The Perfect Woman: Transgender Femininity and National Modernity in New Order Indonesia, 1968–1978

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The decade between 1968 and 1978 was a period of remarkable activity in the state's use of scientific knowledge about sex, gender, and sexuality to define individual bodies in Indonesia. In this article, I analyze a particular locus for the deployment of expert knowledge about the body that emerged during this decade, the process through which Indonesian state experts incorporated, defined, and debated transnational knowledge about transgender femininity. I argue that the very means through which the state sought to transfer knowledge about transgender femininity—an obsessive bureaucratic culture of documentation—generated the possibility for contradictory and ambivalent discourses about the relationship between gender and the self.

Following a military coup in 1965, General Suharto officially became president of the Republic of Indonesia in 1968, marking the beginning of the thirty-year period of authoritarian and developmentalist rule known as the New Order.[1] While Suharto subjected those who posed a threat to his power to varying degrees of coercion and terror, this was also a period marked by the growth of the mass media, economic growth, and dreams of a transparent modernity. From the very beginning, the regime defined itself by and justified its rule through a commitment to seeking out solutions to everyday problems through an apparently transparent transfer of expert knowledge into the realm of the everyday.

Reflecting the state's commitment to intensive documentation and recourse to expert knowledge, writers with and without explicit endorsement

[1] Suharto was president for thirty years. His rule ended in 1998 following enormous economic instability and mass demonstrations. For an accessible and illuminating reflection on Suharto's life and legacy in Indonesia, see Benedict R. O'G. Anderson, "Exit Suharto: Obituary for a Mediocre Tyrant," *New Left Review* 2, no. 50 (2008): 27–59.

Journal of the History of Sexuality, Vol. 28, no. 1, January 2019

DOI: 10.7560/JHS28102

took to writing in a range of official and popular publications. State experts expended considerable effort in their definitional work, drawing on a wide range of psychological, medical, and biological theories circulating transnationally at the time. A tacit yet ambiguous state endorsement of transgender femininity rested on the transport of knowledge between the expert and popular domain contained, for example, in didactic explanations from medical experts in films and magazines targeting a general audience. Yet each of these intensive efforts to demonstrate the mastery of technical knowledge over the body ultimately served to undermine the all-powerful and distinctively national ideology to which the state aspired.

Rather than merely furthering the state's ideological aims, then, doctors and scientists also oriented themselves toward what they saw as universal and therefore definitive scientific knowledge.[2] The contradictions opened up by these state-sanctioned efforts to demonstrate the mastery of expertise made possible divergent forms of popular opinion. As a result, the relationship between sex, gender, and sexuality—as well as the specific form of personhood it was meant to index—was to remain inconclusive. The meanings of expert knowledge about transgender femininity thus escaped the singular ideological ends that it was introduced to achieve.

As is the case in other parts of the world, the relationship between an appropriate performance of femininity and women's bodies more broadly during this period was an active site for state experts who attempted to reconcile national modernity with the everyday presentation of the self. By invoking what anthropologist Carla Jones calls "seemingly universal technical facts," the state invested immense resources in defining and disciplining femininity while simultaneously asserting that it was describing "natural" embodied differences.[3] Armed with this expertise, the state represented the men and women as linked to oppositional and binary roles, with women belonging to the domestic sphere and men to the public sphere. While women's bodies were of course not entirely under the control of state experts, they were subject to an extraordinary degree of surveillance and scrutiny. This took place through an enormous family planning program and the compulsion to join state-endorsed associations at the local level that tutored women in acceptable practices of femininity. Through a process that Evelyn Blackwood refers to as the "deployment of gender," the state normalized definitions of acceptable of sexuality around an ideal of heteronormative reproduction.[4] Such discourse saturated the

[2] Andrew Goss, *The Floracrats: State-Sponsored Science and the Failure of the Enlightenment in Indonesia* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2011), 143.

[3] Carla Jones, "Better Women: The Cultural Politics of Gendered Expertise in Indonesia," *American Anthropologist* 112, no. 2 (2010): 275.

[4] Evelyn Blackwood, "Regulation of Sexuality in Indonesian Discourse: Normative Gender, Criminal Law and Shifting Strategies of Control," *Culture, Health & Sexuality* 9, no. 3 (2007): 295.

national mass media, which generated forms of "public intimacy" through representations of family life and women's bodies as profoundly implicated in national progress.[5] In this context, gender emerged as an especially dense—and fraught—biopolitical node linking moral comportment to projects of national development.

Given the heteronormativity implicit in efforts to render bodies knowable during this period, it is somewhat unremarkable that state experts went to extraordinary lengths to secure gender as the product of natural differences. What I have found surprising about how psychologists, doctors, and scientists—whom the state held up as experts—set out to do this is how frequently and open-endedly they expressed interest in transgender femininity. The decade between 1968 and 1978 is especially notable given that it marked an occasion when state experts spoke candidly about transgender femininity as a part of broader efforts to interpellate "normalized, reproductive citizens."[6] Most scholars have addressed the uses to which femininity was put as the central framework for social difference in New Order Indonesia as a logical starting point for analysis.[7] Yet such an understanding rests on the presumption of a gendered self that can always already be understood as a coherent entity, itself defined in terms of heteronormative and cisgender reproductive roles. By historicizing transgender femininity in terms of state expertise—and not necessarily as always marginal or resistant—this article argues for a more expansive genealogy of the meanings of femininity during the New Order.

The research upon which this article is based draws on sources collected from the Indonesian popular press, state publications, and legal texts. It is part of a larger research project comprising ethnographic and historical research for which I conducted fourteen months of fieldwork in the Indonesian cities of Jakarta, Yogyakarta, Surabaya, and Semarang in 2014 and 2015. It draws mostly on written sources about transgender femininity collected from various archives, including the Indonesian National Library (Perpustakaan Nasional Indonesia), the National Library of Australia, and the Australian National University libraries, and to a lesser degree on oral history accounts collected from transgender women alive during the first decade of the New Order. The archival sources and oral history accounts are thus largely Jakarta based, and all were produced on Java. As such, the categorical distinctions and historical sources that I refer to offer a crucial

[5] Suzanne Brenner, "On the Public Intimacy of the New Order: Images of Women in the Popular Indonesian Print Media," *Indonesia*, no. 67 (1999): 13–37.

[6] Blackwood, "Regulation of Sexuality," 295.

[7] The history of femininity in colonial and postcolonial Indonesia constitutes an entire field of discussion and debate, with significant attention paid to the form that discourse about gender took during the New Order. For example, Laurie Sears's edited volume includes a range of chapters about the historical uses to which discourse about femininity has been put in Indonesia but pays little attention to questioning naturalized assumptions about the difference between men's and women's bodies more generally. Laurie J Sears, *Fantasizing the Feminine in Indonesia* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1996).

perspective on the intersections between gender, sexuality, and class during the Indonesian New Order.[8]

Expertise and Gender in the New Order

The incremental deployment and revision of expert knowledge about transgender femininity through its use in the popular press prompted moments of ambivalence and paradox with regard to gender. I draw on a range of official sources, such as a magazine produced by the Department of Health, in addition to popular media, such as daily newspapers, to speculate as to what the effects of such a contested notion of gender was at the time. These sources incorporate various concepts from American psychology and medicine in addition to accounts linking transgender bodies to medical transformation circulating globally at the time. Although experts identified same-sex desire as cause for concern, they produced a far greater body of knowledge related to the vexed medical categories "transvestite" and "transsexual" in dialogue with mostly North American scholarship. These and other related terms—even those now as quotidian for Western readers as "gender identity" and the "opposite sex"—were incorporated and transformed as they borrowed from existing Indonesian terms.

