

# Homosexuality in Indonesia: Banality, Prohibition and Migration (The Case of Indonesian Gays)

Wisnu Adihartono

Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales (EHESS) Marseille

**Biodata:** Wisnu Adihartono is a PhD candidate in sociology in Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales (EHESS - Centre Norbert Elias (CNE) UMR 8562 CNRS), Marseille, France. His research interests are sociology of gender, gay studies, masculinity studies, sociology of migration, sociology of the family, and sociology of everyday life.  
[wisnuadi.reksodirdjo@gmail.com](mailto:wisnuadi.reksodirdjo@gmail.com)/[wisnu.adihartono@ehess.fr](mailto:wisnu.adihartono@ehess.fr)

## Abstract

A State and a national identity are formed on the basis of mutually unifying thoughts and beliefs through the processes of social imagination and social representations. Through these two processes, people also have rights to determine which thoughts and beliefs are acceptable and which ones are not. Thus, issues relating to homosexuality cannot be avoided. Most Indonesians consider homosexuality as a set of abnormal acts and contrary to their religions. In Indonesia, homosexuals are denied access to power and have almost no access to pursue their rights. Consequently, in order to survive, Indonesian homosexuals usually must hide their orientations, or in extreme cases, they move to other, more tolerant countries. Through face-to-face interviews with several *gay Indonesians* who lived in Paris, the study on which this paper reports sought to establish the reasons for the participants' migration to Paris. It also sought to establish the motives for the choice of Paris as a city of destination. I particularly focus on gays (gay masculine and/or gay feminine). This research was entirely conducted with qualitative methods. Thus, in this paper, several short stories that have been collected from the participants are recounted and analysed.

**Keywords:** Indonesia, Social Imagination, Social Representations, Homosexuality, Gay, Migration

## Introduction

The idea that homosexuality is a disease is widely shared in Indonesia. Many LGBTIQ (lesbian/gay/bisexual/transgender/intersexed/queer) suffer the consequences of a severely homophobic society. According to the report of International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission (2007), Indonesian LGBT people are often targeted for human rights abuses due to their sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression.

A straightforward example of how Indonesian LGBTIQs are discriminated against was when the "Queer Film Festival" was held in Jakarta in 2011 in cooperation with a number of European Cultural Centers. A very conservative Islamic organization -- the *Front Pembela Islam or the Front of Islamic Defenders* (FPI) -- went to the French Cultural Centers and attempted to close the festival. According to FPI, the movies that were being screened were pornographic or at least contained elements of pornography. To attempt to close the festival, the FPI threatened to burn some of the cultural centers that were responsible for

the organization of the festival. The only way the festival was able to continue was by going “underground”<sup>1</sup>

Another event that indicated the violent rejection of homosexuality in Indonesia occurred in June 2005. Members of FPI forcibly entered the “Miss Waria Indonesia 2005” beauty pageant and harassed contestants. In November 2005, the Jakarta Biennale was forced to close because of objections to the display of “Pinksing Park”, an exhibit that depicted semi-clad actors and actresses in a fictional Garden of Eden.

Under the current circumstances, the international migration of Indonesian gays is understandable. Being open about their sexuality results in discrimination and violence being directed against Indonesian gays. Indonesian gays are particularly vulnerable to being discriminated against by society, religious leaders, and even by the state. Thus, in short, migration appears as a “natural way” to avoid being mistreated.

This paper examines Indonesian gays’ migration abroad, in particular to Paris, France. The data on which the following discussion is based is derived from a study of Indonesian gays in Paris based on the author’s on-going PhD research in *Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales* (EHESS) – Marseille, France. Semi structured interviews with twenty Indonesian gays aged between twenty-four and forty-two in Paris, France, were used to explore why they migrate to Paris, as well as a question about why they have chosen Paris as a city of destination. The interviews were operationalized through questionnaires given to initial respondents. In general, interviews were recruited from four locations: fast food restaurants, university parks, public parks, and their residences. Each person was interviewed for an average of one to two and a half hours. The names and other identifying details of the research informants have been changed to protect their confidentiality.

The most difficult aspect of recruiting respondents was obtaining access to the potential participants and then to get to know them intimately because there is no statistical data. I was assisted by a *gate keeper* who has been living in Paris for more than two decades. He, at least, knew roughly of the existence of Indonesian gays in Paris. According to him, at present, there are approximately 450 Indonesian LGBTIQ with a wide range of social statuses in the city and immediate surrounds. In terms of respondents, this research focuses only on *gays* (biological males exclusively in male to male relationships). There are approximately 100 Indonesian gays in Paris, although it should be understood that the figures are approximations only based on surmise of anecdotal evidence.

Why in this study is “gay” used rather than the term “homosexual” in general? The word “homosexual” has a negative meaning. The term indicates a strong relation with

---

<sup>1</sup> Retrieved from <http://social.science.nl/2013/09/25/searching-security-migration-indonesian-gay/> on Tuesday, 17 December 2013

pathology, and humiliates the person to whom it is directed. Concerning the word “gay”, Whitaker (2011, p. 15) said,

Some people believe the word “homosexual” has negative overtones even that it is demeaning. Most homosexual men and women prefer the words “gay” and “lesbian”. Either word is acceptable as an alternative to homosexual, but “gay” should be used only as an adjective. “Gay” as a noun – “gays gathered for a demonstration – is not acceptable. If you wish to use homosexual, as adjective or noun, do so. It is also useful, as it applies to men and women.

