*Journal of Southeast Asian Studies, 36 (3), pp 441–459 October 2005.* Printed in the United Kingdom.
© 2005 The National University of Singapore doi:10.1017/S002246340500024X

# The New Muslim Romance: Changing Patterns of Courtship and Marriage Among Educated Javanese Youth

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*This article explores changing attitudes towards courtship and marriage among educated Muslim Javanese youth, as seen against the backdrop of Islamic resurgence, growing educational achievement and socioeconomic change. Through a comparison of earlier forms of courtship and marriage with emerging trends, it sheds light on some of the tensions and ambivalences surrounding the new social freedoms and autonomy modern Javanese women have come to enjoy.*

Behind headlines about political instability, terrorist attacks and religious violence, gender relations in Muslim Java have undergone a quiet transformation over the past generation. The broad outlines of this transformation can be seen in large-scale sociological surveys, ethnographic accounts and country reports. Statistics from these varied sources indicate that age at first marriage for Indonesian women changed rapidly throughout the 1960s. Prior to that time, one-third of all young women married by age 16. By the 1970s, only 10 per cent were marrying by that age.[1] The Australian demographer, Gavin Jones, describes this seemingly simple change as a 'revolution', adding that it took place after what had been half a century of stability. As Jones writes: 'The word "revolution" is no exaggeration in describing these trends, because the changes, besides being dramatic in themselves, reflect fundamental changes in family structure, parent-child relationships, child-raising practices, and expectations of daughters'.[2]

New marriage legislation enacted in 1975 played a role in the dramatic shift in marriage patterns by setting minimum ages at 16 for women and 19 for men, and by enshrining the principle that the consent of both parties to marriage must be obtained.[3] Jones and others have emphasized, however, that the most critical influence on this

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1 Gavin W. Jones, *Marriage and divorce in Muslim South-East Asia* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994); Terence H. Hull and Gavin W. Jones, 'Demographic perspectives', in *Indonesia's New Order: The dynamics of socio-economic transformation*, ed. Hal Hill (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1994), pp. 164–8.

2 Jones, *Marriage and divorce*, p. 61.

3 Kathryn Robinson and Iwu Dwisetyani Utomo, 'Introduction', *Rima* [*Review of Indonesian and Malaysian Affairs*], 37, 1 (2003): 5–16. This legislation was reinforced by an aggressive family planning programme which urged women to put off marriage until their early to middle 20s and to restrict family size to two children.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S002246340500024X Published online by Cambridge University Press

transformation was the rapid expansion in educational opportunities for women that took place during Suharto's 'New Order' government (1966–98). Employment opportunities for young women and state policies encouraging women's participation in the work force provided a further incentive for Javanese parents to allow their daughters to put off marriage and remain in school, with an eye towards using their education to land a job.[4]

With some 88.7 per cent of its 220 million citizens professing Islam, Indonesia is a Muslim-majority society (indeed the most populous in the Muslim world), and the new freedoms and opportunities for women expressed in these statistics on marriage have been tempered by many youths' growing commitment to the demands of their religious faith. In the last two decades of the New Order era, Muslim Indonesia experienced an unprecedented resurgence in public piety and devotion. The resurgence was influenced by many things, including mass education, new religious media, travel and education in the Middle East and, more generally, growing disenchantment with the conservative nationalist policies of the Suharto regime.[5]

In the case of Indonesia, the resurgence was also noticeable in mandatory religious courses throughout the educational system from primary schools to universities. Muslim students in these classes were instructed, not just in the basic ritual and intellectual tenets of their faith, but in 'proper' gender roles and behaviour as well. State-sponsored religious education placed strong emphasis, for example, on the ideal of husbands as major providers and wives as helpmates and mothers whose primary responsibilities lie in the home.[6] Students were also taught that, rather than tolerating the more casual interactions between the sexes long common in Muslim Indonesia, interactions with unrelated members of the opposite sex are fraught with danger, because they can lead so easily to sinful acts (*dosa/zina*). In a society where traditionally few Muslim women veiled, young women were encouraged to understand that their *aurat* must not be exposed and their heads and hair must be kept covered.[7]

While demographic accounts like Jones' are invaluable in mapping large-scale social changes, they offer little ethnographic detail to allow us to understand the cultural substance of these transformations and their implications for social, family and gender roles. These are the issues I propose to examine in this article, using ethnographic and life historical material to explore changing attitudes towards courtship and marriage among

4 Jones, *Marriage and divorce*, p. 40.

5 See Dale F. Eickelman and Jon W. Anderson, 'Redefining Muslim publics', in *New media in the Muslim world: The emerging public sphere*, ed. Dale F. Eickelman and John W. Anderson (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1999), pp. 1–18; Robert W. Hefner, *Civil Islam: Muslims and democratization in Indonesia* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000).

6 The theme of the happy and prosperous nuclear family with the father as the head and the mother in a supporting role was a widespread theme of Indonesian schooling and in Suharto-era government programmes, which promoted them as an important foundation for the development of the nation. See also Martha Logsdon, 'Gender roles in elementary texts in Indonesia', in *Women in Asia and the Pacific: Towards an East–West dialogue*, ed. Madeleine J. Goodman (Honolulu: Women's Studies Program, University of Hawaii at Manoa, 1985), pp. 243–62.

7 The *aurat* are those parts of a woman's body which must be covered during religious study, prayers, and in the presence of unrelated men i.e., 'everything except her face and the palms of her hands'. Husein Shahab, *Jilbab menurut Al-Quran dan As-Sunnah* [Veiling according to the Koran and the customs of the Prophet] (Bandung: Mizan Press, 1993), p. 44.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S002246340500024X Published online by Cambridge University Press

educated Muslim Javanese youth, as seen against the backdrop of Islamic resurgence, growing educational achievement and socioeconomic change. As a point of entry, I want to compare earlier patterns of courtship and marriage in Java as chronicled by ethnographers in the 1950s and 1960s with contemporary trends among middle-class university students. These contemporary trends include increasingly – and in some estimations, alarmingly – long courtship and engagement periods as well as larger and more elaborate Javanese weddings. These trends are in striking contrast to a more limited but nonetheless growing phenomenon among some Muslim students: the decision to forgo courtship (*pacaran*) and premarital familiarization entirely. These latter changes have also led to radical efforts to redesign wedding celebrations to include only those elements strictly identifiable as Islamic. Through this comparison of earlier forms of courtship and marriage with emerging trends, I want to shed light on some of the tensions and ambivalences surrounding the new social freedoms and autonomy modern Javanese women have come to enjoy.

