veiled body preceded the consumerist counterpart when the veil was stigmatised as a symbol of extremism. Images of 'the sea of veils' of the 1990s and other homogenising descriptions of Muslim women became iconic signs of the Islamisation of Indonesia (van Wichelen 2007: 99). But the veil began to lose its dangerous associations when more young Muslim women and high profile personalities adopted it to symbolise their new pious identities.

Before the advent of the veil in film, the image of the pious Muslim woman was already *de rigueur* in Islamic women's magazines, Islamic fashion, *sinetron religi* (religious soap operas), and popular Islamic novels. The link between literary representations of the Muslim woman and her cinematic counterpart is in fact a strong one; films that heralded the popularity of Islamic cinema are adaptations of best-selling novels.[8] But due to the differences between the media forms, representations of Muslim femininity in the popular novels (Arnez 2009: 51) are conveyed rather differently from the films discussed here.

Muslim female characters in Ramadan soap operas or *sinetron religi* exhibit very similar visual codes to denote idealised Muslim femininity. The Ramadan soap opera belongs to the efflorescence of Islamic media that *film Islami* falls within (Hasan 2009; Heryanto 2011). Rachmah Ida (2009) argues that Ramadan soap operas reproduce a similar kind of oppositional dichotomy of femininity found in Indonesian cinema: the protagonist versus the antagonist represented by the ill-mannered, malicious 'bitch' pitted against the demure 'perfect' woman; and the 'liberal', self-determined Muslim woman versus the pious 'conventional' woman

[8] *Ayat-ayat Cinta* (Quranic Verses of Love, 2008, dir. Hanung Bramantyo) was adapted from the novel of the same name by Habiburrahman el-Shirazy.

(Ida 2009: 11). The oppositional quality of the female characters in these seasonal soap operas may arise from the tensions of tradition and modernity following the transition from authoritarianism to democracy that women in Indonesia and their cinematic counterparts face (Ida 2009: 24). Like Islamic cinema, the theme of intense hardship suffered by the Muslim female protagonist and a denouement through prayer and forgiveness dominate Ramadan soap operas. The female protagonist, who wears the veil in these soap operas, is often caught between the symbols of modernity—a university degree from abroad and freedom in the public sphere—and tradition, represented by the domestic role of wife and mother (Ida 2009: 21). Given the predictable formula there are minor differences between the female protagonists across different Ramadan soap operas for the sake of ratings. In Ida's analysis of the soap operas, the conservative Islamic interpretation of women's roles as subservient to their husbands become the source of the protagonist's suffering. Although the Muslim female characters start out as liberated women with a future full of potential, crisis occurs in the marital context when their traditional role as wives clashes with their career and other life aspirations (Ida 2009: 32). Ida's reading of the ill-treatment of the female protagonists is drawn from a comparison between the film's narrative and excerpted verses from the Qur'an. For Ida, the representations of Muslim women in Ramadan soap operas are unjust and un-Islamic by Quranic standards because the television characters do not redeem themselves in the Islamic way. From her theological perspective, Ramadan television dramas should function as guidebooks for proper Islamic behaviour and concur with Islamic scripture (Ida: 2009: 69).

The relatively late cinematic appearance of the veiled woman—the archetypal Muslim woman—strikes Ariel Heryanto (2011: 63) as perplexing given the plethora of veiled bodies in the Indonesian mass media since the 1990s. Heryanto attributes the late emergence of the veil to the reaction in Indonesia towards the globalisation of Muslim cultures and the demonisation of Islamic identity brought about by the 'war on terror' (2011: 63). Under these circumstances, the veil was reasserted yet again as a symbol of protest and agency but importantly, not as oppression against women. He adds that there was another more apolitical cultural trend that provided a context for the representation of the veil in Indonesian cinema. In the years preceding the release of *Ayat-ayat Cinta*, Islamic symbols and piety became more intensely associated with wealth and higher social status, resulting in more women adopting the veil for socio-cultural rather than

purely religious purpose. It would not be far-fetched to assume that cinema absorbs such associations to project visions of glamour and aspiration personified by Muslim characters. As a powerful symbol of Islam and aspirational Muslim femininity, the headscarf is easily absorbed into the circuit of cinematic representation. Like the veil, representations of Muslim women in Indonesian cinema are enmeshed in the wider discourse on Islam and gender. Films of the *film Islami* genre are often called 'statement films' by their filmmakers, films which are made to project certain political positions on a hotly debated issue. As statement films, post-New Order Islamic films often take on the 'gendered' dimension of Islamic issues (van Wichelen 2010) that require the personification of such issues through Muslim female and male characters. In the early half of the 2000s, polygamy became a contested Islamic issue that captured filmmakers, not least Nia Dinata in *Berbagi Suami* and Hanung Bramantyo in *Ayat-ayat Cinta* and *Perempuan Berkalung Sorban*. Nia Dinata's *Berbagi Suami* follows the inner and public lives of three women who, both unwillingly and willingly, enter polygamous relationships. Not all of the female characters in such arrangements are Muslims, but those who are embody the public critique of polygamy: they are women abused by religiously sanctioned male privilege but utilise bodily and spiritual resistance against the practice (Imanjaya 2009b).

Ekky Imanjaya's reading of the Muslim women in *Berbagi Suami* implies a quiet rebellion against prevailing expectations of Muslim female behaviour of compliance and submission. The two main Muslim female characters in the film, Salma and Siti, are betrayed and tricked by their husbands into a polygamous relationship. Salma and Siti are restrained by public stigma and financial means from leaving their husband, respectively. But Salma's husband passes away from a heart attack while Siti, who utilises her agency, runs away with her co-wife/female lover. For Imanjaya, Dinata's representation of the two women is an exercise in 'realism' and a product of two years of social research on Indonesian women in polygamous relationships (2009b). *Berbagi Suami* qualifies as a 'women's film' as it places differences between women, across religious/class/ethnic lines, at the centre of a gender issue that gripped Indonesia during the period. The women of *Berbagi Suami* have been hailed as strong but at the expense of the men. A focus on their inner lives adds a nuanced perspective on how their new marital role impacts on their personhood, marking a significant shift from previous representations of women in Indonesian cinema whose inner lives were rarely if ever scripted (Imanjaya 2009b). More significantly, the women break away from

the 'New Order patriarchal ideology' by no longer acting as the 'medium or conduit for their husband/father's power' (Imanjaya 2009b). *Berbagi Suami*'s multiple narratives on the issue of polygamy have been commented on as being diametrically opposed to the other major film on polygamy, *Ayat-ayat Cinta*[9] (Hatley 2009). The women who vie for the male polygamist's love in *Ayat-ayat Cinta* depend on him to fulfil their lives. One of them in particular, the Coptic Christian Maria, relies on his love and a marriage proposal to rouse her from a life-threatening coma. In contrast, the women in *Berbagi Suami*, whose narratives are more fleshed out, are less dependent on their husbands.

Current scholarship on the relationship between new constructions of masculinities and Islam in Indonesia points towards debates surrounding polygamous marriage and the 'born-again' Muslim. Female and male media personalities who underwent very public spiritual transformations have capitalised on their religious 'rebirth' in various media and business ventures. For Sonja van Wichelen (2010), discussions on new masculinities cannot be separated from the economic crisis of 1997, the threat of fragmented hegemonic manhood posed by the decline of the New Order, and the possible recourse Islam offers to Indonesian men during 'crises of masculinity' (2010: 91). The strong pro-polygamy stand adopted by men such as the popular Islamic preacher Abdullah Gymastiar, singer-actor Rhoma Irama, and the 'trendy' preacher Ustad Jefri Al-Buchori (also known as Uje) demonstrates a new form of conservatism that cuts across generations and the boundaries between pop culture and religious education. A possible precursor to the youthful Islamic masculinities of the post-New Order may be found in highly popular Western-influenced teenage films. The latter years of Suharto's New Order saw a new kind of masculinity that emerged from decades of the New Order's often uneven economic development. The new kind of masculinity in question is the ultra-rich teenage boy who is at ease with his Indonesian-ness and Western cultural tastes. The series of films that bears this image of masculinity is *Catatan Si Boy* (Boy's Diary, 1988; 1989, dir. Nasri Cheppy). This youthful pro-consumerist masculinity coheres with the values of the New Order: respect towards elders and tradition, heterosexuality, and male-centric work ethic of productivity (Sen 1991: 140; Hanan 2008: 55–56). Boy strikes a balance between the worldly pleasures of sports cars along with the devotion

[9] For a further discussion on *Ayat-ayat Cinta*, see Chapters 5 and 6.

of young women and his Islamic obligations, which makes him a possible precursor to the youthful masculine heroes in Islamic post-New Order cinema.

There are competing views on the emergence of 'new' Muslim masculinities in Indonesian cinema. On one hand, there is a flawed Muslim masculinity that deliberately departs from previous notions of domineering *bapak* and freewheeling materialism of teenaged masculinity of the New Order. But on the other hand, scholars have argued that images of Muslim men emerging in Indonesian cinema are gaining in importance in Islamic public life and connote some aspects of hegemonic masculinity (Hoesterey and Clark 2012: 222). In her study of Muslim performativity in *Ayat-ayat Cinta*, Paramaditha (2010) found that the director's rewriting, or as he describes it, 'deconstruction', of the male protagonist Fahri in the film was meant to construct an imperfect Muslim man through his insecurity, innocence, and sense of doubt (Paramaditha 2010: 82). The masculinity of Fahri joins other secular representations of masculinity in post-New Order cinema who are similarly defined by their lack of assertiveness in handling romantic relationships and conflict. Fahri's masculinity has parallels with young and reticent heroes in popular non-religious post-New Order films such as *Ada Apa Dengan Cinta* (What's Up With Love? 2002, dir. Rudy Soedjarwo). As one of the most successful films to emerge since the fall of Suharto, *Ada Apa Dengan Cinta* features a male romantic lead who is introverted, sensitive, and interested in the deeply introspective art of poetry (2010: 82). In his rejection of perfect masculinity in his leading man, the director of *Ayat-ayat Cinta* follows the lead of his fellow new generation of young Indonesian filmmakers of the post-New Order who are disillusioned with the carefree masculinity of the commercially successful *Catatan Si Boy* series of films of the late 1980s.

One strand of hegemonic Muslim masculinity in post-New Order Indonesian film has been described as 'pro-women' and gentler than the hypermasculine characterisation of the tough men typical of mainstream Indonesian cinema (Hoesterey and Clark 2012: 211–212). In their study of prototypical Muslim masculinity in Islamic films, Hoesterey and Clark found that male protagonists are usually pitted against Muslim male antagonists who oppress women. These 'softer' pro-women men in *Ayat-ayat Cinta* and *Perempuan Berkalung Sorban* (Woman in a Turban, 2009, dir. Hanung Bramantyo), protect women from male aggressors not with their fists but with words. As the gentle hero, the male protagonist is the 'renovated' strain of the Islamic male binary and opposite to the 'hard line'

Muslim male antagonist (Robinson 2007 quoted in Hoesterey and Clark 2012: 214). These Muslim masculinities are described as 'new', but as we will see in my own findings in Chapter 4, there are also instances of hegemonic Islamic masculinities in the New Order period. Because these gentler Muslim heroes refrain from responding to violence with aggression, they become the object of harassment and abuse at the hands of other men (Hoestery and Clark 2012: 215). In *Ayat-ayat Cinta*, the main male protagonist and student in Cairo, Fahri, represents the peace-loving Muslim Indonesian man who stands up against the aggression of abusive and xenophobic Egyptian men who terrorise foreign non-Muslim women. By defending the women from violence, Fahri personifies the moderate Muslim whose cordiality towards white non-Muslim foreigners sets him apart from the notionally despotic Muslim masculinity of the Arab world. Fahri defuses the Egyptian man's aggression with his own unassailable defence: quotations of Prophet Muhammad who forbade the mistreatment of foreigners in Muslim lands. Hoesterey and Clark (2012) identify another antithesis to the peace-loving pro-women Muslim masculinity: the misogynist religious male leaders of Islamic schools in *Perempuan Berkalung Sorban*. The titular character of the film, Annisa, suffers at the hands of nearly every man and boy she encounters in her childhood and adulthood. She is denied the position of class president because of her sex, a university education, and dignity by the men of her life. A redeeming masculine figure of her childhood sweetheart and husband is the opposite of the other men. He is patient, pious, and intelligent, the right kind of man for a similarly intelligent and pious woman such as Annisa. With a few exceptions,[10] analyses of representations of Muslim women and men in post-New Order Indonesian cinema neglect to contextualise the place of such representations within the global circuit of images of Muslim societies. Subsequent chapters will address this lacuna by demonstrating that images of Muslim women and men in Indonesian cinema are juxtaposed with characters and elements both local and global in order to reinforce the ideal Muslim subjectivity of its Indonesian female and male heroes.

[10] Ariel Heryanto's 2011 analysis of Fahri in *Ayat-ayat Cinta* situates his identity within the global discourse of Islam and Indonesian Islam's relation to it.

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CHAPTER 4

Gender, Islam, and the Nation in New Order Islamic Films

In an essay on national identity in Indonesian cinema, Karl Heider (1994) states that New Order films are an effective medium for constructing an imagined Indonesian national identity and culture. Each film, he argues, is a 'fixed thing', a finished product enclosed with messages about the nation. Every copy of the film is 'sent out to cinemas across the country, offering identical images of [the] national culture to all audiences' (Heider 1994: 164). The huge diversity of cultures in the Indonesian nation is, according to Heider, transcended in New Order national cinema. Heider is judicious to add that not all films would be considered representative of Indonesian culture. Audiences who lament the gratuitous sex, horror, and violence in Indonesian cinema would argue that such themes are influences from Hollywood and against Indonesian culture. Heider proposes that films with strong elements of 'Indonesian-ness' are those that (1) '[emphasise] on social groups rather than on autonomous individuals and (2) [distinguish] the conflict between order and disorder rather than between good and evil' (Heider 1994: 170).

This chapter builds on Heider's second suggestion by considering that the Indonesian nation in film is emphasised and conceived through the resolution between order and disorder. However, Heider does not consider how the themes of a unitary Indonesian nation as an Islamic project are played out in gendered terms in the New Order period. I will argue that specific kinds of masculinities and femininities are aligned with ideas of order and the national project in Islamic films of the New Order period. The films explored in this chapter are preoccupied with themes of

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nation-building, whether through attempts at forcing out morally corrupt powers or establishing an ideology of national development. Islam is the motivating factor behind the portrayal of nation-building and it is intertwined with issues pertaining to the gender and sexuality of the central figures who are agitating for change in their nation-building campaign. Throughout the country's modern history, Indonesian nationalist discourse has always been constructed in gendered terms (Sunindyo 1998; Gouda 2002). In the anti-colonial struggles in Java and Sumatra between 1945 and 1949, the struggle for the independence of Indonesia inspired freedom fighters to construct the 'Earth as female and Nation as Mother' (Sunindyo 1998: 4). The idea of the nation as mother (*Ibu Pertiwi*) persisted even after Independence as a figure whose honour must to be defended (Gouda 2002: 203) demonstrating how powerful the feminised imagery of the nation is. During the New Order, both Indonesian women and men have roles of equal importance in nationalist struggles. But their roles are differentiated by gender: men as defenders of the nation, women as producers and nurturers of fighters. Even when Indonesian women take up arms in the military, they are reminded of their femininity as wives or mothers and through their sex appeal (Sunindyo 1998: 9–12). When written into its discourse, women are by design supporting actors whose roles reflect masculinist notions of femininity and of women's 'proper' place in society, that is, in the home (Nagel 1998: 243). In nationalist discourse, the project of nation-building, political violence, state power, and dictatorship are best understood as masculine projects that involve masculine institutions, masculine processes, and masculine activities (Pateman 1989; Connell 1995).

Islamic films from the New Order period are preoccupied with nationhood and progress but both are always on the verge of collapse and requiring the restorative role of women and men who are pious and emancipatory in spirit. They are also anomalies from their commercial contemporaries. Most of the films discussed in this chapter: *Pahlawan Goa Selarong* (The Warrior of Selarong Cave 1972, dir. Lilik Sudjio), *Tjoet Nha Dhien* (1988, dir. Eros Djarot) and *Para Perintis Kemerdekaan* (Pioneers of Independence, 1980, dir. Asrul Sani) depart from the sensationalism of Kompeni genre films identified by Karl Heider.[1] Kompeni films share several narrative characteristics with the historical Islamic films discussed

[1] The Kompeni genre films include *Pak Sakerah* (1982, dir. B.Z. Kadaryono) and *Pasukan Berani Mati* (The Brave Ones, 1982, dir. Imam Tantowi).

in this chapter. In his brief description, Heider describes the Kompeni genre film as those that depict the conflict between Dutch colonials and Indonesians during a period roughly from the seventeenth century until the late nineteenth century (Heider 1991: 40). A recurring plot that incites such conflict involves the heavy tax demands made by the Dutch on the Indonesian people. Kompeni films have a preoccupation with scenes of Dutch-inflicted torture and sexual violence against young village women. Historical Islamic New Order films also portray the suffering of Indonesian subjects under oppressive Dutch rule. But in contrast to Kompeni films, they are focused less on graphic violence than the Islamic message or *dakwah* championed by the protagonists.

All save for one Islamic film discussed in this chapter are legend-based and biopics or semi-biographical. Biopics of national heroes are cinematic representations of *exempla virtutis* or morally exemplary figures. Such films often serve as an arena in which collective morality is forged (and indeed, at times contested) and as a source for national morale (Landy 2001: 8). The biopics and semi-biographies discussed below are about men and women whose leadership are defined equally in terms of their Islamic faith and nationalism. As historical and modern biopics, they are made with contemporary audiences in mind but use history and ideas of modernity to articulate contemporary ideas of nationhood. Ideas and representations of nationhood in the New Order period are aligned with capitalistic development under military rule. Characterised by economic progress and socio-militaristic repression, any opposition towards the regime was considered anti-nationalist and anti-progress (Sen 1994: 69–70). The gendered rhetoric in New Order films about the nation falls within these ideological constraints, the results of which are often simplistic gendered binaries of masculinity and femininity. The idealised gendered discourse of the nation and Islam in the films discussed below creates images of the Other against which the ideal can define itself. In the examples below, a dichotomy of idealised New Order Muslim masculinity and femininity and a corrupt version of manliness and lesser womanhood are constructed as diametrically opposed. In this chapter, nationalised masculinity is very much central to *Sembilan Wali*, *Pahlawan Goa Selarong*, *Perjuangan dan Doa* and *Al-Kautsar* whereby a 'correct' and modernising Islam triumphs over un-Islamic social disorder across sixteenth-century and twentieth-century Java. This discussion is followed by a look at representations of femininity in *Tjoet Nha Dhien* and *Para Perintis Kemerdekaan*. In these two films, Muslim women are constructed as repressed by colonial powers but not

sexualised or passive as in the Kompeni genre. Instead, they reproduce the nationalist discourse of gender equity on the front lines. But rather than participating in the masculine sphere of war and bloodshed, they fight from the hearth.

The Men in White: Mystics and a Revolutionary Prince

> 'Nationalism typically has sprung from masculinised memory, masculinised humiliation, and masculinised hope'
>
> (Enloe 1989: 44)

This section discusses two historical biopics of Indonesia's legendary characters: the Javanese holy men, or *wali songo*, and a Javanese prince who led a rebellion against the Dutch. As pioneering Islamic leaders of both history and myth, they are reconstructed in New Order cinema as nationalist heroes who establish order in a proto-nation plagued by moral disorder. In this section, the gender essentialism of nationalism is examined in the construction of masculinity of these historical and legendary Islamic heroes. An analysis of their *visual* construction is considered here, primarily in the attire they wear. Clothes, as 'evocative and complex signifiers, are a means of understanding the body or character who wears them' (Bruzzi 1997: xiv). They can be mobilised to morally distinguish their wearer from others in an immediately visual way, evoking a range of political and religious signifiers.

Indonesian cinema in the 1980s saw the release of multiple films about the lives and missionary work of the early Javanese mystics typically referred to as the *wali songo* (lit. 'nine holy men' in Javanese). The films in question are *Sembilan Wali* (Nine holy men, 1985, dir. Djun Saptohadi), *Sunan Kalijaga* (1985, dir. Sofyan Sharma), *Sunan Kalijaga & Syech Siti Jenar* (1985, dir. Sofyan Sharma), and *Sunan Gunung Jati* (1985, dir. Bay Isbahi). These films, produced in quick succession of each other, belong to the *wali songo* subgenre of *film Islami*. Widely believed to be Muslim saints and heroes, the *wali songo* are revered for pioneering the spread of Islam in Java between the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries (Piegeaud 1976). Since the end of the seventeenth century, the legend of the *wali songo* was read aloud as *babad* literature or court chronicles to large groups of people in mosques or performed as *wayang* storytelling traditions (Ras 1986: 344). The entry of the *wali songo* into the *babad* literature was a

significant indication of Java's transition from a long era of Hindu-Buddhist civilisation to an era of Islamic sultanates (Ringkes 1996: xxxii). The cinematic retelling of these figures departs considerably from the *babad* literature. From mystical preachers with a Sufistic-orientation, the *wali songo* are cinematically represented as '*dakwah* warriors' who promote the Sunni branch of Islam (Soenarto 2005: 36). The shift in representation may be due to the paucity of historical detail about the individual lives of the nine holy men and their involvement in the building of the Demak sultanate. As the film critic Ismail Isbandi notes, the *wali songo* films blended fact with fiction to repackage the legends as material for *dakwah* (Isbandi 1985). For instance, in *Sembilan Wali*, the nine men are depicted as contemporaries even though some had lived and preached in different centuries and different locations.[2] The fictionalised representation of the *wali songo* brought together as a superhero league in film coincided with the revival of the *dakwah* movement in the 1970s and 1980s from which popular media producers and comic book artists drew inspiration (Soenarto 2005: 37).

The nine mystics who represent the *wali songo*—Sunan Gresik, Sunan Kalijaga, Sunan Ampel, Sunan Bonang, Sunan Gunung Jati, Sunan Giri, Sunan Muria, Sunan Drajat, and Sunan Kudus[3] are often cited as among the earliest and most influential propagators of Islam in Java. The missionary work of the earliest mystics, Sunan Gresik and Sunan Ampel, began during the collapse of the Majapahit kingdom at the end of the fifteenth century. Their missionary work took place during a period when Islam and Hindu-Buddhist cultures existed side by side. The earliest evidence of Islam's presence in Indonesia dates back to the eighth century but its expansion only occurred in the thirteenth century beginning in the kingdom of Aceh at the northern-most tip of Sumatra, situated at what was the gateway to India and the Middle East (van Doorn-Harder 2006: 21). The interweaving of local cultures and religious traditions during this period saw the merging of Hindu-Buddhist, Islam, and animist practices evident in funerary rituals, ancestral worship, and other customs (Daniels 2012: 36).

[2] In *Sembilan Wali*, Sunan Gresik is depicted as the earliest mystic. After his death, his mission to spread Islam and restore order to the chaos of the Majapahit kingdom is adopted by the other mystics.

[3] The title 'Sunan' is used by the most revered early preachers of Islam in Java. It is also adopted by lesser Javanese mystics, among them Sunan Bayat, Sunan Sendang Duwur, Sunan Geseng, and Sunan Bejagung (Quinn 2008: 65).