Such forms of knowledge usually focused on the figure of the *banci*, a term used widely in Indonesia today to refer to a very wide range of gender and sexual transgression, incorporating transgender women, transgender women, masculine lesbians, and feminine gay men. While sources are not entirely clear on the matter, anthropologists have traced the historical uses of the term *banci* to visible performances of transgender femininity recorded since at least the middle of the nineteenth century, suggesting a relationship to precursors for the linguistic and geographical that extend to the borders of the Dutch colonial state.[9] This is especially notable in the Indonesian context—and indeed throughout Southeast Asia—where there is enormous variety in both categories and practices that index sexual desire and gendered embodiment. In this regard, the term *banci* has emerged as both a polyvocal subject position and a well-known (and frequently

[8] While this partially reflects the immense concentration of published sources and organs of the state in Java, it also reflects the diffuse way that Javanese cultural values pervaded the New Order, including with regard to gender. John Pemberton details how routine appeals to Javanese cultural values generated an appearance of order—which displaced the violence and terror enacted by the regime—during this period. John Pemberton, *On the Subject of "Java"* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1994), 26.

[9] Tom Boellstorff, *The Gay Archipelago: Sexuality and Nation in Indonesia* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005), 56–57. The first mention of *banci* in the national mass media that I have located refers to a group of transgender women arrested for "deceiving the public" in a park in Jakarta. "Beberapa tjatatan tentang: Orang-orang bantji," *Siasat*, 20 May 1951, 5.

impolite) term of address regarding gender difference, situated at once at local, national, and transnational scales of meaning.[10]

While the long history and diverse uses of *banci* preclude any definitive answer as to its historical origins, the term has acquired a relationship to class status. Based on research undertaken during the New Order, Dédé Oetomo refers to *banci*—insomuch as the term overlaps with various forms of transgender femininity—as linked to "working-class" status, which manifests through visible expressions of sexuality (including sex work).[11] As we shall see, the new terms that emerged during the New Order generated the means through which the category *banci* came to be understood as "working class," defined against emergent norms of modern beauty. In doing so, these new terms also made possible ways for transgender femininity to constitute a middle- or even upper-class kind of self.[12]

It was the arrival of two new terms at either end of the first decade of the New Order—*wadam* in 1968 and *waria* in 1978—that offers the clearest introduction to the complex process of defining transgender femininity described in this article. *Wadam*, derived by joining together the names Hawa (Eve) and Adam, was first used as a modern alternative to *banci* around 1968.[13] This term was accompanied with limited forms of state support—usually in the form of paternalistic calls that *wadam* should be rehabilitated into Indonesian society—from the governor of Jakarta at the time, Ali Sadikin. According to those present at the time, *wadam* was a bottom-up category created by those who felt themselves best represented by it—even as a replacement for the "rough" term *banci*—and conveyed to state officials on that basis. In June 1978 the new term *waria*, a combination of the Indonesian words *wanita* (woman) and *pria* (man), replaced the existing term.[14] In this case, a group of *wadam* were assembled by

[10] Boellstorff, "Waria, National Transvestites," 83–84.

[11] Dédé Oetomo, "Masculinity in Indonesia," in *Framing the Sexual Subject: The Politics of Gender, Sexuality, and Power*, ed. Richard Guy Parker, Regina Maria Barbosa, and Peter Aggleton (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 50.

[12] Carla Jones, "Women in the Middle: Femininity, Virtue, and Excess in Indonesian Discourses of Middle Classness," in *The Global Middle Classes: Theorizing through Ethnography*, ed. Rachel Heiman, Carla Freeman, and Mark Liechty (Santa Fe, NM: SAR Press, 2012), 151.

[13] Arief Budiman, "'Wanita-Adam'—Sebuah persoalan," *Kompas*, 16 January 1969, 1. Intellectual Arief Budiman introduced the term *wadam* on the front page of the national daily newspaper *Kompas* in January 1968. The origins of the term are unclear, but according to one oral history account that I collected from senior *waria* figure Mami Maya Puspa in Jakarta in June 2015, she suggested that the term was decided on by a group of those who identified themselves with government blessing in or around 1968. She recalled that this group received the support of Jakarta-based members of Musyarawah Kekeluargaan Gotong Royong (MKGR), an organization affiliated with both the military and Suharto's ruling party. See also Dédé Oetomo, "Masculinity in Indonesia," 51–52.

[14] "Waria pengganti istilah wadam," *Kompas*, 7 June 1978, 12. This newspaper account suggests that the reason for the change was to show respect for the concerns for an unidentified Islamic group in east Java, given that the term *wadam* includes the name of a prophet

government officials and offered a number of choices that combined the Indonesian words for "man" and "woman."[15] While not entirely a state invention and certainly idiosyncratic, the process through which the term *waria* was arrived at does reflect the top-down and form-obsessed governmentality of the New Order.

A less prominent but no less significant effort to define transgender femininity is reflected in the interest shown by Indonesian experts in scientific and medical interventions on the gendered body from around 1973 onward. This body of knowledge about transgender drew on a similar logic shown to cisgender femininity displayed during the New Order. This view of gender rested on an overall concern with improvement that relied on both the plasticity of bodily comportment and immutable biological differences. Despite the apparent incommensurability of these perspectives, state experts made every effort to accommodate transgender femininity as part of their efforts to establish a universal view of gender. As we shall see, it was this initial state interest that conferred a degree of class-based respectability to the new concepts *wadam* and *waria*. Yet it also meant that those who were defined and defined themselves on this basis fell just outside of the dominant binary gendered grid through which citizenship was understood and conferred. While state interest was short-lived, state experts considered the possibility that expert knowledge could intervene to enable the successful accomplishment of gender for both transgender and cisgender individuals alike.

Defining "Transgender" in Indonesia

The rapid adoption and recognition of new concepts related to transgender femininity suggest the distinctive role that expert knowledge played in shaping the meaning of transgender femininity in Indonesia during this decade. But the description of transgender femininity as a specific kind of problem linked to modernity among experts also generates productive insights for historical analysis, given that various forms of gendered embodiment certainly predate the New Order. Indeed, this is presumably one way in which state experts came to consider it as a specific "problem" to be considered in the first place, a fact alluded to but not expanded upon in various sources.[16]

(Adam). While the reasons are probably more complex, the attention given to a seemingly trivial issue reflects a greater concern shown by Suharto to explicitly court Islamic groups in light of the Iranian revolution and growing economic and social instability in the years prior. It is also worth noting that this was also one year after Jakarta governor Ali Sadikin, known for his sympathetic attitudes toward *wadam*, was removed from office after an internal political dispute.

[15] Oral history account collected from senior *waria* Ibu Nancy Iskandar in Jakarta in June 2015.

