

WARIA’S RELIGION AND INTERRELIGIOUS DIALOGUE: A Case of Waria Community in Kebaya NGO, Yogyakarta

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Abstrak: Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk memahami ‘Agama waria’ dan dialog antariman, dalam artian bahwa mereka mempunyai pengalaman keberagamannya. Mereka punya pandangannya tersendiri tentang Tuhan, tentang ibadah, tentang takdir, dan dosa. Mereka memandang Tuhan dalam intimasi personal yang mendalam. Mereka juga memosisikan Tuhan sebagai satu-satunya dzat yang membuat mereka tercipta sebagai waria. Terlepas dari bagaimana pandangan mereka tentang dosa dan tidaknya “menjadi waria”, yang jelas relasi mereka dengan Tuhan masih sering terjadi di ruang privat.

This research aims to know more detail about ‘Waria’s religion’ in term of their religious experiences—and their interfaith dialouge. Waria also have their own interpretation about God, worship, destiny, as well as sin. They worship in a deep personal intimacy. They also consider Him (God) as One Essence wanting and determining them to be as they are. In spite of difference opinions on whether becomes waria is sinful, waria’s relation with God is still limited in private public.

Keywords: Waria, Religion, Interreligious dialouge.

INTRODUCTION

One of reasons why studying waria would be challenging is that they are living surrounding us, but they have infrequently

received an appropriate recognition from our community. Waria is often regarded as a group of people who is different from male and female although they should socially positioned as men who have high nature of femininity.

There are two general types of gender in the sense of binary definition (male and female), and waria is regarded as *the third gender*. However, this stereotype, in some extents, is problematic. It could be related to the extent to which waria is socially perceived in the certain communities. In the toilets of TRS (*Taman Remaja Surabaya*), for example, waria's identity seems to be adjusted with male (*pria*), not female (*wanita*). There are only two toilets there indicating: "wanita" dan "pria/waria" (Tom Boellstroff, 2004: 182).

It means that waria is not a kind of gender category apart from both of them. Tom Boellstroff refers waria to *male transvestites* or *male transgender* (Tom Boellsroff, 2004:161). They are physically men, have normal genitals, but psychologically feel like women (Koeswiwarno, 2004:5). Consequently, they have inflexible attitude; their bodies are men, but the ways they walk, talk, and dress up are like women.

It is a long history in which we have to track for waria's life in Indonesia. The historical traditions have shown that *Gemblak* or *Ludruk* in East Java have performed women acted by men. In such tradition, they have a cultural position in the light of art performance, but they have socially been marginalized because they are frequently associated with prostitution life.

Today, it is ironically recognized that there is not exact calculation to amount of waria in Yogyakarta. It has been caused by some factors. *Firstly*, there are no institutions, either private or governmental, which carefully collect data of waria. *Dinas Sosial* which is regarded as the most responsible institution for this case has never made an inventory of waria. *Secondly*, the main organization of waria which was known as Iwayo (*Ikatan Waria Yogyakarta*)¹ has

1. Concrete existence and actualization of waria in Yogyakarta society occurred in June, 1980. At that time, a artist, the late Yoyok Aryo succeed to gather waria around Yogyakarta and contacted Persatuan Wartawan Indonesia (PWI) Yogyakarta branch on June 13th, 1980 to declare community of DIY Waria. However, program's intensity of community slowly decreased until it transformed into newer community called Iwayo (Ikatan Waria Yogyakarta) led by Christine Tambroni. Main focused agenda of this

not been followed by majority of waria in this city, so it is difficult to get an access about numbers of waria. *Thirdly*, waria is a community with high mobility, which means that many waria in Yogyakarta are immigrants from other cities.

The social rejection is one of factors why waria becomes a marginalized community which is latent issue today. Politically waria has insufficient bargaining position as voter or political leader. The unclear card identity, difficult profession, social stereotype, and small amount of quantity are common causes of social distrust to them in political level of government.

The human right is an issue which is mostly associated to waria. The discrimination to them has still occurred until today. Some NGOs which concern about humanity and gender have attempted to advocate them for better social relation. Yet, discrimination problem has been unfinished hitherto.

However, among issues within which waria has been involved, there is one issue which is rarely discussed: religious issue. It is important to notice that waria is commonly regarded as people with transgender characteristics, HIV/AIDS, and other social stereotypes which restrict them, such as *bancing*, *bencong*, and the like. But, how are about their religions? Are they religious community? How do they conduct interreligious dialogue with elites of religious groups?