Of all the *wali songo* subgenre films, *Sembilan Wali* was the most successful in terms of box-office sales and securing a reputation as a *dakwah* film. The production of the film involved the endorsement by and consultation with the MUI, who accept it as a bona fide *dakwah* film (*Pos Film*, 1985). *Sembilan Wali* begins with Sunan Gresik speaking to his disciples about the importance of establishing Islam as the guiding principle of the land. He warns of the retribution that awaits apathetic Muslims who do not challenge the evils of the Majapahit kingdom. Many years after Sunan Gresik's death, his call to empower Islam as the civilising force is taken up by the rest of the *wali songo*. The film then becomes a patchwork of narratives depicting the different mystics preaching and thwarting the activities of criminals who prey on the suffering people of Mataram. All the holy men later come together to install a Muslim aristocrat, Raden Patah, as the next ruler to resolve the battle for the kingdom's leadership. Enthroning Raden Patah as sultan not only brings legitimacy to Islamic rule but also peace and order to the chaos across Java.

To gain widespread support for Raden Patah's ascendency to the throne, the holy men increase their appeal by offering spiritual solace to the oppressed masses. The feudal lords who tax the people unfairly and plunder their villages are unequivocally ruthless and evil. Attempts by the people to stand up to the feudal leaders are ineffectual and fatal. Even the *wali songo* face regular resistance from the feudal lords' henchmen who outnumber them. But armed with religious authority and magical powers, they always emerge victorious and completely unscathed. Once the masses are mobilised for their support of Raden Patah, the Grand Mosque of Demak is built. The building of the mosque is shown as a community activity that brings people of all ages closer to live and work in harmony. But more importantly, the mosque becomes a site in which the people come together under the banner of Islam.

A key plot in *Sembilan Wali* is the persecution and eventual execution of the renegade mystic Syeikh Siti Jenar, who is condemned a heretic by the council of the holy men. Syeikh Siti Jenar's heresy[4] and his support for Rakeryan Patih Mahesa Kicak, a competitor for the royal throne of Majapahit, are intertwined to display the corruption of Islam as an

[4] According to popular legend, Syeikh Siti Jenar was indiscriminate towards those who sought religious education from him. This meant that disciples who lacked the moral aptitude and prerequisite spiritual preparation were attributed to the spread of heresy (Isbandi 1985).

expression of treachery. Syeikh Siti Jenar's alliance with Rakeryan Patih Mahesa Kicak[5] casts him as a traitor to the Islamic cause for order and peace. But more incriminatingly, his heretical teachings of *wahdatul wujud*, or becoming one with God and thereby becoming God, is the unforgivable crime that results in his death at the hands of the other holy men. In the film's dark climax, the holy men and a crowd of people witness the death of Syeikh Siti Jenar. Rakeryan Patih Mahesa Kicak tries to rescue his mentor but is stabbed by a stray spear and lifted into the air. Following the deaths of the antagonists, the palace of the Majapahit kingdom is destroyed by repeated bolts of lightning, signalling the devastating end to chaos and moral decay.

Syeikh Siti Jenar's trial and eventual death sentence for heresy and apostasy for deviating from Islam are perceived as the 'purification' of Islam. However, according to Ermita Soenarto (2005: 62–64), the demonisation of Syeikh Siti Jenar in popular discourse oversimplifies the complexity of his teachings. One hypothesis for his turn as the villain of the film may be based on his Sufistic legacy and the need to establish Sunni Islam as the 'correct' brand of Islam in Java. Through the missionary work of the *wali songo*, Sunni Islam also triumphs over a corrupt and immoral non-Muslim adversary and restores moral order to Java. Javanese society before the arrival of Islam is depicted in *Sembilan Wali* as morally wayward, impoverished, and ruled by corrupt feudal lords who impose punishing taxes on their people. The subtext of the film is that Islam is a civilising element and a political framework for social and spiritual order, appropriate for nation-building. It is when the story of the holy men ends that the film makes an overt declaration of Islam as a civilising force for the entire Indonesian nation. Completely unrelated to the film, the epilogue of *Sembilan Wali* is a documentary montage of Indonesian pilgrims performing the hajj in Mecca. Their presence in Mecca is indicated by scenes of the Indonesian flag that stands in the massive campsite for pilgrims. Accompanied by a soundtrack of Javanese gamelan music, a male voice-over extols the peaceful absorption of Islam into Indonesian culture thanks to the legacy of the *wali songo*. The voice-over states that faith, gratitude towards God, and diligence are the key traits of citizens of the Indonesian

[5] Rakeyran Patih Mahesa Kicak is a fictional character created to add narrative drama by the filmmaker of *Sembilan Wali*, Djun Saptohadi (Isbandi 1985).

nation.[6] Islam is not only woven into the daily lives of Muslim Indonesians but becomes part of the national fabric.

As men, the *wali songo* are stoic and stern but benevolent father figures. They embody the notion of '*halus*' or refinement idealised in elite Javanese masculinity (Clark 2004: 119). Refined masculinity is valorised over the lack of emotional restraint in crude (*kasar*) masculinity of Rakeryan Patih Mahesa Kicak and his thug-like henchmen. Although they regularly find themselves in situations of conflict and political violence, the *wali songo* rarely engage in one-on-one combat with the enemy. Such is the emphasis on their emotional restraint and reluctance to fight, the holy men in *Sembilan Wali* end up appearing expressionless and wooden. The representation of the holy men in *Sembilan Wali* departs from Soenarto's findings (2005) on popular comic book representations of the *wali songo*. In the comic books, the *wali songo* are '*dakwah warriors*' who are specialists in martial arts. Panels are dedicated to depictions of high-octane combat similar to kung fu fighting scenes. While there are numerous violent scenes of combat in *Sembilan Wali*, the holy men do not directly participate in them.

Eric Sasono (2010) found that Islamic films between the 1970s and the 1980s were preoccupied with themes of progress, anti-colonial struggle, and national development. As in the case of *Sembilan Wali*, nation-building is a major theme even when the film is set before the formation of Indonesia as a nation. The anachronistic approach to the idea of nation in *Wali Songo* is consonant with the New Order regime's assertion that historical films should be made with the present audiences in mind and the contemporary political context (Sen 1994: 79). Such an approach explains why the legacy of the *wali songo* is linked to the centrality of Islam to the Indonesian nation. But to what extent is the Bintoro-Demak Sultanate in *Sembilan Wali*

[6] *Telah menjadi kenyataan sejarah Islam telah dipeluk sebahagian besar rakyat Indonesia dengan hati terbuka. Para wali telah merintisnya dengan sikap tassamuh dengan penuh kekerabatan. Dari hari ke sehari kemajuan kehidupan beragama dan syiarnya bukan saja untuk mendapat tempat terhormat di kalbu masyarakat. Namun juga semakin mendapat tempat seluas-luasnya dalam hidup berbangsa dan bernegara. Iman, takwa dan kerja keras melalui pengamalan syariat dalam kehidupan sehari-hari.*

The warm embrace of Islam by the Indonesian people has become a historical fact. The holy men has left behind a legacy with grace and nobility. Throughout history their teachings and role in developing the religious lives of Indonesians not only have an important place in the heart of society but also nationwide. Faith, piety, and diligence in practising Islamic teachings in everyday life (my translation).

representative of a proto-Indonesian nation and how is it differentiated from the Majapahit kingdom? In *Sembilan Wali*, the Hindu-Buddhist Majapahit kingdom is a hotbed of wickedness and corruption while the Bintoro-Demak Sultanate is represented as orderly and enlightened. But in the successful big-budgeted spectacle New Order films such as *Saur Sepuh Satria Madangkara* (Saur Sepuh the Warrior of Madangkara, 1988, dir. Imam Tantowi), the Majapahit kingdom is portrayed as a site of adventure and legend, distilling elements of Indonesian culture and a distant, if mythologised, past. For Karl Heider, *Saur Sepuh Satria Madangkara* is an example of a 'fixed' nationalist product shown all over Indonesia, including present-day West Papua in an attempt to project a continuous link between the past and present day (Heider 1994: 169). The Indonesian government's effort to restore the ancient Hindu-Buddhist temple complexes of Borobudur and Prambanan in Yogyakarta indicates not just pride in their resplendent architecture but an acknowledgement of the Hindu-Buddhist civilisation's cultural legacy of the Indonesian people. *Sembilan Wali*, however, paints an oppositional view through its negative representations of the decaying Majapahit kingdom. From the ashes of the Majapahit kingdom, the Islamic sultanate's rise demonstrates Islam's superiority and dominance in the nation.

Like *Sembilan Wali*, the film *Pahlawan Goa Selarong* (The Warrior of Selarong Cave, 1972, dir. Lilik Sudjio), follows a similar narrative of restoration of moral order and conflict with corrupt antecedent forces. *Pahlawan Goa Selarong* is about an Islamic reclamation of Indonesia from colonial moral degeneration by the proto-nationalist hero Pangeran Diponegoro.[7] Pangeran Diponegoro was often hailed as an inspiration for anti-colonial nationalism and independence in the early twentieth century ever since his rebellion against the Dutch in the Java war (1825–1830) (van der Kroef 1949: 426). The film begins at the point when the Dutch begin levying heavy taxes on the hungry and impoverished Javanese people. Although the Dutch had arrived in the Malay archipelago in the early seventeenth century, the project of colonialism had only become fully-fledged in the early nineteenth century. In Java, conflict between the colonials and their colonial subjects came to a head with Diponegoro's rebellion. Unfair taxes, tolls, and other economic pressures were placed by the Dutch on various central

[7] Another film about the Java War led by Pangeran Diponegoro is Teguh Karya's *November 1828* (1979).

Javanese municipalities so that native leaders give up their control over their government to the Dutch. People living under the constrained local municipalities were beginning to revolt and saw in Diponegoro a powerful leader of their cause. Under the leadership of General De Kock, the Dutch fought back and Diponegoro faced defeat. Diponegoro was eventually exiled to Makassar where he spent his remaining years until his death in 1855.

The film adaptation of historical accounts of Diponegoro's rebellion, however, is more simplified and prominently highlights his influence as an Islamic leader during the rebellion. It begins literally in mid-conversation between the Dutch resident Kapitein De Borst and a native court chief, Danurejo, about raising taxes on the people of Tegalrejo, Mataram, and other Javanese districts. Diponegoro's crusade against the Dutch is represented to begin at this point where the Dutch are at their greediest for taxes. Furthermore, Diponegoro's land in Tegalrejo is encroached upon by the construction of a trade road built for the Dutch. In *Pahlawan Goa Selarong*, the devout masculine figure of Diponegoro is contrasted against the greedy Dutch through crude symbols of Westernisation and colonialism: alcohol and intoxication (Sasono 2011: 51). A dramatic scene shows Diponegoro splashing alcohol in Danurejo's face in disgust and rejecting Danurejo's allegiance with moral evil. The Dutch are not only power-hungry but their greed gives rise to extreme suffering, torture, and enslavement of the people. As he rallies the people of Tegalrejo for support, Diponegoro reminds them that defending their homeland is an Islamic obligation (*membela tanahair itu sebahagian dari iman*). Diponegoro's campaign against the Dutch later became known in Indonesian history as the Java War. The Java War in *Pahlawan Goa Selarong* takes a more Islamic turn when Diponegoro mobilises the masses to join the war against the Dutch. They pray as a congregation of thousands before they begin their journey from the top of Selarong Cave, the highest point in the province, to engage in war in Yogyakarta. When native soldiers desert their colonial masters and swear allegiance to Diponegoro's cause, they are told by Diponegoro that wearing the colonial uniform is forbidden in Islam.

Diponegoro's rebellion is also aimed at restoring the Kraton, the palace establishment in Yogyakarta, to its former glory. This in turn restores his rightful authority over the land and people. To do this, Diponegoro and his army seize the Kraton under the cover of darkness. One of Diponegoro's soldiers reaches the top of the Kraton and thrusts a red and white flag there, much like the Indonesian flag, before dying from a stab wound. Unlike the *wali songo*, Diponegoro rides and fights in battle against the Dutch,

unflinchingly killing colonial soldiers with his sword and spear. The film ends with Diponegoro riding through a burning village, ominously conveying news of his failed attempt at overthrowing Dutch rule. But a male voice-over looms stating the Indonesian people's obligation to continue Diponegoro's mission to uphold the sanctity of the nation for the sake of justice, righteousness, and for God.[8] Like the Kompeni genre, *Pahlawan Goa Selarong* ends with ambiguity or 'dilemma' (Heider 1991: 41). In the Kompeni films, the hero, who is usually assisted by a female aide, is ultimately triumphant but only in death. The final scene of *Pahlawan Goa Selarong* is similarly ambiguous. It depicts him in his last great battle before his surrender and retreat. The film ends with a freeze frame of Diponegoro on his rampant horse, an image that immortalises a momentary glory and defiance.

Both the mystics in the *wali songo* subgenre and Pangeran Diponegoro share an outward appearance that exudes their Islamic authority and differentiates them from civilians, villains, and the Dutch. The mystics in *Sembilan Wali* and Pangeran Diponegoro wear Arab-style white robes and turban when they confront their antagonists. In contrast to the *wali songo* are the villains who are always bare-chested. Similarly, in a dramatic scene where Sheikh Siti Jenar reveals his heresy by declaring himself God, he is dressed in saffron Buddhist monk-like robes with his chest exposed. His hair is long and wild without a turban to tame it.

White, in contrast, is the colour of spiritual purity, modesty, power, and associations with Islamic learning. Half-nakedness is an expression of religious heresy and moral corruption. According to Kees van Dijk (1997: 55),

[8] *Bakar, menjalar, berkobar semangat membela bangsa. Kecepatan, kecekalan menuntut diri, kecerdasan serta kesedaran membuka hati untuk membelanya. Tidak sampai di sini perjuangannya, demi keadilan, kebenaran dan serta demi Allah. Ia segilintir dari segala pembela bangsa, ia seorang dari seantero Nusantara, ia satu diantara mereka: penggugah, pembangkit semangat, pembuka jalan pembinaan Indonesia merdeka. Dia adalah Pangeran Diponegoro. Kita wajib menyelamatkan serta mengisi apa dia dan mereka capai sehingga kini. Indonesia merdeka. Mari kita jaga dan bina*!

The spirit to defend the nation burns. Speed. Determination to rely on oneself. Rigour and the consciousness are the qualities to defend the nation. But [Dipogenoro's] struggle does not end here. For justice, truth, and Allah, he was one of the very few to defend the nation. He belonged to the archipelago, he was one of them: the mover and shaker, the pioneer of Indonesia's independence. He was Pangeran Diponegoro. We must continue to salvage and fulfil what he and others have struggled for. Independent Indonesia—let us protect and develop!

Arab-style Muslim attire sometimes functioned as a 'battle dress' during the Dutch colonial occupation. Pangeran Diponegoro was reported to have fought in battle against the Dutch in his Arab-style long robe (*jubbah*) and turban (Moertono 1974: 33). A semi-historical account has it that Diponegoro took on a white robe and white turban on the day he decided to lead a rebellion against the ruling colonial power. As described in the Chronicles of Diponegoro, the attire that Diponegoro adopted reflected the Islamic nature of his cause: 'Pangeran Dipanagara was already clothed in the apparel of the Holy War; the breeches, jacket and head-dress were all white' (Carey 1981: 87). The leading men in the next section are also visually disassociated from their male antagonists through their clothing. But their differences from their antagonists are imbued with ideas of progress, modernity, and new approaches to preaching Islam to the masses. Rather than defeating non-Muslim villains, the leading men in the following films engage in a spiritual battle with other Muslim men whose deteriorated Islamic faith creates chaos in their community. In the next section, we encounter the Muslim modernisers who introduce modern ways of being Muslims while restoring moral order for the masses.

Islamic Masculinity and the Modern Indonesian Nation

Chaerul Umam's *Al-Kautsar* (Abundance 1977) was the first Islamic film since Asrul Sani's *Tauhid* (The Oneness of God, 1964) and the first to be financially successful (Bilal 1977). *Al-Kautsar* tells the story of Saiful Bachri (played by the poet W.S. Rendra), a young Islamic male teacher who is sent to a remote village to teach in an Islamic school. Saiful is chosen by the head of his school, Haji Mustofa, for his extensive Islamic knowledge and farming skills. On his way to the village, Saiful encounters the rogue cleric and local thug, Harun. Although Harun was trained to be an Islamic scholar, his obsession with money corrupts his moral compass. Money, he asserts, is more important to humanity than religion in this modern age. Saiful's arrival leaves a poor impression on the village's acting religious leader, Haji Musa, who is suspicious of Saiful's role as both Islamic teacher and agricultural expert. No one can be both an Islamic expert and a farmer, the rigid Haji Musa argues. Saiful's arrival is also noticed by a young widow, Halimah, whom Harun intends to take as his lover. However, Halimah is uninterested in him and instead chooses to remain close to Saiful in the hope

of winning Saiful's heart. Humiliated, Harun and his henchman, Kamaruddin Satun, exact revenge by tarnishing Saiful's moral reputation.

The title of the film has a symbolic role in the film's *deus ex machina*. Named after the 108th sura of the Qur'an, *Al-Kautsar* is, in the Islamic tradition, a river in paradise from which its dwellers drink and never become thirsty again. In a community effort to construct and irrigate paddy fields organised by Saiful, a woman falls into a river and is swept away by the current. Saiful rescues her and performs mouth-to-mouth resuscitation. Harun interrupts this and incites the community to condemn Saiful for 'kissing' the woman, an 'immoral' act tantamount to adultery. Saiful's school is destroyed as a result of the accusations. Kamaruddin Satun chastises Saiful's unwavering faith that keeps him in the village. But Kamaruddin's cynicism about the redemptive power of Islam reveals a backstory: he was once a learned and pious man whose reputation was sullied by a desperate act of theft many years ago. But he suddenly regains his piety when he becomes touched by Saiful's spiritual fortitude during a time of crisis. The film ends with themes of redemption and the spiritual struggle that exists on the fine line between piety and moral corruption.

Saiful's agricultural skills are barely represented in the film but they are nonetheless crucial to the narrative. Coming from more developed part of Java, his youth and urbane presentation become a talking point for the other village men. The village Saiful enters is cut off from modernity along with modern education and 'practical' Islam that can transform the villagers into better and self-sufficient Muslims. Saiful not only brings progress and enlightenment to the villagers but demonstrates the virtue of maintaining a connection with an urban-based religious institution. Everyone in the village is a Muslim but they lack a strong pious male leader who can lead them back to the right moral path. When Saiful arrives in the village, he delivers an embodiment of heroism alternative to the typical leading man in Indonesian film (Abdullah 1977). Saiful's heroic virtues and piety are expressed through extreme emotional and physical restraint. Saiful is the 'strong silent type', a persona he maintains in contrast to his two belligerent antagonists, Satun and Harun. In his Western-style shirt, tailored trousers, and tie, Saiful is the modern everyman. No longer associated with Western colonialism, Saiful's attire not only speaks of forward-looking values and worldly knowledge (Sasono 2010: 52), but it also challenges the established authority of older, more traditional but corrupt religious male members whose remoteness cut them off from progressive Islam. As the modern Muslim man, Saiful is highly educated and oscillates between urban and

rural spaces with ease. He has a clear purpose of civilising those around him with practical Islam. Practical Islam, as promoted in *Al-Kautsar*, is described as a new kind of Islam that emphasises the utility of Islamic principles in the everyday. A backward version of Islam from which Saiful is steering the villagers away has resulted in lax and corrupted behaviour personified by Satun and Hasan.

In general, images of masculinity especially that of the agricultural expert are often suffused with notions of technological progress and mastery over nature (Brandth 1995: 132). The farming knowledge that Saiful Bachri brings to the village, along with his spiritual responsibility as religious leader and a masculinised symbol of progress, constitute modernising elements that benefits the rural masses. The figure of the urban middle-class professional who 'modernises' the rural masses is a recurring feature in New Order cinema in the 1970s and early 1980s. The late 1970s saw many films that pitted the professional reformers against backward and superstitious masses (Sen 1994: 120). Such a representation of socioeconomic class relations in film coheres with the New Order government's vision of modernisation as a process in which 'the elite sets tasks for the masses and control the style of mass participation' (Schiller 1978: 38 quoted in Sen 1994: 120). Films about figures who represented progress such as scientists and technocrats were lionised for being bringing prestige to the nation.[9] The portrayal of young, progressive Muslim men in Indonesian cinema during the New Order era coincided with the resuscitated calls for the modernisation of Islam in Indonesia during the 1970s. At the forefront of this call is the Muslim intellectual Nurcholis Madjid, who promoted an Islam that was aligned with modernisation, not Westernisation (Sasono 2010: 53). Furthermore, the modernised image of Islam worked hand in hand with the New Order's programme of nation-building, one that maintained a moderate, non-extremist political Islam in the public sphere.

The clash between new and old ways of propagating Islam takes a musical turn with the appearance of Rhoma Irama's films and his distinct, flamboyant style. The formula of the films starring Rhoma Irama, a *dangdut* singer and self-styled preacher, is based on the presumption that pop-inflected religious teachings with mass appeal can triumph over the staid and rigid face of Islam. Rhoma Irama is an Islamic cult hero of the working class who sings, romances, fights (to protect the woman he loves), and preaches the

[9] Kode Etik, 1981: 177.

word of God (Frederick 1982; Weintraub 2008). He makes his first cinematic appearance as a pop singer-preacher in *Perjuangan dan Doa* (Struggle and Prayer 1977, dir. Maman Firmansyah). In the film, Rhoma Irama establishes an example of an Islamic pop star who rejects the immoral lifestyle of alcohol and pre-marital sex associated with mainstream popular and rock music. Rhoma projects himself as a man of the people: in the opening scenes of the film, we see a pair of mysterious feet that wander around the city 'witnessing' the sins of other people. Motivated by these observations, he writes music about everyday sins to remind Muslims to return to the right moral path.

Like Saiful Bachri in *Al-Kautsar*, Rhoma Irama introduces a new and modern way of preaching Islamic principles. In several scenes in *Perjuangan dan Doa*, Rhoma Irama's distinct Islamic masculinity is emphasised against the traditional image of the learned Muslim man or *santri*. Sartorially, Rhoma Irama stands out from the other *santri* who wear uniform white shirts and trousers. Both represent modern Islamic masculinity, but in stark contrast to the business-like Islamic masculinity of Saiful Bachri in *Al-Kautsar* is Rhoma Irama's flamboyant aesthetics made up of a combination of 1970s silver bell-bottomed trousers and Orientalist couture (Frederick 1982: 113). As discussed in the previous section, clothes play an important role as markers of an authoritative Islamic identity but Rhoma Irama demonstrates no interest in pursuing the traditional look of a pious Muslim leader. Rhoma Irama's distinct style in preaching and attire speaks volumes of a conscious departure from a conservative and typical Islamic image.

Rhoma Irama acts as the masculine role model in *Perjuangan dan Doa*. All other men in the film, including members of his band, Soneta Group, demonstrate moral weaknesses through mixing with women and becoming belligerent when drunk. Like Saiful Bachri, Rhoma Irama's main antagonist is a fellow Muslim man who lives an immoral life. The moral conflict against the antagonist is more challenging because he is the father of Rhoma's girlfriend, Laila. Although a Muslim who claims to have read the Qur'an, Laila's father is an unrepentant alcoholic. Meanwhile, the male *santri* at an Islamic teaching school, of which Rhoma is an alumnus, are jealous and combative towards the pop preacher. When Laila spurns the advances of one male student, he challenges Rhoma Irama to a religious forum at the Islamic teaching school. Rhoma confidently accepts the challenge to publicly defend his unique preaching style. The purpose of the forum is to place Rhoma Irama in the dock for mixing music with Quranic texts and making

people dance to his music. But he remains calm when faced with such an accusation and proceeds reassuringly with his defence. The Quranic texts are not mixed with music, he asserts. Instead, the texts appear separately from the songs, resulting in a non-blasphemous if innovative Islamic delivery.

