

## Pacific News Pictures: Waria – A Third Gender in Indonesia



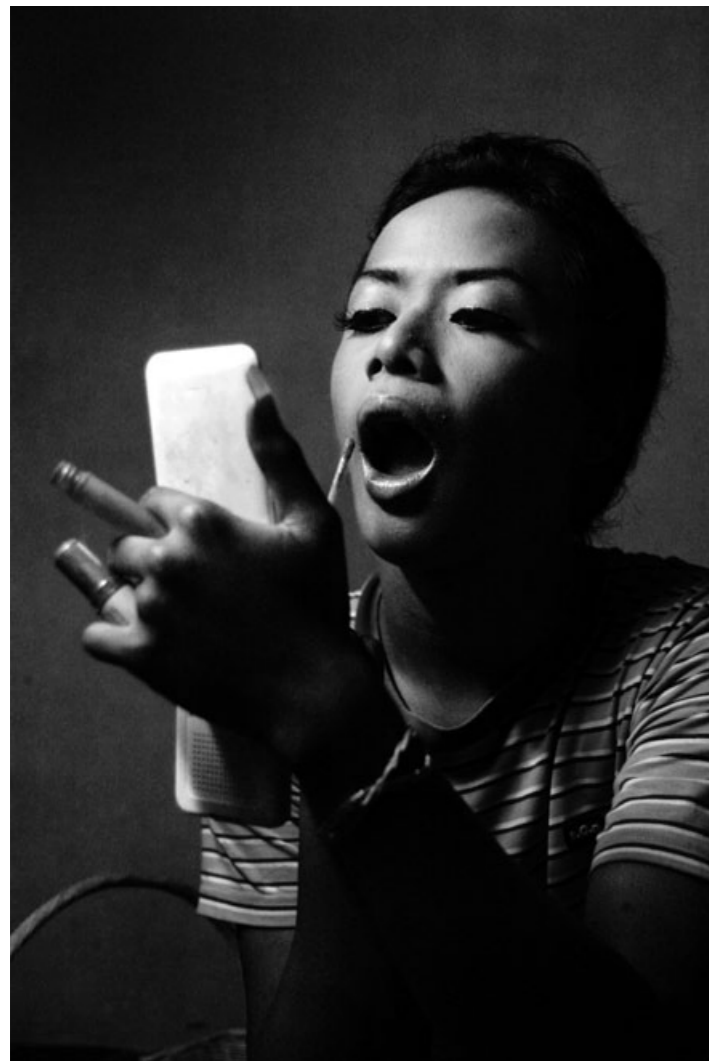
The waria of Indonesia are considered a "Third Gender" by many scientists. The term is a blend of the words „wanita“ (woman) and „pria“ (man) and refers to biological men who dress and behave like women (and often have plastic surgery done to get female body structure).

During a stay in Yogyakarta, Central Java, I had the chance to spend an evening with M<sup>BAK</sup> ERIN (left) and M<sup>BAK</sup> VITA (right), and photograph the process of their putting on makeup and dressing up for work. „Mbak“ is the Indonesian form of address for unmarried girls.

The waria of Indonesia are organized like a club: They have leaders, meetings, competitions (volleyball, karaoke, etc.), house-sharing communities, work-cooperations and so on. They make their living as owners of beauty parlors, street musicians, wig producers or prostitutes. Especially the older ones who can't work anymore by themselves are financially supported by the the younger ones.



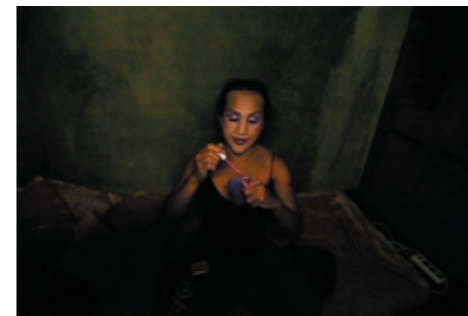
M<sup>BAK</sup> VITA and M<sup>BAK</sup> ERIN share a house with 2 other waria. Together with about 40 other waria they live in a quarter of Yogyakarta where they have been accepted by the residents and the „kepala kampung“ (village head). The acceptance by the „kepala kampung“ is very important, because only through him can they get a temporary ID card issued. Their ID card shows two names: a female and a male one, even though their sex on the ID card is „male“.



M<sup>BAK</sup> VITA produces wigs during the day. At night she works as a prostitute at one of the train stations in Yogyakarta together with M<sup>BAK</sup> ERIN and other waria. To lose their inhibitions they drink cheap wine that they can get from a little kiosk with the option of paying later, after having received a few customers. Their customers enter the train station through a twisted iron fence. They range from young school-age boys to old muslim men who have done the hajj to mekka. Most of them hang around the rails in groups and lower their inhibitions through alcohol as well, before making a deal with one of the waria.



M<sup>BAK</sup> VITA said that her customers are often those men who yell swearwords or laugh about her in the streets. In a good night M<sup>BAK</sup> VITA receives up to 7 customers, who pay around 10,000- 20,000 Rupiahs (about 1-2 euros) each. She doesn't have a fee but takes whatever she can get. She takes her customers to empty waggons around the trainstation. She has already become the victim of violence or rape several times. The worst time of the year is the rainy-season: if it rains there are no customers.



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Ihr besonderes Interesse gilt der Fotografie im südostasiatischen Raum (insbesondere Indonesien).

Weitere Bilder unter:  
<http://www.fotocommunity.de/pc/pc/mypics/449049> und  
<http://www.fotocommunity.de/pc/pc/mypics/426890>.



M<sup>BAK</sup> VITA was still in middle school when she realized she was gay. Soon after that she dropped out, started to dress like a woman and started to work as a prostitute. Over the years she had got breast implants and several silicone injections in her lips, nose, chin and eyebrows. Her family doesn't have a problem with her way of life, she said. Many waria have to run away from home after their coming out, though. They find a new family in the waria community.

