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AN ANTHROPOLOGICAL APPROACH TO GENDER IDEALS AND PRACTICAL
REPRESENTATIONS”**

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CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	1
THEORIZING GENDER AND THE REGION OF SOUTHEAST ASIA: AN ANTHROPOLOGICAL APPROACH	5
<i>Anthropology and the Study of Gender: An Overview</i>	8
<i>Gender as the Product and Producer of Histories</i>	11
<i>Cultural Meanings and Structuring Factors</i>	15
<i>Gender and Diversity: From Difference to Fluidity, or the Concept of Gender Pluralism</i>	17
<i>Stories and Histories of Gender Pluralism</i>	20
<i>Transgenderism</i>	22
<i>Gender as a System of Prestige</i>	24
<i>Shame, Reason, and Passion</i>	26
<i>Official Discourses and Daily Practices</i>	29
<i>Ideology, Hegemony, and Gender Pluralism</i>	30
<i>Summarizing Gender Theories in Southeast Asia</i>	35
MEN AND MASCULINITIES: THROUGH THE GENDER THEORY AND REGIONAL INQUIRY PRISMS	38
<i>Men and Masculinities Through the Gender Theory Prism</i>	38
<i>Men, Masculinities, and Gendered Bodies: Deconstructing Conceptual Underpinnings of Difference</i>	39
<i>Situated Performances and Configurations of Social Practices</i>	42
<i>Localizing Masculinities</i>	44
... <i>at Intersections of Axes of Difference</i>	45
... <i>in Processes of Differentiation and Subordination</i>	46
<i>Men & Masculinities in Southeast Asia: Anthropological Inquiries</i>	48
<i>Floating Between the Global and the Local</i>	50
<i>Passion and Desire</i>	59
<i>Violence and Forms of Intimidation</i>	65
<i>Age Matters</i>	74
<i>Modern (Muslim) Masculinities</i>	77
<i>Summarizing Men and Masculinities in Southeast Asia</i>	85
CONCLUSION	88
REFERENCES	93

INTRODUCTION

Knowledge of masculinity arises within the project of knowing gender relations.

R. W. Connell, 2005b, p. 44

To understand gender, then, we must constantly go beyond gender.

R. W. Connell, 2005b, p. 76

As an aspect of a larger topic – that of gender– in Western history of knowledge, masculinity has often been “individualized” and “personified”. Embodied in the (socially and culturally constructed) entity of a man – a subject with a pre-defined sex and gender identity, masculinity has continuously been defined as a single category and the opposite to its counterpart – femininity. Only recently, perceptions have shifted towards masculinities (in plural) as *multiple* patterns and configurations of gender practices and representations generated within various structures of social relations (Connell, 2005b, p.72). This focus on the diversity of social practices and performances, linked to insights of feminist thinking about gender, sexuality, and power is rather recent and barely explored in the context of Southeast Asian masculinities (exceptions are the recent compilation of Ford & Lyons, 2012; but also recent sociological inquiry by Nilan & Demartoto, 2012; or Nilan, Demartoto, & Wibowo, 2011).

Southeast Asia is a region situated in the Global South¹ in which both academic research and public discourse on gender has been circulating around issues concerning the role of women in kinship and society (cf. Chandler, Sullivan, & Branson, 1988; Karim, 1992; Ong, 1987; Stoler, 1977; van Esterik, 1982; Wolf, 1992, 1996). Until recently, masculinities figured mainly as ideal or idealized characters and cultural representations in particular sociocultural contexts. This approach is informed by notions of local customs and cultures, or *adat*² in the

¹ Leaning on Connell’s (2007) critical analysis on the origin and distribution of intellectual knowledge in the social sciences, I use the term Global South to denote an idea of interconnectedness characterized by relations of “authority, exclusion and inclusion, hegemony, partnership, sponsorship, appropriation” (p. ix). The same can be argued for Western anthropological research (Karim, 1992, pp. 4, 218-219) as it heavily relies on pre-defined concepts that inform the questions and choices about the subjects under study. See also Adam Jones’s *Men of the Global South: A Reader* (2006).

² The term *adat* is of Arabic origin and refers to customary manners and practices which extend to the legal, moral, and ethical aspects of life (cf. von Benda-Beckmann & von Benda-Beckmann, 2011).

Malay world, and lies at the heart of early anthropological inquiry in the region (cf. Firth, 1946/2002; Geertz & Geertz, 1975; Graham, 1987; Heine-Geldern, 1947, Raybeck, 1986; Spiro, 1977). Written mainly by men about men, early ethnographic accounts easily translate into political projects related to global historic processes and to hegemonic politics of knowledge production. Yet, the outstanding amount of information and rich cultural detail on kinship, myths, and rituals accessible through the careful, non-simplistic, and critical analysis of early ethnographies places anthropological comparative research at the forefront in the investigation of masculinities as patterns of gendered practices and relations.³ A move beyond descriptive matters is required in order to trace both the deep historicity and diversity of gender and gender relations as well as the wider relevance of gender practices and representations in the region. A contextual approach which looks into both dominant discourses and the flow of ideas and which takes aspects of power and legitimacy (cf. Peletz, 2009) into account will thus trace masculinities as situated configurations of social practices “simultaneously positioned in a number of structures of relationship, which may be following different historical trajectories” (Connell, 2005b, p. 73).

I organize the following thesis around two overarching and yet interconnected issues of analysis: gender and masculinity. The first part focuses on gender theories, including an anthropological perspective and a more general overview of gender literature with regard to the region of Southeast Asia. Here, I explicitly focus on studies of the past two decades and do not engage with literature focused on women and women’s issues, roles, and identities in any extensive manner (which I have done elsewhere, in a smaller framework; see Parvanova, 2012), with exception to those cases which offer a sound overview over ideals and practical representations of masculinity. The second part of the thesis engages with the topic of masculinity, partly from a more theoretical and partly in a more ethnographic/pragmatic perspective. Throughout the thesis, theory is intermingled with empirical examples and case studies’ references. Although these examples are not based on a personal ethnographic fieldwork research in Southeast Asia, every now and then I refer to some personal experiences which I gathered during my one-year scholarship stay in Bandung, Indonesia (2012-2013). These experiences inform both my interest in gender representations and the performance of masculinities throughout the region.

³ Or, as R. W. Connell (2005b) maintains, “ethnographic knowledge about masculinity is valuable precisely to the extent we understand it as part of a global history, a history marked by dispossession, struggle and transformation” (p. 34).

Tracing concepts and contexts of masculinities in anthropological and ethnographic fieldwork research of the past few decades requires an implicit comparative approach similar to the one applied during fieldwork when anthropologists “constantly compare throughout their empirical activities similar events, situations and contexts in every life, or rituals, with those they have observed in an earlier phase” (Gingrich & Palmberger, 2014, p. 94, also called *intrinsic empirical comparison*, see Gingrich, 2012, p. 206). Comparison in the qualitative research is concerned with the comparing of cases, which themselves are perceived as configurations or “as combinations of characteristics” (Gingrich & Palmberger, 2014, p. 95). As Gingrich and Palmberger denote, in the course of comparative research it is important to consider and actively engage the (historical, cultural, and relational) context of different cases. Yet, instead of retreating to a radical form of cultural relativism, anthropological comparative research today should seek to transcend the dichotomy between particularism and universalism (cf. Gingrich, 2012, p. 205; Gingrich & Palmberger, 2014, p. 97). Led by an interpretative and culturally sensitive approach, anthropological comparison may reveal a much greater regional variety than a priori assumed. In order to avoid over-simplified generalizations of unidirectional developments and transformations in the course of the abstraction of phenomena, a careful selection of data and elaboration of criteria of comparison should form the basis of qualitative comparative analysis (see also Gingrich, 2012, pp. 210-212).

The following thesis applies comparison as a more intrinsic form of analysis aiming at gaining some preliminary insights from a limited (in the spectrum of cases) regional overview of manhood and masculinities in Southeast Asia, while an explicit comparative approach aims at tracing the translocal conditions for the existence of pluralistic dispositions and sentiments (cf. Peletz, 2009, p. 9) within constructions and practical representations of masculinities in Southeast Asia. In the course of a regional overview, I narrow my analysis not only to a limited number of cases stemming from the (mainly anthropological) fieldwork of other researchers in mainland and insular of Southeast Asia (and thus applying comparison in an indirect manner, see Gingrich, 2012, p. 205) but also to a limited spectrum of social contexts. This limitation translates into the critical choice of cases and criteria of comparison in order to account for the intensity of certain topics as well as discursive and practical representations with regard to masculinities in the wider region.

As I move from theoretical insights to “lived” experiences and social realities, I place my focus on both continuities and changes in masculinities and masculine representations. If

social practices are onto-formative⁴, then gender (and masculinities) appears as the product and producer of social realities that, taken into the dynamics of time, constitutes histories, which are inherently histories of change. Change occurs along fractures; it becomes most visible along borderlines, in processes of transition and times of crisis. R. W. Connell (2005b, pp. 81-86) defines change in gender orders by raising the idea of “crisis tendencies”. In both theoretical discussions and practical representations, crisis is traced in shifts of social structures and power relations and in conflicts over strategies of legitimation (cf. Connell, 2005b, p. 85). All case studies depicted for this thesis present such situations of crisis, both on subjective as well as on institutional and larger sociocultural level.

As I focus on the dynamics of change, I attempt to capture not only relations of dominance or subordination, but also various tactics of interplay that underpin the diversity of gender. This supports Michael Peletz’s (2009) concept of gender pluralism as outlined in his seminal work on the construction and transformation of cultural symbols, interpretations, practices, ideals, and ideologies bearing on gender (or, to be more precise, on five different sets of gendered identities/practices/relations) in Southeast Asia. Michael Peletz (2011) defines gender pluralism as the “critical range of pluralistic sensibilities and dispositions with regard to gender, sexuality, and bodily practices” (pp. 661, 682). Characterized by rich cultural diversity, including cultural and social norms, institutions, rituals, and beliefs, the region of Southeast Asia provides a context in which to claim and sustain a singular dominant representation or mode of interpretations is doomed to fail. By recurring to different ideas and ideologies and by creating different discourses different groups construct masculinities in different ways. To show these dynamics is another aim of this thesis.

Despite the large diversity of gendered practices and relations in the region, for the sake of offering a more compact and consistent overview, I will focus particularly on these patterns of gendered practices that are constructed and performed among heterosexual and hetero-gendered men in Southeast Asia, and particularly insular Southeast Asia. By doing so, I already relate to one central framework of a global hegemonic gender discourse – the idea that masculinity is inherent to the male body. Taking up this direction of analysis, I do not attempt to impose a Western hegemonic gender order based on the binary opposition between sexed or gendered bodies – a discourse rooted in dichotomies between men and women, male and female, masculine and feminine (cf. Ford & Lyons, 2012, p. 3). This hegemonic perception is well countered by powerful studies of transgendered individuals (Peletz, 2006, 2009) or

⁴ I refer here to R. W. Connell’s (2005b, p. 81) definition of gender as an onto-formative practice that constitutes social realities.

homosexual relations among both men (cf. Boellstorff, 2005; Jackson & Sullivan, 1999, 2001) and women (cf. Wieringa, Blackwood, & Bhaiya, 2007). The focus of this thesis will thus be on how the performance of heterosexuality is actually connected to hegemonic constructions of masculinity (cf. Ford & Lyons, 2012). This connection is particularly interesting in a context where the distinction between the local and the global becomes increasingly blurred. To recognize the global dimension of gendered practices and the particular intersection between local and global discourses in situated sets of practical representations and interpretations remains a secondary endeavor of the following analysis. Thus, the following discussions offer neither an all-encompassing nor a comprehensive review of published work on gender, men, and masculinities in Southeast Asia up to date. Any such endeavor would necessitate extended time resources and broad access to overseas research archives and databases, which do not fit into the humble and limited frame of a master thesis. Yet, I perceive this thesis as both a sound overview and a starting point for further analysis and discussion of the construction and configuration of masculinities in the regional context of Southeast Asia that will also spur additional interest and enthusiasm for a concrete ethnographic and long-term engagement with this topic.

THEORIZING GENDER AND THE REGION OF SOUTHEAST ASIA: AN ANTHROPOLOGICAL APPROACH

Ever since early ethnographic interest in the region⁵, Southeast Asia has been presented as a site of vast ethnic, cultural, and religious diversity; yet, only in the past few decades, the region has also attracted the attention of gender theorists (see, for example, compilations by Atkinson & Erington, 1990; Ong & Peletz, 1995; Sears, 1996; Sen & Stivens, 1998; see also

⁵ Systematic ethnographic accounts of the region appear about the same time as the ethnographic method (including detailed descriptions of small-scale societies channeled by participant observation and inquiries in the native language of the groups under study à la Bronislaw Malinowski, 1884-1942) reaches a certain level of popularity among young anthropologists in the European and American centers of knowledge production. In the Netherlands, J.P.B. de Josselin de Jong (1886-1964), inspired by French sociologists and ethnologists Émile Durkheim and Marcel Mauss and founder of a regional comparative tradition at Leiden University, presented a model of Indonesian kinship based on insights from Willem H. Rassers' study of Javanese theater and ritual as early as 1935 (cf. de Wolf, 2002, p. 96). According to de Wolf (2002), the Leiden school was "an important source of inspiration" (p. 96) for Claude Lévi-Strauss's *Elementary Structures of Kinship* and thus post-war structuralism.

Andaya, 2007, pp. 113-114; King & Wilder, 2006, pp. 262-288). Gender and feminist analysis, in line with post-colonial critique, largely recognizes that both early processes of knowledge production and the contents of early historical accounts from the region are informed by global political struggles to define the subject and the object of study, to delineate identity and ascribe alterity, and to create timeless histories that ignore the contexts of social practices and cultural representations.

As recognized in more recent critical analysis of earlier scholarship on gender and sexuality (cf. Peletz, 2006, p. 309; King & Wilder, 2006, p. 263), feminist accounts showed a tendency to focus exclusively on women's roles, status, experiences, and voices, and *not* on gender as a structuring aspect of social interaction (cf. Connell, 2005b). Neither did these earlier accounts justice to the complexity of cultural representations and daily practices and their institutionalized arrangements in different locales and structured arenas of social and cultural interaction (cf. Peletz, 2011). Thus, a more general review of gender literature in the region inevitably recalls pre-defined entities of "men" and "women", "gay" and "lesbian" and to a much lesser extent the non-simplistic and critical examination of masculinities and femininities. Such "discrete" categories are problematic as they appear to be "universal" and thus obscure local processes of cultural elaboration and social negotiation of gender roles and their inherently contradictory or ambivalent nature (cf. Ong & Peletz, 1995, pp. 1-3).

Another challenge arises from the necessity to draw a line between (biological) *sex* and (cultural concept of) *gender* and to draw *symbolic* and *structural* schemata of research closer to each other⁶ in order to bridge the common divide between the construction of cultural meaning and the elaboration of structural power relations. The subsequent discussion attempts to show that both concepts of sex and gender, as well as cultural symbolic meanings and structures of difference and inequality are profoundly embedded in the reality of social practice, everyday experience, and the interaction of individual subjects with their immediate surroundings and living conditions.

As I approach the topic of masculinities in Southeast Asia, I draw upon studies from the field of anthropology and its interfaces with other disciplines, including history, post-colonial, and gender studies. My leading question is how cultural and social anthropology can and does

⁶ In using the terms "materialist" and "symbolic", I refer to Eric Wolf's (2001, pp. 370-382) illumination of two more general paths or perspectives in anthropological research and analysis with regard to "ideology" and "power". While the latter perspective emphasizes "interpretation, *Verstehen*, or hermeneutics in grasping the consequences of 'minding'" (Wolf, 2001, p. 371), the first perspective, also common in research on gender and power relations, stresses human engagement with the material world and thus human activity and social interaction.

contribute to the study of masculinities in a certain region. This is a viable inquiry since anthropologists have been at the forefront in studying various cultural and social phenomena in the region of Southeast Asia (for example, the work of Clifford Geertz and his interpretative approach to cultural phenomena). Particularly after the 1980s, due to theoretical and institutional developments, the discipline has experienced a notable growth of ethnographic coverage, sub-disciplinary specialization, and international distribution (Ellen, 2012, p. 422). Although the region of Southeast Asia is often characterized as “archipelagic” (cf. Ellen, 2012, pp. 424-426) due to its geographic constellation, early ethnographies denote a certain level of cultural and ethnic isolation, in accordance to anthropologists’ more general hesitation to assert a regional pattern (cf. Andaya, 2006, p. 2). Despite the lack of coherence in many different aspects (kinship, language, religion, etc.), early historical studies of the region – particularly French historian George Coedès’ *Histoire ancienne des états hindouisés d’Extrême-Orient* (cf. Andaya, 2000a, p. 1) – suggest a comparative approach by ways of demonstrating the interconnectedness of social processes and changes in recent history. Anthropology’s wide array of *thick*, detailed, and refined ethnographic studies and theoretical inquiries both challenge and incite comparative approach. Moreover, along with the discipline’s well-appreciated ethnographic method and predominant cultural-historical approach, comparison has continually gained prominence in recent decades, particularly since the interrelation of global phenomena and their local interpretations have shifted into the focus of anthropological inquiry (cf. Gingrich, 2012; Gingrich & Fox, 2002). Globalization has become a key characteristic of today’s interconnected world. Yet, whether inquiring into cultural and symbolic meanings and their local and contextual particularities, or into the effects of larger processes, such as the incorporation of certain localities into the flows of global market chains, any meaningful assessment of change and transformation will eventually and necessarily implore a thick historical dimension – one which goes beyond the standard framework of historical investigation (cf. Andaya, 2010, p. 5).

Thus, a particular characteristic of contemporary anthropological inquiry in the region of Southeast Asia is its intrinsic focus on local contextual particularities and the historicity of social phenomena (Cowan, 2012, pp. 128-129). It is exactly this contextual approach which brought anthropologists closer to feminist theorists and to the study of gender and the way “different cultures encode, impart and regulate ideas about gender” (Andaya, 2000a, p. 5). Both feminist historians and anthropologists grappled with the histories of the “silenced” to explore how gender intersects with other structuring principles such as race and class in specific localities and in actual historical practices, such as various forms of colonial rule (e.g.

Stoler, 1995). This endeavor implied the willingness to step beyond his-story to explore “herstory” (cf. Andaya, 2000a, 2006) by drawing insights from other disciplines and transgressing methodological and theoretical boundaries (Cowan, 2012, p. 123; Andaya, 2000a, pp. 5-6).

The growing interest in the topic of gender in contemporary ethnographies in Southeast Asia upholds a particular gender distinctiveness of the region, in the sense of gender diversity, fluidity, and pluralism (cf. Peletz, 2006, 2009), which calls for the contextualization of social phenomena and the consideration of their relation to wider social processes and structures. More recently, notions of subjectivity, performance, agency and social practices have come to the center of both anthropological and gender research (Moore, 2012, p. 219). In this thesis, I thus situate the analysis of masculinities in Southeast Asia at this intersection of social structures and practical representations of meaning. Yet, before I turn my gaze to particular identities, practices, displays and ideals connected to masculinity, it is important to take a closer look at how thinking about, conceptualizing, and analyzing gender in the discipline has evoked a certain set of concepts, categories, and analytical tools that interweave with major theoretical shifts and empirical foci. Here, I largely refer to disciplinary engagements and relations between anthropology and gender studies, as outlined by Henrietta L. Moore (2012), one of the leading figures in the study of gender in social anthropology since the late 1980s, in her contribution to *The SAGE Handbook of Social Anthropology*. Intended to present a detailed review of the discipline’s current state of the art, Moore (2012) offers a considerate account of anthropology’s engagement with gender analysis from the 1960s onwards. Skipping theoretical commitments in the following two decades, I consider 1980s as a turning point, since the focus of inquiry eventually shifted “from ‘women’ as the category of analysis to gender as a structuring principle” (Moore, 2012, p. 214).

Anthropology and the Study of Gender: An Overview

Anthropology’s interest in structures dates back to early twentieth century’s Marxist thought later embraced by British and French social anthropologists, including Maurice Bloch and Maurice Godelier, to name two leading figures, as well as to French structuralism, particularly to the work of Claude Lévi-Strauss on the elementary structures of kinship. Yet, as Robert Parkin denotes, both Lévi-Strauss and Marxist anthropologists saw the existence of structures prior to their manifestation in human thought and social relations (Parkin, 2005, p. 221). Despite this early interest in kinship and the historical reproduction of social relations,

including the relations between “men” and “women” as biologically sexed individuals – gender difference remained largely unquestioned. Gayle Rubin, an influential theorist of sex and gender politics, was the first to pose the question of the actual character of gender difference, or “how gender was lived and made liveable” (Moore, 2012, p. 215). With her focus on difference and insisting on the social construction of gender, Rubin went one step further to suggest that gender as a system was essentially a product of human activity through history, eventually moving from structure to process and social practice. This reorientation from structure towards practice and from society towards individual behavior goes in line with theoretical shifts in anthropological analysis marked by the work of French anthropologist, Pierre Bourdieu, *A Theory of Practice* (1977), in which he develops his ideas of social, cultural, and symbolic capital as well as the concept of *habitus*. Habitus as a set of socially learned dispositions “contributes to society’s reproduction by generating and regulating the practices that make up social life” (Moberg, 2013, p. 223). The idea of regulatory practices that produce and stabilize gender categories and identities appears again in the work and theory of Judith Butler, which I address in the following paragraph.

By the end of 1980s, gender as a category of analysis gradually moved away from the category of sex and, to a certain extent, from the physical body as a source of gender identity. Instead, the focus of analysis gradually shifted towards the intersection of gender with other axes of difference. In late feminist and post-Marxist critique, gender identities were increasingly perceived as the product of practices in specific constellations of power relations, including race, class, ethnicity, and culture. As the spectrum of gender analysis broadened, culture was no longer perceived as the symbolic basis of a distinctive gender structure, but rather as the product of different discourses and discursive practices, which provided different subject positions (cf. Moore, 2012, p. 218). In line with intersectionalist thinking, this discursive approach to gender opened the possibility for “multiple and potentially contradictory positioning and subjectivities” (Moore, 2012, p. 218) and thus for strategies of resistance, acceptance, or compliance – an interpretation largely embraced by recent analysis of masculinity as a processual configuration of social practices (Connell, 2005, p. 72).

Gender analysis in the 1990s was marked by Judith Butler’s performance theory – principles of analysis rooted in Marxist ideas of the recreation of social structures and Michel Foucault’s ideas of power and subjugation theory, which anthropologists readily embraced. Butler’s performance theory is also drawn upon in contemporary studies of masculinities in Southeast Asia (cf. Wieringa, Blackwood, & Bhaiya, 2007) in their focus on daily practices and discourses that impose, but also challenge multiple gender structures.

The Foucauldian element disrupts the disciplinary roots of the concept of gender, or, as Butler adequately maintains, the “disciplinary production of gender effects a false stabilization of gender in the interest of the heterosexual construction and regulation of sexuality within the reproductive domain” (Butler, 1990/2011). In late feminist and queer theory, theoretical and empirical engagement with gender moved further to inquire into concepts of gender as (institutionalized) knowledge that organized bodies, practices, acts, and identities. As Donna Haraway, a feminist historian, denotes, knowledge “is *always* an engaged material practice and *never* a disembodied set of ideas. Knowledge is embedded in projects; knowledge is always *for*, in many senses, some things and not others, and knowers are always formed by their projects, just as they shape what they can know” (Haraway, 2004, pp. 199-200, cited in Moberg, 2013, p. 3). Similar to inquiring into foundational concepts of the discipline and its common textual practices (cf. Marcus, 2008), engagements with feminist scholarship brought anthropologists to deeper reflection on the discipline’s own histories, institutionalities, projects, and knowledge production. This critical perspective resulted into a higher awareness of distinct locales and modes of knowledge production.

Gender anthropologists today, and particularly those who have situated their research focus in the region of Southeast Asia, insist not only on the fluidity and plurality of gender categories, practices, and discourses, as Michael G. Peletz (2009) conscientiously asserts, but also on a divergent, locally specific interpretation of gender. In line with this argument, anthropologist Peter Jackson suggests that the notion of *phet*⁷ “incorporates sexual difference (male vs female), gender difference (masculine vs feminine) and sexuality (heterosexual vs homosexual) within a single formation” (Moore, 2012, p. 221). The study of gender in anthropological research in Southeast Asia, thus ultimately brings the body, both sexed and gendered, back into the focus of investigation. At the same time, while gender differences appear as fluid or blurred in certain contexts, sexual difference may evoke interpretation that go well beyond the body, to incorporate the environment, both material and spiritual, and society as a whole.

Before I move to the discussion of gender in Southeast Asia in more detail, I wish to conclude this chapter by pointing out three particular strengths of anthropological research and its potential contribution to the study of masculinity in Southeast Asia: (a) gender as a culturally specific configuration of meaning embodied and imparted in social practices and thus subject to change; (b) contextualization, engaging both a rich ethnographic and a deep historical

⁷ Term in Thai language denoting concepts and ideas of gender, gender identities, and sexual practices.

dimension; and, (c) comparison, crossing the border of the local to consider larger regional or even global processes and their transformative effects on local livelihoods and interpretations. All in all, within a broader comparative project, the study of gender requires the study of change and transformations, which allow for multiple sites of identification. As a comparative discipline taking local and regional contexts as well as human agency and social practices into account, anthropology features theoretical expertise and, most of all, a methodological toolkit – ethnographic fieldwork – to inquire into processes and configurations of masculinities in Southeast Asia.

Gender as the Product and Producer of Histories

Ethnographic and anthropological inquiry into the region of Southeast Asia has a long history of colonial and post-colonial encounters. To recognize the historical context of this work as well as its institutional dimensions and the unequal distribution of knowledge, resources, and power is necessarily the first step towards a critical assessment of the multitude of ethnographic fieldwork data and ethno-historical material on kinship, institutions, rituals, and beliefs in the region.

In the process of integrating a deep historical dimension into the analysis of gender in Southeast Asia, the fact that some units of analysis – the stories, the “his-stories” and “her-stories”, of the people outside the royal courts or the ruling elites who embodied, articulated, and enacted various aspects of gender, status, and prestige, including gender roles and sexual desires – are, in some way, “forever lost” has to be taken into consideration. An analysis of their subjective perspectives and interpretations cannot rely on the short-term observations of early explorers and their biased approach to issues of social organization, kinship, and family relations. These accounts will certainly reveal more information about prevailing socio-cultural and geo-political constellations, in which both the observer and the observed were embedded, than about gender systems in the region. What could possibly be grasped and reconstructed from the limited and restricted material in local archives are exclusively pieces of pre-dominant ideologies and Western-oriented hegemonic discourses.

Tracing continuities and changes in histories of practical representations of masculinities and in dominant discourses of manhood in the region of Southeast Asia should not collapse into the essentialization of identities and ideologies (Blackwood, 2005, p. 850). Rather, as Evelyn Blackwood (2005) suggests, I bear in mind that “gendered practices are differently produced, understood, and interiorized in relation to the dominant religious, cultural, and social

discourses of particular historical eras” (Blackwood, 2005, p. 850). The discussion of gender as the product and producer of histories ultimately brings my focus to Barbara W. Andaya’s seminal work on the “his”- and “her”-stories of gender relations, representations, and interpretations in early modern Southeast Asia.