Rhoma reassures the audience that Quranic texts are recited only *before* the beat of the music begins and when the song starts, the lyrics are not Quranic texts but interpretations of the text. He tells the audience that *dangdut*, rather than other musical genres including Islamic ones such as *nasyid* and *qasidah*, is the music of 'the people' (*masyarakat*) and that his chosen genre is most effective in getting the message of *dakwah* across to Muslims. Catchy Islamic *dangdut* music may steer young people away from consuming Western music, a form of music filled with immoral messages, he continues. Needless to say, Rhoma Irama emerges victorious from the forum but not without an ambivalent statement from the principal of the Islamic teaching school that music can only be a source of moral good in the right hands. Towards the end of the film, Rhoma Irama rescues Laila from an attempted sexual assault by her drunken father whose alcoholism diminishes his morality. Laila's father is rendered unconscious by a blow from Rhoma Irama and when he wakes up, he is shocked to hear of his attempted rape and immediately repents. To demonstrate his return to an Islamic life, Laila's father is shown leading his family in prayer. The scene also shows that an acknowledgement of one's sins and repentance are enough to turn a new leaf without the need to face the judiciary. The audience is led to assume that, through renewed spirituality, Laila's father is an irrevocably changed and pious man. Redemption is a major theme in both *Perjuangan dan Doa* and *Al-Kautsar* as it features in the most dramatic scenes of the two films. Characters redeem themselves when they face a turning point that could threaten the lives of others and their own. In *Perjuangan dan Doa*, Laila's father is only prevented from committing the crime of incest when Rhoma Irama intervenes. Following this intervention, he atones for his misdeeds before reinstating his Islamic beliefs.

In *Al-Kautsar*, Satun redeems himself in prayer before threatening to kill himself and Harun in a burning hut if the latter does not repent. Saiful Bachri rescues both men from the fire after which the two men beg the forgiveness of their family. Redemption is therefore a cornerstone of modern *dakwah* films in the New Order, conveying a reminder to Muslim audiences that salvation is attainable however grievous the sin. The films utilise sensationalistic moral dilemmas and extreme characters to heighten

the dramatic effect of the film while making discrete and one-dimensional references to what is and is not a virtuous Islamic life. As a self-made preacher and Islamic teacher who are neither aristocratic nor blessed with mystical powers, Rhoma Irama and Saiful Bachri represent the modern Islamic masculinity in New Order cinema. They also have the 'human touch' in that they are in some ways part of the masses, but through religious authority, they rise above them. Both Saiful Bachri and Rhoma Irama demonstrate other qualities of Islamic masculinity that add to their humanity. Their masculinity is 'proven' through their heterosexuality and their superiority over women. They rescue both women and other men of inferior masculinities back into the moral fray.

Rhoma Irama's ultimate moral victory is saved for the film's final scene when his band is invited by the Indonesian government to perform for the National Council of Ulamas and other dignitaries. The purpose of the event is to oversee the role of Islam in the development of Indonesia. When the band sing their final number in the film, Rhoma Irama receives an endorsement for his Islamic preaching at a national level. The enormity of such an endorsement is depicted in a bizarre fantasy scene that intersperses between scenes of them performing at the formal state event. In the fantasy scenes, Rhoma and the Soneta Group emerge from a military tank and begin to perform in a war zone. Each band member wears a red and white Indonesian flag bandana around their heads, looking unperturbed by their precarious surroundings. The military fantasy scene sutures Rhoma Irama and his band's service to the nation and their fight, albeit through the power of pop music, against immoral foreign forces.

This section has demonstrated how nationalist discourse is expressed in masculine terms in New Order Islamic films; through leadership, combat, nation-building, progress, and restoration of moral order. Hence in a discussion concerning nationalist discourse and masculinity, it is pertinent to mention here that gender roles represent an important organising element in the imaginary of the nation-state. Men venture forth into the public sphere and actively reinforce, protect, and define the boundaries of the nation. Women, on the other hand, embody tradition, culture, and nation that require masculine protection while remaining firmly insulated in the private sphere (Sunindyo 1998: 6). The notion of modernity as masculine appears within a nationalist and anti-colonial discourse. While femininity concerns a preservation of the past, masculinity gazes forward towards progress. But what happens when a woman is at the helm of a nationalist struggle? The next section considers two films that have been praised for

their depiction of bold leading women within the context of anti-Dutch rebellion. Do they subvert masculine connotations of Islamic leadership? Do the women become de-feminised in their revolutionary roles?

Woman as Mother of an Islamic Nation

One of the major films (*film kolosal*) from the late 1980s was *Tjoet Nha Dhien* (1988, dir. Eros Djarot). The film stars the famous actor Christine Hakim as the eponymous Acehnese guerilla leader who fought the Dutch colonial army in the Aceh War between 1873 and 1905. It was also the first Indonesian film to be invited to the Cannes Film Festival in 1989. The film begins in 1896 with the voice of Tjoet Nha Dhien reading aloud a fictionalised letter to her husband, Teuku Umar Djohan Pahlawan, about their fight against colonialism. Her voice hovers over the panoramic image of the Acehnese people on a long nomadic trail across the hills to a settlement safe from Dutch forces. After her husband dies 'a martyr' in battle in 1899, Tjoet Nha Dhien takes over his leadership and leads an army of 35,000 to a number of battles. Although the Dutch colonials are the villains of the film, the film depicts moral ambiguity on both sides of the war: there are Acehnese informants for the Dutch and Dutch colonialists who collude with the Acehnese to supply the latter with arms. The film nevertheless contrasts the greed of the commercially motivated Dutch colonial administrators with the faith and piety of Tjoet Nha Dhien and her followers. Like the Java War led by Pangeran Diponegoro, the Aceh War against the Dutch is an Islamic crusade to flush out the infidel Dutch (*Kafir Ulanda*) who oppress their colonial subjects.

The incredulous reaction from the Dutch at Tjoet Nha Dhien's ability to mobilise her people and skilfully evade the Dutch challenges their initial perception of Acehnese women. During the colonial period, Acehnese women and men were subject to an essentialist classification system created by the Dutch police that constructed men as the enemy (*vijand*) and women as either 'innocent' civilian non-targets or as housewives (*huisvrouwen*) (Siapno 2002: 26). Thus Tjoet Nha Dhien's unusual position as both a rebel leader and a woman disrupts the colonial construction of Acehnese femininity. Furthermore, Tjoet Nha Dhien's indomitable Acehnese femininity is shown as superior to Dutch white femininity. Dutch white femininity, as personified by the Governor General van Heutz's wife, is represented as petty and idle. In contrast to his wife's

preoccupation with domestic social demands that irritates the Governor General, Tjoet Nha Dhien's militant spirit awes yet terrifies him.

Although Tjoet Nha's leadership and fighting spirit are emphasised to awe-inspiring proportions, these qualities are always complemented with, and perhaps feminised by, her nurturing side. When her daughter, Gambang, begins to show an admirable military spirit, Tjoet Nha reminds Gambang of her real role, as wife and mother of defenders of the nation. In fact, it is in the conversations between Tjoet Nha and her daughter where women's roles in national struggles are rendered ambivalent. After Teuku Umar dies, leaving Tjoet Nha at the helm, Gambang asks her mother if women can be leaders. Tjoet Nha only replies, 'Subhanallah' (Glory be to Allah). Tjoet Nha Dhien's reply may suggest her apparent reluctance to lead her people, particularly since her new role was a result of her husband's unexpected death in battle, and that her leadership is willed by God. Although a formidable military strategist in her own right, her leadership is legitimised through her status as the widow of Teuku Umar. Tjoet Nha Dhien's staunch nationalist stance on women's primary roles as mother is consistent with Nira Yuval-Davis's assertion that women are assigned the duty of 'biological reproduction of the nation' (1997: 26) and the 'cultural reproduction of the nation' (1997: 39).

Years of battle and hiding in the jungle take a toll on Tjoet Nha Dhien's physical state and she succumbs to blindness and paralysis. In his desperation to seek medical help for Tjoet Nha Dhien from the Dutch, her hiding place is revealed by her closest advisor, Pang La'ot. With great reluctance, Pang La'ot surrenders Tjoet Nha Dhien to the Dutch on the condition that she remains in Aceh. The film ends with her capture and exile to Sumedang in West Java where she dies in 1908, breaching the agreement made between Pang La'ot and the Dutch. When she is found in the depths of the jungle, enfeebled, and soaking in the rain, one cannot help but sense the melancholy of her struggle in the film's bleak conclusion. In the film's closing scene is an intertitle: 'the Acehnese continued to fight' which suggests the freedom fighters' legacy in Aceh. According to Schultz (2007: 174), Tjoet Nha Dhien's legacy had inspired the 'liberation of Indonesia' and belies the enduring tensions between the Acehnese separatist organisation, *Gerakan Aceh Merdeka* (The Free Aceh Movement, GAM) and the Indonesian government during the New Order. Despite the continuing campaigns for the secession of the Acehnese state from Indonesia and the government's demonisation of GAM, the biopic of Tjoet Nha Dhien was widely acclaimed by the Indonesian national press and Java-

based cultural elite. Film critics have argued that the film was a thinly veiled Acehnese separatist film against hegemonic Javanese powers (Sasono 2010: 52). But because it explicitly depicts a nationalist struggle against the Dutch and not Javanese dominance, the film was not regarded as inciting separatist sentiments.

In spite of the film's contested subject, Tjoet Nha Dhien's critical success in film festivals is attributed to the appropriation of the Acehnese narrative of Islamic nationalism by auteur cinema and for the construction of Indonesian, and not specifically Acehnese, history. In the local press (*Merdeka Minggu*, 1987; *Merdeka*, 1987; *Suara Pembaruan*, 1988), the figure of Tjoet Nha Dhien is hailed as 'the face of Indonesia' (*wajah Indonesia*), 'mystical woman' (*wanita ajaib*), and a heroine (*pahlawan*)—all of which underlines an oblique statement about female heroism and leadership. Tjoet Nha Dhien is among the most famous of female Acehnese freedom fighters. Others of her rank include Teungku Fakinah, Pocut Bahren, and Tjoet Meutia. In Aceh, the extent of rejection of the Indonesian government and Javanese hegemony can be seen in the pronouncement of Tjoet Nha Dhien as a local heroine and the denigration of Raden Ajeng Kartini, the Javanese women's rights activist and national mother figure (Siapno 2002: 150–151). Raden Ajeng Kartini's criticisms of polygamy was regarded as an affront to Islamic legitimacy of the practice, making her a poor Muslim female role model in Aceh (Siapno 2002: 151).

For a highly praised cinematic achievement about a national hero[10] and freedom fighter, the film portrayal of Tjoet Nha Dhien downplays the legend of her physical strength and ferocious determination. Instead, the film emphasises her role as the sacrificial wife and mother-like figure of the nation. She pays for the spiritual and anti-colonial struggle with her well-being. The national heroine lies mostly bedridden halfway through the film, requiring the help of her male troops to transport her from one hideout in the forest to another. Perhaps within the corporeal paralysis of a woman lies a strength that transcends the physical which makes her all the more extraordinary. But the film's focus on the twilight years of Tjoet Nha Dhien's political life also diminishes her masculine trait of leadership and instead recuperates feminised characteristics of delicate physicality and weakness. War is typically constructed as a male arena, with women at the margins as supporters of the war effort and defenders of the hearth.

[10] Tjoet Nha Dhien was hailed a national hero in 1964.

Women's proper roles outside of the battlefield are suggested in the film through the absence of scenes featuring Tjoet Nha Dhien fighting alongside her male soldiers in battle. She does not lead her male soldiers into battle in the manner her husband did. However, she is unflinching when disposing of traitors to her cause. In an ambush on the treasonous nobleman Teuku Leubeh's travelling party in the forest, Tjoet Nha Dhien stabs him to death for colluding with the Dutch and betraying the Acehnese-Islamic cause. This is the only scene when she is shown carrying a weapon and using it to kill another person. She is also a brilliant strategist and a skilled diplomat whose abilities are viewed with ambivalence by her male collaborators because of her gender.

Eros Djarot's emphasis on the military leadership of Tjoet Nha Dhien instead of her husband Teuku Umar was compelled by a need to depict 'strong' women in film (*Merdeka Minggu*, 1987). But it is also a remarkable decision seeing as Tjoet Nya Dhien did not leave behind written records about her struggles compared to Raden Ajeng Kartini who wrote letters detailing her rebellion. The lack of the recorded experiences and thoughts of the guerilla fighter renders her a 'voiceless' figure of Indonesia's national history (Siapno 2002: 25) who only comes alive in Djarot's cinematic vision. The focus on Tjoet Nha Dhien as a fighter during the height of her leadership and in ageing years stands in contrast to other existing representations of her as a national heroine dressed in aristocratic attire. The most popular image of Tjoet Nha Dhien in Aceh shows her in royal jewellery and dress. Wearing a *selendang* (a thin, loose veil) that half-covers her head, she is portrayed as distinguished and proud, showing no signs of defeat (Siapno 2002: 26).

By highlighting the political career of a formidable female guerilla leader, Tjoet Nha Dhien departs significantly from the mainstream representations of women in New Order film. The departure from common feminine representations in New Order Indonesian cinema is further emphasised by the fact that Christine Hakim was made to look much older throughout the film. Far less represented than younger women, older women are rarely portrayed as powerful figures. Instead, they are subject to stereotypes of frailty, unattractiveness, and asexuality (Bazzini et al. 1997). As an elderly but strong guerilla leader, Tjoet Nha Dhien must engage with men who, in contrast, are weaker or morally suspect. Pang La'ot's betrayal of Tjoet Nja Dhien casts him as a weak Muslim and a traitor to the nationalist cause (Marselli 1988). The imbalanced gender dynamic that places strong women

alongside weak men has been noted by Heider (1991:121) to show that gender egalitarianism in New Order Indonesian cinema does not exist.

Nationalist images of women in the military have a long history in Indonesia. Under Sukarno's presidency, an aspiration for gender egalitarianism was found in women and men's equal participation in the military (Douglas 1980: 166). Because military service constitutes a higher order of citizenship, women in the military were viewed as emancipated women (Sunindyo 1998: 8). A similar view of gender equality via equal military participation continued under Suharto's New Order in which women were considered legitimate defenders of the nation. However, the concept of *kodrat* (female biological destiny) is reinstated among the female armed forces as a reminder of women's essentialised femininity. To ensure that female soldiers retain and accept their *kodrat*, they were assigned an *ibu asuh* (surrogate mother) as their guide and guardian (Sunindyo 1998: 13–14). Feminist scholars have commented on the contradictory expectations of women's capacities and roles in nationalist discourse. They have shown that women's involvement in armed anti-colonial struggle was championed as evidence of gender equality, but when the struggle is won women are relegated to the domestic sphere to rebuild the nation as mothers and wives (Sunindyo 1998: 6). Furthermore, representations of women as military defenders are sometimes sexualised to emphasise their femininity and juxtaposed with the erotic masculine symbolism of phallic weaponry and military vehicles (Sunindyo 1998: 12). The sexualised image of military women or women as armed freedom fighters can also be found in Krishna Sen's analysis of the 1985 film *7 Wanita Dalam Tugas Rahasia* (7 Women On a Secret Mission, 1983, dir. Mardali Syarief). The titular female characters are the lovers, wives, and sisters of male soldiers in battle. Being soldiers themselves, they are members of an anti-Dutch mission. The film's soft-core pornographic visual codes in its portrayal of the women in several scenes sexually objectify the women and fetishise their suffering when they are attacked by men (Sen 1994: 153–154). Eroticised images of women in the military diminish their equality with their male counterparts as they are exposed to a range of sexual threats that men do not endure. Tjoet Nha Dhien is different from these examples of sexualised military femininity on several counts; the Acehnese heroine is a leader of men, she is desexualised as an elderly woman and mother, and towards the end of her crusade, severely disabled. Modern day Aceh is far removed from the pre-Independence period when women and men fought alongside each other. Women's participation in the Acehnese public sphere has been

restricted since independence particularly after the enactment of Sharia law in 2001 (Blackwood 2005: 852). Rather than evoking New Order anxieties of a female leader of an Islamic state, the heroic deeds of Tjoet Nha Dhien are hailed as a figment of an inert distant past. In the film, she is a feminised emblem of nationalism but above all a symbol of national motherhood. I will now turn to another film set in early twentieth-century Sumatra which depicts a similar version of nationalist femininity that is at once revolutionary in political terms but circumscribed within the domestic arena.

A Woman Driven to Apostasy: Female Emancipation as Political Emancipation

Indonesian films very rarely deal with the controversial topic of apostasy, the act of renouncing Islam.[11] In the case of *Para Perintis Kemerdekaan* (Pioneers of Independence, 1980, dir. Asrul Sani), the central character's crumbling marriage and political beliefs push her to the brink of apostasy. Filmed on location in West Sumatra and set in the 1920s, anti-colonial revolt is portrayed as an Islamic struggle against the Dutch government. The film's narrative is shown in flashbacks, beginning with the leading protagonist Halimah in prison for inciting anti-colonial statements. She declares, in a voice-over, that progress in politics, culture, and religion can only be achieved through personal and collective struggle. Her political and feminist emancipated views set the overall tone of the film. What is told in flashback is the political and spiritual journey she has undertaken that results in her eventual imprisonment.

The story of Halimah's awakening as a freedom fighter and campaigner begins with her refusal to comply with the subservient role of wife. She is a regular attendee of anti-colonial lectures, an activity that her husband forbids. Halimah's marriage to her husband, Sidi Marajo, is later suspended as a punishment (*nusyuz*) for supporting the anti-Dutch campaigns. According to Islamic tradition, the *nusyuz* can be pronounced by a man against his 'disobedient' wife. Once effective, the *nusyuz* prohibits a married woman from attaining financial support from her husband and she is denied the right to divorce him. Sidi Marajo's decision to punish his wife is backed by Haji Makmur, the local judge (*kadi*). As a supporter of the Dutch, the *kadi* brandishes a misogynist version of Islam to silence Halimah's pleas for

[11] Another film that does this is the 1974 film *Atheist* (dir. Sjumandjaya).

a fair hearing of her case. For the *kadi*, his cherished medals from the Dutch are symbols of his legitimacy as a peerless and unchallengeable Islamic leader. The only person who would favourably consider Halimah's case is Haji Wali, played by the film's director Asrul Sani. Haji Wali, who runs a mosque in Padang Panjang and edits a political literary magazine, *Menara* (The Watch Tower), is a champion of a progressive, women-friendly Islam. His support for interfaith harmony and democratic debates about faith issues with his congregation further demonstrates his liberal views.

After receiving a letter from Halimah about her predicament, he calls on other clerics to meet and discuss her case. He is supportive of Halimah from the outset, believing that the *nusyuz* has no theological basis in Islam. The decision to call for the meeting of clerics in the region is also a political one and an affront to both Haji Makmur's authority and the Dutch who prohibit the meeting. When Halimah approached Haji Makmur for a fair hearing, he declares that his edict on her punishment cannot be challenged by any other cleric. By contrast, Haji Wali's embrace of open religious debates and respect for dissenting voices place him in complete opposition to Haji Makmur's arrogant version of Islam. Denied a divorce by her husband, Halimah contemplates leaving the faith to separate from him as the *nusyuz* would not be applicable to an apostate. Halimah's decision to leave Islam becomes the talk of her village, turning her into a social pariah. Only her fellow male comrades-in-arms support her in this controversial decision. Together, Halimah and the young men walk to the village mosque past the jeering masses to make her renunciation public to all. But when Halimah arrives at the entrance of the mosque, she has a spiritual experience, represented by an intertitle with the name of God beaming at the audience, and as a result, remains a Muslim. Halimah's change of heart is unexplained except for the possibility that a divine intervention in the mosque restores her faith in Islam. Her journey to the mosque and spiritual enlightenment coincides with the meeting of clerics on her marriage. Presided over by Haji Wali, the meeting unanimously condemns Sidi Marajo and Haji Makmur's declaration of *nusyuz* against Halimah. Following their collective agreement, Halimah's marriage to Sidi Marajo is terminated and the *nusyuz* ceases to be effective.

With her faith restored, Halimah joins the women's movement against the Dutch and teaches other women domestic skills such as needlework. In the film, Dutch colonialism is presented as not only an immoral force to be defeated under an Islamic banner but is also anti-women, forbidding the political mobilisation and education of women. Meanwhile, Halimah's

emancipatory politics and strong religious affiliations are diametrically opposed to Zainab, a young unmarried woman in the film. Zainab is the daughter of Dutch-sympathising parents. She displays elements of Western-colonial sensibility befitting an elite Sumatran woman in the 1920s: she adopts a Western style of attire consisting of skirts and blouses and unquestioningly adheres to a colonial education. Unmoved by anti-colonial sentiment, she sings the Dutch anthem in school with the zeal of an obedient colonial subject. Zainab lacks the political consciousness of Halimah but this may be influenced by her father's loyalty towards the Dutch. As her patriarchal guardian, Zainab's father, Haji Jakfar, determines her future. She is to marry a wealthy man and lead a domestic life. Thus compared to Halimah, Zainab is complacent and anti-intellectual about the position of her people under Dutch rule.

Zainab's femininity reflects the expectations pressed upon educated elite Indonesian women to follow the 'Western patterns of the modern woman as wife and mother' (Locher-Scholten 2000: 28). Although Zainab displays a Western-style sensibility in her Western attire and in her political support of the Dutch, it does not spur her to be as ambitious, independent, and forceful as Halimah. In other words, Zainab's embrace of Western-colonial culture does not engender enlightenment. Conversely, Halimah is progressive and challenges tradition but retains the outward appearance of a 'proper' Minangkabau woman in her *kebaya*, a traditional two piece dress, and loose veil that drapes over her hair. Meanwhile, the other revolutionary men who fight alongside Halimah dress in Western style clothing and question the religious authority associated with turbans and Islamic robes. Perhaps because as a woman enmeshed in nationalist discourse, Halimah must dress in traditional attire as she carries 'the burden of [the national] collectivity's identity and honour' (Yuval-Davis 1997: 45). Unlike men's traditional attire, Halimah's traditional clothes are the most obvious if essential marker of her people's cultural identity.

In contrast to Zainab's resigned domesticity, Halimah remains determined to be a single woman devoted to politics. After Halimah is free of Sidi Marojo, she declines the mayor's demand for her to remarry. The mayor is suspicious of Halimah's activist work with the local women and sees marriage as a means of curbing her movement. In the end, she takes the role of an anti-Dutch agitator herself and gives speeches about political independence in the local mosque. Her Islamic-nationalist activism in the mosque mirrors the kind of leadership held by her male predecessors who are clerics. Halimah's political activism and emancipated views about women's rights

do not, however, go unpunished. Her declaration of an 'Indonesian nation' (*Bangsa Indonesia*) and independence (*Merdeka*) falls foul of the spying military police as such proclamations are illegal. Like her predecessors, she is imprisoned for two years by the Dutch government for inciting anti-colonial views in a local mosque. Revolutionary Islam is therefore envisioned as a feminist struggle in *Para Perintis Kemerdekaan* whereby women and men are equal as leaders in faith and politics. But more importantly, an emancipationist version of Islam is seen to liberate women. It could also be said that other women in Halimah's village are yet to be liberated and enlightened by 'true' Islam themselves, as she faces subtle opposition from other women who beseech her to passively accept a woman's destiny or *kodrat*. Moreover, her journey towards political emancipation is short-lived and this may have to do with her gender. Egalitarian policies in nationalist struggles have been found to be temporary and strategic to rally women's support. Once the struggle is over, women are expected to return to their 'appropriate' roles in the domestic sphere (Sunindyo 1998: 7).