The findings presented here are the result of ethnographic research conducted over an eight-month period in 1999 and several months during 2001, 2002 and 2003, in the city of Yogyakarta in south-central Java.[8] Yogyakarta is widely known as an important centre of Javanese culture and history, as well as the site of Indonesia's only still-functioning sultanate. It is also a 'university town' (*kota pelajar*, lit., 'city of students'), as it hosts dozens of schools and colleges, among them the prestigious Gadjah Mada University (UGM), Indonesia's oldest and second-largest university. During the course of my research, I conducted in-depth interviews with over 150 students attending either Gadjah Mada or the nearby State Islamic Institute (IAIN Sunan Kalijaga [Sunan Kalijaga State Islamic Institute], a four-year Islamic university). I also interviewed and conducted ethnographic observations among teachers, parents and religious leaders in the Yogyakarta area. Although I gathered material on men's and women's educational experiences and attitudes towards marriage, sexuality, work and family roles, in this article I focus particular attention on the experiences of young women because their situation has changed the most dramatically over the past 30 years.

## Javanese courtship and marriage in the 1950s and 1960s

Marriage has long been a near-universal institution among Javanese. Writing in the early 1960s and based on research conducted a decade earlier, the anthropologist Hildred Geertz describes Javanese marriage as 'a pivotal moment' in the life cycle of the individual, one that marks the passage to adulthood through the creation of a nuclear family unit that, ideally, will quickly establish its autonomy.[9] At the time of Geertz's writing, most Javanese marriages were still arranged by parents. Equally important, for many young girls, particularly in rural areas, an engagement was arranged not long after a girl experienced her first menstruation. In a small number of cases, young girls were engaged

8 Research was funded by a Fulbright-Hays Faculty Research Grant (1999) and a Spencer Foundation Small Grant (2001); write-up was generously supported by the National Endowment for the Humanities (2002).

9 Hildred Geertz, *The Javanese family: A study of kinship and socialization* (Prospect Heights, IL: Waveland Press, 1961), p. 55.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S002246340500024X Published online by Cambridge University Press

and married off even before they reached menarche.[10] In the early 1950s, then, most Javanese girls had been married by the time they reached age 16 or 17. Those young women who had reached their twentieth birthday and were not yet married were considered 'unmarketable' (*tidak laku*), and the parents were seen as having shirked their parental duty.

In all cases, however, the ideal pattern was for adolescent girls to be kept close to home and under close parental supervision until a suitable partner could be found. This restrictive ideal, however, was in practice subject to considerable class and occupational variation. Women in peasant and trading families, for example, were well-known for their relatively unfettered movement when engaged in economic pursuits. By contrast, elite and middle-class families were more likely to place tighter controls on an adolescent girl's mobility.[11] Parents were concerned to protect the virtue and reputation of their daughter and the status and reputation of the family. By doing so, they not only guarded their family's good name, but also increased the prospects that the girl might be able to marry a man of appropriate wealth and social standing.

As in many other parts of Muslim Southeast Asia, there was a strongly gendered pattern to the cultural norms surrounding adolescent sexuality.[12] In particular, there was little if any anxiety about adolescent men's sexuality and, as a result, far fewer restrictions were placed on young boys' movements. Young men were viewed as sexual beings, keenly interested in sex and, therefore, potentially a nuisance for neighbourhood girls. Thus it was the responsibility of individual families and the neighbourhood or village as a whole to insure that, if boys did seek premarital sexual activity, they did so outside the village or, in any case, with women other than the young daughters of good families. Both Robert Jay and Hildred Geertz observed that young men occasionally visited prostitutes or, less often, willing young widows or divorcees.[13] If a local girl got pregnant out of wedlock, however, it was the responsibility of village or neighbourhood officials to help the family identify the male partner and to press him into marrying the pregnant girl.

With regard to a young man's development, cultural anxieties about masculine sexuality were counterbalanced by the ideal that a male youth should have the career skills, social experience and personal maturity to support a family before he married. As a result, it was not uncommon for a groom to be considerably older than his bride.[14] Nonetheless, the ideal of masculine social and economic maturity was often compromised, particularly in the rural Java of the 1950s and 1960s where rates of formal education remained low (averaging no more than four to five years total for males) and some males married well before they were able to maintain a household of their own. In cases like

10 Ibid., pp. 55–6; Valerie Hull, 'Women in Java's rural middle class: Progress or regress?' in *Women of Southeast Asia*, ed. Penny Van Esterik (Dekalb, IL: Northern Illinois University Press, 1975), p. 75. See also Susan Blackburn and Sharon Bessel, 'Marriageable age: political debates on early marriage in twentieth century Indonesia', *Indonesia*, 63 (1997): 107–41.

11 Koentjaraningrat, *Javanese culture* (Singapore: Oxford University Press, 1989).

12 Michael G. Peletz, *Reason and passion: Representations of gender in a Malay society* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996).

13 R. Jay, *Javanese villagers: Social relations in rural Modjokuto* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1969), p. 37; Geertz, *Javanese family*, p. 119.

14 Jones, however, indicates that there has been a steady narrowing of the spousal marriage age differential in Indonesia since 1970 so that the difference is now on average only between four and five years (Jones, *Marriage and divorce*, pp. 102–3).

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these, the newlyweds lived for a period of time with one set of parents, most often the wife's. In light of the emphasis in Javanese society on the idea that full social maturity required a couple to have an independent household, however, most young couples in such circumstances worked hard to quickly move out and into a place of their own.[15]

In considering a spouse for their daughter, Javanese parents paid special attention to the young man's social background and upbringing. Javanese describe these qualities with the phrase, *bebet-bobot-bibit*, or, roughly, 'heredity, worldly wealth, and moral character'.[16] Javanese have a cognatic kinship system that places great emphasis on the nuclear family, as well as a more-or-less equal emphasis on relatives through the male and female lines. Consistent with this general pattern, in the selection of a mate the bride's and groom's families were expected to be of more-or-less equal social standing. Among other things, this was necessary so that in the status-conscious world of ordinary Javanese, the families linked by a marital tie could comfortably interact with each other.[17]

In a telling sign of the time in which she wrote, Hildred Geertz reports that the religious orientation of the bride and groom's family was of secondary importance to considerations of class and status.[18] In light of more recent fieldwork concerning the importance that families of Muslim scholars ('*ulama*) place on religious learning and piety when choosing a mate for their children,[19] it seems likely that Geertz's generalization never applied to the most observant of Muslim Javanese families, known collectively as *santri*. Conversely, however, prior to the great Islamic resurgence of the 1970s and 1980s, her generalization probably did apply to the majority of ordinary Javanese.[20]

Whatever the family's social standing and circumstances, a key element in the selection of a son-in-law was extensive inquiry into the young man's family background and reputation. This inquiry was, for the most part, carried out informally. In some instances, however, a relative of the bride or groom's family might be approached by the parents of the child, and asked to inquire into the reputation of the possible fiancé in question, the social standing of the family and the likely interest of the family in marrying off their child.