Barbara W. Andaya is a renowned historian with a profound expertise on gender and gender relations in Southeast Asia, as they have formed and developed in the course of local histories, customs, and ritualized practices. Andaya has published numerous articles and contributions to the study of women’s history in Southeast Asia, and particularly in the area of her regional expertise – the Malay-Indonesian Archipelago. Currently Professor of Asian Studies at the University of Hawai’i, her research on women’s history in Southeast Asia began at a time when a number of finely honed anthropological publications on gender in the region advocated both the contextualization of social phenomena and the localization of cultural particularities. While anthropologists maintained a definition of gender as “a cultural system of practices and symbols implicating both women and men” (Errington, 1990, p. 3), history at that time was only slow in adopting gendered perspectives upon the predominantly national and state “his-stories” of the region, which at the close of the colonial age were deeply “infused with masculine pride” (Andaya, 2000a, p. 2). In subsequent publications following a conference in 1998, in which Andaya delved into the topic of gender in Southeast Asian history, the author recognizes that adding a gender dimension to historical investigation is not equal to adding women’s voices to a laid-down history (cf. Andaya, 2000a, p. 9, or Andaya, 2006, p. 5). Rather, gender history necessarily merges his- und her-story by looking at relations and practices that relate to both men and women, that “encode, impart and regulate” (Andaya, 2000a, p. 5) both masculinity and femininity.

In *The Flaming Womb: Repositioning Women in Southeast Asian History* (2006) Andaya turns towards women’s history dating back to what has been described as early modern times (approximately between 1400 and 1800) (Andaya, 2006, p. 3). Her determined project entails crossing disciplinary boundaries and inquiring into data very different from the European material produced on the region (cf. Andaya, 2006, pp. 41, 42-69). Engaging a variety of indigenous sources of knowledge along with colonial reports and documents, Andaya’s history of women delivers revealing insights into the lives, beliefs, and practices of both men and women, and particularly in relation to one another. She shows that gender difference is most apparent where other markers, such as age, class, or social status come at stake. This particular inter-linkage between cultural particularities, gender, and social status is also apparent in the work of Sharyn Graham Davies (2007a, b) on Bugi’s gender conceptions,

ideas, and practices in South Sulawesi, Indonesia, as she argues that “gender delineates acceptable means by which people can obtain or lose social status” (p. 143). Gender difference is thus not static, neither is it personified in a duality of men versus women.

Having said this, I wish to point out the most revealing insight I have obtained by reading Andaya’s refined work on gender history in the region, and this is the fact that gender, and even gender difference, does not dwell on dualities. It is not about men versus women, male versus female, femininity versus masculinity. These supposed binary opposites are rather the components of a whole. They function as a complementary pair in which each component “can potentially contain elements of its complement” (James J. Fox, cited in Andaya, 2000b, p. 236). This, again, goes in line with indigenous understandings of gender pointed out by scholars of the region, particularly by Peter Jackson (1997), Megan Sinnott (2007), Sharyn Graham Davies (2007a), and Michael Peletz (2006, 2009, 2011), who plea for gender diversity rather than duality, or for what Peletz (2009, pp. 182-283) calls *graduated gender pluralism* (Peletz, 2009, p. 182-183).⁸ Instead of gender difference, it appears more appropriate to speak of culturally-defined boundaries of gender that regulate social practices and gender relations.

One such boundary is the one between female fertility and masculinity. Female fertility, associated with the maturing female body, the reproductive cycle, and menstrual period, is perceived as a “threatening energy” (Andaya, 2006, p. 199), a “powerful and potentially dangerous force” (Andaya, 2006, p. 72), or the “manifestation of forces beyond human control” (Andaya, 2000b, p. 234) which have the potential to threaten male activities, such as hunting, warfare, but also men’s sexual potency and virility. All of these features, including physical power, courage, strength and endurance, are closely related to masculinity. The power inherent in a women’s body, on the other hand, is related to a (super)natural, mystic, and spiritual world beyond men’s (rational) control and as such, potentially dangerous (see also Valeri, 1990, pp. 261-262).

Yet, in societies in which men’s reproductive and procreative role is equally recognized this particular gender difference is played down (for example in Wana society, Sulawesi, in

⁸ Michael Peletz adapts the notion of *graduated* to describe “certain dynamics bearing on gender, sexuality, and body politics in Southeast Asia” (Peletz, 2009, p. 303). Graduated (gender) pluralism, thus, goes beyond local pluralistic understandings and interpretations to consider the “differential distribution throughout societies, polities, and diasporic as well as other transnational spaces of certain kinds of sentiments, dispositions, and institutionalized arrangements conducive to or inhibiting pluralism” (Peletz, 2009, p. 82). By this, and in line with recent anthropological endeavors, Peletz’s comprehensive work on gender transcends local contexts and particularities to look for a promising comparison on a regional level.

Atkinson, 1990, pp. 79-88). Jane Monnig Atkinson (1990) shows that for Wana in Central Sulawesi, Indonesia, gender difference hardly touches upon the cultural imagery of men and women, as both figure as “life-givers” in procreative discourses. Moreover, “as Wana tell it, men used to be the ones to give birth” (Atkinson, 1990, p. 75), they also are pregnant (prior to women), or menstruat(ed) (p. 76). This equality in the procreative process does not preclude gender difference in different contexts, such as the pursuit of spiritual knowledge (Atkinson, 1990, pp. 82-84), in which men figure as braver – bravery being an intrinsic feature of manhood. Bravery in Wana society is required in order to venture the spiritual world beyond the settlement. Although there are no (gender) restrictions on who can become a mediator between the human and spiritual realms, this project requires courage and bravery – characteristics related to manhood. If a woman obtains the role of a shaman, she has most probably “beat the odds” (Atkinson, 1990, pp. 83). Yet, bravery, similarly to the sacral power of women’s body, is associated with male genitalia (Atkinson, 1990, p. 85). Thus, gender difference, rather than *inscribed* in the body, always *relates* to the body, in a sense that it encompasses not only social roles, identities, and practices, but also sexual differences, orientations, and desires. Rather than a static difference, it appears as an organizational difference, in which complementarity figures as the rule.

Complementarity has become a stable characteristic of gender relations in the region of Southeast Asia and it often dwells in reciprocity (see, for example, Andaya, 2006, p. 137, for a wife of a headhunter “tattooed as a partner in his greatness”; or Andaya, 2006, p. 79, for a mother who “acquired merit through presenting a son to the monastery”, or Andaya, 2006, p. 116, for a man in battle protected by the fabric of a skilled female weaver). When reciprocity is disrupted, when sexuality and desire become unrestrained and uncontrolled, this is when calamity can strike not only one person, or a couple, but a whole society (see, for example, Andaya, 2006, p. 76, for a “guilty man” who is reincarnated as a person of “indeterminate sex”).

In Andaya’s history of women in Southeast Asia, men figure not as the implicit standard, or central point of reference; rather they figure as active participants in creating, enacting and imparting locally specific notions of masculinity, femininity, and gender altogether. Men and masculinity are defined in relation to women and femininity (as in the case of female fertility), on the one hand; on the other, they occupy particular, strongly class- and status-related roles that further define their activities and perceptions of manhood and masculinity. These roles are usually associated with physical strength (and also violence), spiritual knowledge (or shamanism), sexual potency and virility. In history, men appear in the roles of

kings and rulers, hunters and warriors, conquerors and men of prowess. If their main attributes – control and power – are threatened, their social status and position can be undermined. Here again, the fine connection between gender and social status becomes evident.

Cultural Meanings and Structuring Factors

Gender inequality – deeply rooted in the Western experience – is inherently linked to gender as a structuring aspect of social practices. From a Western perspective, social inequalities appear to be the product of a complex interplay between a variety of structuring factors of difference (race, gender, class) linked to both status and the distribution of resources and means of control. Here, I stress Connell's (2005b) definition of gender as a way of structuring social practice and interaction and thus the concept's process-related character. The structuring power inherent to gender becomes more obvious in the production and reproduction of gender ideologies by ritualized and routinized practices that give stability to certain gender orders. The construction and enactment of masculinities include some of these practices. Another aspect of this structuring power stems from the institutionalization of such practices, or, in Foucault's sense, the ability "to structure the possible field of action of others" (Foucault, 1984a, p. 428, cited in Wolf, 2001, p. 384). Following this argument, gender, rather than a natural attribute, becomes a marker of status and prestige.

In the compilation edited by Atkinson and Errington (1990), Shelly Errington (1990, pp. 1-58) provides a critical introduction to the topics of gender, sex, and power in the region of Southeast Asia and presents a differentiated perspective on the concepts of gender and power as "construed and enacted socially" (p.10). By taking critical distance away from the Eurocentric imposition of taken-for-granted categories of "man" and "woman", "male" and "female", she turns her focus towards notions of power as manifested in gendered performances. Throughout Southeast Asia, status, Errington (1990) argues, is not necessarily related to class or (solely) to economic power in the sense of economic privilege or prestige, or control over economic resources. Criteria that mark status and power are rather symbolic (and linked to a spiritual world) and thus require a definition of power detached from Eurocentric concepts of power as control and coercive force. In Errington's (1990) words, power is detached from "activity, forcefulness, [...] instrumentality, and effectiveness brought about through calculation of means to achieve goals" (p. 5), thus also from political and social concepts of strategic or structural power.

Subsequently, Errington (1990) introduces the local idea of power as *potency*, referring back to the classical work of Benedict Anderson, ‘The Idea of Power in Javanese Culture’ (1972/1990), who, on his part, addressed the “lack of methodological coherence” (Anderson, 1972/1990, p. 18) in the analysis of traditional political conceptions and their implication in contemporary cultural, social, and political life in Indonesia and the Malay world. In their regional comparative approach to the study of gender and gender relations in insular Southeast Asia, Atkinson and Errington’s (1990) stress symbolic-classificatory aspects of gender systems and thus depart from “universalizing theories of gender based in the particularities of Western experience” (Steadly, 1999, p. 438). Yet, as Mary M. Steedly (1999) notes, the Atkinson & Errington’s approach offer little space for “disruptive or anomalous cultural elements” or “exogenous factors” (p. 438) that forge the creation and reification of meaning. Finally, their work pays little attention to histories of particular structures of power such as colonial rule, global capitalism, or the establishment of new democratic governments (cf. Steedly, 1999, p. 438).

In the subsequent review of men and masculinities in Southeast Asia, two notions of power appear as particularly relevant to understand and be able to differentiate the construction and interpretation of discursive and practical representations: The first one I most frequently refer to as *structural power*, leaning on the theoretical work of Michel Foucault (1980, 1984a, 1984b, 1990), which can be observed in patterns of social interaction and is thus inherently relational; and the second one I will relate to as *potency* in the sense of a non-secular, unitary power which is “embodied” (Errington, 1990, p. 42) and can be “achieved” (Errington, 1990, p. 46), but “does not raise the question of legitimacy” (Anderson, 1972/1990, p. 23).⁹ Yet, it is important to note here, that also this latter idea of power as potency is related to a specific set of mystical knowledge and experience (Anderson, 1972/1990, pp. 54-58). As Foucault asserts: “there are no power relations without the correlative construction of a field of knowledge, nor any knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute at the same time power relations” (Foucault, 1984b, p. 175, cited in Moberg, 2013, p. 36). Thus, there is a very specific interrelation between the two aforementioned concepts of power – the first presenting an *etic* and the second one an *emic* concept – and I attempt to keep this in mind throughout this thesis.

⁹ According to Javanese tradition (cf. Anderson, 1972/1990, pp. 22-23), power is not morally ambiguous, good or bad, right or wrong, and thus “without inherent moral implications” (Anderson, 1972/1990, p. 23). For the concrete discussion, see Anderson, 1972/1990, pp. 50-54.

Contrary to the downplay of (sexual) difference in early gender analysis in the region – a “common in Western commentary about gender relations in the area” (Errington, 1990, p. 2) – Southeast Asia has recently been characterized as the home of a great gender diversity that is recognized and respected in many different ways (daily narratives, national discourse, media representations, to name a few). In this sense, Michael Peletz coins his definition of gender pluralism as the co-existence of a variety of “principles, categories, groups, sources of authority, or ways of being” (Peletz, 2006, p. 310) with regard to bodily practices, embodied desires, social roles and relationships, which are not simply tolerated or accommodated in a certain social system or cultural domain, but are accorded legitimacy in the Weberian sense (Peletz, 2006, p. 310). Peletz’s argument is important as it raises awareness of crucial connections between gendered bodies, practices, and relations on the one hand, and social and cultural change and transformations on the other hand. It thus brings both regional comparison and critical historical contextualization to the center of gender research in the region.

Gender and Diversity: From Difference to Fluidity, or the Concept of Gender Pluralism

The subject of (value) pluralism – rarely the main focus of anthropological research and analysis – has recently triggered the interest in new ethnographies of civic and ethno-religious (Hefner, 2001), normative and legal (Bowen, 2005), as well as gender pluralism (Peletz, 2009) in Southeast Asia. Yet, instead of accounting for the differences between monist and pluralist societies, present-day anthropological studies in the regions look for the particular conditions and configurations of pluralist sentiments and value relations; or, as Robert Hefner (2001) notes,

although it shares much with political philosophy, however, the sociology or anthropology of pluralism and democracy must be concerned, not merely with measuring a society’s conformity to a checklist of liberal ideals, but with understanding the cultural and sociological circumstances that make different responses to the problem of pluralism and citizenship likely. (pp. 3-4)

Thus, as Robbins (2013) suggests in his discussion of Louis Dumont’s theoretical work on the nature of value relations, anthropologists shall not strive to determine “how many different kinds of value there are in the world” (p. 102), but rather what is the particular nature of the relations of these values.

A recent publication by an renowned gender anthropologist and Southeast Asia specialist that goes back to early modern times to trace developments in the proliferation of gender ideas, concepts, identities, and practices is Michael Peletz's *Gender Pluralism* (2009). This work is probably the most comprehensive and detailed investigation of gender across the region, giving tribute to both historicity and comparison. The book is both theoretically and empirically sound and a must-read for anybody who desires to develop an understanding of gender in the region – its vast diversity, deep historical and structural complexity, and relevance in people's daily lives. This study – the result of more than a decade of intensive work – is both challenging and enlightening, as it offers a perspective on gender that allows not only for diversity (far beyond dualities), but also for plurality or pluralism – a (gender) difference accorded legitimacy (Peletz, 2009, p. 7). Peletz defines gender as

the cultural categories, symbols, meanings, practices, and institutionalized arrangements bearing on at least five sets of phenomena: (1) females and femininity; (2) males and masculinity; (3) androgynes, who are partly male and partly female in appearance, as well as intersexed individuals, also known as hermaphrodites, who to one or another degree may have both male and female sexual organs or characteristics; (4) the transgendered, who engage in practices that transcend or transgress normative boundaries and are thus by definition 'transgressively gendered;' and (5) neutered or unsexed/ungendered individuals, like some eunuchs. (Peletz, 2009, p. 10)

Sex, other than gender, designates “physical activities associated with desire, reproduction”; physical bodies distinguished by their genitalia; and bodily processes connected to physiological maturation, such as menstruation or ejaculation (Peletz, 2009, p. 10). Sexuality, both connected to sex and gender, mainly relates to “the realm of erotic desire, passion and pleasure” (ibid.). Given the broad and comprehensive definition of gender, sex and sexual difference appear as only one component or feature of gender identities, practices, and relations, which indeed are much more complex and supersede any kind of dualities or rigid hierarchies.¹⁰ In Southeast Asia, as far as gender is concerned, the body (material, physical,

¹⁰ In his *Masculine Domination Revisited* (1996-1997), French sociologist and anthropologist Pierre Bourdieu notes that “in the case of social universes where ‘sexuality’ has not been constituted as such and autonomized from other realms [...] sexual differences are both inserted and submerged within a system of anthropological and cosmological oppositions that are constitutive of a vision and experience of the world” (p. 194). Naturally confirmed, such difference, including gender difference, is “supported by an inextricable and inexhaustible system of homologous oppositions that all reinforce each other” (ibid.). Such gendered opposites, grounded in a profoundly dualistic cosmology throughout the region of Southeast Asia, did and do penetrate male-female relations in Southeast Asia as well, such as culturally specific concepts of “reason” and “passion”, but also binaries such as “above” and “below” (cf. Andaya, 2000b, p. 234), “hard” and “soft” (cf. Peletz, 1996, p. 286), etc. Yet, as Peletz (2006) and others (cf. Andaya, 2006) strive to show, only the transcendence of dualities

sexed) matters, and yet, its sexual difference visible in physiological processes and characteristics is never *the* central criteria that defines gender identities, practices, and relations. Here, the relation to feminist theorists (cf. Butler, 1990; Moore, 1994; Ortner, 1996) who consider the body through its gendered appearance becomes obvious. Yet, by defining gender as an overarching category that encompasses sexual difference, Peletz does not reduce the historical subjects and subjectivities of his study to their discursive production and social construction.¹¹ Rather, bodies and sex *matter* to gender, as they mark real physical processes and practices (including maturation, reproduction, birth/death) and institutional arrangements that become highly relevant to the social organization along culturally defined gendered boundaries and meanings.

Speaking of multiplicity within concepts and categories, it is important to note that Michael Peletz not only introduced a very comprehensive definition of gender; moreover he opens the space for different sensibilities and dispositions with regard to gendered meanings. Gender pluralism, he defines as

pluralistic sensibilities and dispositions regarding bodily practices [...] and embodied desires, as well as social roles, sexual relationships, and overall ways of being that bear on or are otherwise linked with local conceptions of femininity, masculinity, androgyny, hermaphroditism and so on. (Peletz, 2009, p. 10)

This pluralism transcends duality since always more than two principles, categories, or concepts are at stake and accorded legitimacy (Peletz, 2009, p. 10). This analytical standpoint might seem difficult to comprehend at first sight and indeed hard to venture for those who have only just immersed into the field of gender in Southeast Asia. Yet, regarding the vast diversity of gendered meanings, practices, identities, and institutions documented across a variety of disciplines, including anthropology, history, and the social sciences as a whole, taking this stance is highly rewarding, especially if we are to cast our focus on the

or the balance or combination of binary opposites would present transcendental cosmic and spiritual power.

¹¹ In an insightful essay on the situatedness of knowledge in feminism, Donna Haraway (2013, p. 420) warns against the “radical ‘reduction’ of the objects of physics or of any science [in this case, *sex* as an object of biological knowledge] to the ephemera of discursive production and social construction” (p. 420). She notes further that “to lose authoritative biological accounts of sex, which set up productive tensions with gender seems to be to lose too much; it seems to be to lose not just analytic power within a particular Western tradition but also the body itself as anything but a blank page for social inscription, including those of biological discourse” (Haraway, 2013, p.420). Although Peletz appropriates feminist concepts of gender as *socially, historically, and semiotically positioned difference*, to use Haraway’s words, he definitely does not exclude the body from his analysis, neither does he ignore “innate” and, in the case of Southeast Asia, indigenous knowledge concerning physical processes and transformations.

construction, enactment, and significance of masculinity/masculinities in the daily lives of men, women, transgendered, gays, lesbians, toms, dees, etc. Additionally, by suggesting a graduated form of gender pluralism, Peletz (2009, p. 82) seals potential discrepancies between local particularities and (trans)regional comparison. By definition, graduated gender pluralism points at

the differential distribution throughout societies, polities, and diasporic as well as other transnational spaces of certain kinds of sentiments, dispositions, and institutionalized arrangements conducive to or inhibiting pluralism, many of which are keyed to systems of stratified reproduction defined as encompassing systems of power relations that encourage certain groups' nurturance and reproduction while discouraging or precluding those of others. (Peletz, 2009, p. 82)

Stories and Histories of Gender Pluralism

Taking a historical perspective to trace developments and transformations of gender in Southeast Asia, Peletz (2009, p. 21) underscores the fluidity and permeability of gender roles in early modern times, which was also emphasized by Barbara W. Andaya (2006) and Sharyn Graham Davies (2007a) in their historical and anthropological analyses. Transgendered ritual specialists¹² – a central focus in these works – deserve our attention, since they obviously transcend and even transgress certain normative boundaries by appropriating both masculine and feminine characteristics and acting as mediators between “males and females, and between the spheres of humans and the domains of spirits and nature” (Peletz, 2009, p. 22). Bridging or embodying the balance of dualities (cf. Andaya, 2006, p. 1) and, by this, connecting what is seen as worldly and human to a supernatural and spiritual realm is accorded not only prestige, but also respect and thus legitimacy. This ritual transgression of norms attached to specific gender structures and understandings is rarely met with denial or negative dispositions, especially in the case of male-bodied individuals who in certain areas still enjoy the respect granted to them in earlier days (Davies, 2007a, pp. 101-102, 103; Peletz, 2009, pp. 140-148). Moreover, among the Bugis – a society granted a particular attention in historical and anthropological accounts – the very transgression of gender norms by male-bodied individuals can be interpreted as a display of male power and prestige (Peletz, 2009, p. 147) – the power to appropriate, perform, and thus control symbols of feminine power (Peletz, 2009, p. 38). Interestingly, transgendered male-bodied ritual specialists seemed

¹² Best known probably the *bissu* (South Sulawesi), but also *acault* (Burma), *basir & balian* (Borneo), *kathoey* (Thai), *manang bali* (Borneo), *pawang* (Malay), etc.

to enjoy the same prestige as older “male-like” women who no longer embodied “emasculating female forces” (Andaya, 2006, pp. 102, 221).¹³ Thus, highest prestige was accorded to the perfect balance of femininity and masculinity (cf. Davies, 2007, p. 23) – an embodied connection to the spiritual world that could cause no harm to society in this world. Indeed, if a woman was ever to be excluded from a ritual (particularly women who performed rituals, mostly associated with birth, death, healing, or agriculture), it was because of the “sacral danger” and potential im-purifying forces immanent to her body (cf. Andaya, 2006, p. 7; Peletz, 2009, p. 147). As the perfect balance or combination of male and female elements symbolized wholeness and purity (cf. Peletz, 2009, p. 38), any force out of men’s control (such as the power associated with women’s fertility, maturing body, and menstruation) might potentially endanger this balance. This powerful, potentially dangerous force associated with the female body and menstrual blood is probably the most dominant, culturally defined, gendered boundary that had a strong organizing power in early modern Southeast Asian societies. Masculinity thus often stood in opposition to female fertility, rather than to femininity, while masculinity and femininity were set in a binary relation that animated a holistic view. These sets of categories, concepts, and meanings again point at the complexity of gender concepts in Southeast Asia.

Transgendered ritual specialists earned their high status and prestige from their role as mediators and from operating in arenas clearly related to the spiritual realm (cf. Peletz, 2009, p. 168; for the particular case of *bissu*, see also Davies, 2007a, pp. 101-102). By transcending gendered boundaries and uniting binary opposites within their bodily expressions, comportment, performance, and practices, they could tap into concrete and constant universal powers¹⁴. Beyond its relation to ritualistic fields and healing practices in early modern times, transgenderism continues to be relatively accepted and accommodated in Southeast Asian societies today, since the transgression of gendered boundaries and the blurring of gender categories does not seem to threaten basic understandings about the structure of the universe (cf. Peletz, 2009, p. 194; see also Boellstorff, 2005, p. 222; Davies, 2007a, pp. 99-101).¹⁵

¹³ According to Andaya (2006), in earlier references, *bissu* were “commonly described as older women” (p. 74).

¹⁴ Power(s) not in a structural sense, but an understanding of power which is historically and culturally bound or, to use Benedict Anderson’s (1972/1990) words, an “intangible, mysterious, and divine energy which animates the universe” (p. 22).

¹⁵ This “tolerant” (Boellstorff, 2005, p. 222) and “relaxed” (Peletz, 2009, p. 194) attitude towards transgenderism is not to compare with strict expressions of state and religious authorities against it, particularly across the Malay-Indonesian archipelago (cf. Boellstorff, 2005, p. 222; Peletz, 2009, p. 5).

As Sharyn Graham Davis (2007a), an outstanding contributor to anthropological studies of gender and sexuality in Southeast Asia, particularly Indonesia, notes “the ability to think in terms of complementary sexes, and combinations of male and female elements [...] makes it possible to imagine multiple genders” (p. 23). Going further into detail, I argue with Peletz that such local concepts and logics of gender allow not only for the prospect of various genders (cf. Davies), but also for various or *plural* modalities for the configuration of masculinities. Another issue that, according to Peletz (2009), may have contributed to the proliferation of sexual and gender diversity (including masculinities) in the region, involves the “loosening of the hegemonic ‘deep structure’ that long informed subjectivities as well as the directionality and the embodiment of ‘potential[ly] erotic enterprises’” (p. 180). The “deep structure”, Peletz (2009) refers to, is an implicit “heterogender matrix” (pp. 8, 82), which allowed for sexual relations between “individuals with similar anatomies as long as they were held to be differently gendered” (p. 8). The emergence of a relatively new subculture of gay masculinity (Peletz, 2009, pp. 161-169, 180, 263) is well analyzed in the context of such recent transformations.

Transgenderism

Transgenderism, Peletz (2009, p. 5) argues, provides one powerful and potentially insightful prism to analyze sexual and gender diversity in the region. Indeed, transgendered subjectivities reveal more about gendered boundaries and differences than subjects neatly fitting into a heterosexual/heterogendered system of sociality. I relate here to what Sherry Ortner and Harriet Whitehead posited as early as the 1980s, and that is the fact that “very commonly the same axes that divide and distinguish male from female (and indeed rank male over female) also crosscut the gender categories, producing internal distinctions and gradations within them” (Ornter & Whitehead, cited in Boellstorff, 2005, p. 158). One of these subjectivities, which seems to be a translocal phenomenon (Boellstorff, 2005, p. 162), is the *tomboy* (cf. Boellstorff, 2005, pp. 158-165; Sinnott, 2004, 2007), or a female-to-male transgender subjectivity in which the sexual desire and orientation also denotes the category of the person. *Tomboy* clearly differentiate from their *lesbi* girlfriends by their masculine comportment and embodiment of masculine characteristics, such as being brave, independent, active, and mobile, living a tough life, but also taking over responsibility. Whether their sexual inclination became apparent prior or after their self-identification as *tomboy*, they feel that in some sense they do possess “a man’s soul in a woman’s body” (Boellstorff, 2005, p. 161) and thus transcend normative gendered boundaries. Yet, the masculine “style” they enact

and literally live does not associate with femininity. While the distinction between masculinity and femininity in the case of *tomboy* and *lesbi* is clear, *ngondhek*, or the “performed *gay* self” as Boellstorff (2005) notes, is a style of acting that “surfs the border between visible and invisible, authentic and inauthentic, local and global, masculine and feminine” (p. 166). In this case, sexual desire does not denote gender characters of the person, who could be more feminine or more masculine – yet, preferably more masculine, which, as Boellstorff (2005) indicates, enhances the immanent “desire for the same”, more prominent in *gay* than *tomboy-lesbi* relations. The emergence of these particularly emphasized masculine *gay* identities – “discursive spaces for men who are attracted to other males but who identify as masculine” (p. 161) – is also noted by Peletz (2009), this time not Indonesia, but for mainland Burma. In Burma, *gay* masculinity recalls the image of a “sensitive New Age male” (Peletz, 2009, p. 165) combining and maintaining a contrast between “masculine refinement” and popular masculine aggressiveness. This predominantly masculine orientation, despite sexual “desire for the same”, is a rather recent development, a feature of modernity which seems to elude femininities altogether (Peletz, 2009, p. 167, in reference to Keeler).

