In Search of New Social and Spiritual Space: Heritage, Conversion, and Identity of Chinese-Indonesian Muslims

(Op Zoek naar Nieuwe Plek, Maatschappelijk en Geestelijk:
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Abstract

This study deals with Chinese-Indonesian's conversion to Islam and how they represent their historical legacy and express their culture. I consider that the end of Suharto's New Order opens a new era of Indonesia's democratization. It also facilitates the rise of Islamic revival and the emergence of Chinese-Indonesian's ethnic empowerment. The two historical and social currents merged and expressed by Chinese-Indonesian Muslims who are more willing to increase their public visibility to show their hybrid cultural practices and make public conversion narratives. However, due to the historical formation of racial classification made by Dutch colonial period. Ethnic Chinese confront with *pribumi* (the indigenous) with regard to racial, religious, and economic boundaries. It leads to that ethnic Chinese dislike Muslims and consider Islam as an inferior religion. In contrast, the *pribumi* Muslims consider Chinese as economic creatures and an exclusive elegant minority who are not religious. Therefore conversion to Islam for Chinese is not merely a private choice of religion but also an transgressive action that cause exclusion and suspicion form both sides. I compare how middle-lower class of Chinese Muslim men and women suffer such a boundary-making. In particular, the natal family's exclusion faced by ethnic Chinese women is related with their conversion is considered as a prelude for interracial marriage. In spite of that, it does not mean that Chinese-Indonesian Muslims as new converts are always in negative positions, suffering racial and religious discrimination and patriarchal domination. I take Chinese Muslim preachers and businessmen as two social carriers (or religious agencies), arguing that Chinese Muslims can manage their advantages and obtain leadership in preaching Islam and in

managing Muslim organizations. Chinese-Indonesians convert to Islam is a minor phenomenon of Indonesian Islam, but it has shown its historical particularity in view of micro and macro processes of Islamization in Indonesia. On the other hand, in term of ethnic empowerment, becoming Muslims for ethnic Chinese is not necessary at the cost of erasing their Chinese identity. By contrast, they have created an alternative hybrid Islamic Chineseness in which Chinese-Indonesian Muslims are able to contribute as a platform of interethnic communication where non-Muslim Chinese can work together with *pribumi* Muslims.

Introduction

In May of 1998 anti-Chinese violence erupted in several Indonesian cities, leading to a series of crises which contributed to the fall of President Suharto, and his being replaced by former vice-President B. J. Habibie.[1] Elected by the new parliament in 1999, an unlikely coalition of forces made Abdurrahman Wahid Indonesia's first post-New-Order president. Wahid was perhaps not a very effective president, but he took a number of decisions that were of great significance for Indonesia's Chinese communities.

Wahid's abolishing of the laws discriminating against Chinese-Indonesians encouraged a revival of Chinese culture. Chinese religious activities and the traditional Chinese New Year celebration are now allowed in public. The increasing sense of empowerment in the Chinese-Indonesian community is made evident by the activities of various NGOs, ethnic organizations, Chinese media outlets (Dawis 2009), and religious groups. There has also been an increase in the promotion of human rights issues, as well as the proliferation of Chinese education (Sai 2010), and diverse discourses of Chineseness (Hoon 2008). Religion has always been one of the most important ways used by Chinese-Indonesians to preserve and represent their Chineseness, including not only Buddhism, Confucianism, and traditional Chinese folk religions, but also Christianity and even Islam.

There are two macro social changes setting the landscape for Chinese-Indonesian Muslims to express their ethno-religious selves. First, there emerged an Islamic resurgence which led to Muslim organizations with various religious orientations and political ideologies becoming free to make demands. Second, the more relaxed political

[1] In addition to Jakarta, major anti-Chinese riots also occurred in Medan and Solo (Purdey 2005, 106-141).

environment resulted in ethnic Chinese becoming more willing to publicly display their ethnic identity and insist on their rights as Indonesian citizens. The merging of these two currents is the focus of this dissertation.

Most Chinese-Indonesian Muslims are new converts.[2] Sensitive to the apparent break with tradition that conversion to an alien faith entails, Chinese-Indonesian Muslims endeavor to generate their "Islamic Chineseness" in two main ways.[3] The first is the use of historical arguments to locate Chinese-Muslims in the macro-historical narrative of the Islamization of Java. This is done by linking the voyages to Java of Zheng He, the famous Chinese-Muslim admiral-diplomat of the 15th-century, to a claim that his missions contributed to the spread of Islam. Much has been debated about whether Chinese-Muslims and their descendants played an important role in facilitating the early Islamization of Java. Initially conceived as a controversial historiography of Indonesian Islam in the 1960s, this issue was readdressed during the post-New-Order period, serving to help bridge the chasm between the ethnic Chinese minority and the Indonesian majority. The other way by which Islamic Chineseness is generated is through linkages with material heritage, such as mosques and holy graves perceived to have Chinese origins, leading the Javanese author Sumanto al-Qurtuby to coin the term "Sino-Javanese Muslim Culture" (2003). In my analysis, I focus on the contemporary development of the bodily, ritual, and spatial practices of Chinese-Indonesian Muslims that have emerged since the end of the New Order period, and which have become more conspicuous to the Muslim public in Indonesia

In addition to exploring how Chinese Muslims generate Islamic Chineseness, this study deals with conversion to Islam by Chinese-Indonesians. Due to the racial, religious, and economic tensions which date back to the Dutch colonial period, ethnic Chinese tend to see Islam as an inferior religion. On the other hand, a common stereotype amongst *pribumi* (indigenous) Muslims depicts Chinese-Indonesians as a money-grubbing and irreligious minority. Therefore, conversion to Islam by Chinese-Indonesians is not merely a matter of personal choice, since it tends to raise suspicion in both the Chinese and Muslim communities. Clearly, conversion to Islam is no simple matter for Chinese-Indonesians, who suffer much as a result of their conversion, especially middle- and lower-class Chinese-Muslims. However, not all new converts find themselves in a disadvantageous position. I regard preachers and

[2] There is an old peranakan Muslim community living in the village Pasongsongan, on the north coast of Madura. According to Wubin Zhuang's interview, these peranakan relate their origin to the Mongol attacks of China in the 13th century. But Zhuang considers this claim is confusing. Therefore, on the basis of interviews, he thinks that the ancestors of these peranakan Muslims may have arrived as recently as the 19th century (Zhuang 2011, 13-14).

[3] However, some new Chinese converts, especially those who are married to an indigenous Muslim and live in Muslim-majority areas, mainly associate with indigenous Muslims, rather than the local Chinese community.

businessmen as the two main “carriers” (Max Weber’s term, influential groups or strata who carry important ideas to change history or society) in the Chinese-Muslim community, since these are the Chinese Muslims who make the most of their conversion and even attain leadership roles in the larger Muslim society. To be sure, the conversion of Chinese-Indonesians to Islam is a minor phenomenon in Indonesian Islam as a whole, but it does demonstrate the historical particularity of the micro and macro processes of Islamization in Indonesia. Yet, in terms of ethnic empowerment, conversion is not necessarily at the cost of erasing one’s Chinese identity. In fact, Chinese-Indonesian Muslims have created a hybrid Islamic-Chineseness in which they are able to contribute to interethnic communication and help non-Muslim Chinese live in harmony with pribumi Muslims.

0.1 A Brief History of Chinese-Indonesian Muslims

0.1.1 The Ethnic Politics of Chinese-Indonesians from the Dutch Colonial Period to the Post-Suharto Era

The history of Chinese-Indonesians goes back to at least the 15th century (Reid 2000; Blusse 1986), but ethnic conflicts between indigenous Indonesians and the Chinese minority only came to the fore during the Dutch colonial period and the anti-colonial movement in the 20th century. Despite ethnic hostility, discrimination, and social isolation, the Chinese have largely retained their economic superiority, resulting in Chinese-Indonesians becoming a kind of "pariah minority."[4] Beginning with the colonial period, both Dutch ethnic policies and religious barriers have prevented the assimilation of Chinese into indigenous Indonesian society.[5] The ethnic management policy of the Dutch East Indies government, in which the Chinese were categorized as commercial and bureaucratic "middle men," encouraged the Chinese to maintain a distinct ethnic culture. Moreover, they were required to live in their own communities and did not have complete freedom of travel. This policy hindered intercourse between the Chinese and the natives, and eventually resulted in a unique pattern of social stratification, in which indigenous people were placed below the Chinese (Coppel 1997; Skinner 1996). This had a negative effect on the ability and willingness of Chinese to

[4] A term derived from Max Weber's term “pariah nation”in his book *Ancient Judaism* (Weber 1952) for describing the Jew as pariah**.** The similar situation of Chinese in Southeast Asia and Jews in Europe has led scholars to compare these two ethnic minorities and their economic activities; see Chirot and Reid (1997).

[5] See Skinner (1973), who originally offered four reasons. His first three reasons relate to the Dutch policies concerning ethnic management.

assimilate into Indonesian society. A further barrier reinforcing the social isolation of the Chinese is that Islam is a rigorously monotheistic religion, in stark contrast to the polytheistic traditions of China.[6] Moreover, Chinese tend to regard Islam as an inferior religion for inferior people. Finally, the Dutch authorities officially barred Chinese from becoming Muslims.[7]

With the rise of the anti-colonial movement at the beginning of the 20th century, most Islamic and secular nationalists naturally defined the Indonesian nation in terms of indigenous Indonesians. Yet, some political parties, including the Indonesian Communist Party and other left-wing groups, opened their membership to the *peranakan* Chinese (locally-born of mixed blood). Although the local Chinese were largely excluded from the Indonesian nationalist movement, they took much interest in the republican revolution taking place in China. Many Indonesians took this as indicating that the local Chinese were not loyal to Indonesia. The Islamic Association (SI, *Sarekat Islam*) was organized by Muslim traders in 1912. This influential political movement aimed to promote the economic interests of indigenous Muslims and to reduce the economic monopoly of local Chinese; it later developed into a political movement with an explicitly anti-Chinese ideology (Shiraishi 1997).

During the period of "Liberal Democracy" (1949-1957) and the period of "Guided Democracy" (1958-1965), the ethnic policies of the two most prominent political leaders (Hatta and Sukarno) did not explicitly exclude the Chinese from becoming citizens. They did, however, criticize Chinese economic monopolies. In general, the early rhetoric of the modern Indonesian nation proclaiming the ideal of ethnic equality applied only to indigenous ethnic groups, and excluded the ethnic Chinese. In the New Order Period (1965-1998), the state's policy toward the Chinese-Indonesian minority consisted of three components. First, a policy of assimilation prohibited the public expression and institutional extension of Chinese culture. Second, very few Chinese-Indonesians participated in political activities, leaving them isolated and dependent on the state's protection during the periodic anti-Chinese riots. Third, the Suharto government cooperated with the Chinese-Indonesian elite to carry out its economic policy and expand the Suharto family business.[8] Benedict Anderson refers to this combination of political exclusion and economic privilege as the "ghettoization of citizen-Chinese" (1990: 94-120).

The anti-Chinese emotion expressed by Muslims in the New Order period was of

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[6] Some Chinese have converted to Islam for marriage reasons; this concerns mainly Chinese-Indonesian women, who became only nominal Muslims. However, a child whose father is an ethnic Chinese and whose mother is an indigenous Muslim is considered a *perankan* rather than a Javanese.

[7] The Chinese had to pay more taxes than the native population; but if a Chinese converted to Islam, he would be taxed less. Thus, regulations were frequently issued by Batavia authorities preventing Chinese from converting to Islam (Steenbrink 1993, 68-70).

[8] See Freedman (2000), Heryanto (1998), Schwartz (2000), Shiraishi (1997), and E. K. B. Tan (2001).

two types: (1) local religious violence; and (2) an Islamic discourse of "enemy/other" made by Muslim elites criticizing Chinese economic privilege (Kolstad 1993; Ramage 1995).[9] In the Suharto period, the state suppressed Islamic groups while colluding with Chinese-Indonesian businessmen.

The assimilation of Chinese-Indonesians, whether *peranakan* Chinese or *totok* Chinese (pure-blooded or Chinese immigrants born in China), is not a simple problem of social engineering. Indonesia's constitution includes Buddhism as one of the five officially recognized religions, and this allows for, at least to some degree, traditional religious activities of Chinese-Indonesians (Suryadinate 2000). Also, the transnational capital of Chinese-Indonesian business is still essential to the economic development of Indonesia, and Chinese use their economic clout to maintain their ethnic identity.

After the end of Suharto's New Order, the Indonesian government abolished several laws and regulations which discriminate against ethnic Chinese. This was a critical stage in the empowerment of ethnic Chinese. When Habbie became president, he issued Presidential Instruction No. 26/1998, which annulled the legal distinction between *pribumi* and non-*pribumi*. Habbie was replaced by Abdurrahman Wahid in the 1999 election. Wahid issued Presidential Decree No. 6/2000, abrogating Presidential Instruction No. 14/1967, which prohibited ethnic Chinese from engaging in Chinese customs or religious activities. The abrogation of this notorious law issued by the Suharto government lent much impetus to the public revival of Chinese culture. In the same year, Wahid designated Chinese New Year (Imlek) an optional public holiday. Imlek was later designated a national public holiday by Megawati (Winarta 2008).

This development encouraged ethnic Chinese to become more involved in politics, which manifested itself in three ways (Sujarwoko 2008). First, in September 1998, the first ethnic Chinese association, Paguyuban Sosial Marga Tionghoa Indonesia (PSMTI, Indonesian Chinese Social Clan Association) was established. It only accepts ethnic Chinese as members, but claims its mission is to improve ethnic relations between Chinese-Indonesians and other groups, and to facilitate development in Indonesia. PSMTI is not a political organization, but it expresses concern about relevant ethnic issues (Hoon 2008). Second, by early 1999, three political parties had been formed by ethnic Chinese. Although none of the three have succeeded in winning any seats in national elections, some of their ethnic-Chinese candidates have won local elections; in order to be successful on a national level, they will have to appeal to more general issues, rather than only emphasizing issues directly related to ethnic identity (Tjhin 2009). Third, several ethnic-Chinese activists contribute to the work of anti-discrimination NGOs pushing for the abolition of

[9] See International Crisis Group (2001).

discriminative laws in Indonesia. The work of these organizations has, to some degree, influenced the Indonesian government (Sujarwoko 2008).[10]

In addition to Chinese associations, Chinese education and Chinese media are two other important pillars of the ethnic-Chinese community. The rise of greater China has been accompanied by an increasing interest in studying Chinese. Mandarin Chinese courses are now offered by various private educational institutes, and have also become a popular optional course at many regular schools (Dawis 2008). In addition, various types of Chinese media outlets, such as TV news, magazines, and newspapers, have rapidly developed in the post-Suharto era (Hoon 2008). Significantly, the rising profile of the Chinese and their languages, has been accompanied by an increasingly positive image of China among pribumi Indonesians, many of whom believe Indonesia should emulate China, at least as far as business administration is concerned (Herlijanto 2012).

The religious aspects of the ethnic-Chinese cultural revival usually receive less attention. However, influenced by domestic and international factors, Buddhism, Confucianism, Christianity, and Chinese folk religions are all flourishing among ethnic Chinese. Of particular interest is how Chinese express their ethnic identity through religion, even via Islam, which, although the most important religion in Indonesia, is not usually associated with ethnic Chinese. Chinese folk religions and Confucianism were both repressed during the New Order period, but they have gained new momentum in the post-Suharto era.

Nevertheless, the developments have not all been positive. As Jemma Purdey (2009) has pointed out, the trauma of the anti-Chinese riots of May 1998 is deeply etched in the memories of ethnic Chinese, and "the absence of justice for victims of May 1998 continues to cause disillusionment and an ongoing sense of vulnerability and mistrust in the authorities." In her view, many ethnic Chinese still feel uncomfortable to practice their religion in public, and avoid getting involved in political issues.

[10] For instance, the 2006 Citizenship Law has brought two innovative regulations. It punishes individuals who discriminate against any ethnic group. Moreover, ethnic Chinese born in Indonesia have automatically obtained Indonesian citizenship, without having to offer additional documents (Winarta 2008).

0.1.2 A Brief History of Islam amongst Chinese-Indonesians

Although it may seem that Islam is totally alien to Chinese, in fact, Muslims have had a significant presence in China for some 1,400 years. Also, there have long been numerous Hui Muslim communities along the coast of southeast China, and it is likely that some of the Chinese who immigrated to Java in the 15th century were Muslims. The most significant historical event was Zheng He's voyage to the Indonesian archipelago,[11] and scholars have noted the contributions of Chinese Muslims to the spread of Islam in Indonesia.[12] For reasons of marriage and naturalization, some Chinese immigrants converted to Islam and were assimilated into Muslim culture. Historical records make it clear that conversion to Islam by ethnic Chinese in Indonesia is not a totally new phenomenon.[13]

The first Chinese-Indonesian Muslim organization, the Association of Chinese Muslims (*Persatuan Islam Tionghoa*, PIT),[14] was established in 1936. While many Chinese converted to Islam, they remained afraid non-Muslim Chinese would ostracize them as "indigenes" (The 1993). The motivation of Chinese converts was criticized by one of the Association's leaders, who argued that some new converts erroneously thought that once they adopted a Muslim name or began wearing Muslim attire, they would be real Muslims.[15] During the 1930s, those Chinese who embraced Islam wanted to retain their Chinese identity and remain separate from the Muslim majority. In the Republic period Abdul Karim Oey became the first significant and visible Chinese-Indonesian leader.[16] He chaired PITI (Persatuan Islam Tionghoa Indonesia, the Association of Chinese Muslims of Indonesia) in 1961, and during the New Order period PITI underwent two profound changes.

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[11] Zheng He (Cheng Ho) (1371-1433), an admiral-diplomat and a Hui Muslim in the Ming dynasty (1368-1644), visited the Indonesian archipelago seven times between 1405 and 1433 as part of a Chinese maritime expedition to Southeast Asia, South Asia, and Africa.

[12] There are controversies about the historical relationship of Indonesian Islam and Chinese Muslims. For a discussion of the history of Indonesian Islam and Chinese Muslims, see Bupiman (1979), Fatimi (1963), Kumar (1987), Lombard and Salmon (1994), Ricklefs (1984), and Reid (2000, 60-74).

[13] There was no Chinese-Indonesian Muslim organization before the 20th century, and conversion to Islam among ethnic Chinese in Indonesia was not a collective behavior. Interestingly, Zheng He's visit has been regarded as a significant symbol by Chinese-Indonesian Muslims, and some contemporary Chinese-Indonesian scholars are eager to point out that it constitutes a concrete link between Indonesian Islam and Chinese-Muslims; see my Chapter 2.

[14] PIT was founded in 1936 in Medan, with several branches in big cities. It is estimated to have 43,000 members. According to The Siauw-giap (1993, 67), "Toward the end of 1938, when the organization (PIT) held a propaganda meeting at Palembang in South Sumatra its membership was said to number 4,800; when it next held such a meeting in Jakarta, 9,500 were reported."

[15] In an interview he stated: "Being a Muslim…does not at all depend on a person's dress and name..." (The 1993, 68).

[16] Abdul Karim Oey (1905-1982), a successful Chinese-Indonesian businessman, was a Christian before his conversion to Islam. In 1931, at age 26, he converted to Islam. He was a branch leader of Muhammadiyah and formed a closed friendship with Sukarno. He published an autobiography in 1982 (Oey 1982). For a brief English summary of his life and times see Suryadinata (1992, 105-113). I shall discuss his personal biography in Chapter 7.

First, in order to get broader official support, it invited many military men to be advisors, and also allowed non-Chinese to be members of its board. By 1970 PITI was developing rapidly and founded 11 branches with the support of local governments and sponsorship by local elites.

Second, despite the support of local authorities, eventually PITI succumbed to state intervention. In 1972, due to the government's assimilation policy, PITI's request to print the Quran and publish a religious magazine in Chinese was denied by the Department of Religious Affairs. Subsequently PITI was disbanded by the Attorney General (Jaksa Agung) on the grounds that the word "*Tionghoa*" (Chinese) in PITI's name was discriminatory. Ten days later, PITI was reborn under the name Pembina Iman Tauhid Islam (Organization for the Sustaining of Religious Beliefs).[17] This change emphasized the organization's aim of promoting *da'wa* and education. At present, PITI is still the largest Chinese-Indonesian Muslim organization in Indonesia.

In 1979 Junus Jahja (1927-) joined PITI and later became its leader. He was the first Chinese-Indonesian Muslim to promote conversion to Islam as a solution to the "Chinese problem." In his view, if all Chinese converted to Islam, the social and cultural distinctions between indigenous Indonesians and ethnic Chinese would be erased. Since the 1980s he has published many books to communicate his assimilationist ideas. He set up the Yayasan Ukhuwah Islamiah (Islamic Brotherhood Foundation) in 1981 to promote Islam amongst Chinese-Indonesians, especially those of the middle class. Since the 1970s, many of the new converts have been from privileged backgrounds—businessmen, professors, and even movie stars—implying that some Chinese-Indonesians have little regard for the stereotype of Islam as a religion of subordinated people (Suryadinata 1997, 189-194).[18]

In 1991, the Jahja group created the Haji Karim Oey Foundation in memory of Abul Karim Oey. The foundation established its own mosque for Chinese-Indonesian Muslims on Lautze Street in Central Jakarta.[19] The mosque was approved by then-vice-president B. J. Habibie through the ICMI (Association of Indonesian Muslim Intellectuals). The mosque provides a special religious service each Sunday introducing new converts to Muslim rites and fundamental religious knowledge (M. G. Tan 2000).

The end of the New Order allowed PITI to become more active and give more

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[17] While they changed the full name of the organization, they kept the acronym "PITI."

[18] According to The Siauw-Giap (1993), several MA theses at IAIN (State Islamic Institute College) are devoted to the study of Chinese-Indonesian Muslims, and explain why Chinese-Indonesians convert to Islam as follows: First, Islam offers relief from deep ethnic tensions, because it proscribes social distinctions between different ethnic groups. Second, in some elite circles, conversion is due to purely religious factors, where converts come to appreciate the truth of Islam through step-by-step study. Third, when poor Chinese-Indonesian converts attend religious meetings, they have the opportunity to interact with rich Chinese-Indonesian Muslims, and may receive financial assistance. Last, intermarriage is a key variable underlying conversion.

[19] The mosque is located in a Chinese-Indonesian suburb, on Lautze Street, named in honor of Laoze (Lautze), the legendary founder of Daoism.

prominence to the Chinese elements of its membership, thereby increasing the public visibility of Islamic Chineseness. A staff member of the PITI's headquarters commented that before 2000 PITI had to maintain a low profile, mainly because of the ethnic policies of the New Order era. Another explained the political repression of Chinese-Indonesian Muslims as being similar to the repression of Hui Muslims in China during the Qing dynasty.

One of the most important events in recent years for ethnic-Chinese Muslims was the establishment of the Cheng Ho Mosque by PITI of East Java (PITIJT, the PITI branch at Jawa Timur) in 2003. By articulating the historical narratives of Zheng He (Cheng Ho), PITIJT clearly intends to create a niche for Chinese-Indonesian Muslims in the grand narrative of Indonesia's Islamization. The Mosque also contributes to the discursive, embodied, and spatial discourses of Islamic Chineseness that build a platform of interethnic communication between non-Muslim Chinese-Indonesians and indigenous Indonesians. Ethnic-Chinese Muslim businessmen played a leading role in establishing the Mosque, bringing up the question of the role of Muslim businessmen in the spread of Islam.

In the context of increasing public visibility of Chinese-Indonesian Muslims, there has been a new trend of building mosques mixed with elements of Chinese style. In addition to the Cheng Ho Mosque in Surabaya, several other mosques with Chinese stylistic elements were built since 2005. Such mosques were built not only by PITI or other Chinese-Indonesian Muslims, but also by indigenous Indonesian Muslims. The famous Chinese-Indonesian preacher Anton Medan (see my Chapter 6) built a mosque known by its Chinese name as the Tan Kok Liong Mosque. This mosque is located in his Islamic boarding school At-Ta'ibin in Cibinong, West Java. PITI's second Cheng Ho Mosque was established in Palembang in 2006. Furthermore, there are other two similar mosques for which the initiative came from others than Chinese-Indonesian Muslims. The Cheng Ho Mosque of Pandaan, inaugurated in 2008, was built by the local government of Pasuruan for the promotion of local tourism. This mosque is located beside the highway leading to Malang and Surabaya. Another interesting case is the mosque attached to the hospital of the Muhammadiyah University of Malang, which was inaugurated in 2010. The decision to adopt some elements of traditional Chinese architecture in the construction of this mosque was taken by the Rector of the Muhammadiyah University of Malang. It seems that the adoption of Chinese elements in modern mosque architecture has thus not only become a symbol for Chinese-Indonesian Muslims to show Islamic Chineseness, but also for indigenous Muslims to express their multicultural goodwill.

In contrast to PITI's embrace of Chinese identity, the Lautze Mosque has taken a more ambiguous position, and does not emphasize Chinese ethnicity. This reserved

attitude is mainly due to the influence of Junus Jahja. With his retirement from the Lautze Mosque, the leadership has gradually passed to the younger generation. The Lautze Mosque may not emphasize Chineseness as much as PITI does, but it is gradually moving in the same direction. However, Jahja's da'wa strategy of preaching Islam to ethnic Chinese as an extended assimilation program is not appreciated by most Chinese-Muslims. Yet he is important for his pioneering efforts in preaching Islam, and it's instructive to examine the kind of Islamic discourses he adopted.

Observing Chinese-Indonesian Muslims should not be limited to two Chinese Muslim organizations and elite circles of Muslim businessmen and preachers. The increasing public visibility of PITI also encourages ordinary Chinese-Muslims to share their conversion experiences as a form of public confession, a very significant change, since Chinese-Indonesians rarely discuss their private religious experiences in the public sphere during New Order.[20] Public expression by Chinese-Indonesian Muslims naturally attracts more attention. As for the more recent studies on Chinese-Indonesian Muslims in the 21st century, I have found that most works mainly see conversion to Islam by Chinese-Indonesians as an approach to dealing with ethnic/identity politics. This approach usually covers two issues: considering ethnic-Chinese Muslims' conversion as "An Unfinished Anti-Discrimination Project" (Muzakki 2010) or "Marketing the Chinese Face of Islam" (Hew 2010).[21] It cannot be denied that these two issues are important, and they will be discussed in my study. But if only confining the study of Chinese-Indonesian Muslims to the issue of ethnic/identity politics, it may fail to consider that Chinese-Indonesian Muslims do not only follow a single-track of conversion towards an assumed unitary destination and easily ignores one important thing. Conversion to Islam is motivated by multiple "interests" among ethnic Chinese. It may be applied as a weapon of ethnic empowerment. However, Chinese-Indonesian Muslims also engender their own religious and spiritual understanding in terms of interpreting of Islam and struggling to achieve true religious faith, so it can not be only regarded as an epiphenomena of ethnic empowerment. It is a challenge that I am trying to overcome by examining how Chinese-Indonesian Muslims are "in search for new social and spiritual space."

[20] "Why Ethnic Chinese Chose Islam?" (*Mengapa Etnis Tionghoa Memilih Islam*) collects fifty-seven Chinese-Indonesian Muslims' stories of conversion; see Dyayadi (2008).

[21] Wai-weng Hew has expanded this article and will publish it as a book chapter in an edited volume (Hew 2012).

0.2 A Note on Method

Jakarta and Surabaya are the two main locations where I conducted my fieldwork in 2003 and 2005.[22] I also participated in various meetings of Chinese Muslims and collected conversion narratives published in *Komunitas* (Community), the official magazine of PITIJT (the regional branch of PITI in East Java). I have also perused copies of *Hidayah* (God's Guidance), one of the more popular Islamic magazines, and a number of conversion narratives on websites put up by Chinese-Indonesian Muslims for the preaching of Islam. *Komunitas* was also used as a source for discussions on *fatwa* related to questions commonly asked by Chinese-Indonesian Muslims on conflicts between Islam and Chinese customs. Additionally, I made use of lesser-known biographical literature pertaining to Chinese-Indonesian Muslims.

There is no denying that being male posed some obstacles in my interviews with Chinese-Indonesian women. I present a methodological reflection on this issue in Chapter 5. Before I started my research in Indonesia, I had heard some stories from my European colleagues who complained about how they were treated with suspicion by the Muslims they had wanted to study. I was a little naive in this respect, in that I expected that, as a Chinese and a non-Westerner, I would be able to avoid the politics surrounding a researcher's motives. However, I arrived at this conclusion too quickly. As a researcher who was born in Taiwan and trained in a Dutch academic institute, I thought that being ethnic-Chinese would facilitate access to Chinese-Indonesian Muslims and their organizations. However, this did not preclude suspicion about my non-Muslim identity. During my fieldwork, I wanted to read some official documents at the PITI headquarters, but my request was refused. One of the main reasons for this was that some cadres suspected that I had been sent by the Dutch government to spy on the Chinese-Indonesians who had converted to Islam. This experience surprised me, since one of my professors once told me that "our institute enjoys a good name in Indonesia." This does not mean that the professor was wrong. The prevailing colonial legacy and ethnic politics prompted vigilance on the part of PITI in discerning what my actual intentions were. Difficulties also arose when I tried to arrange an interview with Irena Handono, a famous female preacher of Islam. A senior Chinese friend called her to arrange an interview for me, but she declined. My friend informed me of her mistrust. For convenience, I usually use the nickname "Thomas," which is printed on my business card, to introduce myself. Yet I was not aware that the name "Thomas" is frequently linked by Indonesians to Catholicism, a religious identity that alienates some Muslims. Moreover, I come from Taiwan, a place considered by many to be a client state of the United States; thus, Handono may have suspected that my research

[22] My visit to Yogyakarta in Central Java focused on the controversy over *Imlek Salat*.

had something to do with the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA). Also, her suspicion seems to have been further aroused by the fact that I had studied Indonesian at a famous Christian university located in Salatiga, central Java. Fortunately, my friend's explanation finally placated Handono, and the interview finally took place.

0.3 Chapter Plan

This dissertation consists of three parts, corresponding to the three dimensions, confluence, crossing, and dwelling, in Tweed's framework of religious theory. The first part, "Confluence," consists of Chapter 1, Chapter 2 and Chapter 3, discussing how Islam and Chineseness are merged in historical discourses and Muslim culture.[23]I set two theoretical frameworks in Chapter 1. In chapter 2, I discuss how the historical legacy of Chinese Muslims was repressed in the New Order and why it resurfaced during the post-Suharto era. I argue that amongst these diverse discourses relating to the contribution of Chinese-Muslims to the spread of Islam in Nusantara, some are conflicting, while some echo each other. They are co-formulated by journalists and scholars of China and Indonesia, as well as ethnic Chinese in Indonesia and Singapore. However, Chinese-Indonesian Muslims have neither long-standing Islamic traditions clearly inherited from the Chinese Muslims of five centuries ago, nor do they have direct links with the Chinese-speaking Muslims of China. So, what kind of Chinese traditions are selectively applied by Chinese-Indonesian Muslims to express their Chineseness? How do they create a Muslim culture which they presume to be in line with the traditions of both China and Indonesian Islam? These issues are analyzed in Chapter 3. Chinese-Indonesian Muslims present their ethnic identity through bodily, ritual, performative, and spatial practices. They construct their Islamic Chineseness by performing Salat on Chinese Year (*Imlek Salat*) at an old mosque in Yogyakarta, building a Chinese-style mosque in Surabaya, organizing a *nashid* (religious chant) group whose members wear Chinese skullcaps and mandarin jackets while singing mandarin *nashid*, and introducing the history of Chinese Islam in journals. This inclination to incorporate Chineseness can be observed in the medical practice of a famous Chinese-Indonesian doctor, Hembing Wijayakusuma. He applies his knowledge of Chinese medicine and physiology to Islamic rituals and practices, and suggests that Muslims can improve their health through ritual fasting during Ramadan, and also by performing *salat* and personal prayer (*do'a*).

[23] In this part I draw heavily on Denys Lombard and Claudine Salmon's pioneer work "Islam and Chineseness" (1993).

The second part, "Crossing," consists of Chapters 4 and 5, and deals with lower-middle-class Muslims, explaining why gender, race, and religious boundaries make their conversion so difficult, and how they face the challenges related to their spiritual journey. Chapter 4 highlights the conversion story of a father and his two sons, and the racial discrimination they had to face. Based on the framework of boundary-making, I investigate the issue of gender boundaries and why the conversion of Chinese women is often the cause of much consternation to the woman's family of birth. One of the main reasons is the worry that marriage with pribumi Muslim men will dilute the purity of the Chinese ethnicity. This chapter also looks at some of the problems caused by the religious costumes of Chinese-Muslim women. Both of these issues reflect how the patriarchal mentality of Chinese families emphasizes controlling women's bodies and marriages.

In the third section, "Dwelling," I consider how new converts legitimate themselves as preachers (Chapter 6), and how Chinese businessmen become leaders of Muslim organizations (Chapter 7). By applying Max Weber's concept of "social carriers" I explain how new converts are able to become preachers, even though, as new converts, their religious knowledge may be seen as insufficient. I present five Chinese-Indonesian preachers, and show how their public confessions and da'wa strategies contributed to their success. In the final chapter, I explain how and why Chinese businessmen apply their business experience and economic influence to managing PITI and indigenous Muslim affairs. Bourdieu's concept of "conversion of capital" is used to explain how social carriers are able to exchange economic and religious capital for legitimate religious qualifications. Some Chinese-Muslims make interesting discourses on Islamic economics, and have tried to apply such ideas to business management. I critically review the Weberian thesis based on examining how Islamic ventures are articulated with economic discourses by certain Muslim businessmen in a particular historical period.

Part I Confluence

Chapter 1

The Confluence of Chineseness and Islam

1.1 Introduction

Chinese-Indonesian Muslims generate their "Islamic Chineseness" in two main ways.[24] The first is by emphasizing the historical legacy of Chinese-Muslims in the macro-historical narrative of the Islamization of Java. This is done by presenting the history of Chinese-Muslims in the 15th and 16th centuries and Zheng He's voyage to Nusantara as evidence of the Chinese contribution to the spread of Islam. Much has been debated about whether Chinese-Muslims and their descendants played an important role in the early Islamization of Java (Kumar 1987). This historiography was rather controversial when initially conceived in the 1960s, but has been readdressed during the post-New-Order period, and is now intended to serve as a bridge between the Chinese minority and the Indonesian majority (al-Qurtuby 2003; Chiou 2010).

Second, Chineseness is embodied in the manner in which Chinese-Indonesian Muslims practice Islam. Prominent example include building mosques in a distinctively Chinese style (Chiou 2007), and performing the Islamic popular music known as *nashid* with Mandarin lyrics and dressed in Chinese mandarin jackets. Most interestingly, they have initiated a new ritual discourse of Islamic worship by incorporating into *salat* (Islamic prayer) Chinese gymnastics and massage, and have also incorporated *salat* into their celebration of Chinese New Year, known in Indonesia as "Imlek."

[24] However, some new Chinese converts, especially those married to indigenous Muslims and living in Muslim-majority areas, mainly associate with Muslims rather than the local Chinese community.

However, I have found that the historical genealogy between the old legacy and contemporary cultural practices are questionable in two regards. First, the historical legacy of Chinese-Muslims in the 15th and 16th centuries is controversial. Second, the culture of Chinese-Indonesian Muslims is not a fixed category. The confluence of Islam and Chinese ethnic empowerment emerged in a certain historical and social context. However, it cannot be denied that Chineseness is applied and appropriated by Chinese-Indonesian Muslims as a way of articulating their role in the spread of Islam in Java. In addition, through ritual performance of salat, Chinese-style mosques, and nashid bands, Chinese Muslims express their Chineseness in line with Islamic culture. How can we map the meaning of the developing culture of Chinese-Indonesian Muslims in the landscape of Indonesian Islam?

The second focus in my research, I compare the conversion experience and religious understanding, and social mobility of Chinese-Indonesian Muslims by dividing them as four social groups: lower-middle class male and female Muslims, preachers, and businessmen. This comparison has showed common but diverse conversion experience among Chinese-Indonesian Muslims that needs a multi-level of framework to understand how boundaries of class, gender, race, and religious qualification manufacture their dynamistic process of conversion to Islam.

Corresponding to two issues, Islamic Chineseness and diverse conversion experience, in this chapter, I intend to apply two theoretical frameworks to my analysis of Chinese-Indonesian Muslims. First, I present the culture of Chinese-Indonesian Muslims as the confluence of Islam and the Chinese diaspora, and locate it in the complex religious landscape of Indonesian Islam. I argue that the culture of Chinese-Indonesian Muslims has a special niche, while bearing a certain family resemblance with Indonesian Islam. However, the identities and cultures of Chinese-Indonesian Muslims cannot be essentialized, for they are flexible and dynamistic. In addition, by applying Thomas A. Tweed's concepts of confluence and crossing, I show that conversion to Islam is an act of boundary-making and crossing. Second, I apply a sociological analysis on three levels: individuals, stratified groups, and religious fields. This framework has several methodological implications. It aims to explore conversion on the individual level and questions the traditional approach of Chinese-Indonesian studies that focuses on the ethnic dimension. I also ask why the study of Indonesian Islam tends to focus on classifying religious orientation. By doing so I emphasize that social divisions such a class, gender, and religious qualifications can be brought back to enrich my analysis of Chinese-Indonesian Muslims. In the third level I apply Pierre Bourdieu's concepts of religious field, habitus, and capital, considering Chinese-Indonesians' conversion to Islam to be a form of social mobility by which they create niches in Indonesia's Muslim society.

1.2 The Socio-Cultural Location of Chinese-Indonesian Muslims

Thomas A. Tweed suggests that "religion is about finding a place and moving across space" (2006, 59). He uses two metaphors to demonstrate the fluidity and dynamics of religion. First, he uses an aquatic metaphor by which the development of different religions "is not that of self-contained traditions chugging along parallel tracks… each religion is a flowing together of currents—some enforced as 'orthodox' by institutions—traversing multiple fields, where other religions, other transverse confluences, also cross, thereby creating new spiritual streams" (2006, 59). Instead of seeing a particular religion as a "sui generis" (of its own kind), he argues that each religion is a confluence in which "the mutual intercausality of religion, economy, society, and politics means that religious traditions, as confluence of organic-cultural flows, always emerge from—to again use aquatic images—the swirl of transfluvial currents. The transfluence of religious and nonreligious streams propels religious flows" (2006, 60).

He then extends Arjun Appadurai's framework of global cultural flows by identifying the religious flow as "sacrospaces." Thus the confluence of Islam and Chineseness merged and reflected in the Chinese-Indonesian Muslim community can be considered as a confluence of ethnospaces and sacrospaces. The way in which Chinese-Indonesian Muslims borrow elements of Chinese, Indonesian, and Islamic culture constitutes a "translocation of culture" (Webner 2005).[25] This confluence of Chineseness and Islam is a contingent historical articulation and a changing cultural construction, but it is not completely random, accidental, or fabricated. Instead, it reflects structural and historical factors in line with Islamic revival, ethnic empowerment, and the rise of the communal consciousness of local Muslim society.

As Jemma Purdey asserts, "regional autonomy has enabled reinvigoration of local ethnicities and cultures" (2009). Influenced by the decentralization of Indonesia (Bunte and Ufen 2009; Tyson 2010), the emergence of the culture of Chinese-Indonesian Muslims is not a unique case, as other local Muslim communities are also striving to re-explore their histories which were repressed during the New Order period.[26] The wide variety of local Islamic cultural practices in Indonesia is

[25] Pnina Webner (2005) applies this concept to the Pakistani Muslim immigrant community in Britain and how they maintain their community by distinguishing themselves from non-Muslims. But at the same time, they have to adapt to the local culture and open their community to interact with the host society. I adopt this concept to consider how Islam adapts itself to various indigenous communities to become a translocal religious flow which passes through various communities.

[26] Several cases identify this tendency. First, the legacy of Chinese-Muslims contributing to the spread of Islam in Java that I shall discuss in chapter 2. Second, the Muslim hero Tuanku Imam Bonjol of, Sumatra. Because of his leading role in a war which pitted Muslim against Muslim, his story was not allowed to be fully explored during the New Order (Hadler 2008). Third, the local Islamic heritage of Aceh is being increasingly studied now that a new peace deal has been made by Aceh and the central government.

usually regarded as religious syncretism. Meanwhile, the traditional Muslim camp and the reformist Muslim groups have been learning to respect each other's differences. If we look back to the diverse modalities of Islamic cultural traditions in Indonesia, Islam in Java has shown an amazing capacity to coexist with or absorb Hindu-Buddhist and Javanese mystical beliefs and practices (Beatty, 1999; Headley, 2004; Geertz 1960, 1968; Rickelfs 2007). Islam in Sulawesi reflects how Austronesian maritime memory has been retained in contemporary Islamic practice (Gibson 2006; 2007). The Muslim community in Minangkabau exhibits the tension and compromise between Islamic law and matriarchy (Hadler 2008). Islam in Aceh reveals a collective memory of anti-colonialism and political independence (Siapno 2002).

The different characteristics of regional Muslim cultures have shown that the influence of dominant social institutions and cultural practices contribute to the complex diversity of such institutional factors as a cultural system engendered by a language family, a collective militant memory, kinship, a syncretistic local religious legacy, and so on. Therefore, each Muslim cultural location "is a flowing together of currents…traversing multiple fields" (Tweed 2006, 59) where other ethnic, historical, human geographical, and cultural factors constitute "transverse confluences," (Tweed 2006, 59) creating new Muslim cultural locations.

These Muslim cultural locations have echoed what Clifford Geertz describes as "amalgams" rather than "a signal circumscribed feature" (Rosen 2009, 492). Geertz applied Ludwig Wittgenstein's idea of family resemblance to the complex picture of Muslim cultures:

> We think we see striking resemblances between different generations of a family but, as Wittgenstein pointed out, we may find that there is no one feature common to them; the resemblance may come from many different features 'overlapping and crisscrossing.' This sort of approach seems more promising than one that sees the history of Islam as an extended struggle of a gentle pietism to escape from an arid legalism. A picture of the Islamic venture derived from 'overlaps' and 'crisscrosses' would be less ordered and less continuous, a matter of oblique connections and glancing contrasts, and general conclusions would be harder to come by (Geertz 2010, 80).

Therefore, the cultural location in which Chinese-Indonesian Islam shares a family resemblance with other Muslim cultural locations is not fixed. These Muslim cultural locations have no rigid boundaries. The general picture of Muslim cultural locations share a family resemblance which shows that they are the result of the confluence of Islam with various socio-cultural factors, constituted as a multiple translocation of Islamic culture. The Islamization of Indonesia is an ongoing process,

expressing a process of translocation of Islamic culture.

Chineseness is appropriated by Chinese-Indonesian Muslims as a cultural resource by looking to Islam in China as an imagined homeland, a resource which gains in currency along with the rising fortunes of greater China. On the other hand, the socio-cultural location of Chinese-Indonesian Muslims also constitutes a part of the Muslim landscape of Indonesian Islam, the motherland that breeds the Chinese-Indonesian Muslim community. We can enrich our theoretical imagination by seeing the historical discourses and cultural practices of Chinese-Indonesian Muslims as a special ethno-sacrospace where Chinese, Indonesian, and Islamic cultures are merged and articulated.

1.3 Spatial Crossing: Conversion as Boundary-Making and Dwelling

In Tweed's second metaphor, he identifies religion as a kind of spatial practice. Religion provides a symbolic landscape and dwelling, to "help the pious to find a place of their own" (Tweed 2006, 74). The place searched for is not confined to the other world, but also includes ethnic, national, and religious identities. This spatial practice includes two implications: crossing and dwelling. As Tweed explains, crossing means that religion contributes to boundary-making, but also facilitates people crossing corporeal, natural, social, and spiritual boundaries. Religions:

> …employ tropes, artifacts, rituals, codes, and institutions to mark boundaries, and they prescribe and proscribe different kinds of movements across those boundaries…religions enable and constrain terrestrial crossings, as devotees traverse natural terrain and social space beyond the home and across the homeland; corporeal crossing, as the religious fix their attention on the limits of embodied existence; and cosmic crossing (Tweed 2006, 123).

Tweed also sees religion as a search for a final destination, whereby:

> Dwelling practices also position the religious in longer time frames and wider social spaces. Homemaking…extends to the boundaries of the territory that group members allocentrically image as their space, but since the homeland is an imagined territory inhabited by an imagined community, a space and group continually figures and is refigured in contact with the other, its borders shift over time and across cultures. As with the idea of home, the boundaries of the homeland can contract and

> expand. The homeland's scope depends not only on the tropes used to imagine it…but also on the form of complexity of social organization (Tweed 2006, 110).

Drawing on the boundary-crossing and home-making (dwelling) in Tweed's spatial metaphor, I consider the conversion to Islam of Chinese-Indonesians to be a way of encountering, making, and crossing boundaries of class, gender, race, and religion. For instance, conversion to Islam may create a niche which blurs the ethnic and religious boundary of Chinese/pribumi, but it also generates opposition and suspicion from both ethnic Chinese and indigenous Muslims. Many ethnic Chinese regard a woman's conversion to Islam as a prelude to interracial marriage with an indigenous Muslim man, and some believe that a Chinese would become poor after converting to Islam. To develop this idea further, I now present a few of the strategies of ethnic boundary-making formulated by Andreas Wimmer (2008) and which can be observed in the conversion to Islam of Chinese-Indonesians.

(1) Transvaluation: This indicates how boundary making changes the principle of social stratification in an ethnic system. For instance, an ethnic Chinese is usually considered to be non-Muslim or non-religious. Chinese-Indonesians are regarded as "economic creatures," not only *good* at doing business, but also *confined* to the business field, implying – that ethnic Chinese are utilitarian and non-religious. But when Chinese-Indonesians convert to Islam and become preachers or leaders of Muslim organizations they challenge the traditional stereotype of ethnic Chinese.

(2) Boundary crossing and reposition: This means an individual or group changes ethnic membership or re-positions into a new ethnic category. Some Chinese-Indonesian Muslims convert as a way of assimilating to Indonesian society. They believe that by becoming Muslim will more closely associate themselves with the pribumi majority and erase their Chinese ethnicity.

(3) Blurring: This mainly refers to blurring the ethnic boundaries which are fundamental to social categorization. Most Chinese-Indonesian Muslims do not believe that becoming a Muslim is tantamount to relinquishing their ethnicity. For example, after the New Order period, PITI is more open to public demonstration of both Muslim identity and Chinese ethnicity. They invite indigenous Muslims to join their worship and share the same religious facilities, but at the same time, they promote a Chinese culture partially colored with Islamic practices. This confluence of Chineseness and Islam, this performance of Islamic Chineseness, is a kind of cultural syncretism that tends to blur ethnic and religious boundaries. Blurring may produce a niche of "the third space" and may facilitate interethnic communication. Chinese-Indonesian Muslims, in addition to claiming their legacy in the spread of Islam in Java and the cultural diplomacy between Nusantara and China, also use the invented cultural

traditions of bodily, musical, ritual, and spatial practices to express a hybrid culture of Islamic Chineseness. However, blurring is not without risk, as it may cause suspicion and anger if it transgresses social boundaries or Islamic law, and may cause ethnic and religious exclusion from both the ethnic-Chinese and pribumi-Muslim communities.

Yet, Chinese-Indonesian Muslims may not see their conversion as related to ethnic politics, and their spiritual pursuits show their aspiration to be accepted by the Indonesian Muslim majority. Assimilation and accommodation are the two main da'wa strategies adopted by Chinese-Muslim preachers. Despite their differences, they have the common goal of being accepted as members of the Muslim community of Indonesia—the largest Muslim population in the world. Moreover, Chinese-Muslim businessmen make good use of their economic power in transforming their religious identity, converting their economic capital into religious capital. They apply their entrepreneurship not only to business administration, but also to the management of Muslim organizations and the affairs of the Muslim community. These active and collective actions of Chinese-Muslim preachers and businessmen show how ethnic Chinese-Muslims re-locate themselves in the *umma* (Muslim community) of Indonesia. But it is in a different way; converting to Islam need not be at the cost of their Chinese identity.

1.4 A Three-Level Sociological Analysis of a Chinese-Indonesian's Conversion to Islam

In this section, I apply a three-level sociological analysis to the conversion to Islam by Chinese-Indonesians. On the first level, I discuss the importance of individual conversion experiences, and how to mend the gaps in the individualistic approach to the study of conversion. I suggest that the individual has an irreducible methodological priority, but we still need to consider how to represent individual experience as a miniature of the impacts of structural power. Studies of Chinese-Indonesians often ignore the individual voices. I suggest that a better way is to not assume that Chinese-Indonesian Muslims have to adopt a pious religious stance. Moreover, the individual's conversion can be considered from a comparative perspective of religious subjectivity in which we have to consider Indonesia's colonial legacy, ethnic politics, and religious policy.

On the second level, by inquiring into the inner complexity of the Islamic orientation and religious modalities of Java, I place Chinese-Indonesian Muslims into four categories. Comparing the conversion experiences of these four categories of

Chinese Muslims, I show the similarities and differences of the conversion experiences according to gender, religious, economic, and racial boundaries.

On the third level, I consider conversion as an embodied process by which Chinese cultivate their religious dispositions and accumulate religious capital. In view of the emergence of Chinese-Indonesian Muslims in the Muslim social space, I suggest that we consider their participation in Indonesian Muslim affairs as entering the religious field of Indonesian Muslim society. This analysis echoes how Chinese Muslims dwell or make home in Indonesian Muslim society.

1.4.1 Troubling and Enterprising Individuals

Personal conversion narratives provide access to the conversion experiences of Chinese-Indonesian Muslims. It would be naïve to understand an individual's conversion account without examining the wider socio-cultural contexts in which the conversion took place. However, we should not neglect listening to ordinary Chinese-Indonesians, whose voices have been repressed for such a long time.

Since the beginning of the 20th century, the phenomenon of conversion has been keenly debated within the social sciences and history, especially the type often referred to as the "sudden emotional conversion," such as that of Saint Paul. In the 1960s, psychologists and sociologists began to pay close attention to gradual conversion, constructing diverse models taking into account contextual factors. Four sociological theories of conversion dominated this paradigm (Bainbridge 1992). First, *strain theory* is a variation of the common-sense Marxist view that poor and oppressed classes need religion more than the dominant class, because religious satisfaction compensates for their relative material deprivation. Second, the *social influence theory* focuses on the influence of the convert's friends or a religious group, and the concept of subculture is used to make sense of why a group of like-minded people uphold and display similar habits. These two theories—strain theory and social influence theory—portray converts as playing a passive role in the conversion process. By contrast, the third theory, the *volitional model*, is more subject-centered, seeing converts as in control of their religious choice. The fourth approach, *rational choice*, portrays religion as a market in which individuals, like consumers, apply their rationality, as in economic calculations. The later work of Stark and Finke (2000) adds social cost and social capital, but still emphasize the idea of rationality. There are other models of conversion, each trying to find a balanced analysis of a complex web (Richardson 1998).

It is not difficult to identify the limited value of these individualistic approaches to

conversion. On the one hand, in the social context of the privatization of religion in North America, individual conversion behavior is automatically assumed to be due to either individual motives or to a limited social network, such as friends or a religious group. This overlooks "the large social and cultural contexts within which these individuals changed their religion" Yang (1998, 241). On the other hand, mainstream Christian churches are eager to know why people became apostates, and the study of conversion has thus been imbued with an ideology that regards apostasy as "pathological behavior." To a significant degree, they study of conversion has taken on an anti-cult agenda and a barely-concealed hostile attitude toward new and exotic religions and their unique forms of recruitment, often for the purpose of launching legal attacks against new religions (Anthony 1991; Richardson 1998).

Such an individualistic approach to the study of conversion to Islam in Europe has resulted in similar outcomes. Ali Kose's study (1996), which sees life crises as the main reason motivating people to convert, purports to uncover the psychological pattern of the conversion process in Britain. Anna Mansson McGinty (2006) argues that American and Swedish women convert to Islam out of an interest in spirituality, family values, social justice, and women’s rights. McGinty’s study reveals the very rich inner world of converts, but is based on her interviews with only nine new converts. Her study highlights two of the main problems of the individualistic approach to the study of conversion to Islam by Western women. First, how can a researcher relate an individual conversion account to the wider socio-cultural context? Second, to what extent can we evaluate the autonomy and rationality of the converts. I find that many researchers are eager to argue that Muslimas (female Muslims) embrace Islam rationally, rather than blindly or impulsively, or simply because of marriage with a Muslim man. These kind of studies usually show how the new converts adopt a highly rational position to explain their Islamic faith. It seems that they never encounter the conservative Islamic values and patriarchal family traditions that are prevalent in some Muslim communities. However, would this also be the case if they were studying conversion to Islam by Chinese-Indonesians ?

Monika Wohlrab-Sahr (2006) and Karin van Nieuwkerk (2008) both criticize the flaws of the rational choice approach based on its failure to consider how religion is related to “personal, gender, national, and ethnic identity” (van Nieuwkerk 2008, 434). They both argue that the biographical narratives contextualize the rational choice. Even though the biographical approach may be better able to provide details of individuals’ life histories, their studies are confined to women in America and Western Europe, where religious choice is the norm, such that conversion to Islam tends to be about how an individual fulfils personal religious needs. That is why the main biographical narratives mostly present conversion as a solution to a life crisis or a significant

transformation of identity and cultural conflict. They cannot, however, explain whether conversion was part of a collective action. Interestingly, most studies concentrating on women lack a comparative perspective and thus fail to consider other kinds of converts in America and Western Europe. In the end, the focus remains confined to these Muslimas' religious agency.

If a biographical account of an individual's conversion is essential, how can we apply this approach to considering the Indonesian context when investigating a Chinese-Indonesian's conversion to Islam?

I have found that the individual voices of Chinese-Indonesians were suppressed not only by the anti-Chinese political environment which prevailed during the New Order period, but also by Chinese-Indonesians themselves, who, are highly disinclined to presenting their personal stories in public, even when free to do so. Whether Chinese-Indonesians are seen as victims of ethnic violence (Coppel 1983; Irianto 2005) or are seen as a money-grubbing business community that employs dubious strategies to maintain their preferential relations with the state and private sectors (Chua 2008; Dieleman 2007), Chinese-Indonesians as an ethnic unit are usually categorized as a whole. As Chang-yau Hoon (2008) has argued, since researchers have tended to regard Chinese-Indonesians as a unitary ethnic category, the boundary-crossing of an individual's hybrid identity is not easily categorized and understood, even under the classification of multiculturalism. Recognizing the cultural heterogeneity of Chineseness by using personal biographical accounts can help in taking a more deconstructionist approach to examining how Chineseness is appropriated and practiced by Chinese-Indonesians, but studies of Chinese-Indonesians rarely apply the biographical approach.

The conversion of Chinese-Indonesians to Islam happens in a Muslim-majority society where religion is not simply a personal matter irrelevant to ethnic politics. An individual's conversion narrative sheds light on how religious conversion relates to ethnic politics, the state's religious policy, and religious citizenship. Therefore, how can we present these personal life stories as miniatures of the structural dimension of power relationships?

C. Wright Mills (1970, 3) says, "Unless sociology works at the level of biography it does not and cannot work at the level of structure." This means that sociological research, instead of only examining the structural dimension, should pay attention to the interplay between public issues and personal troubles, because "neither the history of society nor the life of an individual can be grasped without understanding both" (Mills 1970, 3). As Jeffrey Shantz (2009) argues, to go beyond the conventional dichotomy of agency vs. structure, we need to understand how people's biographies are "constructed and enacted…through performative processes that are engaged with and

within social structures, networks, and practices" (Shantz 2009, 117).

Emphasizing the experience of the individual expresses the idea that "the personal is the political," but easily tends toward making the individual become a fragmentary or narcissistic subject.

In this regard, in *The Weight of the World*, Pierre Bourdieu (1999) adopts "the space of point of view" to expose "ordinary suffering" by juxtaposing the various voices of humble people who face economic turbulence, racism, urban violence, insufficient education and housing, with biased representation in the media. Their voices are easily trivialized, but Bourdieu argues for the irreducible complexity of individual perspectives:

> All of them must be brought together as they are in reality, not to relativize them in an infinite number of cross-cutting images, but, quite to the contrary, through simple juxtaposition, to bring out everything that results when different or antagonistic visions of the world confront each other… Simplistic and one-sided images…must be replaced by a complex and multi-layered representation capable of articulating the same realities but in terms that are different and, sometimes, irreconcilable… We must relinquish the single, central, dominant, in a word, quasi-divine, point of view that is all too easily adopted by observers (Bourdieu 1999, 3).

But on the other hand, Bourdieu is aware of the problem of relativism, and says:

> This perspectivism has nothing to do with a subjectivist relativism which might lead to cynicism or nihilism. It is instead based in the very reality of the social world, and it helps explain a good deal of what happens in society today (Bourdieu 1999, 4).

Nick Couldry explains that Bourdieu's view:

> …is not the infinite privatized plurality of individual viewpoints that postmodern accounts of society's dissolution, whether broadly optimistic or pessimistic, suggest. It is a highly organized space where the mutual incomprehensibility of individual viewpoints stems from underlying differences in structural position, dictated by inequality in economic, social, and symbolic resources…the incompatibility of perspectives with an emphasis on conflict over representations of the world and over the resources to make those representations. Such inequality has a symbolic dimension that cannot be mapped in terms of economic measures of poverty but is no less central to grasping how social space is ordered (Couldry 2005, 360).

This tension between individual and structure reminds us to consider how an individual's religious subjectivity is influenced by multiple power structures, and to re-examine the dialectic relations between the two.

The complex interaction between an individual's conversion biography and the socio-political context is reflected in the frequent doubts about the motivation of Chinese-Indonesians who convert to Islam. I suggest that, instead of attempting to legitimate or delegitimate their motivation, we should consider why Muslims are supposed to be very pious. During my fieldwork, I sometimes heard non-Muslim Chinese doubt the sincerity of a Chinese-Indonesian who converted to Islam. There is a similar attitude among pribumi Muslims, who typically expect new converts (*muallaf*) to embrace Islam wholeheartedly, and hold them to standards higher than those applied to those born as Muslims. These suspicions show that many Indonesians suspect new Chinese-Muslims of playing with religious identity, and also see ethnic Chinese as more secular and utilitarian than other Indonesians. Chinese ethnicity, for some pribumi Muslims, is associated with such immoral habits as gambling and excessive drinking. Some pribumi Muslims evaluate a Chinese-Muslim's degree of devotion according to whether their performance of *ibadah* (worship) is in accordance with Islamic law. In my interviews and while reading conversion biographies and public conversion narratives, I have come across many stories of the struggles faced by new converts for the sake of their Islamic faith. I rarely felt that my interviewees were insincere about their faith. Yet their motivation is often questioned by other Indonesians. I suggest that examining this question from a perspective of religious subjectivity can help us to explore the complexity of an individual's conversion.

Samuli Schielke, in his study of young Egyptian Muslims, instead of asking how Muslims live piously in dealing with the secular rationality and materialistic tendency of social reality, examines a Muslim's will to live piously and the focus on self-discipline (Schielke 2009, 158). Schielke argues:

> Most people (Muslims) are not dedicated activists. Focusing on the very pious risks taking those moments when people talk about religion as religious persons (at different times, they can talk about very different things and enact rather different sides of their personality) as the paradigmatic ones, and thus unwittingly reproducing the particular ideological aspiration of Islamist and Islamic revivalist moments: the privileging of Islam as the supreme guideline of all fields of life…in many ethnographies of Muslims' lives there has emerged a more far-reaching way to a priori privilege the Muslimness of the people involved and the Islamic-ness of the projects they pursue (Schielke 2010, 2).

He finds that Islamic morality is not the only resource applied by young Egyptian Muslims to deal with the complex problems in their lives. He says:

> There is a certain tendency to project Islam as a perfectionist ethical project of self-discipline, at the cost of the majority of Muslims who—like most humankind—are sometimes but not always pious and who follow various moral aims and at times immoral ones. The ideals and aspirations people express and the everyday lives they live are characterized by complexity, ambiguity, reflectivity, openness, frustration and tragedy. They argue for discipline at times and for freedom at others, but often live lives that lack both. If we want to account for the significance of Islam in people's lives, we have to account for it in this wider context (Schielke 2010, 2).

Therefore, instead of adopting Mircea Eliade's model of "homo religiosus" (man as a religious being) to measure whether a Chinese-Muslim is serious about religion in terms of motivation and behavior, I suggest reconsidering this issue through a comparative reflection on the historical formation of their religious subjectivity in the religio-political landscape of Indonesia.

Here the religious subject, a bundle of agencies, is constituted by the discursive practice of religious power. Religious discourse, like other discourses, embeds the subject in a complex web of material forces, interests, and conflicting meanings. In a sense, we should look into how the convert's subjectivity is contextually framed and positioned within the interlocked heavenly summon and earthly entanglement.[27] Gauri Viswanathan's *Outside the Fold* (1998) focuses on the worldly essence of religious conversion, as an action of protest to political authority and national identity. She examines how the subjectivities of several converts were constructed, and how they protested the colonial relationship between England and India in the 19th century. She insists that the conversion experience cannot be isolated from social and political circumstances. She criticizes William James's view of religious conversion as overly individualistic, suggesting that this view reflects the ideology of American democracy and its civil society, while in practice, religious conversion tends to be more corporate and dissentient.

While studying why Chinese-Indonesians convert to Islam, it is insufficient to assume that it is either through the way of light or the way of the sword. We should take

[27] The Foucauldian approach to religion (1999) has been influential; see Carrette (2000). This approach concerns the historical and social location of religious discourse, the micro-political mechanism of religion, and how it molds the subject as a technology of the self. The idea of subject formation has been used brilliantly to investigate the discursive practices of Islam. See Ewing (1997), Messick (1998), and Asad (2001).

an epistemological position and examine the double implications of subjectivity from Foucault's viewpoint. Having done so, we will be in a better position to prudently examine the two essential dimensions of conversion, the spiritual pursuit of an individual, and the compulsive impact of reality.

Studies on the cultural and political identities of Chinese-Indonesians have generally focused on how ethnic Chinese sought political ties by affiliating with one of three political entities, *viz.* the Dutch colonial establishment, ancestral China, or Indonesia. Hence, ethnic Chinese in Indonesia are various referred to as Chinese sojourners, foreign Orientals, *Cina*, *Peranakan*, *Tionghoa*, *totok*, *WNI*, etc.[28] In contrast, studies on the religious behavior of Chinese-Indonesians seem to be mainly concerned with how religion is applied to preserve "Chineseness." Nevertheless, through these traditional lenses, one can see how religion has functioned as a channel for ethnic Chinese to secure political rights by appealing to religious citizenship, or at least to prevent their ethnic community from being dominated by the state or the majority of the populace. As Indonesia's constitution guarantees freedom of religion, ethnic Chinese are able to use religion to champion their citizenship. Hence, it is high time that the relation between the citizenship and religious subjectivity of Chinese-Indonesians is re-examined.[29]

The role of religion played in the establishment of modern China is usually undervalued by scholars with a secular orientation, but Goossaert and Palmer (2011) point out the importance of reconsidering the place of religion and religious arguments in modern political discourse in mainland China. In this regard, the case of ethnic Chinese in the Dutch Indies helps to explain the importance of religion to the political motivations of ethnic Chinese.

According to Duara (2008), in the newly established Republic of China, religion was seen by the elite and political leadership as being outdated, and soon to be abandoned. Nevertheless, even in a secular state, "...religion becomes reorganized and channeled into different institutions and practices that we have come to call secular…and vice versa" (2008, 43). In the process of institutional mutual transmutation, Duara was also concerned about "the practice and ideas of subject-formation whereby citizens and religious subjects are created" (2008, 46). He explains (2008, 46):

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[28] That ethnic Chinese in Indonesia have been identified by these various terms indicates their changing civil status in different periods. *Peranakan* means "of mixed descent," and *totok* "pure blood Chinese"; they are mutually exclusive terms; you are either one or the other. WNI stands for "Warga Negara Indonesia," i.e., a non-indigenous Indonesian citizen.

[29] Take, for example, how followers of Confucian Religion (Khongkauw) avoided state repression by adapting their religious forms to fit the agama model of the New Order era. Later I shall explain this case in more details.

> While the nation-state has historically been founded on non-religious or non-sectarian sources of sovereignty, it has nonetheless found the resources of faith, ritual, myth, and religious loyalty too valuable simply to abandon. Similarly, popular conceptions of the religious subject have found political ideas of nationalism and citizenship irresistible for the legitimacy and power that they confer. Subject-formation in the era of nation-states is a vast topic, but the relationship between religious and national subjectivity has yet to be explored in depth.

According to Duara, the secular thinking of Chinese elites and the political leadership in China tended to ignore the role of religion in the transition from the old empire to the new republic. He was puzzled, however, as to why religious resources were important to the *peranakan* Chinese of the Dutch East Indies in the early twentieth century. So he compared THHK's (Tiong Hoa Hwe Koan) version of Confucianism with Kwee Tek Hoay's (1886-1952) presentation of the three traditional religions of China, *viz*. Confucianism, Buddhism, and Daoism as *Sam Kauw* (*Tridharma*, the "Three Teachings"). He found that though their approaches were not completely identical, they were both concerned with how to create a religion which would promote the communal sodality of *peranakan* Chinese. Duara asserts that the peranakan Chinese dealt with their double-sided predicament—being a tiny minority in a colonial society, hedged in on one side by the dominant power representing Christian hegemony, and on the other side by a competitive indigenous majority in the form of Islamic cultural pressure—by using traditional religions as resources for building an ethnic rampart. Thus, on the one hand, was religion was used by ethnic Chinese to engender political involvement, and, on the other, the influence of Christianity and Islam encouraged them to adopt monotheism (Duara 2008).

As mentioned by Duara, religious subjects can be transmuted into citizen subjects by applying religious resources to sustain the minority's ethnic boundary, or to enhance discipline in the new citizen subject. Gauri Viswanathan (1998) compared several cases of conversion to a minority religion in England and British India. Such conversions to Buddhism, Catholicism, and Islam from 1780 to 1850 were seen as a form of political resistance to English secularism and Hindu patriarchy intended as a critique of the established social hierarchy. The defiant religious stance of these converts is reflected in court documents, government legislation, and the majority's suspicion about their motives.

Multiple forms of religious subjectivity underpin the following three issues in my preliminary framework for this study. First, how do Chinese-Indonesians move between the political and religious spheres to create their civil and religious

subjectivities? For instance, in 1995, an ethnic Chinese couple, Budi Wijaya and Lany Guito, insisted on registering their marriage based on a Khongkauw (Confucian Religion) certificate, a religion which Suharto's government had de-recognized in 1979. Hence, their marriage could not be validated by the local Civil Record Office until 2000, when the Supreme Court declared their marriage valid. According to Indonesia's Marriage Law, a couple must hold a religious wedding ceremony and obtain a certificate issued by the presiding religious institution. Since Confucian Religion was de-recognized by Suharto's government in 1979, Wijaya and Guito's religious ceremony was considered invalid. They appealed the case to the courts, arguing their right as citizens to freely embrace Khong Kauw and sought the court's ruling to validate their Confucian marriage. Wijaya's petition was rejected by the local court and higher court of Surabaya. Finally the case reached the Supreme Court which in 2000 voided the decisions of all the lower courts and ruled that Wijaya and Guito's marriage was valid (Abalahin 2005). In Ai-ping Wang's PhD dissertation (2007), for which she interviewed the couple and other followers of Confucianism, it is explained that before the case was appealed, they obtained positive omens from Heaven, convincing then to make the event public (Wang 2007, 61-64).

Another example of a tussle between cultural and religious subjectivities is when the Yogyakarta branch of PITI demonstrated for the right to celebrate *Imlek* (Chinese New Year) at a mosque (this will be described in Chapter 3).

Second, influenced by Indonesia's special religious landscape, how have political elites, religious organizations, and the state identified Chinese-Indonesian religious subjectivity? For instance, which Chinese religions were accorded state recognition, and which religious doctrines, modalities, organizations, scriptures, and worship were legalized or prohibited? These restrictions were due to the state's desire to regulate the expression of "Chineseness" and the transmission of Chinese cultural traditions.[30] They were also related to Chinese-Indonesians ethno-political identity, religious qualification, and religious citizenship.

Third, in response to state repression and the *pribumi* majority's (mis-)understanding of Chinese religions, would ethnic Chinese consider such interventions as a possible erosion of, or a threat to, Chinese ethnic boundaries? Faced with such challenges, how have Chinese-Indonesians changed their modality of religious expression or converted to other "safe" religions?[31] In the mid-1960s the government instituted a policy of converting all Chinese temples (*klenteng*) into

[30] The official prohibition on public ancestor worship is a representative case; see Coppel (1998, 213-226). I shall discuss how this official prohibition influences Chinese-Indonesian Muslims who celebrate Chinese New Year in a mosque by performing salat in Chapter 3.

[31] For instance, in the earlier period of the New Order, embracing a religion was considered to be a good way to show that one was not a Communist. Hence there was a mass conversion to Christianity, Buddhism, and Confucianism (Mujiburrahman 2006, 314).

Buddhist temples (*vihara*), apparently reasoning that Buddhism was somehow "less Chinese.". Many Chinese *klenteng* changed their names to *vihara* and became affiliated with Buddhist associations, but this did not mean that all the elements of Chinese folk religion completely disappeared, and in many instances the change was only nominal. As for Khongkauw, it adapted itself to the official model of religion (*agama*) by emphasizing that it "constitutes a way of life for its adherents, teaches belief in the existence of One Supreme God, has a holy book (*kitab suci*), and is led by a prophet (*nabi*)" (Abalahin 2005, 121; Coppel 2002, 228-255). However this monotheistic transformation was also nominal in some respects, and Khongkauw still included polytheistic religious practices and the worship of ancestors, deities, and spirits. These religious performances in the guise of "*agamaized*" Confucianism somehow managed to escape the notice of the authorities. Furthermore, would ethnic Chinese use religion as a political mechanism to oppose or realign with the dominant *pribumi* majority, political elites, and the state in order to maintain their safety, confirm their citizenship, or sustain other political interests? I would argue that religious faith was not merely a spiritual choice, but also a way of creating a niche for ethno-political belonging, and that inevitably ethnic Chinese in Indonesia had to play the game of political manipulation.

It is my contention, therefore, that studies of the religions of ethnic Chinese cannot be confined to only examining how religion functions to accommodate, maintain, or transform "Chineseness." I propose that we consider how religion has also become a platform for ethno-cultural communication, so that through the syncretistic and hybrid practice of religion, ethnic Chinese are able to cross-culturally associate themselves with other *pribumi* or religious communities. The religious parade of ethnic Chinese in west Kalimantan includes Dayak and Malay spirit-mediums (Chan 2009). Another interesting case is the worship of Chinese *keramat*, common to ethnic Chinese and *abangan* (nominal) Javanese Muslims is (Chan 2009; Jonge 1998; Salmon 1993). It is also useful to know how religion has become a mechanism for ethnic Chinese to consolidate power and build their alliance with the state, power elites, and the dominant majority.[32] My proposition is that religion has been used as a platform on which Chinese Indonesians have adapted to the political scenario in different ways, with different outcomes. Some Chinese Indonesians preserve their religion and ethnic traditions, while others choose assimilation with the indigenous populace by conversion. Yet others, who relinquish their familial religions without forsaking their ethnic identities, ally successfully with the dominant majority.

[32] During the earlier period of the New Order, Chinese Catholic figures such as Harry Tjan Silalahi established the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS). It is evident that a complex power relationship existed between Chinese Catholics and Suharto's military and that they cooperated to oppose both Communism and Islam (Mujiburrahman 2006 and Sidel 1998).

1.4.2 Socially Stratified Islamic Spectrums

Though the conversion experience of individuals has its irreducible sociological significance, I do not mean that those individuals should not be categorized. In my research, I divide Chinese-Indonesian Muslims into four groups for arguing two points. As I mentioned before, Chinese-Indonesians are frequently classified as a single ethnic category, differentiated only in their degree of adherence to ethnic identity. For instance, the terms *peranakan* and *totok* applied in both the old paradigm of Chinese-Indonesian studies and in Hoon's more deconstructive approach, emphasize hybridity and heterogeneity and differentiate the Chinese community on a scale of ethnicity. To some degree, neither is my research able to relinquish the concept of Chineseness, since it is useful for exploring the socio-cultural development of ethnic Chinese, but we should find another way of classifying the diversity of ethnic Chinese.
Christian Chua criticizes such work on the basis of ethnicity:

> It tends to take the ethnicity of Chinese Indonesians at least implicitly for granted and treated it as a given fact, coherent and largely unproblematic…There is little to say against the latter proposition, as ethnic segregation indeed constitutes part of social reality in Indonesia. However, culturalist reasoning fails to realize that Chinese ethnicity is constituted to be relevant. Hence it often led to disputable frameworks that overemphasize the vertical division of society, for instance, combining owners of small shops with big businessmen into one minority labeled 'Chinese' (Chua 2008, 14).

Taking his study of Chinese-Indonesian capitalists as an example, Chua suggests "a perspective, based in the economic divisions of society, has to be adopted, which takes into account material conditions as well as the interest of the various factions who compete with each other for power, resources, and non-material gains" (Chua 2008, 20). Therefore, Chinese-Indonesian Muslims constitute of the focus of this study, but I shall refrain from making general statements about this ethnic group as a whole and instead focus on a number of specific sub-groups that represent distinctly different conversion experiences. .

As the first group, I discuss Chinese-Muslim men belonging to the lower-middle class, and present as a case study the story of a Chinese-Muslim father and his two sons. As the second group, I focus on Chinese-Muslim women, highlighting how their conversion is seen by their original Chinese families as a prelude to interracial marriage, and how their transformation is reflected in their religious dress.

The third group I examine consists of Muslim preachers. In terms of religious

capital, I discuss how some ethnic-Chinese Muslims become qualified preachers. Muslim businessmen constitute the fourth type of new convert. In contrast to Muslim preachers, they show another direction of social mobility and apply their status and economic superiority, but are suspected of having used immoral means to amass their wealth.

My discussion of these four distinct categories not only reflects the inner social division of ethnic Chinese, but also allows me to respond to the question of which variety of Indonesian Islam Chinese Muslims are mostly affiliated with, NU (Nahdatul Ulama) or Muhammadiyah? [33] In my observation of several Chinese-Muslim figures, many of them affiliate either with Muhammadiyah or NU. But most ethnic Chinese Muslims may not strongly associate themselves as reformist Muslims for three reasons. First, for some Muslim preachers' da'wa agenda, it is not necessary to insist on their Islamic orientation, because it is more important to invite Chinese to embrace Islam rather than to be fussy about new converts' transitional process. They may still keep practicing traditional Chinese customs, but the Chinese preachers take a more encouraging attitude, considering gradual progress more important than immediately strictly following *ibadah*. Second, PITI and the Lautze Mosque prefer to keep more connections with various Muslim organizations. Third, I rarely hear that ordinary Chinese Muslims are involved in debates of Islamic law which judge what *bid'ah* (improper deviation) is, though this is an issue they cannot avoid being questioned on by pribumi Muslims. Although I present a general picture in which Chinese-Muslims seem to be moderate in their Islamic orientation, it may lead to a simplified conclusion: saying that Chinese-Muslim religious practice is like that of *abangan* (nominal Muslim) who are careless about the orthodoxy and orthopraxy required by Islamic law. Instead of that, I adopt the reverse way of thinking about the sociology of Muslims. It seems that we are used to classifying Indonesian Muslims according to religious organization and Islamic orientations, or we may also be concerned with which political party they affiliate with, but this is still strongly associating their political identity with their religious orientation. Is religious orientation the only criteria to direct our analysis on the Muslim community? Cannot we think about what the social strata are within a Muslim community or organization?

Recently, the division of religious orientation/positions in the study of Indonesian Islam has been critically examined by Timothy Daniels (2009). I have found that his pattern of analysis can contribute to my exploration of the diverse experience of Chinese-Indonesian's conversion to Islam. Daniels sets a scene in Yogyakarta during

[33] NU is a traditionalist Muslim organization and is the largest Muslim organization in Indonesia. Its religious practices and theological position tend to be more tolerant of local customs. Muhammadiyah, the second largest Muslim organization in Indonesia, and identifies itself as a reformist orientation in line with the Quran and the Prophet Muhammad's words.

the post-Suharto era, comparing how several Muslim groups deal with a spiritual crisis according to their respective religious orientations, to illuminate the varieties of Islam in Java based in the cultural center of Indonesia. He examines cultural festivals and public ceremonies organized by the court and governors, Islamic popular healing practiced by three kinds of religious specialists (*dukun*, *kyai*, and *ustadz*), the cultural *da'wa* promoted by Muhammadiyah, student theater with social critiques calling for equality, and a new type of collective religious meeting performed by the emerging Muslim group Maiyah. Daniels puts officials, Muslim leaders, popular healers, and university students in the same human geographical location, exploring how they address their deep concern for the spiritual and social crisis and expectation for a better future.

Daniels asks (2009, 35): "Where do we locate 'Islam' in this diverse spectrum of religious orientation of Java, and what is the relationship of these orientations to projections of desirable futures?" For a researcher like him, the difficulty in examining the "spectrum of Islam" in Java is how to identify "the cultural categories labeling local variants have multiple and contested meanings and that there is a complex continuum of interpretations, practices, and variants of Islam in Java" (2009, 35) for understanding:

> Javanese Muslims from the broad spectrum of Islam in Java have been challenged to pursue their religious goals, spin their webs of meaning, and stake out their identities while trying to overcome these differences in order to build new alliances (2009, 158).

The idea of "spectrum of Islam" in Java illuminates the inner diversity within the cultural location of Javanese Muslims, and deals with the various political and religious orientations.

In other words, *Islamic Spectrum in Java* thinks that the problematique of asking what Islam in Java is should not be confined to questions of syncretism that have always tried to differentiate Islam in Indonesia in line with normative piety apart from syncretistic segments. Instead of that, he says:

> "Javanese Islam" appears to be located throughout a complex spectrum of variants. Moreover, this description of diverse cultural sources and modes of interpretation along this Islamic spectrum provides a basis for us to understand various frameworks and projections of desirable futures…(Daniel 2009, 48).

By linking the approach of "Islamic spectrum" to my framework, I address the concept

of "socially stratified Islamic spectrums" that is, in addition to religious orientation, a Muslim community is also a group of Muslims consisting of various social stratifications that may cause a variety of Islamic practices and a fuzzy diversity of religious orientations. By doing so, I argue, a Chinese-Indonesian's conversion to Islam is not only an action of boundary-making and boundary-crossing; for along each social division based on class, gender, and religious qualifications, they share some similar experiences of conversion while encountering different processes and consequences of conversion.

1.4.3 Entering the Islamic Religious Field

I have mentioned that conversion to Islam for ethnic Chinese is a way of 'dwelling,' in Tweed's terminology, by which they re-position themselves in the Muslim community of Indonesia. Now I want to analyze this from the perspective of linking micro and macro-level processes of Islamization during the post-authoritarian transition of Indonesia, arguing that conversion constitutes a channel of social mobility in the Muslim social space of Indonesia.

The social distinctions demarcated by economic, racial, religious, and gender boundaries between Chinese and pribumi have been formulated since colonial era. It has generated a profound and mutual ethnic construction between Chinese and pribumi. However, how ethnic Chinese preserve their ethnic identity and ensure the social reproduction of an ethnic minority deserves more exploration. What kind of social mechanisms and institutions have been applied by Chinese is an important issue of Chinese-Indonesian studies.

In Indonesia, embracing Islam is referred to as *masuk Islam*, or more completely *masuk ke agama Islam*, literally "entering Islam" or "entering the Islamic religion." In Chinese this is similarly expressed as *ru hui-jiao* (入回教). However, we may not only understand this to mean that such a person obtains membership in a religious group or embraces a religious faith. If we spatialize "Islam" as an Islamic religious field and "Muslim society" as "Muslim social space," it may lead us to understand the social mobility and transformation of Islamic conversion.

To embody and socially spatialize a Chinese-Indonesian Muslim's conversion in the dynamic generation of the Islamic religious field and diverse Muslim social space, it may help us to examine the micro-psychics of Islamization among Chinese new converts and re-conceptualize their conversion to Islam as a form of social mobility that may cause tension in boundary-making and crossing.

I have presented the conversion to Islam of Chinese-Indonesians as a remaking of social boundaries by which they reposition themselves in the social and spiritual space of Indonesia's Muslim community. Applying Pierre Bourdieu's concepts, religious field (1991), I explained "entering Islam" (embracing Islam) as "entering the Islamic religious field." In doing so, I have focused on Chinese-Muslim preachers and businessmen who have overcome the difficulties of conversion and have obtained the religious qualifications required to preach and/or the trust required to lead a Muslim organization. Such social mobility is different from Junus Jahja's agenda of conversion as assimilation. PITI has shown that participating in Muslim affairs need not be at the cost of erasing one's ethnic identity. However most Chinese-Muslims were not born in Muslim families, and thus lacked the opportunity to gradually learn about Islam as part of the Muslim community, beginning in childhood. Instead, they have to learn as adults how to recite the Quran and Islamic prayers, wear appropriate religious costumes, follow the principles of *halal*, etc. All of this can be quite challenging for new converts. For new converts to become religious teachers, preachers, or leaders of Muslim organizations, they have to accumulate religious knowledge as religious capital. Eventually they may succeed in entering the Islamic religious field, as other pribumi Muslim elites do, by understanding Islamic law and comprehending the power relationships in the field.

In terms of considering the conversion experience of a Chinese-Indonesian Muslim as a process of Islamization represented as a microphysics of power, what does a member of an ethnic minority becoming Muslim mean in the macro-history of the Islamization in Indonesia? We usually take for granted the reformist view that considers syncretism as a deviation from true Islam. However, cannot this be seen as a gradual process of Islamization? If we bring in Bourdieu's concepts of habitus and embodied practice, can we enrich our studies by seeing a minority's process of conversion as a micro-level process of Islamization? M. C. Ricklefs (2007) has shown how the Javanese initially resisted the foreign religion of Islam. The historical process of accepting Islam was not smooth going for Javanese, so it may be even more difficult for ethnic Chinese—a minority considered to be highly alien to Islam—to convert to Islam and try to bring elements of Chinese culture into their invented cultural practices and historical narratives. Understanding the conversion experiences of Chinese-Indonesian Muslims involves a methodological implication: the embodied experience is a dimension for considering the cultural variation from the micro-level of conversion process.

