

Islam, gay, and marginalization: a study on the religious behaviours of gays in Yogyakarta

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DOI: 10.18326/ijims.v7i1.125-152

Abstract

Man does not intend to be born gay, whose existence is not welcomed in the society including within his spiritual religious expressions. In Wonosobo, in the year of 2016, a marriage ceremony almost happened between a male and a male. This phenomenon is interesting to be studied in detail. In a specific way, this article uncovers the religious behaviours of gays in Yogyakarta. Using an anthropological approach, the researchers were directly involved in the subjects' lives in the social, economic, cultural, and religious aspects. In texts, same-sex relationships were found in the narratives of Prophet Luth written in the Al-Quran books Al-A'raf verse 81, Al-Shu'ara' verses 165-166, An-Nisa verse 16, and Hud verses 77-83. These verses are used as the basis for rejecting

homosexuality. From the social life happening in Yogyakarta there arise conflicts between the gays and their families so that they run away from their families to join gay communities and form economic and even religious groups. Furthermore, in their citizenship status, there is marginalization or administrative abuse for their identities in the identification card.

Manusia tidak berniat untuk dilahirkan sebagai gay, yang keberadaannya tidak disambut baik di masyarakat termasuk dalam ungkapan spiritualnya. Di Wonosobo, pada tahun 2016, sebuah upacara pernikahan hampir terjadi antara sesama jenis lelaki. Fenomena ini menarik untuk dikaji secara detail. Artikel ini mengungkap perilaku religius kaum gay di Yogyakarta. Dengan menggunakan pendekatan antropologis, peneliti secara langsung terlibat dalam kehidupan subyek dalam aspek sosial, ekonomi, budaya, dan agama. Dalam teks, hubungan sesama jenis ditemukan dalam narasi Nabi Luth yang ditulis dalam buku Al-Quran Al-A'raf ayat 81, ayat Al-Shu'ara 165-166, An-Nisa ayat 16, dan ayat-ayat Hud 77-83. Ayat-ayat ini digunakan sebagai dasar untuk menolak homoseksualitas. Dalam kehidupan sosial di Yogyakarta, timbul konflik antara kaum gay dan keluarga mereka. Konflik ini membuat mereka melarikan diri dari keluarga dan bergabung dengan komunitas gay dan membentuk kelompok ekonomi dan bahkan kelompok keagamaan. Dalam status kewarganegaraan, mereka mengalami marginalisasi atau penyalahgunaan administratif dalam kartu identitas mereka.

Keywords: *Islam; Gay; Homosexuality; Marginalization*

Introduction

The broadcasting of TV religious operas and other programs on the various TV stations bringing up the lives of gays as the theme opens up to the problems of transsexualism in Islam that has not been completely discussed.¹

¹Call Me Puspa', 3 March 2001 SCTV; '7 Day towards Repentance', 7 October 2006; 'Faith' 25 February 2006 SCTV; 'Sufferings of a Gay', 3 April 2006 TPI; 'Faith', 13 May 2006 SCTV; 'Don't Call me a Homo', 4 February 2006 RCTI; 'I am not a Can Homo', 8 April 2006 RCTI; 'My Son is a Homo', 14 February 2006; 'Good Morning' showing gays' religious teaching (Al-Ikhlas Surabaya) and 'Dorce Show', 28 October 2006 TransTV; 'Monday Night Show', Indosiar, 12 February 2007; 'Om Farhan' presenting Hj. Isabela or H. Iqbal, a gay giving Islamic teaching to mothers and gays in Jakarta and providing Haj services in Mecca, 8 June 2007 ANTV.

Debates are going on within certain parties, particularly those related to deviant behaviours. In the family, the presence of a gay is repudiated since it is regarded as a defect. In the society, marginalization of gays is related to its being an unhealthy sexual behaviour, street prostitution, and social deviation so that being gays is regarded as a social pathology that must be avoided. Furthermore, through religious doctrines, marginalization continues and repeats.

The images that are built by the society become an important trigger for looking at the dialectical relation between the society and gays. Through the images shown by gays, the society gives responses to their behaviours, values, and life problems. As members of a minority group, gays are seen as persons who are outside of the social order and a hindrance to gender stability. Through the images that are dialectically and collectively built, a social doctrine is formed as a response of the society towards gays. This doctrine is subsequently used to reject the presence of gays by certain members of the society or to accept it by other members of the society. The social doctrine depends then on the existing social and cultural processes in the society.

Those who are denied by the community then form an exclusive group that later produces values and life styles different from those of the society. Inclusive in their efforts to maintain existence is the emergence of religious life awareness within gays similar to what happens with other 'normal' people. In Malang, a small group of gays, not more than 20 in number, holds a routine religious lesson with a cleric who gives them spiritual shower. In Surabaya, gays founded Al-Ikhlas institute whose activities include reading the Al-Quran and studying Islamic values. In Yogyakarta, a group of gays runs Islamic studies facilitated by a cleric, head of an Islamic school in Gamping, west of Yogyakarta. Three important observations are seen from this phenomenon. First, a strong psy-

chological drive to do religious teachings emerges among the gays. This is because, through religion, the minorities can have peace since religion does not acknowledge class². Second, in Indonesia, religion is a cultural inevitability as stipulated by the law that every citizen must embrace religion. Third, because of the religious obligation, there emerge various religious practices. This means that individuals or groups perceive religious practices in their own ways.

Based on the phenomena and background above, the foci of the problems raised in this article are: 1) how the marginalization process occurs so to form the images of the gay world within the Muslim society; 2) how gays treat religion and signify religion as part of the Muslim society; and 3) how gays perceive themselves as part of the Muslim society.