[16] Darmadji, "Masalah wadam dan pemetjahannya."

As anthropologists such as Michael Peletz, Evelyn Blackwood, and Tom Boellstorff have demonstrated, various forms of "gender pluralism" flourished during the colonial and postcolonial periods in Southeast Asia.[17] The question of whether modernity has marked an erosion of "traditional" forms of transgender femininity in the face of an encroaching cisgender and heteronormative modernity is far from straightforward. For example, each *waria* whom I interviewed who lived in Jakarta during the 1950s and early 1960s recalled that they were subject to censure for appearing in public as women during this earlier period, particularly during the day. The practice of transgender femininity prior to the New Order appears to have been based on appearing "as a woman" only at suitable times and locations. It follows that, far from a lamentable erosion of preexisting traditions, *waria* see this period as a "golden age," a cultural moment that laid the foundations for widespread social acceptance and recognition linked to modern femininity. It appears that the incorporation of transnational knowledge about sex, gender, and sexuality resulted in a degree of recognition that enabled transgender femininity to become a valued part of Indonesian national society. This suggests that any attempt to understand the relationship between past and present categories for gendered embodiment in Indonesia is complicated by its intersections with national and regional histories of class, race, and sexuality.

Reflecting the centrality of national belonging—expressed through everyday efforts to achieve recognition and acceptance—Boellstorff has referred to *waria* as Indonesia's "national transvestites," a term that subtly hints at how waria are implicated in the distinctive national culture of New Order expertise.[18] Apart from understandable criticisms of its use as pathologizing and inaccurate—a case that could certainly be made in the Indonesian context—any straightforward understanding of the term "transvestite" is confounded by its use both by foreign anthropologists and by Indonesian state experts, albeit in highly distinctive ways. I use "transgender femininity" to highlight how histories of transnational medical and scientific knowledge about the gendered body are never neutral but "deeply tied to racial notions of the normal and ideal body, the normal and ideal woman."[19] This

[17] See Michael G. Peletz, *Gender Pluralism: Southeast Asia since Early Modern Times* (New York: Routledge, 2009); Evelyn Blackwood, "Gender Transgression in Colonial and Postcolonial Indonesia," *Journal of Asian Studies* 64, no. 4 (2005): 849–79; and Boellstorff, *The Gay Archipelago*, 46–48.

[18] See Tom Boellstorff, "Waria, National Transvestites," in *A Coincidence of Desires: Anthropology, Queer Studies, Indonesia* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007).

[19] Eric Plemons, *The Look of a Woman: Facial Feminization Surgery and the Therapeutics of Trans-Medicine* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2017), 25. While Indonesian norms of feminine beauty differ from those described in Eric Plemons's account of facial feminization surgery in the United States, they are nevertheless tied to transnational regimes of race in specific ways. Ayu L. Saraswati, *Seeing Beauty, Sensing Race in Transnational Indonesia* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2013), 78.

encompasses the use and translation of concepts used by Indonesian experts in primary sources, terms that include "transvestite," "transsexuality," and "intersex," as well as their relationship to the ideal aesthetic and physical form that bodies so described should take.

A concern for understanding Indonesian transgender femininity in the context of global histories of sex/gender/sexuality is not mine alone but emerges in dialogue with a now-established body of literature in transgender studies.[20] Susan Stryker's study of the global circulation of transsexuality in the Philippines in the 1960s suggests that homosexuality/heterosexuality might not be the only way through which the globalization of sexuality proceeded; rather, it also involved distinguishing transgender/cisgender via local and national categories of gender and sexual difference.[21] I use the contemporary Indonesian term *waria* to refer to those whom I interacted with during the course of my research—this is the term used by my interlocutors to refer to themselves and is how they prefer to be described—and the term as it was used in primary sources in the case of *banci* and *wadam* as used in written sources. This usage serves to reveal how each of these categories—used by Indonesian state experts armed with Western psychological and medical expertise—came to articulate a range of embodied possibilities and challenge a straightforward understanding of gender as a central organizing analytical framework for the self at all.

The relationship between state expertise and transgender femininity emerges most explicitly in the recognition granted to the two new terms mentioned earlier: *wadam* and *waria*. Jakarta's municipal governor between 1966 and 1977, Ali Sadikin, was central to the emergence of both.[22] Many *waria* with whom I spoke and who were alive during the period remembered him fondly as a father figure who drew them into a national imaginary through interventions that harnessed their individual development to that of a modern society. Ali Sadikin is widely known for his emphasis on discipline and training, including military-style campaigns to impose order on a growing urban "underclass" that threatened the facade of New Order stability.[23] This paternalistic relationship is reflected in an October 1968 article in the weekly magazine *Mingguan djaja*, which was published by the Jakarta municipal government for distribution to residents of the city and which included a range of social, cultural, and economic stories.[24] As the unnamed journalist

[20] Susan Stryker and Paisley Currah, introduction to *TSQ: Transgender Studies Quarterly* 1, no. 1–2 (2014): 1–18.

[21] Susan Stryker, "Kaming Mga Talyada (We Who Are Sexy): The Transsexual Whiteness of Christine Jorgensen in the (Post)colonial Philippines," in *The Transgender Studies Reader 2*, ed. S. Stryker and A. Aizura (London: Routledge, 2013), 543–52.

[22] Boellstorff, "Waria, National Transvestites," 103.

[23] Abidin Kusno, *The Appearances of Memory: Mnemonic Practices of Architecture and Urban Form in Indonesia* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010), 282.

[24] The readership for the magazine most likely would have been the burgeoning numbers of civil servants employed during this period who constituted almost the entirety of Jakarta's

writes on behalf of the magazine's editors, "If it wasn't for Governor Ali Sadikin, who considers every citizen of the capital city [Jakarta] his child, [the *banci*] would be fated to live out their days as isolated and miserable wretches."[25] *Waria*, like all citizens who did not quite fit in, were thus subject to a range of disciplinary measures aimed at rehabilitating them into the norms of an emergent Indonesian middle-class morality.

The relationship between *banci* and the Jakarta governor—his claim to have a personal investment in their well-being—is useful for the way that it highlights the centrality of state recognition to transgender femininity during New Order Indonesia.[26] Indeed, strategies for national belonging among *waria* have usually centered on strategies through which they might assert their expertise in modern norms of feminine beauty. For example, waria appeared as a "paragon of feminine beauty" in some of the first beauty pageants held during the New Order as early as 1968.[20] Arguably, a gender presentation premised on the norms of modern femininity led to increased media attention and more sympathetic concern for their welfare throughout the New Order. However, it is certainly striking that the moment that *waria* recall as one in which they were finally able to be visible coincided with an increasingly narrow definition of men and women. As individuals who did not meet an authoritarian state's expectations of masculinity or femininity, a more logical reaction might have been to attempt to discipline and reform them, which did have historical precedents. I have found that it was precisely the narrow ideals of femininity as a demure form of reproductive citizenship—and the forms of expert knowledge that supported a more granular definition of men and women—that New Order *waria* used to stake their claims to social acceptance.