In order to understand the embodied aspects of the conversion experience, it is essential to study the process at the micro level. For Chinese-Indonesians, to become a Muslim is not an easy process of naturalization, as it is for indigenous Muslims who

learn Islam starting in childhood. These new converts have to cultivate a new religious habitus and religious dispositions, and to be familiar with the logic of Islamic practice, including studying Islamic knowledge (Bourdieu 2000). To master the logic of Islamic practice is also an embodied process, such as changing religious costumes and performing Islamic worship. For ethnic Chinese converts, these processes are challenging. As I shall discuss in Chapter 3 and Chapter 4, many Chinese converts face high social pressure, since their conversions are sometimes private or even secret, out of fear of their family's reaction.

On the other, if the conversion of Chinese-Indonesians is a form of social mobility for entering the Islamic religious field, the next question I ask is about the dynamics of the religious field. This shows a macro-structural change in Indonesia's Muslim society as a historical background accompanied by the increasing public visibility of Chinese-Indonesian Muslims. How can this concept contribute to our understanding of the Islamic awakening during the new era of post-authoritarian Indonesia? If it cannot be appropriately defined, it may not be possible to fully explore the historical implications of entering the "Islamic religious field" by Chinese-Indonesian Muslims.

I describe the process of learning to be a qualified Muslim as the primitive accumulation of religious capital. In a Muslim majority society, Muslim identity is a kind of "religious capital," through which Chinese converts can increase their opportunities to network with the Muslim majority. Therefore, conversion to Islam is a challenge for Chinese new converts, but it also helps them to accumulate their social and symbolic capital, and winning respect in the Muslim community. By converting to Islam, some Chinese have tried to convert their social and symbolic capital. Therefore I explain why a father is eager to educate his two sons in Islamic boarding schools and how he expects them to become ulama, establish a da'wa foundation, and manage their own Islamic boarding school.

Similarly, considering conversion as a strategy of upward mobility, I show how several Chinese new converts are able to become qualified preachers and even turn their da'wa into a business. By contrast, Muslim businessmen contribute their wealth to PITI and increase their symbolic capital via their Muslim identity. The development of Muslim society in post-authoritarian Indonesia has shown two tendencies. The practice of Islamic logic is more widely influential and reflected in several dimensions. Indonesia is not an Islamic state. However, Islam has become the common religious disposition and habitus by which Muslims cultivate their moral frameworks and esthetic sensibilities, showing how Muslims make moral and religious judgments and even formulate their pious tastes in mass consumption. Moreover, it manufactured a more consolidated Islamic religious field where Muslim elites debate, manipulate power, and play sophisticated games of symbolic language (Bourdieu and Wacquant

1992).

By considering conversion to Islam as entering the Islamic field, I explain how Chinese-Muslim preachers legitimate themselves to indigenous Muslims who usually consider Chinese converts unqualified to do so. Chinese-Indonesian Muslim businessmen, in contrast, convert their economic capital into religious capital, managing the PITI as a religious NGO and offering religious charity to local Muslim communities. Furthermore, they are even able to organize debates on whether cerebrating Chinese New Year in a mosque is in line with Islamic law. Undoubtedly, PITI has helped Chinese-Indonesian Muslim businessmen build close relations with ulama and establish Muslim organizations.

Chapter 2

Contested Legacies

2.1 Introduction

Unlike Chinese-Malaysian Muslims, some of whom are Muslims originally emigrating from China (Tan 1991; Wang 2003), most of Chinese-Indonesian Muslims[34] are new converts who are neither born to Muslim families in Indonesia nor originally emigrated from China as Muslims. But it is still possible to trace the Chinese who converted to Islam in Indonesia in earlier periods. Amen Budiman (1979), Peter Carey (1984), Denys Lombard and Claudine Salmon (1991), G. William Skinner (1996), and The Siauw Giap (1993) have outlined many interesting cases of *peranakan* (native-born) Chinese Muslims in Indonesian from the precolonial period and up to the twentieth century. They place the phenomena of Chinese conver-sion to Islam and their assimilation into the local Muslim society in the long-term perspective of historical duration, showing the relationship between the Islamization in the Dutch Indies and the formation of peranakan Chinese communities. Their works highlight the role of Chinese Muslims as merchants in the early development of local urban society and their participation in local administration, as well as the cultural heritages of peranakan Muslims.

Chinese conversion to Islam, which took place for a variety of reasons, such as

[34] In this article, "Chinese Muslim" indicates those Muslims immigrated to Southeast Asia from early Ming Dynasty (from the end of the thirteenth to the early fourteenth centuries) to mid-sixteenth century or contemporary Chinese speaking Muslims in mainland China. The Chinese Muslim immigrants' descendants had mixed blood, with the indigenous specified as "peranakan Chinese Muslim." "Chinese-Indonesian Muslims," in a contemporary sense, highlights ethnic Chinese Muslims who are citizens of Indonesia and are included as part of "Indonesian Muslims."

marriage, commerce, and political interests, was part of historical process of naturalization for the Chinese community and its assimilation into the indigenous society. But the ethnic policies of the Dutch colonial government interrupted this process and disassociated Chineseness and Islam, which are currently two social categories that are often held to be mutually exclusive. Because of that, as Lombard and Salmon (1991) argue, it would be naïve to simply dismiss the claims of Chinese influences on Indonesian Islam without considering the complex historical factors.[35] The dissociation between Chineseness and Islam, which occurred in the colonial period, had led to a widely assumed historical discontinuity. Only some fragmented evidence has remained, making it difficult to show that the contemporary Chinese-Indonesian Muslim community has inherited a legacy of Chinese Muslims since the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Nevertheless, after the end of the New Order period, the legacy of Chinese Muslims dating back to the fifteenth century has been emphasized by the Chinese-Indonesian Muslim community, especially the Persatuan Islam Tionghoa Indonesia (PITI), the Association of Chinese Muslims of Indonesia,[36] to highlight their historical relation with Indonesian Islam and China. Today the issue of the legacy of Chinese Muslims is not only invoked and used by the Chinese-Indonesian Muslims. It also caused a controversy in New Order period and has been discussed again since 2003. Chinese Muslims facilitating the early Islamization in Java have had a place in the politics of the historical writing of Indonesian Islam.

In the scholarly discussion of the Islamization of Southeast Asia, three significant issues are: (1) when Islam was spread to the area; (2) the main agency that spread Islam; (3) where Islam originally came from. Azyumardi Azra calls the discussion "theories of the coming of Islam to the archipelago" (Azra 1992: 27-52). Arguing the theories, however, is not only an academic issue but is also related to the contested politics of the historiography of Islamic history (Meuleman 1997; Van Bruinessen 1999). Some people have argued for an authentic origin of Islam in Indonesia, saying that it is the core of national culture rather than the secular Javanese-centered history (Wood 2005).

This study is not going to focus on whether Chinese Muslims preached Islam in Java in the past. Instead, it attempts to examine how the "Chinese theory"[37] had been

[35] I have highlighted the historical process of the dissociation between Chineseness and Islam as two exclusive categories. See Chiou (2009).

[36] The PITI was established in 1961. It is the first and the only Chinese-Indonesian Muslim organization with a national organizational framework. For an interesting application of Zheng He's Muslim images in the building of a mosque by the PITI, see Chiou Syuan-yuan (2007).

[37] In contrast to the belief that Islam was originally spread from Arab, Persia, or South India, i.e.the "Arabic theory," "Indian theory," or "Persian theory" (Azra 1992, 33), I follow Sumanto Al Qurtuby's term "Chinese theory (*Teori Cina*)" to indicate the idea of Chinese Muslims facilitating early Islamization in Java (Qurtuby 2003, 43; 2007, 125-128).

addressed, repressed, and revived, from the New Order period to the Reformation era. The first part aims to review how Indonesian scholars have discussed the issue and why their arguments have caused a controversy in the historiography of Indonesian Islam. On the other hand, they have even brought some good that has drawn attention to the Chinese contribution to Islamic traditions of Indonesia and provided arguments for including Chinese culture among the sources of Indonesian traditions.

The controversy is not confined to a domestic discourse within Indonesia. Because of the famous Chinese figure Zheng He鄭和 (or Cheng Ho)[38], who has become a historical symbol of cultural interaction between China and Nusantara (Indonesian archipelago), the discourses about his Muslim images and the role he played in the spread of Islam in Nusantara, are being discussed both in China and Indonesia. A series of events and seminars concerning Zheng He's legacy peaked in the festival for the celebration of the 600th anniversary of his expedition to Nusantara in 2005.

I suggest that "Chinese theory" is a discursive practice mainly formulated by three factors that include the rise of China, Chinese-Indonesian's ethnic empowerment, and the liberal sympathy of Indonesian scholars and politicians. "Chinese theory" has its own progressive implications because it encourages people to consider Chinese culture as a part of Indonesian traditions such as Hindu-Buddhist cultures and a reflection of the cultural diversity of Indonesia. However, "Chinese theory" is not only promoted within Indonesia, and we need to consider why and how it is related to the hegemonic discourse on the rise of China. Some geopolitical factors are certainly behind it, which some Indonesian scholars who promote the theory rarely seem to consider.

2.2 The "Chinese Theory" Controversy

2.2.1 The Origin of the Controversy in the Malay Annals of Semarang and Cerbon[39]

Some of the dispute about the role of Chinese Muslims in Islamization of Java originated from a controversial book, *Tuanku Rao*, written by Batak historian Mangaradja Onggang Parlindungan (2007/1964).[40] In the chapter entitled "*Peranan*

[38] A brief biographical note on Zheng He will be shown below.
[39] I follow the original spelling of "Cerbon" in the book title while using "Cirebon" in other contexts.
[40] Parlindungan's book was reissued in 2007. Interestingly, the controversies raised by this book are not only about Chinese Muslim issues. The main story is about a famous Muslim figure Tuanku Imam

Orang Tiong/Islam/Hanafi Didalam Perkembangan Agama Islam di Pulau Jawa, 1411-1564 (The Role Played by Hanafi Muslim Chinese in the Development of Islam in Java, 1411-1564)," which pertains to the annals of Chinese Muslims in Java from 1368 to 1585, he claimed that the text wasobtained from a Dutch *controleur* (inspector) Poortman, who was assigned by Dutch colonial government to conduct a research in 1928 on whether the first Sultan of Demak, Raden Patah (1475-1518) was a Chinese (2007, 651).[41]

Parlindungan claimed that Poortman had access to three carriages (or bags) of documents from the Sam Po Kong Temple in Semarang.[42] Upon completion of the research, he found that Raden Patah (alias Jin Bun) did in fact have Chinese blood. Poortman edited the text and converted the dates to the Christian calendar. According to the Indonesian historian Slamet Muljana (1921-1986),[43] the Dutch colonial government asked Poortman to keep his findings secret and gave limited access to them so that they could only be perused in the office. Muljana says, "If people knew the research result, there would be riots among Muslim communities in Java. On the other hand, Chinese communities may feel more proud because they find that overseas Chinese were important in their involvement in the political and religious life" (2005, 57). Poortman brought the documents back to the Netherlands. When Parlindungan studied in Delft, the Netherlands, Poortman allowed him to read and copy the document. Parlindungan allowed Muljana to get the text as claimed in Parlindungan's book. Nevertheless, neither the report written by Poortman attested to by Parlindungan nor the documents originally collected by Poortman nor the original research are available.[44]

The text was translated and annotated by two Dutch scholars, H. J. de Graaf and Th. G. Th. Pigeaud, and later edited by M. C. Ricklefs as *Chinese Muslims in Java in the 15th and 16th* centuries*: The Malay Annals of Semarang and Cerbon* (hereafter *MASC*). From the very beginning the two Dutch scholars have questioned the validity

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Bondjol, which has invoked new debates about history of the Padri War; and about whether Tuanku Imam Bondjol was an anticolonial nationalist hero or the first Muslim-against-Muslim jihadist in Southeast Asia. The book also bears on autonomy of historiography of regional Islam. Historical figures such as Tuanku Imam Bondjol were under censorship during Suharto's New Order period (Hadler 2008).

[41] According to Ann L. Kumar's investigation, C. Poortman was a controleur of Si Pirok in the Tapanoeli area and than was promoted as resident in Jambi (1987, 607).

[42] The amount of documents carried by Poortman has been the subject of speculation.

[43] Muljana taught in several Indonesian universities and foreign universities in Germany, the United States, and Singapore. His book *Runtuhnya Kerajaan Hindu-Jawa dan Timbulnya Negara-Negara Islam di Nusantara* (The Fall of the Hindu-Javanese Kingdom and the Rise of Islamic States in the Indonesian Archipelago) (1968) was banned by the Suharto government for its controversial argument about some members of the *wali sanga* (nine Islamic saints in Indonesia) as having Chinese blood.

[44] Several western scholars, like Leonard Blussé, Ann L. Kumar, and Denys Lombard, have tried to find the archives and the original text in vain. See Budiman (1979) and Kumar (1987) and Ricklefs's introduction (1984).

of the *MASC*, and even they ignored the texts; but later they found some importance in these and carefully used the *MASC* in their book (de Graaff and Pigeaud 1976). In the introduction to the *MASC*, the final editor, Merle Calvin Ricklefs, states that Parlindungan did not fabricate the *MASC*. Parlindungan had been merely one of several editors, and Ricklefs speculates that the *MASC* may have been edited by Chinese editors based on Chinese sources offered by Chinese scholars living in Java and on oral traditions. These contain a legendary characteristic concerning Chinese communities in Semarang and Cirebon from the eighteenth century. The many connections referring to Javanese *babad* in the *MASC* show that editors were also aware of Javanese babad literatures (1984, 2-4).

The *MASC* contains two parts, the Semarang and Cirebon Annals. The first starts from Zheng He's visit to Java. It states that Zheng He appointed a Chinese Muslim leader, Bong Tak-keng, as a local administrator based in Campa, Vietnam, to manage Chinese Muslim communities flourishing in several entrepots such as Manila (Philippines), Tuban, (Java), Kukang (Palembang, Sumatra), and so on (*MASC*, 13-15).[45] The Hanafi Muslim Chinese communities, mainly coming from Southwest China Yunnan, flourished along the coasts in Southeast Asian countries.[46]
A Chinese Muslim leader, Haji Gan Engcu, was not only a political representative to the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644), but also offered his services to the Majapahit Kingdom. He had become a kind of "*Kapten Cina* (head of the Chinese community)" in Tuban (*MASC*, 15). Because of his relationship with the Majapahit, he was rewarded with a noble title. Gan Engcu's administration over Tuban was under the symbolic control of Zheng He. He was also the suzerain of the Majapahit. These honorifics reflect the special three-cornered relationship and point to how the Chinese immigrant community won the support of its homeland and the recognition of its host polity.

However, after 1433 when Zheng He died in his last expedition, the Ming Dynasty changed diplomatic policies, stopping the expeditions to foreign countries. This had the effect of weakening the authority of Ming Dynasty over Southeast Asia;

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[45] In the *MASC*, the tale of Zheng He's visit to Semarang where he and his Muslim crew practiced Islam, and other stories of the establishment of Chinese Muslim communities have led people to ask whether Zheng He preached Islam in Java. However, there is no record in Chinese chronicles about Zheng He preaching Islam in Java or establishing Chinese Muslim communities anywhere there. According to *Ming Shi-lu* (the Veritable Records of the Ming Dynasty, the collective annals of the emperors of Ming China (1368-1644); see http://www.epress.nus.edu.sg/msl/), at the beginning of fifteenth century, there had been some Chinese immigrant communities in Southeast Asia. From 1405 to 1430, the Ming Dynasty took military action, intervening in the political conflicts between two local leaders to keep Palembang from the influence of the Majapahit and to ensure the safety of international voyages around the region. For greater political recognition, like other countries of Southeast Asia, the Chinese community in Palembang also paid tribute to the Ming Dynasty. In 1407, the Ming Dynasty conferred an overlord, Shi Jinqing, the title of "Pacification Superintendency."

[46] Hanafi is the most widespread school in Islamic law followed by roughly one-third of the global Muslims.

diplomatic relationships between Java and the Ming Dynasty also deteriorated, and the Chinese Muslim communities lost contact with the homeland and were gradually assimilated into the local society. They faced the problem of survival. Under such circumstances, the *MASC* mentions that a Chinese Muslim leader was forced to speak Javanese in order to improve the Chinese Muslims' relationship with the indigenous people. The mosques belonging to Chinese Muslims were gradually changed to Chinese temples venerating Zheng He. This reflected the Chinese Muslim community's gradual loss of faith in Islam, opting to switch to traditional Chinese religions.

The Semarang Annals present a crucial period of transformation from Hindu-Buddhist to Islamic civilization in Java. During this period, several Muslim figures are depicted as important historical agents in the decline of the Majapahit to the rise of the first Islamic kingdom Demak. Bong Swi Hoo (alias Sunan Ampel) was a grandson of Chinese Muslims in Champa, bound in marriage to a member of the Chinese Muslim community. He was a preacher; he converted Javanese to Islam and formed a Javanese Muslim community in Ampel. Three other three figures, Swan Liong, Jin Bun (alias Raden Patah), and Kin San, whose fathers' families hailed from the Majapahit court and whose mothers' relations descended from peranakan Chinese women, had been revolutionaries who undermined the Majapahit's political superiority, and eventually established the first Islamic kingdom in Java in 1478. The *MASC* also summarizes the development of Demak and its relationships with local Chinese communities and the Majapahit. At that time, the remnant territory of Majapahit had become a tributary of Demak and did not die out until 1527. The Annals of Semarang ends with the fall of Demak in 1546.

The main tale of the Annals of Cerbon relates to the expansion of Islamic power from Demak to West Java. During that period, Chinese Muslim communities located in the northern coast of central Java also faced a situation of decline because they had lost contact with China. Syarif Hidayat Fatahillah (Sunan Gunung Jati),[47] a Muslim general, with his armed forces from Demak passed through Talang and Sembung[48] on his way to west Java, and revisited Sembung again twenty-five years later after he had become a king in Banten. On the request of a local Chinese Muslim leader, Tan Eng Hoat, for the purpose of sustaining the Chinese Muslim community in decline, Syarif Hidayat Fatahillah established a Muslim kingdom in Cirebon. This indicates that the establishment of Cirebon Kingdom was supported by Chinese Muslims.

[47] Some scholars think that Syarif Hidayat Fatahillah and Sunan Gunung Jati are different persons.
[48] The locations of Sembung and Talang are not identified (Ricklefs 1984: 8).

2.2.2 Slamet Muljana's Contested Book

Since the *MASC* mostly tells of the historical activities of Chinese Muslims involved in the early Islamization of Java in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, the three scholars annotating the *MASC* remind uncritical readers could well form a skewed impression that the spread of Islam in Java was primarily the result of the labors of Hanafi Muslims from Yunnan. But in fact, before this kind warning, Slamet Muljana had published his controversial book, *Runtuhnya Kerajaan Hindu-Jawa dan Timbulnya Negara-Negara Islam di Nusantara* (The Fall of Hindu-Javanese Empire and the Rise of Islamic States in Indonesian Archipelago) in 1968. In this book he claims that he had obtained a copy of Portman's manuscript and used it to locate the Annals from the decline of the Majapahit and the rise of the Islamic kingdom Demak in Java in order to argue that several of the *wali sanga* (nine Islamic saints in Java) with Chinese blood had played an important role during the crucial period.

From the annals in *Babad Tanah Jawi* (History of the Land of Java)[49] and *Serat Kanda* (Universal Histories),[50] Muljana identifies several Muslim figures with Chinese origins, including six members of the wali sanga. He compares the various approaches of Islamic expansion to North Sumatra, Malacca, Terengganu and Java, claiming that Islam had been known in North Sumatra at the end of the thirteenth century and in Malacca and Terengganu at the beginning of the fifteenth century. In these three regions, Islam had come from India, of the Shafi'i school, while Islam arrived in Java only at the beginning of the fifteenth century and was spread by Chinese Muslims belonging to the Hanafi School. Arguing that Islam came to Java from China in the fifteenth century, Muljana discusses how the Hanafi School developed in China in the Yuan Dynasy (1271-1368) and in the Ming Dynasty. This is logically related to evidences presented in the *MASC*. He even claims that before the arrival of Chinese Muslims, there had been no indigenous Islamic converts in Java, where there were only Arab Muslims. Muljana doubts that Arabic merchant Muslims could have converted the natives in a large scale before the fourteenth century.

Muljana explains that the relationship between the Majapahit and the Chinese Muslim community had been one of mutual benefit. Under the Majapahit, Chinese

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[49] *Babad Tanah Jawi* is the official chronicle of the Sultanate of Mataram (1600-1755), containing the history of the *keraton* (courts) of Pajajaran, Majapahit, Demak, Pajang, Mataram, and Kartasura. *Badad Tanah Jawi* was edited by the linguist and archaeologist J. L. A. Brandes in 1897 (Ras 1987).

[50] The original materials of *Serat Kanda* were collected by Colin Mackenzie (1754 – 1821), an officer of British East India Company later promoted as Surveyor General of India, under the assistance of Dutch colonial officers, the manuscripts were translated from Javanese to Dutch, during his stay between 1811 and 1813. *Serat Kanda* probably originated from the court of the Semarang regent (*bupati*) (Weatherbee 1979, 69) and covers the history of Java till the death of Mangkurat II in 1702. *Serat Kanda* hadn't been well studied until H. J. De Graaf used it to explore the early rulers of Sultanate of Mataram. Graff believes that for exploring of early period of Sultanate of Mataram, *Serat Kanda* seems to be older and more original than *Babad Tanah Jawi* (Weatherbee 1979, 69-70).

Muslim trade leaders were entrusted to engage in trade activities and given political autonomy to develop their religion and economy in the entrepots of the northern coast of Java. But in time, Chinese Muslim traders gained greater control of the economic lifeline, which eventually weakened the Majapahit that was shortly challenged by the growing power of the Chinese/Javanese Muslims.

Because of trade activities between Majapahit and Chinese traders, it was common for the members of the royal family of Majapahit to marry Chinese peranakan women. Muljana stresses that "the interethnic marriage bred the seed which later undermine Majapahit kingdom" (2005, 184). Several peranakan Chinese Muslim figures, Swang Liong (Arya Damar), Jin Bun (Raden Patah), and Kin San (Adipati Terung), who were offspring of Majapahit royalty and Chinese peranakan women, played a very important role in the establishment of Demak, leading to the fall of Majapahit. Thus a new period of Islamization was initiated by those peranakan Chinese Muslims.[51]

Muljana's point of view is tinged with primordialism and circumstantialism. On the one hand, he stresses that they managed to become political leaders because they inherited their ethnic characters from their blood ties. Their firm and persistent qualities were inherited from the Chinese side, while their ability to govern is attributable to their royal lineage. But when explaining why these personalities chose to overturn Majapahit and betray their indigenous origin, Muljana speculates that these men had been raised in a Chinese community and thus were more sympathetic to the Chinese cause than to the Javanese (2005, 191-192). Muljana seems to be keenly interested in the double ethnic identities of these Chinese peranakan Muslims. However, how does he know for certain that their ethnic loyalties were with the Chinese community? More directly, what is the relevance of their ethnic identity to the establishment of the first Muslim kingdom of Demak and to the overthrow of the Majapahit dynasty?

Two years after Muljana published his controversial book, the Minister of Religious Affairs, K. H. A. Dahlan, criticized it, claiming that his argument has brought the "danger of sinicization (*bahaya pencinaan*)" into Islamic history in Java. In particular, Dahlan questions that the idea of identifying the wali sanga as having Chinese blood as a political attempt to make Indonesian Muslim more Beijing-oriented (*berkiblat ke Peking*) and feel "indebted to Chinese" (*Tempo*, 31 July 1971). In the same year, the Attorney General, Jaksa Agung, banned the book after accusing it of "disturbing public and legal order" in 1971 (*Tempo*, 31 July 1971).[52] After Muljana's book was banned, this topic would not be revisited until Amen

[51] Apparently that these peranakan Chinese Muslims, who played such a significant role during the historical transition, referred from the *MASC*, is generally not accepted as a historical fact.
[52] Ann L. Kumar (1987) has offered a comprehensive overview for these controversies.

Budiman (a peranakan Chinese intellectual) published a pamphlet on the subject in 1979. Budiman is more careful not to intervene in the debate on whether Chinese Muslims facilitated Islamization in Java. He reviews the whole controversy with a detached attitude, addressing other interesting issues to shed light on the legacy of Chinese Muslims. For instance, Budiman cites Ma Huan's book that had mentioned Chinese Muslims from southeast China who lived in East Java in the fifteenth century.[53] By employing Javanese babad and studies of Dutch scholars, he concludes that Muljana was not the first person to claim that some of the wali sanga had Chinese blood. Raden Patah, who established the first Muslim kingdom of Demak, did in fact have Chinese origins. He discusses some holy tombs belonging to Chinese Muslims, which are venerated by people, and shows evidence of the participation of Chinese artisans in the construction of some old mosques.[54]

2.2.3 Revisiting "Chinese theory" in the Post-Suharto Period

After the fall of Suharto in 1998, many political taboos were lifted, rendering a more open atmosphere in which the histories of Chinese-Indonesians could be explored. The Indonesian activist/scholar Sumanto Al Qurtuby chose this topic for his master's thesis, supported by a Chinese-Indonesian organization, which he later published as *Arus Cina-Islam-Jawa: Bongkar Sejarah Peranan Tionghoa dalam Penyebaran Agama Islam di Nusantara Abad XV & XVI* (Flows of China-Islam-Java: Exploring Histories about Role of Chinese in the Spread of Islam in Indonesian Archipelago in the 15th and 16th Centuries).[55]

Being aware of the works of Muljana and Budiman, Qurtuby is more alert to the difficulties in reconstructing the history of Chinese Muslims during the early

[53] Ma Huan was a Muslim translator on Zheng He's three voyages in 1413, 1421, and 1431. Ma published his book based on his voyages, *The Overall Survey of the Ocean's Shores*, in 1451.

[54] Amen Budiman (1979) mentions two Chinese Muslim graves of fifteenth and sixteenth centuries belong to Ratu Kalinyamat in Mantingan, Jepara and Nyai Gede Pinatih in Gresik. The two Chinese Muslim graves honored by Javanese Muslims and ethnic Chinese non-Muslims have shown a religious synthesis between popular Islam (veneration of saints' graves) and traditional Chinese religions (Sinicization of indigenous Muslim deities). Claudine Salmon (1993) has discussed the worship of Chinese Muslims graves in Indonesia—an interesting issue that I will deal with shortly. Budiman's other contribution is to introduce the development of *da'wa* (preaching Islam) among Chinese-Indonesians, which started in the 1970s. It broadens the issue to cover the contemporary impacts of Chinese Muslims' cultural legacies in view of popular Islam and Islamic material heritages.

[55] Qurtuby (b.1975) has worked on promoting religious pluralism and liberal Islam. He is the secretary-general of the Nahdlatul Ulama community in North America and a Ph.D. candidate in cultural anthropology at Boston University. His MA research was later publish as a book sponsored by a Chinese-Indonesian entrepreneur, Eddie Lembong, head of the Chinese-Indonesian Association (INTI) and founder of several ethnic Chinese organizations and foundations (Qurtuby 2003, 22).

Islamization of Java in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, and the mythological problems caused by Muljana. Qurtuby exercises caution in reading the *MASC* and checks it with other Javanese chronicles and believes that the *MASC* and Muljana's study provide important historical information that sheds light on the ambiguity of Islamization of Java. But he suggests using these materials carefully and criticizes Muljana for wrongly using the *MASC* to exaggerate the role of Chinese Muslims.

He goes along with Muljana's study on Chinese Muslim's contribution and legacy, and sets the history of Chinese Muslims immigration in Nusantara in the bigger historical background of maritime activities in the Indian Ocean and South China Sea, while citing the introduction of Islam in China in the Yuan and Ming dynasties. Qurtuby believes that Zheng He had an agenda of preaching Islam behind his diplomatic mission and helped in formulating Chinese Muslim communities; in effect, Qurtuby confirms Zheng He's crucial role in the development of Islam in Java. Compared with Muljana and Budiman, Qurtuby devotes greater concentration in the Elaborate reconstruction of the genealogy of Muslim figurers who are said to have Chinese origins (Qurtuby 2003, 115-168). In his view, the Chinese not only played an important role in establishing Demak and in exterminating the Majapahit; he asserts that the Chinese also wielded considerable influence throughout the history of Demak (2003, 125-133).

Qurtuby addresses the concept of "Chinese-Javanese Muslim culture," in which he suggests to explore the legacy of Chinese Muslims by examining the Muslim material heritage such as architecture, incl[56]uding mosques, Chinese temples and Muslim holy graves. He wants to consolidate proof that traditions of Javanese Islam have implicated various elements of Chinese culture as well as to underscore the diversity and plurality in the tradition of Javanese Islam. His approach to consider the material legacy is similar to Budiman's, but in the end he fails to uphold the concept because the evidence he offers are insufficient and irrelevant.

For the concept to be useful as an analytic tool for examining the material dimension of the legacy of Chinese Muslims rather than being merely an interesting rhetoric of historical imagination, we need to locate that legacy and to categorize the period in which some significant traces could be discerned. Apparently, Qurtuby has shown his strong intention to speak for Chinese-Indonesian minority. By exploring the reasons why people forget the legacies of Chinese Muslim, he wishes to remind the indigenous Indonesians that Chinese should not be regarded as an alien part of

[56] John Miksic (2005) traces some Chinese decorative motifs in the architecture of Keraton Kasepuhan, Cirebon, and says: "In modern Indonesia there is a strong tendency to emphasize architectural designs and clothing styles perceived as having been borrowed from Arabic Middle East sources. Yet the study of early Islamic art of the *pasisir* indicates that, during the fourteenth through to sixteen centuries, a dynamic local art display Javanese, Chinese, and Arab elements, combined, harmoniously and aesthetically, in a stimulating and pleasing unity" (2005, 124).

Indonesian society. From the fact that Chinese Muslim populations were distributed through port cities at the north coast of Java, and that Islam in Java was spread through trade, they conclude that Islam is Java had grown in an urban context where the Muslim communities increased economic powers by trade and by which they gradually established an autonomous polity, finally challenging the weakened Majapahit and forming the first Muslim kingdom. It has reminded the Chinese and the indigenous people of two things: On the one hand, Chinese-Indonesians have forgotten that their Muslim ancestors ever played an important role during the historical transition of the fifteenth century. On the other, the indigenous Javanese Muslims should remember that they have an active and dynastic "coastal civilization (*budaya pesisiran*)" behind rather than a negative "hinterland culture (*kultur pedalaman*)" (2003, 211). Qurtuby means that indigenous Muslims should not forget a tolerant Islamic civilization with maritime mentality in the past that allowed diverse cultures to coexist.

In 2005 Golkar, the most dominant political party during the Suharto regime organized a seminar that aimed to reexamine the historical roles played by Chinese Muslims in the fifteenth century. The conference results were later published as an anthology *Telapak Sejarah Sam Po Kong:* Menelusuri *Peran Tionghoa dalam Penyebaran Islam di Indonesia* (Sam Po Kong's Historical Palm: Tracing Roles of Chinese in the Spread of Islam in Indonesia) (Wahid 2005). Most of the authors did not add anything new about Zheng He to enrich their poor discussions, but the foreword clearly demonstrates support for the "Chinese theory" and enjoins readers to seriously consider the contribution of Chinese Muslims in a pan-Indonesian view rather than reject the Chinese Muslims' legacy out of ethnic discrimination.

In the first place, why did the Suharto government ban the idea of a "Chinese theory" in the 1960s? It is a difficult task for a country like Indonesia, which comprises diverse ethnic cultures, to build an inclusive but homological national culture. In the New Order period, the process of building a national culture was controlled by the state's domination of Indonesian historiography. Before the 1990s, the Suharto government preferred to construct a Javanesecentered Indonesian national history, in which Majapahit Kingdom represented the most important nationalist and symbolic core of the golden age, emphasizing the significance of the Hindu-Buddhist heritage. But at the same time, the Islamic tradition was ignored or trivialized as having played a minor part, unlike the way in which the Majapahit legacy was fabricated as the national cultural core in the great historical narratives of Indonesia (Wood 2005); even Islam was otherized as an internal enemy in opposition to the republic during New Order period before 1990s (McGregor 2007, 172-215).

Therefore, since the 1980s, Indonesian intellectuals, scholars, and ulamas like

Roeslan Abdulgani, Taufik Abdullah, Hasan Muarif Ambary, Hamka, and A. Hasimy, have been eager to reestablish a history of the Indonesian Muslim community. They argue that Islam came to Indonesian archipelago possibly as early as the eighth century and insist that Indonesian Islam was directly spread from the Arab world rather than indirectly from the Indian peninsula, let alone China. They are anxious to link the historical solidarity of Indonesian Muslims to global *umma*. Moreover, they are also eager to emphasize the contribution of Islam as a part of the great past of Indonesia, and to assert that the historical impact of Islam on the formation of modern Indonesia is greater and more important than that of the Hindu-Buddhist civilization.

Apparently, a group of Indonesian historians have tried to provide an alternative historical narrative in contrast to Western works that usually claim that Islam, spread by Indian Muslim merchants, came to Sumatra in the thirteenth century and in contrast to the secular Javanese-orientated official history of Indonesian government, which had always tried to annihilate the evidence of Islamic impact on Indonesia and emphasize the glorious tradition of Majapahit Empire (Wood 2005, 150-194). Moreover, in contrast to the secular and Javanese version of nationalist Indonesian history emphasizing its authenticity, these historians claim that Indonesian Islam spread directly form Middle East; as Qurtuby (2005) indicates, it demonstrates puritan Muslims' collective intension to argue the authentic origin of Islam of Indonesia. In fact, these controversies happen from time to time and always touch the nerve of nationalist Islamic tradition (Van Bruinessen 1999; Meuleman 1997).

In addition to the politics of historical writing in Indonesia's Islamic history, we must also consider the power to exclude the position of ethnic Chinese from the national narrative. In particular, under such political correctness in line with the collective anti-Chinese sentiment, the space for historical writing to cover ethnic Chinese was almost omitted, as Karen Strassler argues: "Indonesian nationalist historiography… has essentially written the ethnic Chinese out of the story of the nation" (2008: 397), not to mention the historical roles played by Chinese Muslim or even peranakan Chinese Muslims.

Another main problem with "Chinese theory" concerns the Chineseness of these Muslim figures: how Chinese were those Chinese Muslims? As Ann L. Kumar (1987) points out, the *MASC* shows that Chinese Muslim immigrant community was from a southwest frontier province of the Yuan Dynasty, a new territory where the Emperor of Yuan, Kublai Khan, encouraged Muslims from Central Asia to establish colonies. At that time, the ethnicity of the Muslims in Yunnan may not have been considered as the same as that of Han Chinese (Kumar 1987). Even though those Muslim figures possibly had some historical relation with China, it is still very difficult to identify their ethnic identity as being closer to Chinese as Muljana claims.

Thus it appears that both camps have indulged in similar forms of ethnocentrism in criticizing or upholding the "Chinese theory." Unlike Muljana, Qurtuby is more interested in drawing conclusions from the historical presence of Chinese Muslims in Java for modern ethnic politics. It is a positive and alternative thinking that emphasizes the diversity of Indonesian Islam in the past and advocates multiculturalism in Indonesian Islam to remind the indigenous majority to respect the Chinese-Indonesian minority by considering the contribution of Chinese Muslims to Indonesian Islam. However, although ethnic Chinese appreciate this liberal thinking, it must be carefully examined in terms of an appropriation of history.

2.3 The Making of Zheng He's Heteroglossic Muslim Images

Most Indonesian scholars who have been involved in studies of Zheng He, except for Budiman, have usually relied on the *MASC* and claimed that Zheng He really preached Islam in Java and helped establish Chinese Muslim communities in several coastal cities, thereby facilitating the spread of Islam in Java. But, how did they reach this conclusion? As a matter of fact, most Indonesian scholars may not have had the chance to know that Chinese scholars who promoted these ideas since the 1990s have influenced their Muslim images of Zheng He. In the following section, I will further discuss the debate on whether Zheng He spread Islam by focusing on how Zheng He's Islamic faith was perceived and why the discourse about his preaching Islam was raised in 2005.

In the early 1980s, Chinese scholars paid less attention to Zheng He's Islamic faith. But his Muslim image has been gradually constructed and connected to his voyages, promoting him as an ambassador of friendship and peace to Southeast Asia. The making of Zheng He's heteroglossic Muslim images should consider four interrelated issues.[57] First, the Chinese government's policy promotes people's fervor to commemorate Zheng He's merits and the edification of his voyages as a paradigm of invigorating patriotism in order to rebuild a new maritime mentality. It is an agenda implemented in the service of the new international strategy of "China's peaceful rise." The promotion of Zheng He studies indirectly encourage scholars to explore how

[57] I apply the Russian linguistics Mikhail Bakhtin's concept "social heteroglossia" (1981, 259-422), in which he emphasizes the polyphony of language/culture as "a multiplicity of social voices and a wide variety of their links and interrelationships. These distinctive links and interrelationships between utterances and languages, this movement of the theme through different languages and speech types, its dispersion into the rivulets and droplets of social heteroglossia" (1981: 263). Social heteroglossia indicates the dynamic and dialogic languages that represent "the co-existence of socio-ideological contradictions between the present and the past, between different socio-ideological groups in the present, between tendencies, schools, circles and so forth, all given a bodily form" (1981, 291).

Zheng He contributed to the spread of Islam in Southeast Asia, and Chinese Muslim scholars are eager to confirm his Islamic belief and his Muslim companions' contribution in these voyages.

Second, I argue that while the discourse on Zheng He's preaching Islam is mainly co-formulated by Chinese and Indonesian scholars, it is not only an endogenous discourse argued within the circle of Indonesian Muslim scholars or promoted by Chinese-Indonesian Muslims. It had been developed as transnational phenomenon to promote Zheng He's legacy through a cultural and creative industry that includes organizing festivals, building a museum, and arranging for tourism in the Southeastern countries of Indonesia, Malaysia, and Singapore. Apparently Zheng He can be pressed into service for various purposes with different localized strategies.

Third, in addition to the *MASC*, local legends about Zheng He and his retinue participating in religious activities of Islam abound. These have reflected interethnic relations between Chinese immigrants and the indigenous community. Fourth and last, the venerable images of Zheng He among ethnic Chinese of Southeast Asia are reflected in the worship of Zheng He in Chinese temples. This collective veneration shows that the diverse implications of Zheng He's image do not necessarily care for his Muslim identity. I shall take the celebration for the six-hundredth anniversary of Zheng He's voyage in 2005 at Semarang as an example, examining how people had tried to appropriate his various symbolic implications in ways that are not always coherent.

On the one hand, the emergence of Zheng He's diverse images in Indonesia is partially due to a greater freedom of speech for the histories of Indonesian Islam. It also shows an emerging liberal thinking among Indonesian scholars who are willing to speak for Chinese-Indonesians and promote cultural pluralism in Islam. On the other hand, the new construction of Zheng He's Muslim images is similar to the new images of wali sanga and of a controversial Muslim figure Tuanku Imam Bondjol, showing that various competitive interpretations are engendered by the emerging media, nationalism, regionalism's cultural autonomy required by the local Muslim community, and the formation of a new rational and pragmatic religious mentality post the New Order period.[58] But behind the emerging Zheng He Muslim images circulated in Indonesia, one foreign factor serves the needs of China's international

[58] The images of wali sanga in popular media like comics, cartoons, films, have gradually changed from that of traditional, superstitious, and mystic Sufi types to one of a modern, rationalistic, and pragmatic hero (Soenarto 2005). It shows that a new religious mentality of Indonesian Muslims is being formed, which departs from the old genera of hagiology. Tuanku Imam Bondjol was a putative Wahhabi, leader of the Padri War (the first Muslim vs. Muslim jihad in Southeast Asia) and then led the war against Dutch Indies government from 1833 to 1887. After Indonesian independence, his image had been portrayed as a nationalist hero, a progenitor of Salafism in Indonesia, and a potential symbol of resistance and local autonomy, servicing the various needs and purposes of states, nationalists, Salafists, and local intellectuals of Minangkabau (Hadler 2008).

strategy. This factor is very different from the reasons facilitating the image construction of wali sanga and Tuanku Imam Bondjol. Indonesian Muslims seem to be gradually accepting his contribution to the spread of Islam in Java, but they rarely consider why Chinese scholars are also eager to promote Zheng He's Islamic image and why his voyage has been broadened so as to show his contribution to preaching Islam in the entire Southeast Asia. In this regard, I argue that the Zheng He discourse and his significance in "Chinese theory" must take into account China's geopolitical strategy.

2.3.1 The Promotion of Zheng He Discourses behind the "China's Peaceful Rise"

The beginning of the *MASC* narrates Zheng He's expedition as a starting point of the development of Chinese Muslims in the early Islamization of Java. It is frequently used to argue that Zheng He facilitated the dissemination of Islam in Southeast Asia although no official Chinese record exists to show his activities such as performing *salat* (Islamic prayer) in a mosque or establishing Chinese Muslim communities in Southeast Asia. Despite the lack of records about his visit to Semarang, his legend in Semarang is not only mentioned on the *MASC*; it has also become part of the collective memory commemorated by the local Chinese-Indonesian communities in Semarang until now (Suryadinata 2005). The most famous Chinese temple dedicated to Zheng He, the Sam Po Kong Temple (or Gedung Batu), vividly shows a strong association with his legacy.

Zheng He was a high-ranking eunuch of the Ming dynasty, who was in charge of military mission and domestic administration of the Ming court. He was born in Yunnan in 1371; his father had made the pilgrimage to Mecca and eventually used the title of haji. When Zheng He was twelve, the royal army of the Ming dynasty attacked Yunnan in order to annex it as a new territory of Ming Dynasty. It is said that Zheng He was captured by the army. In the next eight years, he was raised in the army and became a eunuch, giving his services to the Prince of Yeng, who later became the third Ming emperor in 1403, and whose royal title is "Cheng-zu." In the following year, Zheng He was promoted as a higher eunuch by the emperor, who granted him a new surname as Zheng. Emperor Chengzu appointed Zheng He as a "Principal Envoy and a Commander-in-Chief " to establish an armada in 1405; Zheng He carried out seven diplomatic missions from 1405 to 1433.[59] The armadas usually comprised two

[59] Zheng He's seven voyages are dated as: (1) 1405-07, (2) 1407-09, (3) 1409-11, (4) 1413-15, (5)

hundred boats with a crew of some thirty thousand.

There have been various explanations of Emperor Chengzu's motives for organizing several big expeditions to implement his diplomatic and trade policy in Southeast Asia and the Indian Ocean. Emperor Chengzu had usurped the throne from his nephew rather than naturally inheriting from his father, so it has been said that he wanted to hunt down his nephew who allegedly fled to a foreign country. On the other hand, since his reign lacked legitimacy, he was eager to reestablish a suzerain-vassal relationship between China and foreign countries. China protected all tributary countries and allowed them to do business through their trips, while all tributary countries must symbolically recognize the political superiority of the Ming Dynasty. In addition to the two reasons, Zheng He's voyage has been promoted as a peaceful diplomatic activity, contributing to the friendships between China and foreign countries (Needham 1971). The idea of the peaceful nature of Zheng He's voyage, as Edward L. Dreyer observes, has been imposed with more political implications by the Chinese government as:

> …a useful tool for contemporary Chinese foreign policy. In the summer of 2004, as part of a general diplomatic theme of "China's peaceful rise," the government of the People's Republic of China publicized plans for the lavish commemoration of the six- hundred-(year) anniversary of the start of the first voyage in 2005. Since Zheng He's voyage(s) were peaceful and did not result in the building of a Chinese colonial empire, China's neighbors have nothing to fear from the rise of contemporary China's economic and military power—or so the Chinese leadership argues" (2007, 29).

Taking Zheng He's voyage as the symbolic core of friendly and peaceful diplomacy serves to "portray China as an intrinsically peaceful maritime power" (Holmes 2006, 91) not only to reduce the potential anxiety and tension but also to transform the perception of China as a reliable regional leader to sustain the security and prosperity in Asia (Holmes 2006). Geoff Wade's (2005; 2006; 2008) revisionist view reminds us not to take this official propaganda for granted. He argues that the Ming Empire had the most advanced military technology and that Zheng He's voyage had been part of the Yong-le emperor's southern expansion with a view to constitute a maritime proto-colonialism.[60] In addition to the perspectives of martial technology

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1417-19, (6) 1421-2, (7) 1431-3 (Mills 1997, 8).

[60] Wade's ideas have courted the anger of the "overseas Chinese" scholarly circle in Singapore (Hong and Huang 2009). Tan Ta Sen's refutation to Wade's idea of identifying Zheng He's mission as a sort of proto-colonialism can be a representative example (Tan 2005; 2009). The controversies between Tan and Wade have shown the complex politics of historical knowledge intertwined with geopolitics of China's rise, commercialized cultural industry, and ethnic politics of the Chinese Diaspora in Southeast

and colonial implement, I argue that Zheng He's mission should be considered part of the Ming's imperialist practices, and also functioned as state rituals of "imperial tour of inspection" to show the Ming Empire's power. In other words, Zheng He's voyage should not be only naively described as a friendly and peaceful mission; instead, his voyage had underlined an imperial political symbol to sustain the superior status of the Ming over the vassals of Southeast Asia.[61]

Before the 1970s, Zheng He's voyages attracted very little interest and had never become part of the picture of a "glorious past" (Mills 1997). In contrast, the veneration of Zheng He and the popularity of Zheng He's heroic and almost magical images have been widely spread among the ethnic Chinese communities of Southeast Asia. Zheng He is venerated as a pioneer and protector of the Chinese Diaspora in Southeast Asia. To promote Chinese nationalism and new policy of "reform and opening," since the eve of 580th anniversary of Zheng He's expedition in 1985, the Chinese government had begun promoting research on Zheng He by establishing museums; organizing several conferences, workshops, and research projects; publishing books and producing documentary films and TV series; and reproducing treasure ships and nautical charts used by Zheng He's armada (Cheng 2003). The policy implications of promoting Zheng He in the 1980s and in the 2000s are not totally the same. In the 1980s China was eager to open up to the world; the main idea of Zheng He's symbol is to remind people that China should learn from the

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Asia. Tan had devoted his efforts to creating the Zheng He heritage as a cultural and creative industry. On the one hand it surrenders to the shadow of realpolitik, and, on the other, it may be marketed a kind of profitable nostalgia.

[61] Two important elements should be examined in the imperial rituals per formed by Zheng He's voyages. Chinese emperors had long observed the imperial tradition of *feng-shan* 封禪, in which the emperor worships the Heaven and the Earth in a great sacred mountain, claiming his sovereignty over his territory under Heaven. Feng-shan reinforces the emperor's status as heaven's earthly representative with the power to govern all earthly territory (Lewis 1999). The Ming Dynasty, during the reign of the Yong-le emperor, had carried out the feng-shan ritual. The Yong-le emperor enfeoffed several great sacred mountains in several Southeast Asian kingdoms and remotely worshipped these as part of symbolic overseas imperial territories of the Ming Dynasty. According to the official documents of Ming Dynasty, one of Zheng He's main missions was to perform feng-shen ritual. The fact that Zheng performed the feng-shan indicates that his mission itself was carrying out the second state ritual, *xunshou* 巡狩, in which the emperor, after setting up the territory, must embark on an imperial tour of inspection around his territory. Xunshou has several political implications: "to check on the rule of various vassals, to promulgate virtuous teachings over long distances, to inquire about the general populace's hardships, and thus to maintain ultimate authority over the realm" (Chang 2007, 36). Since the Southeast Asian kingdoms had been regarded as symbolic imperial territories of the Ming Dynasty. Zheng He's main mission as "imperial tour of inspection in place of Heaven (*daitian xunshou* 代天巡狩)" was to carry out xunshou in place of the Yong-le emperor (Lee 2008). Both traditional imperial state rituals are complementary as a kind of symbolic representation of imperial geography. Clifford Geertz's comparative discussion shows how three kings had taken symbolic possession of their realm in a public ceremonial forms; he says, "royal progression (…) locate the society's center and affirm its connection with transcendental things by stamping a territory with ritual signs of dominance" (Geertz 1977, 125). He extracts the royal procession in Bali as an implement of "theater state" (1980). The two traditional imperial state rituals feng-shan and xunshou function as complementary performative acts to display emperor's power over his subjects and vassals.

open-minded maritime culture of the early Ming dynasty rather than step back into the self-contained old path. When Zheng He served the idea of "China's peaceful rise" in the 2000s, the idea of peaceful nature was highlighted to reduce the fear and suspicion from Southeast Asian countries. The fervor of promoting Zheng He had lasted and peaked in 2005, the year of the 600th anniversary of Zheng He's expedition. Encouraged by the policy of official propaganda, Zheng He's Muslim image gradually attracted more attention and became connected to the spread of Islam in Southeast Asia at the beginning of the 1990s.[62]

The view that Zheng He contributed to the spread of Islam in Java/Southeast Asia is a historical discourse co-formulated by Chinese and Indonesian scholars. I have found that Kong Yuanzhi and Slamet Muljana bridge the language gap to help Chinese and Indonesian scholars who cannot simultaneously use Chinese and Indonesian materials.[63] By reading Muljana's book published in English (1976) and some introductory works to Parlindungan's *Tuanku Rao* written by Lee Khoon Choy (1976; 1979), a former Singapore ambassador to Indonesia, Chinese scholars can argue the "Chinese theory." Similarly, most Indonesian scholars who cannot read Chinese usually refer to Kong Yuanzhi's book (2000), published in Indonesia. In particular, Kong gives his every effort to promote Zheng He's Islamic image and argues that Zheng He's voyages included the preaching of Islam in Java, but later he takes a more critical attitude about the validity of the *MASC* (2006).[64]
Compared with Indonesian scholars such as Budiman and Muljana, who had been looking at Zheng He's relationship with the spread of Islam in Southeast Asia from the 1960s, Chinese scholars have been quite late to become aware of the issue. They usually take Muljana's and Parlindungan's works for granted, without carefully cross-checking the problems in the two works. Kong Yuanzhi's works can be an "example" representing the major points of view of Chinese scholars.

Kong's arguments are based on three assumptions. First, he explains that Zheng He's diverse religious practices show that he had a spirit of religious tolerance, which fits the need of his diplomatic mission in various countries and thus making himself closer to the local populations. Kong argues that Zheng He's participation in Buddhist

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[62] A Chinese journal of Hui studies *Research on the Hui* 回族研究 published a special issue at No.1 2003, commemorating Zheng He, in which he was highly praised as "the honor of the Huihui; the honor of people of Yunnan 回回民族的光榮；雲南人民的驕傲." Wu Haiying's (2005) anthology about Zheng He and Islamic culture has also reflected this political significance.

[63] Kong Yuanzhi (b. 1937) teaches at Beijing University. He studied Indonesian in University of Indonesia from 1964-5 and has published several books on cultural exchange between China and Indonesia, especially regarding histories of Zheng He in Southeast Asia.

[64] Kong (2000) helps Indonesian scholars access Zheng He's historical background; his work may be the most influential in formulating Indonesian scholars' perception about Zheng He's Islamic faith. However, his recent works take a reserved attitude toward the *MASC* and have not been translated to Indonesian.

and Taoist worships merely served his diplomatic mission, which did not weaken his piety to Islam (2000, 42-43). Since Zheng He was a pious Muslim, Kong assumes that that piety motivated him to preach Islam in Nusantara. Second, although his *da'wah* (preaching) has not been recorded in any Chinese official documents, his activities have been traced in the *MASC*, which makes a strong case for Zheng He's religiosity. Third, considering that Islam was flourishing in Java at the time of his voyages, it is reasonable to further assume that Zheng He contributed to the preaching of Islam outside China. Because of the three reasons, Kong thinks and praises that Zheng He had a spirit of tolerance and multiculturalism.

There are some doubts about whether Zheng He was a pious Muslim. Although Zheng He was born to a Muslim family, he left his family when he was a child; we do not know exactly what kind of religious education he received. There is evidence that Zheng He was involved in Buddhist and Taoist religious activities, which might seem to cast doubt on his Islamic faith and teachings.[65] Therefore it is important for Kong to try to show Zheng He's devotion to Islam.

As a matter of fact, Kong's first argument is based on Lin Song's study. Lin (1992) argues that Zheng He was really a pious Muslim. He explains that Zheng He's multireligious practices were just part of the duties of his office in the Ming court where Buddhism and Taoism were dominant. He performed these to win the trust of other bigwigs who were adherents of Buddhism and to pray for his crewmembers according to Chinese religious customs. This means that Zheng He's participation in Buddhist and Taoist occasions were for utilitarian purposes rather than really out of devotion. Moreover, studies of Zheng He's family genealogy, which shows that he is a descendent of a famous high-ranking Muslim official Sayyid 'Ajall's Shams al-Din[66] in the sixth generation, and that his grandfather and father performed the hajj, give evidence that Zheng He must have inherited a solid Islamic teaching since he was a child even though he left his family at a young age. But, whether Zheng He was an offspring of Sayyid 'Ajall's Shams al-Din is doubtful; even if he was, this indirect

[65] Actually his religious practices were very diverse; and in a sense, he may be a nominal Muslim participating in various religious worships. Zheng He even worshiped the Chinese goddess Ma-tsu in order to pray for safety during and before his voyages, so he could well be a practicing Taoist (Lin 1992, 114-118; Kong 2000, 40-42). In addition, he had a Buddhist name and had contributed to print Buddhist scriptures several times. Donating to Buddhist temples was considered as a way to accumulate merits for successful voyages. When he visited a Buddhist country, Ceylon, he donated money and religious offerings to a Buddhist temple in 1409 (Lin 1992, 111-114; Kong 2000, 40).

[66] Sayyid 'Ajall's Shams al-Din, a Central Asian Muslim, surrendered to the Mongols during Chinggis Khan's battle in Central Asia and served the Mongol court. He was appointed governor in Yunnan in 1274 until 1279. During his administration, he contributed to the development of Yunnan. He invited high ranking Muslim officials to migrate to Yunnan, offering them money and land for cultivation. Although his policy was to introduce Chinese cultures rather than Islamic cultures, the Muslim community grew. Until today, he is regarded as a Muslim pioneer contributing to the development of Yunnan and spread of Islam, and is still commemorated by Muslims in Yunnan (Armijo-Hussein 1997; Rossabi 1981).

evidence cannot prove his Islamic faith.

On the eve of his first voyage, on 7 December 1411, to commemorate his father, he made a stele in which he had his father's name engraved as a haji; thus Lin argues that Zheng He must have known that he was born to a Muslim family. After his third mission, Zheng He returned to his hometown to honor his father's grave ten days before Ramadan. Lin argues that Zheng He had planned to spend Ramadan and celebrate *Idul Fitri* (breaking of the Ramadan fast) with his townsmen (1992, 120-121).

Second, on 31 May 1417, the eve of his fifth expedition, Zheng He venerated a famous Muslim holy tomb in Quanzhou泉州, a famous historic port in Fujian province with a rich Islamic heritage.[67]Zheng He paid his respects to Muslim saints, which shows his "religious emotion" (Lin 1992, 122). Third, several of Zheng He's crewmembers were Muslims; some of them spoke fluent Arabic or Persian, working as translators on the diplomatic missions; Zheng He also invited a religious teacher, Hansan, whose religious knowledge made him responsible for the needs of Muslim crewmembers' religious lives during their voyages. Zheng He needed them because he had to visit many Muslim communities and countries, so their knowledge of the language and religion must have been extremely helpful; on the other hand, these Muslim crewmembers were helpful in preaching Islam. Similarly, it is believed that the emperor must have considered that Zheng He's religious background would favor his diplomatic missions in Muslim countries. Finally, Zheng He requested the Ming court to renovate two mosques in Xian and Nangin in 1413 and 1430, which further supports the view that Zheng He was Muslim.

On Zheng He's seventh expedition in 1430, he ordered a division of the fleet at Calicut, including a mission of seven to go to Mecca (Ma 1997, 173-178). On the basis of some unknown materials, Yusuf Chang (a Muslim from Taiwan), argues that T'ai-tsu, the first emperor of the Ming dynasty, was a descendant of Hui Muslims. T'ai-tsu allegedly left a secret will asking his sons who ascended to his throne to perform the hajj on behalf of the royal family, without the knowledge of Han officials and the people (Chang 1988, 24).[68]Therefore, Zheng He's expedition was also a secret mission to fulfill the will of the royal family of the Ming dynasty. Whether Zheng He actually performed the hajj as has been suggested by an Indonesian scholar cannot be verified.[69]

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[67] Quanzhou had been a famous port where many Muslim traders coming from Arab, Central Asia, and Persia formed a prosperous trading community from the eighth century to the mid-thirteenth century. Quanzhou today boasts the remains of a mosque and Muslim tombs. A general survey about stone carvings and epigraphs has been done; see Chen Dasheng (1984).

[68] Yusuf Chang's argument is not based on any reliable document. But this idea is held by some Chinese-speaking Muslims.

[69] The subtitle of Soedjono Dirdjosisworo's book (2006) entitling Zheng He as "Haji Grand

There have been several Chinese scholars involved in expanding the "Chinese theory." As I mentioned, their limits of language capability causes a problem. Without carefully referring to any Indonesian works or critically crosschecking the problem of the *MASC*, they easily accept the validity of the *MASC* and Muljana's views, jumping rashly to a more exaggerated conclusion that Zheng He had contributed to the spread of Islam in Southeast Asia.[70] They stress that the causal relationship of Zheng He's exploration and the spread of Islam in insular Southeast Asia should not be ignored; furthermore, they argue for Zheng He's contribution, not only relying on his local legend in Java but also relating his voyages to facilitate the expansion of Islam in Southeast Asia. They believe that the relation of the two events is causal rather than coincidental. Xiao Xian (1995) asks two questions to strongly imply Zheng He's contribution to the spread of Islam in Southeast Asia. First, since the international trade among Southeast Asia, the Arabic peninsula, and the Indian subcontinent started from the early sixth century, and there had been many Muslim merchants traveling through Southeast Asia to China, why did a large-scale Islamization not occur in insular Southeast Asia (except for Sumatra) until the fifteenth century when Zheng He inaugurated his seventh expedition? Then, by questioning why Islamization happened in insular Southeast Asia rather than mainland Southeast Asia, he boldly hints that this was because Zheng He's armada had made more frequent visits to the former.[71] Xiao argues that the Mongol invasion of Southwest Asia led to deterioration of Islamic civilization in that region during the fourteenth century, but at the same time, the development of Islam in China came into maturity. Therefore the dissemination of

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Harbormaster (Syahbandar Agung Haji)" has shown that he accepts this possibility.

[70] More recently and since 2005 Chinese scholars have started studying the *MASC* by comparing it with Chinese historical materials rather than only rely on the second hand research. Qian Jiang (2005) and Liao Dake (2007) reexamine the *MASC* in the context of the history of Ming Dynasty. Qian has an interesting explanation for the change in the Chinese Muslim community. He finds that before Zheng He's voyages, Chinese Muslim immigrants from Southeast China were dominant in coast regions of Southeast Asia. But from that Zheng He appointed several Chinese Muslim leaders who were originally form Yunnan (his hometown) via Champa, Qian argues that those Yunnan Chinese Muslims had played more important role in facilitating Islamization of Java than that of Chinese Muslims from Southeast China. Kong (2006) takes a more critical attitude that some records in the text of *Tuanku Rao* are incorrect and that the local legends in Semarang are still insufficient to show that Zheng He spread Islam in Southeast Asia, but he still strongly believes that this is true.

[71] Xiao has addressed an important question although he does not come to a careful conclusion. Anthony Reid (1993, 186-192) has found that Islam is not a widespread belief in Mainland Southeast Asia, except for some Muslim minority, the only Muslim entrepot of Champa, and the Cambodian King Reameathipadei I (1642–58) converting to Islam (Kersten 2006). He explains that "the Muslim challenge in Mainland Southeast Asia" may partially spring from a foreign force against Muslims and the kings, and Buddhist sangha had formulated a strong Buddhist identity to oppose further Islamization. Alan Starathern (2006) highlights two approaches: the first is geopolitical, in which he refers to Victor Lieberman's (2003) thesis asserting that the Mainland Southeast Asian states were stronger to resist foreign influence because of their agricultural hinterland and sufficient military power, unlike the archipelagic region that was more vulnerable to the influence of the Muslim trade network; the second is a sophisticated exploration of historical powers that deterred the kings from converting to Christianity and Islam. However, all abovementioned explanations have nothing to do with Zheng He's influence.

Islam from Mainland China to Southeast Asia was a natural consequence at the beginning of the fifteenth century because the development of Islamic civilization in Ming China was better than that in India. However, though the invasion of Mongols did influence this area, it neither covered the south India nor disturbed the trade activity around the coast of South India.

Liao Dake (1995) discusses the Chinese Muslim's immigration and trade to Southeast Asia since the thirteenth century during the Song dynasty (960-1279). At the end of the Yuan dynasty, because of the turmoil of war in the southeast coast of China, many people, including Muslims, immigrated to Southeast Asia. Thus the Chinese Muslim immigrant community was established when Zheng He visited Nusantara. In the beginning of the fifteenth century, because of the decline of the Majapahit, the shipping route between the Indonesian Ocean and the South China Sea was very insecure. Liao argues that Zheng He's military action pacified the Strait of Malacca, which in turn reopened the international trade between China and Indian Ocean, and through which many Muslim merchants came to East Asia through Southeast Asia, thus relinking Insular Southeast Asia with the Islamic world. However, there is no evidence that the voyage in the Strait of Malacca, a route connecting the Indian Ocean and the South China Sea, was disturbed by pirates who may have needed pacification by Zheng He. Malacca was assisted by Zheng He for defense gainst the threat from Siam in 1405 and later became a Muslim kingdom. This diplomatic event is regarded as evidence that Zheng He helped to spread Islam in the region.

2.3.2 A New Synthesis: The Cultural Industry of Zheng He and the "Islamic Reformist Movement" of the Chinese Hanafi Muslim Community in Java

Tan Ta Sen, a Singaporean businessman with a Ph.D. degree, is the president of the International Zheng He Society and director of the Cheng Ho Cultural Museum. He is one of the main organizers of the Zheng He fair as part of the cultural festival and tourism campaigns in Malacca and Singapore in 2005. Based in Singapore, his transnational affiliations with China, Indonesia, and Malaysia have reflected in his controversial promotion of Zheng He and the alternative interpretation of "China Theory" and the Hanafi Chinese Muslims in Java.

Tan graduated from Nanyang University in Singapore in 1960. Later he got an Indonesian scholarship for Malay and Indonesian studies at the University of

Indonesia where he obtained graduate and postgraduate degrees. After he returned from Indonesia in 1965, he taught at Ngee Ann Colleague at Singapore, later affiliated with the Institute of Southeast Asian Studies in Singapore, as a researcher, and with Nanyang University as an assistant professor. In the late 1970s, he established a construction company and has since become a property developer in Singapore and Malaysia. According Hong and Huang (2009, 301), Tan is known "in converting buildings that he regarded as having great historical value into heritage sites…, which commands a certain commercial premium from its vaunted association with Malacca's past." In a sense, Tan plays the role of cultural broker. In addition to his private museum he runs an inn named after Zheng He (he prefers to write it as Cheng Ho). His current project is to collect Chinese artifacts he believes to be related to Zheng He's voyage and prepare to build the second museum in Malacca.

In 2007, he obtained his Ph.D. degree from the University of Indonesia, and his dissertation focuses on Zheng He and Islam in Southeast Asia. The dissertation is later published as two books, the Chinese version in 2008 and English version in 2009.[72] Tan adopts some views similar to those of Xiao Xian and Liao Dake but supplements a few different discussions from the macro perspective of the process of Islamization to argue why Zheng He's missions helped to secure the international order and facilitate further Islamization in the region. But Tan's arguments are more sophisticated. He thinks that before the eleventh century, Arab traders dominated the international trade from Middle East to China. However, three factors challenged the capability of Arab Muslim merchants and interrupted their international security in the Malay Archipelago. First, the Christian Crusaders' attacks on the Muslims of the Middle East in 1099 led to the decline of Baghdad. The succeeding Mongol invasion caused a fatal weakening of the Arab merchants' capability in Southeast Asia. Second, in terms of geopolitics in the Malay world, the Majapahit and Siam gradually emerged as two regional powers, competing for dominance in the Malacca Strait in the thirteenth century. And third, the Mongol invasion of Java from 1292 to 1293 had led to the disintegration of the Sriwijaya and the weakening of the Majapahit. Both kingdoms lost influence on the Straits of Malacca, and several small port states on the north coast of Sumatra emerged as new trading states.

"In the absence of a major power to ensure the security of the trade routes, pirates ruled over the entire Spice Route…," Tan argues. Thus "by the fourteenth century, the maritime trade routes were not as secure as before and the influence of the Arab merchants in trade and the spread of Islam began to decline" (Tan 2009,

[72] The Chinese version and English version are not totally identical. My discussion is based on his English version. This book is divided into two parts. The first part is not relevant to my main concerns, so I shall discuss how he incorporates Zheng He's missions in a more integrative approach in the second part.

160). He believes Zheng He's expeditions, indicating the rise of Ming China as a new superpower, had established a new international peace for the "political vacuum and unsafe sea passage" (Tan 2009, 160) and opened the way for Arab Muslim merchants to facilitate further Islamization in the Malay world. However, Tan does not mention that as far as Muljana is concerned, Zheng He's mission was as a great threat to the Majapahit kingdom. Muljana's explanation may challenge those people who argue Zheng He's expatiations as peaceful and friendly missions (1976, 186-187).

> There were outside factors as well that speeded the decline of Majapahit. Among them was the relationship between Majapahit and China. The aggressive activities of the Chinese envoy Cheng Ho, which centered on making ties with local chiefs both in Java and in the outer regions, helped to weaken the position of Majapahit in its control over its dependence…Due to Cheng Ho's activities, several dependencies of Majapahit in the outer regions, behaving independently sent tributes to the imperial court of China.

In addition, Tan highlights that Zheng He supported the establishment of the Malacca Sultanate, which would become an important da'wah center of Islam. In his view, Malacca was an important focal point in the spread of Islam in Java (Tan 2009, 175-179).

Tan creates interesting but doubtful explanations about Zheng He's mission and those Hanafi Chinese Muslims in Java, relating how Zheng He engaged in a cooperative overseas Chinese policy to maintain "official supervision" among those Chinese immigrant communities and their gradual assimilation to Javanese Muslim society. Since those Chinese immigrants had been considered as outlaws always considered by the courts as potential threats, the previous imperial Chinese governments had never carried out any policy to take care of those overseas Chinese communities as Zheng He did. This new policy involved the establishment of various Chinese Hanafi Muslim communities that bridged Zheng He's diplomatic missions between China and the Majapahit and provided the logistics for Zheng He's armada.

Tan identifies two stages of "the acculturation process of the Chinese Muslims in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries" (2009, 243). "The first wave of Sinicized Islam was introduced to Java by Cheng Ho and Hanafite Chinese Muslim in the early and mid-fifteenth century,"[73] (2009, 243) but, because they were not religious preachers and were confined by their language, their contacts with Javanese were very limited, so that almost no religious influence penetrated the Javanese community. The next

[73] Tan uses "Cheng Ho," the traditional spelling used in Indonesia and Malaysia, and uses Hanafite instead of a common usage "Hanafi." I keep his original usage in his sentences I quote.

wave of Sino-Islamic influence indicated by Tan was "initiated by the second-generation Hanafite Chinese Muslims in the post-Cheng Ho era from the midfifteenth to (the) sixteenth centuries." Their further indigenization had broken down the ethnic boundary between Hanafi Chinese Muslims and Javanese. The famous figures of Sino-Javanese Muslim descendants, Bong Swi Hoo, Jin Bun, and Kin San, "called for religious reform within the Hannfite Chinese communities," and "the reform movement …was a watershed in the development of the Sino-Islamic movement in Java" (2009, 243). Tan boldly infers:

> It also signified the entrance of the Sino-Javanese Muslims into the sphere of the mainstream Javanese and Sufi mystical tradition. These energetic young Sino-Javanese Muslims were obviously were obviously disappointed by the inefficient, ineffective and passive approach of the Arab, Indian and Hanafite Chinese Muslim traders in propagating Islam in Java. The top-down approach of the earlier Arab, Indian and Hanafite Chinese Muslim traders targets at the court and upper echelons of the society was politically and economically a success but culturally a failure. Hence, they shifted their emphasis to the ordinary Javanese people with a bottom-up approach…The young group differed in many ways from the earlier Muslim traders in the Islamization of Java, Unlike the amateurish Muslim traders, they were religious teachers fired by the jihad spirit with a missionary goal. They were also better trained in religious education and more professional in the preaching.

Even as Tan admits to being confined to limited sources (2009, 254), his creative and imaginative arguments cannot avoid problems of overstatement. His presuppositions that the decline of Islamic heartlands restrained the Arab Muslim merchants from extending their religious influence cannot be supported. The Christian Crusades and the Mongol invasions in the thirteenth century failed to suppress the maritime trade in the Indian Ocean and the South China Sea (Risso 1995, 31-54; Pearson 2003, 62-112). The disorder he says caused by the activities of pirates rampant in Nusantara, because of the lack of super political power, seems unconvincing; the evidence he quotes for his argument actually is not very solid. His presuppositions all serve to buttress an interpretation of Zheng He's missions that fits a contemporary political agenda. These reflect Tan's consistent effort to demonstrate that Zheng He's peaceful and friendly missions could be a contemporary paradigm used by the Chinese Diaspora in Southeast Asian to feel proud about the great maritime legacy of Zheng He and the peaceful rise of a great China.

2.3.3 Local Legendary Traditions

The historical discourse of Zheng He has a transnational characteristic so that scholars from the both countries trace his activities in China and Java. Besides that, the image of how Zheng He preached Islam has also penetrated the local oral legends transmitted among ethnic Chinese community, and is even found in local children's literature.

Although Zheng He's visit to Semarang is historically questionable, his legendary traditions have been etched in the local people's memories and have drawn them to engage in endless arguments. In fact Zheng He had visited several places such as Gresik, Surabaya, Tuban, and Palembang where there are not many legends left as in Semarang where there is a Chinese temple, Gedung Batu, located in a sacred site where Chinese-Indonesians believe Zheng He landed. Furthermore, some people there even believe that Zheng He preached Islam. There is no official record of the Ming dynasty or other historical materials to show that Zheng He visited Semarang, but the Chinese of Semarang keep alive that visit through local tradition and popular memories.[74] This raises the question of how to evaluate the difference between a great tradition of official history and a small tradition of oral history or popular memory held by the local community (Suryadinata 2005). On the other hand, it has also shown that ethnic Chinese of Southeast Asia have generated their own memories and cultural interpretations about Zheng He (Zeng 2008).

In addition to Zheng He's tale in the *MASC*, the following three legends about Zheng He and his crew preaching Islam may bring out some interesting cultural meanings and cast light on how Chinese-Indonesian communities view Zheng He's role in the past. The most popular one is about Zheng He and his deputy, Wang Jinghong, which spread in Semarang. I quote it from Donald E. Willmott's summary (1960, 1-2). In the tales of Zheng He and Wang, the main focus is how they opened up and developed Semarang through teaching people the knowledge of farming and Islam, successfully building Semarang as a vibrant community.

> While they were sailing along the north coast of Java, Sam Po's (alias Zheng He) second in Command, Ong King Hong (alias Wang Jinghong), became seriously ill. Sam Po ordered his fleet to anchor in the bay, which is now the harbor of Semarang, and then explored the small Garong River in his own ship. A small cave

[74] In the seven voyages of Zheng He, the countries can be traced through several records. In Ma Huan's *Ying-Yai Sheng-Lan* (hereafter, *YYSL*) (The Overall Survey of the Ocean's Shores) and Fei Hsin's *Hsing-Ch'a Sheng-Lan* (*HCSL*) (The Overall Survey of the Star Raft) provides greater detail about Zheng He's visit in Java and Sumatra. According to *YYSL* and *HCSL*, Zheng He did visit Gresik, Tuban, Canggu, and Surabaya, but there is no any record mentioned that Zheng and his staff ever visited Semarang.

> was found in a hillside not far from the coast, and this served as temporary quarters for Sam Po while some of his followers built a small house for his sick lieutenant. Sam Po concocted some medicine, and Ong King Hong's condition gradually improved. After about ten days, however, Sam Po decided to continue with the voyage, and Ong King Hong was left behind with a ship, ten men, and plenty of provisions. During a long convalescence, Ong Kin Hong directed his followers in the clearing of land, planning of crops, and building of houses. Even when completely recovered, he did not return to China, but used his ship for trading up and down the north coast of Java. His followers took Indonesian wives, and the little colony became so prosperous that many other Indonesian established farms nearby and became part of the community. Like Sam Po, Ong King Hong was a devout Muslim, and he spent much of his time teaching his Indonesian and Chinese followers the moral precepts, the spiritual truths, and the religious practices of Islam. In addition, he taught them to revere the high achievements and the exalted character of Sam Po. He had a small statue of Sam Po placed in the cave, and he took his followers to worship there at regular times. When Ong King Hong died at the age of eighty-seven, he was given a Muslim burial. He became known as Juru Mudi Dampo Awang, or the "Venerable Navigator of Sam Po," and was worshiped by both Chinese and Indonesians on days fixed according to the Javanese calendar.

Therefore, the holy grave of Juru Mudi Dampo Awang (alias Dampu Awang)[75] was worshipped in the temple, and some people still believe that it belongs to Wang Jinghong. It is not possible to identify who was buried in the grave, but obviously, the legend that Wang Jinghong died and was buried in Semarang is a fable because, according to Chinese official chronicles, he returned to China after he fulfilled his missions. Nothing supports the argument that Wang Jinghong is a Muslim either.

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[75] The story of Dampu Awang is a popular motif seen in indigenous chronicles and local histories. The tale is about a local character (who usually later becomes a king) who had a bet or competition with a rich shipmaster named "Dampu Awang," and who was from elsewhere and had fully laden ships. Interestingly, in some tales, Dampu is associated with Zheng He (alias Sampo Tua Lang or Sampukang). The tales shows how the image of Zheng He's armada is remembered in the local communities and the importance of trade for the leadership of a King. It also appears that China was an economic power at that time (Manguin 1991). Dampu Awang in Javanese is "dang mpu hwang" (Manguin 1991, 46). *Dan* is an honorific prefix and (*m*)*pu* has similar usage, indicating a person with high rank, while "*hwang*" is Malay, meaning a non-noble official with high rank, which may be associated with shipmasters. Manguin finds that the tales is a political myth created in the period of transformation to the age of commerce, which reflects that it was important for the local political leaders to attract more overseas traders to do business in their port polity, through which the political leaders accumulated wealth and consolidated political legitimacy of their people. Manguin also explains that the main reason which led to the identification of Zheng He with Dampowan. In the fifteenth century, China was the greatest power in that area. Zheng He's ships sailing around the area for several times left many memories in people's minds (Manguin 1991).

The motif of Zheng He's legend is also employed in popular children's literature. In Pak Soet's children's book (1985), Zheng He became a Chinese pupil studying and preaching Islam in Nusantara. Soet borrows some elements from Zheng He's history and the local legend of Java as well as from the history of Ming China's invasion of Dai Viet.

In Soet's story, Zheng He is depicted as an emissary sent to Champa to deal with the local rebellion. After the mission, he took on another task, that of going to Nusantara to learn more about the place to help the emperor of Ming. Zheng He met Raden Rahmat (Sunan Ampel), and both went to Pasai to study Islam together. During his study, he grew increasingly interested in Islam and then became a Muslim, and so did Rahmat. After completing their studies in Pasai for seven years, Zheng He and Rahmat preached Islam in Sumatra, visiting Sam Ho and Palembang to preach Islam to the local people. In the meantime, Zheng He also engaged in business, selling silks and ceramics. After that, the two men went to Java to visit the Majapahit kingdom and trade. The final part of the story is about their arrival at Semarang, which begins as a scene of trading with the local people. Later Zheng He decided to build a mosque called Gedung Batu, which gradually became a center of preaching Islam. The area blossomed into a prosperous community, attracting more local people to embrace Islam. After Gedung Batu was completed, the story mentions that, in order to preach Islam, Zheng He went to East Java, studied in Majapahit, and asked permission from King Brawijaya V to preach Islam. Therefore Zheng He helped build good diplomatic relations between the Ming dynasty and the Majapahit kingdom.[76]

The third story is cited from a local legend quoted by Lee Khoon Choy (1976). It is about how Zheng He taught the natives to practice fasting during Ramadan. The story actually compounds a sense of racial discrimination.

> The natives in Nanyang (South Sea) know that Zheng He was such a capable man, so they admired his ability very much and regarded him as a god instead of a man. Whatever Zheng He said, they completely believed. Zheng He thought that the natives were too stupid and useless, so he planned to murder all of them. He told them: "You should not eat anything and make yourselves hungry. By doing so, you will find your well-being in the afterworld after you die." The natives followed his words, and Zheng He did not eat anything either. However, Zheng He still ate stealthily in the evening. One day, the native accidentally found out the fact. They asked: "If we should not eat, why can you do that?" He was unable to utter a word in selfdefense and then told them a lie: "You cannot eat in the daytime; but if you

[76] Soet's story combines the legend of Dampu Awang, including Zheng He's legend of trade, preaching, and cultivating in Semarang. But the fictitious story appears incoherent and illogical.

> eat in the night, it does not matter." Since then, the natives practice the fast one month before the New Year; they seize their bellies suffering from hunger in the daytime but strive for eating in the night. This is called "*puasa* (fasting)."[77]

Those legends about Zheng He and his crew preaching Islam contain three elements: cultivation, trade, and initiation into Islam. Zheng He's legend and worship have been spread among overseas Chinese in Southeast Asia, even in places where he had never been. An Huanran (2003) thinks that those legends of Zheng He were produced among Chinese communities of Southeast Asia around two periods: the first is from the end of the Ming dynasty to the beginning of the Qing dynasty, and the second from the nineteenth to the twentieth centuries. Those legends usually have two elements—apotheosis and cultivation. The first element describes Zheng He's extraordinary capability in taming wild animals and creating fruits; while in the second element about teaching the indigenous how to do fast or cultivate field, they usually point to the superiority of ethnic Chinese over the indigenous.[78]

2.3.4 Celebrating the Sixth Centenary of Zheng He's Voyages in 2005

In 2005, the sixth centenary of Zheng He's voyages had attracted much interest in the Indonesian mass media, including the question of whether Chinese Muslims helped to spread Islam in Nusantara. In the same year, the two events, reissuing Muljana's book once banned in 1971,[79] and the festival for commemorating the sixth centenary of Zheng He's voyages held in Semarang, raised more public interest and stirred discussion about the "Chinese theory." For Chinese-Indonesians it seemed a good occasion to take Zheng He's Islamic imagine as a paradigm for promoting his spirit of multiculturalism. However, the Zheng He discourse is not so docile as to be completely appropriated as a discourse in the service of ethnic harmony. It could also be used as a subversive counterdiscourse to mock Chinese-Indonesians, casting doubt as to why ethnic Chinese would celebrate Zheng He in such a pompous way.

Most of the news dispensed by the media about Zheng He, ranging from his

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[77] The story is quoted from An (2003, 307-308). Lee (1979, 84) and also discusses the following tale: "When the people heard that Zheng He was fasting for one month, they naturally asked for reason, so he had to explain by expounding on the origin, value, and significance of fasting. This would naturally entail further exhortation of the goodness and advantage of becoming a Muslim. Since many people admired Zheng He's character, they listen and then follow his teaching. This could have been the first time the seed of Islam was planted into the mind of the people."

[78] However, An's classification does not consider trade issue and the legends of Zheng He about preaching Islam.

[79] The workshop for Muljana's book was held in Semarang on 17 June 2005.

voyages and mission, to his Islamic faith, and da'wah, tended to move around some fixed discursive frameworks of Zheng. In the discussions and interviews for the reissue of Muljana's book and the festival for Zheng He in Semarang, I found two typical ways of interpreting Zheng He's Islamic images, which are sometimes in conflict.

Harjanto Halim, a Chinese-Indonesian coffee businessman, was invited to talk in the inauguration of festival and was interviewed. His position may represent the opinion of many Chinese-Indonesian groups. Halim agrees with the Muljana's book and thinks that the Chinese really played a very important role in the Islamization of Indonesia, and through which Chinese-Indonesians should learn a lesson and be reminded that "(the) Chinese (*Tionghoa*) community would like to be a member of big family of Indonesian nation; with such a wish, Chinese-Indonesian Muslims can play a role like a bridge to develop our community with other ethnic groups" (*Suara Merdeka*, 18 June 2005). Later, in an interview with the most widespread national newspaper, *Kompas*, commenting on the meaning of the celebration of the sixth centenary, Halim suggests that pluralism should be promoted to improve Chinese communities' relation with other groups, and that Zheng He is a Muslim who is able to get along with the local people in various countries which he visited during his missions. The Chinese community should know how to contribute their cultural tradition to the local people as Zheng He had done six hundred years ago (*Kompas*, 3 August 2005).

However, Abdul Djamil, the rector of the State Islamic University Walisongo in Semarang, who promotes ideas of liberal Islam, takes the opposite view. On the same occasion, Djamil said that, "many sources mention that Zheng He practiced Islam…; in several places that he visited, Zheng He, following Hanafi tradition, preached Islam," but Djamil thinks that for some reasons the indigenous Muslims did not really believe that Chinese Muslims played an important role in spreading Islam (*Suara Merdeka*, 18 June 2005). He suggests that people should read the book with a critical eye, examining the sources and the methods used by Muljana (*Kompas*, 18 June 2005).