On the other hand, on their website, the PFLAG Canada,<sup>2</sup> a Canadian organization that supports gay communities, describes the word “gay” as follows,

“Gay” is a term that describes same-sex attractions felt by both [men] and women; however, some women prefer the term lesbian. The word “gay” first crossed the gender/sex threshold in England during the 16<sup>th</sup> century, when it was applied to male actors who were cast into female character roles. During the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Europeans associated the term with heterosexual promiscuity; however, it did not cross into sexually diverse communities until much later. Under this meaning, “gay” projected an impression of perversity. In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, American men and women experiencing same-sex attractions became the first to identify as “gay”, preferring it to the word “homosexual”, a term used primarily by mental health professionals.

It is clear that “gay” is used to represent selfhood, as in the sentence “I am gay”, “It’s who I am”, and “It’s what I label myself” (Savin-Williams, 2005, p. 7). Thus, being gay is a source of pride.

Before I commence discussion of the respondents’ accounts of their migration through their short stories (short narratives), I will present the traditional history of homosexuality in Indonesia, including the banning of ‘homosexuals’ existence based on the concepts of social representation and the hegemonic gender belief system.

### **The banality of homosexuality in Indonesian ancient times**

Homosexuality in Indonesia grew from a long and complex cultural and historical background. Its existence has been written in history as a part of Indonesian culture and tradition (Johan, 2011, p. 199). According to Boellstorff, Indonesia had been aware of the issue of homosexuality for at least a thousand years. Yet, clearly, as he states: “It is quite certain that no one in the archipelago called themselves gay or lesbi in the year 900, 1400, 1900, or probably even 1960. Yet by the early 1980s gay and lesbi existed in the archipelago as nationally distributed subject position” (Boellstorff, 2005, p. 36).

As an anthropologist, he categorized traditional/historical Indonesian homosexuality as an *Ethno localized homosexual and Transvestite professional subject Positions* (ETP). This term bonded with the concept of ethnicity and locality. Thus, the ETP, as Boellstorff stated, related to indigenous homosexuality and transgenderism (Boellstorff, 2005, p. 45). The

---

<sup>2</sup> Retrieved from [www.pflagcanada.ca/fr/](http://www.pflagcanada.ca/fr/) on Monday, 16 December 2013.

existence of Bissu in South Sulawesi, the tradition of Warok Gemblak in Ponorogo, East Java, and the traditional dance of Rateb Sadati in Aceh, are the cultures most related to homosexuality and regarded as an ETP.

The community of Bissu is a part of Indonesian's pre-Islamic tradition. In the tribe of the Bugis, Bissu is a hermaphrodite man. He is regarded as a sacred person because of his power to dialogue with the goddess. Bissus are mediators between the goddess and the people on earth. To conduct their rituals, Bissu wear androgynous costumes (Boellstroff, 2005, p. 38). They place Badi' (a big knife) and flowers as symbols of masculinity and femininity (Graham, 2002, p. 27). As a sacred person, Bissu usually is invited to a ceremony to bless some activities, for example, the birth of a baby, a marriage, the rice harvest ceremony, and so forth.

Ancient history explained that because of their function as a mediator, Bissu are created neither man nor woman. When Graham conducted her research into Bissu, she interviewed Haji Bacco' about the birth of Bissu:

You ask how this world came to be. Well let me tell you. Up there in the heavens, the God decided they would bring life to this lonely planet. They therefore sent down one of their most inspiring deities, Batara Guru. But Batara Guru was not at organizing things. To do all of this, two Bissu were needed. So the Gods sent down two Bissu who flanked Batara Guru as he descended. And when they arrived, the Bissu set about making everything blossom; they created language, culture, customs [adat], and all of things that a world needs if it is going to blossom. That's how the world began; you see. (Graham, 2002, p. 27)

It is difficult to be a good Bissu. They have to be able to memorize all mantras for several rituals, in addition to understanding the sacred language, studying the ancient sacred books, and some dances particularly for Bissu. Graham described Bissu as a Man and Woman with divine and mortal characteristics (Graham, 2002, p. 27).

The condition suddenly changed completely when during the Guided Democracy period (1959-65) the old ideological divisions gave way to a left-right polarization, mirroring the Cold War struggle within which Indonesia politics became increasingly enmeshed. The army and the PKI (Indonesian Communist Party) emerged as the two main contending forces, with Sukarno attempting to prevent either from threatening his position. Sukarno supported his concept of Nasakom (the unity of nationalism, Islam and Communism) (Bourchier and Hadiz, 2003, p. 5). The resistance against PKI culminated when on the night of 30 September 1965 six of the country's most senior generals were kidnapped and killed. Since then, the political and social construction of Communism in Indonesia changed and turned so that people who do not have a religion have been characterized as Communist.