What *tomboy* and modern Southeast Asian *gay* masculinities thus seem to have in common is the denial of a feminine side, which appears to be of high relevance in the study of masculinities across the region. It is important to note here that both *tomboy* identities and popular *gay* masculinities are perceived and presented in the literature as rather recent developments (cf. Boellstorff, 2005, p. 159; Peletz, 2009, pp. 180-181; Sinnott, 2004, p. 36; Sinnott, 2007, p. 122), emerging in contemporary conditions and environments and deeply entangled in both cultural continuities and present-day globally-spread discourses with regard to national identity, secular education, economic wealth, social status, and so forth. In some sense, they also point at larger notions of globalization (cf. Peletz, 2009, pp. 175-176; Sinnott, 2004, p. 27) associated with global political economies, such as market capitalism, growing urbanization and bureaucratization, the spread of new technologies and means and methods of communication, the rise of social movements and concerns with human/civil rights, etc.¹⁶ Whether the above-mentioned denial of femininity is connected to transformations in global

¹⁶ Despite the global circulation of the terms *tomboy* and *gay*, Sinnott (2004) warns against an unconsidered focus on their Western provenance, indicating that “positioning *tom*, *dee*, and *gay* identities as products of Western discourse reifies the dichotomous categories of Western/local and modern/traditional and fails to capture the complexity of cultural change and gender” (p. 27). Additionally, Peletz (2009) suggests the consideration of both “indigenous categories” and “more recent terms of Western origin” and the way they associate with each other across “broader landscapes of gender and sexuality” and “shifting and contested contours of normative masculinity and femininity” (p. 262).

political economies and their local interpretations is a question that requires a much deeper analysis.¹⁷ Certainly, a number of scholars have extensively analyzed the impact of world economies and state policies on the transformation of local gender identities and relations (cf. Andaya, 2006, pp. 104-133; Brenner, 1998, pp. 134-170; Ong, 2010; Peletz, 1996, pp. 101-154; 306-307). Additionally, Peletz (2009) indicates a connection between “a constriction of pluralistic sentiments and dispositions bearing on gender and sexuality, especially femininity and female sexuality” (p. 177) and “state policies and globalizing forces that are conducive to economic stagnation and to endemic poverty, malnutrition, hunger” (p. 178) after the 1960es – a set of “political-economic and attendant dynamics” (p. 178), some of which found their offset as early as colonial times (cf. Peletz, 2009, pp. 14-15, 84). In any case, grounded in daily practices, the formation and experience of gendered roles must be understood as a process (cf. Boellstorff, 2005, p. 153) which is subject to change. This process, localized in space and time, is intimately and ultimately entangled with developments on a global scale.

Gender as a System of Prestige

The issue of legitimacy, so relevant to Michael Peletz’s concept of gender pluralism or pluralism in general, is intimately linked to notions of power and prestige throughout the Malay-Indonesian archipelago (cf. Peletz, 2009, p. 17). As early as 1972, Anderson (1972/1990) made a similar observation by pointing at the connection between Power¹⁸ (which “does not raise the question of legitimacy”; which is “neither legitimate nor illegitimate”; a power that “is” (p. 23)), status, and prestige. Although he does not clarify this matrix of Power, legitimacy, prestige and status,¹⁹ to a certain extent, they seem to go hand in hand. In this sense, a person of high status is attributed prestige, since he or she is close to the center of Power, which sets a quest for legitimacy out of question. Whether or not this is perceived as a factual truth or a cultural particularity, status seems to be of significant importance to a person’s social standing, not only across the archipelago, but in Southeast Asia on the whole (cf. Atkinson & Errington, 1990; Peletz, 1996). While Sherry Ortner and

¹⁷ Yet, as Peletz (2006) notes, such “long-term cultural-political developments [...] entailed institutional and cultural rationalization that undercut the moral bases of agrarian communities and the cosmologies in which they were embedded and simultaneously contributed to increased social differentiation and stratifications and new forms of surveillance, discipline, and control geared toward producing heightened normativity in all areas of social life” (p. 324).

¹⁸ This is Power in a Javanese sense (for a definition, see Anderson, 1972/1990, p. 22-23).

¹⁹ As Anderson notes, “the implication of this view is that there is an endless historical oscillation between charismatic and traditional or bureaucratic rule; like the chicken and the egg, neither can be said definitely to precede the other” (Anderson, 1972/1990, p. 75)

Harriet Whitehead suggest that “certain very general features of prestige systems cross-culturally can account for some of the equally general features of gender ideologies” relevant not only to the achievement and maintenance of personal status but also to co, Sharyn Graham Davies (2007a,b) takes their argument further to show how “gender delineates acceptable means by which people can obtain or lose social status” (2007b, p. 143) in Bugis society. Moreover, Peletz (2009, p. 37) argues that in the Southeast Asia an “understanding of the dynamics of prestige is essential” in order to comprehend gender-transgressive practices and their connection to personal and social status and prestige.

Indeed, as early as the 1980s, Michael Peletz embarked on a journey of analyzing the formation and change of gendered systems of prestige throughout the Malay world from the nineteenth century until present day. His work is indispensable to understand the particular cross-regional connection between and historical transformations of gender and prestige systems in Southeast Asia. Yet, before I turn to more details, it is important to note that meaning and implications of “status”, just as the concept of “power”, or the categories of “man” and “women”, are not cross-culturally identical. As Shelly Errington (1990) aptly notes, “our most unconscious common-sense ideas about ‘power,’ and with it ‘status,’ may have to be turned inside out if we are to understand the relations between men and women in some parts of the world” (p. 7). Keeping this in mind, I take the intimate connection between power, status, and gender already indicated in Atkinson & Errington’s *Power and Difference* (1990), to look at how changes in Southeast Asian “prestige systems” may have influenced transformations in the constructions of gender and masculinities along with it.

As already indicated earlier in this chapter (particularly in references to Andaya, 2006, and Davies, 2007a,b), the allocation of prestige is deeply connected with the ability or potency to bridge worldly and spiritual realm (as in the case of ritual specialists) and/or to combine or perfectly balance feminine and masculine aspects and traits (as in the case of androgyny or gender transgressive practices that transcend male-female dualities; see also Errington, 1990, p. 52, for “producing perfect unity by reuniting opposites”). Spiritual power or “potency” (cf. Errington, 1990, pp. 41-47) is yet identified as another symbolic criterion to allocate and claim prestige (Peletz, 1996, p. 55). Potency or spiritual power is embodied; although invisible, it is tangible through the performance and practices of a person – in most cases of a male leader, or a “man of prowess” (coined by O. W. Wolters, 1982) (cf. Errington, 1990, p. 42). Wealth, a large number of followers, and extended networks are some of the markers of masculine or men’s prowess (cf. Errington, 1990; Peletz, 1996; Wolters, 1982). Others include physical strength, mobility, and virility (cf. Andaya, 2006; Peletz, 1996). Although

women could show and achieve spiritual potency (particularly elderly women, as mentioned earlier), due to a variety of interrelated cosmological views, concepts, and their historical transformation, they seem to face a number of restrictions. As Peletz (2009) notes, female ritualists were “less likely to engage in any variety of transgendered behavior [...], commonly took normatively gendered male-bodies persons as their husbands and typically served as sacred mediators between males and females, and between the spheres of humans and the domains of spirits and nature” (p. 22). The emasculating powers of a menstruating woman must have been one of the reasons why balancing a perfect duality might have seemed impossible, which again supports Errington’s (1990) argument that “the body is a malleable vehicle of meaning” (p. 36). Another reason might be women’s role as “keepers” of the family’s and kin’s (and particularly of her male relatives’) honor (cf. Davies, 2007a, pp. 35-40) by conforming to ideals of femininity defined by her “relational” position of a caring and loyal daughter, sister, wife, mother. Different from femininity, masculinity is often reflected in the “positional” status of men – such as of leaders, warriors, hunters, chiefs, and so on (cf. Ortner & Whitehead, 1985, pp. 1-27). A third reason can be conceived from the “complementarity” of men’s and women’s roles (Errington, 1990, pp. 50-51; Peletz, 1996, pp. 57-58) which also emanates a perfect balance that animates the universe and reflects concepts of power. Complementarity, again, does *not* signify equality. This intimate relation between role/practice/performance and the allocation of prestige is thus deeply gendered and to a large extent explains prestige differentials and the options and potential restriction for both men and women to achieve prestige and social status. Once again, to quote Errington (1990), to understand gender in Southeast Asia “[we] must understand local ideas of power and prestige” (p. 58).

Shame, Reason, and Passion

From what has been said so far it becomes evident that throughout Southeast Asia, “gender underpins status”, to use Sharyn G. Davies (2007a, p. 33) words, in so far as gender ideals and relational concepts define the allocation of power and prestige. According to Davies (2007a) a particular concept that governs gender ideals in the region of Southeast Asia is the concept of shame/honor²⁰ (*malu* (Malay/Indonesian), *isin* (Javanese), *lek* (Balinese), *siri*’ (Bugis)) (cf.

²⁰ In Bugis society, South Sulawesi, Davies (2007a) identifies the concept of *siri*’ as “an important regulator of gender behavior” (p. 35). While the term *siri*’, as Davies argues, signifies “a complex mix of shame and honor” (since one’s *siri*’ (honor) can be damaged, while one can also feel *siri*’ (ashamed); p. 35), other terms, such as *malu*, are more appropriately translated as “shame” (cf. Peletz, 1996, pp. 225, 228-232). Anthropologists who have focused their research on gender and concepts of

Boellstorff, 2004; Davies, 2007a; Peletz, 1996). Shame is a collective concern that governs the enactment of normative gender ideals and thus of femininity and masculinity. The particularity of this concept lies not as much in its definition but in the gender specific way it relates to individual roles and affects collective action. As far as the appropriate performance and enactment of certain roles (whether positional or relational) as well as the collective perceptions and approval of the “audiences”²¹ are central to the allocation of status and prestige, so do concepts of shame touch upon the social standing and position not only of a single person but of whole families and kingroups (cf. Davies, 2007a, p. 36). Yet, similar to the different roles accorded to men and women in relation to social status and prestige, so do concepts of shame relate differently to men and women. Whereas masculinity is enacted within the social position and political role of a man through activities characterized by strength, bravery, leadership, or wisdom, femininity is attached to women’s relational roles as sisters, wives, and mothers. Accordingly, women appear to embody the shame (or honor) (*siri*) of the family and relatives (Davies, 2007a, p. 35); or, as Davies (2007a) argues, a woman represents a “fixed point against which her close male relatives measure their social status” (p. 36). Thus, while potency or spiritual power and knowledge is immanent to masculine dimensions of social, political, and spiritual roles and practices, shame appears intrinsic to feminine, potentially endangering activities and characteristics. While a man can cause shame to his family by not acting out masculine ideals, if a woman transgresses normative behavior, her relational standing would entail a responsive reaction by her (male) relatives and family members. This explains why a wife is more prone to cause any potential damage to her husband than any other woman could do.²² Thus, while a man’s prowess would reflect on his family’s and female relatives’ social standing, a woman’s shame would bear on her family’s and particularly male relatives’ status. A respective masculine response on part of her male relatives would entail aggression and in most cases a certain form of revenge. Yet, since violence and aggression is rarely associated with the demeanor of spiritual potency, wisdom, and knowledge (particularly mystical knowledge), masculine refinement, *reasonable*

shame and honor in the region of Southeast Asia note the difficulty of translating these categories, since a direct translation of the terms cannot capture their personal, relational, situational, and emotional contexts (cf. Davies, 2007a, p. 35) or their “centrality to Southeast Asian conceptions of sociality” (Boellstorff, 2004, p. 474).

²¹ I refer here to Errington (1990, p. 43) and the mass of “followers” (relatives, descendants, extended networks, etc.) of a person who “read” and so “validate” a persons’ status and potency.

²² For numerous examples of women’s standing in relation to their male companions as well as for men’s fear of female powers (particularly associated with their immediate relational proximity) see Andaya, 2006.

action, and the control of *passion*²³, male relatives would first of all be concerned with their female relatives' performance and practices, and so would be inclined to guard and protect these from any exposure to potential threat. Indeed, shame as a regulative of gender ideals resonates with culturally specific conceptions of reason (*akal*) and passion (*nafsu*) and their masculine and feminine dimension. As Peletz (1996) indicates, "'reason' and 'shame' [...] 'cooperate' and 'work together' to 'kill,' or at least act as brakes on, the expression or realization of 'passion' in social action" (p. 232). Reason, also associated with intelligence and rationality (Peletz, 1996, p. 225), appears as the central characteristic of a (male) adult. Shame in connection to reason and masculinity functions as a means of control. Passion, on the other hand, associated with desire, passionate longing, and also uncontrolled sexuality²⁴ seems to *dwell* in the female body.²⁵ Shame is evoked and enhanced by uncontrolled passion. The complementarity of these two concepts is obvious, as it becomes apparent in the daily interactions between male and female relatives – particularly husbands and wives, but also fathers and daughter, sons and mothers – and in terms of their roles, to quote Suzanne A. Brenner (1998) exceptional work on women gender relations in modern Java, "as producing and reproducing the family's status in the wider society" (p. 156). Eventually, these culturally specific views of gender and gendered conceptualizations reveal "alternative paradigms [which] can be called on to legitimate and to interpret the actions of men and women in different contexts" (Brenner, 1998, p. 149). Following this line of interpretation, a man would *perform* status, while a woman would *accumulate* it (cf. Brenner, 1998, p. 156).²⁶ Thus, rather

²³ Reason and passion are two conceptual categories central to local ontologies, forms of sociality, and gender (cf. Peletz, 1996, pp. 221-232). While reason can be defined as "the ability to evaluate alternative courses of action" or "render informed judgments" (Peletz, 1996, pp. 225-226), particularly in connection with passion and shame, passion is related with ceaseless desire, lust, and longing (Peletz, 1996, p. 221). Interestingly, while reason and shame both control the expression and realization of passion (Peletz, 1996, p. 232), local hegemonic views would have it that women have more passion and men more reason. Yet, as Peletz (1996) accurately denotes, "the lacunae, elisions, and equivocations in the hegemony [...] [allow] for the development of alternative discourses, many of which constitute inversion of the hegemony and are therefore appropriately characterized as counter-hegemonic" (p. 313). For alternative paradigms stemming from this complexity of culturally specific understandings of gender in Southeast Asia, and particularly in Javanese society, see Brenner, 1998, pp. 144-170.

²⁴ Note here the connection to connotations indicated earlier in this thesis associated with the female body, sexuality, and menstruation (particularly Andaya, 2006).

²⁵ I choose the word "dwell" to denote both hegemonic views that passion amounts more in women than it does in men, and that in normative heterogender and heterosexual relations, women are the subject of men's desire. In both senses, women are seen as the "keepers" of desire.

²⁶ I take both terms, "perform" and "accumulate", from Brenner's (1998) formulation; yet, this choice is more than intended, since the term "perform" denotes being active and enact – both masculine characteristics – while not demonstrating or showing off (which can potentially undermine status); "accumulate" conforms with notions of holding/keeping/embodying without denying the ability to choose a certain course of action.

than gender being an organizing principle in systems of prestige, it is status that constitutes and is constitutive of (and so informs) gender ideals and concepts of femininity and masculinity (cf. Peletz, 1996, p. 315)

Official Discourses and Daily Practices

Culturally specific understandings of gender and the enacting of gender roles in the region of Southeast Asia, and particularly the Malay-Indonesian archipelago, allow for seemingly contradictory representations that open spaces for alternative, counter-hegemonic views, practices, and interpretations. These spaces are the products of historical transformations and are colored by structural conditions that more or less define the nature, scope, and force of such contradictory representations. While counter-hegemonic practices may challenge official views and discourses, some of them may reinforce them by simply inverting the hegemony. In his analysis of both official representations and daily practices and enactment of gendered roles in nineteenth century Malay society, Peletz (1996) finds that masculinity is “composed of a number of contradictory representations [...] best understood as dialectically related to constructions of adult men’s kinship role” (p. 5). This relational role of men stands in stark contrast to earlier emphasis of men’s positional role (cf. Ortner & Whitefield, 1985); and, indeed, becomes ever more visible in the analysis of daily practices and in the contexts of everyday life, than in official discourses (cf. Peletz, 1996, pp. 5-6, 296). Thus, while official ideals and ideologies of gender seem to stem from a more encompassing system of prestige and Power, practical representations, countering strategies, and counter-hegemonic performances are ultimately embedded in the daily lives and interactions of common men and women. Masculinity (and femininity) and its constitutive elements, including roles, practices, characteristics, and identities and their relation to other cultural conceptual categories such as prestige, honor and shame, reason and passion are thus both socially (and ideologically) constructed and historically conditioned (and structured). This calls for a deeper analysis of not only official discourses and practical representations in any given society, but particularly of the ways these two levels intertwine, or, in Peletz’s (1996) words, of “the scope and force of ambivalence and the contradictory entailments of ideology in everyday life” (p. 7).

Taking practical representations of masculinity in nineteenth century Malay society into the focus of his research, Peletz (1996, pp. 55-78) identifies the predominance of relational male roles among the majority of men living in villages and rural areas. These roles were mainly defined by age and kinship position – (elderly) brothers, husbands, and fathers. Their prestige

accumulated not so much through the embodiment and performance of certain features associated with Power or spiritual potency, but rather from their ability to meet their affinal obligations and to provide for the family, thus from being a “good provider” (cp. Peletz, 1996, pp. 74-76). This relational role, enforced by state capitalisms and policies as well as national discourses, and combined with a decreasing capacity to meet social and family expectations related to it, paved the way for counter-hegemonic interpretations and inversions which portray men as irresponsible and less reasonable, as well as more aggressive and thus not controlling their passion (cf. Peletz, 1996, pp. 255, 293; but also Brenner, 1998). Yet, again, it is important to keep in mind the context of the emergence and motivation of such practical representations since it comprises structural factors such as the historic development of rural capitalism including the acquisition of commercially valued land and the introduction of individualistic forms of proprietorship (cf. Peletz, 1996, pp. 293-294, 307). Thus, while oppositional and counter-hegemonic practical representations subversively challenge official hegemonic ideals and their articulation and realization, it is important to note that such stances and strategies of resistance are (presently) “most pronounced among the poorest segments of the female population” (Peletz, 1996, p. 301). Yet, the same historical changes and political and economic developments that have opened spaces for counter-hegemonic representations have simultaneously constrained the elaboration of oppositional discourses (Peletz, 1996, p. 305), since, as it comes to the family’s social status and prestige, hegemonic ideals and representations remain untouched (cf. Peletz, 1996, pp. 299-300, 304). Again, the intersection of gender with other axes of difference and inequality, particularly related to class, status, and social position is apparent. Thus, to repeat what Peletz (1996) and others have argued for,

[...] gender systems are not intelligible as isolated phenomena, and are in fact most usefully examined in terms of theoretical frameworks which analyze gender in relation to other axes of difference and inequality as well as quotidian social process and the encompassing realities of prestige, political economy, and historical change. (p. 308)

Ideology, Hegemony, and Gender Pluralism

Before I continue to explore variable representations of gender and particularly masculinity in mainly anthropological literature in the region of Southeast Asia, I would like to take a short excursus into some theoretical debates that inform both the above cited work of Peletz (1996) as well as more general academic discourse focusing on masculinities (partly on a global scale). These theoretical frameworks seek to solve or at least critically evaluate some of the pending questions following a multitude of contrasting and contradicting articulations of

gender ideals and ideologies, such as the ambivalence inherent in ideologies, or its interrelation with daily experiences, representations, and social practices. Some of the central theorists who inform academic work on such issues in both the discipline of anthropology and the social sciences as a whole, are Michel Foucault's theory of discourse, knowledge, and power and Pierre Bourdieu's theory of practice. In his discussion of the relation between official discourse and practice, Peletz (1996) indicates that, while culturally specific ideologies seem to dwell in the formal views and official representations of gender and thus define symbolic meanings and interpretations, practical representations of gender are both context-specific and historically constructed and seem to inhabit the daily lives and experiences of the very subjects who produce and reproduce these same symbolic meanings and interpretations. As such, he finds that "dominant ideological formations both produce and limit the forms, scope, and force of the challenges with which they must invariably contend" (Peletz, 1996, p. 306). Peletz thus advances the notion of all-encompassing ideologies that inform both hegemonic representations and counter-hegemonic, subversive, and inverse practices. Such ideologies, naturalized through their embedding in a transcendental realm, essentially breed their own contradictions which are "culturally realized to one or another degree at both the common sense and ideological levels" (Peletz, 1996, p. 349). Both inversions of binary opposites (such as reason and passion) and the encompassment of these into a transcending "whole", thus exemplify mechanics or structures of ideologies that inform the production of reproduction of (gender) identities, but also social processes of identification and differentiation.²⁷ Imbued with ambivalence and contradiction, such ideologies call for an analytical shift towards the social sources, structural factors, and historical contexts that evoke the production and reproduction of both supportive and contradictory practices and interpretations.

While Peletz (1996) offers a lengthy discussion of the particular relationship between ideology and practice in Southeast Asia, he does not say a lot about the nature of hegemonic representations that seem to take up a central, culturally idealized position in the construction and enacting of gendered roles and identities. Yet, this is important since hegemonic representations not only call upon ideologies to obtain legitimacy, but are themselves the product of social processes seeking the legitimization of these same ideologies. This dialectical relation is worth a closer consideration.

²⁷ For the grammars of identity/alterity, see Baumann & Gingrich, 2004.

Peletz (1996) makes a distinction between practical, or *counter-hegemonic* representations and official, or *hegemonic* views. By this he implicitly links notions of hegemony to official discourse and ideology (see also Peletz, 1994, pp. 151-152). Accordingly, hegemonic masculinities present gender roles, practices, and interpretations that are firmly grounded in cultural ideologies, and as such appear as eternal and ahistorical cultural elements. The problem of such representations is that they render any gender order of society virtually uncontestable and unravelling. Interpretations of masculinities that bear solely on cultural representations not only limit the space for and the scope and force of counter-hegemonic practices, but also narrow understandings of multiplicity and pluralism. This stance ultimately impedes any productive analysis of gender variety in the region of Southeast Asia, which Peletz (2009, 2011) argues for in his later work.

Despite the above-mentioned link between hegemony and ideology, contextually, Peletz's use of the term hegemonic is best translated as "dominant", "leading", or "prevailing", similar to the case of a "hetero-gender matrix" he aptly terms a "deep structure" (and not gender ideology!) in the region (cf. Peletz, 2011, p. 678). Peletz himself describes his use of the term hegemony as one that follows elaborations by Raymond Williams of the Gramsci's enduring concept (cf. Peletz, 1996, 357 n2). This is a hegemony that goes beyond ideology – a "lived" or "alternative" hegemony, that is continually "renewed, recreated, defended, and modified" and also "resisted, limited, altered, and challenged by pressures *not all its own*" (Williams, 1977, pp. 112-114, cited in Peletz, 1996, 357 n2, emphasis added). Peletz continues his direct reference to Williams noting that "what is decisive is not only the conscious system of ideas and beliefs, but the whole lived *social process as practically organized* by specific and dominant meanings and values" (Williams, 1997, pp. 108-109, citing in Peletz, 1996, 357 n2). Accordingly, hegemony is best described as process-oriented and based on social practice and lived experience. Although a hegemony is always dominant, it is never "either total or exclusive", and so it is *not* ideology per se. Also, it is important to note that any representation of masculinity will always contain a certain number of elements related to a certain ideology or a culturally specific understanding of the universe as a whole; yet a hegemonic representation of masculinity will not obtain its force by its connection to ideology or a "deep structure", but rather by its (collective) practice. This is why the focus on and analysis of social processes, practices, and representations and their connection to structural factors attains such an importance for the understanding of gender in the region. Thus, while the symbolic realm and local cosmologies may provide some answers to questions concerning the basic structures and differences which gender ideals and divisions are built upon, the material

world and lived experiences, including their historical, political and socio-economic contexts, may answer some of the (still) pending questions on the means and conditions for the establishment and advance of domination and hegemony.

In other words, hegemony appears as the result of the specific interrelation between local ideologies and prevailing practices; or as Pierre Bourdieu (1996) once suggested, it is important to “import the materialist mode of thinking into the analysis of the symbolic universe” (p. 200). Peletz’s (2009) analytical definition of gender pluralism, I argue, does exactly this: it goes beyond (gendered) dualistic oppositions that dwell in local cosmologies and that animate both symbolic interpretations and understandings of the universe throughout the region of Southeast Asia to incorporate a focus on the different positions, dispositions, and sentiments towards gender identities, roles, and practices (that themselves go well beyond dualities) as well as factors and conditions for their differential distributions throughout societies and their histories.

Bringing this theoretical excursus to conclusion, I am interested into the question of whether a practical gender pluralism in the sense of Peletz (2009) can be merged with the broad concept of hegemonic masculinities as outlined in Connell and Messerschmidt’s article ‘Hegemonic Masculinity: Rethinking the Concept’ (2005). What can anthropological gender material and theoretical expertise from the region of Southeast Asia contribute to a rather Western concept of gender hegemony that rests upon a masculinized notion of dominance? Can pluralism and hegemony co-exist in theory and/or in practice? Is there any possibility to assume a hegemonic pluralism and what would it look like?

In their reformulation of the concept of hegemonic masculinity, R. W. Connell and James W. Messerschmidt (2005) acknowledge the wide variety of masculinities in local cultures as documented in ethnographic research and re-affirm their fundamental idea of the “combination of the plurality of masculinities and the hierarchy of masculinities” (p. 846) within the concept of hegemonic masculinity. Yet, they also maintain that “local plurality is compatible with singularity of hegemonic masculinity at the regional or society-wise level” (p. 850). Additionally, they advance their hierarchical perspective by noting that “whatever the empirical diversity of masculinities, the contestation for hegemony implies that gender hierarchy does not have multiple niches at the top” (p. 845). While it is certain that some representations of masculinity are more associated with authority and power (for example, masculinities associated with national identity advanced in dominant state discourse), it is not clear on what basis hegemonic constructions would subsume alternative representations. A possible explanation is given in Connell and Messerschmidt’s (2005) pattern of hegemony,

which they define as a domination based on “cultural consent, discursive centrality, institutionalization, and the marginalization or delegitimation of alternatives” (p. 846). Seemingly, a hegemonic masculinity in the sense of Connell and Messerschmidt defines its own rules of legitimization and limits the space for challenging and alternative practices. Such a definition which places a single version of masculinity in the realm of ideology subsumes all other forms and representations. As such, Connell’s and Messerschmidt’s concept of hegemonic masculinities is incompatible with Peletz’s gender pluralism. A key point here is the idea of pluralism as a “plurality accorded legitimacy” (Peletz, 2006, p. 310). In the concept of gender pluralism, the source of legitimacy does not dwell in particular hegemonic representations but in the very framework (structural and symbolic) of the construction and enactment of (gender) identities.