In an interview Djamil goes further to explain how Zheng He preached Islam. He thinks that Zheng He's priority had been diplomacy rather than preaching Islam even though Zheng He is a Muslim. Zheng He's preaching was not in the same scale and intensity as that of the wali sanga. Instead, his da'wah was not in the traditional sense of a preacher addressing an audience. His approach was to preach Islam through community service (*dakwah bil hal*). Zheng He guided people closer to Islam through his interactions in everyday life. He set himself as an example, inspiring people through his deeds and words. Djamil argues that Islam had developed in China very

quickly and then was disseminated to Nusantara. He suggests that, since we know that Zheng He was a Muslim, Chinese-Indonesians should neither be allergic to Islam nor dislike it when people mention the Chinese contribution to the spread of Islam in Nusantara. (*Republika*, 5 August 2005) But how does he know for certain what Zheng He's approach to da'wah was?

Although he admires Zheng He's historical contribution to diplomacy and da'wah, Djamil's suggestions may not sound very cheerful to Chinese-Indonesians whom he still wants to remind to venerate Zheng He as an ethnic hero, and which has the effect of making the festival superficial and ethnocentric:

> Zheng He was neither a racialist nor a Muslim hardliner. Instead, he was a tolerant Muslim. He was also different from the Chinese-Indonesians (*warga etnis China*) nowadays, who are very busy doing business and are wholeheartedly looking to making money. (While, if) he would draw a wide smile on his face and sleep tight in his "eternal sleep" if Chinese-Indonesians play more social roles and go beyond the limits, whether it is ethnicity, religion, or social status, which have enclosed on them for a long time. They should increase their awareness toward the place where their feet step on, in Indonesia, in order to develop the nation together. Therefore, commemorating the great voyages of Zheng He should not be merely a ritual to remember a boisterous colossal expedition, but instead to seek a faith value that is fading. (*Suara Merdeka*, 1 August 2005)

Djamil's other criticism of Chinese-Indonesians could well be interpreted as ethnic discrimination because he makes another joke at the end of his article:

> A friend at the seminar told me the joke: If Chinese were asked to make a choice either to enter the heaven or the hell they would choose neither. Why? They would prefer to choose the in-between location of the two roads to the heaven and the hell; selling mineral spring water for those people is in a hurry on their own way. (*Suara Merdeka*, 1 August 2005)

As a matter of fact, Zheng He's Islamic image is not that known and is even usually overlooked among ethnic Chinese of Southeast Asia. There are several Chinese temples worshiping Zheng He in Indonesia, Malaysia, and Thailand, but his apotheosis and hero image in the eyes of Chinese immigrants in Southeast Asia have nothing to do with his Muslim image. Zheng He is generally venerated as a deity in traditional Chinese religions as a protector and pioneer. His Muslim image is usually ignored or denied in the context of traditional Chinese religions, partially because

China considers Islam an inferior religion. Unlike the PITI branch at Surabaya, the Sam Po Kong Temple, one of the main festival organizers, rarely feels it necessary to mention whether Zheng He's stay at Semarang had anything to do with his preaching Islam in central Java.[80] The festival for the celebration of the sixth centenary of Zheng He's expedition to Nusantara and for commemorating his visit to Semarang, took place from 1 to 7 August 2005. The festivities included an opening ceremony for the renovation of the Sam Po Kong Temple, Chinese folk performances, a parade of Zheng He and his crew, seminars, and so on. It looked like a typical traditional Chinese religious festival. A close observation of the activities would not give away Islamic elements related to Zheng He.[81]

Through examining various Zheng He's images constructed by China government, scholars, and Chinese-Indonesians, we have seen that conflicting or consonant ideas had been produced and distributed throughout the celebration of the sixth centenary of Zheng He's voyages in 2005. Various discourses about Zheng He's past and their contemporary ethnopolitical implications that by turns compete, compromise, and resonate in the dialogic process have constituted multivocal narratives similar to Bakhtinian heteroglossia (1981).

2.4 Gus Dur's Appropriation: A Miraculous Historical Convergence?

The public space has opened up for the politics of the ethnic Chinese, which encourages them to speak out for their ethnic group's identity and civil rights, struggling for the majority's recognition and opposing ethnic discrimination. On the other hand, the reflections of Indonesian past have shown that people are eager to know the histories heretofore repressed by the government. The emerging freedom of speech for Muslim scholars has also allowed for more critical and heterogeneous discourses on Indonesian Islam to be circulated and debated, including the "Chinese theory," which is being promoted by young Muslim scholars such as Qurtuby as an issue that would serve to expand the diverse traditions of Indonesian Islam. His idea is not only limited to a critical reflection of the historiography of Indonesian Islam but also clearly expresses his agenda to speak for a Chinese legacy that contributes to Indonesia.

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[80] The Sam Poo Kong Temple published a book (2008), introducing a brief history of Sam Poo Kong Temple. It only mentions that Zheng He was born into a Muslim family and that his deputy, Wang Jinghong was a Muslim, but does not say anything related to da'wah.

[81] The book launching of *Telapak Sejarah Sam Po Kong: Menelusuri Peran Tionghoa dalam Penyebaran Islam di Indonesia*, published by Golkar (Wahid 2005), was also discussed and put in the agenda on 6 August.

The famous Muslim figure, former Indonesian President Abdurrahman Wahid, claims Chinese Muslim origins going back to the fifteenth century. This is yet another interesting usage of "Chinese theory" with the potential power to persuade indigenous Muslims not to discriminate against people with Chinese blood like him, as well as to remind people of the legacy of Chinese Muslim.

Wahid also often told people that his Chinese ancestor, Tan Kim Ham or Putri Campa (lady of Campa) is also his remote grandmother. But his two explanations sound confused. His latest explanation assumes that Putri Campa married the king of Majapahit Brawijaya and had children named Tan Enghwa (alias Raden Patah, establishing the first Muslim kingdom Demak) and Tan Alok (who marries Tan Kim Ham).

Since 2000, a Chinese-Indonesian writer Zhang Yonghe, who published a Chinese biography of Abdurrahman Wahid, has tried to investigate Wahid's Chinese origins. Zhang persuaded local officials to support his investigation. In January 2000, the local Chinese officials of Fujian province organized an archaeological team to excavate the Tan clan's ancestral grave in the name of shifting grave.[82] In this excavation they found that the graves, built in the fifteenth century, were in the style of Chinese Muslim, which supports the view that the ancestors of Tan clan are Muslims. But this team was unable to trace the identity of Tan Kim Ham and whether he went to Java, so in May 2005 they launched an investigation of the pedigree of the Tan clan. They collected as many family pedigrees as possible but found no evidence to support the connection.

In March 2003, Zhang invited a Chinese official to meet with Wahid at home. In that meeting, Wahid signed a commission, authorizing China's local government to investigate his Chinese origins. Strangely and quite suddenly, the investigation committee received a copy of the Tan clan's family pedigree offered by a Chinese immigrant from Singapore in June 2003. The family pedigree records that Tan Kim Ham joined Zheng He's mission to Java and did not return to China. Because of this new finding, the committee had hatched plans to establish a Tan Kim Ham museum and invited Wahid to open it, but so far, I have not heard any more news about the museum. It is very difficult to judge this story as true, but Wahid's "coming out" to publicly demonstrate his Chinese origins can easily be ascribed to the liberal thinking of an important Muslim leader attempting to unbind Chinese-Indonesians.[83]

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[82] It is a Chinese custom to practice secondary burial: ancestors' skeletons are moved elsewhere and reburied.

[83] About Wahid's story, also see Tan (2009, 241).

2.5 Concluding Remarks

The idea of Chinese facilitating Islamization of Java in the early fifteenth century was addressed and repressed in the 1960s, but it has been attracting more attention in the post-Suharto period. In the 1960s, the "Chinese theory" transgressed the political taboo in an anti-Chinese atmosphere; in the post-New Order era the reemergence of the "Chinese theory" is related to Zheng He discourses that have been articulated with the new currency of Chinese-Indonesian's cultural revival and ethnic empowerment, and geopolitical influence of the rising great China.

When the "Chinese theory" is promoted in the democratic Muslim society, it reflects two progressive implications that remind people that Chinese-Indonesian's ancestors contributed to the dissemination of Islam in Java. First, it promotes a spirit of multiculturalism relocating Chinese-Indonesians in the constitution of the Indonesian nation. The ethnic Chinese's historical legacy should not be ignored and the diversity of Indonesian Islam cannot eliminate the contribution from Chinese Muslims in the early fifteenth century. Second, to rethink the possible historical contribution of Chinese Muslims has also shown an emergent need of an ethnic minority to search for its past that had been always excluded from the scope of national history of Indonesia.[84]

However, when Zheng He's Muslim identity is articulated in the discussions, the factors that motivate official Chinese policy to promote Zheng He's diplomatic legacy and the reasons Chinese scholars and Muslims want to emphasize Zheng He's Muslim identity must be considered. Completely accepting China's official propaganda on the peaceful and friendly nature of the mission and the Chinese scholars' exaggeration of Zheng He's contribution to the spread of Islam in Nusantara, or even in the whole of Southeast Asia, without any critical consideration of the historical facts, the political symbols of Zheng He's diplomatic missions, and the potential agendas in China's geopolitical strategy may be a trap for yet another myth and cannot help illuminate our understanding of the past.

The convergence of the "Chinese theory" and the promotion of Zheng He during the post-Suharto period has become a significant part of a Chinese-Indonesian's cultural revival and ethnic empowerment. It may not have been sophisticatedly premeditated by Chinese-Indonesians, but its unintended consequence has led to some impressive achievements. We must consider how Chinese-Indonesians relocate themselves in the narrative of nationalism of Indonesia. A similar case was documented by Japanese anthropologist Tsuda Koji (2007), who observed how two

[84] Since the fall of Suharto, more historical researches have been conducted to deal with national violence and trauma such as the massacres of 1965-1966 and the riots of 1998 (Zurbuchen 2005; Roosa 2006).

ethnic Chinese deities, Tan Oei Diji Sian Seng (Mr. Tan and Mr. Oei),[85] worshiped in a Chinese temple at Rembang in the northern coastal area of Central Java, were promoted by a Jakarta-based ethnic Chinese activist and politician to be glorified by government as "Pahlawan Nasional (National Hero)" for the their contribution to opposing the Dutch invasion in the Chinese War (1740-1750s). Apparently, those Chinese-Indonesians plan to put their little religious tradition in line with both political mainstreams: the great narrative of Indonesian nationalism and Islam.

But in contrast to the effort to embed the traditions of Chinese religions by the Chinese community in Rembang in the national narrative, the approach of promoting the "Chinese theory" and insisting on Zheng He's Muslim identity has the potential to alienate both Muslims and Chinese. It recalls a remote Islamic legacy that is usually assumed not to belong to ethnic Chinese. To emphasize the Islamic origins of the Chinese-Indonesian's historical legacy is to risk offending Islam, the most legitimate religion embraced by the Muslim majority, but it ultimately and ingeniously at least creates a niche for the Chinese-Indonesian Muslim association PITI. Foisting Zheng He's Islamic legacy as a symbol of cultural interaction between China and Nusantara legitimates the PITI to extend its network between the local ethnic Chinese and grassroots indigenous Muslim communities (Chiou 2007). The most important step in the direction of progress is to construct their Muslim traditions, while at the same time bridging their cultural legitimacy in the Muslim society of Indonesia by referring to the "imaginary homeland" of cultural China.[86]

The historiographic politics of the "Chinese theory" is not merely a domestic issue that only considers the heterogeneity of Indonesian Islam or the empowerment of an ethnic minority. Furthermore, because of the migration of Chinese Muslims in the early days and China's involvement with the Zheng He discourses, the transnational and geopolitical factors should be carefully taken account to understand why Indonesian scholars and political figures are involved in the debates.

Finally, the lesson we learn from the controversies is not to argue repeatedly as to what extent the ethnic identity of those immigrant communities of Chinese/peranakan Muslim is really Chinese oriented, or whether the Chinese origins of Indonesian Islam is much more authentic than other theories. Rather, we should be aware that the Chinese element is part of the plural historical and cultural traditions of Nusantara. Whether or not those Chinese immigrants were Muslim before or after they arrived in Java, they have been part of the Muslim community in Java,

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[85] Tan Oei Dije Sian Seng is originally transliterated from the Hokkienese "Dije Sian Seng," meaning two gentlemen or two misters.

[86] In the case study of the PITI branch at Surabaya, I analyze how Zheng He's Muslim image is applied as the Chinese-Indonesian Muslims' invented traditions, which is also used to locate themselves in their "homeland," the historical tradition of Islam in China (Chiou 2007).

witnessing the great transformation from Hindu-Buddhist civilization to Islamic civilization. Chinese-Indonesians need not always venerate Zheng He as a common sacred ethnic totem, although we cannot deny that his voyages had caused various admirable cultural interchanges and his ultimate veneration as a deity of Chinese-Indonesian religions. Chinese-Indonesians may consider how their ancestors in the *MASC* (if it is reliable and makes sense) themselves contributed to the indigenous society, constituting the diverse cultural traditions of Nusantara.

Chapter 3

Performing Islamic Chineseness

3.1 Introduction: From Sino-Javanese Muslim Culture to Contemporary Islamic Chineseness

After the fall of Souharto, when with the changing political atmosphere some repressive policies regarding the Chinese-Indonesians were lifted, the waves of Chinese cultural revival has been raised by various NGOs, ethnic organizations, Chinese newspapers, and religious groups through promoting human right issues, language education, and Chinese traditional culture. In line with the increased public visibility of ethnic Chinese identity, Chinese-Indonesian Muslims, have also chosen to present their ethnic identity through bodily, ritual, performative, and spatial practices in constructing their Islamic Chineseness by performing special Muslim prayers on the occasion of Chinese New Year (*Salat Imlek*) in a major mosque in Yogyakarta, building a Chinese-style mosque in Surabaya, organizing a *nashid* (religious chant) group whose members wear Chinese skullcaps and mandarin jackets and sing *nashid* in Mandarin, and introducing the history of Chinese Islam in their journal, The same tendency can be observed in the publications by the famous Chinese-Indonesian doctor Hembing Wijayakusuma, who applies his knowledge of Chinese medicine and physiology to Islamic rituals and practices and suggests that Muslims can improve their health through ritual fast in Ramadan, and performing salat and personal prayer (*do'a*).

I will examine the increasing public visibilities of Chinese-Indonesian Muslims and consider three questions. Chinese-Indonesian Muslims neither have long Islamic

traditions clearly inherited from the legacy of Chinese Muslims of five centuries ago nor have direct links with Chinese-speaking Muslims of China. So what kind of Chinese traditions are selectively applied by Chinese-Indonesian Muslims? How do they represent their Muslim cultures which they suppose is in line with traditions of Chinese and Indonesian Islam? What are the influences when their public expressions are exposed to the Muslim public of Indonesia?

3.2 Embodying Ibadah in Building Modern Self and Society

Hembing Wijayakusuma (1940-2011) was a famous Chinese-Muslim national figure and a practitioner of Chinese medicine in Indonesia. He did not confine himself to practicing in his own clinic in Jakarta; he was also involved in TV programs and popular publications, promoting his ideas of healthcare, and giving guidelines on how to lead healthy lives by using simple techniques of self-care and self-cure.

As a young boy, Wijayakusuma studied herbs with his great-grandmother, acquiring the knowledge of herbology. At the age of 18, he went to Hong Kong where he was enrolled in an institute of Chinese Medicine and trained as a doctor of Chinese medicine and as an acupuncture specialist. After completing his studies, he returned to Indonesia and gradually gained fame because of his excellent medical talents. Since the 1990s, Wijayakusuma published almost 80 books. Except for a few books which deal with social criticism, histories of Chinese-Indonesians and his two biographies based on interviews with him, most of his books are about Chinese medicine, recipes for herb beverages and healthy meals, self-healing, and pharmacopoeia. He was also a television celebrity, creating several programs on how to have a healthy life using simple approaches such as diet, exercise, and so on (Sutoyo 2000). His publications and TV programs have popularized the knowledge and practice of Chinese medicine, satisfying the urgent needs of the Indonesian middle class interested in improving their health by self-healing and diet. From the mid-1990s', he had been involved in preaching sermons from the Islamic and health perspectives.

Among his healthcare publications, three books had been written especially for Muslims to enhance their mental and physical well-being in performing Islamic rituals (Wijayakusuma 1994, 1997, 2002). Wijayakusuma applied his knowledge of Chinese medicine and physiology to Islamic rituals and practices, suggesting that Muslims could improve their health through ritual fast in Ramadan and performing *salat* and personal prayer (*do'a*). While the idea of incorporating healthcare with Islamic rituals is not totally new, there are three interesting new ideas in his books. First, he

introduced the ideas of *qi* (vital energy) and the meridian system[87] in the practice of *salat* and regarded performing *salat* as similar to doing acupuncture massage and practicing gymnastics. Second, based on Chinese theories of mental and physical health, he gave an interpretation of the ritual of *salat* as a means to instill self-discipline and to organize the Muslim community. Thirdly, unlike most of the popular literature on Ramadan, which usually concentrates on the ritual details of correct performance of worship, and the ritual fast or how the God's divine boons would benefit Muslims, he offered healthy recipes for dinner after the daily fasting during *Ramadan*.

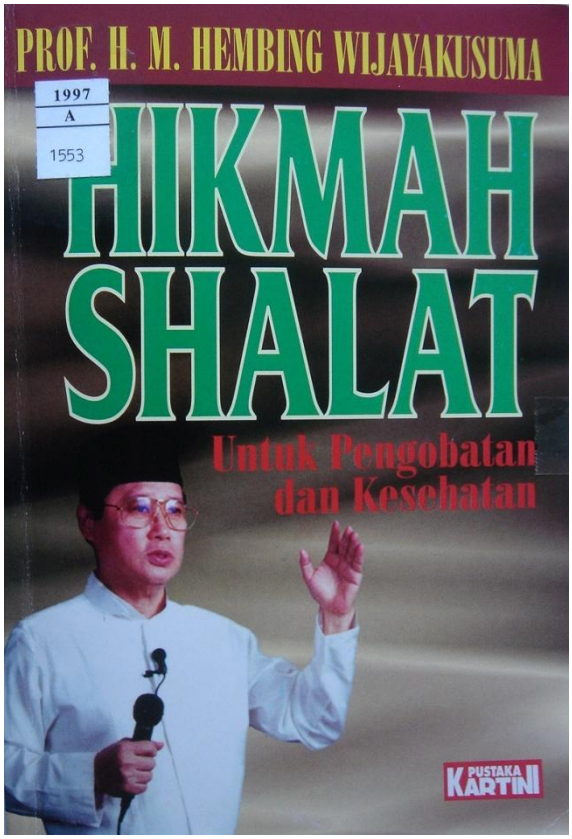
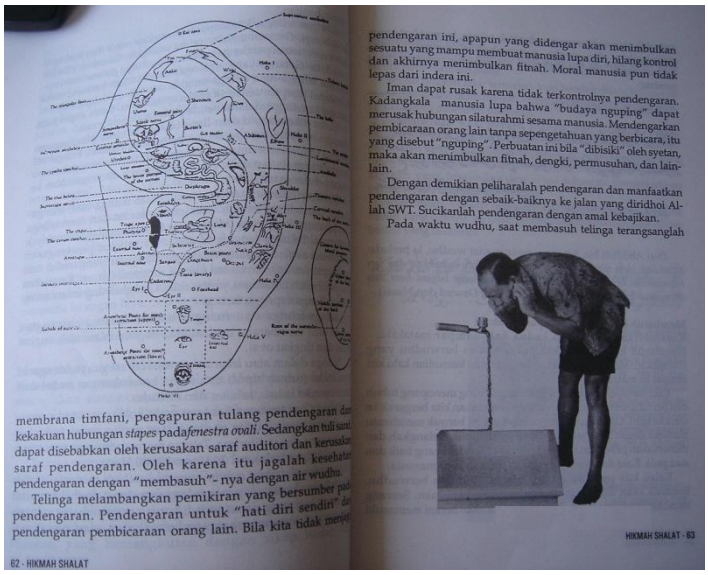


Figure 3.1

The book cover of Wijayakusuma's *Hikmah Shalat.*

[87] The concepts of *qi* and median system will be expanded on later.



membrana timfani, pengapuran tulang pendengaran dan
kekakuan hubungan *stapes* pada *fenestra ovali*. Sedangkan tuli sama
dapat disebabkan oleh kerusakan saraf auditori dan kerusakan
saraf pendengaran. Oleh karena itu jagalah kesehatan
pendengaran dengan "membasuh"- nya dengan air wudhu.
Telinga melambangkan pemikiran yang bersumber pada
pendengaran. Pendengaran untuk "hati diri sendiri" dan
pendengaran pembicaraan orang lain. Bila kita tidak menyaring

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pendengaran ini, apapun yang didengar akan menimbulkan sesuatu yang mampu membuat manusia lupa diri, hilang kontrol dan akhirnya menimbulkan fitnah. Moral manusia pun tidak lepas dari indera ini.

Iman dapat rusak karena tidak terkontrolnya pendengaran. Kadangkala manusia lupa bahwa "budaya nguping" dapat merusak hubungan silaturahmi sesama manusia. Mendengarkan pembicaraan orang lain tanpa sepengetahuan yang berbicara, itu yang disebut "nguping". Perbuatan ini bila "dibisiki" oleh syetan, maka akan menimbulkan fitnah, dengki, permusuhan, dan lain-lain.

Dengan demikian peliharalah pendengaran dan manfaatkan pendengaran dengan sebaik-baiknya ke jalan yang diridhoi Allah SWT. Sucikanlah pendengaran dengan amal kebajikan.

Pada waktu wudhu, saat membasuh telinga terangsanglah

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Figure 3.2

An illustration of ear acupuncture points and ritual ablution (*wudu*).

3.2.1 Healthcare and Islamic Rituals: Do'a, *Salat, Wudu,* and Meals during *Ramadan*

There exists a considerable body of popular literature exploring the relation between health and performance of Islamic rituals in medical studies and *Sufi* practice (Ernst 2003, 2005; Haetey 2007). Muslim medical researchers have tried to argue the curative effects of *salat* and ritual fast in medical practice and social work (Azizi 2002; Al-Krenawi and Graham 1999; Rassool 2000; Reza, Urakami, and Mano 2002). Muslims or Sufi groups see the performance of *salat* as akin to practicing yoga or doing physical exercise.[88] There are common ritual discourses, for instance, stressing that ritual ablution (*wudu*) is a form of hygiene, that concentration on performing *salat* induces mental and psychical health, and analyzing the execution of *salat* as Yoga. However, my purpose here is not to argue whether the performance of *salat* and ritual fast are medically effective. Instead I will examine how Wijayakusuma applied his medical knowledge and techniques of Chinese acupuncture massage, gymnastic, and dietics to Islamic rituals such as *wudu*, *salat*, and ritual fast in *Ramadan.* His ritual discourse on Islam and health, infused with cultural elements of Chinese bodily cultivation, has shed light on a double theoretical implication embodied in certain dimensions of Islamic rituals: performing *wudu* and *salat* has become a physical technique for health care by which the Muslim practitioners formulate their modern

[88] See the electronic references: IslamOnline, Shri Adi Shakti, and Islamic Voice.

religious selves, using the physiological approach to build up a modern Muslim community.

In the following discussion, I will show how Wijayakusuma incorporates his ideas on health care in the discourse of Islamic prayer and *Ramadan*, including *do'a, wudu, salat*, and eating of the evening meal after the daily break of fasting during *Ramadan*.[89]

3.2.2 Health and *Doa*

In a book co-authored with El-Sulthani, Wijayakusuma (2002) takes a physiological approach by arguing that the performance of *do'a* consists of a process of self-healing. Through supplication, the condition of mind-body will achieve balance. When completely concentrating on the intention to pray, the practitioners will feel relaxed and totally reliant upon God. Then the practitioners will feel peaceful and calm, which in turn will ensure that their internal hormonal secretions function efficiently, hence relieving any physical depression, and improving bodily functions, including organs, nerves, the circulation system, and the brain. By contrast, those people who don't pray will feel highly stressed, resulting in malfunctioning of their various organs in their body, and eventually illnesses. Similarly those patients who pray can recover more quickly than those who do not. Psychologically, prayers can bring about positive thinking, leading to a good impact on your health. Prayers can lighten the emotional/spiritual burden of Muslims and make them feel safe, joyful, and peaceful. What matters most is the hope that God will answer your prayers when the time is right.

3.2.3 Ablution and Sins of the Limbs

Salat is a very structured Islamic ritual in terms of the ritual acts and regulations (Mahmood 2005, 123). It has four requirements: "(1) an intention to dedicate the prayer to God; (2) a prescribed sequence of gestures and words; (3) a physical condition of purity; and (4) proper attire." Though there are some differences among the various traditions of legal schools, basically the practice of *salat* contains formal components, which are divided as ablution (*wudu*) and a number of pray-circle

[89] There are three basic forms of prayer in Islam: personal prayer (do'a), ritual prayer (*salat*), and dikir.

(*rakaat*). The ablution is absolutely required before performing the formal prayer. When performing ablution, practitioners have to sequentially wash or wipe limbs of the body, including head, ear, mouth, nose, and other limbs. The prayer-circle consists of four postures and acts: standing, bowing (*ruku*), prostration (*sujud*), and sitting (*duduk*). In the five daily prayers, various numbers of prayer-circle are required on different occasions.

A typical prayer formula usually explains why *salat* is a core religious obligation and guides Muslims on how to pray with legally acceptable bodily posture, timing, place, rehearsal of sura, ritual purity and so on. However, in addition to that, Wijayakusuma emphasizes that if Muslims want to know better about the advantages of *salat*, they should consider *salat* not only from the perspective of *fiqh* but also from the perspectives of health care and medical knowledge. Combining western and oriental[90] medical knowledge with religious knowledge based on the Koran and *hadith*, he asserts that performing *salat* is a ritual practice as well as a way of doing acupuncture massage and gymnastics to improve the health of Muslims. Because it brings about the well-being of body and mind and it is constitutive of inner self-discipline and mental and physical health, performing *salat* can further contribute to a good social life and a wholesome Muslim community.

With reference to the Prophet's saying, "seek knowledge by even going to China," Wijayakusuma introduces the idea of acupuncture, the meridian system, and *qi* (vital energy) (1996, 71-73), and says that Islam is a religion which emphasizes the importance of maintaining good health so as to prevent illnesses, and to ensure general well-being, including that of their thoughts, mind, and moral (1996, 67-68).[91]

According to Wijayakusuma, there are three main advantages in performing ablution. Wiping the body can rid the body of dirt and germs which are detrimental to our health. It is a typical idea among Muslims to regard ablution as a habit of hygiene in everyday life.

The acts of ablution are meant to purify the sins of the body, caused by wrongdoings. Wijayakusuma explains the sins of limbs (1996, 37-38). The symbol of hands has two different meanings, *viz.* creation and destruction. To wipe our hands means to purify the wrongdoing which has been committed by our hands. Washing hands symbolizes the purification of our misdemeanor so as to avoid future punishment and suffering. Cleaning the mouth and tongue by gargling is important because the mouth cavity is a hotbed of germs, which cause diseases. The tongue is

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[90] Wijayakusuma vaguely mentions the term 'oriental medical knowledge,' which, more exactly, should be indicated as 'Chinese medical knowledge.' In particular, acupuncture, the meridian system and *qi*-cultivation are knowledge coming from the Chinese medical tradition.

[91] The two type of *qi*, Yin and Yang, circulate through the meridian system inside body. If the *qi* can circulate smoothly and harmoniously, it shows that the body is in healthy condition. The idea of *qi*, meridian, and acupuncture will be expanded later.

boneless but flexible, capable of saying something good or bad; the tongue can produce honey or toxin, the former to please and the latter to harm people. Washing the face, including the eyes, is very important because one's behavior and intentions are influenced by what one sees, and hence the eyes can cause one to commit evil, uncivil, or inhumane acts. Hence washing your face and eyes with clean water symbolizes the purification of your misdeeds. Cleaning your scalp and hair symbolizes cleansing impure thoughts. Washing your head can improve your mental health and wipe away negative emotions such as fear, anger and so on. The head of a human being is faced towards and bowed to God when performing *salat*; this way our brains will be controlled and be mastered by God. When we wash our head, we are cleansing our tainted thoughts and intentions, thus improving the health of our brain, which is the master of our body. Hence one will receive divine blessings and favors (*hikmah*) from God. The ear is the sense organ for listening; without our ears, our beliefs would become chaotic because we cannot listen. Washing our feet is aimed at purifying our actions. When washing our feet, we reflect on our behavior. The water of ablution can clean the impure and evil in us, thus strengthening our attitude and fortifying our mind.

The symbols used by Wijayakusuma to describe the sins of the limbs are common motifs in line with the discursive traditions of Islamic jurisprudence and theology, as pointed out Katz (2005) who asserts: "most fundamentally, scholars regard *wudu* as a response to the problem of sin."

Wijayakusuma addresses another alternative efficacy of ablution; he notes that when we wipe the body during the performance of ritual ablution, the acupuncture points of the body will be simultaneously stimulated to benefit the body, as in acupuncture massage. The therapy of acupuncture massage is based on Chinese medicine which holds that the body has a meridian system through which the *qi* (vital energy) is circulated and engender the living power of human being, and that special points along the meridian system regulate the flow of *qi*. When Muslims wipe their limbs when performing ablution, the result and effects are similar to massaging the acupuncture points. In his other healthcare books (1999, 2002) Wijayakusuma teaches people how to practice the acupuncture massage on the soles of feet and the neck. He applies the same therapy of Chinese natural self-healing in explaining the benefits of ablution.

3.2.4 *Salat*, Bodily Cultivation and Conduct of Life

Like a bodily exercise, *salat* consists of moving between four postures, standing, bowing (*ruku*), prostration (*sujud*), and sitting (*duduk*). Similarly, Wijayakusuma continues his idea of treating the bodily movements in the prayer-circle as doing acupuncture massage. Because of the bodily movements, Wijayakusuma also sees *salat* as gymnastics through which the body can be exercised to benefit the bones, muscles, and organs as well as the circulation, endocrine, and nervous system.[92]

Wijayakusuma might be aware that he could be accused of altering the meaning of *salat* from a fundamentally religious obligation to a Chinese physical exercise, when he applies the technique of acupuncture massage and gymnastics to the practice of *salat*. Thus, in an effort to distinguish and distance *salat* from physical exercise, he elaborates on the effects of executing *salat* in three dimensions: moral self, bodily health, and wholesome Muslim community. He claims that according to the Prophet, if we perform the *salat* without pious intentions, we merely to "carry out" (*mengerjakan*) this ritual performance rather than "establishing" (*mendirikan*) *salat*.[93] Performing *salat* without pious intentions is similar to doing exercises without focusing on God. Though exercise can relieve stress and improve physical health, it cannot deal with spiritual problems because our minds are still preoccupied by mundane matters. This means that exercises can improve only physical health rather than achieve spiritual well-being. Although the issue of sustaining health by performing *salat* is one of Wijayakusuma's central concerns, this is not the only characteristic he attributes to *salat*. Performing *salat* with total pious concentration can help a Muslim to feel calm and have inner peace; he will have an energetic and ordered life, benefitting both the body and spirit.[94] Thus the meaning of performing *salat* should include the social and spiritual dimensions as well.

In summary, Wijayakusuma's "*salat* theory" includes three continuous steps. Based on the pious intentions towards God, performing the *salat* is akin to simultaneously exercising the body according to the application of Chinese acupuncture massage and gymnastics whose benefits have been explained by empirical knowledge of physiology and Chinese medicine. Through disciplined ritual practice, it brings about a pious self with good morals and healthy mental attitude. This can be the groundwork for outward transformation as reflected in disciplined social activities, and eventually leading to the establishment of a wholesome Muslim community.

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[92] The writing style which Wijayakusuma uses to explain the physic effects makes his book look like a textbook of physiology in which one can find many anatomic pictures, including the meridian system. This style can also be found in his other books.

[93] People pray but usually cannot concentrate on God. People who murmur don't really know what praying means. Those who pray must concentrate with sincere and pious orientation from their heart.

[94] A similar idea has been discussed above (Wijayakusuma and El-Sulthani 2002).

3.2.5 Dietetics of *Ramadan*

Wijayakusuma's book (1997), *Puasa itu Sehat* (*Ritual Fasting is Healthy*), aims at a very different concern other than the typical ritual formulas of *Ramadan* found in most *Ramadan* books. In Moller's (2005, 169-197) review on five Ramadan books published in Indonesia, he has found that all of them deal with issues such as when the ritual fast should begin, how the ritual fast should be performed, and why Muslims have to follow the legal regulations. Moller found seven motifs present in all the books studied.

First, there was an exploration of the religious meanings of *Ramadan*, explaining the boons, and extraordinariness of the ritual fast. The meanings of pursuit of pureness in ritual fast and worships are elaborated and highlighted to show how Muslims can achieve merit, forgiveness and charity by learning self-control, donating money and feeding the poor in this particular month. The second motif is about the timing of when to exactly begin Ramadan; there have been always different legal opinions broadly divided between the modernist and traditionalist Muslim groups. The third motif concerns the various additional and supererogatory ritual prayers, which may be the most important ritual activity in Ramadan. Muslims believe that by performing the ritual prayers during the Ramadan month, they can gain more blessings and merits from God. Reformist and traditionalist Muslims disagree over the number of prayer-cycles (*raka'at*) -- some say eight, others twenty, or more – of the *tarawih* prayers in the evenings of the fasting month. "The Night of Power" (*lailatul qadar*) is extremely important for Muslims because they believe that it was during the night that the Koran was revealed to the Prophet and humankind, and that by performing ritual prayers and commemorating God they can accumulate more merit from their prayers in this night than at any other time. The fifth issue is how to perform *iktikaf* (a form of retreat in a mosque, in accordance with some ritual legal regulations). The sixth motif concerns how to perform the required ritual prayers during the feast of *Lebaran* (*Idul Fitri*). Finally, the explanation of how to perform a valid ritual fast is one of the most important activities. The ritual regulations are usually illustrated according to complicated *fiqh* which are based on the principles of normative Islam.

In contrast, Wijayakusuma's *Ramadan* book, similar to his *salat* book, serves more like a guide to healthcare for Muslims in carrying out Islamic rituals. It takes a different form by providing healthy recipes on nutritious dishes for the evening meal at the break of the daily fast. Unlike his *salat* book, which was interwoven with references to the Koran and Hadith, and presented in a *fiqh* style, this book on *Ramadan* only takes few pages to explain his ideas and reasons for wanting to promote healthy recipes, especially for dinners during *Ramadan*. In addition to

explaining how to achieve mental, physical, and spiritual health through performance of Islamic rituals, he introduces the physical benefits of fasting. He then includes a very different topic, that is, how to eat healthily after the daily fast. Thus his book has become a recipe-like *Ramadan* book.

Convinced that fasting can facilitate self-healing of the body, Wijayakusuma highlights the physical and physiological advantages of fasting. He also believes that fasting, as a form of self-control, is also good for mental health. He argues that when Muslims know how to control desires through fasting, they would master the technique of controlling their emotions and thoughts. Hence they would not be easily influenced by sensory stimulations which may have negative impacts on the body (1997, 8-11). Also, he states that fasting can help one to stop drinking, smoking and taking drugs (1997, 12-15).

Explaining that the endocrine system produces adequate hormones such as insulin and adrenalin to sustain the body during fasting, Wijayakusuma advises Muslims not to worry about whether the nutrition and energy levels are sufficient for the body's need when fasting. Then he explains that he offers the *Ramadan* dietetics because "fasting and nutrition, like the two sides of a coin, cannot be separated" (1997, 20). After the daily fast, Muslims feel so hungry that they often drink and eat much more than they usually do and should. Although the food they eat is not against Islamic law, the problem is that their bad habit of drinking and eating too much harms their health. In essence, drinking and eating too much for a meal contradicts the call for self-control during *Ramadan*. Instead of such bad eating habits, he suggests that Muslims should eat moderately in terms of quality and quantity by taking necessary nutrients like fats, glucose, and protein from various food sources.

Wijayakusuma's *Ramadan* recipes pay more programmatic attention to eating rather than focusing on spiritual matters such as blessing and merits. This pragmatism shows that he may have found the issue of eating to be very important. In contrast, Moller's review of other *Ramadan* books shows they hardly contain any information on healthy meals for Muslims when they break their daily fast in the evening. This points to a gap between normal religious texts and those which deal with personal health issues. As Hoffman has observed (1995, 41):

> Fasting during Ramadan is rarely associated in the minds of Muslims with the renunciation of the flesh in the broader sense, but rather with the acquisition of humility and compassion through hunger. Contemporary Muslim discussions of the fast emphasize Ramadan as a time of increased devotion and the renunciation of the anger, but not the renunciation of fleshly desires per se. The fact that Muslims commonly break the fast each sunset with sumptuous meals and joyful celebrations,

and that often more is consumed during Ramadan than any other month, demonstrate the lack of negative feeling toward the body among religious Muslims.

3.2.6 Chinese Bodily Cultivation as a Body Technique

As mentioned above, in addition to the three books focusing on the healthcare issues in performing *do'a* (supplication), *salat*, and ritual fast, Wijayakusuma's other books include those that promote a Do-It-Yourself healthcare, guides to practicing *qikong*, gymnastics, acupuncture massage, and books on healthy diets. Why does Wijayakusuma incorporate the ideas of techniques of acupuncture massage, gymnastics, and the recipes in the performance of Islamic rituals as a way of improving Muslim's heath? To answer this question, it is necessary to review some elemental ideas of Chinese medicine, and to explore how the technique of bodily cultivation is applied in *salat* and ritual fast.

The cultivation of *qi* and the meridian system are two fundamental concepts of Chinese medicine, originating from Taoist bodily cultivation practice. In Taoism, the body is the key field to be cultivated for health and immortality. Taoists believe that *qi* (vital energy), one of the core concepts in Chinese cosmology and philosophy, exists in all things but cannot be comprehended. *Qi* is also understood as protomaterial; by executing the skill of *qi*-kong, the *qi* circulated inside the body can be strengthened and used to improve organ functions and metabolism. Therefore, how to cultivate *qi* and keep it in a harmonious and vital condition is one of the important goals of Taoist philosophy. The Taoist practitioners believe that bodily cultivation absorbs and transforms proper, healthy, and harmonious *qi* from the subtler levels of comic energy of the natural world and human community "through breathing, food, drink, physical contact, sexuality, and emotion." (Kohn 2005, 30). *Qi* is circulated inside the body through the meridians, i.e., invisible channels connecting organs, inner and outer part of the body. Along the meridians, there are various acupuncture points where the meridian comes closest to the skin; these can be stimulated by needles, heat, and finger pressure. Thus *qi*-circulation can be facilitated through acupuncture for medical purposes.

The Taoist body is regarded as the most fundamental field and instrument through which practitioners exercise mediation, *qikong*, and gymnastics to pursue immortality and eternal salvation. According to Levi (1989), the body is the Taoists' coat of arms, represented as 'alchemy of divine' and 'vessel of divine images.' In

other words, the Taoist bodily cultivation intends to achieve longevity and immortality by merging ego with the natural world. On the other hand, though the Taoist bodily cultivation is "performed by individuals in seclusion and solitude" and "rested in tranquility, away from all turmoil," (Xu 1999, 969), it is not merely confined to an anti-social mysticism but also includes a pursuit of social well-being, which is important for achieving harmony in the family, clan, state, and the cosmos at large (Xu 1999). In the pursuit of immortality, body and mind are equally important, and their relation is considered as a whole, based on the belief that the body has its own inherent autonomic capability to heal itself.

Although the Taoist bodily cultivation in the religious sense is "often informed by occult knowledge about the spiritual transcendence and immortality," (Xu 1999, 969) the knowledge of Taoist bodily cultivation has been gradually transformed to secular medical practice, and has even been adapted for programmatic self-care and self-healing methods. There are several longevity techniques for promoting good health, sustaining and increasing the *qi*, such as acupuncture, massage, *qigong*, breathing skills, gymnastics, and mediation.

The bodily cultivation technique is based on skill training to enhance and cultivate *qi* through various practices. The *qikong* is roughly divided between *jinggong* (*qigong* focusing on quiet meditation) and *donggong* (*qigong* forms practiced with bodily movements with breathing control techniques)[95], as well as other practices of healthcare such as dietetics, herbology, massage, and sexual yoga. Acupuncture massage is a form of massage combining massage and acupuncture. The idea is similar to acupuncture therapy which uses the technique of inserting fine needles into acupuncture points to regulate the *qi*-flow. Acupuncture massage is like doing massage to stimulate the acupuncture points to enhance the *qi*-flow to facilitate the innate healing ability of the body (Kong 2005). Chinese dietetics, including food cures and diets, is known as Chinese mediated diet or nutritional therapy based on the principle of eating selected food according to the healing properties of the food[96] for the purpose of prevention or healing, or to perform fasting for religious self-cultivation. It is not only used as a medical prescription but it is also popularized as local knowledge practiced in everyday life for health and healing.

It is apparent that Wijayakusuma's applications of acupuncture massage and gymnastics in performances of *wudu*, *salat* and dietetics in Ramadan recipes reflect influences from the practices of Chinese bodily cultivation in such a way that a bodily

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[95] Generally speaking, *donggong* consists of gymnastics, Taiji Quan (Great Ultimate Boxing), and martial arts, while gymnastics is gentler than martial arts in bodily movements, and sometimes its practice is combined with massage.

[96] In a general classificatory system, food has three main properties: stimulating (heating/*qi*-enhancing), calming (cooling/*qi*-reducing), and neutral (Kong 2005, 138).

imaginary behind the Chinese body technique has been transplanted in the Muslim's body. But there are some interesting differences among his three books on Islamic rituals and his other healthcare books which do not deal in particular with Islam. Although the ideas of meridian system and acupuncture points in his discourse on *salat* are based on the theory of *qi*, Wijayakusuma does not explain the principle of *qikong* as he has done in other books. To avert possible criticisms that his application is a physical exercise rather than Islamic ritual obligation, he places the intention (*niya*) in the center, stressing the importance of pious intentions and highlighting the totality of the body, including the physical and spiritual aspects. It seems that he does not want to make the performance of *salat* and *wudu*t resemble non-Islamic acupuncture massage and gymnastics.

Second, Wijayakusuma slips in some elements of prayer in a Chinese gymnastics- Swing Arms Gymnastics, which has nothing to do with religious cultivation. Nevertheless, he suggests that practitioners should focus on prayers at the same time. His suggestion is not usual from what we know about Swing Arms Gymnastics.[97] In other words, Wijayakusuma's Swing Arms Gymnastics incorporates some religious elements in Chinese gymnastics.

Wijayakusuma's innovation of incorporating Chinese techniques of bodily cultivation has created some new elements in discourses on Islam rituals. A similar combination of martial arts and Islamic pureness occurs among the Hui community of Inner Mongolia, China. According to Hallenberg (2002, 2003), there is a symbolical link between *wudu* and Hui Muslim martial arts. *Tangping* (water-bottle) is a tea kettle-like washing can. It is a hot water bottle with a lid, a handle, and a spout. It was originally from Inner Asia, and it is still used by Hui Muslims for *wudu* before performing *salat*. Gradually, the *tangping* has become a symbol for *halal*, used as an ethnic icon on signboards to indicate the Hui Muslim's pureness apart from non-Muslim Chinese (Hallenberg 2003). There has a long tradition of martial arts among the local Hui Muslims, and it has produced discourses claiming that the practice of martial arts is legitimated by the religious textual authority of Sunna and Hadith (Hallenberg 2002). One of the Islamized forms of martial arts is called *Tangpingkong* (*Tangping* style boxing). The tangping is not used as a weapon. Instead,

[97] Generally speaking, the Swing Arms Gymnastics is a common exercise, practiced among the elderly or ill people for preservation of health or self-healing. When practicing Swing Arms Gymnastics, in addition to swinging the arms, the practitioners also exercise breathing techniques and the meridian system that can facilitate the circulation of *qi* inside the body and improve health. Compared with other *qi*-qong or meditation, Swing Arms Gymnastics is easy because it does require complex techniques of meditation and exercise of *qi*-qong. It is usual gymnastics, having nothing to do with religious practice. However, Wijayakusuma suggests that the practitioners should focus on praying at the same time. His suggestion is not unusual from what we know about a common style of Swing Arms Gymnastics. In other words, Wijayakusuma's Swing Arms Gymnastics has brought some religious elements into a traditional Chinese gymnastics; similarly, the massage of acupuncture points has been integrated into performing *salat*. His aim is to combine Islam and Chinese longevity techniques.

the practitioner's body imitates the form of *tangping* in exercises of *Tangpingkong*, including a series of movements and practice of *qikong*. There are some interesting similarities among martial arts, *salat*, and *wudu*. For practitioners who perform martial arts after *salat*, "ablutions were necessary before practicing *wushu* (martial arts) just as they are before performing prayer" (Hallenberg 2002, 168).

By comparing the application of bodily cultivation in Wjiayakusuma's *salat* discourses, revision of Swing Arms Gymnastics, and Hui Muslims' Islamized form of martial arts, we can see that the technique of bodily cultivation has been infused in the discourses of Islamic ritual, and vice versa.

Asian religious cultures have rich traditions of self-cultivation that exercise mind and body through physical and meditational training. The body has long served as a vehicle for the religious cultivation that can be analyzed by Mauss's concept of "techniques of the body" in which the body is seen by Mauss as "Man's first and most natural instrument" (2006, 83). The term is also transformed to another concept, borrowed from Aristotle, "habitus", which "vary especially between societies, education, proprieties and fashions, prestige" and are understood as "the techniques and work of collective and individual practical reason" (2006, 80). This points to the socially informed body which can physically cognize and master things in practice. The bodily imaginary in Asian religious traditions is unlike that of the traditional Western vision of body which is based either on Christianity that divides pure spirit which is eternal and transcendent and the body as flesh which is worldly and inferior, or trapped in the Cartesian model, established by Rene Descartes, that believes the mind is superior to the material world and the division of spirit and flesh is ontologically irreconcilable. By contrast, the Taoist vision of body-mind believes that both own the essential oneness, which is of homological importance to the religious cultivation (Kohn 2005, 31-50).

We have discussed how elements of Chinese bodily imaginary have been infused in the performance of Islamic rituals that relates the characters of the Islamic rituals with healthcare by a way of a technique of bodily cultivation. What is required next is examining how *salat* has become as a bodily technique and is transformed in building bodily imaginary as a part of the modern Muslim's self.

3.2.7 Embodying *Ibadah*: Modern Muslim's Self as a Social Imaginary

According to Wijayakusuma, carrying out acts of *salat* with pious intentions and acupuncture massage will lead to mental, spiritual, and physical well-being. Such a

state of well-being will facilitate the formulation of a pious self, eventually leading to the establishment of a disciplined, rational, and wholesome Muslim society.

Wijayakusuma's application of Chinese bodily cultivation in the performing of *salat* has created a ritual discourse, stressing that the body can serve as a vehicle for Muslims to temper mental tranquility, exercise physical health, discipline the social behaviors, and formulate good Muslim community. His *salat* discourse has raised the question of how to consider the cultural meaning of body and the character of Islamic rituals in view of the paradigm of embodiment and theory of practice.

After examining the *salat* practice of three Indonesian Muslim groups, Bowen (1989) concludes that examining the discursive practice of *salat* is more useful than observing the symbolism of *salat*. This is because the *salat* is a simplistic ritual without profound symbolic meaning that offers a space where various Muslim groups can appropriate their interpretations of *salat* in diverse contexts, fulfilling the need of identity politics. Bowen concludes (1989, 615):

> …the prostrations and recitation in the salat do not have the intrinsic symbolic richness of the Ndembu milk-tree, Trobriand spells or any circumcision rite. Movement of Islamic reform and revival often have attempted to purify the historical links between the prophet's salat and current practice by opposing symbolic elaboration... The salat is not structured around an intrinstric propositional or semantic core. It cannot be 'decoded' semantically because it is not designed according to a single symbolic or iconic code. In particular times and places Muslims have constructed the salat as conveying iconic code or semantic meanings, but as part of particular spiritual, social and political discourses…

Since Bowen's pioneer study of *salat* in anthropology, emphasizing the approach of discourse analysis, research has come a long way. Some of this research is published in a collection titled *Islamic Prayer across the Indian Ocean*. In the concluding remarks of this work, Stephen Headley looks at the language and bodily posture used in *salat*, as well as at how the congregational form of *salat* contributes to consolidating the *umma*,. His main theoretical concerns are the linguistic and social dimensions of prayer.

The above theoretical approaches have considered *salat* with regard to discursive, linguistic, and social functional aspects. However, they have also shown some theoretical insufficiency of being unable to cover the symbolic implication and embodied dimension of the practice of *salat*. Islam in the light of the ritual practice of *salat* has been understood by some western scholarship as "a religion of orthopraxy more than of orthodoxy, focused more on ritual practice and proper comportment than

on theological doctrines and philosophical reflection" (Power 2004, 426). Power (2004) criticizes those who describe Islam as "mechanically ritualistic", "ethically superficial," (2004, 426) and thus "defective religion," (2004, 453), saying that such opinions are based on the assumption that a complete religion should be inner-oriented, spiritual, and individual. He argues that the concept of religion "in *fiqh al-ibadat* is consistently presented in bodily, formalistic terms, an embodied orientation toward God" (2004, 450).

A similar critical reflection is found in Asad's (1993, 27-54) critique of Geertz's definition of religion. Asad observes that the concepts, symbols, moods, motions, concepts used by Geertz, have put the interiority as a center of religiosity. This mode of religiosity works to implicitly fit into some style of religiosity such as Protestantism. However, some other religions like Catholicism and Islam are oriented more toward embodying practice, discipline, and community but less toward belief and the status of the individual believer. Following a similar critical line of thinking, he argues that the anthropological theory of ritual inherited a tradition of reformist Christian theology, and has assumed the semantic distinction between outward sign and inward meaning that universalizes the concept of ritual as symbolical action. It fails to see that the embodied dimension in ritual practice has implicated discipline, emotion, and body techniques (Asad 1993, 55-79). Thus he states that ritual is (1993, 62):

> …therefore directed at the apt performance of what is prescribed, something that depends on intellectual and practical disciplines but does not itself require decoding. In other words, apt performance involves not symbols to be interpreted but abilities to be acquired according to rules that are sanctioned by those in authority: it supposed no obscure meanings, but rather the formation of physical and linguistic skills.

Hence, Bowen's claim that *salat* is an Islamic ritual lacking in symbols has been shown to have glaring epistemological limits. By examining Islamic scholarly tradition and the interpretation of *wudu* and from different Islamic jurisprudential arguments and theological interpretations on *wudu*, Katz (2005) concludes that the ritual discourses of *wudu* contain symbolic meanings. But it does not mean that he agrees that the "interpretive-textual model" is undoubtedly fit for analysis of Islamic ritual; instead he emphasizes (112):

> …to critique the understanding of ritual as "symbolic communication" is not to assert the absence of meaning. The essence of the critique is not that there are no

> meanings involved in ritual practice, but that the decoding of symbols or the communication of meaning is not its raison d'etre. The symbolic logic of ritual is an embodied logic, and its meaning are physically mastered rather than spiritually pondered or intellectually understood.

In what sense can "the symbolic logic" of *salat* be an "embodied logic", and what kind of meaning can be "physically mastered?" Henkel disagrees with Bowen's interpretation and argues that *salat* has been most clearly structured 'around an intrinsic propositional or semantic core'" (2005, 498) The practice of *salat* is like "a minutely choreographed body technique" (2005, 498) through which Muslim practitioners "generate and maintain their commitment to the Islamic tradition." This commitment is also "systematically integrated into more encompassing forms of life, shapes the practitioner over time" in which the ideal Muslim lifeworlds are shaped. Thus Henkel sees *salat* as "the absolutely fixed point of the Islamic tradition" (2005, 503) and defines it as "a part of a matrix of disciplines and institutions in which Muslim forms of subjectivity and social relations are forged and reproduced" (2005, 489).

Henkel attempts to methodologically apply phenomenology to *salat* and sees it as an original point of bodily practice for constructing Muslim lifeworlds. But he does not consider how the ritual practice constructs the Muslim self. In examining the Egyptian Muslim women's *Salafi* movement, Mahmood (2005) finds that *salat* can be a bodily technique and a discipline through which the religious self is not only constrained, but the self is also realized by the rigid conduct of life directed by the practice of *salat*. Mahmood compares two *salat* discourses. One emphasizes *salat* as a sign showing absolute submission to God while the other discourse considers *salat* as a direction contributing to the formulation of civil consciousness. She argues that "the body as a signifying medium stands in no determinate relationship to the self" (2001, 848), so that even when *salat* is practiced in the same cultural milieu, it may lead to different effects. Hence, the significance of bodily practice should include "an analysis of the particular conception of self and authority in which these practices reside" (2001, 848). After comparing Henkel's and Mahmood's analysis of *salat*, I have come to the conclusion that there is no essentialized character of *salat*, which correspondingly formulates the homologous social conduct and religious subject. In accordance with Althusser's theory of ideology, we should critically scrutinize how the practice of *salat* has enacted its power of ritualization on the practitioner's body to "*hail or interpellate concrete individuals as concrete subjects,* by the functioning of the category of the subject" in which it either constrains a pious self, or outwardly

formulates the conduct of life.[98] It appears that the practice of *salat* may offer a source of self-formation as a foundation of Muslims' modern bodily imaginaries. As Gole has indicated, through public presentation of "new Islamic languages styles, corporeal rituals, and spatial practice" (Gole 2002, 173), Muslims appropriate, and imagine a new religious self in modern contexts. The bodily discourse of *salat* regards the body as an instrument to "incorporate a set of crucial qualitative distinctions, giving it a sense of orientation and distinction considered to be a higher form of life," (Gole 2003, 820) and "turn them into voluntary sign of self-definition and self-empowerment in public" (Gole 2003, 820).

Wijayakusuma's application of acupuncture massage and gymnastics in *salat* assumes that the body has its own capacity to heal itself. Hence the performance of *salat* becomes a body technique and a physical and spiritual exercise in which Muslims can improve their mental, physical and spiritual health. Wijayakusuma believes *salat* can lead to the formulation of morals, a disciplined and organized life as well as the establishment of a wholesome Muslim society. In particular, his application of self-cultivation of Chinese medicine, originally developed from Taoist cultivation, adopts the idea of Chinese bodily cultivation as a modern bodily imaginary, which entails the notion of Chinese bodily thinking during the performance of *salat*.

Such a bodily imaginary reflects three implications in the ritual discourse of *salat*. Henkel's phenomenological approach attributes the practice of *salat* as a bodily fundamental commitment to the ultimate truth of Islam in which the daily ritual acts universally to "enable both changing interpretations of the Islamic tradition and the affirmation of Muslim community across different interpretations of Islam" (2005, 489). Wijayakusuma goes further to corporealize the performance of *salat* as the "bodily location of Islam" (Henkel 2005), which is supposed to be the origin of constructing Muslim lifeworlds. His appropriation of Chinese bodily cultivation is based on empirical knowledge of Chinese medicine that is rather different from other Islamic spiritual healing, which usually attributes healing to supra-natural power. Unlike Mahmood's case, Wijayakusuma's inscription of a body technique in the practice of *salat* is not trapped in the discipline of power enacted on the Muslim's self.[99] Alternatively, he argues: "*salat* is not solely a physical exercise, nor an unanimated rigid regulation or military discipline which allows no free will and choice." *Salat* should be performed in a calm and peaceful environment in pursuit of balance in mental and physical health.

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[98] The original text is: "*all ideology hails or interpellates concrete individuals as concrete subjects,* by the functioning of the category of the subject" (Althusser 1971, 173).

[99] Another interesting analysis on the power and ritualization of body is to explore how Islamic rituals are used by African-American Muslim in Nation of Islam; see (Edward E. Curtis IV 2002).

Wijayakusuma's agenda not only makes *salat* a technique for health care but also expands the ritual effect through a relaxed approach to achieve self-discipline and self-civilizing consequences. The idea of considering of *salat* as self-discipline and self-civilization is also applied by Egyptian textbooks to create a modern version of Islam, guiding school children to cultivate a modern sense of moral of cleanness, discipline, and order by performing *wudu* and *salat*.[100] Therefore Wijayakusuma's interpretation is not completely unique in this regard, but what is interesting about his ritual discourse is that he imbues a bodily imaginary with elements of Chinese health care in the practice of *salat* to inject the image of Muslim self and society. He even stresses that if we worship God with acts, the spirit of executing *salat* should further enable Muslims to have active and energetic lives; they would not become obstinate, static, repressed and apathetic because rigidity in life is akin to death.

Wijayakusuma's re-formation of the ritual performance of *salat* as a technique of bodily cultivation has offered a way of imagining a modern collective Muslim self underpinning a bodily imaginary. We need to explore how the performance of *salat* has been transformed as a way of "Islamic making of the self" and how the micro-practice of Islamic rituals associated with it offer a blueprint for formulating a modern Muslim self and a modern Muslim society.

Sociologists have elaborated on the Weberian thesis of "The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism" to show how religious values can direct a modern "conduct of life" by constructing a modern mentality that is more suitable to satisfy the need to adapt to the modern capitalist society. It would seem that a similar Weberian thesis can be used to explain the religious impact of modern Islam on the formulation of modernized everyday life among Indonesian Muslims, especially the largest modernist Muslim organization in Indonesia, *Muhammadiyah* (Peacock 1978; Sukidi 2006). Wijayakusuma does not discuss many ideas that have any obvious relevance to the application of Weberian thesis, but there are some similarities, such as trying to take *salat* as collective practices or bodily technique to discipline the Muslim's pious self and civilize the Muslim society. Wijayakusuma's ritual discourse has innovated a tradition of *salat* as a bodily cultivation, which provides consequential methods to be practiced for individual healthcare and collective communal lives. It has shown that his experience of Chinese medicine makes him inclined towards incorporating the

[100] This is evident in, for instance, a text cited by Gregory Starrett (1995, 962): "Because in prayer there is rising and bowing and prostration, all actions that invigorate the body, and the Muslim devotes himself to work with zeal and energy, and increases production and spreads the good, and promotes (the progress of) the nation…Prayer accustoms us to order, and the keeping of appointment, and the binding together of Muslims with cooperative ties and love and harmony…Collective prayer binds society with tie of brotherhood and equality, as it acquires every Muslim with the conditions of his brothers."

bodily practice of *wudu*, *salat*, and ritual fast in healthcare for the Muslim community.

3.3 A Controversy Surrounding Chinese-Indonesian Muslims' *Salat Imlek* in Central Java

After the former Indonesian president, Megawati Setiawati Soekarnoputri, made *Imlek* (Chinese New Year) a public holiday of Indonesia in 2002, a local branch of the PITI held their 2003 *Imlek* celebration in a famous mosque in Yogyakarta, central Java. Even before the *Imlek* celebration was held, some Muslim organizations had expressed their concerns and opposition. They were uncertain whether *Imlek* was a religious festival of *Khongkauw* (Confucian Religion), and wondered why ethnic Chinese who had converted to Islam would still want to hold such a celebration in a mosque. Because of these concerns and the controversy it had caused, the Yogyakarta PITI held two seminars to pacify those who had raised the issue. University scholars and experts on Islamic law were invited to clarify that *Imlek* was a cultural tradition, having nothing to do with Chinese religions, so that *Imlek* celebrations in a mosque would not violate Islamic law. Clearly, despite *Imlek* being declared a national holiday, the Chinese-Indonesian Muslims' *Imlek* celebration seemed to have touch a nerve among the majority Muslim community..

This study looks closely at the controversy caused by the Yogyakarta PITI's performance of *Imlek Salat* (*Sholat Imlek*)[101] in a mosque. First, in the two seminars held to avert Muslim criticisms, what questions were raised and what was the response to critics regarding the use of the mosque for the Chinese-Indonesian Muslims' *Imlek* celebration? The controversy seemed to stop temporarily in 2004, but in 2007, a fatwa was issued by a local religious teacher, who proclaimed *Imlek* as one of *Khongkauw*'s religious festivals, and insisted that this ritual performance be prohibited, and that *Imlek* decorations should not be used by Muslims. Chinese-Indonesian Muslims should wholeheartedly embrace Islam instead of performing an Islamic ritual with a Chinese character.

Secondly, I intend to discuss why *Imlek*, a Chinese ethnic and cultural calendar festival, is so often confused as a religious festival of *Khongkauw*, which only takes place in Indonesia. Two historical factors may be connected to Souharto's repressive ethnic policy categorizing *Imlek* as being affiliated with Chinese religions, beliefs, and custom and his religious policy which compelled followers of *Khongkauw* to fall

[101] This term is addressed by an Indonesian anthropologist Heddy Shri Ahimsa-Putra (2004).

in line with an ideal state-recognized religious model. This policy inadvertently pushed *Khongkauw* to incorporate traditional Chinese calendar festivals into its own religious festivals, thus bringing about the controversial debates on Chinese-Indonesian Muslims' *Imlek* celebrations.

Although adherents of *Khongkauw* were absent at the debates, their appropriation of *Imlek* in opposition to Yogakarta PITI's *Imlek* celebration had been addressed by Muslims who suspected the *Imlek* celebration was a *bid'a*. The fact that two Chinese-Indonesian religious groups incorporated their religious traditions to *Imlek* shows that Chinese-Indonesian religious practices are in line with two modes of religious pluralism. Considering recent developments of the Chinese cultural revival among Chinese-Indonesian communities, the conflicting ideas of *Imlek* have been central to the politics of multiculturalism in the post New Order period during which the PITI Yogyakarta competes with other Chinese-Indonesian religious groups for recognition by the Muslim majority to represent the ethnic Chinese minority.

3.3.1 Origin and debates of *Salat Imlek*

On 13 February 2003, a Chinese-Indonesian parliament member of DIY Yogyakarta (Yogyakarta Special Region), Budi Setyagraha (alias Huang Ren Cong), who was also the chairperson of Yogyakarta PITI (1984-2003), organized a celebration of *Imlek* at Syuhada Mosque,[102] one of the most famous ancient mosques in Yogyakarta. On that day, there were around 100 Chinese-Indonesian Muslims on the second floor of Syuhada Mosque, who had gathered to perform *salat* and prayer (*do'a*) to express their thanksgivings to God.

The head of Indonesian Council of Religious Scholar (MUI, Majelis Ulama Indonesia) of Daerah Istimewa Yogyakarta KH Thoha Abdurahman was invited to attend the *Imlek* celebration. In his lecture, he reminded his audience not to make the celebration a cause for confrontation with one another. He regarded *Imlek* as a cultural tradition rather than the commemoration of Confucius' birthday. Another invited speaker, anthropologist Syafri Sairin of Gadjah Mada University, spoke in similar terms, describing *Imlek* as a Chinese cultural (rather than religious) tradition. He explained that Confucianism was a philosophy and that even Korean Christians embraced Confucianism. He discouraged identifying Chineseness with Confucianism. The meeting was initiated with the reading of the Quran, followed by lectures, and ended with performing *salat* through two ritual-circles. Some of the participants wore

[102] The Syuhada mosque is the most important 'reformist' mosque of Yogyakarta.

traditional red Chinese costumes. A banner with Chinese characters written with "Happy Chinese New Year 2555" (*Selamat Tahun Baru Imlek* 2555) was also hung inside the prayer hall. The whole ceremony was carried out very smoothly.

Although the Yogyakarta PITI had sought and received permission from the provincial MUI prior to holding the celebration,[103] there was some opposition to the *Imlek* celebration being held in a mosque. The head of Executive Board of the Indonesian Holy Warrior Council (*Lajnah Tanfidziyah Majelis Mujahidin*), Irfan S. Awwas, asked that the activity be cancelled because he believed that such a celebration in a mosque would confuse the followers of Islam and *Khongkauw*, and might lead to a misunderstanding. The head of PP *Muhammadiyah*, Achmad Syafii Maarif, thought that if the idea of celebrating *Imlek* in the mosque had caused controversy, it would be better not to hold it.[104] In an interview with me, a leader of Yogyakarta PITI, Budi Setyagraha, mentioned that he was aware of the controversies surrounding the *Imlek* celebration, even though *Imlek* had been declared a national holiday. "We [Chinese] are guests", he said, so we should not celebrate *Imlek* too exuberantly, and should be careful not to cause conflicts because it is more important to sustain the government's good will. If unfortunately ethnic conflicts happen again, then the policy may have to be changed again." Nevertheless, he still insisted that Chinese Muslims should organize their own *Imlek Salat*.[105]

The celebration of *Imlek* by Chinese-Indonesian Muslims in a mosque had led to much criticisms relating to whether this was in conflict with Islamic law. In order to respond to critics and address some misunderstandings, Setyagraha organized a seminar at Gajah Mada University (UGM) on 15 October 2003, inviting two university professors and an expert on Islamic law. They explained that *Imlek* was a Chinese traditional calendar festival, and had nothing to do with religious festivals; hence the *Imlek* celebration held by Chinese Muslims was not against Islamic law.

The seminar was held in conjunction with an initiation ceremony to nominate new leaders for Yogyakarta PITI. Budi Setyagraha's wife, Lie Sioe Fen, succeeded him as chairperson. At the seminar, the general chairperson of PITI and several leaders of local PITI branches were also invited. Due to concerns over a possible disruption, several policemen were stationed inside the lecture hall. Nonetheless, the seminar went smoothly, despite some members of the audience voicing their

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[103] There are two news reports about how the Yogyakarta applied for and got permission from the MUI; see Sinar Harapan (2003) and Nusantara (2003).

[104] The news about the first *Imlek* celebration, please see (Nugroho 2003).

[105] Setyagraha's decision to organize a controversial ceremony may be related to his experience of racial discrimination. Between 1999 to 2001, he bought a piece of land from a Javanese. But his application to transfer the landownership was rejected by the land office of the local government. The land office referred to a discriminative law based on his ethnic background, so he was not allowed to own the land. Finally he submitted his case to the Supreme Court but was unsuccessful; the Court denied his cassation. Please see Andreas A. Susanto's doctorial dissertation (2008, 140-142).

suspicions regarding the *Imlek* celebration. Among the three guest speakers who were responsible for clarifying *Imlek* from the perspectives of anthropology, Chinese philosophy and Islamic law, the two professors from UGM avoided discussions on the controversy; they failed to explain how *Imlek* had become associated with *Khongkauw*. However, the other speaker, Malik Madaniy, a lecturer at State Islamic University and an official member of MUI, was able to defend the view that *Imlek* was not a religious festival, and so the *Imlek* celebrated by Chinese-Indonesian Muslims did not go against any Islamic law.[106] Madaniy added that Islam was known to be a peaceful, tolerant, accommodative religion, which respected differences and accorded equal treatment to all (Madaniy 2004: 5). He added that Islam prohibited forceful conversion to any religion. Madaniy also reminded the audience that Islamic law allowed accepting proper customs (*adat kebiasaan yang benar*), and noted that when preaching Islam during the early Islamization of Java, the saints took tolerant and accommodative views toward local cultures and infused them with Islamic values; they did not oppose or destroy the local cultures. He explained that the traditional Chinese calendar had been used for hundreds of years even before the Christian era. The first well-established official traditional Chinese calendar (*Imlek*) was implemented by the Emperor Wu (B.C 156-B.C. 87) of the Han Dynasty (B.C. 202-A.D. 220), who decided to take Confucius's birth year as the beginning year in his traditional Chinese calendar in B.C. 84. Because of that, for instance, the year of A.D. 2003 is read as "Tahun *Imlek* 2554" (551+2003=2554).[107]

Madaniy further explained that *Imlek* was not necessarily a part of *Khongkauw*.[108] At the beginning, Confucianism was embraced as a philosophy; later, its followers made it into a religion. Notwithstanding the change in its status, whether Confucianism was a set of ethics, a philosophy or religion, *Imlek* had been celebrated according to the calendar tradition of Chinese New Year before the birth of Confucius. Thus while *Khongkauw* adopted *Imlek* as a part of ritual practices, it did not mean that *Imlek* belonged exclusively to any religion. What needed to be observed, as Madaniy suggested, was the fact that the Yogyakarta PITI wanted to avoid the religious connotations imposed exclusively on *Imlek* by *Khongkauw*. By contrast, the Yogyakarta PITI wanted to reclaim *Imlek* as an ethnic and cultural festival, while

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[106] The Yogyakarta branch of PITI took M. Malik Madaniy's explanation as a supporting document, and later published it in the journal *Komunitas*, an official magazine of East Java branch of PITI in Surabaya at the beginning of 2004.

[107] Madaniy's explanation of why Chinese New Year was calculated from Confucius's birth year (B.C. 551) is a common belief in Indonesia, but this common belief is not correct. It is neither supported in Chinese history nor does it explain why the "Confucian calendar" is only used in Indonesia. Later I shall discuss that the origin of Confucian calendar was only around the end of 19th century, why is this calendar is still used in Indonesia, and why its use makes people regard *Imlek* as a religious festival of *Khongkauw*.

[108] About a short introduction to the development of *Khongkauw*, see pp.11-12.

infusing Islamic characters with their cultural tradition. Madaniy stressed:

> That is why there is no hindrance for Chinese-Indonesian Muslim community to express thanksgiving for the coming of New Year by performing salat and praying according to the religious teaching of Islam. Moreover it can be considered as an additional media of dakwah. (Madaniy 2004).

Finally Madaniy concluded that Chinese-Indonesian Muslims should be able to celebrate *Imlek* anywhere, whether in a mosque or prayer house (*mushollah*); it should be not a problem because the mosque is open to all Muslims, regardless of their ethnic or cultural background.

The presentation of three lectures was followed by question time.[109] Among the audience was a university student who commented that since the Chinese-Indonesian Muslims had chosen to embrace Islam, he did not see why they still wanted to celebrate Chinese New Year. Then he raised doubts about whether Chinese-Indonesian Muslims should be allowed to celebrate Chinese New Year. He asked: "…by allowing them to celebrate *Imlek*, are we (the non-Chinese Muslim majority) allowing them to 'recover' their original ethnicity"? A local religious teacher brought up the issue of the legality of Chinese Muslims celebrating *Imlek*. He believed that the *Imlek* celebration should be considered from the perspectives of faith and religious obligation. As such, non-Islamic festivities should not be celebrated by Chinese Muslims, unless *Imlek* was an *adat* and had nothing to do with religious faith and obligation. If so, then *Imlek* celebrations would not be a problem for Islam. However, the religious teacher added, if *Imlek* was part of a non-Islamic religious faith or obligation, it should not be mixed with Islam.

Yet another member of the audience questioned why Chinese-Indonesians still wished to celebrate *Imlek* in light of the fact that Muslims should embrace Islam wholeheartedly (*masuklah Islam secara kaffah*); he believed that Islam required its followers to embrace the religion through a comprehensive approach. For this reason it did not matter why *Imlek* was celebrated by Chinese-Indonesian Muslims. Nevertheless, if the reason for doing so was because *Imlek* was regarded simply as a cultural festival, he argued that Muslims would celebrate *Imlek* with the adherents of Konghucu. This might in turn lead to an association of Islam with *Khongkauw*. For instance, if Muslims wanted to celebrate Christmas, and Christians wanted to join *salat* and *idul fitri* or *idul adha*, it would not be religious tolerance but rather, an intervention to be actively involved in another religion. Hence, he held the view that Muslims should not be allowed to join the religious performance mixed with other

[109] The discussion is summarized from my sound recording in the seminar.

religions because each religion has its own religious rituals. He, however, emphasized that this did not mean that Muslims were not tolerant but that they just respected the religious beliefs of other communities. Another participant questioned why adherents of *Khongkauw* were not invited to the seminar. Had the controversies surrounding *Imlek* been explained by one of them, it would have been more convincing. Since there were no adherents of *Konghucu* among the speakers, the discussions in the seminar lacked persuasion and conviction, despite the defense of *Imlek* from various perspectives. As the speakers did not have sufficient knowledge on *Imlek* and *Khongkauw*, it was difficult for the audience to accept their views. [110] Yet another member of the audience suggested that it was better to stop *Imlek* celebrations until all the doubts had been cleared, otherwise more problems might arise. Another member of the audience took a more moderate stand, saying that if *Imlek* was a part of Chinese culture, and later imbued with Islamic culture, this would not pose any challenges; but if *Imlek* was promoted to be associated with one of the fundamental Islamic obligations and faith, the fundamental basis for its celebration would lose its meaning.[111] Yet another audience member asked whether celebrating *Imlek* in Islamic style allowed Chinese-Indonesian Muslims to go back to their original cultural tradition. Clearly such views show that celebrating *Imlek* in a mosque in China may seem fine, but it might not be a good idea to do so in Indonesia.

Thus seminar apparently failed to erase suspicions that *Imlek* was a religious festival of *Khongkauw*. Nevertheless, the Yogyakarta PITI decided to continue to celebrate *Imlek* in the same mosque, but it held a second seminar on 30 January 2004.[112] Like their first *Imlek* celebration, the audience gathered at the upper floor of the mosque and performed *salat* first, but unlike the first celebration one thing was different: after completing the *Salat Imlek*, the participants moved to an assembly hall on the ground floor to join a seminar. On that day, red lanterns decorated the entrance to the first floor of the prayer hall, reflecting the festive atmosphere of Chinese New Year. At the seminar, a guest speaker from the UGM, Heddy Shri Ahimsa-Putra, reminded the audience that he wanted to explain the meaning of Chinese-Indonesian Muslims' *Imlek* celebration in Yogyakarta from the perspective of cultural anthropology instead of Islamic law. In addition to repeating some general points about *Imlek* as a traditional cultural festival, he highlighted some interesting observations on the significance of *Salat Imlek* in which Chinese-Indonesian Muslims performed *salat* and prayer in the mosque for the purpose of expressing thanks and

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[110] This person may not know that one of the three speakers, Lasiyo, is an expert taking *Khongkauw* as his PhD study; See (Lasiyo 1992).
[111] It questions that Imlek can be celebrated by performing *salat*.
[112] In addition to my field observation, there are two news items on this event; see (GudegNet 2004a and 2004b).

praying for God's blessings. He observed that many festive symbols, such as the colour red, dragon and lion dances, Chinese temple, burning incense, steamed rice cake (*kue keranjang*), had not been used in the *Imlek* celebration by Chinese-Indonesian Muslims. Instead, Chinese-Indonesian Muslims performed *salat* in their ceremony. By comparing a recent development of performing *Yasinan* ritual for celebrating Islamic New Year in the country regions of Yogyakarta, Ahimsa-Putra argued that *salat* was performed for various reasons on different occasions for Muslims to express their devotion and thanksgiving to God.[113]

Thus, it is understandable why Chinese-Indonesian Muslims performed *salat* in their *Imlek* celebration in the same manner. So, if *salat* could be practiced for various reasons, why were the Chinese-Indonesian Muslims unable to celebrate their New Year by performing *salat*? Using as an illustration a recent development about *Yasinan* ritual performed for Islamic New Year in villages of Yogyakarta, Ahimsa-Putra thought that *Yasinan* was a form of invented tradition, but the Prophet did not prohibit local customs which were not against the principles of Islam. We may then ask: why were the Chinese-Indonesian Muslims not able to celebrate their own New Year based on their own traditional calendar? Like the *Yasinan* ritual in which Muslims recite surat *Yasin* and doa, request blessing from God for the coming of Islamic New Year, Chinese-Indonesian Muslims in the *Imlek* celebration also perform *salat* and recite *doa*.

Ahimsa-Putra (2004, 6-8) thought that *Salat Imlek* might be likened to a cultural acculturation in which various cultural symbols mix together, contributing to a mutual understanding among different ethnic groups and Muslims, facilitating cultural and social integration. In other words, *Imlek Salat* might encourage some Muslims, who had little sympathy for Chinese-Indonesians, to be more concerned about this ethnic minority. According to Ahimsa-Putra, *Imlek Salat* could also be a *da'wa* medium to attract Chinese-Indonesians who wanted to convert to Islam, and to even become a cultural property of collective memory for ethnic Chinese and the other Indonesians who were not Chinese descendants. Nevertheless, he appealed to Chinese-Indonesian Muslims to celebrate *Imlek* not only by performing *salat* in mosques but also in their homes and with their families.

The *Imlek* celebration of Chinese-Indonesian Muslims has become a particular

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[113] *Yasinan* is a religious meeting and gathering for reciting sura Yasin as it is believed that by doing so at the meeting, they can have more blessing or merits than when they recite other suras. However, we may question whether the comparison of the performance of *Yasinan* in Islamic New Year with the *Salat Imlek* of Chinese-Indonesian Muslims is appropriate in the defense of *Imlek* celebrations by Chinese-Indonesian Muslims. Although *Yasinan* is accepted according to traditionalist Muslims such as Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), it is still controversial because some religious teachers argue that *Yasinan*, like other Muslim rituals, *manakiban* (reciting prayer and poetry in reminiscence of an iman) and *tahlilan* (people gather in praying for people who are dead), is *bidah* (improper innovation), and that it should be prohibited.

cultural practice of Chinese-Indonesian Islam, and is distinguishable from the cultures of Javanese Islam, Chinese-Indonesian Christianity, and Chinese-Indonesian Buddhism (Ahimsa-Putra 2004, 8-9). During the *Imlek* celebration, Chinese-Indonesian Muslims try to "preserve the memory of Chinese culture with an expression of Chineseness… on the other hand, the *Imlek* celebration performed by Chinese-Indonesian Muslims is different from what was performed by their ancestors in the past" (Ahimsa-Putra 2004, 9). Furthermore, this new ritual practice has created a cultural change because "Chinese-Indonesian Muslims' conceptions about the human world and place are different from those of their ancestors" (Ahimsa-Putra 2004, 9). Such views are "firmly linked with Islamic symbols that have not been articulated with Chinese cultural symbols at all. This has produced a complex symbol connecting symbols of Chineseness and Islam, which may not have been shaped very clearly, but is very possible for it to be realized" (Ahimsa-Putra 2004, 10).

Ahimsa-Putra then suggested an approach to deconstruct the *Imlek* symbol. He proposed that PITI members consider annexing Javanese cultural codes to *Imlek* decorations. For instance, Javanese foods might be served instead of Chinese cuisine and Javanese attire could be donned instead of traditional Chinese costumes for *Imlek*. He also suggested that *Imlek* celebrations adopt green instead of the traditional red color, and "*Gong Xi Fa Cai*" be written in Javanese characters instead. However, Ahimsa-Putra might have arrived at his conclusion too quickly. At the *Imlek* celebration, the Yogyakarta PITI arranged a particular performance in which a man dressed up as a traditional god of wealth distributed *angpau* (cash gift) to young, unmarried members of the audience. The organizer also prepared food packages for all participants. In each package were some oranges and a steamed cake, representing Chinese symbols of good fortune.

After the two seminars, no significant controversy surrounding the *Imlek* celebration of Yogyakarta PITI has been raised again. However, this does not mean that all voices of suspicion and opposition have died down. In 2007, a fatwa entitled "*Imlek is an Unbeliever's (kafir) Religious Festival, Not Simply a Tradition: A Prohibition on Joining the Celebration*", posted on a website was issued by Ustadz Muhammad Shiddiq al-Jawi[114] (2007). It shows a clear sign of strong opposition against the *Imlek* celebration of Yogyakarta PITI. In the *fatwa*, a question was asked about whether Chinese-Indonesian Muslims were allowed to celebrate *Imlek*, and whether it was correct for Chinese-Indonesian Muslims to claim *Imlek* as a tradition rather than a part of religious teachings. al-Jawi disagreed with Budi Setyagraha's idea; he cited a book (Winarso 2001) on the religious festivals of *Khongkauw*. So he concluded that *Imlek* was a religious festival of *Agama Khonghucu* (the Confucian

[114] al-Jawi is also a leading activist of Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia, a radical Islamist movement.

religion) rather than just a Chinese cultural tradition.[115] al-Jawi referred to the preface of this book, which argued that it was a mistake to understand *Imlek* as a Chinese tradition, independent of religion. Winarso (2001) cited some Confucian classical texts which described the transcendence of the Heaven and the importance of worship to the Heaven in the "beginning of spring", and that *Imlek* had religious meanings of awe and faith for the adherents of *Agama Khonghucu*. These citations were used by al-Jawi to drive home his point. He argued that since *Imlek* was a part of *Agama Khonghucu* rather than a tradition, Chinese-Indonesian Muslims should be prohibited to join in the celebration of Imlek.

Al-Jawi argued that, even though the criterion to judge whether Muslims can celebrate *Imlek* is based on whether *Imlek* can be regarded as a tradition cultural celebration, this does not mean that Muslims will accept all traditions. For instance, casual sex in western Christian society has become a common practice, even though it is an immoral deed and is not a part of Christian teaching because Christian religion prohibits adultery. Can Muslims accept casual sex simply because it is a common practice rather than part of Christian religion? In this context, the fatwa may indirectly scorn the idea of defending *Imlek* as a tradition.

Al-Jawi extended his judgment to the celebration of *Imlek* as a form of religious prohibition to Muslims. According to the Quran and the *Sunnah*, Muslims are not allowed to participate in non-Islamic religious activities, including *Imlek* and its associated ritual practices, and even greeting "*Gong Xi Fat Cai*" to the Chinese. It is also prohibited to decorate houses and offices with Chinese-styled lanterns or dragon illustrations and other decorations in red. Performances for celebrating *Imlek* such as live band, Mandarin karaoke, and cooking demonstrations are also not allowed. The idea of prohibiting Muslims from participating in non-Islamic religious activities also extends to other religious activities including Christmas Day, Buddha's Birthday, and Easter. Finally, the fatwa had a stipulation for Chinese-Indonesian Muslims:

> We wish that you enter deeply into Islam and to embrace Islam wholeheartedly (*kaffah*). Please do not—hopefully Allah kindly confers his blessing on all of you—follow the footsteps of Satan; that is, you have converted to Islam but still retain other non-Islamic religious teaching which you embraced and practiced before, such as celebrating Chinese New Year.

In fact, a fatwa requiring Muslims not to attend Christmas celebration was issued by the MUI in 1981 (Mudzhar 1993, 1996), but in al-Jawi's case, since he

[115] See Hendrik Agus Winarso (2001), *Mengenal Hari Raya Konfusiani: Tinjauan Ibdah, Makna, dan Teologinya*, Semarang: Effhar & Dahara Prize. The book was prefaced by the General Chairman of *Khongkauw* Hs. Tjhie Tjay Ing.

concluded that the cultural exhibitions and entertainments organized in *Imlek* were classified as religious activities, he was of the opinion that Muslims should not attend such celebrations. This view also reflected his personal hostility to Chinese-Indonesian popular culture.

