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Political Power, Corruption, and Witchcraft in Modern Indonesia

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THE UNIVERSITY OF SUSSEX
2012

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DPhil Thesis in Social Anthropology

Political Power, Corruption, and Witchcraft in Modern Indonesia

Summary

This thesis examines the relationships between political power, corruption, and witchcraft in modern Indonesia through an analysis of the discursive construction of these concepts in Indonesian society. The subject is approached through an observation of how public discourses of corruption and sorcery are used by people in an instrumental way to talk about and understand political processes in the country. The central argument of the thesis is that Indonesian society experiences contemporary politics in a context that combines values and practices of political modernity and secular rationality with those of witchcraft, sorcery, and the occult. The thesis demonstrates how Indonesian politics has been transformed into a modern-secular democracy by juxtaposing traditionalism and modernism. Both are interconnected features of contemporary Indonesian modernity.

The thesis focuses on corruption and sorcery discourses within the context of the political democracy that has been established in Indonesia following the collapse of the New Order state. There is currently a great deal of expectation that the system of democracy will promote public participation - in the sense that people become involved in political processes, that civil society becomes more effective and that the holders of state powers become more accountable - which should in turn curb corruption. Unfortunately, corruption appears to be pervasive within the new democratic polity, and both corruption and sorcery persist alongside the dynamics of political contestations and power struggles. In the light of continuing corruption practices, many groups of Indonesian society initiate anti-corruption movements by mobilizing social and political resources through collective action. Anti-corruption initiatives are taken by both state institutions and civil society associations, and seek to improve public governance and promote political reform.

Nevertheless, non-state actors—NGOs and civil society agencies—appear to have become the major voices of public criticism against corruption and they have taken the lead in promoting anti-corruption reforms. These actors involve educated people from the urban middle classes: social and political activists, intellectuals, artists, poets, journalists, as well as religious leaders associated with Islamic organizations: the Nahdhatul Ulama (NU), the Muhammadiyah, and the Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia (HTI). It is argued that the ideas and practices of anti-corruption have found new spaces of expression under the new democratic system, and that Indonesian civil society and NGO activists are determined to continue their struggles to fight corruption for the betterment of the nation despite a great deal of opposition which is mostly political. They believe that the new system of political democracy will be much more beneficial for all Indonesian people if corruption can be eliminated from state agencies and political institutions.

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Glossary

| | |
|--|---|
| <i>'Ah! kura-kura dalam perahu ..!'</i> | local saying meaning that someone already knows what the answer is, but he keeps questioning about something as if he doesn't know |
| <i>abangan</i> | nominal, less strict Javanese Muslim |
| <i>adat</i> | local custom |
| <i>ahli hikmah</i> | a devout Muslim who acquires spiritual knowledge |
| <i>al-akhlaq al-madzumah</i> | Arabic: الأخلاق مذمومة, blameworthy, disgraced morality—traits or attributes that are shameful and bad |
| <i>al-amin</i> | Trustworthy |
| <i>al-ma'ruf</i> | Arabic: معروف, good deeds that Islam orders one to do |
| <i>al-maslahah al-ammah</i> | the common good |
| <i>al-munkar</i> | Arabic: المنكر, evil deeds that Islam has forbidden |
| <i>amanah</i> | the Qur'anic concept of responsibility |
| <i>Amanat Hati Nurani Rakyat</i> | the channel for the people's conscience |
| <i>amr bil ma'ruf wa nahy an al-munkar</i> | Arabic: امر بالمعروف و نهى عن المنكر, to ordain the good and prohibit the evil |
| <i>andaru</i> | radiant light or a white ball of light |
| <i>Anjaga tata tentreming praja</i> | a leader should make sure that people's lives are orderly and peaceful |
| <i>anugerah Sang Dewa</i> | bequest of the gods |
| <i>anugerah Tuhan</i> | gift from God |
| <i>aqedah</i> | Islamic doctrine of the oneness of God |
| <i>as-shiddiq</i> | Truthful |
| <i>ayan</i> | Epilepsy |
| <i>Bahsul Masa'il</i> | religious forums through which the ulama and leaders of the Nahdhatul Ulama discuss all the problems related to social and religious affairs among Muslim communities |
| <i>baju koko</i> | white long-hand shirt |
| <i>baku bantu</i> | mutual help |
| <i>balas jasa</i> | Payback |
| <i>barakah</i> | divine favour or benediction given by Allah Almighty to a pious Muslim |
| <i>batik</i> | traditional Javanese cloth created by using a manual wax-resist dyeing technique |
| <i>batu delima</i> | ruby, garnet |
| <i>beras kuning</i> | tumeric rice |
| <i>berbudi bawa laksana,</i> | leader must be noble in conduct so that he is able to |
| <i>ambeg adil paramarta</i> | enforce justice and equality for the people |
| <i>Bethari Durga</i> | the goddess of destruction who creates misfortunes for people |
| <i>bid'ah</i> | innovation which does not necessarily fit in with Islamic norms and values |
| <i>blankon</i> | typical Javanese hat |
| <i>buaya</i> | Crocodile |
| <i>bupati</i> | district head |
| <i>buta aksara biasa</i> | 'conventional illiteracy' |

| | |
|------------------------------|---|
| <i>buta aksara moral</i> | ‘moral illiteracy’ |
| <i>calo anggaran/proyek</i> | budget/business scalper |
| <i>calo politik</i> | political broker |
| <i>cicak</i> | gecko, associated with the KPK |
| <i>cukong</i> | Chinese businesspeople, Chinese tycoon |
| <i>da’wah</i> | Islamic preaching |
| <i>da’wah Islamiyah</i> | Arabic: الدعوة الإسلامية, proselytizing for Islam |
| <i>dewa-raja</i> | god-king |
| <i>dhalang</i> | Puppeteer |
| <i>doa</i> | supplication, invocation |
| <i>dosa besar</i> | great sin |
| <i>dukun peramal</i> | soothsayer; foreteller (person who acquires spiritual or mystical knowledge) |
| <i>dukun santet</i> | black magic practitioner, witch, sorcerer |
| <i>dwifungsi</i> | dual function for the Indonesian armed forces that allows them to take part in the civil service and in the management of government, in addition to the more conventional function of defense and security |
| <i>dzikir</i> | supplication, invocation |
| <i>Enak Dibaca dan Perlu</i> | nice to read and needed |
| <i>fasaad</i> | Arabic: الفساد, mischief |
| <i>fatwa</i> | edict, Islamic legal opinion |
| <i>Fiqih Korupsi</i> | Islamic jurisprudence on corruption |
| <i>firman Tuhan</i> | words of God |
| <i>gabah</i> | unhulled paddy separated from the stalks, rice seed |
| <i>gagu</i> | Dumbness |
| <i>Ghulul</i> | Arabic: غلول, unlawful taking from the war spoils [ghanimah] before they are distributed among the fighters or handed out to the Muslims’ common treasury |
| <i>gotong-royong</i> | co-operation |
| <i>Gusti</i> | God |
| <i>Hastabrata</i> | eight prime characters of leadership |
| <i>ijtihad al-qiyas</i> | legal interpretation based on analogy with reference to scholarly works of <i>ulama salaf</i> (old Muslim scholars) |
| <i>ilmu hitam</i> | black magic |
| <i>ilmu putih</i> | white magic |
| <i>iman</i> | Islamic faith |
| <i>jahiliyya</i> | Arabic: جاهلية, the state of ignorance of guidance from God, referring to the dark period of Arab history prior to the advent of Islam |
| <i>jajanan pasar</i> | various [market] snack |
| <i>jamaah</i> | Congregation |
| <i>jamaah pengajian</i> | members of preaching |
| <i>jihad</i> | Arabic: جهاد, a holy struggle for the sake of Allah |
| <i>jimat</i> | Amulet |
| <i>joglo</i> | Javanese style structure of house |
| <i>Jumat (Kliwon)</i> | Friday |
| <i>kafir</i> | infidel, disbeliever (according to the Islamic faith) |
| <i>kalimat syahadat</i> | the Testament of Faith, the confession of Islamic faith |
| <i>karomah</i> | extraordinary spiritual grace |

| | |
|---------------------------------|--|
| <i>kasakten</i> | magical energy, cosmic potency |
| <i>kaum pendatang</i> | the migrants |
| <i>kebatinan</i> | Javanese mysticism |
| <i>kebebasan</i> | Liberty |
| <i>kejawen</i> | Javanese-ism |
| <i>kekeluargaan</i> | family-oriented |
| <i>kekerabatan</i> | Kinship |
| <i>kekuatan jahat</i> | evil power |
| <i>kekuatan rakyat</i> | the power of people |
| <i>kembang mayang</i> | palm blossom |
| <i>kemenyan</i> | gum, benzoine |
| <i>keris</i> | Javanese knife, double-bladed dagger |
| <i>keterbukaan</i> | Openness |
| <i>keterlibatan</i> | Participation |
| <i>khadam ruh</i> | typical ritual for purifying a person's mind and heart so that she or he can do good things and behave with good manners |
| <i>kiai</i> | Javanese ulama, traditional Muslim cleric |
| <i>klenik</i> | charlatanism, things related to the supernatural world. |
| <i>kongkalikong</i> | literally an action of connivance with someone in power to get privileges or favours |
| <i>korban kezaliman</i> | victim of oppression |
| <i>korupsi berjamaah</i> | corruption in group, corruption committed by many people |
| <i>koruptor</i> | Corruptor |
| <i>kramat</i> | holy place |
| <i>lakon</i> | Story |
| <i>lakon wayang</i> | shadow puppet play's story |
| <i>Lapor Dong!</i> | please kindly report to the authority |
| <i>larung sesaji</i> | drifting offering ritual taking place on river or sea |
| <i>Laut Kidul</i> | the South Sea, a legendary place for centuries because of its mystical attractions as <i>Nyai Roro Kidul</i> resides |
| <i>loyalitas tunggal</i> | exclusive loyalty (to the Soeharto regime) |
| <i>lugut</i> | itchy-bristles of bamboo |
| <i>ma'unah</i> | extraordinary spiritual knowledge and skills |
| <i>macan ompong</i> | toothless tiger |
| <i>majelis taklim</i> | community-based forum for learning about Islam |
| <i>Majelis Tarjih</i> | religious forums through which the ulama and leaders of the Muhammadiyah discuss all the problems related to social and religious affairs among Muslim communities |
| <i>malang tak bisa ditolak,</i> | misfortune cannot be averted, while fortune cannot be reached |
| <i>untung tak bisa diraih</i> | |
| <i>mantra keramat</i> | sacred spell |
| <i>memayu hayuning</i> | leader should be involved in maintaining harmony with the universe |
| <i>bawawna</i> | |
| <i>Metrotv</i> | a private TV channel |
| <i>nasi tumpeng</i> | cone-shaped rice cooked with coconut milk |
| <i>nasib-baik</i> | Fortune |
| <i>nasib-jelek</i> | Misfortune |
| <i>negara</i> | State |

| | |
|---|---|
| <i>Nyai Loro Kidul</i> | legendary Indonesian goddess, known as the Queen of the Southern Sea of Java (Indian Ocean) in Javanese and Sundanese mythology |
| <i>orang Jawa tulen</i> | true Javanese |
| <i>orang pintar</i> | A smart person, an idiom for those who have spiritual knowledge and skills |
| <i>pamrih</i> | concealed private interest/hidden personal motive |
| <i>Pandhawa</i> brothers and the <i>Korawa</i> brothers | famous <i>wayang</i> figures who represent contradictory characters of goodness and badness |
| <i>pandito ratu</i> | saint-king |
| <i>pantun</i> | folk quatrain |
| <i>pawukon</i> | Javanese horoscope |
| <i>peci haji</i> | white rimless cap |
| <i>pejabat bobrok</i> | decayed official |
| <i>pemangku adat</i> | local leader who usually takes the lead for cultural ceremony and ritual |
| <i>pemilu</i> | general election |
| <i>pendopo</i> | large open building in front of a Javanese mansion, or attached open veranda that serves as an audience hall |
| <i>pengajian</i> | religious preaching |
| <i>pengayom</i> | Protector |
| <i>pengayoman</i> | Protection |
| <i>penyelesaian adat</i> | literally ‘customary solution’—an idiom for closing a scandal by removing the official involved in it from office |
| <i>penyuluh rakyat</i> | literally the torch of the people |
| <i>perjuangan besar</i> | great struggle (to combat corruption) |
| <i>pertemanan</i> | Friendship |
| <i>perlawanan rakyat</i> | people’s resistance |
| <i>pesantren</i> | Islamic boarding school |
| <i>Piagam Indonesia Bersih</i> | Charter for Clean Indonesia |
| <i>politik uang</i> | money politics |
| <i>politisi</i> | politician |
| <i>politisi busuk</i> | rotten politician |
| <i>primbon</i> | mythical book of Java |
| <i>pulung</i> | radiant light or a white ball of light |
| <i>pusaka</i> | magical heirlooms |
| <i>putra daerah</i> | son of the region, the native |
| <i>Ratu Adil</i> | the Queen of Justice, the Messiah, the mythical just ruler |
| <i>reformasi era</i> | the transition period from the authoritarian New Order regime to a democratic politics |
| <i>restu</i> | spiritual approval |
| <i>roh jahat</i> | bad spirit |
| <i>ruwatan</i> | exorcistic rite |
| <i>sabda</i> | words of the Prophet Muhammad as recorded in the Hadith |
| <i>sakti mondroguno</i> | ruler with supernatural power |
| <i>saleh</i> | faithfulness, piety |
| <i>santet</i> | Witchcraft |
| <i>santet halus</i> | soft witchcraft |
| <i>santri</i> | pious Muslim who practises a more orthodox version of |

| | |
|---------------------------------------|---|
| | Islam |
| sarong, <i>sarung</i> | traditional cloth for Indonesians |
| <i>Satuan Tugas</i> | Taskforce of Judicial Mafia Eradication |
| <i>Pemberantasan Mafia Hukum</i> | |
| <i>sedang dizalimi</i> | being suppressed |
| <i>Sentono Dalem</i> | inner circle of the noble family of the Kraton |
| <i>sepi ing pamrih, rame ing gawe</i> | [state officials should] refrain from indulging personal motives while working hard for the good of the state and society |
| <i>serangan sihir</i> | sorcery attack |
| <i>shahadah</i> | Islamic witness of faith |
| <i>shalat</i> | prayer, worship |
| <i>shari'a</i> | Islamic law |
| <i>shirik</i> | polytheism (according to the Islamic faith) |
| <i>sihir</i> | Sorcery |
| <i>silaturahmi</i> | informal gathering |
| <i>slametan</i> | communal feast, a kind of social gathering and ritual |
| <i>suap-menyuap</i> | bribe-giving and bribe-taking |
| <i>suara hati rakyat</i> | the heartfelt voice of the people |
| <i>sukerto</i> | Javanese: bad luck |
| <i>Sunnah</i> | Arabic: سنة, authoritative tradition, habitual action and norm referring to the Prophet Muhammad's sayings and practices |
| <i>tampah</i> | round woven bamboo trays |
| <i>tangan kotor</i> | dirty hands |
| <i>tapa</i> | ascetic meditation |
| <i>tawheed</i> | doctrine of monotheism; the belief in God, the One and Only |
| <i>tazkiyah al-nafs</i> | purification of the soul, spiritual purification |
| <i>tebang pilih</i> | literally cutting down selectively, an idiom used to describe the unfairness of the way the authorities impose the law |
| <i>teluh</i> | Sorcery |
| <i>Tobat Nasional</i> | National Repentance |
| <i>tukang sihir</i> | sorcerer, witch |
| <i>uang pelicin</i> | literally 'greasy money'—an idiom for bribe, kickback, payoff |
| <i>uang terima kasih</i> | money given to someone in return of getting contracts or help |
| <i>uang rokok</i> | literally money for cigarettes—an idiom for a 'buyoff' |
| <i>ulama</i> | Muslim scholar |
| <i>ulama salaf</i> | old Muslim scholar |
| <i>umm al-qadhayat</i> | Arabic: أمّ القيوين, mother of all grave problems; severely damaging public morality and weakening the government system |
| <i>ummah</i> | Arabic: أمة, Muslim community |
| <i>upeti</i> | gift, present |
| <i>ustadz</i> | Muslim teacher |
| <i>wahyu</i> | divine radiance, a sort of spiritual sign that one might be |

| | |
|----------------------|---------------------------|
| <i>wali</i> | chosen to be a ruler |
| <i>wangsit</i> | Saint |
| <i>Warta Ekonomi</i> | spiritual hint |
| <i>wayang</i> | a weekly magazine |
| <i>wibawa</i> | shadow puppet play |
| <i>wuku bolo</i> | Charisma |
| | innate power of the devil |

List of Abbreviations

| | |
|----------------|---|
| AGO | Attorney General's Office |
| AMAK | Aliansi Masyarakat Anti Korupsi - Societal Alliances for Anti-Corruption |
| BCW | Bali Corruption Watch |
| BHACA | Bung Hatta Anti-Corruption Award |
| BLT | Bantuan Langsung Tunai - direct cash transfers |
| DPR | Dewan Perwakilan Rakyat - the House of Representatives |
| DPRD | Dewan Perwakilan Rakyat Daerah - the Local Legislative Body |
| GAO | General Audit Office |
| GIB | Gerakan Indonesia Bersih - Movement for Clean Indonesia |
| GMNI | Gerakan Mahasiswa Nasionalis Indonesia - the Indonesian Nationalist Students Movement |
| HIKMAH-BUDDHIS | Himpunan Ikatan Mahasiswa Buddhis Indonesia - the Indonesian Buddhist Students Union |
| HMI | Himpunan Mahasiswa Islam - the Muslim Students Association |
| HTI | Hizbut Tahir Indonesia - the Indonesian Liberation Party |
| ICM | Indonesian Court Monitoring |
| ICW | Indonesia Corruption Watch |
| IMM | Ikatan Mahasiswa Muhammadiyah - the Muhammadiyah Students Union |
| KAMMI | Kesatuan Aksi Mahasiswa Muslim Indonesia - the Indonesian Muslim Students Action Association |
| KKN | Korupsi, Kolusi, Nepotisme - corruption, collusion, nepotism |
| KPK | Komisi Pemberantasan Korupsi - the Commission of Corruption Eradication |
| KPKPN | Komisi Pengawas Kekayaan Pejabat Negara - the Commission of Scrutiny of Officials' Assets |
| KRA | Kanjeng Raden Ariyo - a noble title |
| KRHT | Kanjeng Raden Hariyo Tumenggung - a high noble title |
| MCW | Malang Corruption Watch |
| Monas | Monumen Nasional - the National Monument |
| MoU | Memorandum of Understanding |
| MPR | Majelis Permusyawaratan Rakyat – the People's Consultative Assembly |
| NGO | Non-Government Organization |
| NKRI | Negara Kesatuan Republik Indonesia - the National Unity of the Republic of Indonesia |
| NU | Nahdhatul Ulama |
| PAN | Partai Amanat Nasional - the National Mandate Party |
| Pemilu | Pemilihan Umum (the general elections) |
| PDIT | Pusat Data dan Informasi Tempo - Centre for Data and Information of Tempo |
| PKB | Partai Kebangkitan Bangsa - the National Awakening Party |
| PKKKI | Perhimpunan Koruptor Kelas Kakap Indonesia – Association of High Class Corruptor of Indonesia |

| | |
|--------|---|
| PLN | Perusahaan Listrik Negara - the state-owned electric power company |
| PMII | Pergerakan Mahasiswa Islam Indonesia - the Indonesian Muslim Students Movement |
| PMKRI | Perkumpulan Mahasiswa Katolik Republik Indonesia - the Indonesian Catholic Students Association |
| POLRI | Kepolisian Republik Indonesia - the National Police of the Republic of Indonesia |
| PPATK | Pusat Pelaporan dan Analisis Transaksi Keuangan - Centre for Financial Transaction Reports and Analysis |
| SBY | Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono - a nickname of the President and often used either in informal talk or in the press |
| SCTV | Surya Citra Televisi – a private TV channel |
| TGPTPK | Tim Gabungan Pemberantasan Korupsi - Joint Team on Eradication Corruption |
| TII | Transparency International Indonesia |
| TVRI | Televisi Republik Indonesia |
| UCLA | University of California Los Angeles |

List of Figures

Chapter 1

Figure 1.1: The *ruwatan* ritual for President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono held in the mosque of the Kraton Kasunanan Surakarta, Central Java (p.51).

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Sussex, 27 September 2011

Map of Indonesia (and neighbouring countries)



Source: <http://www.lonelyplanet.com/maps/asia/indonesia/>

Map of Java



Source: <http://www.lonelyplanet.com/maps/asia/indonesia/java/>

Map of Jakarta



Source: <http://gambar-peta.blogspot.com/2010/03/gambar-peta-dki-jakarta-inonesia.html>

INTRODUCTION

1. Background

This thesis seeks to explore the relationships between political power, corruption, and witchcraft in modern Indonesia through an analysis of the discursive construction of these concepts in Indonesian society. The subject is approached through an observation of how public discourses of corruption and sorcery are used by people in an instrumental way to talk about and understand the social and political processes in the country. Corruption mostly involves those occupying public offices and holding state powers, but it is difficult to investigate directly such illicit activities since they are clandestine, as is the practice of witchcraft. The actual practice of both corruption and witchcraft is mostly beyond empirical investigation, and thus an appropriate way of studying them is through people's talk. Both witchcraft and corruption have some features in common in the sense that they can be used as a means of accessing power and accumulating material wealth. However, people usually react to these phenomena differently which result in controversy. They also always occur in concealed places and with full of secrecy so that the only way to understand and observe them is through representation. The representation takes the form of public narratives through which people talk about the subjects that are often imbued with rumours and gossip as the two seem to be the main characteristics of sorcery and corruption.

The thesis focuses on corruption and sorcery discourses within the context of political democracy which was established in Indonesia following the collapse of Soeharto's New Order. There is a great deal of expectation that the system of democracy will promote public participation in the sense that people become involved in political processes, social civil society becomes more effective, and the holders of state powers become more accountable, which should eventually result in the decrease of corruption. Political democracy is widely viewed as a means of governance reform in response to popular aspirations for equal relations between the state and society, replacing the old-centralized and despotic government of the New Order regime that was widely seen as corrupt. Initially, the rationale for democratic reform was that it would promote more rational and efficient forms of modern government in which there would be no space for corruption. Unfortunately, what has happened is that corruption appears to be pervasive within the new democratic polity and that corruption and sorcery persist alongside the dynamics of political contestation and power struggles. In

the light of continuing corruption practices, many groups of Indonesian society initiate anti-corruption movements by mobilizing social and political resources through collective action. Indeed, anti-corruption initiatives have become the primary agenda of Indonesians including religious community. Within the context of religious groups, these people also join public campaigns against corruption clearly demonstrating a common interest of many Indonesians. As is well known, the vast majority of Indonesian people (about 87.2 per cent) are Muslim, but there are also adherents to Christianity, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Confucianism. Furthermore, there are a diversity of indigenous religions embraced by Indonesians in Java and other parts of the country. Within several areas within Java, there are religious beliefs accommodating elements of Hinduism, Buddhism, and Animism. Anthropologists specializing in Java have their own terms to describe these indigenous religions, such as ‘*Agami Jawi*’ (Koentjaraningrat 1985a) or ‘*Agama Asli Jawa*’ (the original religion of Java) in the case of Hindu Javanese Tengger (Hefner 1985). Nevertheless, for the purpose of anti-corruption activism, Islamic organizations and Muslim leaders collaborate with Christians, Buddhists, and Hindus and have organized themselves into a group called *Perkumpulan Pemuka Lintas-Agama* (Association of Interfaith Leaders). This group has emerged as the focal point of public anti-corruption campaigns.

Yet anti-corruption initiatives are taken by both state institutions and civil society associations with the use of various modes, which are aimed at improving public governance and promoting political reform. In parallel with the establishment of the democratic system, anti-corruption reforms have emerged in the political scene that have been pioneered by educated people from the urban middle classes. In this context, the reason why I am interested in researching the subject is because I share with them the idea of democracy and the aspiration of democratic politics, and hope this research will contribute to strengthening democratic political transformation in the country.

2. Aims, Scope and Contribution of the Research

The primary aim of this research is therefore to investigate representations of corruption and sorcery through examining how people talk about corruption and its complexities. It must be stressed from the beginning that this research is not concerned with the actual practices of corruption and sorcery (although inevitably they have to be taken into account), but with the discourses which surround them and how these discourses might

be understood. However, this research does look at discourses and practices of anti-corruption as they appear in the realm of Indonesian politics. This will involve situating corruption and sorcery discourses within the wider context of political power and relationships, and a wide range of actors such as state officials, politicians, bureaucrats, businesspeople and political brokers who establish strong networks among themselves.

One important aspect of this research involved examining how the dynamics of political power has inadvertently created a context where witchcraft, corruption, and anti-corruption—both as practices and as discourses—flourish and are construed by Indonesian society. It approaches the process of political change in contemporary Indonesia from a cultural perspective, which stresses corruption and sorcery as major elements in the ways in which Indonesian people understand their changing power structures and perceive political transformation under the framework of a democratic system. The main contribution of this research is therefore to enrich the study of urban politics in the context of Indonesian modern democracy, in which urban elite politicians rest on corruption and resort, whether symbolically or in actual practice, to witchcraft, the occult, and other rituals by manipulating supernatural forces for political purposes. The country's urban politics enlivened with supernatural magic has not so far been the subject of anthropological research so that this study is likely to be the first research in the context of modern democracy in Indonesia.

3. Research Questions

As indicated in the title of the thesis, the subjects of political power, corruption and witchcraft are the central focus of examination. Sorcery and corruption are connected with the dynamics of political power in the sense that both play a part in the struggle over power and political contest for public office. This research will therefore address some research questions and they will be thoroughly discussed in the thesis. There are two central questions with three sub-questions for each that guided the research:

- (1) *In which ways are magic and witchcraft key to the dynamics of political contestation and the struggle over power?*

The sub-questions are the following:

- Why are mystical beliefs and values important in Indonesian politics while the country has already embraced a modern democratic system?
- How do magic and witchcraft play a role in social and political processes in the world of Indonesian politics?
- How do sorcery and corruption produce different moralities and how do people conceive moral ambiguity embedded within them?

(2) How is the issue of corruption understood by people and how do they relate it to both religious beliefs and secular values?

The sub-questions are the following:

- What are the roots of anti-corruption activisms and what forms do they take?
- How is anti-corruption activism organized and what outcomes do social political activists and proponents of Indonesian civil society seek to reach?
- Why are anti-corruption practices important and how do they affect social and political behaviours of both state actors and people in general?

All these research questions are essential to the whole discussion of the thesis, and each chapter will address them with the use of ethnographic materials that have been enriched with the existing literature in support of the discussion. Hence, in order to provide a general understanding of the topics of the thesis, the literature review should first be presented as it covers some essential themes related to the research.

4. Literature Review

4.1 Researching Corruption and Witchcraft through Discourse and Narrative

As mentioned, the approach applied to research corruption and witchcraft is through representation with the use of discourse and narrative. For this, discourse is used as a way of understanding how corruption takes place in state agencies and public institutions, while narrative is utilized as a way of expressing one's personal experience related to witchcraft. Yet both discourse and narrative can therefore be called a social instrument employed by people to conceive the socio-cultural phenomena of corruption

and witchcraft. They are useful as a medium of articulating ideas and thoughts about a particular subject and of expressing feelings, emotions, stories, etc. that help people perceive reality and understand events they experience.

Narratives of corruption are among the ways through which Indonesian society tries to understand how someone accesses power and amasses wealth. In fact, corruption has become a controversial issue as people talk about this grave problem in their daily social lives. Corruption-talk may take place in the social sphere aimed at understanding the world of politics, which instigates public discourse. In this regard, it is interesting to observe how the public discourse of corruption is always connected with the idea of political democracy which has just recently thrived in the country. The aspirants of democracy believe that it is the best political system for promoting social prosperity among citizens after the very long autocratic system under the New Order state. But corruption undermines the functioning system of political democracy; corruption weakens the capacity of the state to deliver its jobs in bringing social welfare to the people. This is the reason why the issue of corruption is important as the subject of research, as Akhil Gupta has pointed out: "Corruption emerges as a critically important area to study, because narratives of corruption help shape people's expectations of what states can and will do, and how bureaucrats will respond to the needs of citizens" (2005:190). In this respect, narratives of corruption become the key form of cultural expression to criticize the misuse of public office and challenge power establishment as how Indonesian citizens organize strong social-political opposition against corrupt bureaucratic politics.

Furthermore, the public narrative provides an opportunity to investigate corruption by looking at the representation of the state and analyzing the everyday practices of state bureaucracies and public offices. Through corruption narratives people can also construe the discursive construction of the state power in public culture as a zone of socio-cultural debate conducted through, for instance, the media, public talk in the social arena, etc. Both narrative and discourse as a representation are particularly worthwhile since they can be applied hand in hand for researching corruption. Such approaches can be employed based upon storytelling by referring to some features of social life and observing how and why people use corruption as the subject of daily life stories, as some scholars believe that a good discursive analysis of corruption depends to large part on its stories, even if they are not narrated in the text but just in oral stories (e.g. Gupta [1995] 2006, 2005a, 2005b; Turner 2007; Blundo 2007). Indeed, narratives

of corruption through the media and storytelling are very supportive of an anthropological research explaining how private connections, personal relations, and social networks govern everyday society (Haller & Shore 2005; Smith 2007). In this sense, investigation through media agencies as a way of observing corruption is very important, since newspapers, magazines, and TV channels play a significant part in narrating corruption and how corruption narratives are reproduced. They are perhaps the most vital vehicle for the dissemination of public discourse on corruption.

Discourse is always based on organized knowledge and structured narratives which involves arguments and the exchange of ideas to develop understanding and meaning about a specific subject. With reference to Foucault, discourse is a system of thought that operates in the mind of human beings and applies to social actions that functions as a medium of power relations to maintain domination with the use of knowledge. With the term power-knowledge, Foucault (1980) argued that power and knowledge are intertwined with each other suggesting that knowledge is both the producer of power and the product of power. In this context, discourse of corruption is connected with power relations as corruption itself takes place in power structures and is related to the struggle over power. Discourse of corruption is therefore associated with how power is contested in a political arena as corruption is all about politics; indeed there is no politics without corruption. Here, parties involved in the contest then make an arrangement for negotiation of power for their political establishment. Like discourse, narrative also deals with meaning and power, as Edward Bruner puts it: "Narratives are not only structures of meaning but also structures of power as well" (1986:144). A narrative is a way of telling a story or a report with the use of communication modalities and language activities to represent histories, events, moments, objects, and whatever with an attempt to explain them or to persuade others of their relevance in regard to such stories or reports (e.g. Genette 1980; White 1987; Ochs 1997). When a story is narrated, discerned and contextualized with actual events or social practices, it is transformed into a discourse. Thus, narratives become a cultural medium of telling a story that leads to how discourse takes place. Within the narrative there are several elements connected to one another: story, telling, and discourse which are developed in a structured account and discursive analysis. In *Ethnography as Narrative* (1986), Bruner points out:

The key elements in narrative are story, discourse, and telling. The *story* is the abstract sequence of events, systematically related, the syntagmatic structure. *Discourse* is the

text in which the story is manifested, the statement in a particular medium such as a novel, myth, lecture, film, conversation, or whatever. *Telling* is the action, the act of narrating, the communicative process that produces the story in discourse. (Bruner 1986:145)

Bruner's explanations clearly suggest that ethnographic work can be conceived as narrative in the sense that "ethnographies are guided by an implicit narrative structure, by a story we tell about the peoples we study" (Bruner 1986:139). This can therefore be asserted that ethnographic research is a product of the systematic work of scholarship through studying people along with their cultures, and anthropologists then narrate them as they become the interlocutors of the cultures of those people. Here, ethnographic narrative is constituted and interpreted by anthropologists as ethnographies are interpretations (Geertz 1973, 1983).

In this context, the ethnographic materials I collected from the field are partly in the form of the experiences of individuals (e.g. witchcraft attacks, sacred rituals, mystical meditation); and such experiences are subjective and self-referential in nature. Yet subjective experiences appear in the form of narrative through which the individual expresses his/her own stories, thoughts, expectations, feelings, and others. In this respect, Indonesian society has experienced a secular-modern democracy which allows citizens to take part in and exercise democratic power. Here, political discourse of secular-modern democracy emerges in a social space alongside the public narratives of witchcraft and occult politics; sorcery narratives go along with imaginative transformations of democratic politics. Witchcraft narratives thus seem to be a counter-discourse of the secular-modern democracy in the sense that people may become involved in political contests with the help of supernatural magic. However, sorcery narratives and the occult take the form of the individual's experience. In the anthropology of experience, some anthropologists (see Turner & Bruner 1986) consider that ethnography is about cultural narrative in which personal experience expressed in a story becomes the centre of the representation of reality. Considering experience as the subject of anthropological study, those anthropologists attempt to explore how people experience their culture and how those experiences are sensed and expressed in various forms such as narrative, cultural product, sacred ritual, life history, etc. Nevertheless, subjective experience would be meaningful and sound to others if it refers to social practice or if others share a similar experience which makes it become a collective experience. But the experience itself is usually based on the reality in which individual

observes events and receives them with mindfulness and therefore a “lived experience, as thought and desire, as word and image, is the primary reality” (Bruner 1986:5).

The public discourse of corruption and witchcraft narratives, being the subject of this research, are situated in the world of politics. For this, understanding the nature of Indonesian politics is important in providing a background to how corruption and witchcraft are embedded in the country’s politics.

4.2 Indonesian Politics: A Brief Overview

Since Indonesia proclaimed its independence on 17 August 1945, it has experienced different types of political systems, both authoritarianism and democracy. Soekarno, the first president of the new republic, ruled the country for twenty-one years during which he applied liberal democracy between 1950 and 1959 which was represented by a multi-party system with a very sharp political cleavage and ideological orientation. This resulted in an unstable government as political consensus was very hard to settle and the cabinet changed almost every month. Fed up with such situations, Soekarno then turned to authoritarianism until he resigned from office in 1966 which was preluded by a series of huge political turmoil. The Old Order, the very common notion of Soekarno’s government, was then replaced by a new government called the New Order. The emergence of the New Order was preceded by a severe politico-ideological conflict in 1965-1966 which involved the military, the Communist party, Nationalist and Islamic parties, socio-religious organizations, political actors and civilians. This led to bloody social riots and political upheavals which left hundreds of thousands of Indonesians dead. Such bitter conflict paved the way for the military, led by General Soeharto, to take over the government and establish the New Order state. Within the New Order state, the role of the military was dominant. The armed forces were not only charged with national defence and security, but also with guaranteeing political stability and social order for the sake of national integration. They claimed to maintain the domination of the state under the doctrine of *dwifungsi* (dual function). This doctrine stipulated that the armed forces, because of their role in the struggle for the country’s independence, had a double function which allowed them to take part in the civil service and in the management of government, in addition to the more conventional function of defence and security (e.g. Jenkins 1984; Crouch 1988; Singh 1990; Said 1992;

Kingsbury 2003). In the course of Indonesian politics, the involvement of the armed forces in government affairs eventually led to a military regime as Liddle (1999) puts it:

The armed forces implemented the interventionist *dual-function* doctrine by placing active and retired military personnel in the assembly, parliament, and provincial and district legislatures; in executive and staff positions in central, provincial, and district administration; in positions of formal and informal authority over Golkar—[an abbreviation of *Golongan Karya*, functional groups playing as the military's party]; and by keeping the population under surveillance through territorial commands that covered the country from Jakarta to the outermost islands and down to every village. (Liddle 1999:44-5)

Within the highly-centralized New Order state, the effective government relied on the armed forces which presented themselves as a modern institution surpassing all other state agencies in importance. The military presented itself not just as a formal organization but also claimed to enshrine the soul of the nation and, not surprisingly, became the largest political organization in the country (Vatikiotis 1993:60-91) which exerted a tremendous influence on many aspects of social life. Since they held such huge power and enjoyed profound effects on the polity, the military was pejoratively dubbed as the “strongest political party” in Indonesia. Not surprisingly, the state structures and political organizations grew greatly during the New Order period and every single administrative unit of the government and the political parties were obliged to have ‘*loyalitas tunggal*’ (exclusive loyalty to the Soeharto government) reflecting the regime’s patrimonial culture in which opposition and competition were strictly forbidden in exchange for the allocation of economic resources. Moreover, the New Order regime developed into what Richard Robison (1990) calls the ‘military bureaucratic state’. Under the politically-centralized system of the New Order state, there were no possibilities and chances for popular initiatives within civil society. Rather, it gave abundant opportunities and privileges for the state institutions, controlled by the single ruling party, Golkar, to intervene and make all strategic decisions on behalf of the citizens. All public policies and administrative affairs were left in the hands of the central government. The domination of the Golkar Party and the absence of public control were crucial in providing a context in which corrupt practices flourished, but at the same time the New Order regime was remarkably successful in encouraging and sustaining economic development and maintaining political stability (Hill 1990; Liddle 1996; Emmerson 1999).

Nevertheless, despite a certain degree of success in economic terms on the part of the New Order regime, political oppression, restrictions on public life, and limitations

on civil liberties and political freedom did not promote the quality of people's lives. This led to discontent spreading amongst the Indonesian population. After controlling the country for over three decades, the New Order state eventually came to an end in May 1998 because of strong pressure from the grassroots made manifest in a series of social protests and political movements throughout the country. Its collapse was due to a number of factors, but the most significant one was that it was seen as highly corrupt, and state institutions were being associated with what became known as KKN—*Korupsi, Kolusi, Nepotisme* (corruption, collusion, nepotism). Worse, corruption was deeply ingrained in the New Order regime that concentrated power in the hands of Soeharto, his family and his cronies. In addition, in 1997, a severe economic crisis hit the country which contributed to a weakening of the New Order and was effectively used by the Soeharto's opponents as a way of precipitating regime change. Following the collapse of the New Order government, the democratization process begun flourishing as seen in the alteration of the political system. The country's political architecture had fundamentally altered and the change was unprecedented in the modern history of the nation, moving considerably from authoritarianism and centralization of power to democracy and devolution of state power. The new systems of politics and government were created along with a series of amendments to the 1945 Constitution. Significant changes include (1) the adoption of a multi-party system, (2) president/vice president and MPs are elected directly by the people, (3) the period of office of the presidency is strictly limited to only two terms of five years each, (4) the rejection of the military being involved in politics and civil service, and (5) the implementation of political decentralization and regional autonomy.

Keeping with the presidential system, the body of Indonesia's political system is established through an institution called the *Majelis Permusyawaratan Rakyat* (MPR, the People's Consultative Assembly). As a result of profound constitutional reforms, the MPR was formed as the political body housing the two chambers of Parliament: the House of Representatives with 560 seats and the Regional Representatives Council with 132 seats. Applying the system of representative democracy, Indonesia adopted a multi-party system with nine political parties.¹ Despite the fact that representative democracy

¹ Based on the 2009 general elections, nine political parties shared 560 seats in the Parliament with various portions for each party. The Democrat Party, the Golkar Party, and the Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle appeared to be the three biggest parties with a share of 148, 106, and 94 seats respectively. In the middle position were the Justice and Prosperity Party (57 seats), the National Mandate Party (45 seats), the United Development Party (38 seats) and the National Awakening Party (28 seats);

has been in place, Indonesia's multi-party system remains volatile since it has not been well-established so political parties remain weakly institutionalized (see e.g. Ufen 2008; Tomsa 2010). Rather, parties orientate to strong political figures and rely on their personal charisma. Instead of strengthening structures and institutions, parties appear to become personalistic in the sense that they are greatly dependent on charismatic political leaders. Given the fact that patronage in the multi-party system is very strong, it can be argued that what applies in Indonesia is no doubt a paternalistic political democracy. Here are Carothers's observations:

Indonesia's main political parties remain almost archetypical embodiments of the standard lament about parties—they are intensely leader-centric organizations dominated by a small circle of elite politicians who hold onto their positions atop parties seemingly indefinitely are immersed in patronage politics, and who are far more devoted to political intrigues in the capital than the prosaic work of trying to listen to and represent a base of constituents. (Carothers 2006:175)

What Carothers observed basically shows the shortcomings of Indonesia's multi-party system since it is based on patronage politics that paves the way for corruption through patron-client relationships (as will be addressed in the next section). The issue of corruption emerges in public discourse along with the application of the multi-party system that demands a high financial cost of politics. Dirk Tomsa (2010) has raised the problem:

Closely related to the perpetual problem of corruption is the increasing commercialization of electoral politics. The trend has not only affected the image of Indonesia's parties, but also transformed the role they play in the recruitment of political [elites and cadres]. The need to mobilize huge amounts of money in order to run for parliament or head executive posts such as governor, mayor, or district head has made it ever more difficult for ordinary citizens to become involved in politics. (Tomsa 2010:148)

Tomsa's assessment indicates that to reach political positions through democratic elections is too costly, and this is the crux of the problem of Indonesia's democracy which prevents ordinary citizens from having a chance to compete for public positions. In dealing with this problem, politicians simply commit corruption for the sake of public office. Not surprisingly, corruption increases considerably within the democratic system. At the onset, it is believed that a democratic system would promote responsible and accountable government, assuming that public control—through civil society, NGOs, social political associations, the media, and other critical groups—works well. The situations would hopefully lead to the decrease of corruption and other forms of

and the two smallest parties were the Great Indonesia Movement Party (26 seats) and the People's Conscience Party (18 seats).

illicit practices in public institutions. Unfortunately since the turn of the Soeharto regime, corruption has been continuously expanding and seems to have worsened since the adoption of the new system of political democracy. Corruption seems to be embedded in the system as it is found everywhere in almost all government agencies, regardless of what type of regime rules the country. Since the fall of the Soeharto regime, the state ruler has changed four times but the main characters are still the same and corruption is deep-rooted in the state powers. The change of regime had also produced numerous new elite politicians, while the old elite groups were still there who formed another bloc of political alignments and occupied the state powers, but now through a legitimate way, that is, the democratic political system. Corruption therefore stays in state bodies involving state actors—officials and politicians—and it is necessary to define and analyze corruption for this research.

4.3 Corruption as an Analytical Category

Defining ‘corruption’ in any universalistic sense is probably impossible. Perhaps the most general definition would stress the lack of legitimacy, and thus what is corrupt within one context may not be seen as corrupt in another. Similarly, the value judgments that are implicit in any discussion of corruption may well end up as arguments over the legitimacy of different ideological positions. Most discussions of corruption are premised on the existence of bureaucratic forms of governance within the public and the private sectors in which there is a clear distinction between the office and the incumbent. Thus, government officials who use their office as a means of self-aggrandizement are seen as corrupt. So too are employees of private sector companies who use their positions to further their own personal interests rather than the interests of the company that employs them. Corruption, in this sense, is very much part of a wider set of concepts and values which, in total, form a particular model of modernity, very much based on a Weberian ideal of bureaucratic rationality.

Yet such an image of corruption is specific to a particular cultural context—that of ‘modernity’. In other contexts, most obviously the ‘pre-modern’ world in which such distinctions between office and incumbent are less pronounced, the concept of corruption is more blurred. People from different cultures have their own definition of corruption and each society with diverse cultural backgrounds may propose distinct concepts of the things that might or might not be categorized as corruption. Certainly,

corruption is a changing phenomenon in which some of its aspects are culturally specific and its conceptualization is often affected by personal interest, individual preference, cultural values, local customs, social norms, or socio-economic status (Pardo 2004; Shore & Haller 2005; Barr & Serra 2006). This raises the issue of cultural relativism, illustrating that different cultures need to be understood in their own terms, and should not be judged by the standards of others. The doctrine of cultural relativism has been very dominant in public discourses on corruption especially in developing countries. Behaviour that seems to be corrupt (e.g. giving jobs to relatives or favouring one's kinsmen when allocating public resources), according to the standards of Western capitalist countries, may be entirely acceptable as familial obligations in other societies in, say, Asia, Africa, or Latin America. Here, cultural values ascribed to corruption could be relative depending on how society perceives them and how they are practised in social life. Considering the various concepts of corruption, John Gledhill has made an important remark that "...corruption must not merely be analyzed in a moralizing framework but must also be seen as a mode of exercising power within complex social and political settings that must be analyzed carefully and in their historical and cultural specificity" (2004:156).

Therefore, one should focus on the problems of meaning and representation by looking at the way people use cultural idioms to understand corruption and how it is brought into public discourse through debates, media and social disputes. This leads on to the challenge of how to understand seemingly corrupt behaviour within political structures organized in terms of patron-client ties or associated with the idea of the patrimonial state. The patrimonial state refers to a model of politics in which the structures of government bureaucracies are hierarchical and stratified, and in which high-ranking officials are assigned public offices largely on the basis of their loyalty to the ruler rather than to any special administrative competence and merit. Within this system, proximity to the ruler is a major consideration in appointing officials who ultimately become personal agents and confidants within the framework of patronage relation. Originally found in non-bureaucratic societies, patronage is an informal relation between people of different social and economic status—the 'patron' who is both wealthy and powerful, and the 'client' who is a dependent, follower, or protégé. This type of relationship is usually characterized by an imbalanced position between the two parties reflecting their unsymmetrical roles (e.g. Eisenstadt & Roniger 1984; Kitschelt & Wilkinson 2006). Here James Scott clearly delineates:

The patron-client relationship—an exchange relationship between roles—may be defined as a special case of dyadic (two-person) ties involving a largely instrumental friendship in which an individual of higher socioeconomic status (patron) uses his own influence and resources to provide protection or benefits, or both, for a person of lower status (client) who, for his part, reciprocates by offering general support and assistance, including personal services, to the patron. (Scott 1977a:125)

Undoubtedly, patrons and clients are generally unequal in the acquisition of both economic resources and political powers in which the former is obviously superior to the latter in his capacity to grant valuable things; and such superiority creates the so-called ‘lop-sided friendship’ (e.g. Gellner 1977; Wolf 1977; Scott 1977b). The patron exercises power and influence in favour of the clients who are obliged to reciprocate in the forms of political support, donation, loyalty, service and the like. As a result, there is a permanent pattern to the patron-client relationship involving favouritism and responsibility between the parties. At this point, it could be argued that patronage systems are ‘corrupt’ involving as they do situations where there is no distinction between office and incumbent and where goods, services, resources, jobs and favours are all distributed in terms of personal relationships. Yet to see such practices as ‘corrupt’ is to use a concept derived from one particular political context of Weberian modernity to judge another.

Looked at from a slightly different point of view, there is a lot of anthropological literature on the gift, which again throws into question the degree to which corruption, as a universal category, can be used. In many—if not all—societies, gift exchange is a central feature of social life, and the exchange of gifts is associated with a strong morality of obligation. Gift-exchange symbolizes intimate social interaction amongst society members, as reciprocity is a matter of morality in regards to social relationships expressing the social closeness among them (Ferraro 2006:192). Such cultural practices are particularly important between a ruler or power holder and subordinates, and symbolize not only obedience and loyalty but also respect and moral regard from the latter to the former. This notion can be attached to a classical theory propounded by Marcel Mauss ([1954] 2006) who argued that gift-exchange is obligatory. He delineates a universal reciprocal structure for gift-giving explaining that a gift symbolizes the social status of the gift-giver, and the act of giving symbolizes the relationship between the gift-giver and the receiver. The act of giving in some way necessitates a reciprocal gift if the involved parties need to maintain social relations. If one party does not reciprocate it can indicate a signal of the end of the relationship.

Therefore, gift-giving often takes on a cyclical form and is a fundamental way that human societies are willing to continue social relationships.

Mauss vividly described the moral obligations of gift-giving at three levels. First, the obligation to give gifts is to preserve authority, if one is a clan chief, and to maintain a high rank among the chiefs of tribe, as well as to show oneself as generous and thus deserving of respect. Second, the obligation to accept gifts is to express respect and sincerity to the giver, and concurrently confirms one's own generosity showing that one is not afraid of having to reciprocate. Third, the obligation to reciprocate the gift is to demonstrate that one's honor is comparable with that of the initial giver (pp.50-54). In regards to this, Douglas (2006) points out that: "each gift is part of a system of reciprocity in which the honor of giver and recipient are engaged" (p.xi). As a result, gift-giving is connected with the spirit of morality; and by giving, accepting, and reciprocating gifts there is a moral bond between the individuals who exchange gifts, since gift-exchange is meant as a way people create social relations and develop mutual interdependence between the parties involved. Gift-exchange is indeed the mechanism of establishing and strengthening social bonds, which results in social cohesion and solidarity among society's members. It is the way through which enduring social relations are established and maintained.

Nonetheless, an important caveat must be emphasized here. In societies that are organized in terms of a modern bureaucratic framework, the giving of gifts to public officials may create situations where there is a clash of moralities—one stressing the theme of social obligation between the people involved in the exchange; the other stressing the separation between office and the incumbent who should not confuse his personal duties and social obligations with the obligations of office. In these contexts, corruption as a narrative and symbolic system often creates conflicting statements about legality and illegality, proper and improper conducts, or moral and ethical behaviours which are subject to debate (Gupta 2005; Pardo 2004) as in the case of gift-exchange. Within the exchange system, gift-giving should not go beyond its social function which implies moral obligation for a balanced reciprocity referring to the social values and cultural standards of the society. Otherwise, the gift-exchange mode will be used to violate norms and rules that watch over social conducts. Yet it should not be misled with the gift-exchange system as some people wrongly or inappropriately conceive of this to cover up the practice of bribe-giving and bribe-taking. Corrupt officials and politicians even justify those kinds of misconducts with reference to the tradition of gift-

exchange which is very commonplace within society in which patron-client relationships among its members are very strong. In this respect, since anthropology is concerned with understanding rules and social norms, anthropologists need to discover these cultural codes by “[examining] instances where they are violated, how people react to such transgression, and how actors negotiate between different norms and rules” (Shore & Haller 2005:8). As a result, it is important to raise the intricate issues of morality, cultural values, and legal aspects into public discourses on corruption, since every society has distinct concepts of morality and legality and cultural standards as well (Pardo 2000; Pardo 2004; Gupta [1995] 2006). The difficulty of defining corruption in the view of different societies and cultures emerges in the anthropological studies as seen in Jordan Smith’s *A Culture of Corruption* (2007) arguing:

[...] because most anthropologists aim to understand human motives and behaviour at least in part from the perspectives of the people they study, social processes that political scientists typically describe as corruption often appear in the anthropological literature under the rubrics such as gift exchange, moral economies, reciprocity, and patronage. Anthropology’s emphasis on local rationalities and cultural logics, and the largely sympathetic sensibility of anthropologists regarding their subjects, produces a disinclination to attach a seemingly derogatory Western label like corruption to the behaviour of non-Western peoples. (Smith 2007:9-10)

Having considered all those arguments, it is more than clear that corruption is very complex and understanding corruption is deeply affected by the cultural values of a society. What is and is not corrupt is a matter of dispute, not just among people within one single culture but also between competing moralities. Such conflicting moralities are seen in how corruption discourses emerge in a context where gift-giving, patronage, etc. govern social relations and make such exchanges legitimate. Given the practical difficulties of investigating instances of what may to some, but not to others, be corruption makes ‘corruption talk’ the obvious focus of research for here the contrasting moralities and the contexts in which they are developed can be defined. As corruption drives ambiguous attitudes, so does sorcery in that it also instigates contesting moralities as seen in how people are in conflict between denouncement and enthrallment. It is therefore necessary to look at how corruption and sorcery are connected with each other.

4.4 The Relationship between Corruption and Sorcery

Without a doubt, corruption is closely connected with state power and exploring corruption-talk is one of the ways of understanding the world of politics. How people

construct ideas of the state and perceive political life depends to some degree on how they conceive corruption through its accusations. In other words, corruption has a very close relationship with the imagination of the state power, since corruption mostly involves state officials who develop very complex and hierarchical links and intricate networks within government structures. Accordingly, public discourse on corruption can in reality open up thoughts, perceptions, and attitudes of the people towards the state as a public institution.

Similarly, sorcery is concerned with the issues of power and political contest, personal conflict, social vengeance, misfortune, and the need to blame others for the bad events within the life of society. Sorcery-talk is often used as an idiom by which social conflict is expressed. Many anthropological studies of sorcery focus on the relationship between sorcery accusations and social tensions whilst another series of studies focus on the role of sorcery beliefs in the understanding of individual misfortune and social processes. Witchcraft and sorcery are therefore seen as cultural idioms and allegories in explaining problems and offering an alternative solution to those misfortunes (e.g. Watson & Ellen 1993; Kapferer 2003; Stewart & Strathern 2004; Siegel 2006; Niehaus et al. 2006).

These magic forms reflect the thoughts and cultural orientations of people in dealing with such a complicated world and play a dominant part in the cosmology of societies regardless of whether they are primitive or modern. Witchcraft beliefs and sorcery accusations have been controversial since they are frequently utilized as one of the ways to express communal conflicts usually imbued with personal revenge and collective retaliation. For instance, ethnographic studies of Southeast Asian and African societies indicate that witchcraft and sorcery are frequently involved in social tension and used as a way of escalating violent conflict (e.g. Ashforth 2005; Siegel 2006). In the case of communal conflict, both sides of the conflicting parties usually utilize sorcery accusations to manipulate public opinion in order to either convince people of their truth in the conflict or evoke the sympathy of others (e.g. Watson & Ellen 1993; Kapferer 2003; Stewart & Strathern 2004). Sorcery and witchcraft are deeply rooted in the culture of societies, being part of their system of beliefs. They have their own believers and practitioners who apply them for multiple purposes, especially for the worst kinds of such wrongdoing as corruption, killing personal foes, eliminating political opponents, causing illness through creating diseases, making bad luck, creating marriage problems, and the like. Here, it is important to note that witchcraft may kill one but corruption

kills more because the rights of the people are violated as public resources that are supposed to be allocated for many beneficiaries are diverted by corrupt officials for individual gains. As a part of society's cultures, witchcraft and sorcery have been the focus of studies by anthropologists with different emphases and specific interests (e.g. Geertz 1960; Koentjaraningrat 1985; Watson & Ellen 1993; Stewart & Strathern 2004; Siegel 2006; Bubandt 2006).

Not surprisingly, given the similar roles played by sorcery talk and corruption talk some observers have stressed a parallel between the two, for instance, Sedlenieks (2004) and Bubandt (2006). Frequently, people perceive corruption as a demonic force, like witchcraft, but they seem incapable of dealing with it. Although both witchcraft and corruption are classified as evil practices, people are inclined to engage in these condemned actions and misconducts. As those engaging in witchcraft are dubbed devil worshipers, those implicated in corruption are called immoral greedy people. Thus, both are essentially the manifestations of demonic cults in different appearances. Like witchcraft, corruption is usually shrouded by mysterious power, most famously called the 'invisible hand' in political power, and done in secrecy and concealment. Similar to sorcery, corruption can be illustrated with ghosts and spectres. They do not appear in a physical manner, but affect people's lives resulting in misery and plight. Here people have no knowledge for sure and commonly speculate and interpret it based upon public talk. As a result, accusations of corruption very often become rumours and gossip in which one is hardly able to provide hard facts that can assist the authority to take the case to court. Rumours and gossip are usually dense and numerous, and people oppose corruption talk about such cases vehemently. The basic accusation is one of trickery and deceit with the main issue of trust in the government office expressing people's disappointment with the deception and dishonesty. Such an accusation of corruption precisely resembles accusations against sorcerers and witches, while rumours and gossip fill the gap in knowledge and information, and plays a dominant role in escalating public distrust and even forcing a social crisis into being. Comparing the explanations of sorcery accusations may help in understanding corruption accusations, as Geertz (1960) clearly illustrated, "accusations of witchcraft are common enough, but they are never made openly and directly against anyone; they are only whispered to others as malicious gossip or discussed rather abstractly as hypotheses to account for peculiar behaviours" (p.109). At this point, it is not important whether or not accusations are factual or based upon empirical evidence, since both "witchcraft and

sorcery in all societies are potent sources of expressive language, symbolism, and allegory which may be as important as actual accusations” (Ellen 1993:21). This is why gossip and rumours are the most critical things and they are, in the context of mass psychology, treated as the mechanism of transforming suspicion into accusation. Therefore, sorcery accusations must be seen as both ‘historical and processual’ events. As historical events, sorcery accusations are “products of wide-scale changes running through people’s lives”; while as processual event, sorcery accusations are “sets of events that involve complex interactions between individuals constituting micro-histories of their own” (Stewart & Strathern 2004:27).