These questions are rarely asked to further explore their religious lives. This reason has been also guide-assistance for this research. This study is aimed to perceive waria in the light of religious perspective. Waria are positioned as people who have certain religious values and practices. However, there are some exceptions by which waria are commonly called as "non-religious" people in the different way.

This research has not attempted to study whole population of waria in Yogyakarta. The samples are represented into community based waria, Kebaya (Keluarga Besar Komunitas Waria), an NGO

community is social agendas for waria. Koeswinarno, *ibid*, pp. 64-65. Later, on December 18th, 2006, due to massive cases of HIV/AIDS suffered waria, NGO Kebaya (Keluarga Besar Komunitas Waria) was built to deal with it. This NGO also advocates empowerment and protection to waria with HIV/AIDS.

concerning about empowerment of waria and dealing with HIV/AIDS issues. The former and executive of the community, Mami Vinolia Wakijo, has argued that Kebaya is actually extension of Iwayo (Ikatan Waria Yogyakarta) built on May 1, 1983. In Kebaya NGO, there are four members with different religions.² However, they have full respect for their own religious experiences each other.

The religious issue is sensitive but important problem to discuss in a relation with waria community in Kebaya NGO. This is sensitive due to fact that in recent development, the members of Kebaya NGO are still difficult to worship outside of their own community, so it is important to discover how they interact with the others in the context of religious activities. This research is aimed, one of them, to portray this issue.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The themes of waria have been commonly discussed in the field of medical, political, social, and cultural aspects. However, it is rare to deal with it regarding with religion. There are some sources guiding this research. One of them is Koeswinarno's *Hidup Menjadi Waria* (2004). It could be said that this book is a primary source which initially explores waria lives in Yogyakarta. There are two big themes discussed in this book, such as social space and future of waria. For Koeswinarno, waria has low social acceptance as "normal" community, so they should reformulate their strategies to survive in the future. In the end, there are two remaining choices: become homosexual or genital circumcision. This book is important in building the initial framework for this study, but Koewinarno does not discuss further how waria did their religious experiences in Yogyakarta (Koeswinarno, 2004:1).

Meanwhile, Tom Boellstorf, in his article "Playing Back the Nation: Waria, Indonesian Transvestites" (2004) has clearly explained social relation of waria in Taman Remaja Surabaya (TRS). He wanted to know waria's subjectivity in the contested point of identity between male (*pria*) and female (*wanita*) (Tom

2. Those four are Sarinah, Ajin, and Oki Iwan (all of them are Moslem) and Kirana (Christian)

Boellsroff, 2004:182). For Boellstorff, TRS is a space in which waria identity is socially admitted. He has provided an example of toilet in TRS which is initially named with “wanita” dan “pria” in the nameplate, and now it has been changed into “wanita” dan “pria/waria”. He has also pointed out that in Indonesia; waria's subjectivity is commonly based on their performance, not their identity status. In this article, he has also clarified a little bit of waria's perception about their Gods. For him, waria has believed that “become waria” is a gift from God which can't be refused. This article is contributive for this research, but it does not further explore how waria has conducted interreligious dialogue with elites of religious groups.

In a next year, after the previous article has been published, Tom Boellstorff did additional research of waria in the light of homosexuality in Indonesia. His article “Between Religion and Desire: Being Muslim and Gay in Indonesia” (Tom Boellsroff, 2005: 575) has provided an exploration about how gays perceive and position themselves in religion. In this work, Boellstorff has attempted to discuss homosexuality in a relation with religion, but subject of his study is not waria, but gays. For Boellstorff, gay community has been more influenced by orthodoxy of Islamic doctrine which positioned them as part of Sodom. However, some of them have argued that what happens in them is a destiny that neither can't be changed nor refused. In some extents, this article is helpful for building a theoretical framework for this study in seeing a relationship between waria and religion, but in other extents it does not explain interreligious dialogue in which gays have been involved in their daily basis.

This research is at position to provide a landscape of waria's religious patterns and their participation in building an interreligious dialogue with elites of religious groups. In regards with three works above, this study has admitted that social stereotype, as Koeswinarno (2004) argued, is very influential on how waria perceives their Gods. This study is also affirmative to Boellstorff's work in both of his articles that waria have believed that “become waria” is a blessed gift from God. However, this study has found different result from what Bollstorff has done. For instance, in the case of sin, not all of waria have believed that “become waria” is a

gift; some of them has been doubly said that “become waria” can be sinful under certain circumstances. This study also takes a different position from these sources in its analysis on how waria have conducted interreligious dialogue with elites of religious groups. Until now, as long as we have observed, the study about this theme does not still exist.