The opposition to the *Imlek* celebrations of Yogyakarta PITI from 2003 to 2007 has become a topic of much discussion. Since *Imlek* has been legalized as a public holiday, why does the *Imlek* celebration continue to generate so much controversy? How and why is *Imlek* considered to be a religious festival of *Khongkauw*, and why has the Chinese calendar led to so much confusion?

3.3.2 Confused knowledge of Chinese calendar and *Imlek*

Why do debates on the *Imlek* celebrations continue unabated in Indonesia? The controversy is whether *Imlek* should be regarded as an ethno-cultural or religious festival in Indonesia, where Chinese New Year is counted from the birth year of Confucius.[116] There are four factors which are related to the public's perceptions of *Imlek* with Chinese religions, in particular *Khongkauw*. First, since the Dutch colonial period, many non-Muslims has always participated in the celebration of Chinese New Year, until the public performance of Chinese religions and customs, including Imlek, was prohibited by the Souharto Government. While there was no particular mention of *Imlek*, the official definition and repressive regulation placed upon Chinese religions and customs had withdrawn *Imlek* celebrations from the public sphere and caused Chinese-Indonesians to be more unfamiliar with their festival traditions. The official definitions had led to the confusion surrounding *Imlek*, as it was often thought to be ambiguous in nature or seen as a part of Chinese religions. Second, during Chinese New Year, Chinese-Indonesians frequently visit temples as well as participate in ancestral worship to ask for blessings for the coming year. Third, the self-constitution of *Khongkauw* was a response to the repressive policies relating to the Chinese minority, particularly religious policies. *Khongkauw*'s claim of *Imlek* as its religious festival had subsequently formulated a popular perception of *Imlek* as a religious festival. Fourth, the confusion relating to the Chinese calendar has led to the association of *Imlek* with *Khongkauw.*

On December 6 1967, Souharto issued a Presidential decree (No. 14/1967) concerning "Chinese religion, beliefs, and traditional customs in Indonesia which

[116] According to Ching-hwang Yen (1986), Malaysian Chinese once promoted the use of Confucian calendar at the end of the 19th century, but nowadays Chinese New Year is not counted from the Confucius's birth year in Malaysia.

focus on the country of their ancestors, and which in their manifestation can give rise to inappropriate (*kurang wajar*) psychological, mental, and moral influence on Indonesian citizens, and so form an obstacle to the process of assimilation, need to be regulated and their functions placed in their proportion."[117] Therefore, the decree dictated that the "Chinese practices of observance which possess aspects of cultural affinity focusing on the country of their ancestors, their performance must take place internally within the family of individually." It required that the celebration be performed "in a way which is not conspicuous (*mencolok*) in public, rather they should be done within the family environment" (Coppel 2002, 34-35). In 1980, a joint decision issued by the Minister of Religion, the Minister of Internal Affairs, and the Attorney General further illuminated what "Chinese practices of observance which possess aspects of cultural affinity and which have their source in the country of their ancestors" in the presidential decree (No.14/1967) means:

> … all those forms of activity such as the realization (*perwujuddan*) of the internalization (*penghayatan*) of beliefs, religiosity (*kerohanian*) and spirituality (*kejiwaan*) which have characteristics and potentials of Chineseness (*ke-Cinaan*). Such activities can take the forms of procession, celebration of religious festivals, dragon (*liong*) performance, a lion dance (*tari singa*) and other similar forms.[118]

Although these instructions neither directly focused on *Imlek* nor discussed the character of *Imlek*, they resulted in profound repression of the public expression of Chinese culture, including Chinese religions, customs, and *Imlek* celebrations. In other words, *Imlek* was associated with a vague but inclusive category of "Chinese religion, beliefs, and traditional customs."

Since the mid-1960s, there has been a policy to convert all Chinese temples (*klenteng*) into Buddhist temples (*vihara*) in order to move away from the Chinese elements in Chinese temples. Many Chinese *klenteng* changed their names to *vihara* under the organizational banner of Buddhist associations, but this does not mean that all Chinese elements of worships and deities inside the temples had completely become Indonesianized. Instead, many *klenteng* only nominally changed their titles to Buddhist *vihara* to preserve their religious traditions. Thus one might find that *Imlek* is still celebrated in "Buddhist temples". In January 1991, the Minister of Religious Affair appealed to Buddhists not to celebrate *Imlek* in Buddhist temples because *Imlek* was not considered a Buddhist religious festival (Suryadinata 1997, 172) Two years later in 1993, the WALUBI (*Perwakilan Umat Buddha Indonesia*, Indonesia

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[117] The English translation of the presidential decree by Coppel (2002, 34-35).
[118] See Coppel's translation (2002, 38)

Buddhist Council) issued a letter, supporting the policy of Ministry of Religious Affairs and appealing to Buddhists not to do so (Perhimpunan Indonesia-Tionghoa 2007).

Although the celebration of Imlek has retreated to Buddhist temples, it is still not spared the government's purge. *Imlek* is not recognized as a Buddhist religious festival. In 1996, the Governor of Jakarta made an appeal in which he repeated the government's regulation, adding that "Chinese New Year is not a Buddhist religious festival, but a festival of Chinese tradition or culture."[119] Interestingly, the Governor of Jakarta showed concern that the date of *Imlek* was very close to *Lebaran.* Many Chinese-Indonesians would close their shops and this might cause inconvenience for shoppers who needed to prepare for the Islamic holiday. In light of continued targeting of *Imlek* since the early New Order period, it appears that both the government and even Chinese-Indonesians have tried to trace *Imlek* festival to a niche of religious activities, including *Khongkauw* - a new religion that did not existed in China but was founded in Indonesia in the beginning of the 20th century.

From the debates, it is evident that the use of the Confucian Calendar for calculating *Imlek* and the *Khongkauw*'s claim on *Imlek* as its religious festival are two important factors which serve as causes for concern. According to Salmon (2005), taking Confucius's birthday as the beginning of the calendar has been a practice in Surabaya since 1880. The widespread use of the Confucian Calendar is also found in documents of The Archives of the Chinese Council (*Kong Koan*) of Batavia around the end of 19th century.[120]

The application of the Confucian Calendar was facilitated by the development of *Khongkauw* in Indonesia. It was influenced by a Confucian revival movement championed by a famous high-ranking officer of the *Qing* Dynasty (1644-1912), K'ang Yu-wei (1858-1927). In the beginning of the 20th century, the THHK (Tiong Hoa Hwee Koan) was also influenced by the Confucian revival movement in China, taking Confucianism as an ideology to reform Chinese customs which had been mixed with indigenous customs.[121] Although the Confucian revival movement of

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[119] The original official document is from *Surat Seruan Nomor 04 Tahun 1996 tertanggal 14 Februari 1996*; I refer to Coppel's case study (2002, 213-226).

[120] It was "a semi-autonomous organization, which from the 18th until the 20th century the local elites of Batavia's Chinese community joined hands to supervise and coordinate social and religious matters." (Blusse and Chen 2003, 1)

[121] K'ang had a radical agenda, suggesting that the emperor of Qing Dynasty should adopt Confucianism as a state religion by which the Confucian Religion can become a powerful collective value such as Catholic Church in the west to motivate the whole China in their struggle to become a rising power and wealthy country. In his proposal of political reformation, K'ang reinterpreted the image of Confucius as a prophet whose thinking represented the holy idea of the Heaven. By doing so, the Emperor of Qing Dynasty would function as the Pope; the Confucian classics would become holy books offering religious teaching disseminated through the Confucian seminary system and Confucian clergy; Confucian temples should be established nationwide to function as churches; and the traditional Chinese calendar system and Chinese era naming system should be replaced by the Confucian calendar.

THHK was unsuccessful, it left two legacies, namely the use of Confucian Calendar as a way of determining Chinese New Year and the development of *Khongkauw*.[122]

During the New Order Period, *Khongkauw* adapted itself to the model of the official discourse of religion (*Agama*) by emphasizing the features of religion in "constituting a way of life for its adherents, teaching belief in the existence of One Supreme God, having a holy book (*kitab suci*), and being led by a prophet (*nabi*)" (Abalahin 2005, 121). According to the policy requiring each religion to have its own council, Confucian Religion organized *Madjelis Tinggi Agama Konghutju* (MATAKIN, Supreme Council of the Confucian Religion in Indonesia) in 1967, taking the concept "*Tien*" (Heaven) as the existence of One Supreme God, nine Confucian classics (the Four Books and the Five Classics) as the holy books[123], issuing Eight Principles of the Faith (*Rukun Iman*) as a kind of "*fiqh*", organizing a three-hierarchy of clergy, creating ritual performances performed for important occasions such as wedding ceremonies, and assigning religious festivals such as *Imlek* as Confucius' birthday.[124]

After Suharto stepped down, MATAKIN continued its campaign to be recognized as the 6th official religion. It also promoted *Imlek* as a public holiday and invited Presidents Abdurrahman Wahid, followed by President Megawati Sukarnoputri, and subsequently President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono to join the *Imlek* celebration. In 2000, Wahid's lifted Presidential Decree No. 14/1967, and delivered a message that the government had no need to identify any state-recognized religion. MATAKIN has since made effort to "recover" the former status of Confucian Religion as "state-recognized," which was lost in 1979. Moreover, it is believed that the status of *Imlek* as a public holiday is attributed to one of MATAKIN's contributions to the Chinese-Indonesian community. Although Megawati's Presidential decree to declare *Imlek* as a public holiday on the grounds that it was regarded a Chinese cultural festival, many still believe the government's decision was due to the fact that there was no other ethnic cultural festival officially recognized as a public holiday. The involvement of the three presidents was politically significant because it was evidence of a multicultural spirit in the national religious policy aimed at according equal treatment of all religions in Indonesia. The

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K'ang's movement eventually failed, but the influence of Confucian revival movement survived in Southeast Asia, and its legacy lingered on in Indonesia (Hsiao 1959).

[122] About the development of *Khongkauw*, see Abalahin (2005), Coppel (2002, 228-333), and Suryadinata (1978).

[123] The MATAKIN even translated the nine classics as Confucian "Old" and "New" Testaments (Abalahin 2005, 129).

[124] Khongkauw presenting itself as a model of agama for obtaining the status of a state-recognized religion is not a unique case. Catholics, Islam, and Protectionism were the first three religions recognized by Indonesian government. In order to achieve this status as a state-recognized religion, Buddhism and Hinduism also reformed themselves to suit this model of agama; see Bown (1987), Ramstedt (2004), Schiller (1996), and Suryadinata (1997).

formulation of *Khongkauw* in the mode of *agama* and promotion of *Imlek* as its religious holiday have thus given people reasons to believe that *Imlek* is a religious festival belonging to *Khongkauw*. This is why some Muslims oppose *Salat Imlek*. On the other hand, other Chinese-Indonesians who are not adherents of *Khongkauw* feel unhappy because they think that MATAKIN should not appropriate *Imlek* as their own religious festival (Perhimpunan Indonesia-Tionghoa 2007).

To put matters in historical perspective, the numbering system used in Indonesia to calculate *Imlek* is indeed an "invented tradition" of the 19th century which was later appropriated by the Confucianists to redefine Confucianism as religion. It has no obvious links with the traditional calendar enforced by Emperor Wu of the Han Dynasty. Emperor Wu's contribution to the formulation of Chinese calendar was that he united the diverse and inaccurate calendar systems of that time. The numbering years of the dynastic Chinese calendar was associated with the formal name of the era and with an emperor's regal title. The Chinese emperor could use several names to label his era but the beginning of each new era restarted the numbering of the year back to year one. In other words, the Chinese dynastic calendar did not use a numbering style like the Gregorian calendar which is numbered conventionally from the birth year of Jesus. It was likely that Chinese-Indonesians adopted the Confucian Calendar, which was invented by ethnic Chinese in Surabaya and Batavia at the end of the 19th century. This creative invented tradition had inadvertently contributed too much confusion about the connections between Confucian Calendar, *Imlek*, and Confucius.

3.3.3 Double Religious Pluralism and Transgressions of Festival Politics

Yogyakarta PITI's and MATAKIN's choices of channeling religion to *Imlek* appear similar but they are, in fact, in accordance with two modalities of religious pluralism. The first modality of religious pluralism is compelled by the state's religious policy based on an exclusive definition of agama that "equally recognizes and treats" five religions during the New Order era. MATAKIN has complied itself to an ideal model of *agama* through which *Imlek* is appropriated as their most important religious festival. During the New Order era, by claiming this official religious pluralism, the state has taken a pseudo-neutral position as a moderator that allows various Christianity-Islam debates, since it is under the legal protection of the Constitution of Indonesia, which considers religious faith as a civil obligation (Mujiburrahman 2006). In spite of such an exclusive definition of agama, it has left an ambiguous space

referred to as *budaya* (cultures) and *adat* (customs), thus allowing other unrecognized traditional religious practices to be implemented (Woodward 2011). Madaniy's and Ahimsa-Putra's tolerant explanations indicate the second modality of religious pluralism in tolerant traditions of Indonesian Islam. It leaves more ambiguous space for Muslims to argue and explain various performances of Muslim rites, but Islamic law still insists on upholding certain principles associated with the Islamic faith.

Therefore, *salat*, as a principle of religious worship in Islam in the five pillars, does not allow any improper change (*bida*) to fit the needs of any Muslim community (Bowen 1989). The Yogyakarta PITI is embedded in an *adat/budaya* space, by performing *Salat Imlek*, a lightly invented Muslim ritual, to demonstrate their cultural citizenship.[125] However, their performance of *Imlek Salat*, displays a resistant hybridity which simultaneously involves both Muslim politics and festival politics. It comes as no surprise then that the Muslim majority's suspicions are aroused in relation to the sincerity of Chinese Muslim conversions.

In the debates on Chinese-Indonesian Muslims' *Imlek* celebration in Yogyakarta, Chinese-Indonesian Muslims and adherents of *Khongkauw* did not meet together on the same occasion, but their conflicting points of view on *Imlek* were shown by Chinese-Indonesian Muslims' *Salat Imlek* and the suspicions of other Indonesian Muslims. Consistent with the argument of Hoon (2009), the controversial appropriations of *Imlek* caused by the MATAKIN and the Yogyakarta PITI have sparked off a competition for legitimacy of representing Chinese cultural traditions among Chinese-Indonesian communities. Although there is no real rivalry between the two religious organizations, conflicting interpretations of *Imlek* still occur because MATAKIN's official definition of *Imlek* is so influential that many regard *Imlek* as a religious festival. Its definition excludes the legitimacy of the invention of *Imlek Salat* by Chinese Muslims. In the wave of Chinese cultural revival, this new development has been considered as a sign that a civil society is being created in Indonesia, where there is a new discourse of multiculturalism, different from the well-known motto "*Bhineka Tunggal Ika*."

In spite of significant rejoicing for the liberal atmosphere, some Chinese-Indonesians did not completely feel optimistic about the reopening of social and cultural space for the ethnic Chinese minority because some still viewed it as a political trick for getting election votes; others were concerned that it might cause

[125] Indonesia's religious policy identifies six state-authorized *agama* (religion) based on a monotheistic model that prohibits many popular religious practices and faith to be associated with *adat* (custome), *budaya* (culture), and *kepercayaan* (beliefs). On the other hand, there has been a tolerant but sometimes controversial space of Islamic law in Indonesia to debate whether some Islamic *ibadah* (obligation of worship) is *bida* (improper invention). See Beatty (1999), Kipp and Susan (1987), Muhaimin (1995), Syam (2005), and Woodward (2010, 28-67). Woodward provides a very stimulating discussion about this issue.

potential jealousy leading to ethnic conflicts and eventually the cancellation of the public holiday (Hoon 2009). Thus, celebrating *Imlek* was still being contested in related ethnic politics as there was opposition from the indigenous majority (Chan 2009).

At the centre of the debates surrounding *Imlek* were two main parties – the Chinese Muslims and the indigenous Muslims; it is by no means easy to determine which party's view was the better one to adopt. It is even harder to determine who was to blame for generating the many controversies about the *Imlek* celebrations. The Chinese Muslims had to face the hostility of the majority; they had to deal with the majority's unilateral strong criticisms. This is because Muslims objected to some aspects of *Imlek* celebration, which were based on *Khongkauw*'s religious ideas, a locally invented Chinese-Indonesian religion and the indigenous invention of knowledge pertaining to the Chinese calendar. As an ethnic religious minority, Chinese-Indonesian Muslims had to put up with even more severe criticisms when their ritual ceremonies took place in Muslim majority areas, where the people were intolerant of syncretistic ritual practices in Islam. On the other hand, taking into account the confusion surrounding the Chinese calendar shared by Muslims, whether they were pro-*Imlek* or otherwise, it appears that while a dynamic hybrid cultural tradition was very influential, people still took it for granted and practiced it unintentionally. The controversies and complications surrounding the celebration of *Imlek* in Yogyakarta were due in no small part to the web of intricate and complex relations among *Imlek*, *Khongkauw*, and *Imlek Salat*. *Imlek*'s origin and authenticity remain a hotly contested topic within the demarcations between culture and religion.

3.4 Building Traditions for Bridging Differences: the Islamic Imaginary Homelands of Chinese-Indonesian Muslims in East Java

In 2003, the regional PITI of East Java (PITIJT) based in Surabaya built a mosque in the Chinese style. The mosque was named *Cheng Ho* (or *Zheng He*)[126] to commemorate Cheng Ho's great voyages and his contribution to the spread of Islam in Indonesia. If there were no direct relation between the Chinese Hui Muslims and the Chinese-Indonesian Muslims, why then did the PITIJT link its own Islamic tradition to the Chinese Hui Muslims by promoting the history of Cheng Ho and building a mosque in the Chinese style? By building the Cheng Ho Mosque, the

[126] *Cheng Ho* is usually used in Indonesian.

Chinese-Indonesian Muslims of the PITIJT had created an alternative socio-religious space, empowering themselves to improve ethnic relations between the Chinese-Indonesian minority and the indigenous Muslim majority after the downfall of President Suharto. Through the ingenious Cheng Ho mosque, an invented Islamic tradition of PITIJT simultaneously articulated a discourse of religious-cultural intimacy between Chinese and Indonesian Islam, and appropriated Islamic Chineseness from the traditions of the Chinese Muslim Hui. It represented a symbolic convergence of Chinese-Indonesian non-Muslims and indigenous Indonesian Muslims.

3.4.1 The Regional PITI of East Java and its Invention of Chinese Indonesian Muslim Traditions

The regional PITI of East Java (PITIJT) was established in 1987 in Surabaya. In 1995, the association thought that it was important to establish a foundation to deal with financial matters. The first chairman of the PITIJT decided to name this foundation the Cheng Ho Foundation. Why did the PITIJT regard Cheng Ho as an important figure? Cheng Ho was a Chinese Muslim, a descendant of Hui Muslims. His voyage and diplomacy were heralded as initiation to Islam, which was especially important for Chinese immigrants in Southeast Asia. The legend of his voyage, a metonym for the Chinese diaspora in Southeast Asia and the dissemination of Islam from China to the Malay world, had led to the apotheosis of Cheng Ho in the Chinese diaspora community of Southeast Asia.

Why had Cheng Ho been exalted to this position and why was it accepted by Chinese migrants in Southeast Asia? According to An (2003), Chinese migration to Southeast Asia was never supported by the Court, which considered it a sign of disloyalty to the dynasty. Chinese sojourners had to face much hardship; they had to compete with indigenous people and the challenge of Western colonizers. Therefore, Cheng Ho represented an official envoy of the court, and was thought to have come to help Chinese sojourners and protect them. Till this day, Cheng Ho is worshiped in several Chinese temples in Indonesia and Malaysia. The most famous Chinese temple of Cheng Ho, Sam Po Kong, is located in Semarang, a city in central Java.[127] In this temple, Cheng Ho is worshipped by the Javanese and ethnic Chinese; the former commemorate him as a Muslim holy man, and the later venerate his great

[127] In official Chinese documents, there is no evidence showing that Zheng He had ever visited Semarang, but the local ethnic Chinese of Semarang believe that it is true. See my chapter 2.

achievement in helping Chinese sojourners in the early days. As both Javanese and Chinese worship Cheng Ho, the PITIJT uses Cheng Ho as a symbol to bridge cultures. Cheng Ho's voyage had become a part of the collective memories of the ethnic Chinese of Southeast Asia.

The PITIJT established a sacred origin from Cheng Ho's history as a point of interaction between Islam, China and Indonesia, and proof of the Chinese contribution to the spread of Islam in Indonesia. As a Vice-Chairperson of the PITIJT said:

> Cheng Ho might have been the first person to spread Islam in Indonesia. Why don't we Chinese elevate the position of Chinese instead of Arabic?...We just want to tell them [Indonesian Muslims] that Cheng Ho was a Muslim and expect that they will look at us in a different light![128]

3.4.2 The Cheng Ho Mosque: the Invention of an Islamic Imaginary Homeland

In 2002, the PITIJT discussed the construction of a building for worship. Initially, the plan was to build a small worship room; only later was the construction of a mosque planned. The main person to address the proposal of building the mosque in the Chinese style was the General Secretary of the PITIJT, who said (Figure 3.3):

> At the time, I thought of how to build a mosque that could show our ethnic Chinese character. I started collecting some books about the mosques of Chinese Muslims. Finally, I took the Mosque of Ox Street in Beijing as a main reference for my blueprint and discussed this idea with other architects.[129]

Interestingly, when I asked the General Secretary whether he had been to China and visited this mosque, he told me that his first visit to China was before he converted to Islam. So he had never visited Ox Street in Beijing, and only knew of the mosque through a book.

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[128] Interview with a Vice-Chairperman of PITI of East Java in September 2003.
[129] Interview with the General Secretary of PITIJT in October 2003.

Figure 3.3

The Ox Street (Niujie) Mosque, Beijing, China.

As we can see in the photograph (the front cover and Figure 3.4), the architecture of the Cheng Ho Mosque is in the traditional Chinese style with distinctive features—a three levels of tower-like green masonry structure on the roof of the prayer-hall, with several red pillars and blue and green beams.[130] There is also a horizontal inscribed board with Chinese calligraphy written by the ambassador of China in Indonesia. Yet this mosque's design does not only use Chinese design styles. In the prayer hall there is a rostrum beside the *mihrab* (the niche in a mosque indicating the direction of Mecca), which is also used by a modernist (the second largest) Muslim organization, *Muhammadiyah*. Cheng Ho Mosque does not follow the traditional mosque style of placing a *minbar* (a pulpit with a ladder used for delivering sermons) on the right side of the *mihrab*, a typical facility used by the *Nahdlatul Ulama*, the largest traditionalist Muslim organization in Indonesia. A drum is hung in the right wing, and is used for calling people to prayer, which is typical of traditional Indonesian mosques, but not those of *Muhammadiyah*. Standing at the center of the prayer hall and looking toward the roof, we find a regular octagonal geometric decoration on the ceiling that is inspired by the idea of the Chinese Eight Diagram (*Ba Kwa*). In traditional Chinese geometry, the Eight Diagram has the power to drive out evil powers.[131] Due to its particular style, the mosque has become a famous religious landmark. Many Muslims living in East Java and some who live in

[130] The photo I used as the front cover is a digital revision photo, which I intend to use it to indicate a utopia image of Chinese-Indonesian Muslim culture. This photo is produced by the PITIJT; the real picture of Zheng He Mosque please see the figure 3.4.

[131] The designer said that the assonance of *ba* is similar to *fa*; in Chinese it indicates prosperity and development.

the outer islands go there to worship.

Figure 3.4

The Cheng Ho (Zheng He) Mosque, Surabaya, Indonesia.

Although the General Secretary of the PITIJT claimed that the idea for his design was inspired by the Ox Street Mosque, if we carefully compare the two mosques we can see that the Cheng Ho Mosque adopts only one building of the Ox Street complex. In fact, many traditional forms of mosque architecture in China are a complex, with detached pavilions within a walled garden enclosure (Luo 2002). The traditional Chinese mosque is more splendid, but this construction would not have been practical or economical for the PITIJT.

Although the style of the Cheng Ho Mosque is very different from that of indigenous Indonesian mosques, it adopts facilities that are used in *Muhammadiyah* and *NU* mosques, demonstrating that it is in harmony with the ideas of the two largest Muslim organizations and reflecting that Chinese Indonesian Muslims seek a balanced position following the main current of Indonesian Islam.

Since the Qur'an offers no direction on standardized mosque architecture, mosque styles are usually influenced by local architectural elements, especially regional styles of the Middle East. Indonesian mosques also reflect regionalism and eclecticism, and show a diversity of influences from their pre-Islamic heritage such as an ancient vernacular tradition, Indonesia's Hindu-Buddhist past and influences from the Near East. However, even though there were Chinese Muslims in Java during the 15th and 16th centuries, and some aspects of several mosques built in the past were Chinese, the remains were too fragmentary for the PITIJT to use as a model to copy

(Heuken 2003). Hence, it was reasonable to find inspiration from the architecture of Chinese Islam based on a photo of the Ox Street mosque.[132]

In addition to the main construction, a relief of Cheng Ho's voyage has been placed on a wall on the right side of the mosque, and a sculpture of Cheng Ho's main vessel sailing on the sea (a pool) is located before the wall. The relief shows Cheng Ho's firm face and an emperor's edict in his hand. There are two different scenes on each side of Cheng Ho—China is on the left side and Indonesia is on the right, showing that Cheng Ho's voyage signifies communication between China and Indonesia, or Chinese culture and Islamic culture. Interestingly, it is very rare to see such a relief behind a mosque (Frishman et al. 1997).[133]

The designer of the Cheng Ho Mosque is a second-generation Chinese Indonesian who converted to Islam around 1994. He had only been to China once before converting to Islam and may not have been very aware of Hui Muslim traditions. Hence, the style and architecture of the Cheng Ho Mosque refers to and expresses the characters of Chinese Islam, reflecting a hybrid style. In any case, the Hui are not a homogeneous group. Their ethnic origins are in Central Asia and the Middle East, and they gradually assimilated into Chinese culture, speaking Chinese or local dialects, dressed in Chinese-style clothing, even adopting Chinese customs and finally being sinicized by the surrounding Han majority. I will now look closely at the diversity and dynamics of Hui Muslims that the PITIJT draws on by examining two works.

First, Gladney's (1991) comparative discussion of Hui communities in four regions shows that their identities are expressed diversely according to the different local contexts. For the Hui community living in northwest China, Islamic belief is the most fundamental identity. In other words, to be Hui is to be Muslim (Gladney 1991, 117-170). The second example is the Hui community living in Beijing's urban areas, which adopts cultural traditions such as the pork taboo, the ownership of business, and craft profession, as part of their cultural identity (Gladney 1991, 171-228). The cultural identity of the Beijing urban Hui community includes the significance of

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[132] Lombard and Salmon (1991) mention a five-storey mosque imbued with Chinese elements of pagoda in Jepara based on a picture of the 18th century. Interestingly, van Dijk (2006, 52-54) offers a clearer picture of this mosque, which can be traced to 1659. It shows the influence of Chinese elements in the early Islamization of Java. But the designer of Cheng Ho mosque had no idea about that during my meeting with him in 2003 and 2005. I went to Mantingan mosque at Jepara to visit a site with holy graves. It is said that one of the graves (which belonged to Pangeran Hadiri, who had other two names, Wintang and Cie Wiegwan), was a Chinese captain. Nowadays only some ancient Chinese wooden sculptures were left as decorations on the wall of the mosque and no any remain of the old mosque with Chinese-style is left.

[133] Actually, some Muslims criticize the relief of 'Cheng Ho's Voyage' as violating the Qur'anic prohibition on making imagines and idols, but local leaders of the two important Muslim organizations, *Muhammadiyah* and *NU* still support the design. They think it is only a decoration and has nothing to do with idol worship.

ethnic economic status because their traditional occupations such as managing small restaurants, preserves and expresses their cultural identity (ibid.). Thirdly, in Chang-Yang Hui village (located near a rural area of Beijing), Hui villagers maintain their ethnic identities through endogamy, which expresses their belief and maintains an uninterrupted descent from Muslim ancestors and continued Hui heritage for their future generations (Gladney 1991, 229-260). Fourth is the Hui community on the southeast coast, which despite an Arabic ethnic background, is almost assimilated into Han Chinese culture (Gladney 1991, 261-292).

Gladney's study indicates that expressions of Hui ethnic identity are relevant to ecological contexts. If Hui communities are located in isolated regions far away from Han communities, they may hold pious religious beliefs and have a distinct ethnicity. While Hui communities in regions surrounded by Han majorities (in urban areas) might find it difficult to maintain their beliefs and ethnicity, they may gradually assimilate into Han culture.

I focus on Gladney's findings because they allow us to consider which part of Hui culture the PITIJT refers to, and ask whether we can be sure that the association derives its Islamic Chineseness from Hui Muslim culture. A native thinking of the Hui usually identifies a Han Chinese person as non-Hui because most Han Chinese are not Muslims, and Hui are regarded as a backward ethnic community by the Han; the Chineseness of the Hui and Han are not entirely the same. Moreover, unlike the Hui migrant communities in Central Asia, Hong Kong, Malaysia, Singapore, Taiwan and elsewhere, there are no recent Hui migrants in Indonesia. Most Chinese Indonesian Muslims are new converts with no direct historical relations to Chinese Islam (Liu 2004).[134] Therefore the re-establishment of the historic relations between the Chinese Hui Muslim community and the PITIJT is part of a new phenomenon that involves acknowledging Cheng Ho's voyage and his contribution to the spread of Islam in Indonesia, paying visits to Hui Muslim communities in China, and building a transnational Chinese Muslim network.[135] Why, then, are Chinese Indonesian Muslims trying to construct a new tradition by visiting Chinese-speaking Muslim communities and heaping praises on Cheng Ho ? The answer is that it probably provides them with 'imaginary homelands' [136]within a tradition of Islam that extends back before its arrival in the Malay world.

The second work I want to consider is Maris Boyd Gillette's observations of an 'Arabization' of Islam in the Hui community in Xi'an since the 1980s. She (2000, 77)

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[134] In addition, I heard from two interviewees that there are Hui immigrants in Indonesia, but this has not been established by any Muslim organization.

[135] An interviewee from a regional PITI told me that they wished to construct a transnational pan-Chinese Muslim community.

[136] This is Salman Rushdie's concept.

regards this Arabization as:

> …the recreation of an "authentic" Islam through reference to the Middle East, [and] thus a response to modernization even as it provided a model for modernization. In the Xi'an Muslim district (and in other Muslim societies), Arabization was particularly compelling because it was exclusive Muslim.[137]

The opening of China and its economic reforms since the early 1980s have allowed Hui Muslims to do business and study aboard in Arabic countries. This has re-opened a channel of interaction between Hui Muslims and the Muslims of the Islamic heartland. The traditional Chinese style used in mosques has thus been questioned as not belonging to Islam (Gillette 2000, 96).[138]

The irony of this situation is that to construct its Islamic Chineseness, the PITI has to refer to Hui Muslims in order to form its 'imaginary homelands,' but at least one of those homelands is transforming itself as its understanding of the Islamic Middle East increases. However, this does show that the PITI is using the Hui Muslim tradition as its paradigm without slavishly following recent trends and developments. Interestingly, since Hui Muslims are regarded as belonging to the social margins in China, there has been an attempt since the Ming dynasty to incorporate Han-style design into Hui architecture. This means that when Chinese Indonesians design a mosque following the Chinese style, they are tapping into an ancient tradition of the Hui Muslims.

To what extent, then, can Chinese Indonesian Muslims understand the Islamic tradition of Hui Muslims? Although the PITIJT has published in its magazine an introduction to the history of Chinese Muslims, it seems not to have understood the inter-ethnic relationship between the Hui and Han, or how the Hui recognize their ethnicity as being different from the Han.

This lack of differentiation is reflected in the promotion of Cheng Ho's heritage. The Chinese government has also encouraged the study of Cheng Ho, organizing conferences and publishing books on the issue since the 1980s. This reached its peak in 2005 with an official celebration of the 600th anniversary of Cheng Ho's voyage. One of the main reasons for the Chinese government's promotion of this part of history is so that it can declare a historical basis for its quest for maritime supremacy outside of its national borders in the South China Sea. Hence, PITI's promotion of Cheng Ho and his contribution to the spread of Islam in Indonesia contribute to a sort

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[137] Armijo (2008) also finds a similar development in the Hui Muslim Community of Southwestern China.

[138] For instance, some animal-like roof tiles that are used for mosque ornamentation are questioned as disobeying the monotheism of Islam.

of pan-Chinese influence in Southeast Asia.

3.4.3 A Third Space: Social Meanings of Islamic Conversion in Relation to the Chinese Indonesian Identity Politics of the Reformation Era

Conversion to Islam is not common among Chinese Indonesians, but conversion can help to produce a new socio-religious space. Under the banner of Islam, the PITIJT shares the same religion with the Indonesian Muslim majority, thus creating for itself a niche for more interaction with local government and other Muslim organizations. However, the PITIJT's reverence for Cheng Ho and references to the Hui as their 'imaginary homelands' have created a diasporic tradition that incubates a kind of Islamic Chineseness, which—not incidentally—is very different from other forms of diasporic Chineseness.

This is a new social and religious space, like Homi Bhabha's concept "the third space":

> …we see that all forms of culture are continually in a process of hybridity…the importance of hybridity is not to be able to trace two original moments from which the third emerges, rather hybridity to me is the 'third space' which enables other positions to emerge. This third space displaces the histories that constitute it, and set up new structures of authority, new political initiatives…(Rutherfold 1990, 211).

This third space indicates strategies of cultural hybridization that shows the symbolic function of PITIJT's Zheng He Mosque is different from the two main approaches of Chinese Indonesian socio-political movements during the Reformation Era. According to Suryadinata (2001), the first approach focuses on the interests of Chinese Indonesians as a distinct ethnic group, and the second approach appeals to a broader concern for human rights such as anti-discrimination without confining itself to those of Chinese ethnicity (Suryadinata 2001). The PITIJT's third space seems to be closer to the first approach, but there are some differences. As a Muslim organization, it provides a worship service and initiation courses for new converts that are focused solely on Islam. The PITIJT organizes social relief activities for all Muslim communities, which shows that its social concern is not merely confined to Chinese Indonesian communities. But this does not mean that the PITIJT does not care about Chinese Indonesian issues. It has done much work to argue against the

position that conversion to Islam should involve total cultural assimilation by providing Mandarin courses, supporting a revival of Chinese cultures, and promoting Chinese festivals and the history of Chinese Islam in its magazine. This has won the association much trust from indigenous Muslims and non-Muslim Chinese Indonesian associations. In its third space, the PITIJT as a Muslim organization, is empowering Chinese Indonesians by working with indigenous Indonesian Muslims. As many interviewees mentioned, the PITIJT has constructed a bridge between the two communities, attempting to move beyond ethnic and religious exclusivity.

The case of the PITIJT shows that an alternative socio-religious space is a good approach to the reconstruction of social justice and the improvement of inter-ethnic relations. The Cheng Ho Mosque offers worship services to any Muslim, regardless of ethnic background. I visited a weekly prayer session on a Friday and saw many indigenous Muslims attending. A Chinese Indonesian mosque contributing to the Muslim community in Indonesia is a great achievement, and reflects the tolerance inherent in Islam.

3.5 Lampion: A Chinese-Indonesian Muslim's *Nashid* Group

Nashid is a genre of Islamic song which originated from the Middle East. It was first brought to Malaysia and gained popularity in the late 1980s.[139] *Nashid* has since spread to other countries with Muslim populations. In Indonesia, *nashid* is popular in mosques, Islamic boarding schools, and universities. It has become a part of the culture of young Muslims as it is intertwined with student's radical activism and 'Campus Islam' (al-Malaky 2003). *Nashid* has become part of the more popular genres of record industry. *Nashid* bands produce various types of CDs, music videos, as well as perform on TV (Barendregt 2006a, 2006b). In Malaysia, the amateur *nashid* competition has shown "the growing social awareness of Islam and the public

[139] According to Matusky and Tan (2004, 262-263), "*Nashid* songs comprise sung poetry using Middle Eastern rhythms with Islamic themes for the purpose of spreading Islamic values. It is believed that *nashid* originated from Middle Eastern folk songs…These songs remind us of our human nature (especially for Muslims who read and study the *Q'uran* and the Hadith). They also serve to inculcate good moral values and habits, and stress the importance of religion and allegiance to the nation. The word "*nashid*" or "*inshad*", is derived from the word "*nashada*," meaning to "look for" or "to search". Adding the letter a to the *nashada* "*anshada*" means to recite poetry or verse with high and low vocal inflections as if singing zikir…Hence, *nashid* is generally connected with song (or music) resulting from singing serious (or classical) poetry, and with the expression of patriotic sentiment…Originally *nashid* was performed informally at home while seated on the floor in a circle formulation after studying the Qur'an. The teachers and learning took place by route method and in call and response style without using any musical instruments. The voices alone carried the song text and their messages, as the lesson took place from day to day." See also Sarkissian (2005).

expression of faith" since 1990s. The modern and moderate Islamic image of *nashid* has won support from the Malaysian government and the members of the opposition Islamic party PAS, who regard it as appropriate entertainment, besides being able to enhance Islamic values and provide defense against the western cultural invasion (Sarkissian 2005).

The popularity of *nashid* has shed light on how this old genre of Islamic music has been transformed into the emergent public visibilities while simultaneously expressing an aesthetic style with modern Islamic piety and international music dynamics. Sarkissian (2005) examines the language used in the lyrics of *nashid* in Malaysia; in additionl to Bahasa Malaysia, Arabic, English, Mandarin, Urdu are also used. The multilingual lyrics not only reflect the Malaysian multi-racial society but also facilitate marketing Malaysian *nashid* albums internationally. The visual element is another interesting issue for us to consider, namely how *nashid* groups present their pious images in costumes and album cover design, thus creating an alternative Muslim youth culture. The singers wear skullcaps that make them look like "clean-cut boys or girls next door" (Sarkissian 2005, 136), and some album covers take Islamic artist design to highlight their Islamic visual elements (Sarkissian 2005, 136-137).

In Indonesia, Barendregt and van Zanten (2002) have found "the return of religious music in public life" ; they not only touch on *nashid* but also the other two Islamic popular music *qasidah* and *dangdut*.[140] The language of *nashid* used in Malaysia is Malay, the Indonesian *nashid* adopt mainly Bahasa Indonesia, which is an important reason why Malaysian *nashid* is so welcomed by the young generation of Indonesians. Although the concern about whether musical performance is allowed in Islamic law is not a very significant issue, Barendregt (2006a) has found that a tension between the persuasive power of religion and the eroticism of pop still exists in *nashid* performance.

The following discussion is about a *nashid* group called "Lampion," formed by a group of Chinese-Indonesian Muslim young men. Compared with other *nashid* groups with regard to songs and performances, Lampion might not be very special, but it is interesting to examine how they represented their Chineseness in costume, song, and performance. Lampion was an amateur *nashid* band, organized in 1997, involving five young men.[141] At the beginning they did not compose any song by themselves. They managed to do so only after meeting the Malaysian Islamic teacher

[140] The study of Indonesian Islamic music is a very new topic; Taiwanese enthomusicologist Ted Tsung-te Tsai (2006) conducted his fieldwork in Yogyakarta where he tried to establish a preliminary classification of Islamic religious songs including *selawat*, *nashid*, and *qasidah*.

[141] Among the members of Lampion, only one person is not of ethnic Chinese descent.

Abuya Iman Asyari Muhammad At-Tamimi[142] in 1999. In my interview with the lead singer, Kelvin, he explained why he formed his group," Lampion":

> The musical entertainment for people should not merely satisfy their sense of hearing. We intend to extend the effect of audio entertainment into people's hearts, touching people's hearts for adoring God. We also want to show our existence for two ethnic groups; for indigenous Indonesians, we show that ethnic Chinese are able to contribute to preaching Islam by way of playing nasyid/nashid, while for ethnic Chinese, we would like to indicate that the image of Islam is love and piety rather than violence and intolerance. Islam can entertain people universally. We believe that the human beings everywhere have a religious yearning to adore God. We are eager to use the universal emotion and language (nashid) to tell non-Muslim ethnic Chinese who have negative ideas on Islam that Islam is not like what they may think; Islam means love and piety for people such as us who dress in traditional Chinese customs.[143]

The group chose the name "Lampion", which is derived from a philosophy of lampion, indicating that they wished to be an illuminator (*penerang*) such as a lampion for illuminating the way toward God by way of an artist's approach of *nashid*. The other reason was that the lampion, in Kelvin's view, was a cultural symbol of ethnic Chinese.

Although Lampion was not a professional band, it was usually invited by the PITI, to perform on special occasions, or requested by Chinese-Indonesian Muslims to perform for wedding parties. Lampion was invited to perform at the Cheng Ho Mosque in Surabaya in conjunction with a banquet organized by PITI. The group also performed at a dinner hosted by the PITI headquarters in Jakarta.

In 2005, Lampion published their first and only album entitled *Baiknya Tuhan* (God's Goodness), in which all the lyrics of songs in the album were written by Abuya Iman Asyari Muhammad At-Tamimi, while the melody was composed by Lampion. At-Tamimi offered them hundreds of lyrics and Lampion selected those which were suitable for their musical composition.[144] The main musical instruments

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[142] Abuya Iman Asyari Muhammad At-Tamimi, a famous ulama in Malaysia, established an Islamic boarding school and business in Cabang, Jakarta. The Lampion's first album was distributed by the FAKA company, owned by At-Tamimi.

[143] In addition, Kelvin emphasized that although the Lampion was not a professional band, that it was more important for him to make music to touch people. He mentioned, with pride, an experience in their performance; a monk-like man with a bare head, who was a fortuneteller, came up to him, saying that he really liked their music. Kelvin used this incident as an example to illustrate that music is a universal art form with universal appeal, regardless of their religious backgrounds..

[144] According to Kelvin, it was very important for a writer of *nashid* lyrics to hold God in awe, and adore God such as at-Tamimi. Only then can lyrics writers transmit their religious emotions into their song.

used by Lampion were percussion instruments; there was no wind instrument or string instrument used by them. There were some interesting Chinese cultural elements in this album. On the cover photo of the album, the five members of the group wore Chinese skullcaps (the style is different from Muslim skullcaps) and mandarin jackets, standing before a three-level pavilion minaret of a famous ancient mosque, *The Great Mosque*, at Xian, China (See appendix). The cover photo was digitally modeled as a synthetic picture. Kelvin, the group leader, emphasized that they wanted to show something new about the Chinese character in the Lampion. He thought that the ancient Chinese style made them look more like Chinese, i.e. it emphasized their Chineseness. Lampion had composed two songs using Mandarin lyrics. The first one completely adopted Chinese lyrics, and was sung in Mandarin, while the second song is mixed with Indonesian lyrics. The Mandarin song *Yong Ai* (Forever Love) was usually sung to indicate that they were Chinese-Indonesian Muslims, but they sang Indonesian songs at most performances because the audience could not understand Mandarin. Kelvin, the lead singer, compared Lampion to other Javanese *nashid* band, saying that basically they were both similar except for the ethnic difference. For instance, Javanese groups used elements of gamelan, but Lampion wore traditional Chinese costumes as an ethnic symbol.

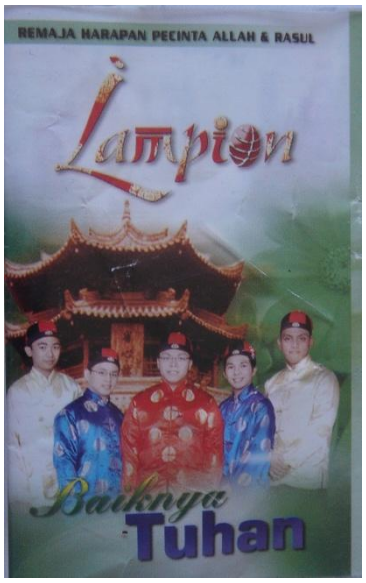

Figure 3.5

The album cover of Lampion's *Baiknya Tuhan.*

Lampion had an interesting unpublished VCD, consisting of two performances; the first show looks like an MTV performance, with members of the group singing in

front of and inside the Cheng Ho Mosque; and the second show was a performance for a banquet held at the square in front of the mosque. When watching their music video, I felt that the whole spectacle, Lampion's performance using the Cheng Ho mosque as a backdrop, each member of the group carrying invented cultural elements, looked like a fabricated stage setting where the fake singers pretended to perform. However, when both were combined and presented together in the same space, a fresh image runs into my mind is that such an arrangement in pairs is unlike a fake manufacture. By contrast, they are a coherent combination, operating in coordination. In the juxtaposition of Cheng Ho Mosque, a Chinese-Indonesian Muslim's symbol of imaginary homeland, and Lampion, a *nashid* group wearing ancient Chinese costumes, many hybrid cultural elements converged during the presentation. The mosque's architectural style imitated an ancient Chinese mosque in Beijing and was infused with some indigenous characters of Indonesian mosque. Lampion sang *nashid* that was originally from the Middle East; but the singers wore ancient Chinese costumes of the *Qing* Dynasty and sang in Mandarin though none of the singers could speak the language. This hybrid combination produced a heterotopic space in which the mosque and *nashid* are true rather than fake, and resulted in a simulated contrast to Islamic culture in China and Indonesia. [145]

3.6 Representation Politics of Ethnicity in Performing Islamic Chineseness during Post-New Order

The Islamic cultural practices of Chinese-Indonesian Muslims have created an alternative social and religious space for Muslim society. Wijayakusuma's transplanting Chinese bodily imaginary in performing salat and the Ramadan recipes, the controversy of *Salat Imlek*, the Cheng Ho Mosque, and the *nashid* group Lampion have shown that the practices of Chinese-Indonesian Muslims are not merely a kind of particular minor phenomenon confined to an ethnic Muslim minority but they also reflect a recent current of middle-class Muslim culture in Indonesia.

Gole (2002) finds that after the first phase of Islamism, there was a series of movements of political Islam; the second wave of Islamism was more concerned with

[145] The term heterotopic is derived from Greek heteros, 'another', and topos, 'place', is used within a broad typology to distinguish these emplacement from 'utopia'…heterotopic is originally a medical term referring to a particular tissue that develops at a place other than is usual. The tissue is not diseased or particularly dangerous but merely placed elsewhere, a dislocation (Johnson 2006, 77). Foucault (1986) creates this concept to indicate a real space (rather than a utopia) where it is formulated /excluded/enclosed by power relationship (constructed, desire, discipline, exclusion, sacred ritual and so on) or juxtaposes diverse cultural elements in an external or temporary way.

social and cultural orientation. In her periodization of the second wave of Islamism, the emergence of middle-class Muslim culture in Muslim and European societies has shown that (2002, 173):

> New faces of Muslim actors using both secular and religious idiom are appearing in public life; the terms of public debate are being transformed by the eruption of religious issues…new spaces, markets, and the media are opening up in response to the rising demands of recently formed Muslim middle classes. Islam carves out a public space of its own as new Islamic language styles, corporeal rituals, and spatial practices emerge and blend into public life.

Focusing on the new rising of public visibilities of Islamic practices repressed by secular state and social sectors in Turkey, Gole indicates that the current middle-class Muslim culture has adapted itself to the modern urban space, using modern communication media, adopting urban life styles and marketing logic of capitalism. The new visibilities of Islam in public have been "carried by corporeal performance and self-presentation rather than by textualized form of subjectivities and discursive practices" (Gole 2002, 183). It has attracted more attention to Muslim's bodily practices. The Islamic practices reflect performative reflexivity by which Muslims use dress codes, consumption, Islamic performance (such as music and arts), and media technology, generating their alternative political engagements to express their pious selves in public. They also express their difference as resistance "to the assimilative strategies and homogenizing practices of modernity" (Gole 2002, 187) of modern secularism that dismiss Muslim's freedom of public religious expression.

Similarly, Boubekeur (2007) observes that more Muslims in Western society pursue so called post-Islamic identity that discard political and militant ideology, and the strategy of old Islamism, having concerns that are more cultural rather than political. Boubekeur calls the new phenomenon "Islamic society of the spectacle" in which Muslim activists take a new repertoire of action with an Islamic mode to spread Islamic norms and values, and transmit new forms of Islamic knowledge by using popular music, painting, theater, television, and radio. The new movements of pursuing post-Islamic identity propose to take new practices for creating a new place in the public sphere in order to "destroy the clichés that cling to Muslims" (2007, 77). She watches out for consumption of Islamic commodities such as dress, drinks, pop idols, and music, as well as new preaching celebrities, new forms of motivating Muslim communities, actively engaging in debates on public issues such as citizenship and religious freedom in western secular society. The new Islamic urban culture is conceptualized as "Cool and Competitive Islam" (Boubekeur 2005), in

contrast to the austere and self-sacrificing religious life style of traditional Islamism, and emphasizes more on "personal pleasure of consumption, success, and competitiveness" (Boubekeur 2005, 13).

Boubekeur and Gole have offered interesting theoretical outlines for us to explore the bodily, individualized, performative, and rationalized dimensions of post-Islamist Muslim culture, and its alternative political agendas in contrast to old ideas and movements of political Islam. However, when we apply the theoretical outlines to observing the Muslim culture in Indonesia.

In Indonesia, we can find the developing currents of middle class culture. The emergence of two social currents, the formulation of middle-class and the rise of re-Islamization, have attracted more Muslim middle class who pursue spiritual self-improvement in urban Sufism, reading groups for well-bred circles, extravagant hajj tourism, and female Muslim dress fashion that are comfortable and enjoyable for the need of urban Muslim life style (Abaza 2004, Abdurrahman 2000, Heryanto 1999, Howell 2001). This transformation reflects also the change in da'wa strategy. For instance, a famous and popular 'tele-evangelist', AA Gym, an expert at using media technology, propagated his preaching by singing, using soft tones and humorous stories in various mosques with modern architecture. His preaching style mixed with Sufi style easily touched the hearts of many Muslims (Sarkissian 2002; Watson 2005). Similarly, the popularity of *nashid* for the young Muslim generation combines the Islamic moral teaching and the auditory enjoyment of pop.[146] In this regard, Chinese-Indonesian Muslims' public visibilities of the discursive, ritual, and bodily practices reflect the new currents of middle class Muslim culture.

However, the cultural politics of the Chinese-Indonesian Islamic cultural practices is not the same as the political agenda and characters of new Islamic public culture addressed by Gole and Boubekeur. When they identified the phenomena happening in the second phase of Islamism or a period of post-Islamism, moreover looking at Muslims in Western Europe (and to some extent, in Turkey), they were concerned with the Muslim's cultural resistance as a political engagement to secular or non-Islamic repressions. This resistance is not a-political but tends to have a more social and cultural orientation rather than militant and violent as political Islam. In this regard, it might not be appropriate to categorize the formulation of Muslim middle class culture in Indonesia as a post-Islamist culture because the development of political Islam had been repressed by the authoritarian New Order government and

[146] Malaysia has also show similar developments. Malaysia is a country with a Muslim majority that occupies a better political and religious position than Indonesia, and the urban Muslim culture itself does not show much interest in engaging in political opposition; by contrast, urban Muslim culture, particularly in the sphere of consumption of Muslim middle class, is deeply formulated by the aesthetic and moral disciplines of the Islamic state, according to the principles of Malayization (Fischer 2008).

restarted only after the end of New Order period. During the post-New Order period, the government respects the religious freedom and public expression of Muslim society; therefore the concept of post-Islamism may not suit the recent development of Indonesian Islam.

Furthermore, unlike the political agenda which opposed the religious repression coming from secular social sectors during the period after the first phase of Islamism, or the political agenda of the rising of urban Muslim culture in Indonesia, the cultural politics of Chinese-Indonesian Muslim's public visibilities has nothing to do with the opposition to western or secular repression of Muslims. Thus, in addition to observing the culture of Chinese-Indonesian Muslims in the context of rising of middle Muslim culture, I argue that their Islamic public visibilities should be considered from a perspective of ethnic empowerment of Chinese-Indonesian minority during post-New Order period. By performing their Islamic public visibilities, Chinese-Indonesian Muslims intend to strive for more recognition from the indigenous Muslim majority, while at the same time attempting to create the ethnic difference by transforming and representing Chinese/Islamic traditions.

Chinese-Indonesian Muslims' Islamic practices have created a hybrid Islamic culture that cannot be solely identified as a tradition which completely belongs to either China or Indonesia. Their practices incorporate Chinese cultural elements such as acupuncture massage, celebration of Chinese New Year, Chinese temple-like architectural style, traditional Chinese costumes, and Mandarin in formulating their Chinese-Indonesian Muslim cultures but the result is totally new hybrid Islamic culture. Wijayakusuma's application of the idea of healthcare to *salat* and Ramadan recipes does seem not to cause any problem, and furthermore he is working on expanding this similar idea to the Five Pillars because his application is welcomed by Muslims. Lampion's Chinese *nashid* and attire did not raise any criticisms. But the *Salat Imlek* has caused many debates concerning whether it is prohibited by Islamic law. By contrast, among the four cases, the *Cheng Ho* mosque has created the most beneficial social niche for the goal of improving interethnic relations.

Ien Ang, a Chinese-Indonesian Dutch scholar teaching in Australia, used her personal diasporic multiple identity as a critical framework for covering politics of assimilation, multiculturalism, and hybridity and to reflect on identity politics and ethnic policies in Australia, Indonesia, and among the diaspora Chinese (Ang 2001). She finds that assimilationism was an old and unsuccessful official policy implemented in immigrant nation-states such as the United State and Australia and an idea expected of new comers. This ideology supposes that a homogenous majority is ready and able to assimilate ethnic minorities. After 1960s, a new ethnic policy based on multiculturalism has been adopted as an official response to the recognition of

ethnic differences of various immigrant communities and subsume the ethnic minorities under a nation-state which is called as 'multicultural nation/state'. The multicultural state assumes that various racial/ethnic groups coexist and share the same social-political space. Nevertheless, in the government policy of multicultural state, "differences are carefully classified and organized in a neat, virtual grid of distinct 'ethnic communities', each with their own culture" (2001, 14), it means that we have to consider how a dominant majority constructs the minority's image and how the minority confirms/represents itself, in order to fit the minority's ethnic images into an ideal (self-) otherized cultural model. For instance, ethnic Chinese minority strive for Chinese identity that "become confined to essentialist and absolute notion of 'Chineseness', the source of which can only originate from 'China', to which the ethnicized 'Chinese' subject must adhere the stamp of 'authenticity'" (2001, 30).

By extending Ang's critical arguments on politics of multiculturalism, Hoon (2006) observes that within the multiculturalism as an ideological discourse in civil society and state, Indonesian ethnic Chinese take advantage of the democratization process and promote the awakening of Chinese identity with the establishment of political parties and NGOs with ethnic Chinese orientations, revival of Chinese culture, language, mass media, and religion. But the revival of ethnic Chinese identity still depends largely on the dominant majority's hegemony that "makes multiculturalism not only artificial and decorative but also dangerous as it (un)wittingly perpetuates stereotypes and essentialist demarcation between ethnic groups" (2006, 156).[147]

On the other hand, the constructions of Chinese-Indonesian minority's cultures "are not necessary external but can also be from within the minority" (Hoon, 157). This self-representation of Chinese-Indonesian minority has even been formulated in various strategies among different Chinese-Indonesian organizations competing for authoritative/authentic representation of Chinese cultures. As Hoon indicates (2006, 157):

> …leaders of resurgent Chinese organizations play an important role in defining what 'Chineseness' means in Indonesia. Even though in reality 'Chineseness' is highly contested and diverse, certain power holders within the 'Chinese community' who have a variety of agendas – for instance, to stress ethnic solidarity, advocate a return to 'roots' and primordialism, claim authenticity and promote resinicization—can represent it as an unchanging and static or primordial

[147] For instance, a popular stereotype of Chinese is that they are usually thought to have faces with slanted eyes and to be stingy and money-oriented (Hoon 2006, 156).

> entity. When this occurs, only a particular version of Chinese culture and ethnicity is displayed as representative of all 'Chineseness' within the framework of multiculturalism".

The limits of assimilationism and multiculturalism have been also reflected in ethnic politics of Chinese-Indonesian Muslims.

The identity politics of Chinese-Indonesians are present in Chinese-Indonesian Muslim's Islamic performative practices, sometimes represented as self-essentialization and conflicts of interpretation of Chinese traditions. For instance, Lampion's members wore ancient Chinese customs to reflect their ethnicity; a similar image is popularly used in TV programs as an ethnic traditional icon for celebrating Chinese New Year in Indonesia.[148] The debates over *Salat Imlek* are to a large extent, based on the belief and knowledge formulated by Confucian Religion, causing an unintended inner exclusion between two ethnic Chinese religious groups. The ideology which regards Zheng He as a Chinese Muslim cultural hero is even more complex, as it partially involves a controversial historiography of Islam in China and Indonesia, and is debated by activists and scholars from both countries.

In the process of representation of Chinese-Indonesian Muslims' ethnic identity, the practice of Salat Imlek, have arisen controversies, and the performance of Lampion brings about the phenomenon of self-essentialization. Nevertheless, when compared with other ethnic revivals of Chinese-Indonesians, Chinese-Indonesian Muslims have created many alternative hybrid Islamic discourses that blur supposedly natural boundaries of Chineseness and Islam. Wijayakusuma's discourses combining Chinese medicine and Islamic practice have gained much popularity, making him a famous preacher and a TV celebrity. The Cheng He Mosque's "in-between" space is the most successful case of building a bridge that channels the ethnic Chinese community's Islamic imagine and welfare resources to indigenous grassroots Muslim society, and of bringing more Muslims to participate in their cultural activities. The PITI's construction of Islamic Chineseness has created a hybrid Muslim culture which is neither solely identifiable as Chinese culture nor completely belonging to the traditions of Chinese/Indonesian Islam. It has not only penetrated into the discursive fields of Indonesian Islam with which non-Muslim ethnic Chinese are rarely concerned, but it has also associated the PITI with

[148] The 'traditional' Chinese costumes, skullcap and mandarin jacket for gentlemen and cheongsam for women with bun hair style, are usually used as modeling style for actors and anchor(wo)man in TV programs of celebrating Chinese New Year. An interesting example is the annual Cici Koko (older brother and old sister) competition in which the competitors wearing traditional Chinese costumes join a competition to show their knowledge of Mandrain language, Chinese culture, and other knowledge about tourism in West Jakarta and Indonesia in general. Some winners said that they rarely use Mandarin at home, but the winners have to wear the costumes in public event, like cultural ambassadors as representatives for the city and the Chinese community (Hoon 2006, 157).

indigenous Muslim society in such a way that it strides across the economic, ethnic, and religious closures between ethnic Chinese and indigenous Muslim society that hinder non-Muslim Chinese-Indonesian organizations from participating fully in society.

This hybrid Islamic Chineseness looks like "neither fish, flesh nor fowl", but in the view of the cultural theorist, Ernesto Laclau, "hybridization does not necessarily mean decline through the loss of identity. It can also mean empowering existing identities through the opening of possibilities" (cited in Hall 2000, 236) In spite of the fact that the suspicions and questions on Chinese-Indonesian Muslims' Islamic Chineseness may never cease, the new hybrid culture displays ethnic creativity, and in doing so, reflects a possibility . On the other hand, by acknowledging the power relationships and diversity of representing Chineseness, Hoon sheds light on the possible creative hybridity in Chinese identity, which allows various cultural confluences to merge and coexist. Thus he addresses more dynamic and optimistic views on creative hybrid Chineseness (2006, 161):

> In the case of the Chinese in Indonesia, after a process of negotiating contradictions and the tension of maintaining one's own culture and becoming like others, a 'third space' in the form of a common, new culture and social environment is created. This new culture suggests the recognition of the transformative process of Chinese ethnicity into a creative, adapted, hybridized Chinese-Indonesian identity.

Hoon provides a dialectic approach to conceptualize hybrid Chineseness among Chinese-Indonesians. However, the hybridity highlighted by Hoon tends to be neutral, hence one needs to add the implications of cultural resistance. When exploring *Salat Imlek*, one needs to understand how ethnic Chinese articulate Islam to empower themselves. The performance of *Salat Imlek* is not a gradual cultural adaptation, rather it appears to be an "intentional hybridity" (Bakhtin 1981, 360), which Werbner illuminates as "the conflation or transgression of culturally constructed categories" (Werbner 2001, 137), in contrast to "organic hybridity", which is a continuous gradual, and organic, cultural mixture. Werbner explains that the transgressions implicated in hybridity are "potential tools of resistance which upturn taken-for-granted hierarchies, play dangerously on the boundary and can thus become a source of a offence…minorities often draw on culture strategically to fight for recognition and against discrimination" (Werbner 2001, 138).

However, if *Salat Imlek* is that kind of intentional hybridity, are ethnic Chinese Muslims playing a religious trick that depreciates its cultural authenticity and

religious sincerity? Religion can work as an articulated mechanism to mobilize socio-political movements. Hall (1986, 53-54) argues that religion "exists historically in a particular formation, anchored very directly in relation to a number of different forces. Nevertheless, it has no necessary, intrinsic, trans-historical belonging. Its meaning—political and ideological— comes precisely from its position within a formation. It comes with what else it is articulated…religion can be articulated in more than one way" and "in particular social formation, where religion has become the valorized ideological domain, the domain into which all the different cultural stands are obligated to enter, no political movement in that society can become popular without negotiating the religious terrain". Clifford (2001, 478) further emphasizes that Hall's articulation "offers a non-reductive way to think about cultural transformation and the apparent coming and going of 'traditional' forms." Therefore, according to Clifford, "to see such chains of equivalence (which must always downplay or silence salient differences) as articulated phenomena is not to view them as inauthentic or 'merely' political, invented, or opportunistic" or to examine who has the authenticity/legitimacy to represent his/her traditions. Instead, Clifford argues that "articulation…evokes a deeper sense of the 'political'—productive processes of consensus, exclusion, alliance, and antagonism that are inherent in the transformative life of all society" (2001, 473).

Similarly, in her observation on a tribe in Sulawesi, Li argues that instead of scrutinizing the authenticity of articulated traditions by a minority, it is more useful to explore how such traditions are historically embedded and utilized by the minority as cultural resources against the threat of their surrounding majority:

> A group's self-identification as tribal or indigenous is not natural or inevitable, but neither is it simply invented, adopted, or imposed. It is, rather, a positioning which draws upon historically sedimented practices, landscapes, and repertoires of meaning, and emerges through particular patterns of engagement and struggle. The conjunctures at which (some) people come to identify themselves as indigenous, realigning the way they connect to the nation, the government, and their own, unique tribal place, are the contingent products of agency and the cultural and political work of articulation (Li 2000, 151).

The ethnic status of Chinese-Indonesians during the New Order era is in contrast to "indigenous" (*asli*) Indonesians. Nonetheless, the status of Chinese-Indonesian Muslims as an ethnic minority is very similar to that of the tribal people described above, as their religious performances are scrutinized by the indigenous majority. Therefore, instead of simply identifying *Salat Imlek* as an unauthentic invented ritual

performance or festival tradition, I believe we should emphasize its historically accumulated dimension.

However, in light of the controversy surrounding *Imlek Salat*, this chapter suggests that non-traditional Chinese religious resources such as Islam can be re-articulated by the ethnic Chinese minority to bridge cultural differences with the Muslim *pribumi* (Chiou 2007). However, by "applying" or "borrowing" the performance of Islamic worship, the hybridity of *Salat Imlek* adopts the risk of transgressing established Islamic convention. This is similar to a Chinese Muslim's conversion which, it may be argued, transgresses racial and religious boundaries, causing *pribumi* Muslims to doubt whether the conversion of Chinese is in any way sincere (Chiou 2009). On the other hand, *Salat Imlek* has changed the conventional way *Imlek* is celebrated in Indonesia, where its authenticity has been questioned, as different Chinese organizations compete for the legitimacy as to who best represents Chineseness in Indonesia.

Part II Crossing

Chapter 4

Encountering the Boundaries

4.1 Introduction

Conversion to Islam among ethnic Chinese of Indonesia is still not a normal phenomenon, but it has resulted in some new tendencies of deeper Islamization during the post-New Order period. As an ethnic minority in a Muslim-majority society, conversion to Islam for Chinese-Indonesians, in a sense, involves transgressing ethnic and religious boundaries because ethnic Chinese are not supposed to be Muslims, and Islam is depreciated as an inferior religion which many ethnic Chinese feel reluctant to understand, not to mention to believe in. Becoming a new convert, on the one hand, means affiliating with the religious majority and, on the other, it is an action that may lead to being excluded from one's own ethnic circle. For Chinese-Indonesians, conversion to Islam has the unavoidable consequence of a social action of crossing ethnic and religious boundaries which are situationally but deeply maintained by society.

Since the 1990s, studies of conversion to Islam have gradually attracted more attention in Europe and North America (Jesen 2008; Kose 1996; McGinty 2006; Nieuwkerk 2006; Roald 2004).[149] In these places, where the society is more liberal and secular, conversion to Islam among Americans and Europeans has also posed other questions. If religious conversion is an ongoing process of self-transformation with regard to body, culture, ethnicity, identity, and religion, then Westerners'

[149] In particular, those studies are mainly concerned with how and why western European and North American women convert to Islam (Nieuwkerk 2004; McGinty 2007).

conversion to Islam can shed some light on new developments of Islamization in a Muslim minority society. It raises questions of whether a new type of local Islam in term of bodily practices and religious knowledge can be produced in western societies. Moreover, what are the reactions to these new converts from the majority society at large?

The main religious discrimination faced by new European Muslims is because of Islam, which is considered by many Europeans as a backward, uncivilized, and patriarchal religion opposed to European social values, which emphasize individuality, equality, and invisibility of religion in a secular society. The new European Muslims' conversion is considered by some as changing their previous national identity and degrading their social status to the level of inferior Muslim immigrants. In particular, after the events of 9/11, the feelings of Islamiphobia have become widespread among the non-Muslim majority.[150]

Through reflecting on the fruitful results of studies of conversion to Islam in the western countries, we are able to find in them some similarities of experiences of conversion to Islam with the experience of ethnic Chinese. Indonesia is a Muslim-majority society; though Islam is not embraced as a state religion, Islamic religious practices and cultural symbols are suffused everywhere in the everyday life of Muslims. Chinese-Indonesians are a small part of the Indonesian citizenry as a whole, but they are an ethno-religious minority in contrast to the indigenous Muslim majority. Why do Chinese-Indonesians who convert to Islam, a religion which is supposed to be respected in the largest Muslim country, still face religious and ethnic discrimination from the ethnic Chinese community and some indigenous Muslims?

Chinese-Indonesian stands in social opposition to the indigenous majority according to an artificial logic of social classification: "*cina/pribumi*" (Chinese/the indigenous).[151] Chinese-Indonesians are supposed to occupy economically superior positions, but they were simultaneously socially and politically marginalized by the Souharto government during the New Order period. In the stereotypical perspective of indigenous Muslims, Chinese-Indonesians are considered an exclusive ethnic minority along the economic, racial, and religious lines. They are a rich but corrupt and money-oriented people, and, moreover, Chinese Indonesians are *kafir* (infidels).

Therefore, I intend to consider the conversion of Chinese-Indonesians to Islam as

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[150] This negative influence of 9/11 to racialize Islam is globally spread and has increased racial discrimination toward Muslim immigrants in North America, Europe, as well as Australia (Dunn, Klocker, and Salabay 2007; Naber 2006).

[151] The Souharto government manufactured *pribumi* (sons of soil) as an official term to identify an indigenous Indonesian nation in spite of the fact that it had many ethnic groups and was so diverse. It was used to contrast an ethnic other, non-pribumi, as a racial mark identifying ethnic Chinese, since the ethnic Chinese held Indonesian citizenship, not to mention a reference to the inner heterogeneity among the Chinese-Indonesians. (Hoon 2008, 2-6)

a form of social mobility and passing through a "social space" (Bourdieu 1985) where the power relationships interweave with various ethnic and religious boundaries that are not supposed to be easily transgressed. Conversion as a social transgression takes risks that may create a new cultural niche, or alternatively it may trap a person in a social dilemma. In this article, I ask why conversion to Islam among ethnic Chinese is still looked at with suspicion by the ethnic Chinese community and indigenous Muslim majority. This has to be answered by reference to the dichotomous logic of social classification of Chinese/*pribumi*. This dichotomy has very powerfully and effectively formulated a deep and firm framework for Chinese-Indonesians and indigenous Indonesians to construct each other.

I aim to sketch some of the difficulties which the Chinese-Indonesian Muslims have experienced since conversion, and I argue that the problems are partially caused by the entrenchment of the social classification Chinese/*pribumi*. I will try to give account of the conversion process of Chinese-Indonesian Muslims. But this is not a conversion process in a psychological sense; instead, this conversion process examines how Chinese-Indonesian Muslim are attracted to Islam, and how they face and respond to the conflicts in their cultural, ethnic, and religious transformation.

The story of a Chinese-Indonesian Muslim father and his two sons is introduced to highlight how their conversion is seen by ethnic Chinese and indigenous Muslims. We are then able to see a short case study of how new Chinese converts struggle to pursue the Islamic faith in which they face many difficult challenges. This case study points to a symptom of conversion among Chinese-Indonesian Muslims: it shows the way Chinese-Indonesian pursuit of Islam is a form of ethnic and religious transgression and how the new converts face the dilemma and deal with conflicts.

According to their conversion experiences, I suggest that ethnic Chinese conversion to Islam has facilitated a social mobility for converts, whether or not they intend to make use of it. Becoming a Muslim is proclaiming a new membership in the Muslim community, but it may keep new converts at a distance from his/her own ethnic origin. This leads to an unintended social consequence such that the conversion should be considered a moving within and across ethnic and religious classifications in a social space. Second, the discrimination faced by Chinese-Indonesian Muslims can be ascribed to the sociological meanings of Chinese/*pribumi* boundaries, which are drawn along racial and class divisions. It also involves looking back on historical developments explaining why Islam is regarded by ethnic Chinese as an inferior religion and why the indigenous Muslims consider Chinese-Indonesians to be *kafir* (infidels).

4.2 Methodological Consideration

We must be careful when considering what serious and pious conversion means for these new Muslims. When I conducted this research, two questions were frequently raised by people about their motivation for conversion, these were: (1) whether they devoutly believed in Islam and (2) what kind of spiritual experiences they had in their conversion. In my fieldwork, I sometimes heard some criticism from non-Muslim ethnic Chinese, or witnessed Chinese-Indonesian Muslims sneer at the converts. Some think that when you ask questions about their conversions, you may be suspicious about whether those new converts are playing into religious identity for personal and social benefits. By converting to Islam, it becomes more convenient for Chinese Muslims to be close to Muslim power elites like politicians. Others sometimes assume that the motivation behind conversion has to do with polygamy and that new converts are aiming to legally marry a second wife. These reactions, more of which I will highlight later, include some curious but malicious questions usually asked by non-Muslim Chinese of new converts, questions such as, "Have you been circumcised?" to men, or, "Have you accepted polygamy?" to women. Although many new converts claim that they are respected by indigenous Muslims when they find out about their religious identity, the potential discrimination based on doubts about why ethnic Chinese want to be a part of *ummat* (Muslim communities) still exits, and indigenous Muslims continue to criticize ethnic Chinese new converts for their supposed unwillingness to get involved in more devout religious activities.[152] The various suspicions may cause another problem for a researcher who is eager to examine minute details of why the new converts want to convert, or study to what degree they are able to follow the prescribed religious obligations. A similar problem also comes up in studying "Islam in periphery of Islamic world" which tends to compare the differences between "Islam in periphery of Islamic world" and "Islam in the hinterlands" and when some argue that Islam in periphery areas is superficial or syncretistic, and neither authentic nor orthodox (Cummings 2001). In his study on African-Americans' conversion, Edward E. Curtis notes (2005, 680-681):

> One might protest, of course, that the religion of Islam had little to do with these persons calling themselves Muslims, that their conversions were superficial, and that they "used" Islam to accessorize their cosmological and historical understandings of what it meant to be black. Such an approach, I have argued,

[152] Muhammad Shiddiq al-Jawi has issued a fatwa harshly criticizing Chinese-Indonesian Muslims of Yogyakarta Division for continuing to celebrate Chinese New Year (*Imlek*) in a mosque; this is just one example of continuing suspicions. See this fatwa online at: www.khilafah1924.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=346&Itemid=3

reflects a fundamental misunderstanding of the local and necessarily indigenous nature of Islamization.

Rather than only judging whether new Chinese-Indonesian converts are really pious and qualified Muslims by focusing on their performance of religious obligations and familiarity with Islamic knowledge, I argue that their conversion to Islam should be understood "as a subtle process of Islamization"(Curtis 2006, 13), even though compared with indigenous Muslims, they are beginners in learning "the meaning of their religion, accepting and rejecting various elements of other Islamic traditions as they struggled to practice a form of Islam that was relevant to their historical circumstances" (Curtis 2006, 13-14).

My study is based on interviews with 79 people[153] in 2003 and 2005 and various conversion narratives published in the official magazine of PITIJT's (*Persatuan Islam Tionghoa Indonesia, Jawa Timur*; the regional branch of Association of Chinese Muslim of Indonesia in East Java) and in one of the most popular Islamic magazines *Hidayah* (God's Guidance). In addition to these publications, conversion narratives on the Internet are also explored; there are four websites which are mainly organized by Chinese-Indonesian Muslims for preaching Islam. In the PITIJT's official magazine *Komunitas* (Community), there were some fatwa issued in answer to questions asked by Chinese-Indonesian Muslims that also reflect the conflicts between Chinese customs and Islam.

In this article, I intend to focus on Chinese converts from below. The reason for doing this is that several famous Chinese-Indonesian preachers have published booklets or biographies in which they present their conversion narratives like public testimonies to people as a form of preaching Islam. Since their conversion narratives mostly serve for *dawa* (preaching Islam), and they are not as simple and private stories like that of other common converts, therefore more complex strategies relating with religious and ethno-political interests have to be considered that demand different points of view for analysis. Since the conversion experiences of Chinese-Indonesian Muslims are diverse, in order to focus more on the impacts of boundary making of Chinese/*pribumi*, I only offer a simple sketch that is summarized from my personal notes and interview transcriptions.

During the time that I was revising this article, two books about Chinese-Indonesian conversion to Islam, written and edited by Indonesians, were published. Fahmi Rafika Perdana (2008) introduces a development of PITI DIY (the PITI branch at the Special Region of Yogyakarta). As an insider of the Chinese-Indonesian Muslim association, she offers many interesting stories about

[153] The sample included 11 women and 68 men; three of them have no ethnic Chinese background.

how the local Chinese-Indonesian Muslim elites play a crucial role in reconciling several ethnic conflicts between ethnic Chinese and Javanese. The PITI DIY also contribute to the integration of ethnic Chinese community into the indigenous society by preaching Islam to ethnic Chinese and introducing Chinese customs to the indigenous community. Dyayadi's (2008) book is actually a collection of Chinese-Indonesian Muslims' conversion narratives collected from various magazines and Internet resources for new converts and Chinese-Indonesian Muslims. It is not original research, but the fifty-six new Chinese-Indonesian converts' stories provide us with rich materials about the conversion experiences of Chinese-Indonesian Muslim.

4.3 A Sketch of Experiences of Chinese-Indonesians' Conversion to Islam

How are Chinese-Indonesians attracted to Islam, and how do they educate themselves about Islam? Although there are only a few organizations specifically offering religious consultations for ethnic Chinese living in a Muslim society, ethnic Chinese still have many chances to be imperceptibly influenced by what they constantly see and hear in their everyday lives.[154] The interest in Islam may either be cultivated in a long or a slow process, or it may be inspired by dreams which bring a new vision enhancing their conversion. Many Chinese-Indonesian Muslims study Islam by joining *pengajian* (religious instruction classes) offered by various foundations, Muslim organizations or private religious meetings. Some Chinese Muslims have higher Islamic education, studying in IAIN or other Islamic institutions. In Indonesia, new ethnic Chinese converts are not as isolated as European new converts; they grow in a Muslim-majority society, living in a Muslim neighborhood and having Muslim friends. They feel their conversion is a process of natural adaptation. I have interviewed a few whose parents were Muslims. This is the initial development of some Chinese-Indonesian Muslim family. What are their experiences when performing religious obligations and wearing veil? It is important to recite *do'a* during performing *salat*, but for some elder converts, it is difficult to memorize *do'a* in Arabic.

Some ethnic Chinese Muslims were afraid that their conversion would influence the way they are treated at their job and by family members. A Muslim wanted to hide

[154] However, we should not deny continued existence of ethnic and religious exclusion that historically and institutionally hinders ethnic Chinese from understanding Islam.

his religious identity, so he had to keep silent (*diam-diam*).[155] I call this a "*diam-diam* Muslim." *Diam-diam* Muslims may only occasionally perform *salat* and may even perform *salat* in a bathroom. Since they do not want their families to know that they have converted to Islam, they are also not able to fast during Ramadan. *Diam-diam* Muslim may move away from home, living with other Muslim friends. But they can only join *pengajian* by which they still cannot learn more complete religious knowledge. Finally, a *diam-diam* Muslim ridicules himself that he is an adherent of neither Konghucu (Confucian Religion) nor Islam. A *diam-diam* Muslim may not be able to "come out" until they get more independence, that is, when they marry, have their own places to live, or get a job. If an ethnic Chinese Muslim unexpectedly passes away, then his family finds out his Muslim identity. His Muslim friends would want to organize an Islamic funeral for him, including washing his body and shrouding him, but his family disagrees and wants to cremate the body. In contrast with *diam-diam* Muslims, sometimes new converts have to prove their religion by showing their ID card, as we will see in the case study below. I call this case a "KTP Muslim," not to be confused with a "Muslim KTP,"[156] but rather someone who has to prove his religion by showing his ID card.

How do non-Muslim Chinese and indigenous Indonesian Muslims consider their conversion? Some new converts are lucky enough to get the support of their families or win respects of indigenous Muslims, but some other Chinese-Indonesian Muslims are expelled by their families, jeered at by Chinese friends, and suspected by indigenous Muslims for their motives. Their Chinese friends feel surprise when hearing they are Muslims and ask offensive questions about circumcision, polygamy, and veiling. A new convert has remarked on the way he is treated by his pribumi and Chinese friends:

> My *pribumi* friends treat me in the same way; as usual, they have already accepted me as a friend. But after they know that I have converted to Islam, our relationship becomes closer. But my Chinese friends are a little different. They still accept me as a friend but keep a distance from me.

Some new converts mentioned a similar response from *pribumi*; indigenous Muslims usually respect their conversion and enthusiastically welcome any new Muslim to join their meetings. But two individuals told me that in a Friday sermon,

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[155] The term *diam-diam* is possibly inherited from Chinese Fukian (Hokkien) dialect; the meaning is the same in Hokkien and Indonesian.

[156] KTP (*kartu tanda penduduk*) is the ubiquitous Indonesian identity card. "Muslim KTP" usually means those Muslims who register their religious faith as Islam but are not practicing Muslims—a Muslim in identity card only. My term here is meant to differentiate these converts from those non-practicing individuals.

the preacher mentioned that Chinese are *kafir*.

I occasionally hear that ethnic Chinese call Islam a *huan-kau* (Hokkien for non-Chinese religion) and conversion to Islam as *jip huan-kau* (Hokkien for entering non-Chinese religion).[157] Ethnic Chinese have a deep stereotype towards Islam and Muslims. They feel that Indonesian Muslims are fanatical, poor, or violent people. For them, Islam is a rural religion (*agama kampung*). Even a new convert mentioned that ethnic Chinese have a stereotype that people converting to Islam will be poor. A typical criticism of new converts by ethnic Chinese usually follows along these lines:

> I think that among those Chinese who convert to Islam, only one-fourth of them are sincere, while the rest of them have converted for the sakes of political, economic interests, and so on, are not wholehearted.

Or,

> Those people converting to Islam regard themselves conceitedly as if their eyes are on the top of the head.[158]

Many ethnic Chinese consider others' conversion as just wanting to have good relations with the *pribumi* power elites who can help with doing business or for planning to have a second wife.

Chinese-Indonesian Muslims have some remarks on their indigenous brothers and sisters. A person told me that he felt the *pribumi* Muslims are too devoted to thinking about how to sustain their living; unlike him, after performing *salat*, they go back to their shops to continue their business. But there are critical remarks on Chinese new converts from both sides. They think that, compared with indigenous Muslims, Chinese new converts neither can pay more attention to religious devotion nor want to improve their religious knowledge.

Many Chinese-Indonesians observe ancestor worships and perform worship of traditional Chinese popular religions. But they stop as soon as they convert to Islam, a monotheistic religion which is against their polytheistic religious customs. Eating pork is prohibited in Islam. In some interviews, Chinese-Indonesian Muslims have had to face a dilemma. For instance, parents may feel unhappy about their rejection of pork. Or, on some occasions, Chinese friends may try to remind them of the fact that the new converts are not allowed to eat pork. Eating pork is not an essential issue, but

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[157] However "*huan*" indicates barbarian and non-civilized.

[158] The latter comment is Chinese slang meaning arrogant people who indulge in self-admiration. The two opinions of ethnic Chinese show that they feel uneasy with the new converts.

it is commonly affiliated with the ethnic character of Chinese.[159]

There are some interesting questions raised by ethnic Chinese Muslims published on *Komunitas*. They reflect some confusion particular to Chinese-Indonesian Muslims. The first type of questions is about ritual performance: how to pay respect to friends or whether they can worship a dead person by burning incense, "can I greet or express my appreciation with ethnic Chinese friends who are not Muslims with my hands folded (*soja*) in Chinese New Year?" or "can I worship an incense burner before a coffin by way of *soja*?" (*Komunitas* 2002a, 9). These three questions relate to ideas of Asian religions such as reincarnation, ancestor worship, and fetishism. "Does Islam have no teachings about reincarnation? What is the perspective of Islamic law regarding burning joss sticks for worshipping ancestors? Why do Muslims pray toward *kiblat* (direction toward Mecca)?" (*Komunitas* 2003, 16) Another question is about how to perform Islamic funerals, specifically dealing with the dead body. A question about Islamic funerals was asked by a person whose Muslim friend has just died, but his friend's family neither understands Islam nor cares to know how to deal with his friend's dead body. He asked what the view of Islamic law about this issue is (*Komunitas* 2002c, 11). There is another question about idolatry: "Can I wear an undershirt with pictures of *barongsai* (Chinese lion dance) or phoenix?" (*Komunitas* 2002b, 9) A Chinese religious teacher, paying his personal service at the PITIJT at Surabaya, suggests that it is better not to wear any clothing with any creatures on it. However, I am not sure why he would give this answer, given that the performance of *barongsai* has been organized for celebrating Chinese New Year by the PITIJT. If it is prohibited to wear underwear with pictures of the *barongsai* or phoenix, then is not the performance of *barongsai* at the PITI also against Islamic law?