Such comparison between witchcraft and corruption can also be viewed in the way they weaken and paralyze the human body and state power respectively. As witchcraft consumes life-force by eating the life of victims causing damage to someone’s body, corruption also devastates the state power by weakening and paralyzing it so that it cannot play its basic role and function within society. Through magical power, the witch hurts the human body by inserting magical materials and saying magical words (spells, the knowledge of spells) along with potions into it in order to harm or even kill that person. The witch is categorically ‘evil whose natural disposition is to harm other people mostly by mystical or invisible means’ (Forth 1993:100), as the main character of a sorcerer is also to carry out witchcraft attacks against victims and to instigate perpetrated acts of malign magic. Therefore, witches and sorcerers are regarded as the perpetrators of evil, as Stewart & Strathern put it:

Witchcraft is seen as power belonging to persons through their bodies or spirits, giving them an ability to fly out of the body or to transform themselves into other creatures to kill, harm, or inflict sickness on those whom they intend to weaken. Characteristically, the witch is seen as a kind of cannibal, eating the victim’s life-force as a way of self-augmentation. Sorcerers are seen as destroying a victim’s life-force, not by directly consuming it but by inflicting sickness through magical means. (Stewart & Strathern 2004:6)

Relevant to this notion, Harrison (2004) discusses the idea that corruption is a cancer on the body politic. As cancer causes serious illness to the human body, paralyzes it slowly and eventually ends the life of a person, corruption destroys the fundamental elements of the state by ravaging its structures. This, in turn, leads state power to severe weaknesses and paralyzes it so that it cannot be as well-functioned as it is supposed to be. Some scholarly works (e.g. Rose-Ackerman 1999; Marquette 2003; Green & Ward 2004; Bracking 2007) have shown how corruption weakens state power and impairs

governance and development since it operates within government systems, encompassing bureaucracy units and state apparatuses so that it will systematically wreck both government bodies and state institutions. As the rite of witchcraft sacrifices the body of the victims, the rite of corruption also sacrifices the state body that eventually places people in insecure circumstances. In the context of politics, sorcery and corruption can form serious dangers to the consolidation process of democracy, especially where modern democratic systems are disrupted by corrupt political actors who are deeply obsessed with power and wealth and use magic as the sole means of realizing the imagination of the state power. Bubandt (2006) explains the ambivalence of sorcery and corruption saying:

[...] both appear to attain power in socially reprehensible and harmful ways. The public and modernist condemnation of sorcery as backward and of corruption as incompatible with democracy is, however, attended by a widespread notion that sorcery and corruption are nevertheless inescapable aspects of political life. The fact that sorcery and corruption appear to be simultaneously reprehensible and inescapable make both highly ambivalent. (Bubandt 2006:414)

As the state power contains morality especially for creating social justice, equality and public virtue, those gaining power through corruption and sorcery practices are considered as being morally untrustworthy. However, the pro-cons over such illicit practices always emerge and the embedded notions of the morality of sorcery and corruption are in fact contentious, so public discourses derived from these phenomena are always ambiguous. Within this context, such boundaries between good and bad, proper and improper, moral and immoral are fuzzy and uncertain; and public controversy over those practising sorcery and implicating in corruption continues to happen in reality. Indeed, the ambiguities of corruption and sorcery within society are socially evident.

4.5 Corruption and Sorcery in the Indonesian Context

One of the major problems in developing an understanding of corruption in Indonesia is that all literature is written from a particular moral position. Undoubtedly, there are political processes that can be seen as corrupt from the point of view of a morality based on Weberian ideals of a rational bureaucracy and the separation of office and the incumbent. But the nature of political power of the New Order appeared to be in contrast to the Weberian concept of rational polity. In some ways, the pattern of government under the New Order regime was similar to the government in pre-colonial

Java in which the role of the leader was dominant. As the top leader of the New Order, Soeharto marshalled military officers, bureaucrats, and technocrats in a model of the state which resonated with Javanese culture and values. He acted as a very dominant ruler who tightly controlled the state government. Here, the ruler played such a crucial role and loyalty was so essential in the context of power relations between ruler and followers.

In this context, one needs to look at the concept of the state in pre-modern Indonesia to understand the New Order. In terms of Indonesian cosmological beliefs, a ruler was conceived as a semi-divine ‘god-king’ whose legitimacy—the popular acceptance of his right to rule—relied upon cultural authority rather than the use of force. Using the example of Bali, Geertz (1980) illustrates that unlike modern concepts of the state which are often based on the control of force, the pre-colonial Balinese state must be perceived culturally in terms of myths, ceremonies, rituals and symbols. He argues that the Balinese state defied the concepts and models of modern political theory and contravened the standard Western approaches to understanding politics and power. The state was about spectacle and symbolism, where “mass ritual was not a device to shore up the state, but rather the state ... was a device for the enactment of mass ritual. Power served pomp, not pomp power” (1980:13). For Geertz, the *negara* was a ‘theatre state’ centred on divine kings who claimed great symbolic power. He illustrated that “The whole of the *negara*—court life, the traditions that organized it, the extractions that supported it, the privileges that accompanied it—was essentially directed toward defining what power was; and what power was was what kings were ... a state was constructed by constructing a king, and a king was constructed by constructing a god” (p.124) through mass rituals, public ceremonies and mythical symbols. Here *negara* actually means both city—a place in Bali—and state; in terms of state, *negara* was neither a tyranny nor a hierarchical-organizational bureaucracy, nor even an effective government. *Negara* portrayed a political system that did not match the typical Western idea of what political power is all about. Rather, *negara* displayed the master image of political life, namely, kingship showing that “The king was a political actor, power among powers as well as sign among signs” (p.131) which became the centre of ‘the ritual extravaganzas of the theatre state’ placing the king as the symbol of the society’s greatness.

During the New Order, the theatre state took the form of a patrimonial state organized in the context of Javanese society. A lot of literature on this subject has

widely explored how Java has become a profound socio-political factor of Indonesian politics and Javanese culture is the most influential element in shaping the patterns of polity in the country (e.g. Emmerson 1976; Anderson 1990; Mulder 1996 & 1998; Liddle 1996:63-106; Antlov & Helman 2005). In fact, most of Indonesia's leaders are Javanese who tend to practise patron-client relationships emanating from the patrimonial state tradition in which leaders are the centre of power. The patron-client model appears in a vertical chain of leader-follower relationships showing that the patronage relation is hierarchical by nature, tying people together in personal bonds of unequal moral and material worth, in which the higher cares and the lower obeys and follows; patrons are resourceful and capable of attracting and protecting followers (Mulder 1996:70-71). Of course, as far as the regime and its followers are concerned, such a mode of resource allocation is clearly legitimate in terms of a particular conception of the state. But for those outside this system and for those who increasingly subscribe to a different set of values, it is clearly becoming nothing less than a complex structure of corrupt practices.

At the time of the New Order, Soeharto's mode of control over resources clearly referred to the tradition of the patrimonial state. He developed political relations amongst entrusted people from both the military and the Golkar Party, and in order to maintain power, Soeharto distributed political and economic resources as rewards to the followers, while at the same time applying threats and exclusion as punishments for those who challenged and opposed him. Indeed Soeharto's New Order gained political support for his leadership by endangering fear and distributing favours with the use of a 'stick-and-carrot' approach. Moreover, Soeharto established personal relationships with his cronies, mostly Chinese, by giving them economic resources, business chances, and the like. This group of Chinese, often dubbed as *cukong*, played a very dominant role since they enjoyed the privilege of obtaining lucrative state contracts through corrupt and collusive relations with state officials. For this, William Liddle rightly describes: "More important than simple corruption in maintaining the loyalty of subordinates is the elaborate network of government-business relations which centres on the role of the *cukong* who are protected by powerful officials in return for a share of the profits" (Liddle 1996:24; see also Kingsbury 2002:197-216). They all formed the so-called 'elite cartel' which was responsible for securing the economic and political interests of Soeharto and his family members along with their inner circles. The elite cartel then developed strong networks in support of its businesses and relied upon what became

known by its critics as KKN involving both public and private institutions. The elite cartel allowed the military officers, bureaucrats, and Golkar's politicians to divert public resources, go into business and extract bribes and rents, but they were absolutely forbidden to disrupt economic development and political order (e.g. Johnston 2005:178-82; MacIntyre 2003; Liddle 1996; Robison 1990; Crouch 1988). All these practices were facilitated by state bureaucracies, which had the privilege of controlling and distributing resources to their favourite clients based on both economic and political interests. Such collusive relations between state officials and private actors were the foundations of what its critics saw as the corrupt character of Indonesian politics. Soeharto's political strategy was to maintain his power by portraying himself as the patron and distributing economic benefits and political privileges to his cronies, protégés, and followers in order to get personal loyalty from them. The interaction between the patron and clients—Soeharto and his cronies—in dealing with collusive businesses took place in three intertwined institutions (the military, the bureaucracy, and the Golkar Party), which greatly determined the whole political processes.

Not surprisingly, under these political circumstances corruption has for years been widespread across the country. What can be described as corruption in public institutions took two forms: “(1) it involves the buying and selling of influence or power over public policy in ways that benefit only particular individuals or groups (e.g. families, cronies and clients); and (2) the corrupt behaviour is more easily protected behind a facade of legality because of the corrupt official's position” (King 2000:605). As a result, such illicit exchanges practised by the government and parliament bodies were common in the policymaking processes. When the executive body proposes an annual budget to the Parliament, the representatives use their political power over budget allocation to take some ‘refreshments’ from the state officials; or, they act as a broker to facilitate their ‘clients’ to get development contracts. From there, the lawmakers will get *upeti* (gift) and *uang pelicin*—money taken from both state officials and clients involved in the lobbying process. ‘Refreshments’ are also informally required for the enactment of a bill, or the legal drafting process, or for any kind of government policies that need to be approved by the legislative body. Within this context, corruption therefore evolves “from one in which the predominant role was played by the, often coercive, bribe-taker to one in which the bribe-giver acquires increasing power, and these two roles then become interchangeable” (Pardo 2004:2).

Those sorts of activities, typical of the patrimonial state from one point of view, characteristic of corruption from another, were keys in maintaining the power of the New Order regime. Yet the uses of magic and sorcery were also important. Sorcery believers and practitioners surrounded the New Order state and people believed that the long-lasting survival of the regime depended on the help of witches and sorcerers. For rulers and political leaders, sorcery and witchcraft are seen as magical tools in order to be able to stay in power for a long time, in addition to committing corruption. When ruling the country for 32 years, Soeharto was believed to possess magical knowledge. Many Indonesian people were convinced that the reason why he successfully assumed power and stayed in office for more than three decades was because of the protection of magical power. Even Soeharto symbolized himself as a mythical figure who had received spiritual potency through the supernatural medium as a result of the constant practice of mystical discipline so that his close aides claimed that he ruled the country as a so-called *pelindung* (guard, protector), reflecting a spiritually powerful person, for all Indonesians. The portrayal of Soeharto as the protector of the people was a typical imagery of political leadership in Javanese society.

Occupying the presidency for extraordinary longevity, Soeharto was believed to make use of sorcery as a means of controlling political power by creating social disruption as in the case of the outbreaks of sorcery-related murders at the end of his regime. Only a few months before Soeharto was ousted and the New Order regime fell, terrible massacres occurred in the Banyuwangi, Jember, and Malang regions of the East Java province, shocking the local communities and leading to a great deal of social commotion in the country. The victims were mostly *kiai* (traditional Islamic clerics), *ustadz* (Moslem teachers), and common villagers, and they were accused of being *dukun santet* (black magic practitioners, witches). The case was immediately surrounded by rumours and gossip as they very often arose as a part of witchcraft ritual with a single political message: the people need a ruler who is, by using the state power, capable of tackling social crisis. At the time, the ruler was associated with the military that was under direct control of Soeharto. Such bizarre slaughter of the *dukun santet* continued to happen for several months even after Soeharto left office and it claimed the lives of more than 200 people. The incidence of sorcery-related murders clearly represented what a so-called 'state violence' as a result of the regime change, which became part of power struggles. As a form of the state violence, witchcraft-related killings can be seen as the ways in which those who were in power exercised the power.

Shrouded by a great deal of mysterious incidents, there was speculation that Jakarta's elite and politicians had masterminded this; they were behind the scenes of the mass carnage. Meanwhile, those *kiai*, *ustadz*, and ordinary villagers who were accused of being the *dukun santet* were simply scapegoats in a suspiciously manipulated campaign designed to disrupt political reforms and discredit the emerging power establishment of the post-New Order regime. Speculations also indicated that mass murders were a sort of military-supported intelligence operation designed to create social chaos throughout East Java in parallel with Soeharto's resignation. Here, it is interesting to consider James Siegel's observation:

In Java, witchcraft accusations arose in the absence of the state. They were an attempt to reassert social control, which at the moment meant control over phantasms. These phantasms were not ghosts of Java but fears that arose within a national context. [...] "Witch," with the subsequent witch-hunt, offered a means for local control of general—or national—malevolence when state control failed. I would argue that [witchcraft accusations] were a legacy of the New Order rather than a reassertion of a traditional practice. (Siegel 2006:161)

What Siegel observed was an affirmation that the image of the New Order state was replete with magic and mysticism. They were translated into witchcraft accusations with two major objectives: (1) to maintain the sustainability of the regime by keeping the power in the hands of Soeharto; and (2) to control political stability by permeating psychological terror within society through rumours on *dukun santet*. It was widely acknowledged that the nature of Soeharto's rule was malevolent, and such massive terrors wrapped up with rumours were the manifestations of mythical performances showing that violence was an integral part of his power. As a part of mythical power conceptualized by the New Order state, during the thirty-two years of reign, Soeharto was perceived by the people as possessing supernatural power and was surrounded by many *dukuns*.

When Soeharto eventually could not hold on to power and forcibly left office, people also believed that his *dukuns* did not stand anymore by his side, since his family members and cronies were so greedy and voracious, and their involvement in KKN could no longer be tolerated. The uncontrolled desire of Soeharto's family combined with unchecked political power as seen in the KKN practices had resulted in the loss of spiritual authority and supernatural power. Having experienced Soeharto's New Order, one might realize that both sorcery and corruption had a political function and became a public secret in modern Indonesian politics, although the practices were not overtly revealed but rather concealed. Yet, in the post-Soeharto era, both sorcery and corruption

seem to continue alongside the establishment of the modern democratic system. However, Indonesian people are critical of corruption and they consolidate social and political resources and organize civil society groups to fight it. They promote the ideas and practices of anti-corruption with the use of any measure available.

4.6 The Ideas and Practices of Anti-Corruption

In the beginning, the ideas and practices of anti-corruption appear in a social space in parallel with the emergence of political opposition to Soeharto's New Order government. Here, anti-corruption movements initially emerged in the mid-1970s when student-led political protests against the New Order state took place as they strongly alleged that Soeharto's regime was corrupt (e.g. Vatikiotis 1998; Schwarz 2004). However, anti-corruption activism during that time was un-institutionalized since particular civil society organizations dedicated to fighting corruption were still absent. Such activism against corruption appeared to be a sporadic movement which was part of the political protest, so it received very little attention from the public. Besides, Indonesian civil society had not been able to consolidate social and political resources to challenge the misuse of power by state actors. This is because the autocratic ruler of the New Order did not leave any space for social criticism voiced by the civil society activists and other non-state actors. The regime maintained its grip on power by repressing people and political opponents so that they were afraid of articulating public critiques. The New Order severely suppressed any social and political groups who tried to challenge the Soeharto government. In fact, social and political activists who opposed the regime were blamed for being the 'obstacle to development' so were isolated from social and political processes and excluded from the world of politics. Many of them were even jailed for years as the New Order applied oppressive approaches in dealing with any political opposition. Yet public criticism of corruption came to the fore when Soeharto stepped down, though in its inception it appeared to be politically less significant. Here is Kingsbury's assessment:

After the fall of Soeharto, there was little holding back as criticism of Indonesia's rampant corruption, in particular that of its elites, became widespread. But for many years, not only were observations about elite corruption in Indonesia rarely discussed, but those who did discuss it in public found themselves either in deep trouble within the state or, if outsiders, excluded from it. (Kingsbury 2002:198)

The discussion of corruption by critical groups of Indonesian elites was politically forbidden, let alone used as political jargon in public campaigns nationally. It was politically risky if social activists and civil society associations criticized the despotic regime by condemning corruption within the New Order. Yet the alteration of the political pendulum has created a way of voicing public criticism on corruption through the promotion of democratic politics since it opened up the freedom of expression. The ideas of democracy and democratic governance have emerged in the social discourse brought about by educated Indonesian elites as they grow and pioneer civil activism and social movements acting as a counterforce of the New Order. Indeed, the democratic political system makes it possible for civil society activists to cement social elements and reinforce political strengths for public critiques. As corruption has become the crux of the problem of the country under the Soeharto government and beyond, NGO activists and civil society agents have raised the issue of corruption as the main agenda of governance reform by promoting anti-corruption initiatives. In the post-Soeharto era, anti-corruption activism has become a massive social movement and has received huge attention from Indonesian people as they share the major concern about the problem of corruption. Such activism against corruption took place in parallel with the 1998 *reformasi* movements which demanded a transparent government and accountable public governance indicated by the 'vanishing' of corruption within state agencies. The *reformasi* movement was a critical moment for civil society activists as they emerged to become the focal point of social and political protest against power establishment. The pendulum of political power then swung into non-state agencies as they gained a profound political influence in the context of public criticism related to the management of political governance and public affairs.

The change from the authoritarian regime to a democratic government system has radically altered the architecture of Indonesian politics. Within the newly established political system, there is a wider social space available for civic participation and citizens are allowed to take part in political affairs. As a result, NGOs and other civil society associations play a greater role in social and political processes. As Indonesia has become a democratic state, those non-state actors have grown exponentially as seen in their increasing numbers over the last thirteen years. There are plenty of NGOs and civil society agencies that focus on the issues of corruption and public governance, whether they are established in the capital or located in local sites.

They are usually led by independent groups of social and political activists, but in some cases they are based on university campuses and led by academics and intellectuals.

In the era of democratic politics, NGO activists and civil society appear to be in the forefront promoting anti-corruption reforms and they take the lead in battling corruption. Here, the involvement of NGOs and civil society in the eradication of corruption represents that civil rights and political liberty are guaranteed—something that was not possible during the New Order period. Even though they enjoy political freedom under the democratic system that allows them to promote the ideas and practices of anti-corruption, they often face difficulties and obstructions in carrying out governance reform to curb corruption. The major obstacles of combating corruption have always been political in the sense that politicians and those holding political powers often impede social and political activists from accelerating their activism against corruption. They always make use of public power and political influence to curtail any efforts to battle corruption so that anti-corruption activists are often in opposition to those who are in power. Despite abundant anti-corruption rhetoric voiced by the power holders, NGOs and civil society activists seem less trustworthy. This is mainly because efforts to eliminate corruption have always been at a standoff if corruption scandals involve state officials and politicians. The Indonesian people are deeply discontented with the authorities (especially the Attorney General's Office, the Police), since they do not have any political courage and the ability to disclose any gigantic corruption scandals that are involved including 'big and influential political figures' who stay in and grip power. As Arjon Schutte points out: "... post-New Order efforts to battle against corruption have largely focused on the investigative and punitive aspects, not least the catching of 'big fish,' as demanded by the public" (2009:85). This is actually the main characteristic of how the authorities deal with corruption as they are politically at risk to prosecute those holding the power or those who have close relationships with the power-holders. The complexity of battling corruption centres on power relations amongst those involved in it. Not surprisingly, tension and conflict very often materialize which lead to the contestation of power involving a wide range of social political groups which will be thoroughly explored in the thesis.

5. Setting the Scene

Carried out for twelve months, from September 2008 to August 2009, this research project took place in Jakarta, the capital of Indonesia. During the fieldwork, I spent time in parliament, public offices, and offices of civil society institutions, religious organizations, NGOs, and media agencies. They were the scenes where my fieldwork was set out and with which my sources associated. In the period of the fieldwork, I settled in two places that were suitable for me to arrange the activities and to do all things in relation to the research project. The first place was my office, that is, the National Development Planning Agency (Bappenas), the state body, which is responsible for economic planning and social policymaking. Bappenas gave me space to work on my research project and allowed me to use all facilities in support of the fieldwork, but I was actually not on official duty at that time. The second place was my colleague's office, that is, the Research Institute for the Study of Development and Business Ethics (LSPEUI), a private institution where I used to be a research associate. Both are located in the heart of the capital which allowed me to move back and forth from one place to another to make contact with and reach informants.

5.1 *Informants*

Settled in those two places, I spent time working on the research project and arranged a series of meetings and interviews with informants to gather data. Informants are well-educated people of urban-middle class with different socio-cultural backgrounds; and this study therefore does not claim to represent the whole Javanese, let alone the whole Indonesian society. They are males and several females of various ages; the young groups are in their thirties and forties while the older groups are between their fifties and sixties. Getting in touch with them during fieldwork, I was fortunate to have been able to capture various perspectives of the subjects being studied. Here I present the sources with whom I spoke by classifying them into seven groups.

The *first* group are politicians who are members of political parties and active in day-to-day politics and legislators, serving in the House of Representatives. They are part of the urban elite politicians who know about politics very well and have knowledge about how the Javanese culture has a profound effect on the country's politics. As politicians and legislators, they engage with the management of political parties so that they are familiar with the issue of political affairs and cultural values embedded within polity. These informants are appropriate sources as they are involved

in political activities that allow them to get in touch with the issues being researched. One of the informants is a leader of a party and former minister and the other was a candidate running for vice president during the presidential election.

The *second* group are intellectuals/academics/lecturers who teach at universities and do not have any affiliation with a certain political party. They are obviously educated elites with high academic credentials and engage immensely in social activities such as participating in public talks on corruption and joining social associations to organize public campaigns against corruption with the spirit of intellectualism and rationality, that is, to improve public governance and to create civic politics in which civic virtue and morality should be the basis of polity. One of them has expertise in Islam and Javanese culture and he is concerned with the issues of mysticism and politics. As knowledgeable people, they are concerned with the world of politics and how the cosmological belief of Indonesian society has a profound influence on the dynamics of political practices.

The *third* group are public officials—state prosecutors working with the Attorney General’s Office (AGO)—and (former) officials of the anti-graft state body, the Komisi Pemberantasan Korupsi (the Commission of Corruption Eradication) who are responsible for and involved in corruption alleviation based on official and civic duty combined. They are professionals and have been taking part in the fight against corruption for many years. As they are officials dedicating themselves to battling corruption, these informants are potent sources as they express their own experiences in regards to the issues of corruption and witchcraft.

The *fourth* group are the religious leaders of Islamic organizations: the Nahdhatul Ulama (NU), the Muhammadiyah, and the Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia (HTI). They represent the Muslim middle class groups who demand greater social and political participation related to public governance. Like other civil society groups, they are also concerned about social issues and public interests with reference to religious ethics. As educated groups, these religious leaders actively engage in activism against corruption believing that they would be able to voice Islamic teachings and religious morality in support of anti-corruption initiatives. The religious leaders are trustworthy people and have knowledge about social issues and political affairs so that they are capable of articulating public criticisms against corruption.

The *fifth* group are social and political activists associated with NGOs and civil society institutions who share interests in common with other groups about the problem

of corruption. They are educated elites and urban middle class who are committed to pioneering and mobilizing anti-corruption activism with a political purpose, that is, to create an efficient and effective government for a better Indonesia. As critical groups, they are the main focal point of anti-corruption initiatives and frequently organize social movements and political protests against corruption. They are prominent activists of the Indonesia Corruption Watch (ICW) and other civil society groups so that they are the best sources for understanding anti-corruption reforms.

The *sixth* group are businesspeople who have worked for many years in their profession and are familiar with the relationship between business and politics. They are established economic groups who maintain social networks and political relations in support of their business activities. From them, among others, I gained much information about how corruption—in the form of bribe-giving and bribe-taking, paying off, kickback, and the like—takes place in state agencies. They are aware that patronage also applies in business as many businesspeople benefit from this to get contracts from the government and deal with state bureaucracies to gain state-financed projects.

The *seventh* group are journalists working with media agencies and artists, musicians, and poets who are concerned about the issue of corruption and then take part in anti-corruption movements. As professionals in journalism and popular arts, they are literate groups who are critical of the grave problem of corruption. Having shared ideas with other civil society groups about battling corruption, their critical views are transformed into journalistic reports and talk-show programmes screened on TV channels; and expressed through popular songs, poems, *pantuns* (folk quatrains), caricatures, and cartoons that address the issue of (anti)-corruption. The media people and popular artists are knowledgeable groups who have the responsibility to fight corruption in their own ways as other groups of Indonesian society do.

For all these resourceful people who became informants for my research project, here I apply pseudonyms for their safety and confidentiality. Nevertheless, it is often difficult to maintain this especially for well-known sources as they can still be recognized, even though I used a fictitious name. But at certain points, I will leave their real name in with the belief that it will not harm them. I should also mention that I have paraphrased all the quotations taken from interviews with informants as I quote the essence of their views and the main points that are relevant with the subject being studied.

5.2 *Notes on methods of the research*

In order to collect the data, I employed the traditional method of anthropological research, participant observation, in addition to carrying out interviews and reviews of media reports and publications. These methods helped me to access plenty of essential sources primary data. The *interviews* gave me the opportunity to talk with the informants by deepening a particular topic of the research so that I could reach a better understanding of the subject being investigated. I talked with informants by asking them questions through unstructured and open-ended interviews, as this approach made it possible for me to change from one topic to another and gave interviewees the chance to talk freely and openly. Yet I still controlled the flow of the talk as the interviews went on, to keep the subject focused. Through a series of interviews, I had a good chance to deepen particular issues and to address specific themes so I could gather as much data as I needed from the interviewees. Interviews usually took place in various locations depending on informants' preferences and convenience. The interview process could therefore be done in homes, offices, coffee shops, or any preferable venues. The interview was of course worthwhile in helping me reach explanations and insights into some research problems that emerged during the fieldwork. The interviews with informants then became a medium of private narratives as they talked to me in person about particular subjects related to the research. The large amounts of data were mainly collected in Jakarta, but I also went to other cities, out of the capital, to interview informants. A colleague of mine, a lecturer at Universitas Muhammadiyah Surakarta, Central Java, helped me to meet and talk to other informants. Another colleague, an MP at the local parliament of the Banten province, also assisted me to meet informants there.

In addition to the interviews, a *review of media reports and publications* were obviously important to help me trace public discourses on corruption and sorcery, which were documented by the public media.² In doing so, I spent an extensive period of time examining the archives of newspapers, magazines, and televisions as there were

² In order to analyze public discourses that appeared in the public media, I relied on both printed and electronic media. For printed media, I took major national newspapers, such as *The Jakarta Post*, *Kompas*, *Media Indonesia*, and *Warta Kota*. Meanwhile, for weekly magazines I just took the two most influential ones, *Tempo* and *Gatra*, as they are the major references for the Indonesian middle class groups. For electronic media, I took two TV channels (TV-One, Metro-TV), since they have special programmes in the form of talk-shows and live event reports which address the issue of corruption. These two TV channels are the biggest ones and viewers favour them as they provide many interesting programmes that effectively shape public opinion.

abundant reports and publications on the subject. I found plenty of public media documents that addressed the issue of corruption, stimulating public debate among those concerned with this topic. Certainly, reviewing the public media archives was critical since they illustrated corruption as a social phenomenon within society and presented political contestation behind the corruption scandals, which affected the everyday lives of Indonesian people. The archives of newspapers, magazines, and the television programmes I reviewed were mostly published in the capital and distributed nationwide. Thus, readers and viewers of those public media were people across the country. Reviewing and analyzing reports and publications was equally important with interviewing informants on the same subject, since they seemed to reflect a 'reality' constructed by the media. Here, the media archives facilitated me to read, document, and examine public discourses of corruption within a certain period of time.

Through participant observation, I engaged in a number of social activities relevant to the research project which helped me obtain first-hand data about the subject being researched. The participant observation allowed me to get the real picture of social life that could not be gained through interviews. In doing so, I attended some sessions in court to observe the dynamics of public debate on corruption in trial and joining people in the workplace to grasp public talk about corruption. Observing public trials directly helped me understand how corruption was perceived and interpreted in different ways by various people. I could also note that corruption is a complicated phenomenon since it is closely associated with power-holders who have a great deal of political influence within the state powers. I did field observation not only about the actual events in court, but also about social protests organized by many social groups such as NGOs, civil society associations, religious organizations, political activists, and other elements of Indonesian society. Here, I observed live events and took photographs which complement my written descriptions, expressing how the public were deeply frustrated with pervasive corruption which caused serious problems within society. I documented live events of carnivals, public congregations, public meetings, and social protests in which all of them were part of anti-corruption movements. Through participant observation, I had a very good chance to talk, not only to common people about the incidence of corruption, but also to listen to public complaints about the grave problem. Moreover, I attended dozen of public discussions in Jakarta from which I had the opportunity to capture ideas, thoughts, and opinions on relevant subjects which appeared in public debate. Here, public discussion refers to an open discussion for those

interested in talking about current topics emerging in the national sphere. It was usually organized by social activists, civil society institutions, NGOs, radio and TV agencies, journalists' associations, or university student groups, which took place in many sites in the capital. The kind of discussion was held in response to social issues and public affairs becoming part of the public forum and social discourse among educated middle class groups. Speakers were various in terms of social background: scholars, intellectuals, politicians, MPs, religious leaders, NGO activists, and others.

5.3 *Notes on being an internal researcher*

As a civil servant working with Bappenas, the National Development Planning Agency, I certainly benefited from the status in which I could have conducted this fieldwork with few obstructions. Having the status of government employee made it relatively easy to find a variety of sources for my research project, since I have plenty of contacts who have given me a great deal of assistance during fieldwork. However, at the time of the fieldwork I was completing my doctoral studies, and every time I approached informants and interviewed them I always introduced myself as a social researcher rather than as a government employee. For this, I developed informal relations with informants and whenever I visited them to talk about contemporary issues of Indonesian politics, it was certainly an unofficial visit. This is to minimize the biases and limitations of carrying out the research project as informants might have remained reticent given my own position within this field of government activity. Besides, whenever I contacted and approached informants I preferred to identify myself as a (former) social activist rather than as a civil servant or a professional working at a government agency in order to make the 'gap' between me and the informants closer. Indeed this strategy seemed effective as informants became more open and less reluctant to talk about the subject being researched.

Being an internal researcher was very helpful especially in terms of accessing sources and how to reach resourceful people both in government offices and the Parliament, as I could approach them almost without any major obstacles. But it was not merely because I am a government employee working with Bappenas; rather, I have known them for long time before they became politicians, legislators, or officials. Despite many years of friendship with informants, I still needed to make an extra effort to convince them about the subject being researched so they were willing to share their

thoughts and information with me. At this point, there were some difficulties as the research topic was about corruption in state agencies and political institutions which involve state officials and politicians. My sources sometimes felt insecure talking about the subject as it seemed to reveal ‘*rahasia dapur*’ (internal affairs) which might place them at risk and humiliate public institutions. Nevertheless, I explained that I was observing public discourse on corruption, not the actual corruption or the practice of corruption committed by state officials. What I studied was how people talked about corruption and how public media recorded people’s talk; and I examined the dynamics of public discourse on corruption raised by many groups of Indonesian society in a variety of ways. Besides, most corruption scandals had already been revealed in the media and became public knowledge for all Indonesian people so the sources should not be unduly worried. As such, I interviewed media people and activists of NGOs and civil society as they were enthusiastic when talking about the topic of corruption and interested in the issue. This is because they wanted to disperse ideas and activism against corruption into as wide an audience as possible including through research I was conducting. This is why they always invited me to get involved in anti-corruption activities and informed me about social actions or public discussion addressing the issue of corruption from which I was able to gather data for my research project.

6. Organization of the Thesis

The structure of the thesis is divided into two parts comprising three chapters for each and each chapter discusses a specific theme. Following this introduction there are six substantive chapters consisting of ethnographic materials, and ending up with a conclusion.

Chapter 1, *Javanese Mysticism and Pathways of Power*, explores the topic of Javanese mysticism and its impact on political practice by illustrating how mystical beliefs and politics are connected with each other. This chapter demonstrates how Javanese mysticism is deeply rooted in the society and becomes part of the culture and identity of the nation. It also presents pathways of power in the views of the Javanese people by highlighting mystical practice, as Java has been the epicentre of Indonesian politics.

Chapter 2, *Witchcraft and Political Contestation at the Time of the 2009 General Elections*, addresses the issues of witchcraft and politics by illustrating the relations

between the two and showing how witchcraft plays a part in political processes. Discourses of witchcraft and politics are extensively explored by bringing in the very recent cases of the 2009 general elections. This chapter will also examine the contesting ideas of being both traditional and modern, and how they appear in the political contestation that instigates much public controversy as the country embraces a modern democratic system.

Chapter 3, *Witchcraft and Corruption: the Risk to Human Lives*, examines the dangers of witchcraft in relation to eradicating corruption as it threatens human lives by bringing case studies of prosecutors and social activists who have personal experiences of sorcery attacks related to their activities. It illustrates how witchcraft is used by alleged corruptors as a way of attacking prosecutors, of obstructing a prosecution process, and of intimidating activists who work for anti-corruption campaigns.

Chapter 4, *Religious Activism in the Fight against Corruption*, explores with the role of religious organizations: the Muhammadiyah, the Nahdhatul Ulama, and the Hizbut Tahrir in taking part in the fight against corruption by addressing the moral and religious bases they employ in support of anti-corruption movements. As these social organizations are Islamic institutions, discussion in this chapter focuses on Islamic ideas and moralities that drive such movements and look at theological thoughts and religious teachings on corruption discourse.

Chapter 5, *Social and Political Activism in the Battle against Corruption*, addresses social and political activism in support of public campaigns against corruption by focusing on NGO activities along with civil society agencies and actors who play a part in anti-corruption movements. The political significance of these groups in fighting corruption is elaborated thoroughly. This chapter also presents the views and thoughts of social and political activists on corruption in public discourses and shows how corruption influences the establishment of political democracy.

Chapter 6, *The Role of the Public Media and Popular Art in Anti-Corruption Movements*, presents the significance of the public media and artists in combating corruption as seen in their work. It stresses the public criticism of corruption expressed in many forms: popular songs, cartoons, caricatures, murals, poetry, and *pantuns* (folk quatrains), as well as media reports and TV programmes in relation to public campaigns against corruption. The chapter shows that all these cultural measures are critical in support of social movements to combat corruption.

The last part is the *Conclusion* that will sum up the whole discussion emerged in the thesis by bringing some reflections on the major issues of the research. Here, all the ideas and thoughts in the discussion will be blended together as final, concluding remarks.

Chapter 1

JAVANESE MYSTICISM AND PATHWAYS OF POWER

This chapter mainly aims to provide a conceptual ground and basic understanding for further discussion in the following chapters on how the occult and corruption have social-political significance as part of the struggle over power. For this, it is necessary to start with a discussion on the subject of Javanese culture, since Java has become the epicentre of Indonesian politics. This chapter therefore seeks to examine Javanese mysticism in relation to political processes by illustrating how mystical belief and politics are connected with each other. Discussion then focuses on pathways of power by presenting mystical practices performed by politicians. It will also talk about the production of political leadership and how political legitimacy is gained. The reason for exploring these issues is to show how the Javanese conceive of power and how they believe it should be exercised for the public interest, not for self-enrichment resulting from *pamrih* (concealed private interest). The main argument of this chapter centres on how the dynamics of Indonesian politics are informed by competing ideas between traditionalism and modernism as traditional values and norms remain alive in the realm of political modernity.

1.1 The Idea of Power: Contesting Meaning, Gaining Supernatural Potency

This section addresses the concept of power from the view of the Javanese people as they have a distinct notion of it compared to what is commonly found in Western literature. It is widely acknowledged that Javanese culture greatly affects the way in which they perceive power, how it is contested, gained, and maintained in the course of power struggle in the tradition of Indonesian politics. Certainly, a much-quoted classic work of Benedict Anderson, *The Idea of Power in Javanese Culture* (1990 [1972]), is essential as the basis for the explanation of the subject. For the Javanese, power intimately relates to spirituality as “the quest for Power is pursued through extreme asceticism” (p.23) by taking various forms such as fasting, ascetic meditation, ritual purification, and others; and is characterized by syncretism and absorption, and centred in the person of a ruler. Because power is concentrated in the hands of the ruler, it becomes personalized and sacred, since the rulers, as in the case of President Soekarno

and President Soeharto, enjoyed portraying themselves as Javanese kings who were imagined by the people to be *Ratu Adil* (the Queen of Justice, the Messiah, the mythical just ruler) and acquired supernatural force. In this sense, the ruler was believed to have received so-called *wahyu* (divine radiance), passed down through ancestral dynasties; and the ruler was thus associated with the founders of a kingdom or dynasty attempting to link with their predecessors through very complicated lines of descent (Anderson 1990:38-41). The link between rulers and ancestral dynasties reveals how the idea of power is close to mysticism and asceticism, as Anderson put it:

While personal ascesis was generally regarded as the fundamental way to accumulate and absorb Power, traditional Javanese thinking also recognized that this process of absorption or accumulation could be furthered both by certain rituals, often containing a core of asceticism, such as fasting, meditation, and the like, and by the possession of certain objects or persons regarded as being “filled” with Power. (Anderson 1990:25)

In a similar way to Geertz’s influential work on the traditional Balinese state or *Negara*, Anderson has developed a culturalist approach to studying (state) power. Interestingly, both employ Weberian theoretical framework when they illustrate the cultural lens through which Indonesian people—more specifically Balinese and Javanese—construe the dynamics of state power and come to understand their political institutions and practices. Power is ascribed to and centres on a strong and dominant figure who maintains the spiritual quality and charismatic authority to exercise power. The structure of power is illustrated by what Geertz (1980) calls ‘exemplary centres’, in which the leader becomes the central focus of power dynamics within a political organization. His personal charisma then becomes the main source of his authoritative leadership. According to Weber’s classification of authority, charismatic authority refers to a leader who has extraordinary personal qualities, often with divine power and spiritual potency; and with this kind of charismatic authority, a leader is able to encourage, guide and inspire followers—winning their loyalty and obedience—to deliver a collective mission and reach common goals. This authority rests on “devotion to the specific and exceptional sanctity, heroism or exemplary character of an individual person, and of the normative patterns or order revealed or ordained by him” (Weber 1947:328). Viewed in this light, a charismatic leader is viewed as an epicentre of political organization, and power is constituted within a pyramid of social structure. The individual occupying the top position controls everything and thus becomes the centre of power. Spiritual potency and charismatic quality overtly radiate from the leader, and constitute the source of passion and principle attraction for followers and supporters. This approach

has been exactly how the Javanese conceived the leadership style of Indonesia's two presidents: Soekarno and Soeharto. They appeared to have represented charismatic leadership; their style accorded well with the Javanese traditional concept of power being highly concentrated in the person of the ruler (Geertz 1973; Anderson 1990). In addition to being empowered with personal charisma, Soekarno and Soeharto became symbolic representations of traditional authority, since both portrayed themselves as strongly influenced by Javanese culture and tradition in their leadership performance. Within Java, culture and tradition greatly impact on the political leadership of a ruler, as there is a belief that the ruler should maintain a variety of sacred objects called *pusaka* (heirlooms)—[e.g. krisses, spears, traditional musical instruments, and the like]—which are believed imbued with supernatural power. Javanese believe that the supernatural power embodied within these sacred objects can be absorbed by and added to the ruler's earthly power. Their loss can be interpreted as the decline of the ruler's power and even a sign of imminent collapse of the dynasty (Moertono 1968; Anderson 1990). Indeed, the belief structures of Javanese culture and tradition have important repercussions for political practices and even during the Soeharto's New Order state, clear elements of Javanese culture were adopted to justify, establish, and stabilize the President's authoritarian regime (Pemberton 1994). As mentioned earlier, traditional authority can be used as one of the primary sources of power within the country's political structures. Following Weberian thinking, traditional authority is grounded in the integrity of a tradition which relies on "an established belief in the sanctity of immemorial traditions and the legitimacy of the status exercising authority under them" (Weber 1947:328). Obviously, these categories of authority are central to the legitimization of power; and in the context of power establishment, legitimacy is both unequivocal and crucial because it relates not only to the institutionalization of power, but more importantly to the moral basis of this power. Without legitimacy, a ruler would not be able to exercise power effectively since power is directly linked to the people's consent. In this context, legitimacy refers to how people believe in the moral integrity of an organized system. Legitimacy is therefore central to power issues because it provides an ethical foundation to those holding power. In this respect, Weber's analysis and classification of authority appears highly significant to understanding the process of establishing legitimate, enduring power.

In addition to understanding power from a cultural perspective, it is important to examine how power is defined by considering another aspect of Weber's analysis. In

contemporary literature, power is associated with physical force as conceptualized by Weberian political theorists. Weber himself defines power as the ability to control the behaviour of others even against their will by any means; thus the most direct source of political power is coercion for imperative control (Weber 1946). On the other hand, Marxist political theorists define power as a state's instrument of repression and the mechanism of subjugation, reflecting the dynamic of class struggle for domination between the capitalists and the workers (e.g. Gramsci 1971; Lukes 2005). In this sense, power is seen in the more classic, material image of it—power through coercion whether it takes the form of physical or economic forces. However, power should not merely be reduced to brute force as the exercise of power relations may take different forms along a continuum. Consent may be manufactured in a refined approach using what Kate Crehan calls 'subaltern culture', indicating 'the mentality of the subordinated' (Crehan 2002:100). Interpreting Gramsci's theoretical approach of the subject, Crehan argues that power relations "can be seen as occupying a continuum with direct coercion through brute force at one pole and willing consent at the other" (2002:101). Indeed, the various understandings of power indicate that there are different conceptions of power as it is associated with the intersection of political ideologies of dominance and social processes (Wolf 1999). Taking into account the complexity of defining power, Eric Wolf has pointed out:

Conceptualizing power presents difficulties of its own. Power is often spoken of as if it were a unitary and independent force, sometimes incarnated in the image of a giant monster such as Leviathan or Behemoth, or else as a machine that grows in capacity and ferocity by accumulating and generating more powers, more entities like itself. Yet, it is best understood neither as an anthropomorphic force nor as a giant machine but as an aspect of all relations among people. ... Power works differently in interpersonal relations, in institutional arenas, and on the level of whole societies. (Wolf 1999:4-5)

As a part of an old tradition in Java, the Javanese defined power as a gift from God (*anugerah Tuhan*) or a bequest of the gods (*anugerah Sang Dewa*), and that is why "Power is that intangible, mysterious, and divine energy which animates the universe" (Anderson 1990:22). The anthropologist Koentjaraningrat mentions that for the Javanese "power is an ascribed quality which [can be] obtained either through inheritance or by divine favour" in that there is an important attribute called *kasakten* (magical energy, cosmic potency) which "reinforces the rituals for the preservation and intensification of power" (1985b:290). In this sense, before granting power to someone God or the gods would bestow one *wahyu*—a sort of spiritual sign that one might be

chosen to be a ruler; and the *wahyu* might be attained through a series of conscientious mystical practices. In essence, the *wahyu* is a sort of boon from God or the gods that usually conveys mystical knowledge for the would-be ruler. The Javanese believe that the *wahyu* emanates from the supernatural usually in the form of radiant light or a white ball of light called *andaru* or *pulung* (see Moertono 1968). In this respect, the idea of *wahyu* is closely connected with the concept of ‘*dewa-raja*’ (‘god-king’) for the powerholder—the ruler; and those wishing to gain it must take up a series of rituals as a part of political mysticism. In the Javanese cosmological belief, the *wahyu* will provide the ruler with spiritual legitimacy and supernatural potency derived from God or the gods. For Javanese society, the centrality of the *wahyu* has been evident in the course of someone’s ascendancy into power, as power would only be possessed by a person who has gained supernatural potency. The acquisition of the *wahyu* was among the major causes for the election of Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, popularly known as SBY³, in the presidential race of 2004 and his re-election for a second term in 2009. On the ascendancy of SBY into power and how he gained the *wahyu*, two informants, Abdul Halim, a former candidate for vice-president, and Ahmad Asrafi, a scholar and former minister, shared their stories with me in separate interviews. Abdul Halim told me the story of the election of SBY to become president in 2004 as follows:

On May 21, 1998, Kiai Afifuddin, the charismatic ulama and head of a Pesantren (Islamic boarding school) in East Java, was watching on television broadcasting the process of the stepping down of President Soeharto. When President Soeharto delivered the national address in the Palace to announce his resignation from power, he saw a white ball of light slowly coming out from Soeharto’s mouth indicating that divine radiance (the *wahyu*) had been pulled out from him. It then came into the body of Kiai Afifuddin while he heard a supernatural voice that it must be imparted to a military General who is younger than him. Kiai Afifuddin tried to find out who the person was and found that it was SBY; he eventually met SBY who at that time served as chief of staff for social-political affairs in the armed forces, and asked him about his age and birthday. Believing that SBY was the right person he was looking for, Kiai Afifuddin gently touched SBY’s head and blew on it to transfer the white ball of light to him by saying: “You will be the sixth president of Indonesia.” Since then, SBY appeared to be one of the prospective leaders of the country and became the focus of public talk among Indonesians. (Quoted from interview, 16 December 2008)

Kiai Afifuddin’s confession indicates the process of withdrawal of the *wahyu* because of the abrupt collapse of Soeharto’s power, which fits with what Moertono has mentioned: “A *wahyu* left the king at his death or at his apparent downfall to go over to those chosen by the gods” (1968:58).

³ SBY—short for Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono—is a nickname of the president and is often used either in informal talk or in the press.

During the years of political transition towards the consolidation of democracy, political elites were involved in power struggles. When the MPR (People's Consultative Assembly) held a special session to elect a president and vice president, as the incumbent President, Abdurrahman Wahid, was removed from power through the impeachment process in 2001, and SBY was contending for vice president for the new elected president, Megawati Soekarnoputri. Unfortunately, however, he lost to Hamzah Haz, head of the United Development Party, since he did not have party yet to be a political vehicle. Learning from the loss, the supporters of SBY, including Kiai Afifuddin, strongly advised him to establish his own party so he could stand for the presidential race in 2004. He did so and was in fact elected. The *wahyu* came into being along with the ascendancy of SBY into power through direct election under the newly established democratic system. Meanwhile, the story of the re-election of SBY in the 2009 presidential contestation was told by Ahmad Asrafi, as follows:

A few months prior to the 2009 general elections, President SBY held a meeting with Governors of the Sumatra provinces to assess the implementation of the development programmes. In the middle of the discussion, SBY with strong assurance mentioned that he would be re-elected as president for the second term, claiming that he had already received the *wahyu* in the form of divine radiant light plummeting into his private home. In the meeting President SBY confidently claimed that, with or without the support of Islamic political parties, he would be the champion of the presidential election in July 2009. As President SBY believed that he possessed the *wahyu*, he perceived that the presidential race was merely a democratic procedure to bring him to power for the next period of office. Having gained the *wahyu*, President SBY believed that the supernatural had given *restu* (spiritual approval) for him to stay in power. (Quoted from interview, 10 July 2009)

These stories assert that the *wahyu* has been pivotal in the political processes in the world of Indonesian politics. In Javanese culture, it is believed that those who are granted by the *wahyu* will gain power or stay in power. The *wahyu* is seen as the mystical quality that surrounds the Javanese leader. As the Javanese believe that there are parallel dimensions of political processes occurring in the secular world and the supernatural, spiritual legitimacy in the form of obtaining the *wahyu* is therefore critical in the course of the struggle for power. Thus, it can be argued here that the importance of the *wahyu* is that it provides the spiritual right for a ruler to possess power or to keep it in the ruler's hands, so that he or she would have the privilege and the sacred mandate to rule and exercise authority. These politico-cultural phenomena illustrate how influential the supernatural potency is and show that the occult plays a part in political processes, thus illustrating that the traditional belief of the occult can go together with modern democratic politics. Ronenbaum & Siderberg's *The Occult and Political*

Development (1971) argue that the ramifications of occult practices and beliefs in politics should not be regarded as ‘traditional’ since they may be helpful and supportive of the establishment of a modern political system. They put it thus:

Of all the possible practices which might be classified as traditional, or even primitive, the occult initially appears to be the most inconsistent with political and social modernization. Superstition and the supernatural seem grossly inappropriate in the secularized world of science and technology often associated with modernity. Such a dismissal is premature, for occult practices may indeed be beneficial, under certain circumstances, for the creation of modern political and social systems. (Ronenbaum & Siderberg 1971:562)

In addition to connecting with the supernatural, power is also associated with the notion of *pamrih* (hidden personal motive) which means that those holding public power should not exercise it for their private benefit or self-aggrandizement but for the good of the people. Used as the moral principle of power, the concept is written in full as *sepi ing pamrih, rame ing gawe* suggesting that state officials should “refrain from indulging personal motives while working hard for the good of the state [and society]” (Anderson 1990:51). The *pamrih* may take the form of, among others, the accumulation of wealth, which is considered as unsuited to or even regarded as breaching that moral principle; and it becomes completely immoral if power-holders amass such wealth by becoming implicated in corruption. The accumulation of wealth through corruption symbolizes someone’s greed, lust and self-indulgence that contradict the value of asceticism in which the Javanese believe, as illustrated earlier. This emphasizes how important the moral dimension of power is, and if it does not exist then someone could easily fall into abusing their power in various ways, as the Dutch anthropologist Niels Mulder has warned: “...[with] the virtual absence of moral constraints on the use of power, there can be little wonder that corruption and social irresponsibility are rampant in Indonesia” (1978:70).

In this regard, the concept of *pamrih* explains why corruption has become the centre of national discourse and the subject of public condemnation, as people conceive that the state power must be exercised for the benefit of citizens, not for individuals occupying it. In the Javanese political tradition, corruption is a clear sign of the *pamrih* because striving for personal wealth definitely opposes the basic assumption that “Wealth should flow to the holder of Power as a consequence of the Power ... wealth necessarily follows Power, not Power wealth” (Anderson 1990:53). In this regard, corruption may result in a power struggle in the two intertwined contexts: (1) corruption can result within the power structures of the state with a number of parties involved in it

through the very complicated power relations among them; and (2) power-holders commit corruption for the sake of accumulating more wealth and of increasing their power. The idea of corruption is always connected with the establishment of power, but corruption-based establishment of power is morally contested. Here, ethics and moral values are obviously critical for the basis of exercising public office and maintaining political leadership.

1.2 Javanese Wisdom as the Basis for Political Leadership

This section explores the local wisdom and values of Javanese society which are used by the Javanese as ethical and moral bases for political leadership. After decades of experiencing an authoritarian system with the Javanese style of national leadership, Indonesia has now entered a new phase of political modernization as the country has established a democratic political system. Nevertheless, political leadership is developed by combining both modern values of democracy and traditional values referring to local wisdom within society. With regard to Javanese wisdom, traditional values that are imparted to leaders usually refer to moral wisdom taken from the so-called *wayang* (shadow puppet play), since it contains ideas of what a leader should learn and what wisdom s/he should have. The *wayang* tradition has existed in Java for centuries, dating back to the ancient history of the Hindu kingdoms, although there have been some modifications, adjusting to modern contexts. Originating in the Hindu tradition, the main stories of the *wayang* theatre are generally taken from the Mahabharata and the Ramayana epics, and portray the everlasting battle between good and evil (e.g. Geertz 1960; Brandon 1993 [1970]; Keeler 1982 & 1997; Sears 1996). Both good and evil characters of *wayang* figures are depicted, to show the quality of an individual whom leaders/people should mirror.

Among the famous *wayang* figures are the *Pandhawa* brothers and the *Korawa* brothers⁴ who represent contradictory characters of goodness and badness, as the first

⁴ The *Pandhawa* and *Korawa* figures are taken from the most popular *lakon* (story) of the Bharatayudha battle. In *The Religion of Java* (1960), Geertz explains that “[i]n essence, the Mahabharata is the story of a struggle between cousins, the *Pandhawas* and the *Korawas*, the struggle which culminates in the great war of kinsmen, the Bharatayudha, during which the champions from each side face one another. ... The immediate impulse is to call the *Pandhawas* who are certainly heroes, the “good” men and the *Korawas*, who are not quite so clearly villains, the “bad” men. ... The struggle between the *Pandhawas* and the *Korawas* is an endless one—despite its seeming ending in the Bharatayuda war. The time-bound realities of good and evil, pleasure and pain, love and hate are dwarfed and rendered meaningless by the timeless and ultimately amoral background against which they are fought out.” (Geertz 1960:269)

group are portrayed as more spiritual, virtuous, benign and decent than the second one. Always placed on the right-hand side of the *dhalang* (puppeteer) during performances, the former symbolize such high moralities as generosity, benevolence, courage, bravery, love and compassion, and the like. Conversely, placed at all times on the left-hand side of the *dhalang*, the latter represent such low moralities as jealousy, greed, arrogance, chicanery, malevolence, resentment, and the like (e.g. Sears 1996; Pasuacker 2004). Derived from the Indian epics, the stories performed in the *wayang* have been adapted in the Javanese versions in which they always play dichotomous moralities through allegoric dramas.

As the *wayang* has been so influential in social and political life, it appears to be a symbolic representation of moral teachings for the Javanese. On the centrality of the *wayang*, I talked to Slamet Prawiro, a native of Java and a lecturer who teaches at Universitas Islam Negeri Jakarta, saying that it has been in the heart of the people. The *wayang* has provided abundant moral lessons from which both people and leaders could learn many aspects of life, both for private and public, including political, affairs. This is why when people talk about the actual problem of politics and political leadership, they very often apply allegories with reference to the shadow puppet play's stories (*lakon wayang*). Prawiro then shared with me about the concept of leadership referring to the *wayang* wisdom called *Hastabrata* (eight prime characters of leadership). Derived from the Ramayana epic, the *Hastabrata* are moral teachings of the king Rama, the central figure of the *lakon*, appearing at the time of the defeat of Rahwana during the battle in the kingdom of Alengka. In essence, the *Hastabrata* principles suggest that a leader should be strong, wise, virtuous, decisive and determined. A leader must have the ability to create peace and order, eliminate crime and malevolence with the principle of impartiality, promote prosperity for the people, and fight against the enemy with courage and bravery in order to save the people and protect the sovereignty. The *Hastabrata*'s teachings make use of symbolism: earth, sun, moon, star, ocean, wind, sky and fire. Each of these symbols represents a certain quality of leadership (see Appendix for further illustration).ⁱ

A number of scholarly works (e.g. Koentjaraningrat 1985a; Anderson 1990; Pemberton 1994; Liddle 1996; Antlov & Cederroth 1998; Antlov & Helman 2005) have addressed the significance of Java with regard to the wider culture, identity, politics and leadership of the nation. In order to understand the ideals of Javanese leadership, Antlov & Cederroth's *Leadership on Java: Gentle Hints, Authoritarian Rule* (1998) may help

one comprehend the nature of Javanese rulers and how they attain and maintain the power establishment. The authors address the central issue of political leadership through the examination of how Javanese leaders come to power, stay in power, and pass their power on by presenting some case studies in local and national contexts. The Javanese idea of leadership offers a concept called *pandito ratu* (saint-king)—first coined by Bagus Burhan, also well-known as Raden Ngabehi Ronggowarsito (d. in 1873), the legendary poet of the Kraton Surakarta—which means a leader must acquire the quality of saint. This concept implies that a king—who is a saint and receives an enlightened feature—rules the kingdom by the grace, will and guidance of God. Following this concept, there is a collective imagination among the Javanese that a leader should have an association with those who are considered as holy figures resembling saints. Becoming *pandito ratu*, a leader should bear three main public responsibilities: (1) *Berbudi bawa laksana, ambeg adil paramarta* which means that he must be noble in conduct so that he is able to enforce justice and equality for the people; (2) *Anjaga tata tentreming praja* which means that he should make sure that people's lives are orderly and peaceful; and (3) *Memayu hayuning bawana* which means that he should be involved in maintaining harmony with the universe, since all elements of life should always be in synergy with nature, from which the *Hastabrata's* teachings are derived. In traditional Javanese society, political leadership rests on the identification with sacred figures becoming the main source of legitimacy. While the modern concept of political leadership is based on public approval, the traditional Javanese concept of it relies largely on charisma in which the authority of the leader is legitimized by ritual intensification and the possession of sacred symbols of authority (see e.g. Koentjaraningrat 1985b; Anderson 1990; Woodward 1989; Mulder 2005 [1998]).

These two elements of leadership are critical, as Koentjaraningrat has illustrated: “In Javanese traditional society such ritual intensification has to take place repeatedly; on such occasions, sacred objects which symbolize authority occupy a central position” (1985b:291) in the political establishment. This is the main difference between the modern and the Javanese traditional concept of political leadership. Today, in accordance with the application of modern democracy, charisma is not the sole source of legitimacy. Political leadership should also obtain public approval through democratic election. However, in Java, political leaders still need to be associated with *wali* (saints) and holy figures; and this is the reason why they need to perform rituals in

sacred places, seeking blessings from them. In general, rituals performed for various purposes are very often connected with political processes, as illustrated in detail below.

1.3 Sacred Rituals within Political Processes

This section considers sacred rituals in connection with political activities by illustrating how they are preserved and practised by people within the context of political modernity. Although the system of secular democracy has been put in place, Indonesian politics has maintained traditional beliefs such as *klenik* (charlatanism, things related to the supernatural world). The *klenik* takes part in political processes despite the fact that the country has adopted modern democracy. In the context of modernity, politics takes place in a secular world and is dictated by secular reasoning with the use of rational judgment. In other words, politics has nothing to do with irrationality related to the supernatural forces. But this is not the case in Indonesian politics as it is connected with *klenik*, which implies the power of prophecy in political affairs.

To illustrate the relation of *klenik* and politics, I introduce some stories. On 20 October 2004, Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono (SBY), a retired four-star General, was sworn-in to be the sixth president of Indonesia, becoming the first president who was directly elected by the people through a democratic election in the modern history of the country. Sadly, soon after his election, a series of misfortunes and distressing events happened that led Indonesians to an insufferable mourning. President SBY began assuming office with a deadly traffic accident taking place in the Jagorawi highway between the cities of Jakarta and Bogor on 17 November 2004. The collision of vehicles occurred as motorcade officers suddenly blocked toll road to prepare the way for convoy vehicles of the presidential security guards, causing six people to die while ten others were severely injured. Soon after the tragic accident, a series of natural disasters struck the country in the following years. The adversities include—mentioning just a few—landfill slide in Bandung in 2005; earthquakes in Papua and Alor in 2004 and in Padang, Yogyakarta, and Pangandaran in 2006; and volcanic eruptions in Yogyakarta in 2006, which resulted in the death of thousands of people. The most upsetting disaster was of course tsunami that severely hit the Aceh and Nias regions in the Sumatra Island on 26 December 2004, which claimed the lives of more than 200,000 people and thousands more were missing. With such a huge number of victims, the Aceh-Nias tsunami had definitely become the most heartbreaking catastrophe of the nation.