ABOUT KEBAYA NGO Development and Institution

Kebaya is the only one NGO which attempts to focus on empowerment of waria in Yogyakarta. In its historical development, this NGO is an extension of Iwayo (Ikatan Waria Yogyakarta) which has been built since May 1, 1983. The transformation of Iwayo into Kebaya has been discussed on anxiety that Iwayo has not really concerned about HIV/AIDS issues in waria community.

For this reason, this NGO which has notarial deed No. 38/22 January 2007 is aimed to reach the main mission “Waria Yogyakarta Would Be Free from HIV/AIDS”. This institution is located at Gowongan Lor JT III/148 Yogyakarta about 30 meters from crossroads of Yogyakarta Monument. As like other NGOs, Kebaya has also structure of organization, including Consultant (GKR Hemas Dr. Yandri Wijayanti S. Ph. D.), Director/Manager (Vinolia Wakijo), Field Coordinator (Arym Marisca), Case Manager (Rully Malay), Finance (Yuni Shara), and Field Officers (Yetti R, Wulan A, Tika A, Sisi A, Susi Arumingrum).

Kebaya NGO has funding supports from the members’ subsidies. It also builds institutional relationship with some funding, such as UNAIDS, HIVOS, and GF. Among many programs this NGO has realized, the empowerment of waria with ODHA is the most important. This community has conducted care-support treatments and VCT test regularly in the six areas of waria communities in Yogyakarta.³ In the scientific level, this NGO has

3. In the data base profile, Kebaya NGO stands with eight waria communities, such as *Kricak Community* (Sidomulyo) with 39 members, *Badran Community* with 19 members, *Lempuyangan* and *Solo Street Community* with 33 members, *Sleman Community* with 25 members, *Bantuk Community* with 42 members, and other communities with 71 members. What makes this database unique is because it only

involved with both individual and collective researches about waria by means of making relation with some universities in Yogyakarta. It has also produced a documentary film about waria and waria photo exhibition.

Generally speaking, Kebaya NGO has strong social solidarity and commitment to unite all members within one community. However, one of the special issues which are still not traced in this community is religious aspect. Is religion for them not really important? Or do they have other reasons to make religious relation with other religious people in general?

Religious Life

Profile of this community does not mention programs trying to cover religious based activities as well as religious background of every waria in the six places of Yogyakarta. This condition is challenging in the sense of that waria life could be regarded as "mysterious". Instead of taking clear identity, today's debate is on adequacy of legal identity of gender in their identity cards.

However, it does not mean that Kebaya NGO has no concerns with religious practices. *Pesantren Al-Fatah* is one of Islamic organizations together with Kebaya NGO for development of waria. This Islamic institution is specialized for giving Islamic education to waria. Some lecturers of UIN Sunan Kalijaga have been involved in this institution.⁴

Additionally, Kebaya NGO has also been involved with efforts of interreligious dialogue with some elites of religious groups. This is what will be further discussed on the special chapter. Generally speaking, the interreligious dialogue between Kebaya NGO members and religious elites is not formal one in the ceremonial events. It takes a form of personal encounter between both of them.

Geographically, Kebaya NGO is located at the housing in which most of residents are Muslims. Kebaya NGO building takes a

includes of name, place, and date of birth, home town, last educational level, and occupation. There is no information about religion in the data base. Kebaya NGO Team, "Database Pendampingan Waria LSM Kebaya DIY Per-31 Mei 2011", Yogyakarta: LSM Kebaya (unpublished).

4. One of UIN Sunan Kalijaga lecturers actively involving in Al-Fatah Islamic Institution is Muzayyin, brother of Abdul Muiz Ghazali, an activist of Nahdlatul Ulama Indonesia.

place nearly with the Muslim family house. The result of interview has shown that there is no relatively conflict between Kebaya NGO members and their neighbors. Rather, the neighbors have high tolerance with the existence of this NGO in participating for empowerment of waria in Yogyakarta.

There are four members living in this base camp. Three of them are Muslims, and another one is Christian. However, they are seemingly accommodated in harmonious relation each other. There is no high tension found in their religious affairs. Moreover for them, talking about “religion”, is something “strange”, because the religion is a private one.