If inquiries about the young man proved satisfactory and informal communications concerning the girl's side were positive (no, she didn't yet have a fiancé and yes, her family would entertain a proposal), the next step was for the prospective groom and his parents to pay a formal visit to the girl's house. This visit is called the 'viewing' (*nontoni*) and provided the young man's family with their first official opportunity to look over the girl. No less significant, the encounter also provided both sets of parents with an

15 Young couples in line to inherit the family home might continue to live with and care for the parents; even in this case, however, an effort was usually made to create some separation of households, for example, by creating separate cooking areas. See also Juliette Koning, 'Different times, different orientations: Family life in a Javanese village', in *Women and households in Indonesia: Cultural notions and social practices*, ed. Juliette Koning, Marleen Nolten, Janet Rodenburg and Ratna Saptari (Richmond, Surrey: Curzon, 2000), pp. 181–207.

16 Elinor Clark Horne, *Javanese–English dictionary* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1974), p. 75.

17 Geertz, *Javanese family*, p. 57.

18 Ibid., p. 57.

19 See Zamakhsyari Dofier, *The pesantren tradition: The role of the kyai in the maintenance of traditional Islam in Java* (Tempe: Program in South and Southeast Asian Studies, Arizona State University, 1999).

20 Note also that Jay, in listing various criteria for choosing a spouse, makes only indirect mention of religion (Jay, *Javanese villagers*, pp. 127–33).

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opportunity to meet and evaluate each other. The girl herself might not be told of the reason for the visit. Whatever the circumstance, custom had it that the young woman would be called by her parents to serve refreshments to the visitors, afterwards quickly retiring from the front sitting room.

If impressions on all sides were favourable and an official proposal had not been made beforehand, a formal proposal (*lamaran*) to the girl's parents for her hand in marriage would be made shortly after the *nontoni*. At this point, the young girl was sometimes, but not necessarily, consulted by her parents as to whether she was willing to marry or not. A girl's acceptance of her parents' choice of marriage partner, however, was widely viewed as an expression of her gratitude (*balas budi*) for her parents' care and affection. In practice, then, a daughter was often subject to subtle or not-so-subtle pressures to accede to her parents' wishes. Most young women did not protest. Silence was interpreted as acceptance.

Young men were allowed more say in the choice of their bride. In many instances the young man might already have made the acquaintance of the girl, and even approached his parents with the request that they arrange an engagement meeting with her parents. If the boy's parents had no other candidate in mind and found their son's choice acceptable, they would likely agree to his wishes and quickly arrange the *nontoni* meeting with the girl's family. If, however, a young man had set his sights on a young woman of whom his parents did not approve – or from a family with whom the parents did not feel comfortable – he too could be pressed into a marriage with someone more to their liking.

The engagement period leading up to the wedding was usually brief, sometimes as short as a day or two, typically no more than several weeks.[21] Whatever delay there was, was not designed so as to allow the bride and groom additional time to meet and get to know each other; in fact, the bride and groom were not supposed to see each other again until their wedding day. Rather, the delay had more to do with the bride's and groom's parents' preparations for the marital ceremony and reception that accompanied most weddings. The weeks before the wedding were used to send invitations to neighbours and relatives, request ritual 'contributions' (*sumbangan*) to help defray ceremonial costs from people to whom one had previously made similar contributions, and to prepare the food, decorations and myriad items required for the wedding celebration itself.

## Courtship and marriage in the parental generation

Elements of these courtship and marriage patterns can still be found in the stories of parents of the young people in my study. These men and women – now in their late 40s and mid-50s – were married in the 1960s and 1970s. Thirty years ago it was still common for a woman to be married in her teens to a (sometimes significantly) older man chosen by her parents, to know her husband-to-be only superficially or even not at all, and to be married before completing high school.

Ninik's mother, for example, came from a family of modest economic means in a village about 20 kilometres outside of Yogyakarta. When she was 17, her parents arranged her marriage to a man 10 years her senior. Ninik's mother had not so much as even met

21 Geertz, *Javanese family*, p. 64.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S002246340500024X Published online by Cambridge University Press

the groom before the wedding. She recounted that at the time of her engagement she 'was still too little' to be drawn into the marital deliberations, and freely admitted that she 'didn't understand anything'. She had some ambivalence about getting married, however, especially because she would have preferred to finish high school before marrying. 'I felt that my parents were forcing me to marry him because they thought that if I waited much longer I wouldn't be marketable (*tidak laku*) and attract a husband. That's how village people thought back then'. Her parents prevailed upon her, emphasizing that her future husband already had a stable government job. 'What are you waiting for? He's a government employee (*pegawai negeri*)!' Ninik's mother said she agreed to the marriage because she wanted to repay her parents (*balas budi*) for raising her and loving her. (She had been 'adopted' as an infant by her mother's younger sister and her husband.) To refuse, she explained, would mean 'I didn't appreciate what they had done for me'.

Ina's mother married at an even earlier age. She came from a relatively affluent family of pious traditionalist Muslims in rural East Java and was married at age 12 to a man of 25. At the time, she was in her fifth year of study at an Islamic school (*madrasah*). Ina says that when she asked her mother how she could marry so young, her mother told her that it was simply the custom at that time. Nobody asked her what she thought about the prospect of being married. 'People married without any courtship (*pacaran*) and without even knowing each other at all', she said. Moreover, she explained, she had begun menstruating at the age of nine and so she was considered marriageable.

Ina's father was actually from a family that was not very well-off, but he was a school teacher and a man of considerable Qur'anic learning, and thus, in Javanese terms, a *santri* (lit., 'student of a traditional Qur'anic school', but generally, a learned and observant Muslim). Because he was a school teacher and religious scholar, there were many families who asked him to become their son-in-law. But Ina says that her father also had very little say in his marriage; it was arranged between the two sets of parents, who happened to be distant relatives.

Rini's parents married in 1975. Her father reports that he grew up in a rural area to the north of Yogyakarta in what he refers to as an 'old fashioned Javanese' (*Jawa kolot*) family. He describes himself as 'the adventuresome type' (*model berani*). He finished middle school and left for Jakarta at the age of 17 to look for work and to escape an oppressive father. Eventually he got a job with a road construction crew and returned to Yogyakarta where he met his future wife. At the time he was 25. Rini's mother was 17 and living at home with her parents because they could not afford to pay for her to continue her education after primary school. Rini's father made some discreet inquiries through a friend who happened to know her family. Was she eligible? Would her parents consider a proposal? A month after their first meeting, Rini's father sent word to his parents that he wanted to marry and asked if they would come to Yogyakarta to meet with his future wife's parents and discuss the arrangements. The couple were married shortly thereafter. The newlyweds moved in with the bride's parents because the bride was still too young to leave home and because Rini's father did not have a reliable income.