Studies about gays can be grouped into three parts. The first is research that underlies the analyses and biological factors of gays as conducted by medical groups like Davison³; Kelly⁴; Heuken⁵; Neustatter⁶, and Manshur and Al-Barasny⁷. These studies are largely based on genetics that are related to chromosome structures and hormonal issues. Agreement has not been achieved among the medical experts concerning gays except for the sufferers of hermaphrodite.

²Wilson, D.N. Cadmium, "Market Trends And Influences In Cadmium 87", proceedings of the International Cadmium Conference London, Cadmium Association, 1988, 189-191.

³Neale Davison, *Abnormal Psychology, An Experimental Clinical Approach*, New York: John Willey and Sons, Inc. 1978.

⁴F. Gary Kelly, *Sexuality Today: The Human Perspective*, USA: The Dushkin Publishing Group Inc, 1988.

⁵A Heuken, *Ensiklopedia Etika Medis*, Jakarta: Yayasan Cipta Loka Caraka, 1979.

⁶W. Lindsay Neustatter, "The Media Aspects in Homosexuality", in William A.R. Thomson (ed.), *Sex and its Problems*, Yogyakarta: Yayasan Essentia Medica, 1987.

⁷M.I. Aly Manshur dan Noer Iskandar Al-Barsany, *Gays and Genital Change Seen from Islamic Laws*, Yogyakarta: Nur Cahaya Ma'rifah, 1980.

The second part is related to psychological factors that cause gay personalities as described by Kinsey, 1953; Kartono⁸; Moerthiko⁹; Kelly¹⁰; and Manshur and Al-Barsany¹¹. For this camp, sexual deviation, including in gays, have the following indications. The first is related to the large physiological ability difference of individuals to receive stimuli. Each stimulus occurs in persons and incites different responses. In transgender individuals, a feeling emerges that their sexual organs are not as expected such that they reject in their selves the presence of their sexual organs. The second indication is related to the circumstance which leads to their first same-sex intercourses.

The third camp is concerned with tying among psychological phenomena, social problems, and impacts of deviant behaviours as suggested by Koeswinarno¹², Atmojo¹³; Boellstorff¹⁴, and Djoht¹⁵. Researchers in this group not only relate homosexuality with social problems such as prostitution, but they also relate it with health problems in reproduction.

Studies on gays that are related to Islam have been conducted by looking at texts that underlies the presence of gays¹⁶. Even though, as a devi-

⁸Kartini Kartono, *Abnormal Psychology and Sexual Abnormalities*, Bandung: CV Mandar Maju, 1989.

⁹Moerthiko, *Gays, Troubles, and Sexual Deviation*, Solo: Surya Murthi Publishing, t.t.

¹⁰F. Garry Kelly, *Sexuality Today: The Human Perspective*, USA: The Dushkin Publishing Group Inc, 1988.

¹¹M.I. Aly Manshur and Noer Iskandar Al-Barsany, *Gays and Genital Change Seen from Islamic Laws*, Yogyakarta: Nur Cahaya Ma'rifah, 1980.

¹²Koeswinarno, "Profile of Yogyakarta Gays: Social Backgrounds and Sexual Behaviours of Yogyakarta Gays", Research Report The Toyota Foundation (Unpublished), 1993; Koeswinarno, *Gays and Contagious Diseases*, Yogyakarta: Centre for Demographi Researc, Gadjah Mada University, 1996; Koeswinarno, *Life as a Gay*, Yogyakarta: LkiS, 2004.

¹³Kemala Atmojo, *We are not Males: A Sketch Gays' Life*, Jakarta: Grafitti, 1987.

¹⁴Tom Boellstorff, *The Gay Archipelago: Sexuality and Nation in Indonesia*, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2005.

¹⁵Djekky R Djoht, "Papuan Indigenous Gays and the Potentials of HIV/AIDS Spread in Papua", *Jurnal Antropologi Papua*, Vol. 1, No. 3 (April 2003), 63-75.

¹⁶Zunly Nadia, "Analuyses of Hadits on Gays", Skripsi, Jurusan Tafsir Hadis, Fakultas Ushuluddin, IAIN Sunan Kalijaga, Yogyakarta, 2003.

ant behaviour, the presence of gays tends to be cursed, none of the Hadith texts explicitly rejects gays. In other words, Islam acknowledges the existence of gays in certain dimensions such as in the case of inheritance division and the possibility of organ surgery¹⁷. Even, as Minasochah¹⁸ shows, there are studies that radically discuss the possibilities of same-sex marriages which, as expected, find no legal bases.

Research method

The first months of living as gays are interesting to uncover. Initially, not much difficulty was encountered in the observation, especially in the social spaces of Cebongan. Just like men who become gay customers, the researchers became part of this consumer group. Eating, drinking, joking, and, often times, using obscene words were done in order to avoid suspicion. The researchers began to see gays' life patterns started from the stigmatic night life, know the Cebongan ethics, formerly full of questions, and find how solidarity was built among them, though at times with little conflicts.

Participatory observation yielded first successful results when the researchers were able to uncover the language symbols used by the gays. In later years, however, knowing their lives just from the Cebongan spot did not seem to give valid data and information. Many of the senior gays had started to leave the Cebongan world. Cebongan, once reaching a golden era, went down to pieces together with the coming of the reformation ideas. A religious-based group of young men obliterated the Cebongan night life. Gays began to feel threatened; they began to leave,

¹⁷Eti Fajar Ma'rifah, "Surgery of Genital Surgery and Genital Perfection: Comparative Study of Muhammadiyah and NU Clerics in Yogyakarta", Skripsi, Jurusan Perbandingan Mazhab dan Hukum, Fakultas Syari'ah, IAIN Sunan Kalijaga, Yogyakarta, 2003.

