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## **VEILING AND POLITIC IN INDONESIA: PROPAGATING JILBAB IN THE NEW ORDER ERA**

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### **Abstrak**

Popularitas pakaian wanita Muslim di Indonesia bagi di tempat umum memakan waktu dan perdebatan yang sangat panjang. Bagian pakaian wanita muslim yang sering menjadi perdebatan adalah penutup kepala. Perdebatan apakah pemakaian penutup kepala bagi wanita Muslim sebagai kewajiban Islam atau tradisi bangsa Arab pada awal abad dua puluh telah memperlihatkan bahwa masyarakat muslim sedang mencari identitas muslim Indonesia. Perdebatan terus berlanjut pada tahap kedua setelah Indonesia merdeka. Oeh karena itu tulisan ini bermaksud untuk melihat bagaimana perkembangan perdebatan terjadi dan isu apa saja yang muncul dan bagaimana masyarakat Muslim secara umum menanggapinya. Metode yang digunakan dalam tulisan ini adalah metode analisis konten dan argument melalui penelurusan kepustakaan. Berdasarkan kajian ini, dapat disimpulkan bahwa perdebatan pemakaian penutup kepala pada periode kedua telah berubah menjadi isu politik Islam dimana penutup kepala dijadikan sebagai symbol perjuangan politik Islam yang juga dipengaruhi oleh perkembangan politik Islam di Negara Islam lainnya.

### **Abstract**

The popularity of Muslim women's clothing in Indonesia for public places takes a very long time and contentious debate. The part of Muslim women's clothing that is often debated is the head covering or veiling. The debate whether the wearing of head coverings for Muslim women is an Islamic obligation or a tradition of the Arab nation in the early twentieth century has shown that Muslim society was seeking an Indonesian Muslim identity. The debate continued in the second phase after Indonesia's independence. Therefore, this article intends to see how the development of the debate occurred and what issues arose and how the Muslim community in general responded. The method used in this paper is the method of content and argument analysis through literature search. Based on this study, it can be concluded that the debate over the use of head coverings in the second period has turned into an issue of Islamic politics where the head covering is used as a symbol of Islamic political struggle which was also influenced by the development of Islamic politics in other Islamic countries.

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Keywords: Hijab, Muslim clothing, debate, politics, New Orde

## INTRODUCTION

The popularity of Islamic dress among Indonesian Muslim women did not take a short time but it was full of struggle and contentiously debated in the beginning of the twentieth century. The use of head cover (veiling) in public places was very limited to women who had performed a pilgrimage to Mecca and also those who studied in Islamic institutions such as Persis, Muhammadiyah and Nahdhatul Ulama. The propagation of veiling to a wider scope in the early twentieth century through printed media triggered polemics from others. The debate itself was not only an Islamic legal debate but it also can be seen as the quest of identity as both being Indonesian and being Muslim women at the same time.<sup>1</sup>

The debate on veiling in that era indicates the contestation of Indonesian Muslim identity among the reformists and the nationalists; for the reformist, veiling could signify them as Indonesian Muslim women whereas for the reformist it was no more than Arab tradition. However, that debate stopped in the middle of 1940s because they were busy involved in a war and struggling to get their independence from the colonization. Therefore, this paper will try to trace the debate on veiling after Indonesian Independence, especially in the new order era. It will also describe how the issue of veiling transformed from the issue of identity to the issue of Islamic politics. It begins with the critical relation of the New Order and Islam which then began

suspecting each other especially after the rising issues of Islamic global resurgence. Then it will describe the political expression of revivalist Muslims who were disappointed of the Government's policies, especially on the issue of veiling in schools. At the end, it will discuss veiling issues in the public sphere.

## The New Order and Islamic Global Resurgence

When becoming the president of Indonesia in 1966 under the support of Angkatan Bersenjata Republik Indonesia (Armed forces, ABRI), Suharto was initially supported by Indonesian Muslim in which they shared the same views to oppose against communism and to build the New Order government. However, some Moslem became disappointed of the Government's decision in January 1967 because their requests to rehabilitate Masyumi party as the political organization of reformist Muslims were rejected by the Government.<sup>2</sup> Even though Suharto permitted them to create a new Islamic party, the Government prevented the former activists of Masyumi from being board members of that new party, in order to eliminate the spirit of Masyumi. Because of this policy, some Muslims, such as Pelajar Islam Indonesia Indonesia (Indonesian Muslim Students, PII), who refused this policy preferred not to have a new party at all, instead of creating a new party that would always support all governmental policies.

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<sup>1</sup> Tantowi, Ali. 2010. The Quest of Indonesian Muslim Identity; Debate on Veiling from the 1920s to 1940s. *Journal of Indonesian Islam*. Volume 04, Number 01, Juni 2010.

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<sup>2</sup> Ward, K.E. *The Foundation of Partai Muslimin Indonesia* (New York: Modern Indonesia Project, 1970), p. 26

The president seemed still traumatic with the Masyumi's previous track records in which some its members get involved in Islamic radicalism activities.