“WARIA’S RELIGION”⁵

How to define waria’s religion? The term *waria’s religion* is not intended to indicate that waria's religion is different from religion which other people formally embrace. Instead, this term is used to emphasize the importance of religion for waria and to show that waria has own transcendental spirit just like other religious people.

The *waria’s religion*, here, is defined as religious patterns practiced by waria as well as the ways people responded them in social context. To further explain waria’s religion in a relation with interreligious dialogue, the first thing to do is identifying their religious experiences in the term of worship, sin, and destiny, and then seeking for practical possibilities in which they are involved in interreligious dialogue with other waria, society, and elites of religious groups.

Worship

Waria community members tend to define worship as personal activities. Although worship also has social impact, they find it risky to get this chance. This comes from the difficulties as well as

5. Conceptually, term 'waria's religion' is modified from term *agama pelacur* popularized by Nur Syam in his *Agama Pelacur: Dramaturgi Transendental* (Yogyakarta: LKiS, 2011). In this book, Syam tried to discover religious life of a prostitute using social dramaturgy analysis. This subtitle is also trying to explain religious experience of waria, but the targeted output is about how the experience influences waria in building interreligious dialogue with elites of religious people.

dilemmas to perform worship in public places, such as in mosque or church. Mami Vinolia told about how difficult for him to perform Friday prayer in a mosque is.

That is the problem (about performing prayer in mosque). I am confused how to behave. We don't perform Friday prayer not because we don't want to do it. We just think about how other people feel and think of us while performing Friday prayer. Instead of being focus in prayer, they will feel bothered enough.⁶

What Mami Vinolia said shows an unfinished social problem in waria's daily worship activity. Friday prayer which every Moslem male should be performed is 'obliged' not to perform because of social stereotype. However, phrase "we just think about how people feel and think of us while praying" implies a concession attitude that every Muslim shouldn't do due on equality doctrine of all human being while performing prayer.

Because of worship they perform tends to regard with their personal intimacy with God, command to perform worship is not obeyed with sense of compulsion at all. "For me, religion is about pleasantness in performing worships,"⁷ as Mami Vinolia said. Upon on what he said, we believe that waria, in some extents, is very religious more than common religious people. During observation, Mami Vinolia seems never force or commands other warias to perform prayers, although he was born in a strong religious family.

"You all are Moslems, so just do the prayers," that is what Mami Vinolia kept saying to Kebaya NGO's members. This means that actually, waria's religious responsibility on God is strong enough. Although they are marginalized in social life, they still consider and are sure about God's existence which is source for every gift and things they have right now.

6. Interview with Mami Vinolia Wakijo, on February 20, 2013, at Kebaya NGO base camp.

7. Interview with Mami Vinolia Wakijo, on February 20, 2013, at Kebaya NGO base camp.

Sin

Waria community members differently interpret the meaning of sin. At least, based on their interpretation, they can be divided into two categories, i.e. those who consider that being waria is sinful, and others who think that it doesn't matter to be waria (in other word, the later category seems to consider that waria is a blessed destiny).

The former group is mainly influenced by Islamic doctrine of Lot's story and Sodom people. Although some verses talking about Prophet Lot's story are still problematic, they really influence the way waria look at themselves as well as interpret the meaning of sin especially in taking sexual intercourse with the same sex.⁸

Well, based on Lot's story, we are not Sodom people. Sodom consists of gay and lesbian instead of waria. Those people wanted to take sexual intercourse with Angels, but we don't want the same. We liked to do it with handsome men. It is undeniable about strange feeling when I listen to the story. Feeling guilty and sinful is probably true, but it is the destiny. Then what should we do?⁹

What Sarinah confessed above shows that Lot's story still influences enough on how waria interpret the sin is. Here, essence of sin is specially interpreted in a matter of sexual relation no matter what the condition beyond the relation is, such as amounts of sexual partners or treatment during the sexual activity.

However, there is also waria who interprets the sin in practical frame. This is said by Oki in our short conversation as below:

8. Due to Islamic perspective, *zina* or adultery is generally defined as illegal relationship between men and women, while anal sex which is usually performed with the same sex is sinful. However, sinful aspect of those two practices need to be further discussed and explained, because Al-Quran only mentions Lot's people instead of Sodomi or Gomorrah. Meaning to say, homosexual relationship is excluded in sinful actions category. Stephen O. Murray and Will Roscoe, "Conclusion", *Islamic Homosexuality: Culture, History and Literature*, eds. Murray and Roscoe, New York: New York University Press, 1997, p. 307.