¹⁸Minasochah, "Practices of Gay Marriages Seen from Islamic Laws: A Case Study in Yogyakarta City", Skripsi, Fakultas Syari'ah IAIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta, 2004.

plan new strategies, and open Cebongan in other desolate places at the city borders.

Together with the observation, data collection was conducted through life histories. In addition to revealing the personal and social gays' life histories, this technique gave greatly amazing information. For example, all gays were able to succinctly recall the first time they had sexual intercourse although it happened 20 or 30 years ago. First sexual intercourses not only became an important event in the life of the gays, but it also became a significant history bend that were strengthening, bolstering, and becoming a meaningful experience.

In particular, this study was conducted in Yogyakarta City. Spaces used by transvestites as a place to capture customers such as in the area of Taman Suropati, around the Railway station, Jl. Kapuas, then the new City area, and around the Sosrowijayan area. Observing the transvestite life, researchers are directly involved in their lives, but not to the extent of sexual intercourse.

Theoretical framework

Transsexuals feel that they psychologically do not agree with their physical sexual organ so that they often change to become another gender type. In homosexuals, one finds that there is no match between the physical condition and the psychological feeling except for a deep interest in the same sex. Besides being different from homosexuality, transsexuality is also different from transvestitism, a pathological desire to wear the dress of the opposite sex¹⁹.

Another symptom which is often parallelized with transsexuality is the hermaphrodite. In hermaphrodites, an extreme intersexuality happens

¹⁹Kartini Kartono, *Abnormal Psychology and Sexual Abnormalities*, Bandung: CV Mandar Maju, 1989, 265.

in the developmental impediment of the differentiating process whether to be made male or female. In the Islamic texts, the hermaphrodite is called *alkhuntsa*. For this kind, the book *Qulyubi Wa 'umairah* states that a *khuntsa* is a person who has a male organ and female organ. The hermaphrodite or *khuntsa* is divided into two kinds the first of which is hermaphalst or the real hermaphrodite, *hermaphrodite compexus/hermaphrodite cernus*, or *khuntsa musykil* (Manshur and Al Barsany²⁰; Ilyas²¹). In this type, it is difficult to know a person's sex as he has both a male and female sex organs or, on the other hand, does not have either one. The second is a false hermaphalism (pseudohermaphrodite) or *khuntsa gairu musykil*. For this type, it is not very difficult to determine the sex type since one of the two is more prominent.

Islamic texts on gays

In Islam, transexuality is often parallelized to homosexuality, especially to gays. This line of parallelism is drawn from the similarities between transexuals and gays in sexual intercourse. Textually, homosexuality is seen in the story of the Prophet Luth in the Al-Quran chapters Al-A'raf: 81, Al-Shu'ara': 165-166, An-Nisa: 16, and Hud: 77-83. These verses are used to reject homosexuality. These verses narrate how the followers of Prophet Luth were destroyed since they were regarded as people who behaved over the limit (*musrifun*)²². To refer to same-sex relationships, the Quran uses the terms *al-fāḥishah*, *al-khabā'ith*, *al-munkar*, and *al-sayyi'āt*²³.

²⁰M.I.Aly Manshur and Noer Iskandar Al-Barsany, *Gaya and Change of Genital Organs Viewed from Islamic Laws*, Yogyakarta: Nur Cahaya Ma'rifah, 1980, 10-11.

²¹Hamim Ilyas, "Sexual Orientations from Is Islamic Analyses", in S. Edy Santoso (ed), *Islam and Sexuality Constructions*, Yogyakarta: PSW IAIN Sunan Kalijaga, Ford Foundations, dan Pustaka Pelajar, 2002, 85.

²²Abdul Mustaqim, "Homosexuality in Classical and Contemporary Interpretations", *Musawa*, Vol. 2 No. 1 (Maret 2004), 9.

²³Moh Yasir Alimi, *Postcolonial Sexuality Deconstructions: From State Discourse to Religion Discourse*, Yogyakarta: LkiS, 2004, xxi.

Socially, interpretation of Islamic texts on transsexuality has undergone development over the last decade. Aside from global considerations, young Islam thinkers have started to give social advocations through more open discussions. Rationality of thoughts is more upfront than classical text interpretations. No verses have explicitly been found to mention transsexuality as a third sex gender after male and female. Nevertheless, if transsexuality is regarded as an 'imperfectness', it actually has been widely interpreted as in Al-Hajj: 5.

This issue of imperfectness is highly problematic if it is tied to physical matters, especially those related to chromosome and gene structures which generally raise behaviour problems. Studies on imperfectness are physical in nature, especially in relation to bodily organs. The terms *mukhallaqah*, which means perfect, and *ghairu mukhallaqah*, which means imperfect, are still related to bodily organs, such as the imperfectness of the hands, feet, or other organs of the body²⁴. On the other hand, psychological problems have not been touched about at all in the discussion of imperfectness. Moreover, some clerics still cling to the opinion that behaviour deviations are not caused by imperfectness. Behaviour is always seen as a learning process. Therefore, if it is regarded as a disease, a deviant behaviour must be remedied²⁵.

Trends of transsexuality are believed to have occurred in the prophet eras both before and after Islam²⁶. The existence of gays during Mohammed SAW can be traced from a story in the house of Ummu Salma. Mainstream clerics equate *mukhannats* as gays, while *muttarajiila*,

²⁴Imam al-Kabir wa al-Muhadis al-Syahir Abi Ja'far Muhammad bin Jarir At Thabari, *Tafsir al-Tabari*, Beirut: Dar al-Fikir, 1978.