The film is an adaptation and an elaboration of a few pages taken from the Indonesian cleric and political activist Hamka's[12] semi-biographical accounts of his father's life in the 1920s, *Ayahku* (My Father, 1955). Halimah's plight as a woman wronged by patriarchal interpretations of Islam is based on the accounts of the many west Sumatran women who renounced their faith to escape abuse by their husbands. Helping the women with the Islamic legal procedures pertaining to their marriage is Hamka's father, a well-known Minangkabau preacher. Characters in *Para Perintis Kemerdekaan* have other historical parallels. The 1920s was a high point for Islamic anti-colonial politics when radical and moderate Islamic political parties set their ideological differences aside to undermine Dutch rule. It was also during this period when most Islamic parties established women's wings, branches, or sections to further their support base and reach (Blackburn 2008: 86). Female members of Islamic political parties who became more defiant and 'non-cooperative' towards the colonial government not only shocked colonial observers but faced similar levels of scrutiny and harassment as their male counterparts (Blackburn 2008: 87). Female activists like Rasuna Said who fought the colonial system were jailed for their anti-colonial activities. Revolutionary men who belonged to the

[12] Better known as Hamka, Abdul Malik Karim Amrullah (1908–1981) was a renowned Indonesian ulama, novelist, and political activist.

Kaum Muda (The New Generation) stressed the importance of women's education and roles in society, along with modernisation and democracy (Abdullah 2009: 21).

Asrul Sani's choice to highlight the female-oriented perspective of anti-colonial struggles in 1920s West Sumatra is argued to reflect the matrilineal traditions of Minangkabau society.[13] Although not shown in *Para Perintis Kemerdekaan*, Minangkabau society has long experienced tensions between its adherence to a matrilineal set of customs and a strong commitment to Islam, a patriarchal faith. Elements of Minangkabau culture pervade throughout Asrul Sani's film nonetheless, underlining not tension but rather a harmonious coexistence between Islam and Minangkabau customs. However, the film's depictions of Minangkabau culture is only cursory in its location, soundtrack featuring traditional Minangkabau music, local batik worn by a few men, and a scene showing a traditional Minangkabau wedding ceremony. The dialogue is in standard Indonesian and there are no allusions to forming a free West Sumatra. In contrast to *Tjoet Nha Dhien*, calls for political independence and nationalist fervour in *Para Perintis Kemerdekaan* is explicitly made in the name of the Indonesian nation. *Para Perintis Kemerdekaan*'s aesthetic references to Minangkabau culture concur with Heider's view that New Order cinema has a reductive and superficial approach to cultural diversity in order to project New Order notions of Indonesian-ness (1994: 163). Following Heider's logic, the film presents to its audience Indonesian history, the apparent roots of nation-building, and national culture. With the exception of *Tjoet Nha Dhien*, which was shot partly in Acehnese language and on location, regional, and cultural specificities in New Order cinema are diluted or flattened out to accommodate a broad image of 'Indonesian-ness'. The motivations behind the dilution and flattening out of regional and cultural differences may serve the New Order's ideology of national cohesion and unity. But such an imposition of cohesion and unity involves the hegemonic modes of representation that marginalise the subjects whose stories are told by elites. Discourses about the nation are tacitly implied in the subsequent chapters on representations of gender in post-New Order Islamic films as their themes move away from nation-building and more towards individualist and transnational concerns.

[13] 'Pioneers of Independence' Monash University VHS Pal video synopsis.

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CHAPTER 5

Empowered Muslim Femininities? Representations of Women in Post-New Order *Film Islami*

Because of its aesthetics and themes that oppose Western and Westernised local mass media in Indonesia, Katinka van Heeren classifies the *film Islami* genre as a type of oppositional cinema (2012: 122). If she is right, then the genre is also in opposition to the Islamophobic view of women's oppression in Islam. In this chapter, the oppositional stance of the genre is more prominent during the post-New Order period as the genre joins the chorus of protest against the Islamophobic discourse in the aftermath of 9/11 that connects extremist misogyny with Islam. Theo van Gogh's short film, *Submission*, which caused outrage worldwide and allegedly led to his assassination, is one such example of cinematic Islamophobia. First screened on Dutch television in 2004, *Submission* depicts four women who call on Allah for an explanation of the male-perpetrated violence they experience. It is not just the narrative of the film that courted criticism from Muslim commentators and protest. Cries of blasphemy were also targeted towards the film's depiction of Quranic inscription on the women's exposed bodies (MacDonald 2006: 7).

This chapter first aims to address the tensions between challenging representations of global Islamophobia and those of Muslim women's participation in the public sphere. The first half of the chapter examines two films that engage with Muslim women's roles in the public religious sphere and how they are beset by familial relations that threaten their Islamic careers and a return to the domestic sphere. *Perempuan Berkalung Sorban* (Woman in the Turban, 2009, dir. Hanung Bramantyo) can be described as a feminist melodrama about a young woman, Annisa, who

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overcomes patriarchal obstacles to pursue her passion for education, reading, and literature. With its critical stance towards bigotry within Islamic institutions and the incorporation of controversial Islamic scripture in the dialogue, the film is a fine example of an oppositional post-New Order Islamic film on the status of women in Islam. *Ummi Aminah* (Mother Aminah, 2011, dir. Aditya Gumay) on the other hand, is a more innocuous critique of middle-class Muslim women's burden of maintaining a successful career and being the primary carer of the family. As a popular female religious leader, Ummi Aminah cannot 'have it all'. She, like Annisa, must battle with domestic conflict before she is free to pursue her career and life aspirations outside the home. The analysis of the film and themes of female suffering demonstrates that *Ummi Aminah* is set apart from other films in the genre as an Islamic 'women's film' and maternal melodrama.

The second half of the chapter explores themes unique to post-New Order Islamic cinema: women who join terrorist organisations and convert to Islam for love. For young Muslim women opposed to the Western connotation of feminist emancipation and seeking escape from the confines of the domestic sphere, participation in militant jihadi offers an alternative that appears to promise justice, honour, and adventure. Their choices present to feminist scholarship both the subversion and crisis of agency as the women show a commitment to an ideology that justify their own subordination. Thus, a different substantiation of agency is sought, one that is concerned with piety and revolution. In *Mata Tertutup* (The Blindfold, 2011, dir. Garin Nugroho), agency is not only mobilised towards these ends. The young women who participate in clandestine militant Islamist organisation utilise their agency to undermine the institutional structures of the family, nation, and citizenship through secrecy, disobedience, and their rejection of the secular state.

In *Ayat-ayat Cinta* (Quranic Verses of Love, 2008, dir. Hanung Bramantyo) and *Syahadat Cinta* (Vow of Love, 2008, dir. Gunawan Panggaru), Islam's image as tolerant towards religious difference is promoted to counter Islamophobic misconceptions that the religion is hostile to diversity and intent on global domination. The implicit engagement with religious pluralism is found in subplots about interfaith romance between a Muslim man and Christian woman. However, the advocation for diversity is undercut by religious conversion by the Christian women into the Islamic faith. Furthermore, the representation of Christianity in both films is feminised within an Islamicised discourse of interfaith romance and religious conversion. The films demonstrate the Christian women's attraction

to the values within Islam as a sign of the religion's positive view about women.

The popularity of female film stars who adopt a pious off-screen persona subverts several misconceptions about Islam and women who work in the film and entertainment industry. Their appeal as film stars rests not only on the maintenance of a public Islamic image and wearing the *jilbab*, but also their ability to successfully construct new and aspirational Muslim femininities in the public sphere. These Muslim film stars are dynamic and resourceful. They cross the boundaries of their on-screen careers in cinema to become political campaigners, writers, models, and singers to further consolidate their Islamic images. Moreover, their media presence is boosted by new modes of communication and media technologies that were largely unavailable during the New Order.

Other than *Ayat-ayat Cinta* and *Syahadat Cinta*, each of the films discussed in this chapter engage with Islamic debates concerning women's roles in the public domain through a central Muslim female character as a way of countering Islamophobic images of Muslim women. Contrary to images of downtrodden women are images of highly educated pious Muslim women who wear the veil and take control over their lives with careers outside the home. However, the attention given to producing counter-hegemonic images of Muslim women in film has resulted in the reinforcement of the status quo with regards to the internal debates concerning images of women in Indonesian cinema. As a challenge to global Islamophobia, the women in films discussed in this chapter have agency and independence, but they cannot have too much of either. The women continue to encounter the enduring resistance against female independence beyond the domestic sphere and painful negotiations between self-actualisation and family demands. As a feature of resistance, the theme of agency runs throughout this chapter, as a gateway to discussions about female domesticity, oppression, and empowerment in Islamic cinema.

Agency here is understood as 'the power within' that manifests through 'bargaining and negotiation, deception and manipulation, subversion and resistance' (Kabeer 1999: 438). It is 'the capacity to realise one's own interests against the weight of custom, tradition, transcendental will, or other obstacles (whether individual or collective) (Mahmood 2005: 8). Through the themes of agency, female suffering, and domesticity, certain films in the Islamic film genre about women share characteristics of the 'woman's film', as defined by Mary Ann Doane:

> The 'woman's film' obsessively centres and re-centres a female protagonist, placing her in a *position of agency*, it offers some resistance to an analysis which stresses the 'to-be-looked-at-ness' of the woman, her objectification as spectacle according to the masculine structure of the gaze. (1987: 286, italics mine)

On the one hand, efforts to portray 'strong' and independent Muslim women are driven by a sense of protest against Islamophobia. But on the other hand, the production of such images are dominated by Muslim male filmmakers, reinforcing another critique of Islam as a male-dominated faith. Women in the Indonesian filmmaking industry I interviewed are cynical about the ability of male filmmakers to produce meaningful portrayals of Muslim women. The filmmaker and producer Nia Dinata argues that male directors are never conscious of gender when they make films. Instead, even when representations of women are prominent and powerful, she believes that women's images and voices are appropriated for their masculine artistic and political vision.[1] Dinata's critique of representations of women by male filmmakers raises an important proviso; depictions of 'empowered' Muslim female characters in Indonesian film need to be carefully examined within the context of the narrative and not taken simply at face value. Krishna Sen stresses that when analysing images of 'strong' women, one must ask 'to what effect and in whose interest is this strength mobilised' in film (1994: 135). And so at this juncture, it would be instructive to bring forward a set of questions related to the context of those images of women (strong or otherwise) in Islamic films. Whose interests are being met in depictions of strong pious women? What influence do feminist critiques of representations of women have on post-New Order *film Islami*? Have representations of women in Indonesian film, as exemplified in the *film Islami* genre, become more Islamic? What does Islamic femininity come to signify in post-New Order Indonesian film? Does it embody, as Sonja van Wichelen identifies (2011) in the Indonesian public sphere, the 'gendered' discourse of contemporary Islam?

For van Wichelen, the Islamic discourse in post-New Order Indonesia has taken on a gendered character in that debates concerning the public moral hygiene and Islamic practice are defined in the contested leadership of former president Megawati, polygamy, the anti-pornography bill, and the

[1] Interview with Nia Dinata in Jakarta on 3rd February 2012.

popular sensuality of performer Inul Darasista (van Wichelen 2010). But more fundamentally, these debates bring to light how certain Islamic practices and regulations disadvantage Muslim women more than Muslim men. This chapter shows that the themes portrayed in the films discussed herein are also 'gendered' Islamic issues, issues that contest Muslim women's participation in the public sphere. The films demonstrate that Islamic issues such as religious leadership, women's role in terrorism, interfaith relations, religious conversion, and an Islamic persona in the film industry cannot be separated from the performance of gender.

Domestic Struggle as Spiritual Struggle

A few female-led films made in the last decade by women filmmakers have dealt explicitly with 'women's issues,' issues pertaining to mother-daughter relationships (*Pasir Berbisik* (Whispering Sands, 2001, dir. Nan Achnas), abortion and female sexuality (*Perempuan Punya Cerita*, Chants of Lotus, 2007, dirs. Upi Avianto, Nia Dinata, Fatimah Rony, and Lasja Fauzia Susatyo), and polygamy (*Berbagi Suami*, Love for Share, 2006, dir. Nia Dinata). In the case of *Perempuan Berkalung Sorban*, however, it is directed by a male filmmaker and overtly focused on a range of women's issues. Adapted from a novel of the same name by feminist Islamic scholar Abidah El Khaleiqy, the film's critical stance on patriarchal domination by Muslim men attracted outrage from the head imam of Jakarta's Istiqlal Grand Mosque in 2009. Conversely, the film won praise from Meutia Hatta, the former women's issues minister and daughter of Indonesia's first vice president, Muhammad Hatta, for challenging retrogressive socio-religious attitudes towards women in the domain of popular culture (Belford 2009).

Perempuan Berkalung Sorban is centred on the trials and tribulations of strong-willed Annisa, a daughter of a *kyai*, the head of the *pesantren* (Islamic boarding school) and local community. Annisa is intent on challenging the norms of her conservative Islamic upbringing by insisting on continuing her studies far from home in Yogyakarta, much to the disapproval of her father. To quell her independent spirit, Annisa is forced into marriage with the son of another *kyai* but soon suffers from domestic abuse, marital rape, and the humiliation of entering a polygamous marriage without her consent. After a painful divorce, Annisa reinvents herself as a women's refuge counsellor then religious school teacher in her father's *pesantren*. At the *pesantren*, she distributes secular and politically charged novels to her students despite criticisms from her father that the content of the books is 'un-Islamic'.

After her first marriage, Annisa rekindles her relationship with a childhood sweetheart, Khudori, a recent graduate of al-Azhar University in Egypt. When the two face accusations of sexual impropriety and threats of punishment by stoning, they decide to marry. As a survivor of rape and domestic abuse, Annisa is wary of intimacy. But she later overcomes her trauma when she initiates sexual contact with her husband. Although the film does not depict the consummation of their marital relationship, Annisa's sexual fulfilment is later suggested in a scene where she looks joyous and triumphant. Thus the film hints favourably at female sexuality although only within the context of marriage. Furthermore, it also considers the considerable trauma experienced by survivors of violence and the sympathetic Muslim men who do not demand sexual intercourse as a marital right.

Khudori's demure and sympathising character has, however, attracted criticism. Eric Sasono, a consultant on the writing of the film's script, argues that Hanung Bramantyo has deliberately portrayed Khudori as a 'weak' man.[2] By contrast, Annisa's father and first husband, in Sasono's view, are portrayed as one-dimensional caricatures of oppressive men. The film is reduced to a crude melodrama, says Sasono, as Annisa's escape from her family and first marital home becomes a predictable choice that diminishes the complexity of her life choices and character. Annisa's tribulations and ideals bear some semblance to the politics of Muslim women's political mobilising in Indonesia. In her book on Indonesian women's leadership in Islamic organisations, Pieternella van Doorn-Harder (2006) reveals the role and influence Muslim women have in challenging the patriarchal reading of Islamic scripture in Indonesia. However, the rise of women's leadership in Islamic organisations occurs alongside rising Islamist extremism. Despite these obstacles in certain parts of Indonesia, Muslim women in general have access to thousands of other institutions where women are trained to become specialists of Islam, allowing them to learn and interpret Islamic scripture (van Doorn-Harder 2006: 1–2).

Among these institutions is the *pesantren*, where female and male students spend many of their formative years studying Islamic texts. These schools have produced female intellectuals, preachers, and feminist activists who actively engage in religious debates equipped with substantial knowledge of Islamic scripture and command of classical Arabic (van Doorn-Harder 2006: 2). These trends suggest a culture that promotes the

[2] Interview with Eric Sasono in Jakarta on 30th January 2012.

betterment and intellectual development of Muslim women. Muslim women in Indonesia, as in the rest of Southeast Asia, wield a relative amount of freedom to move and resist repression. They also have greater economic autonomy and physical mobility than many women elsewhere in the Muslim world (Robinson 2010: 135). But women's active participation in public discourse and leadership does not, however, mean that Indonesia is a feminist utopia. Not far beneath the veneer of relative economic and social egalitarianism, there are intersecting inequalities that underlie specific contexts. Even when religious institutions promote women's education, greater participation, and notional leadership, women's direct and autonomous leadership are usually denied. For example, the women's branch of the mass Muhammadiyah movement continues to be subservient and marginalised in relation to their male counterpart despite exhibiting strong and capable leadership (van Doorn-Harder 2006: 43). The repeated obstacles that Annisa faces in her journey towards self-actualisation are not only domestic in nature but created by the men closest to her: her father and first husband. Annisa's father and first husband's unremitting desire to deny her access to higher education is contrasted with her second husband Khudori's support, empathy, and formidable academic qualifications. Khudori's masculinity has been commented by Hoesterey and Clark (2012: 217–218) as being part of a new shift in representations of men in Indonesian cinema towards pro-femininity. However, Khudori's gentle demeanour vis-à-vis Annisa's heroic persona may be a hangover of Karl Heider's formulation of what he considers the strong-woman/weak man dynamic in New Order cinema (Heider 1991: 121).

Domestic conflict and gossip blight the life of the central female character in *Ummi Aminah*. In *Ummi Aminah*, the titular character is a mother to five children and grandmother of one. In her role as a popular *ustazah* or female preacher, she is also 'mother' to her all-female congregation who pray with her and listen to her sermons. Soon, indiscretions within her family turn Ummi Aminah's life and career upside down. Rumours surrounding her oldest daughter Zarika's romance with a married man and her son Zainal's arrest for drug trafficking threaten to tear her family apart and tarnish her reputation as a morally upstanding religious leader. Ummi Aminah faces repeated public humiliation in front of her female congregation because of her children's failings. Her humiliation begins with rumours that spread via social media of Zarika's affair with a married man. During Ummi Aminah's sermon, members of her congregation read Twitter messages with both amusement and disdain. In another instance, when Ummi

Aminah is driven to a public lecture by her son, he is arrested by the police before her bewildered congregation. Ummi Aminah's public humiliation reaches its peak when nationwide press reports and television broadcasts of her son's arrest question her moral integrity as an *ustazah*. The size of her congregation diminishes dramatically and her sponsors cancel all of her future public sermons. Deeply affected by the turn of events, she descends into depression and withdraws from public life.

It is only when her family band together to restore Ummi Aminah's self-worth and remind her that her strength lies within the confines of the nuclear family that she recovers from her depression. With most of the family crises resolved, not least the end of Zarika's affair with a married man, Ummi Aminah's family rally around her, boosting her confidence by reinstating her in the primary role of mother. Things begin to improve further when a radio station invites Ummi Aminah as a guest on a religious programme. She is hesitant at first, but is encouraged by her husband to return to her public role. The radio broadcast is a success, demonstrated by her family and her congregation who listen in proudly to the broadcast in unison. Following Ummi Aminah's successful comeback, her son Zainal is released from prison after he is found to have been wrongly convicted. With the return of Zainal, her career as a popular *ustazah* resumes, emphasising that as a working mother, she should prioritise her family over her public role.

In accordance with Islamic tradition, a female religious leader must only lead an all-female congregation (Silvers and Elewa 2011: 142). The only time Ummi Aminah's authoritative voice is heard by a mixed-gender audience is in a radio broadcast in which she sermonises about the importance of maintaining traditional family values. What this scene suggests is that the practice of female leadership and the deference she receives from the role are defined through medium and space. Her authority in the public sphere as a religious leader is confined to an all-female space and to the medium of sound. Conversely, she is not shown to speak as a religious leader in the presence of men. Thus ideas of what makes an acceptable female religious leader are interwoven in *Ummi Aminah*. The film also perpetuates traditional expectations of motherhood and the role of faith in the family in that family responsibility trumps a woman's role in her faith community. Ummi Aminah's husband is portrayed as a patient and caring helpmeet to her public role with little impact on his masculinity. In contrast, Ummi Aminah bears the personal cost of subverting traditional femininity.

The tag line of the film, '*Film untuk ibu-ibu yang mencintai ibu*' could be read as 'a film for women who love their mothers,' emphasising the centrality of women's roles as mothers. In a television interview with the film's director Aditya Gumay and the cast of *Ummi Aminah*, the director states that the film is about the 'irony' of a woman who has the ability to lead a congregation of thousands but lacks the ability to maintain harmony within her own family. As a mother and popular *ustazah*, the character of Ummi Aminah was meant to appeal to a larger if more female-oriented audience, along with non-Muslim and family audiences. For the film's director, Aditya Gumay, the film was less a commentary on the Islamic faith or women's leadership in Islam than about the challenges of a family in crisis and the means through which a mother, as saviour, pulls the family back from fragmentation.[3] But even though the film lacks a conscious commentary on gender and public Islamic affairs, it nevertheless raises a number of important if implicit questions about female leadership in Islam. The film's silence on the under-representation of female Islamic leaders speaks volumes of the reinforcement of traditional female roles in Indonesian society and Islamic practice. As a film about female leadership, albeit a vulnerable one, in a religious community and in the home, *Ummi Aminah* portrays the boundaries between the two spheres that Muslim women must tread with peril.

Ummi Aminah has all the elements of a melodrama and its subclass, the 'women's film'. It has the mode of address of a women's film; made for 'women who love their mothers' and as an Indonesian melodrama, it is about a suffering female protagonist caught in a family crisis (Sen 1993: 208) and evokes emotions in its female audiences. But it is also a 'maternal melodrama' with paradoxes, a type of melodrama identified in a study by Linda Williams:

> The device of devaluing the actual figure of the mother while sanctifying the institution of motherhood is typical of the 'women's film' in general and the subgenre of the maternal melodrama in particular. In these films it is quite remarkable how frequently the self-sacrificing mother must make her sacrifice that of the connection to her children—either for her or their own good (1987: 300).

[3] Interview with Aditya Gumay in Jakarta on 3rd February 2012.

Feminist literature on the maternal melodrama in film has commented on the centrality of the 'passive' mother implicated in family-related conflicts. But the passivity of the mother is often not what it seems and may actually be paradoxical. The suffering mother may find 'joy in pain [and] pleasure in sacrifice' (Williams 1987: 299), suggesting not empowerment but rather agency allowed within the constraints of the private and public arena. Ummi Aminah's pain meanwhile appears stripped of joy as she falls into a depression. She is reinstated to her role as a religious leader after gaining the approval of her family and regains the agency to rebuild herself.

Both *Perempuan Berkalung Sorban* and *Ummi Aminah* show that the closer a woman gets to complete autonomy in the religious public sphere, the greater her domestic struggle. Despite the demands of domestic life that threaten to restrict the lives of Annisa and Ummi Aminah, their careers within the Islamic context remain intact in the end. For Annisa and Ummi Aminah, their circumscribed spiritual lives are closely intertwined with their lives as working women. The devastating domestic crises faced by the two women underline a deeply ambivalent view of educated Muslim women stepping out independently into the public arena. Both Annisa and Ummi Aminah resolve tensions on the matter in the end, but not without trauma and threats to family unity. The lesson that the two female characters must accept is that independence and aspirations come with a price in both the domestic and public sphere. The roles of daughter and mother are pressed upon Annisa and Ummi Aminah, respectively, in spite of their resolve to develop their personhood beyond it. They have some, but nevertheless hard-won, autonomy in the public sphere. In this respect, they move progressively forward from Heider's findings that independent women in New Order cinema can only be found in the domestic arena (1991: 120).