In fact, all those catastrophic events could be explained with the help of scientific methods since earthquake, volcanic eruption, and tsunami are purely natural phenomena; while the topography of Indonesia is situated in the ring of fire which is vulnerable to those kinds of natural disasters. Despite the scientific accounts of those disastrous events, the Javanese people perceived them from the supernatural point of view, believing that all those misfortunes and upsetting events indicated the wrath of those occupying the otherworld, the power of the supernatural. In this respect, Bakasura, a paranormal, claimed that it was President SBY himself who brought a great deal of bad luck for the country because his *pawukon* (Javanese horoscope) is shrouded by Bethari Durga—the goddess of destruction who created misfortunes for people. Bakasura claimed:

In the Javanese *primbons* (mythical books of Java), SBY's birthday⁵ is covered by *wuku bolo* (the innate power of the devil) representing darkness and bad fate as manifested in all sorts of havoc, mayhem and destruction. According to the Javanese horoscope, SBY caused various catastrophes for Indonesians; he created misfortunes for them. Certainly, SBY was elected by the people to be president, but nature rejected him. The goddess Bethari Durga was full of wrath so she sent a series of calamities to express her anger. That is why the ascendance of SBY as president consumed the lives of the people. (Quoted from interview, 2 September 2008)

What Bakasura described in essence represents traditional Javanese beliefs that some people are predestined to encounter misfortune due to the configuration of their birth. Therefore, a ritual called *ruwatan* (exorcistic rite) is needed in order to ward this off and to neutralize the *wuku bolo* as well. In regard to this, I spoke to Gunawan, a native of Surakarta, Central Java, who has very close relations with the Kraton Kasunanan Solo (or, Surakarta), as in 2004 he was granted the noble title of *Kanjeng Raden Ariyo*, often written in short: KRA. This is considered a very high status within the *Sentono Dalem* (inner circle of the noble family of the Kraton). Since completing his tertiary education, Gunawan has been working as a professional in an interior design consultancy for several years. Having an interest in politics, he joined the National Mandate Party; and during the years 1998-2009, he served as chair of the local executive board of the Party in Surakarta and as one of the caretakers of the party's central executive board in Jakarta.

⁵ President SBY was born on 9 September 1949, often written 9949. In public, people often gossip about SBY being deeply obsessed with the number 9, indicating that he strongly believes in *klenik*, as that number appears to have brought great fortune for SBY himself. Believing in number 9, therefore, SBY established his political party, the Democrat Party, on 9 September 2001, with the party's initiator consisting of 99 people. However, his political opponents think the opposite, claiming that according to the Javanese *pawukon*, it has caused never-ending misfortunes for the Indonesian people.

On 17 June 2006, Gunawan held the *ruwatan* ceremony for President SBY that took place in the great mosque of the Kraton Kasunanan Surakarta. He explained that the *ruwatan* is a traditional ritual that has existed in Javanese society since ancient times, passed on through generations, and practised by the people during some special events. The *ruwatan* means a ceremony of wishing and hoping to be free from bad fate in life; while the main purpose of the ritual is to banish what is called *sukerto* (Javanese: bad luck) that afflicts people's lives. As Mulder explained, the *ruwatan* is culturally "an attempt to change inauspicious coordinates to orderly ones, to undo the evil spell that hovers over persons who suffer from [an] involuntary state of affliction, who are *sukerto*" (2005 [1998]:85). Indeed, it is essentially to pray to God asking for protection and prevention from all disturbances. Traditionally, with the ritual of *ruwatan* people hope that all kinds of misfortune and bad luck that upset them will be driven out, and they expect that their life will be safe and they will become prosperous. In fact, the *ruwatan* ceremony can be held in a wide variety of forms, depending on what the ritual is for. At some point, it may represent purely the so-called *kejawen* (Javanese-ism) with strong Hindu elements as it is usually conducted along with the performance of shadow puppet plays (*wayang*) presented as an offering to the ancestors and as an attempt to address the problems of those holding the ritual (see Koentjaraningrat 1985a; Sears 1996:235-240).

However, the *ruwatan* can also integrate some elements of Islamic values, as seen in the ceremony Gunawan carried out in the great mosque of the Kraton Kasunanan Surakarta. In the afternoon after Friday prayer, about six thousand Javanese Muslims attended the *ruwatan* (see figure 1.1), as in the Javanese *primbon* (mythical book), Friday, called *Jumat Kliwon*, is believed to be the day on which SBY was born. During the event, the *jamaah* (congregation) sat quietly inside the mosque, while many others flocked into the field outside since the mosque could not accommodate them. In the front line, there was a table covered by a green tablecloth. On the table, there were four *tampahs* (round woven bamboo trays) with banana leaves on which a variety of foods were served: *nasi tumpeng* (cone-shaped rice cooked with coconut milk), *jajanan pasar* (various [market] snacks), vegetables, fruits, and some baked black cockerels dished up for an exclusive ritual of the *ruwatan*. All these foods were presented as offerings which in essence symbolized gratitude and represented a prayer to *Gusti*, God; they were an expression of being grateful to God and a request to God for His blessings and good and safe life. It is important to note that for different *ruwatan* ceremony, the

kind of foods served as offering may also be distinct. During the ceremony, the Kraton's ulama, KRHT Tafsir Anom, led the invocation and the *jamaah* all together invoked Allah Almighty for the safety of the nation. The invocation was solemnly chanted:

Oh Lord, please kindly protect and save our nation from being ruined. Oh Lord, please kindly give your guidance and direction for our leaders to govern the country. Oh Lord, please kindly keep our country away from all dangers that threaten the life of the people. Oh Lord, please do not send us any disaster or catastrophe that are beyond our capacity to bear. (Quoted from Gunawan's words, interview on 2 September 2009)



Figure 1.1: The *ruwatan* ritual for President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono held in the mosque of the Kraton Kasunanan Surakarta, Central Java. (Photo by informant)

A similar *ruwatan* ceremony (see figure 1.2) was held three years later at the time of the 2009 legislative election. The *ruwatan* ritual on that occasion seemed to be purely Javanese, since no Islamic elements were found in it; the ceremony did not take place in the mosque and Friday prayer was not performed. Wearing Javanese traditional outfits, *batik* skirts fitted with a modern style of blazer in various colours, along with *blankon* (a typical Javanese hat), a group of respected figures sat tranquilly in the main room of Gunawan's private museum in Surakarta. Given the sense of *kejawen*, the museum was replete with plenty of framed drawings of *wayang* figures hung on the wall, symbolizing how puppet shadow plays have become immensely integrated in the life of the Javanese, reflecting social, cultural and political meanings. As part of the

requirements for the *ruwatan* ceremony, two packages of offerings were served, consisting of *nasi tumpeng* alongside various vegetables and two cooked ducks put on the tray and seven kinds of fruits put on a separate tray. During the *ruwatan* ritual, they quietly intoned words of invocation supplicating the safety of the country during the general election event, as follows:

Oh Lord, please kindly pour your blessings on our country and bring peace and order for our people. Oh Lord, kindly leave out all sufferings and difficulties from our society; instead, please bring prosperity and well-being for the whole people. Oh Lord, please secure our safety and give us strength to prevent general elections from falling into political conflict which would affect the social life of the people. (Quoted from Gunawan's words, interview on 2 September 2009)



Figure 1.2: The *ruwatan* ritual of the 2009 general elections taking place in Gunawan's mansion in Surakarta, Central Java. (Photo by informant)

In traditional Javanese culture, the *ruwatan* ceremony seems to be similar to the *slametan* ritual in the sense that, as Geertz wrote, "it symbolizes the mystic and social unity of those participating in it" (1960:11). Moreover, the *slametan* also "forms a kind of social universal joint, fitting the various aspects of social life and individual experience together in a way which minimizes uncertainty, tension, and conflict ..." (Geertz 1960:11). As the purpose of the *slametan* ritual is basically to strengthen social solidarity and reinforce social harmony among the community members, as well as to empower people in facing uncertainty and to prevent conflict from happening, so the *ruwatan* ritual is essentially to expel misfortune, create peaceful hearts in dealing with calamity and uncertainty, and make people's lives safer.

Although the *ruwatan* is usually associated with social and cultural events, it has now been brought onto the political stage, as the ritual is carried out for political purposes. The *ruwatan* of SBY's presidency and of the general elections arranged by Gunawan must be seen as the contemporary use of a traditional mechanism of an exorcistic rite to cleanse spiritually all the negative aspects of political processes and the dynamics of power struggles. In essence, the *ruwatan* is a cultural ritual for the spiritual purification of all contenders of the general elections, thus becoming a softly symbolic measure to cast out evil spirits during the vicious political contests and an attempt to rebalance the social and spiritual disharmony that result from the fierce contest of the general elections (*Pemilu*). Here it can be argued that the *ruwatan* is a cultural medium for releasing unforeseen threats, banning bad luck, and thwarting conflict. It is used as a sort of spiritual relief when people feel endangered by destructive powers which might appear during the event of the *Pemilu*. The similarities of the *slametan* and the *ruwatan* rest in large part on the wishes of the people to obtain security, social prosperity, cultural well-being, and freedom from all sorts of difficulties or grievances either created by human beings or resulting from the supernatural.

Furthermore, through the *ruwatan* ritual, the secular events of general elections and political processes of power struggles are transformed into spiritual rites of passage by contextualizing them within a supernatural dimension. The *ruwatan* ceremony acknowledges the power of the supernatural as participants search for protection from God by requesting security and prosperity in order for them to be able to carry out political activities smoothly. The *ruwatan* rituals of SBY's presidency and the *Pemilu* clearly illustrate, borrowing Geertz's words, how "political debate and religious propitiation [are] carried out in the same vocabulary" (1973:166). Like the *slametan*, the *ruwatan* ritual itself usually takes place at local level, but it maintains national orientations beyond the borders of the localities. As James Siegel has described: "the ritual makes gestures to authorities outside the boundaries of the village, whether Islamic or Hindu, for instance, or national, since the different beliefs of the *slametan* are associated today as they were in the 1950s with various national political organizations" (2006:141). In this regard, it is argued that the importance of the *ruwatan* lies in its representing the symbolic authority of the supernatural, towards which the participants address their supplications for protection from any sort of dangers, misfortunes, catastrophes, and the like during the political processes. Relying on the supernatural

indicates that politicians have strong tendencies to believe and practise mysticism, as the way in which they want to reach power.

1.4 Mysticism, Politics, and Pathways of Power

In what follows I continue to illustrate how mysticism and politics are intertwined and what sorts of pathways of power are taken by politicians at the time of political contest. During the months of the 2009 general elections, politicians were competing with each other to be elected as legislators. They stood in the legislative election held on 9 April to secure seats at the House of Representatives by employing a wide range of ways in order to obtain political positions. Among the very common methods of gaining popular votes and of being elected as an MP were public campaigns through the use of advertisements in both electronic and print media; or through the distribution of leaflets, brochures and street banners. Other methods of political campaigns were in the form of meeting people directly in constituencies and of mobilizing supporters in the districts through public congregation. To attract participants, they carried out various social activities, such as mass circumcisions, bazaars or markets with low priced foods and goods, social services at orphanages, and others.

Interestingly, many politicians also took rather unusual actions that seemed bizarre in the view of the ‘rationalists’. They came to sacred sites and performed meditation in order to receive some help from ancestors and those occupying the supernatural world, hoping that they would be able to reach their political objective. To examine such phenomena, I approached an informant, named Bahasim, who was running for legislative election through the Golkar Party, as he had particular experience of observing mystical practice performed by politicians at the time of the 2009 general elections. Bahasim is an activist associated with the Nahdhatul Ulama in which he has been one of the executive board members for several years. The NU has become the primary basis for him to develop social network links with the grass roots and to maintain popular support, both of which are very important for political activities in the constituencies. During the parliamentary election, Bahasim was standing for election as an MP representing the districts of Bantaran, Sindangan, and Babatan (all pseudonyms)—all part of the East Java province. At the time of the public campaigns, he stayed in those districts for two months intermittently to mobilize popular support which was critical for winning the political contest. Bahasim maintained very close

relations with some key figures in those regions to help him socialize his agenda for the constituents and appeal to them to vote for him. When he visited Babatan, some local contacts mentioned that the political contest for the legislative election was very fierce, since politicians usually employed various means to win. They suggested that it would be good for Bahasim to come to *ahli hikmah*—a devout Muslim who acquires spiritual knowledge, asking for *jimat* (amulets) for spiritual backing. Bahasim shared his experience:

I was told by some of my contacts in the locality that the use of magical power was very commonplace in political contests such as the event of general elections. They then took me to some key spiritual figures to get some advice on how to protect myself from demonic forces and help me achieve my political goal. They suggested that I should have some talismans for self-protection. Besides these, amulets were also important for me in support of my efforts so that I would be successful in the political contest and able to achieve what I wanted. (Quoted from interview, 29 January 2009)

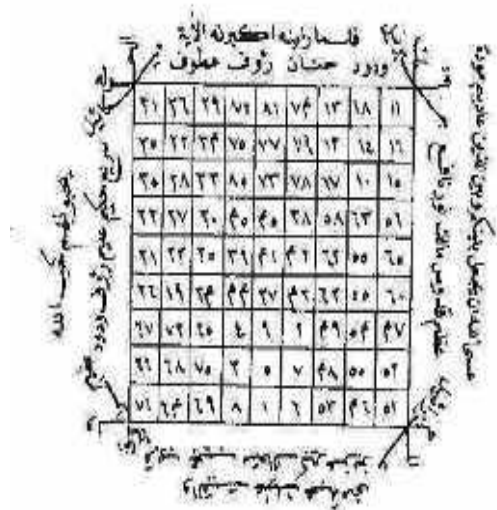
Figure 1.3: A talisman appears in the form of *keris* (wavy double bladed dagger) with an Arabic-looking calligraphy. It is believed to be very powerful for accumulating magical energies for those carrying it.

Figure 1.4: A talisman of attraction appears in the form of Arabic words and numbers. It is believed that one who carries it will find people become attracted to the bearer and supportive of that person's efforts.

Figure 1.3



Figure 1.4



Bahasim was advised that by carrying talismans and amulets, he would be able to concentrate power in order to overcome any sort of difficulties during the furious political struggle at the time of election campaigns. As amulets and talismans represent the supernatural qualities, Bahasim's local contacts suggested that those magical items

would make him feel secure and protected. This is actually a very common belief, as the anthropologist Gonzales-Wippler has explained, and people usually employ them for protective purposes or for strength and self-assurance; while the main intention of carrying them is “to attract good luck, to dispel evil, and to banish fear,” since they are considered to be “the most potent weapon against fear” (Gonzales-Wippler 1991: xv). Similarly, Stanley Tambiah, writing of the cult of amulets among the Thai people, has observed that it is very commonplace to find “people carry some on their person in some other way and also keep a number in their homes to be cherished, looked at, and asked for protection or good fortune according to need” (1984:196). The amulets are worn not merely to represent ‘superstition’ or ‘idolatry’ on such magical objects, but also to indicate that the wearers desire power. Tambiah suggestively wrote:

Many amulet wearers would usually ... say a sacred formula (*gatha*) to the amulet and then using both hands transfer its virtue and power to their own heads. Moreover, in order to replenish the potency of the amulets, wearers would present them for further sacralization by famous monks or holy men, who would touch them with their hands, say words, and sprinkle them with holy water (*tham hai saksit*, meaning to render powerful). (Tambiah 1984:196)

Tambiah’s observation suits what Bahasim had experienced, mentioning that in the course of a political contest, the amulets, especially when blessed by the spiritual figures or the *ahli hikmahs*, were avidly sought by many politicians as they believed that the *ahli hikmahs* acquire and maintain what is called *ma’unah* (extraordinary spiritual knowledge and skills) and *karomah* (extraordinary spiritual grace).

In addition, some local contacts of Bahasim also showed him mystical practice performed by some politicians for the sake of political power. One day in February 2009, they took Bahasim to Alas Agung (*alas* means jungle) in the district of Babatan to observe a ritual meditation performed not only by local residents but also by people coming from other cities and regions. Bahasim witnessed many legislative candidates for local parliaments and the House visiting three most sacred caves—Gua Istana, Gua Mayangkoro, Gua Padepokan—which are located inside Alas Agung, to perform meditation seeking for spiritual hints in order to smoothen their way towards gaining power. In the tradition of Javanese mysticism, it is commonly recognized that for centuries Alas Agung has been a sacred space, drawing mystics from elsewhere in Java to experience its spiritual powers, as they believe that spirits inhabit rivers, rocks, and trees. In *kebatinan* (Javanese mysticism), mystical belief centres on inner and outer spirituality, looking into the connection between the natural and the supernatural, as

both are believed to be intertwined. In Javanese mysticism, people are convinced that there is a continuum line between the natural world and the spirits that occupy the supernatural world, and they seem to have found favourable sacred places in Alas Agung to practise mystical belief.

It is widely acknowledged that, according to Javanese cosmological belief, Alas Agung in East Java, Alas Roban in Central Java, and the coastal area of Ujung Kulon in Banten are centres of mystical powers, having become powerful spirit-sites where supernatural beings dwell. According to such belief, spirits residing in those three places are believed to be the guardians of Java. This is why many politicians perform meditation there, to obtain some kind of mystical powers. These places are considered to be the most promising sacred sites to search for so-called *wangsit* (spiritual hints). The *wangsit* was critical, indicating that someone would gain power, so politicians needed to reach it in order to help them spiritually to secure seats in the House during the 2009 legislative election. There were some requirements that needed to be met by those who wanted to carry out such a ritual. Before performing their meditation they were required to bathe first in the Tempuran River, which links two rivers, Parangireng and Sendanguro, which are regarded as the twin sources of magical energies. Bathing in the Tempuran River is spiritually believed to make people become sympathetic, lovely, and attractive to others. In addition to bathing, those who intended to perform meditation were also advised to carry with them magical heirlooms (*pusaka*) such as *keris* (Javanese dagger), *batu delima* (ruby, garnet), and the like which are believed to make them spiritually become strong. The *pusaka* are very important because they are connected with the possession and preservation of power, as Woodward has expounded: “*Pusaka* are the primary means through which the power of the past is preserved. They are objects associated with particularly powerful persons in Javanese history. *Pusaka* can be used to perform magical acts requiring power greater than that which can be generated by living humans” (2010:80).

These phenomena show how politicians make a great deal of effort in order to achieve political goals by using all possible measures including mystical ones, in addition to their regular efforts of public campaigns in support of their political contest. Nevertheless, mysticism is not merely practised for political purposes, but more importantly it matters in everyday life within society as it is an essential element of Javanese culture and identity (e.g. Geertz 1960; Mulder 1978; Koentjaraningrat 1985a; Woodward 1989; Mulder 2005 [1998]; Beatty [1999] 2003). For the Javanese, the

belief and practice of mysticism are to recognize the harmony of the material and the spiritual, and the unity of nature and the supernatural, as Mulder puts it:

[M]an actively and inevitably participates in the all-encompassing unity of material and spiritual existence. The spiritual aspect is superior, more true as it were. ... Harmony and unity with ultimate essence is the purpose of all life. ... Nature and supernature mutually influence each other, and causality is implied in their coordination. When coordination occurs or is brought about, events and conditions have to follow. This is valid both for pure mysticism and for magic. (Mulder 2005 [1998]:36)

Nevertheless, Javanese mysticism has appeared as the subject of controversy especially among puritan Muslims—those who strictly follow pure Islamic orthodoxies. They consider that Javanese mysticism, particularly in the form of *kejawen/kebatinan*, is ‘un-Islamic’ since it contains some elements of Hindu traditions and values that are viewed as opposed to and in contradiction with Islamic faith. In this sense, for reformist Muslims, many ‘Javanist’ or ‘mystical’ practices are highly controversial, and they view that there is a disharmony between *kejawen/kebatinan* and Islam. For them, Javanese mysticism is to be problematic and contested since it is regarded as being incompatible with Islamic teachings. Indeed for puritan Muslims, being ‘Javanist’ and those practising Javanese mystical beliefs are seen to be not good Muslims who are supposed to strictly follow the teachings in the Qur’an and the Hadith and practise religious beliefs and values according to the doctrines with reference to the Prophet Muhammad’s example. Therefore, although notions of ‘supernatural power’ remain important for many Javanese, they cannot be unproblematically assumed to be of continued importance for all Javanese people. Here, it can be argued that the idea of supernatural power gained from zealous mystical practice can be contested by the Javanese themselves coming from different traditions at different times.

To compare cases, I approached another informant, named Budiyanto, who was a legislative candidate associated with the National Mandate Party. After completing his tertiary education, Budiyanto initiated his professional career as a journalist, which gave him the opportunity to develop personal relations with a large number of political elites and to establish social networking. He found them very helpful in facilitating him to enter the world of politics. I met Budiyanto in his office in Jakarta as he was willing to share his personal experience about political contests with the use of the mystical way. During the 2009 general elections, he stood for parliamentary election to be an MP representing the districts of Bidara, Gambiran, Pagarati, and Rembulan (all pseudonyms), in the Central Java province. At the time of the election campaigns, he

spent two months in the field to visit constituents and meet potential voters. During the months of public campaigns, Budiyanto worked hand in hand with a number of local legislative candidates across political parties who were running for local parliaments, since he himself is not native of any of those regions. A local contact of Budiyanto in Bidara then facilitated him to meet an influential local leader, Mbah Sutarto, who is believed to be a spiritual figure to whom many local legislative candidates turned for help. Mbah Sutarto advised him that regular campaigns to encourage voters were not enough; he should combine these with other efforts through the supernatural way along with performing a series of rituals in order to win the legislative election.



Figure 1.5: A *keris* (dagger) appears in the shape of a ballpoint which is believed to have belonged to President Soekarno and contains magical power, as Soekarno's name is engraved on its handle and an Arabic inscription of *kalimat syahadat* (the confession of Islamic faith) is engraved on its sheath.

Upon foreseeing Budiyanto's fortune, Mbah Sutarto gave him three items—*keris*, salt, and tumeric rice (*beras kuning*)—which had been placed under a spell, while convincing him that they would spiritually help him to achieve his political goal. The salt was to be cast in the yard of his house; the tumeric rice was to be eaten whenever he left home; and the *keris* would protect him from dangers and give him spiritual strength. Besides this, he was advised to perform a ritual purification by taking a bath at midnight together with his wife along with seven kinds of flowers, as these would purify his heart and avert any negative intent and lust which could damage his sincerity to serve people in the Parliament once he reached it. Having completed these processes, Budiyanto and other local legislative candidates took part in a cultural ritual arranged by Mbah Sutarto in his private home in Bidara. Before the ceremony began, he introduced Budiyanto to all the attendees, asking them to help him persuade people to elect him on the day of polling. After a short talk, Mbah Sutarto changed into a traditional costume used for a ritual. Wearing a black costume with *blankon* and sacred *keris* belted onto his waist, Mbah Sutarto led a ritual of meditation for about thirty minutes. Sitting on the floor, he

gently chanted spells in Javanese in front of incense along with *kemenyan* (gum, benzoine) and various flowers put in a basin with salted water, while Budiyanto, other local politicians, and a quite a large number of followers formed lines behind Mbah Sutarto, following the ritual process with tranquility.

After completing it, they all travelled together to the districts where they would be contesting for legislative election, in order to visit constituents and meet people there; the journey itself lasted the whole day and night. During the visit, each legislative candidate poured tumeric rice in several places in some certain villages, symbolizing that those legislative candidates would bring prosperity and welfare to the people who live there, with the hope that they would vote them. The journey ended with another ritual at midnight, which took place at the sacred grave of Ki Ageng Pamanahan—the highly respected figure who was the founder of the Mataram Sultanate of Surakarta (Solo). For the ritual, Budiyanto brought three bags of various flowers given to Mbah Sutarto as a form of symbolic offering presented to Ki Ageng Pamanahan. During the ritual, Mbah Sutarto portrayed himself as a spirit medium to communicate with Ki Ageng Pamanahan's spirit, asking him for his blessings to be poured upon those who were running for legislative election. In Javanese tradition, the practice of spirit communication has become a part of the culture of politics, dating back to past times (e.g. Pemberton 1994).

The experiences of both Bahasim and Budiyanto clearly show that from the Javanese point of view the political contest during the parliamentary election was not merely a secular event. It was indeed related to the supernatural as politicians were keen to receive the so-called *restu* (spiritual approval) from the ancestors, since they believe that “[t]he ancestors were engaged by people as sources of information on their personal future as well as on specific political issues because they were vital to both personal and political success” (Bubandt 2009:295). As described, mystical belief and practice have appeared on the political scene through the event of the 2009 general elections, as an assertion that politics cannot be detached from mysticism.

The main argument in support of the ethnographic materials presented here refers to John Pemberton's *On the Subject of "Java"* (1994). He too pointed out that sacred grave sites of the holy figures, such as Javanese kings and Muslim saints, have become the source of spiritual powers and social-political legitimacy. Those wishing to gain political powers usually need to perform pilgrimages to those sacred sites which are believed to have a mystical influence to help one reach a high position with the

blessings of the holy figures. Drawing upon the culture of politics in Java, Pemberton illustrates how the Javanese people believe in mysticism and practise it for various intentions; and how rituals are required in order to reach mystical powers. They believe that the mausoleums of Javanese kings and the tombs of Javano-Islamic saints are a source of magical powers, as the old Javanese rulers always practised traditional rituals and performed pilgrimages to those sacred sites to pay respect to ancestral spirits and venerate Muslim saints in order to achieve spiritual blessings. On the centrality of sacred sites, Pemberton explains:

Although much of the historical significance attracted to Central Java's supernatural periphery derives from the spiritual campaigns of would-be kings as they retracted the ascetic steps of previous mythical politicians, the promise of kingship was not the only attraction guiding generations of pilgrims. Beyond the isolated rare instances of royal blessings granted lay a vast spectrum of magical powers and esoteric knowledge sought by professionals: shamanic *dhukun*, shadow-puppeteers, military commanders, religious leaders, court authors, and others. (Pemberton 1994:272)

In Javanese mythology, the sacred grave sites are the axis of spiritual powers, since kings or saints might bestow their blessings to those performing pilgrimages. With this kind of reasoning, the veneration of ancestors through traditional rituals at holy places (*kramat*) which are believed to be spiritually endowed is at the centre of Javanese culture. Such rituals are conceived as a way of approaching the ancestors' spirits with the hope of receiving benefactions, boons, and blessings. In order to obtain blessings from the holy figures, the role of spirit mediums is therefore very important since they claim the ability to communicate with ancestral spirits. This kind of ability is traditionally inherited from the ancestors and has thrived by continuous practice over time, as Pemberton explains: "Spirit mediums who perform professional services at *kramat* grave sites maintain that their talents are thoroughly 'traditional' and rooted in Javanese practices of the past" (1994:300). All these socio-cultural phenomena show how dominant the mystical and supernatural powers are in the political processes, thus indicating that they are used in support of struggling for power, as Woodward has clearly pointed out: "Power is acquired by the performance of *tapa* [ascetic meditation] or by merging one's spirit with one of the sources of power in the universe. One of the aims of Javanese mysticism is to acquire the ability to control the flow of power in the universe, directing it toward one's personal goals" (1989:166). Therefore, it can be understood why mysticism is prevalent in politics, and why politicians are willing to practise a series of rituals in sacred sites which are considered to be the source of

spiritual powers. As political mysticism becomes a common phenomenon, however, it becomes the subject of caricatural critique in the media.

1.5 The Media Representation of Political Mysticism

To conclude this chapter, I look at how the media describe the phenomenon of political mysticism through reporting and caricatures in which mysticism in politics is depicted, in order to illustrate how it has become part of social life among Indonesians. The media bring political mysticism into public discourse in the context of democratic elections, asserting that it has become ingrained in the culture of society. A series of articles appeared in a national newspaper, *Warta Kota*, in the editions of 19 February and 17 March 2009, reporting that many politicians who were running for legislative election approached *dukun peramal* (a soothsayer, foreteller) and paranormal, asking for spiritual advice. They also visited sacred sites (e.g. graves of holy figures) to receive divine inspiration. In the publications, a well-known paranormal, Joko Bodo, was reported to have a large number of clients who were mostly legislative candidates asking him for help in winning parliamentary contests and to become an MP. The most common requests by politicians to *dukun* and paranormal were how to make people love them, give their sympathy to them, and eventually vote for them on the day of polling. These phenomena indicate that the world of Indonesian politics is replete with mystical beliefs, and show how politicians appear to have tended to rest on soothsayers in order to help them reach their political goals.

In addition to these reports, it is interesting to see how the belief in the supernatural shows up in caricatures which are published as cynical illustrations, such as those depicted by GM Sudharta of the *Kompas* daily. Figure 1.6 shows a politician (as the word *politisi* is written on the bag) standing for legislative election who comes to a *dukun* asking for help, saying: “*Mohon petunjuk Mbah, agar saya bisa memperoleh kursi*” (Grandfather, please kindly give me some hints on how I could secure a seat in the House); and the *dukun* simply responds to the request: “*Berjalanlah ke arah timur, di sana kamu temui pameran furnitur*” (You should go down towards the east and you will find a furniture exhibition there). Sudharta illustrates the point that the *dukun*’s response does not actually meet the politician’s request, so it is just a political joke showing that politician goes to the wrong person, whom he thought was a soothsayer

whom he initially believes to have spiritual knowledge and skills to foresee his fortune. The cartoon depicts the politician apparently stunned by such a response.

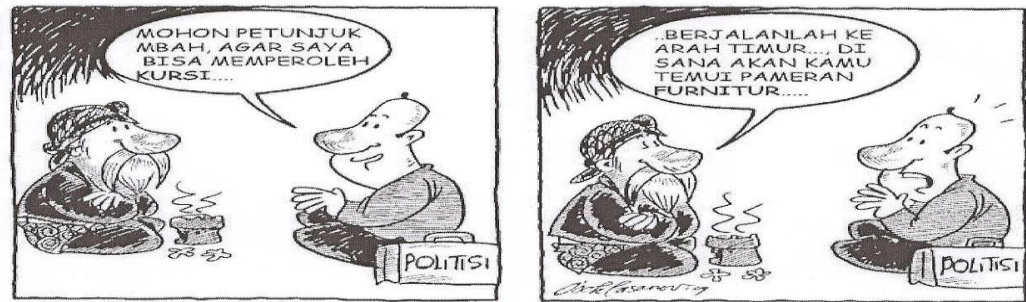


Figure 1.6: A funny dialogue between a politician and a *dukun peramal* (Caricature by an artist of *Kompas*)

Similarly, in figure 1.7, Sudharta allegorically describes how Oom Pasikom (an imaginary character) visits a fortune-teller, while a boy stares at him incredulously, asking her to predict his fate during the 2009 general elections, as he is running for legislative election. Relying on the fortune-teller's power of prophecy, Oom Pasikom, representing a politician, tries to obtain her help by saying: "It's not about natural disasters, Madame ... But, I am deeply concerned about my fortune during the parliamentary election." What appears in this caricature represents the dynamics of political contest during the event of general elections, showing that many politicians make use of all kinds of means in order to achieve their political objectives.



Figure 1.7: Om Pasikom asks for spiritual advice to a fortune-teller (Caricature by Sudharta of *Kompas*)

It is indeed interesting to observe such phenomena in which politicians rest their fate on things beyond the principles of logic and rationality in support of their political

activities. As presented, politicians believe that paranormals and soothsayers could help them, through supernatural means, to achieve what they want. This kind of belief is very common, especially among the Javanese, and is part of the culture of the society. The anthropological study of Niels Mulder, *Mysticism in Java* (2005 [1998]), is particularly helpful in order to understand the culture and political mysticism of the Javanese, as he provides major insights into what lies behind the power play in the political and cultural arenas in Indonesia. There is a tendency to rely on the belief that the fate of every human being could be discovered through mystical means or prophecy, as he has pointed out:

The fact that life is subject to cosmic law and part of an inescapable order stimulates fascination with prophecy and projective action. Because the cosmic design has been 'fixed', it may also be known; it remains a matter of discovering its coordinates to know the future. Prediction is thus possible if one has access to the great scheme by way of medication or mystical practice, magical calculation, or knowledge of horoscopy. (Mulder [1998] 2005:87)

Such phenomena indicate that although the political contest of becoming an MP takes place within a secular democratic election, politicians nevertheless rely on supernatural forces with the help of those who are believed to have spiritual knowledge. This shows that occult politics does exist in the country in modern times. The politico-cultural phenomena of the occult surely suit what Koentjaraningrat has expounded: "The Javanese believe that not only magical energy but also supernatural beings can be manipulated and controlled for magical achievement of a desire goal" (1985a:413). Such a tendency could not simply be understood in contrast to political modernization and reflecting a traditional mentality. Therefore, the occult should not be considered as being inconsistent with or opposed to social and political modernization, since the occult itself is very often connected with political control and legitimacy. However, from the view of the 'rationalists', superstition and the supernatural are often seen as being incompatible with political modernity, which largely relies on the supremacy of secular science, logic, and rationality. Yet one needs to be critical of the rejection of occult practice, as many politicians benefit from it in support of their ambition to achieve political power. As the world of Indonesian politics recognizes the involvement of the supernatural in political processes, the occult appears to be a common social phenomenon. It is argued that political mysticism and occult belief and practice in Indonesia are deeply rooted in the history of the country. Moreover, the occult and superstition are not always in opposition to the establishment of the modern system of

political democracy. The world of contemporary Indonesian politics clearly shows how modern values of democracy are adopted within the new political system, while traditional values of political mysticism are still alive. Indonesia has demonstrated how the two different values are synergized within the social and political systems, and the people mix them up to express their openness to political modernity and their ability to absorb modern democratic values, while keeping traditional values as seen in occult practice in parallel with political contestation during democratic elections. As political mysticism has become intensely entrenched in the culture of Indonesian society, it cannot easily be altered despite the country embracing modern democracy. Thinking of the parallel dimensions of the occult and political modernization, Rosenbaum & Siderberg, again, provide insights:

Reliance on prophecy by those who are in need of confidence has, as with other aspects of the occult, mixed significance for modernization. If the source of stress is not specifically definable but is prompted by the general environment, then occult practices may positively benefit modernization. (Rosenbaum & Siderberg 1971:572)

Within the country's socio-cultural setting, pathways of power through mystical practices are now challenged by modern political ideas represented in democratic elections which are based on secular reasoning. From the perspective of political modernity, politicians wishing to reach power should engage in public campaigns appealing people to vote for them, promote social and economic policies, offer attractive development agendas and programmes, and participate in general elections. Therefore, it is sensible for people to question why politicians should go to soothsayers or paranormals, and practise mystical rituals to win political contests while democratic elections are secular events. These unique phenomena seem to have become a strategy of adaptation as politicians blend the two different trends of social ideologies in order to survive in political contests. What appears on the political scene is a sort of cultural creativity in bridging the ideas of tradition and modernity; instead of presenting the two distinct streams of mystical belief and secular political practice as a contradiction, they join them together. While they embrace a democratic system that is reliant on human rationality, they continue to believe and practise mysticism in politics. Indeed, such distinctive phenomena should not be seen as, borrowing Geertz's words, "clashes of opposed mentalities [...]" but as the substance of the struggle to create an institutional structure for the country" (1973:314), that allow the people to accommodate various values: the political aspiration of modern democracy and the cultural orientation of

traditional beliefs. However, the fact remains that such accommodation is to some extent contested, for instance by the media, in cartoons, and by political commentators, as this chapter illustrates.

1.6 Conclusion

To conclude the discussion in this chapter, it can be highlighted that Indonesian politics is now entering a new and unprecedented phase which could be described as modern democratic politics shrouded by mystical beliefs which are inherited from ancestral traditions. Just to follow the argument presented earlier, that tradition and modernization are the continuum social phenomena in the history of human societies, these are surely the case in Indonesian politics. Here it can be emphasized that the world of Indonesian politics is closely associated with mystical beliefs, and politicians seeking power are willing to perform sacred rituals with the help of a *dukun* or paranormal, who are believed to be able to connect them with the supernatural world. Interestingly, this tradition of political practice takes place alongside modern democracy which relies on secular rationality. This is actually the primary contribution of this study, showing how political mysticism goes together with political modernity. Moreover, the study has also shown that this kind of political practice is challenged by the aspirants of modern-secular democracy.

Departing from the previous studies of other scholars, such as Anderson ([1972] 1990) who looked at how Javanese conceptualize power with reference to their cultural values, Mulder (1996, 1998) who observed how *kebatinan* (Javanese mysticism) becomes the very strong identity of the society practised in everyday life, and Pemberton (1994) who explored rituals and culture with the use of historical analysis, this study demonstrates how contemporary Indonesian politics becomes a medium of cultural contest between the ideas and practices of political mysticism and those of rational democratic politics. These findings have not been argued yet by those scholars in their scholarly works. In fact, Indonesia is a country in which ancient patterns of beliefs—in the forms of mysticism, the occult, superstition, prophecy, and so forth—exist along with modern political practices and a system of modern democracy. With reference to this ancient tradition, it is plausible that Indonesian politics is also enlivened with magic and sorcery. They play a part in political contestation and make the power struggle dynamic and intense, as the next chapter will discuss.

Chapter 2

WITCHCRAFT AND POLITICAL CONTESTATION AT THE TIME OF THE 2009 GENERAL ELECTIONS

The central argument of this chapter is that Indonesian politics absorbs the mixed ideas of magic and witchcraft while it embraces a modern democratic system. This chapter therefore seeks to address the issues of sorcery and politics by illustrating the relations between the two and showing how witchcraft plays a part in political processes. Discourses of witchcraft and politics will be explored through the case studies of the 2009 general elections, which demonstrate how political contest during the event is enlivened by the narrative of sorcery. This chapter will also examine the contesting ideas of being both traditional and modern, and how they appear in the political contestation that instigates much public controversy. The chapter will illustrate how the idea of witchcraft emerges alongside political transformation into the modern democratic system. It will elucidate how witchcraft, like corruption, is utilized as a channel of power. In this context, the main aim of the chapter is to introduce the discourse of witchcraft and power, followed by the discussion of witchcraft and corruption in the next chapter.

2.1 The Media Discourse on Witchcraft and Politics

The issue of witchcraft usually appears in public talk through accusations, thus becoming the way in which people develop their understanding of sorcery in the context of politics. To begin with, I introduce here some stories about witchcraft accusations appearing in public discourse which enliven political debate among politicians and Indonesian people in general. There are some illustrations on the issue of witchcraft related to political contest materializing in the media. In the months of political campaigns during the 2009 general elections, the issue of sorcery blossomed into public narrative, becoming a matter of interest to the people, as a bi-weekly magazine, *Misteri*,⁶ produced a series of articles addressing the gossip of sorcery in the world of

⁶ In the eyes of the public, *Misteri* is categorized as a magazine full of rumours and gossip, but fascinatingly, it has a huge number of readers. Each issue produces roughly 75,000 to 80,000 copies. More interestingly, its readers come from a wide range of social groups: from urban-educated people, professionals and middle class, to domestic staff who are less educated. The chief editor is a lecturer with

Indonesian politics. In its four articles, the editor informed its readers about the phenomena among politicians of using sorcery when they were vying with each other to be elected as a legislator through the general elections. For example, in the edition of 5 February 2009 the *Misteri* published the topic of ‘*Perang Gaib Para Caleg*’ (magical wars among legislative candidates) reporting that many politicians came to *dukun* (sorcerers) asking for help to attack their competitors with the use of black magic, and to pave the way for themselves to win the political contest. And for the 20 May 2009 edition, it introduced a special piece entitled ‘*SBY Jadi Target Santet*’ (President Yudhoyono becomes the target of witchcraft attacks) depicting that the 2009 presidential race was replete with black magic forces, and claiming that sorcery was used by either the candidate for president or their supporters to win the race. Meanwhile, for the 20 June 2009 edition it addressed the theme of ‘*Pertanda Gaib Jelang Pilpres*’ (mystical signs of the presidential election), indicating that there were plenty of mystical hints coming from the ‘otherworld’ domain given to each presidential candidate that he/she would be winning the election. Moreover, for the 5 July 2009 edition it took up the topic of ‘*Perburuan Mustika Jabatan*’ (in search of magic jewels to gain power) describing how politicians were obsessed with magical objects in which they believed, and how they made efforts to reach political power smoothly by wearing amulets and visiting sacred sites to do meditation. However, these articles were met with scepticism, especially among those regarded as ‘rationalists’. They seemed to ignore the role of magic and sorcery in politics because they believed that the political contest during the 2009 general elections was a secular event.

To learn how witchcraft is applied in politics, one needs to look at studies of the subject conducted by anthropologists. Generally, anthropological studies help us to understand the social phenomena of witchcraft and politics by explaining them in the context of political contestation where accusations manifested in rumours and gossip permeate into public space (Stewart & Strathern 2004). Witchcraft is “both a subject of gossip and a product of gossip; and gossip is the medium within which it lives” (Ashforth 2005:65). Many scholarly works by anthropologists have shown that witchcraft always takes place in clandestine settings and the way it works cannot be observed directly, nor can empirical evidence easily be captured (e.g. Siegel 2006; Kapferer 2003; Oldrige 2001; Geschiere 2000). Niehaus et al. argue that it must be seen

a PhD degree at the National University in Jakarta—he also obtained an MA from Leiden University, in the Netherlands.

as “an idiom of social relations and processes, and questions of evidence are deemed to be peripheral. It is either assumed that proof is impossible, or alternatively, that tension [and accusations are] the only proof of witchcraft” (2001:113). Meanwhile, the main intentions of sorcery accusations are to achieve particular objectives and obtain individual interests in the struggle over political power and state legitimacy. In most cases witchcraft accusations are typically used to attack political opponents, weaken their power, and then achieve political gains during the contest. And this seemed to happen to politicians who were standing for legislative election in 2009.

2.2 Witchcraft Narratives at the Time of the Legislative Election

In addition to these articles, some stories related to sorcery accusations have been appearing in the political contest. I start with a story of Abdul Fatah, a legislative candidate associated with the Partai Kebangkitan Bangsa (PKB, the National Awakening Party), who stood for election to be a legislator in the 2009 parliamentary election. In the months of election campaigns, Fatah engaged in a series of social activities to approach constituents and persuade people to vote for him on the all-important polling day. The system applied in the 2009 legislative election was that the process of electing a legislator depended on how many votes a candidate was able to garner—the higher numbers of ballots that are secured the greater chance a candidate has of being the winner. Within this system, political competition became much more fierce and vicious not only between candidates coming from different parties but also amongst those coming from the same party.

Having had a long career as a politician, Fatah has been with the National Awakening Party for many years, since he was born into a family historically associated with the Nahdhatul Ulama organization, the main political basis of the party. For this election Fatah ran for legislator, in the House of Representatives, representing the region of Banten—just about two hours drive to the west of Jakarta, as he had served for one period of office as a local legislator; and he had the ambition to move up to become an MP. Fatah is a native of Palagan (pseudonym), a district in the province of Central Java, and has been living in Banten for a relatively long period of time. To run for the post of MP representing a certain region does not require the person to be a native of that region; politicians are by law allowed to compete for being legislators from other

regions. Fatah had already made all the necessary preparations (logistics and other resources) for political campaigns to reach his ambition.

The months of February and March 2009 were hectic and exhausting moments for Fatah, as he had to visit his constituents in electoral areas almost every day to meet villagers, approach them, and talk to them. That was part of his daily activities in the months of election campaigns. In order to meet as many people as he could in the district, Fatah arranged various meetings by attending *pengajian* (religious preaching) in mosques in villages, or organized social events such as mass circumcisions for boys, donation for orphans and orphanages, blood donations, and the like. Through these social activities Fatah was able to mobilize people—and they were the potential voters—giving him the opportunity to earn sympathy from them, and then they would vote for him on the polling day: 9 April 2009. In organizing all these social activities, Fatah was assisted by some local leaders and villagers with whom he had had a long friendship. Obviously Fatah had to pay all the expenses for the meetings and activities including for the consumption of food, snacks, drinks, and cigarettes as well. Quite often, he gave attendees so-called *bekel* (money of about Rp15,000) in exchange for transportation, so he needed to have plenty of money at hand—the more people come to the meeting, the more money is spent. Sometimes Fatah had also provided some donations for building mosques and public facilities in some of the most populous districts from which he wanted to garner voters. Of course, Fatah needed to have ample money to finance all the social activities for campaigns as they cost him a great deal. Fortunately, he found some sponsors who provided him with some financial assistance especially to produce all the logistics needed for his campaigns.

Overwhelmed by an extensive agenda of heavy work activities during the very long period of political campaigns, Fatah became fatigued and eventually fell ill. At the onset, Fatah just had fever and was exhausted with such a hectic schedule, so that he simply needed to take a rest to recover from his fatigue and recover his energies after having spent so much time on public campaigns. He had been deeply engaged in a great number of social activities during the very busy months of the 2009 general elections, since he had to focus on it in order to win the contest. However, such an illness seemed to be uncommon, as it became far worse in the days that followed. When he had not yet recovered from the fever, Fatah contracted another sickness: earache and it was much more serious than the fever. Just within a few days, Fatah's ear disorder worsened, and he developed a swollen head, so he went to an aurist to cure it. Strangely, the

audiologist who treated him found nothing related to the pains he was enduring; the aurist diagnosed Fatah's swollen head and detected earache on both sides, but he had no idea what to do since he did not find even a single cause of illness. Fatah was obviously such an unusual case with his ear disorder, so he went to another aurist to have a second opinion; and received a similar diagnosis on it. The earache and swollen head was so painful that it eventually forced Fatah to end engaging in campaigns and he just stayed at home for the rest of the weeks. He then consulted his relatives about an alternative way of medication through spiritual treatment by an *orang pintar* (which literally means smart person, an idiom for those who have spiritual knowledge and skills). When visiting Fatah at home to see the ailing legislative candidate, his cousin, Anwar, suspected that the earache that was causing so much pain was man-made sickness—it was a kind of *santet* (witchcraft). Anwar then suggested that it would be good if Fatah came to Kiai Mudzakir of Palagan, renowned for having special knowledge and skills in treating peculiar illnesses, to find a non-medical cure. Fatah agreed with this advice, and Anwar then took him to Kiai Mudzakir for spiritual treatment. Fatah described the story of spiritual healing saying that it was carried out through a simple method. First, Fatah was given a glass of water to drink, but the water had been enchanted with Arabic words of *doa* (invocations) taken from the Qur'an. After drinking it, Fatah took a rest for about an half hour, and Kiai Mudzakir then did another spiritual curing by touching Fatah's head very gently and putting his hands on both sides of Fatah's ears. He kept touching the swollen head gently while chanting in silence. Afterwards, Kiai Mudzakir slowly pulled out a pair of feathers from Fatah's ears saying that they were magical items and were used as a medium for transporting evil objects that caused unbearable pains. He mentioned that these feathers were sent by a political rival's witch to Fatah to hurt him. Fatah explained that the Muslim cleric said to him: "You've received *santet*. Someone wanted to harm you, but I could not tell you for sure who did that to you. I think you may have known who it was yourself as both of you are competing to be elected as a member of the Parliament. I am worried the legislative election makes friends become enemies."

After having done with spiritual medication, Fatah speculated who, among his political rivals, might do *santet* on him. He suspected his own colleague within the National Awakening Party, Sabarudin, who did it simply because of jealousy and hostility as these are the two key elements of witchcraft. Anthropologists observe that those who employ sorcery are usually "motivated by envy and jealousy, and the

networks within which those emotions can plausibly circulate are identical to those of gossip. Witchcraft then has a necessary connection to gossip by virtue of the dynamics and intimacy and secrecy” (Ashforth 2005:67). Sabarudin, with whom Fatah was vying to become elected as an MP, is a native of Banten, while Fatah is a migrant coming from far away, from Palagan in Central Java. Fatah realized that such competition seemed to be a contest between *putra daerah* (sons of the region, the natives) and *kaum pendatang* (the migrants) which became much more significant in parallel with the emergence of local politics with the use of ‘primordial sentiments’ (Geertz 1973). The primordial sentiments usually take the form of ethnicity, race, kinship, religion, and other cultural ascriptions to which politicians become emotionally attached and then use them as an effective means for the struggle over power. The materialization of primordial sentiments take its ideal shape in political contestation in the local settings, since the patterns of Indonesian politics have changed considerably, making it possible for local actors to play a pivotal role after being neglected for years during the New Order era. They become the significant players of regional politics as a result of government reforms and political decentralization which have given them more power and authority. Consequently the role of regional elites appears to be of central importance in the whole political process (e.g. Aspinall & Fealy 2003; Hadiz 2003; Maribeth, Sulistiyanto & Faucher 2005; Nordholt & Klinken 2007).

This is the reason why emotional attachments associated with those primordial bonds are indispensable for such political competition, as they have the potential to be capitalized in support of a struggle for power. In this context, regarding the *putra daerah* Sabarudin, Fatah developed his assumptions, claimed that he had the privilege to be an MP representing his district of origin, since he and his ancestors are all natives of Banten. Certainly the political contest for securing a seat in the Parliament was fierce, as Banten was one of the hardest battlefields, where political parties were seeking a victory. Such contestation to secure a seat took place in two stages: individual contest among candidates of different parties and individual contest among candidates of the same party. Therefore, it became so severe and ferocious that some candidates even employed a seemingly irrational way with the assistance of magic and witchcraft.

The sorcery attacks prevented Fatah from continuing the political contest. Fatah keenly believed that he was the target of *santet* employed by his rivals; and it was certainly connected with political contest during the parliamentary election. What happened with Fatah showed that sorcery and politics are both related to each other,

where the former could be used to influence the latter. Indeed, witchcraft believers and practitioners could be associated with anyone, whether elite or commoner. Yet politicians and other prominent groups are not the exception, as Geschiere has mentioned: “Witchcraft not only dominates the relations between the new [political] elites and villagers, it also marks elite behaviour and their struggles in the arena of modern politics ... witchcraft remains, for both elites and villagers, the preferred discourse when it comes to interpreting the vicissitudes of modern politics” (2000:114).



Figure 2.1: Magical items consisting of a shrouded doll tied with thread, a sketch of man, soil of tomb mixed with sand and a written acronym of PKB, Partai Kebangkitan Bangsa.

The story of Fatah asserts that people may practise witchcraft for various purposes including winning a political contest. The involvement of witchcraft in politics indicates that politicians do not hesitate to apply any measure in order to achieve their ambitions. In fact, a political contest embedded with witchcraft practice has not been exclusively experienced by Fatah during the parliamentary election. Sorcery narratives also appeared during the 2009 presidential election.

2.3 Witchcraft Narratives at the Time of the Presidential Election

At first, it was just gossip circulating among people that magic played a part in the political processes of the 2009 general elections. Such gossip about magic and witchcraft in politics appeared to be merely a trivial topic of talk until President Yudhoyono himself made statements in a public forum addressing the issue of sorcery,

which inevitably instigated huge controversy especially among politicians. Whereas the issue of sorcery in politics was previously talked about by a limited group of people in the form of gossip and rumours, it eventually became the subject of public discourse, attracting extensive attention from both politicians and Indonesian people in general.

On Friday night, 3 July 2009, about two thousands Muslims—sympathizers of SBY and members of the Majelis Dzikir Nurussalam (SBY's Nurussalam House for God-Invocation) who came from the cities of Jakarta, Bogor, Depok, Tangerang and Bekasi—attended a special congregation for preaching (*pengajian*) and invocation (*dzikir*) in President Yudhoyono's private home in Puri Cikeas, the city of Bogor (see figure 2.2). Wearing *baju koko* (white long-hand shirt) with *peci haji* (white rimless cap), colourful scarf, and sarong (traditional cloth for Indonesians), members of preaching (*jamaah pengajian*) sat tranquilly on a *pendopo*⁷ with *joglo* architecture (a Javanese style structure of a house). But the size of the *pendopo* is too small for such huge numbers of the *jamaah* so it cannot accommodate all of them. Many of them sat in the front yard of the house and the surrounding areas as well. Soon after they had finished the evening payer, the ritual of *dzikir* started. Led by Habib⁸ Abdul Rahman Al-Habsy of Kwitang (an area in Central Jakarta where the Arab community resides), they made a long *dzikir* to God to supplicate His blessings and mercies by reciting some verses of the Qur'an. Since 2004—the year when SBY was elected to be president through the first democratic and direct election in the modern era of the country—the Majelis Dzikir SBY Nurussalam has regularly held congregations for preaching and invocations. And during the 2009 general elections, the ritual of *dzikir* was performed more often. From a theological perspective, *dzikir* is essentially a spiritual activity but it may have a political meaning and resonance since it took place in the private house of a presidential candidate and at the time of general elections. Such a congregation for *dzikir* held on Friday night seemed to be very special because it was just about a week before the polling day for the positions of president and vice president, which was due on 9 July 2009. At that moment the incumbent President Yudhoyono delivered a speech proclaiming that he had received *serangan sihir* (sorcery attacks) during the months of public campaigns—the period when he was engaging in a series of political

⁷ *Pendopo* is a large open building in front of a Javanese mansion, or attached open veranda that serves as an audience hall.

⁸ *Habib* is a high title for a venerated Arab descendant ulama; those who want to reach this title must have a very good understanding of Islam and acquire a knowledge of the Qur'an and the Hadiths.

activities for the presidential contestation. SBY shared with the attendees his personal experiences of receiving sorcery attacks:

Ladies and gentlemen, I have a special story for you all. We are now in the time of general elections through which we are going to elect legislators and both president and vice president. Sorcery has been everywhere and seems to be practised by many politicians [the attendees start laughing and SBY stops talking for a while]. This is true ... I and my family members experienced it personally ... It was a truly incredible event! There were many ways used to attack me during the competition, not only in the form of black campaigns, defamation, slander and the like, but also with the use of sorcery. Last night, on Thursday 2 July 2009, I went to the presidential debate programme broadcasted by several TV channels; while preparing to go there, I, my wife and my son along with my guards and driver prayed together, as I was perturbed by bad spirits. *Sihir* assaulted me. But, I believe in Allah Almighty (Arabic, God) who protects me and my family members; and the most effective way to fight against *sihir* (sorcery) is by intensifying *dzikir* (invocations) as God says: *أَلَا بِذِكْرِ اللَّهِ تَطْمَئِنُّ الْقُلُوبُ* “Verily, in the remembrance of God, [human] hearts find their rest” [Qur’an, al-Ra’d: 28]. (Reports of the event appeared on all TV channels on 3/7/2009, as well as online and printed media, such as *Kompas*, 4/7/2009, *Media Indonesia*, 4-5/7/2009).



Figure 2.2: President Yudhoyono delivers a speech in front of the *jamaah* of the Majelis Dzikir SBY Nurussalam (SBY’s “Nurussalam” House for God-Invocation) in his private home in Puri Cikeas, Bogor city, West Java

These revelations certainly startled the public and created controversy as people seemed to have various responses to the president’s statements. But it is not an important subject of discussion whether or not sorcery attacks experienced by SBY were factual; and whether or not his competitors used black magic on him. The interesting matter is: why did SBY bring the issue of magic and witchcraft to an open forum to become public narratives? His revelations certainly provoked people to talk about sorcery in the context of practising political democracy during elections; whereas

the election was supposed to be rational and secular in the sense that it must be placed in the secular world, not in the otherworld or the supernatural.

For the incumbent president, to raise the issue of sorcery for public discourse seemed strange to some people, especially among ‘rationalists’, that is, the educated elite. As a result, the unusual revelations of SBY became the focus of public controversy and increased political tumult, thereby igniting pro-contra responses from either his supporters or his opponents. I bring in here some commentaries, firstly from the side of SBY’s devotees, mostly his close aides who responded in support of his revelations about the sorcery assaults. For example, Abdul Rifai, a senior political elite in the Democrat Party, the political vehicle used by SBY to seek a second term of the presidency, once said that SBY knew about *sihir* menacing him from *kiai* and *habib*—they are *ahli hikmah*⁹ (pious Muslims who have spiritual knowledge), in addition to experiencing it himself. They were the spiritual advisors of SBY who always gave him advice in terms of religious matters and things related to spirituality. These *ahli hikmah* frequently provided SBY with spiritual guidance and mystical knowledge so he would be capable of dealing with any sort of magical disruptions and of banishing any black magic attacks.

In the context of Islam, Muslims usually perform *dzikir* (invocations) supplicating God for spiritual power to deal with any problems in life, including becoming immune from witchcraft attacks as experienced by SBY during political contest. This is why he always carried out *dzikir* either in person or collectively along with members of the Majelis Dzikir Nurussalam, as he considered *dzikir* was the best way to prohibit *sihir* so that it would not wound him. There are some verses in the Qur’an that are always recited by the Muslims to banish any sort of evil spirits and protect themselves from being the target of black magic attacks. As the Muslims believe in Allah Almighty (Arabic, God), Who is the owner of the universe and whose power surpasses everything, all magic powers could be defeated by the words of God (*firman Tuhan*). The Muslims usually chant some specific *doa* (invocation words) taken from the Qur’an verses if they deal with magic and sorcery (see Appendix).ⁱⁱ

⁹ In the tradition of Sufism (Islamic mysticism), *ahli hikmah* are associated with those who acquire a high degree of spiritual knowledge and morality and always practise mystical activities; and *dzikir* is a part of them which can guide Muslims to reach spirituality. In this regard, it may be relevant to note that President Yudhoyono once met Mawlana Sheikh Hisyam Kabbani—a spiritual Guru and world leader of the Naqshbandi Haqqani Sufi Order from whom he learned about spirituality and Islamic mysticism; and Kabbani said: “You will be president” a few years before SBY was elected to be the country’s president in 2004 (see Ki Juru Bangunjiwo, *Learning Spirituality with ‘the Thinking General’* [SBY], 2009).



Figure 2.3: The *jamaah pengajian* of the Majelis Dzikir Nurussalam (The “Nurussalam” House for God-Invocation) are photographed in the *Pendopo* of President Yudhoyono’s private home in Puri Cikeas, Bogor city.