Several Chinese-Indonesian Muslims mention the conflicts between ancestor worship, Islam, and filial piety. The Chinese tradition of ancestor worship is part of traditional religious practices showing filial piety to ancestors. But Chinese funeral rites to deceased parents may become a cause of conflict, and this has been an important issue in Chinese Christian churches. Influenced by Chinese traditions of ancestor worship, some Chinese-Indonesian Muslims feel anxious about giving up worshiping their deceased parents by holding joss sticks. There was the case in my interviews where a Chinese-Indonesian Muslim's mother opposed her son's conversion to Islam. One of reasons was her worry that if her child became a Muslim, then he would not worship the ancestors after she passed away. As my informant

[159] When I lived with an Indonesian family, my hostess sometimes offered me pork dishes, which are actually *haram* (prohibited) to her family, though her families are not all Muslims, and she seems to not be a practicing Muslim. Her kind offer assumed that I missed pork because of my ethnic background. In Taiwan, many people are vegetarians for religion and health reasons. As a matter of fact, even if we overlook non-vegetarians, eating pork in my view is not really an essential habit of ethnic Chinese.

Gunawan mentions below, before conversion to Islam, he had to reconcile the theological conflicts about becoming a Muslim and fulfilling his obligation to "feed" his ancestors by worship of offering foods and drinks.

Instead of directly asking "do you think that you are a Chinese, Indonesian, or Chinese-Indonesian?" I usually ask two questions to Chinese new converts in order to assess their shifting ethnic identities. The first question is about Junus Jahja's idea that encourages ethnic Chinese to assimilate to the indigenous Indonesian society by converting to Islam. [160] Most ethnic Chinese Muslims cannot agree with this idea. They do not support the idea that to be a Muslim means to erase one's ethnicity. The second question is how they celebrate *Imlek* (Chinese New Year). Most ethnic Chinese Muslims believe that *Imlek* is not a religious festival, so it is not against Islamic law.

Following Jahja's ideas, there are three kinds of ethnic and religious identities among Chinese-Indonesian Muslims. The first type of individual would identify as a Muslim and marry an indigenous Muslim woman; he would not want to present himself as Chinese anymore. The second type identifies as a Muslim and Chinese; he is willing to be acculturated with indigenous Indonesians, that is, if his children wanted to marry non-Chinese Indonesians, he would agree. The third type feels, although he has become a Muslim, no interest in building more relations with indigenous Indonesians; he prefers to keep the Chinese ethnic identity, which has nothing to do with the fact that he is a Muslim. However some new converts have critical reflections on lifestyle and religious customs of ethnic Chinese.

Ethnic Chinese Muslims' understanding of conversion to Islam may be unlike what Jahja expects, but in reality, Chinese-Indonesian Muslim organizations such as the PITI and the Karim Oei Foundation have played the two roles of "bridge and firewall" in facilitating more Chinese-Indonesians becoming Muslims and combating the negative impression of Chinese-Indonesians and the indigenous Muslim community (Chiou 2007). Similarly, I have found that Chinese new converts are willing to carry out this mission. They believe that their religious identity can contribute to the communication between ethnic Chinese and *pribumi*. If ethnic conflicts happen, they are able to separate the two groups and work by building a firewall that can prevent ethnic conflicts.

Chinese-Indonesian Muslim women are an interesting case about whom I will only mention a few brief points. Veiling and polygamy are the two significant issues to Chinese-Indonesian Muslim women. The veil issue can easily be solved if they do

[160] Junus Jahja (1927-) is a Chinese-Indonesian Muslim intellectual and leader who addressed conversion in the early 1980s and argued that the best way to assimilate is by becoming a Muslim. He established a famous Chinese-Indonesian association, Karim Oei Foundation, and Lautze Mosque located in Jakarta.

not insist on wearing it for the whole day, but some Chinese-Indonesian Muslim women have a dilemma in choosing husbands. For those who prefer to marry a husband of the same ethnic background, it would be more difficult because most ethnic Chinese men are not Muslims. After the Jakarta riot of 1998, some Chinese Muslims developed bad feelings towards the rioters, who were equated with Muslims. Those Chinese Muslims' parents expressed that they do not want their daughters or sisters to marry indigenous Muslims.

How do the families and friends of the new Muslim converts treat them? Do they accept and embrace them? I have heard many cases where Chinese new converts are expelled from their family or their conversions raise tensions within the family. A female new convert said that at the beginning her father was very angry and would not accept her conversion, but gradually he accepted her and told her that it does not matter that she has become a Muslim, but then asks her not to be too fanatically involved in religion. Her father even cooked *halal* meals for her. Another example is Syafii Antonio**,** a famous figure who created Islamic banking in Indonesia. His mother accepted his conversion after a previous rejection, and later she also became a Muslim; he accompanied her in performing the *hajj*. But there are a few cases that are not so lucky. Some Chinese-Indonesian Muslims have problems because they do not know how to interact with (pay respect to) their non-Muslim parents. They are in an isolated situation that confines them in a purified social imagination in terms of Islamic law. Some Chinese-Indonesian Muslims are too devoted and use their Islamic faith as an excuse. When having problems with their family, they attribute it to their family's lack of knowledge about Islam and to not wanting to understand them, so that they decide to seclude themselves from their family. I also found a new convert who claimed to have Islamic faith, but actually, from his talk, it is not clear whether he even goes to mosques and can interact with other Muslims.

4.4 A Conversion Story of Gunawan and His Two Sons[161]

Gunawan was born in 1941. He retired as a manager in a company; he is now working as a private Mandarin tutor. When he was a child, he followed his grandmother's religion, Buddhism. From when he was 14 years old until he was 25, he liked to read various religious books, looked for answers and even tried to go to a church and to read the Bible. By comparing various religions, he gradually learned about Islam.

[161] In the following story, the three people's names are replaced by pseudonyms. Details come from my fieldnotes of interviews with Gunawan and his two sons.

Before he decided to convert, he was very concerned about a particular issue: if he converted to Islam, how could he still perform ancestor-worship and fulfill his filial duty to his parents? He gradually discarded the idea of ancestor worship by reasoning with himself that the soul cannot eat or drink, therefore there is no need to offer food to ancestors. In addition to that, when his father was alive, his father told him that if people want to show their filial obedience to their parents, they should do this when their parents are still alive, rather than worship their graves and make a lot of offerings after the parents die.

Then Gunawan found that Islam is also a religion that emphasizes the importance of showing filial piety. He said:

> Islam also teaches filial duty. Paradise is beneath the mother's feet. You must show filial obedience that would be rewarded. Parents are worldly representatives of Allah, so if we respect our parents that will delight Allah while if we cannot respect parents, but anger them, that is equal to infuriating Allah.[162]

After he confirmed the fact that Islam requires people to carry out their filial duty to their parents, he made the decision to convert to Islam in October 1967, at the age of 26. Many people disagreed with his conversion, including his mother, brothers, and sisters. But his mother gradually accepted his new religion. In particular, he tried to use a religious occasion such as *zakat*, giving alms to a widow, to explain that the spirit of Islam is to help the weak and aid the needy, unlike the Chinese community which usually lacks this kind of sympathy. After his conversion to Islam, he considered studying Islam in a *pondok* (religious boarding school), but in the end he was not able to carry out this plan because he could not afford it. Consequently, he has always felt that his faith and religious knowledge were not enough because he was not a Muslim from an early age. In his words, "I'm a person entering into religion halfway who is neither able to reach the top nor to touch bottom and only in an in-between situation, without any achievement."

He had a more ambitious plan for his two sons, and he arranged for them to receive a complete Islamic education from childhood. His plan is to establish a dawa foundation managed by his children, whom he set out to train as *kyai*(traditional Javanese Islamic scholars) who are experts in Arabic, the *Quran* and the *Hadith*, and Islamic law. He felt that if his foundation could be established in that way then it

[162] Then he told a story from the *Hadith*. An undutiful son is dying. But he still keeps his last breath because his mother would not forgive him. The Prophet requested from the son's mother to forgive her son, but the mother is unwilling to admit that she is the mother. Then the Prophet pretended to prepare wooden oven in order to burn him. The mother could not stand that, made an admission that she is his mother, and forgave her son. However, I could not determine whether the story is from the *Hadith*.

would be managed very well and become very famous. However, there were many unforeseen problems with his plan to further his children's Islamic education, and so far his goal of establishing a famous *dawa* foundation has not been achieved.

He advised his sons to accept Islamic education by a way of telling a parable. One day, he asked his sons:

> What kind of coconut is better, mature one or immature one? A coconut with rich coconut milk is a mature one or immature one? Souharto is at present a general, but he cannot be a general forever. His term of presidency is limited, when he steps down from his office, he will also fall out of power. But, a kind of person is exceptional that they still have authority and privilege even when they are old. This is the *kyai*who are always respected by people everywhere. If I establish a *dawa* foundation now, it will become a foundation with a long history when you are enrolled in a university.

Then he started to arrange for his two sons to receive an Islamic education from a very young age.[163] However, when his two sons enrolled in an Islamic boarding school, they both encountered serious problems, and they were discriminated against by other pupils. His second son was not able to bear such a tough life and became ill. When he brought his ill son to a clinic, a doctor blamed Gunawan for being irresponsible and ignorant of caring for the child. His ex-wife opposed his agenda and took the second son away from the Islamic boarding school. She complained to Gunawan's mother and blamed him for what had happened, which in turn put more family pressure on him. He thinks that his ex-wife spoiled his plan.[164] His first son had gone through a complete Islamic education in Islamic boarding schools and finally graduated from IAIN-Jakarta, obtaining a BA degree in Arabic, but he says that his first son did not benefit from his higher Islamic education and had a difficult time finding a job, because of Islamophobia after 9/11.

Gunawan even tried to convert his current wife, who was a Catholic when they married. His wife told him that she expects to be buried with him after she dies. He replied to her in a joking tone.

> "It's impossible." Then my wife asked, "Why?" "You know Catholics and Muslims are buried in different burial ground. Since we belong to different religions, how can we be buried together? After we (Muslim) pass away, we are going to marry with female celestials in the Heaven; you should not be jealous

[163] Further details on his two sons' experiences with Islamic education will be introduced below.
[164] According to Gunwan, his religion is one of reasons that his ex-wife wanted to divorce him.

> about that! If we want to sustain our matrimonial relation till our afterlives then you should go with me (convert to the same religion as me)."

His wife previously disliked Islamic religious TV programs, but on the eve of her conversion to Islam, she felt uncertain and wanted to write a letter, asking suggestions from Mas Agung.[165] But he told his wife that if her faith in converting to Islam were firm, it was not necessary to make inquires from anybody. Finally his wife chose to be a Muslim like him.

Gunawan is an active Muslim who enthusiastically joins various Muslim organizations and *dawa* activities. He has experienced racial discrimination from indigenous Muslims, but the indigenous Muslims often change their attitude after finding out about his Muslim identity.

> An employee of Water Corporation visited my house for collecting my water fee. At that time, I was at the mosque, and only my wife was at home. This employee told my wife that our payment was overdue, and if we did not pay right then, the company would stop the water supply soon. The water fee was 7000 Rupiah. My wife gave the employee 10000 Rupiah, but she felt that the employee was reluctant to return the rest of her money to her. When my wife murmured and worried that I had not returned and maybe I was in the mosque close to my home, the employee asked whether her husband was a Muslim. My wife replied, "Yes," and then the employee hurriedly returned the 3000 Rupiah to her.

> On my way to a mosque, I met a person who was Arab-Indonesian. This person walked across to me and purposely threw his glasses to the ground; then he blamed me for colliding with him. I replied "Don't joke; I'm hurrying on my way to the mosque." He was surprised and asked, "On your way to the mosque—are you a Muslim?" I said yes. He asked, "How long have you embraced Islam?" "Not long yet, only about twenty years." "Oh, really?" he replied. Then he asked to leave, and he didn't try to blackmail me.

On another occasion, celebrating Indonesian Independence Day, Gunawan once questioned a young man (who may have shown attitudes which were in some way anti-Chinese) why, if he had not been bullied or abused by any Chinese in his whole life, he still upheld this discriminatory idea? He advised the man that Islam does not teach us to resent people as such. Instead, the *Quran* has described that Allah created

[165] A famous Chinese-Indonesian Muslim entrepreneur, who was a closed friend of Sukarno, who established one of the two largest bookstores in Indonesia.

various creatures and accepts them. Gunawan remarked that indigenous Indonesian Muslims cannot persuade ethnic Chinese to convert to Islam with such an incorrect attitude and appearance of ethnic discrimination. He believed that promoting equality is one of the things that make Islam a good religion, but without introducing this aspect to ethnic Chinese, they are unable to know what Islam is.

Another experience is from my observation. I was accompanied by Gunawan, looking up an address he had difficulty finding. He entered a mosque; when being greeted by a person whom he wanted to ask about the address, he quickly showed his ID card and immediately told the person that he is a Muslim.

Gunawan' first son, Joko, was enrolled to study in a *pesantren* (Islamic boarding school) since he was in fourth grade. As it was arranged by his father, he had an Islamic education from elementary school to Islamic university. He went to a *pesantren* and studied and stayed there for four months. He then went back and forth from home to the school for 1 year and 8 months, until he completed elementary school. When it came to junior high school, he went to a *pesantren* in Depok. The *pesantren* was more modern than the one where he had studied before. But, according to him, it was still traditionalist in some ways. There he learned English and studied yellow books (*kitab kuning*, religious textbook used in *pesantren*) in Arabic. After that, he moved to *Jami'at Kheir*, one of the oldest Islamic schools in Indonesia.

He remembers that when he was just starting his Islamic education, he had to study many subjects that he was not able to handle. After that, he entered another Islamic boarding school in Depok, Jakarta, continuing his junior high school education. Later he transferred to a very famous Islamic school, *Jami'at Kheir*, where they offer a much better Islamic education than he had before. During that period, he was extremely busy; in addition to his formal senior high school education at *Jami'at Kheir*, he also joined a reading club of yellow books on every Saturday and studied Arabic, theology, and interpretation of the Quran at LIPIA (*Lembaga Ilmu Pengetahuan Islam dan Bahasa Arab*, The Institute for the Study of Knowledge and Science of Islam and Arabic) on every Sunday morning. When he was a student of senior high school, Islamic law was his favorite subject. After he finished his study at *Jami'at Kheir*, he followed his father's suggestion to take Arabic as his major and was enrolled at IAIN-Jakarta.

While studying at IAIN-Jakarta, his studies seemed to be transformed into a modern style and his religious courses decreased; by contrast, Joko studied philosophy and philosophical ideas. The curriculum also focused on learning Arabic. He can now read and speak Arabic, but his reading capability in traditional Arabic is better than in modern Arabic. He observes that IAIN-Jakarta is a university where people interconvert to various Islamic religious positions: sometimes the modest or

traditionalist people become liberals while the liberals can also become more traditionalist. Compared with the traditional Islamic education that he received in *pesantren*, he thinks that the education at IAIN-Jakarta was so liberal that it almost crushes his Islamic faith. Therefore he came back to study yellow books again after he graduated from the university.

There are two issues which deserve emphasis. Although he was not a born Muslim, his background of Islamic education made him have different experiences from most Chinese-Indonesian Muslims. On one hand, how did his Islamic education influence his religious experiences? On the other hand, since his unusual experience of being a Muslim pupil in Islamic boarding schools, in addition to his education, he suffered various harsh discriminative experiences because of his Chinese origin.

As the only student of Chinese origin, influenced by his unhappy experiences of racial discrimination, he did not tell other students about his ethnic background. His face was mistaken for a person from Palembang, where people have mixed ancestry including Chinese, so the local people have small eyes and light skin. Even the only friend who knew his ethnic origin was often joking with him about it; they called each other, "Hi, Padang!" and "Hi, Chinese."

Joko says that Chinese have slanted eyes and are supposed to be dangerous, bad, and rich. Chinese eat pork which is *haram* (prohibited), so Chinese themselves are also *haram*. Other Chinese regarded him as a poor Chinese and try to bully and humiliate him. In order to protect himself, he had to fight with them. He says "to become an ethnic Chinese Muslim is so difficult because they do not want to recognize us as real Muslims, and ethnic Chinese are not supposed to be Muslims; ethnic Chinese becoming Muslims is strange (*aneh*)." When finding out about his conversion, his Chinese friends usually feel very surprised and ask why he decided to convert to Islam.

When he was enrolled in *pesantren*, his classmates did not want to believe his motivation is sincere. There was a rumor among pupils that there must be some conspiracy behind the presence of a Chinese among them. They were suspicious that a Chinese boy would study in an Islamic boarding school just because he wanted to deceive people. It was so hard for him when everybody knew his ethnic origin. He says the stereotype in Indonesia is that "Chinese are not Muslim. When you come into Islam, you are no longer Chinese" (*Cina itu bukan islam. Kalau udah masuk Islam, bukan orang cina*). Those pupils, whose ideas of ethnic discrimination are deeply rooted in the anti-Chinese political atmosphere since the 1960s, usually hold a typical ethnic stereotype, considering Chinese "dangerous and bad" (*Cina itu bahaya, Cina itu jelek*).

He had some unhappy experiences that occurred after he entered the Islamic

boarding school. He wanted to play with other pupils but they sneered at him and told each other, "don't play with the Chinese; Chinese eat pork— it is prohibited" (*jangan main sama Cina; Cina makannya babi— babi itu haram*). They also assumed that Chinese are rich and tried to blackmail him by telling him, "Aren't you a Chinese? You must give us money." For a while, he and his young brother studied in the same school. Compared to his frightened younger brother, he considers himself to be braver in defending himself against the abusive students. For instance, he once played chess with a student while other onlookers tried to bother him by telling his opponent how to move his pieces.

> When I said that it was my game, they asked me to fight them by provoking my opponent: "Just beat him! He's Chinese and he's alone." The next day, I found that somebody messed up my wardrobe and stole my clothing. I did the same thing to the person who did it. Then this person told me, "I broke your cupboard because you are a Chinese and you are alone." Then I said, "So what if I'm Chinese? You want to beat me? I don't fear you. We are the same human beings who eat rice. If you don't like Chinese, try to get us all Chinese out of Indonesia!"

He struck back by reminding him that he is not an original inhabitant and must have mix blood with Chinese or Arabic ancestry. In the evening, those pupils gathered outside, waiting to fight him. They told him that they do not like to have a Chinese study in the Islamic boarding school with them.

Fortunately, teachers found out about their fight earlier, and they came to protect him. The *ustadz* (religious teacher) arranged for him to sleep in a different room and blamed the other pupils for treating him with prejudice and regarding Chinese as bad. The teachers are very protective because Chinese Muslim is very rare, so the teachers want to educate him well to be a real good Muslim.

Joko concludes that neither ethnic Chinese nor indigenous Muslims want to recognize him as a Chinese Muslim because they feel it is strange that Chinese want to convert to Islam.

Mulyono, the second son of Gunawan, started his Islamic education when he was seven years old. From age seven until ten, he joined various private children's religious courses. During that period, he was registered to study with his elder brother Joko in the same Islamic boarding school. But his health was bad, so he only stayed for one and half years. His mother took him away from the school, and his parents had very serious quarrels about this. His bad health had become the cause of a conflict between his parents. He recollects that the study and life in a traditional Islamic boarding school are very tough. The students usually had to get up at 3 a.m. The

started with religious courses, which were taken up with performing *salat*, reciting the *Quran*, and studying the religious scriptures. After the religious activities, they had time for sports and to sweep and clean up their boarding house. From the morning until noon, the students go to school; in the afternoon, they have some free time to rest and do some private activities, such as washing their clothes. But regular religious activities continue at 4 p.m. Students have to prepare for the next day's lessons before they go to sleep for one or two hours. The daily schedule was very tight, so he believes that his body was not strong enough for this tough life.

Like his older brother, he also faced difficult, discriminative situations and was frequently asked about his ethnic origin, and, according to his father, Mulyono was under a threat of sodomy by other elder pupils. However, the ethnic discrimination he and his elder brother faced, according to him, is mainly caused by the fact that ethnic Chinese are more exclusive towards other non-Chinese people. Unlike indigenous Indonesians, who easily get along with other different ethnic groups, ethnic Chinese tend to interact with the same sub-ethnic Chinese groups who speak the same Chinese dialect. The problem of Chinese ethnic exclusion is the main reason for ethnic discrimination against them. Because of this ethnic difference, they took a much longer time to make friends with other indigenous students. He believes that for indigenous students it is much easier to be familiar each other.

When he makes known his Muslim identity, his Chinese friends usually curiously ask about his family background, such as the ethnic origins and religion of his parents, and some questions about Muslim religious obligations. The Chinese friends usually ask him, "You don't eat pork, right?" or "Have you been circumcised?" The questions for Chinese female Muslims may be even more aggressive. They may be questioned in such a way that suggests that Chinese women's conversion means accepting polygamy, such as, "Why do you want to become a Muslim? Was it that you can become another person's second wife?" There are often also accusations, like, "You will marry with an indigenous Muslim whose morality is inferior," or "You will marry with a Muslim who will soon have a new wife." Thus, female Chinese-Indonesian Muslims may be asked more difficult questions that imply that their conversion to Islam has meant their unconditional surrender to polygamy and to self-devaluation in marrying with immoral indigenous Muslims.

Even as a practicing Muslim, when looking for places to perform *salat* such as a mosque or a pray room (*musholla*), Mulyono had some experiences of people purposely making things difficult for him. He went to a mosque for performing *salat*, but a gatekeeper assumed that he is a Catholic rather than a Muslim, asking him to show his ID card. Once he was eager to find a prayer place at prayer time. He hurriedly got off a bus and run into a public building belonging to a famous

Indonesian bank, the Bank of Central Asia (BCA). At the entrance, Mulyono told the security that he is eager to find a prayer room. The security asked to him to show the ID card because a Chinese is unlikely to ask where the prayer house is. After the security checked his ID card and made sure his religion is Islam, he casually told him that he should go to the upstairs. However, when he went there, he was not able to find the prayer room. When he saw someone, he hurriedly asked the person, because the prayer time had almost passed. The person censured him for coming inside the company, and asked him if everybody does this, who should take responsibility for any theft? Then this person said that he should go to the prayer room at the basement level. However, when Mulyono went to the basement, he just found a parking lot without any prayer room. Finally, he met an office boy, who honestly told him that there was no prayer room there. Mulyono exasperatedly questioned why people lied to him and treated him badly.

His elder brother Joko also had a similar experience. When he wanted to enter a mosque for prayers, the gatekeeper questioned why he wanted to come in. His brother got angry but kept silent for a while, and then replied: "Sorry sir, this is a mosque, a place for pray; does it belong to you? What's the matter if I want to pray here?"

In the stories above, we can observe how a new ethnic Chinese Muslim struggles to develop a Muslim family. Gunawan's ambitious agenda is to cultivate his children to become Islamic scholars and establish a *dawa* foundation. But enrolling his two children to study in a traditional Islamic boarding school has meant pushing them to be exposed on the front lines of racial discrimination. On the other hand, his educational agenda is an atypical strategy for ethnic Chinese. In order to accumulate Islamic social and symbolic capital in a normal Chinese-Indonesian family without inheriting a deep-rooted Islamic tradition, he has paid the price of struggling to become a legitimate Muslim family. These difficult experiences have shown an ineradicable stereotype of how people perceive ethnic Chinese as non-Muslims.

4.5 Religious Boundaries in the Historical Making of Chinese/*Pribumi*

Taking the story of Gunawan's family as an example, I want to ask: why has conversion to Islam resulted in negative response from non-Muslim Chinese and the indigenous Muslim community. How does each side construct its perception of the other and what are the social boundaries of the construction? Why are the two categories, Chineseness and Islam, exclusive to each other?

Ethnic Chinese and *pribumi* are two ethnic/racial categories which encompass diverse and heterogeneous social constitutions, but the two concepts have been so intrinsic to people's popular recognitions. Compared to *pribumi*, ethnic Chinese occupy an economically and racially superior place in the hierarchy, but they are socially and politically marginalized by the *pribumi*-dominant state and suffer potential discrimination everyday; they even fear the intermittent anti-Chinese riots. *Pribumi* indicates the idea of indigeneity, in contrast to the forever foreign-ness of the Chinese. *Pribumi* believe that they have been suffering from the unequal, economically-exploitative system dominated by ethnic Chinese since Dutch colonial period.

Chang-yau Hoon (2008) has examined the mutual construction of stereotypes in *pribumi* and Chinese, and he has located the boundaries of Chinese/*pribumi* through the *pribumi*'s perception of "Chineseness" and how ethnic Chinese sustain their ethnic difference by constructing an ethnic self through daily ethnic interactions. He concludes that the *pribumi* admire how ethnic Chinese have industrious and disciplined characteristics and are very good at doing business. But accompanying the positive characteristics, *pribumi* think that Chinese are money-oriented, corrupt, non-religious, and exclusive. They believe that ethnic Chinese feel that they are superior to *pribumi*, so that they are reluctant to socialize with the indigenous majority.[166] Since *pribumi* feel they are economically inferior victims, they feel they deserve to push back, asking for more money from the Chinese or expecting the Chinese, who have better economic positions, to "do a favor" for *pribumi*. Moreover, Chinese have been essentialized as newcomers (*pendatang*) because of their land of geographic origin is outside Indonesian territory. Hoon highlights a vivid example from an interview, outlining the main social classification of how "the Chinese are 'Othered' based on their origin, physical appearance, culture, lifestyle, religion and class." (2008, 139) By contrast, the Chinese see *pribumi* as unreliable because they are lazy, stupid, undisciplined, and they are always jealous of them and even consider them as eternal foreigners (Hoon 2008). The boundaries of Chinese/*pribumi*, mostly based on race and class, have led to Chinese suffering the psychological trauma of anti-Chinese discrimination and reminding themselves, as newcomers, to keep a low profile and not to express their opinions publicly, for fear of ethno-political conflicts.

Concerning the influence of religion, Hoon (2008) has found that although many ethnic Chinese are unwilling to marry their daughters or sisters to *pribumi*, when both sides share the same religion, then this would become more acceptable. He argues that religious difference is one of the biggest obstacles to interethnic marriage between

[166] Chang-yau Hoon also provides some counter-discourses, in which some *pribumi* affirm that ethnic Chinese are willing contribute to Indonesia.

non-Muslim Chinese and Muslim *pribumi*. Ethnic Chinese are not willing to see their daughters or sisters accept the practices of polygamy and wearing headscarf. This stereotype has become a point of significant resistance for ethnic Chinese women looking to accept Islam. The making of social boundaries, Chinese/*pribumi*, is crucial for understanding the triple discrimination faced by ethnic Chinese. However, Hoon does not discuss further why *pribumi* feel ethnic Chinese are unreligious or how Islam has become a racial mark of religious difference as a salient moral boundary for Chinese implicated in the boundary-making of Chinese/*pribumi*.

In 2002, the Center for the Study of Islam and Society (PPIM, *Pusat Pengkajian Islam dan Masyarakat*), at Syarif Hidayatullah State Islamic University, Jakarta, conducted a survey on Muslim society and democracy in Indonesia (Mujani 2007). There were two questions relating to the attitudes of Muslims toward ethnic Chinese. The first question asked Muslim respondents which social group they were unwilling to be neighbors to. In this question, ethnic Chinese were compared to four other groups: Communists, Christians, Islamist Muslims, and Hindu/Buddhist. A significant minority, 13% of respondents, indicated that they did not want ethnic Chinese neighbors, in contrast to higher rankings for Communists (84%), Christians/Catholics (16%), Islamist Muslims (14%), and Hindus/Buddhists (12%). The second question required respondents to choose a group which they liked the least. The five groups were: Communists (58%), Jews (8%), Christians/Catholics (7%), Islamist Muslims (2%), and ethnic Chinese (2%), as well as the two answers ”Other Group” (6%) and “None” (15%). The target group most abhorred by Muslims was Communists rather than ethnic Chinese, so we should not exaggeratethe resentment toward ethnic Chinese among the Indonesian Muslim community. However, ethnic Chinese is neither a religious group nor an ideological/ political community, so why are they still recognized as a negative target group?

In another event, people debated whether Chinese-Indonesian Muslims are allowed to celebrate Chinese New Year (*Imlek*) by performing *salat*, exhibiting their festival decoration and performance with traditional Chinese colors. The local Muslim community believes that since ethnic Chinese have converted to Islam, they should embrace Islam wholeheartedly (*masuklah Islam secara kaffah*), completely erasing their ethnicity without showing any Chinese ethnic characteristics anymore. A conservative *ustadz*, Muhammad Shiddiq al-Jawi, condemns the festival culture of *Imlek* as religiously prohibited for Muslims.[167] According to the *Quran* and the *Sunnah*, Muslims are not allowed to join other non-Islamic religious activities, including *Imlek*, ritual practices, even congratulating other Chinese with the phrase ”*Gong Xi Fat Chai*” (a greeting for Chinese New Year). It is also prohibited to

[167] See note 4.

decorate houses and offices with Chinese-styled lanterns or dragon illustrations and other decoration with red color, as well as performances for celebrating *Imlek* such as live bands, Mandarin karaoke, and cooking demonstrations (Chiou 2008). It seems that "*masuklah Islam secara kaffah*" has been understood as "*masuk Islam, masuk Melayu*" (convert to Islam, enter Malay society).[168]

I suggest examining the adaptation, conflicts, and transformation in the conversion process of Chinese-Indonesian by regarding conversion as an act that crosses the ethnic and religious boundaries separating Chinese and *pribumi*. The social boundary indicates "a categorical and social or behavioral dimension. The former refers to acts of social classification and collective representation; the latter to everyday networks of relationships that result from individual acts of connecting and distancing" (Wimmer 2008, 975), through which individuals divide social groups as "us" and "them" and also relate themselves to people classified as "us" and "them" in given circumstances. In other words, the conversion process, in additional to its spiritual dimensions, is a consequence of ethnic, religious, symbolic, and political struggles over the social division. On the macro-level, institutional powers such as the state are identifying what official religions are and demarcating people into various religious groups, and the cultural system such as Chinese customs which urges people in formulating their ethnic and religious identities. On the micro-level, in my observation, Chinese-Indonesian Muslims' conversion has put them on a course to challenge "the hegemonic power of dominant modes of social boundary making" (Wimmer 2008, 995). I intend to examine how a new ethnic Chinese convert changes his or her cognitive framework and repositions his or her own ethnic and religious categories within a multi-hierarchical social space. By converting to Islam, how do Chinese-Indonesian Muslims shift and blur the boundaries, create new cultural diacritics while they face social exclusion from non-Muslim Chinese and the indigenous Muslim majority?

Recently, more attention has been paid to how religion works as moral and symbolic boundaries "in creating, maintaining, contesting, or even dissolving institutionalized social differences" (Lamont 2002, 168; see also Edgell, Hartmann, and Gerteis 2006; Lichterman 2008; Pachucki, Pendergrass, and Lamont 2007). Therefore, we need to illustrate how religious axes are formulated and implemented in the boundaries and shape Chinese/*pribumi* categories. These boundaries can lead Chinese-Indonesians to feel reluctant to understand Islam, and they have hindered the Chinese from association with the indigenous society as well as led indigenous Muslims to easily disassociate Chinese-Indonesians' ethnicity from Islam and even

[168] This Malay slang phrase indicates that as soon as a Chinese individual converts to Islam, he will assimilate to the indigenous Muslim society rather than keep his original ethnicity.

consider ethnic Chinese as "*haram.*"

Before the consolidation of colonial rule carried out in Java in the 18th century, the relationship between the Chinese and Javanese was close. Chinese occupied significant positions in trade and land-lease on Java's north coast, paid their service to the courts, and even were enrolled as high-ranking officers in the courts (Carey 1984; Lombard and Salmon 1991). For economic, financial, and matrimonial purposes, Chinese conversion to Islam, whether it was sincere or not, was a process of naturalization and integration with the indigenous majority.[169] Chinese men marrying with Javanese women increased the size of *peranakan* (locally born, mixed-blood Chinese) community. By way of conversion to Islam, they built a closer association with indigenous society and courts and created a part of *peranakan* culture.

Up to the 18th century, the Javanese political elites enjoyed Chinese skills and talents in the field of tax-farm administration, commercial enterprise, and military expertise (Carey 1984, 15-16). But the increased *peranakan* commercial competition and economic exploitation, after the Java War (1825-30), became more threatening to Javanese political elites and oppressive to lower people. The British attack and humiliation of the Yogyakarta court and the Dutch Indies government's war in Java were the two political events that spoiled the relationship between Chinese and Javanese. The Chinese communities gradually understood that the colonial ruling power was the real dominator, and they were satisfied with the privileges permitted only to them. Conversion to Islam and association with Javanese political elites were less attractive; by contrast, to establish a new eco-political alliance with the western colonial power was more important (Carey 1984). When Diponegoro asked Chinese who wanted to embrace Islam to be circumcised and cut their pigtails, this increased Chinese feelings of being threatened by an image that linked Islam with Javanese chauvinism and anti-Chinese violence.

G. William Skinner's comparative studies (1960, 1996) are a good place for exploring why Islam is an important indicator in the boundary separating Chinese and *pribumi*. At the beginning, he concerns himself with why the Chinese *peranakan* community maintained themselves as an intermediate society and neither assimilated to the indigenous society nor complied with the ethnic closure of Chinese immigrants. In his earlier work, Skinner compared Chinese assimilation in Indonesia and Thailand in the 19th century; he tried to provide a theoretical explanation of the factors deterring Chinese assimilation in Indonesia. His argument identifies two main issues. First, Dutch colonial policy repressed the indigenous political elites who were then degraded to an inferior social status. The colonial administrative and economic elites

[169] Carey (1984) and The (1965) note an interesting case. In the 17th century, in order to escape the pool-tax imposed by the VOC, Chinese immigrants became Muslims by becoming "shaven" Chinese (*geschoren Chineezen*) who cut their head hair except for a long pigtail at the back.

replaced the courts. Dutch authorities established the social status of Chinese immigrants as "middlemen," a status higher than the indigenous people, by giving economic privileges and judiciary autonomy, and they implemented a policy of ethnic separation prohibiting Chinese from associating with the indigenous community. The transformation of colonial social structures eventually repressed the indigenous elites' status and caused racial stratification, and the indigenous elites were pushed to lower social strata. This made Chinese immigrants change their assimilation strategy and become more reluctant to assimilate to the indigenous society as an approach of upward social mobilization. Dutch colonial government had systematically eliminated mechanisms allowing Chinese immigrants to integrate with the indigenous society.

Second, Skinner highlights the significant roles played by religion in explaining why Chinese assimilation to the indigenous society in Thailand was easier than that in Indonesia. Contrasting the religiosity of Islam and Theravada Buddhism, he argues that Islam is "relatively intolerant and exclusivist" and "requires for formal conversion the renunciation of false gods" (1960, 96). For this reason, Chinese immigrants who were familiar with the syncretistic characteristics of popular Chinese religions may feel more alienated from Islam than from Theravada Buddhism. For Chinese male immigrants, interethnic marriage with indigenous Muslim women may encourage more conversion to Islam. But, most nominal Javanese do not oppose this interethnic marriage with non-Muslim men. This causes the Chinese community not to consider conversion to Islam as a necessary choice for marrying indigenous Javanese women. Finally, Skinner has a strange observation on how Chinese recognize Islam in Java. He thinks most orthodox Muslims are Javanese traders, while most nominal Muslims are traditional Javanese elites who are culturally superior to those pious trader Muslims. Therefore, Chinese easily associate Islam with "business competitors who were culturally inferior to high-status traditional elite" (1960, 97).

The Siauw Giap (1965; 1993)[170] agrees that Skinner's analysis on the racial stratification has discerned the social structure in 19th century of Dutch colonial society. But The argues that the religiosity of Islam in opposition to Chinese religious customs should not be overstated. Skinner fails to explore how Islam was considered in Chinese minds as an inferior religion that should be associated with historical factors of colonial racial stratification. The emphasizes that "as the majority of Javanese came to occupy the lowest position in the new stratificational system, Islam was equated in the Chinese mind with the religion of an inferior people; hence its attraction decreased" (1965, 77). In other words, the colonial social structure identified Islam as an inferior religion and racialized it as a mark signifying islanders,

[170] The later expands his previous work (1965) as a revised version, which covers new developments of Chinese-Indonesian Muslim organization and Malaysian Chinese Muslims (1993). I mainly refer to his earlier work.

which deterred Chinese decedents from embracing Islam. The thinks that the role played by Islam in Chinese assimilation to the indigenous society varied from era to era. Before the 18th century, conversion among Chinese descendants was not rare, and in some regions the local born Chinese even mixed with indigenous Muslims. The main factors widening the ethnic distance between Chinese and the indigenous by way of prohibiting Chinese conversion to Islam resulted from colonial ethnic policy keeping Chinese away from the indigenous population. Chinese conversion to Islam was prohibited because it was regarded as a sign of further erosion of ethnic closure.[171] On the other hand, since the indigenous population paid less tax than Chinese, Chinese could have converted to Islam to avoid the head tax (Steenbrink 1993).

The is aware that social conflict may be "polarized along the religious differences in particular" (1965, 80), but, in his view, Islam was not necessarily regarded as a significant barrier for assimilation of Chinese to the indigenous society in the past. The main obstacle for ethnic Chinese to accept Islam was due to Muslims' status. In different circumstances, Islam could be embraced by the Chinese community. In 1960s, he positively predicted that Chinese-Indonesians would gradually be attracted by Islam after the twisted colonial social structure was changed by the independence of Indonesia.

In response to The's criticism, Skinner refined his earlier explanation of how Islam became a barrier for *peranakan* Chinese to assimilate. He reminds us not to ignore the fact that Islam gradually became stricter and more orthodox. As Carey has pointed out, after the Java War, the increasing orthodoxy of Islam made the Chinese feel threatened, and they were afraid of being completely assimilated to the indigenous society if they decided to convert to Islam. But he changes his idea using a utilitarian point of view to explain that Islam was not necessary a barrier for Chinese immigrants to convert when

> the strength of one's desire to cross over is a function of the extent to which valued ends are attainable only on the Islamic side of the fence, and that certain valued ends are likely to be "monopolized" by the body of believers only when Islam is strong and solidly entrenched within the larger society. (Skinner 1996, 74)

He means that once Indonesia becomes a country where Muslims dominate access to indigenous women, high social status, and economical opportunities for Chinese, it will motivate more Chinese to convert.

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[171] The mentions an interesting case. A son of a deceased Chinese officer had converted to Islam and no longer wanted to be a *peranakan*. The colonial government decided that he was not allowed to change his ethnicity because a son of a Chinese man was forever Chinese.

Skinner and The reached some similar conclusions, allowing us to rethink how Islam has historically been constituted as a religious axis in the boundary of Chinese-Indonesian while this social classification is historically and fluidly being remade rather than being essentially fixed. However, further Islamization with increasing religious reform has unavoidably invited social opposition and conflict as Merle C. Ricklefs (2007) indicates. As an ethno-religious minority, ethnic Chinese have faced the social pressure of religious change coming from the Muslim majority from time to time. At the end of the 19th century, the *peranakan* community even raised a movement of Chinese cultural revival, attempting to resist a gradual process of acculturation to the indigenous society or Islamization (Salmon 1996). In the early 20th century, Sarekat Islam (SI, The Islamic Association) considered the Chinese competitors opposing the Muslim lower classes (Shiraishi 1997).[172] Even until the eve of anti-Chinese riots of May 1998, some anti-Chinese sentiment was spread among Islamic groups, considering ethnic Chinese to be either exploiters of the economic crisis or conspirators threatening to subvert Indonesia as a Muslim country (Purdey 2006).

4.6 Concluding Remarks

Some elements of the Chinese-Indonesian conversion experience have exposed Islam as a salient factor intertwined with ethnic/racial and classical classification that fabricate the boundary-making of Chinese/*pribumi*, engendering the mutually-constructed ethno-religious stereotype. I highlight the historical process of how Islam became seen as an inferior religion because of the racial stratification formulated by colonial society of Dutch Indies. This indirectly led to the racialization of Islam. Thus was it revealed how religious boundaries are so crucial as a moral basis for drawing the line of Chinese/*pribumi*. Rethinking how religious boundaries work will improve our analytic tools for exploring the complicated and multileveled minority-majority relations in Indonesia. This demands more serious theoretical works and empirical research to deepen the sociological exploration of how to achieve a more promising multicultural and tolerant Indonesian civil society (Habib 2004).

Chinese-Indonesian Muslims' difficult experiences have reminded us that ethnic Chinese living in a Muslim-majority society should learn to understand what Islam is and why this religion is so important to the Muslim society where they live; similarly,

[172] However Azra (1994) argued that SI was largely a middle class movement reacting to Chinese economic domination and simultaneously arousing Islamic revival. SI should not be charged as an anti-Chinese Islamic organization instigating the anti-Chinese emotions in the early 20th century.

since public expression of Chinese culture was prohibited during the New Order period, most non-Chinese Indonesians also pay little attention to ethnic Chinese. I have found many Chinese-Indonesian Muslims are warmly welcomed by the indigenous Muslims in spite of the fact that suspicion still exists. On the ethnic Chinese side, I believe that if Indonesia is becoming a democratic Muslim country, where Islam is being transformed into a more cosmopolitan religion and more stories of Chinese-Indonesian conversion to Islam and Islamic teachings are introduced to them, more sympathetic understanding will be aroused for those new Muslims. Chinese-Indonesian new Muslims will contribute to bridging ethnic gaps, inviting both sides to improve their friendly understanding of each other (Chiou 2007; Perdana 2008).

Chapter 5

Between Faith and Family

5.1 Introduction

Ani is a young Chinese-Indonesian woman.[173] At a family meeting, when she told her family about her decision to embrace Islam, her parents became very angry with her. Her father asked whether she had decided to convert to Islam because of a Muslim man with whom she had fallen in love, although in fact, she did not have a boyfriend yet. Her father issued an ultimatum. She had to choose either Islam or her family. But Ani refused to denounce Islam. This displeased her parents so much that they withheld her allowance. Hence Ani had to quit her studies at the university and look for a job. A few weeks later, her parents tried to arrange a blind date for her. She recalled what happened on that day:

> The man who was supposed to be my blind date was due to arrive that Sunday evening. But on Sunday morning, I had a quarrel with my father. He tried to choke me, but maybe he didn't mean to do so. Then he locked me in my room. However, Alhamdulillah, I managed to run away… My mother forgot to lock the door. When she was asleep, I ran away.

A few months later after she left home and began working, Ani made friend with a *pribumi* Muslim boy, who later proposed to her. She returned home to tell her parents about her marriage plans. Ani's father, convinced that Muslim men usually

[173] All informants' names of Chinese Muslim women in this chapter are pseudonyms.

have many wives, urged her to investigate how many wives her fiancé might already have. Her father also suspected that her fiancé's ulterior motive was to get a share of her inheritance.

Chang-yau Hoon (2008) mentions an interview with a Chinese-Indonesian male friend. His friend was asked whether he would have a problem with his sister marrying a pribumi (2008, 170):

> He sternly replied with this question:"Would you allow your sister to marry a pribumi and convert to Islam and wear the *jilbab* (headscarf)"? My hypothetical question to this informant had not specified the religion of pribumi. However, his reply shows that his foremost concern is with Islam. By putting me in his shoes, my informant forced me to empathize with him and understand his concern.

After looking at these two stories, the question that begs to be asked is this: why are Chinese-Indonesians so reluctant to see their daughters and sisters marry pribumi Muslim men? Is it because ethnic Chinese hate to see their women wearing headscarves or their refusal to accept polygamy? Before giving an appropriate reply, I intend to investigate how some Chinese-Indonesian women convert to Islam, and why their conversion is often associated with interracial marriages with pribumi men. Moreover, despite the fact that Chinese-Indonesian Muslim women often face opposition and even rejection from their families, they still insist on pursuing their freedom of religion and autonomy in the choice of marriage partners. It might be interesting to know their reasons for doing so.

Studies on Chinese-Indonesians have traditionally not paid adequate attention to women, let alone their religious lives and marriages. After the anti-Chinese riots in 1998, however, the focus of research started to shift to human rights issues of Chinese-Indonesian women, mainly with respect to sexual and racial violence. This new attention was brought about by the sudden anti-Chinese riots rather than a deep-seated interest in the subject. Current studies on Chinese-Indonesians still do not pay much heed to Chinese-Indonesian women and gender issues. From my examination of some of these issues, there is need for further serious research on Chinese-Indonesian women to narrow the knowledge gap in this field.

In the preceding chapter, I highlighted three forms of discrimination encountered by Chinese-Indonesian Muslims. This triple discrimination is based on the social divisions of race, class, and religion implicated in the dichotomous social boundaries of Chinese/pribumi Muslims. These three forms of discrimination are important not only in understanding the opposition brought about by the religious conversion of Chinese-Indonesian women to Islam, but also in the consideration of two specific

issues. Firstly, the enactment of Indonesia's Marriage Law preventing inter-religious marriages makes the conversion to Islam a mandatory act preceding a possible intermarriage (Mujiburrahman 2006). This is related to the second issue, where the marriage strategy is used to sustain the racial purity of Chinese-Indonesians through the demarcation of a gender boundaries. The Marriage Law can be a threat to the stability of sustaining the racial boundary for an ethnic minority such as Chinese-Indonesian. It would be difficult to understand how the Chinese-Indonesian woman's conversion is influenced by her family and marriage without clarifying the complex interrelations among the state's legal regulations, ethnic minority's marriage strategy in line with religious, racial and gendered stratifications, and exclusion of the convert's natal and conjugal family. Therefore, I intend to add a fourth axis of the Chinese/pribumi boundary viz. the significant aspects of the gender boundaries. The intention here is to make my theoretical work on the boundary-making of Chinese/pribumi more comprehensive in the exploration of the conversion experience of Chinese-Indonesian Muslims.

Recent studies on western women converting to Islam have offered a useful reference framework to compare and contrast the similarities and differences between the conversion experiences of new Muslim women in Europe with those of their counterparts in Asia. For a start, the social constraints of interracial marriages sometimes do not seem to have been well considered in the case of European women's conversion to Islam. Newly-converted European Muslim women tend to rationalize their conversion as Islamic feminism or a new critical consciousness in considering Islam as a moral sanctuary to protect their bodies and families. In addition, there are those who defend western women's conversion to Islam as a rational choice and seek to give a positive presentation of the converted women in the post-secular Europe (Roald 2004; McGinty 2006). However, in my comparison of European women who convert to Islam with those in Asia, I shall argue for the need to include the impact of the state, marriage and family, when investigating why Chinese-Indonesians frown upon the female members of their families converting to Islam.[174]

As a male researcher, I must admit that I encountered some gender obstacles during my fieldwork, especially when I needed to interview Chinese-Indonesian Muslim women. Two methodological reflections will be addressed later regarding my position as a male researcher on how to understand the Muslim women's conversion

[174] The book, *Muslim-non-Muslim Marriage*, edited by Gavin W. Jones, Chee Heng Leng, and Maznah Mohamad has offered a comparative framework to explore further this issue in Southeast Asia in general. In particular, Nina Nurmila (2009) and Kate O'Shaughnessy (2009) focus the issues about devoice, marriage law, and polygamy in Indonesia can help for discussing the intermarriage of ethnic Chinese.

experience. Nevertheless, since Chinese-Indonesian women's conversion stories are important sources in my study, it is important that we consider the gendered implications of Chinese-Indonesian Muslim women's conversion narratives, as these women are often marginalized, and their voices largely ignored in the Indonesian society.

Based on selected accounts of Chinese-Indonesian women's conversion, this chapter will examine the following interrelated issues: (1) how do Chinese-Indonesian women become Muslims and what is their response to family pressure? In the conversion process, how do they acquire religious knowledge and information regarding the physical performance of religious obligations? (2) Why do the converts' natal families respond so negatively to their daughters' decision to change religion? (3) How do Chinese-Indonesian Muslim women understand their religious lives and families? (4) What are their views on interracial marriages, including endogamy, exogamy, and polygamy?

5.2 The Impact of Family and Marriage on Women Who Convert to Islam

Studies on western women's conversion to Islam tend to emphasize two related, albeit overlapping and distinct dimensions of the experience. One dimension seeks to explore their motivation and rationale for embracing Islam (Nieuwkerk 2008). It assumes that western Muslim women, due to having more autonomy and freedom, embrace their new religion as well as interpret Islam according to the European liberal spirit of gender equality and *Salafist* principle. The former has engendered an "Islamic feminist" thinking, which tries to critically redress the patriarchal reading of Islam from traditions of Islamic law and theology, and also challenges a supposed patriarchal culture implemented in Muslim families (Badran 2006; McGinty 2007). The latter avoids various performances of local "deviated" Muslim customs which do not originate from the *Qu'ran* and the *Sunna* (Roald 2006). Although marrying a Muslim husband is one of important reasons for a woman to convert, this does not mean that the female convert is supposed to surrender to her Muslim husband's beliefs (Nieuwkerk 2008). Instead, some new female converts have the freedom to study and understand Islam in a different way from their Muslim husbands, who have inherited the faith from their families. In this regard, some Muslim women have even engendered a spirit of Islamic feminism. In addition, for some western women converts, Islam can be a moral and spiritual resource to protect their motherhood and

womanhood, and a solution to deal with issues of sexuality and gender. It may also provide a moral critique of the secularism of the West (Wohlrab-Sahr 2006).

Islam can be viewed as an ethical resource utilized against gender discourses that emphasize women's biological difference and refusal to accept gender equality as an ideology (Abu-Lughod 2002). Karin van Nieuwkerk (2006) identifies three types of gender discourses among Dutch women converts. The first type of discourse is critical of Western concepts of sexual freedom and holds the view that freedom, in particular sexual freedom, in the West or in Dutch society, is often exaggerated. New Muslim women feel that "the restrained behavior between men and women in Islam is a way to prevent disorder. Islamic rules, if applied properly, contribute to clarify and stability in familial and marital life…in Islam they are less perceived as sex objects than in the West. By covering, they also believe they can escape "the terror of the fashion"…their body is a very "intimate thing" that should not be publicly exposed" (Nieuwkerk 2006, 103).

The second gender discourse deals with the worries of newly converted female Muslims. They are concerned that their choice of the new faith would mean accepting women's subordination in Islam. But they later find that Islam grants women equal rights, and the notion of sexes in Islam is complementary, "equal but different" (Nieuwkerk 2006, 103). In addition, according to the third gender discourse, Islam is related to family care and motherhood. It emphasizes women's role of taking care of children and family rather than encouraging women to work outside the home for extra income. In Nieuwkerk's observation, "most Muslimas thus locate themselves within an emancipation discourse. Whereas most new Muslimas see no contradiction between Islam and emancipation, only a few identify themselves as feminists" (Nieuwkerk 2006, 104).

Islam and women's emancipation sound contradictory, but Anna Mansson McGinty, in observing Swedish Muslim women, has found that "they integrate seemingly irreconcilable gender discourses. By drawing on both Western and Islamic ideas, the converts produce a feminist commentary, criticizing both Western ideals of femininity and traditional, patriarchal readings of and practices within 'Islam'" (McGinty 2007, 475).

However, these critical gender discourses, formulated by newly-converted Muslim women in Europe, highlight how women's subjective consciousness is involved in engendering a critical pious agency. They also show that researchers often want to defend European women's conversion to Islam in such a way that it would not be regarded as a hasty decision to blindly embrace a religion considered as being mostly hostile to women (McGinty 2006). But it must be pointed out that new Muslim women have a relatively independent position to pursue their individualized

understanding of Islam, and enjoy more equal gender relations, unlike for instance some Arab Muslim women who have to surrender to patriarchal customs. Thus we have to be careful not to over-generalize the European new Muslim women's 'feminist experience' as a universal paradigm for understanding women's Islamic conversion in Asia. Instead, we need to consider the European new Muslim women's religious agency and ask why it is presented as such in a post-secular European society.

New European Muslim women's Islamic gender discourses are linked to Islamic feminism (Badran 2007; Cooke 2000), moral critique of fetishizing women's sexuality and body, and the defense of Muslim womanhood. This shows the complex multiple articulations between Islamic piety and religious agency. However, when exploring how European women converts present their gender discourses in line with Islam, in addition to the particular European socio-cultural contexts engendering a birth of European Islam, we also have to consider how women converts are presented as religious agencies in post-secular European society (Braidotti 2008). The traditional feminist critique, in assuming a secular and enlightened female subject, fails to understand what pious women are arguing for in their exercising religious piety through a display of gender subjectivity (Mahmood 2005). Neither can it understand how European women can empower a woman's consciousness either by arguing for Islamic feminism or seeking protection under Islamic sexual ethics. Studies on European women's conversion to Islam demonstrate an urgent need to reconcile an uncertain anxiety to face "the return of religion," understood as "return of the other" (Bracke 2008). Moreover, the western woman's conversion is often regarded as being strongly influenced by the European cultural core "more or less homogeneous, dominated by such Western values as secularism and individualism" (Nieuwkerk 2004, 233).

Peter van de Veer (2008, 809) looks at why explanations of agency have become a central issue in religious studies. He observes that "they appear to require even more reflection than usual because of secular skepticism of religious understandings of agency…" However, while some scholars are eager to criticize the stereotype imposed on the female converts and re-map their religious agency, their approaches inevitably become trapped in affirming feminist subjectivity. For instance, McGinty applies psychological/cognitive anthropology to understand how female converts "internalize and understand Islam by drawing from quite different sets of ideas and knowledge infused with subjectivity, emotions, and desires…" (2006, 10). In contrast, Margot Badran, an activist American feminist scholar, believes that the spirit of Islamic feminism has been implicated in the ideas of women converts, despite being aware of the fact that many converts usually do not clearly relate themselves to

so-called Islamic feminists (Badran 2006).

The above reflections act as reminders not to assume a universal/transcendental female subjectivity and suppose it as a paradigm to examine the conversion experience of Asian women. Instead of taking the binary terms of subordination and resistance for granted in examining female converts' agency, we have to consider how the agency is constituted within specific cultural and historical contexts (Mahmood 2005).

Why do studies on women converts in the West rarely discuss the influence of family and marriage? New European Muslims women often reject and overlook the traditional constraints of Islamic laws and cultural traditions of Muslim society. The second generation of Muslim immigrants shows their Islamic faith in a more individualistic style than their parents who still bind their religion with communal traditions. This indicates that New European Muslim women have more freedom of religious expression, often paying scant attention to the obligations imposed on Muslim women. Even when New European Muslim women marry husbands who come from Muslim families, it does not mean that they have to live the typical lives of Muslim wives in a Muslim country, for instance they do not have to live with their in-laws. This partially explains why the studies of conversion to Islam among European women rarely consider the impact of their family lives and intermarriage on their conversion as problems. Interestingly, by contrast, in some cases, it appears that their Muslim husbands have much respect for the idea of gender equality, and they are often even less serious about Islam than their new European convert wives (McGinty 2007; Nieuwkerk 2008). However, if we include women's conversion to Islam in the Asian context, it will be found that family and intermarriage are two important dimensions that cannot be underestimated.

For Chinese-Indonesian Muslim women, it seems that critically examining patriarchal cultural elements in Islamic traditions, or demanding gender equity under the protection of Muslim womanhood are not top priority on their agenda. It does not mean that feminist ideas or movements are totally absent. However, in order to understand the Asian woman's conversion experience, the impact of family and marriage cannot be underestimated.

Before my discussion on Chinese-Indonesian women's conversion, I shall compare five studies on women's conversion experience in five Asian countries. The five cases are divided into two groups. The first group focuses on transnational marriages, including western converts living in Palestine, Japanese converts married to Pakistani Muslims in Japan, and Filipina domestic helpers married to Pakistani Muslims in Hong Kong. In my examination of the first group, I intend to highlight how the woman convert's conjugal family, her husband's social status and local

networks influence her conversion and the power structure of her family. By contrast, in the second group, I shall concentrate on several cases of intermarriage in Indonesia and Malaysia, including Christian Dayak women married to Javanese Muslims, and Malaysian Chinese women married to Malay Muslims. In reviewing the three cases in Indonesia and Malaysia, we have to consider three issues: (1) state legislation on interfaith marriage that mandates a woman's conversion as a pre-requisite for intermarriage; (2) reasons for women being considered as "the symbolic boundary markers of the body politics" (Connolly 2009, 499) by their natal family; (3) how women converts are trapped in a dilemma as they are often excluded from their conjugal and natal families.

Western women who marry Palestinian men differ in their attitudes towards cultural adaptation, and may not be completely and easily assimilated into their husband's culture. One of the main reasons is that the extended families, and in particular the in-laws, tend to intervene in their intermarriage family life (Roer-Strier and Ezra 2006). When living with her husband's extend family, the in-laws always try to regulate the life and behavior of the new family member, as they view her as a stereotyped Western woman who endanger male superiority by "demanding equality, engaging in promiscuous sexual behavior, being incapable of raising children properly, and possibly running with the children" (2006, 50). A woman, who resists complete assimilation but partially adopts some local customs, states: "…I don't wear miniskirts and shorts in public here, and I don't talk back to my father-in-law… (On the other hand) I don't wear a veil, and I don't kiss my father-in-law's hand" (2006, 50).

Masako Kudo (2007, 2008) found that some Japanese women convert to Islam mainly because of their intermarriage with Pakistani Muslim men. Before a Japanese woman visits her husband's natal family, she has to convert to Islam in a formal process to obtain a legal marriage document. However, in order to obtain her marriage document, when accompanying her husband to Pakistan and staying with her in-laws for a period from one month to one more year, (just like western women Muslims living in Palestine), the Japanese woman has to be involved in the Muslim community and in familial web with other relatives. This will transform her life experience with regard to her new gender and family roles. The Japanese woman is treated as *bahu* (son's wife) and *bhabi* (brother's wife), and she is required to play her role in the extended families. Furthermore, the Japanese woman convert has to follow the principles of gender separation observed in the local Muslim community, which limits her spatial mobility, as well as a change of dressing style to cover her body. The Japanese woman feels more obligated to stand up for her family honor since she has become a family member instead of being treated as a female foreign tourist who does

not need to follow the principle of sexual segregation. Nevertheless, although Japanese women converts are considered as family members, some are actually treated as foreigners by their husband's natal family[175] (Kudo 2007, 11-12).

In contrast to their ambiguous status in Pakistan, Japanese Muslim women have a more independent status in their own families in Japan. Pakistani men married to Japanese women in Japan need to get legal visa, and they are also often helped by Japanese wives to start a new business after marriage. The Pakistani husbands change their previous low occupational status as manual workers to become self-employed entrepreneurs, exporting used cars to South Asia. Possibly because of their dependence on the local social capital offered by Japanese wives, Pakistani men usually do not intervene in their wives' everyday religious practice, except the food they eat and their dressing style. On the other hand, Japanese Muslim women have to forge a new identity as new Muslim converts, in contrast to their Muslim born husbands. The Japanese Muslim woman's conversion "is not an outcome of passively assimilating herself into her husband's lifestyle but actively cultivating a new self-image based on the quest of "real Islam" as opposed to 'Pakistani customs' " (Kudo 2008, 116). The Japanese Muslim woman's adoption of such an image to portray a purified universal Islam is seen as a passive protest against Pakistani patriarchal culture.

When comparing Japanese and European women's conversions to Islam and their experiences with their husband's families, and how they engender their practice of "real Islam" in Japan, in the former we can find some of the same experiences that Western women in Palestine have; in the latter, Japanese Muslim women enjoy more freedom in practicing Islam and enjoy as much autonomy in their family as their European counterparts do. If the European Muslim woman stays in her husband's country and live with his natal extended family, it would be interesting to know the extent to which she can preserve her freedom identified as Islamic feminism or whether she faces more constraints imposed on her by her in-laws.

In contrast to Japanese women who have more power in their families, Filipina domestic helpers who marry with Pakistani Muslim men in Hong Kong, are often not as lucky as their Japanese counterparts. Both Pakistanis and Filipinas immigrant workers share many similarities, including relatively low socio-economic positions. According to Sithi Hawwa (2000, 358), Filipinas women converts, unlike her

[175] Some Japanese spouses feel that they are less vulnerable than the wives of their brother-in-law and attribute this difference to the economic contribution which they have made to the household by being Japanese. On the other hand, their being both an outsider to the family and a foreigner, including the fact that they were brought up in a "corrupted" non-Islamic environment, can culturally marginalize them in Pakistan…One woman, for example, said that although she was warmly welcomed, she felt that she was being carefully watched by the husband's father; she speculated that he had a negative image of foreign women… that is, they were sexually and morally loose (Kudo 2007).

Japanese peers, "perceive the Pakistani men as male chauvinists"; they are often under threat of polygamy and their Pakistani husbands may conceal the fact that they also have a wife in Pakistan. Unlike Pakistani men in Japan, those in Hong Kong do not rely on their Filipinas wife's local support. This is reflected in male domination and cheating on their spouses.

Since 1990s the regulation of Indonesia's Marriage Law has made interfaith marriage almost impossible unless one partner converts to the other's religion. Since interfaith marriage is not allowed, a person must convert to the same religion of his/her partner. The marriage law has demarcated people according to religious faith. Chinese-Indonesian women's conversion to Islam may not necessarily be due to intermarriage. They may even be single at the time of conversion. However, their conversion implies that if they plan to marry a man legally, they have to choose a Muslim husband, whether his ethnic origin is a Chinese or a *pribumi*. As Jennifer Connolly says, the "sexual prescriptions, designating which partners and circumstances are appropriate and legitimate," is crucial to sustaining the boundaries of racial groups because "intermarriage, as a form of sexual boundary crossing, is a threat to political order, imperiling a group's purported racial purity and cultural identity" (2009, 494).

Connolly explains why Christian Dayaks in East Kalimantan feel threatened about their women marrying a member of the Muslim majority and converting to Islam. The Dayaks are unwilling to see their women marrying Muslim men. She argues that women are considered as "symbolic boundary makers of the body politic" (2009, 499); to control women's bodies and fertility means to maintain the ethnic group's boundary and status. According to a Dayak's popular understanding, Christian Dayak women are symbols of body politics; while the Dayaks are afraid that Muslim men, through intermarriage with their women, may swallow the Christian community. In other words, the relationships between Muslim majority and Dayak Christian minority are implicated with an image of gendered hierarchy that "Muslim men are the masculine predators and Dayaks are their docile, feminine prey" (2009, 499).

Malaysia's constitution makes Islam the official religion, and Malays must be adherents of Islam. Malays are neither allowed to embrace any religion except Islam, nor can Malays marry non-Muslim partners. In many ways, Malaysian Chinese Muslim women face problems because of the regulation of Islamic law. Rosey Wang Ma offers her services in a Muslim da'wa organization as a consultant to help Malaysian Chinese women who suffer problems caused by their conversion and intermarriage. Malaysian Chinese Muslim women sometimes encounter discrimination and exclusion from their natal families. Their Malay conjugal families usually have sympathy for and support Chinese new converts, but sometimes the

Malay husbands and in-laws also cause problems for them (Ma 2003, 27). I shall introduce few cases offered by Ma, including a single mother and three ethnic Chinese women, who have been involved in intermarriage with Malays.

Sri is from a well-to-do Chinese family, but she decided to convert to Islam. When she studied in a high school in England, she decided to convert to Islam after being influenced by an Indian new convert. Her family did not want to accept her conversion and blamed her for wanting to become a Muslim Malay, despite the fact that her conversion was due to an Indian Muslim. Her family forced her to renounce Islam because her family considers her conversion a family shame. Then her parents blame her for being "*pei-qian-huo*" (a money-losing proposition, 賠錢貨), a derogatory term with strong sense of gender-discrimination that is used to devalue a girl or a daughter.[176] Her mother even believed that she must be charmed by something and tried various ways to find spiritual healing for her "illness." (Ma 2003, 24) Sri was ostracized for a long period and only recently did her family change their mind and accepted her again.

Wei-lian was abhored by her Malay mother-in-law. After numerous quarrels with her mother-in-law, she could not stand her mother-in-law any longer. So Wei-lian came back to her parents' home, but her mother-in-law did not allow her to take her baby back with her; she was not even allowed to breastfeed her baby. The main reason given by her mother-in-law was that "the Melaikahs (Allah's angels) do not come to homes of people who have dogs; so a Muslim baby shouldn't stay in that house" (Ma 2003, 20), without any concern for what the baby really needs and the infant's religion. Later when Wei-lian's husband physically abused her, she decided to divorce her husband. But her child is registered as a Muslim and it is very difficult for a new Muslim mother to get her back (Ma 2003, 20).

Nadira married a Malay man and converted to Islam at a young age, but her natal family strongly opposed her marriage. After 11 years of marriage, she has five children, when her husband suddenly passed away. Her in-laws wanted to help but were not capable of giving her full financial supporting. However, even during such hard times, her parents still refused to help her unless she agreed to renounce Islam.

Hafsa, a Singaporean Chinese, married a Malay man and accompanied him to Malaysia. When staying with her conjugal family, she found that her mother-in-law was unhappy to accept her son marrying a Chinese woman. According to Hafsa, her mother-in-law then told her "…not to retain any Chinese culture, to the extent of forbidding me to have any Chinese friend or even speaking Chinese with the shopkeepers, and later to my children" (Ma 2003, 27).

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[176] The term "*pei-qian-huo*" is used to devalue women as less worthy than men in traditional Chinese society, it implies that a daughter cannot work outside the home as a son can, and that when she is going to marry, her parents have to prepare a dowry for her.

Is it possible for an ethnic Chinese woman to have married a Malay Muslim man without her parents' knowledge? From a very early age, Liana had been warned by her mother never to marry to a Muslim, and never to become a Muslim. However, she did not heed her mother's warning; she married a Malay Muslim man, and converted to Islam. But she does not have the courage to tell her parents about it because of her mother's frail health. Only her siblings know about her Muslim husband. In order to hide her marriage, she has even decided not to have any children. She said, "It is a heavy price to pay for freely choosing my faith and my life partner" (Ma 2009, 28).[177]

The abovementioned stories of ethnic Chinese Muslim women have reminded us that their natal and conjugal families dislike their conversion and interracial marriage. Hence we cannot explore the experience of Chinese-Indonesian's conversion to Islam without considering the impact of intermarriage and the state's regulation in Muslim marriages.

5.3 A Self-Reflection on My Own Identity as a Male Researcher and a Tentative Analytical Framework

Before I met my female Chinese-Indonesian Muslim interviewees, I rarely thought about how my own sexual identity as a male researcher might become a potential obstacle in my future interviews with Muslim women. When talking to Chinese-Indonesian women on different occasions such as in a mosque-gathering, in offices, and in a private party, I gradually began to feel a little uneasy when conducting in-depth interviews. So I decided to make appointments with some of them. My first formal interview in a Muslim woman's house changed my approach on how to access my female respondents. On the day that I visited her family, I was welcomed. She was accompanied by her husband and her eldest son.[178] During the interview, her husband and son talked much more than her. Her husband, an indigenous Indonesian Muslim, and the eldest son, were both very interested in discussing whether Chinese-Indonesian Muslims are serious converts. Eventually, the interview turned out to be on their impressions on Chinese-Indonesian Muslims; there was very little discussion related to Muslim women issues. Then it dawned upon me why female researchers seem to be more dominant in conducting the fieldwork with

[177] Some Malaysian Chinese Muslim women renounce Islam after divorcing their Muslim husbands. But after Malaysia made Islam a state religion, it has become very difficult to get permission for leaving Islam from the Islamic court.

[178] According to Islamic law, her husband and son play the role of "*muhrim*"(close relatives forbidden to marry her) to protect her in the meeting with a male stranger.

Muslim women.[179]

My second in-depth interview was with an elderly Chinese-Indonesian woman. She has two restaurants in Jakarta, and she is active in religious activities. I interviewed her in one of her restaurants. Her husband is a Buddhist who does not care about the gender regulation of Islamic law. Our meeting was in a public place. The issue of sexual separation did not seem to be a problem. I once had the good fortune to listen to her many interesting conversion stories, but I know that this occasion was exceptional; I had not expected other ethnic Chinese Muslim women to be easily accessed for an interview and to feel comfortable to share their conversion stories with me, a non- Muslim male researcher. So I tried to continue to have some informal interviews and occasional talks with Chinese-Indonesian Muslim women. In addition, to compensate for my "disadvantage", I engaged an indigenous Muslim female assistant to help me with conducting some of the interviews.

For a male non-Muslim researcher like me, who must use the transcripts for interviews conducted by a third party, I am fully aware of the limits of my indirect participation as well as my biological, epistemological, and religious identity. However, recent methodological reflections on "men doing anthropology of women" have encouraged me to create some possible space for continuing my discussion in this chapter.[180] In Davis Berliner and Douglas J. Falen's (2008, 135-144) introduction on their special issue: "Men Doing Anthropology of Women", they reflect critically on several important methodological issues. In the past, many anthropologists believed that female scholars were better suited for conducting women's studies than male scholars. Female scholars' analyses were believed to be more worthwhile than those of their male counterparts. Berliner and Falen argue that in spite of the fact that much literature has dealt with how a researcher's gender may influence his fieldwork and access to respondents, the male researcher's role in gender studies has been largely ignored and has become such as an "invisible man." When we look at the contribution of male scholars, they are in fact facing highly sensitive gender politics issues, including those involving the views of their academic colleagues. But this does not mean that they want to overlook the contribution of feminist-orientated research or that they believe that male researchers can replace female researchers in women's studies.[181]

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[179] Many anthropological and sociological works on Muslim women are usually written by female researchers. In my observations, many seminars and conferences about Muslim women issues which I attended are presented by female scholars, this included my personal experience to affiliate with the International Institute for the Islam in the Modern World at Leiden, Netherlands from 2000 to 2007.

[180] See special issue "Men Doing Anthropology of Women" of *Men and Masculinities* 11 (3), 135-233.

[181] However, is the study of Muslim women an "insurmountable obstacle" for male researchers (Berliner and Falen 2008, 138)? Taking his own personal fieldwork experience about female religiosity in a West African Muslim society, the Bulongic of Guinea-Conarky, Berliner discusses how his research topic is suspected in academic field and how his presence as a young white man involved in

When conducting my fieldwork in Jakarta and Surabaya, I felt strongly that if I ignored the importance of Chinese-Indonesian Muslim women issues, it would lead to a great loss in considering the gender aspect of Chinese-Indonesian Muslims' conversion experience. Despite some limitations encountered in my initial fieldwork, I persevered. The other reason was that, when analyzing my data, I discovered some differences in conversion experiences between male and female interlocutors. I was eager to review the literature focusing on Chinese-Indonesian women. However, as mentioned earlier, the several studies dealing with Chinese-Indonesian women's human right issues were related to the anti-Chinese riot of 1998; in the studies of Indonesian women, literature concerning ethnic Chinese women is extremely rare. Even Chinese-Indonesian women's biographies had little to offer. This observation is noted by Coppel (2009, xiii):

> Most books about Chinese Indonesians address societal issues in the broad rather than the refracted experiences of individual lives. Social scientists and historians tend, almost inevitably, to make generalizations about Chinese Indonesians as a minority group. These can easily reinforce the popular negative stereotypes which so often distort the lived experience of individual people of these stereotypes.

Coppel continues his remarks on the marginality of Chinese-Indonesian women's presentation in literature (2008, xiii):

> The few books which do focus in individual lives of Chinese Indonesians are usually autobiographies (or biographies) of men who have played a prominent role in politics or business. Very little has been written by or about individual ethnic Chinese women…

After a quick review on two Indonesian Chinese women's autobiographies (Koo 1943; Chang 1981), mentioned by Coppel (2008, xiii), and a biography of An Utari Sudibjo, a Chinese-Indonesian woman, written by her son-in-law (Pearson 2008), I soon realized that these three ethnic Chinese women were either highly educated (at

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gender politics of local Muslim community. He finally found his niche and discovered that his racial category as a white man is more recognized by the community. This racial category fortunately helped him to go beyond the gender separation and be invited by women's ritual participants. His experience has reminded us that not only a general epistemological concern about a supposed gender division of academic labor on women's studies is needed; it also appears there is a need for a further reflection on problems faced by male researchers when conducting fieldwork on Muslim women. To what extent should male scholars be aware of the gender rules of Islam and their own limits to access and understand Muslim women's living experiences? In my limited knowledge and experience, most researches of Muslim women are conducted by female scholars, but whether male scholars are excluded from Muslim women's studies has rarely attracted concern.

that time) or belonged to well-to-do families. If such literature of Chinese women is more inclined to the elite, it would facilitate me in the presentation of the conversion narrative of ordinary Chinese-Indonesian women who are often marginalized, and hence warranting little concern in Indonesian society.

By keeping the Chinese-Indonesian women's conversion narrative in the biography genre, I am adopting Wohlrab-Sahr's (2006) theoretical implication of "biographical analysis in a functional perspective." According to her, there is "a close connection between processes of biographical crisis and the conversion decision", and this relationship "can be described as the relationship between reference problem and problem solution." But this does not mean that Wohlrab-Sahr has merely framed the religious conversion "in a procedure of conscious self-therapy" to solve problems. For a sociological understanding of religious conversions, the biographical narrative that she suggests should (Wohlrab-Sahr 2006, 76-77):

> …deliver the necessary material for a sociological interpretation and for the reconstruction of reference problems and problem solutions. To look upon biographical materials in functional terms means to look upon it as an observer. The observer depends on the convert's narrative, but he or she does not hear only the intended message of the convert's self-theory. It is latent functions or latent meanings that the analysis aims to uncover.

This epistemological reflection is extended by van Nieuwkerk (2008), as she applies the biographical approach of conversion studies to criticize the rational choice model of religious conversion that reduces the rationality of converts to economic rationality. By examining the biographies of converts, she suggests that we can contextualize the rationality of converts "in the light of the identities and life stories of the actors involved" (van Nieuwkerk 2008, 432). On the other hand, this also echoes my previous concern, which is to be cautiously aware of the danger of assuming a universal feminist subject in studying women's conversion in the Asian society.

Studying the conversion biographies of Chinese-Indonesian Muslim women is important in understanding their experience,[182] but in order to avoid being caught in the self-containment of the theories of *subjectivity, I argue for bringing the impact of family and marriage back into the studies of their conversion to Islam, by linking the conversion biographies to* familial opposition (as a resistance strategy of ethnic Chinese minority) and to interracial marriage, and to the state's attempt to deal with inter-religious marriages. According to Connolly's analytic framework on the

[182] The method of biographical sociology I apply in this chapter, I shall introduce in Introduction chapter. [This footnote should be removed; or be changed in a reference to your discussion of method.

inter-religious marriage between Muslims and Christian Dayaks in East Kalimantan, which is inspired by Barth's three interrelated levels,[183] "the Indonesian state's Marriage Law No. 1/1974 has made interfaith marriage dependent on conversion, so an interfaith couple can marry only if one partner converts to the other's religion." This forces "religious communities with the difficult question of group exit" (2009, 494). Then she turns to the median level of collective religious and ethnic identity, to reveal the traumatic experience of the Dayak. On the micro level of her analysis, a case study and more stories are introduced.

I shall consider the influence of Marriage Law as one of the main causes for conversion and as a background[184] to it, and highlight more on the micro level and median level. On the micro level, I examine the presentation of Chinese-Indonesian women's conversion biographies that covers their emotions, reaction to familial pressure, and religious experience with regard to the bodily performance of religious obligation. On the median level, I shall explore the converts' natal familial opposition to the daughters' conversion and their likely interracial marriage as a strategy of boundary-making to demarcate the distinction between Chinese and *pribumi*. It prevents further ethnic assimilation by way of interracial marriage and sustains a sort of pure lineage. As Connolly surmises (2009, 494):

> This politics of exclusion depends to no small degree on sexual prescriptions, designating which partners and circumstances are appropriate and legitimate, to secure the political order. Intermarriage, as a form of sexual boundary crossing, threatens this political order, imperiling a group's purported racial purity and cultural identity. In situations of social instability or threat, its interest in policing boundaries is heightened. Under such stress, "boundaries between the individual and political bodies become blurred, and there is a strong concern with matters of ritual and sexual purity."[185]

I intend to extend the triple boundary-making of Chinese/*pribumi* mainly based on class, race/ethnicity and religion. It considers intermarriage between Chinese and *pribumi* as a "form of sexual boundary crossing" and includes sexual axis in the triple

[183] Barth (1994) argues that when examining the process of cultural differentiation, scholars should consider three levels. First, the micro level covers "the processes effecting experience and the formation on identities…on persons and interpersonal interaction." The median level is to "depict the processes that create collective and mobilize groups for diverse purpose by diverse means.", for instance, ethnic or religious identities. And the macro level is about state, concerning "the legal creations of bureaucracies allocating rights and impediments according to formal criteria" (1994, 21).

[184] In the follow-up interviews I conducted recently, I found that religious conversion for marriage is common. It may be just for obtaining a legal document for marriage registration, but it does not mean that the new Chinese married converts are not sincere.

[185] The quotation "boundaries between the individual…", please see (Scheper-Hughes and Lock 1987:24).

boundary-making, as well as illustrating how it is implemented in policing the boundaries and shaping the Chinese/*pribumi* categories.

In connecting the two levels, *viz*. personal conversion experience and familial resistance, I propose considering the symbolic implications of the woman's body in the intermarriage issue because "women are often the symbolic boundary markers of the body politic" (Connolly 2008, 491). It has been shown that "the subsequent conflation of women's bodies with body politics means that control of their bodies and fertility is the key to the maintenance of the group's boundaries and status" (Connolly 2008, 491). By doing so, I argue that the body politics of Chinese-Indonesian women's conversion and interracial marriage have to deal with two interrelated issues, namely the bodily performance of religious piety such as practices of Islamic ritual and dressing of Muslim attire, and the body politics issue. Therefore, there is a very significant bodily aspect in the conversion experience of Chinese-Indonesian women which must not be overlooked.

5.4 Conversion Biographies Based on Family and Marriage

I shall introduce several cases of Chinese-Indonesian female converts who, according to their marital status and ethnic origin of spouse, will be classified into three groups. The first group comprises those marrying indigenous Indonesian Muslims, the second are those marrying ethnic Chinese, and the third group consists of unmarried women. Two aspects of their conversion experience in their biographies will be highlighted:

(1) The new convert's experience: How do the new converts gradually become involved in ways to pursue their Islamic faith? How do converts deal with the familial opposition caused by their conversion and likely intermarriage? Under familial pressure, how do they stealthily study Islam and perform Islamic obligations? When do they publicly demonstrate their faith with regard to issues such as opposing ancestor worships, adorning Muslim costumes, and choosing food? What is the significance of Islam in their lives? What are their opinions on interracial marriages?

(2) How did the convert's natal family respond to the conversion and interracial marriage? For convert's natal family, their conversion causes deep anxiety. Parents worry about several things. Firstly, they worry that that their daughters may gradually be reluctant to follow Chinese traditions, and will turn away from Chinese popular religions or ancestor worship, or even abandoning Chinese customs. Secondly, because of the diet of Muslims, their daughters will refuse to eat at home with the family. The change of meal habits is seen as a sign of breaking of family ties. Thirdly,

Chinese parents dislike seeing their daughter quickly adopt the Muslim woman's custom of wearing the headscarf, which is, in a way, a public declaration of their conversion to Islam. Fourthly, they suspect they daughters' decision to convert may be due to having Muslim boyfriends. Lastly, what parents dread most is their daughter announcing her intention to marry a Muslim man. If the inevitable happens, all that her parents can hope for their daughter is that she would not be her *pribumi* Muslim husband's second wife.

5.4.1 Conversion Accompanied by Interracial Marriage

Ani

Ani was a practicing Buddhist before she converted to Islam at the age of 19. Whenever she had a problem, she always went to a *vihara* (Buddhist temple) and knelt down in front of the statue of Buddha. But after studying about Islam in high school, she gradually began to have many misgivings about Buddhist teachings. She could not find answers to the many questions she had had about Buddhism. At the same time, she participated in *pengaijan* on campus. She asked so many questions that her teacher once commented, "You keep on asking these questions as if you were going to be a Muslim!" By reading books borrowed from her Muslim friends and comparing the limits of Buddhism, she gradually confirmed what she had learned about Islam, in particular concerning the true essence of Allah and the Qu'ran which he has revealed.

When she was enrolled in a Buddhist Economics University as an undergraduate student, the idea of converting to Islam faded for a while but later her desire to convert became stronger. The conflicts of faith confused her, so she went to a large Buddhist temple at Tangerang, where she prayed for Buddha to help her decide whether she should continue to be a Buddhist or convert to Islam. She also sought the advice of a Buddhist master, who complained that Muslims kill animals, a practice that is prohibited in Buddhism. The master also gave her a book about Buddhism, but this book did not provide all the answers for her questions about God. After thinking about it for a long time, she finally decided to embrace Islam.

At the beginning, Ani did not dare perform *salat* at home. She said:

> Only at dawn (*subuh*), I once performed salat in bathroom not knowing that it is prohibited. If someone called me while I was praying, I finished two *rakaat* first. Later I finished the third and fourth rakaat. When I had classes until late at night, I

did *dzuhur* on the street, *ashar* and *maghrib* on campus, and *isya* on the street.

As mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, after she told her parents about her conversion to Islam, she had serious quarrels with her parents and finally fled from home.

Not long after her escape, Ani moved to her friend's house where she has been staying since 2001, and continued to deepen her knowledge of Islam. Then she was told by her father that her mother kept on crying and was very sad for her leaving. Her mother compromised by allowing her to be a Muslim, on condition that she promised not to wear the headscarf. In July 2001, her mother was ill, and she went home to her without wearing headscarf. Eventually, however, she went home with her headscarf, explaining that she wore it because it was raining. Her father accepted that and treated her nicely. At that time, she was assisted by the AMMA Foundation, which is a dawa foundation, established by a famous Chinese Muslim preacher, Surya.