In the later years, the government decided to block the Islamic political aspirations to implement the Jakarta Charter, providing no room for religious organizations to involve in the political arena. However, as the compensation, the government provided them funds and spaces to expand their social and religious services. This offer was appreciated by many religious leaders, including both Muslim and non-Muslim, by accepting the regime not as a threat or even considered it as a support to their idea concerning God's work; many Muslim viewed that the regime would be less inclined to oppress them and to consider Islam as a danger, whereas non-Muslim assumed that the regime would protect them from fundamentalist's Muslims' threats to make Indonesia as an Islamic state.<sup>3</sup>

In 1978, to strengthen his hegemony Soharto began campaigning *Pancasila*, which was initially formed as a common platform where all ideologies were expected to meet, as the principal ideology of the New Order government which was compulsory indoctrination for all citizens.<sup>4</sup> Suharto claimed that the *Pancasila* was unique to Indonesia, comprehensive philosophy of life, and personified by the New Order government.<sup>5</sup> From that passion, emerged

some jargons justifying the *Pancasila* as its basis such as *Demokrasi Pancasila* (Democracy of Pancasila) and *Ekonomi Pancasila* (the Economy of Pancasila). In the name of this kind of democracy, the politics of the regime was dominated by few people who refused other social and political organizations' participation outside the system to construct governmental policies. This kind of political system caused them to be authoritarian and repressive.<sup>6</sup>

The repressive and distressing policies of the government led some radical movements to raise rebellion attempts. Bombing attacks occurred in Java and Sumatra which was said that a group called Komando Jihad (Jihad Commando) led by Ismail Pranoto was responsible of those attacks. And in March 1978, an organization, called Pola Perjuangan Revolucioner Islam (the Model of Revolutionary Islamic Struggle) led by Abdul Qadir Djaelani, stormed the building of Majlis Permusyawaratan Rakyat (People's Consultative assembly, MPR) during its general session. In addition, there were a series of robberies and murders committed by both a radical group led by M. Warman which was known as "Terror Warman" and an extremist group led by M. Zeina who concentrated in attacking government facilities. Those attacks culminated, in March 28, 1981, when a movement led by some veterans of Darul Islam hijacked Garuda Indonesia airplane. Those attacks were considered as a reaction against the

<sup>3</sup> M.C. Ricklefs, *A history of modern Indonesia since c. 1200*, (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2001), 366

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid*, 373

<sup>5</sup> Ramage, Douglas E. *Politics in Indonesia: Democracy, Islam and Ideology of Tolerance*, (London and New York, Routledge, 1995)

<sup>6</sup> Muhammad Wildan, *Students and Politics: the Response of the Pelajar Islam Indonesia to Politics in Indonesia*, (MA.Thesis: Leiden University, 1999), 51

government on behalf of establishing an Islamic state.<sup>7</sup>

### The Inspiration of the Global Islamic Resurgence

The success of Iranian revolution in 1979 had globally inspired Muslim world and gave an example of struggle to establish an Islamic state which was dreamed for along time by Muslim in the whole world. It was considered as the symbol of global Islamic resurgence which attracted many mass media to massively report it and became an interesting issue to discuss. Even so, it raised fear among Authoritarian Muslim regimes such as Saudi Arabia, Malaysia and Indonesia.<sup>8</sup>

Because of much appreciations expressed media and Muslim scholars in Indonesia, some scholars who observed the Southeast Asian scene had predictions that Indonesia could become "another Iran." It can be understood since some religious journals and magazines expressed their appreciations by featuring the leader of Iranian revolution, Ayatollah Ali Khomeini, on their covers. An observer even claimed that Khomeini had become the third most popular figure in Indonesia after the present president, Suharto, and the former one, Sukarno. Khomeini's popularity was gained from

<sup>7</sup> Noorhaidi Hasan, *Laskar Jihad: Islam, Militancy and the Quest for Identity in Post-New Order Indonesia*, 41; see also also Martin Van Bruinessen, "Genealogies of Islamic Radicalism in Post-Suharto Indonesia," *South Asian Research* 10.2 (2002): 117-54

<sup>8</sup> For further information, see See "Malaysian and Indonesian Islamic Movements and the Iranian Connections," in *The Iranian Revolution: Its Global Impact*, ed. John L. Esposito (Miami: Florida International University Press), 233-254

Indonesian Muslims' interest that symbolized him as the victory of Islam. Even so they seemed less appreciated to the way and development of Iranian revolution, because of "the fact that the more specific characteristics of the revolution as it unfolded have not been easily translated into the Southeast Asian experience."<sup>9</sup> Besides, Atho argued that Indonesian social system was resistant to Islamic revolution if we see the socio-structural, historico-cultural and ideological-political conditions of Indonesia.<sup>10</sup>

The new order regime had anticipated the influence of Islamic revolution from the beginning; as reacted to the revolution, the Indonesian government chose to issue neutral statements, such as avoiding commentaries on the issue of American hostage releases and the ousting of the Shah. The government also discouraged its citizens going to Iran for either religious studies or private visits. Although this policy of travel warning was unofficially issued, the people who returned from Iran were reportedly suspected by the government. Then in the later years, the New Order Government had barred its citizens from perusing academic study in thirty one countries, including Iran.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>9</sup> *The Iranian Revolution: Its Global Impact*, 249

<sup>10</sup> For more information, Muhammad Atho Mudzhar, *Islam and Islamic Law in Indonesia* (Jakarta: Ministry of Religious Affairs, 2003), 33-42

<sup>11</sup> See *The Iranian Revolution: Its Global Impact*, 244; from those thirty one countries, twenty one were communist, four were courtiers in which Indonesia had not diplomatic relations, and six were considered as extremist, namely Libya Iran, Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, and Algeria; my own Islamic

The New Order regime supervised all kinds of Islamic movements and controlled the media which tried to spread the idea of revolution; an organization called the board of Indonesian Islamic Revolution was accused of asking Iranian supports to impose Suharto's regime; the editor of *Al-Risalah* Muslim youth magazine, Irfan Suryahadi, was accused of campaigning subversion and was imprisoned for thirteen years. Of the magazine articles which caused him to accusation was *Wejangan Ayatullah Khumaini* (the Admonition of Ayatullah Khumaini); it is said that he admitted that he had frequent contacts with the Iranian Embassy in Jakarta.<sup>12</sup>

### **The Political Expression of Islamic Revivalism<sup>13</sup>**

Some revivalist Muslims who did not agree with the government withdrew their supports from the government and sought another strategy, religious predication. Some of them were Muhammad Natsir (1908-1993) and a number of Masyumi former leaders who struggled for demanding Jakarta Charter for the sake of Islamic state. This kind of shift did not indicate any transformation of revivalist Muslim from political activism to spiritual activism; as Hefner argues, instead of joining with

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school teacher in Bogor who graduated from an Iranian university was always put in espionage of the Government.