In the context of Javanese society, the use of sorcery to obtain political power is very common as it has been practised by many people in support of achieving individual objectives. Witchcraft is a common feature of life and it is ‘real’ and present within society. As part of social life, politics cannot be detached from the beliefs of magic, and practising sorcery remains alive (e.g. Geertz 1960; Koentjaraningrat 1985; Ellen & Waston 1993). The issue of sorcery and witchcraft in the context of political contest is widespread, as Slamet Prawiro, a scholar specializing in Javanese Islam and an expert member of staff to a Minister of Yudhoyono’s cabinet, shared his thoughts:

Why the issue of witchcraft came under the spotlight during the 2009 general elections was mainly because the contest of parliament and presidency was a great political event as contestants competed for such prestigious positions. Those competing for political positions would pay all the cost and even take up magical ways. *Santet* (witchcraft) applied in the contestation usually takes various forms, such as inflicting disease like *ayan* (epilepsy) or *gagu* (dumbness) on contenders just for a while to make them lose their *wibawa* (charisma) for leadership. But in some cases it can also be a serious illness leading to death. (Quoted from interview, 30 July 2009)

What has been illustrated by Prawiro is actually an affirmation of what people talk about in the public sphere, saying that magic and witchcraft are part of social life. Moreover, people may practise witchcraft for a wide range of purposes. Geertz writes,

“Sorcery, [as] the Javanese conceive of it, tends to be practiced on neighbors, friends, relatives and other acquaintances fairly close at hand. Of course, the *dukun* employed may be a distant one and so be attacking someone far away from where he is performing his rite, but the actual instigator of the deed is always someone near at hand” (1960:110). And in the course of Indonesian history, witchcraft—along with accusations—usually appears in parallel with political upheavals and is part of the struggles over state power, as in the case of the political crisis before and after the fall of Soeharto’s New Order in May 1998 (Siegel 2006; Retsikas 2006; Herriman 2007). During that time, witchcraft accusations, combined with a series of murders of alleged sorcerers in the East Java region, were pervasive. Witchcraft accusations, with the subsequent witch hunts, showed up in the public space, describing how the regime seemed to have lost control of political authority, which resulted in social chaos. In the splendid illustrations of the tragic event in *Naming the Witch*, Siegel writes:

There are historical conditions of the outburst of witch hunts, though they are inadequate to entirely explain the events. Witch hunts broke out in East Java at the moment when established political structure seemed to no longer take notice of [human] life. At that time, in the absence of the ability to rely on the ‘*aparat*,’ as the local authorities—the police, the military, the civilian officials—are called, witches appeared in the world ... [in line with] chaos in the political realm and a breakdown of authority. (Siegel 2006:157)

Siegel’s accounts of witchcraft accusations are well-grounded as he refers to the very specific time and place in Javanese history during the transition period from the authoritarian New Order regime to the democratic rule at the start of a new episode of Indonesian politics, namely the *reformasi* era. Siegel has clearly explored the nature of witchcraft accusations by laying out the very complicated logic behind them. They involved power struggles and political contestations, with the involvement of the military, political elites, and civil society groups. Most cases involved Soeharto’s loyalists in opposition to his political rivals, who eagerly wanted to take over state power after he was no longer in office. The accusations of sorcery, followed by witchcraft-related killings, had led to political turmoil. As the events were shrouded in mystery, most people suspected that witchcraft accusations inciting violent actions seemed to be very well-designed scenarios arranged by some elements of the state structures, allegedly the military, as part of what Retsikas calls ‘state terror’ appearing in *ninja* groups that carried out communal discord along with the proliferation of rumours of terror and fearful spectres which were connected to political change at the time of Indonesia’s emerging democracy (2006:57, 84). In addition, as the witchcraft

accusations spread, unidentified political actors perpetrated social conflicts, leading to very high tensions between the state apparatuses and local communities (Retsikas 2006; Herriman 2006; Herriman 2007).

In most cases, accusations of sorcery usually serve as an indicator of hidden social strife which is difficult to detect by other methods. Witchcraft accusations and executions have become one of the ways in which communal clashes are expressed; they function as an effective medium through which social conflicts take place. Indeed accusations of sorcery are always connected with social tensions, which lead to the breakdown of social stability and political control. They tend to permeate within situations where social relations are ill-defined and abrasive, and materialize in conditions where other mechanisms for resolving tensions and settling conflicts fail or do not work properly (Moore & Sanders 2004:7). Looking at the history of Indonesia in modern times, magic and witchcraft have become part of the political processes and appear in social spaces where political conflicts are on the increase. They have increasingly become instrumental means for achieving political goals and can be used to support the establishment of political systems, whether despotic or democratic.

It can be argued that the connection of witchcraft with the dynamics of power contests represents how politicians maintain a great deal of interest in political power and make use of sorcery, whether as a symbolic idiom or an actual means to secure their ambitions. In this sense, sorcery is involved in the political transformation and the process of democratic power as seen in the involvement of political elites in witchcraft and occult rituals. Although witchcraft is often conceived as opposed to modernity and rational thinking, here one needs to consider a new interpretation by perceiving that sorcery can be contextualized with the ideas of modernism and intellectualism on the basis of rationality. This is particularly relevant to the fact that Indonesia is a land of mixed beliefs and values in which both mystical behaviour and rational orientation can find the best place to flourish. Such phenomena clearly materialized in the democratic political contestation of the 2009 general elections. Politicians employed various mystical ways of gaining power and President SBY himself also raised the issue of sorcery to the level of public discourse in accordance with the narrative of modern political democracy. It is a fact that SBY was re-elected for the second term of the presidency, thus indicating that the issue of witchcraft he raised seemed to become a political strategy to win the election. In this respect, it can be argued that one cannot draw a solid line between witchcraft as a representation of backwardness and the

practicality of political democracy as a symbol of modernity. What appears on the country's political stage clearly demonstrates how mystical beliefs and sorcery materialize in polity in conjunction with modern political values. Thus both witchcraft and democratic politics appear to have become a political reality in modern Indonesia. Nonetheless, since the 2009 election was a political event through which all political contestants were competing for public positions, raising the issue of witchcraft inevitably attracts criticisms especially from someone's political opponents.

2.4 Critiques of Witchcraft during Democratic Political Contestation

As the issue of sorcery was brought to the public by President SBY, it inescapably resulted in cynical commentaries and criticisms among political elites. This is mainly because they consider that the beliefs and practices of magic and witchcraft are attributed to pre-scientific thinking. As a result, SBY's statements unavoidably prompted bitter censure from his rivals and he was accused of bringing back a kind of backward period, while the country has moved into the era of modern democracy. Indeed the people were wondering why SBY talked about sorcery in a public forum and what lay behind the disclosure of the sorcery assaults he received. Not surprisingly, political opponents severely criticized SBY's revelations, saying that he just wanted sympathy from the people by showing himself as the target of magical offences committed by his political foes. In other words, SBY simply pretended to be a victim of oppression (*korban kezaliman*)—or being suppressed (*sedang dizalimi*)—by his contenders during the presidential race. Agung Permana, a closed political aide of Megawati, one of the presidential candidates, responded to this issue:

SBY's revelations were just a political manoeuvre to gain sympathy from the people. I believe that neither of his competitors—Megawati and Jusuf Kalla—employed sorcery against him. As part of Megawati's team, we believe in democracy and the only way to reach a political mandate from the people to come into power is through a democratic election. As we are in the era of modern democracy, we should believe in the values of democracy, that people have the right to elect the leaders of the nation rationally. We should not practise any black magic to gain victory in a general election. (Quoted from public discussion¹⁰ in Jakarta, 7 July 2009)

¹⁰ Public discussion refers to an open discussion for those interested in talking about current topics emerging in the national sphere. It is usually organized by social activists, civil society institutions, NGOs, radio and TV agencies, journalist associations, or university student groups, and takes place in many sites in Jakarta. This kind of discussion is usually held in response to social issues and public affairs, and becomes part of the public forum and social discourse among educated middle class groups. Speakers are invited from various backgrounds. They can be scholars, intellectuals, politicians, religious leaders, NGO activists, etc.

Such comments are likely to consider that witchcraft is merely seen as the paradox of modern democracy. Yet anthropological studies have suggested that the discourse of witchcraft must inevitably be connected with the idea of power and that one needs to take into account the notion of occult politics. Here, anthropologists suggest that state power and political democracy are seen as “a true breeding ground for modern transformations of witchcraft and sorcery” considering that “the more recent democratization process [...] is accompanied by a blossoming of rumours on the role of the occult” (Geschiere 2000:6; Niehaus et al. 2001). Continuing public criticism, another member of Megawati’s campaign team, Agus Arifin, criticized the president, saying that the tactic employed by SBY looked like a soap opera through which he begged the public for commiseration, and that this was an odd way of gaining compassion from people, as he applied the same tactic in the 2004 presidential contestation. Arifin continued to scorn SBY by saying that it was the most ridiculous political manoeuvre he had ever seen. He expressed further critiques:

I consider that a president must be *sakti mondroguno* (ruler with supernatural power) who is immune from being attacked by sorcery and cannot be harmed by any sort of black magic. I was surprised that SBY, as the president who holds supernatural power, lamented to the public saying that he had suffered sorcery assaults and was perturbed by black magic. He shouldn’t do that ... it was a bit foolish and was not proper, either, to say such weird things in front of *majelis dzikir*. His revelations were provocative, pretending that someone had struck him with black magic, yet none of his rivals did anything bad to him. (Quoted from public discussion in Jakarta, 5 July 2009)

In the same tone, Muhamad Hudaya, a member of the campaign team for Jusuf Kalla, made similar comments, saying that it was an ‘old song’, proclaiming to the public that he (SBY) had received sorcery attacks committed by his political rivals. Such revelations were ridiculous, as SBY talked about black magic during the *majelis dzikir*, a religiously respected occasion through which the Muslims learn about Islamic values, which include “not believing” in magic power, as this is considered to be outside the Islamic faith. Surely the people became confused questioning him either openly or silently as to why, as a pious Muslim, he believes in magical power, while he is also an educated person who must be rational. Sharing other people’s concern, Muhamad Hudaya said that SBY is a four-star General and holds a doctoral degree so that he must think logically and rationally and behave non-mystically. He then commented:

I don’t think anybody would hurt him with sorcery and neither of the two presidential contenders, Megawati and Jusuf Kalla, would take black magic to beat him in the

political competition. SBY should not think that his political rivals would offend him with sorcery. I think SBY simply wanted to gain pity and compassion from the people, as political contest is becoming much vicious and severe. (Quoted from public discussion in Jakarta, 5 July 2009)

On the whole, the notions brought by SBY's critics illustrated above seem to follow the 'rationalists' views related to the discourse of modernity. Here, the common discursive analyses of witchcraft usually view it simply as contrary to modernity since it is conceived as an innate characteristic of 'primitive' culture and a representation of the pre-logical thinking of human societies. Magic and witchcraft are frequently seen as a prime index of the non-modern society and are viewed to be at odds with the notions of rationality and in opposition to scientific modernism, referring to Western standards (Moore & Sanders 2004; Tambiah 2006). Whereas those believing in and practising witchcraft have their own logic and 'rationality' as they try to translate the irrational into the rational, something that Kapferer (2003) calls 'beyond rationalism'. Here, one needs to move away from Western concepts of rationality, in viewing the non-Western practice of witchcraft. Besides, there are also some basic arguments that the ideas and practices of witchcraft are in response to modern exigencies and that the prevalence of witchcraft in politics in any society seems to be the result of 'the unlikely balance it has achieved with the forces of modernity' (Geschiere 2000; Moore & Sanders 2004).

Equally, 'rationalist' elite politicians think that political practice relies on logic and operates in real situations, so that it can be observed in empirical settings. Therefore, from the 'rationalist' point of view, politics is a rational and secular event which has nothing to do with something beyond rationality. Conversely witchcraft is considered to be illogical, a kind of 'primitive' science; and it is an object of the 'otherworld' that is situated in a mystical realm and located in a supernatural domain which cannot be discerned in empirical scenarios, since it defies the logical thinking of human beings (Greenwood 2000; Oldrige 2001). As a result, bringing the issue of sorcery to become the subject of public discourses is extremely sensitive in the context not only of political modernity but also of religious matters, that is, Islamic beliefs. As politicians who believe in and practise sorcery are considered to be irrational and against values of modern democracy that requires rationality and logical thinking as well as non-mystical behaviour, they are also regarded as *kafir* (infidels) according to the Islamic faith. Practising black magic is absolutely forbidden in Islam, so is the belief in witchcraft. Indeed politicians believing in sorcery are the same as those who do not believe in the power of God. This is way critics accused SBY of presenting a bad model

by introducing the issue of sorcery in the context of political democracy, as illustrated by Abdul Rahman, a politician associated with an Islamic party, who expressed his deep regret about SBY's revelations as follows:

I could not believe that SBY as the leader of the nation could give such peculiar statements as to say there were sorcery attacks directed against him. He shouldn't portray a bad model by declaring that black magic was involved in politics. His statements could be regarded as a sort of justification to practise sorcery in general elections, as if it must be conceived as rational and logical. Besides, believing and practising sorcery is strongly forbidden; any attempt to ally oneself to anything other than God's power is sinful and considered *shirik* (polytheism) according to the Islamic faith. (Quoted from interview, 25 July 2009)

Here public discourses on witchcraft appear to thrive during political contestation, in which it is viewed with the standards of Islamic morality, describing those believing in magic and witchcraft as not being good Muslims and even categorizing them as polytheists. In Islam, polytheism is considered to be the root of evil and superstition. According to the Qur'an, *syirik* is the greatest and unforgiven sin; God will forgive any sin but a person who dies while committing *shirik*.ⁱⁱⁱ Similarly, relying on secular morality, public discourses on witchcraft tend to see clear distinctions between good and evil, and that the beliefs of witchcraft reflect the devil; and the practice of witchcraft is often intended to wound other people so it is considered to be morally wrong. In addition, there are some similar responses with the use of religious idioms saying that believing in magic and relying on witches to tackle problems of social life is categorized as non-Islamic and unacceptable, referring to the essential tenets of Islamic convictions. Beliefs, behaviours, and attitudes associated with magic and sorcery are contradictory to the principles of *tawheed* (the doctrine of monotheism; the belief in God, the One and Only) which is the central creed of Islamic faith. Afnan Saleh, an activist of Muhammadiyah, expressed his deep disappointment about SBY's revelations:

I was shocked to hear the president's statements claiming that he was attacked by magic as seemingly he wasn't a good Muslim who should have a strong faith in God and practise Islam properly by not believing in any magic power other than the power of God. What he has confessed about being the target of magic attacks indicates the weakness of his belief in *iman* (Islamic faith) and *aqedah* (the oneness of God). In other words, his *dzikir* (invocations) and his *shalat* (worships) are meaningless, and all the good deeds he has done are useless since they don't have any effect in strengthening his *iman* and *aqedah*. (Quoted from public discussion in Jakarta, 7 July 2009)

Taking into account the pro-contra responses of SBY's revelations, it is interesting to see how Indonesian Muslims, as seen in the views of Rahman and Afnan,

responded to the narratives of sorcery which were brought by President Yudhoyono into the public sphere. SBY used Islamic idioms, was surrounded by *kiai* and *habib*—both are recognized as having a very good understanding of Islam and Islamic teachings—as spiritual advisors, referred to the Qur'an texts in expressing his experiences of being assaulted by black magic, and associated with members of the Majelis Dzikir SBY Nurussalam who are seen to be Islamic and used that forum to start introducing public narratives of sorcery. Yet his political opponents perceived the contrary, saying that what SBY had done was considered to be *shirik* which is against the very fundamental principle of Islamic faith and does not suit Islamic teachings by any means. It is strictly prohibited for Muslims to take any other creation of Allah Almighty as deities or gods, as the Qur'an has clearly mentioned: “Turn unto Allah (only), not associating partners unto Him; and whoever assigns partners unto Allah, it is as if he had fallen from the sky and the birds had snatched him, or the wind had thrown him to a far off place” (Chapter 22, verse 31). All these things reflect the contradictory moral discourses of witchcraft, as both SBY and his political foes referred to the same source and used similar idioms from Islam in conceiving and debating the issue of sorcery. However, the SBY's foes strongly criticized him, accusing him of non-Islamic conduct in his use of ideological thought and religious language taken from the Qur'an, the Holy Book of the Muslims. This was simply because SBY talked to the public saying that he had received sorcery attacks, which his rivals perceived as indicating that his revelations were the same as believing in witches, and meaning that he had fallen into polytheism. In fact, SBY did win the presidential election, so one could argue that despite his critics and political opponents who said he had contravened the principles of Islamic faith, was not a proper Muslim, and so on, he maintained very good relations with and received huge support from the common people, among whom mystical beliefs are as strong as their adherence to rational and modern political values. This strongly suggests that mystic and magic remain rooted in the culture of politics, as mystic-related rituals are often performed during a political event.

2.5 Sorcery and Ritual in the Event of Democratic Election

In spite of all the criticism over SBY's revelations about witchcraft assaults, magic and sorcery have become a key political tool used by politicians, regardless of their social background, and whether educated or less educated, as many of them place their

political fate in the hands of witches. They often come to witches asking for help to cope with difficulties and misfortunes during political competition with the hope of attaining success and fortune in the very tough struggle over power. These situations clearly show the ambiguity of witchcraft since it represents both the strengths and weaknesses of politicians contending for political power. Here witchcraft offers a concealed way of achieving power, but at the same time it demonstrates the incapability of politicians when dealing with problems in politics, as Geschiere has pointed out: “the political implications of witchcraft [...] conjure up unexpected parallels with feelings of power and powerlessness that mark popular conceptions of politics in [modern] democracies” (2000:8-9). So, the narrative of witchcraft appears in social spaces in accordance with the increased anxiety of political struggle, as witchcraft always follows the dynamics of social and political tensions. When President Yudhoyono unveiled the issue of sorcery, he basically confirmed what was being talked through rumours and gossip behind the scene. Afterwards, discourses of sorcery came onto the stage so that people started commenting on it, which led to public controversy. Apparently the people responded to SBY’s revelations differently, as Bakasura, a paranormal, explained in his comments:

SBY is indeed a true Javanese (*orang Jawa tulen*) and he of course believes in magical power as most Javanese do. As SBY claimed that he was attacked by sorcery, it indicated that the presidential race did not take place merely on the electoral stage represented by a series of political campaigns in the public sphere. Political contest took place in ‘otherworld’ space, too, which refers to an unobservable domain; there were political battles among spiritualists and magicians who were the supporters of politicians or presidential candidates. (Quoted from interview, 2 September 2008)

What Bakasura argues is that traditional beliefs, expressed in the association with holy figures who have spiritual powers, are still alive. Here people perceive that gaining fortune in social life, including winning in the political contest, does not rely solely on practical efforts, but also depends on whether or not someone is given *restu* by the holders of the ‘otherworld’. It is therefore important to please ancestors and holy spirits that represent the ‘otherworld’ so that they will help a person to reach what he or she wants, including political power. Rituals of pleasing them can be found in a wide variety of forms and take place in certain locations which are considered to be sacred sites where blessings are abundant and people can benefit from them.



Figure 2.4: A cultural ritual of offering in pursuit of spiritual blessings for democratic political contest held by SBY's supporters in the district of Kediri, East Java (Photo by detik.com).

The following ritual (see figure 2.4) describes a tradition of a cultural ceremony to please ancestors and holy spirits, which was performed during the 2009 presidential race just before carrying out a public campaign in Kediri. Led by the *pemangku adat* (local leader of cultural ceremony and ritual) a group of SBY's supporters and followers, wearing blue costumes—beloved colour of uniform for the Democrat Party—performed a special ritual of *larung sesaji* (drifting offerings) which took place on the bank of the Brantas River in the province of East Java. In the sacred ritual they presented a package of offerings consisting of two ducks attached with stickers of SBY-Boediono for president and vice president, seven kinds of flowers, palm blossom (*kembang mayang*), eggs, and incense together with benzoin (*dupa, kemenyan*). All these items were then floated on the Brantas River in the Kediri region with the intention of gaining blessings from the ruler of the universe, so that SBY-Boediono would be granted a victory in the contest. And if both of them were elected—in fact, they won the 2009 presidential election—they would become good leaders of the nation and lead the whole Indonesian people to social prosperity and economic well-being, as symbolized by the package of offerings floating on the river. The feature of rituals in respect of the ancestor spirits shows how people believe that the spirits of ancestors have a sort of spiritual influence on the political processes in the real world and that the possession rituals contribute to the efficacy of political practices. Here Bubandt clearly explains that “spirits are being conjured up for political reasons, they partake in a

spiritual politics in which they are both instruments and actors. [...] Possession rituals construct and make intelligible a particular relationship between politics, experience and emerging democracy in Indonesia” (2009: 291). In this respect, the ancestor spirits are believed to be able to meet the interests of politicians and to realize their wishes. Meanwhile, possession rituals are seen as a cultural medium carried out for particular objectives in parallel with political transformation in the country’s modern democracy.

The 2009 general elections showed two intriguing phenomena of political contest that seemed to contradict one another. There were contradictions between aspirations of modernization in politics and attachments to traditional beliefs and attitudes as seen in the cultural rituals serving the holders of the ‘otherworld’ that were performed along with the election processes. On the one hand, most politicians believe that general elections represent modern democracy through which people elect representatives and leaders of the nation, as Ahmad Rahmani, a senior politician and an executive board member of the National Mandate Party, once said:

We have chosen democracy as the best way to govern the country after we were deeply discontented with authoritarianism under the New Order regime. Unlike the old despotic system, which was full of repression, within a modern democracy we now enjoy political liberty and all citizens are able to participate in politics by electing our leaders and representatives directly. Civil rights are respected; suffrage and the public voice are recognized. And people also have many opportunities to take part in politics by becoming involved in the decision-making process, so they can influence the outcome of it. (Quoted from public discussion in Jakarta, 7 March 2009)

So, with regard to general elections—both legislators and president are directly elected by the people—Indonesia has moved forward in terms of the development of an institutional structure of modern democracy. Yet the consolidation of democracy in Indonesia is considered to be very slow and to have a number of shortcomings. However, people do believe that it is the best way through which to progress towards becoming an advanced and modern nation. The system of democracy was chosen with a great deal of hope that they would be able to establish a responsible political leadership and constitute a good government accountable to the public (see e.g. Liddle 1999; Liddle 2001; Bunte & Ufen 2009). Moreover, the 2009 general elections were seen as the manifestation of a modern democratic system through which political parties and politicians applied all forms of modern means to perform the contest. Among modernity’s tools are the media, both print and electronic, through which citizens articulate their political aspirations. Unequivocally the media play a critical role in the delivery of election campaigns which include public debates between presidential

candidates, wars of words among campaign teams, even massive negative campaigns and the circulation of smear stories. All these things represent the world of modern politics, so a general election must be perceived as a political process in which rational modernism should be the main basis for politicians to perform and take political actions in the ordinary world which can be observed empirically.

On the other hand, the 2009 political contest was also carried out in the 'otherworld' domain where politicians used supernatural magic as a means to win the competition, and Bakasura's views quoted earlier and the possession rituals illustrated previously have described how politicians conceive that the world of politics is also related to the 'otherworld'. As has always been the case in every crucial event, the contest of political power is often replete with uncertainty and no one has the ability to fully control it. Under the very high degree of uncertainty, contestants try to obtain spiritual assistance from those with magical power including *dukun* (witches) to gain *nasib-baik* (fortune) instead of getting *nasib-jelek* (misfortune). As Ellen notes, "the belief in sorcery and witchcraft depends not only on cosmology but also on the availability of other means of explaining misfortune" (1993:14), since one of the key functions of supernatural power is to provide a sense of certainty in highly insecure situations. As witchcraft deals with the issues of misfortune and suffering, it must also be conceived "with reference to alternative formulations of mystical power and competing explanations of misfortune in a constantly shifting 'ecology of belief'" (Niehaus et al. 2001:16).

Alternatively, because of unwanted misfortune those seeking political power often look for a scapegoat, accusing their rivals of using magic when the latter are successful in political contest. In most cases, controversies over magic and witchcraft have been especially prevalent in close-knit communities facing failure or misfortune, mixed up with social strife and scapegoating (Stewart & Strathern 2004). Accordingly, accusations of sorcery spread being the way in which the losers please their psychological conditions by blaming their political opponents as having utilized witchcraft to win the contest, or as Bubandt put it, "The felt prevalence of sorcery in politics is manifest in the general assumption that the success of politicians is possible because of powerful protective magic [...] and the success in democratic politics is itself magical" (2006:421). Indeed political fights during elections also involved the use of sorcery and witchcraft to hurt enemies and defeat contenders in order to win the race.

The use of magical power in the world of politics is not new. Thus, SBY's revelations claiming that sorcery attacks were directed against him during the presidential race must be understood that magic might be used by anyone, in the interests of political contestation along with the use of democratic measures. In other words, if someone is obsessed with political power yet does not have the ability to manage the changed political circumstances within a new democratic system, she/he might employ magic and sorcery in order to gain a position of state power. In this respect, it can be said that magic and witchcraft do not necessarily mark the backwardness of a society; neither are they associated merely with primitive culture. Indeed magic and witchcraft can be part of modernity and thus must be interpreted metaphorically as a cultural idiom through which matters of pressing social and political reality are expressed, especially for people who are uncertain about the outcome of their action and those of others. In this sense witchcraft is seen as, borrowing the Comaroffs' words, "modernity's prototypical malcontents" (1993:xxix). In explaining how witchcraft represents the anxiety of the modern world, Adam Ashforth puts it thus:

If the possibility of many forms of modernity is conceded, witchcraft today need not necessarily be the same as in the past, nor need the fact that some people still worry about witches necessarily indicate an absence of modernity. The reason they still believe in witchcraft, then, can be posited as resulting from the fact that discourses of witchcraft still work in making sense of their worlds, including the changes that modernization and globalization have wrought. (Ashforth 2005:116)

Considering all the arguments of the discursive analyses of witchcraft and modernity that have appeared in public space, what is interesting is to place witchcraft and sorcery in the dynamics of power contestation, as Kapferer points out: "Sorcery manifests in the dynamics of powers. Most fundamentally sorcery *is* power, power in its totalizing essence. [...] Sorcery is a cultural recognition of the centrality of power in the everyday world of human beings and a recognition that the points from which power emanates are human beings themselves" (1997:261-263). At this point SBY, as a presidential candidate, used the issue of sorcery as a medium of political dramaturgy in the context of gaining and maintaining power, as well as attacking his political opponents with the use of the rhetoric of sorcery to win sympathy from the people and then win the political competition. Therefore, sorcery cannot be conceived as a crust of primitive culture; instead it is part of the social drama in the whole political process. Or, as Niehaus puts it, "witchcraft must not be seen as a residue of traditional and primitive culture but as a complex social drama which is deeply embedded in contemporary social

and political processes” (Niehaus et al. 2001). As a result, magic and witchcraft cannot be viewed merely in terms of the differences between modernism and traditionalism—as some scholarly works on the subjects have suggested—indicating that the former is more advanced in a broad sense than the latter, since believing and practising witchcraft and sorcery are part of social life and there is no clear distinction between modern and traditional society, as Bubandt notes: “Sorcery ... achieves its effects in the troubled social space where imaginaries about what it means to be ‘modern’ or ‘traditional’ intermingle” (2006:421). This asserts that modernity does not necessarily mean that the beliefs and practices of magic and witchcraft are omitted from social life. Instead, they are an effective means employed by politicians to achieve and possess power; and discourse on witchcraft is shown to be a vital part of the struggle over state legitimacy, as demonstrated by President Yudhoyono when he claimed he suffered sorcery attacks during his political campaign at the time of the 2009 general elections. With regard to the events, here witchcraft is brought into public narrative, becoming a sort of political tactic to empower one’s self and at the same time it represents the embodiment of all the contradictions of the experience of Indonesian modern democracy in parallel with the wave of globalized democratic states.

2.6 Occult Practice and the Economic Aspect of Magic

Most interestingly, witchcraft narrative in Indonesian politics goes beyond the border of the country, as the Aljazeera channel has brought it to a global audience. One day in early 2009 during the hectic times of election campaigns, Aljazeera broadcasted an interesting cultural feature of Joko Bodo (see figure 2.5), a well-known paranormal, who was practising supernatural magic and occult activities to make money. It was screened with a fervent narration claiming that he had plenty of clients with very high profile backgrounds: officials, politicians, artists. They came to Joko Bodo asking for help, such as how to reach power or how to defeat their rivals by, if necessary, employing magic and sorcery. He claimed that he could do it on the request of his clients as he showed a medium of a human puppet and a toy to transfer magical elements to the target. Joko Bodo was presented as offering various services for his clients, called *supernatural consulting services*, that seemed to represent occult practice.

A wide range of services include: how to get elected in elections, how to succeed in business, how to recover from failure in business, how to settle a marriage

dispute, and how to become a successful artist. He told Aljazeera that many elite politicians and high ranking officials visited him with requests for potent supernatural magic in order to gain and maintain their positions in the power structures. He said that they wanted to advance their political competition for wealth and power in that they were willing to carry out a series of occult rituals arranged to secure their wishes and ambitions. In fact, the claims of Joko Bodo accord with the revelation by Bakasura, a paranormal, who comments:

Most elite politicians and state officials secretly come to a *dukun* or mystic, searching for spiritual assistance and supernatural force. However, they always deny getting involved in supernatural magic, but they believe in and engage with the occult as a pathway for reaching power. They do this in great secrecy, to avoid the eyes of the people, as they seemingly feel ashamed of doing something so bizarre. (Quoted from interview, 2 September 2008)



Figure 2.5: Joko Bodo, a soothsayer/paranormal, gives spiritual advice to a client who seeks some help in dealing with problems and difficulties. (Image by Aljazeera)

The broadcast by Aljazeera about the occult activities of Joko Bodo in the form of supernatural consulting services clearly shows how magic and witchcraft have been transformed into a narrative of modernity with the use of a modern tool: the global electronic media. Moreover, it is most interesting to observe how magic and sorcery have become an attractive business and a potential source of economic activities as Joko Bodo mentioned that clients were charged for receiving spiritual services. Certainly, the supernatural consulting services have become a big market economy, and the charge

varies depending on the type of services (see figure 2.6). For ordinary people seeking some spiritual advice, he charged them about \$35 (equal to Rp330,000); but for high profile clients such as artists seeking popularity and success or politicians and officials seeking a political position, he charged them up to \$2,000 (equal to Rp19,000,000). What Joko Bodo has done by making money through occult practice fits with what the Comaroffs have described as the ‘occult economy’, which they describe as follows:

Occult economy may be taken, at its most general, to connote the deployment of magical means for material ends or, more expansively, the conjuring of wealth by resort to inherently mysterious techniques, techniques whose principles of operation are neither transparent nor explicable in conventional terms. These techniques, moreover, often involve the destruction of others and *their* capacity to create value. (Comaroff & Comaroff 1999:297)



Figure 2.6: A client gives a quantity of money to pay for the spiritual service she receives from Joko Bodo. (Image by Aljazeera)

As shown in various studies, magic and witchcraft are conceived as having a close connection with the circumstances of modernity. Noticeably, a number of anthropological works (see, for example, Fisiy & Geschiere 1991; Comaroff & Comaroff 1993,1999; Shaw 1997)—which mostly take the case of post-colonial African countries—even observe that the proliferation of magic and witchcraft is directly connected with the penetration of the neo-liberal economy and global capitalism along with the spirit of modernity. These alternative perspectives seem to be creative interpretations of witchcraft following what Evans-Pritchard mentioned many years

ago: “new situations demand new magic” (1937:513); and the ‘new situations’ happening in contemporary societies around the world are characterized by the proliferation of the global market economy and the influx of ‘millennial capitalism’ (Comaroff & Comaroff 1999 & 2001); whilst the ‘new magic’ is contextualized with that kind of modernity so that magic and witchcraft are inherently modern (Geschiere 2000; Moore & Sanders 2001).

By connecting the occult forces with economic issues, these scholars attempt to explain that the capitalist economy has created wealthy groups and powerful people, enabling them to enjoy a high social status within society. In this respect, the reason why Joko Bodo has been able to make money through occult activities is because there is a growing demand for those kinds of services within Indonesian society. It can also be said that people seem to be anxious when they encounter dramatic changes in their lives which they are unable to control. As they want to succeed in business or become the winner of a political contest in elections, they come to a *dukun*, mystic, soothsayer, or witch looking for assistance. In this context, the occult economy thrives within society as “... people subject to neoliberal interventions can only comprehend these transformations by resorting to magic and mystification. Those who have seen their lives disrupted in dramatic ways resort to supernatural forces to make sense of these changes” (Rudnyckyj 2009:115). As a result, magic and occult practice then become cathartic solutions for those who cannot deal with the complexities of social, economic, and political problems. The unbearable problems coupled with the uncertainties of daily life mean that people tend to rely on mystical and supernatural magic because these may, in terms of psychological need, satisfy them, through the occult forces and rituals.

2.7 Conclusion

To conclude the whole discussion of this chapter, it can be re-stated that power struggle and political contest in the world of Indonesian politics do not merely take place in the secular world, as magic and witchcraft play a part in social and political processes. Politicians may come to power with the help of magic and sorcery by using them as a political tool to smoothen their path towards power. Magic and witchcraft are viewed as important vehicles as a political party to gain and possess power, despite Indonesia having adopted modern democracy. In this context, Indonesian modernity appears to be a mixture of rational and magical beliefs and values in which sorcery is used politically

as a means of obtaining power. However, in the process both the ‘modern’/‘rational’ and the ‘traditional’ also become reified categories which are constructed through discourse and practice as “opposed to” each other. Those categories that seem to be in contradiction are essentially constitutive and interpretive and are articulated by those involved in such discourse. With reference to the previous scholarly works, for instance Siegel (2006), Bubandt (2006), and Herriman (2006, 2007), this research seeks to enrich the arguments of these studies by asserting that magic and witchcraft are closely connected with the imagination of political power. The occult politics emerges in social space to be used as a means of securing public positions along with the newly-established modern democracy. However, this research is slightly different from those earlier studies in terms of the context of the research. Bubandt’s study observes sorcery and the occult in local politics and both Siegel’s and Herriman’s studies examine how witchcraft is used as a mode of violent conflict resulting from a fierce political game at national level, but the contest takes place in local-rural settings. Instead, this research observes witchcraft in the context of urban politics becoming part of political contestation which takes place at national level and involves urban elite politicians who make the political magnitude of the contestation become highly attractive and controversial.

Yet it is important to note that witchcraft is not the sole pathway to power. Politicians may also be involved in corruption to achieve the same goals of accumulating wealth and increasing power. Nonetheless, one may think that witchcraft and corruption are hazardous for human societies and that those who deal with corruption may put their own lives at a very high risk, and these two subjects will be addressed in the next chapter.

Chapter 3

WITCHCRAFT AND CORRUPTION: THE RISK TO HUMAN LIVES

The main task of this chapter is to explain that witchcraft and corruption represent the collective imagination of power and material wealth. Yet they also reflect moral ambivalences, as people respond to these social phenomena differently. The chapter therefore seeks to explore the issues of witchcraft and corruption by illustrating how both appear in public narratives, and how they are replete with controversy. It will also address how witchcraft and corruption play a part in the shaping of the social imagery of power and wealth. The primary topic discussed in this part concerns the ways in which witchcraft affects public efforts to eradicate corruption. It will show the dangers of witchcraft appearing in the form of threats to human lives, by bringing case studies of prosecutors and activists who suffer black magic attacks while they engage in the fight against corruption. It will also illustrate how witchcraft is used as a way of attacking prosecutors, obstructing a prosecution process, and intimidating activists who work for anti-corruption campaigns.

3.1 Narratives of Witchcraft and Corruption

In popular narratives, witchcraft and corruption share some features in common, as both can be manipulated in the interests of power and wealth. Such narratives usually claim that those who maintain a very strong wish to gain power and amass wealth often take a shortcut by becoming implicated in corruption or by practising sorcery, as Simon Turner writes: “A central characteristic of corruption is that someone enriches him- or herself at the expense of others, creating a kind of parasitic wealth, similar to the power and wealth created through witchcraft” (2007:127). Both witchcraft and corruption can thus be utilized by an individual who desires to possess power and acquire wealth. As witchcraft and corruption are closely bound up with power and wealth, both are inherently connected with threats and dangers, especially for those who engage in efforts to eradicate corruption. This is exactly the case of social activists and public prosecutors who dedicate themselves to investigating corruption.

In this regard, I talked to Dian Megawangi, a senior prosecutor serving at the Attorney General’s Office (AGO), who has been working on corruption investigation

for many years and has experienced sorcery threats while in service. Soon after completing her study in Law at the University of Padjadjaran, Bandung, Megawangi joined the AGO in the early 1990s, which led to her being dispatched to a number of regional prosecutorial offices across the country, where she very often dealt with corruption cases. She was of course aware of the risks when performing her official duty, particularly if those who committed corruption were politicians or officials holding state powers, as she observed that witchcraft was often employed against people who were fighting corruption. Megawangi mentioned that one of the very serious risks was how to contend with witchcraft, since many corrupt politicians and officials were not averse to applying any means necessary, including magic and sorcery, to counteract prosecution. The application of witchcraft is of course very dangerous, as prosecutors may be killed. Taking into account the perils of magic and sorcery, Megawangi fervently confessed:

Whenever any state prosecutors speak overtly, they have always been threatened by magic and witchcraft when they are posted to localities—anywhere across the country. Those who are dispatched to a district with a very high risk of witchcraft must prepare for a spiritual battle, since they might become the target of sorcery attacks. (Quoted from interview, 3 February 2009)

Megawangi's views seem to suggest that witchcraft and corruption can be conceived as a sort of 'malevolent consumption', to borrow Kari Telle's (2003:98) phrase, in that both can devastate the lives of human societies. In this sense, witchcraft consumes the lifeblood of human beings while state officials committing corruption seize public resources belonging to people. It can be argued that both witchcraft and corruption represent the immoral attitude of those who strongly desire power and material value. Again, Megawangi expressed her views:

Corruption can be addictive for those who are obsessed with power and wealth, as both symbolize social prestige. With money embezzled from public office, state officials increase their power in order to accumulate more wealth, as the increase of power will have the consequence of the accumulation of wealth, and vice versa. Not surprisingly, corrupt officials tend to keep power in their hands even with the use of magic and sorcery, despite public denunciation of these immoral behaviours. (Quoted from interview, 3 February 2009)

As widely acknowledged in the course of contemporary anthropological research, witchcraft is commonly linked to personal obsession with political power and the imagination of the state (e.g. Geschiere 1991; Niehaus 1997; Niehaus et al. 2001). As found in many anthropological studies, it is often conceived in connection with the accumulation of wealth, money, and social production as people usually take a simple

way of attaining material benefits (e.g. Fisiy & Geschiere 1991; Shaw 1997; Geschiere 2001; Oslen 2002). In this respect, people are often attempting to reach political power by using witchcraft and committing corruption, and these result in social controversy, as Bubandt states: “Sorcery and corruption are part of the same political imagination because both speak ambivalently to the problems of power” (2006:413). This is the reason why the issue of morality becomes the central subject of public talks and gains social significance in the discourses of witchcraft and corruption. As witchcraft is regarded as form of evil behaviour, so is corruption in the sense that both are morally wrong and socially unacceptable. This is why they are censured by most people, and those practising sorcery and committing corruption are considered immoral and decadent. Corruption seems to share some characteristics in common with witchcraft, thus reflecting the paradoxical relationship between condemnation and fascination, as Giorgio Blundo has expounded:

Corruption as much as witchcraft and the actors involved in it are dependent on ambivalent representations that oscillate between stigmatization and indulgence and between fascination and rejection. This ambivalence is reflected in the paradox of corruption being ubiquitously condemned while practiced everywhere on a daily basis. (Blundo 2007:31-2)

It is important to note that both witchcraft and corruption have some similarities, as seen in the ways in which people talk about them, mostly in the form of allegations, with the use of the social medium of gossip and rumours. This is because witchcraft and corruption always take place in concealed settings which are of course beyond empirical observation; no one is able to view and examine the practices of the two directly but just gossip about them (e.g. Sedlenieks 2004; Shore & Haller 2005; Bubandt 2006; Nuijten & Anders 2007). What appears in the social space is therefore accusations of witchcraft, which are generally made when people see such a dramatic success by others especially in accumulating wealth or in gaining power, to explain why some people suddenly become rich while others remain poor, as Geschiere writes: “discourses on the occult can serve to protect or reinforce the accumulation of wealth and power” (2001:46). Some anthropologists argue that this is a sort of cultural interpretation to explain the spread of devil beliefs, since they “form part of an egalitarian social ethic that delegitimizes persons who gain more money and success than the rest of the social group” (Taussig 1980:15; Olsen 2002).

Likewise, accusations of corruption are widespread when people suddenly become wealthy and possess power, since corruption can be the way of reaching both of

these. As a result, witchcraft and corruption accusations are seen as the ways in which people try to understand and interpret spectacular achievements related to power and wealth, as Blundo puts it: “in order to explain the trajectories of quick wealth, someone can be suspected just as easily of corrupt behaviour as of having resource to magic and witchcraft” (2007:31). As found elsewhere, anthropological studies have shown that accusations of witchcraft and corruption are “described as responding to and addressing the social, moral, and emotional consequences of selfishness, greed, and excessive accumulation in societies organized around obligations of reciprocal exchange” (Smith 2007:142). The fact that witchcraft and corruption stimulate controversies in public discourses asserts that they are conceived ambiguously by people in the social sphere. Though some people strongly criticize witchcraft and corruption, both of these are part of social life as they can be found in the daily activities of society.

3.2 The Dangers of Witchcraft in the Context of Corruption Eradication

- **Subjective experience of prosecutors: the cases of Sirajudin and Fatimah**

This section recounts the bitter experience of people dealing with witchcraft when they are fighting corruption. I start by introducing a personal story of a state official working with the Attorney General’s Office (AGO) who experienced bizarre events when investigating corruption scandals. A weekly magazine, *Gatra*, released a report that one day in January 2006, a senior prosecutor with a high ranking position at the AGO, Herman Suparman, made some odd revelations which seemed to be uncommon for the public. While he was filing corruption cases involving several important public figures and tycoons, he felt that black magic was disturbing his work—a sort of occult force attacked him. It was reported that Herman found large numbers of caterpillars in the bedroom of his private home. They were piled up to the ceiling and spread into every corner of the bedroom, but he had no idea from where those nauseating insects came; they appeared and vanished mysteriously for weeks. Herman unveiled this weird event when he was accompanying the Attorney General, as they held a public hearing in Parliament to evaluate the progress of the investigations of corruption cases being tackled by the AGO. Since the revelations seemed peculiar, most legislators considered that they were just fictitious stories; they did not believe in Herman’s revelations about the occult attacks when he was coping with corruption incidents. Instead, they suspected

that Herman exposed such weird stories to the public as the way of covering his inability to deal with corruption and of hiding his incompetence to handle the prosecution processes of those implicated in it.

For the ‘rationalist’ legislators, Herman’s revelations seemed to show magic practice which is considered as unlikely to be done in modern urban settings. However, it is important to take into account Koentjaraningrat’s observation that “... in Javanese society destructive magic and sorcery (*sihir* or *tenung*) are still practiced frequently, not only in rural communities but also in urban environments. The practitioners of Javanese destructive magic are specialists who have learned the magical techniques of harming other people” (1985:419). With reference to this explanation, the occult forces attacking Herman were possible and the revelations should not be judged as fictitious or ‘irrational’ since magic and sorcery could take place in any situation. In this respect, one needs to move beyond the conventional approach in understanding sorcery and witchcraft. Moreover, one should not interpret witchcraft and occult actions merely through the perspective of the analyst’s own rationality. Instead, he/she should view them based on the local framework of rationality (Kapferer 2003). In fact, Herman’s stories did not stop there and what he disclosed to the public was just one of many stories of prosecutors who suffered sorcery assaults but these were uncovered by the media. Some of them shared with me their personal experience of suffering witchcraft attacks in relation to their jobs. The followings are among the reports of public prosecutors in regard to black magic and occult actions.

I talked to one of them, named Ahmad Sirajudin. He graduated in Law from the Jakarta Islamic University in 1985 where he taught for several years after finishing his studies. As an opportunity to be a civil servant with the status of prosecutor was offered, Sirajudin then joined the AGO in the early 1990s. Since then he has been stationed in many local offices across the country such as South Sulawesi and West Java, which allows him to learn about beliefs and cultures of Indonesian society including how magic and witchcraft are practised by many people in the country. With such long years of experience as a prosecutor working with the AGO, Sirajudin frequently coped with a number of corruption cases involving politicians and state officials. When dealing with corruption, he very often confronted obstruction and resistance from those implicated in it, since those who were being prosecuted relentlessly tried to halt the prosecution process in various ways. Sometimes they offered bribes with huge amounts of money or other forms of inducements, for instance, a package for traveling (tickets, allowance,

accommodation, entertainments, etc.). However, they could also commit bad actions such as black magic, to make Sirajudin sick and prevent him from performing his official duties; or, to bring misfortune and plight so that his life would be always in misery and anguish. Sadly, that was what he experienced since he was not tempted to take such inducements. And here is an upsetting story of the dedicated prosecutor who lost his soul mate, his beloved wife, due to the perceived occult forces.

One day in early 2003, Sirajudin was shocked when he found blood spilled on the floor of his house and abundant black maggots creeping around it. They spread everywhere reaching the tables, chairs, shelves, cabinets, and walls. Very shortly, they swamped every corner of the house. Considered that such circumstances were so strange, he thought that it might be *santet* (witchcraft) as those occurrences had never happened before. After that, Sirajudin had a series of terrifying events when he was investigating corruption incidence. The most horrible event occurred when he was in service stationed in the city of Anugerah Alam—a region which is very well-known as one of the most powerful places for black magic in the West Java province—between 2003 and 2007. During these periods he was authorized by his superior to tackle a number of corruption scandals. Of the sixteen corruption cases in which Sirajudin was responsible for bringing a legal process, there was a large one in which the amount of public money embezzled from the local government budget was about four billion rupiah. Besides this, the case was politically risky since it involved a number of influential politicians associated with several large parties. These politicians occupied important positions at the local parliament: one as chair of the DPRD (*Dewan Perwakilan Rakyat Daerah*, the local legislative body) and the other two as deputy chairs. As Sirajudin started to prosecute those politicians with the consequence that they could be removed from their positions, they became angry and directed their vengeance at him personally, as they considered that Sirajudin wanted to finish their political careers as local MPs. When he was cross-examining them pertaining to the allegations of corruption, he was threatened by one of them in the following menacing words:

You have made a big mistake since the prosecution process you are doing now has stopped me from being a legislator. How brave you are to deal with me! You will regret it when you know with whom you are dealing. It is because of you that I have lost my political career; all my political resources have gone. I swear ... I will take revenge for all I have lost, and you and your family will suffer the consequences. You'll bear the risk as you are prosecuting me ... You are humiliating me in the eyes of the public ... You have my words! (Quoted from Sirajudin's words, interview on 20 December 2008)

Since Sirajudin had the responsibility to prosecute those who were suspected of corruption, his life was in sorrow as he faced long dark days together with his family members. The threats he had received seemed to come true. At first, Sirajudin just had a fever and headache which he thought were not very serious, as those were very common illnesses for anyone. On other days, however, he contracted another sickness, bellyache, which was followed by half-paralyzed hands and legs, which lasted for days. His wife, Fatimah, suggested he must go to the doctor for medical treatment and he did so, but after a series of diagnoses the doctor could not find any symptom of sickness. It was unbelievable that scientific medical treatment could not examine the illness he had. Weirdly, he suffered very much pain and what was so strange was that the suffering and pain came out on certain occasions and these were very disturbing since he could not work properly. As Sirajudin thought that what happened to him was uncommon, he believed that somebody must have done *santet* (sorcery) to him. On how sorcery is applied, Geertz explains:

[...] *santet* is sometimes used for inducing foreign objects into the stomach of the victim, but, strictly speaking, it refers to the kind of sorcery in which the *dukun* must actually approach the victim and rub pepper grains (or something of the sort) against him while repeating a spell soundlessly in his mind. (Geertz 1960:108)

Believing that what Sirajudin had was *santet*, his superior, Megawangi, advised him to take an alternative treatment. He then visited the *orang pintar* or *dukun* (person who acquires spiritual or mystical knowledge), named Ki Agusman, in the city of Anugerah Alam (pseudonym) to obtain what is called ‘prophetic faith-healing’ (Ashforth 2001:214). Ki Agusman examined Sirajudin’s body with the use of spiritual envisioning, a sort of metaphysical method to detect what was going on inside the physical structure of the body; and he said that *santet* was being employed against Sirajudin by those who were very angry with him—the people who had deep feelings of hatred because Sirajudin had created problems for them. Ki Agusman then took Sirajudin into a private room for spiritual healing by carrying out a series of rituals to exorcize the devil spirits from his body. He laid Sirajudin down on the bed and then gently washed his face with salted water mixed with seven kinds of flowers. With the use of a small *keris* (Javanese knife, double-bladed dagger), Ki Agusman gently sliced the skin on both sides of Sirajudin’s temples, and by chanting some words of mantras silently during the process of spiritual treatment he then slowly pulled out some odd stuff from his head without any bleeding, unbelievably. Such treatment was, however, very painful and it was several days before the pain vanished. Certainly, Sirajudin was

so amazed by what the *dukun* found as things came out from his head one by one and all were some bizarre objects: a half-rusty nail, debris of multi-coloured glass, a piece of razor blade, a pine needle, a nut and bolt, and a small piece of steel. The healing process then moved on toward Sirajudin's stomach and again the same weird materials were found, and when collected all together they filled a bowl. Ki Agusman told Sirajudin that occult powers were actively working; and the strange stuffs were inserted into his body through a magical means located in his house. Whenever he felt not so well or became tired, those magical materials went through very easily into his body which caused weakness of physical resilience; and if he lost strength, then he fell ill. And that is the way in which the occult forces work everywhere.

Sadly *santet* also affected Sirajudin's wife, Fatimah, and it was even much worse and more dangerous than what he had, whereas the sickness he suffered had not gone yet. Without knowing the cause of the painful conditions in her body, Fatimah moaned with the unbearable illness in her head and stomach, just as Sirajudin had. Again, it was so strange as the severe pain and suffering showed up only at certain times, mostly in the evening until midnight. Deeply concerned by the ordeal, at first Sirajudin took his wife to hospital as he considered that medical treatment from the doctor might help at this time. But after being hospitalized for several weeks nothing had improved; medication for the strange illness did not make any difference. What made Sirajudin so distressed was that Fatimah's head grew bigger and bigger, doubled in size day by day and became flabby, resembling a water-laden balloon. As the medical treatment was hopeless, Sirajudin decided to come back to the same *orang pintar*, Ki Agusman, to obtain a spiritual remedy. As requested, the *dukun* did a spiritual healing upon Fatimah, exactly the same as he had done with Sirajudin before. Similarly, magical materials were found and pulled out from her head, while a small piece of rolled garment was taken from inside her stomach consisting of several strange items: a nail, a needle, a piece of razor blade, several seeds of rice, a doll, and a piece of paper with hand-written words:

I hate you very much. I will crush you along with your family members. I have made a contract with my witch to ravage you. If you don't want to become ill and dead, you must provide a ransom of Rp3,330,000. And if your witch finds and reads this note, I will drink his urine and eat his feces. (Quoted from Sirajudin's words, interview on 20 December 2008)

The *orang pintar* who performed the spiritual healing said that the witch of Sirajudin's opponent was continuously working by sending those magical materials one

after another, because he was bound by a contract to do *santet* upon Sirajudin and his wife. Ki Agusman mentioned that they (Sirajudin's opponent and his witch) had made an agreement to destroy and even kill him and Fatimah. In doing so, they had carried out a special ritual by sacrificing a buffalo head, which had been buried in the back yard of Sirajudin's house, since this was a required ritual to serve evil spirits.

After finishing the spiritual healing, Ki Agusman asked Sirajudin whether or not those magical items should be sent back to the senders. He agreed to send them back without the intention to hurt the senders, but it was just to let them know that the magic and witchcraft they employed against Sirajudin and Fatimah had been tackled. After all, Sirajudin hoped that he and his wife could recover from their odd illness and regain their health. And returning those magical objects to where they came from needed a special ritual, too; and Ki Agusman requested Sirajudin to provide the required amount of Rp3,330,000¹¹ (equal to \$330) which was put on the hearth along with all the magical items found on the bodies of Sirajudin and Fatimah. All the magical objects were enfolded in several leaves of betel vine and then wrapped up in a white garment. While the *dukun* carefully cast spells around the hearth and silently voiced mantras, he asked Sirajudin to help him by reciting the words of *shahadah*—Islamic witness of faith, which reads in Arabic لا إله إلا الله . محمد رسول الله : “There is no God but Allah Almighty and Muhammad is the messenger of Allah” and by blowing on the fireplace very strongly. After a few moments, the hearth opened and all those magical materials along with the money disappeared, evaporating with the blowing wind; they had been sent back to those who had done the witchcraft on Sirajudin and his wife. The pathways of spiritual healing were taken since they believed that the *orang pintar* had the capability of communicating with spirits that hold the ‘otherworld’, as Ashforth describes: “... traditional healers and prophets partake in aspects of the privacy by founding their authority and power upon particular and personal relations with spiritual beings ... they work through private communications with personal empowering spirits ...” (2001:218).

Nevertheless, at the inception Sirajudin basically did not believe that black magic could affect him, but his personal experience forced him to consider that sorcery and witchcraft could be used for various purposes. He was convinced that witchcraft assaults were employed against him as a result of his duties in investigating corruption

¹¹ The amounts of money required for ritual did not have any particular meaning; it was simply part of the offering.

which involved politicians serving as local legislators. The reason why he approached the *orang pintar* was because some of his friends suggested that the *santet* must be counteracted by another *santet* with equal or even greater magical powers in order to defeat it. Having agreed with these suggestions, he then asked the *orang pintar* for help to chase away all the devil spirits that attacked him and his wife. Sirajudin had made the decision as the best way to save the life of his wife in the fight against sorcery. His effort fits what Geertz has observed:

The only defense against sorcery is to get a better *dukun*, one whose spiritual strength is greater than that of the *dukun* one's enemy has employed against him. A struggle between *dukuns*, on a mystical plane of course, then takes place, and if one's *dukun* is indeed stronger than his adversary's, he will turn the latter's magic back upon him, and the enemy will fall ill with the disease he has wished on one. (Geertz 1960:107)

With the intention of obtaining a second opinion, Sirajudin and Fatimah looked for another *dukun* to find another spiritual therapy; and interestingly, the second *dukun* came up with the same mystical envisioning as the previous one had told them, assuring them that what they experienced was a kind of *santet*. From this mystical observation, the couple believed that black magic was being inflicted on them and that medical treatment was unable to detect such a disease because it was a man-made illness. The *dukun* then did a mystical examination of the bodies of Sirajudin and Fatimah by applying what is called the *prana* technique with the medium of a basin with clean water. He silently recited *mantra kramat* (sacred spells) while interchangeably touching the faces of the patients and putting his hands on the surface of the basin, and from there he took some magical objects: black maggots, worms, hairs, and small black stones. He said that somebody wanted to take the lives of both Sirajudin and Fatimah with the use of these magical objects. Therefore, they must be returned to where they initially came from. As suggested by the *dukun*, Sirajudin, together with his wife then floated them away on *Laut Kidul*¹² (the South Sea) in the city of Anugerah Alam, believing that those magical materials were originally taken from there.

Despite all the types of remedies they had taken, however, the man-made sickness remained there and a great deal of their plight was not over yet. Since the

¹² *Laut Kidul* has been a legendary place for centuries because of its mystical attractions as *Nyai Roro Kidul* resides. *Nyai Loro Kidul* is a legendary Indonesian goddess, known as the Queen of the Southern Sea of Java (Indian Ocean or Samudra Kidul) in Javanese and Sundanese mythology. Reflected the diverse stories of her origin in many sagas, legends, myths and traditional folklores, she is also the legendary consort of the Mataram Sultanate kings, beginning with Panembahan Senopati in the sixteenth century and continuing to the present day. In addition, *Laut Kidul* has become a favourite place for someone who is looking for fortune or rejecting misfortune by performing special meditation and ritual.

conditions did not improve, the couple continued to make other efforts to heal this inexplicable sickness they suffered. They went to a third *dukun* asking for another spiritual remedy. They even took the *dukun* to their house to observe the whole building and he said that there were plenty of magical materials roaming in the house. The *dukun* examined all the rooms one by one to unravel the mystery and to find magical objects. In Sirajudin's bedroom, he found a doll with a big head and palm-fibre hair similar to his wife's bloated head which was affected by witchcraft. Inexplicably, the doll's head was skewered by a rusty nail and its stomach contained all the magical items which were also found in Fatimah's swollen belly. Moreover, there was also a handful of soil which, according to the divine knowledge of the *dukun*, was taken from a cemetery. Those magical objects, particularly the soil, seemed to be mystical signs that the death of his wife would likely come very soon; and therefore the *dukun* suggested that they must be burned in order to secure his wife's body from any disease caused by occult rituals. Yet as a local proverb says, *malang tak bisa ditolak, untung tak bisa diraih* (misfortune cannot be averted, while fortune cannot be reached), Sirajudin could do nothing but accept the fact that he had such misfortune.