It is also happened to the Bissu when they were marginalized and considered as an atheist group, particularly when the *Operasi Tobat* was launched by Kahar Muzakar in the 1960s in South Sulawesi. As a consequence, Bissu were forced to convert to Islam, while those who did not obey the regulations, would have faced death (Boellstroff, 2005, p. 39).

Currently, the Bissu can be still recognized in the role of the person who offers the blessings in a number of key social and cultural ceremonies. But, mostly, they do it now only for the sake of tourism (Boelstroff, 2005, p. 39).

Besides Bissu, the banality of homosexuality in Indonesia can also be seen in the traditional relation between Warok and Gemblakan<sup>3</sup> in the performance art Reog Ponorogo in East Java. This narrative below indicates how that relationship is related to homosexuality, in particular in the concept of pederasty:

Ini bukan acara khitanan. Seorang remaja laki-laki sekitar 12 tahun, bersarung kain batik, tangan kirinya berarloji, sandalnya tertutup – bukan sandal jepit murahan. Ia bergigi emas.

Wajahnya bersih, jalan dan suaranya agak keperempuan-perempuanan. Di saku bajunya selalu ada rokok. Kadang-kadang ia berkacamata hitam pula. Satu atau beberapa laki-laki berotot mengawalinya. Itulah pemandangan yang hanya bisa dilihat kaitannya dengan khitanan, meski ada hubungannya dengan seksualitas. Adapun para pengawal, itulah warok. Kehadiran gemblak dan warok bermula pada pantangan: jangan menyentuh wanita, bila kamu ingin sakti. Maka, untuk meneduhkan gairah birahinya, selagi memantapkan ilmu, warok Ponorogo mengangkat pacar remaja laki-laki. Dari situ muncullah tradisi gemblakan, atau homoseksualitas...Boleh jadi di Ponorogolah, gemblakan atau homoseksualitas bukan saja tidak dikutuk, tapi malah jadi simbol status utama.<sup>4</sup>

(This is not a circumcision ceremony. There was a teenage boy about 12 years old, wearing batik, in his left hand wearing a watch, and he wore expensive sandals. His face was clean and his gesture is like a woman. In his pocket is always a cigarette. Sometimes he wears sunglasses. One or more muscular males escort him. Those guards are called Warok. The existence of Warok and Gemblak began on abstinence: do not touch a woman, if you want to have a magic power. Thus Warok has a Gemblak (those teenage boys). It may be that in Ponorogo, gemblakan or homosexuality is not condemned, but became a symbol of social status)

In the history of Warok, it is possible to establish a definition of Warok. Budiman explained that authentic Warok was derived from the word “Wewarah” or people who are able to advise others about the ‘good life’ (Budiman, 2012, p. 574). Warok is a mediator between the superior and the inferior in terms of cosmology. Warok are stereotyped by wearing “kolor ijo” and black dress (Budiman, 2012, p. 574). Some mythologies have suggested that Warok’s character is that of a rebel.

Gemblakan is a teenage boy aged between 12 to 15 years old. Gemblak is always having a love relationship with Warok. For the Ponorogo peoples, that relation is normal

---

<sup>3</sup> The term Gemblak and Gemblakan basically have a same meaning. The term Gemblak refers to a person who acts as a Gemblak – a teenage boy aged between 12 to 15 years; meanwhile, the term Gemblakan refers to the system of the activity.

<sup>4</sup> *Dari Mata Turun ke Hati*. Retrieved from <http://majalah.tempointeraktif.com/id/arsip/1987/10/10/PRK/mbm.19871010.PRK32396.id.html> on Wednesday, 18 December 2013

and acceptable (Budiman, 2012, p 574). Having a handsome boy is a source of pride for Warok. Warok will dress his Gemblak with beautiful clothes and powder his face to maintain his good looks. However, their relationship can be stopped because of the maturity of Gemblak. Warok has a stake to find a woman for his Gemblak. When Gemblak marries, then he automatically loses his charm.

Another relation similar to the relation of Warok and Gemblak can be found from the origins of the dance of Rateb Sadati in Aceh. According to Dutch Islamologist, Snouck Hurgronje, the word “Ratib” was first introduced in Medina in the 18<sup>th</sup> century by Sammam, a mystical teacher. Ratib is basically a prayer or praise to Allah sung by groups of people. Ratib is usually sung in the afternoon, in particular during the Friday prayer (Hurgronje, 1906, p. 216–219). In its development, the tradition of singing Ratib has become a dance, called Rateb Sadati.

The dance of Rateb Sadati has an Arab-Malay characteristic. It was performed by 15 to 20 male dancers accompanied by a Syekh, called Ulee Rateb, Pangkay, or Ba’. At the same time, this dance is required to have two Radat who have the task of repeating what is sung by Syekh. A Syekh sings love poems to Allah in the local language (Hurgronje, 1906, p. 221). Thus, the word “Sadati” itself is derived from the Arabic language and means love poems (Hurgronje, 1906, p. 221).