While Connell & Messerschmidt’s (2005) (re)formulation of hegemonic masculinity rests both on a deep hierarchical structure of gender relations, defined by dominance, subordination, and marginalization, despite internal “dialectical pragmatism” (p. 847; see also Demetriou, 2001) or complexities altogether (pp. 847-848), and on a “simple framework” of geographical distribution that suggests that global discourses eventually overshadow local diversity (pp. 849-850), it precludes or at least dramatically limits the space for alternative structures such as relative equality or complementarity (as documented for the region of Southeast Asia). Yet, if we adhere to a concept of hegemony that goes beyond ideology and recognizes multiple sources of legitimacy, including cultural-symbolic beliefs and official discourses but also structural factors and historical dynamics (cf. Peletz, 1996, 2009, 2011), this not only opens the space for conceptual and practical pluralism but indeed renders the idea of *hegemonic pluralism* not only on a local but on a regional level plausible.

A focus on practices, whether hegemonic, counter-hegemonic, complicit, or altogether different opens an analytical space for social complexity and ultimately shifts our gaze towards the subject. While recognizing the role of historical dispositions, structural factors, and current dynamics that both open and limit as well as conditions spaces of divergent representations, the onto-formative power of social practice shall not be underestimated. Otherwise, we run the risk of portraying the social subject as the mere product of history and social conditions, and of disregarding the power and consequences of individual or collective action, creativity, interest, and choice to pursue a project and identity different from the position it (the subject) has been ascribed. Such a project could be well oriented towards the challenge of official discourse and the pursuit of equality and social justice, which Connell

(2005, pp. 229-230) regards as a potential move from hierarchical towards more equal structures and gender relations based on reciprocity and mutual consent.

As Pierre Bourdieu (1996-1997) notes, “when we attempt to think masculine domination” – or, in the case of R. W. Connell, of hegemonic masculinity – “we stand in danger of resorting to, or submitting to, modes of thinking that are themselves products of millennia of masculine domination” (p. 191). “To escape this infernal circle wherein we unconsciously take as instruments of analysis of masculine domination the unconscious (masculine) categories produced by this domination” (Bourdieu, 1996-1997, p. 192) takes a conscious, self-reflective, and self-critical stance and a move, both in ethnographic description and anthropological analysis, that places an emphasis on both the social subject and social conditions within and out of the subject’s control, thus taking consideration of both positions and dispositions, agents and institutions (cf. Bourdieu, 1996-1997, p. 199).

So what does the above discussion of gender in the region of Southeast Asia implies for the study of men and masculinities? It necessarily indicates that neither the category of man nor masculinity is a natural, biologically-sealed entity, character, or characteristic. It also rejects the common link of status and power to economic power or control of resources. In the attempt to trace masculinities and the ways they are constructed, interpreted, and enacted, the focus eventually shifts towards subjective life-stories stories and face-to-face interactions, towards family relations and collective forms of organization, towards desires, sensitivities, and dispositions and the ways these are communicated to an immediate audience. All these aspects constitute the salient field of an ethnographic research which integrates anthropological methods of participant observation, the record of life-histories and the inquiry into the lived realities including trans-local (im)mobilities and global forms and means of communication and interaction. A different level of research would entail a discursive analysis – one that tells us more about dominant ideas and ideologies, cultural constructs and conceptualizations, as well as the various social and political processes that inform or otherwise define the consolidation of dominant discourses. This schematic approach relates to Connell and Messerschmidt’s (2005, p. 849) framework for the investigation and analysis of local and global masculinities.

Summarizing Gender Theories in Southeast Asia

In approaching the topic of men and masculinities in Southeast Asia, there are three central elements of aspects of gender that shift into focus: cultural representations, daily practices and

performances. When gender is seen as a structuring aspect of social interaction (Connell, 2005b) a certain level of complexity delineates the subject of research. Gender, from an interpretative lens, entails symbols and meanings – a set of culturally specific understandings and definitions of what it means to be a man, or masculine. From a structural perspective, gender regulates orders and power relations, also in relation to and in connection with other structuring aspects, such as age or class. From the lens of performance theory, gender becomes enacted – a role which is the result of informed and repeated practices, of social agency.

If we assume that “different cultures encode, impart and regulate ideas about gender” (Andaya, 2000a, p.5; emphasis added), then we presume the existence of a cohesive culture, cultural meaning, or a discourse that predefines what is actually gender. As we could see in the concept of *phet* (Thai language), which signifies not only sexual difference but also gender difference and sexual orientation and thus gender relations, different places and contexts do offer different terms and definitions to deal with categories such as men or women or with gender (transgressive) practices, roles, or characters. Yet, cultural meanings and representations always derive from a certain context – regional and historical, but most of all structural, defined by (other) structuring aspects of social interaction such as class, age, ethnicity, and so forth. If cultural meaning offers the material for the construction of ideal representations of gender roles and relations, the ultimate question is how do people deal with these ideals – how do they incorporate their cultural (gender) knowledge in their daily practices and repeated practical representations? How does the context – social, regional, and historical – influence their action and agency?

To repeat Donna Haraway’s (2004) words, knowledge is always an engaged material practice and never a disembodied set of ideas. Also gender is the product of social practices; moreover, it is the product of histories. Thus, gender analysis (including masculinities) requires research into local and regional histories; I say histories, for we shall acknowledge the diversity of sources and data that sometimes offer contradicting images and conflicting representations of gender roles, practices, relations, and ideals. As historian Evelyn Blackwood (2005) notes, “gendered practices are differently produced, understood, and interiorized in relation to the dominant religious, cultural, and social discourses of particular historical eras” (p. 850).

Researching into the histories of gender practices and representations entails a focus on processes, on continuities and changes, as well as a focus on context – social, cultural, religious, political, and economic. Gender, as a structuring aspect of social interaction is not

only difference, or identity; it is not only structure, an order, or relations; and it is not only inscribed on and enacted by material bodies. It is the product of social process and a co-producer of social interaction. Difference is identified, constructed, enacted, and defied in and through the practices of real people over the course of time. This historical process of consolidation and contestation of cultural meaning bearing on gender is delineated by the structuring power of gender as the “producer of history” (Connell, 2005b, p. 81). Gender as a system of cultural meanings and as practical representations thus structures not only the field of action but also the acting subjects themselves (cf. Butler, 1999; Wolf, 2001).

While difference is based on a binary mode of identification or of defining identity/alterity – the state of one being different from the other –, diversity involves a variety of ideas, types, sensibilities, and dispositions. In addition, pluralism, as in Peletz’s (2006, 2009) gender pluralism, entails pluralistic sensibilities and dispositions, and thus a variety of “ways of being” which are accorded legitimacy. While the existence of pluralist value relations does not predefine the nature and distribution of these relations throughout societies, it opens a space for fluidity and multiple constitutions of gender in connection to power relations and systems of prestige. Here, I recall the words of Davies (2007a) that “gender delineates acceptable means by which people can obtain or lose social status” (p. 183).

Systems of prestige are based on cultural, religious, or other understandings about the basic constitution and structures of the universe. In a region in which linguistic, ethnic, and religious diversity are as much recognized and appreciated as a complementary world view connecting the material world with a spiritual realm, value pluralism paves the way for pluralistic sensibilities as well as for multiple sources of authority and legitimacy. In the face of global economies and constant flow of people and ideas across national borders and boundaries, sources of legitimacy and prestige shift in surprising directions. To understand change and continuities in local gender roles, practices, and representations requires an understanding of global dynamics and their restructuring powers.

Thus, while on the one hand the region of Southeast Asia offers a variety of emic concepts of (masculine) power or masculinity embedded in the cultural representations and symbolic meanings of official discourses, social relations and daily practices based on complementarity produce a certain level of ambivalence and conflict. Contradictory representations are most present at the fringes of a social system and where two or more axes of difference cross-cut, such as in the case of transgendered ritual specialists, or the examples I look at in the following chapter.

So how can we explain the co-existence of pluralistic sensibilities and dispositions as well as of hegemonic and counter-hegemonic, subversive, and opposing practices? Michael Peletz (1996) provides an answer when he notes that “dominant ideological formations both produce and limit the forms, scope, and force of the challenges with which they must invariable contend” (p. 306). Accordingly, ideological formations inform both dominant practices and practices of resistance. Moreover, the whole social process is practically organized by cultural meaning, ideas and beliefs.

The following analysis thus looks into the practical representations and lived experiences of men and women that bear on culturally specific understandings of gender and on masculinity in particular across the region of Southeast Asia. Practical representations, both subject- and process-oriented, open a space for complexity while resolving some of the basic theoretical questions with regard to cultural meaning, social structures, performance, and identity.

MEN AND MASCULINITIES: THROUGH THE GENDER THEORY AND REGIONAL INQUIRY PRISMS

Social sciences’ analyses of men and masculinities have so far been situated in the theoretical framework of identity and subjectivity, focusing on social processes and configurations of difference with an emphasis on the structuring aspects of difference and on masculinity as an ordering practice on the one hand (cf. Connell, 2005b), and on practices, roles, and performance deriving from poststructuralist feminist theories that draw on the works of Michel Foucault and Pierre Bourdieu on the other hand (cf. Butler, 1990). Both approaches underline the social construction of gender orders and of structures of inequality in connection to larger social processes and power relations, including globalization, or the emergence of trans-local spheres of communication. In a region such as Southeast Asia which offers a vast variety of social, cultural, religious, and ethnic diversity, the analysis of identities and practices and their embedding social structures and processes becomes indispensable.

Men and Masculinities Through the Gender Theory Prism

The latest publication on men and masculinities in Southeast Asia is the compilation edited by Michele Ford and Lenore Lyons (2012) which draws together a number of cases based on

present-day ethnographic fieldwork to shed light on heteronormative masculinities in the region and the way these are constructed and performed at the intersections of gender, sexuality, class, ethnicity, and nationality. In their introduction, the editors ask the critical question of how the study of men and masculinities relates to feminist research and to key insights from critical gender theory (Ford & Lyons, 2012, p. 2). Subsequently, Ford and Lyons point out that the study of masculinity has long been associated with the study of men, thus not only focusing on the category of man, but also on men's self-perception, on their experiences "as men", and on their relations to women and other men. In their work, the authors attempt to incorporate critical perspective on the category of man which bears on understandings of masculinity as a pattern of social practices that takes into account the *body* and its various dimensions (social, historical, political, moral) as a concept shaping the larger social, cultural, and political landscape (cf. "social body" in Douglas, 1970). The body thus figures as the culturally and historically constructed and conditioned material expression of a symbolic system that provides categories for the ordering of a subject into a larger social and cultural whole (with reference to "systems of prestige" in Ortner & Whitehead, 1985). Bodies become a relevant node of analysis when perceived as "a starting point for understanding the condition of being a woman [or a man] in a social order hierarchically organized by gender and other intersecting categories of inequality [or difference]" (Davies, 2013, p. 504). Differently situated and conditioned, bodies as embodied experiences counter the essentialization of difference and place social practices and representations back into the focus of analysis.

Men, Masculinities, and Gendered Bodies: Deconstructing Conceptual Underpinnings of Difference

Up to date, essential insights from feminist scholarship with regard to gender and the body have been absent in critical men studies (Ford & Lyons, 2012, p. 4; Peletz, 2006, p. 309). Also the body, as bearing the imprint of difference – be it gender, race, or class difference – does not figure prominently in gender studies from the region, apart from the already mentioned works and compilations preoccupied with the issue of sex and sexuality (cf. Peletz, 2006, p. 309; Ford & Lyons, 2012, p. 1). Nevertheless, these few exceptions do admit that the body is in a sense "inescapable" to gender (cf. Connell, 2005b, p. 56; Ong & Peletz, 1995, p. 5-7). As Connell (2005b) testifies, "bodies, in their own right as bodies, do matter. They age, get sick, enjoy, engender, give birth. There is an irreducible bodily dimension in experience and practice; the sweat cannot be excluded" (p. 51). Yet, similar to masculinity, we cannot

speak of the body in singular; rather, when we speak of the body, it is decisive to take a differentiated stance – a standpoint that will take into account the body, and its various dimensions and demarcations of difference, as the central point of experience, as a mean of expression, and as a matter of perception and consideration. The body is not (only) biology, it is not sex, and it is not fixed (cf. Connell, 2005b, p. 56). Rather, following Foucault, I suggest here Ong and Peletz's (1995) depiction of the body as "a historically and culturally specific nexus of shifting power relations that inscribe different meaning as schemes of social control" (p. 6). Such approach takes into consideration the multi-vocal narratives of lived experiences in changing structural conditions and life circumstances and comes close to the practical world we live in today.

In my aim to work with a concept of the body that transcends the boundaries of normative categories, I do not necessarily recast my focus onto the subjects who, more or less consciously, transcend normative roles and identities (as in the sense of transsexual and transgendered individuals, cf. Peletz, 2006, p. 310). Rather, I acknowledge that difference or boundaries of identities are essential elements of meanings and definitions, the contents of which are constantly challenged by those people whose practices and interactions constitute social reality.

In the process of identification, the creation of difference/alterity is central. Moreover, difference has rarely been perceived as a historical project, due to its integration and incorporation in hegemonic ideologies, practices, and discourse.²⁸ As Butler notes, sex is one of those differences that has been "forcibly materialized through time" (Butler, 1999, p. 236). Thus, difference is not static but is materialized through reiterative practice and repeating enactment across different levels and domains of social and cultural complexity.²⁹ Sexual difference that is materialized through performance, according to Butler, works "in service of the consolidation of the heterosexual imperative" (Butler, 1999, p. 236). Difference which is inscribed on the body and which is perceived as fixed or natural – as seen in depictions of sex – exposes exactly this process of materialization behind which there is a specific distribution of productive power – a power which "organizes and orchestrates the settings themselves"

²⁸ Note that "hegemonic" here is used in the sense of a "whole lived social process as practically organized by specific and dominant meanings and values" (R. Williams, cited in Ortnner, 1989-1990, p. 44), going beyond both "culture" and "ideology" to embrace social practice and discursive expression as well as institutional embeddedness.

²⁹ For more elaborated discussion on the connection between ritualized practice and social power interlaced in ideological processes, see Wolf, 2001, pp. 379-382.

(Wolf, 2001, p. 384).³⁰ Yet, difference, similar to meaning, bodies, and power, becomes increasingly visible at the margins of hegemonies where meaning and signification is disrupted, contested, resisted, and eventually altered (cf. Wolf, 2001, p. 396). Where bodies do not comply with norms, where acts of resistance question hegemonic forces, this is where possibilities for change in a certain system or social order open up.³¹

If sex as a seemingly “fixed” attribute of the material body is the product of the materialization of social and cultural norms through repetitive acts and practices, what is then gender? In terms of theory, gender has often been treated as the socio-cultural construct inscribed upon the material body and as the very norms, ideas, and values that have been imposed upon the “natural” heterosexual body. This theoretical assumption, born in second wave of feminist thinking and the quest to articulate a concept of gender apart from the category of sex as two separate analytical domains (cf. Rubin, 1975), reveals the deep historicity of this ontological discourse. In this sense, sex is commonly perceived as a natural biological category while gender is assumed to be the cultural construct placed on top. This attempt to distinguish the two concepts and define the way they relate to each other, reveals the “onto-formative” and defining power of what Butler calls conventional *beliefs* with regard to normative heterosexual standards (Butler, 1990, p. 271). These normative standards accompany the construction and realization of the self, very much in the sense of hegemonic institutions that “enabled a person [...] to maintain a mastery and superiority over them [...] and to achieve a mode of being that could be defined by the full enjoyment of oneself, or the perfect supremacy of oneself over oneself” (Foucault, 1990, p. 31).

As hegemonic gender discourse would have it, there is a fixed, unquestioned, or natural entity – much like the category of man or biological sex – some sort of an all-encompassing (male) system in which structures of prestige intersect with constructions of difference. Thus, it is not unusual that the concept of masculinity would trigger questions and meet with confusion in the course of ethnographic research (cf. Ford & Lyons, 2012, p. 9). Additionally, masculinity would most often translate into a stable and unitary identity while gender would relate to more fluid and multiple identities such as studies on women’s issues, status, and rights would reveal. This might be one of the reasons why masculinities have so far remained largely an unquestioned field of inquiry while gender has been predominantly associated with pioneering

³⁰ For the detailed elaboration of different modes of power – starting from power as potency, or capacity, to structural power, recalling the work of Foucault – see Wolf, 2001.

³¹ For concrete details on the issue of sex difference and the processes of materialization and identification, see Butler, 1999, pp. 235-237.

interpretations of women's social position that challenge dominant social orders by tapping into modern discourses on civil society, human rights, democracy, equality, and social justice. Yet, what has remained unquestioned is often perceived as the *norm*. Only recently, after leading scholars in feminist research recognized the essential role of men in achieving these social merits, has their focus shifted towards the study of men, constructions of manhood, and the enactment of masculinities.

Situated Performances and Configurations of Social Practices

Masculinity is much more than a norm, an ideology, or a hegemonic discourse. As both men and women are located differently within a variety of structural hierarchies, also masculinities traverse the defining lines of race, age, class, ethnic identities, and other axes, creating multiple patterns of practices as well as a web of multiple understandings of how and why a certain behavior might be more dominant or established than others.³²

Judith Butler's answer to the question of gender is the concept of performativity. Gender, rather than a natural behavior or a cultural construct, represents an *act* – not a single act, but a complexity of practices embedded in a certain discourse and enacted over time and across a variety of domains to form and consolidate a certain convention, a structural order, or a hierarchical system that informs fixed ideas of sexual difference. Subsequently, Butler (1990) reconsiders the capability of the social agent to choose upon an act prior to enacting a certain (gender) identity and argues that rather than enacting a “stable”, “seemingly seamless” identity, identities are constructed and “instituted through a *stylized repetition of acts*” (Butler, 1990, pp. 270-271). Accordingly, gender – or the “*appearance of substance*” – is “a constructed identity, a performative accomplishment which the mundane social audience, including the actors themselves, come to believe and to perform in the mode of belief” (Butler, 1990, p. 271). Masculinities and femininities can thus be interpreted as acts – as gestures, movements, and enactments creating and following an idea of a gendered self. Thus, Butler's approach towards gender as constructed through performative acts is not irreconcilable with the practice and process oriented argument of Connell (2005b, p. 81) which defines gender as both the *product* and the *producer* of history. Thus, performances and practices constitute both the social reality and subjective perception of a gendered subject.

³² For an elaborated discussion of gender and intersectionality, see also Collins, 1999, p. 263.

Reading masculinity through the illuminating lens of post-modernist and post-structuralist theory engaging both structural models and historicity offers a solid basis for the analysis of masculinities as they have been constructed, enacted, contested, revised, and adjusted in a certain locale – in this case Southeast Asia and particularly insular Southeast Asia – and across time. Again, three interlocked units of analysis are important for this thesis: bodies, subjectivities, and identities as they are constructed through practices and performative acts; discourses, beliefs, and ideologies, both normative, subversive, and marginalized; and institutions, sites, and organizations that ensure the constant repetition and consolidation of identities and behavior. Yet, as most decisive, I choose to focus on practices since, following Butler’s argument, “gender reality is performative which means, quite simply, that it is real only to the extent that it is performed” (1990, p. 278). Moreover, people, the flow of ideas and the way they materialize through acts of performance and practices constitute the world and inform the very processes of globalization we come to realize today (cf. Ford & Lyons, 2012, p. 12).

Masculinities are an ever growing field of inquiry for the fact that they are not timeless, isolated phenomena inscribed on and displayed by human bodies. Also, these bodies are not simply performers on the scene of life, acting out their roles according to a socially approved script. What the study of masculinities (and femininities) reveals is how large-scale processes, ideologies, and discourses penetrate the social world, including cultures, traditions, daily routines but also disruptions, innovations, social movements, and change. They offer a critical angle to look at the complex interplay of processes, at the ways these define our lives, as they become evident in our choices, practices, and relations. Masculinities (and femininities) additionally raise questions concerning power on both personal and structural level; they open up spaces for the study of identities and the articulation of difference as well as their institutional settings. What masculinities (and femininities) eventually talk about are the merits and ubiquity of the reproductive arena³³, yet not merely in a sociobiological sense but rather in recognition of the sociocultural and historical dimension of bodies and bodily

³³ In looking at gender as “a way in which social practice is ordered” (p. 71), Connell (2005b) relates to the “reproductive arena” as a “historical process involving the body” (p. 71), including “sexual arousal and intercourse, childbirth and infant care, bodily sex difference and similarity” (p. 71). I would like to expand this definition of the reproductive arena at the point where the body is addressed by engaging postmodernist theories of the body as a historical construction “produced by various scientific discourses in service of other political and social interests” (Appelrouth & Edles, 2011, p. 379; see also Butler, 1993, p. 10).

practices. Again, my central focus here is not on theories of social or cultural reproduction³⁴ but on a critical understanding of gender and masculinities as patterns of gendered behavior and practices.

Localizing Masculinities

In the course of research about masculinities, the investigator faces human performance, daily practices, forms of language expression and speech that more or less directly involve and address gendered human bodies. If gendered bodies are simultaneously the product and the producer of such practices as already elaborated above, then men – heterosexual, male individuals, to employ the most common framework of reference here – present only one part of the picture. Women’s masculinities may well be assumed to present the other part; but this is not all. Masculinities as configurations of gendered practices are not ultimately linked to only one or two gendered categories, although they might depend on who actually performs and also defines which practices are perceived as masculine. Moreover, looking at masculinities only through the continuum of a single gendered category would bring a tremendous flaw into the concept of masculinities, as it will limit the spectrum of practices, ideas, and discourses as well as recuperate a polarized, largely criticized binary of male opposed to female – with emphasis on (biological) sex; or men opposed to women – with emphasis on a (cultural and ideological) gender.

The multiplicity of masculinities reveals the large diversity of subjects’ positions, relations, and involvement with their immediate surroundings. From individual acts of self-definition, self-assertion, resistance, and liberation, to the organization of whole movements and institutions that promote certain norms and ideas by imposing these on their members and on society at large – the politics and tactics of regional gender discourses are broad; and if not necessarily coercive, they define the space and scope of fluid identities and representations. In the face of hegemonic gender delineations and arrangements, to recall the growing diversity of gendered positions and practices is the first step towards recognizing the co-existence of more liberal and flexible gender relations. Yet, by making this assertion I do not suggest that gender diversity, as a part of a “new gender picture” (Holter, 2005, p. 29), will eventually translate into more egalitarian gender forms, nor does gender diversity automatically call for

³⁴ Most of these theories build upon the social theory of Pierre Bourdieu (1977/1993) in which he develops a critique of structuralism and the key concepts and ideas of the circulation of different forms of capital, habitus, and the reproduction of the social structures through strategy and practice.

more pluralistic sensibilities and dispositions with regard to gender (cf. Peletz, 2006, p. 310). In both cases, there is more than the mere existence and circulation of diverse gender practices, or as Connell & Messerschmidt (2005) precisely identify, “whatever the empirical diversity of masculinities, the contestation for hegemony implies that gender hierarchy does not have multiple niches at the top” (p. 845). Gender equality, in contrast to hierarchy, will entail that power and prestige are allocated equally among differently gendered groups or individuals, or as Ortner (1989-1990) suggests, that “prestige or social honor is allocated primarily on nongender grounds” (p. 53). A “de-gendered” hegemony can imply both a model of gender egalitarianism, where differently gendered subjects have equal access to status and prestige (Ortner, 1989-1990); or gender pluralism, where diverse gender positions are equally granted legitimacy (Peletz, 2006, p. 310), while power is distributed among axes different from that of gender.

... at Intersections of Axes of Difference

As social sciences research has shown, hegemonies are “never total” (Ortner, 1989-1990, p. 78) and spaces of equal power distribution can exist within hegemonic gender orders³⁵ (Connell, 2005b, p. 74, 127; Ortner, 1989-1990). “Arenas of nonhegemonic practice” (Ortner, 1989-1990, p. 79), local reversals of gender power relations, and practices of resistance (Connell, 2005b, p. 237) can become a solid basis for the challenge and transformation of hegemonic gender orders; or as Butler (1990) notes, “the possibilities of gender transformation are to be found in the arbitrary relation between [...] acts, in the possibility of a different sort of repeating, in the breaking or subversive repetition of that style” (p. 271). Interestingly, as both Ortner (1989-1990, pp. 78-80) and Connell (2005b, p. 237) attempt to show, arenas of subversive practices occur mainly at the intersections of gender with other structures, domains, or axes of difference. At this point, it is important to recall that gender, particularly at its collective and institutionalized foundations, can be interpreted as a set of power relations rather than a fixed, internalized characteristic (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005, pp. 846-847; Ford & Lyons, 2012, p. 6); and that sources of power, authority, and prestige are distributed across multiple axes of difference, including ethnicity, religion, age, race, class, which also intersect differently at different times and localities. Following this pattern of interpretation, hegemonic or dominating masculinities can deduce power from a

³⁵ By “hegemonic gender orders” I do not stress the prevailing, or dominant character of a gender system, but domineering, or ruling relations and hierarchies of power, status, and prestige structured along axes of gender difference.

certain class position or social status related to economic resources, cultural and social capital, prosperity and success, rather than from the mere, oppressive domination over other gendered subjectivities.³⁶ Such struggles over power are well associated with the “Gramscian wars of position in which struggles over ascendancy and authenticity of meanings and values are linked to the material conditions shaping the distributions of wealth, power, and prestige” (Ong & Peletz, 1995, p. 2). In other cases, cultural or indigenous discourses can inform the configuration of hegemonic (dominant) representations of masculinity, which again do not necessarily entail direct oppression or marginalization of other gendered individuals (for the complementary relations between gender roles in the early modern Malay world, see Andaya, 2006). In this sense, masculinities are patterns and configurations of gendered practices that emerge in collective processes and are sustained through institutionalized arrangements (Connell, 2000), such as local organizations, international corporations, and the state. A model of “multiple masculinities” shifts the focus of analysis towards the construction and maintenance of difference as well as towards “gendered subjectivities and their ambiguous, discontinuous, and multiple character within asymmetrical relations” (Collinson & Hearn, 2005, p. 294).