When asked about his plans for his own teen-aged daughter, Rini's father says he would like her to continue for as long as possible in school, so long as he can afford to support her education. When I ask him if she will be allowed to choose her own husband, he is philosophical:

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> It's really different than it used to be in my time. Now high school students have boyfriends and girlfriends. They meet and get to know each other at school or with friends. Before it used to be that people would meet one time and the boy would propose and it worked! But now young people have to get to know each other for a long time, to 'go steady' *(pacaran)* for a long time before they marry. Before, it used to be that your parents would arrange your marriage and it was fine, ok. Not anymore. In Javanese there is a saying, *kudel nusuh kebo*; that is, the calf follows the adult water buffalo or the child follows the wishes of the parents. But now we say *kebo nusuh kudel*; the adult water buffalo follows the calf, or the parents follow the desires of their children. So even if we don't agree [with our child's choice of marriage partner] we have to let them marry because they are the ones who will live with each other, not the parents.

## Women and education

Over the past 30 years Indonesia has seen far-reaching political, economic and religious change. As Rini's father's comments illustrate, many of the changes have challenged received Javanese practices and ideals. Nowhere, perhaps, has this impact been greater than in matters of socialization, gender roles and family relationships. Today there is a widespread recognition that girls as well as boys need an education in order to prosper in the modern world and should be allowed a greater measure of autonomy, particularly in their choice of marriage partner. 'The times have changed' (*zaman sudah berubah*), Javanese parents say, 'this is the modern era' (*ini zaman moderen*).

Beginning in the late 1960s, Indonesia entered a period of sustained economic growth, with GDP growth achieving rates of six to eight per cent *per annum*.[22] The New Order regime benefited significantly from the spectacular increases in oil prices beginning in 1973, but the state's economic policies played an important role as well. Turning its back on the socialist and Third-World-oriented policies of the Sukarno era, Suharto's government cracked down on labour organizations, implemented regulations favourable to Japanese and Western investment, spurred the growth of manufacturing, invested in transport and communications and in a word, transformed Indonesia from an overwhelmingly agrarian economy into a diversified economy based on agriculture, export manufacturing, industry and services. Road building, communications and new electronic media brought formerly isolated areas of the country into contact with national life and accelerated the process of urbanization.[23]

In the 1970s and 1980s the New Order government also expanded educational opportunities throughout Indonesia by instituting an ambitious policy of school construction, under the so-called Inpres programme. The period witnessed not only an increase in the number of state-run 'general schools' (*sekolah umum*), but Muslim religious schools (*madrasah*) as well. Government programmes made primary education compulsory through grade six and later through grade nine,[24] identifying education as crucial for human resource development as well as national development (*pembangunan*

22 Robin Madrid, 'Islamic students in the Indonesian student movement, 1998–1999: Forces for moderation', *Bulletin of Concerned Asian Scholars*, 31, 3 (1999): 17–32.

23 See Hefner, *Civil Islam*.

24 Karin Johnson, Wendy Gaylord and Gerald Chamberland, *Indonesia: A study of the educational system of the Republic of Indonesia* (Washington, DC: World Education Series Publication, USAID, 1993), p. 8; Robinson and Utomo, 'Introduction', p. 6.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S002246340500024X Published online by Cambridge University Press

*nasional*). Although the quality of education in Indonesian schools was far inferior to that in nearby Malaysia and Singapore, and lagged behind even the Philippines and Thailand, the impact of government programmes was nonetheless profound.

Between 1965 and 1990, the percentage of young adults with basic literacy skills skyrocketed from 40 to 90 per cent. The percentage of youths completing secondary school grew from four per cent to more than 30 per cent today.[25] Although the economic and political crisis of 1997–98 slowed progress in the government's goal of universal education through grade nine for all young people,[26] the breadth and quality of schooling in Indonesia today still remain much greater than was the case in the 1950s. Equally important, the expansion of educational and new economic opportunities has affected the situation of girls and women even more significantly than men. A telling example of this transformation is that in 1971 there was a 48 per cent excess of males over females in enrolment at the university level; by 1990, it had shrunk to only 29 per cent.[27]

Historically, there have been no legal restrictions and little cultural bias against educating women in Indonesia.[28] In contrast to the situation in some other Muslim countries and notwithstanding the attitudes of an ultraconservative fringe, the great majority of Muslim leaders in Indonesia have enthusiastically promoted the education of young girls. With some 35 million supporters today, the neotraditionalist Nahdlatul Ulama ('Renaissance of the Religious Scholars', founded in 1926), the largest of the country's Islamic associations, made the religious education of women a central priority beginning in the 1950s. With some 25 million members, the second largest of Indonesia's Muslim associations, the modernist Muhammadiyah (founded in 1912), has placed an even greater emphasis on women's education. Religious leaders often note that according to the words of the Prophet Mohammad, the individual should take his studies as far as he can; he should 'follow knowledge even as far as China'.[29]

Despite the enormous educational achievements made over the past 30 years, there have continued to be gender asymmetries to school participation. For example, if a family's resources are limited, a son's education may be given a higher priority than that of a daughter, on the assumption that a man will be the primary wage-earner and the major support for his family once he marries. If a school is not located within easy commuting distance, parents must provide not only school fees, uniforms and supplies, but also the cost of transportation or of boarding their child in a distant town if the child is to continue his or her education. Aside from economic considerations, most Javanese parents have also been reluctant to let adolescent daughters travel long distances or board with strangers. For this reason, many rural Javanese of *santri* background prefer to send their daughters to nearby Islamic schools (*madrasah*, *pesantren*). These schools offer a curriculum that combines instruction in general on non-religious subjects (mathematics, writing, history and science) with a strong emphasis on religion and moral training.

25 Hefner, *Civil Islam*, p. 17.
26 See Gavin W. Jones and Peter Hagul, 'Schooling in Indonesia: Crisis-related and longer-term issues', *Bulletin of Indonesian Economic Studies*, 37, 2 (2001): 207–31.
27 Hull and Jones, 'Demographic perspectives', pp. 164–8.
28 Mayling Oey-Gardiner, 'Gender differences in schooling in Indonesia', *Bulletin of Indonesian Economic Studies*, 27, 1 (1991): 58.
29 See Achmad Fedyani Saifuddin and Irwan Martua Hidayana, *Seksualitas remaja* [Adolescent sexuality] (Jakarta: Pustaka Sinar Harapan and The Ford Foundation, 2002), p. 45.