Among the men who danced this dance, there must be a handsome boy who dresses as a woman. This handsome boy is named ‘Dalem’, ‘Aduens’, or ‘Abang’ (brother). In principle, historically, the three examples above indicate that ancient Indonesians accepted homosexuality as a fact. The term ‘homosexual(ity)’ was identified as emerging in Indonesia in the 1970s through the publication of a book “Jalan Sempurna”, found by Ulrich Kratz in the National Library (Perpustakaan Nasional) in Jakarta. From the fragments that I will describe, we can see the indication that the “history” of homosexuality in Indonesia has already appeared at the beginning of the 1910s. This book tells the journey of life of Sucipto, a Javanese man who lived during the Dutch colonial era (Boellstroff, 2005, p. 48). Here, I show the feelings of Sucipto when he meets a man around twenty years old in Situbondo (East Java).

I walked by the front of the Regent’s residence, intending to keep going past the railway station. But only a few steps after I passed the Regent’s residence, a young fellow suddenly stepped out of an alley. He looked to be about twenty years old, but was still in school, judging from the schoolbag that he, like me, was carrying. The second our eyes met, my heart started to pound. I felt as if the blood was hissing (*berdesir-desir*) through my body. “Hey, why is your heart thudding like that?” I asked myself. Never in my life had it pounded so. And, at that moment, I lowered my head, puzzling over the beating of my heart. (Anderson, 2006, p. 47)

That day, I could not pay attention in my class. All I could think of was the meeting that had so shaken my heart. “Where does he come from? What is his name?” It was only natural, after all, that I didn’t know where he came from, since we had never met before. And besides, when we were walking together, I never learned his name;

since the whole time his eyes were fixed on me as if they could never be satisfied. (Anderson, 2006, p. 48)

“Why is he like this?” I thought to myself. I was sure that his desire was awakened. But why was I, too, aroused? Unmistakably, it was because his body was really amazing. Wherever I laid my hand, his skin felt so smooth and soft. Even though he was another boy, at whatever part of his body I looked, my desire and passion grew stronger. Especially, if I looked at his face. If I didn’t quickly lower my head, my desire would surely explode. I would surely lay my head by his. I longed to nibble at his lips and kiss them. His body was like silk to my touch. Even this morning when I first met him, my heart was already pounding, as if something was beating inside my chest. (Anderson, 2006, p. 54)

Eventually, he explained to me that a man can satisfy his desire with another man. We became lovers, until he was transferred. After he left, I did with others what he had done with me. I was attracted to handsome boys, and in the end found a good friend, whom I had to leave when I came here. ... “How does one satisfy one’s desire?” I asked him with a smile. He answered not a word, but began kissing my cheeks, while his hands caressed my body. At that point I could no longer control my desire, so I forgot myself and responded with kisses of my own. “This is what I’ve been waiting for for so long,” I said to myself. Then gradually he took hold of my thigh, and inch by inch lifted up my sarung, till finally his hand touched my... “It seems you like me, isn’t it so, Little Brother?” he said with a smile, and kissed me again. By this time my desire had become indescribable. (Anderson, 2006, p. 54 – 55)

From the fragments above, Sucipto did not say the word ‘homo’ or even ‘gay’. He did not know that the romance between two men can be considered as ‘homosexuality’. Until then, he began to realize that that kind of relation is unusual when he found his friend has a relation with a doctor who loved him.

At one time my friend, too had not understood. Just like me. Then he learned from the doctor who loved him. Ah, why would a doctor, with plenty of money, not feel like marrying? Other men would certainly have married a beautiful girl. But he didn’t want to because he wasn’t used to an attachment to women. The other thing was that I had no idea why he didn’t go for women. Perhaps he was the kind of man who... And it was the same with my friend. He was accustomed to being attached to other boys. (Anderson, 2006, p. 59)

The emphasizing of ‘homosexuality’ between Sucipto and his boyfriend is more indicated in this fragment,

Can you really hear the bells from here? Amazing. In that case, I needn’t stir till I hear them ring! Right now, the two of us have received a blessing. So we must be grateful to Him and give Him thanks. And now that we have received this blessing, let’s not just run round and round from joy.... I thought it was I who had fallen in love with him. But now I see that his love for me is even greater than mine for him.... Listen to me, Little Brother. My love for you is like nothing else in this world. If I try to hold it back, I feel my heart dissolve. (Anderson, 2006, p. 65)

However, what made homosexuals so distinguished from other social classes was the major contribution of the colonial Dutch government. The Dutch government 'imported' a new culture of homosexuality, when around the same time, homosexuality was banned in Europe. The very existence of the Dutch crackdown suggests that homosexuality was visible enough to catch the eye of the colonial apparatus at a time when the colony's future was increasingly in doubt. Sex between men seems to have become seen as threatening the racial<sup>5</sup> hierarchy and as the product of global connection and a threat to social order (Boellstorff, 2005, p. 54).

### **Social representation and gender belief system**

The creation of the "State" contributed most certainly to the interdiction of homosexuality in Indonesia. Every State represents itself to its society through the mechanisms of social representation and the gender belief system. Social representations are about processes of collective meaning-making resulting in a common cognition which develops social bonds uniting societies, organizations and groups (Höijer, 2011, p. 3).<sup>6</sup> These social forms make it possible to classify persons and objects, to compare and explain behaviors and to objectify them as part of a shared social setting. While representations are often to be located in the cognitions of men and women, they can just as often be found 'in the world', and as such examined separately (Moscovici, 1988, p. 214).