<sup>12</sup> See "Malaysian and Indonesian Islamic Movements and the Iranian Connections," *Iranian Revolution: its Global Impact*, 233-251

<sup>13</sup> For more information on the revivalist phenomenon, see Fred R. von de Mehden, "Malaysia and Indonesia," in *The Politics of Islamic Revivalism*, ed. S. Hunter (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 1988)

permanently well-established Islamic organizations, such as Muhammadiyah, Natsir and his friends decided to establish a new religious predication organization, called Dewan Dakwah Islamiah Indonesia (Indonesian Council for Islamic Predication, DDII) which was founded in 1967 to facilitate them in propagating their political and religious ideas. Beside their unwillingness to conceal their relations with the earlier Masyumi, they also intended DDII to become a forum that would facilitate and gather political leaders who were dissatisfied with the political condition.<sup>14</sup> Concerning the establishment of DDII, Natsir stated, "Previously we carried out Islamic predication (*dakwah*) through politics, but now we run politics through Islamic predication."<sup>15</sup>

DDII tried to negotiate with the Suharto regime by adopting various strategies but he seemed still suspicious of it. It is noteworthy that DDII had associated with Saudi Arabia from the beginning of its foundation by becoming the Indonesian representative in Rabitat al-'Alam al-Islami. Such relation strengthened DDII's position in Suharto's view because he was still attempting to eliminate the Indonesian communists' forces and influences. In campaigning against communism, the government supported students from all levels to attend religious subjects in their institution. But in contrast to his supporting policies to be more piety

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<sup>14</sup> Robert W. Hefner, *Civil Islam: Muslim and Democratization in Indonesia* (New Jersey : Princeton University Press, 2000) 106-7

<sup>15</sup> See Muhammad Natsir, *Politik Melalui Jalur Dakwah* (Jakarta: Abadi, 1998), 22

personally, he restricted his control on the political expression of Islam.<sup>16</sup>

In the beginning of the 1970s, DDII began raising sensitive issues concerning the Christian domination in Indonesian politics and criticized Ali Murtopo, the most trusted advisor of Suharto, who had strong influence in the governmental policies to be the source of the problem. At the same decade, the eruption of global Islamic resurgence began encouraging DDII to raise Islamic themes. By then, it spread the ideas of Muslim Brotherhood and the Jama'at-I Islami through its network of Muslim preachers and mosques by providing and contributing books written by some influential Islamist leaders and ideologues such as al-Banna, Sayyid Hawwa, Sayyid Qutb, Maulana al-Mawdudi and Mustafa Siba'i. The passion of Global Islamic resurgence influenced it to be more dared in criticizing the Government's policies more openly through its daily, *Abadi*. However its ambition to get involved in the political arena was countered by Suharto's policies which were more increasingly repressive. This condition compelled DDII to accept when the government banned its daily *Abadi* in 1974.<sup>17</sup>

The Islamic revitalization which was intensively propagated by DDII significantly influenced students in Indonesian universities, since they became one of its predication targets that would become the future leaders and agents of changes. One of its strategies to

accelerate the mission, DDII supported financially some projects for establishing Islamic centers and mosques in about twelve universities in Indonesia in the 1970s; some of them are Universitas Dipenogoro (University of Dipenogoro, Undip) semarang, Universitas Negeri Sebelas Maret (University of Sebelas Maret, UNS) Surakarta, Universitas Andalas (University of Andallas, Unand) Padang, Uiniversita Gajah Mada (University of Gajah Mada) Yogyakarta, and Universitas Indonesia (University of Indonesia) Jakarta.<sup>18</sup>

### **Muslim Student Activism in Schools and Universities**

In 1978 the New Order government issued a restrictive policy, the so-called Normalisasi Kehidupan Kampus/ Badan Koordinasi Kampus (Normalization of Campus Life/ the coordination Student's council, NKK-BKK), prohibiting students in universities to actively participate in politics. Moreover in 1983, the student also was also enforced to apply the Pancasila as the sole base (*asas tunggal*) of their organization. The policy significantly raised some consequences which made student movements difficult to speak up their political aspirations; the student conferences and trainings were difficult to hold because of tight procedures made by policy and military authorities. These conditions encouraged

<sup>16</sup> Noorhaidi Hasan, *Laskar Jihad: Islam, Militancy and the Quest for Identity in Post-New Order Indonesia*, 39

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid*, 40

<sup>18</sup> For further information on the mosques and Islamic centres supported by DDII in campuses see Hakim and Linrung, *Menunaikan Panggilan Risalah*, 31; Husin, *Philosophical and Sociological Aspects of Da'wa*, (PhD dissertation, Columbia University, 1998), 167-176

Muslim activist students to be more concerned in the Islamic predication in universities.<sup>19</sup>

The policy made almost all university student organization frustrated, including the largest and the oldest Muslim student organization, Himpunan Mahasiswa Islam (Muslim Student Association, HMI). This frustration led HMI to fragment by making a new organization, called Himpunan Mahasiswa Islam-Majlis Penyelamat Organisasi (Muslim student organization-the Assembly of the savior of the organization, HMI- MPO) which totally rejected the Pancasila as their sole base. This position was also taken by some other student organization such as Pelajar Islam Indonesia (Indonesian Muslim students, PII) which was affiliated to Masyumi.<sup>20</sup>