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During the 1970s and 1980s, however, New Order improvements in roads and transportation converged with government-sponsored school expansion to make both Islamic and general schools more accessible, allowing larger numbers of girls to obtain their first six or even nine years of education without having to travel great distances or live away from home.[30]

As more and more young women have managed to complete their first nine years of schooling, growing numbers of Javanese parents have begun to allow their daughters to continue their education to the upper secondary level and beyond – even if it involves living away from home. This dramatic shift in the upbringing of girls is linked first and foremost to the recognition on the part of Javanese parents of the clear employment benefits of education, a correlation which is particularly strong for students who have secondary and tertiary levels of schooling. Gavin Jones writes:

> Rates [of female labour force participation] are relatively high among the uneducated, falling into a trough among those with lower secondary education, and rising to very high levels among those with upper secondary education and especially those with tertiary education. The reason for these patterns appears to be the economic necessity to work among lower income groups, who are more likely to have low levels of education; and the strong motivation among those with upper secondary and tertiary education to put their education to use, a motivation fuelled by the rapid expansion of jobs suited to educated women.[31]

Linked as it is to employment opportunities and economic security, education has taken the place of more traditional markers of prestige among the urban and rural middle class in Java. Educating one's children has become an especially important source of status for those able to send their children to prestigious high schools or colleges like those in famous centres of higher education like Yogyakarta.

The expansion of educational opportunities has had a profound effect on contemporary patterns of marriage and courtship among Javanese. The most immediate index of this change has been the prolongation of the period between puberty and actual marriage. Middle-class women are marrying at significantly older ages as they put off marriage until they have finished their degrees. In 1965 the mean age at marriage for females in Indonesia as a whole was 18.6; in 1971 it was 19.2.[32] By 1990 the figure had climbed to 21.6 years.[33] These statistics do not distinguish between urban and rural areas, but studies indicate that while urban centres like Yogyakarta – where the mean age at first marriage for females in 1990 was 24.1 – have led the way in patterns of delayed marriage,

30 Oey-Gardiner uses large-scale survey statistics to argue that school availability is of greater importance for rates of female than male secondary school attendance in Indonesia. Statistics indicate that parents are much more willing to allow daughters to attend secondary school if a school is available nearby; Oey-Gardiner, 'Gender differences', p. 68.

31 Jones, *Marriage and divorce*, p. 40.

32 Peter Smith, *Contrasting marriage patterns and fertility in Southeast Asia*, East-West Population Institute Working Paper No. 8 (Honolulu: East-West Center, 1981), cited in Diane Lauren Wolf, *Factory daughters: Gender, household dynamics, and rural industrialization in Java* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), p. 80.

33 Jones, *Marriage and divorce*, p. 80.

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when level of education is controlled for, there is little difference between urban and rural women.[34] Ethnographic commentaries from contemporary Yogyakarta confirm that most Javanese are keenly aware of these dramatic changes.

As Ina, a fourth year student at UGM, recounts:

> 'It's different from when my mom was young . . . . She had to quit school and get married when she was only 17 because her parents thought if she got much older she wouldn't be marketable (*tidak laku*) and she'd end up an old maid (*perawan tua*). Nowadays women who marry young are laughed at, '*kok kawin, masih muda*!' (How come she's married, she's so young!). Women want to finish their educations first and if possible to work before marrying. And it's not just city people who think that way. If they can afford to, rural people send their daughters to the city to go to school and they get married later too.

**Modern courtship**

The prolongation of the period between puberty and marriage has had, in turn, an equally profound, if unintended, impact on courtship patterns as young people today have many more opportunities to interact with members of the opposite sex on their own, independent of direct parental oversight. Self-initiated romance of this sort is referred to in Indonesian as *pacaran*.[35] The relative novelty of 'having a boyfriend/girlfriend' ([*ber*]*pacaran*) with its modern Western connotations is reflected in the number of words and phrases which have recently been borrowed into Indonesian from English to talk about such relationships. These include such revealingly ambivalent terms as *having fun, traoma, serius, enjoi, komitmen, ker, playboy* and *bekstrit* ('having fun', 'trauma', 'serious', 'enjoy', 'commitment', 'care', 'playboy', and 'backstreet') among others, which have gained widespread currency within the past 15 years.

According to surveys and my own ethnographic interviews, most young women today begin to have boyfriends sometime in mid-secondary school. They meet boys at school, in school-related activities or though friends. Early relationships are typically described as *belum serius* 'not (yet) serious' and *cinta monyet* or 'puppy love' (literally, 'monkey love') and usually consist of little more than innocent flirtation or teasing within a group of friends, sitting together on school trips or just walking home together. Most young women say they did not bother to mention these kinds of flirtations to their parents because they were still 'young/immature' (*masih kecil/belum dewasa*) and were 'just having fun' (*having fun saja*). For their part, most parents report that if they knew about their daughter's early interests, they ignored the situation, assuming it was nothing serious and the fascination would soon fade.

Early flirtations aside, most Javanese parents attempt to limit their daughters' relationships with boys; in many cases they even forbid their daughters from having a boyfriend before graduating from secondary school and starting college. The degree to

34 Ibid., pp. 80, 89.

35 Significantly, John Echols and Hassan Shadily's first translation for *pacar* is 'fiancé/fiancée'; John M. Echols and Hassan Shadily, revised by John U. Wolff and James T. Collins, *Kamus Indonesia Inggris* [Indonesian English Dictionary] (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, and Jakarta, Penerbit PT Gramedia, 1989), p. 401.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S002246340500024X Published online by Cambridge University Press

which parents are able or willing to enforce this requirement, however, varies considerably. Parents say they worry that involvement with boys may have a negative effect on their daughter's studies (as was often the case in earlier generations when girls stopped school to marry). Adolescent girls are described as *masih labil*, 'still changeable' and easily caught up in their emotions. They may suffer emotional trauma (*traoma*) from break-ups or from early crushes which are unreciprocated. Parents also worry that arguments or jealousies involving boyfriends will have an adverse effect on test scores and class rankings.

Boys are less frequently forbidden from *pacaran*. Although parents also worry that a son's involvement with the opposite sex might interfere with his studies, boys are expected to be able to take care of themselves and are allowed to make more of their own decisions from an earlier age.[36] And because boys are given more freedom to come and go as they please, it is more difficult for parents to supervise their social interactions.[37]

Irma, a third year student at UGM, compares her socialization to that of her brothers:

> I wasn't allowed to have a boyfriend until I was in college. My parents told me that if I had a boyfriend in high school I wouldn't be able to think and my grades would be affected. So they wouldn't allow it. My family is Muslim, but my parents put me in an all-girls [Catholic] high school just so that I wouldn't get involved with boys. My younger brothers were freer to do what they wanted. If they wanted to have a girlfriend, 'go ahead', even in high school.

