

PAPER NAME

**1870-5291-1-PB (1).pdf**

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WORD COUNT

**10538 Words**

CHARACTER COUNT

**56263 Characters**

PAGE COUNT

**26 Pages**

FILE SIZE

**291.5KB**

SUBMISSION DATE

**Aug 7, 2023 3:27 PM GMT+7**

REPORT DATE

**Aug 7, 2023 3:28 PM GMT+7**

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## Representation and Symbolism of Power and Sexuality in *Jamu* (Utami, 2002)

G. M. Adhyanggono

e-mail: [adhy@unika.ac.id](mailto:adhy@unika.ac.id)

Digital Performing Arts - English Department

Faculty of Language and Arts

Soegijapranata Catholic University

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### ABSTRACT

In the first decade following *reformasi*, three main factors fostered the revival and re-signification of documentary film in Indonesia. First, there was resistance to the New Order's repressive paradigm of censorship which was still imposed, particularly on issues such as sexuality, religion, and ethnicity. Second, there arose wider freedom for individuals to express their creativity due to the zeitgeist. Third, there was a coherence between the spirit of 'make-your-own-film' and the increasing popularity of the digital camera to produce independent films. Ayu Utami's *Jamu* (2002) provides a subtle and yet excellent example of a documentary film from this period. It is a documentary that might have never had the opportunity to be made in the New Order regime. The film, set in Jakarta, represents the power of jamu - traditional herbal medicine - which pertains to sexuality and its myth. Using an unconventional expository mode, this film explores jamu as a socio-cultural artifact that forces issues relating to power and sexuality to be brought out into the open. I contend that the representation and symbolism of power and sexuality in the film is predicated on challenging the prevailing view that Indonesia is a moralized society as once constructed by the New Order regime. Therefore, the effect of *Jamu* can be perceived as twofold: a celebration of freedom of expression and the creative resistance to a hegemonic view of sexuality. My analysis is designed from a semiotic and cultural approach, concerning Roland Barthes' photographic paradox, Michel Foucault's power/knowledge, Jeffrey Weeks's inclusive sexuality, as well as Robert Segal's and Laurie Honko's concepts of myth.

Keywords: jamu, power, sexuality, and myth

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### INTRODUCTION

Ayu Utami's *Jamu* (2002) is a documentary film that represents jamu culturally imbued with myths. Jamu is a Javanese traditional herbal medicine mainly composed of

plants in combination with minerals and sometimes animals (Beers, 2001; Soedarsono and Roemantyo, 2002; Elfahmi et al., 2014). The film, set in Jakarta, describes jamu which pertains to power, sexuality, and its myth. The documentary film was a self-funded project (Benny, 2003), which was initially meant for a literary presentation at *Schule für Dichtung* in the University of Viena, Austria (Utami, 2002).

*Jamu* is, syntagmatically, structured into seventeen segments: 1) Opening credits; 2) A depiction of the Indonesian presidential palace, the national monument (Monas), some landmarks in Jakarta and the introduction of the narrator; 3) A stock footage of television advertisement, *Neohormoviton*, an energy supplement; 4) A description about physical exercises surrounding the Monas, maintaining health and the introduction of jamu; 5) The popularity of jamu sold in stall or street vendor in a city's urban kampong and its mythic associations; 6) Interviews with a jamu vendor (Sariyem), a street vendor (Suyoto), and a family health consultant (Pandu Riyono) around myth of sexuality; 7) A city's graffiti illustrating a female jamu vendor with the Indonesian flag as its background; 8) A description of Bogor Botanical Garden with its rich collection of natural ingredients often used for jamu production including those associated with sexual-related problems such abortion and genital cleanliness; 9) A stock footage of television advertisement, Betel Soap (*Sabun Sirih*) for vaginal cleanliness; 10) An illustration of the importance of vaginal cleanliness for Indonesian women after using toilet; 11) The condom public service advertisement and its controversy; 12) A description of Kramat Tunggak, its past and present; the transformation from prostitution area to Jakarta Islamic Centre; 13) A trip to the Old Town Batavia, from the town square, Batavia cafe, its vicinity selling aphrodisiac jamu, including snake jamu, and then followed by television advertisement - *Fatigon*; 14) A stock footage from Indonesian mythical-horror movie 'The Incarnation of the Snake Goddess' (*Titisan Dewi Ular*, Frans Pontoh, 1990); 15) From the Old Town Batavia to the Jakarta's China town: a glimpse of its night life; 16) Leaving the China town to the city centre; finding a motel for 'sex hour' - the 'intimacy fantasy' of the narrator and the social actor's re-enactment; 17) End Credits.

Paradigmatically, I found that the film culturally intersects the ideas of power and sexuality within the frame of mythical beliefs surrounding jamu. The urgency to understand this intersection is due to the satirical representation of the documentary to highlight the cultural content, i.e. the intersection of power and sexuality in the post-

authoritarian era of Indonesia. With this in mind, this article then discusses the representation and symbolism of power and sexuality in *Jamu* decoded as a challenge against the prevailing view of Indonesia as a moralized society, which was once hegemonically constructed and narrated by the New Order regime. The article comprises five main sections: theoretical frameworks, remnants of the New Order's hegemonic ideology, presence of the mythic power, satirical representations of sexuality, and from state symbols to a rooster.

## THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS

The power illustrated in the film is closely representative of two concepts: Roland Barthes's photographic paradox and Michel Foucault's power/knowledge. Given Barthesian photographic paradox, I draw the concept of power from the understanding that power is a force mirroring the ideology of those in power, i.e. hegemonic ideology (Barthes and Heath, 1977; Ben-Shaul, 2007; de Valk and Arnold, 2013). In *Jamu*, this corresponds to an introductory remark by the narrator, Ayu Utami herself, stating that "We [Indonesians] are a moralized society" (Utami and Prasetya, 2002). As for Foucaultian definition, power is understood as a force exercised and manifested in all levels of social structure involving the idea of 'truth' (Dreyfus, 1983; Fernet-Betancourt et al., 1987). I exercise this notion when referring to, if I may term it, - mythic power - that is a force manifesting in an individual and/or communal affirmation or agreement with the 'truth' of a myth described in the film. In other words, mythic power is closely associated with the public's belief in myths.