... in Processes of Differentiation and Subordination

The construction of difference as a form of social practice manifested through speech and language across fields of social interaction is a highly discursive act. However, the act of differing as an act of defining identity can also start at the level of a single subject, yet always in interaction with the immediate surroundings and the other (cf. Gingrich, 2004, p. 6). In order to avoid an over-simplified and essentialized notion of difference, Gerd Baumann and Andre Gingrich (2004) suggest the concept of *othering* as a term for defining *alterity* (Baumann, 2004, p. 46) in the dialogical relationship between sameness and difference. Such identities, as Gingrich (2004) recognizes, are “multidimensional and contradictory, and the include power-related, dialogical ascriptions by selves and by other which are processually configured, enacted and transformed by cognition, language, imagination, emotion, body and (additional forms of) agency” (p. 6). Othering, or defining or enacting alterity as a process of identification, is presented through a differentiated spectrum of three grammars of

³⁶ Shahin Gerami (2005, pp. 453-456) drew this conclusion in exploring modern Muslim masculinities in Iran, and particularly in connecting identity configurations among young Muslim men with the structural and cultural currents in which they evolve. I will come back to this work in the analysis of modern urban Muslim masculinities in Indonesia.

identity/alterity based on the seminal work of Edward Said, E.E. Evans-Pritchard, and Louis Dumont. Although I do not wish to tap into a more detailed and comprehensive discussion of these grammars, which in other cases is surely worthwhile as these schemata offer a whole new logic to the construction of identity and alterity, I want to emphasize here that the act of differing is not always encapsulated in the binary opposition of self and the other, or in this case of men and women. Other grammars, such as the grammar of encompassment inspired by Louis Dumont's *Homo Hierarchicus* (1980), may offer a more suitable framework to address the prevalence of ideologies in interpretations of self and the other. Louis Dumont's idea of encompassment, as an act of "selfing by appropriating, perhaps ... adopting or co-opting, selected kinds of otherness" (Baumann, 2004, p. 25) is of particular interest in the definition of hegemonic masculinities as well as the conceptualization of gender pluralism.

The grammar of encompassment recognizes multiple levels of difference and operates differently on each level. In this way, while "the lower level of cognition recognizes difference, the higher level subsumes that which is different under that which is universal" (Baumann, 2004, p. 25). This grammar is inherently hierarchical, thus linked to a hierarchical order, in which "the putatively subordinate category is adopted, subsumed or co-opted into the identity defined and, as it were, owned by those who do the encompassing" (Baumann, 2004, p. 26). Although this grammar suggests unity at the higher levels of the hierarchy, it does allow for diversity and distinction at more inferior levels; or, as Connell (2005b) argues for structures of inequality, "a gender order where men dominate women cannot avoid constituting men as an interest group concerned with difference, and women as an interest group concerned with change" (p. 82). Reversals, in Dumont's sense (cf. 1980, pp. 241-242), mark asymmetry and inequality. While a superior level cannot be reduced to an inferior level, it always depends ideologically on its parts, or as Parkin (2009) notes, "being encompassed is [...] synonymous with being distinguishable, and encompassment implies a second level by virtue of the part" (p. 52). The grammar of encompassment thus allows for conflict and pluralism in the Weberian sense³⁷. Thus, hierarchical gender orders and gender pluralism are not mutually exclusive systems but interconnected arrangements of different strategies and tactics to convey identity.

³⁷ Weber's notion of pluralism rests on the claim that "the various value spheres of the world stand in irreconcilable conflict with each other" (Weber, cited in Robbins, 2013, p. 100). As Robbins (2013) explains, "for pluralists, there is no way, or at least no legitimate, non-totalitarian way, in which value monism can be achieved such that the plurality of existing values does not lead to the possibility of conflict" (p. 100) between them. For a detailed analysis of Dumont's work and its interplay with Weberian concepts of value pluralism, see Robbins, 2013.

The ability of hegemonic masculinities to adopt and adapt elements of other, subordinated and marginalized representations informs Demetriou's (2001) concept of "dialectic pragmatism" and his critique of Connell & Messerschmidt's concept of hegemonic masculinity (see also Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005, p. 844-845). Demetriou (2001) identifies two forms of hegemony in Western gender discourse: a form of hegemony "connected to the institutionalization of men's dominance over women" (p. 341), which reflects the hierarchical opposition of two distinct gendered entities and which he calls "external hegemony"; and another form of hegemony referring to social status or the "social ascendance of one group of men over others" (p. 341), in which various "allied" groups serve and contribute to the formation and consolidation of a "hegemonic bloc" (Demetriou, 2001, p. 344, 348), which he calls "internal hegemony". Demetriou (2001), thus argues that "hegemonic masculinity is not a purely white or heterosexual configuration of practice but it is a *hybrid bloc that unites practices from diverse masculinities* in order to ensure the reproduction of patriarchy" (p. 337, emphasis added). What Demetriou (2001) strives to show with this diversified, Gramsci-inspired concept of a hegemonic masculine bloc is the fluid and changing character as well as the transformative capacities of hegemony. Yet, what Demetriou disregards in his concept of dialectic pragmatism are the very structures of the hierarchical order and the directions of subordination (or appropriation) as well as possibilities of reversals or the capacities of potential subversive practices and conflict. While hegemonic, hybrid forms of masculinities appear to blur gender differences by assimilating elements of subordinate others (including various forms of masculinities and femininities) and thus recuperate their dominating character, the restructuring power of distinction and of protest and reversal that have the potential to open a space for pluralistic dispositions and sensibilities remain out of focus.

Men & Masculinities in Southeast Asia: Anthropological Inquiries

In the contemporary collection *Men and Masculinities in Southeast Asia* by Michele Ford and Lenore Lyons, the contributors actively challenge the idea of emerging global hegemonic forms of masculinities (Ford & Lyons, 2012, p. 12) produced in a "world gender order" (Connell, 2005a, p. 1802) or as the product of interconnecting gender orders of local societies (Ford & Lyons, 2012, p. 9). Despite the emergence of a worldwide discussion on topics such as gender equality, gender justice, human rights and the rise of a certain set of concerns and policies with regard to gender violence, reproduction, labor, and the gender dimension of education and health, Connell (2005a) recognizes that "change in gender relations occurs on a world scale, though not always in the same direction or at the same pace" (Connell, 2005a, p.

1804). Moreover, in their reformulation of the concept of hegemonic masculinity, Connell & Messerschmidt (2005, p. 850) warn against an overestimation of the term global, pointing at the capacity and power of regional and local masculinities. Thus, the notion of global as a level of analysis relates to these new global arenas such as transnational business organizations or political associations that become the stage of new, reformulated, and rearticulated forms and patterns of gendered practices and performance (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005, p. 849). A world gender order is thus by no means the mere agglomerations of various competing gender systems. It is not a time-bound effect of the globalization of markets, of the formation of modern political systems, or the spread of neoliberal agendas. Rather, if at all, a world (gender) order – hybrid and contradictory in its substance – has a deep historic dimension, reaching back to pre-colonial times. Both the continuous circulation of ideas, people, and capital and local cultural flows matter as they interrelate, transform, and eventually impact the (re)construction and (re)articulation of masculinities in different localities and on different levels of social interaction. The transnational (or global) dimension of masculinities or gendered practices, in the sense of the circulation and distribution of ideas and interpretations beyond national and geographic boundaries, has always existed to a lesser or larger extent despite radical cultural relativist representations of “a monadic world of [often] totally independent cultures or discourses” (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005, p. 850). Only when we recognize the fluidity of gender as a “contingent process characterized by contestation, ambivalence, and change” (Ong & Peletz, 1995, p. 1), then we can approach the topic of gender as squarely positioned across time and space, past and present, local and global (Ong & Peletz, 1995, p. 1). Gender, as Aihwa Ong and Michael Peletz (1995) recognize, is “most appropriately contextualized in the ever shifting and ever widening fields of knowledge and power associated with specific modernities” (p. 2). The deep historical and global dimension of power structures and competing social, cultural, and political forces is recognized only through the contextualization of gender meaning, representation, and experience in different colonial and postcolonial formations such as the religious, ethnic, or national ideologies and local and regional economic developments.

An analytical framework which distinguishes between local, regional, and global masculinities should thus enable a differentiated perspective on the interplay between locality, culture, and discourse against the backdrop of global moral imperatives, values, and ethics.³⁸

³⁸ In response to universalizing claims of ethical standards which proved inappropriate in particular ethnographic situations, Aihwa Ong (2011) introduced the concept of *situated ethics* – an

By drawing on rich ethnographic fieldwork and by situating both dominant and marginal constructions and configurations of masculinity in different localized settings in insular and mainland Southeast Asia, *Men and Masculinities in Southeast Asia* continues a valuable contribution to the overall understanding of masculinity and to gender-based research in this region. Furthermore, it points to the regional significance of particular local gendered practices in the construction of hegemonic, subordinate, or marginalized masculinities in Southeast Asia. It particularly looks at local practices and experiences as they configure in the life-histories and interactions of individual people, families, communities, and local groups and organizations, and regional ideologies and gender discourses.

Floating Between the Global and the Local

Masculinities as localized configurations of practices that transport certain images and meanings are intrinsically embedded in a local system of cultural values, norms, ethics, and prestige, and are constantly (re)negotiated in line with or in opposition to emerging and changing flows of ideas, concepts, and knowledge. Culture as a central analytical concept in anthropological research has long been treated as a stable, enduring concept through the course of history and social change³⁹, or as the “immanent” characteristic of an ethnically-bounded group of people⁴⁰, or as a coherent and unchallenged meaning resulting from shared understanding⁴¹, or as the product of the human mind within social interaction⁴². In the face of globalization, of strong and at the same time loose interconnections of people and places, and of the boundless flow of ideas and information, culture has become a constitutive element of the global reality (Friedman, 1990, p. 311). In this sense, local masculinities are not *traditional* masculinities – they are not some sort of a relic, spared from the multiple, intertwined processes of modernity⁴³, or some outdated interpretations of what it means to *be*

anthropological approach which accounts for difference and recognizes the conditions in which the negotiation and modification of different strategies take place.

³⁹ In this case culture is presented as a cultural canon that figures as interpersonal norms and rules of communication and interrelation.

⁴⁰ In this case emphasis is placed on the connection between culture and society, in which culture refers to “the acquired, cognitive and symbolic aspects of existence” (Eriksen, 2001, p. 4)

⁴¹ Clifford Geertz, a leading proponent of the hermeneutic (interpretative) approach in anthropological research and the author of several books focusing on the region of insular Southeast Asia, depicted culture as an integrated system of shared meaning (cf. Eriksen, 2001, pp. 3, 198).

⁴² This phenomenological approach towards culture assumes that identity, difference, and meaning are always elaborated and negotiated in the interaction of the subjective self with its immediate surroundings.

⁴³ Modernity here as the intensified flow of ideas, people, commodities, and capital on a global scale together with the spread of capitalism, systems of modern nation states, media, and technology. For a

a man. Local masculinities do not necessarily play a subordinate, complementary, or contributive role towards global masculinities (which, in the framework of a polarized hierarchical masculine order has often been taken for granted). Rather, masculinities as a fundamental aspect of subjective and social gender identity, as a constitutive part of gender relations, and as a configuration of practices defined by a variety of structuring contexts and conditions are constantly changing and evolving across time and space.

“Masculinities Afloat” is the title of the first contribution in the collection of research on Southeast Asian masculinities in Ford and Lyons’ seminal work. McKay and Lucero-Prisno III’s (2012, pp. 20-37) focus on “constructions and transnational performances of manhood among Filipino seafarers, tracing their strategies to compensate for their marginalization” (p. 20) and thus contribute to present-day research on the interplay between global economic processes and the gendered organization of labor. *Floating* masculinities is probably the best attribute to describe the ambiguous and inconsistent position of Filipino seafarers as “caught in a ‘masculine dialectic’ between models of middle-class professionalism on the one hand, and working-class hyper-masculinity of adventure on the other” (McKay & Lucero-Prisno III, 2012, p. 20). Placed on the ladder of transnational professional occupation, Filipino seamen are located at the lower rungs of the hierarchy (pp. 22). Yet, the space and distance that opens between what Filipino seafarers perceive as their home, local family members and community (McKay & Lucero-Prisno III, 2012, p. 30), and the ship, allows them to both negotiate between multiple masculinities, both dominant and subordinate, and “compensate for their marginalization” (McKay & Lucero-Prisno III, 2012, p. 20) on board.

This study is in so far relevant for the analysis of multiple masculinities, and particularly the interplay of hegemonic and marginalized behavior and practices among men in Southeast Asia, as it points at the situatedness of masculine performance, the role of place and space between different localities. While at home Filipino seafarers are characterized as “exemplars of masculinity” (McKay & Lucero-Prisno III, 2012, p. 20), on board of the transnational arena of modern shipping industry they score rather poorly. Yet, how can these men negotiate between multiple and often conflicting aspects of masculine identity and practice? What strategies and resources do they draw upon? These are only two of the questions the authors seek to answer in their chapter.

detailed elaboration of the concept of modernity, see Arjun Appadurai’s *Modernity at Large* (1996). For a more diversified and nuanced perspective on modernity as a subjective experience in the region of Southeast Asia, particularly Indonesia, see Suzanne Brenner’s *The Domestication of Desire* (1998).

Contemporary Filipino seafarers transmit “exemplars of masculinity” at home, among their families, local communities, and peers. These exemplars are by no means a mere, unequivocal expression of their real lives on board, at the port, or at home. Rather, they become the keepers of certain ethics and values, as the images they evoke and vigorously communicate connect to a certain set of ideals that penetrate Filipino society since early colonial times. *Magaling na lalaki*, or “good men” (McKay & Lucero-Prisno III, 2012, p. 23), is one of this mythologized figures, relating back to pre-colonial ideal male qualities of *malakas* associated with strength, but also bravery, intelligence, eloquence, and “rapport with the spirit world to gain followers” (p. 23) – a potency that translates in an augmented status, privilege, and the social position of “Big Men”⁴⁴. Other, more contemporary ideals among Filipino men, such as self-discipline, endurance, and even the ability to abstain sexually (McKay & Lucero-Prisno III, 2012, p. 23) have developed in their interconnection with global economy and modern capitalist systems of the West. Again, recalling such images does not mean that Filipino seafarers automatically assume a leading role – neither onboard nor at home. Quite the opposite – great distances and long periods of absence from home most surely have a certain impact on immediate relationships at home. Rather, it is these images Filipino seafarer actively call upon in order to negotiate their position and status at multiple places and unpredictable circumstances.

Yet, Filipino exemplars of masculinity are not simply products of self-ascription. In fact, even a persuasive self-portray might not be of any worth if there was not an audience that would support or approve of such practices and representations. Thus, the ideals and images mentioned above do not Hoover upon a collective imagination of what it means to be a man but are rather deeply rooted in the history and experience of Filipino islanders and their families. As the authors indicate, “merchant seafaring has had a distinct masculine identity since its earliest years” (McKay & Lucero-Prisno III, 2012, p. 21) and it’s not without a reason why the term *Manilamen* had become a common name for Asian seafarers on Western ships (McKay & Lucero-Prisno III, 2012, p. 22). Since early years, these men had to endure hard working conditions often associated with struggle but also with strength and persistence, on board of these ships. And even if nowadays the doors to higher positions, professionalization, and better remuneration are open, the road there for young Filipino men is often long, risky, and less promising as the rules and standards are still dictated by the centers of the world economy.

⁴⁴ American anthropologist Marshall Sahlins’ “Poor Man, Rich Man, Big Man, Chief” is still the most referenced anthropological study into the concept of “big man” in Melanesia.

The masculinities Filipino seafarers convey are neither purely imagined nor fixed or stable over time and space. They do not translate into a single man's life. Rather, they present to a certain mix of ideas and values in response to real, present-day social processes and conditions. These masculinities are hegemonic in the way they offer solutions in time-bound social and gender constellations in which Filipino seafarers make a living as the "breadwinner", "provider", "adventurer", and "good father" (McKay & Lucero-Prisno III, 2012, pp. 30-33). Although global in the multiplicity of resources they tap in, they remain local as they obtain true relevance and meaning mainly in the home society.

Not all Filipino migrant workers manage to successfully assert an ideal image of masculinity and manhood among their peers and in their often precarious lives. A rather opposed image of "failed" migrant men recurring to acts of violence and aggression, lacking self-control and self-confidence in result of the appalling experiences of exploitation and humiliation abroad is also circulating in migrant masculinities discourse in the region. In her essay on Ilocano male migrant workers in the Arab Gulf countries, Jane A. Margold (1995) explores the effects traumatic experiences of degradation, and what she terms the "crises of masculinity", have on men's identities and subjectivities. As the author shows, forms of marginalization do not necessarily translate into marginal or marginalized masculinities at home (see also Elmhirst, 2007, on "left-behind" masculinities, discussed later in this thesis). The negative images associated with liminal sites of experience such as one's occupation on board or exploitative work abroad are not marginal to the hegemonic ideals circulating in these workers' home communities. Rather, such images become a repository for traumatic experiences as they continue to figure in stories, narratives, painful memories, and setbacks. Captured in a story, these images allow the narrator to distance him- or herself from the real experience, offering a space to re-assert his or her identity. This argument goes in line with Pattana Kitiarsa's (2012) research among Thai migrant men working and living in Singapore and their reassertion of manhood despite the marginal social position they occupy in the host society. Rather than focusing on the dismantled and fractured character of migrant workmen's identities, Kitiarsa's analysis places an emphasis on "workmen as actors with purposeful intent" (Kitiarsa, 2012, p. 39). Thus, there is a difference of perspectives in the matter whether a certain masculine behavior is seen as marginal or heroic. Individual standpoints and personal and emotional accounts will often present strategies how to cope with mental, physical, or material load and express ways to compensate and subvert social and economic marginalization. These personal stories will often resort to images of hegemonic or heroic masculinities, while an objective and contextualized portrayal of migrant men employed in a globalized world economy will

often recur to images of social marginalization, ethno-cultural estrangement, bodily dislocation, and political and economic deprivation. Neither of these perspectives is per se wrong or inappropriate; they simply present two different approaches to one and the same issue – the life experience of migrant men surrounded by the sweeping forces of a global world economy.

At this point it is worth recalling Connell & Messerschmidt's (2005) argument that since "every ethnography discovers a distinctive gender culture, every life-history study uncovers unique trajectories of men's lives, and every structural analysis defines new intersections of race, class, gender, and generation" (p. 845). Different narratives attached to different localities, different material and spiritual resources, different social arrangements and schemes of inclusion and exclusion produce different masculinities reaching from dominant to marginal, from ruling to submissive, from compliant to rebellious.

The fact that our world today does not consist of multiple, disintegrated parts and that every locality, even the most remote places, is politically, economically, and culturally interwoven in a larger system of global processes, opens the possibility for an infinite dialogue between local conditions, knowledge, and experience and global abstractions, interpretations, and generalizations. Yet, not every locality scores equally in the competition for who actually defines the direction and modalities of this dialogue, which on a global scale often turns into a monologue. This point is regularly emphasized by supporters of postcolonial, postmodern, and subaltern studies, including feminist research. What ought to be an egalitarian construct is in fact a highly hierarchized world with both leading and subordinate areas that seek to maintain their "unique" identity and particularity. So is it possible at all to impose a certain set of norms and values that will result in uniform practices and norms of behavior on a global scale? As we see from the example of a globally circulating human rights discourse, this is practically and virtually impossible since there will always be places that will boldly seek to re-establish their own particular ethics of social co-existing.

At the birth of the concept of hegemonic masculinity, the most obvious conceptual flaws that triggered a wave of uncompromising critique most probably emerged from the awkward relation between the ideas of the *local* and the *location* of the *global*. The immanent problematic between the growing interest in global processes and the local predicaments of ethnographic research is most constructively elaborated in Michael Burawoy's 'Manufacturing the Global' (2001) and his co-authored *Global Ethnography* (2000).

According to him, the global can become ethnographic and thus captured and exposed by the ethnographic method in two ways – from the standpoint of experience (or of a "participant

located at the intersection of the most remote forces, connections and imaginations” (Burawoy, 2001, p. 148)) or from the standpoint of production (organizations, institutions, communities) (Burawoy, 2001, p. 149). In both cases, the global is not detached from the local and this is fact we have to take in account when we speak of global hegemonic masculinities. As the global is essentially informing the local (Burawoy, 2001, p. 150), globalization is produced and experienced differently in each locality. As Burawoy (2001) indicates, “only in the locality [...] can one study these concrete effects of globalizations” (p. 149), which he summarizes into three categories – (*supranational*, or external) forces, (*international*, or interpersonal) connections, and (*postnational*, or collective) imaginations.⁴⁵ Studied from the lens of different localities, the global is by no means an accumulation of sites, perspectives, and experiences but a dynamic constellation of practices related to global processes which are visible and observable on a local scale. Globalization as an analytical concept is thus rather multiple than hegemonic.

When we look for global hegemonic masculinities, we should thus look at certain localities, at the life-histories and experiences of people, families, communities, at institutions and organizations, situated at the intersection of global forces, connections, and imaginations (cf. Burawoy, 2001). Global hegemonic masculinities are revealed exactly at these intersections, at the sites of overlapping ideologies and discourses. Also, we should recognize that gender, as Peletz (1995) argues, is never “an analytically discrete, isolateable domain of inequality or difference” (Peletz, 1995, p. 77), and so “we must be prepared to cast our conceptual and analytic nets as broadly as possible” (Peletz, 1995, p. 77).

Daring a step outside the academic field of anthropology, I wish to take one study into consideration that analyses present-day masculinities among young Thai men employed in the tourist industry of Southern Thailand. With an academic background in social and cultural geography, Linda Malam (2008) embarks upon a journey across the multiple social geographies which migrant male workers inhabit and traverse in the island of Koh Pha-ngan. This study, based on a twelve-months-fieldwork in a small community of Rin Peninsula, is interesting for several reasons. First, it focuses both on the gendered subject (Thai migrant

⁴⁵ The italic terms in the brackets are used by Burawoy (2000) to theorize the location of global processes beyond national hegemonies. With regard to global gender discourse, I distance myself from national gender discourses, or the nation-state in general, in recognition that national hegemonies present only one side of the picture. Hegemonic religious discourses or hegemonic cultural representations score equally in the definition and interpretatoin of gender norms, values, and practices. Thus, since I speak of lived realities and daily experience, I choose to speak more concretely about subjectivities and bodies, interpersonal relations, and collective experiences.

male workers), practical representations, and experiences and on the structural factors and conditions that open and limit spaces of conduct, identity construction, and articulation. Second, while acknowledging official national and cultural discourses and local hegemonic structures that define the marginal position of these subjects, the author also points out spaces for alternative interpretations and various forms of resistance. Third, while by no means the study actually reveals how a skilled and knowledgeable self-positioning produces “new” identities in new regions detached from “old” norms and conditions of existence, it does indicate new grounds of masculine performance in which masculinity is defined more by the subject’s transgressive encounters than it is by its conforming to hegemonic discourses.

Malam followed the life and daily routines of a group of young Thai men working in the tourist area of Koh Pha-ngan. In her analysis of the young men’s subjective self-positioning and lived experience in a host community – in a relative freedom of movement and comportment but also in a certain dependence on the hierarchical structures of a patron-client-relationship, Malam (2008, p. 136) adopts the conceptual corpus of (hegemonic) masculinity offered by R. W. Connell in her seminal *Masculinities* – a work that spurred both vigorous international research projects and critical interdisciplinary debate. By looking at the (counter-hegemonic, resisting) practices of a socially marginalized group of men, Malam (2008, p. 135) identifies masculinity as an individual project rather than a collective attribute (a stance that might well have been different if the author had switched her perspective to the well-established group of local male elites and their recognized socio-economic position and status). While these men “have to labour at becoming masculine” (Malam, 2008, p. 135), they also sustain and contribute to existing local (gendered) hegemonies by supporting the foundations of local masculine ideals of their patrons/employers (cf. Malam, 2008, p. 137). The reason for this bi-directional impact of their practices is the “complex system of hierarchies” (Malam, 2008, p. 135) and intersections of local culture, class, and gender in which these young men get caught upon their arrival. To enable a more detailed look behind these entanglements, Malam (2008) explores what she calls “the spacialised performances” (p. 135) (I would rather choose the term localized representations to emphasis the prevalence of structures and axes of difference different from geographical boundaries and spaces) to track masculinities as experienced and envisioned by this specific group of Thai migrant workers.

The first locale the author considers lies in wider Thai national and cultural discourses (cf. Malam, 2008, pp. 138-139) which Thai migrant male workers have little to no control of. In these discourses, the masculine identity is pictured and dictated by hegemonic state narratives

and representations imbued with “traditional values”. Due to their “self-chosen” detachment from their communities and mobility that allows them to traverse and transgress not only geographical boundaries but also traditional orders, norms, and values, they are pushed into a degraded marginal position of moral transgressor (cf. Malam, 2008, pp. 138, 141-142).

Because of their overt public comportment and aggressive demeanor that does not conform to the normative image of a “respectable moral householder”, young migrant workers become a “signifier of rebellion against Thai values of social harmony” (Malam, 2008, p. 138). Their learned skills of translating between local cultures and tourists’ foreign or transnational identities are additionally devalued by their marginal socio-economic position.

The second locale is the island of Koh Pha-ngan – the young men’s place of work and habitat – characterized by pre-existing social structures, political economies and relations of power that open only certain niches for the migrant workers to tuck in (cf. Malam, 2008, pp. 139-141). While the opportunity to “create new identities around the aspects of self left ungoverned in the new power networks” (Malam, 2008, p. 140) gives these young men a sense of freedom, yet “it does not remove workers from discourses that attempt to fix their identities as deviant others” (ibid.). Open spaces for the renegotiation of the self are also governed spaces, filled with ambiguity, precarity, and pre-existing mechanisms of governance (cf. Malam, 2008, p. 140). Being an outsider or a deviant other is per se defined against well-established (gendered) ideals and identities. Additionally, as Malam (2008, p. 145) notes, in the tourist sector of Thailand’s south, young Thai migrant male workers’ ability to communicate cross-culturally necessitates a departure from certain modes and normative codes of “respectable” Thai masculinity. Living outside of a particular social control mechanism these men appear to pose a threat to local cultures and communities (cf. Malam, 2008, pp. 141, 143). Being a placeless person or *phanejorn* (cf. Malam, 2008, p. 141) and looking for a certain level of freedom and independence, young Thai migrant workers become trapped in a room of nobody (lacking respect by the locals) and nowhere (lacking any tie to family and community). Yet, the image of a “dangerous other” or “unpredictable, uncontrolled subjects” (Malam, 2008, p. 142) lacking social manners, moral values, and responsibility – justified or not – excludes the subjective experiences, interpretations, and motivations of the young men in Malam’s study.

Thus, in the last section of her article Malam (2008, pp. 144-146) introduces a third locale of performance – the micro-cosmos of daily routines and experiences along the beach, in bars and in restaurants along the coastline – the only space defined by young Thai migrant men in which they can apply their learned (language, translation, communication) skills and strategic

knowledge, or “experiment with different subjectivities” (Malam, 2008, p. 145), from the skilled bartender to the “ladies man” (Malam, 2008, p. 146).