When I ask where her brothers would find girlfriends if most Javanese girls were not allowed to have boyfriends, she explains, 'Guys can always find girls who come from families with different views about dating. My dad is a distant descendant of the court and so he's still rather traditional. But there are others who aren't Javanese and they're more democratic, you know, more liberal.'

Some young women whose parents forbid them from *pacaran* resort to *pacaran bekstrit* (lit., 'backstreet *pacaran*'); that is, meeting with their boyfriends without their parents' knowledge ('on the sly'). Backstreet relationships sometimes involve a young man of whom the girl's parents disapprove because of his family background, personal characteristics or religion. The couple may cling to the hope that eventually the girl's parents will come to accept their relationship or that one or the other will convert. Some women resort to *pacaran bekstrit* fearing that if their parents knew about their relationship, they might insist that the couple stop seeing one another or even push them into marriage before they are ready. Backstreet relationships are not necessarily any more

36 Of course, young men may also experience emotional trauma and depression (*depresi*) from failed romances. But parents say they can only advise their sons; they have less ability to directly control their behaviour than is the case with daughters. 'All I can tell him is to be careful', is a common refrain from parents. For a comparison of gender and emotion in the Malay context see Michael G. Peletz, 'Neither reasonable nor responsible: Contrasting representations of masculinity in a Malay society', in *Bewitching women, pious men: Gender and body politics in Southeast Asia*, ed. Aihwa Ong and Michael G. Peletz (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), pp. 76–123.

37 Men are consistently characterized as playing the more active role in courtship. This role is captured in common phrases used to describe adolescent male activities such as *suka hunting* ('[he's always] chasing [girls]') and *cari cewek* ('[he's out] cruising/looking for girls'.)

https://doi.org/10.1017/S002246340500024X Published online by Cambridge University Press

serious (sexually or otherwise) than those that are above board. But of course not all relationships are completely innocent.[38]

The prolongation of the period between puberty and marriage and the new freedoms accorded to modern young women have increased societal and familial anxieties surrounding the possibility of sexual promiscuity. Daughters are told repeatedly to *menjaga diri*, that is, 'to guard, protect, or control themselves' and to uphold the family name (*jaga nama baik keluarga*). Despite the new emphasis on education and the development of a measure of female autonomy, women are still considered the ones responsible for maintaining sexual restraint and control and for protecting their sexual 'purity' (*kesucian*) or virginity prior to marriage. Javanese say that the girl 'carries the name of the family' and, by extension, a daughter has the capacity to ruin the family's name and reputation should she happen to become pregnant out of wedlock. Although sons too have a responsibility to uphold the family's honour, the visible evidence of their transgressions is less immediately apparent and the repercussions are considered less serious.

A daughter who gets pregnant before marriage is a source of great shame and humiliation (*aib*). Young people jokingly refer to such relationships as MBA, 'married because accident', but for parents the situation is no joking matter. A female student who becomes pregnant has little choice but to drop out of school and quickly marry in an attempt to 'cover up the embarrassment'.[39] For her parents then, what should be the final testimony to their skill and accomplishment, and a joyous public display of their social status and prestige within the community, is instead a painful, hurried ordeal which becomes the focus of malicious community gossip.

### Moral ambivalences

Many young women report feeling deeply ambivalent about how to deal with the new opportunities and freedoms they experience. They want to take advantage of the new options open to them, but feel uncomfortable with the new possibilities for unsupervised interactions with members of the opposite sex. On the one hand, modern social change offers new freedoms and possibilities and encourages, even requires, the

38 Linda Rae Bennett, 'Modernity, desire, and courtship: The evolution of premarital relationships in Mataram, Eastern Indonesia', in *Coming of age in South and Southeast Asia*, ed. Lenore Manderson and Pranee Liamputtong (Richmond, Surrey: Curzon, 2002), pp. 96–112. Bennett argues that backstreet relationships among young people in Lombok offer an alternative to the traditional Sasak pattern of courtship known as *midangan*, which involves a young woman entertaining suitors at her home in the evening under the supervision of her parents. 'Meeting "backstreet"', Bennett writes (p. 110), 'accords women much greater freedom to express physical affection and engage in sexual contact than do other modes of courtship because it typically occurs in more private spaces and involves limited (or often no) social surveillance'.

39 Condoms are widely available in corner kiosks and stores; however, contraceptive use is reportedly very low among young people because of 'embarrassment', particularly on the part of young women and the widespread belief that use of contraceptives, even condoms, can cause infertility by 'drying out the uterus'. Although abortion is illegal, it is nonetheless performed by some doctors. See Terence H. Hull, Ninuk Widyantoro and Sarsanto W. Sarwono, 'Induced abortion in Indonesia', *Studies in Family Planning*, 24, 4 (1993): 241–51. Abortion is considered a grave sin within Islam. Young women may try traditional means to induce the foetus to abort, but often end up continuing the pregnancy and giving birth to a child with serious health problems. Young women from well-to-do families may pay for an illegal abortion or seek an abortion outside of the country.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S002246340500024X Published online by Cambridge University Press

development of an important measure of autonomy. On the other hand, young women are admonished to control themselves, limit their desires and remain chaste.

One index of the tension and uncertainty surrounding women's new autonomy is the growing popularity of veiling and the wearing of looser, more enveloping, 'Muslim style' dress, as opposed to Western clothing styles. On the campus of Gadjah Mada University, my surveys indicate that approximately 60 per cent of female students now wear a veil (*jilbab*). This constitutes a dramatic change from earlier dress styles for women students which up until the early 1980s consisted of Western-style knee-length skirts and short-sleeved blouses. Women say that veiling makes them feel safe and protected and that they veil in part to 'limit their interactions' and to 'put a brake on their relationships with men'.[40]

The uncertainty surrounding interactions with the opposite sex is perhaps most apparent among students who are living away from home and are distant from the traditional constraints imposed upon their behaviour by their families and close communities. The contrast in freedoms is particularly dramatic for those young women who come to Yogyakarta from Muslim boarding schools (*pesantren*) where male and female students stay in separate dormitories and interactions between the sexes are highly circumscribed.

Ana and Ali, for example, are a young couple, both of whom were educated in *pesantren.* They first met while students at the State Islamic Institute (IAIN) and were boyfriend and girlfriend for two and a half years before marrying. It was two years, Ali reports, before Ana allowed him to hold her hand and several more months before she allowed him to kiss her. But after that, 'things began to progress very quickly'. Ali says,

> To be honest, we felt tremendous worry and strain all the time we were *pacaran.* You know, we both came out of the *pesantren* and the remnants of that tradition have stuck with us. After kissing, we both felt we had sinned terribly, and that what we had done was not ethical, that it was sinful. And often, I have to admit to you, we did things that came close to danger. [Just kissing, Ana says quickly.] And then we would argue.