Myth in this article is perceived as a belief about something very significant (Segal, 2004) that may go beyond the boundaries of time and place. Interestingly, in *Jamu*, the myths seem to originate from 'mythologized beliefs of sacred origin' (Honko, 1984), which encapsulate the syncretic traditional Javanese worldview on sexuality. It is syncretic as it has been amalgamated from the traces of religions setting their footholds, particularly in Java. The religions here cover some radiances of Hinduism, Buddhism, and Islam. The myths represented in the film are pertinent to sexuality.

Sexuality, according to Week, is an inclusive concept, a construct of social, cultural, and historical forces, which is subjective and fictional because "it is an invention of the human mind" (Weeks, 2010: p. 7). If this notion of sexuality is seen as an invention

of the human mind, a product of social, cultural, and historical forces, then such an invention, I argue, also converges myth since myth is also a social, cultural, and historical abstract in the guise of a narrative belief. Weeks (2010) further asserts that the subjective and fictional qualities of sexuality are rendered by the fact that throughout human history, the notion of sexuality did not exist, and sometime in the future may not exist again. This underlines the idea that sexuality is invented and narrated. Again this coalesces myth in that narration is the very medium where myth is perpetuated due to its regenerative capacity (Eliade, 1987), and is most frequently embraced as part of the ritual (Honko, 1984). As an inclusive notion, sexuality covers disparate areas such as “marriage and the family, illegitimacy and birth control, prostitution and homosexuality, changing patterns of moral, legal and medical regulation, rape and sexual violence, sexual identities, and sexual communities, and oppositional cultures, reproduction, erotic activities and fantasy, intimacy and warmth, love and pleasure, sin and danger as well as violence and disease” (Anna et al., 2011: p. 3 ). In addition to the subjective and narrative characteristics that both sexuality and myth share, this inclusive standpoint of sexuality is selected and applied because *Jamu* indicates that some of the areas mentioned above are present in the film, from public morality to consuming jamu as part of ‘increasing vitality’.

### **Remnants of the New Order’s Hegemonic Ideology**

As has been mentioned previously, the claim deliberately stated in the documentary that “We [Indonesians] are a moralized society” has inspired conducting a semiotic and cultural investigation of the present topic. The claim operating in Indonesian society above is further internalized and emanated through a general view that representation and discourse of sexuality in the public domain are abhorrent. During the New Order regime, the presence of the state policing its citizen’s discourse of sexuality was conspicuous through any government-sponsored bodies such as *Dharma Wanita* (Women’s Duty), a large organization for the wives of the civil servants, and *Pembinaan Kesejahteraan Keluarga* (PKK), a social organization for women based on both rural village and urban neighborhood (Brenner, 1999; Wieringa, 2003).

The gender paradigm or ideology of the New Order was of a culturally family-based function encapsulating the position of women as wife and mother under the shadow of husbands. The New Order’s gender and sexual politics are correlated with

the family-based ideology of the military and what is believed to be the 'favorable' version of *Javanese priyayi*, a 'reinterpretation' of the Javanese court-based cultural model, characterized by an ideal image of an educated community (and of course family) with lofty and indirect language, proper decorum with high morality inherited from Dutch colonial public morality standard, and economic-oriented logic to justify self-profit seeking (Budianta, 2000; Sutarto, 2006; Jones, 2012 ). This kind of the desired view and manifestation could be observed in the early periods of the New Order regime establishment during the 1970s wherein the government needed to gain significant control over its citizens. It was necessary to execute for their political agendas primarily resided in creating and maintaining political stability and economic development. Nevertheless, this cultural-based view turned out to be not enough as from the mid-1980s to 1990s, the government tended to subsume religious discourse, especially Islam, to strengthen the justification of this family-based gender orientation (Blackwood, 2007).

This heavily views on family orientation purported to represent "Suharto as the ultimate father who upheld the absolute power of stability; Indonesian citizens were considered as the children, and women were associated with motherly function, i.e. the keeper for maintaining the harmony of the big family nation called Indonesia" (Paramaditha, 2012: p. 71). This 'logic' was even stipulated in political institutions, and therefore, sexuality was always understood within this logic boundary, i.e. father-mother or husband-wife as in familial life. However, family in the New Order paradigm was never portrayed as a political entity, but a functional unit. Therefore, the New Order family was a part of the nation with which safeguarding the security, morality, and well-being of its members and the nation in a broader sense were entrusted. As a result, the discourse of sexuality might not find its outlet except within a family, and it is even restricted between husband and wife. Any public representations or images of sexual intimacy, be those of printed and visual, must be within this family boundary, or comply with the New Order's policy (Brenner, 1999).

From the seventeen segments in *Jamu*, several scenes well indicate this kind of hegemonic view or power. They are the introductory scene at the National Monument, the jamu stall, the Bogor Botanical Garden, the condom public ads, the *Kramat Tunggak* scene, the *KukuBima TL* scene, and the Indonesian mythical/horror stock footage (*Titisan Dewi Ular*, Frans Pontoh, 1990). The documentary evidence suggests the presence of the hegemonic view regarding public morality and the discourse of sexuality.

At the National Monument scene, it can be overtly perceived what the narrator states when she makes an introductory remark as follows:

Welcome to Jakarta, the capital city of Indonesia. My name is Ayu, I will take you city touring. Jakarta, together with Bali and Yogyakarta, are three major tourist destinations in Asia because of their rich culture. But, we are not like Bangkok that is famous for the Amsterdam of Asia. We are not like that you know. We are a moralized society. Our motto is Jakarta *Teguh Beriman*, or Jakarta - strong in faith.

(Utami and Prasetya, 2002)

From the remark above, it is noticeable that there is gainsaying to juxtapose Jakarta with Bangkok and Amsterdam, which are closely associated with their 'sex-tour'. Here, the denial is crystal clear for acknowledging the juxtaposition means that Jakarta embodies similar characteristics as that of Bangkok and Amsterdam. Although in reality, practices of prostitution and obscenity occur, they are still considered denigration and prohibited by Indonesian law since the Dutch colonial times (Strafrecht, 1915).

Then, the relationship between the claim and the city's motto "*Jakarta Teguh Beriman*" (Jakarta - strong in faith) is another interesting to highlight at this point. I perceive that the city's motto becomes a projection, a manifestation from the claim of "We are moralized society". In Indonesia, a city's motto is usually and officially issued by the city government. Stemming from the phenomena, such a city's motto suggests two things: the pervading general claim of public morality and the interference of the state to find its justification over the claim. Not only does it become a mere general view, but a general view with force; a hegemonic force that is morally, socially, and legally binding.