At the end of October 2001, a Muslim man, Fuad, proposed to Ani. Surya supported her marriage. But her father told her to try to find out how many wives Fuad already had because he believed that Muslims usually have many wives. Her father also suspected that his intention to marry Ani was just for her inheritance. Nevertheless, Ani went ahead with her marriage plans. Surya was her officiator because neither her father nor her brother wanted to be her officiator. Eventually, however, Ani's parents changed their mind and accepted Ani's marriage to Fuad. Her family wanted to hold a wedding reception according to the customs in Tangerang. Ani took great care not to annoy her parents about the costume issue. She usually wore a long Muslim costume when visiting her parents but on this occasion, she changed to a western style with her headscarf. Ani feels that Islam has helped her lead a more disciplined life. She says she has become more respectful towards her parents. Moreover after her marriage, she understands her role as a Muslim wife better and is also more feminine.

Jenny

Just like Ani, Jenny had been interested in Islam since she was a junior high school student. In senior high school, she was still a Christian; she began contemplating a change of faith. The public school usually separated students during religious classes. She was supposed to attend the religious class for non-Muslims, but she felt the teacher was teaching her something different from what she believed in. So she joined *pengajian* with some friends. Once she had a very harsh teacher, who disliked her presence in the religious class because the teacher thought that she was not sincere but was just disrupting the class with numerous questions. She felt offended at first, but

gradually the teacher ignored her. At the end of her third year in high school, she joined her classmates in the celebration of breaking fast (*berbuka puasa*). The vice principal of her high school was there, reminding her that if she really wanted to convert into Islam, she had to perform syahadat and follow the religious obligations of Islam. So she made the decision to convert.

When she was in college, influenced by a close Muslim friend, Jenny continued to learn how to perform *salat* with her. But she did not dare to tell her parents about her conversion and always performed *salat* outside. Her family did not find out about this till two years later after her conversion. Maybe because of this anxiety of hiding her faith, Jenny had a dream and heard a strange "*adhan*" (the call to prayer) before she formally converted to Islam:

> …someone gave me a white folded cloth in the middle of the night. I did not know what it was. I thought at first that I was going to die. Then I opened the folded cloth. Apparently the cloth had holes here and there. I remember when my friend performed salat I saw that what she was wearing looked similar to the white cloth that I was given in my dream. She said that it was a "*mukena*" to be worn when performing salat. Two weeks later at around 12 midnight, I heard the sound of *adhan* in my room. I went outside and asked my younger sister about this, but she had heard nothing. I ignored it at first, though my friend said that I got a *hidayah*. When I heard it the third time, I believed that I got a hidayah. My friend gave me a *mukena* but I could not use it because I could not perform salat. She then took me to visit her pengajian teacher. The teacher taught me *syahadat* and how to perform salat. I also joined "*keputrian*" in my university every Friday. Alhamdulillah, finally I can perform salat. However, I still perform it secretly.

However, Jenny's mother later caught her in the act of performing salat:

> One day, my mother saw me when I finished taking *wudu*. She asked me why I was soaking my hands. I lied to her. Then, after the second *raka'at* my mother called me and knocked on my door. I forgot to close my window. She had a glimpse of my *mukena*. I instantly threw it under my bed. She looked suspicious but she said nothing.

When the anti-Chinese riot occurred in May 1998, her friends advised her not to go home, so she stayed in a friend's boarding house. Meanwhile, her family packed their belongings and important documents to flee from home. While packing the things in her room, they found her *Qur'an* and *mukena*. When she returned, they

asked her about it. She lied, saying that those items belonged to her friend. She was convinced that if she had told them the truth at that time, they would ask her to leave. Since that day, they kept a close watch over her and monitored her activities. Later she found out that actually they had already known about her conversion but were just waiting for her to tell them the truth. However, she did not have the courage to tell them about her conversion to Islam because she still needed financial support from parents for her studies. When she graduated, she started to perform *salat* at home. Finally, they caught her in the act and forced her to tell the truth. They asked her to leave home, so she left and stayed in a boarding house for around two weeks.

Another serious conflict erupted when Jenny asked her parents for their blessing and permission to marry a pribumi Muslim man. Her parents were furious and hit the table several times. Her parents said, "You can marry but not to a Muslim." She replied "I am a Muslim, so I should marry a Muslim!" They were furious with her till midnight. She kept on crying. A week later, however, her parents changed their mind and came to visit her. Eventually, her parents decided to attend her wedding party. She was grateful to her husband, who supported her in this difficult period.

After the conflicts subsided, Jenny resumed her close relationship with her natal family. Now she even tries to convert them. She has an elder brother, who has a girl friend who was once was a Muslim, but later reverted to Buddhism. Her parents forbade him to mingle with his friends who are mostly Muslims. She often prays for her family and tries to persuade her parents to convert by introducing them to a kind of "popular Islam".[186]

Lusi

Lusi is a housewife, who graduated from University of Indonesia. She is of Betawi descent (an ethnic group in the Jakarta region), whose great-grandmother was a Betawi, adopted by a Chinese family.[187] She was born into a family who had a lot of religious tolerance. Her parents have different religions. Her mother is a Christian, but her father is a Buddhist. When she decided to marry her fiancé, she found that the marriage law did not allow a non-Muslim woman to marry a Muslim man. Moreover, she did not consider asking her husband to convert to Christianity. Before her marriage, she started reading the Qu'ran and Hadith given to her by her fiancé. Her parents had no objection to her decision to change to a new religion, but only

[186] For instance, when her mother was ill, she told her to drink "*yasin* water" (water blessed by reciting the Yasin chapter of the Qu'ran that is supposed to be an empowered magic cure), and she did it twice because she was sure that she would recover. Then Jerry told her mother if she wanted to do something she should recite *bismillah*. Jerry's parents were willing to follow her advice, but they did not want to really accept Islam. Her father can also recite *bismillah*, but they do not accept Islam. She does not understand why. Even her father often learns from ustadz, but strangely he does not want to be a Muslim. She believes that it is maybe because of *hidayah* that has not been gifted.

[187] But I am not sure whether Lusi's other ancestors were Chinese.

reminded her to take the conversion of faith seriously, not merely toy with it. On the contrary, Lusi was so committed to Islam that she emphasized the whole family should have the same religion for the sake of her children's religious upbringing. Eventually she herself decided to convert to Islam. She believed that her conversion was wholehearted rather than merely as a pre-requisite to accommodate her marriage to a Muslim man. This is despite the fact that before she got married to her Muslim fiancé, she discovered that her prospective mother-in-law had a very negative impression of ethnic Chinese. She would speak only in Javanese and was reluctant to speak to her in Indonesian. Even before her marriage in 1976, her future mother-in-law had shown a lot of disapproval of her relationship with her son.

Soon after Lusi converted to Islam, people mocked her and told her that a Muslim man could marry four times, and that her future husband might do just that. They questioned her mother, wondering why she had agreed to her daughter's conversion. When she heard people saying such things, she replied that there were also non-Muslims having four wives. When she moved out and lived with her husband in a *pribumi*-majority community, at the beginning she felt excluded by her neighbors even though she had become a Muslim and was wearing a headscarf. However, gradually her neighbors realized that she wanted to get along with them, so they changed their mind and began to treat her more kindly. At that time, she was still attending functions with her Chinese relatives, though they were only for meeting the extended family and had nothing to do with her Chinese identity. She taught in a high school in Yogyakarta for a while. There were very few ethnic Chinese. She was welcomed by the *pribumi*-majority as they considered her to be one of them.

Generally Lusi did not experience much difficulty in becoming a Muslim since her conversion to Islam was based on her own conviction of the faith. When she had just converted to Islam, she did not wear headscarf immediately, only on some occasions such as attending *pengajian*, going to the mosque, and teaching at school every Friday. Gradually she thought that it would be better if she wore a headscarf all the time. Now she feels that wearing a headscarf has many advantages. For instance, people can know her Muslim identity and treat her more respectfully. When accompanying her husband to formal functions, she does not need to go to a salon and get a *sanggal* hairdo[188]. The only thing which she needs to do is to match the color of the headscarf with her costume, which is quite easy since her niece has given her thirty headscarves with various colors, so there is no disruption to the *salat* time.

In spite of her mother-in-law's attitude, Lusi has a good relationship with the rest of her conjugal family; her husband treats her kindly and she maintains very good

[188] Sanggul is a traditional women's bun around at the nape of the neck. It is also a headscarf style. For Indonesian Muslim women, it is convenient for setting hairstyle when wearing such a headscarf with a sanggul. It is likely a bun-like decoration attached to a headscarf.

relationships with her in-laws. Similarly, her husband interacts with her natal family very well. She believes that, maybe because of the harmony and peace in her marriage, several members of her natal Chinese family are impressed with her relationship with her Muslim husband. Hence some of them have also decided to convert to Islam and to perform *syahadat* with the assistance of Lusi's husband. She is proud of her conversion and her successful family life. Lusi feels that her successful marriage to a Muslim is exemplary. Another important reason is that her natal family has a democratic tradition, encouraging open discussion and appreciation and respect of other people's differences. She emphasizes how her successful marriage life has changed the stereotype of her conversion to Islam and intermarriage with a pribumi Muslim man, something which Jolanda Lindenberg (2009) identifies as "maker of success in life." Her own family still stays connected with other ethnic Chinese relatives, and has even invited some of them to become Muslims. She has four siblings; two brothers are Christians. They celebrate festivities such as Lebaran and New Year together.

When asked about her ideas on interracial marriage between ethnic Chinese and the indigenous Muslims, Lusi thinks that Chinese-Indonesians usually tend to look for Chinese as their spouse.[189] According to Lusi, ethnic Chinese prefer to marry endogenously. They make erroneous assumptions about Islam, and tend to focus mainly on conspicuous negative behaviors of Muslims while disregarding the good elements of Islam. Compared with Chinese married to *pribumi* Christian, intermarriage between Chinese and *pribumi* Muslim is less common. This is because ethnic Chinese think that if they marry *pribumi* Muslim then they have to give up their Chinese customs like eating pork. However, she personally admitted that after becoming a Muslim and being married to a Muslim, she has become devoted to Allah and is closer to her in-laws. According to Lusi, the pressure of endogamy is imposed on both Chinese-Indonesian Muslim women and men.[190] In contrast, Arab-Indonesians do not care about their spouses' ethnic origin so much as ethnic Chinese do. Lusi clearly disagrees with the idea of endogamy.[191] She estimates that among the interracial marriage between Chinese-pribumi couples, around 20% of ethnic Chinese partners still embrace Confucianism and Christianity. This means that

[189] During my fieldwork in Lautz Mosque where Karim Oei Foundation is based, I heard that the mosque once tried to arrange dates for young ethnic Chinese Muslims, helping them to find suitable Chinese Muslim partners.

[190] She gave an example. A Chinese-Indonesian man was required by his mother to find a Muslim wife of ethnic Chinese descent after he expressed his desire to convert to Islam. Consequently, he committed himself to marrying an ethnic Chinese to fulfill his mother's wish and to show his appreciation to her for allowing him to be a Muslim. He finally found an ethnic Chinese Muslim woman to marry.

[191] Lusi was once matched to one of her relatives, but her father refused because he thought that marrying a relative was not a good thing. People usually match their sons and daughters to their relatives in order for the inheritance to stay within the family. This custom is very similar to the custom of Javanese families. For Lusi it shows that she prefers to mingle with the indigenous.

their pribumi partners are not necessarily Muslims.[192]

In her case, it seems that her experience of conversion and intermarriage is an example of further assimilation into the indigenous community. However Lusi disagrees with the idea of Islamic conversion as the main approach to assimilation. According to her, when ethnic Chinese try to assimilate or accommodate the main stream beliefs of the indigenous Indonesian society, religious conversion is only one of various approaches. She suggests that other important factors such as family, environment and education should be considered. From her experience, religious difference does not hinder mutual understanding in a multi-ethnic family. For instance, when her non-Muslim ethnic Chinese relatives participated in her son's wedding ceremony, they did not oppose the wearing of headscarves to fulfill the needs of the wedding ceremony.

Lusi is an active participant in women's religious gatherings in the Lautze Mosque. Though she does not consider herself as an ethnic Chinese anymore,[193] she is still willing to join activities in the Lautze Mosque and sometimes people there would consult her about problems associated with conversion. In addition to the influence of her conversion on her adoptive Chinese family, she mentions the story of a Chinese woman, who converted to Islam first and then gradually persuaded her husband and children to become Muslims.

5.4.2 Converts Marrying Ethnic Chinese

Yeni

Yeni is a Muslim by birth, but this case focuses on how her father tried to forbid her to wear a headscarf, rather than on her conversion experience. Moreover, it is useful from her interview to learn about her father's conversion subsequently, interracial marriage, and life that influence her experience of being a Muslim in an interracial family. Yeni's husband is a Chinese-Indonesian Muslim, but she was born into an interracial family. Hence she has had some interesting experiences in her interaction with her conjugal family. Her father is a Chinese, who originated from China and married a Chinese woman in China before coming to Indonesia. Yeni's father was against Islam and disliked *pribumi* until he married his second wife, Yeni's mother, a

[192] There was an ethnic Chinese woman, who wanted to marry a Batak Muslim. Her parents prohibited her to do so and forced her to shave her all hair to deter her marriage to the Batak Muslim. The marriage was called off. But subsequently, she still converted to Islam.

[193] I have a general impression that after Lusi married, she lives in a environment with pribumi-majority. This might cause her to distance herself from her original Chinese family.

few years later after his first wife passed away. In order to marry Yeni's mother, a *pribumi* Muslim woman, as the second wife, her father nominally converted to Islam and owned a Muslim name. However he kept worshipping in Chinese temples and held joss sticks even after he embraced Islam. He stopped doing it only when Yeni was in high school.

After her graduation from high school, Yeni decided to wear a headscarf, but her father forbade her to do so, saying that "no one is allowed to wear a headscarf in our house." Her father told her, "We can pray in any way we want to but we shouldn't change our appearance." This rule was enforced particularly when there was a gathering with the members of her father's first wife's family. So all the time her father forbade them (Yeni and her sister) to wear the headscarf, and if they did, they had to take it off. Consequently, Yeni only wore the headscarf when she attended a *pengajian*. In the first few months her father was angry, but after less than a year, he did not insist any longer. He might still ask them to take off their headscarf but he has gradually accepted the wearing of the headscarf.

As her father aged, Yeni found that he had become closer to Islam. Yeni said:

> …few years before he died, he was very close to Islam although he hadn't performed salat. At that time he said that he really wanted to do it. However, his body was really too weak to move because he was too old (93 years old)…My mother always tried to persuade my father to perform salat, but he always said that he was too old to do that. Especially when you are old, you have to think about *akhirat* (afterworld). He always said that he wanted to go to Mecca and become a Haji, but it seemed that he didn't have enough time. So actually he had those intentions but he didn't have enough time to carry them out.

All of her mother's children are Muslims, and two of her father's first wife's children converted to Islam because they are married to Betawi Muslims. Another one is also married to a non-Chinese, but chose not to have any religion.

When her father was still alive, her siblings (half-sisters) did not treat her mother's family kindly, perhaps because they regarded them as non-Chinese and also of a different mother. Nevertheless, her father had always emphasized that all the siblings belonged to the same family and should love and look after one another. Her father always introduced her second family to every family member, and gradually they became more open towards them. However, only her father was invited to attend the Chinese New Year party because pork dishes were always on the menu. After her father passed away, her half brothers and sisters gradually changed their attitude, inviting them to visit their houses, and also when celebrating *Idul Fitri*.

Having been brought up in an interracial family, she regrets the prejudice which ethnic Chinese hold against pribumi. In her view, Chinese-Indonesians should not always consider Muslims as lower class. She mentions an example of ethnic Chinese petty traders who do business with the Muslim root community without actually getting close to them:

> I think that those who sell Muslim clothes in Tanah Abang, Mangga Dua, and Pasar Pagi[194] should be Muslims. But the fact is that those who sell Muslim clothes are Chinese. What a pity!

Yeni believes that people like her could bridge the gap in understanding. She could play the role of mediator to help both sides eliminate mutual misunderstanding and racial discrimination. Yeni offers some unique views on interracial marriages. She argues that since there are not many ethnic Chinese Muslims, and if most of them marry *pribumi* Muslims, how can they have more influence through marriage to persuade more ethnic Chinese spouses to convert? According to Yeni, the best strategy for ethnic Chinese Muslims is to adopt endogamy so that they can convert more Chinese-Indonesian spouses to Islam.

Yeni is a mixed-blood Muslim woman. At first she was worried about how her conjugal family would treat her as a non-Chinese person and may not easily accept her. But when her father-in-law found out that he shares the same Chinese surname "Lio" with her, she was consequently considered as having the same Chinese pedigree as him and the same Chinese origin!

Yeni's husband is the only Muslim in his family. With the exception of her husband, most of his family members are adherents of traditional Chinese religions. Therefore they sometimes have to follow the customs of Chinese religions which, in a sense, is against Islamic teaching. For instance, her husband's family always celebrates Chinese New Year heartily and holds on to their traditions firmly. Hence, her husband sometimes still holds joss sticks to pray. At family parties, she is asked why she wears the headscarf. Such questions are asked merely out of curiosity. People usually avoid discussing sensitive issues related to Islam. Still cultural misunderstandings do happen.

Once her in-laws obliged her and her husband to attend the *Qingming* Festival, which is Ancestors Day or Tomb Sweeping Day[195]. Compared with her husband, who

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[194] These are local open markets, selling articles for daily use, by various vendors and small shops for middle-lower class at Jakarta, in contrast to high class shopping malls such as Plaza Indonesia and Plaza Senayan.

[195] The Qingming festival is an annual traditional Chinese festival. In the festival, Chinese usually go to clean and worship their ancestors' tombs.

adamantly refuses to adopt the Chinese custom of ancestor worship by offering food and fruits, holding joss sticks, and burning the paper money, Yeni is more flexible and thinks that she can pray anywhere. For such a family worship event, she just pretends that there is nothing in front of her, or that she has to do it because it is an emergency situation.[196] This is why her husband's family do not draw themselves away from her, just as she does not keep her distance from them. Her husband's distant relatives had even mistaken her for a domestic help for the family because she wore a headscarf.

Wina

Before Wina converted to Islam, she was an adherent of Confucianism and disliked Islam and Muslims. She considered Islam as a backward religion. But when she started thinking about her final goal in life, she also felt that there was something missing in her life. In particular, for a woman, there must be something more than "only doing good deeds, being devoted to our husband, parents, and in-laws. There must be a final goal after all of these." However, she could really explain why she started to find answers by reading books about Islam, once considered by her as a religion for people of lower class. She said, "I looked for it by myself. If you do not look for it, *hidayah* will not come by itself. Mostly I started by reading books, because I feel that Islam has transparent characteristics. Allah's promise will make a way for anyone who seeks Islam." Before she recited the *syahadat*, she informed her husband gently about her decision to convert. Her husband accepted her decision. She converted to Islam in 1990, after many years of marriage. A few years later, her husband also converted to Islam.[197]

At that time her parents were still alive, and they were not Muslims. They asked her to reconvert to Khong Kauw (Confucian Religion) because they had hoped that after their death, their children would keep taking care of their graves and worship them with offerings. However, before her conversion, she had explained to them:

> In Islam, the spirits of dead people are God's business. Whatever reward or punishment they will receive depends on their deeds when they were alive. Alhamdulillah, after having lived with us for quite a while, my mother converted to Islam about a year or two before she died. Before her death, she used to worry that after converting to Islam she would not be able to give offerings to her dead parents and ancestors. I explained that in Islam this was not the right way to

[196] She said, when her grandfather passed away, she was also involved in preparing the counterfeit paper money to be burned.

[197] According to Lusi, Wie's husband once didn't want to take her to Karim Oei Foundation gatherings, so she drove by herself. Later, her husband would take her to Karim Oei and wait in the car. Finally, he joined in Karim Oei and performed *salat* there. It happened after Wie went to perform the hajj.

> respect our parents. Feeding is only done for living people. For example, when my mother was still alive, insya Allah we would fulfill her needs when we had money. If she wanted to eat orange, chicken, meat, or anything, we would give her. However, I am so sorry to say that we could not have fulfilled her wishes to eat her favorite the food if she had been dead. Finally, alhamdulillah my mother became a Muslim.

But Wie's decision not to engage in traditional Chinese worship angered her relatives who called her as "a fanatic Muslim because she does not want to worship in the 'Chinese style' anymore", but she does not mind. As a pious Muslim, she is satisfied with her religious life and said:

> I feel excited and happy to learn something new, especially about religion. We can count only on religion. We cannot count on money because we cannot take it to our grave…I've changed quite a lot, such as my feelings, heart, point of view, and way of thinking. In Islam we do something because of Allah…I have done everything because of Allah, which makes me more excited…Islam does not only teach us about religion, but also about politics, life, marriage, money, and all.

She is very glad to have established a Muslim family and is always eager to tell her ethnic Chinese friends:

> After becoming a Muslim, alhamdulillah my economic condition improved and my children improved their grades in school…I would point out that as a Muslim, I was clean and skilled; and my marriage is happy because it is based on Qur'an and Hadith. Besides that, we should also show friendliness as Islam teaches us.

Wie pays special attention to her children's religious education and one of nephews has even gone to study in a *madrasa*. [198]

When Wie had just converted to Islam, she was hesitant to wear a headscarf until she was sure that she had completely understood the significance of wearing the headscarf. At the beginning, she only wore a headscarf when attending *pengajian*. But she questioned herself, using an interesting analogy, "If the prostitutes bravely show their private parts, clearly forbidden by Allah, then why do I feel unsure and afraid to follow the good order from Allah to wear the headscarf." She is now more

[198] In this regard of devoting to Islam, she has a comment on pribumi Muslims: "Unfortunately, I feel that many indigenous Muslims are reluctant to seek more knowledge in Islam. As Muslims by birth, they should know Islam deeper than the Chinese *muallaf* like me. I also teach Islam to my children although it is not easy as children have different characteristics."

open to wearing the headscarf as she gets older.

When asked her opinion about polygamy, she does not consider ethnic Chinese should focus on this issue:

> When you have completely understood Islam, I do not think that this will be a problem. A man can have four wives because man is the root of children and will give his name to his children with "bin" or "binti" followed by his name. Maybe that is one of the reasons why polygamy is legal in Islam.

But her attitude toward interracial marriage is reserved; she thinks that even for the couples who have the same religious faith, it would be difficult to accommodate their ethnic differences smoothly in their interracial marriage. This is the main reason for her opposition to interracial marriage, and it has appeared in the comments on the different points of view of marriage between ethnic Chinese and *pribumi*:

> As far as I know, married Chinese couples seldom divorce because female Chinese have been taught since they were young to be devoted to their husband. The parents even send their daughter back to her husband's house if the daughter comes back after a quarrel with her husband, whereas the pribumi family usually spoils their daughters when she quarrels with her husband. I think it is not good to meddle in our children's marriage.

5.4.3 Single Chinese-Indonesian Women: A preference for Ethnic Chinese Husbands, while Leaving Their Fates to Allah

Lia

Lia has had her doubts about traditional Chinese religions since she was fourteen years old. Her parents are Buddhists, but she had religious knowledge of Islam from religion courses taught in high school. She lives in a region where most of the people are Muslims. Thus, for Lia, understanding Islam has been a gradual and long but natural process, not a sudden revelation. For her, Islam is neither an ascribed religion for born Muslims, nor is Islam an immediate prescription to save people who are in a life crisis. For Lia, her embracing Islam as her religious faith is a carefully considered decision, and Islam has been gradually integrated into her life. In the process of seeking her Islamic faith, she questioned that the status of human being and that of

supernatural being (deities and ghosts). She wondered why people have to worship the ancestors, deities, or ghosts while those supernatural beings do not necessarily take care of human beings. But in Islam, Allah owns everything and there is no need to get back anything rewarded by human being.

At that time, Lia's family was anti-Islam although they still maintained a good relationship with Muslims. Thus she was even warned that she would be expelled from the family if she really had any romantic attachment with a Muslim man. For several years she read books about Islam. But she had never directly asked her Muslim friends or neighbors because she felt that there was no competent Muslim in her neighborhood who could give satisfactory answers to her questions. So, she only read books about Islam. Owing to her family's strong objection to Islam, she decided to be a Catholic instead because she had some knowledge of Catholicism, which was taught in high school. But then she felt an objection to the concepts of confession and indulgence. She could not accept how a human being could pardon the sins of another human being. Moreover, she could not understand why Catholicism prohibits its followers to divorce while in Islam it is allowed. If a couple has found problems in their marriage, why are they forced to live together? All of these doubts about Catholicism strengthened her resolve to convert to Islam. However, the Muslims around her are not exemplary models of the followers of Islam, which is supposed to be the most righteous religion, thus adding to her confusion.

At the beginning, she was afraid to be expelled or marginalized by her family for her inclination to Islam. Nevertheless, she tried to gradually introduce Islam to her family. In 1993, when she worked outside Java and stayed on Bangka Island, she tried to fast during every Ramadan although at that time she had not yet performed *syahadat*. Then she started to avoid eating *haram* food. Since she managed to maintain a good relationship with her family, they felt that her inclination to Islam was because of someone's influence rather than simply her own arbitrary decision. She said:

> That adaptation process took me 4 years. From 1997 until 2001 I tried to introduce Islam bit by bit to them. I always fasted during the fasting month. When I hung out with them and if we went to a Chinese restaurant which I regarded not , I didn't eat. I just waited, so gradually they realized that I had a strong will to convert to Islam.

Eventually, when she phoned to tell her father about decision to become a Muslim, he was so angry that he just hung up the telephone.

Lia struggled for a while in her decision to wear a headscarf. According to her:

> Wearing *jilbab* is because of *hidayah* from Allah. Without hidayah and His help, it won't happen. Actually, suggestions for me to wear a veil had long begun. In every *pengajian* that I attended, there was always a recommendation to wear the veil and that it is an obligation. But at that time it was so hard to wear headscarves because I still thought that the Prophet had only recommended wearing the veil. I did not know there is a verse in the Qur'an about wearing headscarves. Only then did I realize that it is a command of Allah. Hence I wear a headscarf for no other reason except to obey Allah. The struggle wasn't easy, though. I had to things to consider several issues, such as without wearing a headscarf, how other Muslims would consider my behavior and whether I was patient enough to wear it. I believe it is a command of Allah. I started to collect Muslim attire. Actually, since my conversion to Islam I stopped wearing *jahiliyah* (ignorant of Islam) clothes although I hadn't worn a headscarf. Besides, I always prayed that God would give me a chance to live wholeheartedly (*kaffah*) in Islam, and give me determination to wear a headscarf. My other concern was my fear of my family's reaction, especially my father's anger. To strengthen my will, I started to read on the internet about the struggles of Muslim women in France to defend their right to wear the headscarf. From that moment, I took a decision to wear veil because I feared disobeying Allah's command more than I feared my family's reaction and my father's anger.

It was on Chinese New Year day that Lia went home wearing a headscarf. Her father was very shocked and angry. He said, "You are very arrogant as a new Muslim to wear a headscarf. Even those who are born Muslims Islam don't wear one." Her behavior was considered a disgrace to the family because her parents had always hidden the fact that there was a Muslim daughter in the family.[199]However, by being clad in Muslim attire, Lia feels more comfortable, confident, and protected. When using public transportation, she thinks the other passengers are more respectful when they see that she has a Chinese face but wears a headscarf.

After her conversion to Islam, Lia tried to introduce Islam to her ethnic Chinese friends. She always had to clarify and explain what Islam is because most of her Chinese friends' ideas of Muslims are stereotyped. It was difficult for her to explain fully because of her insufficient religious knowledge. But when her religious knowledge gradually grew by attending various religious study groups (*majelis taklim*), she knew how to defend Islam better. For instance, in her early conversion, she did not know how to explain why the Prophet had married so many times, a question frequently asked by her friends. But she later understood it better, knowing

[199] When she was ostracized by her family, she came to the AMA foundation, asking for support form Surya.

the Prophet's marriages were to protect them, nothing related to lust. She also defended polygamy, saying that:

> I know more about rules in Islam, so that when people comment bad things about Islam I can answer that Islamic rules are very just or fair, not cruel, and are preventive rather than punitive. These rules are made by Allah, because He knows what will happen to human and all of His creations. Nowadays, many people have contempt for men with four wives. Then how about men who like to flirt with prostitutes? Isn't that more disgraceful?

Lia takes a more rigorous attitude in dealing with the food issue. It has become a symbolic distinction that keeps her away from non-Muslim Chinese and her family. If she attends an *Imlek* party, she eats nothing because she is concerned the food in her natal family might be cooked with something prohibited by Islamic law. During the Chinese New Year celebrations, her uncle always holds an open house. Since most of his guests are Muslims and officials from regional authorities, her uncle has to hire a Muslim cook to serve food. Her family worries for her because before her conversion, she ate almost everything. Even if her father had wanted to cook food for her, the food would still be prohibited because the kitchenware would have been contaminated by non-*halal* food, or ingredients prohibited by Islam. Hence she is hesitant to eat even the food cooked specially by her father for her.

Lia's mother feels sad because she does not eat the food that she cooks anymore. She tries to comfort her mother, asking her not to worry for her. Her decision to follow a rigorous rule of food has caused an uneasy relationship with the family. She considers this her dilemma:

> On one hand, I doubted the rules of food. On the other hand, I was afraid that my belief had offended my father because I didn't eat his food. But alhamdulillah, Allah always helped me. Suddenly, my aunt came to visit and asked me to take her to the market. When we were there, she took me for a meal in a Padang restaurant. Subhanallah, Allah's help always comes to me at the right time.

Conflicts arising from religion occur not only in her family. Lia comments on Chinese customs:

> Honestly, Chinese tradition violates the teachings of Islam very much. For example, in my region, people gamble, drink, and eat pork on Chinese New Year. Those are practices forbidden in Islam. But for them, it's a tradition. I truly love them, and

> alhamdulillah I feel that they also love me and care about me. But such a situation has become a dilemma for me. I actually want to show them the righteousness of Islam, and that after becoming a Muslim I am a better person. Unfortunately, I don't feel comfortable mingling among them. Actually I have pity on them but I also feel that they pity me. I want to preach Islam to them, telling them how good I have been since converting to Islam. But it's useless. I shall never be successful in persuading them to accept Islam.

Lia is eager to explain how good Islam is although some practicing Muslims do not live up to the expectations of the religious moral obligations of Islamic teaching. Her religious sympathies are sometimes too apologetic to be convincing to her relatives. Her aunt was a victim of the anti-Chinese riot of 1998. Her house once was raided by a mob of Muslims wearing *sarung* (a piece of cloth worn by men when they pray) and who had just emerged from the mosque after *Jum'ah* (the Muslim Friday prayers) while yelling *"Allahu Akbar"* (God is the Greatest).

The relatives from her mother's side have interacted with many Muslims. They are also well-educated; they received her conversion readily and accepted her practice of wearing a headscarf as a Muslim. But the reaction from the relatives on her father's side is completely different. They are saddened, surprised – even hysterical – and they feel sorry for her. They look at her as if she was self-imprisoned because she wears a headscarf. She explains that wearing a headscarf makes her feel more comfortable and free to move about. Nevertheless, she is annoyed by their hysterical reactions because that only saddens her father even more. She has tried to explain that there are people who want to create a bad image of Islam. Her explanation that the punishment for stealing is hand-cutting only strengthens her aunt's negative view of Islam.

Lina

After studying Islam for seven years, Lina finds Islam to be religion of discipline, even though not all Muslims are disciplined. In her home, there is an altar where deities of transitional Chinese religions are worshipped. Since childhood, she has questioned why ethnic Chinese worship so many deities, as well as their ancestors, while Muslims pray to only one god. She became more reluctant to pray to the Chinese deities and she refrained from eating pork. Her parents began to notice her change. She herself was aware of her alienation from the traditional Chinese religion, but she was unsure what religion interested her. During that period of uncertainty, she even once tried to embrace Christianity. At the beginning, her father advised her not to be too drawn to Islam. He became angry when Lina, having devoted herself to Islam,

did not want to worship Chinese deities by holding joss sticks. Matters worsened when she was found by her aunt to perform *salat* at home. Her family advised her to wear a headscarf only at the mosque, not at home.

Lina is still single and does not object to marrying a pribumi man. Since she is the eldest daughter, however, her family expects her to find an ethnic Chinese husband. Since Chinese-Indonesian Muslims are a very small minority, marriage between them is not uncommon but is not easy. When an ethnic Chinese marries a pribumi, he or she normally converts to Islam. The ethnic Chinese still adopts the patrilineal family system, even in inter-marriage. She has an uncle who married a pribumi woman with little or no opposition from relatives. In her uncle's case, their children's ethnic origin continues to be Chinese. However, this would not be the case when an ethnic Chinese woman marries a *pribumi* man. In this situation, opposition from the family is more likely.

Lina mentions another example pertaining to the polygamy issue. She has a cousin who married a pribumi Muslim man. Her cousin's family later found out that the man was dishonest for not disclosing that he already had a wife. The cousin's parents are unhappy that their daughter is willing to continue with the marriage. However, Lina does not see this case as a reason to oppose polygamy in Islam. She thinks the wife has the right of a legal relationship with her husband, and that it is in fact preferable that a husband has extramarital relations with different women while the status of the legal wife is preserved.

Sari

Sari was influenced by her Muslim neighbor, and learned Islam from courses on religion in her public elementary school. Though her parents were Buddhists, they never took her to any Buddhist temple, so she knew little about Buddhism. When she was in junior high school, she chose Islam as a subject for her school examination because it was the only religion that she had learned about and it was easier for her to perform better. However, she had not intended to be a Muslim. In addition to the religious education in the school, she had also attended religious classes in her neighborhood since she was a child. During the fasting month, she would wake up early to go jogging but she would not fast. When she eventually decided to embrace Islam, she assumed that the process of conversion would not be as difficult for her as for other new converts.

During the transition period of conversion, she did not face serious problems in her neighborhood. She simply ignored those who mocked her wish to become a Muslim. However, her family was not supportive of her decision; they did not understand why Muslims should perform *salat* more than once in a day. Besides that,

her family was also concerned about the issue of ethnicity. They worried that if she converted to Islam, she would most likely marry a *pribumi* spouse. However, they eventually compromised on the situation and went along with Sari's decision to convert. Sari recalled that in the first year of her conversion, when some Muslims do bad things her family members would say "That's your Islam!" It only occurred when there were problems, though. Such a situation was during the anti-Chinese riots of 1998:

> I converted to Islam in 1994. Then in 1998, there was a riot. My family had a very bad image about Islam at the time because many ustadz were also involved in the riots and they robbed other people of their property. Frankly, at that time, the Chinese-Indonesians were oppressed. This made my family lose respect for Islam. However, they still considered me as a part of the family, and said that it was alright as long as I did not do anything bad. Actually, I personally thought that, as someone of Chinese descent, we should be able to make adjustments to be with our family. In other words, we need not take extreme positions and we should avoid confrontation.

In performing the *salat* five times a day, for example, Sari is careful that her religious faith should not distance her from her family. She believes that even a new convert should not be unduly obsessive in discharging her religious obligations and defending the faith at the expense of her feelings for her family.

She has few problems with the *halal* food issue. Her family does not eat pork very much. Her mother likes it, but her brother does not. If her mother wants to eat pork, she usually eats it in a restaurant and never takes it home. She does not have problem with whatever people eat, or which plates they use. According to her, "some people become fanatics after becoming Muslims. I will never be like that. My family is not Muslim, and I do not want to create a negative image of Muslims by doing such things. They already harbor a negative image of Islam and such behavior will only reinforce their negative ideas of Islam."[200] Sari's moderate attitude is reflected in her compromise when it comes to the question of performing ancestral worship, an act that she refuses only later:

> There used to be a problem praying for our ancestors at the cemetery. Because my parents were dead, I was asked to hold joss sticks to pray for them. At first, I did

[200] Sari says that her family is sympathetic to her religion. For instance, during the Ramadan, they would wake her before the sun rose to eat the *sahur* (meal taken between midnight and dawn during the fasting month).

> hold the joss sticks as asked to because I did not want to appear too radical. The most important thing was that I only held them, but not in prayer for my parents. In the past two years, however, I had said "no" to joss sticks because the Qur'an does not teach such things. When asked why I did not pray for my parents, I replied: "I pray for them according to my own belief." "But your parents did not believe in Islam," my family members would retort. We quarreled over this once or twice. My family has now let the matter drop as they do not regard this as a big issue. Even when prayers are performed at home, I would not hold joss sticks. However, I would still help in the preparations for the prayers and rituals.

Sari does not face serious opposition from her family, but she knows that they are concerned about her choice of her future spouse:

> They know that a Muslim can have four wives. So I could be the first wife, or maybe the second wife, and so on. When I converted to Islam, my mother was still alive. She passed away in 1999; my father passed away earlier in 1990. Hence, my older brothers and sisters were the ones who often criticized my decision. Now, they realize there is nothing more they can do to change my decision. They only warn me to be careful in choosing a spouse. I have no problem with that and I place my faith in Allah. I prefer a spouse who has the same religion and ethnicity as I. However, if Allah wants something different for me, it is fine with me. I am sure Allah knows what is best. Honestly, I used to have such worries, but lately I just put everything in God's hand (*Lillahi Ta'ala*). Allah knows everything. So if we do good deeds and have a pure heart, insya Allah, He will give us the best. Our desire cannot be forced. If there is a pribumi Muslim who has strong faith and everything about him is good, why not?

According to Sari, the main reasons ethnic Chinese parents are against their daughters marrying pribumi are:

> … if a Chinese man marries a pribumi woman, it is tolerable. But if a Chinese woman is married to a pribumi man, her reputation would suffer. The family name is descended from the father's side. If a Chinese man marries a pribumi woman, the Chinese family name will still be adopted by their children. But if it happens the other way, the family name will cease to exist. Even if the pribumi woman is married to a Chinese man, her last name won't be used, and she will take her husband's last name. The pribumi do not have this custom. However, I do not have a deep understanding about such matters.

When asked if interracial marriage would damage her reputation, she denied that and explained what her main concerns were:

> The pribumi families still have culture of patriarchic domination by which women are more obliged to be at home. They must do this and that. But most Chinese families, unlike the Javanese, would not insist that women must obey their husbands. We are not like that. If wives can work to help their husbands, why shouldn't they be allowed to do so? Another issue is about the manners of speech. In eastern culture we have to speak softly and politely. But, as you can see, the Chinese tend to talk loudly and harshly. My manner of speech may not be too soft when talking to my husband. If I have a pribumi husband, I am concerned more about how his family would treat me.

Then Sari offers an example to support her concerns:

> There was a female Chinese married to a pribumi man. When this couple had a fight, the husband's family did not want to help because they still saw her as a Chinese even though she was a Muslim. That is one of many things that I am afraid of. As a person of the faith, however, I shall surrender everything to God's will.

She feels very sorry to hear about new converts who are expelled by their families just because of their Islamic conversion:

> Sometimes there are parents who are so selfish that they think that their children have betrayed their religion by converting to Islam. They send their children away from home. Alhamdulillah, my parents were not like that. They felt I could choose any religion I wanted as long as I was committed to it. They loved me just the same. I think it is stupid to send your children away from the house because of problems with religion.

Although Sari converted to Islam eleven years ago when she was fifteen, she still has difficulty reciting the Quran in Arabic. This appears to be a typical problem for new converts familiarizing themselves with the rituals of the religion:

> I once learned how to recite the Quran, but because I was too busy, I have forgotten it. When we learn something, we should practice it often. I have not done it for some time, and so I have forgotten. I also learned the Arabic alphabet, but

> now I have forgotten that too. So when I read the Quran, I read the words in Latin script.

After her conversion to Islam, Sari was questioned by her family and Chinese friends whether her religion also accommodated her ethnic identity, or if her values had inclined more to those of *pribumi* Muslims. For example, her ethnic Chinese friends doubted her position on the anti-Chinese riots. Nevertheless, she believes that her conversion to Islam has made it easier for her to interact with *pribumi* Muslim friends, notwithstanding her ethnicity. Sari is aware that her new religion has brought her closer to her *pribumi* friends. Nevertheless, she treats people equally, regardless of their ethnicity.[201] Neither does she want to take advantage of the benefits that come with conversion. It is a popular idea that sometimes when a Chinese becomes a *muallaf*, he/she will no longer be regarded as a Chinese. One's religion overshadows his/her ethnic background. However, Sari takes her experience of ethnic interaction in her office as an example to dispel this idea.[202]

In another interesting reply to some people who have wondered if she might have become less interested in making money, she argues:

> My family used to mock me, calling me stupid. However, now they can see what happens after my conversion to Islam. I have not lost my Chineseness, nor have I changed my behavior or way of thinking. Frankly, Chinese worship money as their God, and so they take every effort to make more money. My family worries that after becoming a Muslim, I would adopt the pribumi's way of thinking. When I have to make money, I will do my best to make as much money as possible. But when it is time to pray - performing salat - we have to think of nothing else but God. People think that someone with a strong faith cares only for religious matters. I try to balance everything.

But Sari would not completely agree with the idea that accumulating wealth is a Chinese characteristic. Her comments on the stereotyped Chinese-Indonesian reflect her attitude:

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[201] When she wanted to register her new religious identity as a Muslim, she was rebuffed by the government official. Many officials assume that converts of Chinese descent want the Islam religion stated on their ID cards only for the purpose of benefiting from such identity.

[202] In her view, her boss has a problem with ethnic discrimination. He is more accommodating to his Chinese staff than to the pribumi. She has a colleague, who is a Christian Batak. However, even as a Muslim, she feels that her boss treats her better than her Christian Batak colleague. Her boss once asked her about her conversion and after that, she felt some alienation on his part. Still, compared to the way he treats her Christian Batak colleague, she feels the boss treats her better. In this regard, her boss seems to value ethnicity much more than religion.

> Non-Muslim people think that Islam is too "fussy" because we have to remember our Creator all the time. We also have to perform salat five times a day. We have to wake up very early in the morning and when other people are taking a nap in the afternoon, we have to do it again. Coming back from work, we have to perform salat also. People tend to notice more about Islamic routines. My sibling once said, "Why do you have to be a Muslim and perform salat every time as if you had nothing else to do." As I have said earlier, the Chinese are preoccupied with earning more money. They are not obliged to perform certain practices that pious Muslims do. If a pious Muslim has a meeting with a client, he will leave the client for salat if he hears the azan. I have no intention to denigrate other religions by saying that Christians only go to church once a week for 3 hours from 7 a.m. until 10 a.m., whereas Muslims have to perform salat five times a day even though it only takes about 5 to 10 minutes each time. That's why they think that Islam is not efficient and is too fussy.

Despite her single status, her curious friends like to ask her about the polygamy issue. If they ask her in a teasing manner, she usually replies jokingly:

> For instance, they once asked me, "In Islam we can marry four times, do you agree with that?" I replied, "You can do it if you want. But are you "tough"[203] enough?" I mean tough in dividing money among the four wives. If you are not tough enough, do not even try. Besides, are you able to treat your wives fairly by giving them equal attention and so on? After that they would likely remark, "So you say."

5.5 Concluding Remark: Conversion Experience as a Boundary Inscription of Chinese-Indonesian Muslim Women's Body Politics

In my interviews with Chinese Muslim preachers, I rarely hear them mention the difficulties faced by new female Chinese Muslim converts. Hence, I think that the problems of family and marriage faced by women converts arising from inter-ethnic marriages are underestimated by the Chinese-Indonesian Muslims themselves.

We should have an overview of the typical Chinese-Indonesian women's conversion experience. Before conversion to Islam, some of them are gradually influenced by the surrounding Muslim community, perhaps initially without the

[203] The term "tough" in this context means rich, just, and capable of treating all wives equally.

intention to convert. They learn about Islam and adopt some of the ritual practices of Islam and Muslim customs. In the transition stage of switching religious faiths, they may compare their ascribed religions with Islam, the religion embraced by their Muslim majority, and engender their own comparison of religions.

When disclosing their conversion to their families, new converts run the risk of expulsion from the family. The possibility of a pending interracial marriage may cause the family to be suspicious and issue threats. The family's patriarchal concerns and domination that newly-converted Muslim women have to face are reflected in their anxiety, sorrow, fear, escape, opposition, patience, and compromises that they make. They may have to perform *salat* secretly, wear the Muslim attire hesitantly, choose food carefully, and comply with the ancestral worship perfunctorily. Such practices imply that their conversion experience is an inscription of body politics. For instance, the gradual process of adopting female Muslim costume from non-Muslim style (*baju-baju jahiliy*) to the wearing of headscarves initiate a conversion process that leads towards the wholehearted embracing of Islam (*menjalankan islam secara kaffah*).

Among the small number of Chinese-Indonesian Muslim women interviewees, we can see that how the family resists interracial marriage with pribumi Muslim men, and how single women, whose parents still expect them to find ethnic Chinese husbands, assume a hesitant attitude towards their future marriage with pribumi men. The relationship between conversion and the interracial family has resulted in these new Muslim women encountering problems as they enter into a new realm under Indonesia's Marriage Law; the Chinese/pribumi union takes the form of a "sexual crossing". There is a double symbolic implication in the ethnic Chinese women's conversion to Islam. On the one hand, there is their bodily experience of becoming a Muslim. Then there is the symbolism as the "ethnic Chinese minority". Because intermarriage has blurred the boundary between Chinese and pribumi, women's bodies and fertility are a political proxy for an ethnic minority blending into the pribumi society. I would identify the double powers inscribed in the Chinese-Indonesian Muslim women's body as "body politics of observing Islam viz-a-viz body politics in preventing intermarriage."

The ethnic Chinese women's Islamic conversion and interracial marriage have exposed several interesting issues that need to be explored. Traditionally, it is natural for Chinese male immigrants to marry local indigenous women. This is particularly true of the early migrants when only few Chinese women joined them in the foreign country. In the 19th century, even for male Chinese immigrants who had a wife in mainland China, it was not uncommon for them to marry indigenous women as their second wives to satisfy the needs of their business, local social network and sex lives.

A similar practice was not uncommon among westerners during the colonial period. This custom of intermarriage changed when more female immigrants arrived in the early twentieth century. Among the Chinese immigrant communities, a movement of ethnic cultural revival rose against the spread of intermarriage between Chinese and the indigenous that might lead to further dilution of their own ethnic cultural traditions.

Another important issue concerns the racial myth[204] and the strategy of religious and racial stratification in intermarriages. There is a basic pattern of religious and racial stratification in intermarriages. For most ethnic Chinese, the best spouse is a non-Muslim Chinese. If they have to marry a *pribumi*, a non-Muslim *pribumi* is preferable to a Muslim pribumi. This chapter has also shown that the issue of inter-ethnic marriage of the ethnic Chinese warrants more attention. Because of the marriage laws in Indonesia, the Chinese Muslim women's marriage has exposed a kind of "political and cultural contestation" of inter-religious marriage in Indonesia (Jones, Chee and Mohamad 2009).

[204] For instance, Javanese have a myth saying that the blood of Chinese is stronger than the blood of Javanese. Thus the intermarriage of Javanese and Chinese is disadvantageous to Javanese because the biological impacts of Chinese blood will overbear Javanese blood. It means their descendant will show more Chinese characteristics than Javanese. This old myth reflects a traditional racial relationship and a potential feeling of ethnic inferiority (Ati, 1999).

Part III Dwelling

Chapter 6

Preacher and Da'wa

6.1 Introduction

In February 1996, the Indonesian weekly magazine *GATRA* published a special report on ethnic Chinese who have become Muslim preachers (*muballigh cina*), including Alifuddin El Islamy and Syafi'i Antonio. The existence of ethnic Chinese *da'i* (preacher) reminds us that the role of *da'i* and *muballigh* in Indonesia is not monopolized by indigenous Indonesian Muslims. Several Chinese-Indonesian converts, the first generation of Muslims in their families, are active preachers and have published books on Islam. *GATRA* also interviewed Junus Jahja, who discussed the difficulties faced by ethnic Chinese converts to Islam, as well as his *da'wa* (mission) strategy for converting ethnic Chinese to Islam by assimilating them into mainstream Indonesian Muslim society. The *GATRA* report raises three questions. First, what kind of experience motivates Chinese-Indonesian converts to preach Islam? Second, what training do ethnic Chinese Muslims undergo to legitimate themselves as preachers whose knowledge of Islam surpasses that of indigenous lay Muslims? Third, how do Chinese-Indonesian preachers approach preaching Islam to the Chinese community?

In chapters three and four, in discussing the conversion experience of Chinese-Indonesian lay Muslims, I pointed out that their conversion was a kind of spontaneous choice, but many of them were the objects of suspicion and exclusion. To some degree, their lower middle-class social status has limited their ability to deal with problems caused by their conversion. In this chapter, in addition to exploring the

questions raised in the *GATRA* articles, I examine how Chinese-Indonesian preachers enhance their effectiveness by using narration of their personal conversion experience as a type of public confession, and explore the following questions: How do they apply their public confession to the formulation of their da'wa strategy? In their approach to da'wa, how do they present their ethno-religious self, and fashion themselves either by repressing, appropriating, or even potentially opposing Chineseness? How do they interpret Islam and find a niche which expresses their socio-political concern for *umma* (the Muslim community)?

PITI was established in 1961, but during the Sukarno and Suharto periods the political circumstances were unfavorable for ethnic Chinese, and its da'wa efforts gave little public attention to ethnic Chinese, in order to avoid both criticism from the New Order regime and offending Chinese Buddhists and Christians. Although *da'wa* was occasionally carried out in the Chinese community individually and privately, the overall stance of PITI did not change until the end of the New Order period. Even so, PITI didn't organized a *da'wa* program focusing on converting ethnic Chinese, as does the *da'wa* program started by Junus Jahja in the 1980s. In this chapter I shall introduce five Chinese-Indonesian Muslim preachers, whom I divide into two groups. The first group consists of two male preachers who both focus on preaching Islam to ethnic Chinese, but who have very different approaches. The second group consists of two male preachers and one female, all of whom employ a da'wa strategy which is not specifically confined to ethnic Chinese. However, the two male preachers in this group emphasize their Chineseness, while the female preacher downplays and even indirectly oppose her Chineseness.

First, I examine the historical varieties of *da'wa* that consider da'wa as a form of Islamic revival, and how Muslim preachers formulate their sermons and apply mass media to spread their religious and political messages. I also review several studies on da'wa and preachers in Indonesian Muslim society in the New Order period.

Second, I examine a number of related questions: What strategies do Muslim preachers use for preaching Islam to ethnic Chinese in Indonesia? Why was conversion to Islam once considered tantamount to assimilation to the indigenous society? During the post-Suharto period, why is Chineseness considered as indispensable when preaching Islam to ethnic Chinese? I also compare two approaches of da'wa directed towards ethnic Chinese. I regard Junus Jahja's approach as an assimilative da'wa, explaining how he promoted da'wa, the ethnic politics behind his ideas, and the legacy and limits of his da'wa. In contrast, Syarif Siangan Tanudjaja, a former general secretary of PITI, devotes himself to organizing family *pengajians* in his home. Unlike Jahja, he believes that it is not necessary to give up one's Chinese ethnicity to become a Muslim. I label Tanudjaja's approach as

"accommodative da'wa," since it attempts to modify Chinese customs to conform to Islamic law, but not at the price of erasing one's Chinese ethnicity.

Third, although converting ethnic Chinese may be important for some Chinese-Indonesian Muslim preachers, it is not their priority, and they are more concerned with addressing sermons to indigenous Indonesians, both Muslims and non-Muslims. In this section I present the conversions and careers of three Chinese-Indonesian Muslim preachers. Since some of them have not received an extensive Islamic education, how do they go about legitimating themselves and become celebrity preachers before a non-Chinese Muslim audience? How do they integrate their public confession into their sermons and fashion themselves as both Muslim and ethnically Chinese? How do they use different da'wa strategies to speak to the Indonesian umma?

Finally, I explore why many public confessions and conversion narratives of Chinese-Indonesian Muslims have been circulated on the Internet and published in books and Islamic magazines during the post-Suharto period. I also discuss why the non-mainstream da'wa of Chinese-Indonesian preachers typically touches upon such religio-political issues as the human rights of ex-offenders and anti-Christian polemics. Based on this, I question a popular assumption that identifies the emerging public visibility of Islamic piety among urban middle-class Muslims as "expressive/public Islam." Taking their conversion narratives and public confessions as a hermeneutics of ethno-religious subjectivity, I consider how Islam has been used as a technique for governing self and other, and which guides Indonesian Muslims to formulate various conceptions of the modern Muslim self in such areas as confession, healthcare, business psychology, and self-cultivation.

6.2 Da'wa in the Global Muslim World and Indonesian Society

6.2.1 A General Reflection on Da'wa and Preachers in a Global Context

The meaning of da'wa varies historically, but it contains two basic implications: "spreading the faith to unbelievers, and providing a better understanding of Islam to nominal Muslims" (Collins 2003, 152). Prior to the twentieth century, Indonesian Islam has not paid much attention to converting non-Muslims, but this attitude has been changed by aggressive Christian missionary work (Troll 1994). Today, Muslim organizations are adopting a more active da'wa strategy towards Muslims and non-Muslims in their competition with Christian missionaries (Ahmed 2008a and

2008b; Loimeier 2005). In the twentieth century, da'wa became an important dimension of the Islamic revival movement (Waardenburg 2002). The da'wa movement may encourage the Muslim public to resist state domination (Bayat 2007; Hirschkind 2006), or contribute to the formulation of a female Muslim subjectivity which promotes their participation in Muslim civil affairs (Deeb 2006; Mahmood 2005).

The increasing importance of da'wa accentuates the roles played by Muslim preachers, and I identify three broad approaches to understanding their role. First, influenced by Max Weber's analysis of religious carriers (priest, magician, and charismatic) and the concern of American anthropologists for how local elites act as "cultural brokers" who accommodate traditions and mediate power during the transition from traditional folk society to modern society,[205] Richard T. Antoun (1989) and Patrick D. Gaffney (1993) have examined how preachers use their sermons to establish links with a diverse audience at the Muslim grassroots. Antoun observed a Jordanian village preacher and his Friday sermons over a period two decades, collecting a lot of sermons and analyzing the topics related to Islamic moral teaching and local communal issues. Gaffney applied Max Weber's ideal type to categorize three types of preachers and examine the Islamic traditions and religious institutes these preachers represent in Egypt. Both of these studies exhibit several common concerns. On one hand, they mainly discuss a preacher's authority, the rhetoric used in sermons, and how they apply their interpretation of Islam to the relationships between preacher, mosque, Muslim public, and the state's religious policy. Moreover, all the interactions among these several agents, Gaffney suggests, should be contextualized in the macro-changes brought about by the modernization of Muslim society and the Islamic revival.

Unlike the above-mentioned preachers who either received a complete Islamic education or were enlightened by spiritual blessing, and whose preaching is associated with Friday sermons at the mosque, there is a second group of preachers who never received a formal Islamic education, some of whom make anti-Christian discourses as their main da'wa agenda (Ahmad 2001b; Larkin 2008). In contrast to anti-Christian preachers, there are also Muslim celebrity preachers who may use the language of marketing in their sermons and cater to the new form of religious piety that the Muslim religious marketplace requires (Rock 2010). Both types may work as freelance preachers, and some have established da'wa businesses in media and publishing. These Muslim preachers have transformed the traditional sermon into a new form of Islamic preaching known as "Islamic (television) evangelism."

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[205] Clifford Geertz's analysis (1960) of an Indonesian *kyai's* role as a "cultural broker" is an example of an American anthropologists' interest in the modernization of a traditional Muslim society and how lay Muslim leaders find their niche amidst political change.

Da'wa has also been used as a response to racism and domination by white Christians. For instance, the African-American organization Nation of Islam encourages black Americans to convert to Islam, supposedly the original religion of their African ancestors (Curtis IV 2006; Turner 2003). Having previously advocated the establishment of an independent homeland for African-Americans, the Nation of Islam teaches that white Christians made blacks ignorant of their history and religion. The Nation of Islam's religious teachings were first systematized by Elijah Muhammad (1897–1975), and its most prominent member was Malcolm X (1925–1965), who converted to Islam while in prison and who propagated black supremacy, but later became a Sunni Muslim (Malcolm X and Haley 1965).

Moreover, Charles Hirschkind's (2006) study of recorded sermons reveals that the use of media can be more significant than a preacher's religious authority. These cases reflect a further consolidation of Islamic piety at the social level, instead of only advocating a political agenda and the establishment of an Islamic state, but this does not mean that their sermons have been depoliticized. Preachers can appropriate their religious authority and use media to propagate a political message against state domination, or oppose Christian missionary activity.

In a word, the religious knowledge and status of a preacher may not be as high as that of an *ulama*, but the preacher is at the front line and interacts with lay Muslim society. Examining a preacher's sermons and the use of media reveals the Muslim community's current concerns, and the oratory of the sermons can be seen as a discursive practice in which the preacher's rhetoric often responds to social and political issues. In challenging the old paradigm of religious interpretation and authority, preachers motivate their audience to resist state repression and intervention in Muslim religious affairs.

6.2.2 Da'wa and Preacher in Indonesian During and After the New Order Period

First of all, according to B.J. Boland (1982), in examining the historical development of da'wa since the advent of the New Order period, we can see that the term "da'wa" did not become a common term until the 1960s.[206] Previously, Indonesian Muslims took a passive attitude to da'wa, but over the past century have been increasingly adopting a more active approach to da'wa, largely as a reaction to Christian

[206] See B. J. Boland's discussion about the da'wa project of Muhammadiyah in the 1960s. Boland claims that the word *tabligh* was gradually replaced by *da'wa* (Boland 1982, 191–193).

missionary competition and state repression of the political participation of the Muslim elite. The former leader of the Masyumi party, Mohammad Natsir, who is one of the founding members of the Da'wa Council (Dewan Da'wa Islamiyah Indonesia, DDII), once stated, "We are no longer conducting da'wa by means of politics, but engaging in political activities by means of da'wa. The result will be the same."[207] This shows that at first the DDII da'wa movement adopted a kind of apolitical strategy to avoid the risks of New Order politics in the late 1960s. The DDII's da'wa projects included raising funds for Islamic charity, building mosques, circulating and printing da'wa publications, and even unintentionally formulating "campus Islam." It later became one of the more prominent dissenting Muslim organizations (Diederich 2002; Hasan 2006, Machmudi 2006; van Bruinessen 2002).

Second, the da'wa agenda of Indonesian Muslims was not aimed at converting non-Muslims, but rather at preventing Muslims from converting to Christianity. In the 1970s, Indonesian Muslims put a lot of effort into urging the government to prevent Christian missionary organizations from establishing new places of worship. Moreover, worried about church use of foreign funding in converting Muslims, Muslims urged the government to limit Christian missionary work and foreign aid (Mujiburrahman 2006, 57-90). Beginning in the 1980s, the Suharto government considered da'wa as a way to deepen the people's Islamic faith.

It has been pointed out that Muhammadiyah's da'wa program is more about deepening Muslim faith than converting non-Muslims (Dickson 2008, 13-27). Very few Muslim organizations have a special da'wa program for converting Christians who previously were Muslims.[208] Muhammadiyah believes that strengthening the faith of the Muslim majority is more important than recruiting new members. Unlike Christian missionaries, Muslim organizations usually do not seriously consider how to preach Islam to ethnic minorities. Although syncretistic Muslim practice is common in Indonesia, it seems to cause tension only between reformist and traditionalist Muslims, and is generally considered to be a natural by-product of advanced Islamization.

The post-Suharto period has witnessed the rise of several Muslim preachers who have become "entertainer-televangelists," such as Aa Gym (Abdullah Gymnastiar), Arifin Ilham, and Zainuddin M.Z. (Howell 2008, 50). Their TV sermons, teachings based on neo-Sufi spirituality (*tasawwuf*), the pragmatic application of Islamic morality to business and family life, and the production of da'wa media have become a conspicuous religious market of public piety (Fealy and White 2008; Hassan

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[207] I quote from Robert Hefner's interview with Mohammad Nastsir (Hefner 1997, 82).

[208] Anne Louise Dickson (2008, 41-58) describes Forum Arimatea, a da'wa organization based in Malang, East Java focusing on converting Christians.

2009).[209] Julian Millie (2008) asserts that many find the traditional approach to da'wa to be overly intellectual and conservative, and that Muslim organizations and ulama ignore the importance of public preaching and oratory. This critical reflection has led to a shift towards the study of the rhetoric of Indonesian preachers. The application of media in preaching Islam is also significant in this regard. In fact, in addition to TV sermons, Islamic morality has been applied to novels (Arnez 2009), films, comics (Sonearto 2008), and even the Internet and mobile phones, what Bart A. Barendregt (2009) refers to as "mobilized Islam" and "Islamized mobility."

However, regarding the preaching of Islam to Chinese-Indonesians, there are a few points that have not been well dealt with. First, preaching Islam to non-Muslims in Indonesia tends to be considered as a strategy for countering Christian evangelization. In fact, da'wa directed towards ethnic Chinese can be seen as a partial Islamization of Indonesian society at the micro-level, or a way of *diversifying Indonesian Muslim society. Second, why* is public confession necessary for Chinese preachers? Third, how is the da'wa of Chinese-Indonesian preachers related to the religio-political issues of *umma* (Muslim community)? Can the sermons of Chinese-Indonesian preachers be easily explained within the scope of the new pious life style of urban, middle-class Muslims?

6.3 Two Approaches of Preaching Islam to Chinese-Indonesians

6.3.1 Junus Jahja's Assimilative Da'wa

Junus Jahja is a famous ethnic Chinese activist and intellectual who promotes the assimilation of ethnic Chinese into mainstream Indonesian culture, encouraging Chinese to move out of their ethnic enclaves, erase their Chinese identity, and completely assimilate to the Indonesian nation.[210] He converted from Christianity to Islam in 1979 and soon launched his da'wa agenda and establishing several da'wa foundations, in the belief that the conversion of ethnic Chinese would bring to an end

[209] There are a number of interesting articles focusing on Aa Gym, e.g., James B. Hoesterey (2008) and C. W. Watson (2005). Julia Day Howell (2008) discusses several preachers and how they apply neo-Sufi spirituality.

[210] Junus Jahja (1927–) studied at the Economic College of Rotterdam, the Netherlands (Nederlandse Economische Hogeschool, Rotterdam) from 1952 to 1959. When he was a student in Rotterdam, he was active among the Indonesian student community, and his assimilationist orientation is evident even in his early days. In a speech given to a meeting of an Indonesian Chinese association in Rotterdam, he advocated disbanding ethnic Chinese organizations in order to solve the ethnic problems between Chinese and indigenous Indonesians. After returning to Indonesia, he became enthusiastically involved in several organizations promoting such assimilation.

the ethnic strife between ethnic Chinese and *pribumi* (indigenous Indonesians).

Jahja's conversion to Islam can be seen as an extension of the assimilationist movement he started during the New Order period.[211] There were two patterns of political participation among Chinese-Indonesians for responding to this political situation. The first pattern was the integrationist movement, which advocated that Indonesia should be a pluralistic society in which Chinese would keep their own cultural traditions, and in which their human rights and citizenship would be protected. The second pattern was the assimilationist movement, which advocated the disbanding of all exclusive Chinese schools and organizations, the giving up their ethno-cultural identity and complete assimilation to the Indonesian majority.

Jahja joined two assimilationist organizations, Lembaga Pembinaan Kesatuan Bangsa (LPKB, Institute for the Promotion of National Unity),[212] and Badan Komunikasi Penghayatan Kesatuan Bangsa (Bakom-PKB, Communication Body for the Appreciation of National Unity).[213] Even though the Suharto government applied a harsh assimilation policy to ethnic Chinese, the policy was not successful. The real intention of the policy was not to integrate the ethnic Chinese minority into Indonesian society, but rather to prohibit the public expression and transmission of Chinese cultural traditions. Yet, Suharto's economic policy favoring Chinese-Indonesian capitalists largely diminished the impact of assimilation. On the other hand, in regard to religious policy, despite the state's discriminatory policy towards the public expression of traditional Chinese religion, the Suharto government never intended to encourage Chinese-Indonesians to convert to another religion.[214]

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[211] It seems that Jahja never actually says that his conversion to Islam was only a way of promoting his assimilationist movement. He mentions that one of the main reasons was that, when he studied in the Netherlands, he found that Indonesian students were divided according to different religious orientations: Christians, devout Muslims, and nominal Muslims. He also noticed that students who were not highly devoted to their religion could easily interact with people belonging to different religious groups, and he thus became less parochial in his Christian faith. In the 1970s, however, he decided that he should seriously embrace a religion (Jahja 1993, 65-70). In his public reflection on his conversion experience, he mostly emphasizes that his conversion was a kind of guidance from God (*hidayah*). Following his conversion in 1979, some of his non-Muslim friends suggested that he might offer information to other ethnic Chinese who are interested in Islam (1993, 71-72). In my interview with Junus, he told me that combining his da'wa aimed at ethnic Chinese with his previous assimilationist movement was suggested to him by one of his closest Catholic friends, an ethnic Chinese.

[212] Assimilationist Chinese established the LPKB in 1963 as a semi-official organization supported by the Department of Domestic Affairs. They advocated that Chinese-Indonesians should disband any exclusive Chinese schools and organizations, give up their ethno-cultural identity, and completely assimilate to the Indonesian majority. The LPKB continuously played an important role under the supervision of the government until 1967.

[213] The Bakom-PKB was established in 1977 as the successor of the LPKB, and took da'wa as a part of its assimilationist agenda , but it is not an Islamic organization (Coppel 1983, 169).

[214] According Coppel's discussions on Suharto's Assimilation Program (1983), apart from pushing *kelenteng* (Chinese temples) to be incorporated into Buddhism and denying the legal status of Confucianism—two ways of repressing the public expression of Chinese culture—Suharto's government rarely mentioned any project to accelerate the assimilation of ethnic Chinese by converting them to Islam. Junus Jahja once mentioned that Suharto was glad to hear about ethnic Chinese

Yet the fear of being branded a Communist pushed many people to nominally join a religion. The result was a wave of religious conversion in the 1960s, in which Catholicism and Protestantism became alternative ethno-religious shelters. Many other Chinese-Indonesians embraced Buddhism and other traditional Chinese religions in order to preserve their ethnic Chinese identity. Still, when Chinese-Indonesians convert to Christianity or Chinese religions, they remain a religious minority in Indonesian society. In other words, though they diminished their chances for political participation, such Chinese-Indonesians retained their ethnic identity and expressed their political potency in the fields of economics and religion. Moreover, the state's capability to implement its assimilationist policy was limited, and assimilationist organizations were not able to get broad support from the Chinese community. These factors motivated Jahja to convert to Islam and invite Chinese-Indonesians, in particular eminent businessmen, to become Muslims, as his new strategy of assimilation.

Jahja's conversion to Islam attracted public concern, partially because of his propaganda strategy. Since the 1980s, he has published many pamphlets to preach Islam and propagate his assimilationist ideas.[215] In 1981 Jahja set up the Foundation of Islamic Brotherhood (Yayasan Ukhuwah Islamiah), which preaches Islam to Chinese-Indonesians, and, in particular, to the younger generation of Chinese-Indonesian entrepreneurs and businessmen.[216] He emphasizes that, although Chinese-Indonesians and Arab-Indonesians (Hadrami Arab) are both immigrant ethnic minorities, Arab-Indonesians have been successfully assimilated into Indonesian mainstream society, despite their very different physical appearance. In his view, the main reason is their belief in Islam. Thus he argues that if ethnic Chinese convert to Islam, they will gradually be assimilated into the Indonesian umma. Since he believes religious difference is one of the main problems sustaining this ethnic confrontation, he argues (Junus 1997, 167-168): [217]

> By becoming Muslim and so joining the Islamic world in Indonesia, all doubts about the credibility and loyalty of Chinese disappear. Therefore, they are now fully accepted as true brothers, sisters and compatriots, having the same commitments towards Indonesia.

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converting to Islam, and it was Vice President Habibie who approved the establishment of the Lautze Mosque with funding from the ICMI.

[215] See Junus Jahja, *Muslim Tionghoa*, (Jakarta: Yayasan Ukhuwah Islamiyah, 1985); *WNI* ***Beragama*** *Islam* (Jakarta: Yayasan Abdulkarim Oei Tjeng Hien, 1991); *Islam Dimata WNI*, (Jakarta: Hajji Karim Oei, 1993); and *Pembauran dan Islam* (Jakarta: Hajji Karim Oei, 1999).

[216] He established a business association where Chinese-Indonesian Muslims, non-Muslim businessmen and indigenous Muslims meet to exchange information and promote da'wa. This will be discussed later.

[217] See Junus Jahja, "Conversion to Islam," in Leo Suryadinata, ed., *Political Thinking of the Indonesian Chinese*.

His radical agenda of assimilative conversion often raises two criticisms. First, religious faith should not be mixed with ethnic politics. Even many ethnic Chinese Muslims think that it is not necessary to give up their Chinese ethnicity just because they embrace Islam. Second, the source of tension between ethnic Chinese and indigenous Indonesians is economic rather than religious. Nevertheless, I have found that Jahja's ideas on da'wa are not so naive. I would suggest we prudently examine how he explains why Chinese-Indonesians dislike Islam, and how to implement an effective da'wa targeting ethnic Chinese who are potential converts (*muallaf*).

Although he preferred to convert to Islam in a low-key way, in fact he made his conversion into a public event, inviting his boss, Moeljoto Djojomartono,[218] to witness his conversion, and he also likes to show a photo with the famous ulama Buya Hamka (1908-81) standing behind him. From 1979 to 1985 he wrote a yearly report in which he publicly shared his personal reflections on being a Chinese muallaf (Jahja 1985, 1-22). In these yearly reports, Jahja's main intention was to encourage non-Muslim Chinese to convert. Although his friends worried that he would encounter many difficulties after his conversion, he found that things were going well. He says that, according to Islam, every person has an equal opportunity to be blessed by God. He identifies his conversion as a *hidayah*, (receiving guidance from God) and that through following the principles of the Quran and Sunnah, step by step, the fundamentals of Islam began to direct his life. He emphasizes that, after becoming a member of the umma, ethnic background is no longer important, because before God there is no ethnic difference. He emphasizes that Chinese converting to Islam will win respect from the indigenous Muslim community, and that embracing Islam is not as difficult as some people suppose.

When Hamka passed away in 1981, in his third yearly report, Jahja (1985, 5-8) mentioned how Hamka encouraged his da'wa plan and recalled Hamka's friendship with Karim Oei and Sukarno. By commemorating Hamka, Junus emphasized that his da'wa plan was blessed by Hamka, whose close friendship with Kalim Oei and Sukarno shows that Islam unities people and promotes Chinese assimilation.[219]

In addition to mentioning his participation in the lectures and *pengajian* of famous preachers, Junus offers suggestions for improving the preaching of Islam to Chinese-Indonesians. He also discusses what Chinese find difficult about conversion to Islam, proposes better approaches to da'wa, and suggests that Chinese professionals are the most likely converts. He also reports on attending a conference

[218] At that time, Jahja worked for the Export & Import Bank of Indonesia; Moeljoto Djojomartono was the president of the bank. In 1999 the Export & Import Bank of Indonesia merged with three other banks to become Mandiri Bank.

[219] Jahja likes to mention that when Suharto heard about ethnic Chinese converting to Islam in 1982, he was happy because he regarded it as a sign that ethnic Chinese are willing to be assimilated by way of conversion.

of Muslim elites and suggests that the Indonesian government should sponsor a da'wa project focusing on ethnic Chinese.

In his book *Islam di Mata WNI* (*Islam in Chinese-Indonesian's Eyes*, 1993), Jahja explains the main reasons why ethnic Chinese dislike Islam, and how to improve this situation and more effectively convert Chinese-Indonesians. Jahja explores Chinese-Indonesian's misconceptions about Islam and points out five barriers that make ethnic Chinese reluctant to embrace Islam: (1) If they were to convert to Islam, their Chinese friends would accuse them of being materialistic opportunists; (2) People would suspect that their conversion to Islam was not really pious, but only a means of gaining practical benefits (Junus 1993, 16); (3) Islam is not welcoming to ethnic Chinese; (4) It is not easy to practice Islam, because Muslims have to learn Arabic, and Islamic law prohibits many things; and (5) Converting to Islam may have an adverse effect on business connections with non-Muslim Chinese, and the new convert may be ostracized by his family and the wider Chinese community (Jahja 1993, 27).[220]

In order to address these prejudices, Jahja (1993, 21-22; 103-107) explores the historical factors which have contributed to this kind of mentality. He (1993, 105-107) presents three main reasons. First, the Dutch colonial government's policy of ethnic division regarded Islam as an inferior religion, and prohibited ethnic Chinese from converting to Islam, thus encouraging Chinese to consider Muslims as inferior. Also, the economic gap between the two ethnic groups served to strengthen their social distance. Second, although some early Chinese immigrants to Indonesia became Muslims, many of these changed their Chinese names, making it difficult to trace their history and hold them up as models of successful conversion. Third, the indigenous Muslims considered the Chinese to be in collaboration with the Dutch colonizers.[221] He also emphasizes that Islam is a part of Chinese culture, having

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[220] Some Chinese may worry that conversion would anger their Chinese business partners, who may decide to suspend their business relations. On Chinese stereotypes about Islam, Jahja offers the following joke: When a Chinese was preached to, he replied, "Brother, how could you embarrass me like this? Islam is the religion of poor people. Do you want me to live in poverty and eat only rice and *jengkol*?" (a type of broad bean, and the common fare of poor people) (Junus 1993, 17). Jahja (1993, 17-18) explains that the main reason why Chinese are reluctant to convert to Islam is that they see it as a difficult religion to practice. Chinese usually take a casual attitude towards religion, especially precepts. But if one converts to Islam, he or she has to follow the stringent requirements of Islamic law, which prohibits eating pork and drinking wine, gambling, charging interest on loans, and burning incense for worship. Circumcision is another issue that scares ethnic Chinese, especially men. He also mentions the interesting case of Liem Sioe Liong's eldest son, Anthony Salim, who was given a Chinese version of the Quran. After he read it, he commented, "Islam is a good religion, but very difficult to practice. A Muslim must perform *salat* five times a day, and some pious Muslims do so more than five times a day; how can I compete with *them*? Chinese religions are easier to practice, and you don't even need to know Chinese. But in order to be a good Muslim, you have to know Arabic" (Jahja 1993, 17-18).

[221] Jahja mentions that Sarekat Islam's anti-Chinese movement also helped to fuel anti-Chinese sentiment.

spread to China in the seventh century. He mentions that the Chinese explorer-diplomat Zheng He was a Muslim, and that he performed a fast during his stay in Nusantara (the Indonesian word for the Indonesian archipelago). Jahja's purpose is to remind people of two things: 1) Islam is a universal religion, also embraced by Muslims in China; and 2) Since Islam is historically associated with both China and Indonesia, Chinese-Indonesians should not feel alienated from Islam and refuse to consider it as a part of the Chinese cultural tradition (Jahja 1993, 21-22).

Jahja also suggests that a research center focusing on how to facilitate da'wa to ethnic Chinese should be established.[222] He also suggests that missionary work should first focus on ethnic Chinese professionals, because their conversion would encourage others to convert. Although Jahja emphasizes conversion to Islam as the main solution for dealing with discrimination against Chinese, he is also aware that the economic gap between ethnic Chinese and indigenous Muslims is a problem. He has started another project to promote Islam via business and vice versa, helping to improve the economic status of indigenous Muslims, and bringing Chinese businessmen closer to the indigenous Muslim community.[223]

In his da'wa strategy, Junus has a somewhat contradictory attitude about Chineseness. Although he emphasizes the historical affinities between Chinese and Islam, he says that he is merely reminding non-Muslim Chinese that Islam is not alien to Chinese culture. However, he is careful not to over-emphasize these points, because doing so might cause ethnic Chinese converts to highlight Chinese elements in Islam after their conversion. This idea of "escaping the burden of Chineseness" (Reid 2010) is reflected in a comment he made on PITI. When people hear that he is a Muslim, they usually ask him if he is a member of PITI, assuming that a Chinese convert cannot be considered as an ordinary member of the Indonesian umma. His approach to conversion is to completely erase Chineseness. This attitude is also revealed in his argument on how new converts should gradually erase their Chineseness. He says (1993, 38-39):

> The phenomenon I see is that most Chinese who embrace Islam want to directly plunge into the Muslim circle and then completely "disappear." By becoming a Muslim, they are automatically assimilated, and the problem of ethnic identity is resolved. This is the most appropriate attitude: after becoming Muslim, let them disappear without any trace.

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[222] Jahja (1993, 40) states that such an Islamic research center should cooperate with other Indonesian da'wa organizations to explore how to preach Islam to isolated aboriginal people who live in remote areas of Irian Jaya and East Timor.

[223] I shall discuss this project again in chapter 7.

Jahja (1993, 39-40) even argues that, during their transition phase, if necessary, new converts can associate or stay with other Chinese converts. This transition should be considered as a temporary process. After they are more used to life as a Muslim, they should interact more with indigenous Muslims.

In 1991, Jahja founded the Haji Karim Oei Foundation in memory of Abdul Karim Oei. The foundation established its own mosque for Chinese-Indonesian Muslims on Lautze Street in Central Jakarta, proclaiming that "Islam has come to Chinatown" (Junus 1993, 147-148). The mosque provides religious guidance for new converts. Jahja was invited to join two Indonesian Muslim organizations, and became a board member of the Council of Indonesian Islamic Scholars (Majelis Ulama Indonesia) (1980-1990) and a member of the Counsel Committee of ICMI in 1992.[224]

Jahja is a pioneer, the first person to advocate a systematic da'wa strategy focusing on ethnic Chinese. However, as mentioned before, his ideas cannot be widely supported by ethnic Chinese Muslims, since the emerging public visibility of PITI has shown that Chinese identity and Islamic practice can coexist. PITI emphasizes various Chinese elements of Islamic culture, including Zheng He's legacy and the Chinese Muslim contribution to the Islamization of Java; it has also built a mosque, and encourages *salat* on Imlek (Chinese New Year), and singing *nashid* while wearing traditional Chinese costumes.[225]

Interestingly, Jahja's Lautze Mosque was established earlier than PITI's Cheng Ho (Zheng He) Mosque. Although the Lautze Mosque is keen to invite indigenous Muslims to participate in its activities, it is best known for offering guidance to ethnic Chinese who are interested in Islam. In other words, the Lautze Mosque is considered as a place for ethnic Chinese, and cannot get rid of the Chinese ethnic mark.

Jahja is not only an activist involved in preaching Islam to Chinese-Indonesians, but also an intellectual who has formulated a da'wa strategy that considers the historical relations between Chinese-Indonesians and Islam, and how to overcome the difficulties of cross-cultural da'wa. As an insider, Jahja has offered many first-hand observations about ethnic Chinese Muslims (Jahja 1991). However, his assimilative da'wa is controversial. Although many ethnic Chinese Muslims at the Lautze Mosque respect him as an elder, I frequently hear people criticizing his ideas. In my view, Jahja seems to be unaware that mosques in Western countries are invariably regarded as belonging to an ethnic minority. In the United States of America, for instance, African-Americans establish their own black churches, and the racial boundary does

[224] In 1990 he joined a committee of Muhammadiyah working to apply Islamic ethics to the economic development of Muslims. He presented his idea in a seminar, encouraging ethnic Chinese to convert to Islam and involve themselves in grassroots Muslim society, stating that Islamic economic ethics should be illustrated and promoted. The results of the seminar were later published as "Terobosan Ekonomi Muhammadiyah" (Junus 1990); further details are provided in chapter 6.

[225] More details are provided in chapter 7.

not automatically disappear just because they have the same religion as the white Christian majority.

Jahja sees Islam as a potential mediator for dealing with ethnic discrimination. His ideas on the history of Islam in China, Zheng He's Muslim identity, and the Chinese Muslim legacy in fifteenth century Java, were put forth in the 1990s, when even ethnic Chinese Muslims themselves where not very interested. However, the political force of the "China theory"[226] erupted again during the post-Suharto period. Moreover, Islam can serve as a bridge for ethnic communication, but not if the traffic is one-way, and forces ethnic Chinese to give up their ethnicity. Insisting on erasing ethnic identity after conversion is the most significant defect in his discourse on da'wa. He assumes religious difference as the most important gap to be crossed, but he is aware that having the same religion cannot guarantee peace. To equate conversion to Islam as a rejection of Chinese ethnic identity is actually against Islamic teaching.

If preaching Islam to ethnic Chinese based on erasing their ethnicity is neither humanistic nor practical, what, then, is the best approach to preaching Islam to ethnic Chinese without negating their ethnicity, and to dealing with the conflicts between Chinese customs and Islamic law? How do other Chinese-Indonesian preachers approach da'wa for ethnic Chinese?

6.3.2 Muhammad Syarif Siangan Tanudjaja's Family Consultation and Accommodative Da'wa

Muhammad Syarif Siangan Tanudjaja (b. 1950) is a former general secretary of PITI. Although he is a notary public rather than a professional religious teacher, he organizes a weekly *pengajian* at his home.[227] In 1971, his father suddenly passed away, bringing to an end his undergraduate studies at the Faculty of Medicine at Atma Jaya Catholic University, Jakarta. In order to make a living, he started a business supplying stationary to government departments. Several of his business partners were Muslims, and he gradually came to learn about Islam. Later on, however, his business began to flounder and he went into debt, leading him to seek spiritual guidance with Islamic religious teachers. In an interview with *Hidayah* magazine (January 2005, 38–43) titled "Debt Leads Him into the Faith" (*Lilitan Hutang*

[226] See my discussion in the chapter 2. The "China Theory" is a point of view that argues Islam was brought to Indonesia by Chinese Muslim in the 15th Century and later spread by their descendants.
[227] The following interviews I quote were done on April 30 and May 31 2005 and the second interview was held at his home.

Mengantar Kepada Keimanan), he recounts how he converted to Islam in 1975. Based on his experience of preaching Islam and serving in a Chinese Muslim organization, he offers insightful observations about how to preach Islam to ethnic Chinese, and comments on some of the limitations of PITI's da'wa. He strongly disagrees with Jahja's assimilationist da'wa, and takes a more accommodative approach to preaching Islam to ethnic Chinese.