Gender and Sexuality in the Early New Order

From its inception, the New Order state consistently narrated homosexuality as a foreign phenomenon that had no place in the Indonesian nation.[27] By

middle class. Richard Robison, "The Middle Class and the Bourgeoisie in Indonesia," in *The New Rich in Asia: Mobile Phones, McDonald's and Middle-Class Revolution*, ed. Richard Robison and David S. G. Goodman (London: Routledge, 1996), 79.

[25] "Tjeritera seorang bantji jang berpendidikan universiter," *Minggoean djaja*, 19 October 1968, 4. The older term *banci* (written in this source using an older style of transliteration, *bantji*) is used in each of the articles rather than *wadam* possibly because it was not widely understood by the magazine's readership and also because those interviewed for the articles referred to themselves as such.

[26] Boellstorff, "Waria, National Transvestites."

[20] The relationship between *waria* and the visibility afforded by modern femininity developed during the New Order. Benjamin Hegarty, "Under the Lights, onto the Stage: Becoming *Waria* through National Glamour in New Order Indonesia," *TSQ: Transgender Studies Quarterly* 5, no. 3 (2018): 362.

[27] Evelyn Blackwood, "Transnational Sexualities in One Place: Indonesian Readings," *Gender and Society* 19, no. 2 (2005): 221–42.

contrast, transgender femininity was discussed in frank and open terms.[28] State experts in Jakarta began to discuss *wadam* in relation to the proliferation of definitions of masculinity and femininity around 1968. In that year, the Jakarta municipal government published a series of articles on the topic of the "prevention of *banci*."[29] The following year, an Indonesian psychologist, Darmadji, wrote an article entitled "The Problem of *Wadam* and Their Prevention" for the national daily newspaper, *Kompas*. In doing so, he drew on the new term as a way to draw an Indonesian "problem" into dialogue with solutions offered by forms of expertise from Western psychology. He reflected on the appearance of *wadam* as part of a broader problem concerning the development of gender identity within the family: "It is just that they are experiencing the consequences of psychosexual development most likely encountered during their childhood."[30] Darmadji here suggests that young men must be shielded both from seeing *wadam* and from overly feminine influences—particularly their mothers—in order to avoid such a transformation. On the front page of the same newspaper but in more sympathetic tones, the public intellectual Arief Budiman distinguished *wadam* from "homosexuals" as "transvestites." The latter, he writes, identify as the "opposite sex" or as male-bodied individuals who understand themselves to be women.[31]

It would thus be incorrect to mistake this interest—by either the Jakarta governor or in the popular press—for deliberate tolerance or acceptance. Most accounts indicate that transgender femininity drew the ire of state officials and the media, which deployed newly available forms of knowledge such as "psychosexual development" mentioned earlier in an attempt to explain and contain them. The twin concerns of safeguarding morality and applying expertise to everyday problems stimulated interest in assisting *wadam*.[32] Most commonly, experts described *banci* as the result of

[28] Tjiptono Darmadji, "Masalah wadam dan pemetjahannya," *Kompas*, 16 January 1969, 3. A psychologist named Darmadji at the time wrote in a daily newspaper that a willingness to tolerate *wadam* rather than homosexuality was perhaps due to preexisting ritual and performance practices found throughout the archipelago. He suggests that they are nevertheless a significant problem in modern Indonesian society that requires significant effort—through the tools offered by psychology—to prevent.

[29] "Bentjong (bantji)," *Minggguan djaja*, 12 October 1968; "Tjeritera seorang bantji jang berpendidikan universiter," *Minggguan djaja*, 19 October 1968, 4, 10; "Rumah bentjongan," *Minggguan djaja*, 2 November 1968, 3–4, 12; "Pengalamanku sebagai seorang bentjong," *Minggguan djaja*, 6 November 1968, 26–28; "Masalah bentjong (bantji) di ibukota," *Minggguan djaja*, 9 November 1968, 5–7, 40; "Charles d'Éon pria jang hidup sebagai wanita," *Minggguan djaja*, 23 November 1968, 14–15, 29; "Korban2 lesbianisme," *Minggguan djaja*, 30 November 1968, 14–15.

[30] Darmadji, "Masalah wadam dan pemetjahannya." The early use of the term "opposite sex" in order to define *wadam* prefigures much more widespread understanding of gender on that basis.

[31] Budiman, "'Wanita-Adam'—Sebuah persoalan."

[32] "Razzia wadam," *Kompas*, 17 January 1969, 2. This newspaper article quotes a police officer who condemns *wadam*'s practice of sex work on the edges of Jakarta's new network of

inappropriate childrearing, suggesting the family as a "state in miniature."[33] Experts lamented, however, that little could be done for *wadam* who had "developed in the wrong direction," and they could not be returned to a *penyaluran normal* (normal track).[34] In the name of "prevention," then, the psychologist Darmadji's article reflects a broad consensus that society should not ostracize *wadam* and *banci* completely. Instead, both psychologists and state officials—with the support of the governor Ali Sadikin—reasoned that "it is enough to provide them opportunities to work, consistent with their desires and abilities."[35] However, far from settling the facts of gender and sexuality, the terms used to referred to *banci* and *wadam*—and the crossings between them—introduced a new vocabulary through which the meanings of masculinity and femininity would come under increasing scrutiny.

This scrutiny emerged in a range of guises. The clearest evidence of interest in transgender femininity by Jakarta-based state officials during the New Order appears in the pages of the series of *Minggguan djaja* magazine articles published in late 1968. Earlier that same year, a newspaper article had announced that fifteen thousand *wadam* were resident in the city; Governor Ali Sadikin was quoted as calling on "every citizen to overcome that problem" (menanggulangi masalah itu).[36] As a municipal government magazine located between expert knowledge and popular interest, *Minggguan djaja* provided popular interest stories, as well as those related to the economic development in the capital city. The articles in the series about *banci* are indicative of the wider remit of the magazine to transfer expert knowledge into the popular realm—most likely aimed at an audience almost entirely associated with the civil service. Articles in this series ranged from detailed investigations and interviews with *banci* to lists of definitions from Western psychology and medicine that referred to well-known Western sexologists such as Havelock Ellis.

One such list illustrates the differences between "hermaphrodite" as "people with combined men's and women's genitals," "*homoseksuil*" as "men who interact intimately [berhubungan kelamin] with other men . . . and wear women's clothing for this purpose," and "*bisexuil*" as "men who have sex with women and other men, especially those who perform [berlagak lagunya] or dress as women." What this suggests is an effort to define homosexuality in the Indonesian context as always bearing a relationship

highways, complaining that "they create an unpleasant view [*pemandangan yang tidak baik*], especially for foreign guests." In this police officer's view, *wadam* were an embarrassment who might cause embarrassment if seen by visiting dignitaries.

[33] "Tjeritera seorang bantji jang berpendidikan universiter," 4; Darmadji, "Masalah wadam dan pemetjahannya"; Masdani, "Pemeriksaan psikologik pada bantji."

[34] Darmadji, "Masalah wadam dan pemetjahannya."

[35] Ibid., 3.