The jamu stall scene also provides evidence of how an impact of a general hegemonic view regarding the presence of women in jamu stall is unraveled. In this scene, the narrator said, "It [jamu stall] sells various kinds of traditional herbal medicine from different parts of Indonesia. Usually woman doesn't come here alone, but with their partner" (Utami and Prasetya, 2002: 05:22-05:35). The last sentence mentions that a woman when wanting to consume jamu in a jamu stall needs to bring her partner. The problem lies in the assumption that jamu stall as depicted in the film is closely associated with the male's domain. The statement above implies a social norm of decency whereby a woman entering a public space closely associated or stereotyped with the male's

domain needs the presence of her partner or spouse. It is a rather ironic situation considering the history of jamu initially begun as women's affairs.

In the old days, it was mothers who handed down the secrets of jamu recipes to their daughters. Then when they became skillful enough at preparing jamu, the stories went orally to their neighbors. Consequently, those girls were consulted by their neighbors, and demand automatically resulted in small family enterprises. These became the kind of forerunners of the so-called cottage industries which in turn have become present day's modern herbal healing industries.

(Beers, 2001: p. 7)

Not only did it begin as women's affairs, but the irony continues since a jamu stall sells mostly various kinds of traditional herbal medicine which may consist of jamu products for men and women. Thus, in terms of decency, a woman consuming jamu in a jamu stall by herself is considered inappropriate. It implies a social construction which may be based on various reasons.

Concerning the above view, I intend to examine it in the intersection between male's exclusiveness, sexuality, and safety. This intersection appears as a 'preventive attempt' that may result from a condition possibly encountered by a woman coming and drinking alone in a jamu stall. Here, a jamu stall correlates with the place selling an exceedingly strong jamu that can be highly dangerous when over consumed. It is similar to a fermented wine or beer and is well-known among Indonesians for 'making men strong', or in other words, it relates to elixir improving sexual performance. Sometimes, men reeling and singing around at night stall, chances are they have been working on their virility because of the fermented drink may make customers exceedingly drunk. This would situate a woman in 'awkward' and 'unsafe' condition when consuming jamu in the stall with the presence of men other than her spouse or partner. Beers (2001) also mentions that jamu sellers in jamu stall are reluctant to sell to a woman who arrives on her own, but they will serve her if she is accompanied by her husband. The question that follows would be whether this applies only to Indonesian women or all women? The answer is "Foreigners do not have to worry about stumbling across these sellers because they would never let a Westerner buy their jamu" (Beers, 2001: p. 33).

The next evidence of the presence of a hegemonic view can also be pinpointed at the Bogor Botanical Garden scene. Here, the hegemonic view corresponds to the issue of abortion in Indonesia. The narrator said, "*Nanas* or pineapple has a strong abortive



content. Traditional witch doctors use young *nanas* in large amounts in abortion. But abortion is illegal in Indonesia" (Utami and Prasetya, 2002). From the statement, it is mentioned that in Indonesia abortion is prohibited by law. Like in many other countries, the issue of abortion has always been endlessly debated among experts and commoners from various perspectives. The film presents this issue in the ambiance of the paradoxical situation. On the one hand, the film mentions that a large amount of *nanas* (pineapple) is used by a traditional witch doctor (traditional midwife) to perform an abortion. It may indicate that the practice still survives. On the other hand, such abortive practice is punishable by law unless under meticulous medical considerations. When diagnosed that the life of the pregnant woman and/or the infant is in danger due to certain diseases or malfunctions, then abortion is an alternative. Regarding abortion, Indonesian Penal Law was revised in 2009 regulating which abortion is allowed and which is not. Nevertheless, under the shadow of a hegemonic view lingering in Indonesia that "We are moralized society", practices of illegal abortion are always subject to public condemnation. Therefore, the moral view behind the condemnation of abortion resides in an argument perceiving abortion as the extermination of the living being. Life is God's most precious gift, and therefore, no human being has a privilege to take it away, particularly in the early stage of life formation itself (infant). Indonesian society still regards this view strongly, but the illegal practices of abortion also secretly remain (Billy, 2010).

Public service advertisement scene regarding the prevention of AIDS with the use of condoms is also grounded in a hegemonic view that perceives "We have moralized society". The argument given revolves around the fear that promoting the use of condoms for safe sex would further worsen sexual freedom in the country. The scene illustrates stock footage from the public service ads on television played on a computer in combination with the presence of the narrator giving commentary on the subject and intertitle (subtitle). The issue brought forward here relates to what the narrator said, "This public service advertisement commissioned by Family Health International was protested by *Majelis Mujahidin* [an Islamist group] and Society without Pornography [NGO]. It is considered to have the side effect of promoting free sex. Free sex is violating religious norms and Eastern values. Finally, the television stations stopped broadcasting this advertisement" (Utami and Prasetya, 2002).

Many Indonesians perceive that consummation needs to be done only within the boundary of marriage and any misconduct thereof would be considered demeaning and indecent. Interestingly, the above scene also evokes public memory that in the early years of the post-Suharto era, while individual and communal voices were euphorically exercised, besides student movements, it was Islamist groups and non-governmental organizations that actively voiced their objections to the government and the social conditions of the country (Brenner, 2011). The revival of Islam brings to fore discourses and also movements that carry with them agenda to redefine and reconstitute their power relations in all levels of Indonesian society, which inevitably also touches upon the issues of gender and sexuality (Adamson, 2007; Robinson, 2009).

As to the *Kramat Tunggak* scene, the film depicts how the hegemonic view in society manifests in a transformation of a notorious prostitution area in Jakarta into an Islamic center as shown below:

The name *Kramat Tunggak* in Northern Jakarta used to be identical with the red-light district in the city. Hundreds of *wanita tuna susila* or immoral women worked here. After the reformation in which General Suharto stepped down in 1998, several religious groups urged the government to ban the activity. Several prostitution areas in Java were attacked. Finally, the red-light district of *Kramat Tunggak* was also closed down. Now, in this ten-hectare area, an Islamic center stands to replace the previous bars and rooms.

(Utami and Prasetya, 2002)

The scene above suggests that ascending groups in Indonesian society, i.e. Islamist groups and NGOs tried to exert their influence and power over others in the new era of democratization after President Suharto's resignation in 1998.