Such conditions contributed to the acceleration of student Islamic activism in universities such as the spread of the Qur'an study groups; the Islamic student activists made the Quran study groups as their movement. For instance, Instead of emphasizing religious studies, Islamic activism in University of Gajahmada in the late 1970s were concerned on deprivatizing Islam by emphasizing social and political issues which were also considered by them as religious problem in general.<sup>21</sup> The Islamic predication in campuses raises negative stances toward the Government and even some of them

denounced themselves as the enemy of the government.<sup>22</sup> This condition culminated when they witnessed the Iranian revolution as the Islamic resurgence which was appreciated by students' more devotion to Islamic teaching symbolized by the growing number of veiling women in universities, such as in Institut Pertanian Bogor university (Institute of Agriculture of Bogor, IPB) and ITB.<sup>23</sup>

### **Islamic Movement and Veiling**

The propagation of veiling in universities and schools could not be separated from the role of Muslim activism (*halaqahs*) in the mosques of universities which were supported by Muhammad Natsir. It is noteworthy that Natsir was one of the influencing leaders in Persis that actively propagated the obligation of veiling and got involved in polemics with nationalist Muslim in the 1930s – 1940s. Moreover, The leader of DDII, Muhammad Natsir, personally also backed up Imaduddin Abdurrahman, an influential activist in the mosque of Institute Teknologi Bandung (Institute of Technology of Bandung, ITB), to develop Latihan Mujahid Dakwah (training of Islamic propagation strivers).<sup>24</sup>

Imaduddin himself had been elected as the general secretary of International Islamic Federation of Student Organization (IIFSO) which raised his consciousness of the global

<sup>19</sup> Noorhaidi Hasan, *Laskar Jihad*, 44

<sup>20</sup> See Muhammad Wildan, *Students and Politics : the Response of the Pelajar Islam Indonesia to Politics in Indonesia*, 77-100

<sup>21</sup> Nancy J. Smith-Hefner, "Javanese Women and the Veil in Post Suharto Indonesia" in *The Journal of Asian Studies* vol.66. no. 2, 2007,p. 396

<sup>22</sup> Usman Ks, " White Mujahideen in the Heart of al-Qaeda," *Tempo*, English edition, Novermber 2, 2009, p 72

<sup>23</sup> *Panji Masyarakat*, no. 301, p. 77

<sup>24</sup> Noorhaidi Hasan, *Laskar Jihad*, 44

Islamic resurgence.<sup>25</sup> With this international experience and networks he became a charismatic activist and succeeded in developing Islamic activism in universities and recruited many participants. The intense Islamic activism of the Salman mosque made it the leading centre for Islamic revivalism in campuses.<sup>26</sup>

Some Muslim female activists in Bandung began veiling in the late 1970s and propagating it to other female Muslims, mainly to high school and university students. Such propagation was spread in their Islamic trainings. Moreover, veiling became one of the most important parameters of the successful training; if the former participants of the training kept veiling after the training, the training was considered to have been successful.<sup>27</sup> In some year later, thanks to the student networks veiling students in urban mosques were became more in number in Jakarta, Pekalongan, Surabaya, Yogyakarta, Jember, Solo Ambon, Ujung Pandang. Therefore the Muslim activists in Salman Mosque in Bandung, West Java, became the pioneer of veiling movements in schools and universities.<sup>28</sup>

<sup>25</sup> For further information on Imaduddin's role in the spread of Islamic study circles, so called halaqah, and his friendship with Natsir see Asna Husin, "Philosophical and Sociological aspects of Da'wa : A Study of Dewan Dakwah Islamiyah Indonesia", 168

<sup>26</sup> M.C. Ricklefs , *A history of modern Indonesia since c. 1200*, 379

<sup>27</sup> Rifki Rosyad, *A Quest for True Islam: A Study of Islamic Resurgence Movement Among the Youth in Bandung, Indonesia* (Canberra: ANU Press, 2006), 52

<sup>28</sup> See Moeflich Hasbullah, "Cultural Presentation of the Muslim Middle Class in

Besides Muslim activists in Bandung, Muslim activists of PII, founded in 1947 to fight and to defend national independence, also had the contribution to the growing number of veiling students. Since, some of PII members were also involved in *halaqahs* which supported them to propagate veiling. Actually *halaqahs* was more concerned on Islamic ethics and worship while PII is more concerned on Islamic ideology. PII actively rejected the indoctrination of the *Pancasila* since the 1960s and became legally unregistered and 'underground' organization in 1987 when refusing *Pancasila* as its sole ideological base. Instead of participating in the political arena, it focused more on strengthening its activities in Islamic propagation and education which would transmit its religious and political views. Because of its intense activism, it gained popularity among young Muslim in both urban and sub-urban areas.<sup>29</sup>

In the early 1981, PII actively organized religious trainings attended by high schools students also participated in this process. The mentors of PII trainings who are the university students from different campuses used to read the books that were translated and spread for free by DDII and presumably made them as the sources of the training materials. Instead of commanding the high schools students directly to adopt veiling, they discussed Islamic issues, including Islamic ethics of

Contemporary Indonesia", *Studia Islamika*, vol. VII, no. 2, 2000, p. 50-51; and Alwi Alatas and Fifrida Desliyanti, *Revolusi Jilbab; Kasus Pelanggaran Jilbab di SMA Negeri Se-Jabotabek*, 1982-1991, (Jakarta: Al- I'tishom, 2001), 29

<sup>29</sup> Muhammad Wildan, *Students and Politics*, 89 -104

dressing, according to the Quran and hadith. Inspired by the training, some high school students of them began wearing headscarf and even advised other students to wear.<sup>30</sup>

The veiling students of senior high schools themselves also participated in propagating headscarf with their own religious student organization in their schools, called *Kerohanian Islam* (Islamic Religiosity, ROHIS); some members of this organization persuade other uncovered students to adopt veiling and even gave them headscarves for free.<sup>31</sup>