What can *Perempuan Berkalung Sorban* and *Ummi Aminah* tell us about the images of women produced by Indonesian male filmmakers? At present, a number of high profile male filmmakers are just as likely as their female counterparts to make films about women and 'women's issues'. Other post-New Order male filmmakers such as Riri Riza, Slamat Rahardjo, and Hanny Saputra, have directed on-screen portrayals of resilient femininity (*Eliana Eliana*, 2002, dir. by Riza; and *Marsinah*, 2002, dir. by Rahardjo) and active female sexuality (in *Virgin*, 2005, dir. Saputra) in the 'secular' public sphere. Marshall Clark identifies the cinematic efforts of these male filmmakers of women-centred films as 'challenging the normative gender dynamics and constructing non-patriarchal models of subjectivities and practices' (2010: 95). Granted, the images presented by these male

filmmakers do to some extent dislodge the normative gender dynamics that reproduce feminine weakness and male aggression. But whether or not they construct non-patriarchal models of subjectivities and practices is less clear, especially when male entitlement to power, authority, and access to female sexuality and bodies in the films are not dismantled. These male-produced images of women, Annisa and Ummi Aminah included, nonetheless transcode the post-*Reformasi* zeitgeist of increased participation by Indonesian women in public, often male-dominated, domains.

Although men still dominate the visual production of Muslim women in Indonesian cinema, their portrayals of ideological subversion is minute in scale but nonetheless noteworthy. A significant example of ideological subversion can be observed in the titles of their films and in the film ending. For instance, *Perempuan Berkalung Sorban*, which roughly translates as the woman who wears the turban around her neck, suggests a woman's attempt to assume the authority of a male Islamic leader who typically wears the turban. Rather than wearing it as a head accessory, Annisa feminises the symbol of masculine Islamic authority by wearing it as a neck-piece (the verb *berkalung* means to wear as a necklace). By the end of the film, Annisa is seen on a horse, riding away with her son into the horizon, leaving an abandoned turban on the ground far behind them, signifying movement from patriarchal control while self-circumscribing one's relation to the reproductive and domestic arena on one's own terms.

Subverting Agency in Mata Tertutup

In Garin Nugroho's 2011 film *Mata Tertutup* (The Blindfold) the two feminist concepts of agency and empowerment are turned on their heads as they are marshalled towards a radical Islamist ideology. As extraordinary findings on women's participation in the terrorist organisation Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant or ISIS come to light, feminist scholars must contend with the reality that jihadi women employ the fundamental rhetoric of women's free will, agency, empowerment, and fulfilment not dissimilar from feminism. Educated and earnest about what they see as revolution or simply adventure, many young women have left their homes on their own volition to begin a new life as wives of militant jihadis who fight alongside male insurgents. Resisting obstacles that may stand in the way of their new-found beliefs, such women also embody disobedience against traditional male authority of the father, brothers, and even male clerics who insist on women's primary role in the domestic sphere. Studies on women in

ultraconservative *dakwah* groups in Indonesia shatter the stereotype of the passive Muslim woman and instead demonstrate their enthusiastic commitment to the development and future of their organisation. Nisa (2012) found that Salafi women who belong to the ultraconservative Wahdah Islamiyah in Makassar, Indonesia, are active members who contribute to the life and running of the organisation. Wearing the face veil (*cadar*) poses no obstacle to the women. Rather, the women redefine the notion of 'invisibility' and 'visibility' in the public sphere on their own terms.

Research on Indonesian women in militant Islamist organisations is scarce as much of the attention has been on the radicalisation of young men by a number of Islamist movements since the New Order period. The rise of homegrown terrorism in Indonesia is linked with the political and economic disaffection caused by high employment rates during the first decade of the post-New Order and the lack of political alternatives for devout young Muslims. Consisting mostly of young men between the ages of 15 and 29, paramilitary groups that have emerged in Indonesia since the *Reformasi* period have been known to perform disruptive public protests and a variety of acts of terror, including violent communal conflict against Christians. These groups go by names like *Laskar Jihad* (Jihadi Warriors) and *Front Pembela Islam* (Islamic Defenders Front). Others have formed outposts of ISIS in Indonesia. Influenced by the jihadi brand of Salafism, militant insurgents turn to threats and acts of violence to demand the purification of the state in accordance with Islamic law. It would be misguided to argue that jihadis are clouded by extremist indoctrination as Noorhaidi Hasan finds that young men who join radical groups in Indonesia do so for rational reasons. They see themselves as actors in a moral drama, 'a sort of performative practice to demonstrate, in the face of powerful opponents, a hitherto marginalised power and to challenge the hegemonic global order' (2010: 51).

Mata Tertutup is based on true events in Java about young women seduced into the radical mission to establish the 'Islamic State of Indonesia' (Negara Islam Indonesia or NII) and a young man who finds spiritual meaning as a suicide bomber. It is an evocation of the Indonesian government's attempts to root out and eliminate homegrown terrorism in Indonesia amid rising concerns of global Islamist extremism and the global acts of terror by ISIS. The film begins with new recruits transported to the secret headquarters of the NII where they will be indoctrinated by the male leaders of the organisation. Blindfolded to their clandestine venue, the new recruits are coerced into the initiation process by reciting the Islamic vow of the

faithful. Among the newly recruited is Rima who later becomes a successful recruiter of other young women. Rima's journey into radical Islam and her exit from it are a portrayal of agency and the allure of jihadism among women. At 20 and a university student, Rima is lured by the promise of justice guaranteed by the formation of the NII, a new nation 'blessed by Allah and governed by the Qur'an'. There are traces of her intellectual interests in Muslim women's emancipation; she owns a copy of the feminist classic, Woman at Point Zero by Nawal el-Saadawi and a desire for revolution embodied by the first president Sukarno and that of women dressed in black chador who herald the Islamic revolution in Iran and the fall of the Shah. These indicators of Rima's political and intellectual path towards militant Islamism are, however, shown fleetingly as if insubstantial to her new identity. Her transformation into a successful recruiter of young women is more powerfully attributed to her encounter with the charismatic leader of the movement who explains that the degradation of intelligent and honest women in Indonesia will end under the rule of an Islamist caliphate. His words have a hypnotic effect on her as she soon begins to parrot his messianic vision.

Another parallel narrative in *Mata Tertutup* concerns the trauma of losing a daughter to extremism. Asimah's search for her daughter Aini takes her into unfamiliar parts of a Javanese town, past unfamiliar types of people not least women who have adopted the face veil. The frustrating enterprise of looking for Aini allegorises the search for reasons why young Indonesians turn to radical Islam. Both Aini and Rima do not look like the average militant. Without the headscarf and dressed in Western-style T-shirt and trousers, both are no different from other urban young women, Muslim or otherwise. Thus as an unassuming young and female recruiter, Rima's modus operandi as a recruiter is simple and effective: the building of trust and friendship with other young women. It is not long before Rima is congratulated for her tremendous efforts as the organisation's fundraiser, a role often played by women in jihadi groups, as the collector of money amassed from new members and fines for moral 'sins' such as masturbation. As a token of honour, she is given the nom de guerre of 'al-Khansaa', named after an early Muslim poetess who was revered for the loss of her sons to martyrdom. Buoyed by praise and validation by her male leader, Rima applies to a male-dominated higher-ranking position but fails because of her gender. Rima's disillusionment with NII takes immediate effect when she is told that women, in practice, are inferior within the movement and in its political vision. Her protest against the group's leader is rebuked with

accusations of deviating from Islam and falling into apostasy. At last, Rima's rejection of NII stems from the lie that the aims of the Islamic State of Indonesia are gender equality and justice, ideals that were promised to her from the outset of her recruitment.

Garin Nugroho is best known for his flamboyant art-house films. However, with *Mata Tertutup*, he scales back with a small budget and non-professional actors, and with the support of the moderate Islamic organisation, the Ma'arif Institute, uses material from research to convey a candid portrayal of youth participation in radical Islamism and terrorism. With factual data underpinning the film and its pedagogical goals, *Mata Tertutup* is a contemplative documentary-drama that commentates unambiguously from a political and aestheticised perspective. In its closing credits, Muslim and Christian faith leaders perform as talking heads on the preservation of harmonious multicultural life in Indonesia. The film is also held together by popular and ideological songs sung by supporting characters and extras in the diegesis to demonstrate the sound world of young Muslims conflicted by the pleasures of youth and the self-abnegation of jihadi belief. The minimalist presentation of the interlacing narratives are complemented by long takes in outdoor scenes, and intimate handheld camera angles when characters are inside their often cramped and dilapidated abode. In doing so, Nugroho creates a visual poetics of gender in a democratic nation under threat from within its boundaries. It is also a portrait of a young woman with an inchoate political desire that ends with a personal crisis brought about by her gender identity.

Women who join militant jihad explode[4] the myth and stereotype of submissive Muslim femininity. Studies have shown that they play powerful roles as ideological supporters, operational facilitators, and suicide bombers (von Knop 2007). Although the Qur'an does not stipulate that women are forbidden from taking up arms in warfare, particularly when the Muslim community (*ummah*) is under threat, women's participation in war is bound by restrictions unique to their sex. Even when they called to participate in war, women's role in jihad is paradoxical because of orthodox Islamic proscription against the free mixing of the sexes and the requirement for chaperones for women when they are out in public. Another contradiction arises in the injunction for all young people, both male and female, to leave their homes in the name of jihad even if it means disobeying

[4] Pun not intended.

their parents or as in the case of Aini, leaving without her parents' knowledge. The paradox is resolved through calls for women's specific roles as supportive wives and mothers during warfare rather than fellow combatants (Lahoud 2014).

Women and men may share similar ideological motivations to participate in terrorism. However, initial assumptions about women's commitment to terrorism could be counter-intuitive as ultraconservative ideologies promoted in militant ideologies are thought to place women in oppressive and subservient roles. Studies have shown that women demonstrate gender-specific reasons such as restoring their honour as women particularly when their mobility and life potential are restricted in their own societies (von Knop 2006; Zakaria 2015). Aini's escape from her overbearing mother, Asimah, provides a clue to young women's desire of a life free from parental control. Women also join because of vengeance and restoring the honour of husbands, brothers, and fathers who make up the male casualties of terrorist activities, which correlates with the belated participation of women (von Knop 2006). That being said, however, there is a significant disparity between women's personal motivations and those of the terrorist organisation. While the women may utilise the language of emancipation and revolution for themselves, the radical jihadi organisations they pledge their allegiance to are unlikely to share similar ideals. The inclusion of women is nevertheless good for terrorist organisations; women can be utilised in propaganda and shame men into jihad. Women also present the 'element of surprise' as women in general are regarded as non-violent. But many women within such organisations report disappointment that their actual roles do not live up to the propaganda. In parts of Iraq and Syria under ISIS control, women who dissent or are demonised by radical organisations have been subjected to extreme sexual violence (Zakaria 2015). The display of female agency in *Mata Tertutup* presents the problem of freedom. Saba Mahmood (2009) questions the feminist assumption that all women share universal meanings of freedoms and liberty, not least devout Muslim women. For Mahmood, the agency of pious Muslim women is better framed around the notion of personal ethics or as a set of practices towards perfecting one's spirituality. Pious Muslim women seek to redefine agency and freedom within the modes of their subjectivation or the limits of a historically specific set of formative practices and moral injunctions that are delimited in advance (Mahmood 2009: 28). Put more simply, agency as articulated by pious Muslim women may be redefined and detached from progressive politics. Exhibiting positive freedom or the capacity to realise

their autonomous will, women recruited into terrorist organisations demonstrate willingness and enthusiasm in their ideological commitment even if it means subordinating themselves under patriarchal control.

The film also makes an explicit appeal to young Indonesians to re-enter more closely into the embrace of the nation. Disillusioned by the glass ceiling in the NII, Rima's 'return' to proper citizenship is beckoned by the captivating singing by a young choir. 'I'll never forget my homeland' sings the choir, 'even when I've wandered afar'. It is the nation to which Rima returns tearfully after straying far from its ideological boundaries. Boundary-crossing between legitimate citizenship and illegitimate Islamic statehood has become necessarily dynamic and non-alarmist in the post-New Order period. Outright aggression has been replaced with a humanistic appeal to understanding the jihadi Other. In January 2016, a series of explosions in Jakarta masterminded by a group affiliated with ISIS left two civilians dead. The immediate response from both the president Joko 'Jokowi' Widodo and the people of Indonesia was an expression of firm and understated resistance. Hundreds of Indonesians took to social media to convey a message of defiance, "We are not afraid" (*Kami Tidak Takut*), hours after the attack (Friedman 2016). It bears mentioning here that women are not called to the nation on equal terms and it is possibly for this reason why Rima and Aini leave radical Islam with their lives in contrast to the third male character, Jabir, who is killed while carrying out a suicide mission. Both women are prohibited from dying as warriors and attaining martyrdom as their femininity within their movement limits them to traditional spheres of (in)action. Should Rima and Aini re-enter the boundaries of the nation, their gendered citizenship in post-New Order Indonesia is still circumscribed within a strategic mode of redomestication (Sen 2002). With their lives spared, the women are interpellated by the democratic nation as citizens to be protected and who will, through their reproductive capacities, perpetuate the nation.

Women Who Need Salvation: The Gender Politics of Interfaith Romance and Religious Conversion in *Film Islami*

The subject of inter-religious romance and marriage in film, usually between a Muslim and a non-Muslim, is deployed as a superficial statement of tolerance and acceptance of irreconcilable differences between two faith

groups. Bollywood cinema has been known to transcode the Indian nation's tensions with Pakistan into romances with an inter-religious couple at the centre of the narrative. The films may foreground the traumatic legacy of Partition as in *Henna* (1991, dir. Randhir Kapoor), *Veer Zaara* (2004, dir. Yash Chopra) and the 1993 anti-Muslim riots of Bombay in the film *Bombay* (1995, dir. Mani Ratnam) but all emphasise the sharing of values between the interfaith couple. Ultimately, the films create simplistic characters who love their nation and remain devoted to their family despite complex historical and interfaith tensions (Hirji 2008).

A similar glossing approach is employed in Indonesian Islamic films from the post-New Order period. The films also provide a few clues to the way Christians and Christianity are portrayed in Islamic films. *Ayat-ayat Cinta* and *Syahadat Cinta* depict the religious conversion of two Christian female characters to Islam after developing a romantic relationship with the Muslim male protagonists. Both films share some similarities, in that the male protagonist is a student in a religious institution and becomes the object of desire of several women, one of which is a Christian woman. The Christian women convert to Islam for different reasons but then encounter tragedy and abuse. *Ayat-ayat Cinta* concerns the dilemma of an Indonesian male graduate student, Fahri, in Egypt in his pursuit for marriage. He faces the challenge of marrying two women: Aisha, a wealthy young woman of Turkish-German descent, and Maria, his neighbour, an Egyptian Coptic Christian woman. A model Indonesian man, Fahri is a diligent student who takes his religious obligations seriously. His Islamic faith turns him into a reluctant polygamist, unsure if he could be fair to both his wives in accordance with Islamic tradition. His first marriage to Aisha disappoints Maria who later falls into a coma. Two other women who vie for his attention: a fellow Indonesian student and another Egyptian neighbour, are similarly disappointed. In revenge, the latter accuses Fahri of rape when he rebuffs her advances. When he is thrown into jail and sentenced to death by hanging, only Maria can stand as witness to Fahri's innocence. Upon his acquittal, he fulfils the request of the ailing Maria by taking her as his second wife on her deathbed, with Maria converting to Islam. Not long after a brief polygamous arrangement, Maria dies leaving Fahri and Aisha together at last.

Before Maria's conversion to Islam, she is depicted as a morally upstanding character who helps Fahri with his studies. As a devout Christian, she is shown in several scenes praying at the altar. She wears a crucifix around her neck and possesses a tattoo of a cross on her wrist. But she also shows

interest and knowledge in Islamic texts and cites the verse on the Virgin Mary from the Qur'an, 'Meryam' the 19th sura, as her favourite. More impressively, Maria knows it by heart. When news reaches Maria that Fahri is marrying Aisha but is then wrongly accused of rape, she is shown tearfully praying at home. In the film, Maria's decision to become a Muslim is founded on her desire to be Fahri's wife and not die of a broken heart. Her conversion to Islam is shown in a scene of her praying alongside Aisha and behind Fahri, who leads them in prayer. Unsurprisingly, the conversion subplot in *Ayat-ayat Cinta* is not without its critics. On the popular Indonesian media literacy online discussion group, Mediacare, commentators have criticised the contradictory messages conveyed in the film's purported valorisation of religious diversity (Paramaditha 2010: 86). If the film pays tribute to religious diversity, why must Maria convert to Islam? They question whether a similar film would portray a Muslim character converting to another faith without incurring angry protest or censorship. Some on the online forum argue that the conversion subplot implies Islam's superiority over other religions and faith traditions (Paramaditha 2010: 86). Different from the film from which it was adapted, Maria's reason for her conversion to Islam in the novel also courted criticism. In the novel, Maria meets the Virgin Mary in a dream who tells her a symbolic key is required to enter heaven. That key is her conversion from Christianity to Islam. However, in the novel, not only does Maria convert to Islam. An American reporter, Alicia, who Fahri defends from xenophobic Egyptian men, also converts to Islam in her admiration of Fahri's Islamic righteousness. The film adaptation, however, does not depict Alicia's religious conversion but only her show of gratitude to Fahri. The critical stance against the conversion subplot in both the film and novel is significant. But there is also indifference towards Maria's conversion in *Ayat-ayat Cinta* seeing as religious conversion is commonplace in multifaith Indonesia (Hatley 2009: 57).

Released within months after *Ayat-ayat Cinta*, *Syahadat Cinta* also features a subplot of religious conversion to Islam. It tells the story of the wealthy and wayward Iqbal who has never prayed and lacks the skill to read the Qur'an. After a night of heavy drinking he accidentally injures his mother, sending her straight to hospital. While there, he is told to pray for her, at which point he admits to having no ability to do so. He vows to mend his ways the Islamic way by enrolling to a *pesantren* where he would learn to be a better Muslim. Gradually, he begins to pray and develops a more religious identity. But when he has a falling out with the headmaster's

daughter, Aisyah, he leaves the *pesantren* out of anger. Away from the *pesantren* and homeless, he strikes a friendship with Pricilia, a young Christian woman. Pricilia's committed Christianity is alluded to from the outset, when she is shown cradling her bible when she first meets Iqbal on a bus. When Iqbal is falsely accused of terrorism and serves a jail sentence, Pricilia finds a lawyer to prove his innocence and release him. Upon his release, he attends a ceremony for Pricilia's conversion to Islam. Unfortunately, her conversion is not welcomed by her father. He rejects her new-found religion and violently attacks her for following a path of deviance (*jalan sesat*) and choosing hellfire over salvation in Christianity.

Like Maria, Pricilia's Christian faith prior to conversion also appears robust initially. But it is rendered fragile when she witnesses Muslims in prayer. After becoming a new Muslim, Pricilia wears the headscarf but faces physical abuse at home for her faith. Seeking Iqbal's protection, she runs to him at his *pesantren* where he resumes his study following his wrongful detention. The students at the *pesantren* catch Pricilia running into Iqbal's arms and accuse him of inappropriate sexual behaviour. He is dragged to the mosque to defend his sexual purity. Unable to placate his accusers, all of whom are male, Iqbal agrees to leave the *pesantren* for good. Parallels can be found in Maria and Pricilia's journey from Christianity to Islam. The interest and knowledge in Islam that both Maria and Pricilia share make their decision to convert a little credible. Thus their attraction to Islam suggests the faith's potential as a source of fulfilment for women and their agency to embrace Islam is emphasised for this reason. Before Pricilia recites the *shahadah*, or the vow of the faithful, during her religious conversion, she is reminded of her agency so that witnessess to her conversion know that she has not been coerced into embracing Islam. She declares her wish to become a Muslim willingly and aspires to adhere to the Islamic faith to the letter.

But for all their agency, both Maria and Pricilia represent women who need to be saved by their Muslim male heroes. Fahri grants Maria momentary longevity through matrimony while Pricilia is a damsel in distress who turns to Iqbal to protect her from her tyrannical Christian father. By embracing Islam, their destiny in the afterlife is ostensibly sealed but not without challenges in life. Interestingly, both Fahri and Iqbal also require rescuing by the women following false accusations of a crime they did not commit. Here, both male and female characters demonstrate distinct kinds of vulnerability that dislodge traditional gender dynamics. Fahri and Iqbal are respectful towards the Christian beliefs of the two women but they are

uninterested in Christianity. The men's respect towards the women's faith goes as far as refraining from attempting to convert the Christian women through proselytising. The romantic subplots between Fahri and Maria, and that of Iqbal and Pricilia can be understood as an attempt to frame interfaith relations through a soft-focus lens, romanticising the interactions between individuals of different faiths. But the films show a one-sided relationship across the religious divide. The men do not show interest in Christianity or praise the key figures of that faith. Their silence on Christianity in contrast to the women's enthusiasm about Islam speaks volumes about the film's pro-Islamic stance on religious diversity. The underlying message is that non-Muslims are respected if they respect Islam but the reverse cannot be guaranteed.

Why a heart-warming and romantic interfaith subplot should end with the Christian woman converting to Islam will elicit a number of possible explanations. Thus far, there has not been a film about male characters who convert to Islam for the Muslim woman they love. Characters who are male and Muslim make a particularly potent combination for notions of leadership, dominance, and moral exemplar for others, in this case non-Muslim women who in the end follow their faith. Men who convert to Islam in the name of love may upset traditional gender and religious power dynamics in Islamic films. Why the conversion of Christian women should reoccur in *Ayat-ayat Cinta* and *Syahadat Cinta* is fascinating for two reasons; it suggests a public fascination in Indonesia with young Christian women who convert to Islam, and it is a romanticisation of inter-religious relations that flatters the Islamic faith. When the popular female actor Dian Sastrowardoyo converted from Catholicism to Islam in 2011, the extensive media coverage of her conversion was usually accompanied with images of her in the *jilbab* even though she is an infrequent wearer of the item (Paramaditha 2010: 87). Her much-publicised veiling following conversion underlines the visual dimension of conversion that attracts media fascination and contributes to the discourse of aspirational Muslim femininity. The religious conversion subplot in *Ayat-ayat Cinta* and *Syahadat Cinta* conveys the messages of Islam's appeal to women and writes back to the rhetoric of women's oppression in Islam: if Islam is oppressive to women, why do women willingly embrace it? Conversion to Islam is therefore seen as a political expression, particularly during the period after 11 September 2001, whether the convert intends it or not (van Nieuwkerk 2009: ix). The argument that Islam is not oppressive to women is enhanced further by the media construction of female Muslim actors. Female actors marked or

marketed as 'Muslim' push the boundaries of female liberties and aspirations in the public sphere. The section below discusses a few examples of female actors who personify the convergence of Islamic belief, conspicuous piety, media shrewdness, religious commodification, and idealised Muslim femininity.