There were various backgrounds contributory to the movement or the revival of Islamist groups at the time. Political oppression during the authoritarian times of President Sukarno and Suharto was not a sole factor, as, for Muslims, it was also driven by religious obligation. Studying Islam and teaching it to others as well as practicing it on a daily life basis are all parts of Islamic *dakwah* (Zarkasyi, 2008). In Indonesia, prostitution is considered against religious and social norms. Therefore, the hegemonic view of "We are moralized society" finds its concordance and materialization through this window of *dakwah*. Hence, from this religious-based public morality, the transformation of *Kramat Tunggak* into the Jakarta Islamic Centre is then considered 'legitimate'. Under public pressure, mainly from Islamist groups and religious teachers

(*ulama*), *Kramat Tunggak* was officially closed down on December 31, 1999, by the Decree of the Governor of Jakarta number 6485/1998. Then, in 2001, Governor Sutiyoso proposed an idea to build the Jakarta Islamic Centre (JIC). The following year, the Provincial Government of Jakarta started to construct the locale into JIC (JIC, 2014).

Moving to the next corroboration, the *KukuBima TL* scene, the hegemonic view still revolves around the social norm, i.e. decency, under the religious value of matrimony. The narrator mentions:

If we close down the prostitution area or ban visual images that have explicit sexual connotations from the public sphere, it doesn't mean that we hate sexuality. On the contrary. We honor it very high and name it intimate relation between husband and wife.

(Utami and Prasetya, 2002: 13:04 -13:29)

The scene indicates that sexuality (consummation) is 'permitted' within the boundary of husband and wife intimate relation, which means in a marriage. It meets social and religious acceptance. The statement also implies that the public in general will conceive of any sexual relation beyond the boundary of marriage as a violation of public morality and religious norms.

In addition to the evidence aforementioned, a segment of Indonesian mythical-horror footage also represents a hegemonic view of sexuality within marriage. The scene presented illustrates a wife (*Sumi*) physically abused and expelled by her husband (*Dayan*) for her pregnancy was of the result of her 'adultery' as accused by her husband. The wife fervently denied it but there was no way for her to prove her 'innocence', let alone convinced him. Then, she ran away, escaped from her malicious husband. In despair, a mythical snake revealed the secret of her pregnancy. It was told that she happened to be the incarnation of the Snake Goddess. Then, she gave birth to a baby daughter. In the end, her malicious husband (*Dayan*) found his demise after battling with the mythical Snake God (Utami and Prasetya, 2002). This footage underscores how another issue of sexuality, pregnancy resulted from adultery is a violation of fidelity to marriage life. Such an underlying value is used to amplify the conflicts of the married couple in the film. It hints at how sexuality within marriage is a privilege in the Indonesian social context.

### Presence of the Mythic power

The representation of mythic power in the documentary corresponds to any depictions of the presence of the myths indicated to be believed by the social actors and the narrator. With this, there are three myths illustrated and addressed in the film: first relates to a myth of 'dry' female principle 'preferable' to men; second concerns a myth that jamu improves sexual performance especially for men, and third is a myth of '*Loro Blonyo*' mentioned by the narrator.

Concerning the first myth, there are four scenes in the film that illustrate the presence of mythic power. It can be traced in all events involving interviews between the narrator and the social actors: Sariyem (a jamu *gendhong* vendor), Suyoto (a street vendor), and Pandu Riyono (a family health consultant). Here, each social actor expresses her or his view on the myth of the 'dry' female principle. Sariyem stated, "Of course men prefer dry. They don't like it if the women are wet" (Utami and Prasetya, 2002). Suyoto confirmed her statement by saying, "Well, dry is nicer" (Utami and Prasetya, 2002). Unlike the first two informants, Pandu Riyono challenged the belief: "About dry sex, it is only men who believe that a dry female genital gives extraordinary sensation" (Utami and Prasetya, 2002). From this illustration, it can be seen that two contradictory perspectives exist: Sariyem and Suyoto can be grouped into those believing the myth while Pandu Riyono opposes it.

Sariyem and Suyoto are the very models of those who base their belief on an 'assumption' relying very much on the subjectivity of 'male's perspective', which is also hard to gauge. In other words, this signifies that a 'subjective assumption' might have operated in their belief. Precisely because of this assumptive quality, the mythic power of this instance can be well traced in two dimensions: internalization and materialization. The former suggests that both Sariyem and Suyoto have internalized their unquestioned affirmation on the myth as 'a general truth' as if each of them had experienced it; therefore, it is worth-believing. The latter refers to the fact that their acceptance of the 'truth' of the myth is convincingly and openly shared via the interview. When observed closely, Sariyem's statement starting with 'of course' denotes that such a belief has been 'widely' acknowledged. In the subsequent shot, Suyoto with his 'serious' facial expression reassures the interviewer that the belief is true: "Dry is so nice, friend. You don't know it!" (Utami and Prasetya, 2002). These all suggest that the belief or the myth has been deeply internalized and, therefore, considered 'valid'. Besides, it is

also worth noting that their social class background - less educated working class - may also contribute to their attitude and belief. I conceive that this factor has been deliberately considered by the filmmaker to set them as the source of information in the filmmaking.

Unlike Sariyem and Suyoto, Pandu Riyono positions himself as opposed to the myth. From his statement, it can be inferred that such a belief is biased and sexist for it is only an assumption from a male's perspective, and yet it is hard to prove that all men share a similar viewpoint. In the shot, it is seen that his facial expression and tone undermine the belief. In other words, Pandu seems to assert that such a belief is misleading and therefore subjective; characteristics 'commonly' associated with the myth. Given his statement and background as a professional, a consultant at Family Health International, viewers are invited to rationalize the myth. Hence, the power/knowledge exercised by Pandu Riyono at this moment is the kind that enlightens the audience with challenging the myth and that brings to fore an explanation of the belief. Interestingly, the filmmaker contrives this contradiction which provides viewers with an understanding that both views co-exist in Indonesian society.

The second myth is related to the belief that jamu can help someone improve his or her sexual performance. The hardest evidence of this myth can be pinpointed by referring to the snake jamu drinker scene. This scene begins with a shot of a man holding a cobra snake, and then he cut its head. Following was a shot of the man draining the cobra's blood in a small cup; he showed its liver and put it in the cup together with the blood as a jamu concoction. Then, a customer (Jalu Patidina) came into the frame and drank the concoction. He said, "The benefits are for skincare, to boost energy, and to increase sexual vitality" (Utami and Prasetya, 2002). Here, it is obvious how jamu for some people is understood as a traditional medicine that also possesses its aphrodisiac function. Although, there has been some research on jamu's medicinal qualities (Limyati and Juniar, 1998; Delima et al., 2013; Elfahmi et al., 2014), yet research on its aphrodisiac function concerning one's sexual performance is still hard to find. Again, this canvasses the idea that jamu is used as a medium to bridge a strong wish or an expectation and an action projected to sexuality.