²⁵Abdul Mustaqim, "Homosexuality in Classical and Contemporary Interpretations", *Musawa*, Vol. 2 No. 1, Maret, 2004, 12-13.

²⁶Abdelwahab Bouhdiba, *Sexuality in Islam: Kamasutra Civilization Mid-century Culture*, Yogyakarta: Elenia, 2004, 84.

on the opposite, as female transsexuals. When a brother asked about what to do with *mukhanntats*, the Prophet Mohammad SAW ordered not to kill them. Nevertheless, they must be exiled to a town and allowed to come back on Fridays to find food. Quoting Ibnu Hajar al-Asqalani, Nadia²⁷ states that the *mukhannats* is divided into two types: *mukhannats* who are born having the deviation since childhood and *mukhannats* who deliberately behave like females. The second type, according to al-Asqalani, are cursed by the Prophet, as written in the hadists, while the first category is given limited social spaces.

Marginalisaion of gays in Muslim families

Most of the gays who come to Yogyakarta are persons who are marginalized in the family. They reside in certain areas hardly with adequate skills and education. They even do not have identification cards. Some of them have Yogyakarta as their first city to choose after deciding to leave their house; others come to Yogyakarta as their “nth” after several other cities. These are subjective choices as they cannot bear the oppressions from the family, especially the parents. Only very few cases are found in which they come to town without conflicts or marginalization from the family.

Gays who have ‘female-owned’ skills as their girl friends do in their village²⁸, actually have *occasionally inverted* personalities that are not always clearly seen²⁹. Conflicts between gays and the family arise when the inverted personalities become more permanent (*absolutely inverted*) and then contract with the socially-produced identities. Normatively, behaviours are choices of actions taken by man to adapt with the surroundings or to adapt the surroundings with himself so that, when an

²⁷Zunly Nadia, “Analyses towards Gay Hadists”, Skripsi, Tafsir Hadis Department, Fakultas Ushuluddin, IAIN Sunan Kalijaga, Yogyakarta, 2003, 97.

²⁸Interviews with gays Ratri, Yora, Tika, Arie, Tinuk, and Anok.

²⁹Sigmund Freud, *Sex Theories*, Yogyakarta: Jendela, 2003.

individual cannot adapt with his surroundings, his behaviours are regarded as deviant. One's behaviours depend on one's knowledge or, in other words, awareness of the surroundings, including public personalities, as stated by From³⁰ and Hall & Lindsay³¹. Basically, man is born free. When his freedom is confronted with social values, then conflicts emerge.

The rise and fall of inverted personalities in a childhood are caused by the discrepancies between the child's personalities and the family and community's values. On the other hand, family's supports for feminine boys have two strength dimensions. First, such supports will tend to nurture the feminine behaviours, a process of becoming gays in the internalization phase. Second, the child's feminine behaviours get supports from the parents since, in the family, he can take domestic roles and do domestic works. Especially in the Javanese families, special skills that are achieved by children give prides to the parents without considering whether or not any of these carries inverted personalities.

The settling personalities are responded to by gays and family in various dimensions. Gays' responses can be varied. First, most gays tend to leave home. Second, conflicts are taken by youth gays by remaining to stay in the house. Third, gays, who are exiled during his whole life, live as nomads, moving from one city to another to return to a place they have ever visited.

Giddens sees that pressures in the family are due to the presence of the dominant power of males. Gidden's study reveals that the target of pressure at children is far more often than it is at wives or housewives. In modern societies, the house is often seen as a dangerous place, even compared to living in the street. There are three reasons for this to happen.

³⁰Erich Fromm, *Love, Sexuality, Matriarchy, Gender*, Yogyakarta: Jalasutra, 2002.

³¹L. Hall and G Lindzey, *Psychodynamic Theories (Clinical)*, trans. by Supratiknya, Yogyakarta: Kanisius, 1993.

First, in the family, the combination of emotional intensities has a stronger intimation level than it does in the street. In other words, the home is the most expressive venue for the letting out of mixes of emotions such as love, hate, longing, anger, and so on. Domestic dispute models become a more open stage compared to other places. Second, pressures in the family have episodic and fluctuative frequencies. This means that pressures can continue for a long time or happen at a certain time. However, after the conflict, reconciliation can occur at a certain time. Third, pressure and violence in the family open the chances to toleration by family members. In this case, the persons who put pressure and do violence feel that they have the support from other family members. This is due to the fact that there is a socially approved agreement that the family is an autonomous chamber such that it is felt to be common that there are some kinds of pressure or violence. If a young gay is slapped on the face in the street by the father, people will say that it is not common and is a form of violence. On the other hand, if the slapping is done at home, it is seen as something else. The household in the home is a legitimate room for the parents to do violence and give pressure.

Marginalization of gays in the community

After the 2000s, gays in Yogyakarta live in a paradoxical world. On the one side, the gay-banning movement by the GPK (Ka'bah Youth Movement) in 2000 became an influential part of the marginalization of and rejection to transexual behaviours. On the other side, however, it is from that time that gays have begun to free themselves from the homosexual community and integrate themselves into the wider community in various social activities. Some of them left the Cebongan community and united themselves with female sex workers. Young gays began to brave the pressure and work in cafes.

The mass media have an important role in building the images of gays, both the ones that reject gays on an extreme scale and the ones that accept the presence of gays, partially or totally. Through a series of episode in the audio-visual media, new awareness finds room after issuance of unwritten agreement among the doers of the electronic media to not display gays' roles in the 1990s³². This awareness arises out of two opposing conditions.