[36] While the population of *wadam* cited in this article is likely superfluous, it appears that their growing visibility prompted the mobilization of state expertise. "Di Djakarta terdapat 15,000 bantji," *Kompas*, 5 August 1968, 2.

to gender presentation; state experts may have been reading Western sexologists, but their interpretations had a bearing on how these concepts were translated into Indonesian and thus received in popular culture. Armed with a list of terms, *Mingguan djaja* offered the following definition as most suitable for transgender femininity as observed in Jakarta: "Transvestite = a man who is physically a man, but with the psyche [*psychis*] of a woman. She does the work of a woman and wears women's clothing because of the force [*dorongan*] of her soul [*jiwa*]."[37]

This series of articles clarifies that "transvestites" are people who wear the clothes of the opposite sex. Moreover, the authors state that these are not temporary but "permanent transvestites" (*transvestit abadi*) afflicted by an "abnormality" (*keabnormalan*). This pathologizing definition of *banci* as a category of "transvestite" rested on the fact that they not only wear the clothes of the "opposite sex" but also possess an inner sense of self as a woman. A common definition of *banci* and *wadam* thus emerged as a hybrid formulation: the English term "transvestite" was used to refer to *banci* as those who had an enduring "women's soul," translated by using an existing Indonesian term, *jiwa*.[38] Doing so appears to explicitly link a sense of individualized interiority to gender identification. Based on observations and interviews with *banci* in Jakarta, *Mingguan djaja* further describes them as follows: "They dress in women's clothing and makeup during the day and at night, in and outside of the home" because of their "woman's soul" (*jiwa perempuan*).[39] As mentioned, the author compared this understanding of selfhood directly with homosexuality. According to the eyewitness accounts collected by the journalist, for some *banci* feminine embodiment incorporated the situational wearing of women's clothes for chance opportunities to have sex with men. For others, however, it was having a "woman's soul" that animated a much more profound and lasting relationship to an individual's gender presentation. The distribution of these definitions—presented by the journalists writing for *Mingguan djaja* and the psychologists in the pages of *Kompas*—served to consolidate three widespread understandings of *banci*. The first, according to these authors, is that possessing a "woman's soul" (*jiwa perempuan*) is the primary factor for physical manifestations of femininity; this cannot

[37] "Tjeritera seorang bantji jang berpendidikan universiter," 10. In this and other accounts, as was the case for many state magazines and other publications in New Order Indonesia, no name or rank is given to the person who wrote the source (apart from very well known figures). In this case, the author was most likely a journalist working under the instruction of editors who were civil servants employed by the Jakarta municipal government. Given Ali Sadikin's authoritarian and paternalistic rule (and reflecting a broader style of rule from the president down), and given that this was a state-sponsored magazine, it is likely that individual articles were vetted prior to being pursued.

[38] "Tjeritera seorang bantji jang berpendidikan universiter," 4.

[39] "Rumah tangga bentjong dan penghuninja," 7.

be repressed.[40] Second, becoming *banci* is a process, one determined to a large degree by social and familial influence. The third is the emphasis placed on separating transgender femininity from homosexuality as a self-evident fact.

A "woman's soul" emerged as the unifying grounds for these three understandings, which together distinguished the boundaries between cisgender and transgender bodies. While anthropologists who have described *waria*'s subjective understandings of selfhood in Indonesia have most often translated the Indonesian term *jiwa* as "soul" or "spirit," its historical use among state experts suggests a geneaology that extends to transnational networks of knowledge.[41] In the *Minqguan djaja* definitions, there is significant slippage between *jiwa* and the English-derived term *psychis*, which in this context is used to refer to something like the "mind of a woman." Thus understood, *jiwa* refers to an interiority that finds expression through the body, even as that corporeality shapes the form that a person's interiority takes. While this is a formulation that seems to accurately convey many anthropological accounts of personhood found throughout Indonesia, it also demonstrates the attempts made to transfer expertise onto individual subjects.[42] Rather than simply reproducing older ideas, the use of *jiwa* by state experts with regard to *banci* and *wadam* is a hybrid formulation. By this I mean that an existing concept (*jiwa*) was brought into dialogue with the Western theories proposed by figures like Harry Benjamin and Robert Stoller that define gender and sexuality as indexing a stable inner self.

This understanding must be situated within broader transformations in the use of scientific and medical expertise by the New Order state. The concept of *jiwa* as an Indonesian translation of "mind" more generally had itself only achieved widespread use as a concept by Indonesian psychiatrists in the first years of the New Order.[43] And it is striking that the earliest issues of the first Indonesian journal of psychiatry, *Djiwa* (simply the older transliteration of the same term, *jiwa*), contained a detailed case study about *banci* based on investigations conducted by psychiatrists and psychologists in Jakarta.[44] In light of this historical evidence, *jiwa* might thus be interpreted as having taken on a meaning more indebted to New Order expertise than its common translation as "soul" may suggest.

[40] Ibid.; Darmadji, "Masalah wadam dan pemetjahannya."

[41] See Evelyn Blackwood, *Falling into the Lesbi World* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2010), 101; Boellstorff, "Waria, National Transvestites," 88; and Boellstorff, *The Gay Archipelago*, 126.

[42] Clifford Geertz, *The Religion of Java* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1976), 281; Shelly Errington, *Meaning and Power in a Southeast Asian Realm* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1989), 76.

[43] Hans Pols, "The Development of Psychiatry in Indonesia: From Colonial to Modern Times," *International Review of Psychiatry* 18, no. 4 (2006): 366–67.

[44] A. Masdani, "Pemeriksaan psikologik pada bantji," *Djiwa,* no. 2 (1968): 55–60.

Translating Transgender in Indonesia

The 1970s saw an increasing emphasis on Western scientific and medical discourse by the New Order state that involved a range of biopolitical measures. For example, an invasive program of restricting women's fertility through reproductive health programs served as the material means through which women were encouraged to understand themselves as "procreators of the nation."[45] The organization for the wives of civil servants and Indonesia's revised marriage law—both key routes through which women's roles came to be defined—were established by 1974.[46] At around the same time, and as was the case in other parts of the world, the translation and selective incorporation of knowledge about emergent expertise about intersex, transsexuality, and homosexuality also influenced emergent definitions of gender.[47] As early as 1969, popular newspaper accounts had described both *wadam* and *banci* as individuals who identify with the "opposite sex"—a turn of phrase that reflects what Sandy Stone has called "a binary, oppositional mode of gender identification" circulating through various fields of medicine globally in relation to transsexuality at the time.[48]

These translations and the forms of selfhood that they referred to appeared infrequently but consistently in New Order state publications. In 1973 the official Department of Health magazine, *Majalah kesehatan,* defined *banci* expressly as those "whose mind is in conflict with their body."[49] This account, in a publication intended for dissemination among doctors and other medical professionals in hospitals and offices throughout Indonesia, came up with this formulation by drawing on the American psychologist Robert Stoller's theory of "gender identity."[50] Stoller and his colleagues had originally developed the concept in 1964 in an attempt to bridge biological and psychological explanations for gender development—as historian Joanne Meyerowitz writes, the concept as it was formulated

[45] Julia I. Suryakusuma, "The State and Sexuality in New Order Indonesia," in *Fantasizing the Feminine in Indonesia*, ed. Laurie J. Sears (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1996), 101. The 1974 Indonesian Marriage Act explicitly declared men to be *kepala rumah tangga* (heads of the household) and women to be *ibu rumah tangga* (housewives).