The usage of animals, particularly snake, together with herbs in the healing method has a very long history and tradition. Snake, in the past, was regarded as the symbol of life, growth, rejuvenation, health, fertility, and even eternity (Menez, 2003). The symbolization is universal and has been passed down through curative rites and

medication. In such a tradition, belief becomes a pre-requisite factor than a logical explanation. Such a belief is constructed through a variety of narratives. Therefore, believing snake concoction increases one's vitality or sexual performance is only one of them predicated more on the remnant of symbolization intersected with one's condition and wish. In the case of Jalu Patidina, the snake jamu drinker, it can be deduced that the mythic power is represented in his belief that drinking cobra's blood and liver may increase his virility. Then, it is manifested in his action.

In the Cafe Batavia scene at the Old Town Batavia, the mythic power is disclosed by the narrator when she presents a pair of traditional Javanese statuette, a man and a woman, known as *Loro Blonyo*. She recounts the statuette as follows:

While waiting for the waiter, let me show you something. This is *Loro Blonyo*, a traditional Javanese statuette. In Javanese folk art, statue or figure always comes in pair: man and woman, husband and wife. In Javanese philosophy like in Eastern philosophy, the universe is made up of masculine energy and feminine energy. You can find the masculine element and feminine element in everything. (Utami and Prasetya, 2002: 15:17-16:09)

The explanation does not eventually tell the 'story' of *Loro Blonyo* per se. Yet, it only touches upon the 'basic' masculine and feminine elements of the recount. In Javanese culture, there are a lot of varieties of the myth of *Loro Blonyo*; one of them is based on the myth of *Sri-Sadana*. In the *Serat Pustakaraja Purwa*, book III, written by R. Ng. Ranggawarsita, it is told that in *Prabu Sri Mahapunggung*, the king of Purwacarita, had three children, two of them were *Dewi Sri* and *Raden Sadana*, who showed their sisterly and brotherly love one to another. When the king planned to arrange the marriage between Raden Sadana and Dewi Panitra. Raden Sadana refused the arrangement and ran away from the palace. Due to her sisterly love and responsibility, Dewi Sri followed him. Furious, the king cursed them both. Sadana turned into a swallow while Dewi Sri became a snake. They were separated, and their search for each other, they encountered some ill-fated events. The snake slithering in rice fields and the swallow flying over it. Their fidelity, love, and unstoppable search moved heaven. By the divine pardon, they were retransformed into human figures and then deified. Ever since, Dewi Sri was recognized as the goddess of fertility, agriculture, and foods, while Raden Sadana was the god of clothing (Endraswara, 2013).

Nowadays, they are known as *Loro Blonyo* referring to the idea of a couple united by love and fidelity. This is heavily interlinked with Javanese cosmology perceiving that 'masculine and feminine energies from the universe'. With this in mind, the presence of the mythic power of *Loro Blonyo* in the Cafe Batavia scene rests in the reaffirmation of the notion of fidelity, of complementary love between a couple, man and woman, husband and wife. It is the narrator who positions herself to represent such an existing mythic power. Alongside, the way the narrator 'plays with' the statuettes, by placing them on her lap, moving them away one another, putting them back close to each other, turning their back against each other, rubbing their heads one another, turning them backward and swaying them, represent this idea of man and woman union.

All of the myths mirror the traditional Javanese worldview (mysticism) of sexuality, healing, and personhood. From the Javanese mysticism standpoint, sex, in the first place, is perceived as something sacred. Therefore, it has to be appropriately done between man and woman in marriage (see also Geertz, 1989; Suseno, 1996; Malhotra, 1997). The sanctity of intercourse lies in the belief that it is not only an expression of biological relationship for mere 'pleasure', but it also becomes a total system (not only a medium) for continuing descendants as well as for obtaining divine grace. In the second place, intercourse is regarded as one of the methods to express spiritual belief and union with the divine one, God. It is due to a belief that the divine quality has already immersed in a conception to develop a fetus. In the third place, intercourse 'reflects' the totality of human life where activity and inactivity, freedom and self-control, feelings, intuition, and logic, as well as love and respect, coalesce (Endraswara, 2013).

### **Satirical Representations of Sexuality**

Given the previous hegemonic public morality and the Javanese worldview inclusion, the representation of sexuality in *Jamu* seems to be contradictory. This is evident in some illustrations: *Neohormoviton* (TV ads footage) scene, jamu stall scene, betel soap scene (TV ads footage), scene of nightlife at Jakarta's China Town, and the motel bedroom scene. This contradiction to a certain extent reveals the disparity between the hegemonic axiom and the discourse as well as practices of sex, which find their ways to manifest in public. Yet, the point does not reside in the disparity itself, this more importantly shows that the documentary is semiotically intended for satirizing and

'playing with' the social and cultural signs still operating in Indonesian society pertinent to sexuality via jamu.

Making use of footage from a TV advertisement, the *Neohormoviton* scene communicates two pieces of the message: *Neohormoviton*, a jamu product made in a capsule as men's energy-boosting supplement, and the illustration of the advertisement itself, which features three women and a man. When the man is doing fitness, the three women impart 'meaningful' gaze and 'gestures' to him making it subject to the bodily attraction. The subsequent shots inevitably connote further sexual association wherein the man doing the fitness moves his lower abdomen around, forward, and backward giving an impression as that in sexual intercourse. The camera intentionally zooms in on his tight gym short leaving the shape of his genital underneath fantasized. This 'visual play' along with the product tagline "*Neohormoviton*, an energy booster for men only" asserts the coherence between manhood and sexuality.

About these pieces of the message, the notion of sexual attraction seems to be in the background. Cortese (2004) mentions that sexual attraction is driven by two important factors: primeval sexual motivation (biological drives) and impression management (cultural and social construction). The latter is what distinguishes between human beings and animals. It is also the area in which displays of attraction and body are endlessly explored in advertising because "...we can control what signals we give out and we are usually aware of how our body displays are being received or interpreted" (Cortese, 2004: pp. 35-36). This impression management is so diverse since the so-called 'standard of beauty' for both men and women often varies significantly between cultures, let alone between individuals. Although the 'standard of beauty' varies, in the circulation of Indonesian media including TV advertisement, contemporary Indonesian men images are also influenced by "the fantasy images of global hyper-masculinity - tough, hard, and heroic" (Nilan, 2009: p. 327). Being tough, hard, and heroic require narratives wherein one of them is of the biological display through advertising as exemplified by the classic triangular shape of an ideal man: "broad shoulders with a narrow waist" (Cortese, 2004: p. 33). All of these seem to go in line with the tendency to highlight undesirable male impotency in Indonesia. Therefore, the widespread of herbal energy supplement is lucratively perceived as a marketing opportunity which made TV advertisement more sexually representative and appealing for both men and women (Marshall, 2004).