The showing of gays' life on some private-owned television channels is not accidental. At least through agenda-setting theories, this phenomenon can be explained. This theory states that the mass media form the public's opinions about matters they regard as important. The mass media give cues on issues that are more important (Becker³³). This media theory makes an assumption of the positive relation between the evaluation made by the media on an issue and the concern given by the public on that issue. In other words, it can be said that what is regarded important by the media is regarded important by the public. This is how public agenda come into existence. This means that, according to this theory, media agenda and public agenda have a linear relationship. A media product is not to present something that is not liked by the public in the agenda. Reversely, the public see that what the media present to them is what they expect in their agenda.

Adaptation becomes an important thing when a gay decides to leave home and live with the wider community. Adaptation is not only related to how a person is to suit himself with the environment. Adaptation is also tied to how he suppresses his individual wants and drives that, if expressed, will come to conflicts with the societal values and rules. In this

³²Interview with TV show reporters in "TransTV Phenomena", Seno and Indri, and Arya Santa Pandora, Jakarta 19 December 2005.

³³Garry S Becker, *Human Capital*, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1993, 79-82.

case, the gays conjure up things with various ploys which, at certain scales, become risky, such as the one in Liesdiana case.

Such strategies come in order for the gays to support their life and maintain their identities as gays. These two intentions include behaviours and thoughts since living as man occurs in the real and artificial worlds, living together and, simultaneously, competitively, that is, maintaining life and maintaining identities.

Fighting for life and fighting for identities are man's activities that cannot be separated. In order to defend life, one must jointly maintain identities. Defending the two entities is not a simple thing. Conflicts, either with family or with the social environment, must be experienced in maintaining life and identities. Having conflicts does not mean combating structures; but it is an effort to maintain life and identities. Therefore, it is not only having a conflict in order to maintain life and identities. Upholding harmony is also one thing to maintain the two entities.

A gay is to behave politely in the public, does not commit immoral actions, and does not invite a male into his room. Living in togetherness must become a primary goal, often times having to suppress individual needs. Living in togetherness means overcoming differences, being cooperative, and maintaining harmony³⁴. To uphold togetherness in the neighbourhood level, a gay is to actively participate in every neighbourhood activity. Playing volleyball with young boys and girls, attending neighbourhood welfare meetings, taking part in community work, are some of the community activities that must be undertaken by community members in a neighbourhood area.

Gays who do not possess citizenship cards or residence cards often receive different treatments from the area authorities. This is evident

³⁴Niels Mulder, *Innerself and Daily Life of Javanese People: Perpetuality and Cultural Changes*, Jakarta: PT Gramedia, 1984, 65.

from the attitudes shown by the personnel. A neighbourhood chief, for example, often shows cynical expressions and refuses to give administrative services to gays who cannot show identification cards. When a gay is ill, the area chief does not give him social aids as he does when other members are ill.

In Indonesia, the citizenship card is not only an important document for identity and authority; but it also becomes a border among people. A border is not always a tall wall with a guarded gate. Whatever is the form—a castle, a stone hedge, a welcoming arch, an identification card—a border, just like a fence, indicates an order. In this order there stands authority, and in every authority there tends to be a marginalization³⁵.

The city, village, or neighbourhood area is a form of control. It exists out of the demands of order. Town castles, town gates, village arches, border marks, or symbolic patterns such as area concentrates in Javanese kingdoms like the palace, market, park, and mosque all represent order. Class bureaucratic and political policies in every area produce clear and hierarchical demarcation lines in the social and spatial relationships among the economically established class, government workers, elite groups, down to marginalized social groups such as scavengers, beggars, and gays. Through development politics and security ideologies, administrative areas are determined and separated by clear borders, such as through local area authorities, with the intention to make community control easy as the manifestation of mass political policies.

In Indonesia, the citizenship card is a border. It becomes a keyword for every citizen in selecting and solving a problem among parties legitimated by the law and state. In the distribution of free daily needs, for example, personnel from the Social Department will ask the recipi-

³⁵Goenawan Mohamad, *Exotophy: On Power, Body, dan Identity*, Jakarta : Putaka Utama Grafiti, 2002, 101.

ents to show identification cards as an important requirement for the poor people to receive the packages. To give out sacrifice meat, the mosque committee works together with the local neighbourhood authority in order to shortlist the community members. All this shows that, automatically, the presence of identification cards makes a clear separation mark which simultaneously control not only politically, but also socially and culturally, who are regarded as citizens.

Marginalization of gays occurs in sequential layers. Burton *et al.*³⁶ defines social marginality as 'being outside the mainstream of productive activity and/or social reproductive activity'. This is related to two phenomena. First, it refers to small groups of gays who consciously and voluntarily marginalize themselves from various social rules. Living in a social slum area is one way of marginalizing self since this community has a looser tolerance limits. Burton characterizes these people as deliberately putting themselves outside the mainstream arena of a capitalistic product and a product activity. This is what is referred to as 'voluntary social marginality'.

Second, it refers to the group of individual gays who undergo marginalization from a large system and structure order. It happens to gays who are born in an area with dominantly different identities especially in the psychological and religious domains. In addition, gays also receive marginalization from a big 'development' that intrudes into the area of identities such as the citizenship identification card.

Building religious perceptions: picture of religious violence

In Indonesia, religion becomes an important part of identities. Every citizen is to embrace a religion that is 'ruled to be legal' by the govern-

³⁶Graeme, Burton, *Discussing Television: an Introduction to Television Study*. Translation by Rehmawati, Laila, Yogyakarta & Bandung: Jalasutra, 2002.

ment, shown by the citizenship identification card. Furthermore, religion becomes an authority space for the state; an individual who fails to give information about religious identities will be regarded as an atheist and is often attached with other negative attributes. Religion is often even used as a legitimate tool for the state to accept or reject the faiths of groups that are regarded as deviant. In this case, religion becomes an important element in the life of the state and society.