### **Veiling policy and Public sphere**

Veiling students attracted people's attention when some incidents appeared in Bandung where veiling students in three schools, SMAN 3, SMAN 4 and SPGN, complained about the discrimination toward veiling over about 1979. Therefore, In July 15 1980, the leader of Majlis Ulama Indonesia (Council of Indonesian Ulama, MUI) of West Java, E.Z. Muttaqien, informed in a letter to Departemen Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan (Department of education and culture, DPK) that there had been growing number of veiling students in public schools. Thus, MUI demanded DPK to announce that public institutions such as public schools should give the same rights to the veiling women who wore headscarf, since the religious freedom was guaranteed by state law, 45 constitution chapter 29. This letter was then consulted to the center office of PDK which later gave a uniforms policy,

suggesting that the uniform should not contradict with the social ethics and norms and should show Indonesian characters which were based on local customs.<sup>32</sup>

The aforementioned incidents and phenomena of growing number of veiling students in public schools presumably led the government to question what actually was happening to the students; moreover their commitment to wear headscarf was very strong which should have a certain Islamic movement behind it. The suspicion of government can be seen for instance in an incident happened in the beginning of 1982. A veiling student in SMAN 1 Jember was accused of following a forbidden Islamic movement, Jamaah Imran; she was not allowed to attend the school since she had disobey the rules of her school uniform and refused to uncover her head where, even she. In February 1982, this incident invited various organizations in Jember criticizing and demanding SMAN 1 Jember to accept the veiling student; but there was not any reaction, although they had requested the governor of Jember to solve it.<sup>33</sup>

### **The Beginning of Polemics**

As the reaction to those incidents, the government which was still suspicious to the Islamic movements for the first time issued a policy concerning school uniforms for elementary to high school, so-called SK 052 through the ministry of education In March 1982. The policy was claimed to raise the sense of

<sup>30</sup> *Revolusi Jilbab*, 24-30

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid*, 83

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid*, 27

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid*, 28

unity among students, but many people doubted it. Some schools who supported the policy argued that public schools were not religious schools.<sup>34</sup>

Instead of being a solution, this policy caused many conflicts between students and schools in later years. In the middle of 1982, eight veiling students in SMA 3 Bandung, West Java, were forced to wear short pants by a sport teacher, Wargono, when they attended his sport lesson; they would get a low grade in sport subject if they refused to obey. Objected with the policy, they reported the incident to MUI of Bandung which then requested the school to tolerate the veiling student in August 1982. In November 1982, Wargono, the sport teacher, wrote a thirteen page letter to MUI of Bandung, denying its request to allow veiling students attend his class; he argued that the Qur'an did not rule the way women should dress. The polemic occurred which eventually permitted the veiling students to attend the course.<sup>35</sup>

Actually MUI had complained to DPK, in September 1982 and requested the central office of MUI to solve it more broadly, since the local level had not solved the problem yet and the uniform policy also was applied in a national level. Because of the absence of significant solutions from the Government in the national level, an incident of banned veiling occurred again in January 1983; a veiling student from SMAN 68 Jakarta was banned to attend the class and compelled to change his uniforms; the headmaster argued that she had disobeyed the government policy of

uniform, SK 052. Refused to obey the policy, she was finally dropped out her school.<sup>36</sup>

Exposed by Indonesian Media, the issue of the case of veiling in schools became national debate and invited polemics among students' parents, teachers, Muslim scholars and government officials. Over January 1983, more Muslim mass organizations, such PII, Pusat Badan Pembela Masjidil Aqsha (the Center Board of al-Aqsa Mosque's defenders, BPMA), Pusat Wanita Islam (the Center of Muslim Women) began to react; they protested to the ministry of education and demanded the freedom of religious expression in public state schools which was guaranteed by the Indonesian state constitution. Moreover, students from senior high schools themselves held demonstrations in Jakarta, Tangerang, Bekasi.<sup>37</sup>

In August 1982, students from SMAN 30 held demonstration the freedom of veiling in schools which turned into a physical clash between them and the security apparatus. Some of them got injured and the headmaster of the school commanded his three veiling students to move to other schools. In the same month, a student of SMAN 1 Surakarta was also compelled to move to another school since she rejected to take off her headscarf. Over the August, there were approximately a hundred students who were compelled to move to other schools because of their headscarves.<sup>38</sup>

## Muslim Leaders' Reactions

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid*, 34-35

<sup>37</sup> *Revolusi Jilbab*, 35-6

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid*, 39

<sup>34</sup> *Revolusi Jilbab*, 30-1

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid*, 33-4

From May to August 1982, MUI also intensely negotiated with the ministry and department of education to solve the problem of veiling. In May 1982, the minister of education, Nugroho Notosusanto, promised to take persuasive solutions, instead of oppressive actions.<sup>39</sup> Since there was not any significant reaction from the government, MUI in West Sumatra province held a held meeting concerning Muslim women's dress and Musabaqah Tilawatil Quran (the championship of Quaric recitation, MTQ) in March 1983.<sup>40</sup> From this meeting they issued a fatwa which obliged Muslim women to wear headscarf. This fatwa can be seen as a reaction to some cases occurred in Java, because before 1983 Muslim women who participated in MTQ which is held annually in every city and provice were not obliged to cover their head as can be seen in a following photo from 1979,

This contentious case invited more solidarity from Muslim communities. The leader of DDII, Muhammad Natsir was very concerned to the issue of veiling; since December 1982, he actively corresponded with MUI, updating and discussing the problem and strategies to solve. Besides, he also negotiated with some organization such as Muhammadiyah to accept students who were dropped out because of the veiling.<sup>41</sup> The leader of Muhammadiyah at that time, Lukman Harun also argued that the freedom of veiling was a part of religious freedom advocated by the Indonesian

constitution.<sup>42</sup> Moreover, many people who were aware of this problem attended Muslim gathering which was held by Komite Solidaritas Umat Islam (the Committee of Muslim Solidarity, KSUI) in al-Azhar Mosque to discuss and support the veiling students. They tried to collect donation from the whole Muslim to financially help the dropped out students.<sup>43</sup>

