

ISA INTERNATIONAL GUEST LECTURE

INDEXING SCANDAL: STYLE, GENDER AND CORRUPTION IN INDONESIAN URBAN LIFE

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We seem to be living in scandalous times. How can an anthropological analysis make sense of the intimate binary between exposure and vulnerability? In this presentation, I argue that contemporary Indonesian debates about corruption are a potent site through which to analyse the shifting but fused relationship between semiotics and political economy. Post-authoritarian Indonesia has seen a public fascination with and anxiety about the illicit circulation of wealth, which has taken the form of accusations of illicit use of particular styles. In particular, women's use, or misuse, of pious, covered, luxury styles, read as vulgar, have become a powerful mode through which to circulate more complex critiques of consumption and morality. Building on Muir and Gupta's (2016) invitation to ask how accusations of corruption typically assume that a properly ordered public sphere is masculine, I ask how putting style at the centre of the analytical frame reveals gendered and class biases. These biases not only produce material inequalities but constrain the semiotic forms available for political critique.



CARLA JONES is Associate Professor in the Department of Anthropology at the University of Colorado, Boulder. Her research analyses the cultural politics of appearance in urban Indonesia, with particular focus on femininity, domesticity, aesthetics and Islam. She has written extensively on self-improvement programmes, manners and middle-class respectability during the Suharto and post-Suharto periods in Yogyakarta and Jakarta, and is the co-editor, with Ann Marie Leshkovich and Sandra Niessen, of *Re-Orienting Fashion: The Globalization of Asian Dress* (Berg, 2003). Her current work situates anxieties about Islamic style in the context of broader debates about corruption and exposure. She is especially interested in the suspicions that settle on covered women in contemporary Indonesia, in which accusations of hypocrisy intersect with gendered assertions about revelation and propriety.

Jones is President of the Association for Feminist Anthropology from 2017-19 (<http://afa.americananthro.org>).