Figure 3.1: A *dukun* performs a ritual healing at a private home of a prosecutor (see photo hung on the wall) in Jakarta. With a white magic stick and a couple of sacred stone rings used as charms to combat evil, he chants spell with mantras to heal the prosecutor who has become sick through being affected by occult forces. (Photo by informant)

Certainly it was very sad, as misfortune eventually came to him and his family members who had been in such a long predicament due to occult powers. Although

every effort had been made and every method of treatments—medical, spiritual, mystical—had been taken to save the life of Fatimah, she finally died; and her death was assumed to be the result of witchcraft. In fact, containing an occult attack is believed to be highly dangerous because it might affect oneself and this is what exactly Ashforth has pointed out:

[...] those who would seek to counteract evil work must gain knowledge from access to 'higher' powers, beings such as ancestors or Holy Spirit who can penetrate the secrets of the witch's craft without compromising their own moral character and who can communicate this knowledge to human specialists in turn without compromising them. (Ashforth 2001:218)

Inevitably Sirajudin became convinced that his wife was bewitched and he believed that it was because he had begun to put on trial those politicians who were accused of corruption. The most distressing situation was the long suffering of Fatimah that led to her passing away, and Sirajudin was gloomy as he was unable to thwart the perceived death magic of his beloved wife. He was so desperate at such a predicament so that he emotionally lamented:

I almost lost hope so I protested to God questioning Him why I should suffer from this kind of ordeal, while I was in service to fight corruption. I questioned the justice of God as I thought that I had done such good things. But I must accept God's predestination upon me with all my heart and continue to live while avoiding any prejudice toward His intent. As a pious Muslim I should believe in my destiny. What people might perceive as such a bad thing could be a good thing in God's view, since people might not be able to capture the spiritual message behind a bad event. I must have a strong endurance in accepting this plight and my wife's ordeal. After deep reflection, which brought me to total self-abandonment to God's will, she passed away after suffering from a mysterious illness created by witchcraft. (Quoted from interview, 20 December 2008)

Indeed the dangers of witchcraft are evident, as many prosecutors were very often under serious threats when they were in service to perform official duties. Coincidentally, other senior prosecutors, Joko Pambudhi and Dian Megawangi, who were Sirajudin's superiors in the successive period of office between 2003-2005 and 2005-2007 had bitter experience of witchcraft assaults, although they did not receive the death magic as Sirajudin's wife did. Nonetheless, a great deal of occult actions occurred to those two state prosecutors when they took the lead to investigate corruption; and the abnormal sicknesses they had were also similar to those of Sirajudin and Fatimah. In this respect, those prosecutors put their own lives at risk when coping with corruption, so that it can be said that witchcraft is as dangerous as corruption in the sense that both can damage people's lives. The former creates people's suffering with the use of evil spirits, while the latter produces hardship for them by embezzling public wealth and

stealing economic resources as these are supposed to be allocated for citizens. Taking into account the parallels of witchcraft and corruption in terms of risk, Joko Pambudhi, who holds a high position at the AGO, shared his views:

For a prosecutor, fighting corruption can be dangerous for his own safety because corruptors will not let one bring them into court. They will take all measures necessary to prevent themselves from being put on trial, including the use of magic and witchcraft. When a friend of mine was prosecuting officials who committed corruption, he became mute and paralyzed. I myself contracted a bizarre illness for months; a rusty nail was inserted in my back which made me sick and caused unbearable pain. (Quoted from interview, 13 December 2008)

What has been discussed above clearly shows the paradoxes of witchcraft and corruption, as both represent the ambiguous relationship between “concealment and publicity and the hidden continuities between the illegal and the legal and the moral and the immoral” (Anders & Nuijten 2007:19). As a result, people seem to be morally ambivalent when they react to the social phenomena of witchcraft and corruption. In this sense, the issue of morality becomes the subject of contestation among those who are involved in witchcraft and corruption, since people maintain their own moral values and ethical basis.

▪ **Subjective experience of social activist(s): the case of Ahmad Ghulam**

In fact, sorcery attacks were not exclusively suffered by prosecutors. NGO activists also had a similar experience while they were involved in social activism against corruption. Here is the personal story of Ahmad Ghulam, a social activist associated with the Indonesia Corruption Watch (ICW), who once suffered witchcraft assaults which, he believed, were caused by his activities in the fight against corruption. Like other social activists in general, Ghulam is a typical young idealist NGO activist who has a great deal of concern about making Indonesian politics better in the sense that the country should be free from corruption. Such idealism has been for years very commonplace in public narratives brought up by social and political activists as they keenly expect democratic power and the democratically-elected national leaders and rulers to be committed to eradicating corruption while at the same time providing better social services for the people. After graduating from the State University of Jakarta, Ghulam decided to join the ICW in the early 2000s as he felt that the nature of the job seemed to suit the spirit of his social activism, concentrating on anti-corruption initiatives. Before taking up a position of vice chair of the agency, he served for several years as a coordinator of the division dealing with political corruption. His daily activities were (1)

to document and verify reports on corruption either given by citizens or obtained from other sources for further investigation, (2) to supervise and organize volunteers in public consultancy for promoting anti-corruption initiatives, (3) to assemble and reunite other NGO activists for social advocacy on anti-corruption movements, and (4) to examine and probe presumed corruption in public agencies, for prosecution processes by the authorities.

Ghulam shared his personal story saying that at the time of the witchcraft attacks he was scrutinizing a secret report on alleged corruption at PLN—*Perusahaan Listrik Negara* (the state-owned electric power company) totalling tens of billions of rupiah. He was responsible for ensuring the validity of the report before the ICW disclosed the case to the public. In order to probe the corruption allegations, Ghulam, together with several members of the ICW staff, collected ‘evidence’ from the ground by gathering adequate information and filing a large number of documents which were taken from various sources. All the ‘evidence’ gathered strongly corroborative of the alleged corruption scandals; and what he found was that there were indeed very strong indications of illicit practices at the state-owned electric power company which implicated its director general. With a set of dossiers in their hands, the ICW activists bravely unveiled the allegations of corruption scandals in a press conference attended by a large number of journalists in Jakarta. As the corruption scandals exploded and the media put them in the headlines for weeks, the Police were forced by the public to investigate them and some officials of the PLN were charged with corruption.

However, Ghulam was not so happy with the action taken by the Police who forcibly prosecuted those suspected of corruption; he asserted that, according to past experience, corruption cases were always political in the sense that there was a strong tendency to link up with political power so that those implicated in it often tried to obtain political protection from those holding power. In fact, the prosecution process of the PLN corruption scandals went nowhere and the case became blurred since a number of political elites were involved in it and they tried to intervene in the investigation process. Gossip and rumours abounded saying that it was because those suspected of corruption had a very close relation with power-holders and the ruling party that the juridical processes were then put on hold and eventually all charges were annulled, with some reasons given by the Police that there was not enough evidence for any further prosecution processes. It seems that through such activities the ICW had frequently created bitter social relations and political tensions because politicians and state officials

became irritated, which in turn put Ghulam and other activists at risk. Ghulam was deeply concerned about the risk, pointing out that:

Being social activist of anti-corruption is highly risky because we deal with those who hold state powers and dominate political resources. They can abuse such powers for anything to meet their own interests. With their powers they can jail activists who criticize rulers for political reasons; injure activists who reveal illicit activities of rulers through, for instance, a car crash; or suppress activists who oppose and rebuke the power regime. State violence is a common feature of political life as this approach was always used by the New Order regime. During that time many activists were kidnapped and disappeared; they went missing and have never been found. (Quoted from interview, 10 August 2009)

Within Indonesia, state violence became part of the political landscape of the New Order regime. This violence took the form of what came popularly to be known as *preman* (thug, gangster). These individuals were connected with elite politicians and affiliated with various social organizations led by influential political figures and military officers (Ryter 2005). The *preman* were very powerful since they were protected by military officers who provided them not only with immunity from prosecution and legal sanction, but also a variety of privileges related to economic and political resources. In fact, the *preman* maintained political significance, as Loren Ryter has rightly pointed out: “All the talk about *preman* politics supported the idea of a regime, a unified state whose power originated with Soeharto and extended like blood vessels through neat chains of command, and finally downward and outward through its *preman* capillaries.” State violence continues in the post-New Order era. The poisoning of a prominent human rights activist, Munir Thalib, while he was on board the Garuda Indonesia aircraft flying to Amsterdam on 7 September 2004, is a macabre example. This murder was believed to be politically driven as a result of Munir’s involvement in the disclosure of a series of human rights abuses committed by the military. Many political activists strongly believed that military intelligence officers were involved in the murder, as a secret document emerged in the public arena indicating that the authorities felt Munir was a dangerous activist and a serious threat to the military as a direct result of his political activities and relentless struggle for human rights. The document identified three strategies for taking the life of Munir: (1) by crushing him in a car/motorcycle accident, (2) by employing witchcraft against him, or (3) by poisoning him. Tragically, Munir, a high profile, passionate activist with a strong commitment to promoting democracy and human rights in the country, died from arsenic poisoning in mysterious circumstances on an international flight.

Actually such risk can also be in the form of magic and witchcraft attacks. Witchcraft itself can be conceived as a form of ‘state violence’, or a form of occult power which the powerful can mobilize to protect themselves from various threats that may destabilize the power establishment. Yet it should be noted here that while witchcraft can be used to produce an evil political battle and create state violence against one’s opponents, accusations of witchcraft are the way in which the powerless—as in the case of the prosecutor or the activist—seek to react to power, or rather, to the occult actions and spiritual attacks by the powerful. A number of studies in African and Asian countries (e.g. Geschiere 2001; Ashforth 2005; Siegel 2006; Herriman 2007) have shown that witchcraft can be manipulated for political interest in support of the state power and witchcraft violence is then very easily transformed into state violence. Moore & Sanders point out that “the oppressive nature of the state combined with corruption and the continuing impoverishment of populations raises questions about how wealth is produced through the exercise [of] illegitimate or illicit power” (2001:18) in which witchcraft is taken as a form of political action. These anthropologists have provided an understanding of the dynamics of social processes and political formation in which occult activities play a part within society, as they observe how people manage their fear of such evil forces as witchcraft and sorcery. They also examine the dynamics of insecurity in everyday life within society, by demonstrating how occult violence as a form of spiritual insecurity has become part of the establishment of the state power.

Given the kind of setting, it is not surprisingly if NGO activists often face occult violence when they are working on unveiling corruption scandals, given that their actions could threaten power-holders. And this is exactly the case of the ICW activist, Ghulam, who experienced this occult power. One day in June 2008, amidst the hectic schedules of daily activities, Ghulam asked permission from his colleagues at the office to go home early as he did not feel so well. At first he just felt fatigued so he decided to take a couple of days off and relax at home for a while; but a week later he contracted a very bad fever with a cold and cough. Despite having taken some medicines, the illness did not go away; rather, it became chronically worse day after day. In the weeks that followed, Ghulam sensed there was something wrong in his belly as it slowly inflated with severe pain, and his throat became inflamed, preventing him from speaking. As his health became worse, Ghulam’s parents took him to hospital for medication and a series of medical examinations were taken, such as checking his body temperature and blood pressure, testing urine and blood samples, and some other tests. While waiting for the

results, Ghulam thought that he would soon be hospitalized as he felt that his health conditions were worsening. Weirdly the results of the clinical checks showed that everything was fine, since all the important aspects of his body which had been tested were in good condition so that doctor simply advised him to take some more medicines and have more rest. Although Ghulam felt a very strong stomachache, he could do nothing but follow the advice of the doctor, who suggested he should take some medication at home. However, some very bad things unexpectedly happened. At night after returning home from hospital, the pain and suffering were unbearable and Ghulam vomited dark blood with *lugut* (itchy-bristles of bamboo) indicating that occult powers had affected him. Since medical treatment did not help at all, Kareem—Ghulam’s brother—then asked an *ahli hikmah* (person who acquires divine knowledge) whom he knew very well, named Abdul Gaffar, to heal Ghulam’s abnormal physical disorder through spiritual treatment. Having seen Ghulam’s physical health, Kareem believed that he was being attacked by somebody with the use of *teluh* (sorcery); he was in serious danger as black magic assaulted him and it must therefore be counteracted by supernatural powers. In Islamic spirituality, it is believed that the *ahli hikmah* who acquires *ilmu putih* (white magic) has the capacity to defeat *ilmu hitam* (black magic) because the person has the so-called *barakah*—a sort of divine favour or benediction given by Allah Almighty to a pious Muslim. Containing religious elements, white magic is usually practised for a person’s benefit to help them overcome man-made disease, so it is also known as public magic since it is beneficial for people. As Koentjaraningrat put it:

Public magic is often performed as a part of public religio-magical ceremonies [...]. Because productive magic generally has a benevolent character, it can be considered as what is called white magic ... which is usually performed for the benefit of a large group of people and for the community as a whole, and it may therefore also be called public magic. (Koentjaraningrat 1985:413)

In the context of practising white magic, *barakah* is central, and is generally conceived as a spiritual power, a blessing from God, which can be granted to certain people, places, or objects and is always seen as benevolent since its ultimate source is Allah Almighty—the One True God who possesses all the universe. On the acquirement of *barakah*, Muslims have no choice but to rely entirely on the grace of God, since “God makes his choice manifest through the possession by the elect of the crucial attributes of pacifism, inculcating generosity and hospitality, and prosperity” (Gellner [1981] 1995:121). Relying on the interpretations of Islamic tradition, Muslims think of

barakah as divine blessing, grace and mercy; protection from dangers and threats that affect the live of human societies; a charismatic quality for leadership that makes a leader more influential and authoritative; or a spiritual power to protect and cure. The *barakah* is transferable; if one gains this kind of spiritual power, he or she can pass it on to other people, places, and objects. It can also be inherited by other Muslims who meet the qualifications as seen in a high degree of what is called *saleh* (faithfulness, piety). Some Muslims even consider *barakah* as a mystical force which can be induced by ritual and manipulated for human benefit; they think a personal spiritual power based on a relationship with Allah Almighty can become an impersonal force and they can then use it for the benefit of human society (Lenning 1980; Gellner [1981] 1995). An interpretation of *barakah* is also given by John Esposito, who refers to it as:

Blessing conferred by God upon humankind. ... One of the most visible manifestations of *barakah* in popular Islam is the ability to perform miracles [and to produce spiritual favours] ... and *barakah* has long been viewed as hereditary. It may be associated with specific places, things, and acts, such as certain foods, animals, plants, events, words, and gestures. (Esposito 2003:37)

As requested, Abdul Gaffar performed a long-distance ritual healing—at that time he was far away from Jakarta—to contain the occult forces that assaulted Ghulam; and with the help of divine knowledge, he removed the evil spirits that were trying to crush Ghulam. The *ahli hikmah* also told Kareem that there were magical objects placed in a ditch in the alleyway close to his house through which Ghulam was affected by witchcraft as he passed through it every day when leaving and returning home. The magical items consisted of *gabah* (unhulled paddy separated from the stalks, rice seed), sea sand, itchy-bristles of bamboo, and dried blood. To neutralize the occult forces of these magical items, the alleyway and the surrounding areas of the house must be covered with salt. There is a cultural belief especially among Javanese people that salt can thwart demonic magic and counteract occult actions. A few days later, therefore, Abdul Gaffar visited Ghulam at home, bringing him some herbs and perfume—all these items had already been enchanted—and suggested that he, along with his family members, should bathe with water containing these substances in order for them to be able not only to ban occult attacks but also to repulse the evil powers. Taking a shower with the enchanted herbs and perfume was part of the ritual for healing and that was very important because the occult powers might affect whoever among the family members was in the weakest condition. As Ashforth has indicated, “witchcraft can refer to the malicious manipulation of the powers of herbs and other substances ... used for

healing medicines, to pacts with devils and demons, to innate supernatural powers, or to collective actions by persons engaging all of these forces” (2001:207), so one should take the same way to counteract the occult practices. This is why Abdul Gaffar suggested that Ghulam had to perform a ritual healing. The *ahli hikmah* said that Ghulam was indeed the target of the occult forces and they had been working for about a month and half; and that is why before he had a swollen belly, he also had a fever, cold and cough for days to camouflage the magic attacks. Ghulam believed that he was lucky to be saved from the sorcery assaults, since the magical materials sent by the witch were highly dangerous. Fortunately, he was strong enough to survive, given that the sorcery attacks were carried out by a witch with a very high level of black magic from East Java, which is well-known as one of the centres of witchcraft.

Ghulam believed that the sorcery attacks he suffered were connected with his activities in the battle against corruption; and that such a threat was not only in the form of occult forces but also that of physical violence. Certainly, anti-corruption social activists like Ghulam, associated with the ICW, often experienced threats of violent action, and became a target of criminalization. Moreover, it is believed that witchcraft assaults were part of the threats and carried out by those who were accused of corruption, since they did not want to be prosecuted by the authorities. Here, magic and witchcraft were used by the alleged corruptors as a sort of self-defence mechanism. In other words, those implicated in corruption would act at all costs to prevent the investigation process, as Ghulam put it:

Generally officials and politicians agree that corruption is dangerous for both the state and society and must be fought. They fervently state to the public that corruption is a serious threat to social life, but it is a fact that every single corruption scandal always involves state officials and politicians. If they are implicated in it, they talk ambivalently about corruption and even use any means to avoid a prosecution process—including black magic. So practising witchcraft is commonplace and sorcery is used so as to endanger those dealing with corruption. Witchcraft attacks are not just very dangerous for the victims – they can even take one’s life. (Quoted from interview, 10 August 2009)

Generally speaking, the uses of magic and witchcraft are closely tied to resentment and someone might take revenge by employing an irrational way, an occult action, as what happened to the couple Sirajudin and Fatimah and the ICW activist Ghulam. Their bewitchment seems to fit with James Ferguson’s observation: “It is easy to agree with the classic writers on the subject [witchcraft] that the apparently irrational, superstitious fear of bewitchment is not so irrational after all if we consider the way that imaginations of harm-doing are linked to all-too-real social hatreds and resentments” (1999:118). As

a result, it can be asserted that such bitter experiences as those of Sirajudin and Ghulam who suffered witchcraft attacks and even the demonic forces which were perceived to result in the death of Fatimah might threaten anyone who is engaging in efforts of corruption eradication in which magic and witchcraft become very common phenomena in social life. Sorcery may only be a subjective superstition, but it is socially efficacious. People may not believe in witchcraft, yet they feel it is better to protect themselves from it to avoid any danger. Thus, prosecutors and social activists feel they have to look after and protect themselves from the possibility of being attacked by magic and witchcraft.

3.3 Ways of Understanding Witchcraft and Corruption

As already discussed at length, the main nature of witchcraft is that it is always the subjective experience of an individual. Niehaus (2005) argues that subjective experience is linked and filtered through culturally specific modes of action and apprehension of lived reality, such as mysterious deaths, strange sicknesses, nightmares, auditory hallucinations, and others. Because witchcraft is part of the cultural imagination, personal experience can be interpreted through this 'filter' which attaches the idea of witchcraft to the felt reality of the individual. Moreover, the subjectivity of witchcraft refers to the fact that its activities and actions always take place in domestic areas. But to limit the fears of witchcraft among individuals, it must be brought into public space as James Siegel has suggested: "Witchcraft should be part of public life in order to defend against the fears that it brings" (2006:13). In this sense, witchcraft has an impact on public affairs; its impact on social life is seen in the two cases of prosecutors and social activist(s) who were engaged in public services and represented public interests. As prosecutors and anti-corruption social activists represent the public interest, attacking them with the use of black magic and other occult forces is perceived as disturbing public order and social stability within society. This is what Fisiy & Geschiere have also pointed out: "... witchcraft is shifted from a domestic affair to an offence against public order and tranquility" (2001:239).

In this context, witchcraft attacks experienced by prosecutors and social activists, as seen in the cases of Sirajudin and Ghulam, clearly represent a personal vendetta and retaliation. Both of them suffered sorcery assaults after they began to investigate corruption allegations involving officials and politicians who were the subjects of prosecution which could lead them to be imprisoned if found guilty. At this point, the officials and politicians were very angry with the prosecutors and NGO

activists who revealed corruption scandals which brought these officials and politicians into court and resulted in their being imprisoned. They lost their political career and position in public office, due to the prosecution processes, so they took revenge by applying witchcraft against those causing such problems in their lives. In those cases, hatred and anger seemed to be the primary motives for practising sorcery, although this remained undisclosed since only the politicians and officials themselves knew the motives. In support of these explanations, Adam Ashforth says:

Given the motive for witchcraft is secret, and considering the perpetrators have a strong incentive to conceal their motives, one way to determine the identity of the agent behind a particular act of witchcraft is to assess the possibility of particular persons possessing the motives of jealousy and hatred. There are two basic ways of doing this: first, to assess the distribution of jealousy across particular social roles and correlate it with access to other means of causing harm, most notably violence; and, second, to assess the possible motives of particular individuals by inference from other words and deeds. Broadly speaking, capacities for witchcraft and capacities for violence are typically perceived to be inversely related. (Ashforth 2001:216)

An alternative way of understanding witchcraft and corruption is by connecting the two with the increase of material worth and the enlargement of power. As is widely known, those implicated in corruption are mostly political and economic elites; and corruption is, in the end, about accumulating wealth and capital in order to gain and maintain power. Meanwhile, occult powers in the form of witchcraft and sorcery are often intended as a means to amass wealth, material worth, and all kinds of economic resources. All these things are attributed to social and political positions, symbolizing a high social status within society. In this respect, corruption shares some similarities with witchcraft, in the sense that both of them ‘are crucial for the operation of power’ and ‘they tend to be directed toward people who have suddenly and inexplicably increased their wealth or power’ (Anders & Nuijten 2007:19) which often results in allegations. That is why accusations of sorcery and corruption are commonly attributed to those who have a strong desire for power and wealth.

Following the same line of reasoning, Clough & Mitchell state: “Accusing somebody who appears to be over-accumulating—and is therefore guilty of excess—of entering into devil pacts, or of being a witch, is seen as a way of ensuring an equal distribution of resources and discouraging economic inequality. [...] Such accusations represent a positive acknowledgement of the power entailed in accumulation” (2001:2). Not surprisingly, people who are deeply obsessed with power and wealth are very often accused of having a strong tendency to rely on magic and witchcraft. In the context of

public discourse, people frequently talk about corruption and witchcraft with limited—or an absence of—proofs or hard facts. Here, the parallels of corruption and witchcraft can be seen in the fact that both lack empirical evidence so that what appears in public discourse on corruption and witchcraft is mostly in the form of accusations. As accusations of monstrous witchcraft rituals, devil worship, demonic powers are widespread, so are allegations of corruption, as they come to the centre of public narratives through rumours and gossip and both of them are conceived as a sort of ‘empirical evidence’ in support of the allegations. Thus Blundo writes:

[T]he empirical evidence of corruption and sorcery is constituted above all by a discourse that crystallizes around rumours rather than around facts that could be easily documented, [so that] one is led to question the nature of rumours (accusatory or justificatory) and what it is that they actually convey. Corruption, just as much as sorcery, functions in a system of circular beliefs that are private and feed themselves, and that can explain unhappiness, disgrace, the failure of an administrative step, and the loss of a case in court ... Corruption and witchcraft are thus mechanisms to interpret, explain, and attempt to manipulate the world. (Blundo 2007:31)

The accusations of witchcraft and corruption indicate that people seem to be in great doubt since they are unable to claim any empirical evidence in support of such allegations. Without evidence, such baseless accusations would easily lead to ambiguous attitudes, as people would be in contradictory positions in response to those practising sorcery and committing corruption.

3.4 Corruption and Moral Ambiguity

As social controversy always surrounds illicit deals, moral ambiguity seems to be the main characteristic of both corruption and witchcraft. While people denounce corruption as being the source of social difficulties and hardship for others, those who occupy public powers and are implicated in it, enrich themselves with public money, as Jordan Smith points out: “People frequently condemn corruption and its consequences as immoral and socially ruinous, yet they also participate in seemingly contradictory behaviour that enables, encourages, and even glorifies corruption” (2007:5). Likewise, people censure sorcery because it represents an uncivilized culture and creates social disorder, yet some of them practise magic and witchcraft as a way of avoiding misfortune, possessing power, and accumulating wealth. Interestingly, anthropologists have observed corruption and witchcraft in connection with social inequality within society, so public discourses on the subjects are always related to the issue of how wealth and public resources are not distributed equally among people. In other words,

some citizens do not share evenly the material worth belonging to the public as they have a right to do. Again, Jordan Smith raises his concern about the issues of witchcraft and corruption by arguing that witchcraft accusations seem to be a sort of critique of corruption in the sense that both are connected with and represent the moral ambivalence with regard to massive social inequality, as he writes: “Stories of evil rituals and occult practices in the pursuit of wealth point to tensions and ambivalence as people experience corruption ... that underlies structures of inequality in society” (2007:162).

Moral ambiguity is clearly shown in pro-contra responses to corruption within society. Although corruption is widely condemned by the public, there are some groups of people who support those committing corruption. Interestingly, moral support is given by spiritualists through a series of cultural rituals, as demonstrated by a well-known paranormal named Ki Sidharta. Such rituals for helping those who are charged with corruption are very commonplace, and are even done in public space. One day in November 2007, Ki Sidharta performed a cultural ritual (see figure 3.2) called *khadam ruh*—a typical ritual for purifying a person’s mind and heart so that she or he can do good things and behave with good manners.



Figure 3.2: An event of the *khadam ruh* ritual is conducted by a paranormal/spiritualist at a court in Jakarta to protect a corruptor who stands for trial, being charged with corruption. (Photo by detikfoto.com)

The ritual of *khadam ruh* took place in a special court for corruption in Jakarta and was carried out in support of Hasan Rais, *bupati* (district head) of Kutai Kertanegara, Kalimantan, who stood in the public court to answer corruption charges. The intention

of the *khadam ruh* ritual was to purify the minds and hearts of the judges who led the court session to prosecute Hasan Rais so that they would be able to make a just decision for him. For this ritual, Ki Sidharta used a white plate with words written in Arabic (which seemed to be a sort of talisman), an empty glass, a knife, a banana, white papers with words written in Arabic, and a cigarette. Helped by an assistant, Ki Sidharta began to light those white papers and throw them in the glass; and then the glass was put on the plate which was held by the assistant who sat in front of him (see figure 3.3). While chanting some mantras in Arabic, the paranormal placed the knife in the glass as smoke filled the small waiting room of the court. Ki Sidharta then took the cigarette, wrapped in tissues, and he connected the roll of tissues to the glass while continuing to chant sacred mantras. He repeatedly voiced the name of Hasan Rais, and suddenly from his mouth splattered blood into the glass several times; he then tried to pull out the knife but it seemed very hard to do so. A few minutes later he was successful, plucking the knife from the glass and then putting it on the plate. Ki Sidharta claimed that the ritual he did was Islamic and said that the blood coming out from his mouth was dirty, representing dirty hearts of the judges and political opponents of Hasan Rais who wanted to hurt him. Such a ritual was important to guide the judges and prosecutors so they would prevent themselves from having dirty intention and avoid false allegations of corruption toward Hasan Rais. Despite the *khadam ruh* ritual he carried out, Hasan Rais was in fact found guilty and given six years in prison. The verdict was based on valid evidence and so the judges were able to send him to jail.



Figure 3.3: A paranormal/spiritualist performs the ritual of *khadam ruh* at public court in Jakarta to protect a corrupt official who stands trial on charges of corruption. (Photo by detikfoto.com)

It can be said that a ritual to obtain help from a spiritualist who plays the role of a medium with the use of divine knowledge does not represent an exotic society which is often associated with pre-modern culture. Rather, it is a very common social phenomenon taking place in a contemporary society which is integrated into social, political, and economic systems in the modern era. Such rituals reflect a moral expression based on a person's perception of what may or may not be categorized as corruption, in the sense that the standards of morality may be different among different people since they have their own values in which they believe. Here, Mark Auslander states: "... ideologies of ritual agency, witchcraft, spirit mediumship, and divination ... are not archaic or exotic phenomenon—somehow isolated and disjointed [through the] historical processes of global political and economic transformation. Rather, these are moral discourses alive to the basic coordinates of experience, highly sensitive to contradiction to economy and society" (1993:168). In this sense, witchcraft can be used as an additional way in which power holders can impose their power; it seems to be a tool of the powerful, in addition to that of corruption, to gain and maintain power. In other words, they first commit corruption (at the material level) and then—if it is detected—they still have witchcraft (at the spiritual level) to try and avoid being prosecuted or losing their jobs.

3.5 Conclusion

The discussion of this chapter can be concluded by asserting that corruption has received wide public attention as it has become so pervasive and chronically ingrained within state agencies. It attracts the deep concern of people and is seen as a major source of the misfortune that affects them. Corruption has produced great controversies since it generates the pros and cons of various views especially when it is associated with those occupying public offices and holding state powers. This clearly shows society's moral ambiguity in response to corruption, since people respond differently to those committing corruption; they are often in limbo between condemnation and fascination. In the same vein, the way people react to witchcraft is similar as they are ambiguous between denunciation and commendation. Yet the social effect of witchcraft must be taken seriously especially in connection with corruption eradication. Those who engage in efforts to fight corruption frequently deal with occult powers, as in the case of

state prosecutors and social activists. The safety of their lives is under threat, as appears from the magic and sorcery assaults, because of their involvement in combating corruption. The occult powers experienced by prosecutors and activists have clearly demonstrated the dangers of magic and witchcraft in the fight against corruption. Here, therefore, paradoxical values are embedded in corruption, and in magic and sorcery.

The paradoxes of corruption and supernatural magic may be observed through the idea of modernity. Noticeably, magic is one of the major subjects of Weber's empirical studies in that it could be challenged by rationality—the main characteristic of modernity. In this regard, rationality is viewed as opposed to enchantment and the enchanted world is indicated by the primacy of magic and the supernatural. Therefore, to be rational means one needs to move away from these circumstances and should not rely on magical and occult forces. Weber argues that modernity rests on the rationalization process of human life and it must be placed at the centre of an individual's behaviour. The rationalization will eventually lead to demystification as rational action replaces myth, mystic, and magic—all of them representing traditional values. At this point, Weber suggests that rationalization requires one to do what he calls 'disenchantment'. This term refers to the prevalence of rational thinking and scientific knowledge, indicating that the beliefs of mystical authority and magical power may fade away as human rationalism and intellectualism take over (Weber 1946). In this respect, one way to contextualize the idea of rationality is through a modern organization, in order to carry out rational action. Weber indicates that rationality may take the form of bureaucratic institutions that are based on rational-legal legitimation. This is exactly the agenda of Indonesian civil society in regard to the ideas and practices of anti-corruption, as will be discussed in the next part of the thesis. Indonesian civil society views corruption as being against the basic principles of rational bureaucratic institutions in the context of public governance.

Although corruption has created great controversy, some groups in Indonesian society hold the view that it cannot be tolerated for any reason. Yet those who respond to corruption with ambiguity usually maintain some kind of interest in power or are associated with some sort of patronage relationships with officials or parties involved in it. However, other groups of Indonesian people strongly reject any views that tolerate or accept corruption. Instead, they firmly consider that corruption is dangerous for the state and society as it greatly impacts on the low quality of people's life and affects public affairs. That is why public criticism against corruption, bringing it into the spotlight, is

mostly pioneered by religious-Islamic organizations, civil society institutions, NGOs, media agencies, popular cultures, and others. They ground their criticism against corruption on both Islamic ethics and secular values, because they believe that corruption is undoubtedly against any morality, whether religious or secular. For this reason, the following three chapters will address these issues by examining the ideas and practices of anti-corruption as promoted by civil society associations, both religious and secular.

Chapter 4

RELIGIOUS ACTIVISM IN THE FIGHT AGAINST CORRUPTION

The main purpose of this chapter is to discuss activism against corruption with reference to religious movements. It aims to show that religious groups speak firmly and without ambiguity, against corruption, asserting that it breaches religious values. This chapter therefore seeks to explain the role of religious activism in the battle against corruption by addressing the issues of morality and ethics derived from Islamic doctrines, as they are utilized as the basis for activism. I will discuss the Islamic roots of corruption discourses by focusing on Islamic ideas that drive anti-corruption movements and by looking at theological doctrines used as the main sources for anti-corruption reform. In discussing this, I will examine Muslim organizations, as they have a strong commitment to supporting collective efforts to eradicate corruption by taking part in anti-corruption initiatives. This chapter will show how Indonesian Muslim society has become involved in social activism against corruption and contributes, from the perspective of Islamic practices and teachings, to flourishing public narratives on corruption.

4.1 Nahdhatul Ulama and Muhammadiyah: Representation of Indonesian 'Civil Islam'

This part explores an introductory account of Indonesian Islam and the two most influential Muslim organizations, as they play a key part in public life and Indonesian politics. Much scholarly research has illustrated that Indonesia is the world's largest Muslim nation. Historically, Islam first came to the country through a pacific route, as it was brought by Muslim traders and travellers from the Arabian peninsula and from Gujarat on the Indian subcontinent as early as the thirteenth century (e.g. Reid 1993; Ricklefs [1981] 2001; Azra 2004). Interestingly, Indonesian Islam has some unique characteristics that are different from those of the Middle East and South Asia, since it has adapted to local cultures and indigenous values that are not necessarily Islamic. Even Islam in Java appeared to be syncretic, as Clifford Geertz (1960) decades ago described this version of Islam as *abangan* (nominal, less strict Muslims) in contrast to *santri*—pious Muslims who practise a more orthodox version of Islam. The *abangan* are Javanese Muslims who are more inclined to follow a local system of beliefs called *adat* (local customs) than Islamic *shari'a*; and their belief systems combine Hinduism,

Buddhism and Animist traditions as these were the major religious faiths in the old Javanese kingdoms. Many historians and anthropologists (e.g. Pigeaud 1960; Geertz 1960; Pigeaud & de Graaf 1976; Koentjaraningrat 1985; Woodward 1989; Beatty 2003) have explained that pre-Islamic Java was dominated by those religions and local beliefs which significantly influenced how Islam appears in modern times. In fact, Indonesian Islam is so colourful with its various cultural values and is highly diverse, characterized by “mutual influences of normative Islamic piety, Javanese mysticism, Hinduism, Buddhism, and folk tradition upon each other” (Beatty 2003:1).

Whereas *abangan* is attributed to religious syncretism, *santri* is ascribed to Islamic reform, which is mostly associated with the Muhammadiyah and the Nahdhatul Ulama (NU), although both represent different streams of Indonesian Islam. Generally the first often claims to be modern, progressive and more reformist, as it has become the major proponent of modernist Muslim movements (e.g. Noer 1973; Nakamura 1976; Peacock 1978), while the second is usually called traditionalist and conservative (e.g. Barton & Fealy 1996; Feillard 1997; Bush 2009). Nevertheless, such distinctions are merely in the ways of practising Islam, not in theological doctrine. The former is more puritan by strictly following the Qur’anic texts and the Hadith of the Prophet Muhammad, while the latter is more adaptive to cultural rituals, adopting the so-called *bid’ah* (innovations) which do not necessarily fit in with Islamic norms and values. Yet both are very similar in the ways in which they deal with the issue of corruption, and even work in cooperation, functioning as critical elements in anti-corruption initiatives. Becoming the home to *santri* Muslims, they appear to be the two largest and most influential Islamic organizations in the country, with an important role to play on the national stage. The NU is the largest Islamic institution, and was first established on 31 January 1926, in the city of Surabaya, East Java, with an estimated 35 million members. It is devoted to providing social and economic services, covering Islamic education (*pesantren*, *madrasah*), orphanages, Islamic banking and micro-finance credit units. Claiming not to be a political organization, the NU still has political significance as it plays a critical role in the country’s politics, as seen in the ascendancy of Abdurrahman Wahid, the former leader of the NU, into power, becoming in 1999 the fourth president of the Republic of Indonesia. Despite this claim, the NU is usually linked to two major Islamic parties: the National Awakening Party and the United Development Party. In fact, the NU members have traditionally become the primary constituents for them in the modern history of Indonesian politics.

Meanwhile, the Muhammadiyah is the second largest Muslim institution, and was established on 18 November 1912, in the city of Yogyakarta with an estimated 25 million members. The vast majority of its members are well-educated people who work with government bureaucracies or become entrepreneurs and merchants. The Muhammadiyah has for many years been devoted to carrying out economic, social and educational activities by running banks, clinics, hospitals, schools and universities scattered across the country. Although its leaders and members are often involved in shaping the politics of the nation, the Muhammadiyah is by nature not a political party. Yet it inevitably plays an important part in Indonesian politics, as seen in many of its elites who occupy strategic political positions in the state structures. One of them is Amien Rais, the former leader of the Muhammadiyah, who served as head of the MPR (the People's Consultative Assembly) from 1999 to 2004. Although the Muhammadiyah claims not to be a political party, it has had a very close association with a Muslim-based party called the National Mandate Party from the time when that party was founded by Amien Rais—along with other political activists of the *reformasi* movement—in 1998 and then headed by him until 2005. Not surprisingly, the Muhammadiyah members are the major constituents of the National Mandate Party. Still, many of them are also linked with an Islamic party called the Prosperous Justice Party and a nationalist party called the Golkar Party, as some elites of the two parties were leaders and activists of this Islamic organization.

As religious institutions, the NU and the Muhammadiyah are key civil society agencies which obtained political significance in the process of democratization in Indonesia (e.g. Nakamura, Siddique & Bajunid 2001; Bruinessen 2004; Bush 2009). A number of studies have shown that educated middle class groups of Indonesian Muslims have greatly contributed to promoting political transformation and democratic government, which allow the people to participate in public life and open up much wider opportunities for citizens to become involved in politics and public governance (e.g. Hefner 1993 & 2000; Porter 2002). As the system of democracy was established in the country in 1999, the NU and the Muhammadiyah appear to be the major proponents of Islamic civil society that encourage the public to take part in social and political processes. Hence strengthening civic associations among Islamic institutions is important, so public participation becomes more effective. In this respect, the NU and the Muhammadiyah represent what the American anthropologist Robert Hefner (2000)

has termed ‘civil Islam’, explaining that Indonesian Muslims are eager to partake in public governance within a democratic framework while repudiating the aspiration of an Islamic state; instead, Islam is presented as part of ‘public culture.’ Presenting Islam as public culture “depends on mediating institutions in which citizens develop habits of free speech, participation, and toleration. In all this, there is nothing undemocratic about Muslim voluntary associations ... playing a role in the public life of civil society as well as in personal ethics” (Hefner 2000:13). Having a shared agenda of promoting democratic governance, the Indonesian Muslims consider the importance of check-and-balance relations between the state and civil society including civil Islam associations.

Certainly the democratic system has provided Indonesian civil society organizations with a much greater chance to participate in public affairs. Benefiting from the era of openness within the democratic system, the Muhammadiyah and the NU have attempted to maximize their role in public life by being involved in social and political processes. With the force of religion, they take part in social movements to fight corruption, showing that they share the concerns about corruption in the country.

4.2 Muslim Organizations and Social Movements against Corruption

This section describes the involvement of Islamic organizations in the anti-corruption movement, focusing on the NU and the Muhammadiyah. As religious institutions, they have been engaging in social activities related to the empowerment of the Muslim communities and the monitoring of public governance becoming a social control for the state government. As corruption has become a critical problem in the country, the two Muslim organizations are directly concerned with illicit practices within state agencies, so they are forced to become involved in social movements to battle corruption. Yet the involvement of the NU and the Muhammadiyah in social movements against corruption is a relatively new phenomenon, since their major activities are mainly related to the provision of social services for the improvement of *ummah* (Arabic: أمة, Muslim community) by focusing more on *da’wah Islamiyah* (Arabic: الدعوة الإسلامية, proselytizing for Islam). However, they feel that there is a need for them to engage in anti-corruption initiatives, as they consider that participating in the battle against corruption is a form of moral duty. This is to show that they are cognizant of public issues in the country and concerned with social problems within society. Both of them wanted to demonstrate what Salvatore & Eickelman (2006) call ‘public Islam’ with the

intention of achieving ‘the common good’. The term ‘public Islam’ refers to “the highly diverse invocations and struggles of Islam as ideas and practices that religious scholars, self-ascribed religious authorities, Muslim intellectuals, Sufi orders, and some others make to civic debate and public life” (p. xii). By presenting public Islam, these religious organizations attempt to articulate Islamic ideas concerning public life, so they develop an active engagement with social realities in society by connecting between Islam and the problem of social life. Public Islam then becomes “a way of envisioning alternative political and religious ideas and realities, reconfiguring established boundaries of civil and social life” (p. xii).

The NU and the Muhammadiyah have asserted that Islam strongly rejects any sort of illegal deals committed by those who occupy public office and hold state powers. Both of these Islamic institutions have demonstrated a strong commitment to strengthening anti-corruption movements by engaging in various kinds of public campaigns against corruption. Expressing public anxiety about the severe problem of corruption, the leaders of the NU and the Muhammadiyah took the initiative to encourage the Indonesian Muslim communities, along with other civil society groups, to partake in social movements in fighting corruption. Working in cooperation with a non-state agency called the Partnership for Governance Reform, on 15 October 2003, in Jakarta, they declared the ‘National Movement on Anti-Corruption’ to launch the anti-corruption reform. They signed an agreement, a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), asserting that they would work together with other civil society institutions to combat corruption. As explained by Ahmad Syafi’i Ma’arif, the chairperson of the Muhammadiyah, this cooperation must be seen as a moral force in order to strengthen the spirit of anti-corruption movements in the country. He stated:

It will be more of a moral movement. Yet, at least, through this movement we can inject more boldness and courage into government officials in charge of handling corruption cases. We have witnessed so far that what the Nahdhatul Ulama and the Muhammadiyah have done in the fight against corruption has been echoed in some ways. (Quoted from public discussion in Jakarta)

On the other hand, Hasyim Muzadi, chairman of the NU, stated that the whole nation has for a long time been unhappy with the fact that corruption is so pervasive across the country while efforts to eliminate it seem to be very difficult because many public officials and state apparatuses are untruthful. At this point, the main objective of the cooperation between the Muhammadiyah and the NU was to encourage people to be optimistic about what they call *perjuangan besar* (great struggle) to combat corruption,

although there are many obstacles and resistances to it. Expressing a deep regret about the ingrained corruption, Muzadi lamented:

The prevalence of corruption is beyond anyone's imagination, as it has become entrenched in most of the state bodies. In spite of the claim that we are devout Muslims within a religious community, corruption is rampant and our nation is called one of the most corrupt countries. If we are good Muslims, then why do we commit corruption? It is time for all Muslims and religious organizations to march shoulder to shoulder in combating corruption in the country. (Quoted from public discussion in Jakarta)

Indeed, Indonesian people feel frustrated with such extensive corruption and they rely largely on non-state agencies, including religious institutions like the Muhammadiyah and the NU, to support anti-corruption reform, since they seem to be sceptical of the government's ability to cope with it. In the case of Muhammadiyah, anti-corruption movements became much more intense under the leadership of Din Syamsuddin, who took the top position of the organization in 2004. UCLA-educated, Din Syamsuddin is an Islamic political scientist who has been lecturing at the Syarif Hidayatullah State Islamic University, Jakarta, for more than twenty years. He is one of the most prominent Muslim leaders who has both intellectual and political credentials, as he was previously a high profile politician associated with the Golkar Party—the New Order's ruling party. As an intellectual-cum-activist, Din Syamsuddin has been most active and vocal in articulating public criticism against corruption and advocating good governance. Having been trained in a *santri* Muslim institution, *Pondok Modern Gontor* in East Java, and having gained a secular education in America, Din Syamsuddin has acquired knowledge of both Islam and modern-secular social sciences, which allows him to speak out eloquently about corruption. As such, his knowledge and skills help him propagate public narratives of (anti)-corruption with the combined use of an Islamic perspective and a secular approach. Criticizing corruption as the main source of weakening the state government, Syamsuddin mentioned:

Corruption, collusion and nepotism have been widespread for years, and we all see that the three have become *umm al-qadhat* (Arabic: أمّ القيوين, mother of all grave problems), severely damaging public morality and weakening the government system. Through the *da'wah* movement we have to be in the forefront to stand up and combat corruption. (Quoted from a Friday sermon in Jakarta)

As corruption has become an acute problem, Din Syamsuddin pointed out that in Islamic teachings, fighting against it is considered to be a sort of *jihad* (Arabic: جهاد, a holy struggle for the sake of Allah). The term actually has a very broad meaning, ranging from military battle to a spiritual fight against any human disposition or

tendency considered as running counter to the will of God (e.g. Rahman 1989; Esposito 2003; Esack 2007). Conceiving the fight against corruption to be part of *jihad*, Din Syamsuddin explained:

Jihad against corruption is part of the spread of *da'wah Islamiyah* (Islamic preaching) through *amr bil ma'ruf wa nahy an al-munkar* (Arabic: الأمر بالمعروف والنهي عن المنكر—to ordain the good and prohibit the evil). This reflects strong commitment to creating a good social system and promoting a good society and the state as well. Corruption must be treated as a common enemy because it has resulted in social inequality and economic discrepancy among the Indonesian people. Indeed, the incidence of poverty, hardship and suffering are largely as a result of uncontrolled corruption; and therefore it must be set as the main target against which the whole nation should fight through *jihad*. (Quoted from a Friday sermon at a mosque in Jakarta)

At this point, Din Syamsuddin seems to suggest that Muslims should move away from understanding *jihad* based on the classical meaning, which is about waging war through military struggle, by offering an alternative interpretation of the term. Instead, it must be conceived as a social struggle or social fight, contextualized within the actual problems in society that need to be addressed by every effort. Following this line of argument, it is indeed logical if Muslims include the fight against corruption as part of *jihad* as well.

The social movement against corruption initiated by Muslim organizations has continued since the declaration; they have intensified public campaigns against corruption with the use of various measures. The commonest forms of public criticism are social protest and political rally, which are often organized by social activists associated with various civil society agencies including the Muhammadiyah and the NU. This is why the Anti-corruption Day is commemorated by orchestrating public protest; the Muhammadiyah took the lead to arrange a political rally in commemoration of the Anti-corruption day on 9 December 2009. At the central office of Executive Board of the Muhammadiyah in Jakarta, a few days before the event, cross-social background activists gathered for a meeting to prepare for a series of huge mass demonstrations in the capital. The meeting was held to check everything: logistics, vehicles, loudspeakers, flags, flyers, banners, supplies, etc. which were needed to support the planned public protest. The D-day of the event came; thousands of people flooded onto the main streets of Jakarta in a peaceful rally. Departing from a number of different places and meeting points in the city, the protesters reached Monas (the National Monument)—just on the doorstep of the Merdeka Palace—where the rally took place. The very large crowds swamped Monas to show a public spirit of anti-corruption through rally speeches, posters, and theatrical acts. Although the Muhammadiyah was

in the forefront of organizing the public rally, the masses participating in it came from various civil society associations including both Muslim and non-Muslim student associations. They were the Muhammadiyah Students Union (IMM), the Muslim Students Association (HMI), the Indonesian Muslim Students Movement (PMII), and the Indonesian Muslim Students Action Association (KAMMI). Other religious-nationalist activists also took part in the rally including the Indonesian Catholic Students Association (PMKRI), the Indonesian Buddhist Students Union (HIKMAH-BUDDHIS), the Indonesian Nationalist Students Movement (GMNI), and others.

Public protest became fiery with the breaking out of a gigantic scandal of government bailout amounting to 6.7 trillion rupiah (US\$715 million) for a small bank called Bank Century. Inevitably, the scandal attracted a great deal of public attention, which instigated a political tumult lasting for several months as politicians, parties and pressure groups voiced their suspicions that the bailout was illegitimate and that some amounts of the money were allegedly embezzled by some groups for political purposes. The parliament was then forced by the public to investigate the scandal by conducting an inquiry into allegations that the bailout had benefited President Yudhoyono's re-election and his party victory in the parliamentary election and presidential race in April and July 2009 respectively. The public media widely reported that after the bailout many of the bank's wealthy clients allegedly donated money to the president's campaign team. The allegations of misconduct were levelled at the two officials in charge of handling the bailout: the Finance Minister, Sri Mulyani Indrawati and the Governor of Bank Indonesia, the then Vice President Boediono. However, they denied any wrongdoing and President Yudhoyono said that the allegations were all part of a big political manoeuvre by his political enemies to topple him. In fact, the protesters raised the bailout scandal to be the main theme of the anti-corruption rally, as appeared in the huge banner of the protest. With a white backdrop on the right side of the stage, the demonstrators—led by Arip Mutopha, chair of the Muslim Students Association—all together recited '*Piagam Indonesia Bersih 2009*' (The Charter for Clean Indonesia).

The charter consists of five public concerns about the issues of corruption. First, Indonesia must be clean from corruption, not only speeches of anti-corruption [by the president]. Second, the state agencies should be clean from corruptors as they are a betrayal of the people's mandate. Third, Indonesia should be clean from the corruptors of Bank Century. Fourth, Indonesia must be clean from a conspiracy to weaken the KPK (the Commission of Corruption Eradication) and the law enforcement bodies.

Fifth, corruption eradication should start from the Presidential Palace, and the president and other state officials should declare their wealth properly and in a transparent manner (see figure 4.1).



Figure 4.1: The commemoration of the 2009 anti-corruption day was jointly arranged by social and religious organizations under the name of Gerakan Indonesia Bersih (GIB, Movement for Clean Indonesia) in which the Muhammadiyah took the lead, as chairperson of the organization, Din Syamsuddin, became the central figure in it.

At the time of the political rally, expressing their collective anger protesters burned pictures of Vice President Boediono and Finance Minister Sri Mulyani Indrawati, while the other demonstrators presented various theatrical shows. Among other images was one from the theatrical act (see figure 4.2) performed by activists of the Muhammadiyah Students Union (IMM) which depicted Boediono and Sri Mulyani Indrawati¹³ as vampires, symbolizing that they were sucking the blood of the people. The demonstrators also brought a coffin covered by a white cloth with the word *koruptor* (corruptor) written on it, while four protesters wrapped in bloody bandages sat in front of the casket. That was a satirical expression of public criticism over corruption, and the theatrical act had a very harsh message that all corruptors must be sent for burial because they had caused the country's economic difficulties and created the social plight

¹³ A number of sources to whom I spoke stated that they believed neither Boediono and Sri Mulyani Indrawati had committed corruption; nor did they misuse their power to enrich themselves, their relatives, or their cliques. However, the bailout policy they introduced had in fact been abused by other people for illegitimate political activities. After four months of investigation, the House concluded that the bailout was against the law as there were many irregularities and unaccountable spending of the funds. Therefore, the lawmakers forced the authorities—the Police, the AGO, and the KPK—to take legal action against those who were responsible. Nevertheless, the bailout scandal of Bank Century is still blurred and to this day it has not ended.

among the Indonesian people. As the people were deeply disappointed by the entrenched corruption within state agencies, the public outrage illustrated by those protesters seemed to be reasonable. Certainly, a theatrical act of that kind was an expression of public resentment and abhorrence toward corrupt officials.

In fact, the issue of corruption has united all elements of Indonesian society since they consider it as the common enemy against which they should fight collectively. Here, both religious institutions and secular NGO agencies have been working collaboratively in battling corruption through, among other means, social protest. However, since social protest often contains individual political interests among the parties involved, religious and secular NGO activists at some point might disagree about the political agenda. If this is the case, they will go their own ways. In other words, they will work together for as long as they are in agreement or not in conflicting political interest with one another. This kind of relation is called conditional cooperation between secular NGOs and religious institutions. However, generally speaking they are very supportive of each other through activities such as social advocacy, workshop, or training related to public governance.



Figure 4.2: Activists of the Muhammadiyah Students Union (IMM) take part in a public rally commemorating World Anti-corruption Day on 9 December 2009 in Jakarta

However, more broadly, I argue that the role of religious organizations in the public criticism of corruption is obviously crucial, as they have become the critical elements of civil society associations which effectively articulate the heartfelt voice of the people (*suara hati rakyat*). This is not only because they drew larger numbers of the masses during the social protest, but also because those religious institutions have acted

as moral guardians for the public. They have shown that religious ethics should not be kept in the private domain; rather, they must be transformed into social space, becoming public ethics. Therefore, it is necessary to take into consideration the importance of religious morality in public affairs.

4.3 Religious Morality as the Basis for Anti-Corruption Movement

This section addresses the issue of morality in the context of public governance and the anti-corruption movement that appeared in public criticism during the social protest. At the time of the social protest, the chairman of the Muhammadiyah, Din Syamsuddin, criticized the state government, as many politicians and state officials involved in corruption scandals have not been brought to justice. He spoke urgently of how those political elites and national leaders had a mental illness, known as ‘moral illiteracy’ (*buta aksara moral*), which can be more dangerous than ‘conventional illiteracy’ (*buta aksara biasa*). In fact, Din Syamsuddin has been a fierce critic of President Yudhoyono who in his view—which the public seem to share—has not made serious efforts to eliminate corruption during his period of office. Having held the office for six years, he simply used words and promised that he was committed to combating corruption very seriously, but the public seem to be doubtful because some evidence shows the reverse. Din Syamsuddin accused the Yudhoyono government of applying double standards in fighting corruption and of doing what is called *tebang pilih* (literally, cutting down selectively—an idiom used to describe the unfairness of the way the authorities impose the law). A number of examples were then exposed. State officials and legislators committing corruption and associated with the President Yudhoyono’s Democrat Party have not yet been brought into court, including the lawmaker Johny Allen Marbun who is serving as Vice Chair of the Democratic Party, some governors and mayors, and the district heads of some local governments.¹⁴

Having mentioned those facts, Din Syamsuddin urged the public to force the law enforcement bodies to combat corruption from the Presidential Palace downwards. He spoke allegorically, quoting a popular proverb, ‘If someone needs to clean the floor of a

¹⁴ According to the Indonesia Corruption Watch (ICW)’s reports (2010), which have recently been disclosed, tens of public officials and politicians both at central and local levels of the state government have been named as being suspected of corruption by the Attorney General’s Office. However, the AGO seems to be facing some obstructions to prosecuting them, since President Yudhoyono has not yet issued a ‘letter of permit’ which allows the authority to take them into court. Moreover, most of the public officials and politicians are Democrats; some critics have since accused the Democratic Party of being the ‘bunker of corruptors.’

house, they shouldn't use a dirty broom; otherwise, the floor will get much dirtier.' He also quoted another aphorism, saying 'If someone needs to paint wall of a house, they should start painting from the top and then go downwards, not the other way around; otherwise, the bottom of the wall will get dirty as the paint drips onto it.' Indeed, these sayings have become moral wisdom for Indonesian society, and frequently appear in public narratives of (anti)-corruption to show the importance of having trusted leaders with high standards of morality and integrity, since these are central to political leadership. The Islamic concept of leadership suggests that all leaders should have moral qualities, two of which are *al-amin* (trustworthy) and *as-shiddiq* (truthful) as these are attributed to the Prophet Muhammad. These qualities are essential in showing that leaders are entrusted with governing public affairs in a truthful manner (see e.g. Lings 1983; Beekun & Badawi 1999; Adair 2010). In this context, Beekun & Badawi (1999:vii) wrote: "Leadership in Islam is a trust. Often, it takes the form of an explicit contract or pledge between a leader and his followers that he will try his best to guide them, to protect them and to treat them fairly and with justice." These views are of course derived from the Qur'anic concept of *amanah* (responsibility) which is clearly presented on surah An-Nisa [chapter 4] verse 58: "Verily! Allah commands that you [people] should render back the trusts (*al-amanah*, الامانه) to those to whom they are due; and that when you judge between men, you judge with justice. Verily, how excellent is the teaching which He (Allah) gives you! Truly, Allah is Ever the All-Hearer and All-Seer."

On the other hand, President Yudhoyono responded very sensitively to the public rally during the commemoration of the Anti-corruption Day. Although he expressed his respect for any efforts to campaign against corruption, he indicated that the rally was not purely a moral movement. Instead, he alleged it was a sort of political ploy in the sense that the social and political activists who organized the social movement had political plans to subvert the state power. He accused his political opponents of having a hidden agenda behind the anti-corruption movement, saying that they had camouflaged their political motives by arranging a public rally to commemorate the Anti-corruption Day. He believed that the public protest was partly aimed at destabilizing his government. By mobilizing thousands of protesters, he claimed, his political opponents wanted to perpetrate a social riot leading to political upheaval, and then they would take over power. President Yudhoyono addressed this issue at the Presidential Palace, saying:

We all are very displeased with the fact that corruption has been so far-reaching and the government is relentlessly fighting it with any measures available. As the president, I myself will deliberately lead the combat against corruption, since it has obstructed our collective efforts to bring prosperity for the people. I value all kinds of public campaigns against corruption initiated by civil society groups, but a political rally to commemorate the Anti-corruption Day seems to be different. The state intelligence sources have told me that it would not be a purely moral movement of anti-corruption. Rather, it might have the political intent to create instability in the government. And my logic says these political movements want to discredit, shake and topple me in the short term. (Quoted from *Metrotv*'s Breaking News Programme)

President Yudhoyono's statements illustrate how anti-corruption movements have become a political theatre for moral and power contestations between the state and civil society which seem to be typical of social, political and religious activism. Here, the moral movement for anti-corruption has politically threatened the power establishment of the incumbent. Thus, the importance of the political rally was to show publicly the power of civic groups in criticizing the misuse of public powers that have resulted in corruption and other illicit practices. As always, the public rally was utilized as a medium for contesting power, as the state—represented by President Yudhoyono himself—was challenged by some groups of joint social activists associated with religious organizations and other civil society institutions in the struggle over political influence within the public sphere in relation to the corruption problem. On the issue of power domination between the two, Ernest Gellner writes:

[...] civil society is that set of diverse non-governmental institutions which is strong enough to counterbalance the state and, while not preventing the state from fulfilling its role of keeper of the peace and arbitrator between major interests, can nevertheless prevent it from dominating and atomizing the rest of society. (Gellner 1994:5)



Figure 4.3: A mocking caricature appeared in the *Jakarta Post* daily on 8 December 2009, illustrating how President Yudhoyono was in great fear of the political rally commemorating the anti-corruption day, as he accused the protesters of attempting to seize his power.