9. Interview with Sarinah, February 20, 2013, at Kebaya NGO base camp.

I think it depends on action. Generally, all religion dislikes us. However, in a matter of sinful or not, it is all about choice. If both parts in any relation are willing to do, there is no sin then. But, taking sexual intercourse with several partners may be sinful, because it is also bad for health.¹⁰

One reason why Iwan considers that being waria is sinful is because practical reasons. According to Iwan, a matter of sin in being waria depends on how waria interacts with the partner. When both parts are glad and willing for the relationship, the sin can be decreased or erased at all. Meanwhile, for Iwan, waria can also get sin if for not keeping God's blessing by taking sexual intercourse with several partners which is so risky to suffer HIV/AIDS.

Destiny

This kind of talk is actually regarded with previous explanation about whether it is sinful to be a waria. In this extent, waria community members usually assume that 'being waria' is not sinful, because it is a destiny even a God's blessing.

God created them as waria for His own will and they can't neither deny nor reject it. Refusing God's gift is precisely a sinful thing, because God has determined them to be waria. So that's why, there is no reason to say that being waria is a sinful one.

I am not willing to be a waria, but this is God's gift. I never tried to change my self into a woman, but since I was a child, I had had feminine characters. Therefore, I just want to keep the body and soul God gave me. There are few people who intentionally change penis into vagina, such as Dorce. I don't want to be like them. This is a God's gift, I will never change it. I will keep it as always.¹¹

10. Interview with Oki Irwan, February 20, 2013, at Kebaya NGO basecamp.

11. Interview with Mami Vinolia, February 20, 2013, at Kebaya NGO basecamp.

What Mami Vinolia said above indicates that according to them, being a waria is not sinful, because it is God The Most Merciful's blessed gift. As a waria, Mami Vinolia said that he never dreamed or wanted to be waria, but since he was born, he was as he is and his fate is nothing but being a waria. Therefore, he just receives and keeps everything on his hand.

For Mami Vinolia, sinfulness is not being a waria, but trying to change what God gave into something else which is different. Being a waria is a fate and everyone gets the fate has to receive what God wants them to be. Mami Vinolia says firmly about this.

If I changed my genital, would I get pregnant? Is it possible for me having womb? I wouldn't, would I? When the Angel asked me where the God's gift is, I will not able to answer if I had removed it. Otherwise, if I pass away, I will not care whether I will be showered in a way people use for female corpse or male one. I don't care at all.¹²

Mami Vinolia's conviction about destiny is really important here, especially about waria's self confidence. Considering "being waria" as a destiny even blessing is a kind of last fort they have when they regret about themselves as well as what they done so far. This is also closely related with how they interpret sexuality essence as a part of desire, because everyone has a desire and denying it is just a sinful one.

WARIA AND INTERRELIGIOUS DIALOGUE

In informal forums, Kebaya GNO actively involved in contributing and building interreligious dialogue with society, other waria, and elites of religious people at Yogyakarta. Surely here, the dialogue has two definitions. *Firstly*, dialogue and meeting of different perspective; *secondly*, concrete and real meeting with religious people; and *thirdly*, self-empowerment to open with the others in dialogue. By attending face to face dialogue, waria has

12. Interview with Mami Vinolia, February 20, 2013, at Kebaya NGO basecamp.

actually involved in multi perspective dialogue, between waria's perspective and religious people's perspective.

There are two perspectives used in defining interreligious dialogue here. The first is coming from St. Sunardi's idea in "The Dead End of Religious Dialogue in Indonesia" (Sunardi, 2001:55). For Sunardi, today's idea of dialogue is very limited. In Indonesia, the interreligious dialogue tends to be elitist, in which this activity is commonly undertaken and coordinated by the governmental institutions, including Minister of Religious Affairs. Consequently, the dialogue is merely aimed to protect the believers from proselytism (Sunardi, 2001:67). According to Sunardi, the interreligious dialogue is ideally directed one of them, to make an encounter between religious communities and society. Such dialogue can advance not only religious consciousness, but also social collectiveness to deal with social issues in Indonesia.

The second is Mansour Fakhri's idea of social transformation in his well-known *Jalan Lain: Manifesto Intelektual Organik* (Mansour Fakhri, 2002: 54). In this book, Fakhri has not directly mentioned "dialogue" as part of transformative movements. He has emphasized the importance of critical attitude to social change. What is expected from the interreligious dialogue should be aimed to achieve such goal: social transformation. In Fakhri's perspective of transformation, the interreligious dialogue is not merely regarded in normative way as a social encounter among religious communities. Such dialogue should be pragmatic in the sense of social transformation. For this purpose, those who are involved within the interreligious dialogue should have critical position to dominant party in social relation. The community of waria, for instance, is not merely guided to have dialogue, but also to empower them to have self-recognition about the importance of dialogue for social transformation.