Despite the consideration of official Thai discourses and local hegemonic structures and representations and the lived experience and practical performance, subjective interpretations, and negotiations of Thai migrant male workers’ identities, Malam’s analysis runs short of showing the dialectics between these three (national, local, individual) levels of representation. Additionally, the reader will not find a lot about (hegemonic) national and cultural representations of masculinity apart from the “respectable moral householder”, the family provider, or the socially and economically well-situated employer. Thus, it is difficult to see or understand how a transitory move to a new region or the challenge of a new positioning of the self into pre-existing social structures and networks of power relations will trigger the creation of “new identities”. Despite the struggle and counter-hegemonic practices of young Thai migrant male workers, local structures and relations of power do not seem to offer much room for re-negotiation and re-positioning. This image of wider hegemonic discourse versus the counter-hegemonic micro-cosmos of life experiences fits well into R. W. Connell’s formulation of hegemonic masculinity. The hierarchy of locales mirrored in “spacialised performances” supports Connell and Messerschmidt’s (2005, pp. 849-850) argument for the geography of masculine configurations – a theoretical tool of analysis that recognizes the “importance of place without falling into a monadic world of totally independent cultures or discourses” (p. 850). While Malam (2008) notes the pertinent lack of academic approach towards non-Western masculinities stemming from “assumptions of economic marginality as the primary axis of identity” (p. 136), the author’s analytical disposition that recognizes the “full ‘human-ness’” (p. 136) of its research subject does not show the “full range of desires, affiliations and aspirations” (p. 136) of this subject.

In order to answer the question of whether the group of young Thai migrant workers of Malam’s study really manages to skillfully and strategically reposition itself at the intersection of gender, class, and national identity, or whether it simply reaffirms the marginal position offered by local structures and networks of power relations, a closer look at the structural factors and conditions that makes certain identities available while constrain others is necessary. In an international arena of tourism and entertainment, skills of cross-cultural communication and the strategic movement and translation between traditional values and codes of conduct are highly appreciated. Yet, the heavy backpack of cultural and community detachment caused in the course of migration is not an easy load to carry around, especially if this disconnection becomes the cause of mistrust and seclusion. As long as “lived

experiences” and practical representations are ranked third and last place in the hierarchy of locales, geographies, and “spacialised performances”, chances and conditions for repositioning, restructuring, and change seem predefined. Yet, showing that connections and ties to global identities via learned skills and forms of communication and self-representation do not translate into hegemonic representations on a local level, Malam’s study of migrant masculinities deserves a particular emphasis.

Passion and Desire

In her contribution on men and manhood in Cambodia, Trude Jacobsen (2012, pp. 86-102) explores the flow of ideas at the intersections between notions of “traditional” and “modern” in the construction and understanding of present-day masculinities. In the course of her research, Jacobsen (2012) traces three hegemonic representations of manhood, summarized under the categories of “good”, “bad”, and “successful” men. While all three concepts embrace a certain amount of historical legacy, all three of them remain relevant in the construction and assertion of masculinity in contemporary Cambodia. Relating to fourteenth-century Buddhist ideals of Cambodian manhood, a “good” man (or *broh*) should show kindness and compassion, should be gentle and non-violent (pp. 89-90) – a moral code related to personal virtues and characteristics that were open to the masses and thus possible to achieve. While a “bad” man can be referenced as the opposite of a “good” man, a “successful” man, on the other hand, is most commonly a man associated with virility and heroism, with physical health and material wealth – a man of higher class and of high position achieved with a certain amount of struggle and effort and thus associated with both charisma and power in a modern, secular sense (Jacobsen, 2012, pp. 88, 93-94). Material power and success, not easily achieved, may thus require some “bad” or immoral practices. Both ideals – the “good” and the “successful” – were so powerful and socially penetrating in their heydays, as the moral codes of conduct and behavior (*Cbpab*) written by elite men for their respective audiences spread throughout the region of today’s Cambodia that they remain relevant today in the search for national models and ideals, despite re-negotiations and adaptations to certain situations or contexts of the present. These conflicting scripts of masculinity and masculine behavior, Jacobsen (2012) argues, reflect present-day tensions between expectations of being “modern” (*samay*) and perceptions of “culturally ‘pure’” (p. 90) Cambodian ideals.

Hegemonic representations of masculinity associated with both the Cambodian past and Cambodian national identity create more pressure for Cambodian men than flexibility and choice of performing multiple masculinities. This tension is definitely accelerated by the

forces of class, wealth, prosperity, and capitalism that connect Cambodia to the global flow of goods, ideals, and most of all, money.

As Jacobsen (2012) demonstrates through the presentation of her ethnographic experience⁴⁶, in present-day Cambodia there is no single or unitary hegemonic masculinity or a representative ideal for masculine behavior. Instead, there are at least two “conflated and conflicting” (Jacobsen, 2012, p. 98) representations that put both men and women in a quandary. Although it may be desirable to maintain both spiritual and material power and prestige, it is deemed impossible to be successful without adopting some “bad” practices (Jacobsen, 2012, p. 99). In her essay, Jacobsen indicates that there is a specific connotation of being “successful”, which is not only “bad” as opposite to “good”, but also worldly, and most importantly – deemed as natural. In present-day conditions and circumstances in Cambodia, an ideal form of masculinity, in the sense of a “good” man, would not seem to survive. In today’s national and global capitalism, the accumulation of wealth and economic power triggers rather negative images of corruption and exploitation among those excluded from the benefits of prospering business. As global capitalist and corruption mechanisms become unquestioned, being successful “naturally” means being “bad”.

The desire for economic, social, and political success is a recurrent topic in the analysis of gender as a system of prestige linked to both symbolic meaning and structural patterns. I further explore this topic by discussing Suzanne Brenner’s essay ‘Why Women Rule the Roost’ published in Peletz and Ong’s (1995) compilation on gender relations in Southeast Asia. Brenner’s interest in gender relations in Southeast Asia and particularly Indonesia drew her attention to the island of Java where local gender ideologies interweave with local concepts of *potency* or spiritual power, the nature of desire, and mastery of self-control. With her anthropological background and an expertise in gender studies, Brenner casts a critical view over Benedict Anderson’s ‘The Idea of Power in Javanese Culture’ (1972). Her critique focuses not so much on the notion of spiritual power as such, but on its access and distribution along the dividing lines of social hierarchies, as they have especially developed in the courtly centers of Solo and Yogyakarta.

As mentioned earlier, the idea of power in Javanese cultural traditions is closely related to the concept of spiritual potency – divine energy that can be achieved and mastered through the sustained practice of emotional and behavioral self-control (cf. Anderson, 1972/1990, pp. 22-

⁴⁶ Jacobsen explains that she came across the ideas of the “good”, “bad”, and “successful” men only randomly during her work with Cambodian sex workers in Phnom Penh (cf. Jacobsen, 2012, p. 87).

23, 50-51; Brenner, 1995, p. 20). According to Anderson (1972/1990, pp. 28-33), there are some clear signs for the concentration of power which referred almost exclusively to the ruling class, or to the king himself. One of these signs is the ability to concentrate within oneself “apparently antagonistic opposites” (Anderson, 1972/1990, p. 28) – with “opposites” meaning both masculine and feminine characteristics. Thus, there is a clear gender dimension in the very origin of the concept of power. On the one hand, power is ascribed to the ruler, most commonly a man of high status, prestige, and wealth who, on the other hand, is able to unite with feminine power, as in the legendary story of the alliance between Senapati (Sultan of Mataram, 1575-1601) and the female goddess Nyai Loro Kidul (also known as Roro Kidul or Ratu Kidul, or the “queen of the south”)⁴⁷. In this narrative of masculine power women figure only marginally. The reason for this marginalization, Brenner (1995, pp. 20-21) argues, can be found in the origins of the concept in a specific set of knowledge and ethical code of comportment related to the *priyayi* elite class, which ascribed to women an inferior social and moral position. Yet, by adopting a critical stance Brenner explores conflicting representations of gender in Javanese culture and daily discourse and points at alternative and subversive perspectives that are often witnessed with ambivalent feelings and predispositions. Such alternative viewpoints expressed in more casual discourse suggest that women are actually in a better, again “natural” position of controlling their passions and desires than men are. These seemingly contradictory representations of masculine and feminine behavior can be understood as “conflicting paradigms that can be called upon to legitimate and to interpret the actions of males and females in different contexts” (Brenner, 1995, p. 32).

Being a product of history, Javanese gender ideologies, including internal contradictions and ambiguous representations, have come to be what they are today through the continuous enactment and reinterpretation of gender roles and relations in different contexts and situations, starting from a *priyayi* system of values and ethical codes, through patriarchal tendencies of Dutch colonial rule, to the resurgence of Islamic rhetoric and postcolonial national endeavors (cf. Brenner, 1995, p. 31). Thus, gender ideologies are never simply about gender, but also about class, status, prestige, and prosperity; they are about wealth and

⁴⁷ According to the legend, since her alliance with Senapati, Roro Kidul continues to lend her powers and support to Senapati’s descendants. Several ritualized celebrations continue to commemorate their alliance up to this day. Annually, fishermen bring gifts to the sea and offer them to Roro Kidul in hope for her blessings. Also the royal courts of Yogyakarta and Solo (Central Java) recount the union of Roro Kidul and Senapati through sacred rituals and dances. A number of mystical stories recall this famous figure at a popular level.

sexuality, as much as they are about piety and reason; and sometimes, as in Javanese culture, they are particularly about desire.

In her seminal work on a small Javanese trading community and its transition from “tradition” to “modernity”, Brenner (1998) explores values and practices related to gender relations as they are constructed and enacted in and outside of the family, drawing particular attention to what Brenner calls the “domestication of desire” (Brenner, 1998, p. 134). One recurrent topic in the construction of gender roles is the notion of desire. Desire in gender literature has frequently been interpreted as sexual desire, or *cathexis* (Connell, 2005b, pp. 74-75), which shows the deeply gendered character of this concept. Desire is related to the human body as the place of experience of sensations, passions, and emotions and thus has often been perceived as something natural and, as in the case of Javanese gender ideologies, deeply irrational. Desire is gendered, or as Connell (2005b, p. 74) puts it, it is a structuring aspect of the gender order. Additionally, as Brenner (1998, p. 21) argues, both men and women define their subjectivities in relations to gendered notions of desire. In Javanese culture, desire perceived as the state of being emotional and unreasonable has officially been ascribed to women (Brenner, 1995, p. 31), while, on the contrary, women have generally been described as the object of men’s desire. Consequently, the control of desire is not simply a matter of self-control – it also translates into the control of objects, or of one’s relations to other subjects, and so into the control and accumulation of (political) capital and power (cf. Brenner, 1995, pp. 28-31; 1998, p. 21, 148). Thus, encompassing politics of power and social control the arrangement of desire reaches far beyond human bodies and sexuality (cf. Brenner, 2011).

Benedict Anderson’s (1972/1990) discussion of power and self-discipline in Javanese society does not explicitly address differences between men or women, or other gendered subjects, and thus produces a rather homogenous and limited account of otherwise gendered practices (cf. Brenner, 1998, p. 148). To correct this partial perspective and to offer a more detailed gender analysis of ascetic practices was one of Brenner’s central concerns in her seminal work *The Domestication of Desire* (1998). The general assumption that self-discipline and the practice of self-control will lead to accumulation of spiritual power, high personal status, and prestige addresses almost exclusively men of high positions, members of the royal family, i.e. the Javanese elite. Yet Brenner (1995) points out that while men’s asceticism will lead to the “fulfillment of *personal* goals” (p. 36), ascetic practices among women will not result in personal gain but rather in the accumulation of “economic and spiritual value for the family” (p. 40). This relational approach toward the construction and configuration of gender

identities and practices is important since it draws our attention to processes of identification and differentiation as well as contestation and negotiation at intersecting axes of difference and spaces.

A number of contemporary studies on heterosexual men and masculinities in Southeast Asia (including Brenner, 1995; Jacobsen, 2012; Kitiarsa, 2012; McKay & Lucero-Prisno III, 2012; Williams, Lyons, & Ford, 2012) project women as a defining factor in the constitution of men's identity and practices identified as masculine. Yet, instead of essentializing difference, contemporary research, such as the one of Brenner, is well informed of gender as one among several axes of difference and thus seeks to inquire the relation between different defining factors by taking up a situational and contextual approach towards gendered practices.

In his essay on contrasting representations of masculinity among Malays residing in the state of Negeri Sembilan, Malaysia, Michael Peletz (1995) takes this approach further to point out the ambiguity and fluidity of masculinities in result of their implicit connection to other modes of identification, such as class, in a particular spatial and historic context. In a complementary manner to Brenner's (1995) notions of self-control and desire among central Javanese residents, Peletz (1994) explores the symbols and meanings of the concepts *akal* and *nafsu*⁴⁸ and their role in contextually variable configurations of gender difference. In analyzing both official and ordinary settings in which the notions of "reason" and "passion" are evoked, mainly pointing at differences between men and women, Peletz (1995, p. 88) equally shows that these concepts are not simply aspects or extensions of gender. As Peletz asserts (1995, pp. 88-91), the notion of passion is originally linked to the creation of the universe and with the first man's transgression against his Creator⁴⁹ and thus with derogative, even "sinful" (Peletz, 1995, p. 89) behavior. Contrary to passion, which is linked to a sinful, ignorant, savage, un-socialized, or un-taught *nature* (Peletz, 1995, p. 90), the notion of reason relates to the ability to make informed judgments and evaluations of someone's behavior according to the ethical codes and rules embodied in religion⁵⁰ and *adat*. While theoretically every human being can acquire and develop *akal* or reason, proficiency is mainly attributed to a physically and emotionally healthy male adult person (Peletz, 1995, pp. 92-93). Yet, as

⁴⁸ These local concepts are of Arabic origin and denote "reason" and "passion" respectively.

⁴⁹ This is the commonly recited story of Adam and Hawah (Eve) and their temptation by the devil (cf. Peletz, 1995, p. 88)

⁵⁰ In Malay society, this is predominantly Islam; in fact, considering the Arabic origin of the concepts of "reason" and "passion" (*'aql* and *nafs*) and their central position in Islamic discourse, it is likely that they played a significant role in the establishment and spread of Islam throughout the Malay region (cf. Peletz, 1995, p. 94)

Peletz and others (Brenner, 1995; McKay & Lucero-Prisno III, 2012) point out, practical and discursive representations are *situational* and we should pay particular attention to the “contrasting sets of representations” (Peletz, 1995, p. 83) and their interconnection to other domains of power and difference.

In her research among the Wana of Central Sulawesi, Indonesia, Jane M. Atkinson (1990) traces continuities and discontinuities of social structures, gender roles and relations as well as practical representations across social contexts and cultural domains. She approaches cultural representations of gender “not as a disembodied set of definitive cultural statements, but rather as polylogues among cultural actors” (Atkinson, 1990, p. 66). Ideologically downplayed differences between men and women and a seemingly egalitarian gender order in which “both Wana women and Wana men are represented as life-givers with identical, not opposing and complementary, roles in procreation” (Atkinson 1990, p. 65, but also pp. 77, 79) continue in practical representations and daily activities in community life (Atkinson, 1990, pp. 66-79). In Wana society, Atkinson (1990), “the conjugal relationship is central to Wana social structure” (p. 67); additionally, “likeness, not difference, between husband and wife is expressed” (p. 67). In a Wana conjugal relationship, for example, “both spouses are expected to be hard-working contributors to their productive unit” (p. 68). Although Wana divide tasks along gender lines, the product of their work – rice – is perceived as the product of their joint work. Also “transcendence” or contact to the spiritual realm “is not so explicitly gender-marked” (Atkinson, 1990, p. 86). Thus, while the exercise of authority, Atkinson (1990) argues, is a “principally male prerogative” (p. 65) because of their bravery or extended sphere of activity, Wana men’s claim to power and authority has its limits which are constructed and represented “physiologically”, “characterwise”, and “experientially”. In the author’s words, while Wana men’s power is represented “physiologically by their penises; characterwise by their bravery; and experientially with reference to their travels to distant realms”, it is mitigated “physiologically by notions of women’s alleged anatomical completeness; characterwise by the sense that [...] Wana as a people are quite cowardly; and experientially by the fact that access to exogenous forms of power is not limited to those who travel long distances” (Atkinson, 1990, p. 66).

Practical and thus “situated” representations inform men’s and women’s conduct and move through their life-histories from one relational position to another. To grasp practical representations fundamentally requires the presence of the researcher in the field of his or her inquiry.

Violence and Forms of Intimidation

Similar to desire, violence – not only physical force but also psychological intimidation or verbal insults – is another issue frequently evoked in connection with gender relations and, as we will see in the following paragraphs, which often figures as a trait attributed to marginal, “untaught”, “unhealthy”, or upset masculine identity and behavior. From pre-colonial times through the colonial past and histories of independence until today’s struggles for local and regional autonomy, the region of Southeast Asia has not remained untouched from various forms of politically, economically, ethnically, or otherwise motivated forms of violence. In fact, to recall Henri Myrtilinen’s assertion of gender-based violence among East Timorese young men, “violence has become a normalized tool, especially for men, for seeking redress to real and perceived grievances in both the private and the public sphere but also for challenging or confirming social power structures” (Myrtilinen, 2012, p. 104).

In my discussion of violence in Southeast Asia, I want to recall Mary Steedly’s (1999) cautions against “essentializing” or “culturalizing” violence. Instead, Steedly(1999) suggests to “localize” violence: “By this I mean exploring the full particularity of its multifarious occasions: how it is produced in certain circumstances; how it is deployed, represented, limited, imagined, ignored, or instigated; how it is identified, disciplined, interrogated, and, of course, punished” (Steedly, 1999, pp. 445-446). Violence, thus, is not an inevitable social behavior; it is not a manner of discipline or a cultural trait. Rather, it is localized in a specific historical context. This approach will inform the following discussion.

In research on masculinities in Southeast Asia, violent and intimidating practices have been linked to a gendered (explicitly masculine) state of being emotional and thus “irrational” or “unreasonable”. It has often been described as a form of impulsive, aggressive, and offensive behavior recurring to the deliberate use of physical force associated with men rather than with women (Atkinson, 1990; Tsing, 1990; Myrtilinen, 2012). The expression “running amok”, or simply amok, originates from Malay’s *mengamuk* which is associated with the spiritual world and thus out of a man’s control. Although violence as a typically masculine behavior has gained a certain level of global acceptance (cf. Connell, 2005b, pp. 185-186; Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005, pp. 840-841; Myrtilinen, 2012, pp. 105, 110), it is important to note that it is not a particular context (e.g. imperial expansion, or the growth of global capitalist economy) that contributes to the emergence of violent masculinities. Rather, as Connell (2005b) emphasizes, it is the “vital connections” (p. 185) or historical encounters that have spread violent orders of inequality. Thus, while violence can be justified and rationalized (e.g. as a form of defense, or in military education, cf. Connell, 2005b, p. 192), it can also appear

as marginal or irrational; while an attribute of the powerful, it can also be an act of subversion; while utilized as a tool of self-identification, it can also mark difference to a bordering other. To account for the plurality of interpretations, I would like to turn to Henri Myrtilinen's (2012) careful analysis of young men's self-identification in relation to (gendered) violence in Dili, the capital city of Timor-Leste.

According to Myrtilinen (2012, p. 104), two key explanations of men's violent behavior dominate gender-based violence discourse in Timor-Leste. The first explanation recurs to a partially assumed history of patriarchal social organization that penetrates Timorese culture up to the present, and thus portrays violence as a "natural" and un-reflected "way of life" (Myrtilinen, 2012, pp. 104, 108-110). The second version attributes violent behavior to young uneducated, unemployed, and marginalized young men in urbanizing environments. While the historical depiction tends to normalize violence, the socio-economic one seeks to rationalize it. Yet, both interpretations are not as plausible and straightforward as they seem to be. As Myrtilinen (2012) takes his research further into historical and ethnographic detail, he shows that it is highly improbable that the first of the two explanations is informed by any adequate historical data since accounts of or research on pre-colonial and colonial "traditional" gender relations is literally non-existent (Myrtilinen, 2012, pp. 108-110). The source of such interpretations thus lies somewhere in the contemporary histories and experiences of men and women in East-Timorese society; and indeed, as Myrtilinen (2012, pp. 110-112) points out, since 1974 the life-histories of East-Timorese have continuously been injected with the experience of violence, struggle, and grievances. Violence, as Myrtilinen (2012) argues, has eventually become a "tool to address grievances" (p. 110). Thus, although deemed problematic and unacceptable as a cultural characteristic (Myrtilinen, 2012, p. 106), violence is also addressed as the weapon of the poor, of the socially and economically marginalized, of the "uneducated" and "unemployed". It is a momentum outburst after facing insult or a personal attack (Myrtilinen, 2012, pp. 106-107); it is generally accepted as "a response to personal, social, political and economic frustration" (Myrtilinen, 2012, p. 112). In being accepted in certain situations, violence does not lose its negative connotation of being problematic and destructive to human potential and society. Yet, it is normalized as a momentum condition, or "amok" – the way life is (similar to the "bad" nature of the "successful" man in Jacobsen's (2012) analysis).

While in Suzanne Brenner's (1995, 1998) research on gender and desire in central Javanese society it was the daily, more casual and subversive discourse among women that defined men's behavior in contrast to official representations, in Timor-Leste aggressive behavior

among young men is justified by their marginal position and inaccessibility of other, more positive images of masculine behavior, such as national heroes or successful urban professionals. This goes in line with Messerschmidt's (1993) central argument on the relationship between masculinities and crime, emphasizing that acts of violence and crime become a form of a social practice, or in Ian Wilson's (2012) words, "a resource for 'doing' masculinity when other resources are unavailable" (p. 122). Again, this justification is reminiscent of Jacobsen's (2012) image of the "successful" man in the city of Phnom Penh who, striving to cope with severe social and economic realities, is forced to recur to negative practices, including acts of violence, in particular situations.

The import and circulation of global hegemonic images of masculinities through the internet, social media, and popular culture, including music bands (Nilan, 2009, pp. 335-336), movies (Clark, 2010), or other commodified world icons (Myrtinnen, 2012, pp. 114-115) further complicates the analysis of masculinities in Southeast Asia. While masculinities enacted by East Timorese gangs can be depicted as "protest masculinities" – challenging normative representations through powerful images from within the social and economic margins – against the dull realities of urban areas marked by social and economic inequalities, they also reaffirm hegemonic models of male patronage networks (Myrtinnen, 2012, p. 115; see also the image of *preman*, literally "free man", in Wilson, 2012, following). Yet, notions of honor and group loyalty remain key aspects of identity and performance. Recalling a sense of belonging and group solidarity, young men's gangs become a means of self-identification and re-assertion of one's place in society (cf. Nilan, 2009, p. 337; Wilson, 2012, p. 133).

Claiming authority over a certain territory, be it a street, a small neighborhood, or another area, has become another way of asserting a place and a "name" among young, socially and economically marginalized men in urban areas. As in the context of today's institutional and state-backed control over urban areas, seemingly random, yet well calculated, ferocious acts have been perceived as an indispensable tool to (re-)claim and retain control over a certain area. They manifest a way of life, in which violence translates into a standard form of communication among city gangs and their immediate surroundings. Also Jakarta has become the scenery of such violent acts, in which the central, yet ambivalent figure of the *jago* – literally "cock" or "rooster" –, or a local strongman has been associated with both a romanticized, socially idealized masculinity and the sheer embodiment of "a reactionary and oppressive social and political order" (Wilson, 2012, p. 122). This violent form of protest masculinity has developed in a different historical and political context than the local ideal of the self-controlled and reasonable man (as in Javanese elite representations). As Ian Wilson

(2012, p. 123) asserts, honor and virility of *jago* masculinity are inextricably linked to territoriality and the body, or physical appearance. While spiritual powers and extraordinary skills (*ilmu kebal*) are not an uncommon attribute to the figure of the *jago*, his ultimate power stems from his ability to retain control over a certain territory. In the process of state formation and consolidation and the expansion of regulatory frameworks, the ideal of the *jago* and territorially bound notions of identity, honor, and power have come to occupy a central role in present-day debates upon urban masculinity.

While territoriality, in the sense of a physical, demarcated place such as a neighborhood or a street area, calls for physical and thus vehement means of control and protection, actual control or power over this area is not displayed solely by means of physical strength (which, according to Javanese logics, does not on its own figure as a measure of potency). A number of other, more varied forms of power display and performance, such as the claim to possess mystic powers and supernatural skills achieved in the course of long periods of ascetic practices, fasting, and training (Wilson, 2012, pp. 123, 125), or the currency of extended networks and social capital (Wilson, 2012, p. 130), are indispensable for the reputation of the *jago*. Yet, as Wilson shows, in the image of the contemporary *jago*, physical strength, expressiveness, and virility are by no means opposed to spiritual prowess. In fact, invulnerability – a common distinctive of the *jago* – is intimately linked to both physical presence and conduct and the possession of supernatural powers and spiritual potency (Wilson, 2012, pp. 125-126). Thus, an aggressive, violent, and outgoing behavior will not inevitably result in the decrease of spiritual prowess, the loss of “face”, or the damage of honor, which are perceived as *jago*’s most valuable assets (Wilson, 2012, pp. 122-123). Rather, as in the mythic figure of the “social bandit” (Wilson, 2012, p. 129), the figure of the *jago* successfully combines seemingly conflicting concepts of violence and honor, fear and glorification. It is this particular combination of honor, prestige, and violent behavior that makes the figure of the *jago* so intriguing. Another historical figure spread in the East Javanese region is the character of the *warok* (Wilson, 1999). A local strongman acting independently from the government and yet often as an agent of higher authorities, he dwelled “in the margins of social and political life” (Wilson, 1999, para. 1). Born in a mythology of rebellion against the official order, the image of the *warok* combines two contrasting sets of characteristics: the “charismatic leader” and the “ruthless predator” (Wilson, 1999, para. 39). As Wilson indicates, the central axis around which these two contrasting representations revolve is the notion of *kesaktian*, i.e. “supernatural power”, and its ambiguous definition of

being “beyond good and evil” (Wilson, 1999, para. 39) and thus “not indicative of any particular code of ethics or morality” (Wilson, 1999, para. 39).⁵¹

While the image of the *jago* offers a model of masculinity in certain historical periods and in particular situations, the ideal of the *jago* does not seem to be easily accessible to all disenfranchised realities of poor and socially and economically marginalized men in suburban areas. As Marshall Clark (2010, pp. 97-101) points out in his review of recurring masculinities in popular Indonesian movies, images of passive, emotionally deprived, and reluctant men, refusing to take hold of their lives, also circulate in popular discourse about suburban masculinities. Neither protesting nor complicit, these performances of passive masculinities signal a crisis in contemporary Indonesian masculinity (cf. Nilan, 2009, p. 331).

The instrumentalization of leadership associated with idealized images of masculinity under the New Order regime, such as the *warok* (Wilson, 1999) or even the criminal *jago* (Wilson, 2012), has led to a general mistrust and ambiguous sentiments among the public. *Premen*, another form of an urban *jago* and a highly ambivalent figure that had already “existed in a legal and conceptual grey zone, operating both inside and outside of the law” in the Dutch Indies (Wilson, 2012, p. 128) operates at the intersection of criminal violence and state power (Wilson, 2012, p. 131). Both a “soldier” and a “politician” (Ryter, 2005), a *preman* is regarded with suspicion and distrust. “The Act of Killing”, a recent documentary filmed by Joshua Oppenheimer over several years in the city of Medan, the capital of North Sumatra, demonstrates the ambiguity of such “elderly gangsters” (cf. Cribb, 2014). Holding government offices and prospering entrepreneurial positions, their “genial” in their appearance disappears as they most readily demonstrate their indifference towards or even pride in remembering acts of violence during their early careers as *preman* – violence that is deemed a natural trait of their idealized and politicized personality.