The issue of the dropped out veiling students still invited debates and some demonstration by students from 1983 to 1985. Even so, in June 1984, fifteen schools in Bandung compelled students to put their headscarves off. Moreover, about 350 veiling students in different cities were threatened by their schools to be dropped out. Their protests of the banned veiling to Dewan Perwakilan Rakyat Daerah (House of Representatives of province, DPRD) of West Java were refused by arguing that they should maintain national stability by obeying the policy to uncover their heads, instead of inviting conflicts which would be a great opportunity for the political oppositions of the government.<sup>44</sup>

The declining reactions to the Government's policy on veiling in public schools were spread through abundant pamphlets over 1984. Not only advocating the freedom of veiling in schools, such pamphlets also protested against the Government's policies concerning *Pancasila* as the sole base, the corrupted behaviors of the Government officials, Christianization and etc. Those

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid*, 38

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid*,37

<sup>41</sup> *Revolusi Jilbab*, 37

<sup>42</sup> *Panji Masyarakat*, no. 607, April 1989, p.

31-2

<sup>43</sup> *Revolusi Jilbab*, 39-40

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid*, 43-49

kinds of pamphlets eventually became the triggers of the well-known tragedy, *tragedy Tanjung Priok*, which killed hundreds of peoples from civil and military forces in September 1984.<sup>45</sup>

In the same month, DDII and MUI protested against the government's policy and requested to accept Muslim's aspiration. This protest was also followed by Muslim student organization such in West Java as HMI and Ikatan Mahasiswa Muhammadiyah (the Association of Muhammadiyah students, IMM), Gerakan Pemuda Islam (the movement of Muslim Youth, GPI) <sup>46</sup> PII and PMIB- Pemuda dan Mahasiswa Islam Bandung (Muslim Youth and Students of Bandung) which staged demonstrations asking freedom of veiling.<sup>47</sup>

The teachers who opposed headscarf claimed that it was not obliged by the Quran to wear headscarf. The Minister of Religious Affairs, Munawir Sjadjali was doubted on the compulsory of headscarf, stating that many Indonesian Muslim leaders' wives, including his wife, did not wear it. This statement was criticized by the lecture of Islamic University of Bandung, Agus Hakim, arguing that it is inappropriate to consider the family tradition of the minister as the references of Islamic laws.<sup>48</sup>

<sup>45</sup> Widjiono Wasis, *Kesaksian Peristiwa Tanjung Priok* (Jakarta: Balai Pustaka, 2003), 119-121

<sup>46</sup> *Media Dakwah*, October 10, 1984.

<sup>47</sup> Darul Aqsha, Dick van der Meij and Johan H. Mueleman, *Islam In Indonesia: a Survey of Events and Developments from 1988 to March 1993*, (INIS : Leiden 1995) 67

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid*, 68

### Legal Aids for Veiling Women

In 1986 and 1987 seemed free from the case of veiling. However, it occurred again in 1988 and even two cases were defended in state court. The first case occurred in SMAN 1 Bogor and the other in SMAN 68 Jakarta. In August 1988, sis veiling students in Bogor, West Java, faced discriminative treatment from their school, SMAN 1 Bogor. They brought the case to the state court, assisted by Lembaga Bantuan Hukum (Legal Aid Organization, LBH) Jakarta and also supported by Indonesian lawyers. This first trial of the case attracted thousands of people to support; however, after long negotiation between the schools and students, parents, the case was closed by allowing the students to keep veiling in December 1988. This first case of veiling in court was actually aimed to defend the freedom of veiling in all schools; however the principle of the schools chose reconciliation, instead of continuing the court trials.<sup>49</sup>

The same case occurred again in 1989 when ten veiling students of SMA 68 Jakarta were forced to take off their veils if they still wanted to continue studying. They also sought legal aids to LBH Jakarta.<sup>50</sup> Unlike the first case, this second case took long time and struggle. In the first trial in September 1989, the veiling students were defeated their school; many Indonesian Muslim leaders were disappointed of such defeat and they

<sup>49</sup> See *Panji Masyarakat*, no. 598, January 1989, p. 66-8

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid*, no. 600, 'Lagi, Siswi Berkerudung di-PHK [Again, Veiling students were dropped out]', p. 56-9

decided to continue struggling.<sup>51</sup> It was just in 1995 the trial was eventually won by the students.<sup>52</sup>

### An Uninteresting and Dangerous cloth

The stereotypes and negatives stances against veiling, which primarily occurred in public schools since 1980, influenced more broadly to other public spaces including family and neighborhood; for instance, a Muslim woman who wore the veil was ever intimidated by his father and called, “*Why didn’t you get on the camel?*” Muslim women’s decision to adopt veil could break their relationship with their parents and even with their prospective husband and parents in law; their parents were afraid that veiling women would have difficulty to find a mate.<sup>53</sup>

Moreover, in the late 1980s a rumor had been spread that a veiled woman had a connection to the issue of poisoned biscuits killing some children. The rumor degenerated the issue of veiling; for instance in 1989, accused of having spread poison under her headscarf, a veiled woman, Fadillah, was massively beaten up in the market of Rawu in Serang, Banten where the victim almost died;<sup>54</sup> and then in 1991, a veiled woman in Central Java was accused of thief and then sexually abused by the security of supermarket.<sup>55</sup>

<sup>51</sup> *Panji Masyarakat*, no. 623, September 1989, p. 20-6

<sup>52</sup> See *Revolusi Jilbab*, 50-69

<sup>53</sup> *Revolusi Jilbab*, p. 48-9

<sup>54</sup> Darul Aqsha, Dick van der Meij and Johan H. Mueleman, *Islam In Indonesia*, 68