Besides it, Kebaya NGO also attended interreligious dialogues with various communities. Some of them are kyai, pastor, and FPI. Having each other's interest, those communities tried to have interreligious dialogue with Kebaya NGO as an institution contributing for empowering waria in various aspects. Additionally, for the purpose of social transformation, Kebaya has actively been

involved in empowering waria for self-recognition in building the interreligious dialogue with other religious community.

Waria and Kiai

History of Kebaya NGO can't be separated with personal experience of Mami Vinolia who actively involves in founding and leading it up to now. In midst of interview, we can infer that personally, Vinolia has a close relation either with kyai or pastor. During process for getting having self-identity, Mami Vinolia ever visited a house of kyai in Yogyakarta. The kyai openly and warmly welcomed him and said that it is ok to be waria as long as Vinolia does well for others.

However, not everyone accepts existence of waria. Some elites of religious people are still wondering waria's status in hereafter. Some radical kyais also often underestimate them by saying that waria only deserves place in hell to be tortured there. Once upon a time, Mami Vinolia visited a religious figure and asked him to be repentant.

When he ordered us to read a verse, one of use was able to read it because he is alumnae of Tebuireng Islamic Boarding School. However, we were still blamed and accused.¹³

Dealing with this condition, Mami Vinolia usually strengthens herself by visiting Islamic boarding schools welcoming her well. Fortunately, not every elite of religious people treat them badly, as what Kyai Hamrolie did.

“Kyai Hamrolie was even more open and welcomed us better,” Mami Vinolia said. Hamrolie is a leader of Pesantren Senin-Kamis in Notoyudan, Ngampilan, Yogyakarta. The institution accepts waria, gay, and lesbian to be student living and studying there. This Islamic boarding school is initiated by Iwayo before it turned into Kebaya NGO.

13. Interview with Mami Vinolia, February 20, 2013, at Kebaya NGO basecamp.

Waria and Pastor

Besides kyai, NGO Kebaya members are also active in building interreligious relation with pastor. They actively involved in a meeting of Kaliurang Seminari. At that time, NGO member, Mami Vinolia, discussed with some pastors and academicians about waria's position in Christian. For Vinolia, it was a concrete step to reduce bad stereotype of Yogyakarta waria.

Moreover, one of pastors visited Kebaya NGO just to ask them about homosexuality. He came there because he was asked by his fellow about that issue, and he felt that Kebaya NGO members know this more than himself. According to Mami Vinolia, Kebaya NGO was really appreciative welcoming the pastor to discuss each other about homosexuality and Christian.

Besides in personal level, Kebaya NGO also attended many agendas in empowering waria by inviting elites of religious people, including pastors, to actively involve within it. For Kebaya NGO itself, those programs are urgent not only for showing and proving waria's existence, but also for actively building peace interreligious dialogue with pastor.

Waria and FPI

FPI (Front Pembela Islam) is intentionally included in Yogyakarta interfaith dialogues forum because it is rather radical religious organization which is usually hard to attend dialogue with waria. Instead of having dialogue, FPI often involved in sweeping actions for waria, as recently happened in Solo and Jakarta.

However in Yogyakarta, Kebaya NGP's proactive action in socializing waria's identity toward society had a significant aspect for FPI's acceptance on them. Uniquely, Mami Vinolia has a close relation with a staff leader of FPI namely Heri so that it is far easier and safer for attending various events regarding with waria in Yogyakarta.

I well befriend with some of FPI members. One of them is Heri. I bravely attended waria contest in front of Vredeburg fort comfortably because there is no worry for FPI's sweeping. In Kaliurang, there was a seminar talking about lesbian swept by FPI

and I was there for giving acknowledgment. I found no bad or rough treatment. Later, I told Heri about this and he just said: “It is better for your friends to be like you, having achievement and skill.” I just answered, “Everyone is not same. They have own advantages and disadvantages. Not everyone is like me”.¹⁴

Institutionally, Kebaya NGO doesn't have close and formal relation with FPI, but personally, Mami Vinolia befriends with some members of FPI. Certainly, this leads to more serious interreligious dialogues, especially for discussing how waria is considered by FPI members who tend to be rather radical.