From what has been said so far, it is clear that both notions of desire and violence figure prominently in official and popular configurations of gendered practices and hegemonic representations of masculinities in Southeast Asia. Yet, while passion and desire in the sense of personal traits and aspects of behavior and public performance have discursively been attached to women, femininities, and also to a spiritual realm, violence is commonly perceived as the coercive physical force stemming from a masculine body, real or metaphoric,

⁵¹ Note here B. Anderson’s (1972/1990) definition of potency or spiritual power as transcending ethical questions.

as in the sense of “masculine” state bodies (cf. Myrntinen, 2012; Wilson, 2012), and has thus been associated with the violent imposition of unequal gender orders.

As violence became a burning issue during and after the establishment and consolidation of new political regimes and democratic policies following the colonial and post-colonial authoritarianisms in the region, a number of researchers felt the need to focus on violent hegemonic masculinities and of means for conflict resolution (cf. Demartoto, Nilan, Broom, & Germov, 2014; Elmhirst, 2007; Myrntinen, 2012; Nilan, Demartoto, & Wibowo, 2011; Wilson, 2012). These studies rarely addressed women or otherwise gendered subjectivities, if not in the position of the victimized object. Also, alternative practices in conflict-laden situations such as different forms of mediation and conflict settlement (cf. Demartoto et al., 2014) are still insufficiently explored. Particularly, more direct, face-to-face relations between various types of masculinities attached to a certain locality or brought together in a specific situation are hardly reflected, including for example those performed by the local strongmen, religious mediators, administrative head men, street vendors, and owners of a small business, making their living in the same neighborhood.

In her analysis of contemporary young masculinities in Indonesia, Pam Nilan (2009) seeks to bring together three dominant yet distinct images of men circulating in present-day Indonesian media – the young devout Muslim (pp. 333-334); the trendy, cool but sensitive young guy from the city (pp. 335-336); and the violent gang member (pp. 337-338). With their constant presence in the Indonesian media, including popular Indonesian movies⁵², music videos, series, advertisements, and magazines, such images of Indonesian modern masculinities are important points of reference for young men who struggle to make a sense of their gender identity, socio-economic position, and political and religious stance (Nilan, 2009, p. 329). Having more or less directly experienced the turmoil during and after the collapse of the New Order, the struggle of new political installations to establish and consolidate a popular democratic system, the resurgence of Islamic rhetoric and practices, the significant expansion of economy and related transformations of the labor market, the rapid urbanization, resettlements, and migration and, most of all, the spread and growing accessibility of new information and communication technologies, the contemporary world of young Indonesian urban middle-class men has become ever more demanding.

⁵² Up to date, Marshall Clark (2010) offers the most comprehensive and detailed analysis of masculinities in the Indonesian cinema. For contemporary masculinities associated with violent behavior and environments, he closely analyzed two of Rudi Soedjarwo’s movies: *Mengejar Matahari* and *9 Naga*.

The social concern present in Pam Nilan's (2009) first two images of masculinities is countered by representations of the violent and aggressive demeanor in the last illustration of youthful masculinities in contemporary Indonesia. Opposite to the more affirmative portraits of the young Muslim devotee or the young well-educated activist, the image of the street *geng*-ster is still tempting to the majority of young men with poor social and educational background, living partly on the street with few to no chances for social and economic upward mobility or higher education. Born in rebellion to the official public order and widely circulating ethics of piety and social conformity (which they vigorously oppose to), these young gangsters' "bad" demeanor and behavior is rooted in the conditions of their marginalized existence (and exclusion). As Clark (2010) asserts, in post-New Order Indonesia violence is considered "a normative response to the shame and humiliation of poverty, unemployment and associated feelings of hopelessness" (p. 107).

While in Southeast Asian research protest masculinities have been widely associated with young urban middle-class men in the context of mainly student resistance against authoritarian regimes and perceived injustice, violence and rebellion is often constructed as a particular feature of the urban and rural poor (cf. Lee, 2011). In her study on the impact of "feminised labour migration" on "left-behind" masculine subjectivities, Rebecca Elmhirst (2007) inquires into how young men "negotiate the space of the village, their social relationships and the absence of work in the context of young female migrants' assumed economic and social success" (p. 226). Her study, based on an extended period of ethnographic field research in the village of Tiuh Baru, Lampung province on the island of Sumatra, Indonesia, illustrates how local shifts in gender-specific labor demand, employment patterns, and gender mobility change the conditions of young *kampung* (village) men's negotiation and achievement of masculinity, authority, and status.

In Tiuh Baru and elsewhere in the region successful masculine identity, as Elmhirst (2007) explains, is linked to both the achievement of a certain level of social status, particularly embedded in local *adat* understandings of prestige achieved through extensive social networks and cultural capital, and the financial accomplishment in particular forms of employment (particularly "business"), which forms the basis for the subsequent adult masculine role as provider for the family (see also Hertzman, forthcoming). Financial and cultural resources are thus perceived as essential prerequisites of masculine adulthood (Elmhirst, 2007, p. 230). According to this pattern, "men should be worldly-wise" (Elmhirst, 2007, p. 230) – a personal quality achieved by means of temporary migration for the purpose of experience and education. This highly-pursued practice particularly among young men is

discussed under the local concept of *merantau* or “migration for experience” (Elmhirst, 2007, p. 230) – an activity commonly associated with the shaping of adult masculinities. As Elmhirst (2007, pp. 230-231) denotes, the practice of *merantau* had long time been perceived as an essentially male activity, and thus deeply imbricated in a “clear gender division of labour (and mobility)” (Elmhirst, 2007, p. 231). Only recently did *merantau* become an option for women along with sweeping changes in labor demand, employment patterns and mobility. Interestingly, as the author explains, “the construction of gender-specific labour demand [...] has also been fed by local stereotypes that condition the gendering of labour supply” (Elmhirst, 2007, p. 231). Such local stereotypes include more general representations of women as docile and malleable workforce (Elmhirst, 2007, p. 231) while men have been increasingly portrayed as “hot-headed” and prone to protest (Elmhirst, 2007, pp. 230, 231).

According to Elmhirst’s analysis, this shift in gender divisions has created a gender competition for sources of power (Elmhirst, 2007, p. 232) since social status, economic success, and cultural capital are all linked to both adult masculinity and a local system of prestige. This resonates with earlier studies among female factory workers in post-colonial Southeast Asia (cf. Ong, 1987/2010; Wolf, 1992) which portray how local “conceptions of female gender constitute an ideological basis that propels capitalist industrialization” (Wolf, 1996, p. 141). According to the author, a “re-scripting [of] migration mythologies” (Elmhirst, 2007, pp. 233-234) and an attempt to shift the local acceptability of female migration and factory employment is only one of several strategies employed by young village men in Lampung in order to re-assert dominion in the relational production of gender identities and masculinities. Recalling and partly reviving teenage years of a “dangerous life” including long nights of traversing streets and neighborhoods, engaging in the risky activities of street gangs and gambling is another way to confront the struggles of demanding adult masculinity, which I also encountered in my conversations with local young or middle-aged men during my one-year stay in Bandung, West Java. A third strategy of re-assertion, this time in the context of traditional *adat* practices and prescriptions, is the performance of so called “tiger” masculinities. According to Elmhirst (2007, pp. 234-235), “tigers” are young village men who pursue a girl against the common or socially approved *adat* procedures due to their lower social status or other factors that mark their general unsuitability as a future family provider. Such oppressive hyper-masculine behavior, as Elmhirst (2007) recalls Kerry H. Robinson’s research on sexual harassment in secondary schools in Australia, is observed in contexts in which “such practices [of sexual harassment] are integral to the construction of heterosexual masculine identities, and a means through which oppressive gendered power relations can be

reinforced and maintained” (p. 235). Although this particular abusive behavior “does not earn parental or community disapproval”, as Elmhirst (2007, p. 235) notes – most probably because of a certain social acceptability under the particular circumstances of reversed gendered hierarchies of status and prestige, “men’s perception of their economic, cultural and social ‘lack’ relative to young women migrants is potentially a source of community conflict” (ibid.). In rebellion against a perceived injustice, opposition to sweeping economic, political, and social developments molds into aggression and acts of violence and intimidation towards various members of the system, including gendered others, or even small businessmen, or middle-class men in senior positions.

Hence, as Nilan (2009, p. 338-339) indicates, the roots of negative comportment and rebellious demeanor of young men are perceived to lie in responses to the negative guidance of a “bad”, and most importantly, “corrupt” masculine example. At the fall of the New Order, it was the relentless misery and poverty induced by the corrupt and authoritative regime of Suharto that taught young men how to rebel. After the fall of the New Order, violence against gendered “others” was linked to an emerging political homophobia informed by normative gender regimes of a hegemonic discourse concerning Indonesian national identity (cf. Boellstorff, 2004). Sweeping economies and perceptions of political disorder, particularly with regard to environmental or community justice, seem to additionally spur young men’s aggressive responses.

Mediated masculinities, circulating in official and popular discourse, are embraced as various points of reference, and not as mere prototypes of masculine performance and behavior. Indeed, the ways in which young people engage with popular images in the media are highly contested (Ging, 2005; also Nilan, 2009, p. 331). Yet, before I elaborate further on this question, it is important to note that also the media actively engage with the social and cultural field. The images they produce present a vivid amalgamation and interpretation of multiple ideals, present and historical, local and global. Prone to public assessment and bound to official censorship, these images combine both creative and restrictive processes indicating what is valued, accepted, challenged, restricted, or condemned. As new technologies and social media are experiencing a growing popularity in Southeast Asia, mediated images and masculine representations become an important indicator of the challenges new, “youthful”⁵³ and contemporary masculinities have to go through. For this reason, I would like to turn to

⁵³ “Youthful masculinities” is a term used by Pam Nilan (2009) in her essay on contemporary images among young middle-class heterosexual men in Indonesia, which implicitly shape the constitution of young men’s subjectivities in both rural and urban settings (p. 329).

some of these “youthful” masculinities present in the media and out there on the streets of Jakarta and other urban areas in Java and throughout the archipelago, which have been analyzed in more recent research on adolescence and gendered subjectivities, particularly in the work of sociologist Pam Nilan (2009, 2011).

Age Matters

Age matters – not only as an aspect of identity in the course of (self-)identification and the process of self-positioning in relation to others; or as structural aspect, in the sense of an (institutionalized or otherwise ritualized) demarcation of difference in the access to power or resources; but also as an aspect of transition and change. Here, I refer to the life-histories of young men in urban areas who inevitably experience the fast pace of political, economic, social, and cultural transformations. For most of these young men change and the passage from one social position or situation (also related to the access of resources to social status) to the next becomes a bending mark in their lives. Hence, in acknowledging the time dimension of both popular discourse and gendered configuration of practices, age too becomes a time-bound aspect. Subsequently, young men today most definitely have to deal with other images and discourses than their fathers or grand-fathers did.

By approaching both mediated images and the life-histories of a dozen of young Indonesian men, who Pam Nilan (2009) encountered during her extensive work on the topics of gender and adolescence in different cities and rural areas throughout the Indonesian archipelago, the author attempts to identify the ways in which different popular images and discourses inform young men’s self-identification and subjectivity. Nilan (2009) differentiates between three parallel representations of youthful masculinities – the young devout Muslim (see also Clark & Hoesterey, 2012), the trendy, cool but sensitive young guy from the city, and the violent gang member (see also Elmhirst, 2007) – which, to a certain extent, challenge longstanding ideal images of masculine heroism, virility, or spiritual potency. These masculinities are firmly grounded in the present – in the pressure posed from family expectations and in the challenges resulting from a globalized market economy (also Elmhirst, 2007). As a form of “protest masculinities” they challenge both cultural and state hegemonies of “exalted” figures, such as the *bapak*⁵⁴ – a family and a national “wise”-man extolled with “God-given wisdom, self-control and mastery of emotions” (Nilan, 2009, p. 332). The image of *bapak* was

⁵⁴ *Bapak* literally translates as “father”, but also refers to an elderly man of high social status (cf. Nilan, 2009, p. 332; also Suryakusuma, 1996, p. 95 for state regulated sexuality and gender roles).

instrumentalized by Suharto during his New Order regime (Clark, 2010, p. 9; Nilan, 2009, p. 332; Suryakusuma, 1996, pp. 96, 102) in the portrayal of the nation as a large family with the president as its ultimate leader. The omnipresence of Javanese aristocratic and paternalistic political ideologies in official political discourse at that time is easily observable. With the fall of the regime in 1998, space for new, alternative, and reframed images and interpretations opened up. Young Indonesian middle class and well educated men throughout the archipelago, and particularly in the urban areas, concerned with the political future of their country took to the streets, readily embracing the ideal of the *pemuda* – the young, resentful activist and revolutionary fighter, identified with the struggle for independence from colonial rule seven decades ago (see also Lee, 2011). Committed to the future of the nation, these young men's central operational grounds were the streets of urban areas, which turned into a public space of oppositional politics (Lee, 2011, p. 935). Reframing the image of the “angry young man” with a new language, style, behavior, and expression, the movement of 1998 against the old regime reconciled “the moral and elite persona of the student with the revolutionary charge of the *pemuda*” (Lee, 2011, p. 936), resulting in the image of the student activist endorsed with a “male ideal of political heroism” (Lee, 2011, p. 937). Knowledge, acquired by means of education and embodied in the culture of the streets, combined with political and social commitment, became the brand-mark of the new young urban activist. Indonesia's student movement of 1998, anthropologist Doreen Lee (2011) argues, showed a “specific masculine style” which “draws on both the authenticity of nationalist historical narratives and the street as the domain of the People” and which “in the process masks potentially contentious class and gender difference among progressive activists” (p. 933). When the street becomes an open space for political action and activism (also seen during Indonesia's presidential elections), a key question is “who constitutes the fringes as well as the center of democratic discourse” (Lee, 2011, p. 934). In Jakarta, and elsewhere in Indonesia, as Lee (2011) indicates, the divides between the two poles run along the intersecting lines of class and gender difference. Furthermore, the author argues, “the youth activists who inhabit the realm of popular and democratic discourses in Indonesia are separated in significant and structural ways from the marginalized political subjects they derive inspiration and legitimacy from” (Lee, 2011, p. 934). As the public and informal space of the street – a symbol of “real” life and an illicit “danger zone” – becomes the place where political activism is carried out, political commitment is measured by the ability to perform and “demonstrate masculine power of the wild, urban, *pemuda* type” (Lee, 2011, p. 943). As Lee (2011) asserts, “the trope of masculinity acts as an inclusive and hegemonic ideal,

informing activist definitions of political success and behavior” (p. 943). Only through embodying the largely masculine qualities and characteristics of bravery, commitment, intelligence, knowledge, and confidence could women enter the public space of the movement (cf. Lee, 2011, p. 945), which young educated middle-class women, or *mahasiswa*, did. In this context, the *experience* of gender (discrimination) was constructed mainly as a lower class problem, which can only be overcome by education and social mobility (Lee, 2011, p. 945). Gender inequality or gender as structure of difference was thus seen as a problem and a condition of the marginalized poor and, at the same time, it had no space in the image, politics, and activities of modern urban activists.

After the fall of Suharto’s New Order in 1998, young urban well-educated middle-class men, anxious about their future and the future of their families, actively challenged the state-induced figure of the *bapak* by assuming an identity of a vigorous and eloquent, concerned and committed, but most of all responsible young man. These characteristics are present in two of the more successful images of the young and devout Muslim activist and the urban “cool” guy in Nilan’s analysis. An image commonly embraced by these men is the one of the *civil servant* (cf. Nilan, 2009, p. 333; but see also Suryakusuma, 1996, pp. 95-97), or the serving leader – a man of high values and personal strength who is concerned with the well-being of his immediate surroundings, including his family, colleagues, apprentices, friends, followers, and society as a whole. Whether religiously devout or not, these men see themselves as socially active – activity and flexibility labeling their own “youthful” character. Committed to their family’s and community’s well-being, these men tend to show much more feelings and compassion (Clark & Hoesterey, 2012, p. 209; Nilan, 2009, p. 335-336) than early idealization of self-control would allow. Yet, these passionate demeanors are rarely linked to violence or aggression.

This image of the civil or (Muslim) community servant was well present in the practices and performance of young to middle-aged, well-educated, and well-positioned devout Muslim men, whom I was grateful to encounter during my one-year stay in Indonesia. A common characteristic these men shared was their deep concern for their colleagues (particularly peer or “subordinate”) and their families and local communities as well as their dedication to serving and helping those “who have less”. Certainly encouraged by religious (mainly Islamic) gender ideals (see also Davies, 2007b, pp. 147-148), and only partially reminiscent of state-encouraged *bapak* or civil servant ideals (see also Suryakusuma, 1996), these men presented themselves as actively engaged with their immediate surroundings. Inspired by a vision of change or progress – whether economic, educational, or religious – all of these

young men were engaged in one or the other charitable practice, and all of them vigorously discussed their ideas with me.⁵⁵

As already mentioned, it is important to draw a line between masculine roles of state civil servants under the Suharto regime and present-day self-identifications and practices that partly distance themselves from state politics or bureaucracy. While the first image reaches back into colonial histories when “the colonial administration recruited the Javanese aristocracy as subordinate allies and as political and bureaucratic instruments of the alien regime” (Suryakusuma, 1996, pp. 95-96) and in which the civil servant functioned as the “controlling link between government and the mass of the people” (Suryakusuma, 1996, p. 96), the latter image draws from Islamic masculine ideals of “caretakers” (Davies, 2007b, p. 148) entrusted with the protection and provision as well as the development of their family and larger community.

Modern (Muslim) Masculinities

Another noteworthy analysis of practical representations of masculinity in present-day Southeast Asia is the study by Marshall Clark and James B. Hoesterey (2012) on modern representations of Muslim men and masculinities in the Indonesian cinema, particularly in the genre of *film Islami* (Islamic films). The author of *Maskulinitas: Culture, gender and politics in Indonesia* (2010), Marshall Clark has devoted a great part of his academic endeavor to the study of (hegemonic) heterosexual masculinities in Indonesia, paving the way for a long-time overlooked issue of gender constructions and relations in the bursting academic literature on women and gender both in and outside the country (e.g. Blackburn, 2008; Blackwood, 2005; Brenner, 2011; Rinaldo, 2010; Robinson, 2009; van Wichelen, 2010). Drawing several *film Islami* into their close analysis, the central interest of the authors is how practical, everyday representations of Muslim masculinity resonate with larger public debates, and with both prevailing anxieties and progressive aspirations of the audiences, particularly of the urban Muslim middle classes. As an intriguing node of encounter for film producers, novelists,

⁵⁵ As a peer or, most of the time, younger female foreign student at a local university in the city of Bandung, for a one year period between 2012 and 2013, who was interested in the social and cultural beings and realities of common people in Indonesia, I must have triggered many questions among the people I communicated with. Due to some personal qualities, Indonesian people openly discussed with me their visions and concerns (partly in English, partly in Bahasa Indonesia). Although, back then, I was not aware that these practices and representations will form a basis for my theoretical interest and research in the masculinities, and masculine performances and configurations of practices in Southeast Asia today, I am grateful for all these insights I gained through informal conversations, and from working, studying, and living together.

artists, state and religious authorities, intellectuals, social critics, and the mass of consumers, *film Islami* offers space between official state and religious discourse and the lived experience and practices of the urban middle-classes for the relatively free articulation and contestations of religious and gender identities. How the intersections of religion, gender, and class in public debates surrounding this particular space of popular culture, articulation, and performance forward portrayals of young, mostly urban, well-educated, pious Muslim heterosexual men and how these portrayals resonate with both practical experience and cultural ethics and values, is what I wish to show by summarizing some of Clark and Hoesterey's central arguments and findings.

Similar to the Jakartan streets of Doreen Lee's (2011) study of urban political youth culture in present-day Indonesia, *film Islami* opens a node of communication between the state alongside with religious authorities and the larger masses. Both popular and political, it challenges present-day Muslim and gender identities by offering political positions, theological arguments, as well as ideas and practical representations of "what Islam *could be* and *should be*" (Clark & Hoesterey, 2012, p. 208). By recurring to utopian images coupled with more realistic daily and life experiences, *film Islami* deals with the real and practical anxieties of Muslims by subtly and overtly offering answers to daily dilemmas and moral questions as well as visions and aspirations. In the context of decades of religious repression and "unfulfilled promises of secular nationalism and neo-liberal globalisation" (Clark & Hoesterey, 2012, p. 209), this medium of communication, among other "religious commodities" such as Islamic cassette sermons or self-help publications (to name a few of Clark and Hoesterey's list), offers practical models and figures of identification for modern Muslim men and women which embody a mix of piety, prosperity, morals, and ethics. Images resonate with a number of pertinent frustrations of middle-class Muslims along issues of *poligami*, domestic violence, and gender relations. In the framework of Islamic piety and social and religious justice, the models of modern Muslim masculinity aspire to be "loving and gentle, but decidedly *not* hypermasculine or patriarchal" (Clark & Hoesterey, 2012, p. 213). In "The Agency of the Heart", Martin Slama (2010) indicates similar images of the charming, humorous, patient, and supportive partner – a man who not only shows his feelings but also speaks honestly and openly about personal experience (p. 325). Moreover, open conversations and communication, as Slama (2010) notes, are not only a "criterion for making friends" (p. 324) for female users who meet in online chat rooms to discuss relations with their male counterparts. Recalling the study of Carla Jones (2004) among middle-class wives

in Yogyakarta, he underlines that open communication, together with individual affection and egalitarian respect, serves as the basis of an ideal marriage (Slama, 2010, p. 235).

Affection, mutual understanding, and respect thus become a symbol and a sign of a modern middle-class romantic marriage in which both the husband and the wife equally share their feelings and emotions. The popularity of “modern” images stems not only from their break with traditional conservative religious representations or from their opposition to a “globalizing” Western hypermasculinity, but also and particularly from the way they touch upon some persistent cultural ideals revolving around ideas of *halus* or (spiritual) potency. The moral protagonists of *film Islami* are always well-educated and appear thus as knowledgeable and wise. In a situation of overt offence or conflict, they remain calm, non-reactive to the anger of their offender; in a situation of injustice, they will stand up for righteousness by calling upon the Prophet’s teachings and life. Their temper is mild, refined, they comportment relaxed, almost “easy-going” (Clark & Hoesterey, 2012, p. 216). As Clark & Hoesterey (2012) show, “the dominant strain of Muslim masculinity [...] is, of moral fortitude and pious self-restraint”, which, they argue, are “engendered through an urban education and a strong commitment to Islam” (p. 217). This modern Muslim masculinity stands against representations of a “lazy, abusive and sex-obsessed” (Clark & Hoesterey, 2012, p. 217) man, who “has trouble controlling his anger” (p. 215), radical in his interpretations of Islam, blind to both morality and justice. While these contrasting images may seem to mirror “the well-worn dichotomy in men’s studies between hegemonic and alternative masculinities” (Clark & Hoesterey, 2012, p. 214), I retain the authors’ perception that the models of Muslim masculinity presented by *film Islami* are neither hegemonic, nor alternative or homogenous (cf. Clark & Hoesterey, 2012, p. 222), but rather a mean to “communicate with an audience, with people, and *give them a slice of life*” (Nia Dinata, in Clark & Hoesterey, 2012, p. 213, emphasis added) and “to present Islam’s ‘true face’ and to portray Muslims as modern people who practise tolerance, sincerity and honesty” (Hanung Bramantyo, in Clark & Hoesterey, 2012, p. 216).

These depiction and articulations of gendered characteristics and roles find the general approval of the main audiences (Indonesian urban middle-class Muslims) since they subtly recall some of the most valued qualities of Javanese masculine ideals such as patience and self-control, deliberate speech and spiritual potency, insight and wisdom, refined sensibility and a sense for justice (also associated with *priyayi* Javanese aristocrat or elite culture) (cf. Keeler, 1990). These qualities, most of which are commended in both men and women are easily adopted and adapted to Islamic gendered ideals of behavior and comportment promoted

not only through visual media, such as *film Islami*, but also in daily sermons, public speeches, Islamic formal and informal groups, self-help, and many others. In these contexts, good and successful Muslim men take up the roles of the observant and caring manager, the just and serving leader, the humble and patient educator.

During the one year (2012-2013) I spent in Bandung – the capital city of West Java, with a pronounced majority of Sundanese Muslim population – I regularly faced these ideals in conversations with company department leaders (particularly in the sphere of human relations), restaurant managers, but also small business owners, each of whom aspired to take up an exemplary position in their immediate surroundings. With relatively pronounced social hierarchies and a long history of Islamic consolidation, Sundanese cultural values are conducive to an amalgamation of highly valued individual qualities related to status or prestige on the one hand, and religious piety and a sense for social justice on the other hand (cf. Millie, 2011). Both personal qualities and religious piety are subject to display, and thus a matter of practice and performance in different settings; although both men and women are obliged to acquire religious knowledge, Muslim men conceive the practical usefulness of their knowledge in the sense of increased public activity and involvement in the community (cf. Millie, 2011, pp. 164-165). In the course of his extensive ethnographic fieldwork research on Islamic preaching and oratory practices among Sundanese people in West Java, Julian Millie (2011) asked the question of “how preaching events provide the conditions for contrasting behavior following gender lines, focusing especially on spectatorship” (p. 159). In his careful analysis, Millie (2011) explains how Muslim men’s participation in the organization and leadership of sermons, community events, and other activities related to public life and the religious infrastructure in general relates to particular understandings of Muslim hegemonic masculinities related to men’s “headship role”(pp. 152, 161). Similar hegemonic representations of masculinity associated with male leadership roles are also indicated by Sharyn Graham Davies (2007b) for the Bugis in South Sulawesi; or in Davies (2007b) words, “Islam exhorts Muslim men to be the caretakers of women and to be their managers, leaders, and educators” (p. 148). Muslim men, Davies (2007b) explains, “are required to pray at the mosque of Fridays; this large gathering of men often serves as a public forum for *asserting* and *affirming* notions of masculinity” (p. 148, emphasis added). Millie (2011) takes this argument further to conclude that “mosque attendance was the important embodiment of Islamic knowledge” (Millie, 2011, p. 164). In this context, an increased engagement and successful participation in the organization and management of the religious infrastructure becomes a valued asset to Muslim masculinity and masculine performance.

Modern and mediated images of Muslim men inserted in the context of everyday ethics, daily routines, common experience and practices are very powerful and have a great impact on the audiences largely because these images “speak” with a non-authoritative voice – they offer a rhetoric that opens spaces for individual interpretations and contestation, and also for collective approval or discharge. These spaces – different from the domineering context of religious authorities or state discourse – are both liberal (in the sense of freedom of opinion) and egalitarian (in the sense of identity ascription), and thus tolerant and non-exclusionary. Millie (2011) identifies approximately the same characteristics in the narratives of West Java’s popular preacher A. F. Ghazali’s cassette recordings which “affectionately refract Islamic norms through the deflating lens of daily life” (p. 163). In the course of conveying Islamic knowledge and promoting Islamic behavior, Ghazali adopts an actual life setting for his narratives that allows the audience to identify with the main characters and face “their own human failings” (Millie, 2011, p. 164). By introducing an exemplary model of behavior in an ideological setting which represents an “aspiration beyond challenge or question” (Millie, 2011, pp. 163-164) and thus impossible to achieve, Ghazali, as Millie (2011) argues, “defuses the ‘normative pressures of morality’” (p. 163) and resolves the tensions between ideal and practical representations by opening a space for humor and irony. Modes of pleasure, humor, and affection replace modes of condemnation, castigation, and verbal admonishment (cf. Millie, 2011, pp. 163-164).