Moscovici added that a social representation is as a "network" of ideas, metaphors and images, more or less loosely tied together (Moscovici, 2000, p. 153). They are embedded in communicative practices, such as dialogues, debates, media discourses and scientific discourses (Marková, 2003). Social representations participate each time in the global vision a society establishes for itself (Moscovici, 2000, p. 160), and operates at different levels, including large communities such as the nation and small subgroups of people (Höijer, 2011, p. 6). Thus, as Fairclough (1992) said, social representation proceeds in society and everyday life.

The system of representation has a power to classify, to assimilate, and to compare the society and the environment (Giust-Desprairies, 2009, p. 45). As a consequence, if social representation is embodied in the structure of society, it appears then as a gender system termed the *gender belief system*. This system is closely related to norms that dominate in a society, which, in this case, is the emergence of the norm of heterosexuality. Rubin (2011, p. 151) underlined this norm as,

Sexuality that is "good", "normal", and "natural" should ideally be heterosexual,

---

<sup>5</sup> As an "academic product", racial theory cannot be separated from its own historical moment: it was developed at a particular era of British and European colonial expansion in the nineteenth century which ended in the Western occupation of nine tenths of the surface territory of the globe (Young, 1995, p. 91).

<sup>6</sup> With the epithet « social » Moscovici wants to emphasize how representations arise through social interaction and communication between individuals and groups. "Social" also marks that the contents of representations are social. They reflect, in different ways, historical, cultural and economic contexts, circumstances and practices (See Höijer, 2011, p. 4).



marital, monogamous, reproductive, and noncommercial. It should be coupled, relational, within the same generation, and occur at home. It should not involve pornography, fetish object, sex toys of any sort, or roles other than male and female. Any sex that violates these rules is “bad”, “abnormal”, or “unnatural”. Bad sex may be homosexual, unmarried, promiscuous, nonprocreative, or commercial. It may be masturbatory or take place at orgies, may be casual, may cross generational lines, and may take place in “public”, or at least in the bushes or the baths. It may involve the use of pornography, fetish objects, sex toys, or unusual roles.

This is what Gagnon and Simon explained as a sexual script theory where sexuality is produced, shared, and forced to follow a blue print and is used as a guide to analyze the perfect gender. As a blue print, sexual scripts serve as a cultural consensus to define sexuality. Such a dominant sexual script affects at the level of perception as to the good and perfect couple, the sexual relations that should appear and sexual emotions (Waskul and Plante, 2010, p. 151).

Indonesian’s understanding of contemporary sexuality is very limited. This situation is probably a result of the heteronormative norms dictated and sustained by the New Order Era (*era Orde Baru*) government. The New Order government based its Nation-State on the heterosexual archetype of the nuclear family consisting of a husband, a wife and children, with the nation’s president and his wife as parents (Johan, 2011, p. 200). Marriage is oftentimes viewed as the basis of society. Sexual intercourse aims primarily for procreation, which consistently serves to build a nuclear family (Yulius, 2013). Thus, according to the Indonesian government, the only legal marriage is a marriage between a man and a woman (Johan, 2011, p. 205). This notion has prevented the emergence of a homosexual culture in Indonesian society as homosexuality is considered a deviance and immoral practice against the norms of society (Johan, 2011, p. 200). For the reason stated above, gay, lesbian, and *waria* are considered deviants and their identity is perceived as *penyakit masyarakat* (social problems or illnesses). These people have been forced to ‘linger in the closet’ and it is deemed taboo to talk about them publicly (Johan, 2011, p. 200). It can be said, thus, that the LGBT peoples in Indonesia are victims of prevailing social norms (*une victime de normes sociales*) (Chauvin and Lerch, 2013, p. 12) that arise in a society and which are legitimized by the State through social representation and the hegemonic gender belief system.

In fact, in reality, people who behave homosexually are informally welcomed by most of modern Indonesian society. It means that a person who displays homosexual behavior will be accepted as long as he or she does not trigger any trouble in the society (Johan, 2011, p. 203). But, actually, according to Oetomo, cited by Johan (2011, p. 204), there are many problems facing gay men especially in current Indonesian society. The first issue is that many Indonesian gays, lesbians, and *warias* feel insecure and self-doubting. They feel guilt-ridden, not normal, awkward, and unrighteous because of their condition. Their greatest fear is to be rejected by their family and condemned as a sinner by their religion. There are many negative stereotypes, judgments, and the misinterpretation of homosexuals in Indonesian society. Second, most homosexuals are afraid of their family’s,

friends' and society's perceptions and the risk of rejection. This circumstance forces Indonesian homosexuals to disguise their identities and sometimes to coalesce on the town outskirts and build new, exclusive communities. Some will leave their hometowns to live in larger cities such as Jakarta, Bali, Surabaya, Yogyakarta, and Bandung (Ellis, 2011, p. 204) and even may migrate overseas to cities deemed more tolerant such as Amsterdam, The Hague, Paris, London, San Francisco, Sydney, Melbourne, for example.