For Vinolia, Kebaya NGO is in fortune because it lies in Yogyakarta which is largely known as a city of tolerance. He assumed that Yogyakarta is really special than other cities. This also supports harmony between Kebaya NGO and FPI up to now. “In other cities, waria is usually swept and raided, but it doesn't happen in Yogyakarta. That makes Yogyakarta special. I am sure everywhere here is safe. Meanwhile in Jakarta and Solo, there is not safe place for us,” Mami Vinolia said in end of the interview.

ANALYSIS

God and Personal Intimacy

This research shows that waria's relation with God is still in personal level. Meaning to say, worship is still just interpreted as personal intimacy only so that it is performed in private places.¹⁵ They know how importance worship is, but it is not number one priority in interpreting God. They perform prayer, but they don't force others to do as they do, as well as to perform worshipping in public places.

14. Interview with Mami Vinolia, February 20, 2013, at Kebaya NGO basecamp.

15. Further explanation about *personal intimacy* can be read in Joe Masterlo's article, “Intimacy: Religion vs. Spirituality”, <http://www.joemasterleolcsw.com/2012/01/21/intimacy-religion-vs-spirituality/>, accessed on March 12, 2013.

This shows that social stereotype really influences how they interpret and see God. Waria like to meet the God in lonely places where others can't reach the place and find them out. Mami Vinolia and his friends' decision not to perform Friday prayer is a proof that a matter of social acceptance really troubles waria.

Besides that, they accentuate religion on pleasantness in performing worship. This leads them think that worship is a private matter of each individual. It is important to notice that they do worship as men. In performing prayer, they often use kopiah while in pilgrimage, they also act as men. Here, Mami Vinolia plays a good role by forcing waria to consider themselves as men and not to lie to their selves by considering that they are women.

Interpreting God is often regarded with a matter of sin and destiny. On these two issues, Kebaya NGO members are in different opinions about how God really treats them. In one hand, they are still bothered by orthodoxy doctrine about people of Lot's story regarded with them. This makes them less confidence to talk about God especially in a matter of their personality.

Meanwhile, on the other hand, some of them consider that being waria is not sinful because it is God's gift. For those who think like this, being waria is even a blessing because God had determined them to be as they are since they were born. Refusing it is refusing God's blessing they have received. This is such an undeniable destiny.

One time, Mami Vinolias was asked, "Does God think that you are a man, woman or waria?" He simply answered, "God considers me as waria, neither man nor woman. Being waria is what God wants about me". Although this statement represents that they are the third gender beyond man and woman, actually they can't refuse or reject the fact they are normal men with feminine mind and thought in talking about sin and destiny.

“Personal” Interreligious Dialogue

Since it was firstly born and run, Kebaya NGO has not been actively involved in building formal interreligious dialogues with elites of religious people. However, this doesn't mean that they never been involved in this kind of dialogue. In some chances, as it was explained before, they had dialogues with some elites of religious

people. They are also often considered as more knowledgeable one to talk about homosexuality instead of elites of religious people.

However, interreligious dialogue in Kebaya NGO is still in personal scope. The dialogue is not formally and directly facilitated by Kebaya NGO yet. It runs and occurs individually, as what Mami Vinolia experienced due to his board connection. He has good and intense communication with kyai, pastor, as well as FPI member. This close relationship facilitates him to be in intense interreligious dialogue with them all.

However, as Mami Vinolia said, Kebaya NGO is not proactive yet in building interreligious dialogues, and they just give a feedback so far. Meaning to say, they don't be proactively involved by visiting elites of religious people to talk to them formally and intentionally. Perhaps, the reason is because they feel it is enough to live their life without having to talk and interact with elites of religious people. Consequently, they are more often visited instead of going somewhere to visit anybody.

Besides that, interreligious dialogue of Kebaya NGO only happened in Yogyakarta so far. Those who visit Kebaya NGO are also from Yogyakarta only. This indicates that interreligious dialogue in this NGO is still in local level. Discussed topic is also about one same thing, i.e. homosexuality.

Anyway, in various moments, as what Mami Vinolia and his followers did in Seminari Yogyakarta and befriended with FPI, priest and pastor, Kebaya NGO is also institutionally involved, although it is still facilitated by personal relationship and friends' link of Mami Vinolia. Mami Vinolia is playing important role here in building and keeping interreligious relationship between waria and elites of religious people.