The Rise of the Islamic Film Star

A noticeable shift in the star image of female actors during the post-New Order period is the adoption of the headscarf as part of their off-screen persona. The shift emerged from the destigmatisation of the headscarf and the women who wear it in Indonesian popular media and public life. The adoption of the *jilbab* by the film actor Inneke Koesherawati in 2001 and the transformation of her career in the public eye signalled an important turning point in the public reception of the veiled media figure. Inneke's Islamic image not only challenged the stigma previously attached to the headscarf, but also played a part in promoting the cultural mainstreaming of pious Indonesian womanhood (van Wichelen 2010: 87). She combined glamour and modernity with Islamic values, making herself a role model for other middle-class Muslim Indonesian women with modern aspirations. Inneke's Islamic image was not only confirmed by her public adoption of the veil but also in her on-screen roles in television dramas and Islamic singing career. Her transformation into a 'repentant star' was significant because of her past as an actor of seductive and sexy roles in film. A biracial 'Indo', or of white European and indigenous Indonesian heritage, Inneke began her career as a model and established herself as one of the sex symbols of Indonesian cinema in the 1990s (van Wichelen 2012: 98).

Other female media personalities and actors in Indonesia have followed Inneke's footsteps by taking up the *jilbab*, going to Mecca for pilgrimage, and making their religious transformation as public as possible. A similar example of a redemption narrative played out on- and off-screen is that of the female actor Desy Ratnasari. Sometimes known as the 'no-comment' actor who refuses to engage with entertainment news tabloid journalists regarding her controversial love affairs, Ratnasari performed the hajj and wore the *jilbab*, albeit inconsistently. There are also male counterparts of 'born-again' narratives and the reconstruction of the men's public persona from nominal or non-Islamic background to a more visibly Islamic one (see van Wichelen 2010: 90). The construction of the Islamic star image is associated with allusions to 'playing oneself in each role' (Hollinger 2006:

47). This means the construction of the Islamic star image, and the popularity thereof, relies on the similar kinds of roles and moral connotations pursued by an actor both on-screen and off-screen. The Islamic star image may reward female film actors and media personalities with a bigger fan base and a career boost. However, the construction of such an image can come with a price. Pious female actors are placed under intense public scrutiny to perform their Islamic identity appropriately (Krier 2011: 136).

This section illustrates the construction of the Islamic star image in the post-New Order period by examining the careers of young female actors Oki Setiana Dewi and Zaskia Adya Mecca, stars of Islamic cinema. More typical of younger Muslim female actors who wear the headscarf, Oki's Islamic star image is not constructed around the redemption narrative represented by Inneke Koesherawati and Desy Ratnasari. From the inception of her film acting career, Oki has worn the *jilbab*, marking her out as a pious star from the outset of her career. Best known for her role in *Ketika Cinta Bertasbih* 1 and 2, Oki has written books and news articles, sang inspirational songs, and endorsed campaigns—all of which are publicised in the Indonesian media. Oki's publicity campaign through her official website displays the media-savvy dimension of Islamic popular culture. On her official website, www.okisetianadewi.co.id, visitors can read her blog posts, interact with her on social media, watch videos, and purchase her books and music. Her profound piety is prominently featured on the homepage with images of her in Mecca and standing next to verses from the Qur'an and hadith (sayings of Prophet Muhammad). In a media interview, Oki declared that she would only choose roles that were appropriate for a pious Muslim young woman like herself (*KapanLagi*, 2010). This would mean not playing characters who were by some definition immoral; roles that would jeopardise her moral public persona such as playing promiscuous, adulterous, and other versions of 'fallen women' on-screen. Favourable comments made about her longer, hence more modest hijab or *jilbab labuh* on entertainment websites and blogs indicate the moral judgement that viewers and fans alike make of Muslim female actors in Indonesia who wear the headscarf.

There have been instances whereby a female actor's moral conduct is questioned, particularly when her off-screen persona is believed to be a mirror image of her on-screen counterpart. In 2008, photos of the young rising star of Islamic television drama, Zaskia Adya Mecca, smoking a cigarette elicited a wave of public opprobrium. Associated with religious made-for-television films, and later, the Islamic film *Ayat-ayat Cinta*, Zaskia

is known for publicly endorsing socially conservative campaigns and as a 'wholesome' female actor. She is also known as a trendsetter of stylish headscarves through her video tutorials online. Thus the negative responses from the public who call to attention her wholesome Islamic star image suggest that their expectations intertwine with gender and religious ideals within and beyond the cinematic text. It can be argued then, that in Islamic cinema, art should imitate life. The linking together, and at times, conflation, of public religious identity and cinematic representations therefore makes it an important issue in a discussion about gender, Islam, and film. The pious Islamic film star image of female actors is created by the entanglement of three spheres: their private and public lives, and the fictional lives they play on screen. Public scrutiny and fascination with pious or redeemed female actors reveal the gendered and embodied dimension of Islamic cinema. Star images after all act as vessels for an aspirational gender ideology for a mass audience (Dyer 2004: 4) as they circulate in Indonesian society mainly through film/visual images, journalistic, and political discourses (Ida 2011: 5). The media fascination with the private lives of Muslim female film actors can be attributed to the tabloidisation of news media and the rise of infotainment since the boom years of private television companies in Indonesia (Ida 2011: 3). In congruence with the rise of celebrity culture is the growth of management agencies for female actors and modelling schools (Faizal 2003: 26, 33). Given the confluence of media trends and new business ventures that produce actors of star quality, it is as if every beautiful Indonesian woman would have the opportunity to become a star. But film actors who audition for roles in Islamic films may need to demonstrate their pious off-screen persona by wearing the *jilbab* in 'real life' and the ability to recite prayers in fluent Arabic (Widodo 2008; Imanjaya 2009a).

Describing the similar phenomenon of veiled female actors in Egypt, Lila Abu Lughod (1995: 57) suggests that 'born-again' narratives of Muslim media stars are more closely associated with women because of the enduring view that female entertainers and performers are disreputable. Women in the entertainment industry are perceived to be akin to prostitutes because of their work that requires them to mix publicly with unrelated men. Thus the moral onus weighs more heavily on women in patriarchal societies making the 'sin' of the female performer greater. Furthermore, the lifestyles of the rich and famous are thought to be full of sin and hedonism. Seen in a variety of acting roles, female actors are assumed to be independent from family control, challenging the conservative expectations of women's dependence and place within the family. Married and divorced Muslim female stars alike

in Indonesia stress the centrality of their family and claim to prioritise the needs of their children ahead of their careers (van Wichelen 2010; Ida 2011). Such public proclamations serve to restore their traditional femininity in the morally suspect world of media entertainment.

Traditional off-screen roles that extend beyond their primary subjectivity as Islamic stars are deemed necessary for female actors in Muslim societies in order to be accepted into what Abu Lughod (1995) calls the 'moral community' of their audiences. The moral community refers to a group of media consumers who share and promote a moral standard that is expected of their favourite stars. In the moral community, media consumers and their favourite pious stars are thought to share 'a world where religion and morality are taken for granted as the foundation for social existence' (Abu Lughod 1995: 64). Although the wealth, fame, and beauty of the female actors distance the star from their viewers, their redemption narratives and pious images bring them closer to their less privileged audiences. In other words, redemption narratives, and piety can transcend the divisions of socio-economic class and lifestyles. Like the Egyptian 'clean' cinema populated by pious female actors who take up the veil and conservative roles on-screen, the Indonesian Islamic film genre can be regarded as 'a mode of cultural production and consumption linked to representations of the body in films' (Tartoussieh 2007: 32). These representations of bodies are compelled by the reconfiguration of media stars, especially those who are female, to fit within the normative religious project in Indonesia that has been gaining momentum since the 1990s. Among the characteristics of the normative religious project is the gentrification of piety and Islamisation of popular culture. Central to this project are moral and proper bodily comportment and piety. On the visual level, pious female Muslim stars eschew explicit displays of sexuality, improper relations between the sexes, and relative nudity, involving the exposure of the cleavage, stomach, upper arms, and thighs. For the reasons spelled out above, Muslim female film stars help define the Islamic film genre and become the linchpins of its popularity. They are also exemplars of a new cinematic morality that echoes a moral sensibility that places an emphasis on public piety.

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Syahadat Cinta (Vow of Love, 2008, dir. Gunawan Panggaru)
Ummi Aminah (Mother Aminah, 2011, dir. Aditya Gumay)

CHAPTER 6

Poor, Polygamous, But Deeply Pious: Muslim Masculinities in Post-New Order *Film Islami*

Portrayals of men in Indonesian cinema are now receiving more scholarly attention than ever before. The current scrutiny on such portrayals could not be more timely, particularly when debates about Muslim men have become more pointed in the aftermath of 9/11. The 2001 attack on the World Trade Centre and the Pentagon in the United States followed by the Bali bombings in 2002 were regarded as acts of Islamist extremism. In a blanket reaction to the attacks, all Muslims, and especially Muslim men, became the target of greater vilification, Othering, and state-sanctioned torture. Hence, attempts to recoup the image of the Muslim man in Indonesian cinema as tolerant, progressive, and respectful towards women have become more urgent after 2001.

The prototypical Muslim man in post-New Order cinema, particularly after the success of *Ayat-ayat Cinta* in 2008 and *Ketika Cinta Bertasbih* 1 and 2 in 2009, is highly educated and aware of his place in the world, a world that conflates Muslim masculinity with violence and oppression. Other similar images of sensitive and pious Muslim men emerged in Indonesian mass media as counterpoints to the stereotypical young Muslim male terrorist and suicide bomber (Nilan 2009: 328–329). But as this chapter will show, strategies to reclaim the image of the good Indonesian Muslim man reproduce neo-Orientalist tropes to construct the Other: the extremist, the heretical, and the Arab man. But while the Arab man is a spectral figure insinuated as the Other, the figure of the heretical and extremist Indonesian man represents the literal embodiment of internal anxieties about the nation and Islam. This chapter begins with a study of the critical treatment of

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polygamy in *Mengaku Rasul* (Self-proclaiming Prophet, 2008, dir. Helfi Kardit). Critical of the sexual excesses of men who enter polygamous marriages based on heretical and patriarchal interpretations of Islam, the film transcodes the public contestations over polygamy, Muslim male privilege, and male sexuality in Indonesia. The film associates male sexual excesses implicit in polygamy with heresy, making it a thinly veiled indictment of the Ahmadiyya faith, a long persecuted minority Muslim sect in Indonesia. In *Mengaku Rasul*, Muslim masculinities are constructed through the critique of polygamy as male sexual excess and abuse of male power in Islam.

The Islamic version of masculinity in crisis in Indonesian cinema is discussed in this chapter. As discussed earlier in Chapter 3, Clark found that representations of embattled men gripped in a struggle against poverty and failure to be breadwinners have turned these subordinate masculinities to a life of violence and gangsterism in order to accrue aspects of hegemonic masculinity. But in two films discussed in this section, *Emak Ingin Naik Haji* (Mother Wants to go on the Hajj, 2009, dir. Aditya Gumay) and *Kun Fayakun* (God Wills It, and It Is So, 2008, dir. H. Guntur Novaris), men become embroiled in a *spiritual crisis of masculinity* because of their abject poverty and failure to live up to their respectable gender role as the main breadwinner of the family. The men's unwavering faith also has the power to redeem their masculinity as worthy sons, husbands, and fathers. The final section of the chapter considers Nurman Hakim's 2008 film *3 Doa 3 Cinta* (3 Wishes 3 Loves), a film that reimagines young Muslim men of the *pesantren* as models of moderate and peaceful Islam. While debates surrounding the face veil and its associations with undesirable Arab culture and extremism are inscribed on women's bodies in post-New Order Indonesian cinema (see Izharuddin 2015), suspicions of terrorism and adoption of Islamist mythologies are seen as issues pertaining to Muslim men. One can trace in *3 Doa 3 Cinta* martyrdom mythologies, fears of the terrorist and neo-Orientalist tropes surrounding a young man whose masculinity is situated at the fault lines of sexuality, the nation, and beyond its borders.

This chapter is about films that engage with, and at times departs from, what Ariel Heryanto (2010: 7) calls the 'masculine' spheres in Indonesia: modernisation, nation-state building, the economy, war, and corruption. These spheres have typically upheld the dominance of hegemonic masculinity but in the films discussed below, they dismantle different forms of masculinity only to restore them at the last minute, through the power of prayer or through the triumph of 'correct' Islam. The restoration of post-New Order

Muslim masculinities argued for in this chapter does not necessarily offer a 'positive' reading of order reinstalled, but rather an open-endedness and ambiguity about the relationship between Islam, sexuality, class relations, and masculinities in post-New Order Indonesian cinema. It also offers an analysis of the masculine embodiment of anxiety within Islam in Indonesia, dislodging the centrality of prototypical Muslim masculinity as heroic in Islamic cinema.

The Polygamous Muslim Man Who Meets His Comeuppance

> Every society creates images and visions of those forces that threaten its identity
>
> Zygmunt Bauman 1998: 73

Opinions regarding polygamy as a practice with Islamic legitimacy cannot be neatly divided into avid supporters and firm objectors. Although polygamy has long been a bugbear for the majority of the Indonesian public, and women in particular, its discourse has changed significantly during the post-New Order period. Once considered unacceptable to the point of stigma for the men involved under Suharto's regime, Muslim men who were married to up to four wives simultaneously felt they could proclaim their controversial marital status more publicly in the post-New Order period. The reasons for this shift in discourse rests on the relaxation of legal restrictions on polygamy pressured by Islamic organisations and the relative openness of high profile figures to express their support for polygamy (van Wichelen 2010: 74). Polygamy became a point of sensational public interest when a highly successful fried chicken businessman, Puspo Wardoyo, sponsored and handed the first ever 'Polygamy Awards' in 2003 to men who were deemed fair and 'successful' with their multiple wives. Perhaps to no surprise at all, the combination of aspirational middle-class lifestyles and spiritual 'upgrading' through the promotion of polygamy courted the ire of the public, feminist activists, and Islamic clerics who felt Islam was being exploited to fulfil the sexual excesses of men (Brenner 2011: 220). The public condemnation of the erstwhile popular preacher Abdullah Gymnastiar, also known affectionately as Aa Gym, for taking another wife confirmed the strongly held view against polygamy in Indonesia.

As a marginal practice sanctioned in Islam but ubiquitous in political and feminist debates in Indonesia, polygamy is a prominent subject for filmmakers in Islamic post-New Order films. In this section, the 2008 film by

Helfi Kardit, *Mengaku Rasul* is examined to illustrate how its representation of polygamy is used not only to condemn heresy but to critique male sexual excess and the abuse of Islamic male privilege. This section builds upon Sonja van Wichelen's analysis that polygamy in the post-New Order period is less about Islam, and more about Muslim masculinity and Muslim male privilege (van Wichelen 2010: 75). In other words, concerns about Muslim masculinity and male sexuality underpin the contestations over polygamy in Indonesia. *Mengaku Rasul* begins with a foreboding caution to audiences of the dangers of heretical teachings.[1] Following the cautionary advice, *Mengaku Rasul* traces the rise of Guru Samir, the charismatic leader of a new Islamic sect and self-styled latter-day prophet. The film is told in flashbacks and begins with the aftermath of the sect's destruction survived by a former follower of Guru Samir's cult, a young woman called Rianti. Rianti is admitted into hospital following an arson attack on a cult meeting with Guru Samir in a village hall. She had joined the cult after leaving her rock musician, tattoo-covered boyfriend, Aji.

In order to win Rianti back, who later falls for Guru Samir, Aji has to prove that the self-styled prophet is a fraud. But he is also determined to end the cult's heretical practices, which include praying to Guru Samir to absolve one's sins, attending an exclusive course that will guarantee a place in paradise, and having faith in Guru Samir's status as a prophet, a messenger of God. There are other displays of apparent miracles that are abused for Guru Samir's personal pleasure. Guru Samir can be in two places simultaneously if he needs to; he can be both in his office and in a decrepit shed secluded in the forest where he can have sex with women. Guru Samir's sexual excesses are made just as damning as his prophetic pretensions. He also bends the Islamic law on polygamy in his favour by justifying his need for a fifth wife, Rianti. In Aji's pursuit of Rianti he discovers the truth behind Guru Samir's mystique. Instead of a latter-day prophet with messianic qualities, Guru Samir is adulterous and deceitful of his ability to perform miracles, namely, the ability to regrow his amputated arm. The 'miracle' is debunked when Aji finds that the amputee was in fact Guru Samir's identical twin who is later murdered by the false prophet. Aji concludes that Guru Samir is not only a mere mortal but a ruthless murderer

[1] *Film ini dibuat sebagai bekal keimanan dalam mengantisipasi maraknya ajaran sesat* (This film was made as a spiritual guidance when faced with the perils of heretical teachings*)
*My translation.

bent on captivating his impressionable followers. When Aji and Guru Samir's estranged stepson burn the meeting hall down, destroying the cult, they uncover the mystery behind Guru Samir's other miracles. But before Aji can warn Rianti of Guru Samir extraordinary duplicity, she murders the latter-day prophet by stabbing him on their wedding night. To end the spread of heresy, Rianti had secretly planned to murder the man all along.

Aji and Guru Samir are portrayed as unlikely opposites: the 'good' Muslim against the 'bad', respectively. In his casual Western attire and tattoos, Aji is not the conventional Muslim hero typical of other Islamic films. We do not know if he has had a traditional Islamic education, prays, or knows how to read the Qur'an. Conversely, Guru Samir wears elaborate Islamic gear; a turban and long-flowing tunic. There is an inversion in the portrayal of Guru Samir and the depiction of the New Order heretical mystic in *Sembilan Wali* (discussed in Chapter 4). While both are villains in the conflict over 'true' Islam, their representation as 'the outsider' is different. Syeikh Siti Jenar, the heretical mystic in *Sembilan Wali* is barely clothed, has wild long hair and unrestrained gesticulations. However, Guru Samir takes on the appearance of the traditional Islamic male leader, which suggests that the outsider may or may not be easily distinguished among pious-looking Muslim men. Thus the extensive focus on the villain, Guru Samir, who has considerable screen time in the film, which functions to define the contours of his 'bad' Muslim masculinity, and subsequently mark him out as Other despite his appearances to the contrary. Didactic in narrative style, *Mengaku Rasul* is a trenchant critique of distorted religious teachings characterised by sorcery, exploitation of women, and unscrupulous politicking. It establishes the accentuation of heretical Islamic practices by unprincipled and lascivious passions. The portrayal of Guru Samir as the religious charlatan who takes advantage of his position ends with his murder, which occurs during the throes of passion with his new wife, Rianti. The film therefore links sexual exploitation and heresy with unscrupulous male spiritual leadership to disaggregate the Muslim male villain from the familiar Islamic male leader. *Mengaku Rasul* shows that the theological weight of Quranic justification for polygamy is undermined when it is practiced alongside heresy. The film shares a critical view on polygamy with other post-New Order films, namely *Ayat-ayat Cinta* and *Berbagi Suami* (Love for Share, 2006, dir. Nia Dinata). However, the deployment of critique in each of the films is very different in style, degree of frankness (see Hatley's comparative study of *Berbagi Suami* and *Ayat-ayat Cinta*

(2009), denouement, and how the issue of polygamy is mobilised alongside other concerns surrounding the characters and their environment.

Guru Samir personifies a Muslim masculinity that has gone far astray not only from the righteous path of mainstream Islam, but from the normative image of man as trusted head of the home and community. He is also a masculine embodiment of new anxieties percolating in Indonesia about 'correct' Islamic practice and the abuse of Muslim male privilege in polygamy. Hence the double condemnation of heresy and polygamy serves to highlight the excesses of Muslim masculinity if left unchecked. The demonisation of polygamy in modern Indonesia has a modern history that can be traced back to the notoriety of President Sukarno as a womaniser and polygamist. As discussed in Chapter 3, Sukarno's 'excessive' masculinity or hypermasculinity is perceived as a masculine weakness in contrast to the sexual restraint of other men with opposing ideological views. His sexual excesses were criticised even by supporters of his government and became the basis for the sense of 'order' that men of Suharto's New Order regime needed to abide by (Paramaditha 2007: 49). The New Order regime enforced strict regulations against polygamous marriages on male civil servants in 1983, who were only permitted to marry another woman with permission from their superiors, the express consent of the wife/wives and the judgement of the Sharia court (van Wichelen 2010: 74). *Mengaku Rasul* was made during a period of violent divide within the Muslim community in Indonesia. According to the film critic Eric Sasono (2012), the release of *Mengaku Rasul* coincided with the Joint Ministerial Decree in 2008 that denied the propagation of the Ahmadiyya faith[2], resulting in rising aggression towards them throughout Indonesia (*The Jakarta Post*, 2008).[3] The director of *Mengaku Rasul*, Helfi Kardit, professed that his purpose in making the film was to 'to foreground the phenomenon and anxiety of the (mainstream) Muslim community about heretical sects that are becoming brazen and more brutal', and 'promote the love for Prophet Muhammad (Peace Be Upon Him), the final prophet of Islam'.[4] Kardit's express

[2] Interview with Eric Sasono in Jakarta on 30th January 2012.

[3] 'Ahmadiyya decree bans propagation, not private prayer,' *The Jakarta Post*, 14 June 2008 http://lgtv.thejakartapost.com/index.php/read/news/171906.

[4] '*Film ini mengangkat fenomena dan keresahan umat Islam terhadap aliran-aliran sesat yang semakin liar and brutal, dan sebuat langkah kecil dari saya sebagai pembuat film ini untuk menumbuhkan rasa cinta yang dalam kepada Rasulullah Muhammad SAW sebagai Nabi dan Rasul hingga akhir zaman*'.

intention in making the film may not be an explicit call to condemn the persecution of the minority sect but may nonetheless intensify tensions by reinforcing their alienation from 'true' Islam.

Widely labelled by mainstream Islamic groups as members of a heretical sect (*aliran sesat*) and condemned by the MUI as apostates,[5] the Ahmadis and their places of worship have been the target of violent attacks by militant radical Islamist groups. The status of the Ahmadi Muslims is a lightning rod for debates about the protection of religious freedom and the acquiescence in violent acts towards the Ahmadis by extremist groups. Founded in India in 1889 by Mirza Gulam Ahmad as an Islamic revivalist movement, the Ahmadiyya movement distinguished itself from orthodox Sunni and Shia Islam in one major if controversial aspect: the founder regarded himself as a Muslim reformer and post-Muhammadan prophet bearing the spirit of Prophet Muhammad (Burhani 2014: 136). Thus the greatest heresy of the Ahmadis is the belief that divine revelations continue to be conveyed by chosen prophets after the demise of Prophet Muhammad whom other Muslims believe to be the last. Possibly driven by persecution in India, the Ahmadiyya faith had spread beyond its place of origin to other predominantly Muslim countries like Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Malaysia, and Indonesia in the early twentieth-century (Burhani 2014: 141).

Since 1929, the MUI has issued numerous fatwas forbidding the designation of the Ahmadiyya faith as an Islamic sect (Crouch 2009: 5). Later in 1965, the sect gained official recognition as a religious community in a decree by the Minister of Justice but on the condition that the tenets of the Ahmadiyya sect fall within the boundaries of Islam. Failing to assimilate into orthodox and mainstream Islam would deny the Ahmadis from being included in the six main faith groups in Indonesia—Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists, Catholics, Protestants, and Confucians—as enshrined by the Indonesian government and in federal law. With 50,000 to 80,000 Ahmadis living in Indonesia today, they represent a small but significant religious minority in the country (Crouch 2009: 6). The Ahmadiyya faith is not the only religious group subjected to persecution and denounced as heretical by mainstream Islamic groups in Indonesia. Darul Arqam, al-Qiyadah

[5] Apostasy, or the abandonment of Islam and/or conversion to another faith, is considered a grave sin in Islam and is purportedly punishable by death, although several scholars argue that there is no Quranic statement that sanctions capital punishment on apostates (Saeed and Saeed 2004: 69–87).

al-Islamiyah, the Madi, and Lia Eden's 'cult' have all had similar appellations attached and suffered similar persecution (Burhani 2014: 138).