[46] Ibid.

[47] Asfaneh Najmabadi, *Professing Selves: Transsexuality and Same-Sex Desire in Contemporary Iran* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2014), 50. Asfaneh Najmabadi writes of a similar process through which "transsexuality" in Iran was formed at the intersection of various sources of knowledge about sex/gender/sexuality and their use in the popular media.

[48] Sandy Stone, "The Empire Strikes Back: A Posttranssexual Manifesto," *Camera Obscura* 10, no. 2 (1992): 156.

[49] Karsono, "Sedikit tentang hal banci," *Majalah kesehatan,* no. 37 (1973): 89–90.

[50] Susan Stryker and Stephen Whittle, eds., *The Transgender Studies Reader* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 53, 58. Robert Stoller's concept of "gender identity" not only was the result of academic theory but developed in clinical practice at the Gender Identity Center at UCLA. The case of Agnes, a young transgender-identified woman who "passed" as intersex to receive treatment, is illustrative both of conceptualizations of gender identity at the time and of how transgender people negotiated clinical settings on their own terms.

at the time further segregated sexuality from gender, as well as "more clearly differentiated the subjective sense of self from the behaviors associated with masculinity and femininity."[51] However, the department's translations of Stoller were not necessarily extensive, nor did they even reflect the efforts to identify binarized poles of behavior/identity present in the original text.

As a result, various ambiguities arose that troubled the assumed universality of expert knowledge. Despite taking some care to convey Stoller's perspective on sexuality and gender identity as distinct aspects of a single self, the author collapsed them. The result is a definition as follows: *banci* are individuals who have both a "male body" and a "woman's mind." Moreover, the author concluded that the "problem" cannot be cured through medical intervention. Given that *banci* are afflicted for life, society should offer opportunities for them, such as participation in beauty contests and vocational training in fields associated with femininity.[52] This harnessed transnational knowledge to preexisting terms in the case of *banci* and generated the production of new, hybridized Indonesian concepts. Despite their hybridity, this definitional work was indeed invested in securing the ambiguous relationship between cisgender bodies and heterosexuality. In particular, the concept of *sex kejiwaan* (mental sex)—possibly an Indonesian translation of Stoller's gender identity—was used not only to describe the subjective state of *banci* but to relate men's and women's social roles to their inner psychological and biological state.[53]

Vivian Rubianti and the Perfect Woman

Popular interest in transgender femininity emerged most evidently during the first widely publicized case of gender reassignment surgery by an Indonesian citizen, Vivian Rubianti, which took place in Singapore in early 1973.[54] Vivian had gained attention in the Indonesian national media after

[51] Joanne J. Meyerowitz, *How Sex Changed: A History of Transsexuality in the United States* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002), 115. Although a psychoanalyst by training, Stoller emphasized an ambiguous underlying biological base for what he called gender identity. In the case of those whom he called "transsexuals," he tended to see biology as less important, relying instead on a psychoanalytic analysis of gender as a product of childhood development. This is reflected in the Indonesian sources as well, which tend to emphasize the importance of harmonious and appropriate gendered roles within the family as a way to produce "normal" children.

[52] Karsono, "Sedikit tentang hal banci," 89–90.

[53] "'Sex kejiwaan' iwan memang wanita," *Kompas*, 10 October 1973; "Pembahasan beberapa aspek medis sexologi," *Majalah kesehatan,* no. 36 (1973): 38–42.

[54] "Gender reassignment surgery" is a translation of the most commonly used Indonesian phrase "operasi penggantian kelamin," literally, an "operation that changes the genitals." My choice of "gender reassignment surgery" is thus an attempt to preserve a sense of the way that the concept was translated and received among Indonesian experts and transgender-identified individuals as they understood it at the time. My efforts therefore rest on contextualizing

requesting that a Jakarta district court change the gender listed on her state documentation from that of male to female in October of the same year.[55] Vivian's international reputation and glamorous appearance attracted an extraordinary degree of attention, including reports of a visit from President Suharto and First Lady Ibu Tien after her court case.[56] This reflects how media interest transformed Vivian to something of a minor celebrity, culminating in a film about her life—in which she starred—released in cinemas in 1978.[57] That interest in Vivian's story unfolded across a period of significant crackdowns on press freedom—in addition to the ease with which mainstream papers referred to high-ranking figures—suggests if not explicit then certainly tacit support from state actors at the time.[58]

Vivian was a well-known hairdresser and stylist. She stated that she had undergone gender reassignment surgery in Singapore and wanted the correct gender listed in her passport to avoid confusion when traveling.[59] Intensive media interest in Vivian followed her court case, which was settled on 14 November 1973 in her favor: her *seks kejiwaan* (mental sex) was declared to be that of a woman, and as such she was issued identification that listed her gender as female.[60] Vivian's case is especially notable given that it set a precedent for Indonesians wishing to change the gender listed on their identity documents, although this continues to involve a complicated bureaucratic process.

Early public commentary on the case was supportive. One progressive writer published an editorial in *Kompas* saying that Indonesian "law must

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the use of this and other terms, the way that they traveled, and discussion of their relevance. Moreover, surgical interventions with respect to genital morphology have historically been given little attention within national discourse about transgender rights.

[55] "Pengadilan mengabulkan permohonan iwan rubianto berganti status wanita," *Kompas*, 15 November 1973, 1, 8.

[56] "Aturan bongkar pasang kelamin," 15.

[57] Ben Murtagh, *Genders and Sexualities in Indonesian Cinema: Constructing Gay, Lesbi and Waria Identities on Screen* (London: Routledge, 2013), 41–42. Ben Murtagh's account, focused on the film *Akulah Vivian*, is the most comprehensive on the matter. Although commercially unsuccessful, the film appears to have served a didactic purpose, with time reserved for medical professionals to explain the latest scientific expertise to the film's audience. The information echoes that introduced in this article. In one scene, a psychiatrist delineates three types of *wadam*: "transsexuals," "transvestites," and *wadam* or *banci kaléng*. Although the doctor defines the last term as "men who wear women's clothes for profit"—and firmly set apart from the first two—contemporary *waria* often use this expression in narratives of the self to refer to the first stages at which a *waria* starts to make their "woman's soul" visible by wearing feminine makeup and clothing.

[58] David T. Hill, *The Press in New Order Indonesia* (Jakarta, Indonesia: Equinox Publishing, 2007), 37–39. Indonesian film at this time was also subject to strict state censorship even from the preproduction stage, although the censors' interest was usually reserved for matters considered more sensitive, such as religion and overt political protest. See Krishna Sen, *Indonesian Cinema: Framing the New Order* (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Zed Books, 1994), 124.

[59] "Aturan bongkar pasang kelamin," *Tempo*, 29 September 1973, 14–15.

[60] "'Sex kejiwaan' iwan memang wanita."

go along with the developments of the era" in order to "facilitate and assist development."[61] Newspaper reports described the judge's final verdict in terms of its relationship to social justice and the triumph of science. One journalist wrote in lofty terms that "as someone with a mental affliction [*menderita jiwa*] the law must help Vivian . . . because the law must uphold welfare and justice."[62] Another journalist, writing in *Kompas*, noted in overtly nationalist terms that the case reflected that Indonesia was even "more liberated compared to Holland, and more flexible towards the development of a society which continues to develop."[63] Unlike in Indonesia, where judges had recognized Vivian Rubianti's postoperative gender in state documentation, this commentator claimed that the rigidity of definitions of gender made this impossible for her Dutch counterpart at that time.[64] While this claim may not necessarily be true, it does reveal the degree of popular interest and public sentiment linking transgender femininity to national progress at the time.