Additionally, one thing to be concerned with interreligious dialogues is about minimum involvement of Al-Falah Islamic institution coordinated by this NGO. Mami Vinolia herself admitted that Kebaya NGO doesn't intervene anything about it.

If any buddy's here want to stay at the boarding, we please them. I don't force them at all. It was them who choose to stay here (Kebaya NGO) or get living outside. I find no problem on that. I

don't also intervene managerial of institution. I will attend in social programs but for educational or religious program, I seldom attend.¹⁶

All by all, it can be inferred that interreligious dialogue Kebaya NGO attended is still in personal level, especially what happens to Mami Vinolia and his close relationship with some elites of religious people. Surely, Mami Vinolia has important role in keeping interreligious relation, besides his own skill and achievement enabling him to easily interact with society. He is a good beginning for building more serious interreligious dialogue in larger scope.

“Critical” Interreligious Dialogue

The critical dialogue assumes that empowerment of waria is aimed not only to involve waria in making responsibility for the others, but also to make themselves be aware of building an interreligious dialogue. The idea of ‘critical’ is coming from Mansour Fakih’s notion about transformative movement in society. This movement which is known as ‘organic intellectual’ acquires the communities’ efforts to have critical attitude for social transformation.

In relation with waria, the critical dialogue is defined as waria’s efforts in making them open with other people without having influence from external factors, such as their involvement in NGO. It means that Kebaya has a facilitating function to increase their consciousness in building the interreligious dialogue with the others. This is one of important steps for social transformation of waria in specific and social community in general.

The Gong Xi Fat Chai parade and Waria’s Reunion in cooperation with GKI Semarang is two of transformative agendas administered by Kebaya to make waria having collective consciousness to build an interreligious dialogue with other religious community. Furthermore, their institutional dependency on Kebaya can be decreased by means of their involvement in these progressive programs.

16. Interview with Mami Vinolia, February 20, 2013, at Kebaya NGO basecamp.

This critical movement which is aimed to create a social transformation has reflected itself within waria's creativity in developing their own activities of both programs. In addition to increase their self-rule, this movement is hopefully to make waria be aware of the importance of their active participation in interreligious dialogue.

Indeed, it is too far to expect a "big result" from such programs. However, what Kebaya has done through these programs has reflected their efforts to be critical to themselves and their social community. For Mansour Fakhri, this is "another way" (*jalan lain*) for every social institution (Mansour Fakhri, 2002:47), including Kebaya, not only to strengthen waria's social independency, but also to guide them in humanizing themselves in the context of interreligious dialogue.

Their involvement within these critical programs of empowerment is also a challenge to common institutions and educational policies which side with majority and discriminate minority groups. Instead of cultivating a spirit of interreligious dialogue, such institution has commonly been directed to create the single definition of the plurality and religiosity.

Regarding with this ironical condition, the concept of "interreligious dialogue" should be re-interpreted in broader spectrum. It is possible to build an interreligious dialogue if people who involve within this dialogue are not only able to be actively involved in the personal dialogue with religious elites, but also can empower themselves in making a critical interreligious dialogue for social transformation.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

In social life, waria is often considered as abnormal people. However, their religious experiences as well as interreligious religion of their life are seldom exposed. Social stereotype runs without looking waria as religious people who also worship God. Few attentions on the religious aspect often make them more marginalized because it covers them and their life more and more, so they become more mysterious.

Actually, waria community members also have their own religious experiences. They also have own interpretation about God,

worship, destiny, as well as sin. They worship in a deep personal intimacy. They also consider Him as One Essence wanting and determining them to be as they are. In spite of difference opinions on whether becomes waria is sinful, waria's relation with God is still limited in private public.

In interreligious dialog, Kebaya NGO actively involved many times. Being facilitated and promoted by Mami Vinolia, this NGO has tried to build good and harmonic relation with kyai, pastor and FPI. Although the dialogue is still in local scope, what Mami Vinolia has done so far is a good start to the better condition.

Kebaya has further efforts to build social transformation through critical interreligious dialogue. This is carried out, one of them, by means of implementing two programs of empowerment, namely Gong Xi Fat Chai and Waria's Reunion in cooperation with GKI Semarang. Although they take ceremonial forms, both of them are expected to increase their attempts in building an interreligious dialogue. Through these programs, they are not only facilitated to have dialogue with religious elites, but also to encourage themselves in building their own interreligious dialogue. For the next time, interreligious dialogue of this NGO should be broadened into community level, not personal only, so that religious experience can also be known by waria outside the NGO.

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