In spite of the presence of such normative system, every religious follower certainly feels that, in living in the world, man cannot be safe without religion even though more and more people become atheistic (no God) and agnostic (no religion) from day to day. According to Naisbitt, religion gives man the meaning of life, something that can never be given by science and technology. In this view, religion is a holy canopy of life³⁷; carrier of peace; muffler of conflicts; cleaner of dirty behaviours; carrier of torches for lost of life; and, ultimately, guide to human life.

The gay world is often described as 'far apart' from religion since gays are seen as disdainful creatures that should be avoided, a group that is cursed. Gay diversity is therefore highly problematic. Some have the conviction that there is no room for gays to be able to express religiosity; some others, however, adopt the permissive stance to say that there is always a possibility for gays to actualize their religiosity.

The absence of religious space for gays is felt when some Yogyakarta gays intended to hold a religious learning. The difficulty in obtaining a cleric who was willing to talk, negative responses from members of the society, and the low level of participation of gays were some of the obstructions felt by the gay organizing committee. Similarly, when the Al-Ikhlâs institute was going to be founded, a great many people mocked it

³⁷Peter L. Berger, *Holy Sky: Religion as Social Reality*, Jakarta: LP3ES, 1994, 49.

(Interactivity in the 'Good Morning' show 28 October 2006, Trans TV.

The question still remains as to whether there is room for gays to treat and be treated by religion. For them, religion is a venue when they face psychological and social pressures. They have the firm belief that it is the human who imposes injustice to them, not God. Notwithstanding, almost every one of the religious texts (Islam) does not give a room for the presence of gays.

The narrow space given by religion to gays, make their perceptions towards religion ambiguous. On one side, religion, as an ideological heritage, is believed to be capable of guidance in life; on the other, however, religion is not yet capable of giving peaceful space to gays. Religion emerges to the surface with a double face; as a constructive power on one side and a destructive factor to human relation on the other (Hidayat³⁸). Most gays are not much involved in religious activities in the mosque or other meeting venues. Should a small number of gays perform prayers, they always do these in the home for the simple reason that not all society members have accepted their presence in the holy places. Ratri was once reprimanded by the mosque organizer when joining the prayers in the women chamber wearing female attires. It happened when he was still a university student. Mince was also reluctant to do prayers in the mosque for the same fear.

One disturbing question is why religion apt to cause marginalization and why the "mandates" of God to eliminate certain human traits are accepted in such a firm conviction by some believers. According to Houtart³⁹ (2002: 73), every society has an element that marginalizes another group regarded as having a different opinion, and this

³⁸Komaruddin Hidayat, "The Failures of Social Religious Roles" in *Dialogue of Muslim Scholars to Realize One Religious Community*, Jakarta: UGM Yogyakarta-IFIS, 2010, 160.

³⁹Francois Houtart, "Violence Rite under the Name of Religion: A Landscape View" in Thomas Santoso, *Religious Violence without Religion*, Jakarta: Pustaka Utan Kayu, 2002, 73.

marginalization becomes stronger if it is hooked to religion. The gays are not a 'holy' group in the eye of the society. Not many clerics or religious leaders have a suggestion of how to become Muslim gays except that they should come back to their destiny as males⁴⁰. They believe that gay personalities are a learning process. As a process, this learning can change the gay conditions by giving strong motivation to change in gays.

Apologetically, it is therefore too easy to claim that religious contents are basically not violent (not having violent elements) and that good persons, individually or collectively, do not bend to the actual teaching. In reality, the roots of marginalization can be found explicitly in the religious texts, and, by reason of that, can easily become a vehicle for the tendency of gay marginalization.

Religion teachings (Islam) actually offer useful answers in the intention to curb destructions in ways that are wise, thoughtful, and peaceful; it is only in matters of inevitability are hard treatments allowed to be used. Even so, such hard solutions may not exceed the limits (*la ta'tadu*) and must be based on the religious laws (*qawā'id al-fiqhiyah*) seeing that this destructive measure cannot be replaced by other destructions (*al-darar la yuzālu bi al-djārar*)⁴¹. Notwithstanding, what is 'felt' by gays is that religion cannot yet provide positive responses to their life problems in the real sense. Although the gays are believers in Islam, they do not have total comfortable and peaceful feelings yet in their self. Their experiences in receiving violent treatments from the Muslim youth groups reinforce their conviction that religion is not yet capable of solving the gays' prob-

⁴⁰All operas broadcasted by the TV tell about the same thing; that in the end of the story the gays become males. Or, otherwise, the gays die of HIV/AIDS. The reality show *7 Days to Lead to Pardon* was also successful in 'returning' gays to become males; but, then what happened 2 or 1 year later was not known. All these strengthen the fact that being gays is a condition rejected by religion.

⁴¹Cholil Bisri, "Political and Religious Violences", in Ahmad Suhaedy (Eds), *Violences in Pesantren Perspectives*, Jakarta: PT. Grasindo-P3M, 2000, 45.

lems. Neither does their learning from the TV shows ever give them way-outs as Muslim gays. In various interviews with gays, agendas in the TV operas turn out to add to gays' problems. Some respondents feel that they even tend to simplify things. An interview with dr. Inu Wicaksono also shows that, in all his career as a psychiatrist, there has never been a successful case in returning gays' personalities to normal men; except for one in which homosexuality is seen as a burden and disease that motivate gays to become men.