### **The myths of Paris**

Under the social representation and gender belief system, gay people in Indonesia instead of playing 'hide-and-see', have often decided to migrate to other countries, for example to Paris, the capital city of France. The Netherlands<sup>7</sup> is also known around the world for its liberal position on homosexuality.

Freytag (2008, p. 8) states that as a travel destination Paris evokes multi-faceted and particularly capturing imageries that are portrayed in countless travel guides: the iconic landmark of the Eiffel Tower and the controversial glass pyramid of the Louvre, impressive Haussmannian boulevards that dress the city in cream-grey limestone, numerous cafés and restaurants, the Montmartre hill with tiny lanes and squares filled with street painters, the glamorous Champs-Élysées boulevard that stretches from the Obelisk of Place de la Concorde to Arc de Triomphe, magnificent views of the River Seine from Pont-Neuf, and the famous cathedral of Notre-Dame. According to key tourist indicators, Paris can be identified as the European capital of tourism and one of the most important urban tourism destinations in the world (Freytag, 2008, p. 9).<sup>8</sup>

#### *Paris as a Destination for Gays*

As a destination, the city always makes images such as beauty, sorrow, pleasure, mystery, and violence (Clavel, 2002, p. 51). Paris has many places for homosexuals, so that Paris has become one of the capital cities of homosexuality in Europe (Leroy, 2005, p. 585). The City of Paris and its homosexuality reached its golden age in the 1920s, during which time appeared many famous homosexual artists, for example Proust, Colette, Satie, Gide, and Diaghilev (Leroy, 2005, p. 586).

Paris is considered as a major gathering place for homosexuals after Berlin and London (Leroy, 2005, p. 585). Areas of Paris which encourage the open meeting of homosexuals and the gay lifestyle are central and suburban Paris locations such as the *Hôtel*

---

<sup>7</sup> Amsterdam, in particular, is often associated with gay emancipation, as it provided the setting for the world's first legally recognized 'gay marriage' in 2001, and hosts the famous gay parade with festively decorated boats floating through the city's picturesque canals each year. In cross-national survey research, the Dutch indeed indicate to accept homosexuality more than most other European peoples (See Buijs, Hekma, & Duyvendak, 2011, p. 633).

<sup>8</sup> With a ratio of almost 60 per cent of the overnight visitors to Paris, the city is an important destination for international tourists. The leading resident countries of international travelers are the US and UK, followed by Italy, Japan, Spain, and Germany. As a result of its function as the political and economic center of France, Paris attracts a large number of business travelers that are estimated to be more than 44 per cent of overnight visitors (See Freytag, 2008, p. 9 – 10).

*de Ville* and *Place de la Bastille* (4<sup>th</sup> area), 9<sup>th</sup> area, and 11<sup>th</sup> area (Leroy, 2005, p. 588). Between those areas, the 4<sup>th</sup> area is the largest area for homosexual peoples: the *Le Marais*. In earlier times, this was an area for aristocrats until the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Clavel, 2002, p. 35). Le Marais has been growing rapidly since the 1980s as a commercial area, reserved in particular for gays. It is characterized by the creation of gay bars, gay boutiques, and other services for gays. In addition, this area is used as a symbol of the existence of homosexuality which can be seen from the rainbow flag (Giraud, 2011).

Indonesian gays prior to their arrival in Paris did not know of Le Marais. From the interviews I conducted, it is clear that the only images of Paris were connected to notions of a romantic city, the Eiffel Tower and the Louvre, Mona Lisa, a fashionable city, and the French kiss. Respondents almost totally answered in the negative when asked of their knowledge of Paris as also the city that represents freedom for homosexuals.

“For those who have never been to Paris, Paris is Eiffel Tower” (D, 27)

“Eiffel Tower, Monalisa, and Disneyland” (W, 29)

“Eiffel tower, who does not dream to see that famous tower?” (W, 31)

“For me, Paris is a romantic city. Here you can find many places where gays, lesbians, and transgender can express their expression. They can embrace each other, kissing each other” (M, 38)

“Paris is Eiffel tower. But now I am thinking that Paris is a city of tolerance” (H, 40)

#### *Why Should I Move to Paris?*

The discourse of migration is inseparable from the discourse of globalization. Larsson (2001, p. 9) explained that globalization is the process of world shrinkage, of distances getting shorter, things moving closer. It pertains to the increasing ease with which somebody on one side of the world can interact, to mutual benefit, with somebody on other side of the world. In other words, globalization not only compresses time and space (Harvey, 1989, p. 8) but creates a process of massive migration, multiculturalism, and cosmopolitanism (Szeman, 2003, p. 94).

The migration of gay people abroad is an example of the greatness of the effects of globalization. There are no organizations worldwide that have statistical data for LGBT migration, in particular the number of Indonesian gay peoples who move abroad. Concerning the condition of gay peoples in Indonesia who are discriminated against physically and psychologically, it is understandable that migration is not always a choice but a necessity (Binnie, 2004, p. 88). The migration of Indonesian gays outside Indonesia seems to indicate that that this condition is the best way to avoid discrimination.