<sup>55</sup> *Panji Masyarakat*, no. 674, February 1991. “Mila Diajak Damai oleh Dynasty”

### Theatrical and Musical supports

The movement of Jilbab gained supports from Indonesian Muslim intellectuals such as Emha Ainun Najib, a critical Muslim figure. He firstly reacted to the issue publicly by reading famous poems, known as *Lautan Jilbab* (the ocean of jilbab) when he attended the theatrical performances of Ramadan held by Shalahuddin teather in Universitas Gajah Mada (Gajah Mada University, UGM), Jogjakarta in 1986. In the later, he staged theatrical performances entitled *Lautan Jilbab* which successfully attracted thousands of people in mosques, universities and other public places over several different cities of Indonesia. He was often to recite his thirty poems of *jilbab* which consist of thirty three poems when he attended certain occasions.<sup>56</sup>

His theatrical performances showed not only artistic aspects but also propagation of *jilbab* and social critics toward the government policy on it. His poems describe *Jilbab* as the strong symbol of struggle, as we can see in the following paragraph,

“ Jilbab is the song of our standpoints, the ink of our decision, the preliminary of our struggle. Jilbab is the letter of our believes, the long way of our study, the process of our searching. Jilbab is the attempt of our courage in the middle of fear education which is neatly structured. Jilbab is the spark of light in the middle of darkness, the tough honesty in the middle of falsehood days. Jilbab is the

<sup>56</sup> Emha Ainun Najib, *Syair Lautan Jilbab* (Jombang: Yayasan al-Muhammady, 1989), 5

experiment of tenderness in facing the brutality of time in life. Jilbab is Jilbab is the attempt of protection from attacks.”<sup>57</sup>

His poetries which inspired many people were then published in a book, entitled *Syair Lautan Jilbab* (the poetry of Jilbab Ocean).

Moreover, Muslim musicians such as Bimbo also participated in supporting the veiling students by releasing a song, entitled *Aisyah Adinda Kita* (Aisyah Our Siter) which was actually written by a famous national poet, Taufik Ismail:<sup>58</sup>

Aisyah, our sister who is polite and beautiful  
 Averaging nine in her SMP and SMA grades  
 Competent in composition and organization  
 Since Muharram one four zero one  
 Wore the jilbab covering her hair  
 How appropriate the Muslim dress is

Aisyah, our sister who is polite and pretty

<sup>57</sup> The Indonesian texts is “Jilbab ini lagu sikap kami, tinta keputusan kami, langkah dini perjuangan kami. Jilbab ini surat keyakinan kami, jalan panjang belajar kami, proses pencarian kami. Jilbab ini percobaan keberanian di tengah pendidikan ketakutan yang tertata dengan rapi. Jilbab ini percikan cahaya dari tengah kegelapan, alotnya kejujuran di tengah hari-hari dusta. Jilbab ini eksperimen kelembutan untuk meladeni jam-jam brutal dari kehidupan. Jilbab ini usaha perlindungan dari sergapan-sergapan”: see Emha Ainun Najib, *Syair Lautan Jilbab*, 56

<sup>58</sup> Nina Surtiretna, *Anggun Berjilbab* (Bandung: Al-Bayan, 1993), 12

Has been top of her class for three years  
 A future engineer and a star of campus  
 On Muharram month one four zero four  
 She still wears the head-scarved  
 How appropriate the Muslim dress is

Aisyah, our sister  
 Does not say much  
 Aisyah, our sister  
 She just leads by example

There are ten Aisyahs wearing headscarves  
 There are hundreds Aisyahs wearing headscarves  
 There are a million Aisyahs wearing headscarves  
 There are a million Aisyah, Aisyah our sister<sup>59</sup>

### Revision on Schools Uniform policy

The government finally revised the uniform policy in 1991 allowing students to wear “special uniforms” that means a headscarf and long skirts. Even so, some educational institution kept forbidding their students to adopt headscarf. In 1993 for instance, some schools in Kediri, East Java and Bengkalis Riau banned their students to wear headscarf and asked them to move to other schools. The discrimination also continued to appear in Jakarta where public universities did not accept

<sup>59</sup> Moeflich Hasbullah, “Cultural Presentation of the Muslim Middle Class in Contemporary Indonesia”, *Studia Islamika*, vol. VII, no. 2, 2000, 26-27

prospective students who adopted headscarf to follow the entrance test. In contrast to the reality, the spokesman of the ministry of education and culture stated the institution never banned headscarf.<sup>60</sup>

### Popularizing Jilbab

This term actually had been found in *Maleisch-Nederlandsch* dictionary (1877), describing it as 'a long and wide dress of Muslim woman or long veil'.<sup>61</sup> However Indonesian dictionaries in the 1950 had not adopted *jilbab* yet as an Indonesian term for women headscarf. Then it was just in the 1980s, Indonesian dictionaries began adopting it as Indonesian terms, such as *Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia* (1988) that defines Jilbab as a long wide and dress along with headscarf that covers head, a part of face and breast.<sup>62</sup>

This definition presumably was just copied from the Arabic term, as we can see in Q 33: 59, since it does not fit with the developing issues on *jilbab* in the 1980s. The style of *jilbab* that became burning issue in the 1980s was just like *kerudung*, but it covers all head completely, showing only face; it then is usually called 'tight veil'. However, *jilbab* and *kerudung* in the present are

now generally used to denote women's headscarf, long or short, wide or medium.