With regard to religious activism against corruption, I ground my argument in the concept of ‘public religion’ (Casanova 1994). With reference to this concept, I argue that religious-based anti-corruption movements show how religious leaders make use of the teachings of a religion to be a moral force for controlling public behaviour. The idea of public religion relies on the need for connecting religion with public affairs. Rather than keeping religion merely as an individual’s personal business, one should look at its social effects in public life, as Casanova points out: “The unexpected public interest derived from the fact that religion, leaving its assigned place in the private sphere, had thrust itself into the public arena of moral and political contestation” (1994:3). In this respect, it seems that the religious leaders feel strongly that religion should not be contained within the private sphere. Such discursive interpretation leads to the process of ‘the “deprivatization” of religion’ (Casanova 1994), showing that religious practices in everyday private life are transformed into social and political space. This is because “in the modern world religion often defines cultural identity, [so that] it is often difficult to sustain a simple and neat division between the public and the private” (Turner 2010:12). In line with this argument, the involvement of religious institutions in anti-corruption reform is unequivocally significant, asserting that religious communities seem to be willing to respond to a moral call to fight corruption. Alongside the emergence of what Eickelman & Anderson (1999) call a “new religious public sphere” within democratic politics, religious institutions appear to have played a role as a partner—and sometimes as a counterforce—for the state powers in dealing with the issue of corruption. In support of the discursive analysis, the idea of ‘public Islam’ (Salvatore & Eickelman 2006) mentioned earlier is also relevant for furthering the argument. In the context of public Islam, I argue that in parallel with the growing numbers of Muslim educated middle class groups, the religious public sphere has grown much greater, and they now have a wider opportunity to participate in the dynamics of the social and political processes. In essence, public Islam represents the expansion of a critical mass among Muslim educated elites who, being strategic social actors, are concerned with the public interest to promote what is called *al-maslahah al-ammah*—the common good (Zaman 2006:130-155) through the creation of accountable public governance for the betterment of the nation. In this sense, public Islam “includes the participation of a wider spectrum of citizens than had heretofore had access to or helped to shape either the normative expressions of Islamic belief and practice or the larger political system” (Salvatore & LeVine 2005:15).

Despite the fact that religious groups are very supportive of an anti-corruption movement, their involvement in it seems to be less structured. Anti-corruption initiatives made by religious institutions have not been well-consolidated yet in terms of specific action plans and programmes, as they have not yet been able to translate ideas and concepts of anti-corruption reform into systematic and continuous activities. This condition is different from that of secular NGOs as these work consistently through well-structured activities carried out with the use of specific approaches. They combine public advocacy, investigative reports, research, public watchdog and social protest, as seen in the case of the Indonesia Corruption Watch (ICW), the Transparency International Indonesia (TII), and university-based centres for (anti)-corruption studies.

However, the involvement of religious groups in the anti-corruption movement is definitely indispensable since they have much wider social networks with solid constituencies. The importance of the religious groups rests on the ways in which they communicate to people through religious sermons and Islamic preaching (*da'wah*) delivered by *ulama* (Muslim scholars) and *kiai* (Javanese ulama). The *da'wah* and religious sermons through *majelis taklim* (community-based forum for learning about Islam) seem to be the main activities by which they are able to proliferate anti-corruption reform and propagate the dangers of corruption for the public. Such an approach is very effective to raise public awareness because it applies religious terms that touch the heart of the people. Therefore, it is important to take into consideration the role of the ulama since they represent religious institutions, while preserving Islam and giving moral guidance to Muslims in public life as well as providing 'religious legitimacy for the de facto power holders' (e.g. Kechichian 1986; Bruinessen 1990; Zaman 2002). The ulama and other religious leaders do play a critical role in the dynamics of social and political life, since they can articulate the public interest by bridging the gap between public aspiration and political authority. John Kelsay expressed it this way:

The ulama, with their power to bind and loose, still provide an entree into civil society in Muslim societies; they represent the dynamic, associational power of religion, and understand themselves as dedicated to the preservation of an Islam that cannot be simply identified with any existing governmental regime. (Kelsay 2002:13)

The ulama and other religious leaders can place themselves in different positions that are not always in harmony, depending on the social contexts and political circumstances they face. While articulating the public interest, they can be in opposition to the state establishment, as Eickelman & Piscatori have illustrated: "While the ulama

continued to cooperate with the political authorities, the religious sphere acquired its own identity, institutions, and discourse. In effect, a religious establishment emerged as a complement—and sometimes as a rival—to the political establishment” (1996:47). In the context of Indonesian politics, the religious public sphere produces religious movements of various forms as seen, among others, in the Islamic group called Hizbut Tahir Indonesia (HTI), which promotes an Islamic system of political governance.

4.4 The HTI: Islamic *Shari'a*-based Anti-Corruption Protest

This section deals with HTI, which is similarly involved in anti-corruption movements but with the spirit of *shari'a* (Islamic law). The Hizbut Tahrir (Arabic: *حزب التحرير*, the Liberation Party) was originally founded in Jordan in 1953 by a Palestinian religio-political figure, Taqiyyuddin al-Nahbani, and spread across the Muslim nations in the world. The primary mission of the Hizbut Tahrir (HT) was the re-establishment of the Islamic caliphate system—a single political leadership of the Muslim world—and the application of Islamic *shari'a* law. This political agenda refers to the success story of the Islamic caliphate system which used to exist in the ancient period of Islamic history as seen in, among others, the Ottoman Caliphate of Turkey (see e.g. Taji-Farouki 1996; Karagiannis 2010; Sankari 2010). Called a pan-Islamic political organization, the HT was brought to Indonesia in the 1980s—during which the wave of transnational Islamic movement was on the increase—by Indonesian students who studied in the Middle East countries especially Egypt and Saudi Arabia. Over the years, the HTI grew greatly and eventually this Muslim organization successfully held an international caliphate conference in Jakarta’s Gelora Bung Karno stadium on 12 August 2007, which was attended by about one hundred thousand supporters and sympathizers.

Most HTI members are educated middle class groups based on university campuses across the country. In fact, the social and political activism of the HTI has become very active and fervent, especially since Ahmad Yunus, an intellectual and lecturer, took over the political leadership of the HTI in 2002. Having graduated from Gadjah Mada University, Yogyakarta, in Geology and then switched to Islamic economics for his postgraduate studies, Ahmad Yunus has been engaging in Islamic-based political activism for years while teaching at the Hamfara Institute of Islamic Economics in Yogyakarta. He is also the director of the *Shari'a* Economics and Management Institute—a private institution focusing on research and development,

professional training, consulting, and publishing. While keeping the very strong Islamic ideology in social activism, Ahmad Yunus is deeply concerned with general public issues including political governance and corruption. With regard to this problem, the HTI participated in social protest to criticize corruption in the state agencies. Like the public protest organized by the Muhammadiyah and other cross-background activists, the HTI held a political rally with the same theme as that of other groups: the scandalous bailout policy.



Figure 4.4: A huge public rally in Jakarta organized by the Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia (HTI) denounces pervasive corruption and demands the investigation of the Bank Century's bailout scandal (Photo by *Media Indonesia*, 6/12/2009).

At the time of the public rally (see figure 4.4), the very large crowds of the HTI activists and sympathizers marshalled in M.H. Thamrin Jakarta, the heart of the capital, protested about the Bank Century bailout scandal, accusing the state officials of corruption. During the political rally, the masses of the HTI uncased a large number of flags with Arabic words (*kalimat syahadat*, the Testament of Faith, لا إله إلا الله محمد رسول الله), the symbol of the organization, and a large banner with the striking slogan “*Skandal Century Bukti Kebobrokan Kapitalisme*—the Bank Century scandal is a proof of rotten capitalism.” The jargon of the protest indicates that capitalism is perceived to be the cause of social ruin along with extensive corruption in public institutions. The HTI criticized the ideology of neoliberal capitalism for having created a chain of corruption by economic and political elites within the government system. The anti-corruption rhetoric emerged in the public sphere along with public denunciation over the capitalist

economy, which manifested itself in the form of crony capitalism—as it became the main characteristic of the New Order state—and therefore was to blame for various illegal practices that resulted through bureaucratic collusion within state agencies (see e.g. Robison 1987; Crouch 1988; Robison & Hadiz 2004; Collins 2007).

There is a common belief that unregulated capitalism will become inherently corrupt since the instincts of the capitalist economy's practitioners tend to be corrupt, as appeared in Elizabeth Collins' *Indonesia Betrayed* (2007) which studies the country's South Sumatra province arguing that neoliberal "development" policies have produced extreme poverty and allowed corruption to thrive. Having observed that neoliberal "development" projects have reproduced inequality and injustice, Collins suggests that neoliberal capitalism must be recognized as a utopian ideology. This is the essence of her criticism that claims that capitalism lays the emphasis on the ideals of individual freedom and liberty, but divests people of their right to justice and equality. In line with this view, Ahmad Yunus of HTI expressed his bitter criticism:

Capitalism is a secular ideology that causes a great deal of misfortune for Indonesians. It drives illicit transactions among those who operate the economic system and those who occupy public powers. We should therefore change our minds by embracing the Islamic system. Islam should become an alternative ideology as the true path through which Indonesian Muslims can reach justice and prosperity. This country is facing a multidimensional crisis and the root of it is a moral crisis. We should get back to the moral and ethical guidance given by Islam on how to manage public life including the economy and polity. The system of Islamic *shari'a* will liberate the people from the shackles of capitalism and corrupt and exploitative rulers. (Quoted from interview, 10 June 2009)

The views of Ahmad Yunus must be construed in the context of the ideological beliefs of the HTI. This Muslim organization is struggling to impose Islamic *shari'a*, which is fervently believed to be the only means of coping with the manifold crises in Indonesia. Obsessed with the caliphate system, the HTI strongly rejects the democratic system along with the capitalist economy since both are derived from secular ideologies. Within HTI, secular ideologies are conceived of as a result of what is cynically called modern *jahiliyya* (Arabic: جاهلية, the state of ignorance of guidance from God), referring to the dark period of Arab history prior to the advent of Islam. It is a mix of views, ideas and practices that entirely defy and refuse the guidance given to all human beings by Allah Almighty, as found in the Qur'an and the Hadith of the Prophet Muhammad. The state of *jahiliyya* shows the kind of situation in which human societies live with the absence of Islamic *shari'a*; whereas, it is believed that Islam is a perfect and complete system that must be implemented as a way of life. Conversely, all aspects of *jahiliyya*—values and beliefs, ideas and thoughts, rules and regulations,

manners and behaviours—are considered as evil and iniquitous and against the essential teachings of Islam (e.g. Qutb 2000; Khatab 2006).

It is important to note that the main difference between HTI and the other two Islamic organizations—Muhammadiyah and NU—lies in their preferred choice of the political system that must be established in the country. Disbelieving in democracy, the HTI firmly disagrees that this should be applied; instead, it is in favour of Islamic *shari'a* being employed in the quasi-secular state of Indonesia. In contrast, the other two believe in democracy and consider that it is not necessarily important to impose Islamic *shari'a* as a logical consideration. This is mainly because Indonesia is a very pluralistic country with a very diverse society alongside various religious beliefs, so it is inappropriate to apply Islamic *shari'a* for the whole nation. Despite the fact that Indonesia is mainly a Muslim country, both the Muhammadiyah and the NU consider that it is improper to enforce Islamic *shari'a* as the sole way of tackling the grave problems in the society. This is because the concept of Islamic *shari'a* itself is highly controversial, and the minority aspiration for imposing it in such pluralistic societal settings of the nation has been for years contested by the dominant Indonesian Muslims.



Figure 4.5: A group of Muslim women activists marshal support for a social protest against corruption in Jakarta with a banner which strikingly reads “Corruptors Go to Hell”.

Yet it is acknowledged that the HTI movement has appeared to be an alternative mode of public criticism, and with a strong ideological orientation the HTI activists galvanize Islamic militancy in the fight against all secular systems that conceivably cause social problems in the country including corruption. The HTI’s alternative mode of discursive

debate of the capitalist economy and the promotion of *shari'a* law can be seen as a 'counter-publics' (e.g. Warner 2002; Hirschkind 2006). The basis of the counter publics is an unbalanced, unequal status between a dominant group and a subordinate group. Here, Michael Warner illustrates vividly:

A counterpublic maintains at some level, conscious or not, an awareness of its subordinate status. The cultural horizon against which it marks itself off is not just a general or wider public, but a dominant one. [...] The discourse that constitutes it is not merely a different or alternative idiom, but one that in other contexts would be regarded with hostility or with a sense of indecorousness. (Warner 2002:86)

Having been an ardent religio-political movement, the HTI challenges the dominant ideology and hegemonic group by trying to impose *shari'a* law for the Muslim community. That the HTI activists are trying to apply Islamic *shari'a* law seems to challenge the social-political hegemony enjoyed by secular groups within Indonesian society. In this regard, it is relevant to revisit Gramsci's concept of hegemony as political dominance applied by—using his phrase—a 'fundamental group' (an euphemistic term for 'class') over another or other classes (Gramsci 1971). With reference to the Marxist approach, Gramsci proposes that hegemony is a form of social control exercised by a dominant class or group and refers to a process of moral direction and intellectual leadership through which consent to domination by ruling classes is given by the dominated, subordinate groups. Hegemony therefore implies the willingness of the dominated groups to accept their inferior positions without being forced or coerced. Indeed, hegemony represents social-political domination in which some groups of society give their approval to follow the direction and rules imposed on their lives by the principal, fundamental group. In the case of the HTI, counter publics should be seen as a challenge to the existing socio-political hegemony, since this group appears to have represented the other variant Indonesian Islam which is slightly different from mainstream Islam in the country and the other dominant groups of Muslim Indonesians. Yet, the difference relates to minor ideological beliefs and political orientations, rather than principal doctrines and theology of orthodox Islam. The counter public movement brought by the HTI is similar to Charles Hirschkind's (2006) work on religious cassette sermons, a form of Islamic *da'wa* amongst Muslim Egyptians. Like the HTI activists who persistently encourage the Indonesian Muslim community to follow *shari'a* law as the main source of ethical code both in private life and public affairs, Islamic cassette sermons call for Muslim Egyptians to obey the original Islamic teachings as laid down in the Qur'an and the Hadith. In Egypt, religious

cassette sermons are used as “a tool of ideological indoctrination and a vehicle for the transmission of militant directives” (p.3) becoming part of public critique for a dominant ideology. Nevertheless, the main purpose of Islamic cassette sermons is not political (e.g. challenging the state establishment, power-holders and the like) but rather ethical, as Hirschkind clearly points out:

The form of public discourse within which this critique takes place, however, is not oriented toward militant political action or the overthrow of the state. Rather, such political commentary gives direction to a normative ethical project centered upon questions of social responsibility, pious comportment, and devotional practice. (Hirschkind 2006:5)

In regard to the discursive debate of the political system of secular democracy, the HTI is persistent to apply the caliphate system which is regarded as being more Islamic, even though it instigates controversy within Indonesian Muslim community. Yet, as the HTI favours the caliphate system that tends to be monolithic, it contradicts the democratic political system and the secular state, whereas the system of political democracy, as experienced by most developed countries, is the necessary basis for capitalist development: democracy and capitalism are intertwined with each other (e.g. Przeworski 1986; Bowles & Gintis 1987; Rueschemeyer, Stephens & Stephens 1992; Bowles, Edwards & Roosevelt 2005), which is something the HTI activists strongly disapprove of. They always construe the ideas of democracy and capitalism vis-à-vis the ideas of Islamic *shari'a* which they consider should be the basis for economic activities and political governance.

We learn from Ahmad Yunus' views that under the capitalist system illicit exchanges can be done between power-holders and capital-holders. The former would be inclined to make economic policies based on favouritism and the latter would be willing to give them bribes and 'refreshments', mostly in the form of money, material worth, and other benefits, in return for preferential economic policies. Within these kinds of collusive transactions, it is important to consider the meaning of 'money and the morality of exchange' (Parry & Bloch [1989] 1996) in the whole capitalist system. In this context, Charles Tripp points out:

For many, however, the prime concern has been for the moral economy as a whole—often based upon an idealised picture of the past, both recent and ancient. This has prompted efforts in the Islamic world to devise a discourse of equal power that would break the circle of capital–market–exchange–profit–capital which so dominates social life and dictates the culture of exchange under capitalism. (Tripp 2006:6)

It is interesting to observe how Muslim activists raise the issue of the capitalist economy as the main theme both in social movement and in public narrative. However, perception of the capitalist ideology varies among Indonesian Muslims. The HTI activists perceive secular capitalism as a source of the country's multiple crises, manifested in extensive corruption. In contrast, other Muslim groups—many of whom are workers and professionals working with private companies and state-owned enterprises—view the capitalist economy as offering an opportunity to develop a work ethos through competition and to become more productive, as appears in Rudnyckyj's works on *Spiritual Economies* (2009) and *Market Islam* (2010). Set in an urban area, these studies show how some groups of Indonesian Muslims try “to merge Muslim religious practice and capitalist ethics” (2010:177). Instead of condemning capitalism, they consider it as part of reality; they accept capitalism as something that has been dominating the global market economy for years while they try to obtain as much benefit as they can from it by reconciling “markets and social justice for Muslim Indonesians” (see Hefner 1998:224-250).

Regarding the discursive debate of Islam and the neoliberal economy, I argue that the urban Muslim groups—some of whom are associated with the Muhammadiyah and the NU—seek to interpret Islamic teachings beyond orthodoxy, which enables them to remain faithful to their Islamic belief whilst engaging with economic activities that are associated with capitalism. They also endeavour to find the positive aspects of market capitalism and search for compromise and interaction with it. This phenomenon fits with what Hefner has observed: “market growth has been accompanied by religious revival,” but religion is not “uniformly used to mobilize resistance against the individualizing or alienating tendencies of capitalism and urban life” (1998:26). Nor do Muslims use religious belief as a spiritual cover for rejecting capitalism, or a pathway for escaping from it, or a defence mechanism in response to the threats of the neoliberal economy. What they do is encourage spirituality to flourish, and they also strengthen Islamic piety so that they will be able to ban all the negative aspects of the capitalist system. Here, improving the quality of being a good Muslim by emphasizing religious devotion is the most important aim. They prefer to do the so-called *tazkiyah al-nafs* (purification of the soul, or spiritual purification) by deepening Islamic teachings, increasing good deeds, reinforcing the Islamic faith, and purifying the worship of Allah Almighty. While doing *tazkiyah al-nafs*, they keep engaging in economic activities; they do not separate economic activities and Islamic ethics, since the separation of them

seems to be unproductive. All these dimensions of spiritual purification would hopefully impact on the improvement of social and economic activities in public life. The concept of spiritual purification seems to be similar to that of ‘spiritual reform’ proposed by Rudnycky, as he expounds vividly:

The proponents of spiritual reform consider the separation of religious ethics from economic practices as the cause of Indonesia’s economic crisis. In their eyes, this disjunction resulted in rampant corruption, a lack of accountability, and labour indiscipline. The concept of spiritual economies elucidates how two domains, religion and capitalism, are brought together to create a new ethical orientation toward oneself, one’s work, and one’s collectivity. Islam is not merely a vehicle in this process, as spiritual reform is taken to both enable Islamic virtue and effect dispositions that enhance corporate productivity and competitiveness in an increasingly global market [capitalism]. (Rudnycky 2009:106)

Within this context, spiritual purification is conceived as the process of transforming personal desires that are inclined to defy religious ethics and disobey God’s rules into the level of purity, piety and submission to the will of Allah Almighty through various Islamic practices. Spiritual purification will then lead a person to become a good Muslim and he/she would be more devoted to following the teachings of Islam and sincerely obey God’s commandments. All Muslims should therefore behave with good manners in all dimensions of life whether social, economic or political. In this respect, they will not commit corruption, since it clearly breaches Islamic morality. Anything that violates the principle of Islamic morality will damage the purity of the soul so that a Muslim needs to cleanse the self through spiritual purification. Indeed spiritual purification is very important in order to protect Muslims from any wrongdoings or the tendency to do such bad deeds as corruption. Here, I argue that spiritual purification is essential for the improvement of Islamic spirituality; meanwhile, Islamic spirituality is a critical factor for resolving a multidimensional crisis, as Rudnycky puts it:

[...] [P]roper Islamic practice necessarily entails greater productivity, less corruption, and more diligent work habits. ... Participants in spiritual reform directly connected their own previous moral failings to the political and economic problems in Indonesia at large. Perhaps due to past acts of corruption ... they see the problem of resolving this moral crisis as an impetus to work on themselves in order to improve both themselves and the larger community. (Rudnycky 2010:178)

As illustrated, the issue of the capitalist economy has instigated different responses and views between the HTI activists and other Indonesian Muslims. Such distinct reactions have clearly shown the moral ambiguity among them, indicating that there is no single perception on capitalism. Given the kind of ambiguity, Tripp points out:

It is not simply that the morally offensive aspects of capitalism provoke, but also that its transformative potential attracts. It is this which helps to explain the ambivalence of Muslim responses to a phenomenon which some see as an existential threat, but others see as an opportunity for Muslims to re-inscribe themselves into world history. (Tripp 2006:6)

The different attitudes toward capitalism reflect the fact that ideological belief and political orientation among Indonesian Muslims vary and are far from being monolithic and hegemonic. Yet, regardless of what sort of ideology they orientate, they consider that corruption is against Islamic morality as they refer to the same theological doctrine.

4.5 Theological Doctrine: Islamic Narratives on Corruption

This part looks at how the Muhammadiyah and the NU examine corruption with reference to theological doctrine. To do this, they established a joint task force to study corruption from an Islamic perspective and introduced what is called *Fiqih Korupsi* (Islamic jurisprudence on corruption). By introducing *fiqih korupsi*, they view corruption in the light of the Qur'anic concept and based on *sabda* (words) of the Prophet Muhammad as recorded in the Hadith. In doing so, they apply a methodology called *ijtihad al-qiyas* (legal interpretation based on analogy) with reference to scholarly works of *ulama salaf* (old Muslim scholars), as there is no equivalent term for corruption in Islamic jurisprudence. The Muhammadiyah formed a special committee chaired by Abdul Munir Mul Khan, a senior lecturer at the Sunan Kalijaga State Islamic University, Yogyakarta, to ponder the issue of corruption through a forum called *Majelis Tarjih*. The NU created a special committee led by Rozy Munir and Syaiful Bahri—both were members of the executive board of the organization—to address the problem of corruption through a forum called *Bahsul Masa'il*. Traditionally, both *Majelis Tarjih* and *Bahsul Masa'il* are religious forums through which the ulama and leaders of the two Islamic organizations discuss all the problems related to social and religious affairs among Muslim communities. Upon the very serious studies through those forums, which were conducted separately, they concluded that corruption is considered as *dosa besar* (great sin) and corruptors are *kafir* (infidels, disbelievers). Having studied corruption, they produced a book entitled *Koruptor itu Kafir: Fiqih*

Korupsi Muhammadiyah-Nahdhatul Ulama (2010),¹⁵ which has become a source of Islamic legitimacy for religious activism against corruption.

With regard to this issue, I approached Mahmud Akmal of the Muhammadiyah and Abdullah Misbahudin of the NU to interview them about how Islam perceives corruption. They shared the view that corruption is undoubtedly against the Islamic faith, by referring to the famous saying of the Prophet Muhammad: “a person will not steal if he or she is faithful to Allah Almighty.” They also mentioned bribery, which is strictly prohibited and considered sinful behaviour, by quoting the very eminent Hadith: *La'na Allah `ala al-raasyi wa al-murtasyi wa ma bayna huma*, which can be translated as “Damned is the bribe-giver, the bribe-taker, and the broker who acts as a middleman between them.” These two Hadiths have become the theological basis to explain the immorality of corruption because it affects public life very badly. In short, both the Muhammadiyah and the NU categorize corruption as a form of *fasaad* (Arabic: الفساد, mischief) and all Muslims should take the responsibility to combat it whether individually or in a group, since evil deeds might affect them as a whole.

Islamic narratives on corruption therefore suggest that it not only breaks the secular precepts of transparency and accountability, but also violates ethical conduct and the moral code according to Islamic principles (e.g. Lewis 2006; Iqbal & Lewis 2009). Indeed they are very important elements of public governance and if they are absent, those holding public power “will not be reluctant to pursue [their] interest by lying, cheating or stealing by simply outweighing the risks [by the] benefits in breaking the law, as there is a widespread proverb ‘rules are made to be broken’” (Mevliyar 2008:34). Islamic teachings have provided Muslims with a set of moral standards of behaviour, as they are obliged to behave with good manners or *al-ma'ruf* (Arabic: معروف, good deeds that Islam orders one to do), while avoiding all bad conduct or *al-munkar* (Arabic: المنكر, evil deeds that Islam has forbidden). Indeed there is a very rich tradition in the Islamic heritage of high moral standards, values and norms of demeanour that direct personal and public life. Ethics and morality as the bases for both individual and social behaviour are clearly paramount in Islamic teachings (e.g. Izutsu 2002; Asad 2003; Rahman [1989] 2009). Therefore, it is important to pay attention to how Islamic value systems construe corruption and how the Qur'an and the Hadith

¹⁵ This scholarly work is a blend of the two proceedings of the studies on corruption conducted separately by the ulama of the Muhammadiyah and the NU through different religious forums: *Majelis Tarjih* and *Bahsul Masa'il* respectively. The old version of the studies was first published in 2006 through a sponsor of a Jakarta-based NGO called the Partnership for Governance Reform.

provide an ethical code to show that corruption is completely repugnant to Islam. As reflected in Islamic scripture, corruption is classified as *al-akhlaq al-madzumah* (Arabic: الأخلاق مذمومة, blameworthy, disgraced morality—traits or attributes that are shameful and bad). Mahmud Akmal even claimed that corruption is:

A form of *shirk* (polytheism) in the sense that corruptors are deeply obsessed with money and material worth, worshipping them as they worship God. They perceive the power of money as similar to that of God. They venerate wealth, capital and other material goods, placing them as objects of adoration that they deify in place of God. (Quoted from interview, 2 September 2009)

Unlike secular discourses that place corruption at the centre of the controversial subject of political and economic debates (e.g. Heidenheimer & Johnston 2001; Rose-Ackerman 2006), Islamic discourses show very clearly that corruption is indisputably against the moral code of the Qur'an and the *Sunnah* (Arabic: سنة, authoritative tradition, habitual action and norm referring to the Prophet Muhammad's sayings and practices). However, there is no specific term for corruption in Islamic texts, but Muslims, as Misbahudin mentions, usually perceive corruption by referring to the Qur'an (Al-Baqarah [chapter 2]:188): "Do not eat up one another's property unjustly (in any illegal way, e.g. stealing, robbing, deceiving), nor give bribery to the rulers (judges before presenting your cases) that you may not knowingly eat up a part of the property of others sinfully." With reference to classical Islamic texts, Misbahudin conceives of corruption by comparing it to what is called *Ghulul* (Arabic: غلول, unlawful taking from the war spoils [*ghanimah*] before they are distributed among the fighters or handed out to the Muslims' common treasury). He asserts that corruption is a modern term for *ghulul*, used in the ancient Islamic period, as the term *ghulul*, like corruption, is a form of misappropriation. In explaining the term *ghulul*, Misbahudin quotes the Qur'an:

It is not for any Prophet to take illegally a part of the booty (*ghulul*), and whosoever deceives his companions as regards the booty, he shall bring forth on the Day of Resurrection that which he took (illegally). Then every person shall be paid in full what he has earned; and they shall not be dealt with unjustly. (Ali Imran [chapter 3]:161)

Considering the iniquity of corruption, leaders of the NU issued a controversial *fatwa* (edict, Islamic legal opinion) suggesting that corruptors should not receive religious rituals or Islamic prayers when they die. Although the *fatwa* is not legally binding on all Indonesian Muslims, it shows the extreme degree of depravity of corruption. It seems that the NU leaders wanted to assert that those committing

corruption deserve both social and moral sanctions—in addition to severe punishment—from the Muslim communities by not performing prayers for them, as Misbahudin explains:

Corruption is a grave practice which not only destroys religious faith and truth but also badly affects social life for everyone, and Islam considers it a great sin. This is why the NU proposed a *fatwa* saying that corruptors should not receive Islamic prayers when they pass away. Let the family members of the corrupt pray, but not our *imams* and all Muslims. (Quoted from interview, 13 January 2009)

The views of Misbahudin actually represent those of the NU scholars who often highlight the judgment in the afterlife for corruptors. In illustrating the severity of corruption, he refers to a saying of the Prophet Muhammad: “Every flesh and bone that grew from illicit fortune shall not be accepted in heaven,” so that the organization also forbids blessing the remains of a corruptor and warns that none of the corruptor’s deeds will be accepted unless the person has sincerely repented. Expressing anxiety over the moral syndrome of corruption, Misbahudin states: “We need to re-orientate society’s value, and place corruption as not only illegal but also immoral. Corruptors have acted shamelessly by swindling money from people as if they have no responsibility at all.” In this context, refusing to perform prayers and Islamic rituals, as social and moral sanctions for corruptors, reflects an expression of religious disapproval of those implicated in shameful misconduct.

It is clear that the involvement of the NU and the Muhammadiyah in the fight against corruption is motivated by religious beliefs. Public narratives on corruption voiced by these Islamic organizations represent what Heinzpeter Znoj (2007) calls ‘civic religious discourse’. As representatives of Indonesian Muslim society, they are involved in public campaigns against corruption in support of establishing good and responsible government for the sake of people’s prosperity. Looking at the kind of (anti)-corruption narrative, Znoj writes:

[...] a well-articulated civic religious discourse [...] demands a strong civil society in a secular state and [...] regards the various religions as indispensable sources of a general moral attitude, out of which civic virtues are expected to grow. It deems a religiously inspired, morally firm civil society [to be] the only source of successful resistance against the “social disease” of corruption. (Znoj 2007:58)

Znoj illustrates how the public place their trust and hope in religious institutions as the last resort to fight corruption. Indeed, most Indonesians have strongly urged the NU and the Muhammadiyah to redouble their efforts to combat corruption so the public could maintain their hope, with the expectation that civic morality and social virtue

would flourish and such depravity as corruption would be banished. Definitely, Islam condemns corruption and the things that lead to the spreading of it, since corruption is not only against public morality but also wounds the sense of justice. As corruption causes social distortion and seizes public interest, preventing people from accessing public resources, it is certainly contrary to the principle of social justice—which is the ideal that Muslim organizations are fighting for.

As the two largest Muslim institutions—the Muhammadiyah and the NU—have joined the social movements against corruption, anti-corruption reforms advocated by Indonesian civil society have grown much stronger and created a political significance in the course of the anti-corruption programmes. Their involvement in eradicating corruption has asserted that the endemic problem of corruption has become of interest to every single element of the nation. In this sense, Islamic organizations have shown the public that they do play a significant role in the context not only of religious matters, but also of public affairs as in the case of promoting anti-corruption initiatives in which the general public are deeply involved. The Muhammadiyah and the NU have demonstrated that such a prophetic role in fighting corruption has a very strong religious basis with reference to theological doctrine. They ground religious activism in the battle against corruption in Islamic values and beliefs so that their involvement in social movements against corruption basically reflects Islamic teachings. They actualize them in real life by promoting clean government and governance reform through corruption eradication programmes. In the context of Indonesia, this research seems to be an original contribution to the study of anti-corruption that demonstrates how Muslim organizations take part in promoting social reform against corruption. Religious leaders do not conceive of Islam to be practised merely in private life, but rather it must be applied in public life as well. Islamic teachings are therefore transformed into social practices in order to realize the common good. Their engagement in anti-corruption movements is part of the call of religious doctrines and credos.

4.6 Conclusion

As a conclusion to the discussion in this chapter, it can be asserted that corruption has multiple dimensions: economic, social, and political, as well as ethical and moral. Certainly moral standards are crucial elements in support of anti-corruption initiatives. In an Islamic context, fighting corruption must be rooted in Islamic values and norms to

ensure the legitimacy of the anti-corruption activities. At this point, the role of Muslim civil society has been very helpful in support of anti-corruption reforms. The involvement of religious organizations like the NU and the Muhammadiyah in anti-corruption movements is expected to encourage public spirit and increase the power of civil society to force social and political reforms on public governance. Most importantly, these Islamic institutions are crucial for providing religious legitimacy in support of social movements against corruption. The socio-political significance of the Muhammadiyah and the NU, along with other religious groups, is because they have moral credentials and political leverage as they represent such a huge number of the Muslim communities who have become a focal point for an effective anti-corruption movement.

Within this perspective, collaborative work between religious groups, secular NGOs, and other civil society associations is hoped to become much more meaningful and to strengthen social movements to combat corruption. It is hoped that the synergy among them will energize social and religious activism in the battle against corruption for the sake of all Indonesian citizens, thereby creating prosperity and justice for all. Nonetheless, with regard to a great deal of corruption in the country, the efficacy of these Islamic civil society associations in alleviating this acute social disease still needs to be achieved. To do this, it is important to take into consideration how secular NGOs—in addition to religious organizations—play their part in the fight against corruption, as the next chapter will discuss.

Chapter 5

SOCIAL AND POLITICAL ACTIVISM IN THE BATTLE AGAINST CORRUPTION

The main purpose of this chapter is to show how anti-corruption activism is grounded in grass-root movements, especially those involving educated people. Public resistance to corruption is mostly orchestrated by middle class groups, who take initiatives to mobilize social and political resources to fight corruption. This chapter therefore explores the non-state initiatives of anti-corruption movements pioneered by social and political activists associated with NGOs and other social groups. The main issues addressed here are the nature of social and political activism in the fight against corruption, what ideological thoughts ground such activism in support of anti-corruption movements, and how social political activists, along with civil society agencies, play a vital role in the battle against corruption. This chapter will also look at how anti-corruption movements blossom within a democratic system, but how, ironically, political democracy also instigates corruption that results in public disappointment.

5.1 State Actions to Fight Corruption

Before addressing the role of NGOs and civil society in public campaigns against corruption, I first introduce what actions have been taken by the government in dealing with this problem. Despite the fact that corruption takes place in state structures and involves officials and politicians, the state has a political duty to take action to eradicate it. In this respect, the government has established various commissions or bodies which are in charge of tackling the grave problem of corruption. As the nation has learned from the bitter experience of the New Order state, which was dubbed a highly corrupt regime, Indonesian people strongly demanded institutional reforms that would encompass all important aspects of the government systems. The new government during the *reformasi* era has taken a series of governance reforms through the provision of a legal basis and the establishment of operating agencies in an effort to curb corruption and prevent it from becoming widespread.

Governance reforms in support of corruption eradication were first launched by President B.J. Habibie soon after he came to power in May 1998. In response to political pressure to tackle massive corruption, the Habibie government introduced Law

No. 28 of 1998 on *Penyelenggaraan Negara yang Bersih dan Bebas dari Korupsi, Kolusi, dan Nepotisme* (Clean Administrative Government that is Free from Corruption, Collusion, and Nepotism). This Law was followed by the establishment of *Komisi Pengawas Kekayaan Pejabat Negara* (KPKPN, the Commission of Scrutiny of Officials' Assets), but unfortunately it did not perform as well as expected. In fact, this Commission became ineffective as the Habibie presidency lasted only a very short period—his government ended in October 1999, and during his administration, very little was done to tackle corruption. The successor of B.J. Habibie, President Abdurrahman Wahid, then created a task force called *Tim Gabungan Pemberantasan Korupsi* (TGPTPK, Joint Team on Eradication Corruption) by issuing Presidential Decree No. 19 of 2000. However, this team, like the previous commission, appeared to become powerless and ended with unsatisfactory results.

During the Megawati presidency, a new institution called *Komisi Pemberantasan Korupsi* (KPK, the Commission of Corruption Eradication) was founded. Designed as an independent state agency with reference to Law No. 30 of 2002 on the KPK, this body was established on 29 December 2003; and its establishment was in line with Law No. 20 of 2001 on the Alleviation of Corruption Crime. As well as this Law, the government enacted Law No. 15 of 2002 on Money Laundering Crime. Following this Law, in 2003 the government founded *Pusat Pelaporan dan Analisis Transaksi Keuangan* (PPATK, the Centre for Financial Transaction Reports and Analysis) whose main task is, among others, to trace the transfer of money resulting from white-collar crimes such as corruption. These two laws have become a strong legal basis in support of corruption eradication. The KPK was the product of institutional reforms in response to widespread political pressures demanding that the eradication of corruption must be handled by a new body, since the public greatly distrusted the existing state agencies (e.g. the police, the judiciary). The major tasks of the KPK include (1) to coordinate state agencies, especially the National Police, the Attorney General's Office (AGO), the General Audit Office (GAO), and the PPATK in eradicating corruption; (2) to supervise the involved actors—the National Police, the AGO, and related institutions—in collective efforts to fight corruption; (3) to investigate and prosecute cases of corruption; (4) to undertake prevention programmes of corruption eradication; and (5) to review procedures and institutions prone to corruption and to recommend respective remedies. Even though the KPK maintains its status as a state body, it is not part of the executive structure, nor under the authority of the president. It is not always easy,

however, for this anti-graft agency to achieve its objectives, since there are a great number of political obstacles which lead the KPK into conflict with those who hold state powers. (This issue will be addressed later in this chapter).

Over the years, state-led corruption eradication appears to have become less effective, since state actors and politicians are very often involved in illicit practices. Their involvement in corruption has created the so-called gridlock situations which cause considerable difficulties for the authorities (e.g. the KPK) in dealing with corruption scandals or in taking legal action over them. This is because such people often apply a self-defence mechanism by revealing their opponent's corruption scandals, as a strategy of avoiding a prosecution process. These apparently hopeless situations, in relation to the possibility of state action to eradicate corruption, result in very deep disappointment among the Indonesian people. However, political pressures to fight corruption have emerged from non-state actors, most notably NGOs and other civil society associations.

5.2 Indonesian NGOs and Anti-Corruption Initiatives

This section presents an overview of the emergence of NGOs and how they have become important non-state actors in the world of Indonesian politics. Historically NGOs originated in the 1970s and then mushroomed in the 1980s as a consequence of the increasing demands for people's involvement in public affairs. They emerged to become a counterpart of the government in the delivery of development programmes through three approaches: '(i) high-level partnership: grassroots development, (ii) high-level politics: grassroots mobilization, and (iii) empowerment at the grassroots' (Eldridge 1990:512). NGOs claimed to be 'independent agencies' having a strategic mission to bridge the gap between the government's interests and the people's aspirations. They dedicated their efforts to social advocacy while voicing the importance of civil society as the basis for promoting participation in politics and the involvement of the public in the policymaking process (e.g. Mahasin & Ibrahim 1996; Bunnell 1996).

Noticeably, NGOs appeared to flourish in the Indonesian political landscape alongside the growing number of educated people who campaigned for democratic participation based on the people's sovereignty (e.g. Eldridge 1995; Billah 1996); while the idea of democracy itself began thriving even in the times of the authoritarian New Order when the regime was still powerful and unchallenged by non-state contenders.

Anders Uhlin observed this phenomenon some years before the autocratic military rule came to an end, saying: “In Indonesia, as in most other authoritarian states, there has been a marked increase in demands for democracy during the last couple of years. New pro-democracy groups have emerged and activists in older NGOs have become more outspoken on democracy issues; various middle class activists and intellectuals demand more political freedom” (1993:517). NGOs are therefore recognized as having played an important role in the process of democratization (e.g. Eldridge 1997; Hadiwinata 2003); and such a role relates to greater demands for what the Indonesian media refer to as *keterbukaan* (openness), *keterlibatan* (participation), and *kebebasan* (liberty). These are among the key components of democratic politics and public governance. Indonesian NGOs then gained political significance when ‘the third wave of democratization’ (Huntington 1991) swept across developing countries in the late twentieth century. Moreover, they have made a valuable contribution to promoting what Aspinall calls a ‘new hegemony of democratic ideas’ which are essential as ‘the groundwork for democratic transformation’ (2005:115) in line with the proliferation of global discourse of democracy and political liberalization asserting that they have a central role to play in developing a flourishing democracy in the country.

Having benefited from the emergence of democracy, NGOs and other civil society groups have moved forward to strengthen their role in public criticism. They have become actively involved in social and political activism against corruption. As the public has strongly demanded that corruption must be tackled very seriously, they have taken the lead to develop grassroots initiatives to combat the social disease. The role of NGOs is considered to be critical for fighting corruption, since they consist of and are buttressed by educated elites and other elements of the middle class that are very important in support of anti-corruption reforms. Thus the NGOs are among the major protagonists among the anti-corruption movements that are playing a crucial part in battling corruption through various programmes: increased citizen participation and civic monitoring with the spirit of what is called ‘integrity warriors’ (e.g. Sampson 2005; Bracking 2007; De Sousa, Larmour & Hindess 2009).

Even though claims about the NGOs’ ability to facilitate the political transition to democracy are to some extent contested, several scholars (e.g. Holloway et al. 2002; Antlov et al. 2005; Schutte 2009) acknowledge that their part in fighting corruption and promoting public accountability is central. Hadiwinata also argues that NGOs, as the ‘third sector’ organizations, contribute to “the strengthening of Indonesian civil society

needed to generate demand for more accountable, clean, and transparent government” (2003:ix). In this sense, what emerges in public talk indicates that corruption is counterproductive to the creation of accountable governance. The issue of corruption materializes in public narrative as part of the rhetoric of transparency, accountability and the rule of law, as all of these have become the central foci of discourses on democracy and good governance in the global landscape over the past few years (e.g. World Bank 2003; Rose-Ackerman [1999] 2007; De Sousa, Larmour & Hindess 2009). Yet critics say that terms such as good governance, accountability, transparency, participation, and the like have become merely buzzwords (e.g. Munshi & Abraham 2004; Cornwall 2007), since they are not easy for those occupying public office to implement as ideal norms and values. In this sense, corruption is seen as opposed to those basic tenets of governing administrative power which are indicated by the clear distinction between public and private. This refers to the Weberian concept of legal-rational bureaucracy, which is characterized by standardized procedure (rule-following), formal division of responsibility, hierarchy and impersonal relationships (Weber [1968] 2006). Using this model, state officials often become trapped between conflicting interests: public and private; and without drawing the line clearly between the two, they easily fall into corruption as categorized by the modern concept of public bureaucracy.

5.3 ICW: Roots and Ideologies of Emerging Anti-Corruption Activism

Social and political activism in combating corruption is pivotal, while NGOs have been proven empirically to become vocal actors in voicing popular protests and in articulating public criticism on corruption. Here I first introduce an NGO that focuses on the issue of corruption, the *Indonesia Corruption Watch* (ICW), along with other middle-class-supporting social groups that share some concerns about the problem of corruption. They have the same mission, that is, the strengthening of civil society associations in support of public campaigns against corruption and anti-corruption movements initiated by non-state actors. The ICW, the first and leading watchdog organization, was established on 21 June 1998, precisely in the transition period from the New Order to the *reformasi* era, when the general public strongly demanded the investigation of corruption committed by the Soeharto regime along with his cronies. Indeed the misuse of public powers and illicit deals within state bureaucracies were so extensive that they came to be popularly known as KKN. At that time, KKN became

the central issue of public censures directed at political campaigns against the New Order as they were the bad legacy of the regime. KKN associated with the shady-despotic rule were blamed by the people as the main cause of the nation's ruin (e.g. Vatikiotis 1998; Robertson 1999; Kingsbury 2002). According to the founders of the ICW, the initial idea of establishing the agency came from several societal leaders and NGO activists who had a strong commitment to promoting democracy and good governance. They were deeply concerned by the fact that the New Order regime bequeathed a large number of corruption problems which were ingrained in all levels of state bodies: executive, legislative, and judicial. Here Abdullah Misbahudin, one of the ICW founders, explained:

Corruption was endemic during the New Order state but there was no space for public criticism as the military regime ruled the country repressively. That is why some NGOs and educated middle class people took initiatives to create an independent social organization in support of the fight against corruption soon after the New Order finished. The establishment of the ICW was intended to be a sort of counterbalance for the hegemonic and corrupt state powers. (Quoted from interview, 13 January 2009)

The initiators of the ICW are prominent public figures¹⁶ with various social and professional backgrounds but they have a common interest: eradicating corruption. Although these people came from different professions, they agreed about the importance of setting up an independent institution to deal with the issue of corruption. Most of them had already associated with their own NGOs in different areas of interest, but they considered that establishing the ICW was indispensable in order to consolidate civil society groups in combating corruption so that anti-corruption movements became much more organized. In the heated moments of the transition period after the collapse of the New Order rule and with increased public criticism of corruption, the formation of the ICW reached a historical momentum as the people deeply hated the corrupt regime. A leading figure of the ICW, Johan, pointed out:

The foundation of the ICW was to respond to the fervent spirit of public criticism against corruption during the New Order era. Under this regime, the palace, the military, and the bureaucracy were the axes of corruption; and the oligarchic power centered on the inner circle of Soeharto made corruption become much more acute. These situations were aggravated by the absence of public control; and therefore the creation of the ICW was

¹⁶ Among the founders of the body were Todung Mulya Lubis, Bambang Widjojanto (lawyers, human rights activists); Adi Andoyo Sutjipto (judge); Chusnul Mar'iyah, Robertus Robert (academics); Daniel Dhakidae, Alexander Irwan (social researchers); Marsilam Simanjuntak, Kemala Chandra Kirana, Teten Masduki (social and political activists); Sonny Keraf (politician); Masdar Farid Mas'udi (Islamic organization leader); Munir Thalib (human rights activist); Christiano Wibisono (economic analyst, businessman); Eros Djarot (film director, musician). It is important to note that some of them were European- and American-educated activists with a very good understanding of democracy and political governance; and it seems that the Western democratic cultures and values they learned during their studies in those countries had a strong influence on their social and political activism.

dedicated to become a watchdog institution as part of social responsibility. (Quoted from interview, 3 December 2008)

Before the ICW was established, there was not even a single NGO concentrating on the issue of corruption. Considering that corruption had become a grave problem in the country for many years, resulting in numerous negative impacts on public life, these social and political activists mentioned earlier arranged among themselves to set up a solid and strong organization in support of the anti-corruption agenda. The institution of the ICW was critical in order to organize what is called *kekuatan rakyat* (the power of people) and to strengthen civil society groups so that anti-corruption initiatives would become more effective. Indeed, the establishment of the ICW was in line with the spirit of the *reformasi* movements, that is, to 'free' the government from corruption since it had burdened the state bureaucracies socially and politically and inhibited them from carrying out public duties properly. The mission statements of the ICW are very clear as follows:

The primary missions of the ICW are: (1) to struggle for the establishment of the systems of politics, the law, the economy, and state bureaucracies without corruption and based on social justice; (2) to enhance people's participation in the process of public policymaking and in the monitoring of the implementation of public policy. In order to deliver these missions, the ICW plays several roles: (i) increasing public awareness and organizing citizenship in order to gain civil rights and better public service; (ii) facilitating the investigation and revelation of corruption cases to achieve clean government; (iii) mobilizing public campaigns on governance reforms in support of corruption eradication; and (iv) encouraging law enforcement and ethical standards among public officials, business groups, and other professionals, including accountants, engineers, notaries and lawyers. (Quoted from the ICW's booklet)

Since its inception, the ICW has proven to be a most influential agency in mobilizing civil society to fight against corruption; and the public greatly relies on this body in dealing with all forms of illegal practice in the state agencies. The role of the ICW in support of anti-corruption movements reached political significance under the leadership of Johan when he successfully investigated and revealed a huge corruption scandal which implicated a very senior state official in the very early phase of the *reformasi* movements, at times when Indonesia was experiencing political turmoil during the transition period towards democracy. Tantalized by the euphoric moment of the *reformasi* era, in 1999 Johan bravely exposed a payoff, which totalled about Rp2.5 billion, transferred by two tycoons, Ning King and Prajogo Pangestu, to the bank accounts of Andi Ghalib and his wife: he was a three-star General and a high ranking military officer who held the post of Attorney General under the Habibie presidency. The money transfers were allegedly in exchange for dropping charges of the misuse of

bailout and bank fraud that were being filed by the Attorney General's Office (AGO). As the basis of the revelation of the illegal payments, Johan secretly investigated this scandal and found strong evidence from a number of credible and confidential sources which allowed him to reveal it in support of the disclosure of illicit deals between business groups and state officials. Inevitably, Andi Ghalib became the target of bitter censure by the media, and the public severely denounced him as well. A huge wave of mass demonstrations lasting for weeks eventually forced Andi Ghalib to leave his office and President Habibie had no choice but to remove him from his post. However, Andi Ghalib had never been charged with corruption as he took bribes from business people; being fired as a state official with such an important post as Attorney General was considered to be a serious political punishment. In Indonesian politics this sort of punishment is a very common and is popularly known as *penyelesaian adat* (which literally means 'customary solution'—an idiom for closing a scandal by removing the official involved in it from office and leaving the case to disappear by itself, evaporating from public talk as time goes by).

What Johan had done in revealing the scandal of the Attorney General was significant and unprecedented in the course of the fight against corruption, and was made possible only in the democracy era with freedom of expression and of the press allowing citizens to control the state government. Since then, Johan and the ICW have received great respect from the public, who deeply appreciated them becoming the leading figure and the foremost anti-corruption body respectively. Therefore, among social and political activists Johan is called 'an icon of anti-corruption' since he is the prominent leader of anti-graft civil movements and of the first NGO activist pioneering oversight body. In addition, the ICW itself gained political credibility in the eyes of the public as the most effective and powerful watchdog agency, becoming a role model for citizen participation and civic involvement in combating corruption in the country.

Johan is a devoted activist with a strong commitment to embracing social activism. Indonesian NGO activists often point out that Johan is synonymous with (anti)-corruption, as he is the prominent leader in civil society who dedicates himself to combating corruption. Educated at the Institute of Teacher Training, Johan beforehand served as a teacher at a Senior Higher School in Tangerang (a district in the Banten province, on the border of west Jakarta) for a short period of time. He then went into social activism as, using his words, 'a call of duty for societal service.' From the outset, Johan associated with some NGO agencies, namely the Institute for the Study of Human

Rights and the Jakarta-based Legal Aid Agency which concentrate on legal assistance and social political advocacy. When involved in activism with these NGOs, Johan frequently coped with labor forces; he often mediated in disputes between workers and employers in business and industry over labour rights: minimum wages, benefits, safe working conditions, etc. From there, Johan learned that workers had for a long time been exploited by the capitalist economy as they earned very low wages and were without adequate protection at work. He also found out about the common practices of bribery, extortion, and the like when businesspeople dealt with state bureaucracies, the police, or the military officers who needed to be given *uang rokok* (which literally means money for cigarettes, an idiom for a ‘buyoff’) in return for business permits and security protection. Johan became familiar with these illicit practices and that is why he decided to become totally involved in social activism focusing on corruption. Certainly, he is regarded as one of the prominent figures who firmly stand for fighting corruption and relentlessly support any sort of public campaigns to eradicate corruption.

Johan served in the chairmanship of the ICW for more than a decade. For many years now, the ICW has become the hallmark of anti-corruption movements and has had a great impact on building collective actions to eradicate corruption. Seemingly Johan has enjoyed his jobs with the spirit of a social activist who has kept his idealism in mind, dreaming of how corruption could be eliminated from the state agencies in favour of prosperity for the people. Indeed, Johan is a typical idealist social activist and such idealism is reflected in the drawings and photographs on the walls of his modest office. One of the photographs displays a group of poor and homeless children residing along the edge of the railroad in a slum area in Jakarta, without access to education and health services, and with limited food to eat so they had to share with each other. The image clearly shows extreme poverty and the picture slogan strikingly reads, “Corruption kills the future of the nation. You [corruptors] confiscate their [the children's] food. Corruption seizes the rights of the people to live prosperously.” There is another scene of even stronger contrast. A satirical drawing, hung on a bare wall, shows a well-dressed man urinating on a homeless man lying in an alley while his uniformed chauffeur holds his jacket, and the picture caption reads “Trickle-Down Effect Theory,” referring to the promise of the ideology of economic liberalism that used to be embraced by the New Order state but still carries on under the new government in the era of democracy. The ‘trickle-down effect theory’ is the belief that once the economy grows

well, wealth will automatically be dispersed among and be shared by all the people and prosperity can be enjoyed by everyone.

Such illustrations may symbolize the social ideology held by the ICW people as the basis of anti-corruption movements, and Johan stated that those drawings and photographs represent the paradoxical conditions of daily life among Indonesians. He said that some people believe in the ideology of capitalist economy as it would lead the country to achieve social and economic welfare, while the deep gulf between the rich and the poor still remains unresolved. "It is very sad," Johan commented bitterly, "that while poverty is still the major problem faced by many people, corruption is widespread across the country. I imagine how the embezzled public money could be allocated to the needy." Not surprisingly, in the course of social and political activism, the 'corruption-causes-poverty narrative' has become part of public discourses and is among the way in which people attempt to understand the phenomenon of corruption. Corruption is thus conceived to be a serious obstacle for the disadvantaged groups to gain public resources which are supposed to be distributed for them. Johan's perspectives seem to follow 'the very typical structural approach that addresses the relation of corruption to the unequal distribution of resources in society' (Nuijten & Anders 2007:15). Johan then continued his grievance:

Corruption reflects the loss of social compassion. Officials and politicians implicating in corruption have lost their hearts, since they do not have any empathy towards people who have a very poor standard of living. They do not feel guilty, which shows that their behaviour is against the basic tenets of social ethics and public civility. The social phenomena (how officials and politicians behave and how the poor endure hardship in life) clearly contradict each other, and these are only found in a society with a lack of sympathy towards the disadvantaged groups. (Quoted from interview, 3 December 2008)

Indeed the 'corruption-causes-poverty narrative' has been dominantly voiced by social and political activists who represent the aspirations of the poor. Such narrative has dominated the shaping of public opinion, becoming an attractive language of public discourse among those who are concerned with the problems of corruption and poverty. The fact that poverty is as pervasive as corruption drives social activists to question the effect of economic development on people's lives, as Ahmad Tumbaleka, an intellectual-cum-political activist associated with the University of Indonesia, despondently remarked:

Economic disparity and social inequality remain the serious problem. The gap between the haves and the have-nots is widening rapidly. The less well-off groups are entrapped in poverty as allusive comments often appear in public talk: 'the poor are forbidden to get sick; the poor are not allowed to go to school' to express strong disappointment. Sadly, state officials and politicians repeatedly commit corruption despite the fact that it

endangers social life. As corruption is pervasive, Indonesians suffer long-lasting adversity and sadly the poor always get affected the most. (Quoted from talk-show on *Metrotv*)

Therefore, anti-corruption activists relentlessly voice popular criticism against the ideology of neo-liberalism when they mobilize social protests and orchestrate political rallies, as they consider that corruption is part of the practice of uncontrolled neo-liberalism. Corruption is perceived to be the cost that must be paid for capitalism, as Fahreza Nurahman, a political activist, said, sharing his views: “Corruption seems to be embedded in the capitalist system and the neo-liberal economy applied in this country, as the practice of *suap-menyuap* (bribe-giving and bribe-taking) has long been a common feature in the worlds of business and industry.” Such views apparently fit with what a businessman, Razak Ismail, has experienced, who says, “If you do not accept the corrupt system, you cannot do business. If you don’t pay bribes, nothing can go ahead; bribery has become the way the systems work.” Following these views, corruption is closely linked with economic neo-liberalism, as it provides more space for illicit practices through the mechanism and procedures facilitated by the government. Here elements of state bureaucracies contribute to the spreading of corruption, as seen in the practice of bribery involving bureaucrats and in the collusion of economic and political elites as a result of what is called ‘state capitalism’ or ‘bureaucratic capitalism’ (Robison 1990; Robison [1986] 2009). The public perception is that corruption is connected with the capitalist economy as the two are interrelated and often emerge in ordinary talk among social and political activists when they criticize the ideological underpinnings of the Indonesian economy. Such perceptions connect with an analysis offered by the neo-Marxist approach, which considers that corruption among the ruling class and political elites seems to be natural since they are agents of global and domestic capitalist economies. They are corrupt because they are part of the struggle of oligarchic elites to hijack democratic political institutions and maintain the system of the neo-liberal economy (e.g. Girling 1997; Robison 2002; Robison & Hadiz 2004).

Criticizing the ideology of capitalism, some NGO activists organized political rallies on the occasion of celebrating the World Anti-Corruption Day in Jakarta by bringing a huge banner with the striking caption, “Clean up Indonesia from Corruption and Neo-liberalism” (see figure 5.1) expressing the view that both have caused social plight for the people and placed the country in jeopardy. Hence the need for controlling and regulating economic neo-liberalism, as it is believed that an unregulated capitalist

economy will become inherently corrupt, since the instincts of its practitioners tend to be corrupt. Moreover, it can only be controlled by both effective regulations and the functioning of a checks-and-balances mechanism within social and political institutions. In this context, public criticism of corruption voiced by civil society organizations, and anti-corruption movements organized by NGOs, are very important to prevent corruption from becoming widespread under the capitalist economy.



Figure 5.1: A group of NGO activists take to the streets in the capital, protesting against the pervasive corruption by criticizing the ideology of neoliberalism which is blamed to be the source of illicit deals.