Such popular commentary is also notable in terms of the role that the more psychologized concept of *jiwa* introduced earlier played in lending the legitimacy of medical authority to Vivian's self-identification. Drawing on expert testimony from doctors and psychologists, the judge reasoned that given Vivian's "woman's mind," the alterations that she had made to her body meant that she fulfilled the Indonesian state's definition of "woman." Magazine and newspaper reports about the case suggest how such categorical distinctions rested on a broader distinction linking individual bodies to progress. Vivian claimed that the primary reason for seeking state recognition of her gender was to separate herself from the pejorative meanings attached to *banci* and to a lesser degree *wadam*, the term used in most reporting about the case. She was reported as saying that she felt especially "insulted by being referred to as a *banci*, which troubled her mind [*jiwa*]."[65] This view partially reflects Vivian's class position: she wished to distance herself from the common view that *banci* in particular represented a lower-class and sexualized subject position that was far from the productive and respectable member of society that she identified as.

A boon for Vivian was the support of reformist Islamic scholar Buya Hamka very soon after the story first broke. His support for transsexuality and for Vivian was unequivocal: "Basically, this is a person who doesn't know who they should be: they are not a man, and also are not a woman! People who are like this, who experience a long period of mental anguish

[61] "Aturan bongkar pasang kelamin," 14.

[62] "Pengadilan mengabulkan permohonan iwan rubianto berganti status wanita," 1.

[63] T. H. Lim, "Hoge raad Nederland tentang perobahan pencatatan sipil," *Kompas*, 14 March 1974, 4.

[64] Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1997), 14.

[65] "Biaya operasinya dua juta rupiah," *Kompas*, 21 September 1973, 5.

[*tekanan jiwa*], are often teased by others, so their mind is a mess. They are a man. However, their behavior, comportment, and even their mind [*jiwa*] is that of a woman. In the modern era, there is an operation that releases them from their anguish. If *wadam* then decide to obtain gender reassignment surgery, then so be it!"[66] Reflecting a now-common theme of relating transsexuality to national scientific progress, Hamka reasoned that all individuals should be able to access the science and technology enthusiastically adopted by the New Order state. In this case, according to Hamka, Vivian should be able to access "gender reassignment surgery" in order to alleviate her suffering.[67] While Hamka's comments appear to reflect a consensus of sympathy for *wadam*, the capacity to receive assistance rested on the necessity to submit to state expertise.

Interest in Vivian's case led to widespread discussion of the capabilities of modern technology to transform gender, usually as a speculative concern for "operasi penggantian kelamin" (operation that changes or transforms the genitals).[68] One consequence was a demand for greater clarification by state experts as to the relationship between transgender femininity and cisgender or "normal" femininity. The tentative acceptance of Vivian rested on recasting the existing term *banci* and, to a lesser degree, *wadam* as outside of a respectable and consistently performed femininity worthy of state recognition. This increasingly manifested in the focus on fastening the meaning of the category "woman" more closely to a capacity to bear children. It is notable that the judge in Vivian's case noted that even though she could not give birth to children, she *should* be considered a woman legally. As the judge justified sensibly: "Among women there are those who may be born less than perfect [kurang sempurna], such as those who do not have a womb or ovaries, but they are nonetheless called women." Nevertheless, in this and other accounts, the meaning of the "perfect woman" was clarified beyond doubt: one with the capacity to engage in heterosexual reproduction. At the same time, a lack of clarity as to the relationship between genital morphology, inner self, and the ideal performance of gender surfaced repeatedly, confounding any opportunity to settle the matter beyond doubt.

[66] "Buya hamka mengenai kasus ganti kelamin & pertunangan," *Kompas*, 22 September 1973, 1, 12.

[67] Ibid., 1. Hamka described her experience as a "mental suffering" (*tekanan jiwa*) related to her being a *khunsa*, an Arabic-language term which in this case appears to combine definitions of intersex and transsexuality.

[68] Hamka's declaration of support for Vivian Rubianti's transsexuality by way of referencing the concept of *khunsa* bears notable parallels with Iran. Throughout the 1960s and 1970s, Iranian medical experts' discussions—similar to Hamka's position as he was quoted in the 1973 *Kompas* article—reflect understanding of an affiliation between intersexuality and transsexuality (Najmabadi 2014, 47). Although Iran and Indonesia each developed a different set of debates on the topic, the Indonesian Council of Ulema (of which Hamka was chair) *fatwa* in 1983, which parsed out "khunsa" as an acceptable "operation to perfect the genitals" and "changing sex" as unacceptable, is similar to some Iranian Islamic scholar's interpretations of the issue (Najmabadi 2014, 180).

It was this speculation that provided the grounds for Indonesian doctors to undertake the nation's first surgical intervention in 1975, also framed with reference to "transforming the genitals."

Nationalizing Transsexuality

A narrowed definition of femininity based on a woman's reproductive capacities—rather than her inner state—had profound consequences in the last half of the 1970s. Experts and commentators in the popular press increasingly questioned whether *wadam* could bear children. Dr. Herman, a Jakarta government Department of Health official and medical doctor working in the field of reproductive health, was quoted in a newspaper article that the success of "an operation creating perfect genitals" could only be measured against the criterion of whether it had provided "the capacity to later have children."[69] Such definitions of *wadam* emerged alongside interest in intersex. For example, Dr. Herman noted that operations that could "change [*merubah*] genitals that were 'half and half' to those of a man" were already possible in Jakarta. By describing the patient using the existing term *wadam*, Dr. Herman articulated how terminological slippage between transsexuality and intersex served as a route through which the meaning of femininity was related to genital morphology and in turn to the practice of reproduction in the Indonesian setting.[70]

The most significant investment by the Indonesian state in science and medicine's capacity to transform gender came two years after Vivian's story first broke, when Indonesian doctors undertook the nation's first surgical intervention in June 1975. The availability of surgical interventions related to transsexuality, while never widespread, emerged as an unlikely yardstick for measuring national scientific progress. The first Indonesian surgical patient, Netty Irawati, was reported to have become "complete in every sense" following what the reputable national weekly magazine *Tempo* referred to as "genital refinement surgery" (*penghalusan kelamin*). As in other cases, Irawati had experienced "psychological suffering" (*penderitaan jiwa*) and "felt like she was a woman since she was a child." Recalling Vivian's comments to the press, Netty was reported to have said, "I hate being called a *banci*! Won't I be a woman [after the operation]?" Her case was the subject of significant attention and sympathy, with well-known newspapers and magazines soliciting financial support for her postoperative hormonal treatment from readers.[71] Netty was reported to have said: "I feel as though my self-esteem has risen and I can become a proper person."

[69] "Dr. Herman: Persoalan Vivian jangan dibuat berlarut-larut," *Kompas*, 29 September 1973, 1, 12.