“I moved here because I think it’s impossible being a gay in Indonesia. Look at FPI! They attacked us. It’s rude! How can I live peacefully in Indonesia? That’s why I move. Thank God that I met a Belgian man in France. He takes care of me. Oh I

forgot to explain to you that I move here as a student. I learned French for 3 months and the rest I work as a waiter” (Y, 33)

For some men, parental divorce becomes a trigger to move abroad. The conditions of stress and depression have inadvertently led them to stay in France.

“I love Indonesia but I hate it also. I am Indonesian but why do I have to live abroad just because I am gay? When I am in Indonesia, I have to play hide and seek. I confessed only with my best friends, but I didn’t confess with my family. In 2004 my parents divorced and I got stress. I went to some bars and I got drunk. When I took a pee, I met a French man. He helped me because I almost fainted. In sum, he asked me to move to his country. I think this is the way that I have to leave Indonesia while I love my country. In 2006, I move to France and living with him.” (K, 38)

“My parents divorced 15 years ago. I hate them, especially to my father. ... But although I hate him, I missed a father figure. I remembered when he taught me math. He explained very well until I understood math. ... One day I went to the bar with my gay friends. There I met French man. Since I can speak French, he was very excited to chat with me. I don’t know why I didn’t hesitate to tell my problems. In the end, I fell in love with him, and he did. He asked me to go to France. For me, why not? I am a gay and I understand that I can’t live in Indonesia; in addition I am in love with him. After taking care of all documents, I went to Paris. He picked me up at the airport. And now I am happy because it seems that I found the figure like my father.” (J, 35)

Some of the respondents moved abroad just to study. At first they did not want to stay in France, but their meeting with French men led them to decide to stay there.

“Actually I don’t have any plan to stay in Paris. I came here as a scholarships receiver. I studied Master in Communication. One day when I had a coffee in one of the best coffee shops in Paris, I met a French man. At that time, the café was full but I didn’t notice it. I continued reading a roman. Suddenly he asked me whether he could sit next to me or not. Ok, when I saw that the café was full, I directly said “yes, of course”. Time goes by, we fell in love. Now I stay with him. He works in...sorry I don’t want to mention his office...while I work as a waiter in a junk food restaurant. I don’t think so that when I stay in Indonesia, I can come out of closet. It’s hard to be a homosexual in Indonesia.” (A, 37)

From the respondents that I interviewed, it can be seen that at the first time they did not have the intention to migrate to France. They came to France with their competences as a student or because of they were invited by their partners. At present, what they feel is calmness, because they can live freely without pressure or discrimination.

## **Conclusion**

According to Romero (2012, p. 194 - 196), the United Nations noted that there are 72 to 86<sup>9</sup> States that still punish homosexuals. In addition, between 1979 and 1990, there have been

---

<sup>9</sup> The number is still more and more developed since the pressure of sexual minority groups is high to insist the local government to pass the law of the recognition of homosexuality as well as to pass the gay marriage.

107 executions of homosexuals. Thus, the State and society became the greatest sources of discrimination against homosexuals. What the State does is to create and to form society through a hegemonic process of social representation embodied in a system that is trying to make a stereotype of every human. This systematic stereotyping can best be understood as a *gender belief system*.

The gay groups whose existence is challenged from all dimensions, they ought to be afraid. It is very reasonable if they accumulate a million questions; for example, how they can live in the homophobic society? What is the impact of society's view of their existence? Where they should look for security when they are discriminated against? The "contemporary" question to solve this problem for many Indonesian gays is to move abroad. It can be said that the gay migration cannot be prevented anymore because they are vulnerable to discrimination not only from Indonesian society but also by the Indonesian State.

Globalization opens the eyes of this vulnerable group and, as indicated in this paper, many move to France, in particular to Paris as a capital city of France. Borderless technology, assisted by the internet, offers chances to think more deeply about staying in Paris. As many of the respondents' comments suggested, they feel Paris offers a freedom for homosexuals, seen by Paris' popularity as a "queer city" (Binnie, 2004, p. 122). Paris is not overtly a gendered city that always puts men over women, over minority groups, over children's and the poor's rights, where they do not have any access to move freely (Low, 1996, p. 390). In addition, the contribution of their partners as the person who invited them to move to France is also a major trigger. The partners have contributed to allow many of the Indonesian gay migrants surveyed here to move immediately and to become settled in France. Thus, as I said before, the migration of Indonesian gays is not affected by a 'push factor' or a 'pull factor' but automatically; indeed, those two factors influenced them to move abroad.