The contemporary pattern of extended schooling and longer courtships, like that of Ali and Ana, is considered particularly dangerous within the context of a newly resurgent Islam. The Islamic resurgence and years of religious education in the schools have reinforced a normative view of Muslim sexuality which is predicated on four basic notions: that sexuality and sexual pleasure are God-given and thus potentially good; that the realization of its goodness requires that sexuality be confined to marriage; that puberty and adolescence are marked by a greatly heightened interest in sexuality; and, finally, that the best way to respond to God-given sexual interest is to usher youths as quickly as possible, all other things considered, into marriage. The social, economic, and educational changes of New Order Indonesia have made this final formula deeply problematic.

Since the collapse of the Suharto regime in May of 1998, Muslim conservatives have stepped to the fore in public debates and vigorously promoted polygyny and early marriage (*nikah dini* or *nikah sirrih*) as solutions to what they view as a moral crisis

40 Nancy J. Smith-Hefner, 'Muslim women and the veil in post-Suharto Indonesia' (Manuscript, 2004).

https://doi.org/10.1017/S002246340500024X Published online by Cambridge University Press

among today's Muslim youth.[41] Puspo Wardoyo, a popular and vocal supporter of polygyny (and the owner of a well-known chain of fried chicken restaurants), has appeared frequently in public forums to argue that the taking of multiple wives by Muslim men would radically reduce extramarital affairs and prostitution by addressing men's greater libidinal requirements. Wardoyo holds up his own life as an example of how polygyny can be successful. He is often shown in newspaper and magazine articles surrounded by his four smiling, veiled wives, each of whom manages one of his fried chicken restaurants located in various cities throughout Java.[42] Wardoyo and other proponents of polygyny voice support for the loosening of marriage laws to allow earlier marriage without parental permission. They argue that young people should be allowed, even encouraged, to marry before finishing their degrees, because it would facilitate the taking of multiple wives and would prevent immoral pre-marital relationships from occurring during long engagements.

Mohammad Fauzil Adhim, a popular author and frequent speaker on university campuses, also urges young people not to put off marriage until after graduation, arguing that marriage is above all a religious requirement and the postponement of marriage is contrary to Islamic law (*syari'ah*). In his book, *The beauty of early marriage*,[43] Adhim tells young people to ignore societal pressures (to postpone marriage) and to work to convince their parents that early marriage will not affect their success in college or in life. In his view as well, marriage is the only way young people can 'avoid the disaster of sin and fornication' (*tidak terjatuh dalam malapetaka zina*).[44] Adhim writes passionately:

> We need to open our eyes and see that sin and lust are now everywhere. Waves of sexual passion wash over us everyday without our invitation. Magazines compete to display the most exciting images, while our youth cannot sleep because they struggle to restrain the flames of desire. Marriage age has been postponed, while the urge to engage in relations with the opposite sex is constantly ignited via television, VCD, magazines, even the Internet, and without any censorship at all from the government. In the name of democracy we have allowed all kinds of things, even those which we should most definitely not allow. There is only one thing that we do not allow and that is early marriage (*nikah dini*).[45]

### The new romance

A small but growing number of young people at secondary and tertiary educational institutions have come to embrace a similarly conservative view of Islam as systematic,

41 This view is widely espoused in popular books such as Mohammad Fauzil Adhim, *Indahnya pernikahan dini* [The beauty of early marriage] (Jakarta: Gema Insani Press, 2003); Abu Al-Ghifari, *Pacaran yang Islami, adakah?* [Dating the Islamic way, Is there such a thing?] (Bandung: Mujahid Press, 2003); and Nina Surtiretna, *Bimbingan seks bagi remaja* [A sex guide for teens] (Bandung: PT Remaja Rosdakarya, 2000), among the many available in Yogyakarta's bookstores and kiosks.

42 The various articles from local magazines and newspapers which comprise Pak Puspo's polygyny campaign are compiled as photocopies with a cover entitled *Kiat sukses poligami Islami* [The secret to successful polygyny the [true] Muslim way]. 'Basically our aims are similar to those of the feminist activists', Puspo claimed in a personal interview in the summer of 2002. 'We want to extend the protection of legal marriage to women who would otherwise be illegal mistresses engaging in sinful acts in adulterous relationships.'

43 Adhim, *Indahnya pernikahan dini.*

44 Ibid., p. 7.

45 Ibid., p. 28.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S002246340500024X Published online by Cambridge University Press

comprehensive and all-encompassing or *kaffah*, and believe that if *syari'ah* were instituted, then Indonesia would become a more just and peaceful nation. *Syari'ah* places severe limits on the interactions between unrelated men and women and restricts the form premarital familiarization may take.

The Muslim student organization KAMMI (Action Group of Indonesian Muslim Students) espouses this *syari'ah*-minded view. Established in early 1998 (several months before Suharto's resignation), KAMMI has rapidly become the largest and fastest growing Muslim student organization on Indonesian college campuses.[46] Although it is difficult to obtain statistics on their membership, KAMMI is widely identified as the most active and vocal of Muslim student organizations.[47] Their members argue that the Qur'an and *Hadiths* (accounts of the actions and sayings of the Prophet Muhammad) provide a set of unambiguous rules for courtship and marriage – one has only to follow them. According to this *syari'ah*-minded view, young men and women who are unrelated to one another should never be alone in each other's company, should remain circumscribed in their interactions and, above all, must avoid any hint of physical contact. Having a boyfriend or girlfriend (*pacaran*) is sinful or, at the very least, creates the opportunity for sin, hence it should be avoided. Most importantly, if one is mature and feels sexual desire but is unable to restrain it, one is obligated to marry. In this view, there is no such thing as premarital *pacaran*; the only acceptable outlet for premarital interest must be direct *khitabah*, 'proposal'.

Mona, who is 21 and a student leader within KAMMI at Gadjah Mada, explains that the organization actually provides a committee to facilitate the process of finding a marriage candidate for its members. When a member feels ready to marry, they submit their 'biodata' to the committee which then suggests a match, usually from within the group. They also provide chaperones so that the couple can meet and come to a decision without ever being alone with one another.