Moving to the jamu stall scene, the representation of sexuality is described by the time the narrator explains two kinds of jamu special for women: *Sari Rapet* and *Tongkat Madura*. About the former, the narrator said, "This is called *Sari Rapet* or the essence of tightness. It strengthens the contraction of woman's feminine organ" (Utami and Prasetya, 2002). While talking, the narrator put her left index finger into her right palm, folded it, and tightened up. This illustrates the act of penetration and contraction. As to the latter, it is stated that "This is also another kind of traditional product. We call it *Tongkat Madura* or Madurese Stick. Madura is very famous because of its products and jamu for a woman...Direction for use: insert this whole medical herbal into a woman's feminine part, and let it remain to one or two minutes. Then take it out. It will absorb the excessive liquid and banish unpleasant odor" (Utami and Prasetya, 2002).

The depiction of both products above accentuates the common association of jamu stall, jamu, and sexuality. Interestingly, the examples are given in this scene present jamu for women aimed at maintaining their sexual health and performance. Consuming or applying jamu may not be as popular as in the old times, especially for many 'post-modern' and urban Indonesian women, but the idea to enhance female charms and to ensure harmonious marriage life proves to be irresistible. In the Javanese tradition, a woman is advised to drink particular jamu such as *Kamajaya-Kamaratih* (God of Love and Goddess of Love) before marriage to "become a wife loved by her husband as every wife desires her husband's love and attention. But she should know that every husband desires to see his wife looking fresh, neat, vivacious, healthy, charming, and fascinating" (Beers, 2001: p. 22). The notion is even more noticeable in the following illustration of sexuality, Betel Soap.

Betel soap or *Sabun Sirih* scene, footage of TV advertising, presents the importance of female genital cleanliness. The scene features a lady promoting the product followed by the appearance of the product, its function, and a newlywed couple in a Javanese traditional wedding ceremony. Again, the picture is about the connection between a particular product containing traditional herbal, its usage, and also the result of the product application, an imagined healthy female genital to 'guarantee' harmonious sex life of the couple described as pointed out by the expression of the excited bridegroom saying, "*Sik asik, asik ... Mat, nikmat, nikmat*" in combination with the product tagline "*Sabun Sirih...harum dan keset - [Betel soap keeps it fragrant, tight and dry]*" (Utami and Prasetya, 2002)

Sexuality in the film is also captured in the portrayal of nightlife in Jakarta's Chinatown. As though it is meant to 'remind' the viewers that "We are moralized society", the scene starts with a shot recording a city signpost that reads "*Jakarta - Teguh Beriman* [Jakarta-strong in faith]". Subsequently, various nightlife shots in Jakarta's China town are represented, such as street stalls selling jamu, karaoke and night clubs, bars and discotheques, as well as the spa and massage parlors. The idea of nightlife in Indonesia tends to connote something negative. It is because night and day are equally divided following regular cycles for the country precisely lies along the Equator where the sun rises at around 6 a.m. and sets at around 6 p.m. every day. It becomes a cyclic life in which night or darkness also has its own 'laws' upon people's lives. Within families, prohibitions and restrictions are to a certain degree still imposed. Children are not permitted to play outside as soon as dusk begins to fall, people are not allowed to sew, and everyone is reminded to behave themselves, and not to provoke quarrels and make noises (Tadié and Permanadeli, 2015).

The night is thus seen as a moment when one should be careful. It is a moment when people, especially families, are focused on a home marked by rules, codes, and attitudes different from those of daytime. The night is both a moment when nobody should be out in the street and a period that is essential to the daily life of the city. It is often seen as a moment of transgression. It is a time when nobody should be in the public arena, a sacred moment when moral values have to be reflected and restored. Yet, it is also a continuation of daytime when city management and order from transportation to markets have to be still run. Therefore, night activities create a different sort of city, where some activities seem to shrink, others are more visible such as the leisure and sex industry (Tadié and Permanadeli, 2015).

*Jamu* presents a glimpse of this Jakarta's nightlife, which undermines the claims 'We are not like Bangkok, the Amsterdam of Asia. We have moralized society' and 'Jakarta-strong in faith' as well as the notion of 'transgression' aforementioned. In Indonesian contexts, karaoke, night clubs, bars, discotheques, night spa, and massage parlors are easily associated with the presence of both 'formal' and 'informal' sexual industry. Thus, the sexuality in this very scene lies in the direct, vivid, and associative depiction of the nightlife of Jakarta in such places.

Approaching the end of the film, the audience is brought to different scenes, from Jakarta's China town nightlife, down to the south across the central district of the capital, to a motel room. On the way to the motel, the narrator mentions:

We have left China town and passed by the city center. Now, we are heading to a motel. Yes, it may be similar to what other people call a 'love hotel'. But this is not for short time. In Japan, you book the room for one-hour; in the Philippines for four-hours; but here, the minimum charge is for six-hours.

(Utami and Prasetya, 2002)

In the motel room, the scene encapsulates the notion of sexuality with the 'demonstration' of intimacy between the filmmakers, Ayu Utami, and Erik. The demonstration purports to represent 'love hotel' which has become an 'undercover' lifestyle of Jakartans as indicated in the film.

This is the end of our city tour. I am now in a motel room. There are a lot of motels in Jakarta. Why? Because Jakarta is very crowded. Its population during the day is more than twelve million. Millions of people live in satellite cities. They commute every day and it takes a long journey, and they might already get tired and exhausted when they get home. To maintain the intimacy between husband and wife, some married couples make love here. After office hour or during lunch break, like me and my 'husband', Erik. Come, honey... We welcome you to Jakarta. Goodbye...

(Utami and Prasetya, 2002)

Interestingly, by the time Erik appears on-screen taking off his T-shirt and jeans, the audience sees that he wears underpants reading "*Jangan Lupa pakai kondom* [Don't forget to wear condom]" on their back. This shot immediately becomes an *aide-mémoire* of the earlier scene illustrating the prohibition of condom advertisements on TV. This is all to say that the motel room scene has exposed the undercurrents of the 'trend' which, at the same time, challenged the claim of 'We are moralized society'.