Last but not least, practical representations of present-day modern Muslim masculinities, be it in cinemas, cassette recordings, novels, or self-help booklets, ease not only tensions between masculine and religious ideals and real, everyday practices and performance, but also the tension between present-day conditions of modernity, associated with education, employment, migration, commercialization, and the influx of information, just to name a few, and more traditional Islamic gender ideals related to marriage and family life, roles, and expectations. Thus, innovative modes and constructions of Muslim identity, to use Gerami’s (2005) words, “attempt not to modernize Islam, but rather to design an Islamized modernism compatible with pluralism [...]” (p. 455).⁵⁶

⁵⁶ In his description of “liberal masculinities”, Gerami (2005, pp. 454-455) speaks of young Muslim men in the context of anti-Islamist and anti-*shahid* movements in Iran and abroad, and who are “against exclusionary ideologies of fundamentalism and Wahabism and strive toward a discourse of tolerance and gender redefinition” (p. 455). In Southeast Asia, religious revitalization and Islamic resurgence have been defined by “two generations of rural-to-urban migration, sprawling urban growth, and the spread of new forms of religious association”, which as Robert Hefner (2010, p. 1041, emphasis added) argues, “have all resulted in an Islamic religiosity emphasizing *chosen* rather than inherited faith, and *personal* initiative rather than virtuoso privilege”.

New Muslim identities, masculine and feminine, are not “preached” or “imposed”. They do not circulate through Westernized politics and rhetorics of *emancipation* but rather through articulations of everyday *real life*⁵⁷ that opens practical spaces for self-identification, contestation, and reification. It is important to note that these new identity formations emerge in an era defined by the relatively unbound circulation of information that not only allows for rapid social transformations but also spurs innovative projects and new modes of reflexive social interconnections and interrelations.⁵⁸ Public debates incited within these new trajectories of Muslim gender identities and modes of self-identification rather than relentlessly promoting hegemonic discourses and gender ideologies open rooms for dialogue. Rather than ordered, Muslim gender identities and masculinities in particular are debated, adapted, and adopted.

A recurrent issue in public debates surrounding contemporary constructions of new Muslim masculinities is the issue of *poligami*. Indeed, this topic incites broad interest – not only of young urban well-educated middle-class Muslim men and women but also state representatives, religious authorities, various advocacy groups, NGO’s, artists, novelists, journalists, and so forth. It is the topic of both hegemonic discourse and everyday real practices and representations; and the vivid public debates as well as multiple sentiments and anxieties that surround public talks on *poligami* show that there must be much more at stake. The topic of *poligami* is intrinsically related to religious piety and social justice, and it is constantly subject to public contestation and re-interpretation.

Both piety and the call for justice, including gender justice – an issue that often resonates in debates surrounding the secondary or subordinate role of women in both the family and society (Blackburn, 2008) – have conditioned the emergence of a “‘pro-women’ strain of Islamic masculinity” (Clark & Hoesterey, 2012, pp. 211-212), particular sentiments and dispositions of Muslim men that define women as participating and experiencing subjects and thus as self-reflexive and active contributors to social transformation (cf. Blackburn, 2008; van Doorn-Harder, 2006; Millie, 2011). Pro-*poligami* campaigns in contemporary Indonesia, such as the one mounted by Puspo Wardoyo, a polygamous man himself and a focus of public debate, forward “discourses of hypermasculinity and (Javanese) paternalism”, as Sonja van Wichelen (2009, pp. 181-182) asserts. “Albeit enveloped in an Islamic framework” this kind

⁵⁷ Clark and Hoesterey (2012) speak of “the real Islam” (p. 210) in connection with wider public debates on *poligami*, domestic violence, gender relations, and religious piety.

⁵⁸ In this context, Antony Giddens’ *Modernity and Self-Identity* (1991) offers some insightful concepts related to “life politics” or “self-actualization”, both of them related to present-day politics of identity and modernity.

of “masculinist advocacy”, Wichelen continues, “did not carry much empathy in the Muslim public” (p. 182) – a fact that greatly reveals the multiple positions taken by various Muslim and non-Muslim social groups, religious organizations, state institutions, and other actors.

As pluralistic sentiments and dispositions have it, *poligami* is not just approved of or defied. Rather, informed and self-reflexive Muslims may proclaim a pro-*poligami* stance while emphasizing the “loving and gentle” nature of Muslim masculinity, characterized by pious self-restriction and asceticism and high respect of and “sensitivity to the needs of women” (Clark & Hoesterey, 2012, pp. 217-218). Again, a popular pious image of the caring leader shines through.

In contemporary Indonesia, as well as in other Southeast Asian countries (e.g. Udani & Lorenzo-Molo, 2013), elements of the Western-oriented concept of servant leadership – coined by Robert Greenleaf in the late 1970es – gained popularity along with the shift from “faith in development” to “developing faith” (Rudnyckyj, 2010) in new business economies that seek to reconcile entrepreneurship with spiritual piety and religious devotion. ESQ (Emotional and Spiritual Quotient) training initiatives⁵⁹ in West Java and other popular Islamic human-resource consultancies across the archipelago (cf. Rudnyckyj, 2010, p. 7) – part of the new market Islam identified by Clark & Hoesterey (2012) – seek to ground business practices firmly in central Islamic principles based on mutual relations of trust, responsibility, sensitivity, and deep concern for the community. This combination of business management knowledge and Islamic practices is particularly attractive not only to young urban well-educated Muslim men who seek to build a living, but also among middle-aged, already well-established Muslims who seek to retain their positions and cultivate personal qualities in line with both modern Muslim masculinities and well-established cultural values and everyday ethics.⁶⁰

⁵⁹ Human-resource training programs, first introduced at the Krakatau Steel plant in Banten, West Java, around the turn of the twenty-first century in response to structural reforms incited by the IMF, rapidly gained popularity, particularly through specially designed ESQ training sessions (cf. Rudnyckyj, 2013).

⁶⁰ During my stay in Indonesia, I had the great chance to speak personally and extensively with department managers and small business owners (all of whom were men in their twenties to forties) on business ethics and motivations. Coming from Europe, I was well acquainted with concepts of social entrepreneurship, servant leadership, philanthropy, etc. The first time I addressed these topics (in English), my respondents did not seem to relate them; yet, after a short discussion on what these concepts entail, including some central personal characteristics, practices, and concerns, my discussion partners assured me that they have been “living” and “promoting” these ethics and value all along their business engagement.

The “universal set of human values” (Rudnyckyj, 2010, p. 85) based on “universal global spirituality” (Rudnyckyj, 2010, p. 148) – as presented in the context of ESQ trainings – show a unifying capacity that plays down ethnic, religious, gender, and class differences. This particular appeal for a moral connectedness associated with new Muslim subjectivities seems essential in an increasingly interconnected world. Indeed, “unity” was the leading message of the winner of 2014 presidential elections in Indonesia.⁶¹ Joko Widodo (Jokowi) won the hearts of many through his simple appearance, calm demeanor, upright speech and public performance, and most of all because of his deep compassion and concern for the community and national unity.⁶² “A media darling” (Lowry, 2014), Jokowi has been in the center of public attention at least since his victory in Jakarta’s governor elections in 2012 (cf. Mietzner, 2014). “The leader of a new breed of Indonesian politicians” (Lowry, 2014), he has been described as a “polite populist” (Mietzner, 2014), “grassroots communicator” (Mietzner, 2014), his leadership has been described as “even-handed” (von Lübke, 2014), “participatory, people-centred” (von Lübke, 2014), “consultative” (Lowry, 2014), “hands-on” (Lowry, 2014), and his demeanor as simple and humble (von Lübke, 2014). In the words of common people, Jokowi is “a good person”, “down to earth”, “exceptional”, “a president who is one of us” and who “defends the people”⁶³. In the speech on the day of his election, Jokowi spoke of his victory as the victory of all Indonesian people, insisting that strong relationships within the community and a spirit of *gotong royong* – a concept based on mutual assistance and shared responsibility (cf. Bowen, 1986) – can form a firm basis for a unified nation and a prosperous future of the country. This deep concern for people and for national unity “bodes well for future conciliation efforts that reach across ethno-religious or social divides” (von Lübke, 2014), or in Jokowi’s own words, “restore the relationship between families, neighbors, and friends that have drifted apart”⁶⁴.

⁶¹ Jokowi-Kalla calls for Indonesian unity. The Jakarta Post, Election Watch, July 23, 2014. Retrieved from <http://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2014/07/23/jokowi-kalla-calls-indonesian-unity.html>

⁶² For a detailed and insightful, and yet critical outline of the rise of Jokowi from a city mayor to national president, see Marcus Mietzner’s ‘Jokowi: Rise of a Polite Populist’ (2014). For a review of Jokowi’s memoir, see Bob Lowry’s ‘Review: Jokowi: From Solo to Jakarta and Beyond?’ (2014).

⁶³ These phrases are just some of the comments made by common people on the street upon Jokowi’s winning of the presidential elections, see: Said on the street: Indonesian hopes for president-elect. The Wall Street Journal, 23 July 2014. Retrieved from: <http://blogs.wsj.com/searealtime/2014/07/24/said-on-the-street-indonesian-hopes-for-president-elect/>

⁶⁴ “Pulihkan kembali hubungan antara keluarga dengan keluarga, tetangga dengan tetangga, antara teman dengan teman yang sempat renggang” (personal translation in-text), in Ini pidato politik perdana Jokowi sebagai presiden terpilih. Kompas, 22 Juli 2014. Retrieved from: <http://nasional.kompas.com/read/2014/07/22/23272611/Ini.Pidato.Politik.Perdana.Jokowi.Sebagai.Presiden.Terpilih>

In the light of his progressive rise to presidency as well as positive coverage by local and international media Jokowi might well become the new inspirational figure among both men and women in Indonesia, or the ideal example of Indonesian Muslim masculinity. Many of Jokowi's supporters admire his humble demeanor and praise his hands-on political performance. Up to present day, Jokowi has proved his ability to meet popular aspirations and expectation with real practices. His success owes a great deal to his performance, in which he virtuously combines both highly symbolic and emotionally charged props and means – from his simple batik clothing to the scenery he chose for his speech upon elections⁶⁵ – and real, practical, well-informed, and concrete action, so appreciated by all his supporters. As Lowry (2014) asserts, “nothing is left to chance, be it dress, mode of transport or unannounced inspections and visits”. This mixture of symbolism and practical orientation – unifying the poles of ideology and practice as well as transcending social, ethnic, and religious divides – has become Jokowi's political success formula and a vital part of his public image.

Summarizing Men and Masculinities in Southeast Asia

In this chapter, I have looked at masculinities in the region of Southeast Asia through the lens of lived experiences and practical representations of common people – men, women, and heterosexual, heterogendered men in particular. Informed by sets of cultural meaning and ideas and forming and transforming structural settings and power relations, practices and performances of masculinity offer valuable insights into the configurations of gender, both structural and symbolic, and the way these figure in hegemonic and counter-hegemonic practices.

While through gender theory prism the category of man is treated as the product of historical processes and social interaction imbued with cultural meaning, symbols, and ideas, masculinity appears as a concept which informs social interaction. As a particular configuration of gender, masculinities are realized in social practices and performances. In a social field mark by power relations, practical representations of masculinities reveal not only cultural symbols and meanings but expose some of the basic social structures of production and reproduction as well as the intersections of various structuring aspects of social

⁶⁵ Sunda Kelapa Port, northern Jakarta: “a port redolent with history that was the site of a famous victory against Portugese sailors in 1527”; for a short historical background of the site, see Linda Silaen's ‘New President Widodo Celebrates Victory in Historic Jakarta’ (2014).

interaction. Practices and performances are thus never disembodied but situated and linked to a particular local and historical context which varies across time and space.

The case studies I have gathered and analyzed for this thesis reveal both more general cultural ideals of what it means to be a man and the ways these ideals figure in the present-day practices of men across the region of Southeast Asia. Caught in a “masculine dialectic” between different models and masculine ideals – local, cultural, religious, but also modern, transnational, middle-class, and professional – these men’s practical representations and performances are first and most of all strategic negotiations of various sources of power and prestige.

One of these sources are “exemplars of masculinity” associated with local historical and mythological figures and with particular sets of characteristics such as physical strength, courage, and bravery but also with intelligence and self-discipline. While Filipino *magaling na lalaki* evokes images of revolutionary brave men of physical and spiritual strength, Indonesian *jago* masculinity is bound to the control over territory and the embodiment of supernatural powers. Adopting such images and translating these in correspondence with present-day social and economic conditions as well as professional demands is one way to communicate a certain identity and obtain social standing and prestige.

Another source are emic concepts such as the concept of power, or potency, which transcends physical boundaries and dualities and which is animated by specific local understandings of the basic structures of the universe. Such emic concepts are a powerful source for social practices and configurations as their meaning lies beyond questions of legitimacy. A man of prowess is thus a man who embodies the power and knowledge to bridge the material world with the spiritual realm. This power is acknowledged and admired by his followers. He earns wealth and support. Yet, success in today’s local conditions influenced by global economies and transnational mobilities is hard to earn. Besides, material wealth today is hardly seen as the result of spiritual prowess. A man of a high position is a man of good relations.

While both positional and relational roles and models inform men’s practices and performances, in Southeast Asia today, a “good man” is essentially a “caring” man. Social responsibility and concern for the family and local community score well with regard to a man’s social position and prestige. Accordingly, a good man is a good provider, a good father, and a caring brother. Upright connections to one’s home and community offer not only social support but also social capital. National images, such as Indonesia’s *bapak* engage with such masculine representations of the good father, head and provider of the family. Yet, as already

mentioned, every hegemonic discourse implies elements of protest and triggers counter-hegemonic practices. Protest masculinities such as the young *pemuda* or the politically engaged *mahasiswa* tap into both cultural values and modern ideals. Such images travel across national boundaries through global channels of communication. They are transmitted through various forms of entertainment, media, and public discourse. Consciously adapted and appropriated, new masculine identities go hand in hand with new forms of performance and practices as well as new forms of communication and social relations.

It is important to note that the plurality of sensibilities and dispositions with regard to gender practices, roles, ideals, and representations in the region of Southeast Asia is partly due to the large cultural, ethnic, and religious diversity of the region, including emic concepts and understandings with regard to social and particularly gender relations, and partly because of the ways these concepts regulate social interaction and practical representations. The concept of desire, and particularly of uncontrolled desire, is one of these concepts that sets the limits of individual success and thus of social prestige. Rationality, intelligence, or *akal* that gives a man the knowledge and wisdom to act wisely and control his passion, is another such concept. While desire is associated with uncontrolled passion, rationality appears to raise the ability of self-control. Yet, as far as wisdom and spiritual knowledge are concerned, these binary oppositions interact to delineate individual performance and design social interaction.

While passion is often ascribed to women and described as a feminine characteristic, it is intrinsic to the “natural”, material body. Reason, on the contrary, is developed and acquired through time, age, and experience; it is not gender-bound. While a man has the ability to gain experience and knowledge and thus develop rationality and reason, men are also more prone to losing control. Self-discipline is thus an essential prerequisite of a good and a real man. Yet, to control one’s passion does not translate in the inability to express one’s feelings. Quite on the contrary – in today’s modern world of constant communication, an open conversation appears to mirror a good relation. Mutual exchange of ideas and emotions implies a sense of appreciation and egalitarian respect. Such modern principles not only define social interaction and gender relations, they also shape gender roles and identities as well as ideal and practical representations.

On the opposite side, under certain conditions and circumstances passion and the lack of self-control can transform into violent, intimidating, and abusive behavior, particularly among men. Violence is often deemed irrational and associated with an unhealthy body or an upset masculinity – a “natural” crisis in result of unfavorable conditions and adversity. While supernatural powers are also associated with the spiritual realm, which common men have no

control of, a man of potency and prowess has the knowledge to unite binary oppositions and reach reconciliation.

What is beyond rational explanations is also beyond any code of ethics or morality. Moral imperatives, on the other hand, design healthy and knowledgeable masculine performances, ideals, and practical representations. Whether the educated and revolutionary young man or the religious devotee, modern ideals transported by global channels of communication become a source for the reconfiguration of gender roles and practices. While cultural symbols and emic concepts do not lose their defining role, they do figure differently in the configurations of present-day masculinities and femininities.

CONCLUSION

In the course of writing this thesis my central endeavor was to draw a picture of contemporary research on men and masculinities in Southeast Asia. I do this by identifying a shared theoretical approach towards masculinities and masculine configurations of social practices and representations as well as by tracing dominant ideals and practical representations in a number of local and regional case studies based on ethnographic research. Geographically, case studies and ethnographic data drawn for this thesis derive mainly from insular Southeast Asia (with some mainland exceptions) and particularly on the Indonesian archipelago, partly due to my regional interest, personal experiences, and study and work engagement in the urban area of Bandung, Western Java. The present analysis implies a critical engagement with terms and categories such as men, women, masculinity, femininity, sex, and gender that have been used to name and define the subjects and subjectivities, acts and performances under inquiry. A comparative regional approach informed by the results of ethnographic fieldwork leads to particular insights into both local concepts of gender and particular configurations of practices related to masculinities and masculine representations. In exploring local concepts, ideal representations, and present-day situated practices recalling and referring to masculinities in Southeast Asia, I also intended to partly address the academic and theoretical frameworks in which such research has been organized and conducted, eventually pointing at common argumentations that open new trajectories for analytical explanations.

The study of men and masculinities in Southeast Asia is closely related to the study of gender and the plurality of gender practices and representations, including the study of women and femininities, but also of gender relations or gender transgression. Gender, understood as a

structuring aspect of social interaction, intersects with other axes of difference such as age, class, or ethnicity to shape and create competing identities, hegemonic and counter-hegemonic practices. As a set of cultural meanings and symbols, it also relates to other systems of ethics and values such as adat or religion which simultaneously infuse dominant and ideal representations into the lived realities of social relations. This entanglement in a nexus of emic concepts and interrelating structures shall not divert the researcher's focus from the social realities and daily experiences of the subjects under inquiry. To bridge empirical realities with higher levels of theoretical abstraction and interpretation is one challenge of anthropological research on gender in the Southeast Asia. Michael Peletz looks into the plurality of sensibilities and dispositions with regard to gender, sexuality, and bodily practices, to coin his theory of gender pluralism. Gender pluralism relates to the large diversity of bodily practices and embodied desires, of social roles and sexual relationships, of conceptualizations of masculinity and femininity, all of which are accorded legitimacy. Gender pluralism is thus based on the co-existence of a variety of principles, categories, sources of authority, and ways of life that legitimate the above mentioned diversity of social practices.

Adopting gender pluralism as a conceptual and analytical baseline, I look into both the diversity of masculine practices, roles, and ideals and the principles, concepts, categories, and discourses that offer support and a source of legitimacy for this variety of practical representations. As I do so, I take up a regional comparative approach in order to identify similarities in conceptualizations as well as larger social processes and official discourses that bear on the construction and enactment of masculinities.

One such emic concept is the notion of power or potency essentially linked to spiritual knowledge and a spiritual realm – the power to bridge the material with the spiritual world and unite binary opposites, including masculine and feminine characteristics. This ideal of a perfect balance bears on local understandings of the basic structures of the universe – a complementarity of powers, including further conceptualizations that structure social interaction, such as reason and passion. Shame is another such concept that penetrates gender roles and relations. Additionally, shame is intimately linked to local systems of prestige. While the performance of masculine ideals, such as bravery, intelligence, self-discipline, and self-control can raise a man's social status, shame caused by transgressions of social norms and violations of social and cultural values can damage a man's social position.

In looking at social realities, I identify not only continuities of cultural concepts, meanings, and ideals but also transformations in the practical representations of gender roles and

relations attached to certain geographical locations and embedded in certain sets of social, political, and economic processes and conditions. Such processes include the growing incorporation of local modes of production into global economies, rising levels of education, a steady consolidation of the middle-classes, the spread of social media and modern forms of communication, urbanization and professional mobilities. Such processes and transformations in fields of social interaction not only provide spaces for new ideals, social roles, and identities but also a fertile ground for counter-hegemonic practices that actively challenge traditional roles and constricting discourses. It is present-day practical representations that provide a good starting point for the analysis of masculinities in the region. Another point are prevailing cultural, national, or religious discourses, and thus the larger conglomerates of values and ethics, of rules and norms envisioned to legitimize, give meaning to, and exert control over social interaction. These two sites of analysis – practical representations and official (institutionalized) discourses – delineate the field I chose for my analysis of masculinities in the region of Southeast Asia.

While in the first part of this thesis I have elaborated on gender theories with regard to the study of masculinities in Southeast Asia, in the second part I focused on practical representations across recurring topics related to masculinities and masculine performances, including professionalism, religious devotion, social engagement, success, and violence. While throughout the region, emic concepts such as courage and bravery, reason, passion and desire inform ideals of masculinity and masculine performances, other structuring aspects of social interaction linked to modern dominant discourses such as mutual respect, social concern, religious piety, commitment, or sensitivity equally penetrate gender roles and relations. These concepts and aspects interrelate and bring about change in present-day practical representations of masculinity.

Last but not least, Southeast Asian masculinities are neither a historical or a cultural relic nor simply the product of global forces in interaction with local politics and economies of gender. Masculine practices and representations are actively adopted and adapted, negotiated and integrated into the complex field of local cultures, and constantly transformed by social processes and new forms of social interaction. As configurations of social practices informed by gender as a structuring aspect of social interaction masculinities are not only the product of cultural meanings or (modern) sets of ideals and understandings but the producers of hegemonic and counter-hegemonic representations. As lived experiences masculinities are subject to change. To trace this change, research must tap into the histories and contexts of bodily practices and performances. To tap into locally and temporally bound life-histories of

people and their involvement with their immediate surroundings including families, communities, workplaces, and also bearing in mind larger processes of state formation, market expansion, religious resurgence, or (democratic) political consolidation, presents both a challenging but also a rewarding theoretical, methodological, and empirical endeavor in today's study of men and masculinities in Southeast Asia, and elsewhere. Any such endeavor is promising and worthwhile, particularly since both the study of masculinities and the study of gender pluralism (finding its origin in the region of Southeast Asia) have only just taken off.

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ABSTRACT

In the past few decades, since the study of gender departed from its central focus on women to engage with the study of gender orders, relations, identities, roles, and practices, gender research in Southeast Asia has mainly involved with research on women's issues, including their relational position and status relative to that of men, or with the study of variously gendered people including transgender ritual specialists, transgender identities, homosexual relationships, and so forth. Only recently, gender research in the region has moved towards analysis of social practices as the product and producer of local gender histories and towards various sensibilities and dispositions with regard to cultural symbols and ideals, identities, roles and practices.

Masculinities, as particular configurations of social practice that borrow from these rich histories of gender practices, performances, and relations, stand in the focus of this thesis. In the context of various gender sensibilities and dispositions, I look at practical representations to trace similarities and differences in cultural symbols, meanings, and interpretations and the way they transform in relation to changes in recent social, economic, or political contexts. In doing so, I draw together a pool of recent ethnographic case studies that focus on both men and the performance of masculinities in different localities and social, economic, and political contexts in Southeast Asia.

While the first part of this thesis is built around the history of gender studies in the region, including central theories as well as specific aspects of gender analysis, the second part focuses exclusively on men and masculinities as configurations of social practices consciously arranged along various structuring aspects such as gender, age, class, but also religious or political orientation. This comparative regional approach informed by the results of ethnographic fieldwork conducted a priori leads to particular insights into both local concepts of gender, power, and prestige, and to practical representations of masculinities that draw upon these local concepts. Yet, as the following analysis shows, masculinities in Southeast Asia are not a stable set of cultural ideals, but configurations informed by social processes and transformed in the course of global changes, including the rise of new media, transnational mobility, and online communication.

ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Während die Genderforschung früher auf Problemstellungen des weiblichen Geschlechts reduziert war, beschäftigt sich diese Wissenschaft heute vermehrt mit gesellschaftlichen Strukturen und Geschlechterverhältnissen, sowie mit Geschlechtsidentitäten, -rollen und -praktiken. In den letzten Jahrzehnten befasste sich dieser Forschungszweig auch in Südostasien vorwiegend mit Frauen und deren gesellschaftlicher Position im Vergleich zu Männern. Ein weiteres Forschungsfeld in diesem geografischen Gebiet sind heute noch *trans-gender* rituelle Praktiken, sowie *trans-gender* Identitäten, homosexuelle Beziehungen usw. Erst seit kurzem sind Praktiken der Erzeugung von Geschlechtsdifferenz Thema der Genderforschung in der Region und eine Vielzahl von Zugänglichkeiten und Neigungen gegenüber Geschlechtsidentitäten und -praktiken werfen neue Fragen bezüglich kultureller Symboliken, Rollenbilder und Ideale auf.

Männlichkeiten als Konfigurationen sozialer Praxis, die aus den lokalen Geschichten von Geschlechterverhältnissen und -praktiken schöpfen, sind Kernthema der vorliegenden Arbeit. Im Kontext vielfacher Sensibilitäten und Dispositionen werden praktische Repräsentationen von Männlichkeit betrachtet, wodurch Ähnlichkeiten und Unterschiede von kulturellen Symboliken, Bedeutungen und Interpretationen aufgezeigt werden. Ergänzend werden die Auswirkungen von aktuellen gesellschaftlichen, wirtschaftlichen oder politischen Veränderungen auf die zuvor genannten Punkte untersucht. Zu diesem Zweck werden aktuelle ethnografische Fallstudien herangezogen, die sich sowohl mit der Rolle von Männern als auch mit Interpretationen von Männlichkeit in verschiedenen geographischen Gebieten als auch in unterschiedlichen sozialen, ökonomischen und politischen Kontexten in Südostasien befassen.

Der erste Teil dieser Arbeit betrachtet die Entwicklung der Geschlechterforschung in dieser Region. Er beinhaltet zentrale Theorien sowie spezifische Aspekte lokaler Analysen. Im zweiten Teil werden Männlichkeiten als Konfiguration sozialer Praxis anhand von praxisstrukturierenden Merkmalen wie Geschlecht, Alter, sozialer Schicht aber auch religiöser und politischer Einstellung beleuchtet. Dieser, auf ethnografische Feldforschung basierende, vergleichende Ansatz bietet Einblick in lokale Auffassungen von Geschlecht, Macht und Prestige sowie in daraus resultierende „praktizierte Männlichkeiten“. Die Analyse zeigt, dass Männlichkeit in Südostasien keine festgelegte Zusammensetzung von kulturellen Idealen ist. Vielmehr handelt es sich um Konfiguration bedingt durch soziale Prozesse und globale

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