The root of the persecution of the Ahmadis is the Islamic and political construction of religious groups and citizens in Indonesia. Because they are denied a place alongside other official religious groups in Indonesia, the Ahmadis are rendered outside the nation. At this juncture I would like to return to how the character of Guru Samir is identified as a heretic and therefore dis-identified as a citizen because his version of Islam is rejected by the state. Violence towards and elimination of groups deemed heretical are therefore legitimised by the state, making men of such groups like Guru Samir particularly threatening figures to be vanquished. His dis-identification as a citizen is also sexualised; Guru Samir promotes a non-Indonesian brand of Islam that mistreats women and abuses his Muslim male privilege to satisfy his sexual excesses. In sum, the villain in the conflict over 'true' Islam may take on the familiar appearance of the traditional Islamic leader. The unusual emphasis on the false prophet in an Islamic film like *Mengaku Rasul* acts as a means to draw out aspects of his status as an outsider to authentic Islam, namely as a heretic and non-Islamic polygamist. In the next section, the moral divide separating 'bad' and 'good' Muslim masculinity is less distinct. Instead, other versions of Muslim masculinities emerge through the socio-economic class divide.

Rich Man, Poor Man: Islamic Commentary on Socioeconomic Class and Masculinity

Class relations in Indonesia should be seen as more than differences in economic, social, and symbolic production and accumulation of capital but also as relationships that are worked out historically through a process of self and mutual definition (Sidel 2006: 18). This is a more fluid, contextually driven definition of socioeconomic class that lends itself well into the formation and transformation of various social classes from the Dutch colonial era through the Sukarno era (1950–1965) to the New Order period (1966–1998) and up to the present day. Because of its potential to stoke tensions, socioeconomic class as a concept and term was rarely spelled out during the New Order regime (Sen 1994: 128). Commonly used in pre-1965 political discourse, the term 'class contradictions' was replaced with 'social difference' (*kesenjangan sosial*) under Suharto's leadership. In fact, the word 'class' was usually censored in Indonesian cinema. But as

Krishna Sen argues, even when the word class is verbally excised from a film, images of class differences between the have and have-nots that are left uncut in film speak louder than words (Sen 1994: 128).

Sen's method of 'mimesis' is helpful in identifying images of the affluent Muslim middle class[6] in post-New Order cinema. Her method of identifying class relations in New Order films highlights the qualitative differences (ownership of expensive consumer goods, personal transport, larger homes) between the ostensibly rich and the 'masses' (*rakyat*) (Sen 1994: 129). All the signifiers of wealth, such as luxury cars and multiple servants, are prevalent in post-New Order films including ones discussed here. But in addition to these undisputed symbols of wealth is the centrality of piety in the lives of the characters who yearn for spiritual fulfilment. Issues related to, and visual markers of, affluent middle-class lifestyles are usually emphasised in post-New Order Islamic films and may be a reflection of the prevailing discourse of middle-class Islam in post-New Order Indonesia, where piety and material prosperity are often linked together as an expression of successful Islamic personhood (Heryanto 1999, 2011; Hasan, 2009). The shift in public Islamic piety exhibited by the Muslim middle class in Indonesia towards being associated with wealth and urban lifestyles began in the mid 1980s (Heryanto 1999). This shift is characterised by the social transformation of the *santri* class (pious and learned Muslims) into the Muslim bourgeoisie who exhibited 'the aestheticisation of their lifestyle, the display of wealth, and exuberant consumption' (Heryanto 2011: 52).

During much of Indonesia's modern history and popular memory, white Westerners and ethnic Chinese Indonesians were considered by indigenous Indonesians as the wealthiest in Indonesian society. Just below the white Westerners and ethnic Chinese in the hierarchy of perceived affluence are the members of the government elite. Heryanto notes that wealth has long been frowned upon in Indonesia and compared to the rich, the poor and rural indigenous Indonesians were morally superior (1999: 163). By the 1990s, however, the gentrification of the occasionally overlapping classes of the indigenous middle class and Muslim elite culminated in the promotion of the idea that 'it is cool to be rich' (Heryanto 1999: 163). In the films

[6] The category of middle class is not a stable, uncontested cultural and economic construct. Here, I follow Heryanto's definition of the category, whose Indonesian equivalent—*kelas menengah*—denotes the 'well-educated, economically better-off urbanites, with structural occupations ranging widely from the petty bourgeoisie to intellectuals, artists, middle-ranking bureaucrats, and managerial or technical professionals' (Heryanto 1999: 165).

examined here, post-1998 Muslim masculinity is conceived through visual markers of unequal socioeconomic class relations and expressions of piety. Images of men from different class background in the films illuminate not only diversity between men but also how unequal socioeconomic class relations between men affect their spiritual aspirations. Using two films, *Emak Ingin Naik Haji* and *Kun Fayakun*, this section foregrounds the theme of disempowered masculinity precipitated by the main male character's economic deprivation. The crisis of masculinity is defined as the collapse of structural patterns that (mainly heterosexual) men have traditionally followed to fulfil their concept of masculine behaviour, namely through the adoption of the breadwinner role of the dominant paterfamilias (Kimmel 1987; Morgan 2006).

Emak Ingin Naik Haji was highly acclaimed by film critics, Islamic clerics, and politicians alike for its apparently 'realistic portrayal of Indonesian society' and 'demonstration of an individual's highest love for her Creator'.[7] The premise of the film—that financial shortcomings hinder religious obligations—involves the dramatisation of the yawning economic divide that separates the cast of characters. In *Emak Ingin Naik Haji*, the roles of the three main male characters are positioned in relation to the symbolic significance of the hajj, the annual Islamic pilgrimage to Mecca. Zeinal is an impoverished artist and street trader who intends to fund his elderly mother's trip to the holy land; successful businessman Haji Sa'un is planning his sixth pilgrimage in an effort to improve his piety but still feels inadequate in religious matters; while Pak Joko is convinced that going to Mecca will enhance his political image and boost his mayoral campaign. All three men are driven by different desires, some more noble than others but their relation to the pilgrimage becomes a yardstick of how 'good' a Muslim they are. Set in Jakarta where the very rich live side by side with the desperately poor, the audience is introduced to the state of Zeinal and his mother's poverty in relation to Haji Sa'un's wealth through an aerial shot over their homes. Haji Sa'un's ability to make multiple pilgrimages to the

[7] *Film ini menggambarkan puncak kecintaan seorang hamba kepada Tuhannya* ('This film portrays the peak of a Muslim's love for her God'*)—Ustaz Jefri Albukhori. DVD sleeve of *Emak Ingin Naik Haji*.

Satu dari sedikit film yang mendidik, akting yang baik sekali dan mengharukan ('A rare film that teaches, [with] excellent and heartfelt performances'*)—Hajriyanto Tohari, member of the People's Consultative Assembly. DVD sleeve of *Emak Ingin Naik Haji*.

*my translation.

Middle East for the hajj and *umrah*, a lesser pilgrimage, becomes the marker of his wealth rather than his piety. The financial stakes are against Zeinal and his mother who are unable to secure funds for her first trip to Mecca as the travel costs increase year on year. The film paints a cynical image of traditional gender roles expected of Indonesian men, as Zeinal's mother, his former wife, and child all cling to him as dependents despite his financial failures. Zeinal is encumbered by his paternal obligation to pay alimony to his former wife who looks after their son. His financial difficulties become more acute when his son requires hospital treatment and simultaneously aggravated by a demanding ex-wife who shows little pity or empathy towards his predicament. Living with his widowed mother in a household without a father, Zeinal is portrayed throughout the film as the hapless man of the house who struggles to make ends meet.

The stark contrast between the impoverished circumstances that Zeinal and his mother endure and the affluence of Haji Sa'un and Pak Joko is a commentary about piety and wealth. Haji Sa'un's wealth sends a message about the tenuous link between a man's spirituality and class status. Obverse to Zeinal's mother and her noble intention to travel to Mecca is Pak Joko's pilgrimage as a political strategy, appealing to what his personal assistant describes as his 'fanatical Muslim' constituents. Pak Joko's well-publicised pilgrimage echoes Suharto's visit to a number of holy sites in the Arabian peninsula in 1991 at the peak of his Islamisation programme (Hasan 2009: 235). By virtue of his power, authority, and status as a politician, Pak Joko is the embodiment of hegemonic masculinity, but his cynical claim to the humbling experience as a pilgrim belies his moral bankruptcy.

Although the film is a critique of wealth, power, and the rise of the pious middle class it spares little sympathy for men like Zeinal who have neither wealth nor power. In fact, the film's spiritual message is that true piety eludes those who have too much and too little. When Zeinal fails to fulfil his duty as the breadwinner of his household he resorts to breaking into Haji Sa'un's house to steal money and valuables. However, upon entering the house, the sight of the Qur'an stops him in his tracks and he leaves the house like a moral fugitive. For powerful men like Pak Joko, his public display of piety is not a reflection of his personal moral responsibility and ethics. He cheats on his wife because his power and authority entitle him to do so. Haji Sa'un is flummoxed by the materialism of his children despite their multiple visits to the holy land and has little religious influence to educate them on the value of money. For Haji Sa'un's children, going on

the pilgrimage is little more than a chance for a picnic, an opportunity to encounter Indonesian celebrities abroad on their spiritual journey.[8]

The three men—Zeinal, Haji Sa'un, and Pak Joko—each personify a flawed version of traditional male roles; a son and breadwinner, a family man of financial means, and a male leader of his people, respectively. Moreover, their inadequate Islamic spirituality affects their roles as men. Zeinal's inability to support his family leads him to robbery and gambling. Pak Joko is a dishonest leader of his community who exploits his religious image to buy votes. Haji Sa'un is a spiritually hollow family man despite his immense wealth. The film thus makes a clear statement that a Muslim man's poverty can weaken his faith but even then wealth and power cannot guarantee spiritual improvement. Zeinal's responsibility as primary provider puts his morality to the test as he is tempted to steal money from Haji Sa'un and gambles his way to win the lottery to Mecca. The irony of gambling, which is forbidden in Islam, as a means to Mecca appears to be lost to Zeinal. When Zeinal discovers a winning lottery ticket discarded in a rubbish bin, he rushes back to his mother to reveal the tremendous news in the film's climax. Accompanied by Zeinal's desperate inner voice chanting his praise to God, his run home is more ominous than jubilant. This scene takes a shocking turn when Zeinal is suddenly knocked down by Pak Joko's car. His winning ticket to Mecca is shown flung into the air in slow motion, into the void of hopelessness where Zeinal's fate appears to lie.

The film closes with the interlinking fate of Zeinal and Haji Sa'un's family. Zeinal is sent to hospital for treatment just as Haji Sa'un's eldest daughter goes into labour. The coincidental meeting between Haji Sa'un's family and Zeinal in the same hospital makes for a propitious *deus ex machina*. When Haji Sa'un celebrates the arrival of his grandchild in an Islamic ceremony of thanksgiving, his daughter grants Zeinal's mother an all-expenses paid round trip to Mecca to perform the hajj. The kindness and generosity of Haji Sa'un's daughter may appear random and inexplicable but it is an illustration of patronage that keeps working class Indonesians in their place. Zeinal and his mother may never be able to afford a single trip to Mecca let alone live comfortably without economic constraints. They accept the kindness of Haji Sa'un's family whose wealth is at risk of corrupting their own spirituality. It bears noting that the film is not, however, a searing critique of scandalous mal-distribution of wealth in Jakarta as the cause of

[8] Interview with filmmaker Aditya Gumay in Jakarta, 3rd February 2012.

spiritual crisis nor does it end with ways to redress the socioeconomic imbalance. Instead, it is about the failure of masculinity when faced with the double challenge of piety and socioeconomics. Just as significantly, it is about how family units both poor and wealthy can maintain the spiritual equilibrium through charity and prayer. Haji Sa'un and his family represent the 'pietisation' of the affluent Muslim middle class discussed in current literature (Hasan 2009; Heryanto 2011). Although the upmarket piety of Haji Sa'un and his family is sometimes portrayed in an unflattering light, it is redeemed through their act of charity that guarantees Zeinal's mother's pilgrimage to Mecca. The film evinces that piety alone is not enough to fulfil one's Islamic obligations or be a good Muslim.

More than just a depiction of class-related crisis of piety, *Emak Ingin Naik Haji* is a portrayal of the wealthy class of Indonesians who benefitted from the corrupt modes of feudalist politics of the New Order. Seeing as the film ends 'happily' with the poor receiving charity from the rich, it perpetuates the feudalist politics of patronage of the New Order. Hence, in *Emak Ingin Naik Haji* we will find an extension of an older story from the New Order regime, a 'discourse of legitimation of unequal access to wealth in New Order Indonesia, a legitimation of an exceptionally luxurious lifestyle, accessible to only a few but acceptable to many' (Sen 1991: 146). Not all films conflate wealth and prosperity with the degradation of piety. In stark contrast to *Emak Ingin Naik Haji* is a film that places wealth and generous almsgiving as central to Islamic faith. Islamic almsgiving and charity are important features in the concept of prosperity Islam whereby the distribution of one's wealth to people in need can strengthen the Muslim community. The source of wealth through halal, or permitted, means is also stressed in prosperity Islam. These themes are conveyed in *Kun Fayakun* (God Wills It, And So It Is, 2008, dir. H. Guntur Novaris) through a didactic rags-to-riches story.

Kun Fayakun is a moral parable about the power of prayer to redeem the hard work of faithful Muslims. Before the film begins, there is a three-minute sermon by Ustaz Yusuf Mansur, the founder of Wisata Hati, the film's production company. The sermon serves as an introduction to what the audience will expect from the ensuing film, namely how the film will educate the viewer about the 'power of prayer'. But the opening sermon is also a marketing opportunity. Before finishing his sermon, Ustaz Yusuf Mansur invites the audience to visit the Wisata Hati website for further Islamic guidance through religious self-help programmes, all for a fee. The film begins with the daily hardship of the mobile mirror trader, Ardan, who

struggles to shift his goods and make ends meet. His hardship is endured with forbearance as Ardan and his wife are model Muslims: they are pious, patient, and resigned to the power of prayer that will eventually turn their fortunes around. The Quranic phrase, 'kun fayakun' which means 'God wills it, and so it is', or literally, 'be and it is', is meant to encapsulate how Ardan and his family's fate resides entirely in the hands of God.

The opening scenes of the film establish an image of abject poverty; Ardan pushing his mobile stall of picture frames and mirrors in a state of exhaustion and hopelessness. He faces the daily humiliation of a failing business that provides precious little to his family when he returns home. His wife is a paragon of sacrifice and patience, holding back her disappointment and despair when her husband returns yet again without a single sale. As the sole breadwinner of the family, Ardan befits the hardworking but unlucky man whose diligence and fortitude are slow to be rewarded. His masculinity is dishonoured.

The film also upholds the notion of family unity that survives not through the support of their community but only through faith and prayer. But Ardan's steadfast belief in the power of prayer alone to lift them out of poverty turns him into a man verging on madness which distresses his wife. In a tearful prayer to God, she begs for his success in selling a lovingly polished mirror the next day. The inner voices and constant prayer of Ardan and his family members in their moments of despair demonstrate the purity of their spirit that matches their intense commitment to worship. But Ardan's perseverance is tested by a series of humiliating and frustrating events. On one occasion, when he nearly makes a sale of a mirror, a fight breaks out smashing the mirror in the hands of a potential buyer. Overcome by anger and exhaustion, he faints but is rescued by a group of Muslim men dressed in religious attire. They feed and nurse him back to health but this adds to Ardan's shame in not having the ability to fend for himself.

Ardan's inability to return home with money for his family and the disgrace he experiences as a failed father and supporter of his family is a portrait of masculinity in crisis. Much of the film shows him at the mercy of his poverty, the disregard of society towards the poor who refuse to buy his products, and the persistent setbacks to attaining the most basic of human needs: food. When he returns home from yet another challenging and unfruitful day, Ardan is upset to find more food on the table than usual. His anger arises from the shame in his inability to provide for his family. He

is emasculated by his family's need to depend on other sources of food than he himself can provide. Ardan later reveals to his family that not only do they need to continue praying for God's material blessing (*rezeki*) in the form of money and relative comfort, but he himself will work harder towards improving their fortunes. He adds that he has ambitions in financial empowerment by becoming an owner of a large mirror and picture framing business and will donate a handsome sum to the poor. Charity is the highest form of piety and an expression of honour to a fellow member of humanity, he states, in a messianic tone.

When Ardan's youngest son is sent to hospital after being struck by the car of a wealthy man their fortunes begin to change for the better. It turns out that the wealthy man in question, Bramastyo, is a former boyfriend of Ardan's wife who had broken her heart after leaving her many years ago. Committed to mend the past, Bramastyo and Ardan agree to a business deal to a much more cheerful film soundtrack. Ardan pledges to turn Bramastyo's compensation into a loan to start a business and donate ten percent of his profits to an orphanage, the prayer house, and to the needy. God's will is enumerated by Ardan; 'when one gives away ten percent of their earnings to charity, God will reward him ten times the figure, making him wealthier by one hundred percent'. With the newly gifted cash flow, Ardan is able to lighten his daily burden at work: he has a pick-up truck and helpers to carry his goods to his new picture framing shop.

Ardan's greatest reward for his prayers and perseverance awaits him in the closing scene depicting his situation three years later. In a scene befitting a dream sequence with little rhyme or reason, Ardan and his family are driven to a venue to launch his booming mirror and picture framing business. Their path to the venue is flanked by people dressed in bright white Muslim attire as if Ardan and his family had arrived in a wintery paradise. They step out of their large, chauffeur-driven vehicle also dressed in white, denoting their newly acquired prestige and richly deserved symbol of purity. Before cutting a ceremonial ribbon to launch the expansion of Ardan's business, his wife has a flashback that takes her through images of their painful poverty-stricken past. This flashback functions as a reminder that they are blessed thanks to their unwavering belief in the power of prayer.

Tied to his masculinity as the rightful breadwinner, Ardan's piety and pride impel him to reject alms from others. He feels humiliated when he is forced to accept financial help. Such a pang of humiliation places his

masculinity constantly on the verge of collapse throughout the film. Ironically, his pious masculinity is salvaged by the helping hand of the generous Bramastyo whose act of charity arises from the latter's own need to absolve his past indiscretions. This ironic twist in the tale dissolves the reproach to socioeconomic class disparity, as demonstrated in the extreme wealth gap between Ardan's family and Bramastyo's. In lieu of a class critique, *Kun Fayakun* reinforces the individualisation of the struggling breadwinner's masculinity and the causes of its crisis rather than embed Ardan's masculinity within a larger framework of oppressions that exist in Indonesia. The film constructs Muslim masculinity upon a religious version of the libertarian myth that success can simply be had through the hard work of individuals no matter their station in life. Thus it can be said that *Kun Fayakun* offers a different reading of the effects of wealth on piety from *Emak Ingin Naik Haji*. Instead of corrupting, wealth in *Kun Fayakun* is to be desired as it enhances the faith of Muslim individuals.

In his assessment of Islamic films of the post-New Order period, Eric Sasono (2010) finds a broad theme of individualisation of Islamic spirituality through the preoccupation with personal gain as an Islamic experience. Sasono identifies three main themes in these films; finding a life partner, self-identification with Islamic consumer culture, and personal achievement (2010: 54–58). These themes are prevalent in the definitive and most successful Islamic films of the period, *Ayat-ayat Cinta* and *Ketika Cinta Bertasbih* 1 and 2. In fact, they are concerned with the lives of the young, pious, and aspirational, characters that mirror the putative target audience (Heryanto 2011). The themes of individualistic Islamic spirituality depart from images of Islamic experience as a nationalist and communal concern in New Order cinema (Sasono 2010: 62) making them consistent with theories of the rise of individualism and late capitalist logic of consumerism as an aspect of identity formation (Jameson 1991). Even though the Islamic film genre is no longer preoccupied with nationalism in post-New Order period, the genre continues to imagine the nation but in ways different from New Order Islamic cinema. In the next section, images of Indonesian Muslim men are foregrounded in a discourse on terrorism to distinguish Indonesian Islam from extremism and Arabian culture. The section will examine the struggles of recuperating Muslim masculinity in the post-9/11 world when the definition of Indonesian Islam and the nation is at stake.

Martyrdom Mythologies? The Radical Muslim Man Versus the Moderate Muslim in *3 Doa 3 Cinta*

The deliberate contrasting of corrupt 'bad' Muslim man against peaceful 'good' Muslim man occurs in a number of films throughout the New Order and post-New Order period. Rather than static, the constituents of the binary that separates the 'good' from the 'bad' Muslim man are dynamic in the genre. In Chapter 4, the Islamic hero is pitted against the morally wayward drunkard or the despotic non-Muslim antagonist. The antagonists in post-New Order Islamic cinema is frequently more ambiguous as they are men whose religious authority is rendered suspect when they abuse it to oppress other Muslims. In the case of the final film discussed in this chapter, *3 Doa 3 Cinta* (3 Wishes 3 Loves, 2008, dir. Nurman Hakim), the young Muslim heroes must contend with antagonists in the form of the spectral figure of the extremist Arab man, the militant religious teacher, and the homosexual man. This section examines these contrasting images, and reveals the ways images of young Muslim masculinity in rural Indonesia are situated in the moral spaces of the *pesantren* and those beyond it, and in relation to the nation and the global Islamic community. This section seeks to determine how youthful Muslim masculinities in *3 Doa 3 Cinta* are constructed in a world dominated by a discourse on the 'war on terror', and how a critique of Islamophobia is visually mobilised in response.

3 Doa 3 Cinta resonates with contemporary national anxieties about the recruitment of young men into terrorism in Indonesia. The purpose behind making the film, according to the director of the film, Nurman Hakim, was to depict a more 'realistic' portrait of life in an Islamic boarding school by featuring characters with depth, humour, and poignancy.[9] Nurman adapted his experiences as an alumnus of a *pesantren* to make a film that challenges negative stereotypes of rural male Islamic boarding school students and assuages the growing concerns about the *pesantren* as the hotbed of extremism and terrorism. The link between religious education in remote Indonesian villages and terrorism became established when police investigations traced the 2002 Bali bombers to a small *pesantren* in Lamongan, East Java. Later, in 2005, a second bombing in Bali prompted the Indonesian government to roll out a counter-terrorism procedure to fingerprint students in all rural *pesantren*. Although the fingerprinting procedure did not

[9] In the DVD's Special Features section on the film's production.

materialise it nonetheless upset many Muslim Indonesians who interpreted it as the demonisation of Islam by the Indonesian government (Hoesterey and Clark 2012: 220).