Suwanti is a 25-year-old writer and graduate of Gadjah Mada who recently married without *pacaran*. She wears a white waist-length headscarf drawn closely around her face and pinned tightly under her chin, a long loose tunic, a long skirt and flesh coloured socks. 'People misunderstand', she says. 'They ask, "How can marriage work if you don't know the man?" But interacting with men is allowed. It's only those interactions which might lead to desire which are not'. Suwanti grew up in a small town outside Solo, Central Java. She comes from a family with a Muhammadiyah or modernist Muslim background; she points out, however, that when she was young, her family was not particularly religious. She took up the veil as a teenager when she moved to Yogyakarta for secondary school. While studying literature at Gadjah Mada University she became involved in *dakwah* (religious 'calling' or outreach to fellow Muslims) activities through the campus mosque. Through these activities she became convinced that Islam offers a

46 See also Madrid, 'Islamic students Andi Rahmat and Mukhammad Najib, *Gerakan perlawanan dari masjid kampus* [The opposition movement from the campus mosque] (Surakarta: Purimedia, 2001).
47 My interviews with KAMMI members indicate that the organization appeals not only to modernist Muslims and secular Muslims who have undergone a kind of 'religious rebirth' but also to traditionalist Muslims dissatisfied with other student organizations because of what they perceive as an insufficient focus on the Qur'an and the *hadith*s as guidelines for living.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S002246340500024X Published online by Cambridge University Press

'comprehensive' answer to all social and ethical matters, including courtship and marriage.

Suwanti says she married without ever having once been alone with her fiancé. She explains that there are several ways to arrange such a relationship, but in her case, she used a go-between to get to know her future husband:

> The go-between would always accompany us, whenever we met. I actually knew my fiancé; that is, we had attended different schools but belonged to the same organizations and we would occasionally run into each other at events between schools. So I had seen him and knew something about him. At a certain point he decided that he was ready to marry. I had come to the same decision. I was ready to marry.

Her husband didn't propose immediately; he waited so they could get to know each other. They had several long discussions together but the intermediary was always present. Suwanti says, 'He made his intentions clear through the intermediary and I indicated that I was interested. Only at that point did he go to my parents and, thanks be to God, they agreed. I think the whole process took only about two months. It didn't take long because our vision and our principles are the same and because we were both ready to marry'. She stresses that they never overstepped the bounds of Islamic law. Before they married, she says, they never touched, 'not even a kiss on the cheek, not even the touch of one finger'.

Mona from KAMMI, UGM explains that, 'When you marry quickly like that without *pacaran* beforehand, we say that you *pacaran* after marrying. My friends all say that it's more beautiful, more romantic, than if you already know the person before marriage. It's a surprise, like "what's his favorite colour? What dishes does he like?" It's all a big surprise'. When I ask her if she can be certain that it is always a positive surprise, she answers:

> It's always a positive surprise because in Islam you are protected by the rules. There are clear rights and responsibilities for both husband and wife. Those are basic principles which have to be followed. In Islam you're not allowed to hurt each other. When we hurt another person, we have sinned. So if you marry within Islam, each partner supports the other and they grow in faith together.

Suwanti reports that not only her courtship was *Islami* style, but her wedding was as well. There was, for example, no traditional ritual meal (*slametan, kenduren*) to which neighbours and family were invited. Such festival meals, Suwanti insists, frequently include the making of offerings to family and guardian spirits, all of which are 'polytheistic' (*syirik*) and thus not allowed within Islam. Furthermore, she adds, such rituals are 'too complicated and just not practical'. Also *Islami* style, the male and female wedding guests were seated in different sections of the reception room, separated by a rattan screen. The bride and groom were separated as well. Moreover, the bride and groom dressed in 'regular clothes' rather than as royalty as is traditional in Javanese wedding ceremonies. Suwanti says she wore a long, white gown, and a white headscarf decorated with gold embroidery and flowers. Her husband wore a Muslim-style tunic and loose pants and an innovative 'Baghdad-style' hat. Finally, she reports, the focus of the ceremony was reading from the Qur'an rather than the traditional Javanese speeches and

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rituals which stress harmony, fertility and cooperation. She describes the overall atmosphere of the ceremony as being 'more like a religious study session (*pengajian*) than a wedding'.[48]

## Conclusion: Education, courtship and modern Muslim weddings

Shorter or 'absent' courtship and *Islami*-style weddings are still relatively limited occurrences in Javanese society. Nonetheless, the innovations documented here are revealing of more general patterns of change among Muslim Javanese. These changes have not resulted in a single, agreed model for courtship and marriage. Social developments which have occurred in the 50 years since Hildred Geertz's path-breaking work on Javanese family and gender roles have offered young people varied and often contradictory options.[49] Greater educational and employment opportunities, particularly for women, have led to the postponement of marriage, greater opportunities for freer interactions with members of the opposite sex and the intensification of the trend towards self-choice of marital partner. These developments stand in contradistinction to the greater incidence of veiling and modest clothing styles among female students and Islamist appeals for pre-marital chastity, gender segregation and the establishment of *syar'iah* .

The Islamic resurgence of the 1970s and 1980s has, if anything, led to an even greater fragmentation of religious authority, and a pluralization of Islamic ideals as regards education, courtship, family and gender. On campuses and in urban neighbourhoods, the resurgence has created a competitive religious market which encourages individuals and groups to seek out and choose an authentic Islam to practise as their own. Religious teachers press young people to embrace a more normative Islam and reject elements of belief deemed 'polytheistic'. Muslim student organizations offer seminars and workshops on how to control sexual desire and interact as young adult Muslims. Popular authors and religious authorities urge sexual restraint and the avoidance of inappropriate contact with members of the opposite sex. Against this backdrop, most young people have been satisfied to adjust and reinterpret Javanese traditions; others have abandoned them completely.

As is also true in the West, modernity in Muslim Indonesia has ushered in enhanced social mobility and increased opportunities for education and economic achievement. As in other parts of the Muslim world, however, that modernity remains a space of intense moral and political contestation, not least of all as regards ideals of family and, especially, femininity.[50] For young Javanese, modernity is experienced as a realm in which the

48 Although 'Muslim style', Suwanti's wedding celebration was far from small and austere. There were 1,500 guests at the celebration sponsored by her parents and 700 at a later celebration sponsored by the parents of her husband. And although there was no traditional entertainment, such as *wayang* (shadow puppet theatre) or classical Javanese dance, there were two popular and quite lively Muslim singing groups which took turns playing throughout the entire evening.

49 Geertz, *Javanese family*.

50 Fariba Adelkhah, *Being modern in Iran* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000); Arlene Elowe Macleod, *Accommodating protest: Working women, the new veiling, and change in Cairo* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991); Ziba Mir-Hosseini, *Islam and gender: The religious debate in contemporary Iran* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999); Jenny B. White, *Islamist mobilization in Turkey: A study in vernacular politics* (Seattle: Washington University Press, 2002).

https://doi.org/10.1017/S002246340500024X Published online by Cambridge University Press

individual choice and freedoms so widely celebrated in accounts of Western modernity do indeed exist, at least as a latent potential. But the freedoms are also buffeted and constrained by rival and more encompassing visions of self and sexuality. The message many pious Muslim youth deduce from the contest is that selfhood and sexuality should be not merely a matter of individual achievement and autonomy, but part of a broader and notably less individualistic vision of religious piety and moral community.

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