## References

- Anderson, Benedict R. O'G. (2006). First Love: The Opening of Soetjipto's *Djalan Sampoerna*. *Indonesia* 82, October, 39 – 74
- Bastié, Jean. (1992). Paris, Ville Mondiale. *La France Dans le Monde* (Under the direction of Gabriel Wackemann). Paris: Nathan.
- Boellstroff, Tom. (2005). *The Gay Archipelago. Sexuality and Nation in Indonesia*. London : Sage
- Bourchier, David and Vedi R. Hadiz. (2003). Introduction. *Indonesian Politics and Society. A Reader*. London : RoutledgeCurzon.
- Binnie, Jon. (2004). *The Globalization of Sexuality*. London : SAGE Publications
- Budiman, Muhammad Arief. (2012). Reog: Unique Dance. *Proceedings of the 4<sup>th</sup> International Conference on Indonesian Studies*. Jakarta: ICSSIS UI.
- Buijs, Laurens, Hekma, Gert and Duyvendak, Jan Willem. (2011). 'As Long As They Keep Away from Me': The Paradox of Antigay Violence in a Gay-Friendly Country. *Sexualities*, 14 (6), 632 – 652
- Chauvin, Sébastien and Lerch, Arnaud. (2013). *Sociologie de l'Homosexualité*. Paris : La Découverte.

- Clavel, Maité. (2002). *Sociologie de l'urbaine*. Paris : Anthropos *Dari Mata Turun ke Hati* (1987). Retrieved from <http://majalah.tempointeraktif.com/id/arsip/1987/10/10/PRK/mbm.19871010.PRK32396.id.html>
- Ellis, Justin. (2006). *Gay Life in Jakarta: Defining the Emerging Community*. Retrieved from [http://www.kyotojournal.org/gender/gay\\_jakarta.html](http://www.kyotojournal.org/gender/gay_jakarta.html)
- Fairclough, Norman. (1992). *Discourse and Social Change*. Cambridge : Polity Press
- Freytag, T. (2008). Making a Difference: Tourist Practices of Repeat Visitors in the City of Paris. *Social Geography Discussion*, 4 (1 – 25), 1 - 19
- Giust-Desprairies, Florence. (2009). *L'Imaginaire Collectif*. Paris: Erès
- Giraud, C. (2011). Enquête sur les lieux de residence des homosexuels masculins à Paris. *Sociétés Contemporaines*, (81), 151 – 176.
- Graham, Sharyn. (2002). Sex, Gender, and Priest in South Sulawesi, Indonesia. *IIAS Newsletter* (29), 27.
- Harvey, David. (1989). The Condition of Postmodernity. In R. J. Holton, *Globalization and the Nation State*. London : Macmillan Press.
- Höijer, Birgitta. (2011). Social Representations Theory. A New Theory for Media Research. *Nordicom Review*, 32 (2), 3 – 16
- Hurgronje, Snouck. (1906). *The Achehnese*. Leyden : E. J. Brill
- International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission. (2007). Human Rights Abuses Against Sexual Minorities in Indonesia. *Report*, November.
- Johan, Rizki Theodorus. (2011). Discovering the "Others": Unearthing Homosexual Identity Construction in Selected Indonesia Contemporary Novels and Short Stories. *The Asian Conference on Literature and Librarianship Official Conference Proceedings*. Osaka: Japan, 199 – 209.
- Larso, T. (2001). *The Race to the Top: The Real Story of Globalization*. U.S : Cato Institute
- Leroy, Stéphane. (2005). Le Paris Gay: Élément pour une Géographie de l'Homosexualité. *Ann. Geo.*, (646), 579 – 601
- Low, Setha M. (1996). The Anthropology of Cities: Imagining and Theorizing the City. *Annual Review of Anthropology*, (25), 390
- Marková, I. (2003). *Dialogicality and Social Representations. The Dynamics of Mind*. Cambridge, UK : Cambridge University Press.
- Moscovisi, S. (1988). Notes towards a Description of Social Representations. *European Journal of Social Psychology*, 18, 211 – 250
- \_\_\_\_\_. (2000). *Social Representations. Explorations in Social Psychology*. Cambridge, UK : Polity Press
- Oetomo, Dede. 2001. *Memberi Suara pada yang Bisu*. Yogyakarta: Galang Press. Reksodirdjo, Wisnu Adihartono. (2013). *Searching for Security: The Migration of Indonesian Gays*. Retrieved from <http://socialscience.nl/2013/09/25/searching-security-migration-indonesian-gays/>
- Romero, Jean-Luc. (2012). *Homopoliticus*. Paris : Edition de la Cerisaie
- Rubin, Gayle. (ND). *Deviations. A Gayle Rubin Reader*. Durham, London : Duke University Press.
- Savin-Williams, Ritch. (2005). *The New Gay Teenager*. London : Sage

Sidanius, Jim, & Pratto, Felicia. (1999). *Social Dominance: An Intergroup Theory of Social Hierarchy and Oppression*. New York : Cambridge University Press

Szeman, Imre. (2003). Culture and Globalization, or the Humanities in Ruins. *CR: The New Centennial Review*, (3), 2, 94

Waskul, Dennis D., & Plante, Rebecca F. Sex(ualities) and Symbolic Interactions. *Symbolic Interactions*, 33, 148 – 162

Whitaker, Brian. (2011). *Unspeakable love. Gay and lesbian life in the Middle East*. London : SAQI

Young, Roberts. 1995. *Colonial Desire: Hybridity in Theory, Culture and Race*. New York : Routledge