Violence may not always be physical; it can be symbolic. Religious texts that tend to marginalize gays are responded to as one of the symbolic forms. Discrepancies between the good and evil are another source of violence related to religion. This has been widely shown in the holy books of various religions, including Islam. Prescriptions of what is goodness have given the legitimation to do violence in the history of many religions and to attack groups regarded as immoral through internal heretic and inquisitive oppression. Similar traces can be found in the case of world major religions. Many religious texts reflect violence rituals or violent usages in order to achieve the highest virtue and the needs for violence in maintaining faiths and, at the same time, ethical justification for illegitimate violence; all intended towards achieving the highest peacefulness⁴². Obliterating the existence of gays is regarded as a sacred purpose, in the name of God, since it is religious texts that are thought of as the most obvious means of legitimating violence. It is from this case that religion is seen in negative perceptions even though gays do believe in the religious truths.

In the 1990s and 2000s Islamic values were regarded by gays as having radical views. None of the religion-based organizations was present among

⁴²Francois Houtart, *Violence Rite under the Name of Religion: A Landscape View* in Thomas Santoso, *Religious Violence without Religion*, Jakarta: Pustaka Utan Kayu, 2002, 87.

the gays. None of the gays dared to wear Muslim attires or head covers. The year 2000 was not the time for the decline of the radical Islamic movements, that tended to see things as white or black, but this year marked the appearance of new movements among gays in exploring religious values. Two or three gays, secretly, started to initiate religious meetings. Other gays, however, watched this with cynicism.

The actions conducted by bands claiming to carry the name of Islam to annihilate Cebongan, one-sidedly, and ransack a discussion forum on sexuality in Kaliurang often invite antipathic comments. Though it is not completely clear as to what has motivated the actions, it may be true whether these have been based on pure motivation or have been driven by personal or group interests. The actions to eradicate deviant conducts often invite negative comments from the society and the victimized parties obtain negative perceptions of the existence of religions. Religion is then taken as a symbol of marginalization and violence.

The gays' religious movements in the midst of religious violence towards gays can be explained in three views. First, gays respond to situations symbolically. They see religion by the meaning contained in the components of their environments. When gays are confronted with a situation, their responses are not mechanical; nor are they determined by external factors. But they depend on how they define the situation within the social interactions.

Second, meanings are products of social interactions; they are not attached on the objects, but they must be negotiated through various ways. Negotiations are possible since man is capable of handling things; not only physical objects or actions or events, but also things that are abstract or symbolic. Third, meanings that are interpreted by individuals can change from time to time in line with the situational changes that are found in social interactions. Changes of interpretation are possible since

individuals can do mental processes; that is, communicating with self while they imagine and plan what they are going to do⁴³.

Attitudes and diversities of gays

Up to the writing of this report, religious activities in gays still go on in irregular frequencies. The religious learning groups they organize are aimed at showing to the society their changes of images; that they also have concern on the religious life. In the gays' opinions, religion is needed not only for individual lives but also for social lives. Religious movements still appear as social movements since the occurrence of religious learning activities are followed by the decline of the social actualization of gays. From the 1980s to 1995, the actualization of gays is carried out through the activities of folk-drama shows, volleyball, football, art festivals, and others; becoming one form of their social reproduction. Such activities begin to disappear and are replaced by religious movements, starting in 2005. The religious movements grow in intensities and receive endorsement from religious figures since 2006.

Worshipping God can be done in many ways even though, formally, they embrace one and the same religion. They are conscious of the presence of God in their every life step. Madam Tupon, at his age of 60, starts to live his life as a supranaturalist in relation to his abilities to see divine things. Once in a while, young gays come to him for consultation on their destiny and luck. In his village, Welly, as a male person, sometimes conducts the dead prayers for a dead person. So, eventually, worshipping is the matter of God. Man does not have the right to say that one's prayers are declined merely because his condition is one that is not expected by the religious community. While Ratri and Mince at times do

⁴³Herbert Blumer, *Symbolic Interactionism: Perspective and Method*, California: University of California Press, 1986, 56.

the 'led prayers wearing body covering, Nuke maintains his masculinity in front of God.⁴⁴

One's religious development is definable into three phases of faith, thought, and discovery⁴⁵. The faith phase is marked by a strong discipline that must be accepted by an individual or group as an instruction, unconditionally, and without rational understandings of the meaning and purpose of the instructions. This can be found in Ganang, and other gays, who dedicate worshipping activities in a mechanical way. The thought phase is marked by the emergence of rational understandings of that discipline and the source of its nature of power. In this phase, religious life looks for its foundations on some kind of metaphysical beliefs, logical views about the world, and God becomes part of the beliefs. Religion is not owned only by 'holy persons' and, thus Welly has the right to do the dead prayers in his village.⁴⁶

In the discovery phase, metaphysics is replaced by psychology and, then, religious life develops the intention to build direct contacts with the ultimate reality. In this phase, religion becomes a personal sublimation between life and power, such that a person reaches freedom in personality without detaching from legal ties. Here, an individual finds the rightful laws in the depth of its own conscience. Madam Tupon is a picture of how he merges with God through his supranatural powers, that are believed by other gays as a superiority.

Religion is often used as a means of escaping from crimes, from the real state to symbolism. Religious activities of gays in Yogyakarta grow

⁴⁴The writers' experience in participation and interviews with gays during the study.

⁴⁵Musa Asy'ari, *Islam: Work Ethos and Empowerment of People's Economy*, Yogyakarta: Lesfi dan Institut Logam, 1997, 2-34.