[70] Ibid.

[71] "RSTM akan lakukan operasi perubahan kelamin pertama di Indonesia," *Kompas*, 24 May 1975, 3; "Berkenalan dengan benny runtuwene yang menjadi netti Irawaty," 12.

However, the fact that she was still unable to bear children cast a shadow over the operation—indeed, Netty herself claimed that she had undertaken the surgery in part for this purpose. In Netty's case, journalists presented medical intervention as a way for unruly forms of transgender femininity to join respectable forms of femininity, here again defined against the class-marked category *banci*.

Netty's surgery generated enough interest at the intersection of medical practice and policy for a seminar in March 1978. At this seminar, experts squarely addressed the role of science and medicine in defining gender for the first time. The consensus reached at the seminar and subsequent report rested on evidence offered by biologists who argued that the latest scientific definitions of masculinity and femininity do not rely on physical appearance and function of the genitals alone but must be measured in terms of genetic makeup and reproductive capacity. In line with this view, the seminar report concluded—in what marked an alarming reversal of past sentiment—that the *psychis* (mind) of *banci*, *wadam*, and *waria* should, in fact, be treated with psychotherapy so that their behavior might reflect their biological sex. The seminar report denounced the "operations to change the genitals" that had been performed in the mid-1970s. The results of the seminar were, however, fairly ambiguous. The 1979 Department of Health decree that resulted from the seminar, entitled "Instructions on Operations to Change the Genitals," failed to produce any conclusive results. Both it and a revised decree conflated the diagnosis and treatment of transsexuals with operating procedures for intersex children, with some reports suggesting that transgender-identified individuals could receive treatment at the same hospital as late as 1989.[72]

While the impact of the seminar both at the time and during the decades that followed is beyond the scope of this article, it does suggest the centrality of sex, gender, and sexuality to the moral project of defining "normal" by New Order experts. Given that citizenship itself came to be understood as a moral category linked to being "normal," those unable to conform for various reasons would find themselves in an extremely ambiguous position. Both unable to escape the stigma related to the term *banci* and unable to access state expertise for support to improve, gender-nonconforming Indonesians of all kinds would have to develop their own strategies to forge livable lives in the shadow of this definition of the "normal."[73]

[72] The decree identified six hospitals where gender reassignment surgery would be undertaken and the medical specialists required to perform it. "Enam RS ditunjuk untuk pelaksanaan operasi ganti kelamin," *Kompas*, 27 July 1979, 12; Indonesian Ministry of Health, Keputusan menteri kesehatan Republik Indonesia 253/Men.Kes/SK/VI/1979, "Tentang penunjukan rumah sakit dan tim ahli sebagai tempat dan pelaksana operasi penggantian kelamin" (1979).

[73] Saskia Wieringa, "Discursive Contestations Concerning Intersex in Indonesia," in *Sex and Sexualities in Contemporary Indonesia: Sexual Politics, Health, Diversity, and Representations*, ed. Linda Rae Bennett and Sharyn Graham Davies (London: Routledge, 2015). This

Conclusion

By the beginning of the 1980s, interest in transgender femininity had largely dissipated. The period between 1968 and 1978 thus appears as somewhat extraordinary. For this brief moment, the state drew upon medical and psychological knowledge about gender and sexuality in an attempt to reform those individuals who did not comply with normative definitions of masculinity and femininity. Transgender femininity was of particular interest to the New Order state because it appeared to successfully reconcile understandings of gender as both a matter of bodily appearance, which was susceptible to social influence, and the product of an individual mind (*jiwa*), which might be subject to improvement. One implicit aspect of this effort was to refer to transgender femininity as a form of knowledge that, unlike homosexuality, was recognized as relevant to the Indonesian context.

This state interest in transgender femininity therefore condensed and redeployed efforts to produce idealized forms of gender normativity for cisgender women. While popular and expert opinion in the early 1970s was stirred by the possibility of modern science making perfect what nature had left incomplete, this was abandoned when it was established that transgender women could not give birth to children. While this shift moved transgender out of the orbit of respectable femininity, one result of this interpretation entrenched a key understanding that persists today: their imperfection is not a fault of their own but a psychological condition from which their *penderitaan jiwa* (mental suffering) is for life. This double-edged definition, I suggest, is what has enabled partial tolerance of transgender femininity in a state that had adopted a resolutely heteronormative gender ideology.

As an authoritarian and technocratic regime, the New Order state held that both femininity and masculinity could be manufactured according to the demands of society. However, the discursive and material possibilities for gender normativity in Indonesia were considerably different from those advocated by Western psychologists, even as they drew upon a shared vocabulary. A key difference was that access to medical knowledge and technologies in Indonesia was uneven, and expert knowledge was an entirely governmental affair. The result was the emergence of a discourse that rested on a contradictory logic. Popular representations referred to femininity and masculinity as natural states. Yet intensive efforts to develop a vocabulary that would define moral boundaries for gender—defined in relation to the intersection between class and sexuality—threatened to expose what was presented as natural as mere artifice. In doing so, the process of definitional work that state experts undertook inadvertently troubled the boundaries of masculinity and femininity as an index for an inner and stable form of selfhood that could be subject to cultivation at all.

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touching account of the experiences of intersex in Indonesia is a rare example of research on the effects of the moral dimensions of New Order state expertise.

This focus on social roles, reproduction, and psychological attributes of individuals reflects the culmination of a broader effort to redefine gender. By focusing on the way in which transgender femininity became the subject and object of expertise for this brief moment, I have revealed the anxieties present not only in the ideological basis for defining gender but also in the material basis for sex. Whereas popular accounts in newspapers and magazines reflected a possibility that transgender femininity might join the Indonesian national family, over time those referred to as *banci*, *wadam*, and *waria* came to be excluded from the category "woman" altogether. As Tom Boellstorff writes, this regrettable development has relegated Indonesia's *waria* to a "ghost in the machine of the male."[74] And the category "woman" itself continues to serve as an ambivalent category in Indonesian public life, linked as easily to the proper shape of national progress as it is to consumer and sexual excess.[75]

In viewing the history of transgender femininity in Indonesia through the lens of state expertise, I am also interested in how such forms of knowledge have influenced the adequate performance of cisgender femininity. Indeed, transnational forms of knowledge and their deployment in the service of aspirations to national modernity have had profound implications for definitions of femininity as a central organizing category for social difference more broadly. Seeing engagement with transgender femininity as part of the texture of New Order state expertise—rather than as peripheral to it—suggests why the meanings of gender provokes such anxiety in Indonesia. Even as it has now moved beyond the purview of the state alone, expertise continues to shape the lives of gender-nonconforming Indonesians in profound and increasingly troubling ways. As both subject and object of such ambivalences and contradictions of meaning during the New Order, these Indonesians face the burden of negotiating the unfinished relationship between gender performance and the self, a burden that follows them everywhere they go.

About the Author

Benjamin Daniel Hegarty is a visiting assistant researcher at the University of California, Irvine, and an honorary fellow at the University of Melbourne. His current research focuses on gender, sexuality, class, and cultures of expertise in Indonesia.

[74] Boellstorff, "Waria, National Transvestites," 109.
[75] Jones, "Women in the Middle," 165.