### **From State Symbols to a Rooster**

Symbolism is eventually part of the representation system wherein meanings appear as a result of cultural construction subject to conventions and milieus (Barker, 2004). Therefore, in the study of ethnic and cultural representations, symbolism holds a seminal position (Smith, 2009). In this paper, the symbolism also corresponds to depictions of objects or signs that connote power and sexuality. Thus, the symbolism of

1 power and sexuality in *Jamu* subsumes several shots illustrating the Presidential Palace “*Istana Merdeka*”, the National Anthem “*Indonesia Raya*”, the National Flag “*Sang Merah Putih*”, the National Monument “*Monas*”, the Department of Tourism and Culture Tower, *jamu Tongkat Madura*, Jakarta Islamic Centre at *Kramat Tunggak*, *KukuBima TL*, canon “*Cijagur*” and a rooster at the Old Town Batavia. The symbolism makes use of the state symbols, city architectural buildings, mythological paragon, historical artifact, and animal.

The consecutive shots at the outset, which captures *Istana Merdeka*, *Indonesia Raya*, and *Sang Merah Putih*, are all state symbols. They are symbols implying the notion of formality and unity from which Indonesia is officially represented as a country. Interestingly, when these meanings are connected to the subject matter of the film, *jamu*, it may bring forward a question of the relation between the two. Those state symbols ideologically represent authority and power, while *jamu*, regardless of its healing quality, embodies mythic power. In other words, both of them represent hegemonic power. Yet, from a different standpoint, it can also be said that the need to present those state symbols at the very outset is meant to highlight the contrasting effect the film intends to expose; ‘hegemonic’, ‘dominant’ and ‘pious’ as “We are moralized society” on the one hand, and ‘fluid’, ‘mythical’, and ‘secretive’ on the other. Furthermore, the contrasting effect may also suggest the ‘push and pull’ of national icon versus local icon. *Istana Merdeka*, *Indonesia Raya*, and *Sang Merah Putih* are all the pride and honor where the country resides in, while *jamu* although has been increasingly acknowledged as part of the national legacy, represents its locality, especially that of Javanese. The word *jamu* itself is of Javanese word (Soedarsono and Roemantyo, 2002; Elfahmi et al., 2014) and it has carried the Javanese world view of curative rites and premises for generations to resonate (Woodward, 1985; Beers, 2001). Thus, it can be read that *jamu* works as local symbolism under the shadow of hegemonic and national symbolism; or that it operates within the frame of the hegemonic claim.

The national monument or *Monas* and the Department of Tourism and Culture Tower have different ‘story’ to tell us, in this scene, the narrator reveals their association with the phallic symbol. In the case of *Monas*, she reveals as follows:

This is the National Monument in the heart of the city closed to the Presidential Palace, the Embassy of the United States of America, and the Department of Defence...*Monas* was erected in the 1960s. It is a modern representation of the

<sup>1</sup> *lingga'* or the phallic symbol in Javanese mythology. It also symbolizes Indonesia's independence and strength. Oh...we love symbols!

(Utami and Prasetya, 2002: 01:40-02:15)

This scene embodies the association and idea of a monument as a phallic symbol (*lingga*) and its political construction, i.e. independence and strength. The association of any tall and roundish-shaped constructions such as a monument, tower, minaret, and skyscraper with a phallus, or in general any architectural metaphor to the human body, especially genital, is not something new (Niculae, 2014). Yet, what makes the symbolization of the national monument with phallus more 'lively' is the intelligence of the filmmaker to analogize it with the portrayal of the people doing some exercises surrounding the monument as if it becomes the 'magnet' of their activities as shown in, "You can see, people exercise together in this park surrounding the Monas as if they absorb the energy from the golden flame on the top of the monument. The symbol of fire is made from 35 kilograms of golden leaves" (Utami and Prasetya, 2002: 02:58-03:18). Similarly, the same association also applies to the Department of Tourism Tower. Its roundish shape is interpreted by the narrator as embodying phallic symbolism. She mentions, "Another phallic symbol within the area is the Department of Tourism and Culture. It has a main tall tower and a pair of smaller rather roundish building" (Utami and Prasetya, 2002: 02:18-02:33). Interestingly, the shot was made in both high and shallow focus when recording the building. It is hard to suggest why the filmmaker did such a transformation.

The symbolism of sexuality and power resonates in Jamu *Tongkat Madura*. Looking at its form, *Tongkat Madura* or Maduresse Stick typifies much of a phallus. It has a cylindrical shape with oval heads at both ends. Furthermore, its usage is directly applied to the female genital making it resemble that of the phallus. Hence, the product bears the symbolism of sexuality in terms of its form and application, whereas it becomes symbolism of power as the jamu has mythic potential for mythic power to operate, to be believed in by people.

The establishment of the Jakarta Islamic Centre at Kramat Tunggak in northern Jakarta indicates the materialization of hegemonic ideology "We are moralized society". Therefore, the complex itself becomes the symbol of triumph; 'piety' overwhelms 'impiety'. This is the moment when shots capturing the Jakarta Islamic Centre with its

1 grand mosque, soaring minarets, and vast empty spaces which were still under construction, picture the determination of both the government and Islamist groups to transform the past into desirable present and future. Thus, power symbolism operates in this scene.

*KukuBima TL* scene offers its symbolism of sexuality, particularly on two illustrations such as the hand gesture of the narrator and the '*KukuBima*' on the poster as indicated below:

If we closed down the prostitution area or banned visual images that have explicit sexual connotations from the public sphere, it does not mean that we hate sexuality. On the contrary, we honor it very high, and name it 'intimate relationship between husband and wife'.

(Utami and Prasetya, 2002: 13:04-13:25)

While making the above statement, the narrator's index fingers made hook form and linked them up tightly. This hand gesture symbolically confirms the notion of sexuality in that sex is not forbidden and taboo to do. Yet, the narrator describes it as the intimate relationship between husband and wife for a sexual relationship is legally and morally allowed within the marriage in Indonesia.