Tanudjaja organizes a weekly pengajian at his home, usually held on Sunday evening, since most participants are busy people who only have spare time after work. The meeting usually continues till midnight, but sometimes doesn't conclude until the morning salat (*shalat subuh*). His family pengajian focuses more on sharing between new converts and people who have been Muslims for some time, and they discuss important issues in Islam, such as *tauhid* (the oneness of God) and guidelines for performing salat. In order to make it easier for ethnic Chinese to understand the essence of God, Tanudjaja advocates first teaching *aqidah* (belief or theology) to new converts, teaching them about God from the perspectives of various religions, encouraging his listeners to compare and choose the concept they find most suitable. He adds, "In teaching religion we should not force participants to accept only one approach, since people come from different backgrounds. Therefore, I think that my pengajian should focus more on basic issues, such as introducing participants to fundamental Islamic beliefs. As far as other issues go, such as Islamic law, I leave it to other people to handle." In other words, he is aware of the complexity of teaching Islamic law, and limits his teaching to providing guidance to new converts on "less controversial" issues, such as tauhid, which he sees as more fundamental than such topics as Islamic law and *fiqh*, which are often controversial.[228]

Tanudjaja believes that there are diverse ways of understanding Islam, seeing his role as that of an advisor who shares his own religious experience to strengthen the faith of recent converts and help them find solutions to religious and family problems. He considers this weekly meeting held at his home as a kind of consultation rather than a real pengajian, proudly referring to the event as a "consulting family." He gives his sincere attention to the participants, encouraging new converts to share their concerns with him.

Tanudjaja has made some insightful comments on how the headquarters of PITI preaches Islam to Chinese in Jakarta. According to him, PITI has tried to find a place to serve as a multi-purpose center, similar to the PITI branch of East Java in Surabaya, but it has not been carried out.[229] He also mentioned that the PITI headquarters in

[228] He also mentions that if female converts have questions about worship, he usually asks his daughter to help.

[229] The headquarters of PITI occupies one floor of a building, but is not offered for religious activities. In contrast, the PITI branch of East Java in Surabaya establishes the first Zheng He Mosque in

Jakarta does not organize pengajian very regularly, as I was also told by a number of other informants. In this regard, a cadre of PITI told me that PITI does not focus on preaching Islam to ethnic Chinese; since most Chinese are either Buddhists or Christians, if PITI were to actively implement such a da'wa plan, non-Muslim Chinese may feel threatened. But Tanudjaja says that PITI members should at least show their Islamic faith to non-Muslim Chinese, so that they can gain a positive impression of Islam. For ethnic Chinese Muslims, the most important thing is to demonstrate a good attitude and behavior. In Anne L. Dickson's fieldwork (2008) at the PITI branch of East Java at Surabaya, she had a similar impression. PITI members rarely mention how to preach Islam to Chinese Indonesians, and leaders merely offer some lip service. In contrast to that, Tanudjaja cares more about preaching Islam to ethnic Chinese and helping new converts to be accepted by their non-Muslim Chinese family.

According to his experience of organizing pengajian at home, Tanudjaja believes that providing religious consultation and warm concern to Chinese converts is more practical than pushing PITI to function as a missionary assembly (*tabligh*). He hopes that PITI will also begin to offer guidance to Chinese converts:

> In PITI, the board members should function as surrogate parents, brothers, or sisters. Afterwards, we will be able to reunite new converts with their families. If necessary, board members can visit their homes or families. We can even hold a pengajian for family members who are non-Muslims; the husband, the wife, or the children. We can hold an informal pengajian with a meeting (silaturrahmi), or just chat about what Islam really is. This is actually more effective. This kind of pengajian is what I want to hold in PITI, not a big missionary assembly (tabligh)… I have also suggested that the counselors in regional branches of PITI do the same thing… Actually those things are often taken for granted, easily considered as trivial, but practicing it is very difficult… On the other hand, I think that as board members we have a responsibility to offer guidance to muallaf, so they feel more secure and "settled." I think only preaching is not enough; based on my own experience, we really need a teacher or counselor to accompany and guide us.

When I asked his opinion about Jahja's da'wa strategy, he replied:

> I do not agree. I used to be Pak Junus' "cadet," but I now feel that assimilation cannot be forced. Some people convert to Islam and try to efface their ethnic

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Indonesia, which has an activity center and a public square which may serve either for worship or sports.

> identity. But for people like you and I, our Chinese customs and appearance are hard to hide… This makes Chinese more reluctant to become Muslims, because they are afraid that their Chinese identity will be lost.

Tanudjaja also believes that such an assimilationist agenda will lead to an opposite result:

> As a Chinese Muslim, I think I have to show my Chinese identity when preaching Islam, and show that many Chinese are Muslims. Preaching that Islam requires that we expunge our ethnic identities would now be considered a violation of human rights.

Tanudjaja also argues that Islam teaches Muslims not to forget their origin and ancestors. Nowadays, the attitude of Chinese towards Islam is changing, and several ethnic Chinese NGOs helped the victims of the Tsunami in Aceh. If Indonesia is building a new society, then he believes that the Chinese community is one of its pillars.

In its monthly magazine, PITI has been publicizing the history of Islam in China, Zheng He's Muslim background, and his diplomatic contribution to the cultural intercourse between China and Nusantara. Tanudjaja is aware of the controversy surrounding whether Zheng He actually preached Islam in Nusantara, but he himself takes no position on the matter. He thinks that the history of Islam in China and the legacy of Zheng He is meaningful not only for Chinese Muslims, but also for all Chinese in Indonesia, since it helps people know that Islam existed in China long before it came to Indonesia, and that Islam is a common legacy shared by Indonesia and China. Such understanding would help overcome the stereotype that Islam and Chinese are not compatible. He says, "We have to show that Chinese have a close relation to Islam. For example, the existence of Zheng He and the introduction of Islam to China a long time ago."

In his experience counseling ethnic Chinese converts, he finds that the most difficult problem for them to overcome is how to interact with their non-Muslim Chinese family after their conversion. Tanudjaja quotes a verse of the Quran (Al-Baqarah 2, 118),[230] saying, "Some fanatical ulamas do not like it if we have relationships with non-Muslims. In my opinion, this kind of attitude will hinder the process of assimilation. Therefore, we have to be able to differentiate fraternity (*ukhuwah*) and personal relationships."[231] Thus he always reminds Chinese Muslims

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[230] "The Jews and the Christians will not stop disturbing you until you convert to their religion."
[231] This was discussed in the second interview.

of the importance of sustaining good relations with their non-Muslim Chinese family, and cautions against cutting off their relationship with their family. In his view, "We need to be wise. However, for someone with a stern or stiff character, it might be difficult to compromise. Having good relationships with non-Muslims will encourage others to be interested and to convert to Islam."

Tanudjaja also gives advice to Chinese converts on how to accommodate Chinese customs like Imlek and ancestor worship. In his view, Imlek itself does not have any relevance to Islam; although he doesn't celebrate Imlek with his Chinese relatives, he does respect it as a cultural custom, and doesn't see any problem if new converts want to celebrate Imlek. It is a process of accommodation, similar to the way the *walisongo* (the nine saints) appropriated gamelan and some other Javanese cultural elements to preach Islam. He says:

> As far as I can see, the way the walisongo used *sekaten*[232] was not without reservations. Before they would attend a gamelan performance, they first held a *syahadat sekaten*.[233] However, this thing could be discontinued. When someone has firm faith, he can tell for himself what is right and what is wrong. He can choose for himself what's necessary.

In Tanudjaja's view, as new converts gradually come to know Islam better, they will reconsider whether they want to continue celebrating Imlek. Regarding those ethnic Chinese Muslims who celebrate Imlek in a mosque, he argues that it is fine, as long as it is done for da'wa, and they don't bring the *barongsai* (lion dance) into the mosque.

Ancestor worship is another challenge for new converts. But, for Tanudjaja, this problem can be solved in a moderate way. He considers ancestor worship as a way of expressing love and respect for our ancestors, but questions whether Chinese should make food offerings to their ancestors, asking, "Do they really enjoy the food we prepare for them?", to which he replies with a resounding "No!" He suggests that Chinese converts honor their ancestors without going to the graveyard, but by having good relationships with parents and friends, or emulating our parents' good qualities.

If new converts are required by their parents to participate in traditional Chinese forms of worship (sembahyang), he usually indicates that it's OK to partially join the ancestor worship:

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[232] Celebrating the Prophet's birthday (*maulid*) with a ceremony imbued with Javanese cultural elements.

[233] When participants of **sekaten** visited mosques, they were required to pronounce confession of creed (syahadat).When Islam was introduced to Java in the fifteenth century, walisongo applied Javanese cultural elements in celebrating Islamic festivals.

> …As long as this requirement does not violate their aqidah (intention and motivation), they can do it. However, they have to be able to explain to their family that if the worship is related to other religious rituals, they cannot do it. They can perform sujud (kneeling down and bowing the head until it touches the floor) merely to honor or respect their parents, nothing more.

Tanudjaja is not a professional religious teacher, but he offers something that Junus Jahja and the PITI's da'wa strategies lack. He points out that those who preach about Islam to ethnic Chinese should consider family factors and Chinese customs, rather than ignoring or repressing them.

6.3.3 Accommodating Chineseness when preaching Islam in Da'wa to Ethnic Chinese

PITI now encourages ethnic Chinese converts to express their Chineseness along with their muallaf (new convert) identity, while continuing to promote interethnic communication with pribumi Muslims. Jahja's assimilative approach to da'wa is now out of fashion and, as Tanudjaja notes, making assimilation as essential for conversion to Islam is a violation of human rights. Tanudjaja's concerns highlight two important issues that PITI may need to consider. First, although PITI has the preaching of Islam to ethnic Chinese at the focus of its official agenda, to what extent is PITI's leadership serious about actually doing so? In this respect PITI is facing a dilemma. For, if PITI were to adopt a da'wa strategy which is aimed exclusively at ethnic Chinese, this may cause uneasiness amongst non-Muslim Chinese who may not be opposed to PITI, but expect to continue practicing their own religion. On the other hand, were PITI to extend the scope of its da'wa to include all communities, other Muslim organizations may question the necessity or legitimacy of an ethnicity-based Muslim organization.

The contrast between Jahja's and Tanudjaja's respective da'wa strategies indicates that the question of how to treat Chinese customs and cultural traditions when preaching Islam to Chinese is an interesting issue which PITI needs to carefully consider. An interesting figure in this regard is Ibrahim Ma (1900-1982), a Chinese diplomat who immigrated to Malaysia in the 1940s, engaged in da'wa activity amongst Chinese-Malaysians, and wrote several books to help Chinese understand Islam in relation to Chinese culture, including Confucianism. His book *Tanya Jawab dengan Seorang Muslim Tionghoa* (Ma 1980) has been translated into Indonesian, and

deals with the issue of how to facilitate a cross-cultural understanding which will encourage Chinese to accept Islam. However, such a cross-cultural da'wa[234] seems to attract little interest, neither with PITI, nor amongst Indonesian Muslim organizations in general.

6.4 The Sermons and Public Conversion Narratives of Chinese-Indonesian Preachers

Having compared Jahja's and Tanudjaja's approach to da'wa for ethnic Chinese, I would like to introduce three other Chinese-Indonesian preachers. These "professional preachers"[235] mainly preach to non-Chinese Indonesians, and have little concern for converting ethnic Chinese. There has been increasing public visibility of Islamic piety in Indonesian Muslim society during the Reformation period. In contemporary popular Islamic culture, religious messages are spread by famous Muslim preachers, circulated by all forms of modern media, and appropriated by Muslim youth and the urban middle class. A number of these celebrity preachers are ethnic Chinese who either imbue their dress and sermons with Chineseness, or involve themselves in political and religious controversies.

Anton Medan and Koko Liem have attracted the most interest, mainly because of their use of Chinese customs. Anton Medan has even established a Chinese-style mosque on the campus of his *pesantren* (Islamic boarding school).

Such conspicuous expressions of Chinese-style Islam have been described as "marketing the Chinese face of Islam" (Hew 2010) and featured in a New York Times article titled "Chinese Preachers Bridge Indonesia's Ethnic Gap" (14 July, 2010).[236] The third preacher is Irena Handono, a female Chinese-Indonesian with an anti-Christian message and a fundamentalist style. As Wai-Weng Hew (2010) has found, the messages of some Chinese-Indonesian preachers are not necessarily in line with the multiculturalism that is usually supposed to be spoken by and for the Chinese minority.

I shall examine their preaching careers by investigating a few questions. First, how did these three preachers convert to Islam, present their conversion narratives to

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[234] The issue of cross-cultural da'wa has been discussed in an edited volume titled *Reading in Cross-Cultural Da'wah* by the da'wa organization Darul Arqam Singaporea (Wu 2001).

[235] I mean that they at least take preaching Islam as one of their main occupations. Among the second group of preacher, Andon Medan has his businesses. A preacher's da'wa may mix with commercial activities and preaching Islam can even be turned into a business.

[236] The public expression of religio-ethnic elements by Chinese-Indonesian Muslims that I call "Islamic Chineseness" will be discussed again in chapter 7.

the Muslim public, and relate their life stories and conversion experiences as a way of legitimating their authority? Second, what are their main strategies for fashioning themselves, and what kind of issues and rhetoric appear in their sermons? Third, taking the public conversions of these Chinese-Indonesian preachers as an example, how do we evaluate a Chinese-Muslim's public expression of self in the lens of public Islam during the post-Suharto era? Fourth, why are the political messages in their sermons welcomed by some in the Muslim audience?

6.4.1 Anton Medan: A "Black and Green" Kyai

Anton Medan[237] was born into a Chinese family in Medan in 1957. When his family became poverty stricken during the anti-communist and anti-Chinese movements of the 1960s, he was forced to earn his livelihood on the streets, and became a criminal at the age of 13.[238] He arrived in Jakarta in the 1980s, and soon became involved in a series of crimes, including robbing jewelry stores and banks. In 1986 he led a mob in burning down the Jakarta police headquarters in order to protest the judiciary system. As for schooling, Medan only received some limited informal education while in jail.

Although Medan nominally converted to Islam in 1979 because he wanted to marry a Muslim woman, he didn't become a practicing Muslim until 1991. He was sent to jail several times, and when he was kept in Cipinang Prison (LP Cipinang) he took an interest in various religions.[239]

In 1983, because of a conflict with another prisoner, he was moved to the minimum security prison at Cianjur, which only held convicts who had committed

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[237] Anton Medan is his nickname. His Muslim name is Ramdhan Effendi. "Anton" was given to him by one of his friends.

[238] Medan beat a person to death in Medan when he was 13 years old. He was working at a bus station and one day someone stole his money. He knew who stole his money, ran up to him, and demanded the money back. The thief refused, got angry, and hit him. Many people watched the fight, including an ice seller. Medan used the ice seller's ice axe to hit the thief, who died in the hospital. Medan was then put in Jalan Tiang Listrik prison in Medan (Raharjo 1997 I, 119-122). For Anton Medan's life story up to 1997, I refer to his six-volume biography, which Anton Medan hired the author S. Budhi Raharjo to write.

[239] Influenced by other convicts, he took an interest in various religions, including traditional Chinese religions and Buddhism (Raharjo 1997 VI, 57). In particular, he was baptized as a Christian. One day there was an event held by Batu Pejuru Church in the prison in which Christians distributed free food and stamps to the convicts. Anton Medan attended the event, where he met Kho Liong, a convict who was later sentenced to death for murder. From him Medan learned a lot about Christianity, and he became a Christian. (Raharjo 1997 VI, 67-74 and 132). He later converted to Buddhism and then became a Christian again (Raharjo 1997 VI, 82). As a pious Christian he was eager to learn and read the Bible. He also went to church three times a week and consulted with a Christian prisoner and priests. At that time he wondered, if Jesus really was the son of God, why he couldn't save himself from the crucifixion (Raharjo 1997 VI, 89-90).

minor crimes. When the month of fasting came, Medan closely watched for the first time how Muslims fasted. Cianjur was not a big city, so the prison was pretty close to the people (Raharjo 1997 IV, 105-106). Every day, the loud speakers attached to the top of the prison mosques announced *pengajian*s were being held, and he recalled his talks with Tony Ardhie[240] about God or *tauhid* when he was in Cipinang. One night, he heard people singing loudly outside the prison wall. One of his friends said that people were performing *takbiran* (collective recitation of the Quran). He was so touched that night that he cried for only the second time during his adult life.[241] He was then moved to Subang prison, and then Cirebon prison.

At Cirebon he met Azhar, Edy, Soni, and their fourteen friends, all imprisoned for attacking the Cicendo police station in Bandung. They were followers of Imron, who hijacked a Garuda Airlines flight and forced the airplane to land at Don Muang Airport, Thailand. In the prison they often read books on Islam, practiced *zikir* (chanting the names of God) in the mosque, and counseled other prisoners. One day, Medan came to their cell, attracted by their calmness despite the difficult conditions in the prison. They told Medan about Jesus**,** who was calm even during the Crucifixion. They also told him stories about other saints; most of who were persecuted by secular political authorities (Raharjo 1997 IV, 123-127).[242] Medan began to study the Quran and the Hadith, and came to accept that the Quran is the only original word of God (Raharjo 1997 IV, 134-136). Although he was convinced that Islam is the only true religion, he felt that he was not ready to live according to Islamic law and its many prohibitions (Raharjo 1997 IV, 144-145).

After two years at Cirebon Prison, following some incidents, he was moved to Kuningan Prison, where he learned how to perform salat from a convict who diligently performed it every day. After being released from prison on August 17, 1986, in a general amnesty, Medan soon returned to his old livelihood in the Indonesian underworld. At the risk of his life, he struggled with and eventually displaced Hong Lie, who ran illegal casinos. The news quickly spread among casino owners, and Medan reached the peak of his power. Three days later, casino owners

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[240] According to Martin van Bruinessen, Tony Ardhie converted from Christianity to Islam and became a well-known radical preacher in student circles in the late 1980s and was sentenced to prison for his sermons.

[241] The first time was when his mother visited him at the juvenile detention facility in Binjai, North Sumatra.

[242] Afterwards, Medan often discussed religious faith with them. The fundamental difference between Islam and Christianity is, according to Medan, that in Christianity each baby is born with original sin inherited through Adam; in Islam, however, each person is born pure. Azhar and his friends kept telling Medan that God is God, human is human, and religion is common sense. That's why Islam does not call Jesus or "Nabi Isa" the son of God, because he was born as a human. This understanding of Islam and Christianity made him rethink the concept of God with common sense. He was told, furthermore, that no one could wipe out his sins except himself, by repenting before God (Raharjo 1997 VI, 131-134).

came to see Medan and pay their respects and offer tribute to their new boss. Some casino owners also asked Medan to manage their illegal casinos. All of this made him very happy, because he could earn a huge amount of money and also offer jobs to his jobless friends and relatives (mostly his brothers). Medan usually received 15 percent of the profits from every casino that he managed, and he also opened his own gambling den. Although it was not as big as the casinos that he managed, and it had to move to a new place from time to time, his casino was always full of gamblers (Raharjo 1997 V, 1-31).[243]

Although he had become very rich, he had to defend himself against his old enemy Hong Lie, who was seeking revenge. He was also involved in unlawful debt collection and managed brothels[244] (Raharjo 1997 V, 93-98). Anton's extensive network included important government figures and lawyers. As more and more ex-prisoners came to for jobs he decided to start a grocery business.[245]

As the high ranking police officers who cooperated with Medan gradually retired, his criminal enterprises encountered more difficulties. At the same time, Hong Lie, now under the protection of another mafia boss, was growing stronger. One night, the police raided Medan's casinos and arrested him together with 366 gamblers. He was incarcerated at Mabes Polri Prison for 4 months, and then moved to Salemba Prison, where he was able to use his wealth to arrange luxurious facilities. He had a telephone, stayed in a luxurious cell, and his wife could visit him every night. Finally, Medan was granted parole (*tahanan luar*), so he did not have to stay in prison. After several trials, he was sentenced to nine months of imprisonment. Since the verdict was decided when he had already completed nine months at Salemba, he was released from jail (Raharjo V, 113-120).

Medan felt tired, and tried to get out of the gambling world by building a legal

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[243] During that period, Medan reverted to traditional Chinese religion, worshipping Chinese deities for various purposes. One day, Medan accidentally met a fortune teller. He was told that he would divorce his wife when he was 33 years old (he was 30 years old at that time). Worried by the fortune teller's prophecy, he started to worship several Chinese deities. He had an altar in his house and a special room for burning incense, where he made offerings to the God of Gamblers, so that he would not lose to anyone in gambling and running casinos. Medan also worshipped the goddess Kwan Im (Guanyin in Mandarin, Avalokiteśvara in Sanskrit) in hopes of preserving his marriage. He also worshipped Kwan Kong (Lord Guan, a legendary Chinese general honored for his loyalty and bravery) for protection and blessings (Raharjo 1997 V, 45-58).

[244] As Medan's business grew, many of his friends from jail came to him for jobs. In addition to the casinos, Medan also ran bars, karaoke clubs, and massage parlors (*panti pijat*). For each place, Medan appointed one manager, a security staff (some of whom were police officers), and a person responsible for maintaining good relationships with reporters, police officers, and so on. Medan also told his men to keep their eyes on the crime reports in the newspapers, so that he would know which reporters often wrote crime reports. He would then give them special treatment so that they would not write about his business. Medan recruited hundreds of employees. When any of his men were caught by the police, he would find a way to save them, often by bribing high-ranking police officers (Raharjo 1997 V, 80-89).

[245] A few months before Lebaran (the day ending Ramadan), he bought a lot of staple goods, such as sugar, flour, and rice, selling them for a high price just before Lebaran. He did the same thing in cement trading (Raharno 1997 V, 100-103).

business. He first tried producing mineral water, but failed. His second attempt was marketing traditional medicine (*jamu*), but this also failed. He then tried excavating sand on Rengat Island, Riau. The business went well for some time, but then the government suddenly decided to turn Rengat into a tourist site, so he had to cease operations. Moreover, he was unable to sell the heavy machinery used to dig the sand because he smuggled it from Japan. Frustrated, Medan went back to gambling, now as a player. Gambling in Genting Highland, Malaysia and Las Vegas, he lost a lot of money, and had to take a loan from a *jangket* (a person who lends money to gamblers). He kept on losing every night, until he was completely bankrupt, in 1991, when he was 34 years old (Raharjo V, 120-132).

Broke and dejected, Medan had a lot of time on his hands, which he used to socialize and build good relationships with his neighbors, through whom he came to know about the famous preacher K.H. Zainuddin. One day he went to visit Zainuddin, accompanied by his wife. As a result of the meeting he determined to change himself into a good, honest person. Returning to Islam, he got actively involved in social events (Raharjo V, 137-140), and attended the talks given by other *ustads* (religious teacher), such as K.H. Noer Muhammad Iskandar, K.H. Dr. Manarul Hidayat, and Rhoma Irama. A year later, he decided to send his children to a pesantren, and in 1992 he underwent circumcision (Raharjo VI, 1-11).

However, Medan's interest in religion was not accepted by all his family members. Although his father did not object, his mother and brothers continually tried to "shake" his faith in Islam.[246] His mother asked him to go back to operating casinos, but he was determined to leave the "dark life" and get closer to God (Raharjo VI, 13-15).

As his Islamic faith deepened, Medan decided to go on hajj, for which he received guidance from several ustads. After returning from hajj, when chatting with his friends, Medan told them not only about his experience in Mecca, but also about his entire spiritual journey. This was the first time Medan addressed a large group of people. His way of talking made people laugh, especially when he spoke about his Chinese background. On his return from Mecca, Medan experienced what he regarded as a miracle: a wound on his leg which had been festering for years was suddenly healed after he washed it with the water from the Zam Zam well in Mecca (the wound was the result of being shot while fleeing the police years earlier). He got a lot of guidance from ustads who also willingly listened to Anton's aspirations.

The news about Anton's repentance and hajj spread among prisoners and ex-convicts, many of whom contacted him for guidance. Eager to assist his former

[246] Anton's brothers and mother moved from Medan to live with him in Jakarta, regularly cooking and eating pork in the house.

partners in crime, he asked himself, "Is it fair that there is no place for people who made mistakes?" He thus realized the need to create opportunities for such people to repent and turn themselves around (Raharjo 1997 V, 43-55).

Thus, on June 10, 1994, he established a center providing temporary shelter, religious teachings, and occupational training for ex-convicts, the Majelis Taklim At-Ta'ibin.[247] Medan served as the general chairperson, and he also established five branches located according to the administrative districts of Jakarta. Majelis Taklim At-Ta'ibin also held open pengajians and religious sermons in areas frequented by ex-offenders, many of whom attended. Pengajians were even held in red light districts, and among the participants were prostitutes who were good at reading the Quran. Majelis Taklim At-Ta'ibin also held da'wa in prisons. *At-Ta'ibin* means "people who repent" or "those who go back to the righteous path" (Raharjo 1997 V, 55-65).

Medan invited the ustads K.H. Zainuddin and Kyai Noer to give sermons in the prisons and by observing them preach he learned how to be a da'i, and he was always given a chance to get on the podium before the sermon started. At first, Medan spoke for about ten minutes, and only told the audiences about his life story and conversion experience. Then Zainuddin suggested that he integrate a few points of Islamic doctrine into his sermon. As he honed his public speaking skills, he took preaching in prisons as his goal. Practicing in his bedroom, he would stand on his bed and give a speech. Although he tried hard, some ustads or *kyai* (an expert on Islam) still did not believe that he was capable of preaching in front of a large group of people (Raharjo 1997 VI, 67-75).

One day, a member of Majelis Taklim At-Ta'ibin told Medan that there was a business woman who wanted to fund the organization. Medan later met the woman and she took him to visit the Coordinating Minister for People's Welfare (Menkokesra, Menteri Kordinator Bidang Kesejahteraan Rakyat). They decided to establish a foundation known as YAI (Yayasan At-Ta'ibin Indonesia, At-Ta'ibin Indonesia Foundation), but for various reasons the plan had to be abandoned,[248] and the related disagreements made some people leave Majelis Taklim At-Ta'ibin. Despite a lack of funding, Medan kept preaching in prisons, and also began receiving large numbers of invitations to preach in other venues.[249] Finally, he began to be invited to give sermons at pengajians (Raharjo 1997 VI, 85-103).

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[247] In the Jakarta region, *majelis taklim*, "teaching association", is the common term for regular *pengajian* or religious study groups, especially those for women.

[248] Apparently, the programs of YAI generated some controversy. Some people agreed, while some others, including Kyai Zainuddin and Kyai Noer, told them to return to their original or fundamental ideas of establishing Majelis Taklim At-Ta'ibin. As a result of this controversy within YAI, the public notary refused to issue the certificate which legalized the establishment of YAI. Finally, YAI was closed down even before it was officially opened.

[249] When he received an invitation to preach outside Jakarta, he would also preach in the prisons of that region.

Medan preferred to preach outside the mosque because he thought that those who came to the mosque to hear his sermons were already pious Muslims. Instead of talking about such weighty theological ideas as *ibadah* (religious obligation), heaven, and hell, he usually only shared his experience of prison, and conversion. He says he is neither a proselytizer (juru *da'wa*) nor an ustad, but was training to be a proselytizer (Raharjo 1997 VI, 113). Many journalists interviewed him, and he was often invited to preach to politicians, universities students, businessmen, company owners, and even policemen. When listening to Anton's speech, audience members often cried, protested, or laughed (Raharjo 1997 VI, 130-143).

Two years after Majelis Taklim At-Ta'ibin was established, Medan felt that he had not been able to solve its financial problems, and went to visit Kyai Zainuddin and Kyai Noer to ask for help. Together they came up with a plan to make *gerobak*s (two-wheel vendor's carts), each with a label reading "*Pembinaan Mantan Narapidana dan Tunakarya*" (Majelis Taklim At-Ta'ibin Foundation for Former Prisoners and the Unemployed).

In 1997 Medan was included on a journalist's list of preachers who were unqualified to preach Islam. The report commented that because of his background as an ex-prisoner and violent criminal, he was not suitable to preach, especially on TV.[250]

In the Anti-Chinese riot of May 1998, Medan was suspected of being an instigator, and was investigated by the Jakarta police; he denied the accusation.[251] In Kafil Yamin's book (2004) *Revolusi Kaum Napi: Catatan Kesaksian Anton Medan*,[252] Medan claims he was offered five billion rupiah by a high-ranking member of the military to have his subordinates provoke the riot, but he refused. Knowing that trouble was brewing, he claims that he sent his subordinates to protect various Chinese neighborhoods, Chinese temples, churches, stores, and houses. On May 13 and 14 he ordered his subordinates to cause the mob to attack alternative targets.[253] After the riot, protesting students gathered around the parliament. Being informed that the army might slaughter the students, he decided to mobilize four thousand people to join the students, in order to strengthen their rampart. He also invited his religious teacher, K.H. Zainuddin, to go to the scene and express his support for the students.[254]

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[250] His friend who showed him the news was very sad and even cried. Medan also cried privately, but not in front of his friend. They finally agreed to call the news agency and talk to the journalist who wrote the article. They made an appointment with the journalist to meet in the mosque of Hotel Sahid Jakarta. Medan explained that he only preached to prisoners and prostitutes, so he never preached on TV. The journalist finally agreed to revise the article (Raharjo 1997, 170–184).

[251] See Asiaweek, 24 July 1998, collected in Edward Aspinall, Herb Feith, and Gerry van Klinken (1999, 164); Kees van Dijk (2002, 237); Loren Ryter (2001, 145 & 150); and John T. Sidel (2006, 122).

[252] This book looks similar to an abridged edition of his biography, but it is written by a different person and the story is extended to cover the events of May 1998.

[253] Liem Sioe Liong's house was the substitute target.

[254] Loren Ryter (1998, 71) received a similar account in an interview with Medan, but Ryter finds his statements dubious.

Medan is seen as an activist promoting the rights of prisoners and ex-cons, and has also criticized corruption and ignorance in the prison administration of Indonesia. In March 2001, Tommy Suharto, ex-President Suharto's son, was going to be jailed at Cipinang Prison. In order to accommodate Tommy Suharto, the prison administration renovated the jail and moved several prisoners to other places, provoking a serious riot. Medan went to the prison to mediate, and criticized the privileges enjoyed by elite prisoners.[255]

Medan is well-known for religious education and helping ex-offenders re-enter society. He later established an Islamic boarding school, and has also become a kyai. Still, the thoroughness of Anton's transformation from a former mafia boss, to preacher and kyai remains open to doubt, especially if we consider how he manages his business, the ex-offender center, and the Islamic boarding school.

The Majelis Taklim At-Ta'ibin Center is located in Cibinong, around 80 kilometers from Jakarta, and functions as a residential center which offers ex-prisoners occupational training, and helps re-integrate them into society and find jobs. Medan claims that he also arranges weekly *pengajian* for the program's participants.

The facilities at the center are very basic. The center is actually a big workshop, where ex-prisoner workers manually print banners and billboards for Anton's advertising business. There are seventy workers, working from 6:00 AM till sunset prayers. According to Anton, he does not want to offer an environment which is more comfortable than what they will have to face after they leave. Ex-cons usually stay in the center one year. If they successfully learn a skill, they can open their own shops after they leave. Two thousand ex-cons have "graduated" from the At-Taibin center. He refuses outside donations, preferring to preserve the center's financial independence.

Medan got started in the banner business in 1997, after a journalist asked him to help solve a problem. The journalist was using banners to promote a magazine, but somebody kept taking his banners away. Medan had his assistants hang the banners again, but soon the banners were taken away again. He investigated how it happened, and found that a group of street hoodlums (*preman*) named Pemuda Pancasila was behind it. Medan negotiated with its leaders, and they agreed not to take away the banners again. [256] In the process, he found out that advertising is a good business. When his banner business was at its height, there were two hundred ex-prisoners

[255] In a January 2010 interview, Medan again criticized corruption in prison administration (*Tempo*, 11 January, 2010). It seems that his experience of having done the same thing qualifies him to be a spokesperson for reform.

[256] Ryter (1998, 47) defines preman as extortionists and illegal debt-collectors, who might also work as parking attendants or nightclub security guards when not outright violating the law.

working at his Majelis Taklim At-Ta'ibin Center.[257] Inspired by the success of Majelis Taklim At-Ta'ibin , he is planning to build a more ambitious rehabilitation park, including factories, a meeting hall, and a football field. He explains that nobody freely chooses a life of crime, yet people are forced into it due to a lack of economic opportunities. He also believes that putting criminals into jail doesn't solve the problem, but only makes it worse.

When I visited his workshop in 2005, he had already established a number of other businesses, including a small construction company and a chicken farm. Medan has a three-stage training program for ex-offenders. In the first stage, each ex-prisoner performs such work as shaving wooden building materials, making cement, or transporting building materials. If someone does well in the first stage, he gets promoted to a lighter work unit, such as working on the poultry and catfish farms. If they again do well, they are assigned work in the banner-making workshop and may even eventually serve as a secretary. Medan summarizes his training program as follows (Yamin 2004, 163):

> Any ex-prisoner entering this program, even if he is a scholar, has to go through the same stages. Construction work is for the first level. Farm work is for the middle level; and banner-making is for the final level. Administrative jobs are for a higher level, and so on.

Medan has earned a lot of money from his businesses, some of which he used to build an Islamic boarding school.[258] Fully aware of his limited formal education, he takes the Prophet as his role model, reasoning that the Prophet did not receive much formal education, but still become a great religious leader.

Like Syafi'i Antonio, who will be discussed in the next chapter, he extended his business to Islamic education. Medan's pesantren, named At-Ta'ibin, was opened in the summer of 2005. The campus includes a Chinese-style mosque and his personal grave.[259] The pesantren is similar to other Indonesian pesantrens, but Medan includes occupational education in the curriculum, in which students have to learn tailoring (for female students) or woodworking (for male students). Their products are sold, and the revenues are used to pay their tuition and support the pesantren.

He explains that the policy of the Dutch colonial government was to limit pesantren to book learning. But a religious school that only teaches Islamic

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[257] See "Spanduk, Billboard, dan Anton Medan" at http://pantau.co.cc/berita-91-.html

[258] According to a report, Medan uses ex-offenders as a "cash machine." This report mentions that Medan spent Rp seven billion to build his Islamic education complex. See the online news article "Langkah Akrobatik Seorang Anton Medan" (23 August 2009, Pasa Minangkabau).

[259] When I visited his pesantren, I saw he built his mosque and grave at the same time. He says that the sight of a grave reminds his students that the life of a human being is very short.

knowledge cannot really help students to find a job, and when students leave the pesantren, they have nothing. Many Muslim students graduate from pesantren at the age of 17 to 20, and tend to get married about three years later. But without a viable vocation, what sort of contribution can they make to their family or nation? Thus it is important for Muslim students to learn vocational skills. Medan therefore emphasizes the importance of practical knowledge and having a career plan in mind before graduation.

In the past few years he has developed his philosophy of education, and his school motto is:

> Make yourself useful, establish your faith, straighten your mind, achieve your goals. Remember, death is not what you should worry about. It's what happens after death that you have to prepare for.[260]

Anton Medan has an interesting explanation of *wirausaha* (entrepreneur), separating it into two words, *wira* and *usaha*. The former means "hero" or "heroism," while the later means "talent." Furthermore, Medan regards entrepreneurship as a human being's talent gifted by God. But business success is determined by God, and accords with moral principles. Medan argues that the educational mission at At-Taibin is to teach students to recognize and develop the gifts God has given them. Thus, while the curriculum of other such schools centers on Islamic law, the Hadith, and Tafsir (exegesis of the Quran), the five main subjects at at-Taibin are worship, entrepreneurship, language, environmental science, and occupational training.[261] His curriculum includes Arabic, Chinese, English, and Japanese. For religious studies, his students only study the Quran and the Hadith. Though commonly used by other pesantren, the yellow book is not amongst the teaching materials.

When I asked for his opinion about Junus Jahja's idea of combining business and da'wa, he expressed some reservations, saying:

> It's better if business is business, and preaching Islam is preaching Islam. So, don't use religion as a mean for doing business; it's not allowed. In this case [Jahja's approach], if preaching Islam is mixed with doing business, it will endanger religion itself.

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[260] "*Agar dirimu bermanfaat, mantapkan imanmu, luruskan niatmu, tingkatkan prestasimu raih cita*-citamu. *Ingat, kematian bukanlah yang mesti kau risaukan. Melainkan jalan menuju mati itulah yang harus kau siapkan*." See: http://www.pt-kas.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=183:masjid-tan-tok-liong&catid=1:latest-news&Itemid=50.

[261] For his ideas on establishing the Islamic boarding school, I refer to: "Fondasi Nilai-Nilai Anton Medan" at http://muhshodiq.wordpress.com/2009/08/31/fondasi-nilai-nilai-anton-medan/; and "Metode Kreatif Ponpes At-Taibin" at http://berita.liputan6.com/sosbud/200511/112053/Metode.Kreatif.Ponpes.At.Taibin

Still, Medan agrees with Syafii Antonio's[262] approach, because "he teaches people to do business with an ethical base. I admire his approach, but I cannot imitate him, due to my lack of higher education." Since he has a double identity as a preacher and businessman, I asked him about his view of the relation between business and da'wa. He replied:

> If the economic condition of a preacher is not good, then there will be problems. If a preacher has his own business, he neither begs money nor depends on the government, and feels independent and active. He will also be more qualified to offer unbiased advice to people because he won't be constrained by the people who donate money to him… Most preachers don't have their own business, and only offer religious talks. Because of that, when their talk is finished, then everything is over; there is a beginning but no sense of completion. I don't want to be such a preacher… If the economy becomes stronger, then Islam can become more prosperous.

Medan's conversion experience and preaching Islam has actually linked two very interesting issues: conversion to Islam in prison (Hamm 2009; Spalek and el-Hassan 2007; Dannin 2002, 165-187), and how Islamic teachings apply to a program for ex-offender rehabilitation. Moreover, his experience as a mafia boss makes his thinking more secular than other kyai, and he knows how to hire ex-offenders for his business. He built his Islamic boarding school by using the profits from his training center for ex-cons, and has also applied his pragmatic ideas to his pesantren. However, his opinions on public affairs are sometimes controversial. He recently advocated that the Indonesian government should legalize casinos in a special region, reasoning that Indonesian gamblers still go to casinos in such countries as Malaysia and Singapore, with the result that the Indonesian government loses a lot of money it could make by taxing legalized gambling. He argues that Muslims should not be allowed to gamble or manage the casinos, but his idea easily reminds people of his sordid past. Muslim leaders strongly oppose his opinion on this issue.[263]

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[262] Syafii Antonio (1965-) is a highly influential Chinese-Indonesian Muslim and has been engaged in establishing the Islamic banking system since 1990s. He has published several books to promote Islamic banking and Islamic management. In particular, he established new business schools based on his special curriculum combined knowledge of Islamic law and modern business administration. I shall discuss his career and influence on Islamic economics in chapter 6.

[263] See *Gatra*, April 22, 2002, "Pulau Judi Pundi Judi, Mau Tapi Malu," and, more recently, "Anton Medan: Lokalisasi Judi Pakai Keppres dan Di Tempat Terpencil" at: http://us.detiknews.com/read/2010/07/03/070139/1392108/10/anton-medan-lokalisasi-judi-pakai-keppres-dan-di-tempat-terpencil

6.4.2 Koko Liem: Preaching Islam as Talk Show Performance

Koko Liem's Muslim name is Utsman Anshori and his Chinese name is Liem Hai Thai. Koko is a form of address in the Hokkien Chinese dialect, the literal meaning of which is "brother."[264] His nickname Koko Liem conveys a friendly image. He was born into a Chinese Buddhist family of Riau in 1979. His father is a Buddhist priest,[265] and his family worships popular Chinese deities. Although his parents were tolerant and allowed their children to socialize with the local indigenous community, they refused to allow their children to have anything to do with Islam. Liem, however, became very interested in Islam, but in his religion class at elementary school he was excluded from the Islam course because of his ethnic and religious background. However, after asking permission from his teacher, he was allowed to attend the class on Islam, and he gradually came to doubt his family's Buddhist faith. He liked to listen to the speeches given at the mosque, but was not allowed to enter because, as a non-Muslim, he was considered ritually unclean (*najis*). At that time, he took the prophet Ibrahim (Abraham), venerated in both Christianity and Islam, as his role model, saying that Ibrahim's father was not an adherent of God, but this fact did not hinder him from being a devout follower of God.

In 1994, at the age of fifteen, he formally converted to Islam, but he did not dare tell his parents about his conversion. One day, his father found him performing salat at home, became very angry, and eventually expelled Liem from home. According to Liem, when he left home, he had no personal belongs, and only 100,000 rupiah. Since his father had asked all their relatives not to help him, he had nowhere to go and walked ninety kilometers, until he was finally assisted by several religious teachers, who helped him enroll in an Islamic boarding school. During such difficult times, he confirmed his faith by reminding himself, "I can be poor. I can be an orphan. But I must have God."[266] Shortly thereafter Liem was adopted by a pious Muslim family.

In 1995, he entered a Muslim boarding school in Banten, Pondok Pesantren Daar el Qolam Gintung, and continued his studies there until 1999. In 1999, there was a test for a scholarship to study in Egypt. The pesantren nominated 15 people, including Liem, to take the test in central Jakarta. There were 135 nominees but only 15 scholarships. Liem got the 11th best score, but was unable to raise sufficient travel

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[264] Its meaning is close to *mas* in Javanese and *bang* in Sundanese, and is usually used as a polite form of address for a young man who is not a great deal older than the speaker.

[265] His father performs religious services at the family alter, rather than at a Buddhist temple. According Koko Liem's description, his family's religion seems to be not orthodox Buddhism, but rather the worship of various popular Chinese deities.

[266] Although he tried several times to become reconciled with his parents, it was in vain. He encouraged himself by seeing his situation as similar to the Prophet's *hjjra* from Mecca to Medina. Three months after his conversion, his aunt offered him three million of rupiah to convert to another religion.

funds.[267] Being forced to give up his plan to study in Egypt, his adoptive father in Riau suggested that he go to Medina, because it was cheaper. Indonesian applicants were required to memorize fifteen sections (*juz*) of the Quran.[268] To prepare for the exam, he joined a special training course in Malang, East Java for 1 year and eight months at Pondok Pesantren Tahfizhul Qur'an Raudhatual Muchsinin, where he focused on learning how to memorize and recite the Quran. He proudly says, "My friends were surprised to hear that a new Muslim convert could recite 30 sections of the Quran" (*Hidayah* October 2004, 43).[269] When he was ready, he suddenly lost his adoptive father's financial support, causing his plan to be canceled again. After finishing the study course at the pesantren in Malang in 2001, he began his undergraduate studies at Institut Perguruan Tinggi Ilmu Al-Quran in Jakarta, where he specialized in the Quran.[270] He completed his undergraduate degree in Islamic religious education in 2005, and did his graduate studies at the same school from 2005 to 2008, pursuing a master's degree in *tafsir* (exegesis).

As an ethnic Chinese preacher, he says that his indigenous Muslim audiences appreciate his background by saying:

> When a Chinese Muslim becomes a dai, the native Muslims admire him more. From my experience, when I deliver a da'wa, many of them will be motivated. They usually say, "Look at him! He was not born a Muslim, but his knowledge about Islam is deeper than any of us who have been Muslims since we were babies."

He is also a volunteer secretary for the PITI branch of south Jakarta. In his view, preaching Islam to the ethnic Chinese community is important, but not easy. He is proud of successfully converting several of his family members to Islam, but has so far failed to convert his father. He adds, "When I became a Muslim, I was hated by my relatives on my father's side. Therefore, they would never allow me to preach Islam to them." He concludes that one of the main reasons he was able to successfully convert his mother and sisters was that his behavior had become better after he converted to Islam.

In the past few years, Liem has become a celebrity Muslim preacher in Indonesia,

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[267] The scholarship only covered six years of study in Egypt. His adopted parents could only raise six million for him, but he needed eleven million.

[268] Juz is one of the thirty chapters of the Quran.

[269] He told me that in an interview published in *Hidayah* he explains why he decided to leave his family religion and convert to Islam. After reading the interview, his father was angered by his comments about Buddhism, and asked him to apologize to all Buddhists.

[270] During my interview with him in 2005, he told me that he was writing his undergraduate thesis.

conspicuous by his colorful Mandarin jacket and skullcap,[271] making him looks rather like the moderator of an Imlek TV show. Although such an outfit makes him appear less serious than other Muslim preachers, his strategy has been adopted by Anton Medan and a Chinese-Indonesian *nashid* band.[272] He follows the current of televangelism by using various types of modern media to preach Islam, adorning his personal da'wa webpage with his new Chinese costume and offering SMS (short message service) via mobile phone.[273] The combination of Chinese and Islamic cultural elements is his trademark, not only wearing traditional Chinese clothing, but also peppering his TV sermons with Chinese words and exclamations.[274]

In this TV sermon entitled "Imlek and Islam," he introduces Chinese New Year customs, promoting a tolerant sort of Islam, encouraging Muslims to accept the celebration of Imlek. In this TV sermon on Chinese New Year, I found that there were several interesting appropriations in his strategy of cultural communication and rhetoric. After telling a story to explain the origin of Chinese New Year, he suggests that if the origin of Imlek has no contradiction with Islamic law and does not contain *syirik* (polytheism), then it should be *halal* (allowed). This fable centers on a legendary giant beast called Nian ("year" in Mandarin). Nian was in the habit of coming out and eating people around the time of the Chinese New Year holiday. Since Nian was very terrible and threatening, people were sacred of it but had no idea about how to guard against it. Once, however, when Nian was passing near a bamboo grove, the bamboo caught fire and exploded, and the people found out that Nian was scared of loud noises and bright colors. After that, the people began to decorate their houses with red paper the color of fire and used firecrackers to produce a large amount of noise to scare away Nian. This explains why Chinese believe that red is a lucky color and why Chinese set off fireworks on Chinese New Year. Actually, the story about the origin of Chinese New Year used by Liem is considered a folk story, usually found in children's books. It may help Indonesian Muslims understand Imlek on the surface, but his approach may be too simplistic for two reasons. On the one hand, the story regarding the origin of Imlek is merely an interesting folktale.[275] On the other hand, he fails to mention that, for many Chinese, Imlek is also an important festival for

[271] In my interview with him in 2005, he had not yet changed his style, and was still wearing the garb of a typical Indonesian Muslim preacher.
[272] In chapter seven, I shall introduce this Chinese-Indonesian *nashid* band and discuss the cultural politics of representation of Islamic Chineseness.
[273] His website can be seen at www.kokoliem.com.
[274] I did not have a chance to attend his sermon in 2005, and have not met him again to observe him preach in Chinese attire. For a sample sermon, from TV *Titian Qolbu*, aired on TV One on February 14, 2010, see: http://www.archive.org/details/TitianQalbuust.adhyaksaDaultAhmadAlhabsyi
[275] In my opinion, this folktale is more of an entertaining introduction than a case to be judged by Islamic law.

worshiping ancestors and visiting Chinese temples.[276]

In addition to telling the story of Imlek's origin and explaining why the color red is associated with festivals and joyous events, he also makes a pun comparing the *angpao*[277] given amongst the ethnic Chinese community with the *pekbao*[278] given by Muslims. He explains that the *angpao* is similar to the *sedekah* (alms) of Muslims. The amount of money inside the envelop is not the point; instead, giving an *angpao* indicates that the giver intends to give his or her blessing to the recipient. Stressing that the giver's sincerity is much more important, he says:

> The children get the small ones (angpao). If they are old, they will be given more. Islam and the Prophet also taught this... The meaning is if we cannot give even a small amount of money to others, it is impossible for us to give a big amount. Do you give sedekah? How much do you usually give for sedekah? Five thousand? Five hundred? Is there anyone here who gives five hundred as sedekah? Only five hundred is ok, as long as we are sincere (ikhlas).

Liem points out several other Imlek customs which have counterparts in Islam. For instance, people who are in debt must clear off their debts before Imlek, and auspicious greetings are exchanged between family and friends during Imlek. Another social function behind the giving of *angpao*, he explains, is to visit relatives and friends, which is similar to the Muslim custom of *silaturahmi*.

In addition to explaining that the spirit of Imlek is compatible with Islamic teachings, he peppers his sermons with Chinese expressions, especially *haiya*, a Mandarin Chinese pet phase functioning as an exclamation at the beginning of a sentence. He also makes a joke by punning *haiya* with the Arabic phrase in the call to prayer, *hayy `ala-s-salah* ("come to prayer"). He also points out that before his conversion, he often said *haiya* but after his conversion, he says *haiyaalashola,*:

> …Chinese say "haiya" quite often, don't they, ladies? When I was not yet a Muslim, I also did the same thing. Apparently, Islam and Koko are the same. Muslims say it at least five times a day, ladies, in the mosque, "haiyaallashola"[279]

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[276] A better way is to explain Imlek as a way of marking the passage of time.

[277] *Angpao* (*hongbao* in Mandarin, literally "red envelop") means money given by adults to unmarried children, young people who have not yet entered the workforce, or elder parents who have retired without any income. Giving an *angpao* is a way of wishing someone good luck in the coming year.

[278] Amongst Chinese, however, *pekbaos* (literally "white envelop") are usually given to express one's condolences when there is a death in someone's family, and also helps the family cover the funeral expenses. Koko Liem's joke appears to be an equivoque emphasizing the similarity and difference between Indonesian and Chinese customs.

[279] *…Kalau orang Cina itu mangatakan 'haiya'. Bener tidak, bu?! Sedikit-sedikit 'haiya'. Koko dulu waktu belum Islam juga sama. Ternyata Islam sama koko juga sama. Islam satu hari minimal lima kali,*

How can a Muslim be tolerant? He takes an example from his conversion experience. When he converted to Islam he was ostracized by his Chinese family and the only thing he could do to win their trust again was to be patient and behave well. His main goal is to encourage his Muslim audience to understand Imlek by applying the multicultural and tolerant spirit of Islam, since doing so will help reduce ethnic tension and violence.[280]

On the other hand, he is not hesitant to joke about his own ethnicity, mocking his own appearance while warning his audience of the evil of racial discrimination.[281] He says:

> ...usually Chinese people have slanted eyes, just like Koko Liem. Although my eyes are slanted, I have a verse. The sparrow exists on all islands. Although Koko Liem's eyes are slanted, he looks like Andy Lau.[282]

6.4.3 Irena Handono: "Hijra" from Her Catholic-Chinese Origins

Irena Handono (b.1954) was born in a rich and pious Chinese Catholic family, the only daughter among five siblings. She was baptized as a baby, and received a good religious education with a private tutor. Active in the church as a youth, she soon decided to become a nun, even though she knew that life in a convent is austere. Her father is a famous entrepreneur in Surabaya, one of the main benefactors of the largest church in Indonesia. An excellent student, after she graduated from high school, she felt the call to enter the convent. When her parents heard about her plan, they felt surprised. However, since they were pious Catholics, they finally agreed. Meanwhile, her siblings felt proud of her decision.

While studying at a Catholic seminary, Handono was one of the top students, and

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bu, di masjid 'haiyaallashola' tu.

[280] Liem tells a joke in one of his TV sermons. An American, a Japanese, and an Indonesian take a ferry to Batam. On the journey, the three passengers compete to show who is the least attached to his belongings, a kind of rivalry potlatch. The American throws away his expensive Dunhill cigarette, and the Japanese discards his *samurai* armor. The Indonesian passenger, however, throws away a Chinese, because there are too many Chinese in Indonesia.

[281] In one sermon he even jokes that ethnic Chinese are not good at pronouncing a retroflex consonant. For instance, for some Chinese-Indonesians, it is difficult to differentiate "l" and "r."

[282] The original text in his speech is: "Kalau orang cina kan biasanya matanya sipit-sipit, kan seperti Koko Liem begini, mbak. Tapi walaupun sipit, bu, Koko Liem punya syair, bu. Burung pipit di pulau-pulau. Biar Koko Liem sipit katanya mirip Andy Lau. Haiya." The verse is "Burung pipit di pulau-pulau"; it means that although the sparrow is a little bird, it exists everywhere, similar to the Chinese saying "The sparrow may be small, but it has all the vital organs." He mocks his slanted eyes, but his face is similar to the famous Hong Kong movie star Andy Lau.

was required to take a double major, so in addition to Christian theology, she also majored in Islam in the Faculty of Comparative Religious Studies. Her teacher criticized Islam, but she was struck by its good points. With permission from her teachers, she began studying Islam and reading the Quran and the Hadith. She was touched by the essence of God revealed in the Sura Al-Ikhlas (Ch. 112 Oneness).[283] She then debated the doctrine of the Trinity with her teacher for a few days, shocking her classmates and the teacher. Feeling disillusioned with Catholic education, she eventually decided to quit the seminary. Her parents felt confused and sad about her radical change. Afterwards, she continued her studies in Atmajaya University and married a Catholic. At that time, she felt that if she married a Catholic, her problems relating to religious faith would be solved, but she often had quarrels with her husband when they discussed Islam. She began reading Islamic books and studied Islam with an *ustadz*. Finally, she converted to Islam in 1983, when she was 23 years old. After her conversion, she divorced her husband, who was unwilling to become a Muslim, even though they had three children. Her original family was unhappy about her conversion, but she maintained contact with her mother for six years after her conversion. Then her mother passed away, and since then she has not had any contract with her father or siblings.[284]

Handono's Islamic education is not as extensive as the education she received in the Catholic seminary. She says that due to her previous experience of being a Catholic and a seminary student, she is aware of the Catholic Church's intention to Christianize Indonesia (2005). In her books and sermons, she uses her knowledge of Christian history and theology to criticize popular Christian culture and defend Islam.

Handono often criticizes Christian preachers for purporting that Christianity and Islam share common traditions, while ignoring the fundamental theological differences between the two religions. The intention is to make Indonesian Muslims feel less guilty about converting to Christianity. In contrast to Christianity's strong missionary orientation, Islam tends to take a more moderate attitude towards missionary work, resulting in a gradual process of Christianization. Since most Muslims do not consider it to be a serious problem, Handono uses the story of slowly boiling frog as a metaphor to warn Indonesian Muslims about the forces trying to weaken their faith. She coauthored a book (2003) with her new husband, basically a reply to American fundamentalist preacher Robert Morey's book *Islamic Invasion: Confronting the World's Fastest Growing Religion* (1992), a typical book of Christian

[283] She explains that when she started reading the Quran, she did not know how to read it. Neither did she know that the Quran was not complied in chronological order. Unaware that the Quran is read from right to left, she began by reading the Oneness chapter, the last chapter of the Quran.

[284] Her conversion story is recounted in an interview published in *Hidayah* magazine (Hidayah, November 2002).

polemics against Islam, in which he belittles Islam as a fake religion (Varisco 2007). Handono criticizes Christian missionaries for employing various dubious approaches to convert Muslims, including religious healing, social welfare, visiting the sick in hospitals, and education.[285] She believes that Christian missionaries employ deceptive tricks which exploit poor Muslims. She compares Indonesian Muslims to hapless chickens tempted by the church's bait.[286]

Handono (2005) also warns Muslims not to be influenced by various elements of Christian popular culture. Pointing out the pagan origins of Christmas and Valentine's Day, she laments that most Indonesian Muslims are more familiar with these elements of Western popular culture than they are with the history of Islam.

Another problem of Indonesian Muslims, in her view, is that their knowledge of history is insufficient for wisely reflecting on the contemporary crisis faced by them. In her latest book (2008), *Menyingkap Fitnah & Teror* (Exposing Subversion and Terrorism), she takes a historical approach to the prejudiced attitudes about Islam in the West. She first discusses various atrocities committed by Christians. In the second part, she recalls the Prophet's experience of struggle during the Mecca and Medina periods. Finally, in the contemporary part, she highlights the Jewish influence upon the Christian and Islamic worlds, global power, and the invasion of Muslim nations by the United States.

In our interview, I asked her about the influence of her Chinese background, and she quoted the teaching in the Quran that no ethnic differences exist in Islam. In another interview conducted in a radio program, she was asked why she does not focus on preaching Islam to Chinese-Indonesians. She replied that she thinks that preaching Islam only to ethnic Chinese is rather parochial, but if somebody were willing to sponsor such a project, she would be willing to help. Handono does not hide the fact that she was born in a rich Catholic Chinese family, and, to my limited knowledge, she rarely criticizes ethnic Chinese. However, if we examine Handono's ideas in the context of anti-Christian Muslim polemics, her messages tend towards anti-Semitism and anti-Christianity. Moreover, anti-Chinese discourse in Indonesia has been associated with anti-Semitism and constitutes part of a conspiracy theory involving Zionists and Christians (Burhanuddin 2007; Siegel, 2000; van Bruinessen 1993). It was claimed in the radical Muslim magazine *Sabili* that "some combination of Christians, Jews and Chinese had secretly added pork to popular food products"

[285] In a VCD sermon entitled "Penyesatan di Balik Penyembuhan dalam Nama Yesus," she is invited to join a workshop on the influence Christian faith healing has on Muslims. They conclude that Christian healing is merely a form of psychological comfort used to confuse Muslims and make them become more dependent on the healing and eventually leave their Islamic faith. However, the discussion completely ignores the fact that Islamic healing is getting more popular in Indonesia, and is widely covered by the mass media.

[286] I summarize her ideas from her sermons in VCDs entitled "Strategi Pemurtadan Ummat" and "Kebangkitan Ummat".

(Woodward 2010, 323). In an interview with *Sabili*, Handono (2003) discussed a conspiracy of the Christian church to elect a Christian President in 2004.

As a female preacher and a new convert of Catholic ethnic Chinese origin, Handono's anti-Christian polemics undoubtedly have caused anger and resentment. In 2009, a rumor was spread that Handono wore a nun's habit while in Singapore, leading Handono to defend her innocence according to Islamic law.[287]

Although she lacks a solid Islamic religious education, she is still perceived to be a legitimate preacher. Handono's anti-Christian polemics, her critique of the Trinity, and her ideas about a Zionist -Christian conspiracy are not unique. However, compared with other anti-Christian discourses in Indonesia, her remarks on the cultural pollution coming from Christian popular culture demonstrate the concern some Indonesians have about neo-colonialism. I think that the increasing success of Christian missionaries in Indonesia may partially explain the reasons for her popularity.

However her rhetorical style borders on alarmism, and is therefore unable to facilitate reasoned dialogue. As Martin van Bruinessen (1993) has observed on the appeal of conspiracy theories:

> Conspiracy theories have a strong appeal because they constitute explanations that are easily understood and at once point out a scapegoat. A conspiracy theory attributes responsibility for anything that is unwelcome to other people. Adherents of the theory do not have to reveal their own deficiencies, weaknesses, and mistakes, nor do they need to criticize themselves, because all things are attributed to the evil deeds of their opponents. Such theories prevent people from investigating the real causes of events, and thereby make it difficult or even impossible to take rational steps towards changing unwanted situations.

[287] According to Diki Candra, he got a message from the Muslim organization Arimathea that an imam named Safari claimed that he saw Irena Handono dressed like a nun wearing a crucifix and walking away from a church, without indicating the time and place. Candra then organized a private investigation. When Handono was preaching in Bali in January, 2009, a participant asked her about this rumor. Handono sued Candra for slander. Later, Forum Ulama Umat Indonesia (FUUI) organized a *mubahalah*, inviting Diki Candra, Irena Handono, and Safari. This *mubahalah* was moderated by the famous ustad Athian Ali at Al-Fajri Mosque, Cijagra, Bandung, and several hundred people attended the event. However, Candra and Safari were unable to present corroborating evidence. According Handono, Safari is not really an imam, and is a member of Islam Liberal under Nahdlatul Ulama.

6.5 Expressing Ethno-Religious Selves via Da'wa in Confession, Chineseness, and Political Intervention

In C. W. Watson's discussion of Abdullah Gymnastiar, he inquires how he became a celebrity preacher without any institutional or inherited Islamic education (Watson 2005, 784):

> Gym is not a traditional kyai insofar as he does not possess the usual legitimating genealogical antecedents, something which he very well recognizes. He does not come from a family of religious scholars, something which has up till now been considered a necessary condition for a reputation as a scholar, nor has he been educated for any length of time within a traditional pesantren. Gym does not emerge from the same tradition of religious scholarship as his predecessors, nor does he possess the knowledge of Arabic and the familiarity with classic scholastic texts which are otherwise the essential attributes of the kyai. Very conscious of this difference, Gym has astutely developed two different strategies to deal with his perceived deficiency.

Watson identifies Gym's first strategy as claiming to be gifted with an innate wisdom obtained from God; and his second strategy is to claim that his understanding of Islam comes from his rich life experience "rather than through religious piety or political action" (Watson 2005, 784). How, then, do Chinese-Indonesian preachers who have not received a complete Islamic religious education, legitimate themselves and become celebrity preachers? They adopt three strategies. First, as in the cases of Anton Medan and Koko Liem, they appropriate their Chineseness to fashion a marketable image of themselves. This distinguishes them from other preachers and shows that a Chinese muallaf can be a qualified preacher.

Second, as in the cases of Anton Medan and Irena Handono, they make use of socio-political issues to fashion themselves as spokespersons for *umma*. Anton Medan expresses concern about corruption in the prison administration, the human rights of prisoners, and ex-offender's welfare. Handono presents herself as a defender of Islam against Christian proselytizing. Even the mild-mannered Koko Liem expresses concern about racial discrimination and anti-Chinese violence.

Third, they recount their conversion experience, a strategy employed by all three. During the post-Suharto era, ethnic Chinese are more willing to openly talk about their life stories. Among these public reminiscences, I have found two contrasting types. One type consists of the life narratives of ethnic Chinese who studied in Chinese schools before they were closed by the Suharto government in the 1960s and

who have recently begun to organize alumni parties at which they openly share their memories of the "golden age" of studying Mandarin. They also share their life stories in Chinese-language newspapers (Sai 2010, 174–177). The other type consists of the life narratives of Chinese-Indonesian Muslims who openly talk about their conversion experiences; their life stories are also circulated on the Internet and published in Islamic magazines and books. Their conversion stories show how they dissociate from their Chinese origins. Their conversion narratives typically include a number of ritual elements, such as Arnold Van Gennep's "rite of passage." During the conversion process, the new converts first enter the phase of "separation." Since their conversion to Islam is easily seen as a betrayal of their Chinese identity and their previous religious beliefs, they often have to leave their Chinese families and old religious communities. They then enter the second phase of "marginalization," in which they face such difficulties as isolation, opposition, and seduction. Finally, they reach the third phase of "aggregation"; with their new religious identity, they adjust themselves to a new social status which helps confirm their Islamic faith.

Actually, even after the end of the New Order period it is still not very common for ethnic Chinese to fearlessly confess their private religious experience in public. How, then, can we explain why so many public confessions of Chinese-Indonesian Muslims are presented in the mass media?

Public conversion narratives can be seen as a form of public confession, by which Chinese-Indonesian preachers confess their former blindness and misdeeds. By describing how their struggle to break free from their previous religions and resist social isolation and material seduction, their ethno-religious selves are exposed in the religious landscape where various modes of piety exist and multiple Muslim subjectivities emerge. These elements of public confession in the conversion narratives of Chinese-Indonesian Muslim preachers resonate with Michael Foucault's description of confession (1998, 62):

> …a ritual of discourse where the subject who speaks corresponds with the subject of the statement; it is also a ritual which unfolds in a relation of power, since one doesn't confess without the presence, at least the virtual presence, of a particular who is not simply an interlocutor but the agency that requires the confession, imposes it, weighs it, and intervenes to judge, punish, pardon, console, reconcile… a ritual where truth is authenticated by the obstacles and resistance that it has had to lift in order to be formulated…a ritual where articulation alone, independently of its external consequences, produces, in the person who articulates it, intrinsic modifications: it makes him innocent, it redeems him, purifies him, promises him salvation.

The public conversion narratives of Chinese-Indonesian Muslims typically emphasize the acquisition of self-knowledge, a sort of technology of self-care that intertwines with self-domination and self-creation. For instance, Jahja's conversion entailed a complete elimination of his Chinese ethnicity. Zygmunt Bauman (1997, 47) calls this kind of assimilation "annihilating the strangers by devouring them and then metabolically transforming them into a tissue indistinguishable from one's own." In addition, conversion to Islam allows "individuals to effect, by their own means, a certain number of operations on their own bodies, on their own souls, on their own thoughts, on their own conducts, and this in a manner so as to transform themselves, modify themselves, and to attain a certain state of perfection, of happiness, of purity" (Foucault 1993, 2003). After conversion, these three preachers formulated their new ethno-religious selves to speak for the umma. Anton Medan, Koko Liem, and Irena Handono all emphasize that they had to overcome huge obstacles related to their conversions. Moreover, although they may not have received a formal Islamic education, they all studied hard and eventually became qualified preachers accepted by indigenous Muslims.

In the past few years, there has emerged a new mode of piety in public Islam. Urban middle-class Muslims increasingly regard Islam as a spiritual practice, a type of self-cultivation largely compatible with modern self-help psychology. This transformation has made Islamic ritual (such as Sufi ritual) and Islamic morality into pragmatic tools for dealing with problems in secular life. New Islamic spiritual messages are preached by celebrity preachers through TV da'wa. This new tendency has resulted in religious markets in which Islamic messages and Islamic life style are promoted as religious commodities, produced, circulated, and consumed to satisfy the need of Muslims for a new form of religious piety. In the process, Indonesian Islam is being refashioned into a kind of "expressing Islam" (Fealy and White 2008) in which Islamic spiritual and moral teachings have become commodities that require new modes of religious piety (Howell 2008). The increasing public visibility of Islamic fashion has engendered an important aspect of public Islam (Hassan 2009) that can facilitate Muslim women's political subjectivity, contributing to civil engagement according to Islamic morality (Rinaldo, 2008; 2010).

However, in contextualizing the public confessions and da'wa of Chinese-Indonesian preachers as an expressive form of piety in the current religious landscape during the post-Suharto period, I have found that there are two questions that cannot be well covered by the problematic of "expressing/public Islam."

The approach of "expressing Islam and public piety" has two epistemological preferences. First, it focuses on a public aspect of moderate Muslim lives that shows that religious piety is accommodated to liberal and secular social changes and is

transformed as a commercial-oriented religious life style and expressed as an Islamic-aesthetic practice of middle-class Muslims. Nevertheless, it has paid less concern to how Muslims' selves are transformed by a pragmatic application of Islamic moral teachings that guide Muslims to conduct self-cultivation to formulate modern Muslim subjects. Public confession by Chinese-Indonesian preachers has highlighted why expressing a pious ethno-religious self is so fundamental for a Chinese muallaf. Instead of only identifying a Muslim's public piety, I argue that we can also see how a Muslim's self is formulated and sustained by a new application of Islamic faith. Second, the approach of expressing/public Islam has unintentionally overlooked the politics of commercialized and pragmaticized patterns of piety, and given little consideration to how the lay Muslim community presents their non-mainstream concerns about Islamic piety. Anton Medan's in-between status frequently associates him with ex-offenders and prisoners who are at the margins of the Muslim community. Handono's fundamentalist polemics are not supposed to be a marketable da'wa strategy, but are welcomed by a lay or anti-Christian Muslim audience, who do not necessarily belong to urban middle- and upper-class Muslim circles. These lay Muslims may support marginal and conservative religious stands, instead of being attracted to marketing Islam.

In Oliver Roy's (2004) observation of Muslim minorities living in Western society, where neither the umma nor Islamic traditions can be easily sustained, following religious norms offered by religious authority and Islamic law is difficult without communal support. The Muslim community has developed a tendency he identifies as "individualization of religion." A better way to follow Islamic teaching is to transform it from religious norms to practicable values beyond marking any particular ethnic origin. A self objectification frequently asks what a good Muslim is, and how Islam can provide the best solutions to various problems. Although the situation in Indonesian Muslim society is very different from that of Muslim minorities in the West, we can see some similarities. Roy describes how the individualization of religion led to a Muslim "triumph of religious self" or "enunciation of self," showing that "Islamic revivalism goes hand in hand with a modern trend: the culture of self… a return to Islam also equated with a sort of worldly salvation" (2004, 193), and "salvation is as much a matter of worldly things as it is a heavenly one" (2004, 191). To follow the norms of Islamic law is much less attractive than to achieve true faith in Islam; as he says: "With tears instead of fear, we are far from the legalist approach of the neo-fundamentalists. Spiritualization accompanies the individualization" (ibid.).

What kind of knowledge and skills are used to formulate and express a Muslim's modern religious self? Foucault's concept of technique/technology of self has shed

light on how Islamic teachings are applied as a technique of self which

> permit individuals to effect, by their own means, a certain number of operations on their own bodies, on their own souls, on their own thoughts, on their own conducts, and this in a manner so as to transform themselves, modify themselves, and to attain a certain state of perfection, of happiness, of purity, of supernatural power.

If we compare the techniques listed in his genealogical examinations of Western civilization, such as control of sexual conduct, confession, dietetics, and self-examination, to similar practices applied according to the new patterns of Islamic piety, we find that collective Sufi ritual performance, Muslim work ethics, self-sustaining mass psychology, a life philosophy of inner spiritual beauty, and Islamic fashion constitute a series of technologies for fashioning the Muslim self. I therefore believe that examining the new application of Islamic morality can help with "analyzing the constitution of the subject's mode of being" (Foucault 2010, 4) and exploring "how and through what concrete forms of the relation to self the individual was called upon to constitute him or herself as the moral subject of his or her" religious conduct. It can help to discuss issues of implementing Islamic piety, "from the question of the subject to the analysis of form of subjectivation, and to the analysis of these forms of subjectivation through the techniques/technologies of the relation to self" (Foucault 2010, 5).

In my second criticism to the approach of "expressing Islam" and "public Islam," I argue that this approach tends to praise the birth of a new and moderate Muslim subject, one which would contribute to an emergence of public Islam and show a new mode of Islamic piety which is compatible with a modernity that caters to the liberality and discipline of capitalism. Roy has pointed out that (2004, 149):

> …the individualization of religion can lead to various forms of religiosity, from liberal Islam to neofundamentalism, passing through emotional pietism, moral conservatism, or humanistic and social propagandism. Individualization of faith does not necessarily lead to a more secular and liberal way of life. Modernity does not automatically lead to liberalism and democracy, and secularization could accompany a reconstruction of closed religious identities, a process we call communitarisation… individualization may lead either to liberal forms of Islam or to neofundmentalism.

Even in individualization of religion, Islamic meaning and symbols have become commodities sold as in a religious market. He reminds us not to forget that "the

manipulation of Islamic symbols and legitimacy—also has a political dimension: who will speak for Muslims? The quest for social position is important because it provides sociological legitimization with all the attendant perks (not necessarily in terms of wealth)" (2004, 174). On the other hand, Roy asserts, "conformist and conservative values are reappropriated by pious modern middle-class urbanites, who stress family values over permissiveness" (2004, 196).

Looking through the lens of building and expressing a modern Muslim's pious self, we need to critically reflect on the politics of piety that equally treats various modes of pious Islamic expression and practice, from marketing Islam, to jihadist hardliners. By doing so, we can better understand why Chinese-Indonesian preachers are able to speak for marginalized ex-offender Muslims and anti-Christian fundamentalists.

6.6 Concluding Remarks

In this chapter, I discussed the conversion experiences and da'wa strategies of five Chinese Muslim preachers. The first group of preachers consists of Jahja and Tanudjaja, who have completely different attitudes towards Chineseness, but share a common concern for the social exclusion faced by the Chinese minority, as well as the cultural obstacles to accepting Islam. Their enthusiasm for preaching Islam to ethnic Chinese and searching for a better approach to da'wa seem to be in strong contrast to PITI, in spite of its official agenda claiming to preach Islam to Chinese.

The second group of Chinese-Indonesian preachers does not make converting ethnic Chinese to Islam a priority. These preachers have overcome the obstacles created by their ethnic origins and lack of formal religious education to legitimate themselves as celebrity preachers. Medan, Liem, and Handono have each made a niche for themselves by presenting their past experience in the form of a public confession and also by addressing various religo-political issues of importance to the Muslim community. The transformation from new convert to Muslim preacher demonstrates their ambition to place themselves squarely within the Indonesian umma and share their diverse experience with other people.

The efforts of Chinese-Indonesian preachers to preach Islam show an alternative dimension of da'wa in Indonesia, and their da'wa strategies appear to be an extraordinary accommodation. Jahja's and Medan's interpretations of Islamic economic ethics will be further explored in the next chapter.

In addition to the five preachers I discuss in this chapter, there are several other

Chinese-Indonesian Muslim preachers who also have received little formal Islamic education, and who preach Islam to the Muslim grassroots, but without attracting much public attention. Although they are also new converts, they don't focus on such issues as Chineseness, business, and anti-Christian polemics. In my interviews with them, I found that most of them are doing business or have professional occupations. Some of them are affiliated with PITI or the Lautze Mosque. They understand the problems Chinese-Indonesians have when converting to Islam, but they take a more neutral position, and do not see a need for a special da'wa project targeting ethnic Chinese. They spend more time preaching, serving the indigenous community, and providing religious guidance. One of the outstanding characteristics of the Chinese-Indonesian Muslims preaching Islam is that they don't passively wait for guidance, but actively propagate their understanding of Islam. Although their approaches to da'wa are sometimes controversial, they each are recognized preachers in the Indonesian umma.

Chapter 7

The Conversion of Capital

7.1 Introduction

The first time I visited the Lautze Mosque, Junus Jahja presented me with a photo that I find very significant. In the photo (see Figure 7.1), Karim Oei, the founder of PITI sits with Sukarno and Hamka, three important figures in the modern history of Indonesia, a businessman, a politician, and an ulama (religious scholar), respectively. The photo demonstrates the triangular relationship by which ethnic-Chinese businessmen build relationships with politicians (politics) and ulamas (religion). This relationship is the focus of this chapter.

In my interview with PITI, I soon found an interesting fact: the organization's key leadership consists almost entirely of ethnic-Chinese Muslim businessmen. This impression significantly contrasts to other Indonesian Muslim organizations, such as NU, Muhammadiyah, and Persatuan Islam, in all of which academics and ulama usually occupy the organization's key leadership positions. As a matter of fact, PITI is not a religious association whose membership is only open to businessmen. This raises two interesting questions: How and why do businessmen play such a significant role in PITI? And, seeing that in the spread of Islam in the Malay world Muslim merchants played a role as important as that of Sufi masters and ulama, why do Muslim businessmen seem to have little involvement in the development of Islam in contemporary Indonesia? In the previous chapter I described five Chinese-Indonesian Muslim preachers and their respective da'was; in this chapter I will go on to explore

how and why Chinese-Indonesian businessmen become Muslims, how they apply their economic power and business experiences to Muslim affairs and organizations, and how they participate in cultural organizations and political activities.

Figure 7.1

Buya Hamka, Karim Oei, and Sukarno in Bengkulu, Sumatra, Indonesia (1938).

Chinese-Indonesian businessmen are stereotyped both racially and ethically. They may be wealthy, but it is often assumed that they gained their wealth by illegal or immoral means, such as exploiting poor workers or bribing corrupt officials. This stigma naturally assumes that Chinese businessmen are "economic animals," who would only convert to Islam for practical reasons, and have no genuine interest in Islam. Nevertheless, the economic and religious mobility of Chinese-Muslim businessmen has shown that their conversion has raised their social and religious status and encouraged them to participate in Muslim business, charitable, political, and religious affairs, all of which have traditionally been closed to non-Muslims. This two-way interchange between the economic and religious spheres has facilitated their social mobility beyond the typical social trajectory of ethnic Chinese, in which they are seen as a minority only able to achieve success in commercial activities. As such, their conversion to Islam can be seen as a "two-way social kinetics" similar to Pierre

Bourdieu's "conversion of capital," and this is the approach I will use to examine how Chinese-Indonesian Muslim businessmen transcend the stigmas of social class and race.

First, I shall introduce Junus Jahja's da'wa strategy of "preaching Islam by doing business and vice versa." In the previous chapter I emphasized how his da'wa strategy is mainly concerned with ethnic assimilation. Yet, among the Chinese-Muslim circle in Indonesia, he was the first person to highlight the importance of Chinese businessmen in his da'wa movement and to elaborate how and why businessmen can contribute to his assimilative movement.

Second, by comparing Muslim businessmen in India, Malaysia, and Turkey, I introduce the roles Muslim businessmen play in contemporary Muslim society, and explore some of the reasons for the making and unmaking of the Muslim business class in Indonesia. Next, I critically review some of the deficiencies of the culturalist perspectives and Weberian thesis when applied to exploring Muslim businessmen's religious virtues and economic practices. This provides a framework for the theoretical approach I use for investigating the conversion experience of ethnic-Chinese Muslim businessmen, their religious activities, and their economic practices. I then explore how ethnic-Chinese Muslim businessmen articulate Islamic values and work ethics, how their conversion encouraged them to become active in non-economic spheres, and how they manage their religious organizations in a way which is similar to the way they manage their businesses.

In the third section I discuss three Chinese-Indonesian Muslim figures—Abdul Karim Oei, Masagung, and Syafii Antonio—and give an overview of the leadership of PITI. By comparing their business careers, conversions, and other activities, I present four different but related approaches to using Islamic faith and Muslim identity to expand their influence in various spheres. Finally, I argue that the conversion of these businessmen and their involvement in Muslim affairs increases their ability to shuttle between the economic sphere and the Muslim public sphere.

7.2 Junus Jahja's "Da'wa through Doing Business"

The Chinese-Indonesian Muslim activist Junus Jahja, long part of the financial circles of Jakarta, preaches Islam by doing business and vice versa. He emphasizes that Islam is a religion which encourages Muslims to pursue a prosperous life in this world, rather than taking a dogmatic anti-capitalist stance which only gives importance to spiritual rewards in the afterworld. On the other hand, in light of the huge obstacle to

social integration presented by the large economic gap between indigenous Indonesians and ethnic Chinese, Jahja encourages non-Muslim, ethnic-Chinese businessmen to convert and get involved in da'wa. Although his plan is idealist and has failed in various ways, he at least has foreseen how the economic power of businessmen can contribute to Muslim organizations and da'wa.

Most of those opposed to Jahja's da'wa believe that the ethnic tensions between ethnic Chinese and indigenous Indonesians is based on the economic gap rather than on religion. In fact, Jahja cannot easily ignore this large economic gap, and his long experience working in several banks has led him to conclude that his da'wa should make the best use of the financial and commercial power of Chinese-Indonesians.

The Yayasan Ukhuwah Islamiyah (Islamic Brotherhood Foundation) established by Jahja is not only a Muslim da'wa organization. In 1983, he recruited many Indonesian businessmen and organized a business club named "The Islamic Brotherhood Business Network" (Kontak Bisnis Ukhuwah Islamiyah). The first preparatory meeting was held at a five-star hotel, and participants included pribumi Muslims and ethnic-Chinese Muslims who "are successful in business and who recently converted to Islam" (Jahja 1985, 32). The Network's purpose is to promote commerce and improve the economic power of the Muslim community, and its board includes many important Chinese-Indonesian Muslim businessmen (Jahja 1985, 31-35; 1999, 39-46). Jahja explains that the organization provides the opportunity for indigenous Muslims to learn commercial skills from Chinese-Indonesian businessmen, and helps Chinese-Indonesian businessmen to expand their social contacts with indigenous Muslims and to learn more about Islam. He believes that ethnic Chinese have to make contact with the Muslim community at the grassroots level.

Why did Jahja try to organize a business club in the form of a Muslim da'wa organization? He reasons that some Chinese-Indonesian businessmen will convert to Islam, and he knows that the support of Muslim businessmen is important to the development of his da'wa movement. Businessmen not born as Muslims may not be as familiar with Islamic traditions as indigenous Indonesian Muslims are, but their extensive business experience can make a major contribution to his da'wa movement. So, in addition to exchanging business experience and information, the organization also provides an opportunity to attract non-Muslim businessmen to Islam and to reduce the social distance between pribumi and non-pribumi.

During the 1990s Jahja was active in promoting the idea that Islamic ethics are compatible with capitalist values, as a way of improving the economic lives of Muslims. He saw his promotion of ethnic assimilation and economic development based on Islamic values as killing two birds with one stone. For instance, he co-organized a series of meetings and lectures with Muhammadiyah in 1990, arguing

that Muhammadiyah has been successful in da'wa and social welfare, but is much less concerned with economic issues. He suggests that Muhammadiyah should become more concerned about economic issues, "because increased involvement in the business world will have an immediate impact on the welfare of the community. With millions of followers, Muhammadiyah promotes religious values, functions as a glue, and will bring fresh air to the business world" (Jahja 1990, 4). In this lecture series, Jahja promoted his idea that ethnic Chinese should go to the Muslim grass-roots, but he did not clearly mention anything about the purpose of converting non-Muslim Chinese businessmen, but just emphasized that ethnic Chinese will get more opportunities to interact with the indigenous Muslim community. The idea is that indigenous Muslims would benefit from the assistance of Chinese businessmen, and would be willing to cooperate with them without caring about whether they are Muslims or not. Jahja combines his assimilationist agenda with the promotion of Islamic economic ethics, and links assimilation with Muhammadiyah's new concern for Islamic economics.[288]

After the establishment of the "Business Network," he began to further explain his ideas. In his view, Islam is a this-worldly religion as well as a religion for the hereafter. Muslims should pay more attention to economic issues, for without economic power and material prosperity Muslims cannot live balanced lives. Aware that economic and commercial activities are vital to the development of the Muslim community, Jahja asserts that Muslims should adopt the "Calvinist spirit" which spurred the great economic development of Western Europe and the United States.[289] He was surprised to find that mosques have played a key role in doing business in Islamic nations. Accordingly, he asserts that Muslims should make the best use of the mosque—big or small, urban or rural—to stimulate economic growth, and advocates holding economic discussions in mosques.[290]

Jahja's plan has been discontinued, partially because of a lack of financial support from other Chinese. In fact, his plan sounds rather impractical, for how can the long-term ethnic and economic gaps be overcome only by relying on meetings and the exchange of business and religious experience? However, Jahja does recognize the capability of businessmen to develop Chinese-Muslim organizations and support his da'wa movement. Jahja's cooperation in 1990 with Muhammadiyah in promoting the application of Islamic ethics to economic development and Muslim work ethics has shown that he undoubtedly stands at the vanguard of the Chinese-Muslim community.