The social and political activists who are taking the lead to combat corruption are mostly educated elites and middle class groups who have a very strong social conscience about the dangers of corruption for society and its negative impacts on public life. They represent typical urban-educated elites who are politically literate with a wide access to the media so that they are skilful in articulating public criticism on corruption. They are considered to be an effective channel of political pressure on public policy- and decision-making processes. As an independent group without affiliation to any party, they have a strong political autonomy and play a central role in promoting democracy and governance reform, as Rob Jenkins has pointed out in the case of India: “as they become increasingly prosperous and influential, middle class groups are expected to find a political voice sufficiently autonomous to demand more accountable governance” (2007:63). As the proponents of anti-corruption movements, social and political activists embrace social ideologies—something related to the ideals

of justice, equality and prosperity, as they believe democracy to be the best way of achieving all these ideals for the whole people. Full of idealism about freeing Indonesia from corruption and bringing social justice and prosperity to Indonesians, they are very supportive of anti-corruption movements. In this regard, Mohamad Fauzan, a political activist, shared his views:

Corruption cannot be tolerated for any reason because it really hurts the sense of justice (*rasa keadilan*) for all Indonesian society and contradicts a civilized polity. Corruption is totally shameful and reflects uncivilized social behaviour as it breaches civic morality. Equally, corruption destroys public ethics in the context of governing the state, whereas the primary objective of establishing the state is, among others, to achieve social justice for all Indonesian people. (Quoted from interview, 4 March 2009)



Figure 5.2: [Hurting a sense of justice] A businesswoman who had been convicted of bribing an AGO prosecutor, and who received five years imprisonment, created a ‘mini palace’ in her prison in Jakarta, enjoying luxurious facilities; and from there she managed her business activities and controlled her private companies. An official from the Taskforce of Judicial Mafia Eradication (*Satuan Tugas Pemberantasan Mafia Hukum*) made an investigative visit and described it as a most serious scandal. (Photo by *Kompas*, 10/1/10)

Considering that corruption hurts the sense of justice for all Indonesian people, social and political activists strongly criticize the incidence of corruption. They believe in the principles of justice and equality as the fundamental values and the moral bases for creating a good society. As a good society relies on the shared moral values by which its members are bound (Etzioni 2001), corruption obviously infringes not only public morality and ethical values but also breaks the law and order of that society. Ideological thoughts of this kind deeply influence the ways in which social and political

activists comprehend the issue of corruption and how it potentially destroys social values within society. Here Mohamad Fauzan continued his views:

As corruption undermines the principles of justice and equality, it eventually leads to the distortion of social harmony, public trust, ethics and morality, and the whole value system of society. In other words, corruption is the master key to injustice and inequality, leading them to flourish, since it prevents public institutions from delivering good services for the people and achieving the common good for the betterment of society. (Quoted from interview, 4 March 2009)

Such ideological convictions reflected in Fauzan's views assert that state officials and those who operate the government systems must be responsible for creating public welfare as the manifestation of social justice. In this respect, corruption is conceived to be contradictory to the idea that the state government has a moral responsibility for the well-being for all its citizens. Here public narratives on corruption bring about, borrowing Gupta's phrase, 'the imagination of the state in public culture' (2006 [1995]) in which corruption discourse helps to construct the state by looking at how the government bureaucracies deliver their duties and responsibilities to serve the people, as he clearly explains:

The discourse of corruption is central to our understanding of the relationship between the state and social groups precisely because it plays this dual role of enabling people to construct the state symbolically and to define themselves as citizens. For it is through such representations, and through the public practices of various government agencies, that the state comes to be marked and delineated from other organizations and institutions in social life. (Gupta 2006 [1995]:226)

The public discourse of corruption helps one understand how people feel the state government should operate. In fact, corruption centres on state power, reflecting what Rose-Ackerman calls "the dysfunction of administrative government" (2007); or, in the language of Jonathan Parry, "the 'crisis of corruption' is a symptom of the weakness of the state" (2000:52). Not surprisingly, corruption renders the government incapable of providing social and economic welfare for its citizens. In other words, those who hold public power while being implicated in corruption are considered to be morally wrong as they break the very basic rights of the citizens, since corruption removes their opportunity to achieve a better life. In line with this reasoning, Italo Pardo points out: "Corruption at once draws and thrives on injustice, exploitation of inequality, distortions of power and betrayal [of] the fundamental principles of citizenship, for those who do not have access to, or to refuse to engage in corruption are at a disadvantage" (2004:11). Thus, it can be argued that corruption is against the

prophetic mission of the state, which is about bringing prosperity for all people, as Dini Ratnasari, an activist of the ICW, puts it:

Indonesia is endowed with abundant natural resources, but such natural endowments don't bring welfare to its people because of mismanagement and corruption. We have a big problem with corrupt and rotten politicians who have hijacked the reform movements. Seeing the political circumstances currently, the public seem to be sceptical that corruption can be eliminated. Instead, it will continue being the major problem in the country. (Quoted from interview, 18 February 2009)

Taking into account the illustrations mentioned above, social and political activists realize that corruption is tightly intertwined with power, and so they look at those who hold political power and how power relations are established. This is actually the major concern of anthropologists in studying corruption, as Haller & Shore put it: "We should not lose sight of the fact that transactions of bribery and corruption always take place in power relationships that invariably stratify, marginalize and exclude" (2005:17). Mirroring views of social and political activists, Ahmad Ghulam, head of the ICW's political division, explained that those who hold political power usually develop very strong relations with each other in order to secure their agenda and shield their interests, which are mostly associated with economic opportunities and political advantages. They form multifaceted networks encompassing many elements of the parties involved, which make the networks more complicated and problematic so that power relations among them are highly intricate. This notion is particularly connected with the common argument that corruption must be seen in the complexity of relationships among social actors within power structures, as Gledhill writes: "Corruption persists and may well enjoy a bright future because of the way its practices spin webs of complicity at different social levels" which are bound by the power relations that "shape both practices and the ambiguous moral discourses that characterize the responses of situated social actors to those practices" (2004:156).

The fact that corruption is connected with politics and takes place in power structures makes attempts to fight it much more difficult. Therefore, anti-corruption initiatives pioneered by non-state actors are critical as a sort of political measure to control any potential misuse of public power. This kind of political role is precisely the one played by the ICW along with other NGOs and civil society associations; they work hand in hand to strengthen collective efforts in combating and curbing corruption. Among their major activities are what is called "'deep throat' investigation" on presumed corruption cases which they reveal for investigation by the authorities. They

conduct social advocacy to increase public awareness about the perils of corruption affecting social life. As well as these, they carry out a series of workshops on (anti)-corruption and good governance for various civil society agencies. The ICW itself frequently holds training sessions for social activists on public governance and provides supervision for local NGOs on how to design anti-corruption programmes and agendas, so that civic participation in corruption eradication can be implemented. Although there are no hierarchical and structural relations between the ICW and other civil society associations, they have developed potent networks to uphold anti-corruption initiatives. Networks have also been established between the ICW, other NGOs, and centres for the study of corruption at several universities like Gadjah Mada University in Yogyakarta, Java, and Andalas University in Padang, West Sumatra. They also conduct research on the patterns of corruption in public office at national and local levels and have designed a roadmap of corruption eradication.¹⁷ In conducting all these activities, they have developed what they call ‘strategic partnerships’ and ‘interagency coordination’ in order to synergize all the elements of civil society groups so that they can maximize their common endeavour in fighting corruption and carrying out their anti-corruption agenda.

5.4 Power Contestation: the State and Civil Society

As the relations between corruption and political power are evident, anti-corruption movements cannot be detached from power contestations between the state and civil society. A relevant feature of such contestation is presented here, that is, a series of public protests organized by social and political activists in opposition to the ‘criminalization’ of two central figures of the KPK which lasted for several months and caused political tumult in the world of Indonesian politics. Led by the ICW, on 12 July 2009 tens of national and local NGOs¹⁸ congregated in Tugu Proklamasi Park in Jakarta

¹⁷ There are some works carried out in collaboration between the ICW, the Korupsi Pemberantasan Korupsi (KPK), and the Partnership for Governance Reform that have produced, among others, two main documents: (1) Fighting Corruption from Aceh to Papua (provinces of Indonesia); and (2) Roadmap of the KPK 2007-2011: Toward an Effective Corruption Eradication.

¹⁸ Other NGOs taking part in the public protests were: Transparency International Indonesia (TII); Center for Anti-Corruption Studies, Faculty of Law, Gadjah Mada University; Society for Public Monitoring of Indonesian Court, Faculty of Law, University of Indonesia; Center for Constitutional Studies, Andalas University; Center for the Study of Law and Policy Jakarta; Indonesia Forum for Budget Transparency (Fitra); Legal Aid Agencies of Jakarta, Padang, Surabaya; Bali Corruption Watch (BCW); Malang Corruption Watch (MCW); Societal Alliances for Anti-Corruption (AMAK), Indonesian Court Monitoring (ICM) Yogyakarta; and some others.

to declare what has become popularly known as CICAk (see figure 5.3), an acronym of *Cinta Indonesia Cinta KPK* (Love Indonesia Love KPK). The meeting was attended by hundreds of social and political activists as well as academics, journalists, and artists. They initiated a series of social mobilizations and political actions to counter what they named ‘corruptors fight back’ by proclaiming what is called *perlawanan rakyat* (people’s resistance) towards the (mis)use of the state power to undermine the KPK. Worried about the fate of KPK and the future of corruption eradication, Abdul Rahman, a former vice chair of the body and one of the CICAk initiators, shared his concerns:

We all rely on the KPK since this agency is the only state body the public can trust, as the people have lost their trust in the Police, the AGO, and even the courts. The KPK has proved to the public that it is a credible agency being in the vanguard of combating corruption effectively, so this body is the only hope for the people to fight corruption. But many corruptors are under threat with the existence of the KPK so they try to undercut it or even to sweep it away. So we proclaim CICAk to defend the KPK and we stand beside it and strongly condemn those who undermine it. (Quoted from interview, 15 July 2009)



Figure 5.3: The logo symbolizes the battle between *Cicak* (gecko) representing the KPK and *Buaya* (crocodile) representing the Police, and was used by social and political activists during mass demonstrations and political rallies against the ‘criminalization’ of the KPK officials. The motto reads *Saya Cicak Berani Lawan Buaya*—‘I am a gecko ... I am brave enough to fight against the crocodile’.

The term CICAk was taken from *cicak* (gecko) which was associated with the KPK when the anti-graft body was involved in a long battle against the Police, symbolized by *buaya* (crocodile). *Cicak* and *buaya* were used as symbolic expressions to illustrate the imbalance of power between the two state agencies when they were in fierce strife; the crocodile of course symbolizes superiority and domination over the gecko. In the battle there was a very high ranking police officer who was accused of

receiving bribes from a merchant banker, and the case was tackled by the KPK, which eventually caused a bitter conflict among three law enforcement bodies: the KPK on the one side and the Police along with the Attorney General's Office on the other side, as the two latter agencies were in complicated rivalry with the former. Such rivalry showed that senior law enforcers tried to frame anti-graft officials from the KPK on fabricated charges of bribery and blackmail. The Police and the AGO, as the story goes on, then worked hand in hand to strike at the KPK by detaining two of its officials—Bibit Rianto and Chandra Hamzah—and charging them with extortion and misuse of authority. They were then suspended from their positions as vice chairs of the agency. This inevitably sparked off accusations among social activists, who speculated that there was a political conspiracy operated by powerful and invisible agents, and suspected that the reason why the Police and the AGO targeted the KPK officials was because the anti-graft agency had grown to be a super-body so they wanted it to be delegitimized. Such speculation of conspiracy seemed to be the same in nature as corruption in which both appeared in the form of accusations and rumours, as Nuijten & Anders put it:

Corruption accusations can develop a life of their own and public denial usually succeeds in reinforcing the impression that the accusations are true. Gossip about corrupt practices often takes the form of conspiracy theories that quickly absorb contrary evidence into a conspiracy of even grander proportions. The public imagination quickly substitutes a lack of tangible proof with gossip and rumours. (Nuijten & Anders 2007:19)

In fact, the KPK has the right to arrest and prosecute everyone without exception, even the inner circle of President Yudhoyono and those holding state power: ministers, legislators, governors, mayors, and regents, who were previously untouchable and above the law. The success of the KPK in putting corrupt officials on trial is monumental and unprecedented in the course of the fight against corruption in the history of Indonesian politics. The public has widely recognized such accomplishments. Here is an example from people's comments:

If I were a corrupt official, of course I would want the KPK to die. If it couldn't be "killed" institutionally, I would try to weaken its power and damage its reputation. Losing public trust will make the KPK into the equivalent of a toothless tiger because trust is its lethal weapon. (Quoted from *Readers' Forum* of the Jakarta Post)

Certainly the existence of the KPK has created fear and scare among officials and politicians since corruption scandals mostly involve these people; and hundreds of public officials and legislators have been imprisoned by the KPK because of corruption. Such fear and dread among politicians are recognized by an unnamed prominent MP associated with the Golkar Party as follows:

The KPK has already prosecuted several MPs and begun investigating a huge corruption scandal which could suck in more than fifty (former) members of the parliament's financial commission, including two cabinet ministers. The rights of the KPK to prosecute those accused of corruption were authorized by parliament itself. The irony is that few MPs thought they themselves would be the target. It's really funny. The KPK was created by parliament; its bill was passed by parliament; its members were elected by parliament. And now they are scared of it. (Quoted from interview, 9 May 2009)

In essence, the conflict between the KPK and the Police together with the AGO has reflected the struggle for domination and superiority since the first one has effectively enlarged the newly established agency and gained credibility, being trusted by the public to tackle corruption, while the other two have lost trust and integrity. Worse, both the Police and the AGO are perceived by the public to be among the most corrupt state agencies. During the conflict, accusations were connected with political statements made by President SBY who expressed his personal apprehension about the growing power of the KPK by saying:

I should give an alert in relation to the position of the KPK as this agency has become the super-body among other state agencies, despite the fact that it was granted by the law the status of an independent body. Its power must not go unchecked because that would be dangerous for everyone, as the agency has no external control to balance such power. The KPK is now only responsible to God since there are no other institutions watching and monitoring this body. (Quoted from *Kompas* 24 June 2009)¹⁹

Straight away, the president's political statements ignited public controversy and he received strong criticism from many civil society groups as well as political observers, academics, and the media, and he was accused of being involved in, or at least giving covert approval to, a secret plot to undermine and paralyze the KPK. Such controversial statements were allegedly motivated by both political and personal interests because the father-in-law of President Yudhoyono's son—Aulia Pohan, a former Deputy Governor of the Bank Indonesia—was arrested by the KPK and charged with being implicated in the bribery of legislators. He was then taken to court, tried on corruption charges, found guilty, and given a sentence of five years in prison. The public accused the president of being angry and disappointed by the punishment, and he then expressed his feelings through the controversial statements which were interpreted by the activists as part of a political scheme to demoralize the KPK leaders and weaken

¹⁹ President Yudhoyono gave a press conference after meeting the executive board of *KOMPAS*, one of the most influential newspapers, just a few days away from the presidential election. Certainly his controversial statements heated up the political situation, which boiled over in the political contest at the time of the 2009 general elections.

the agency. Agum Badarudin, from one of the *cicak* activist groups, sharply criticized President Yudhoyono, saying:

President SBY applies double standards in combating corruption simply because his close relative is involved in it. He is not consistent with the government's programmes on corruption eradication and shows ambiguity in response to corruption scandals. His controversial statements basically indicate that his claim to having a strong commitment to fighting corruption is just a sort of political rhetoric to appease the public. (Quoted from interview, 12 July 2009)



Figure 5.4: A group of people take to the streets in front of the KPK office, protesting about a plot to criminalize two of its officials and to paralyze the anti-graft body. (Photo by detiknews.com)

Indeed the president's statements vehemently fuelled public anger. Social activists joined the ICW and other civil society groups and then organized a public protest to challenge what they called the 'invisible hands' to undermine the KPK. Taking a stand in front of the KPK office, joint NGO activists congregated for their social protest by bringing a huge banner (see figure 5.4) with the images of Yudhoyono and Aulia Pohan and the striking caption, "Parent-in-law is guilty, KPK is broken into parts; NKRI (Indonesia) without Corruption" which clearly reflected a deep public hatred and resentment towards those playing with political power. Public anger escalated and a wave of people's opposition to the political plot of destabilizing the KPK grew swiftly. Eventually, the accusations of political conspiracy exploded into public view when a series of wire-tapped conversations between the police officers, the senior prosecutors of the AGO, and the *cukong* (Chinese businesspeople), which hinted at the framing of the two KPK officials, were listened to in a court session in the Constitutional Court.

The revelation of the wire-tapped talks shocked the public and made people so angry to discover that the political conspiracy was a fact. They realised that the worries among NGO activists about ‘corruptors fight back’ were evidently true. Expressing deep disappointment about such bad situations, Mulyawan Karim, a prominent figure of the Jakarta Legal Aid Agency shared his laments:

In our everyday talk we often hear that law and justice can be bought by the haves. Even buying and selling court verdicts are popular; charges can be negotiated in the country’s legal systems. But I am deeply shocked by listening to the wire-tapped talks which show that those who are in charge of law enforcement have been rotten. These clearly reflect the decay of morality among officials; whereas they are supposed to impose the law and justice. Such bad situations are getting worse over time. Sadly, they are even worse than I thought. (Quoted from talk-show on *Metrotv*)



Figure 5.5: The large crowds take part in a public rally in the capital—as part of the *Cicak vs Buaya* conflict—protesting against a political scheme to destabilize the KPK and criminalize its officials.

Social mobilization opposing such political plots reached its peak when thousands of people marshalled political rallies to support the KPK and challenge what is called *kekuatan jahat* (evil powers) and *tangan kotor* (dirty hands) and those who were disturbed by the existence of the KPK. Flocking to Bundaran Hotel Indonesia, the heart of the capital, the large crowds expressed public outrage at the evil powers and dirty hands operating within the state agencies. During the political rallies, people brought crocodile dolls representing the Police and burnt them; while others brought a poster of *cukong*—who in the recordings attempted to get the KPK to drop a bribery case—dressed in a police uniform, parodying the Commander-in-Chief of the Police (see figure 5.5).

The event indicated popular resistance representing the struggle over the power hegemony between the state and civil society with the use of agents for each; and “agents of each category,” Kurtz writes, “may be involved in political and cultural hegemonic practices. They may represent either an existing hegemonic structure or a counter-hegemonic structure. And they may be located in the institutions of the state ... or civil society” (1996:109). Yet the idea of civil society is widely contested and it cannot be strictly separated from the state since the state exists within society, and the former cannot be assumed more dominant in terms of power possession than the latter, as Sharma & Gupta have illustrated:

Once we see that the boundary between the state and civil society is itself an effect of power, then we can begin to conceptualize ‘the state’ *within* (and not automatically distinct from) other institutional forms through which social relations are lived ... Such an analysis of state formation does not simply assume that the state stands at the apex of society and is the central locus of power. (Sharma & Gupta 2006:9)

This notion seems to follow the Gramscian (1971) school of thought, asserting that state and society are mutually constitutive rather than separate entities; they are equally reinforcing elements of the socio-political structures. Here the state is conceived of as one aspect of civil society and at the same time civil society functions as part of the state; they are by no means in contradiction to each other and therefore cannot be seen as two distinct entities in opposition to each other. As Ernest Gellner put it:

There is no talk of civil society as distinct from the state; there is only overlapping, identical political hierarchy and economic specialization, mutually reinforcing each other. Political rank and economic function are firmly welded, and one entails the other. (Gellner 1994:55)

Indeed, although the various elements of state and civil society appear independent, they are in fact interdependent, as Crehan points out: “The state and civil society do not represent two bounded universes, always and forever separate, but rather a knot of tangled power relations which can be disentangled into assemblages of threads” (2002:103). What is more, the apparent autonomy of civil society produces a sense of freedom and formal equality, but in reality it is endorsed by political forces associated with the state power. The concept of civil society is related to the creation of a so-called ‘level playing field’ where elements of both state and society are in contest; they then form an open arena or a public space in which hegemonic ideas concerning social and political life are contested (e.g. Kurtz 1996; Howell & Pearce 2001; Crehan 2002). Within the kind of framework, social and political activism against corruption manifested in social movements organized by civil society groups represent a political

contestation to counterbalance the power hegemony of the state, or as Akhil Gupta has noted: “Any struggle against hegemonic configurations of power and domination involves a cultural struggle” through which “the state comes to be constructed” (2006 [1995]:231). Here activists of civil society have created what is called a ‘constructing arena’ through a series of popular protests in support of a state agency, and the KPK and contestation of power hegemony reflect multiple understandings of what the relations between state and society ought to be, as Bebbington, Hickey & Mitlin explain:

The resulting contestations and the hegemonies which emerge and the roles that [civil society] and NGOs play must in turn be understood in terms of the relationships and struggles for power among the constitutive actors of society. Importantly, this also means that agents from within the state may join forces with civil society actors in forging counter-hegemonic alternatives as well as dominant hegemonies. (Bebbington, Hickey & Mitlin 2008:7)

These arguments clearly show how power contestation involves multiple agents, as seen in the case of the Cicak-vs-Buaya conflict. In this fierce conflict, civil society activists strongly criticized the state and power establishment, while at the same time they also linked up with some state bodies, such as the KPK. Such political contestation illustrates how civic groups forge what Jenkins calls “creative alliances” with some state actors “to combat broader patterns of unaccountable governance in which corruption is a key component” (Jenkins 2007:65). Indeed the role of Indonesian civil society in support of anti-corruption movements has been made possible within a democracy system, as it provides the public with a good opportunity to watch out for corruption within state agencies and to encourage civil society groups to be involved in grassroots-based anti-corruption initiatives. Since democracy guarantees civil rights and political liberties, thereby allowing citizens to play a part in the social and political processes, public attention to corruption has become much more intense; and with the help of the free press, corruption scandals among state officials are easy to disclose to the public.

Democracy is therefore the key to anti-corruption initiatives, as Anderson & Heywood have pointed out: “The increased attention paid to corruption is often seen as either a reflection of an increase in real levels of corruption or else an increase in the visibility of corruption—itsself the result of a host of changes, including the rise of a new type of media, the spread of democracy, and the mobilization of civil society” (2009:34). This is particularly true in the case of Indonesia, as people have a very strong feeling that corruption becomes much more extensive and the perception of corruption have also increased. There is a widespread sense among Indonesians that the level of

corruption has grown as the media have regularly made abundant reports about it. With the help of the media, discourses around corruption have frequently appeared in social sphere taking its place alongside other ways of exercising and contesting power, especially in relation to the issues of patronage, clientism, and cronyism. Indeed, the increased perception of corruption is seen in the wide coverage by the media, showing that people are becoming aware of corruption. With the massive media coverage, corruption-talk as discourse has escalated and become more overt; and within democratic system, people enjoy political freedom to talk about corruption openly. In other words, public awareness of corruption has increased dramatically in parallel with the increased access to the right to information and the growing public participation in social and political processes.

Nonetheless, Indonesian democracy also reveals ironic phenomena, as unintended consequences materialize along with democratic politics. Unlike the common belief that democracy will produce good governance, which means less corrupt government, Indonesian democracy is showing the contrary, since it is producing more corrupt politicians and state officials. Corruption seems to be the paradox of liberal democracy as it becomes much more pervasive within democratic systems. It is sad to witness how democracy in the country has become a breeding-ground for corruption, since the price of liberal democracy has been such a high one (e.g. Mietzner 2007; Aspinall & Mietzner 2010). In spite of raising public enthusiasm in response to the new era of modern democracy, the current Indonesian democracy fits what Barbara Harris-White & Gordon White have observed:

Democratic systems also provide incentives and opportunities for corrupt behaviour, notably the enormous costs of mounting election campaigns, the capture of political parties by economic elites, the politicization of the state apparatus by elected officials and the desire of the latter to compensate for political uncertainty by building up a capital stake through corruption. (Harris-White & White 1996:3)

In this context, it can be argued that corruption seems to be a facade for 'patrimonial democracy' (Webber 2005) in which political elites maintain popular support with the use of clientage relations by practising the so-called money politics, which is conceived as an object of corruption. In the world of politics, corruption has become a key channel for social mobility through the system of democracy, and corrupt politicians have a strong tendency to maximize their own benefit with the use of parties as vehicles for increasing their wealth, political influence, and social status within

society. In this respect, it seems relevant to quote Jonathan Parry who states that “[corruption] may be as much a product of a growing acceptance of universalistic bureaucratic norms as of its actual increase. Corruption has seemed to get worse and worse not (only) because it has, but also because it subverts a set of values to which people are increasingly committed” (2000:53).

Corruption thus represents social pathology since it is condemned by the public while at the same time it is part of daily practice within society. Not surprisingly, the people are deeply concerned with the issue of corruption because it is a serious threat to democracy. The fact that corruption is on the increase within democratic systems means it has become a major challenge for NGOs and civil society groups to maximize their efforts in combating it. They have been part of citizen participation and public monitoring to watch corruption and create a healthy democracy through the mechanism of checks and balances to halt the misuse of public power which results in corruption. However, the citizens alone will not be able to cope with corruption, if the state does not step in; instead, it will gnaw at the state body and then devastate the whole power structure, as Pardo has warned: “The experience of corruption may well be a corollary of the reach of the state. However, as it inevitably conflates the opposite of the rational legal authority and impersonal rules and of the realm of private interest, its corrosive power in the relationship between citizenship and the state may well become a key element in the demise of the state and its institutions” (2004:10). Yet with all due respect to the role of NGOs and civil society in exercising public control of the state government, further examination and deeper assessment are still needed regarding the efficacy of non-state actors in mobilizing grassroots initiatives of anti-corruption in the growing incidence of corruption in the era of liberal democracy.

5.5 Conclusion

To conclude the discussion of this chapter, it can be argued that the power of NGOs and civil society institutions in propagating anti-corruption reforms is undoubtedly significant. They are widely recognized as representing civic participation in articulating public criticism against corruption. They have been relatively successful in becoming an effective watchdog for state bodies despite many political obstructions to carrying out their social activism. The relative success of social and political activism in mobilizing collective resistance to combat corruption can be seen in the fact that NGO

and civil society activists are always at the forefront of the disclosure of a number of huge corruption scandals within power structures. With the support of NGOs and civil society groups, the authorities feel that they are socially and politically encouraged by the public to take legal action against those committing corruption and to deal with any corruption incidents.

Indeed NGOs and civil society agencies have become the major proponents of anti-corruption movements since they have been able to play a critical role as political safeguards in the battle against corruption. As the political significance of these non-state actors is evident, the public acknowledge that the future of corruption eradication would be in great doubt without the participation of NGOs and civil society associations. With the spirit of volunteerism they work almost without any political interest in the sense that they are not seeking power. Instead, the main interest of these non-state actors is solely to promote accountable and transparent public governance and create clean government. As a result, the state government will operate merely for providing good services for the people, not for enriching those holding public power. This is actually the nature of social and political activism in campaigning for anti-corruption reforms that affect the ideology of NGOs and civil society activists. More importantly, state actors—officials and politicians—are regarded as the central players who repeatedly commit corruption and thus become the main subjects of social watchdogs and public criticism. In this respect, the central argument as to why activists of NGO and civil society shape their own ideology rests largely on political idealism: overseeing and ensuring that those who occupy the state powers take full responsibility for achieving prosperity for the whole people by reducing corruption in public institutions.

Although NGOs and civil society can sometimes go together and work hand in hand with state agencies (e.g. the collaboration between the KPK and NGOs and civil society during the Cicak-vs-Buaya conflict), they still keep some distance from the KPK and other state bodies and position themselves as the representatives of the general public. They appear to have become the key for public control and political force to criticize the misuse of the state powers. Moreover, NGOs and civil society agencies are also often critical of the KPK as this anti-graft body is conceived to have some sort of political barriers—they seem afraid of losing authority, of being the target of criminalization, of receiving various threats—when dealing with any illicit deals. Indeed the KPK frequently encounters serious political risks so that they seem very careful—if

not fearful—in investigating corruption scandals and in prosecuting state officials and politicians implicated in illegal practices. Activists of NGOs and civil society suspect that those who possess political powers commonly intervene in legal actions and undermine the authorities (e.g. the KPK), treating them as the subject of political co-optation, when they prosecute those who are alleged of corruption. Such intervention often leads all parties involved to make compromises in the form of elite settlements for the sake of political stability, shielding the big boss, protection of the powerful, and the like. This kind of language is always used if huge corruption scandals with strong political dimensions end up without a clear solution, settled behind closed doors.

It is acknowledged that what NGOs and civil society have done in terms of anti-corruption activism is certainly far from perfect, but the public rely on them to carry on this task. Nonetheless, it should also be recognized that the relative success of NGOs and civil society agencies in the fight against corruption would not have been possible without the help of the media. In this regard, media people participate in bringing the idea of anti-corruption into wider audiences, raising collective consciousness among Indonesians. The next chapter discusses the role of the media in anti-corruption campaigns, along with other forms of public criticism against corruption pioneered by Indonesian artists.

Chapter 6

THE ROLE OF THE PUBLIC MEDIA AND POPULAR ART IN ANTI-CORRUPTION MOVEMENTS

The main purpose of this chapter is to show that anti-corruption movements take the form of a collective effort involving a diversity of groups across Indonesian society. The central argument is that the media and popular art resonate considerably with the ideas and practices of anti-corruption. This chapter therefore explores the significance of the media and artists in support of public campaigns against corruption, using a variety of modes. It looks into public criticism of corruption expressed in ways such as TV programmes, songs, poetry, *pantun* (folk quatrains), cartoons, caricatures, and murals, regarding all of them as part of anti-corruption initiatives. The major theme discussed in this chapter is about how the media and artists use their collective efforts to echo the public voice and popular protest in combating corruption, thereby showing that they have become a critical factor in social movements that aim to eradicate illicit practices. The chapter will also demonstrate the efficacy of the media and artists in promoting public awareness of the problem of corruption.

6.1 The Media: Public Criticism and the Culture of Resistance

This section discusses the media used as a means of public criticism and of voicing people's aspirations. But before going further, I should first clarify what I mean by 'the public'. In the course of discussion in this and previous chapters, I apply the term 'the public' which refers to the general public—most of the Indonesian people—as their opinions and views often appear in both print and electronic media. However, for the sake of discursive analysis, I utilize the approach of representation through the educated groups and middle class elites, since they represent the so-called critical mass. With their intellectual capacity and critical thinking, they articulate people's aspirations and voice opinions, thus becoming the focal point of public criticism against corruption. In the context of the print media, Indonesian newspapers and magazines are accessible to a limited audience, that is, the educated urban groups. However, in the context of the electronic media (TV), the media reach the much wider public of the lower classes and those who lack higher levels of education. They engage with these groups of people, and are indeed the indispensable means of dispersing the issue of corruption into a

wider audience so that it becomes the subject of public talks amongst Indonesian people, that is, the general public. In addition to this, here what is meant by the media refers to an instrument through which people express their opinions and views related to actual problems in daily life. In this respect, newspapers, magazines, and TV are classified as the media, through which people find a way of criticizing public policies and addressing social issues.

It is acknowledged that democracy has brought Indonesian people to enjoy political liberty and civil rights so that they are now experiencing the exuberance of freedom in many aspects of public life. As the democratic system has become well established, there are no restrictions in politics, social life and cultural expression as was the case during Soeharto's New Order (1966-1998). The new architecture of Indonesian politics under democracy allows people to articulate their aspirations freely, as repression from the state authorities has gone. Certainly political democracy was the paramount achievement of the 1998 *reformasi* movements, which made it possible for citizens to become involved in politics and guaranteed freedom of expression, of association, and of the press (e.g. Emmerson 1999; Budiman, Hatley & Kingsbury 1999; O'Rourke 2002; Aspinall 2005).

Generally speaking, the media appear to have become an influential factor in the dynamics of democratic politics, and media institutions are considered as one of the main pillars of democracy. Peter Gross (2002) applied the phrase 'media-politics entanglement' to illustrate how the media have played a vital role in promoting political democracy. In the context of Indonesian politics, Krishna Sen & David Hill, in their *Politics and the Media in Twenty-First Indonesia* (2011), have examined the role of the media in post-authoritarian Indonesia, explaining how they have become very supportive of political transformation towards the establishment of democratic governance in the country. However, prior to the emergence of the *reformasi* era, the media experienced very strong restrictions under the New Order state as the authorities severely obstructed their capacity to operate freely; very often the media faced threats of being banned and of their printing permits being withdrawn by the regime. As appeared in a number of scholarly works (e.g. Dhakidae 1991; Romano 2003; Hill 2007 [1994]; Sen & Hill 2007 [2000]), the New Order government always dictated to the media that they should follow the principle of the so-called "free and responsible press" in the sense that they should be in line with state policy, thus forcing them to produce news and reports which were safe for the regime and which would maintain national stability.

Indeed, the New Order regime employed very tight control of the press through censorship and bans on its publications in the name of national security and political stability. The New Order state always used the language of social security and public order to limit the freedom of the press, since it did not want to place security and stability at risk or put the power establishment in jeopardy because of public criticism voiced by the media.

During the period of the New Order regime, there were a series of press bans and withdrawals of publication permits mainly for political reasons; and the banning itself clearly indicated that “the press was becoming a significant site of political struggle” (Sen & Hill 2007 [2000]:52). Moreover, such bans reflected how the culture of resistance against the state power had been originated by the media even in the era of the authoritarian government. Although the press was tightly restricted by the autocratic power of the New Order, media people relentlessly struggled for their freedom to voice public criticism and express the aspirations of the people. To do this, they took all the risks including the withdrawal of publication permits if the regime felt infuriated by their reports. What follow are some critical cases of the press being banned.

Kompas and six other newspapers were banned by the state authority on 21 January 1978 as they produced a series of reports on mass demonstrations to challenge the nomination of President Soeharto for the third tenure and on social protest against widespread corruption in the state agencies. The regime became angry as the power establishment was challenged by its political opponents, and the media made it possible through their publications. Meanwhile, in the 1980s, two dailies, *Sinar Harapan* and *Prioritas*, were banned on 9 October 1986 and 29 June 1987 respectively, over their severe criticism of the government’s economic policies. Furthermore, the most controversial suppression of the press was the bans of three major weekly publications on 21 June 1994: (1) the oldest and most prestigious *Tempo* magazine; (2) the most critical political tabloid *DeTIK*; and (3) the weekly *Editor*—all for different contents in their reports but for the same reason, that is, they threatened the regime's existence. *Tempo* vividly described a bitter conflict between two of Soeharto’s ministers—Finance Minister Mar’ie Muhammad and Minister for Science and Technology B.J. Habibie—over the purchase and refurbishment of thirty nine ships from the German navy. *DeTIK* criticized the military, which dominated key civilian posts in the government offices, and opened political speculation about who would be the successor of President Soeharto. These were indeed the most sensitive issues that should not be questioned let

alone be criticized, since it was forbidden to debate them in the public sphere. The *Editor* announced in its headline that the President's son, Tommy Soeharto, should be grilled on suspicion of being responsible for the collapse of the government bank, Bapindo. Those bans on the press clearly illustrate how media agencies experienced the fight against the very strict control by the state. In this respect, people now utilize the media as a way in which they can challenge the misuse of public power by state authorities or criticize government policies that do not meet public aspirations. With the emergence of democracy, the media have become much more important in terms of providing the public with a channel to express their criticism (e.g. Dhakidae 1991; Sen & Hill 2007 [2000]). The press is so vital for public control because it "not only serves as a watchdog, warning of faults and problems in the [state] system, but also acts as a channel for public opinion, providing communities with a voice in public affairs" (Romano 2003:43). Meanwhile, gaining wide access to the media has become a major demand of the middle class groups being part of common concerns of the public, as David Hill has mentioned: "As [an] ally of the open press, the emerging middle class demands access to information and knowledge from [the] mass media, both print and electronic, that is free to provide comprehensive coverage of a matter of public interest" (Hill 2007 [1994]:12-13). The educated groups and middle class elites are in need of access to the media as a mode of public transparency.

Given the fact that the media have played a central function in public life, it is important to take into account how they are used as an effective tool to support public campaigns against corruption. It is almost impossible to get an appropriate view and understanding of the issue of corruption without connecting it with the media; corruption cannot be detached from the media since it is about popular narratives presented by the media to the public. Indeed, corruption practices *per se* obviously take place in clandestine locations beyond the direct observation of anyone, but the media then bring the cases to light for public discussion, involving and attracting a wide range of audiences, as Haller & Shore have rightly written: "the media discourse of newspapers [magazines and TV programmes] create 'the public' with rights and 'the politicians' [and state officials] with responsibilities" and they assert that "corruption narratives are of course mediated through media" (2005:15, 18).

The major argument is grounded on the fact that the media provide people with an adequate space to invigorate critical discourse on corruption which spreads outward to the public. It is argued in this chapter that the media are the foremost agents of

dispersing ideas of social and political resistance against corruption and of increasing popular support for public criticism of corruption. The resonance of public campaigns against corruption has become very effective with the help of the media, and it is becoming increasingly apparent that the media have inspired the public to become much more aware of the perils of corruption in relation to the state government and citizens. Through the media, ideas of freeing the state agencies from corruption can easily thrive in society and are widely distributed therein. Likewise, through the work of journalists, anti-corruption initiatives can flourish unhindered among social and political activists and even reach out to much wider audiences across the country. As a result, the public have become much more attentive to the serious dangers of corruption which can threaten social life and put the fate of Indonesian people in jeopardy. Thus they respond to the critical issue of corruption by giving popular support to anti-corruption movements pioneered by social and political activists, as well as by media people and artists, as I will be presenting the roles of these last two respectively.

6.2 Images of Corruption in the Indonesian Media

This part discusses the issue of corruption as materialized in the media and how they are involved in circulating corruption narratives within society. It is very common for the magnitude of corruption to be due to its connection with politics, and this is why the issue of corruption receives huge public attention and wide coverage by the press. In this respect, media people feel that they should take part in publicising the hazard of corruption as one which must be taken very seriously. With this concern, I approached a senior journalist, Suleiman of TV-One, to talk about media and corruption, as he focused on fighting corruption through the public media. Suleiman graduated from the School of Government at Padjadjaran University, Bandung, West Java. Before entering the world of the media industry, he used to be an ardent social activist who had a strong idealism of dedicating himself to social and political advocacy for Indonesian society. Before joining TV-One, he had worked for several years first with a weekly magazine, *Warta Ekonomi*, and then with electronic media, SCTV (*Surya Citra Televisi*).

When I met him at his office, Suleiman shared his thoughts about the vital role of the public media in empowering society and acting as a channel for the public voice. When he entered a professional career as a journalist, he still maintained his commitment to supporting public advocacy; and the media of course are a strategic

instrument to be used as a way of delivering what he called ‘a prophetic mission’; becoming a social control for both government and society. As a professional journalist, Suleiman had been frequently involved in investigative journalism, in which he investigated many cases including corruption and other political scandals in the state agencies. Concerned with media and corruption, he explained:

As corruption has been far-reaching, it must be taken seriously and the media must take the lead to promote public campaigns to eliminate this ‘social virus’. The media can be a representative of the public voice and reflect the heart of the people concerning the problem of corruption, so they should take responsibility for fighting it by working together with other elements of civil society. Here the media are considered as the best way to narrate the dangers of corruption to the public and convey to people its negative impacts on society. (Quoted from interview, 2 November 2008)

Thinking of the negative effects of corruption on public life, Suleiman along with his TV crews then created a special news programme focusing on the issue of corruption, and called *Kerah Putih: Liputan Mendalam Korupsi—White-Collar Crime: Deep Reports on Corruption*, which was screened weekly on TV-One. The main purpose of broadcasting the *Kerah Putih* was to raise public awareness that corruption has become a very serious problem which greatly affects many aspects of social life within society. He wanted to show the public that corruption has put people at risk and jeopardized the country as a whole, since it weakens the structures of the government. As a journalist, Suleiman has been able to capture the voice of the people, and comments that they often grumble that corruption causes social grievances and injustice, because public funds that are intended for basic services such as education, health care and other social benefits are embezzled by corrupt officials. Suleiman explained that the media are believed to be an effective means to transform public consciousness of the dangers of corruption into collective actions for combating it and to transmute public criticism to all groups of society. Thus, it is hoped that news programmes on corruption, screened on television, would be able to curtail the intention of state officials to become implicated in it and would help the public watch out for the potential for corruption in those who hold public power.

One of the much-watched editions of the *Kerah Putih* was an investigative report on a corruption scandal involving officials of Bank Indonesia—the Governor, along with four Deputy Governors and two managers—and fifty four legislators linked to both Islamic and secular-nationalist political parties, which shared a number of seats in the legislative body including the United Development Party, the Indonesian

Democratic Party of Struggle, and the Golkar Party. According to Suleiman, the broadcasting of the *Kerah Putih* attracted a large number of viewers because of the magnitude of the corruption scandal, as it amounted to Rp31.5 billion (US\$3 million) and those implicated in it were high profile politicians. One of them was Paskah Suzetta of the Golkar Party who was appointed as a minister in Yudhoyono's first cabinet. On the screen, narratives of the corruption scandal were presented in detail for viewers, along with some lively images of those who were accused of it. The scandal initially begun with the Bank Indonesia's proposal of amendment of Law No. 23 of 1999 on Bank Indonesia, and the Constitution says that any amendment to a Law must be made with the approval of the Parliament. Disappointingly, some MPs who were responsible for this asked officials of Bank Indonesia for some 'refreshments' in return for the approval of the amendment of that Law. With the broadcasting of the Bank Indonesia—MPs scandal on TV-One, the public then became convinced that corruption was indeed so complicated since it involved such important officials who occupied very senior positions. Given the fact that corruption has become deeply entrenched in public office, efforts to combat it need to be organized effectively by synergizing all elements of the nation. Obviously the media have become a crucial factor in the fight against corruption. Suleiman points out:

The role of mass media in alleviating corruption is unequivocally important. Any social and political activism against corruption would be less echoed to the public without the help of the press. Likewise, public criticism of corruption would have no impact socially and politically unless the media kindly transformed it into the wider audience in order to become public discourse. This is the primary social responsibility of the mass media that must be carried out; and this is basically the main intent of broadcasting the *Kerah Putih* programme on TV-One. (Quoted from interview, 2 November 2008)

These views actually correspond to what scholars call 'the power of the media institutions' (e.g. Couldry 2000; Curran 2002; Gurevitch et al. 2005 [1982]). With reference to this notion, I argue that electronic media are among the major sources of corruption narratives which impact a great deal on how the public perceive this critical issue and how the state should deal with corruption and respond to public criticism of it. What the electronic media people did, as in the case of the TV-One's *Kerah Putih* programme, was essentially to capture what the public are concerned about, that is, the issue of corruption, so they share in common the actual problems in everyday life. Here, the electronic media are able to reproduce social issues and broadcasts then bring them to the audiences, as Couldry has illustrated: "Through a long and uneven process

affecting programming, modes of presentation, speech styles of broadcasters, and so on, the audience ... came to feel that the ‘world’ of broadcasting was in some sense their own world” (2000:11). In essence, the electronic media try to bring daily routines of events and social life within society for the public through live broadcasting by “[escaping] from the shadow of the state powers to become independent [institutions]” (Curran 2002:5). Crucial to these processes is the existence of what Habermas (2010 [1989]) has described as ‘the public sphere’ through which the media are able to function as a public control by vocalizing public opinion, since this social function reflects democratic values. Meanwhile, the public sphere itself must be seen as a way of mediating the interests of both sides: the state and society. Here Habermas explains:

The public sphere is one which mediates between society and the state, in which the public organizes itself as the bearer of public opinion, in accordance with the principle of the public sphere—that principle of public information which once had to be fought for against the arcane policies of monarchies and which since that time has made possible the democratic control of state activities. (Habermas 2010 [1989]:73-74)

In addition to the images of corruption screened on television, print media also bring the corruption incidence to their readers by illustrating how it operates in public office, which involves state officials and politicians. In line with the electronic media, a weekly magazine called *Tempo*²⁰ has frequently brought corruption scandals to audiences for public control and debate. On the edition of 7 July 2008, *Tempo* presented investigative reports on the same corruption scandal as TV-One did through the *Kerah Putih* programme. *Tempo* depicts on its front cover the official of Bank Indonesia who carries a bag full of money in his left hand and hugs shoulders with a politician while

²⁰ *Tempo* was established in April 1971 by a group of journalists and artists with the spirit of promoting investigative journalism. Among the founders of *Tempo* are Goenawan Mohamad, who was then appointed to become the first editor-in-chief, Jusril Djalinus, Bur Rasuanto, Fikri Jufri, Syu’bah Asa, Isma Sawitri, Putu Wijaya, and some more. Inspired by America’s *Time*, *Tempo* (meaning time) appears to be the first magazine in the absence of weekly media. The publication of *Tempo* was intended to be an alternative reading source for middle class groups working as professionals at both private institutions and public agencies. With the very popular tag line, *Enak Dibaca dan Perlu* (nice to read and needed), *Tempo* is widely acknowledged to be the most influential magazine as indicated by its weekly sales reaching about 120,000 copies with 535,000 readers distributed into big cities in Java and outside Java. Yet the vast majority of *Tempo*’s readers are concentrated in Jakarta (44.5%) and the surrounding areas of Bogor, Tangerang, Bekasi (27.3%), while the rest of them are scattered across the country in other cities. With the feature of distribution, readership, and sales, *Tempo* is considered the leading magazine which greatly affects the building of public opinions and criticism. *Tempo* also claims to be an independent media agency which has no affiliation with any political party or individual so it enjoys freedom in expressing its views and assessments in relation to all contemporary issues in the nation. Regarding the success of the publication, *Tempo* has also appeared in an English edition since 2000, of which about 24,000 copies are printed, with around 54,000 readers, indicating that it reaches English-speaking audiences both in Indonesia and beyond. (Most of data are taken from *Pusat Data dan Informasi Tempo* [PDIT, Center for Data and Information of *Tempo*])

his right hand puts an envelope full of bribes into the pocket of the politician's trousers. And the headline boldly reads *Main Belakang BI-DPR*—Illicit deals behind closed doors between Bank Indonesia and the House of Representatives. Meanwhile, in the editorial the *Tempo*'s journalist wrote:

It is indeed pathetic to see the Bank Indonesia's scandal of bribes implicating MPs. In this country, corruption can be done in various ways; it can be covered by polite language with a cheerful joke, or can even be concealed in an official meeting with a keen sense of humour. If in fact corruption is perceived to be as evil as a murder, what has been done by corruptors is similar to films about the mafia, portraying a mafia figure who kills his enemies while feeding dogs; or a mafia boss who is praying in a holy place while giving an order to slaughter his opponents. (*Tempo*'s Editorial, 7 July 2008)



The corruption narratives by *Tempo* seem very suggestive as the editor employed metaphorical descriptions to illustrate the degree of the dangers of corruption so that such narratives would sensitively affect public perception. As corruption is a secret activity, those committing it often make use of various ways to conceal such desire. Again, the *Tempo*'s editor illustrated the kind of camouflage as below:

Corruption can be done with the use of symbolic language that seems graceful, polite and funny although it is actually loathsome. A small team formed by Bank Indonesia to deal with MPs on illicit transactions gave itself a very nice name: the Committee of Societal Development—just to cover up the transfer of money to legislators. A former official of Bank Indonesia once said that he very often received requests by MPs about *uang pelicin* ('refreshment' or pay-off) in a joke with various forms of allegories, such as 'We [MPs] don't have any budget', or 'There is a price that must be paid for this project', or 'We need *zamzam*²¹ water'. (*Tempo*'s Editorial, 7 July 2008)

²¹ *Zamzam* is mineral water from Mecca, Saudi Arabia, as those who perform *hajj* (pilgrimage) always bring it home as a gift for their families and friends.

By presenting the actual cases of the corruption scandal, *Tempo*, like TV-One, tried to represent a ‘reality’. Here, representation refers to the construction of aspects of this reality such as people, political figures, religious sects, objects, cultural identities, etc. with the use of the media. Such representations can be through speeches, writings, live pictures, or visual objects as displayed on a TV screen or magazine cover. Yet representations are a sort of interpretation which may enforce particular ideologies to which one is orientated, as Kellner & Durham have illustrated: “Representations in turn were interpreted not just as replications of the real, reproductions of natural objects, but as constructions of complex technical, narrative, and ideological apparatuses” (2010 [2001]:xxxiii).

As a part of the cultural system and social practice, the media greatly influence almost all aspects of social life of human societies. Here, the media are “embedded in people’s quotidian lives,” while the public are “imbricated in discursive universes, political situations, economic circumstances, national settings, [and] historical moments” (Ginsburg, Abu-Lughod & Larkin 2002:2). Given the fact that the media have social significance in public life by playing an important part in shaping public opinion, one needs to take into consideration the vital role of the media in support of anti-corruption reform, since they have become “the most important mechanism in public culture for the circulation of discourses on corruption” (Gupta 2006 [1995]:222). The centrality of the media in proliferating public narratives of (anti)-corruption is unquestionable as conceived by Linda Wardoyo, a committee member of the Bung Hatta Anti-Corruption Award (BHACA).²² She expressed her views as follows:

We give our thanks to the media as they have shown the public their crucial role in promoting the ideas of anti-corruption. In many cases, media people maintain great courage by disclosing a number of corruption scandals involved those holding political powers, even at the risk of losing their jobs. The media are able to disperse information within society, to mobilize social solidarity among citizens in the fight against corruption, and even to take the lead in revealing illegal practices within the state agencies. (Quoted from interview, 12 January 2009)

²² In honor of the former Vice President Mohammad Hatta, the Bung Hatta Anti-Corruption Award (BHACA) was established in 2003 by a collaboration of scholars, intellectuals, researchers, journalists, activists and businesspeople who are concerned about the prevalence of corruption in the country. The BHACA regularly grants an award to individuals from both the public and private sector—among them are officials, activists and scholars, as well as local leaders and regional administrators—who show strong leadership and a commitment to fighting against corruption.

These views seem to represent the wider opinion, acknowledging that the media have played a critical part in developing a public discourse of (anti)-corruption. In this respect, the Indonesian media seem to have the responsibility to support public campaigns against corruption through the media industry. The power of the media is unquestionably indispensable since they are the most strategic medium for disseminating the ideas and practices of anti-corruption into society. They are also capable of mobilizing public opinion with regard to anti-corruption campaigns.

6.3 The Poetics of (Anti)-Corruption: Popular Songs, Poems and *Pantuns*

It is interesting to note that it is not only the media but also popular art forms that have played a critical role in public criticism against corruption. This section looks at art narratives of (anti)-corruption that take the form of popular songs, poetry and *pantuns* (folk quatrains). I would call them the poetics of (anti)-corruption, as people make use of these cultural media to articulate their criticism of corruption. There are many ways of narrating corruption, as have appeared in daily public talk; and among the interesting modes of conversing about it are popular songs, poems, and *pantuns*, as their lyrics are replete with critiques.

I bring up here a group of musicians known as *Slank*, who are very active in support of anti-corruption movements. They have frequently participated in public campaigns against corruption through a series of music performances on many occasions such as social protests, public rallies, the commemoration of Anti-corruption Day, and others. Just to take one event: on 9 December 2008, *Slank*, along with other groups of musicians, joined a cultural performance organized by the KPK to propagate anti-corruption programmes. On that day, amid the hectic morning hours in the capital, large crowds flooded the parking areas of the KPK office to attend the performance, dubbed a music concert for fighting corruption; and its slogan, shown on a black-and-red banner (see figure 6.1), stirringly reads *Satukan Tekad: Lawan! Lawan Korupsi Sekarang!* (Let the spirit unite: fight! Let us fight corruption right away!). The crowds stridently screamed and waved their hands as five musicians of the *Slank* came up on the stage; one of them, in a very loud voice, shouted to the crowds: “Corruption must be thoroughly eliminated! ... Corruptors deserve to be condemned! ... We shouldn’t let them damage the nation with their evil conduct!” From the ground, the crowds

deafeningly replied: *Basmi koruptor! ... Hancurkan koruptor!* (Obliterate corruptors! Crush corruptors!).



Figure 6.1: A group of musicians perform a music concert during the commemoration of Anti-Corruption Day on 9 December 2008 in Jakarta

A few moments later, they started singing several songs, and one of the hits they sang was *Gossip Jalanan* (Street Gossip)—the favourite one for *Slank*'s followers and a much-awaited one—which expresses the bad behaviour of officials and politicians who are often implicated in corruption, as these excerpts from the lyrics show:

Street Gossip^{iv}

By Slank

Have you ever heard about the mafia for gambling?
 One said that there are abundant bribes for the Police
 Officer whose job is to be a private guard for businesspeople
 Do you know about the mafia for the court?
 On the right hand is the code of law, on the left is crime
 Give them bribes and everything will be over
 Do you know that there is a mafia for the general election?
 Whether because of technology illiteracy or trying to rig votes
 In the end money can buy popular votes
 Do you know about the mafia for the Parliament?
 Those who draft laws and make regulations
 Drawing up acts with money as inducement

It is widely understood that music is an art of audition, and an artistic form of expressing personal feelings and human imagination as it is the universal language—the language of the emotions (e.g. Bowman 1998; Sharpe 2000; Ridley 2004). However, music and song alike have a social context in the sense that musician often makes a song with reference to social problems found in real life. Therefore, for *Slank*, music

can be utilized as a proper medium of public criticism with regard to social problems in everyday society. In this respect, *Slank* took the problem of corruption to be an object of criticism, thereby showing that they shared a common interest with the public about this grave problem, as Ahmad Budiman, manager of *Slank*, expounded:

Corruption obviously hurts people and corruptors seem to have lost their moral standards as they don't care that such evil conduct results in people's anguish. How could they embezzle public funds while a lot of children suffer from malnutrition? How could they take the state's money illegally while the poor lack food and the needy can't find healthcare? *Slank* have some degree of sensitivity about such bitter problems as corruption since this has clearly damaged the public interest and caused serious difficulties for people. This is why many of *Slank*'s songs contain criticisms expressing the group's very deep concerns about social problems in real life. (Quoted from interview, 12 February 2009)

In addition to *Slank*, other Indonesian artists have also creatively written songs for social criticism. Franky Sahilatua, for example, is a leading musician who is prolific in creating songs which specifically address social problems within society. The major themes of his songs touch the issues of—mentioning just a few—poverty, corruption, economic gap, social injustice, and unjust rulers, all of which certainly seize people's interest. What makes Franky interested in bringing these actual issues into his music is because he is also a passionate social activist. The world of activism seems very influential on how he feels, reflects, and thinks of the real problems faced by people in everyday life, and he then transmutes them into the lyrics of a song. An example is a song that Franky wrote which addresses everyday problems, as expressed in the lyrics below:

You are ... We are ...^v

By Franky Sahilatua

Oil is expensive ... the nation pays foreign debt
Electricity is expensive ... the nation pays foreign debt
Education is expensive ... the nation pays foreign debt
Medicine and health services are expensive ... the nation pays foreign debt
The nation gets a loan ... corruptors 'eat' the money
But the people are to be the bearers of foreign debt
Poverty is full of tears
Malnourishment is endemic ... the nation pays foreign debt
High unemployment is widespread ... the nation pays foreign debt
The poor become poorer ... we are ... we are ...
The rich become richer ... you are ... you are ...

All these songs apply language that is full of emotions, that represents reality and verbalizes resistance to the practice of corruption. In this respect, Lutz & Abu-Lughod's *Emotion and the Politics of Language* (1990) helps one understand that emotions are not merely psychological phenomena but also socio-cultural facts that are tied to the

politics of everyday interaction which incites a so-called ‘emotion discourse.’ The phrase ‘emotion discourse’ refers to how emotion is construed in the context not only of psychological processes but also of social life in which one’s personal feelings are socially expressed in situated speech practices that become the subject of sociocultural analysis. Here, Lutz & Abu-Lughod point out in detail:

The study of emotion as discourse allows us to explore how speech provides the means by which local views of emotion have their effects and take their significance. [...] Rather than seeing them as expressive vehicles, we must understand emotional discourses as pragmatic acts and communicative performances. (Lutz & Abu-Lughod 1990:11)

As observed, these two songs reflect the actual problems within society, and musicians transform them into the lyrics of a song which emotionally touches people’s hearts. The language used in these songs represents the social problem of corruption, and in order to invigorate public awareness they “approach emotion through language and understand language as inescapably and fundamentally social” (Lutz & Abu-Lughod 1990:10). The two songs are obviously protest songs which are associated with social movements of anti-corruption and initiated by Indonesian musicians. Their lyrics contain messages of a very strong social protest against injustice resulting from corruption. The tone of these protest songs is similar, questioning the absence of justice and equality in public life, while depicting those who are in power as betraying the citizens by abusing their power and committing wrongdoing in public office. In the first song, Slank bitterly expressed his satirical criticism, as bribe-taking is widespread among those possessing power in every single line of the state apparatuses. In the second song, Franky cynically articulated how corruptors immorally ‘eat’ funds gained from foreign loans at the expense of the people, who will later have to pay it back; and unfortunately, at the same time the latter endure a long plight because all goods and social services are expensive so they could not afford them. These are actually the essential characters of the protest songs, as Deena Weinstein has pointed out: “... the protest in protest songs means an opposition to a policy, an action against the people in power that is grounded in a sense of injustice ... [while] the preponderance of [popular] protest songs focus on what those songs identify as improper use of force” (2006:3). Certainly, among Indonesian audiences who love popular songs, Slank and Franky are regarded as the makers of the protest songs canon, as they are the prominent musicians in this kind of music genre. An activist of ICW, Dini Ratnasari, expressed her feelings about the lyrics of the songs:

Such great musicians as Franky Sahilatua and Slank are not only artists, but also public figures who play a prophetic role as *penyuluh rakyat* (literally, the torch of the people). They have the ability to portray reality and to voice social criticism of the real problems in people's everyday lives through popular songs. The lyrics of their songs certainly reflect real life experience. They are truthful in articulating social protest without having a vested interest, in the sense that they are not part of or involved in political games in order to reach power. The people feel that the protest songs represent their aspirations. (Quoted from interview, 18 February 2009)

To put this in a wider discursive context, some scholars (e.g. Eyerman & Jamison 1998; Clayton, Herbert & Middleton 2003) have asserted that music and song are central to the growth of modern critical culture, ranging from social movement to cultural change in a society. In *The Resisting Muse: Popular Music and Social Protest*, edited by Ian Peddie (2006), scholars have demonstrated that popular music has traditionally served as a rallying point for voices of opposition and it is commonly used as the notions of resistance and being anti-establishment. Here too, the use of popular songs for supporting social protest must be seen as a way in which people try to challenge the power establishment, as these approaches are commonplace in social movements and political activism everywhere (e.g. Eyerman & Jamison 1998; Bennett et al. 2005; Peddie 2006). It seems that popular songs employed in support of social protest are a very effective means for expressing civic disagreement with the ways in which those holding public office exercise their powers. Instead of using their powers for fulfilling the public interest, realizing justice and delivering social services for people, they misuse public powers for their own benefit. Borrowing the phrase of Bennett et al. (2005), the popular protest song is part of “the cultural politics of music” as it contains a strong social character which reflects resistance and empowerment. With sensitivity, that type of song inspires people to be able to “appeal to higher human sensibilities in a manner independent of the contradictions and paradoxes of everyday life” (Bennett et al. 2005:1). As seen in the texts, protest popular songs absorb actual problems within societal lives into lyrics in order to invigorate the moral audacity of the public in support of social and political movements to change the power establishment. As music is the universal language of the emotions resting in human experience (e.g. Finnegan 2003), I argue that popular songs created by Indonesian musicians can be utilized as an effective mode of preserving public emotions in the fight against social injustice and unjust rulers, of maintaining the spirit of resistance against corruption, and of strengthening civil society groups in energizing and encouraging anti-corruption movements.