Indonesian printed Media contributed in introducing and popularizing the new term *jilbab*, even the case of veiling in over the 1980s was called *Kasus Jilbab* (*jilbab* case). Within this decade the term became more popular than *kerudung*; magazines such as *Panji Masyarakat* and *Tempo* and newspapers such as *Pelita* and *Pikiran Rakyat* had also participated in popularizing this term.<sup>63</sup>

The popularity of *jilbab* was also supported by audio visual media; as we can see in the popular two Islamic songs, *Jilbab Putih* (white *jilbab*) and *Busana Muslim* (Islamic Dress); both songs were popularized by Nashida Ria kasidah group.<sup>64</sup> This first song was written by M. Ali Sukarno in the 1980s and became popular in the 1980s and 1990s. The writer of song explicitly states that *jilbab* is the symbol of purity, religiosity, beauty

<sup>63</sup> For instance, "Catatan Kronologis Masalah Jilbab (notes on the chronology of *jilbab* case)", *Buletin Majelis Ulama*, no 20, September 1983; "Jilbab Menunggu Fatwa (*jilbab* awaiting fatwa)", *Panji Masyarakat*, no. 623, 1989; "Pelajar SMAN 3 Bandung Tanya Soal Jilbab (the students of senior high schools 3 Bandung Questioning *jilbab*)", *Pelita*, August 22, 1984.

<sup>64</sup> Nasyida Ria music group was founded in 1975 in Kauman and led by H Choliq Zain, and it became the first Islamic Modern Music in Indonesia. Its popularity brought it to get some awards and to perform concerts in Germany and Malaysia. It has released 32 albums in Indonesian language and two albums in Arabic language. The first album, *Alabadil Makabul*, was produced in 1978. Under P.T. Ira Puspita Record's label, those albums was spread nationally;

see

<http://www.suaramerdeka.com/harian/0408/20/bud02.htm>, accessed in September 30, 2009

and modesty, as we can see in the following lyrics,

Your Jilbab waves every time  
along the road, I see you  
your *jilbab* muffles desire  
your dress calms heart down  
the charm of your *jilbab* is elegant  
on your face  
the slight of your smile enhances  
beauty  
because of your *jilbab*, I become  
charmed  
that is the mirror of your *taqwa* in  
your heart  
White *jilbab* is the symbol of  
purity  
grace heart, full of love, firmly  
commitment  
White *jilbab* is like the light  
that shines in the middle of dark  
night  
Behind your *jilbab* is the *taqwa*  
soul  
Behind your smile is bright  
future<sup>65</sup>

The second song, *Busana Muslim*, was also popularized Nasyida Ria group. Like in the first *jilbab* song, the writer of the song explicitly states that the symbol of piety, beauty and modesty, as we can see in the following lyrics,

<sup>65</sup> Berkibar *jilbabmu* di setiap waktu. Di sepanjang jalan ku lihat kamu. Gebyar *jilbabmu* meredam nafsu. Busanamu menyegarkan qalbu. Pesona *jilbabmu* anggun di wajahmu. Sekilas senyummu menambah aju. Karena *jilbabmu* aku terpaku. Cermin takwa iman di dadamu. *Jilbab jilbab putih lambang kesucian*. Lembut hati penuh kasih teguh pendirian. *Jilbab jilbab putih* bagaikan cahaya. Yang bersinar di tengah malam gelap gulita. Di balik *jilbabmu* ada jiwa yang takwa. Di balik senyummu tersimpan masa depan cerah

*Jilbab* is the symbol of Muslim dress

*Jilbab* is the mirror of religious woman

*Jilbab*, no need to feel ashamed  
*Jilbab* makes more beautiful and pretty

wearing veil shows a healthy soul  
polite dress will not stimulate crime/ sexual harassment

many young man will get tempted  
because of stimulating dress

be careful when you wear dress.<sup>66</sup>

The media that actively exposed the issue invited the government and its intellectual citizens to compromise and negotiate the solution of the problem, not only activist Muslims but also Muslim in general got involved in gaining freedom of expression in the public sphere. Supported by many Indonesian Muslims in all levels, Muslim students eventually got their freedom of religious expression by veiling and deserved positive stances; some considered the case of veiling that was won by the revivalists as the winning of Allah (Islam) which was related to the implementation of sharia.<sup>67</sup>

The songs and poems described above shows how Indonesian Muslim popularized Islamic issues which would reinforce the struggle of senior high

<sup>66</sup> *Jilbab jilbab lambang busana muslim. Jilbab jilbab cermin wanita alim. Jilbab jilbab jilbab tak perlu malu. Jilbab jilbab bikin cantik dan aju. Memakai jilbab pancarkan jiwa yang sehat. Busana sopan tidak merangsaang maksiat. Banyak pemuda kan tergoda. Karena busana yang merangsang. Hati hati memakai busana.*

<sup>67</sup> Revolusi *Jilbab*, 82

school students in defending their rights. Music, as stated by Gilroy, is not merely music but it inspires “a great deal of courage”:

The power of music in developing our struggles by communicating information, organizing consciousness and testing out, deploying, or amplifying the forms of subjectivity which are required by political agency, individual and collective, defensive and transformational, demands attention to both the formal attributes of this tradition of expression and its distinctive moral basis..in the simplest terms, by posing the world as it is against the world as the racially subordinated went it to be, this musical culture supplies a great deal of the courage required to go on living in the present.<sup>68</sup>

## CONCLUSION

From the description above, it is clear that the debate on veiling has transformed into the issue of the resurgence of Islamic politic. The Islamic activism and propagation had significant roles in raising the growing number of veiling students at public schools which can be seen as a success for revivalist Muslims in their political expressions. However, to avoid this political tendency, the government issued a policy that would prevent students in state offices and public schools to adopt veiling, on the ground that this practice was seen as a violation of the basic code of the school

<sup>68</sup> Simon Frith, *Performing rites : on the value of popular music* ( Oxford University Press, 1996), 118

uniform. Veiling at public school was considered as a form of resistance to the state authorities. Thanks to the media that exposed supports from public figures which then changed official's' policy on veiling, the veiling in public places became more accepted.[]

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