As to the '*KukuBima TL*' poster, the symbolism lies in the illustration featuring the logo of the jamu product. The narrator draws her interpretation of *KukuBima TL* in the following:

Most of the jamu products are intended to strengthen this kind of relationship that is between husband and wife. For example, *KukuBima TL* is a man's drink. *TL* stands for *Tahan Lama* or lasts long, while *KukuBima* stands for *Kurang kuat Bini marah* or if you are impotent, your wife will get angry. *Bima* is a symbol of masculinity. The gesture of his wrist also symbolizes sexual intercourse that is husband and wife intercourse.

(Utami and Prasetya, 2002: 13:28-14:15)

In Javanese and Indonesian, '*kuku*' means nail, and *Bima* refers to one of the virtuous heroes called the *Pandawa* in one of the Javanese's *wayang* epics, *Bharatyudha*, a story originating from the Hindu's *Mahabharata* (Geertz, 1973; Anderson, 2009; Mulder, 2005). The logo of *KukuBima TL*, as illustrated on the poster, represents *Bima* with his big and pointed thumbnail popping out between his index and middle fingers. This nail representation connotes phallic association. It is then imbued with the notion of *Bima*'s gigantic physical strength, the strongest of the *Pandawa* (Suseno, 1996). They all come to

1 symbolize the potent virility the logo intends to illustrate. Yet, it still leaves the further question of why a *wayang* figure becomes the logo of a jamu. From a cultural standpoint, there is however a connection between healing or curative rites and *wayang* in the Javanese world view. Wright (1991) states:

The *wayang* – as art-form, philosophy, and frame of reference – still has a variety of functions in Javanese culture...A *wayang* performance is believed to have the power to protect, cure, and exercise...Javanese discourse is filled regarding *wayang* figures and their characters, likening people to this one or that one or choosing one as a model to emulate.

(pp. 90-91)

Similarly, Marshall (2004: p. 24) also mentions that in Indonesia “the power and might of a mythological paragon of manhood” to a certain extent still applies because it provides “a traditional model of masculinity, a model easily recognized by both men and women”. Thus, the creation of the *KukuBima TL* logo as such seems to intertwine with some aspects: cultural associations and accessibility, emulation, and belief framed within the discourse of sexuality.

Likewise, cannon ‘*Cijagur*’, reaffirms the symbolism of sexuality in *Jamu*. The scene set in the Old Town Batavia records a Portuguese cannon whose cascabel shape resembles that of *KukuBima TL*; in other words, a symbol of sexual intercourse. The function of a cannon as artillery in the past is self-explanatory, but in the film canon ‘*Cijagur*’ has been given ‘meaning’ about the premise of sexuality.

From the Islamic Centre in Kramat Tunggak, we move to the west to the Old Town Batavia where you can find *Cijagur*, a Portuguese cannon dates from the 17th century. The cannon was named ‘*Cijagur*’ or Mr. ‘Robust’ because of what it symbolizes.

(Utami and Prasetya, 2002: 14:16-14:33)

The analogy of the cannon with phallus has been interconnected with the desirable condition of the cannon in old times, i.e. strong and perfectly functional; in other words, ‘robust’ or ‘*jaguar*’ in its equivalent. Thus, in the film context, the cannon and its name provoke an association with ‘strong and functional’ phallus.

For instance, at the National Monument scene, the narrator reveals its association with a phallic symbol. In the case of Monas, this scene illustrates the association and idea of a monument as a *lingga*, a phallic symbol in Javanese mythology, and its political signification, i.e. independence and strength. The association of any tall and roundish-

shaped constructions such as a monument, tower, minaret, and skyscraper with a phallus, or in general any architectural metaphor to the human body, especially genital, is not something new (Niculae, 2014).<sup>1</sup> Yet, what makes the symbolization of the national monument with a phallus more 'lively' is the intelligence of the filmmaker to analogize it with the portrayal of the people doing some exercises surrounding the monument as if it becomes the 'magnet' of their activities as shown in, "You can see, people exercise together in this park surrounding the Monas as if they absorb the energy from the golden flame on the top of the monument. The symbol of fire is made from 35 kilograms of golden leaves" (Utami and Prasetya, 2002: 02:58-03:18).

## CONCLUSION

This paper has attempted to examine the representation and symbolism of power and sexuality in Ayu Utami's documentary film, *Jamu*. Having said this, I would rather deduce that the representation and symbolism of power and sexuality reveal a paradoxical situation that contrasts the hegemonic views of 'public morality' on the one hand and the 'real' social condition on the other. When the hegemonic ideology concerning public morality mirrors the residue of the New Order's policy, the social reality pinpoints that the discourse of sexuality is not abhorrent per se. *Jamu*, the Javanese traditional herbal medicine, is a cultural product that embodies the negotiation between what is by convention allowed and what is not. Thus, the discourse of sexuality still finds its way through *jamu*.

In the meantime, 'nightlife' and free sexual practices as 'performed' in the film became more 'indicative' in the first decade of the *reformasi* era. It was a transitional time where people disparately signified their 'freedom' of sexual practices through social conventions still applied. In this respect, the documentary can be seen as a satiric reflection against the prevailing hegemonic ideology "We are a moralized society". Therefore, the film can then be perceived as a celebration of freedom and creative resistance to a hegemonic view of sexuality.

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**First, there was resistance to the NewOrder's repressive paradigm of censorship w...**

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**The film, set in Jakarta, describes jamu whichpertains to power, sexuality, and its ...**

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**authoritarian era of Indonesia. With this in mind, this article then discusses therepr...**

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**of the human mind, a product of social, cultural, and historical forces, then such an...**

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**This kind of the desired viewand manifestation could be observed in the early peri...**

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**At the National Monument scene, it can be overtly perceived what the narratorstat...**

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**domain needs the presence of her partner or spouse. It is a rather ironic situationc...**

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**From the statement, it ismentioned that in Indonesia abortion is prohibited by law. ...**

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**Many Indonesians perceive that consummation needs to be done only within theb...**

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ulama), Kramat Tunggak was officially closed down on December 31, 1999, by the ...

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**Presence of the Mythic power**The representation of mythic power in the document...

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**also worth noting that their social class background - less educated working class ...**

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**medication. In such a tradition, belief becomes a pre-requisite factor than a logical...**

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**Nowadays, they are known as Loro Blonyo referring to the idea of a couple unitedb...**

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**playing with' the social and cultural signs still operating in Indonesian society perti...**

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**Moving to the jamu stall scene, the representation of sexuality is described by thet...**

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**Sexuality in the film is also captured in the portrayal of nightlife in Jakarta'sChinat...**

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**Approaching the end of the film, the audience is brought to different scenes, fromJ...**

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