As popular songs are the effective ways through which Indonesian artists denounce corruption, so are poems and *pantuns* in which poets articulate their criticism on corruption with the uses of beautiful words. For this, one day in May 2009, the Ministry of National Education held an annual celebration of National Education Day by carrying out a series of cultural activities including a photos and paintings exhibition, poetry reading, a campaign of anti-corruption education among schoolchildren, and some others. One of the most well-known Indonesian poets, Taufiq Ismail, was invited to partake in that event to read his famous poem which addresses the issue of corruption, and the lyrics are as follows:

I wonder if I'm also a Thief^{vi}

By Taufiq Ismail

Have a look at thieves who steal in groups, line by line
They form the lines very tightly, in an orderly way with strong discipline, silently
As they stand up very strongly, it is hard for you to reach them
As they do so in systematic procedure, it is impossible for you to sabotage
Since they are so silent, you would think that they were praying
Then we ask: is there anyone who persists in being a thief?

Look at their numbers, tens of years long, widening from the front to the back
Overwhelming from the top level to the ground one
The groups are growing much bigger, the lines are becoming much longer
These groups are formed beyond borders: religion, ethnicity, and gender

How do you fight against thieves who rob in groups?
How do you arrest thieves who are protected by officials in hierarchies?
And, ones who protect them are those who have guns and rule the state government
How come?

Taufiq's poem illustrates a great number of bad situations and bitter social life, as corruption has become pervasive, which leads him to question himself whether he might be as corrupt as others because people very easily find corruptors in every single line of state institutions. Through his poem, Taufiq expounds that corruption has taken a typical form in which it is done in a collective way, so it is called *korupsi berjamaah* (corruption in groups), as indicated by the verses of the poetry. Worse, corruption has become institutionalized as state officials within all hierarchies of the power structures—from the lowest to the top—are involved in it. As officials commit corruption for years, they even have followers and develop networks encompassing all groups of people regardless of their social-cultural backgrounds, which result in intricate relations in support of illicit deals. Within relationships of this kind, they then create the so-called partners in crime. That is why corruptors are very difficult to prosecute since the powerful person with weapons in his hands protects them in

exchange for the share of money embezzled from public office. This poetry indicates that Taufiq—and maybe also the vast majority of Indonesians with him—is in a great deal of desperation as corruption is becoming worse over time. Taufiq implies that fighting corruption is extremely difficult—if not impossible.

Another famous poet, W.S. Rendra, participated in a poetry reading festival on the occasion of a cultural performance held in Taman Ismail Marzuki, Jakarta. Popularly dubbed *Penyair Burung Merak* (A Poet of Peacock), Rendra read the funniest *pantun* he had ever written, entitled *Pantun Koruptor*, which criticized corruption practice in state government and political institutions. The lyrics are as follows:

Pantun Koruptor²³

By W.S. Rendra

Kalau ada sumur di ladang—If there is a well in the field
Jangan diintip gadis yang mandi—It's forbidden to peep at a girl who is taking a shower
Koruptor akalnya panjang—Corruptors are very rich with deceitful ideas (or cheating tactics)
Jaksa dan hakim diajak kompromi—Prosecutors and judges are offered bribes for a compromise

Kura kura dalam perahu—A turtle is in a boat
Buaya darat di dalam sedan—A playboy is riding a sedan
Wakil rakyat jangan ditiru—One shouldn't imitate legislators
Korupsinya edan edanan—They commit corruption with huge amounts of money

Berakit rakit ke hulu—To reach upstream one may take a boat
Berenangnya kapan kapan—Others may go in swimming at any time
Maling kecil sakit melulu—Little thieves very often get beaten, unfortunately
Maling besar dimuliakan—Big thieves [corruptors] are always respected, fortunately

To understand what *pantun* is, I need to explain it briefly. Originally *pantun* is a traditional oral form of expression among the Nusantara people. It is a typical Indonesian poetic sentence, which, in its basic form, is comprised of a quatrain with the use of steady rhyme patterns. A *pantun* is traditionally recited according to a fixed rhythm; and in order to avoid diverging from the rhythm, every line of its verse should contain several syllables expressed in parallel contexts. Here Katharine Sim vividly writes:

The *pantun* is a four-lined verse consisting of alternating, roughly rhyming lines. The first and second lines sometimes appear completely disconnected in meaning from the third and fourth, but there is almost invariably a link of some sort. Whether it be a mere association of ideas, or of feeling, expressed through assonance or through the faintest nuance of a thought, it is nearly always traceable. (Sim 1987:12)

²³ To give some idea of the meaning, I have given the original version of the *pantuns* in Indonesian, directly followed by the English translation. Indeed *pantun* is highly allusive and in order to understand it, readers generally need to know the traditional meaning of the symbolic verses and allegorical terms applied in it.

Rendra's *pantun* actually depicts similar situations in far-reaching corruption and how corrupt state bureaucracies are. This *pantun* describes how corruption appears to have become a way of life among state officials—bureaucrats, police officers, judges, prosecutors and legislators—and they often abuse public powers for their own benefits. They exercise state powers not in the interests of the people but rather for the sake of the officials themselves; the misuse of public office has become very commonplace in everyday public life. The verses of the *pantun* clearly illustrate that being corrupt seems to be the main characteristic and common manner of those who occupy public positions as state officials, and politicians shamelessly put their positions on sale by taking bribes, payoffs, and the like. Through his *pantun* Rendra wittily tells about the misbehaviour of public officials and lawmakers who are very often implicated in bribe-giving and bribe-taking, on one side; and how the state authorities treat unequally those who commit petty corruption and grand corruption, on the other side. Yet all these things of course break the principles of public morality and hurt the sense of justice for the people. Indeed Rendra's *pantun* clearly describes that the culture of corruption has become deeply rooted in the power structures and part of social life within Indonesian society.

As poetry and *pantun* are frequently quoted in public conversation, they turn out to be what Debra Spitulnik (1996) terms “society's public words”, becoming the ways in which people talk about corruption and through which the issue of corruption is dispersed within Indonesian society to become public knowledge. Taking the issue of corruption as the essential elements of verses of poetry and *pantun*, they seem worthwhile for becoming modes of campaigning anti-corruption reforms, since both of them directly touch human emotions. The human emotions usually appear in the feelings of being deprived, divested and ill-treated as the state officials irresponsibly abuse public powers by committing corruption that clearly shows how the basic principles of justice are breached, whereas they are supposed to impose them. In this regard, the moral virtues of the poetry and the *pantun*'s verses rest in the call for those holding the state powers to have integrity and credibility so they morally deserve to assume public office. As poetry and *pantun* are rich with moral sentiment, poets have been able to find the language of poetry to criticize the misuse of public powers. It is argued that what Indonesian poets have done with public criticism via poetries and *pantuns* is best called the poetic resistance to corruption. They have a great deal of social resonance and political significance in anti-corruption activism. In this regard, it should be emphasized that popular songs, poems, and *pantuns* discussed here are part of

public discourse on (anti)-corruption. The Indonesian publics utilize these cultural measures to express their criticism against corruption and use them as a favourable means to stimulate people's concerns about the grave problem of corruption. Thus, it can be argued that popular songs, poems, and *pantuns* are part of discursive expression of public campaigns against corruption. Here along with public criticism, symbolic resistance through iconographies also appears in the public space.

6.4 Symbolic Resistance against Corruption: Murals, Caricatures, Cartoons

▪ *Campaigning through murals*

Apart from those poetic measures for fighting corruption, anti-corruption initiatives also appear in the form of murals, caricatures and cartoons. These iconic measures are part of public efforts to campaign against corruption. At the time of carrying out fieldwork for this thesis, I was commuting around Jakarta to meet my informants with whom I talked about corruption and anti-corruption activism. Along the long journey, my attention was drawn to a mural (see figure 6.2) painted on a concrete pillar of overground in South Jakarta, depicting a pig with an inflated belly alongside three bags of money (Rp, *rupiah*) and scattered gold embezzled from the state's treasury, as indicated by the written word *korupsi* (corruption). In addition, on top of the pillar was an instruction for the public: *Lapor Dong!* (Please kindly report to the authorities by dialing cell phone number 08121247247). The number given here is of course just imaginary, and the painter of this mural clearly wanted to criticize corruption in a satirical image that would seize the attention of the public.

Along with the mural of corruption, there are also other murals of paedophiles, drugs, and terrorism painted on the other sides of the same concrete pillar with various eerie facades of animals. In this mural, corruption is grouped into these three social problems that are commonly found within Indonesian society; and that is the main reason why corruption frequently appears in public talks and is dubbed a 'social disease', because all of them are categorized as 'social viruses.' As McLuhan says, "the medium is the message" (2002 [1994]), and these murals tell many things about what messages the artist wanted to convey to the public in relation to the events, stories and meanings behind those wall paintings. Here one could interpret that Indonesian people are severely burdened by these kinds of social diseases so that they have to face the very serious threats which could jeopardize their life.

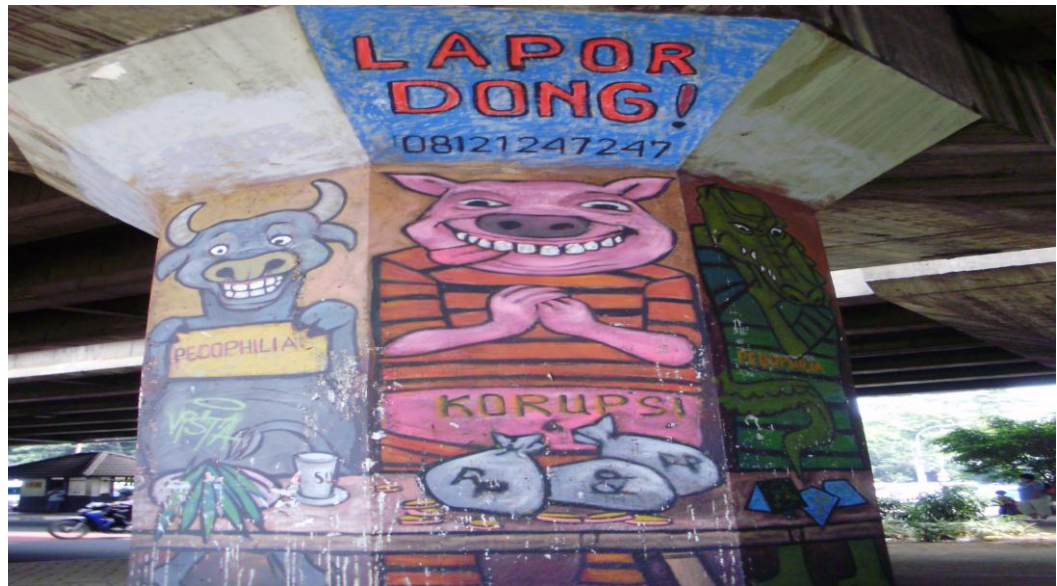


Figure 6.2: An anti-corruption mural is painted on a concrete pillar of overground in South Jakarta. Another mural below was found in another part of Jakarta illustrating how the KPK have to deal with serious difficulties and obstructions in carrying out their tasks in the fight against corruption, since many parties seemingly do not like what they have done so far. Thus, anti-corruption activists described such difficulties and obstructions faced by the KPK by drawing an eye-catching illustration (see figure 6.3). They drew a man (representing the state body) shackled with a very big weight so he could not catch a rat—a symbol for a corruptor.



Figure 6.3: An anti-corruption mural appears in public in the main road of Jakarta in support of the KPK. (Photo by Ari Saputra of detiknews.com)

In terms of its aesthetical aspect, the KPK mural may not be of interest to the public since it is a popular form of art. However, it should not be seen simply as an

artistic creation, but rather one should view this mural in a different way since it has a political dimension and reflects a strong public support of the KPK role in eradicating corruption. In the public rhetoric, the parliament, the police, the AGO, and even the president have declared their commitment to fighting corruption and working hand in hand with the KPK, as this anti-graft body is the bearer of a political mandate given by the law to take the lead in combating corruption in the country. However, ironically the KPK faced very strong resistance from what social activists call *politisi busuk* (rotten politicians) who operate political systems, and from *pejabat bobrok* (decayed officials) who occupy public institutions. Instead of the KPK being supported (as the politicians and officials have reiterated many times), the anti-graft agency frequently had to deal with a series of organized political attacks, which were allegedly orchestrated by those shady officials, in the form of the ‘criminalization’ of the KPK’s leaders. On this issue, Alexander Kenan, a prominent activist of ICW, shared his views:

Politicians and state officials seemingly feel apprehensive about the KPK, since the public have seen this anti-graft agency showing its sharp teeth to jail corruptors, regardless of their social status and political position. Most people believe that, with the use of power they hold, corrupt officials arranged a plot to criminalize the KPK leaders with the aim of destabilizing the body. Fortunately, the public, including the mass media, fully supported them and sincerely stood by behind the agency. (Quoted from interview, 7 August 2009)

In fact Kenan’s comments to some degree represent those that very often appeared in public talks, and social activists claimed that evil powers set up a secret plan to paralyze the KPK in order to halt efforts to fight corruption so that the anti-graft institution would become powerless. Seemingly, after a great number of political attacks lasting several months in the year of 2009, the KPK became weak—some social activists even called it a *macan ompong* (toothless tiger)—so that their efforts to curb corruption declined and the spirit of fighting it decreased. Reflecting on these circumstances, anti-corruption activists illustrated how those evil powers weakened the KPK through a symbolic painting in a public space so Indonesian people could easily grasp what the meaning and message of the mural for the public are. In the context of public narratives, this mural maintains a very strong political dimension, and its political message seems more important than its iconic art form and its aesthetical aspect, as Coote & Shelton point out: “...the ‘artness’ of the objects sometimes seems to be of secondary importance after their political or symbolic roles” (1994:3). In this sense, the mural is thus political and reflects a contest of political discourse taking place in social space.

▪ *Campaigning through caricatures*

Alongside murals, caricatures have also become an important medium for expressing public criticism of corruption. The caricatures that will be presented are taken from *Kompas*, the most prominent national newspaper circulating across the country.²⁴ The following caricatures are created by GM Sudharta and Thomdean of *Kompas*. They are considered one of the most prolific artists who have produced enormous caricatures with high quality in terms not only of the aesthetical aspects of their works, but also of the efficacy and accuracy in illustrating social events represented by caricatures they created. Much of corruption incidence often comes first in rumours. As rumours abound in public space, accusations of corruption among officials occupying public offices are widespread. And since accusations are sparked off in social space, officials usually lay the blame on each other, reflecting that they distrust one another. Observing a great deal of suspicion among state officials, Sudharta described such situations in his soft criticism in a caricature (see figure 6.4).



Figure 6.4: A caricature illustrates distrust among state officials (by Sudharta of *Kompas*)

²⁴ *Kompas* was established in June 1965 by P.K. Ojong and Jakob Oetama—the latter then became the first editor-in-chief. Since its inception, *Kompas* has become the leading newspaper that presents reporting, pieces and features with such high quality, becoming the most prestigious print media in the country. With the very popular tag line, *Tanpa Kompas Terasa Belum Pas* (without *Kompas*, things don't seem right), *Kompas* claims that one would feel something was missing from the start of one's day without reading it first, as this newspaper brings updated information and current news for reference. Moreover, with the friendly motto, *Amanat Hati Nurani Rakyat* (the channel for the people's conscience), *Kompas* declares that it aims to place people's aspirations at the very central point and to voice them in a way that would enunciate public opinions and articulate public interests. As of 2010, according to a journalist, Ahmad Arif, week day sales of *Kompas* exceeded 530,000 copies, with more than 620,000 copies for the Sunday edition, while its actual readership is currently estimated at more than three million people nationwide. Its readers vary in terms of social and economic classes, education, professional and cultural backgrounds; and they take *Kompas* as their primary reference for current national and international issues. Having gained a great deal of social and political impact, *Kompas* has become a powerful trend setter of print media in terms of voicing public criticism. Taking into account all those features, it is widely recognized as the most influential newspaper in Indonesia.

The caricature illustrates the KPK investigating corruption committed by officials, while the Police (POLRI), supported by the Attorney General's Office (JAKSA) and the Parliament (DPR), counteract to investigate corruption within the KPK. It describes the bitter hostility between the KPK and those three state bodies, who then investigate each other to find out who is the most corrupt among themselves. The three public agencies all together point their fingers at the KPK, accusing it being a home for corruptors as some of its officials are also accused of taking bribes. It depicts a boy holding a flyer with the words: '*Korupsi? No!!*', and asking Oom Pasikom (an imaginary character), with curiosity: '*Lha...yang korupsi man...na?!*' (So, who is the corruptor then?!); and he, while staring at the boy, responds cryptically: '*Ah! kura-kura dalam perahu ..!*' (This is a local saying meaning that someone already knows what the answer is, but he keeps questioning about something as if he doesn't know). Through this caricature Sudharta tries to illustrate that public perception of the three state agencies—the Police, the AGO and the Parliament—is very bad; in the public's view, they are considered as the most corrupt institutions. Here Sudharta rightly portrays what materializes in daily public narratives transforming them into artistic works so they become what Benedict Anderson calls 'symbolic speech' in the sense that those drawings speak for real events. They also represent 'a mode of political communication' (1990:155) which is a useful bridge between the public interest and political establishment. Indeed, artistic works themselves can be an effective instrument to describe the complexity of social and political relations. Placing the KPK as a common enemy for those three state bodies in a dynamic of power relations, Sudharta tries to translate into iconographic creations what emerges in public discourse and what the public senses, feels and thinks of live events. This approach of mass communication seems much more evocative, as "the live, ephemeral communication is transmuted into an illustration" (Anderson 1990:154), so that the public becomes interested in receiving the message and capturing what hides behind an image.

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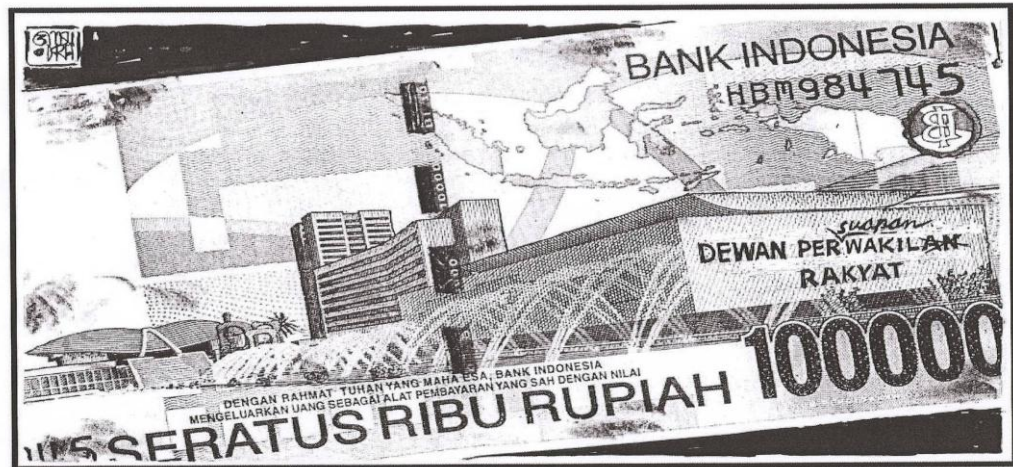


Figure 6.5: A caricature illustrates the Parliament as the House of Bribery (by Sudharta of *Kompas*)

Another caricature (see figure 6.5) tells another story. As a political institution, the Parliament has, by law, a number of political rights including the prerogative of approving the budget as well as that of agreeing who will be appointed as state officials, such as the Chief of the Police, the Commander-in-chief of the armed forces, the Governor of Bank Indonesia, and others. Worse, with all these political entitlements rumours proliferate saying that many legislators often request what is called *uang pelicin* (literally ‘greasy money’, an idiom for bribes, kickbacks, and others) in return for such approval. With regard to such gossip, people often illustrate attitudes of these kinds in the satirical words of Razak Ismail, a businessman, who said: “MPs are not really representatives of the people; they are actually political brokers (*calo politik*) and budget/business scalpers (*calo anggaran/proyek*).” Reflecting on these circumstances, GM Sudharta illustrated in a mocking caricature the use of Indonesian currency. It shows a drawing of the offices of the Parliament and the words *Dewan Perwakilan Rakyat* (the House of Representatives) changed into *Dewan Persuapan Wakil Rakyat* (the House of Bribery for MPs). This caricature depicts the Parliament not as the House where people are represented by MPs, but rather as a public office where illegal transactions (e.g. payoffs, buyoffs, kickbacks, etc.) between legislators and their counterparts take place officially.

It is important to note that the discourse of corruption is usually connected with poverty. As discourses of corruption appear in public conversation along with that of

poverty, narratives of these subjects also materialize in caricature (see figure 6.6) as seen in Thomdean's work published by *Kompas*. It depicts a very poor person who becomes a beggar, with a small basket labelled BLT (*Bantuan Langsung Tunai*—direct cash transfers), begging for some coins, while he holds a poster with the words: *Harga-Harga Naik! Yang Korup Jangan Ikut Naik!* (Prices increase, but not the numbers of corrupt officials, please!). This caricature is a severe public criticism since it shows the contradiction between a deprived person living in very bad condition, in extreme poverty, on the one hand, and widespread corruption in public offices across the country, on the other hand. Sadly, the poor do not have any access to public resources so they inexorably beg for coins. Thomdean brought the issue of poverty into creative manipulation to attract people's attention and touch public emotions; he rightly captured people's heart and affected public opinion. This is because a caricature—being an iconic form—is “never [a] purely passive condition; but it involves some degree of ideational and emotional engagement with the relations suggested by the subject” (Firth 1994:16).



Figure 6.6: A caricature depicts a very poor person who becomes a beggar while corruption is pervasive (by Thomdean of *Kompas*)

The caricature on corruption vis-à-vis poverty is a symbolic discourse which seems ideological since it depicts the contradictory circumstances where those occupying public powers are not responsible for the people who are suffering from poverty. The moral message of the caricature rests on the tendency for the state agencies and those holding public powers to avoid the responsibility of bringing prosperity to people, as these are satirically portrayed in impoverished conditions. Certainly, symbolic discourse entails multiple meanings and ideologies, as Burton has written: “Discourses are linked to ideologies and representations, and evolve ways of using

language—verbal, visual, or whatever code—about a subject, so as to produce particular meanings about that subject” (2005:53). In this respect, such representations by the Indonesian public media often report that state officials and politicians enrich themselves with abundant wealth, living in luxurious lifestyles, while they leave the poor with social and economic difficulties, living with hardship in daily life. Therefore, the public feelingly question about social justice, contrasting the fact that many state officials and politicians commit corruption.

The main argument regarding these iconographic works refers to the idea of symbolic anthropology as advocated by, among others, Clifford Geertz (1973, 1974). As Morphy & Perkins have explained, “Symbolic anthropology was concerned equally with the semantic [or, in Geertz’s term: semiotic] aspects of symbolism and with the effectiveness of those symbols” (2006:10) in social contexts, and I argue that those murals and caricatures are forms of symbolic resistance against corruption created by Indonesian media which enliven popular narratives of (anti)-corruption. What materializes in public discourse in the form of the murals and caricatures presented above is part of social creativity in articulating public anger over corruption. With this regard, public criticism over corruption is delivered with the use of symbols as seen in those iconic images so that they can also be called symbolic expression (Geertz 1973, 1974), since people try to express their opinions and views in the public sphere through those aesthetical creativities by “applying the principles of symbolic anthropology to media texts, treating these texts as symbolic expressions of the cultures that produced them” (Peterson 2003:53). Being used as a channel of political communication, these murals and caricatures appear as symbolic public criticism over social problems, since these creative drawings represent social events and contain messages and meanings which are transformed into public discourse. In fact, murals and caricatures are basically cultural products which must be seen as symbolic representation through which people express certain concepts and meanings connected with social life. All symbolic forms appearing in those murals and caricatures represent social facts and impose multiple meanings which need to be interpreted with reference to actual events. In this respect, symbols can be created in public life through a series of social interactions that reflect the reality with which people connect. The symbolic images of murals and caricatures are drawn from the social experiences that appear in the lives of human society in Indonesian contexts. They reflect what has happened in Indonesian society, that is, the struggle for promoting a better country with reduced corruption in the state institutions.

▪ *Campaigning through cartoons*

As murals and caricatures play a part in public campaigns against corruption, so do cartoons, which are quite similar in the way they deliver social criticism on corruption. They are used to support social activism against corruption by manipulating images and words to express a very strong disapproval of and a deep dissatisfaction with far-reaching illegal practices in the form of misuse of public powers which result in corruption. The following are cartoons published by *Kompas* that communicate how people talk about corruption by illustrating it in words and images combined. I will explain first what each cartoon actually refers to and then follow it with a discussion.

Cartoon (figure 6.7) below illustrates a group of people joining an organization called P.K.K.K.I or *Perhimpunan Koruptor Kelas Kakap Indonesia*—Association of High Class Corruptors of Indonesia. They are cheering in celebration as they listen to the authorities saying that there is not enough evidence found in a legal enquiry to indicate a crime of corruption committed by the suspects; and therefore, further investigation is suspended and the case is closed. These corruptors celebrate their ‘victory’ in a vivacious party, yelling: hip hip huraa!!! ... Horeee!!! ...Yess!!



Figure 6.7: A cartoon illustrates a meeting among big corruptors (by an artist of *Kompas*)

Cartoon (figure 6.8) below illustrates a social event of *Tobat Nasional* (National Repentance), left-right: (row 1) Oh my Lord, please forgive us for all of our sins and faults. Please don't be in wrath at our beloved nation ... Amen!; (row 2) please forgive us for having much moral decadence in our country, especially pervasive corruption ... Amen!; (row 3) Oh my Lord, please open up the hearts of corruptors so they will willingly return the wealth and money they have embezzled from the state's treasury ... Amen.



Figure 6.8: A cartoon illustrates an event of National Repentance (by an artist of *Kompas*)

The Indonesian media utilize these cartoons as a strategy and approach to articulate soft criticism over the pervasive corruption in the country. This strategy seems very effective in raising people's criticism of corruption. It is also effective in propagating the ideas of anti-corruption among the public, as the media are able to reach much broader audiences. Cartoons combine words and images so that they are useful for conveying a very strong message—but with soft method—for readers and viewers, since both present “a division of the human experience of representation, presentation, and symbols” (W.J.T Mitchell quoted in Varnum & Gibbons 2001:x). What makes cartoons different from other modes of representing social events is the active engagement between the readers and the objects. With the use of storytelling techniques and images, cartoons are a powerful cultural medium to convey political messages to the public. In this sense, cartoons, borrowing Gupta’s words, are a sort of “cultural texts that give [one] important clues to the political culture” (2006 [1995]:223) of society. It is clear that cartoons maintain a political dimension, since they reflect actual events within society. The media use them as a mode of political communication so that readers find it much easier to construe historical events and what is happening in public life. As Anderson puts it:

Of all the forms of visual political communications, cartoons are perhaps the most readily decipherable. Since they frequently make use of written words, they seem closest to printed documents. As they are usually responses to historical events, they can, on one level at least, be mined for their “factual” contents. (Anderson 1990:156)

Certainly thoughts, commentaries, annotations and ‘dialogues’ in cartoons should not be detached from historical events, since the former came into public discourse through mass media from the latter. Nor should one conceive of cartoons just as a personal imaginary of those who created them, because the ideas presented in cartoons are the reflections of reality mirroring social events within Indonesian society. The things that have happened in social life are illustrated in cartoons and presented by the media as a storytelling shared by people and one which has proliferated into broader audiences in order to arouse public awareness and evoke collective consciences. Such an approach seems to be helpful particularly for those who have not had any access to sources of political affairs, as Anderson writes: “Cartoons [are] a way of creating collective consciences by people without access to bureaucratic or other institutionalized forms of political muscle” (1990:163). This is because cartoons can be utilized as “a mode of visual political communications” (Anderson 1990:156) and an instrument of political campaigns that may affect readers’ views and shape their opinion, resulting in how they respond to the issues being discussed in those cartoons.

Likewise, corruption discourse cannot be separated from storytelling, which appears in various forms including cartoons. It is believed that there is no corruption narrative without storytelling, as Gupta (2005) rightly mentions that there would not be a good analysis of corruption without its stories revealed by the media with the use of cultural idioms, allusions, allegories and others; and cartoons become a medium for public narratives to represent corruption. Here, cartoons of corruption narratives may help one understand the nature of illegal practices taking place in the state government by comprehending the patterns of power relations among state actors involved in it. Illustrating how popular narratives of corruption appear in the Indonesian media through cartoon allegories, Heinzpeter Zonj writes: “In cartoon[s] ... bureaucrats are often depicted publicly denouncing corruption while receiving a bribe behind their backs. These satirical textual and pictorial genres unveil the hypocrisy of the ‘serious’ critique of corruption which nevertheless all newspapers engage in” (Znoj 2007:63). As a mode of public discourse, cartoons help one reconstruct complex power relations and the media can be seen as a source of power, becoming the tool of dominant forces in society. Certainly, a discourse cannot be detached from social contexts; it is always connected to society and history along with actual and specific events. It also indicates that there are always power relations and power contestations appearing in discourse, since “discourse encodes relations of difference, distinction, and power that are relevant

in a particular historical moment” (Peterson 2003:96). In this respect, stories and narratives of corruption in cartoons are obviously historical as they are derived from public awareness of social realities and political affairs in which people share some interest in common. Nonetheless, in the course of anti-corruption campaigns, it should be underscored here that murals, caricatures, and cartoons have political significance for stimulating public awareness of the perils of corruption. They are part of the discursive repertoire of campaigners in support of promoting public criticism against corruption.

6.5 Conclusion

To conclude this chapter I would argue that Indonesian people are very enthusiastic in endorsing public efforts to curb corruption in the country. They are keen to take part in public campaigns to combat it and are eagerly involved in anti-corruption movements. Various modes of fighting corruption illustrate that the public are discontent with the illegal practices through the misuse of public power which result in corruption, bribes, and other forms of illicit deals, and these cannot be tolerated for any reason. Social activists benefit from the democracy system, as it allows the public media to play a dominant role both in the fight against corruption and in proliferating the ideas of anti-corruption in Indonesian society. The centrality of the public media in voicing public criticism on corruption is evident; and the mass media, along with popular songs, poetries, *pantuns*, murals, cartoons, and caricatures function as what Joseph Errington (1998:282) calls an “interactional medium and ideological construct”, thus becoming the way of expressing people’s aspirations and public views, since the contents and messages brought by these measures impose ideological beliefs and meanings. In this context, media people are considered as the critically important groups who advocate the interest of the people and provide a wide space for public criticism. They are certainly central actors who play a crucial role in articulating public aspirations and building bridges between the public and the state establishment. What has been explained above clearly indicates that public criticism of corruption has been very significant, showing that the role of public culture in various forms is pivotal in the proliferation of corruption discourse in the public sphere. As a result, people have become much more aware of corruption as a grave problem in the country, which unquestionably creates serious difficulties for people’s lives. Interestingly, people utilize any sort of public media such as TV, newspapers and magazines, along with

other cultural media such as popular songs, poems, *pantuns*, murals, caricatures, and cartoons. As a part of public culture, all these cultural products play a significant role in criticizing corruption and are utilized as an effective means for enlivening public discourses on corruption.

Like the study on religious activism against corruption, the research on the role of the media and popular art in combating corruption is the major contribution to scholarly work on the subject. Most studies of anti-corruption usually look into the role of social and political institutions, but this research examines public culture and popular art which, in the context of social activism against corruption, have not yet been considered by other scholars. This study shows how musicians, poets and popular artists are fervently interested in engaging with anti-corruption movements, as they receive wide attention from the Indonesian public. This research demonstrates that they are, along with other social groups, very supportive of fighting corruption. The general public indeed benefit from them greatly, so that corruption eradication achieves greater social and political effects on public life.

Concluding Remarks

1. Modernity, Urban Politics, and the Occult

As discussed throughout the chapters of the thesis, Indonesian politics shows how modernity brings together traditional values, modern political cultures, and secular rationality. Indonesian society experiences that politics can take place in different cultural and historical contexts as seen in the way in which political modernity appears in a mixture of mystical beliefs, the involvement of witchcraft and the occult, supernatural magic, and modern-secular democracy—something beyond the comprehension of ‘rationalist’ adherents. Indonesian politics has been transformed into a modern-secular democracy by juxtaposing traditionalism and modernism, as they are intermingled becoming the main features of Indonesian modernity. The process of political transformation in Indonesia can thus be described as, borrowing Arce & Long’s phrase (2000), the ‘mutational processes of change’ in which the society is still confined by ancient traditions and primordial values, while at the same time it orientates to the culture of modernity and is eager to adopt modern values and attitudes. These different cultural features are embedded within the social and political life of Indonesian society, reflecting that Indonesians are adaptive to the process of modernization while they still embrace traditional beliefs. Sundoro, an intellectual-cum-activist associated with the NU, assessed the current development of Indonesian politics saying:

Although Indonesia has adopted modern democracy and applied democratic political system similar to Western democracies, cultural values, social basis, and state of mind of many Indonesian people (and especially the Javanese) are still ‘traditional’. And these traditional values and beliefs cannot be abruptly uprooted from their cosmological faith, since they have immensely become the cultural identity of the society. (Quoted from interview, 6 May 2009)

Ethnographic materials brought into discussion in the thesis reveal how Indonesian modernity embodies paradoxical values and beliefs between myth, mystic, and magic—all depicted as a form of enchantment and rationality, secular reasoning, and scientific objectivity—all described as a form of disenchantment. Interestingly they are mixed together and transformed into urban politics. Here, the notion of urban politics does not link politics merely to political organisations, bureaucratic institutions, administration of a state, democratic political management, and political governance, as one may find analyses of it in Judge, Stoker & Wolman’s *Theories of Urban Politics* (1995). But rather, it also relates politics to cultural ceremonies, sacred rituals, and spirit-possession

rituals—all becoming an integral part of the political processes that occur in urban areas and involve urban elites who maintain an imaginative obsession of state power. Moreover, urban politics is enlivened with various traditional beliefs and cultural values taking the shape of witchcraft narratives and occult rituals and is connected with the diverse structures of political power in which urban elites desire public positions. For this, all politico-socio-economic resources—political organisations, social institutions, principal actors, economic assets, the power of urban elites—are therefore exploited in support of the establishment of power structures and the domination of bureaucratic politics. In this sense, political modernity experienced by Indonesian society does not necessarily follow the experience of the Western nations in applying modern democracy. This is because different societies have their own historical experiences and there is some space for local interpretation with reference to local values and beliefs. Indonesian political modernity is thus culturally located based on its own customs and traditions; it is indeed “re-embedded in locally-situated practices” (Arce & Long 2000:1). In other words, Indonesia creates its own trajectories of modernity by presenting a localised cultural representation through discourses and practices. This argument fits with what Jonathan Spencer has argued in *Anthropology, Politics and the State* (2007) explaining:

[T]he paradoxes raised by the cultural interpretation of new, ‘modern,’ institutions and practices [suggest] that these institutions and practices never carry their own stories imminent within them, but in fact are understood in whatever idiom comes to hand. Political modernity is a diverse modernity, because different people bring different histories, values, and expectations to their encounters with its apparently invariant forms. But the political itself is not a static object mutely awaiting its local interpretation. (Spencer 2007:48)

The system of modern democracy has been in place within Indonesian politics for thirteen years since the authoritarian New Order state ended in 1998. At the onset, public expectations were high and people were hoping that with the establishment of democracy good governance would materialize. At first, it was part of political reform to promote accountability and transparency of public governance in which there would be no room for corruption. Moreover, it would also hopefully lead the nation to modernity indicated by the supremacy of rationality in polity, but witchcraft and the occult still prevail in society enlivening the newly-established modern democracy. Indeed witchcraft and corruption have become critical issues as both play a part in the political processes and in the struggle over state power.

Narratives of witchcraft and corruption always emerge in the public sphere showing that the country's politics is replete with stories of magic and illicit practice. In fact, magic and witchcraft have become part of local culture and entrenched in people's beliefs referring to the cosmology of Indonesian society. They are often associated with a political contest to attain and maintain power. Such phenomena can be seen in the case of politicians who employed sorcery against their rivals during the 2009 general elections; the revelations of President Yudhoyono who claimed to have received sorcery attacks at the time of the presidential race; and the very bad experience of prosecutors and NGO activists who were assaulted by witchcraft by those who were alleged to be corrupt. Narratives of witchcraft often appear to be a way of understanding state power, how people come to power, and how they keep power on their hands, as Moore & Sanders have asserted: "State power is itself associated with witchcraft and occult power; [...] and the link between state power and occult forces has been reinforced in the popular imagination" (2001:18). In short, magic and witchcraft are usually understood in the context of constructing state power in the sense that those who are deeply fascinated with power are often involved in magic and sorcery as both can be employed to reach their ambitions. Within this context, as part of the study of political anthropology, the main contribution of this research is to show that politics is not only related to political institutions, pressure groups (e.g. opposition parties, NGOs), interest groups (e.g. political parties, lobby groups), and members of social organizations and political agencies in power. This study tries to show that politics is also intimately connected to social imageries of and an obsessive fascination with power amongst politicians who use all possible means to justify their ends. It also shows how local cultures and cosmological beliefs are closely linked to the machinery of politics, and how these influence the behaviour of politicians. This research also shows how Indonesian politics is enlivened with magic and witchcraft narratives, possession rituals and mystical beliefs and practices, which invigorate the country's political dynamics and heighten the intensity of power struggles.

2. Corruption, Witchcraft, and Competing Moral Idioms

In the course of anthropological studies (e.g. Geertz 1980; Cheater 1999; Kurtz 2001; Spencer 2007), power maintains symbolic meaning since it provides social prestige for those possessing it; and facilitates the accumulation of material wealth. As widely

discussed in chapter 1, the concept of power held by the Javanese seems to follow a culturalist approach. This group conceives of power as being mystical, derived from the tradition of old Java. In this regard, the Javanese people perceive power as bequeathed from God or the gods, and as gained through a series of sacred rituals. They also perceive that it should be exercised for the benefit of all people, not for the interest of individuals occupying it. With power in his hands, the ruler should serve the people instead of exercising it for self-aggrandizement. In other words, those who hold public powers should not be implicated in corruption as it breaches moral principles. The power-holders should maintain the moral dimension of power by taking the responsibility to serve the people, instead of amassing material wealth through corruption for their own benefit.

In this context, the anthropologist Jordan Smith's views seem relevant when he raised concerns about the issues of witchcraft and corruption. He made an alternative interpretation illustrating that witchcraft with subsequent witchcraft accusations are used as a way that the public can criticize the prevalence of corruption, while social inequality is very extensive; and the state government that bears the responsibility to tackle this problem seems unable to deliver its job properly. Smith stated: "Stories of ... magic practices form part of a dynamic cultural complex for which 'witchcraft' serves as a crude but widely organized label. It is important to understanding why stories of the occult—of witchcraft—are so prominent in the interpretations of corruption and inequality in contemporary society" (2007:143). Within this line of reasoning, what appears in public talk often takes the shape of corruption-causes-poverty narrative in which the public view the kind of contradictory phenomena as a problem of morality. They raise this issue into social space in order to instigate collective consciousness about the peril of corruption for public lives. This is because corruption undoubtedly breaches the principles of justice and equality. The Muslim cleric, Ahmad Bestari, mentioned during a Friday sermon:

Many officials and politicians are really starving for money. They are greedy and deeply obsessed with becoming affluent persons. Entrapped by such obsession, they become a slave of money and material wealth; they are zealous worshipers of lavishness and luxurious life. And to meet such desires, they even commit corruption and implicate in illicit deal; without having a sense of sin, they embezzle state's wealth. Such behaviour indeed breaches religious ethics. They don't even have sympathy toward people who live with difficulty and suffering. (Quoted from a Friday sermon)

The views of Bestari clearly represent the voice of morality in response to the problem of corruption. The similar views commonly materialize in public discourses expressing

how people are deeply frustrated with the fact that corruption has become far-reaching. Yet the moral ambiguity of corruption is clearly seen in political practice under the framework of patron client relationships, since state officials and politicians who hold public powers bear moral obligations to provide their subordinates, clients, cronies, friends, and families with access to economic opportunities, public resources, jobs, and the like. This behaviour, in the view of critics, is of course categorized as a sort of corruption, collusion, and nepotism. As a result, debates about the boundaries of acceptable corruption frequently manifest in social sphere which lead to public controversy, illustrating how behaviour that is considered as corrupt to some may not be corrupt to others. This clearly represents the ambivalence of corruption, as contradictory views emerge and contest one another. In spite of very strong public condemnation on this issue, some groups of Indonesian society benefit from corruption bound by networks of patronage. Here, it is interesting to note the revelation of Radius Prawiro, a Western-educated technocrat serving as an economic minister of the New Order state, as quoted by Robertson-Snape saying: "In a patriarchal society such as Indonesia, the government had become the ultimate patron. There was almost no element of the economy that was not directly touched by the government ... every point of economic interaction within the government was a new opportunity for patronage or corruption" (in Snape 1999:592). All these views clearly demonstrate how the issue of corruption raises competing moral idioms as people and elites conceive it differently and with ambiguity.

Similarly the moral ambiguity of witchcraft is seen in how people respond to this cultural phenomenon. They view sorcery as harmful, like corruption, so that both are the subject of condemnation. In this respect, sorcery and corruption are considered to have created some kind of negative effects on the lives of the people. Like corruption, witchcraft is a potential danger for human societies and a serious threat to the safety of the people's lives as seen in the subjective experience of prosecutors and social activists who put their lives at risk because of sorcery employed against them when they were dealing with corruption investigations. In essence, both witchcraft and corruption could hurt and destroy human societies, while at the same time they are often used in the pursuit of power as well as to construe the world of politics and the ideas of power associated with them. At this point, it is important to contextualize witchcraft and corruption with the emergence of democracy. As illustrated, liberal democracy has led to fierce political competition and those who are strongly obsessed with political power

usually apply any necessary measure. In order to reach such ambitions, power-seekers are willing to take any means possible including the involvement of witchcraft and corruption. Both should not be seen in opposition to one another, but rather they are in support of the power struggle and political contest. These notions correspond to what Bubandt has observed in Indonesia's North Molucca, saying: "As political competition has become localized, sorcery and corruption have become to be seen as similar rather than opposed political tools. The ambiguity arises because they are tools that are publicly condemned as illicit means of ensuring the failure of others, but which, in the North Malukan political imagination, are nevertheless seen as necessary for achieving political success" (Bubandt 2006:419). Indeed it has been very clear how sorcery and corruption have created conflicting moralities between good and bad or benign and malevolence among those who are involved. Whatever morality one wants to embrace entirely depends on the individual's economic and political interests. That is why the ambivalence of witchcraft and sorcery is evident.

3. Power, Witchcraft, and (Anti)-Corruption

Popular narratives have shown that witchcraft and corruption are very often imbued with accusations. Accusations usually abound if someone suddenly becomes wealthy and powerful. Those who suddenly attain economic success and achieve political power are then accused of having been involved in corruption and witchcraft. It is understandable if there is a tendency that those who are implicated in corruption are often in search of material wealth, and those who are involved in corruption for accumulating wealth usually do so for the sake of more power. Yet power might also be obtained with the use of magic and witchcraft as those who are obsessed with it make use of any means necessary including the manipulation of the supernatural. In this regard, supernatural magic can be used as a political instrument for obtaining and possessing power as it materialized in the course of political contestation at the time of the 2009 general elections. Such political contest was enlivened with narratives of sorcery as supernatural magic and witchcraft maintain a political dimension; they are connected with social imaginaries of power amongst those who are deeply fascinated with it. In this sense, the similarity of sorcery and corruption is seen in both can be utilized as a political measure to destroy the credibility of politicians in the context of a power struggle. In fact, the issues of witchcraft and corruption vehemently instigate

much social controversy and they are very often used to undermine someone's political opponents so that the others can take advantage of winning the political contest. As both witchcraft and corruption are highly secret and take place in clandestine settings, they are construed "to explain the success of some politicians and the misfortune of others, relying on a perception of political power as depending heavily on hidden practices and on concealing true intentions" (Turner 2007:125-6).

Often, narratives of witchcraft also appear to be connected with the idea and practice of anti-corruption in that it threatens people who engage with activism against corruption placing them in jeopardy since they might be the target of malevolent magic. The case of state prosecutors and NGO activists who received sorcery assaults clearly asserts that the dangers of magic and witchcraft for human beings are evident. As they were investigating corruption scandals, they were perturbed by magic and occult forces which seriously hurt them. On the dangers of witchcraft in relation to corruption eradication, Dian Megawangi, a senior state prosecutor, intoned:

Combating corruption is highly perilous since we have to deal with the powerful that hides behind the scene. They are not reluctant to fight back with the use of both physical force and the occult power to hurt anyone who tries to investigate corruption and prosecute the alleged corrupt. For this, malevolent magic is not the exception to be employed and those who engage in anti-corruption practices very often deal with it. (Quoted from interview, 3 February 2009)

Megawangi's illustrations on the perils of sorcery in regard with the fight against corruption seem to suggest that there are double immoralities within witchcraft and corruption. Officials and politicians are first implicated in corruption and they then employ sorcery to attack those who investigate it. The iniquity of witchcraft and corruption is seen in the context of how they threaten human security and damage social order as both are harmful for private and public life. This is the centre of double immoralities of witchcraft and corruption as they are very destructive for both human societies and state powers. As witchcraft destroys the body of a person through magical means, so does corruption paralyzing state agencies so bureaucratic systems cannot function properly. Nonetheless, efforts to eradicate corruption are unlikely to decrease as anti-corruption activism is still strong despite plenty of threats and obstructions.

Yet corruption remains a very serious problem in Indonesia and it has been so endemic for years within the power structures of the state government. As corruption has become so extensive, anti-corruption initiatives are relentlessly promoted by both state agencies (e.g. the KPK) and non-state bodies in which collective efforts have been

made to tackle the grave problem. With the use of a wide variety of approaches, various societal groups such as social and political activists, NGOs, religious organizations, civil society associations, and the media have taken part in public campaigns against corruption, whether in the form of social protest, public advocacy, or others. They are indeed essential in supporting anti-corruption movements that make people become more critical of corruption. In this context, democratic politics in the country has thrived vibrant environments for civil society and other social groups to be involved in promoting anti-corruption reforms.

It is a great fortune that political configuration has altered considerably. As part of the democratization process, the public now enjoy freedom of expression and freedom of the press, so that Indonesians now freely criticize any kind of power abuse resulting in corruption and other forms of illicit deals. Unlike the authoritarian New Order that always concealed corruption incidents within state bodies, and public media especially the press were tightly restricted when reporting any sort of illegal practices to the public. Within the democratic system, everyone can speak out when criticizing corruption as it has become a very popular issue within society. People utilize public media such as TV channels, newspapers, and magazines to support public campaigns against corruption. As a result, anti-corruption initiatives have widely appeared in headlines of both print and electronic media invigorating the spirit of fighting corruption. As part of public cultures, those public media have played a significant role in criticizing corruption and are used as a very effective means of dispersing the public narrative of corruption. Yet despite the massive coverage of the media about corruption and regular editorials in support of anti-corruption programmes, the culture of corruption seems unchanged as it has become deeply ingrained within the state agencies.

Furthermore, social and political activists, intellectuals, and academics very often work in collaboration with artists, poets, journalists, and others to set up cultural movements by mobilizing supporters from grassroots to battle corruption. Religious leaders and Muslim clerics associated with the Nahdhatul Ulama and the Muhammadiyah, as well as Islamic ideology-driven activists of the HTI also take part in anti-corruption movements either through Friday sermons or public rallies and campaigns in social space. The involvement of Muslim leaders and religious organizations in anti-corruption campaigns, especially the HTI seems to be part of 'counter-publics' since they refer to Islamic values and teachings when criticising illicit

deals and illegal practices within public institutions. Having considered as counter-public movement, social activism of these religious organizations is indeed ideological in the sense that Islamic values must be applied as the moral basis for social behaviours and public affairs; and therefore those occupying public powers should strictly follow religious ethics. Their activism in the battle against corruption can be viewed as an aspect of what Hirschkind (2006) calls ‘ethicopolitical project’. Such activism tries to connect “Islamic traditions of ethical discipline to practices of deliberation about the common good, the duties of Muslims in their status as national citizens, and the future of the greater Islamic community (the *umma*)” (p.8).

In this respect, this thesis has shown that activism against corruption in Indonesia takes a variety of forms with different sources of origin both secular and religious, but they are collectively orchestrated in support of a wider movement against corruption. All these measures are new modes of criticizing corruption in the era of democracy which are completely different from those of the New Order state. In the period of the Soeharto government, censuring corruption in the public sphere was absolutely forbidden and it could be considered as a form not only of personal assault towards a state official, who must be saved from humiliation overtly, but also of political attack towards the legitimate government which might disrupt social stability. Let alone criticizing corruption cases openly through the public media, even the bravest critics did not have enough courage to talk about corruption although it took place in an off-the-record forum with a very limited audience such as seminars or informal discussions within academia. Considering that the political situations were not conducive for talking about corruption in public spaces, people preferred to do it in clandestine places and all the talks were concealed by using what James Scott (1990) calls the ‘hidden transcript.’ This is to illustrate that people were afraid of speaking up about social issues concerning their interests because of hegemony on public discourses by the power holders. The New Order ruler very often exercised power to produce ideas and beliefs in order to control information sources including the media, so there was no alternative way for public discourses because the popular voice was under domination by the regime. Instead of talking in the public arena, people then used the back-stage talk strategy indicating that there was another story usually in the form of folktales, fairy-stories, rumours, etc. behind the official story produced by those possessing power. Explaining the conceptual meaning of the term ‘hidden transcript’ Scott said that it is “to characterize discourse that takes place “off-stage,” beyond direct observation of

power holders. The hidden transcript is thus derivative in the sense that it consists of those off-stage speeches, gestures, and practices that confirm, contradict, or inflect what appears in the public transcript” (1990:4-5).

Public criticism, as a part of anti-corruption activism, is based on the spirit of civic morality and grasps passionate support from the grassroots, but unfortunately it faces very strong rejection from shady politicians as they form a cartel of politics in parliament and political parties. As political democracy paves the way for a multi-party system, politicians then create oligarchic politics which is considered as the main cause of institutionalized corruption. Both elite cartels and the political oligarchy are the major obstacles of anti-corruption movements so that NGO activists and civil society have to cope with many challenges and difficulties. Yet elite politicians and state officials always reiterate political rhetoric in support of anti-corruption reforms. Thinking of their anti-corruption rhetoric, people are aware that it would have little effect since they themselves benefit from and are involved in corruption for the sake of the power establishment. This is the reason why people become frustrated with the fact that corruption remains uncontrolled despite persistent efforts arranged by various groups of Indonesian society to combat it. However, they realize that eradicating corruption will take many years; anti-corruption activism is indeed an everlasting effort and Indonesians should prepare for an endless battle against the social disease. Nevertheless, Indonesian civil society and NGOs are determined to continue their struggles to fight corruption for the betterment of the nation despite a great deal of opposition which is mostly political. They believe that the new system of modern political democracy will be much more beneficial for all Indonesian people if corruption can be eradicated from state agencies and political institutions. [*]

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Appendixes

ⁱ The meaning of the symbolism of Hastabrata teachings:

Character one: Earth

Earth is generous, giving an equal opportunity to anyone to benefit from it and allows everyone to walk on it impartially. Earth is benevolent, becoming a good place for living existence, where everything is available for anyone. Like Earth, a leader should be munificent and willing to put aside his own interests and always dedicate himself to his people, serve them, and work for his country full of sincerity.

Character two: Sun

Sun is the centre of energy for life which relentlessly produces sunbeams needed for people's lives and living creatures, and radiates down on them equally without any exception. Like Sun, a leader should be able to enlighten the people, giving them good guidance to achieve common goals. As Sun moves within the world system in an orderly way, so a leader should follow the basic principles to guarantee social order for all the people.

Character three: Moon

Moon appears at night with light for the universe, offering tranquility, serenity, and harmony. Like Moon, a leader should bring light to the darkness and enlighten dark circumstances. He should be able to educate people by setting a good example in societal life, and befriend enemies and look after his friends.

Character four: Star

Stars enliven the sky at night, becoming a means for sailors to navigate the ocean. Like Star, a leader should perform as a role model for people in terms of manners, attitudes, and morality. He should have high ideals and make strong efforts to achieve the advancement of the nation, and be persistent, responsible, and trustworthy.

Character five: Ocean

Ocean is so wide, accommodating many things and never rejecting whatever things go over it. Like Ocean, a leader should have a 'wide heart', full of sincerity and patience. If he is criticised, he should not be emotional and effusive; yet neither should he become forgetful of his duty if he receives flattery and adulation. He should accommodate the aspirations of people in spite of their social and cultural differences.

Character six: Wind

Wind is unseen but it can be sensed; Wind can go anywhere into every single corner and space. Like Wind, a leader should be beneficial for people going anywhere across the country to understand public interest and absorb people's aspiration. He should sincerely dedicate his energies and efforts for the sake of the people by promoting prosperity for them.

Character seven: Sky

Sky is huge and wide and can accommodate all things—mountains, valleys, forests, land, sea, and the whole world. Like Sky, a leader should have a great soul and wide heart to embrace everyone and treat them equally regardless of their social status and cultural background.

Character eight: Fire

Fire is very hot and can burn everything, but is needed for life. Like Fire, a leader should be decisive about anything, follow nothing but the truth, and be able to impose the law justly for everyone and dispense justice for all people. He should not be partial in keeping justice in the land and should lead the country solely for the betterment of the people's lives.

ii The 113th *sūrah al-Falaq* (Arabic: قل فلق, the Daybreak), a brief 5-verse invocation, is usually recited by Muslims asking Allah Almighty for protection from the evil of *satan*.

سورة الفلق
Sūrat al-Falaq [Verse 113]
The Daybreak

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

١-بِرَبِّ الْفَلَقِ قُلْ أَعُوذُ
٢-مِنْ شَرِّ مَا خَلَقَ
٣-وَمِنْ شَرِّ غَاسِقٍ إِذَا وَقَبَ
٤-وَمِنْ شَرِّ النَّفَّاثَاتِ فِي الْعُقَدِ
٥-وَمِنْ شَرِّ حَاسِدٍ إِذَا حَسَدَ

In the Name of Allah, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful

- Say: “I seek refuge with Allah, the Lord of the daybreak;
- “From the evil of what He has created;
- “And from the evil of the darkening (night) as it comes with its darkness; (or the moon as it sets or goes away);
- “And from the evil of those who practise witchcrafts when they blow in the knots;
- “And from the evil of the envier when he envies.”

iii The verse of the Qur’an mentions about *shirk*: “Verily, Allah Almighty forgives not that partners should be set up with Him (in the worship), but He forgives except that (anything else) to whom He pleases and whoever sets up rivals with Allah in worship, he has indeed invented a tremendous sin.” (Chapter 4, verse 48).

iv Original version in Indonesian:

Gossip Jalanan

– Slank

Pernah kah lo denger mafia judi?
Katanya banyak uang suap polisi
Tentara jadi pengawal pribadi
[...]
Ada yang tau mafia peradilan?
Tangan kanan hukum di kiri pidana
Dikasih uang habis perkara

Apa bener ada mafia pemilu?
Entah gaptek apa manipulasi data
Ujung-ujungnya beli suara rakyat

Mau tau gak mafia di senayan?
Kerjanya tukang buat peraturan
Bikin UUD ujung-ujungnya duit
[...]

^v Original version in Indonesian:

Kamu-kamu ... Kita-kata

Franky Sahilatua

Minyak mahal, bangsa bayar utang.
Listrik mahal, bangsa bayar utang.
Sekolah mahal, bangsa bayar utang.
Berobat mahal, bangsa bayar utang.
Bangsa yang utang, koruptor yang makan.
Yang miskin tambah miskin, kita-kita-kita.
Yang kaya tambah kaya, kamu-kamu-kamu.
Kota banjir bangsa bayar utang.
Desa terendam, bangsa bayar utang.
Pengangguran tinggi, bangsa bayar utang.
Busung lapar, bangsa bayar utang...

^{vi} Original version in Indonesian

Jangan-jangan Saya Sendiri Juga Maling

– Taufiq Ismail

[...]

Lihatlah para maling itu kini mencuri secara berjamaah.
Mereka bersaf-saf berdiri rapat, teratur berdisiplin dan betapa khusyuk.
Begitu rapatnya mereka berdiri susah engkau menembusnya.
Begitu sistematis prosedurnya tak mungkin engkau menyabotnya.
Begitu khusyuknya, engkau kira mereka beribadah.
Kemudian kita bertanya, mungkinkah ada maling yang istiqamah?

Lihatlah jumlah mereka, berpuluh tahun lamanya,
membentang dari depan sampai ke belakang,
melimpah dari atas sampai ke bawah,
tambah merambah panjang deretan saf jamaah.
Jamaah ini lintas agama, lintas suku dan lintas jenis kelamin.

Bagaimana melawan maling yang mencuri secara berjamaah?
Bagaimana menangkap maling yang prosedur pencuriannya
malah dilindungi dari atas sampai ke bawah?
Dan yang melindungi mereka, ternyata,
bagian juga dari yang pegang senjata dan yang memerintah.
Bagaimana ini?

[...]