⁴⁶In his testimony, Welly often joins people to do the dead prayers, for dead men and women, in his village. Welly positions himself as a man. This is confirmed by neighbors in his village.

simultaneously with the growing of cases of deaths of gays who die of “mysterious diseases”. Some are detected as having HIV/AIDS, some others are not detected at all. Religious meetings are not found before 2000s. Even so, they are initiated by gay seniors who have withdrawn from the Cebongan life. In the same way, there is awareness in the elder gays towards religious teachings.

Some gays even treat religion not textually as a prophetic religion. Yayuk 'Heru' Parabola often carries out traditional rituals on every Friday Kliwon eve in places that are regarded as sacred such as Imogiri, Joko Bodo's grave, Gunung Kemukus, and others. According to Yayuk, his success as a gay entertainer, so far, owes to his routine visit to these sacred places. At times he conducts the Monday/Thursday fasting even though he almost never does the sholat prayers. Nevertheless, during the fasting month, he does the fasting. Yayuk completely believes that there is, outside his self, power that moves to have luck stay on his side. He carries out the rituals since he believes that there will be power that acts as he wishes⁴⁷.

As a religious element, faith is capable of making life based on cultural and legal systems. A belief is an element that emerges from various drives towards a reality accompanied by a strong emotional tie. In addition, faith also shows a typical belief tends to look at moral utility values that function to give reasons for various commands of the body and behaviour. These functions become conventions in the society. Besides, on one side, religion implants symbolic value strengths to instigate emotions, affective sentiments, desires, and feelings in a particular situation. A religious system in a cultural setting is capable of scaffolding various social values through which various symbols are able to formulate a world and solid unity. This is what Geertz later refers to as a *logico meaningful*

⁴⁷The researcher once accompanied Yayuk to go to Imogiri graveyard. Two gays were there, Lady Tupon and Nunuk, a gay from Magelang.

system meaning that religion is able to integrate various power, logical implication, and meaning and value unities into the solidity of the society by way of dogmas, prohibitions, persuasions, and instructions that must be carried out. In other words, meaningful logics see that a social group consisting of sub-groups that are inter-related or are controlled by functions of a central power becomes a cause that moves it⁴⁸.

On the attitudinal level, gays are convinced that religion is a bridge to piety of self. None of the gays has negative perceptions towards religion. On the behavioral level, however, perspectives are different. Gays' piety often times becomes an obsession when the gays step into their old age, an obsession towards awareness when they begin to be abandoned.

Religion as a measure of a cultural system within a human communality is capable of tying various functional behaviours in the gay world such as intentions to help each other, sympathies towards gay mates who are faced with difficulties, and others. They dedicate their obedience to the religious power since religion gives them signals or, to be more precise, is to them an icon. These symbols become special terms that are regarded as sacred symbols. What gives it more than just sacred symbols to obey, however, is the fact that, in sacred symbols are contained authority, power, and mystery.

Meanwhile, in the meaning system, religion will determine the orientation of gay groups towards their life venues when the value system will determine what attitudes they will take towards their life venues they respond to according to their meaning system. Hence, the tight relationship between the meaning system and the value system will produce four things.

The first is sense; referring to movement and interaction of a system over and above meaning and values. Welly's doing the dead prayers is a mixture between religious meaning and value systems which have a social dimension simultaneously. The second is taste; that is selection of

⁴⁸Clifford Geertz, *Interpretation of Culture*, Yogyakarta: Kanisius, 1992, 5.

styles in an interaction. There is no common agreement among the gays in reflecting their religious attitudes. Some maintain their female attires and some others go back to their original nature as males.

The third is feeling; that is related to emotion, sensitive, and sentimental. It is related to psychological events. Even though professing in commercial sex, during the fasting month, a large number of the gays do their fasting. They state that, as Muslims, they must fast as fasting is a religious obligation. Fasting is seen as a task that can give them a 'different' feeling since it is done only once every year. The fourth is meaning; which refers to political matters. The motivation of gays in encouraging their friends to conduct religious activities is not detached from their wishes to be perceived positively by their surroundings.

Conclusion

In the perspectives of defences towards religious values, deconstruction gives impacts on the honouring of the correctness of interpretations by others, especially to give a new space to others so that there will no longer be a single interpretation to what God gives. In other words, deconstructive ideas shift the idea and discourse nuances from the formerly transcendent directions to the more horizontal discourse spaces. Consequently, religion is no longer seen as merely a package to be accepted literally, but it also becomes a debate of discourses along the experiences in the journeys as a gay, externally among different faiths or internally within one and the same faith.

The condition of being gays must be understood as a process that does not stand alone as a product of learning, especially that which is obtained in the family and community. Being gays follows a long track from a social and cultural construct. Berger's concept on social constructions shows that the society is the product of human beings and human beings are the product of the society. This way, there is a dialectics between the

self and the socio-cultural world. That is why daily life realities contain typological schemes based on which others are to be understood and treated. It is for this reason that dialectics occurs in three simultaneous moments: externalization, which is adaptation of the self to the socio-cultural world; objectification, which is social interaction in the inter-subjective world which is institutionalized or undergoing an institutionalization process; and internalization, in which individuals identify themselves with social institutions or organizations in which they become members.

The revival of gays' religious life is not to be interpreted as merely building their social images. Revivals such as this become an integral part of religious interpretations which demand changes. Gays' revival of their religious life can also be described as a strategy and actualization of their life. While, in the 1980s, gays' actualization is reflected in social activities such as performances and sports, the revival of the religious groups is translated as a change in their actualization patterns. Such patterns are not separate from their social constructions, either through social relation among the gays or through the society's social constructions.

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