Nurman states that the making of a film about the lives of young men in the *pesantren*, one of whom is seduced into radicalisation no less, was fraught with certain difficulties.[10] The film was in production before the boom years of Islamic cinema when Hakim was forced to change the original title of the film, *Pesantren*. The title and the titular subject matter were considered politically sensitive by local film investors who were also unconvinced by the commercial potential of the film. When the film screened in numerous film festivals outside Indonesia to rapturous reception, overseas audiences and festival organisers saw little problem with the title *Pesantren* used during its festival tours. However, when screened locally, the sensitive and potentially unprofitable title had to be replaced with a more industry-friendly name *3 Cinta 3 Doa* that was in keeping with the prevailing naming norms for films in Indonesia.

The Indonesian religious boarding school, the *pesantren*, is iconised as the traditional centre of Islamic learning and knowledge. The term, *pesantren*, is derived from the word *santri* to mean 'student' and *persantrian*, the place for students (Lukens-Bull 2000: 48). All *pesantren* in Java are usually led by a group of teachers cum religious leaders known as *kyai*. The *kyai* also plays an important role in the community as a spiritual leader and in recent years, as a political figure (Iskandar 2006: 97). As the oldest existing system of learning in Indonesia, the *pesantren* has had an influential function in the spread of Islam and continues to represent the country's valuable spiritual and cultural repository. Studying in a rural *pesantren* in Central Java are three male students and best friends, Huda, Rian, and Syahid. Each aspires to accomplish a particular mission when they leave the limiting confines of the *pesantren*. They surreptitiously write them down as graffiti on a decrepit wall within the school. Huda yearns to find his long-lost mother; Rian is given a handheld video camera as a gift and wants to start a photo studio business and a filmmaking career; while Syahid wants to be a 'martyr' of Islam. Their world appears sequestered from the rest of the country, particularly from the foreboding urban hubbub of Jakarta, to which Huda ventures in search of his mother.

[10] *3 Doa 3 Cinta* DVD's Special Features section on the film's production.

The Islamic nature of their surroundings is emphasised in the mock Arabian musical soundtrack, marking their isolation from a secular world. Their visual access to the world beyond Indonesia is through television where they witness the attack on the World Trade Centre in New York City in 2001 with awe and little comprehension of how the faraway images will eventually impact their lives. This scene would mark the beginning of their collision with the global geopolitical enterprise of the 'War on Terror'. From the outset, the film establishes its stance on Islam and other faiths in a Quranic recitation lesson led by Kyai Wahab, the headmaster of their boarding school. Part lesson on scripture and part moral instruction, he urges his male students to advocate peace and tolerance towards what is sometimes perceived as Islam's greatest adversaries, Judaism and Christianity. Speaking in Javanese, their teacher Kyai Wahab asserts that Quranic verses do not, in essence, incite war against Jews and Christians but can be manipulated by extremists to promote war. So long as there is mutual respect between Jewish, Christian, and Muslim people, there is no basis for animosity between the faith groups, he continues. But the students of the *pesantren* are presented with a range of mixed messages about other religious groups and the condition of Muslims beyond their shores. They listen intently about the war between occupied Palestine and Israel in an Indonesian radio news report. The news report and their Islamic lessons interweave with one another forging their view of fragile interfaith relations abroad. These mixed messages influence the development of their sense of purpose as Muslims in the world.

The students later sit in a lesson led an unnamed hardline teacher who gives a fiery lecture promoting intolerance towards Jews and Christians. Thin and dishevelled, the hardline teacher links the Western influence of cinema with the murder of Muslims in Palestine, Iraq, and Afghanistan and the humiliating global 'war' on Muslims. More chillingly, the religious teacher urges his students that it is their duty to murder Christians and Jews, and foster a warlike mentality of 'kill before one becomes killed'. The hardline teacher's murderous exhortation in Indonesian is partially muted in the censored version of the film but the subtitles articulating his words in English are retained. The hardline teacher promotes the martyrdom mythology, a narrative shared by many militant extremists across the world (Hafez 2007: 97). Would-be martyrs are said to be motivated by the interrelated objective and outcomes of the martyrdom mythology, namely to avenge the deaths of Muslims worldwide by Westerners and the Israeli military, the weakening and collusion of Muslim states with Western

imperialist politics, and the inevitable victory of Islamic fighters. After the foreboding message conveyed in class, Rian and Huda express their rejection of the hardline teacher's murderous exhortation. But Syahid is intrigued by it and undeterred by suggestions to stop taking lessons from him. Seduced by the martyrdom mythology, he argues with Huda and Rian that there may be a kernel of truth in the hardline teacher's vision of militant jihad.

In their private space behind the *pesantren*, each of the three men scribble on the walls the number of days before they graduate from the *pesantren*, no different from prison inmates enumerating their days towards their freedom. On the walls, Syahid articulates a wish to die a martyr, a wish he sees appropriate to his namesake, which means 'martyr' in Arabic. Within this private space, they joke and make references to a make-believe world where they are Hollywood characters. Scenes such as these reveal a more vulnerable and affable side to these men and challenge stereotypes of solemn young Muslim men. The three best friends are not one-dimensional straight-laced Muslim male cut-outs without humanity. They, like most young men, are playful, defiant towards authority, and hopeful about their future and life beyond the *pesantren* rather than obsessed about the death of their religious adversaries and the afterlife. The other students of the *pesantren* are similarly light-hearted and good-natured, smiling, singing, and well-adjusted.

Of the three male protagonists, only Syahid is drawn to radicalism. The film demonstrates the possible motivation behind his journey into it. His father's illness and mounting hospital fees forces him to sell off his paddy field at a low price to a white foreigner. Out of anger and hopelessness, Syahid hits back at the foreign buyer, calling him an 'American infidel' who is 'colonising' his country. To assert some control over his life and learning ways to protect his country from white neo-colonialists, Syahid uses Rian's video camera to record paramilitary training in the jungle. Having witnessed the paramilitary training, he later becomes inspired to participate in extremist military intrigue. He also creates a video recorded suicide note to convey that he is on a mission to be a martyr and end the oppression of Muslims by Americans and Israelis (see Fig. 6.1). In contrast to Rian and Huda's ease with the world outside the *pesantren*, filled with sensual and sensorial pleasure such as the presence of attractive female performers at the visiting village fairground, Syahid's brush with the outside world is less salubrious. Despondent from witnessing his father's decaying health, he wanders back to the *pesantren* on a different route than usual, through the urban

Fig. 6.1 Syahid experiments with the terrorist 'suicide note' on video in *3 Doa 3 Cinta* (3 Wishes 3 Loves, 2008, dir. Nurman Hakim)

underbelly where he walks past a woman gyrating publicly in front of a wild-haired man. The world outside the *pesantren* that Syahid witnesses is full of vicious, pleasure-seeking, and exploitative men.

Soon, however, the world that Syahid knows, one apparently divided between Western oppression and Islam, becomes more ambiguous when he learns that the American businessman who bought his father's paddy field had also paid his hospital bills. The American businessman's unexpected kindness causes Syahid to rethink his suicide mission and attack against American imperialist oppressors. Showing a change of heart, Syahid informs his disappointed mentor, the hardline teacher, that he has decided to abort his suicide mission. Syahid's sudden decision to pull out of his mission coincides with the 2001 attack in New York City. In response to the growing fears of terrorism in the *pesantren*, a police crackdown in his school results in the arrest of Syahid, Rian, Huda, and Kyai Wahab for suspected Islamist militant activity. During the raid, the police discover Rian's video recorder and in it suspicious recordings of guerilla training by Syahid. The unlawful arrest of the three young men and Kyai Wahab effectively ends the ambitions of the young men. During their imprisonment, Syahid's father dies while Rian's dream to be a filmmaker is extinguished. Years later, their

innocence is vindicated but it is a much delayed one as Kyai Wahab dies shortly after their release. However, Syahid is released much later than the others, as he alone had briefly dabbled with extremism. Huda takes over the role of *kyai* of their *pesantren*, succeeding Kyai Wahab after his death, and marries the late *kyai*'s daughter. As the new *kyai*, Huda preaches the same brand of tolerant Islam as his predecessor. The film ends in Huda's living room as he witnesses on television another news report of a terrorist bombing in Bali reminiscent of the one that occurred earlier in 2002. The film's ambivalent ending indicates the continuing struggles with home-grown terrorism and radicalised Muslim men in Indonesia. Huda, his peers, and students of his *pesantren* may not be immune to future arrests, unlawful or otherwise.

Nurman Hakim's depiction of the three young men is refreshing in light of hegemonic media discourses that demonise Muslim masculinity and Islam. The parallel narratives of the three men function as a device to add nuance and to neutralise the often-toxic portrayal of the male *santri* by the Indonesian mass media and government. Although their movement is mostly restricted to the confines of the *pesantren*, the young men engage thoughtfully with external media influences from outside the *pesantren*. The young men also negotiate the infiltration of terrorism and extremist interpretations of Islam promoted within the *pesantren* with agency rather than passivity. Through depictions of their negotiation with extremism, marked by both fascination and apathy, the young men depart from the reductive caricatures of the angry terrorist Muslim or Taliban man. The depiction of Syahid's brief dalliance with extremist ideology and its outward associations, such as wearing an Arabian-style turban during prayer, momentarily constructs his masculinity as 'Other' to the masculinity of Huda and Rian's. Rian chastises Syahid for wearing the turban not because it is un-Islamic but because it is excessive beyond the acceptable idea of moderate Islam and Indonesian-ness. This brief scene on the Otherness of the turban reveals the multiplicities and historically contextualised meanings of the turban. 'To the untrained eye', the turban signals 'the most pernicious components of oppressive patriarchal backward cultures and traditions, those that have failed at modernity' (Puar 2007: 181). However, the turban is 'multiple' in its incarnations in size, shape, and colour, tied with connotations that designate gender, caste, region, militancy, age, and marital status (Puar 2007: 181). By wearing the turban, Syahid does not actually become an Arab. Instead, his sartorial choice invokes the spectral figure of the Arab and extremist.

The masculinity of Otherness that Syahid briefly embraces is also desexualised. Syahid's rejection of women in contrast to the voyeuristic pleasure embraced by Huda and Rian suggests the failure of Syahid at performing his heterosexual masculinity. Syahid's masculinity can be compared with the Orientalist stereotypes of the terrorist whose masculinity has 'failed at modernity' (Puar 2007: 181). Almost always male, the crude Orientalist images of the terrorist are meant to provide a shorthand for the backwardness of the culture and religious traditions from which he emerges. In his desexualised Otherness, the terrorist lives and operates in strict exclusion from women, thereby making him a sexual deviant who is contemptuous of women (Puar 2007: 181). But it bears mentioning here that Syahid's masculinity of Otherness is not the same as the non-normative sexuality displayed by a minor male character in *3 Doa 3 Cinta*. Early in the film, the cook of the *pesantren* is seen sneaking into a student dormitory and molesting a sleeping boy. Distressed by the attack, the boy reports to the three heroes who then instigate a revolt to expel the cook. Hoesterey and Clark (2012) compares this condemnation of non-normative sexuality with the 'homoerotic play' between Rian, Huda, and Syahid. In a scene that evokes playfulness in the *pesantren*, Rian finds the sleeping Huda and Syahid with erect penises under their sarongs and proceeds to flick the protruding members. This playful scene marks the boundary between 'normative' homoerotic play and punishable non-normative homoeroticism.

Hoesterey and Clark (2012: 220–221) conclude that *3 Doa 3 Cinta* reinforces heteronormativity and a homophobic view of male same-sex sexual relations despite its depiction of 'homoerotic play' between the three main protagonists. They add that the film panders to 'political homophobia' (Boellstorff 2004) in Indonesia, the violent reaction to male homosexuality condoned in the name of Islamic values and Indonesian culture. Through the demonisation of the cook's non-normative male sexuality, the film promotes a 'heterosexist masculinity'. My focus on the character of Syahid, however, highlights the desexualisation of masculinity and failure in modernity through his avoidance of sensuality and aspirations for glory in martyrdom. Rian and Huda's pleasure in looking at women confirms their heterosexist masculinity while Syahid's ascetic piety, rejection of women, and uneasiness about pleasure suggest otherwise. Although the film's intention is to construct an image of a peaceful *pesantren* and diligent students, it reiterates the misconceptions and concerns about the *pesantren* as a place where hardline beliefs may flourish. The hardline teacher who incites and instructs impressionable young men into joining the warfare against

Western imperialism and Israel, often conflated with Jews, Judaism, and Zionism, appears and disappears from the film's narrative. Unlike Syahid, the hardline teacher does not retract his extremist views nor is he condemned for them. The men who are outside the film's central narrative, the hardline teacher and the American businessman, are marginal one-dimensional figures who lack character development. They are but stock characters and foils to the three young men and Kyai Wahab. The hardline teacher is credited with no name while Mr. Smith is the name given to the American businessman, as generic as a Western John Doe. And yet they are the notional antagonists of the most conflicted of the young men of all, Syahid, who must negotiate his way back to an acceptable Muslim masculinity and be part of his society. By bringing together in discussion images of Syahid's 'failed masculinity', the spectral Arab, the hardline teacher, and Mr. Smith, one sees a tableau of men and masculinities that constitute the discourse about the Indonesian nation in the world after 9/11. The nation is reconfigured in post-New Order Islamic film into a relational idea with a global outlook. The reconfigured Indonesian nation is engaged, and at times forced to confront, with a post-9/11 world, where Muslims in Indonesia are mapped onto a bigger picture of global Islam. Thus Muslim masculinity in post-New Order Islamic films can be said to be more informed by the impact of transnational geopolitics than previous representations of Muslim masculinity of the New Order period.

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Berbagi Suami (Love for Share, 2006, dir. Nia Dinata)
Emak Ingin Naik Haji (Mother Wants to go on the Hajj, 2009, dir. Aditya Gumay)
Kun Fayakun (God Wills It, And So It Is, 2008, dir. H. Guntur Novaris)
Mengaku Rasul (Self-Proclaiming Prophet, 2008, dir. Helfi Kardit)

CHAPTER 7

Afterword

Islam and Gender in Indonesian Cinema: Beyond Veils and Turbans?

Indonesia may be known for its diversity of cultures, languages, and religions. However, neither its complex religious landscape nor its dynamic gender relations are captured in its Islamic film genre. It is a small wonder how religious diversity and complexity of gender relations within Islamic contexts are flattened, neutralised, and at times distorted in the genre. Rather than an accurate portrait of social reality, many images of gender and Islam in the Islamic film genre are 'archetypes, a representation of cultural concerns which, if given a specific historical setting, would become less forceful, less black and white, and thus less communicative' (Chakravarty 2011: 201). For these reasons, the Islamic film genre is replete with binaries of 'good' and 'bad' Muslims or rather 'good' Muslim man/woman pitted against their 'bad' Muslim counterparts. The construction of gender in Islamic Indonesian cinema tends to follow a separatist binary model of analysis which divides gender into cis-gendered femininities and masculinities. Such a model of analysis assumes that representations of femininities are somehow autonomous from masculinities and, as a result, we rarely see discussions of how images of women and men relate to the other and influence their construction. Susan Brenner's analysis of New Order gender relations is one such rare example in which she finds that representations of mothers and wives who are discouraged from prioritising their careers reinforce the traditional roles of men as primary breadwinners

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of the family. Women who overstep their circumscribed gender roles are threatening to men and risk losing their male partners to other women (Brenner 1999: 28).

Feminist approaches to cinema and culture do not just identify the unequal power dynamics at work in the construction of the image. Instead, such approaches caution against 'considering women exclusively in terms of gender' and recognise the 'complex interrelations of difference' between women (Dittmar et al. 1994: 2–3). And although the images of women have traditionally been the focus of feminist film criticism, those of men are scrutinised through a feminist lens just as rigorously (Cook 1982; Cohan 1997). A feminist consciousness in film-making and criticism in Indonesia, however, has focused mainly on films by and about women (Michalik 2013). Images of masculinity in Indonesia are rarely studied as a feminist project. This is perhaps due to the tenacity of the (mis)conception that feminism and gender are about women and 'women's issues'. By converging feminist film criticism with conceptual debates about Islamic popular visual culture and modernity, I argue that images of gender in the Islamic film genre, especially those produced during the post-New Order period, belong to the 'Islamic spectacle' in Indonesia created visually, temporally, and spatially by the drive towards Islamic modernity (Schmidt 2012: 386). Even images of gender produced during the New Order before Islam was 'more commodified' (Schmidt 2012: 396) and 'everywhere' (Fealy 2008: 16) are sometimes revived on television and percolating online today—they do not simply disappear. Islamic modernity has profound implications for the visibility and voices of Muslim women and their influences on Muslim men because of their increased participation in public life and culture. I would be the first to admit, however, that the link between feminist film criticism and Islamic modernity here is not an exhaustive one for reasons I will explain below.

There is an emergence, since the post-New Order era, of Islamic or Muslim feminism in Indonesia (Robinson 2007; Rinaldo 2008), but its influence on film and media has yet to be considered more extensively by scholars. Moreover, the medium of both fiction and documentary film has been adopted by Muslim organisations to articulate new visions of Islam in Indonesia. As part of a transnational movement, their engagement on feminist issues transcend national borders. There are Muslim female film-makers producing documentary films on feminism in Indonesia and engaging in a global dialogue with other feminists in the Muslim world. How are they represented in Islamic modernity and the emerging Muslim public? What is the politics of looking in the era of 'new visibilities' in Muslim

societies in Indonesia? The definition of the Islamic film genre may also be further developed and change in the future, partly because 'correct' Islamic practice in Indonesia is perpetually contested and reimagined. It bears mentioning here that there is no single 'Indonesian Islam' that Indonesians follow. Many follow a combination of local expressions of piety and *adat* or traditional customs. Others are influenced by smaller branches of Islam with roots in the Arab world. Future definitions of Islamic cinema and other forms of popular visual media may one day reflect the varieties of Islam in Indonesia. The concept of 'transcoding' was used as an explanation for cinema's ability to reflect and refract public debates. But the concept raises other questions that are not covered in this book, such as what lies beyond major Islamic issues in public debates that have so captured film-makers? What gets left out from the purview of Islamic cinema and why? Why do audiences watch films about issues that are widely debated in the media?

The mixed methodological approach was chosen in order to ask questions about representations of gender in a more specific way. Rather than ask 'what is Muslim femininity and masculinity in Indonesian cinema', I ask 'when, how, and where' images of gender are constructed. This method ensures that any examination of images of gender focuses on the occasion, purpose, and agency pertaining to the articulation of gender by film-makers. Or to reiterate Krishna Sen on studying women in Indonesian cinema, we must question 'to what effect and in whose interest' particular images of women are mobilised (1994: 135). In Chapter 4, it was highlighted that the scholarly focus on gender in Indonesian cinema had by default been about images of women in 'secular' film. I found, however, that the way images of women in Indonesian cinema have been studied has evolved, from comparing them to women in ethnographic 'reality' and those idealised in government ideology to a more theoretical and contextualised outlook. Although studies on women in Indonesian cinema have grown in sophistication over the years, many conclude with the Freudian binary of femininity comprising of the virgin/mother and whore as the dominant model of femininity. As a feminist study on representations of gender in Islamic cinema, it is pertinent to critique the binary logic femininity and unlock its limitations. Categorising female characters into either virgin and whore limits one's framework of analysis into easy tropes and perpetuates the moral judgement of female sexuality. First introduced as a psychoanalytic concept, Sigmund Freud argued that the Madonna/Whore complex is a conflicted expression of heterosexual male desire precipitated by the fear of oedipal castration during childhood. Analysts often impress such categories on characters even

though they do not always fit neat binaries. At worst, the continued and uncritical employment of the Madonna/Whore complex in the analysis of representations of women reproduces a masculinist framework of understanding female sexuality.

Studies that identify transformations in the images of Muslim men dominating Indonesian cinema note the shift towards those that signify sensitivity and even disempoweredness. These studies, though often focused on youthful masculinities, have found that they reflect the rise of hegemonic Muslim masculinity personified by popular Islamic preachers of the post-New Order period. The extant literature, however, does not have a commentary on New Order Muslim masculinities. This is perhaps due to the dearth of new studies on heterosexual masculinity in New Order cinema and the absence of highly visible markers of piety presented by men that are analogous to the veiled woman. Through feminist approaches to gender in Indonesian Islamic cinema, images of Muslim women are not taken for granted and those of Muslim men are rendered visible when 'marked' and 'unmasked'. Images of gender are not meant to represent 'real' women and men, but rather ideas about the nation, 'true' Islam, modernity, and a range of public concerns raised in the films discussed in this book. Although they are not meant to mirror 'reality', the images are nonetheless ideological and reproduce unequal power relations across gender, class, sexuality, and religious groups in society.

Efforts to better understand the definition of 'religion' and 'Islam' in Indonesian cinema can be best served by a turn to audience studies. Scholars of religion and popular culture (see Lynch 2007) argue that further insight into the uses of popular media by religious communities are lagging behind research on religious content in popular culture. Such a lopsided emphasis risks 'unsubstantiated claims about the significance of these cultural resources and practices for particular individuals and groups' (Lynch 2007: 159). Further insights into the practices of film audiences and consumers of Islamic popular culture can throw light on the purposes, effects, and meaning-making of cultural products such as Islamic cinema. What of feminist insights into the Islamic film genre itself? In Chapter 6, I argue that melodramatic Islamic films focused on the domestic sphere and the struggles of motherhood constitute part of the 'women's film', a subclass of melodrama. Scholarship on melodrama in Indonesian cinema has reached an impasse since Krishna Sen's pioneering exploration of the genre (1993). The study of melodrama in Islamic cinema has a potential to unlock further discussions about gender and Islam in Indonesian cinema, especially

pertaining to images of Muslim women and domesticity. It can draw insight from the growing literature on representations of women in Indonesian Islamic television melodrama (Ida 2003, 2009; Subijanto 2011) similar to the development of Anglo-American feminist studies on melodrama in cinema and television soap operas. Anglo-American feminist studies on melodrama in cinema and television soap opera have sought to examine the appeal of the genre amongst female audiences and the construction of the female spectator. Audience research on melodramatic Islamic cinema can reveal its uses by the Indonesian female spectator and how its uses construct identities.

The Islamic film genre provides a powerful glimpse into the religious life in Indonesia. For non-Indonesians, the peculiar quality of Indonesian cinema to transcode issues of public concern such as poverty, women's rights, marriage, and the state of the nation from a religious lens illustrates the social and political function and performative character of film-making practice. As the country emerges as a regional model of experimental democracy, its cultural and aesthetic life progresses alongside it towards a shared political horizon. The cinematic visualisation of religious stories made with the very intent of moral didacticism goes to the heart of the belief that film can be educational, spiritual, and, above all, a source of moral good to be absorbed by 'the masses'. Films with religious messages routinely begin with excerpts from sacred texts, a sermon, or a statement which alludes that something highly moral and religious is to be learned from watching the film. Defying all classical theories of secularisation and the retreat of religion to the private sphere, religion in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, repackaged in a more popular format (some say commodified) has always found its way into public consciousness in brighter, glossier ways. With more films adapted from the life of religious communities and biblical texts still in the making, it seems as if the tension between cinemas as morally suspect places and religion may never be resolved once and for all. To what extent will the cinema remain a kind of ritual in the twenty-first century? Cinema-going numbers have been dwindling since the rise of the video home-viewing, television, and now, the internet. The cinema is no longer the only place where one can gaze upon images of the spectacular and receive tales of moral heroism. What draws the loyal cinema-goer to the wide-screened altar? Like the stragglers of a long party, mosque and cinema-goers alike stick around for an experience quite profound. In the cinema, there is a suspension of time and space, and an

immediate connection is made between the viewer and the glowing purveyor of hopes and dreams.

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