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[288] Jahja is a member of Muhammadiyah. In 1990 he published this series of lectures and other related news reports as a pamphlet titled *Terobosan Ekonomi Muhammadiyah.*

[289] In an interview in 2005, I asked him whether this view is an application of Max Weber's idea, and he replied: "Since I studied in the Netherlands I naturally know something about the idea."

[290] In the 1990s the Lautze Mosque organized several talks on business and management.

Jahja's work gives rise to the following questions: Why is there a tendency to underestimate the role of Muslim businessmen in contemporary Indonesia? And, can Muslim businessmen contribute to da'wa, the development of Muslim organizations, and other cultural and religious activities?

7.3 Islamic Ethics, Economic Practice, and Muslim Businessmen

Of all the world religions, Islam is one of the most commerce-friendly. Compared with Jesus' criticism of merchants, the Prophet Muhammad was a trader who strengthened the umma by controlling trade routes. The Quran and Hadith provide much scriptural support for engaging in commerce, and even include regulations for conducting commercial activities, based on which the Islamic world enjoyed a period of great prosperity until around the middle age (Hefner 2009; Kuran 2010). Afterwards, a period of economic decline set in, largely the result of Western colonization and the anti-capitalist stance of Islamic socialism and political Islam. Beginning in the 20th century, a substantial number of Muslims have begun to hold hostile attitudes towards wealth and Western capitalism (Tripp 2006), and even some Western scholars question the compatibility between Islam and capitalism (Kuran 2004). However, since the 1960s the development of Islamic financing and increasing interest in Islamic economic modernity has made Islam appear to be more compatible with capitalism. Scholars have begun to discuss what the Muslim middle class can contribute to the rise of civil society (Hefner 2000) and optimistically expect that the Muslim business class and Islamic capitalism can lead the Islamic world to embrace democratic politics and a liberal economy (Nasr 2010).

In my discussion of Chinese-Indonesian businessmen, I address three interrelated questions relating to the practice of Islamic economics in modern Muslim society. First, to what extent are economic institutions embedded in Muslim society based on Islamic law, and what role do Muslim merchants play in Muslim society? In a case study of the bazaar economy in Sefrou, Morocco (Geertz 1979),[291] Geertz found that the assets of religious organizations are managed by religious leaders, a practice which facilitates and sustains the economic practices of the local Muslim society. He also found that Muslim merchants who are members of certain Sufi associations are the main actors participating and assisting in the community's religious activities. In other words, the relationships between the bazaar economy and religious institutions

[291] Clifford Geertz (1979) "Suq: the Bazaaar Economy in Sefrou" is usually ignored when people review Geertz's studies of Muslim society.

are managed by religious leaders and merchants. The former manage their religious assets in a way that helps merchants to earn their living and sustain the order of the market, while the latter carry out their religious obligations based their membership in these Sufi associations, which in a sense, function rather like guilds. Geertz thus exposed the organic economic and religious order of the local Moroccan Muslim society, in which the social boundaries and functions of religious leaders and Muslim merchants are closely and naturally intertwined.

By contrast, a bazaar economy recently introduced in Malaysia demonstrates how contemporary Islamic economic practice has been influenced by Islamic revival. The state government of Kelantan wants to introduce the Middle Eastern bazaar economy (*suq*) in Malaysia. PAS (Pan-Malaysian Islamic Party) is the ruling party of Kelantan, and has been implementing a policy of Islamization known as "Developing with Islam" (Membangun Bersama Islam) for almost two decades. Muhammad bin Ahmad (2009) observes the impact this has had on the economic practices of the traders in a central market located in Kota Bharu. He finds that the implementation of this Islamization policy has had a significant impact on the religious practices of these traders, in particular, Islamic financial assistance. The Office of Religious Affairs appoints a religious teacher to conduct the Friday worship service, and after the service, the religious teacher is charged with answering questions put by these traders on how to deal with business problems in view of Islamic law. The management board has set up several Islamic foundations for the traders, including a funeral foundation, a non-profit financial assistance foundation which lends money to its members, an *umrah* (pilgrimage to Mecca) fund for members who plan to go to Mecca, a welfare fund for zakat and sedekah (voluntary charity), and a special rotating savings program.[292] In such activities, the trading community is careful not to violate Islamic financial law, especially with regards to *riba* (illegal usury), instead lending money on the principle of *murabahah* (loaning money on the promise of sharing the profits).

Second, how are Islamic (economic) ethics applied and implemented by individuals or institutions as a "regime of knowledge" to construct a modern Muslim's subjectivity? According to Patricia Sloane (1999), the Muslim businessmen based in Kuala Lumpur stress their identity as modern Muslim entrepreneurs by distinguishing themselves in three ways. 1) They disagree with a Western capitalism, which they see as materialistic and immoral. 2) In comparison to other Muslim communities in Malaysia, they emphasize that they are progressive and modern

[292] In Malaysia, it is called "*Main Kutu*." A *kutu* is a group which raises money every month by rotation. It may draw lots to decide the member in that kutu who gets the monthly amount. This private loan activity is also popular among Chinese-Indonesians. I joined once in Salatiga, Central Java. Indonesian call this *arisan* and Chinese call it *biao hui* or *hu-zhu hui*.

Muslims who are neither overly conservative nor passive, as are many Muslim villagers (Muslim *kampung*). 3) They tend to distance themselves from Islamic fundamentalist movements and organizations. Daromir Rudnyckyj's (2010) exploration on the confluence of Islamic discourse and economic improvement in the post-Suharto era has helped us to understand how Islamic ethics can be applied to business management. He discusses Ary Ginanjar, who has created the popular human resource program "Emotional and Spiritual Quotient" (ESQ) and observes how ESQ is implemented in a state-owned enterprise, Krakatau Steel. By formulating the concept of "spiritual economies," Rudnyckyj explains how Islamic virtues have been transformed and implemented through collective self-convincing techniques, applying Islamic spirituality to the justification of neo-liberal ideas and strategies by striving to live a moral life oriented to this world. The application of Islamic faith to a training program reflects macro-historically that Islam has to offer new spiritual resources for blue- and white-collar Muslim workers.

Third, how can a Muslim business class be made? How do Muslim businessmen transform their Islamic faith based on their economic interests to engage in collective actions, while responding to economic, political, and religious changes? How does such a Muslim business class consider its own role and mission in the development of the modern Muslim community? And, how are Islamic doctrines interpreted by Muslim businessmen when presenting their points of view on wealth, work ethos, and business ethics? How do Muslim businessmen organize and empower themselves by promoting Islamic economic practices, life styles, even a bourgeoisie political party?

Similarly, can Muslim businessmen become key agents of democratization, or use their business experience to formulate a new understanding of Islam? Turkish Muslim businessmen have gone far in the making of a Muslim bourgeoisie class and engendering a middle-class movement in commerce, religion, and politics. MUSIAD (Independent Industrialists and Businessmen's Association; *Mustakil Sanayici ve Isadamlari Dernegi*) was established in the 1980s by Turkish Muslim businessmen operating small and medium enterprises (SME). The Turkish government's policy of economic liberalization has facilitated the emergence of a "devout bourgeoisie" (Gumuscu 2010). MUSIAD is not purely a business association, since it also promotes "entrepreneurial Islam" (Adas 2003; 2006). By building an Islamic economy and allying themselves with an Islamic party to demonstrate their goal of establishing a pious and prosperous society, the members of MUSIAD model themselves as after the ideal of the *homo Islamicus*, the Muslim who is both entrepreneurial and moral, as described by Adas (2006, 127):

> He is an Islamic personality who defines his existence by combing private and public life and religious and economic affairs through his Islamic ethical values and norms. He does not eschew economic activities and retreat to otherworldly asceticism because of his religion. Nor does he make concession with regard to his religion and morals for his business activity. He is competitive, productive and innovative, rather than a rent-seeker and speculative. He thinks that being economically successful is a duty of any and every Muslim, as Islam condemns idleness, laziness, and encourages hard work and resourcefulness. He is the ideal persona Islamic who will bring genuine economic and technological development, while being just and fair towards others as dictated by his religion.

Homo-Islamicus stands in stark contrast to homo-economicus, whose only concern is profit, and homo-traditionalis, the traditional Muslim trader who only cares for personal salvation, and is lacking in entrepreneurial ambition (Adas 2006, 130).

MUSIAD has fashioned itself as a high-status group. They promote a luxurious lifestyle, wear designer clothing, eat their after-sunset feast during Ramadan in ornate restaurants, and spend summer vacations in luxurious hotels on the Mediterranean Sea (Gumuscu 2010, 844). In 2001 MUSIAD was one of the key factors which served to transform the radical Islamic party into a conservative democratic party, the Justice and Development Party (AKP, Adalet ve Kalkinma Partisi). Later, several MUSIAD members joined AKP and were elected as MPs. Gumuscu considers MUSIAD's support for a free market and a moderate understanding of Islam as an important reason for the Islamic party distancing itself from its headline members.

Muslim businessmen may also adopt a mission to lead their Muslim compatriots towards advanced economic and social development. The reformist Muslim entrepreneurs from Kerala, South India combine religious piety and economic success by making donations to educational and medical programs intended to benefit the Muslim community of Kerala (F. Osella and C. Osella 2009). They use charity to address the backwardness of the local Muslim community, and also see it as a response to the increasing competition coming from other local religious communities as well as global capitalism in the wider Gulf area. Filipppo Osella and Caroline Osella (2009) see such charity as part of the complex relationship between pragmatic instrumentalism, pious sincerity, and the Islamic reformism practiced by some Muslim entrepreneurs, such that "the sense of the self as a Muslim, in turn, underpins community-wide projects of self-transformation" (F. Osella and C. Osella 2009, 214).

It can thus be seen that economic activities and institutions organically integrate with Islamic institutions to function as a part of Muslim society. Still, whether or not Islamic values are intrinsically opposed to capitalism needs to be carefully examined.

Timur Kuran (2011) has observed that the economy of the Middle East was more advanced than that of Europe before 1000, but after 1800 fell far behind Europe. He argues that this economic stagnation set in as the result of several factors, including the Islamic inheritance system, polygamy, the ban on riba, the prohibition of apostasy, and the absence of merchant organizations.

Therefore when reflecting on contemporary discourses of Islamic economic modernity to promote modern Islamic economic institutions and constructing a capitalist mentality for modern Muslims, or when exploring the historical factors contributing to the making or unmaking of the Muslim business class , we have to consider how discourses of Islamic modernity have selectively applied traditional Islamic ethics in response to rapid economic and political developments. Institutions, the modern transformation of Islamic ethics, and the Muslim business class as an historical agency are three important dimensions to Islamic economics in Indonesian, but have been marginalized in Muslim intellectual discourses. Presenting a general historical picture of the development of Islamic economics and the Muslim business class in Indonesia can help us to understand the sociological meaning of an ethnic-Chinese entrepreneur's conversion to Islam. I point out two theoretical limitations of the Weberian approach to exploring Islamic virtues, economic practices, and history. I then apply Pierre Bourdieu's concepts to exploring the social mobility of ethnic-Chinese Muslim businessmen after their conversion.

7.4 The Historical Role of Muslim Businessmen in Indonesia

When introducing the history of how Islam came to Southeast Asia, Muslim merchants, ulamas and Sufi masters are usually seen as the most important historical agents. For instance, Hadrami Yemeni Muslim merchants are a significant case. As Engseng Ho (2006) has commented, they create "a transoceanic 'new world' for Islam, symbolized by a common allegiance to the Shafii school of Islamic law" (2006, 100). Their movement has constituted a trans-regional Muslim diaspora across the Indian Ocean over the past five hundred years. During the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, they were active in several port cities where they were welcomed by the local rulers. Some of these itinerant Muslim merchants rendered services to the rulers or married local women, and a few even became the new rulers of the rising port cities (Ho 2006, 100–101). K. R. Hall asserts that "Southeast Asia's Islamic conversions were not primarily spiritually motivated but trade-related, to induce specific foreign traders to do business in a polity's ports, with resulting increases in local revenue collections by

the local monarchs who were co-religionists. Local conversion implied a favorable religious environment and the assurance of local acceptance of the Islamic moral codes, at least as this applied to commercial if not personal transactions (2004, 247).”[293]

If Muslim traders were one of the most influential agents of the Islamization of the Indian Ocean and the South China Sea, why is the role of Muslim businessmen routinely underestimated in presentations of the contemporary history of Indonesian Islam? In order to understand whether or not there is a Muslim business class in Indonesia, we need to first review the relevant histories.

Ernst Utrecht (1984, 26-35) states that powerful Indonesian Muslim merchants were based in urban neighbourhoods adjoining the central mosques, which were known as *kauman* (community) and which functioned as religio-economic centers. In the sixteenth century, the economic and political power of the *kauman* became so strong that they carried out rebellions against the sultan’s court. It was also during this time that the political leadership of the *kauman* was is in the hands of the harbor authority known as the *shahbandar*, for it was he who controlled trade relations between kingdoms in the hinterland and foreign traders. But the *kauman* gradually lost its economic power under the rule of the Dutch East India Company from the end of 17th century, when Chinese businessmen replaced the Muslim commercial class.

During the early decades of the 20th century, the Dutch colonial government continued to largely maintain this policy toward indigenous Muslim businessmen. Sarekat Islam (SI) was established by Muslim merchants who wanted to protect their batik businesses from competition from Chinese businessmen. The first Muslim merchant association aiming to protect the commercial interests of indigenous Muslim merchants from Chinese monopolization, SI once embraced left wing thought as a solution to the problems of the peasantry and working class (Shiraishi 1990). The indigenous business class has traditionally attributed its failures to unfair Chinese competition.[294] Thus, when Indonesia gained independence it adopted a policy of repressing the Chinese business community in order to promote the economic success of indigenous businessmen (Utrecht 1984). The colonial legacy of using the Chinese middle class to limit the economic power of indigenous Muslims lasted well into the 20th century, and has led to significant social divisions. Today, the Chinese minority is

[293] Similarly, in my discussion of Chinese-Muslim activities in Java during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, I assert that Chinese-Muslim merchants established trade bases and had good relations with local rulers and other foreign traders.

[294] There is a historical stereotype that sees Chinese as the main or even only factor contributing to the failure of indigenous businessmen. But this explanation sometimes is too simple to cover the complex historical picture, and Christine Dobbin (1994) asserts that competition from Chinese businessmen was not the only factor explaining the failure of the Muslim business class in central Java from 1880 to 1940. Promoting the development of the indigenous Indonesian business class was one of the main concerns during Sukarno period, but it was never successful.

regarded as an economic class, while the indigenous political elites are regarded as a political class (Ufen 2008). Ufen's analysis offers some valuable insights into the unmaking of the indigenous Muslim business class after independence (2008, 9-10):

> In the 1950s, the new indigenous elites captured the state apparatus, and political parties offered the principal channels of access to the bureaucracy. Their power was based upon the control of segments of the bureaucracy, the military, and state companies… Thus, the political class was defined by educational background and achievement rather than by land titles or entrepreneurial success, and educational institutions became the main conduit for career advancement.

Utrecht's explanation about why Sukarno's policy of repressing Chinese businessmen failed and was transformed into the "Ali Baba economy," shows us another clue to as the nature of the social division between ethnic Chinese and pribumi Muslims (1984, 46):

> How can Chinese businessmen survive when encountering an economic discrimination policy? The majority of Muslim middlemen in particular knew little or nothing about the techniques of commerce. Some of them could not even read the government's regulations on trade. They then sold their licenses to Chinese middlemen… This type of economic activity, is commonly referred to as the *Ali Baba economy*.

In the Ali Baba economy the indigenous Muslim merchants or military men were only middlemen in charge of obtaining licenses for the Chinese businessmen who actually controlled imports and distribution, a situation in which indigenous Muslim businessmen could not change their inferior economic status very much. Yet Geertz was eager to find santri Muslims whose role was similar to that of Calvinist businessmen, and who spearheaded economic development in Java.[295] Still, puritan and reformist Muslims did not play much of a role in the economic development of Indonesia during 1950s-1960s.[296]

During the New Order, Suharto established state and military enterprises controlled by an abangan bureaucracy and generals, thereby leaving a "back-door" for

[295] Geertz's concern is closely associated with America's poverty-relief programs in the third world (Geertz 1996). This kind of application of the Weberian thesis of applying religious or cultural values to the cultivation of a modern work ethic easily runs the risk of using cultural essentialism or racialism to assert that Malays are lazy. A similar approach was later taken by James Pecock (1980), who investigated the hygiene and sanitation practices of the followers of Muhammadiyah in order to determine whether they have a modern outlook .

[296] This is not to say that few or no pribumi Muslim merchants existed at that time; rather, their economic and social power had little significance.

monopolization by Chinese business interests, and leaving very few opportunities for indigenous Muslim businessmen (Utrecht 1984, 53-55). On the other hand, as mentioned above, Suharto's alliance consisted of military men, bureaucrats of state businesses, and Chinese entrepreneurs. He had no interest in supporting an indigenous business class, because doing so might have threatened his political legitimacy. Before the 1990s, he was reluctant to make any special economic policy benefiting indigenous Muslims. Suharto's strategy was to control state businesses through bureaucrat business experts, and to strengthen the links his family enterprises had with Chinese tycoons. Such state control over private business interests amounted to crony capitalism, offering no support to the SME's of indigenous Muslims, and served to exacerbate the tensions between ethnic Chinese and indigenous Muslims. During the period when economic monopolization by Chinese businessmen was tacitly supported by Suharto, indigenous Muslim businessmen were in straitened circumstances in that they had much difficulty obtaining business skills and raising sufficient capital for starting their own businesses.

Concerns about the poverty of indigenous Muslims continued until the 1990s, when Muslim intellectuals pressured the Suharto government into granting permission for the establishment of an Islamic bank which would help Muslims become less dependent on Chinese businessmen (Hefner 1998). Actually, Suharto's repression of political Islam discouraged Muslims from promoting Islamic economic thought and Islamic financial institutions. In the 1990s, however, the Suharto government began to cooperate with Muslim intellectuals and elites in their efforts to empower indigenous Muslim businessmen, apply Islamic economic values to new development projects, and establish Islamic banks.

Hefner (1998) highlights three divergent strategies employed by Muslim Indonesians in addressing their economic marginalization. The first one is Habibie's "technological development strategy," which originated from the Muslim debates which accompanied the creation of ICMI (Association of Indonesian Muslim Intellectuals). However, Habibie's program for the state's strategic industries eventually failed, and has been criticized by the second strategy, "popularist-Islamic economics," by which it is argued that "a few Muslims have always benefited from sweetheart deals during the New Order but insist that such patronage has little to do with improving the welfare of the Muslim community as a whole" (Hefner 1998, 235). The popularist-Islamic perspective supports state intervention in promoting Muslim economic progress, but it should be implemented in a fair and open process. Its views are similar to those of Islamic socialism. Another contrast existing between Habibie's supporters and the popularists is to what extent Islamic economic thinking should be applied. The former supported the establishment of the first Islamic bank in Indonesia,

but they are not interested in exploring the techniques and details of Islamic finance. Instead, they tend to believe that education, technology, and management are more important ways of improving the economic situation of the Muslim community. The popularists are more concerned with expanding the Islamic banking system throughout Indonesia, helping Muslim small businesses to easily get credit, promoting management training programs for small-scale entrepreneurs, and integrating sources of zakat.

Abdurrahman Wahid represents the third approach. He does not subscribe to the views of Islamic economics, instead favoring the establishment of Muslim businesses in cooperation with Chinese and based on the principles of honesty and social justice. Wahid emphasizes that more credit and education programs should be established for the benefit of Muslim SMEs. He frankly expresses his doubts about Islamic economics and is not afraid of being criticized by other Muslims on account of his friendly attitude towards cooperation with Chinese businessmen. In the last decade of the New Order, Muslim businessmen had much difficulty competing with their Chinese counterparts. In his research during 1990s Hefner found that the Muslim middle class (Muslim professionals) was rising and was active in distributing political ideas and Islamic economics. But, he concludes, "In almost all respects the new Muslim middle class is less prepared to compete in the marketplace than its forebears… this new middle class lacks many of the ground-level skills and organizations with which to run a business, they are nonetheless well positioned to play a role in the production and distribution of political ideas (1998, 237)." Meanwhile, the agenda for improving the economic situation of Muslims had become more urgent, resulting in the Suharto government establishing the first Islamic bank in Indonesia at the beginning of 1990s. Although Islamic economics has attracted much debate, its application is not a priority, and is not even being considered by the mainstream Muslim organization NU.

A few interesting new tendencies have emerged since the end of the New Order period. Robert Hefner (2000) considers the Muslim middle class to be a locomotive for the creation of civil/public Islam in Indonesia. There are some similar considerations in the PKS (Prosperous Justice Party), for instance, a political concern for Muslim middle class women (Rinaldo 2008). Another topic of discussion has been how the religious piety of the new Muslim middle class fits into a modern urban lifestyle, and how its religious needs create a religious market where religious messages are produced as a commodity to be consumed (see my discussion in Chapter 5). In addition, there has been a rapid increase in discourses on Islamic economic modernity, including Islamic marketing, Islamic management, Islamic popular psychology, Islamic finance, and Islamic work ethics. Since the end of the New Order

period many books have been published asserting that Islamic economic modernity is not only a theory, but can be made the basis for the development of such techniques as the Islamic spiritual training known as ESQ (Emotional and Spiritual Quotient), which has been adopted by many corporations to improve efficiency and strengthen the ethical qualities of their employees (Rudnyckyj 2010). In the past few years, this increasing concern seems to be influencing Muhammadiyah, which has started promoting the economic prosperity of Muslims and improving the efficiency of its own organizational management.

However, the study of Muslim businessmen and Muslim economic practice is still very underdeveloped in general. What F. Osella and C. Osella have to say about Kerala also applies to a certain extent to Indonesia:

> …analyses of contemporary Muslim politics focus on phenomena such as 'political Islam', private/public piety, or Muslim 'public sphere', with little attention paid to articulations between politico-religious orientations and economic practice in the production of contemporary Muslim subjectivities. (F. Osella and C. Osella 2009, 202)

If there has been a Muslim business class in the making, how has it tried to advance its class interests through politics? However this question may be answered, the past discussions about the role of the Muslim business/middle class and the politico-religious orientations and economic practices of its members are still very insufficient. This epistemological limitation is due to the historical factors I mentioned above, and its influence continues up to the present. Yon Machmudi (2008, 21-50) came up with the concept of the "new santri" to identify the PKS, and applied it to his exploration of the various historical implications of the development of Muslim politics from the New Order period to the rise of the PKS. Machmudi focuses more on the religio-political meaning that the concept of the new santri carries, and has used its rich implications to extend Geertz's concepts. But Machmudi's discussion of santri does not touch on the disciplinary mentality of reformist Muslims or any of the economic implications originally addressed by Geertz. This lack indicates that Muslim elites may tend to have more interest in religio-political issues than in systematically promoting economic development in Indonesia. This is what Muhammadiyah is concerned about when it speaks of the "forgotten legacy."

This shows that the discourses of contemporary Muslim intellectuals give more weight to religo-political affairs than business activities. This inclination, as mentioned above, is partially due to the economic policies implemented during both the Dutch and Suharto eras, and has resulted in the contemporary role of Muslim

businessmen and how their commercial experiences influence their understanding and practice of Islam receiving little attention. Although there has been some interest in exploring Islamic economic modernity since the end of the New Order period, the lacuna is still quite large. To better explore the sociological meanings of the conversion to Islam of ethnic-Chinese businessmen and how they associate their commercial experience with Islam, it is necessary to examine the limits of culturalist perspectives.

Culturalist perspectives have always assumed that a certain religious ethics and values would lead to the development of a capitalist mentality and capitalist institutions. Hindered by cultural essentialism, this perspective assumes that ethnic and religious values are the first and most fundamental factor in the formulation of a systematic economic practice, without giving due consideration to economic, social, and political contexts. This approach, for instance, argues that Islamic ethics is a necessary part of entrepreneurship. But such ethics are not suitable as an explanation of the business success of Chinese-Indonesian Muslim businessmen, because they were successful before their conversion to Islam. Similarly, emphasizing only the influence their Chineseness had on their success may cause other problems. It is sometimes implied that Chinese businesses are more successful than Malay/pribumi businesses in Southeast Asia because the Malay ethnic character is backward and lazy (Li 1998; Rutten 2003). Even some Muslim businessmen believe that it would be better to replace their traditional values with new Islamic values which can help build a new Malay *entrepreneurial* mindset (Slone 1999).

The second limitation of the culturalist perspective is that it unreflectively assumes that the class situation, commercial orientation, or modern economic practices of Muslim businessmen naturally leads to an interpretation of Islam which is more compatible with modernity and religious morals. Also, it tends to assume that businessmen are a universal historical agency that largely ignores the interests and powers relationships manipulated by them. For instance, the Turkish Muslim businessmen of MUSIAD welcome a moderate form of democracy that keeps far away from political Islam, while supporting a free market ideology. They dislike trade unions and believe that worker-employer relations can be regulated under an idea of brotherhood. Similarly, as F. Osella and C. Osella remind us, instrumentalism and religious sincerity coexist in a Muslim entrepreneur's charity.

Thus I argue that emphasizing these Muslim businessmen's commercial experience is important in terms of examining how they apply their pragmatic ideas and entrepreneurship to manage Muslim affairs, but their commercial experiences should not be simply attributed to their Chinese ethnic talent or their Islamic virtues. In some conditions, their Islamic virtues motivate them to engage in Islamic economic

discourses and perform economic practices with an Islamic orientation, but it cannot be naturally assumed that Islamic virtue is the most fundamental factor facilitating business success, since most ethnic-Chinese Muslim businessmen were successful before they converted to Islam.[297]

Since in most cases they achieved business success before their conversion, and are actively involved in Muslim affairs and other activities, we need to consider how they expanded their influence outside commercial activities through the legitimacy obtained from their Muslim identity and religious faith. I therefore consider their religious conversion to be a form of social mobility between the economic and religious spheres, what Pierre Bourdieu refers to as "conversion of capital." This is how ethnic-Chinese Muslim businessmen are able to extend their influence to a Muslim public sphere otherwise unfamiliar or unwelcoming to non-Muslims. On the other hand, because of their business experience, they are more inclined to associate Islam with business issues. The conversion of economic and religious capital by Chinese-Indonesian Muslims and their particular business and religious experience should not be taken as a typical situation to be generalized to the indigenous Indonesian Muslim business class, but I hope my discussion demonstrates a particular dimension of Chinese-Indonesian Muslim businessmen, and can elucidate some of the interesting developments of the Muslim business class in contemporary Indonesia.

7.5 Three Chinese-Indonesian Muslim Businessmen: Politics, Spiritual Practice, and Islamic Economics

7.5.1 Abdul Karim Oei: The Founder of PITI

Abdul Karim Oei (1905-1988) was one the main figures in the founding of PITI in 1961.[298] In 1926, Oei moved from Padang to Bintuhan (on Sumatra's West coast, south of Bengkulu), seeking business opportunities. His father and brother disagreed, but he was intent on following the local tradition in Minangkabau known as *merantau*, whereby young men leave their hometown to earn a living in some far-away place. In

[297] Christian Chua has criticized the culturalist perspective for attributing the success of ethnic-Chinese businessmen to their ethnicity or Confucianism (Chua 2008, 13-16). Instead, he suggests the focus should be moved to highlight the "power configurations of state and capital" (See his chapter 2), and explores the patronage networks between Suharto's state and Chinese conglomerates in the New Order (Chua 2008, 29-63).

[298] The following discussion is mainly based on his autobiography (Oei 1982) and my interview with Oei's son, Ali Karim, in 2005. Oei's autobiography was given to me by his eldest daughter, Iriana Karim, when I stayed in Salatiga, Central Java during 2002. About why Oei set up PITI, please refer to the introduction.

a short time Oei succeeded in his business ventures, became well known in that small town, and was invited to manage Tionghoa Hwe Kwan, a school for Chinese students. Because he had lots of contact with indigenous Indonesians he was given the nickname "*babadek"* by the local Chinese community. As a successful Chinese merchant, his close relations with indigenous Indonesians brought him to the attention of the Dutch authorities, but he was careful not to be used as a political instrument (Oei 1982, 10-13).

However, his successful business career could not satisfy his inner spiritual thirst. He was a Christian when he moved to Bintuhan,[299]but there was no church there, so he had no opportunity to attend mass. Gradually attracted to Islam, Oei became a Muslim in 1931, at the age of twenty-six, but he was worried that his conversion would anger his father. The Chinese community in Bintuhan was shocked on hearing about his conversion to Islam,[300] but the indigenous community was pleased to have a Chinese Muslim. His conversion was soon exposed to his father by an anonymous letter stating that his son had become an "orang Melayu" (a Malay) and that his business had declined because he donated large amounts of money to the poor. His father was furious and condemned his conversion, but during a period of mail communication, Oei explained to his father the meaning of Islam. To his great surprise, his father also converted to Islam (Oei 1982, 14-21).

Oei recalled how he drove his imported Chevrolet car to villages, joining various religious meetings and preaching Islam. He firmly believed that due to his active da'wa he had been transformed from a new convert (*muallaf*) to a preacher (*muballigh*). On one of his frequent business trips to Jakarta, he was introduced to some of the important figures of Sareket Islam and Muhammadiyah, including Al-Irsyad. These new contacts expanded his horizon and faith in Islam, and encouraged him to dedicate himself to the Islamic reform movement in Indonesia. When he started reflecting on the Islamic teachings he had previously received he realized that they were more associated with traditional local syncretistic practices, and decided that he needed to bring his faith more in line with orthodox Islam. He decided to join a Muslim organization, either Sarekat Islam or Muhammadiyah. At the first, he was attracted to Sarekat Islam for its work with Muslim traders and its anti-colonial stance. But, for some reason, he later decided to join Muhammadiyah and establish a new branch in Bintuhan, and was elected as the chairperson of the branch (Oei 1982, 21-24).

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[299] At that time, his embrace of Christianity was probably the result of his studies at HCS, a Dutch School for Chinese children. (Oei 1982, 7)

[300] His Chinese neighbors in Binhuhan kept silent, but threw stones and human excrement into his house. He considered resigning from the Tionghoa Hwe Kwan, but the committee decided to keep him on (Oei 1982, 16-17).

The presence of Muhammadiyah in Bintuhan aroused the suspicion of the Dutch authorities, who kept the organization under surveillance. Oei was considered an organizer of opposition to the Dutch government,[301] which demanded that the head office of Muhammadiyah in Yogyakarta dismiss Oei from Muhammadiyah because it considered the activities of its Bintuhan branch as seditious. After that, the government tried twice to "eliminate" him.[302] Finally, Oei was forbidden to give public speeches for two years (Oei 1982, 25-31).

In 1938, Sukarno was in internal exile and was moved from Ende, West Nusa Tenggara, to Bengkulu, where he stayed for two years. It was during his stay in Bengkulu that he was introduced to Oei. The two become close friends and Sukarno persuaded Oei to move to Bengkulu from Bintuhan to work with him.[303] Oei and Sukarno established a furniture business in Bengkulu , a cooperative venture which was crucial for Oei's later career. During this period both Sukarno and Oei were active in the Bengkulu branch of Muhammadiyah, giving Oei the chance to become familiar with Sukarno's anti-colonial views, understanding of Islam, and even Sukarno's marriage problems (Oei 1982, 56-66).[304]

In Oei's discussion with Sukarno about the role Islam should play in the building of an independent Indonesia, Sukarno made it clear that he believed that Islam should not be made the foundation of a new republic, in light of the principle of the separation between religion and state. Oei did not completely agree with Sukarno's idea, arguing that there was no need to politicize Islam or build an Islamic state, but Islam should be promoted as the source of a common ethics and values for Indonesian society. Although Sukarno was not interested in building an Islamic state, he asked Oei to arrange a conference of Muhammadiyah at Bengkulu so that he could meet its board members from Yogyakarta and other branches and have a dialogue with them on improving nationalism among Muhammadiyah followers (Oei 1982, 66-73).[305]

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[301] Oei wrote articles criticizing how the Dutch government had enslaved Indonesians and which appeared in the newspapers *Jakarta Sin Po* and *Keng Po*, thereby arousing the antipathy of the Dutch authorities. (Oei 1982, 25)

[302] According to Oei (1982, 28-31), the Dutch authorities tried and failed to eliminate him twice, first by planting stolen goods in his goldsmith shop, and then by attempting to assassinate him.

[303] Sukarno asked Oei to move to Bengkulu and serve as the chairperson of the local branch of Muhammadiyah. At the beginning, Oei was hesitant to accept because he would have to restart his business in a new region, but he finally agreed and decided to move to Bengkulu and join Sukarno's alliance.

[304] Sukarno did not have a child with his first wife, Inggit Garnasih. Thus Sukarno intended to marry another woman, Fatma, the daughter of Hasan Din (a board member of Muhammadiyah Bengkulu) who was old enough to be his own daughter. But when his first wife discovered her husband's intention she became enraged. Oei was the only person with whom Sukarno spoke about his marital problems, and almost every night Sukarno asked him to come to his house, have dinner, and chat.

[305] Oei (1982, 66) tells a story showing Sukarno's reformist religious orientation. Sukarno once planned to join a public worship organized by Muhammadiyah in an open square. When he arrived however, Sukarno suddenly told Oei that he was feeling unwell and could not participate. Sukarno later explained that the real reason he didn't participate was that he saw a *tabir* (cloth curtain) separating the

During the Japanese occupation of Indonesia from 1942 to 1945, despite intimidation by the Japanese, Oei managed to protect Muhammadiyah. Following the expulsion of the Japanese by Allied forces in 1945, Oei participated in the Indonesian War of Independence, which ended in 1949. In this transitional period, Sukarno and his wife were put under house arrest by both the Dutch and the Japanese and were forced to change their residence several times, but Sukarno maintained contact with Oei until he established his government in Jakarta. During this period Oei helped arrange Sukarno's third marriage, and Sukarno even asked Oei to represent him at the wedding ceremony, but Oei refused to do so. When the Japanese army took over Palembang, the military governor Taota wanted Oei to disband the local branch of Muhammadiyah. Oei refused to do so, stating that it would cause turmoil in the Muslim community, and managed to keep Muhammadiyah functioning by reaching an agreement with the Japanese military and administrative authorities. During this time Japan was eager to collect ricin (*jarak*), an extract of castor beans which can be used to produce chemical weapons. Oei promised to help by requiring Muhammadiyah members to plant castor oil plants, but the plan never materialized (Oei 1982, 75-82).

A few days after Japan was defeated in World War II, Sukarno and Hatta proclaimed Indonesia's independence, while Oei was in Bengkulu.[306] When the Dutch returned to Indonesia they did not occupy Bengkulu itself, but they did occupy the neighboring region, where Oei was involved in guerrilla activities along with villagers and members of Muhammadiyah. When a cease-fire was implemented Oei was invited to establish a temporary government, but he refused to cooperate and was jailed by the local commander, one Lieutenant Van den Berg. A few days before the Dutch finally conceded to Indonesian demands for sovereignty the Dutch officers left Bengkulu and Oei was freed. It was a tough time, and because of the war many people were not able to repay their loans from his bank (Bank Muslimin Bengkulu), causing Oei to go bankrupt. With the advice and assistance of Sukarno, Oei moved to Jakarta and soon developed his business again (Oei 1982, 106-125).

After moving to Jakarta, Oei became a private advisor to Sukarno, and he and his family were frequently invited to the presidential palace. Oei's relationship with Sukarno shows how a Chinese entrepreneur could maintain a close relationship with

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men and women at the event. With his reformist orientation, Sukarno considered the *tabir* to be a symbol of backwardness and discrimination. It is said that Agus Salim, another senior reformist religious scholar, once tore down the *tabir* at one of Muhammadiyah's meetings. My thanks to Mujiburrahman for explaining these events.

[306] Three months after this declaration of independence, on November 7, 1945, Majelis Syuro Muslimin Indonesia, commonly known as Masyumi, was established in Yogyakarta, then in other areas, including Bengkulu in 1946.

the president, the most powerful person in the Old Order.[307] Oei was careful to remind Sukarno of his implied obligations based on his membership in Muhammadiyah.[308] Oei kept trying to show that Muhammadiyah was supported by the president, for instance, by recommending Muhammadiyah figures as ministers and inviting Sukarno to join an important meeting of Muhammadiyah (Oei 1982, 161-171).[309]

Oei was an active member of the Muslim political party Masyumi, and during the election campaign of 1955, Oei worked very hard together with the Masyumi leaders Mohammad Natsir, Kasman Singodimedjo, Burhanuddin Harahap, and others in several cities of central Java. After the elections, Oei was offered a seat in the DPR by Masyumi. The seat remained vacant for about three months because Oei previously refused it for health and other reasons. However, Oei was persuaded that the DPR was a suitable place for him, since he only needed to show up, sign the attendance list, and vote. Finally, he agreed and was sworn in on August 30, 1956 by

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[307] Oei recalled two stories that show how he was close to Sukarno. First, Sukarno regularly asked him to come to the presidential palace in the evening. One day in 1964 Sukarno summoned Oei to the palace to solicit his opinion as to which people he should appoint as ministers (Oei 1982, 164-166). Second, Sukarno once summoned Oei to the palace to discuss a financial problem relating to the operations of the new cabinet (Dwi Komando Rakyat, the Dwikora Cabinet). Sukarno told Oei that he needed around 250 million rupiah and Oei suggested that Sukarno could easily raise the amount by summoning certain businessmen to Jakarta. The next morning, Oei went to see the Minister of Social Affairs, Mulyadi Djojomartono, and handed him a check for 75 million rupiah. The president then gathered together a number of businessmen and gave a speech. Eventually, they collected around 650 million rupiah (Oei 1982, 173-175).

[308] There are three stories showing how Oei maintained the influence of Muhammadiyah in Sukarno's government. First, Sutan Mansur, the former Head of the Central Executive Committee of Muhammadiyah, once came to Oei's house in Matraman Dalam, Jakarta, to ask Oei to help him meet the president. Oei arranged for Sutan Mansur to meet Sukarno on Monday morning at 9:00 in the palace. On Saturday night, however, when Oei and his family went to the Palace to watch a movie together with Sukarno's family, Sukarno told Oei that he could not meet Sutan Mansur at the scheduled time. Oei was furious and told Sukarno that he was offended by Sukarno not keeping his promise to meet Sutan Mansur, who had brought an important letter from the Central Executive Committee of Muhammadiyah. Oei also told Sukarno that he seemed to consider other things to be more important than Muhammadiyah and Islam. Finally, Sukarno agreed to meet Sutan Mansur on the scheduled day but at an earlier time. Second, Oei once recommended two Muhammadiyah members to be ministers, Mulyadi Djojomartono as Minister of Social Affairs, and Faried Ma'ruf as Minister of Hajjj Affairs. Third, in July, 1965, Muhammadiyah held its 36th national conference (Muktamar) in Bandung, and the Central Executive Committee of Muhammadiyah asked the president to give the opening speech. When Sukarno declined Oei reminded him that, since he used to be one of the leaders of Muhammadiyah, he was obliged to join the Muktamar. Afterwards, when Oei and several members of the Central Executive Committee of Muhammadiyah met the president in his palace, Sukarno explained that he could not give a speech at the Muktamar because he had a lot of things to do and a lot of events to attend. Oei angrily said that Muhammadiyah's members felt offended and that if Sukarno believed in Muhammadiyah and if he was a true Muslim, he would be able to make time for Muhammadiyah, for the sake of Islam. On hearing Oei's strong appeal, Sukarno then asked his secretary to check his schedule and make time to attend the Muktamar. Sukarno eventually attended the conference by taking a military helicopter (Oei 1982, 161-171).

[309] There is an interesting booklet consisting of three articles about Sukarno's historical relations with Muhammadiyah; see Soekarno dan Muhammadiyah, edited by Farozan Amar (2009). One of the articles mentions Karim Oei, but not Oei's reflections about Sukarno's participation in Muhammdaiyah.

the vice president, Hatta. Oei held the DPR seat for four years and retired on June 24, 1960. In the last two years of Sukarno's presidency, he publicly expressed his appreciation for his close friendship with Oei (Oei 1982, 176-180).[310]

There is an ambiguity about Oei's patron-client relationship with politicians of the Old Order that Oei has not clearly discussed, but which is important to understanding how crony capitalism is used by the Chinese business community. Oei's various enterprises developed from his gold shop, and he also owned a local bank before independence. After he went bankrupt when borrowers couldn't repay their loans to his bank, he got around 2,500 gulden from Sukarno's wife Fatmawati. Oei, however, quickly bounced back after he moved to Jakarta, where he and Hasan Din[311] established the Mega Company, named after Sukarno's daughter Megawati. Oei remained the director of Mega until 1981. Leo Suryadinata (1993) states that Hasan Din also had a close relationship with the well-known Chinese businessman Liem Sioe Liong, who appointed Hasan Din as director of several of his companies in Jakarta, including Mega and Bank Central Asia (BCA). Oei (1982, 245) mentions that he was the director of BCA from 1955 to 1973, indicating the business relationship which linked Oei and Liem to Sukarno's family.[312] Oei also owned several manufacturing companies (including clothing and matches) and a gold mine.

7.5.2 Masagung: Publisher, Healer, and Preacher

7.5.2.1 Childhood, Establishing a Business, and the Idayu Foundation

Masagung (1927-1990) was a prominent ethnic-Chinese entrepreneur who converted to Islam in 1980s. Born as Tjio Wie Tay, Masagung had a tough childhood.[313] After

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[310] On July 18, 1966, Sukarno invited a number of DPR leaders, religious figures, and public figures to the presidential palace. After entering the room, he smiled and said, "Look everyone! Today a president came to Mr. Oey Tjeng Hien. How arrogant he is, now that he is rich; he never comes here anymore" (Oei 1982, 171). On August 3, 1965, Bung Karno was given an Honorary Doctorate Degree by Universitas Muhammadiyah Jakarta. In his speech, he mentioned the two most unforgettable people in his life. One of them was Karim Oei (Oei 1982, 179-180).

[311] Hasan Din was the father of Sukarno's third wife Fatmawati.

[312] Although Oei doesn't mention his business relationship with Liem, Oei's son Ali Karlim confirmed this with me.

[313] My discussion of Masagung is mainly based on his two biographies (Hastuti 2003; Murthiko 1984) and two memoirs. These publications are biased by the authors' admiration for Masagung, but do include some interesting private anecdotes which demonstrate Masagung's cultural ambitions and religious orientation. The two memoirs, *Hajji Masagung Telah Tiada tapi Roh Jihadnya Hidup Seangjang Masa* (1990) and *Hajji Masagung dalam Kenangan* (1993), are basically collections of anecdotes written by many different people. While referring to these in the following discussion, I cite the first memoir's editor and the second memoir's publisher (the editor of the second memoir is anonymous).

his father passed away in 1931, his mother was not able to raise their five children, so he was placed under an uncle's care. The uncle, however, treated him harshly, and he had to drop out of elementary school and begin earning a living as a peddler. Masagung managed to gradually accumulate capital and eventually joined other ethnic Chinese to form a company called "Thay San Kongsie" (Thay San Company).[314] After Indonesia gained independence, the demand for books rapidly increased, so the Thay San Company decided to sell books and magazines and developed very well. Later, the partnership was dissolved, and Masagung became the only partner to continue in the book selling business, which he later expanded into a large business group (Murthiko 1984, 67-88).

Having been denied access to books and media for such a long time, following independence Indonesians were thirsty for information, making it an opportune time to develop a publishing business. Masagung seized the moment and made "nation and character building" one of his company's official goals, and he was proud of saying, "If we talk about nation and character building, it is clear that books are important. I am happy to be in the publishing business because it enables me to contribute to the nation's development" (Hastuti 2003, 30). His publishing business led to his establishment of a number of international enterprises and helped him to cultivate private relationships with a number of political figures of the Old Order. Also at this time, the Indonesian government was eager to replace Dutch books with those published in Indonesian. Thus Masagung managed to gain government contracts for supplying books and stationary to schools and local government offices in the remote districts of West Irian and Riau (Murthiko 1984, 57-61). During the early 1950s he dropped his Chinese name and adopted the name Masagung.[315] Around the same period, he established a new company with the name of "Gunung Agung,"[316] which became an important publisher. His business developed into the Agung Group, consisting of nine companies. He organized several national book fairs and joined international book fairs between 1953 to 1971 (Murthiko 1984, 61-66).[317] During the 1960s he established an import agency which imported not only books and news magazines, but also cigarettes and office supplies. This import business eventually

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[314] Thay San (in Hokkien, Taishan in Mandarin) is a sacred mountain in China, renowned as a center of religio-political space. The name can also be taken to mean "big mountain."

[315] There are some interesting anecdotes about why Masagung changed his name. When Masagung worked in West Irian (Irian Barat), people found it difficult to pronounce his Chinese name, and simply called him "*Mas dari Gunung Agung*" (a young man from Mt. Agung), which later was shortened to "Masagung." Masagung became his official name on August 26, 1963 (Hastuti 2003, 15-21; Murthiko 1984, 89-90).

[316] Gunung Agung (big mountain) is the Indonesian translation of "Thay San" and the name of a mountain in Bali; Masagung claimed that he had Balinese blood from his grandmother's side.

[317] Gunung Agung held a book fair called *Pekan Buku* in 1954. This was the first book fair in Indonesia. It was a success, and many public figures attended the event, including Sukarno and Hatta. It was the first time for Masagung to meet Sukarno and Hatta (Hastuti 2003, 11-14).

became the main support of his publishing business. Masagung kept on developing his retail business,[318] and in 1965 he established the Sari Agung Company as a joint venture with the Sarinah Department Store. This company was established with support from Sukarno. Masagung opened the first currency exchange agency in Indonesia, which is now named after his wife, Ayu Masagung (Hastuti 2003, 30).

Masagung was also known to have close relationships with Sukarno and Hatta, which got started when he invited them to his first national book fair in 1954.[319] Moreover, Sukarno was an advisor to one of Masagung's enterprises, and Hatta's family and Masagung's family had a close relationship for a long time. (Murthiko 1984, 89-96) In 1970, Masagung established the Jaya Bali Agung Company, which dealt with hotel management and tourism, in partnership with Pembangunan Jaya (established by Ir. Ciputra). With the support of Sukarno and permission from Ali Sadikin, the Governor of Jakarta at that time, Masagung built his Mandarin Hotel on Thamrin Street, Jakarta, opposite the Hotel Indonesia (the first hotel in Jakarta). (Hastuti 2003, 29) When the hotel opened in 1975, a number of important politicians were invited to be shareholders, including the first vice-president, Mohammad Hatta and Darsjaf Rachman, a former mayor of Jakarta (Murthiko 1984, 50). This partially explains why Masagung's business was not closed when a policy was adopted requiring Chinese investors to be displaced by indigenous Indonesians (Murthiko 1984, 52-57).

Masagung established the Idayu Foundation on October 28, 1966, revealing his interest in promoting culture and education, and that Sukarno was his political patron. Sukarno was a partner in the foundation, which was named after his mother. The foundation claimed to be non-commercial and independent of any political, religious, or social group, with the purpose of helping the Indonesian government to promote national character through education and cultural activities.[320] The Idayu Foundation also built relations with other institutions in Indonesia and abroad,[321] and focuses on documentation, speeches, and publishing. Idayu has an important research library which shares resources with Masagung's publishing company, Gunung Agung

[318] Masagung also opened a duty-free shop. He was also the sole distributor for name brands like Parker and Kodak. He was also the sole distributor of Time Magazine in Indonesia in 1969, and for Penguin Books in 1971 (Hastuti 2003, 26-27).

[319] Masagung took the opportunity to go to the presidential palace to deliver an encyclopedia to Sukarno as a gift (Murthiko 1984, 92-95).

[320] In 1966, when Sukarno was replaced by Suharto, the leaders and shareholders of Gunung Agung did not agree with Masagung's proposal to found the Idayu Foundation, thinking that anything related to Sukarno at that time was too risky. Therefore, Masagung established Idayu as an independent institution with no relation to Gunung Agung or any other parties (Hastuti 2003, 36-41).

[321] The Dag Hammarskjold Award was given to Masagung on November 11, 1982 by the Academie Diplomatique de La Paix "Paix Mundi" in Brussels, Belgium. This award was given for Masagung's contribution to culture and education through Idayu.

(Hastuti 2003, 36-41; Murthiko 1984, 37-40).[322]

7.5.2.2 From Javanese Mysticism to the Promotion of Islamic Culture

Before converting to Islam, Masagung was a follower of Balinese Hinduism and Javanese mysticism, beliefs that remained important for him even after his conversion to Islam. Masagung's family doctor, Soemarmo, once described him as trapped in a world where only God could save him. (Nasution 1990, 228) During the 1970s, Masagung faced a spiritual crisis. Diarto, one of Masagung's friends, recalled that Masagung was bored with his business life and more interested in experimenting with Javanese popular religion. In April and May of 1974, Masagung invited him and Lee Khoon Choy, a former ambassador of Singapore to Indonesia,[323] to visit a *jailangkung* (a doll made from sticks and wearing clothes, into which a spirit is summoned) in Semarang, a person in Wonogiri who could make a keris fly, a psychic in Solo, and the Srandil Cave in southern Kroya. According to Diarto, Masagung also received mystical instructions (*dawuh*) written on glass (*baca kaca*) (Nasution 1990, 60-69).[324] When Masagung officially converted to Islam around 1977 he was more inclined to Kejawen Islam (a form of Islam which incorporates various traditional Javanese beliefs predating the introduction of Islam)[325] (CV Haji Masagung 1993, 77-81). He took a female *dukun* (later known as Pangrukti Aji) as his spiritual guide,[326] who told him that Sunan Kalijaga had conferred the title "Bawono Aji"

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[322] Although the Idayu Foundation still has its office on Kramat Kwitang Kecil, Central Jakarta, its collection is not as complete as before, because 70% of its original collection was destroyed by termites and floods. On June 1, 1966, the Idayu Foundation opened a library called Perpustakaan Surya Agung (Surya Agung Library) in Surabaya. When I visited this library in 2005 it was still in operation and was managed by one of Masagung's ex-secretaries.

[323] Lee Khoon Choy is also an amateur writer, and has published several books. I quote his book *Indonesia*: *Between Myth and Reality* (1976) in discussing Zheng He's legacy in Indonesia. Although Lee does not mention anything about Masagung, his discussion of Javanese popular religion includes some interesting experiences that could be related to his journey with Masagung.

[324] According to Diarto's, at that time Masagung became bored with his career and began to take an interest in spiritualism and the occult. Masagung obtained mystic and spiritual message or clues (*dawuh*) from Eyang Kalijaga and Eyang Samber Nyawa, eventually becoming dependent on these mystical messages and losing his self confidence. Diarto once warned him not to become too involved in all this, but he replied that if he was being fooled, he would take the consequences by himself. However, if the messages were all true, everyone would benefit from it. Since that time, Masagung distanced himself from Diarto.

[325] Masagung's informal conversion took place at midnight in the early 1970s in a house in Slipi, Jakarta, about which he later said that he was not ready to demonstrate his Islamic faith to his family and relatives.

[326] This female dukun was introduced to him by one of his employees, who introduced her as a witch doctor (*tabib*). She convinced Masagung that she had great spiritual power and was the reincarnation of Sunan Kalijaga. Coincidently, Masagung claimed to have heard voices in his sleep mocking him as a successful businessman who had forgotten God, and that he would not get the key to heaven because he

upon him.[327] Under her guidance, Masagung deeply embraced Sunan Kalijaga (one of the "nine saints" of Islam) and even planned to make a film about him. Masagung converted to Islam due to some messages given to him by Sunan Kalijaga through Pangrukti Aji. Masagung converted to Islam not because of a da'wa he had heard or because an ustadz or religious figure approached him. As a new Muslim, Masagung did not really follow Islamic law, and he continued to practice Javanese mysticism even after his conversion. Masagung was fascinated with collecting *benda pusaka* (antique heirlooms), such as kerises, which are believed to have supernatural powers. He also believed that he could hear the voices of spirits (one of which was believed to be Sukarno's voice),[328] and his title of Bawono Aji indicated that he had spiritual healing powers. Claiming to be guided by a spirit master named Putri Sakti, Masagung opened a "clinic" in his house with service every Monday and Thursday after *salat ashar* (Murthiko 1984, 22-23).

Masagung's strong belief in Kejawen later caused his friends to be seriously concerned, and they tried to persuade him to turn to orthodox Islam, but Masagung paid no attention. However, it is interesting that Masagung once tried to convert a master of Kejawen to Islam (Nasution 1990, 200-202). As Junus Jahja saw it, Masagung got mixed up with superstitions through his association with antique collectors, but luckily returned to orthodox Islam, and later on even promoted it himself (Nasution 1990, 140-142). Hamka criticized Masagung for believing in

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did not have any religion. This is what convinced Masagung to convert to Islam (CV Hajji Masagung 1993, 68, 70-71). This female dukun later adopted the title Pangrukti Aji, and Masagung continued to rely on her for spiritual guidance. According to Soedarmo, he would carefully do whatever Pangrukti Aji told him to do, even if it sometimes looked ridiculous to other people. He typically replied to the objections of others by saying, "Why object? I don't do you any harm" (CV Hajji Masagung 1993, 77-80).

[327] Masagung claimed that Sunan Kalijaga entitled him to have this name, indicating that he had received spiritual power from the saint. This story is also reported by *TEMPO* (July 26, 1980).

[328] One of his employees, Marchatib, recalled how Masagung was obsessed by a miracle associated with one of his paintings. On the afternoon of September 12, 1979, Marchatib was summoned to Masagung's office. Masagung asked him to watch the portrait of him, Sunan Kalijaga, and Sukarno. This was the third time that Marchatib was asked to do so. Masagung said, "It is strange that you always say that you see nothing peculiar about this portrait. Most people that I ask always say that there is something unusual about this portrait. Some said they saw me moving in the portrait; others say Sukarno smiled; and some others say that Sunan Kalijaga blinked. Do you believe them?" Marchatib replied, "Well, at first I didn't, but since so many people have said it, I am a little bit affected. Are there things or places in Padang which are considered sacred? When I went to Padang, I saw a museum which kept old things." Masagung replied, "No, that's not it. The things kept in that museum are just historical artifacts, but we don't make offerings to them. Every tribal leader has a kris, but it is just a symbol. The shape of the kris and its handle only shows which tribe he belongs to." But Masagung did not give up and continued, "All right, I don't care about that. Now I want you to closely look at the portrait again. I will leave you here alone; recite Al-Fatihah before you begin." Then Masagung left for about one hour and Marchatib closely looked at the portrait, but still saw nothing unusual. Masagung said that maybe it was because Marchatib came from Padang, he did not believe in such things. Later Marchatib found out that Masagung usually gave gifts (such as a pen, a set of Parker fountain pens, or a box of imported cigarettes) to those who said they saw something unusual about the portrait, which may have served as an encouragement to seeing "miracles" (CV Hajji Masagung 1993, 172-178).

magical voices, and the two engaged in a number of heated discussions around 1980. However, Hamka felt that Masagung could still be brought to true Islam, so he assigned his student Alifuddin el Islamy,[329] an ethnic-Chinese *muallaf*, to counsel Masagung. Hamka also invited Ghaffar Ismail[330] (well known as Bung Karno's teacher in Islam) to talk to Masagung. Finally, Ghaffar Ismail persuaded Masagung to return to orthodox Islam, after which Masagung never talked about magical powers or *benda pusaka*, although he still kept some kerises which he said were just historical artifacts. Several ulamas said that Masagung got *hidayah* (guidance) from Allah, after which Masagung began to understand and practice Islam more deeply, and began to always wear white clothes and a white cap. Many ulamas then sympathized with Masagung and often invited him to attend various religious events. Later on, he was often invited to be a speaker as well. Although he did not recite many verses from the Quran and mostly just shared his experience in finding Islam, many people liked the way Masagung spoke in public and were interested in listening to his life experience. Moreover, Masagung had never wanted to receive money or anything else as a payment for his "da'wa." At the same time, Masagung kept deepening his knowledge of Islam by asking questions to ulama and other knowledgeable people (Hastuti 2003, 58-65).

At that time many people speculated that Masagung's conversion to Islam was merely for the sake of cultivating business relations with prominent public figures in Indonesia. Masagung once replied, "My conversion to Islam is not for gaining a certain position, getting business orders from the government, or finding patrons." (Hastuti 2003, 48) When asked about his reasons for converting, he would say, "Whatever God wants will happen" (Hastuti 2003, 48). Masagung once explained his conversion to his ulama friends by saying, "I have read about many religions, but I think Islam is the most rational one. It can be applied to the smallest or biggest part of one's life." On another occasion, at the home of K. H. Masjkur (former Minister of Religion) in Malang, Masagung was asked whether he converted to Islam to get some business advantages or to be able to have more wives. He retorted calmly and smilingly that since he was already the CEO of several big companies, what kind of additional business advantages could he possibly need? He once said that he had committed many sins (*maksiat*)[331] in Hong Kong, London, New York, and Paris, but he later repented, and that his intention was now to be a pious Muslim and to devote

[329] Alifuddin el Islamy is currently a professional Chinese-Muslim preacher. I met him with Imaduddin, an intellectual and activist with ICMI, at a lunch meeting hosted by a Chinese-Indonesian Muslim businessman in 2001. His conversion story and preaching are also interesting, but go beyond the scope of this dissertation.

[330] Ghaffar Ismail was a well-known ulama, preacher and Masyumi activist of Minangkabau ethnicity.

[331] Masagung did not elaborate on these sins, but in Indonesia the Arabic term *maksiat* is usually shorthand for gambling, alcohol and prostitution.

the rest of his life to Allah, society, and the spread of Islam (Nasution 1990, 217-218).

In 1981, when Masagung was on his way to perform hajj, among the participants there was a young woman from South Sulawesi who suddenly became mentally deranged and sang out loudly while standing on a chair and table. Masagung held her hand and told her to repeat his words, and then took some holy water in his hand and rubbed it on her. Not long after that the woman recovered her presence of mind and looked normal again. Since then, many people began to regard Masagung as a healer (*tabib*) (Murthiko 1984, 15-18). Masagung believed that his strong belief in Islam had made him more independent, allowing him to devote more of his time to da'wa and spiritual healing. In his healing practice, he usually used only drinking water blessed with prayers from the Quran. He sometimes used a piece of paper with Arabic writing on it, usually quotes from the Quran, to heal around one hundred people in a collective healing treatment. (Murthiko 1984, 40-43) Masagung also provided healing services in peoples' homes (CV Haji Masagung 1993, 86-89).[332]

Masagung performed his third hajj in 1983.[333] Deeply impressed by the Haram Mosque and the Shafa-Marwa Mosque, he then had a vision which inspired him to build similar mosques in Indonesia. These buildings would be built in the same area, and there would also be a museum, library, education center, and orphanage (Murthiko 1984, 19-20). On January 15, 1984, Masagung organized an open ceremony to mark the launching of the Masagung Foundation. The ceremony opened with a speech by former vice president Adam Malik (1917-1984),[334] and the event included an exhibition of calligraphy, Islamic books, and artifacts. The main purpose of the foundation was to implement two projects, the "Spreading the Good Name of Islam Project" and the "Wali Sanga Project" (Proyek Mengharumkan Islam and Proyek Wali Sanga). The two projects were intended to develop an Islamic cultural park which included a mosque, museum, Islamic calligraphy, a library, a hospital, and an orphanage. Kadumangu village at Citeureup, Bogor, West Java was chosen as the site, and the area of the Islamic cultural park was planned to be around 200,000m^2. (Murthiko 1984, 27-34) In preparation, Masagung began collecting Islamic artifacts, which he kept at one of his companies in Jakarta. Masagung's initial plan was to build a museum to provide information about Islam and its historical development. However, this plan seemed to be too broad, so he dropped it in favor of the Wali Sanga Museum, a collection of Islamic artifacts from about 500 years ago.

[332] On March 2, 1985, Masagung suddenly turned to his friend Aziez, and said, "Ustadz, I am worried about Gunawan." Aziez asked him why. Masagung replied, "Because one time I spontaneously asked him (Gunawan) to rehearse Bismillah three times before leaving on a trip. Otherwise he would have an accident." Apparently, his instinct was right. Not long after that, Masagung heard that Gunawan was in a terrible car accident in Muara, Brunei Darussalam (CV Hajji Masagung 1993, 86-89).

[333] His first hajjj was made in October, 1981, six years after he converted to Islam. His second hajjj was made in April, 1982.

[334] Adam Malik served as Indonesia's third vice-president from 1978 to 1983.

Unfortunately, after Masagung's death, the collection has been neglected (Hastuti 2003, 78-79).[335]

In 1985, Masagung's first wife, Ayu Agung, passed away, and two months later he married his secretary, Theresia Sri Lestari, a Catholic until she converted to Islam after her marriage with Masagung. His second marriage indicates two changes in Masagung's life. First, his first wife's death brought to an end their marital problems.[336] Second, he decided to retire, handed his businesses over to his three sons, and gave full attention to preaching Islam. After retiring from Gunung Agung, Masagung focused more on religion by opening the Wali Songo Bookstore, which sold Muslim clothes, religious accessories, and Islamic books.[337] At almost the end of his life, Masagung opened a branch in Yogyakarta (Hastuti 2003, 67-82).

Masagung's other significant plan for his retirement was to build the Al-A'raf Mosque. The idea was initiated by Sri Lestari, who said to Masagung that she wanted to perform *salat tarawih* with the people of the Kwitang area. Masagung then asked his ustadz to hold *salat tarawih* in the calligraphy room under the Walisongo bookstore. More and more people came, and the room was later also used to hold Friday worship, leading Masagung to convert the room into the Agung Al-A'raf Mosque, meaning "a high place." Officially opened on November 27, 1987, this mosque was unusual in that it encouraged its members to have discussions after the sermon. Masagung frequently invited preachers to give sermons in his mosque, and he developed close relationships with a number of them (Hastuti 2003, 80-82). Similarly, Masagung's publishing interests put him in contact with many writers, and he

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[335] Masagung's plans were never realized, but later I shall introduce a similar plan carried out in Bogor by Syafii Antonio, another Chinese-Indonesian celebrity.

[336] Masagung's biography, *Ketut Masagung: Bapak Saya Pejuang Buku*, was written by the professional writer Sri Hastuti and published by his third son, Ketut Masagung. It discusses Masagung's marital problems, which is rather unusual, because, generally speaking, most biographies of Southeast Asian Chinese entrepreneurs cover only their public life, and rarely touch on their private life, especially marriage issues (Hastuti 2003, 67-75). Many people believed that Masagung had an affair with Sri Lestari and that Aju Agung's death was caused by her deep grief over her husband's affair. Once, when Aju Agung was in San Francisco, Masagung sent her a tape recording in which he apologized and explained his close relationship with Sri Lestari. He said that Sri Lestari's point of view and attitude had synchronized with his own desire to spend the rest of his life working to benefit Islam, Indonesia, and humanity in general. Since Masagung converted to Islam, he always hoped that his children and his wife would also convert to Islam, but he never tried to force the issue, and only his third son, Ketut Masagung, became a Muslim, which made Masagung very happy. Ketut Masagung converted to Islam on September 8, 1990 in the Agung Al A'raf mosque, Jakarta. According to Ketut Masagung, his mother, Aju Agung, converted to Islam before she passed away. However, not many people knew about this, including Masagung. Therefore, when Aju Agung passed away on April 11, 1986, she had a Christian funeral. Although Masagung swore to Aju Agung that he never had an affair with Sri Lestari, she still believed that they had a special relationship which they kept secret from her. Finally, around two months after Aju Agung's death, Masagung asked Mrs. Rahmi Hatta (the wife of Hatta) to present his marriage proposal to Sri Lestari. With the guidance of K.H. Ghaffar Ismail, Sri Lestari officially converted into Islam on her birthday, November 27, 1985.

[337] Wali Songo bookstore is the largest theme shop selling Islamic books, ornaments, clothing, and so on. I enjoy visiting the bookstore during my stays in Jakarta.

published books on the Quran (*tafsir*), Islamic arts, and the modern history of Indonesia. Nasution, a famous hero of the Indonesian independence movement, commented that Masagung was not a fighter, but he did contribute all of his energy, ideas, and money to preserving history (Nasution 1990, 1-3).

Masagung was a successful entrepreneur before he converted to Islam, and he never received any formal religious education. Yet he was keen to apply Islamic ethics to his management practices, and even spoke in public on Islamic economics. Moreover, he established the Gunung Agung Book Store based on five principles he referred to as "the 5 Ks": *Keamanan* (safety), *Kebersihan* (cleanliness), *Keindahan* (beauty), *Kesopanan* (politeness), and *Kepribadian* (personality). It is said that Masagung always encouraged his employees to adopt and apply these principles. In addition, Masagung prohibited his employees from paying or receiving bribes. He was also very helpful toward everyone. Although he was once fond of gambling, Masagung prohibited his employees from gambling, even before he became a Muslim. By his personal example he encouraged his employees to always be tidy and to be polite towards everyone. Imaduddin believes that Masagung was successful in his application of Islamic management. For example, he set up a welfare fund by deducting 2% of each employee's salary, to which the company added 3% of the e mployee's salary, and the sum total would be given to the employees when they retired or resigned. Moreover, as a Muslim entrepreneur, he always gave charity to schools, mosques, and people in need. He always supported the religious activities of his employees and regularly invited preachers to his companies to give sermons (Hastuti 2003, 87-91). A preacher recalled that Masagung—unlike most businessmen, who invite Muslim preachers just to fulfill an obligation—always gave preachers his personal care and attention by inviting them to lunch, providing an opportunity to have a discussion (Nasution 1990, 152-156).

In 1990 Masagung gave a speech titled *Etika Bisnis dari Sudut Islam* (Business Ethics from an Islamic Perspective) at Gadjah Mada University, Yogyakarta. In his speech, he quoted verses from the Quran and the Hadith regarding how Allah endows human beings with the capability to earn a livelihood, and some must do so by doing business. He emphasized that trade is a fundamental activity of human beings, and that Islamic virtues should serve as a guide for Muslims involved in business activities. Zakat is a religious obligation for all Muslims, but without an income, a Muslim would not be able to offer charity. He argued (1990, 3):

> Islamic principles must be followed by Muslim entrepreneurs (*pengusaha/usahawan*), so that their business will go forward and be blessed. In Indonesia, Islamic business ethics have not been officially implemented or applied.

> However, since most Indonesians are Muslims, pious Muslim businessmen will have no problem applying these ethical guidelines to their business.

Masagung believed that if trade is conducted based on Islamic law, it would make Muslim society more prosperous and safe. Masagung also emphasized the key factors for making a business successful (1990, 4):

> There are some physical and material factors which can make an entrepreneur succeed in business: human resources, capital, and tools. The mental and spiritual factors needed are creativity, piety, honesty, good intentions, willpower, gratefulness, and other good attitudes. These factors can serve as the basic principles for Muslim entrepreneurs. The larger the amount of capital invested, the more honest and creative management needs to be. Sometimes big companies go bankrupt because of uncreative management or uncontrollable corruption. Therefore, good management needs internal control… Besides being pious, we also have to be honest in business or entrepreneurship, as we have mentioned before.

Masagung also quoted Hadith emphasizing the importance in business of such mental factors as industriousness and will-power.

7.5.2.3 The Chinese Issue and Pro-Sukarno Sentiment in the Name of Freedom of the Press

Masagung never paid particular attention to preaching Islam to ethnic Chinese,[338] nor did he feel there was a "Chinese problem" in Indonesia (Murthiko 1984, 44-48). In an event sponsored by Bakom PKB and the magazine *Sarinah* in Jakarta in 1984 that was called "*Lokakarya Pemantapan Persatuan dan Kesatuan Bangsa*" ("Workshop on National Unification and Unity"), Masagung gave his opinions on assimilation (Murthiko 1984, 44-45). He said that ever since he became a Muslim and began applying the teachings of Islam to his life, he had assimilated himself into Indonesian culture and society, such that for him the *pribumi* and *non-pribumi* issue was no longer important. After pointing out the patriotism of many *non-pribumi* Indonesians, he asked, "On the other hand, can we call corrupt indigenous officials true

[338] A cadre of PITI in Jakarta told me that PITI once invited him to join, but he replied that it's fine that we (he and PITI) preach Islam separately.

Indonesians and patriots?" (Murthiko 1984, 45)

Masagung always avoided getting directly involved in politics, and his enterprises maintained good relations with politicians, as mentioned above. After Sukarno was ousted by Suharto, he maintained his friendship with Sukarno. Masagung admired Sukarno and his admiration inspired him to collect artifacts, books, and reports on Sukarno.[339] He even wanted to build a museum for Sukarno. Masagung's association with Sukarno brought him into conflict with the Suharto government. Masagung claimed that he was in possession of Sukarno's last will—kept in a bank abroad—in which he stated that he wanted to be buried somewhere in Kebun Raya Bogor, under a bushy tree and near a flowing river.[340] Masagung didn't agree with the Suharto government's policy of repressing Sukarno, and during his time under house arrest, Sukarno often asked Masagung to act as his messenger to the Suharto government.

Masagung passed away on September 24, 1990, at 5:15 am. The night before, Masagung spent some time observing the blooming flowers in his yard, flowers which only bloom at midnight. After Masagung performed *salat tahajjud* at 2 am, he did not go to sleep. When Sri asked why, he replied that he would sleep later because he was still reading the Quran. In the morning, Masagung and Sri performed *salat subuh* together. Then Masagung drank some orange juice which Sri made for him. Afterwards, he continued his Quran reading. Suddenly he fell off his chair and died. His death was caused by his high blood-pressure level. He put his last will in his Quran, expressing that he would like to be buried in Citeureup (Hastuti 2003, 115-112).

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[339] Masagung's admiration culminated in a mystical experience that happened when visiting Sukarno's grave. According to Masagung's family doctor, Soemarmo, Masagung and his wife asked him and his wife to visit Sunan Ampel Mosque in Surabaya on August 7, 1990. After performing salat in the mosque, to which Masagung had donated some money, they visited Sunan Ampel's grave. After that, they went to Blitar. They visited Sukarno's house, which was now inhabited by his nephew. The next morning they visited Sukarno's grave. On the way back to Jakarta, Masagung told Soemarmo that Sukarno welcomed us and that he felt Sukarno pat his shoulder while saying, "*Gung, teruskan perjuanganmu*" (Gung, continue your struggle) (Nasution 1990, 228-229). The famous writer Solichin Salam mentions that In June, 1966, Sukarno introduced him to Masagung at an event in Istana Bogor and asked Masagung to publish his book *Bung Karno Putera Fajar* (Bun Karno, Son of Dawn). During the New Order, this book was banned and had to be withdrawn from circulation. Masagung tried many ways to get the book republished, and in 1980 the Supreme Court allowed it to be republished (Nasution 1990, 216-223).

[340] Masagung published what he claimed was Sukarno's last will in a book titled *Wasiat Bung Karno: Berdasarkan Bahan-Bahan dari Hajji Masagung* (Sukarno's Last Will: Based on Materials from Hajii Masagung). As a result he was prosecuted and had to appear in court no less than 40 times (Hastuti 2003, 36). This book was reissued in 1998.

7.5.3 Syafii Antonio: Shaping the Future with Economic Jihad and Islamic Economics

Syafii Antonio (b. 1967)[341] is a highly influential Chinese-Indonesian Muslim who has been engaged in Islamic banking since the 1990s. His father was a *Khong Kauw* (Confucian) clergyman, but Antonio was raised as a Protestant Christian. Influenced by the surrounding Muslim community, he was gradually attracted to Islam, and without a conscious intension to do so, he spontaneously joined his Muslim friends in worship. At the age of seventeen, while a student in senior high school, he decided to embrace Islam. His conversion angered his family so much that he was ostracized.

After graduating from high school, he attended a traditional Islamic boarding school (*pesantren*), Al-Nizam at Sukabumi, where he began studying Arabic.[342] Afterwards, he studied at a teacher training Institute and later moved to IAIN (Institut Agama Islam Negeri, State Institute of Islamic Studies) Jakarta. Recommended by Muhammadiyah, he got a scholarship to study at the University of Jordan. He soon developed an interest in how the Prophet Muhammad's life can be taken as guidance for improving Muslim communities, and during his studies in Jordan he was encouraged to study economics and eventually earned a bachelor's degree in Islamic law. He then attended the International Islamic University of Malaysia, where he learned more about Islamic economics and Islamic banking, and obtained a master's degree in economics in 1992. One month before he graduated, he met some of the members of the preparatory committee of an Islamic bank, and was invited to join their team and help to establish Indonesia's first Islamic bank, Muamalat Bank, which adopted the Malaysian model of Islamic banking. He worked on the project from 1992 to 1997, and in 1998 he established his own company, Batasa Tazkia, which provides financial consulting services and training in Islamic finance and insurance. At the same time, he joined the Karim Oei Foundation to help recent Chinese converts to Islam, and taught at several universities. At the beginning of 2000, he started his Ph.D. studies at the University of Melbourne, Australia, and graduated in 2004. His

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[341] The following is mainly summarized from my interview with him in Jakarta in 2005, the introduction on the official website of Tazkia college, http://tazkia.ac.id/index.php?content=isi&&id=146#isi, and some newspaper articles and webpages that I shall indicate later.

[342] Antonio's stay at the *pesantren* was not very long. As for his views on peantrens and traditional Islamic education in general, he does not believe that the curriculum of the average Islamic boarding school could train a person to embrace terrorism, saying that "if a person wants to become a comprehensive Muslim, the pesantren is the ideal place." However, he argues that the education of pesantrens should be reformed. Yet he feels that most pesantrens over-emphasize morality, ethics, and asceticism, and that is in opposition to his idea of Islamic economics. Antonio also believes that the curriculum of pesantren should be better adapted to the needs of modern students and that the curriculum is too classical and can't be completed with two or three years. Another problem is that all the students in a pesantren usually study with one or two kyai who are burdened with an excessive number of students. See http://tazkia.ac.id/index.php?content=isi&&id=146#isi.

dissertation focuses on the history of microfinance in Islamic banking in Indonesia since the 1990s. Since then he has established divisions of Islamic banking in fourteen conventional banks, set up seven Shari'a-compliant insurance companies, and trained over six thousand financial professionals in Indonesia. In recognition of his work he has won several awards praising his contributions to the development of Islamic financing, and he has recently been getting more acknowledgement internationally. In 2006 he was appointed as an advisor to the Shari'a Advisory Council of the Central Bank of Malaysia, and in 2006 he was appointed as an advisor to Al-Mawarid Finance in Dubai. In June, 2010, Antonio was appointed as an member of the Indonesian government's newly established National Economic Committee (KEN, *Komite Ekonomi Nasional*).

Antonio frequently participates in seminars to present his ideas on Islamic economics. Since 1992 he has established a number of businesses, including an insurance company, a financial consultancy service, and a travel agency specializing in pilgrimage to Mecca. Antonio is one of the pioneers of Islamic banking, and has published several books discussing the concept, theory, and practice of Islamic banking. His interests are not limited to Islamic banking and finance, and he has done work on how Islamic economics can be carried out by Muslims who have a modern business mentality and also have a strong sense of Islamic ethics. He is aware that Islamic economics cannot be practiced in isolation, without the support of social institutions; he is thus concerned with how to build a system which can simultaneously facilitate economic development, social justice, and an equitable distribution of wealth. Although he has a traditional Islamic education, he believes that a *madrasa* education cannot satisfy the needs of modern life. This led him to establish the Tazkia Islamic Business College, whose curriculum combines modern business and language courses (Arabic and English) with courses in Islamic law.

How does Antonio formulate his idea of Islamic economics? In my interview with him in 2005, he outlined his ideas and plans. He thinks that Muslims usually overlook the material dimension of the Prophet Muhammad's teaching, and he regards ignorance as the most crucial problem of the Indonesian umma. Solving the problem requires improving education and the economic condition of the umma. He said:

> I consider education and economic issues to be the main problems facing our Muslim community. When I studied the life of the Prophet Mohammad, I found that, in addition to being a religious leader, he was actually also a successful businessman. But, unfortunately, his ideas regarding business and management are less studied than his spiritual teachings. This can be seen as another dimension of the prophet's teaching. In addition to his teachings on the spiritual life, we also

> have to study his teachings on economics, leadership, and management. That's why I've dedicated my life to the study of Islamic economics and financial management. If you study management and leadership, you can also see the value of Islam. If you study the life of Muhammad, you come to the conclusion that, yes, he was a great manager!

7.5.3.1 The Birth of Islamic Banking

The development of modern Islamic financing institutions began in the Middle East. The first shari'a-compliant bank in Malaysia was established in 1980s, and the first Islamic bank in Indonesia was established in 1992. Based on his experience in founding the first Islamic bank, the Indonesian Muamalat Bank (Bank Muamalat Indonesia, BMI), Antonio has much first-hand information to offer about the birth and development of Islamic banking.[343] In his dissertation (Antonio 2004) he explains how the idea of Islamic banking is supported by a number of ulama and Muslim scholars, and why BMI was established in 1992 with the permission and support of Suharto.

Antonio analyzes fatwas issued from 1927 to 2003, and their bearing on four established Muslim organizations, Muhammadiyah, NU, Persatuan Islam, and MUI. He also presents the opinions of several prominent Muslim figures about whether interest charged by a bank is equal to *riba* (usury), which is prohibited (*haram*) by Islamic law. He finds that Muhammadiyah and NU do not consider interest to be riba, but Persatuan Islam and MUI do see interest as riba. His analysis provides insight into how Indonesian Islamic scholars debate the concept of riba, a topic which has been ignored in previous fatwa studies of Indonesian Islam. For the Suharto government, the establishment of BMI, was a way of associating his secular-oriented government more closely with the Muslim community. The establishment of BMI is considered by Robert Hefner as a case of Indonesian Muslims struggling for economic justice in a banking system which has long been dominated by Chinese-Indonesian bankers (Hefner 1996, 1998). Yet Antonio points out that Suharto's ill-gotten capital was essential to the establishment of BMI.

Since the establishment of BMI, the development of Islamic banking in Indonesia has faced and overcome many difficulties, including the Asian financial crisis (1997-1999).[344] He sees the main factors deterring the development of Islamic

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[343] While conducting his Ph.D. research he participated in the establishment of several banks, including the Central Bank of Indonesia and MUI. See Antonio (2004, 54).

[344] In my interview with him in 2005, Antonio was very proud to emphasize that Islamic banking is a sustainable system, as had been proved by the financial crisis of 1997–9.

banking as a lack of human resources; a lack of products; excess liquidity; and legal constraints. Islamic banking's principle of sharing profit and loss is an important strength in times of financial crisis, and following its recovery from the Asian financial crisis, the Islamic banking industry has gained new momentum. In the final part of his dissertation, he uses a questionnaire to conduct a survey of customers of three Islamic banks and three conventional banks. Antonio argues that one of the important concerns in Islamic banking is to promote microfinance for lower income groups. He says, "The Islamic banking system can be fully comprehended only in the context of social justice, widespread distribution concepts, and attitudes toward ethics." (Antonio 2004, 213) His dissertation mainly focuses on Islamic banks and small and micro business financing. He discusses the initial problems in the implementation of micro financing in Islamic banks, the perceptions small and micro business owners have on issues related to Islamic banking, and offers suggestions for the future development of Islamic microfinance in Indonesia. Antonio's Ph.D. dissertation provides important insights into the development of Islamic banking in Indonesia, and it is unfortunate that most of the related studies only refer to his introductory book to the topic, *Bank Syariah: Dari Teori ke Praktik* (Islamic Bank: From Theory to Practice), and rarely discuss the empirical research in his dissertation.[345] Since one of the problems in the development of Islamic banking is the shortage of human resources, he plans to found a modern Islamic business school. He also plans to establish an Islamic center, including a training center and a publisher, to promote his idea of building the character of modern Indonesian Muslims.

7.5.3.2 Following the Prophet's Leadership and Praying with Asmaul Husna for Success: An Islamic Prosperity Theology?

Antonio emphasizes the importance of cultivating modern Muslims to have the active and moral character requisite to success in business and life, and believes that Islamic ethics are crucial to the implementation of Islamic economics. He quotes Christiaan Snouck Hurgronje's negative comment on Acehnese Muslims: "There are enough Muslims who concentrate on praying in the various prayer houses (*mushallah* and *langgar*); let us now give more attention to the rubber and tea plantations."[346] This

[345] One of the main reasons is that Antonio's dissertation remains unpublished, apart from one chapter (Antonio 2008c) regarding Islamic microfinance in Indonesia in Greg Fealy and Sally White's *Expressing Islam* (2008).

[346]See Anton (2010), Alquran dan Daya Saing Ekspor, at: http://www.syafiiantonio.com/index.php?content=isi&&id=79&&nid=20
Antonio notes that Snouck Hurgronje is quoted from "Islam and the East Indies" and "The Acehnese."

stereotype is quoted by Antonio to warn Muslims to not misunderstand the Quran (62:9)[347] and believe that Islam and secular business life are incompatible, or believe that prayer is more important than seeking material prosperity. By contrast, he emphasizes that the Quran (62:10)[348] encourages Muslim to pursue commercial interests. He explains that the Quran (62:9) enjoins Muslims in busy jobs to make time to clean themselves and pray sincerely, but it does not ask Muslims to only concentrate on religion.

He emphasizes that Islam is not confined to religious obligations such as performing worship within the mosque, going on hajj, and distributing zakat, but also includes applying moral principles to one's economic life. Based on the teachings of the Quran and Sunnah, Muslims should also apply the principles of Islamic law to their economic affairs, social and business life, and personal character building. Furthermore, the sustainable implementation of Islamic economics must be supported by other institutions as a whole.

Antonio has written three self-guidance books. In the first one (2008a), *The Prophet Muhammad: Super Leader, Super Manager*,[349] Antonio takes the biography of Prophet Muhammad as his source material to extract the Prophet's paradigm of leadership in various aspects of life, including business, family, da'wa, politics, education, law, and military service. He explains the relation between the Prophet and entrepreneurship, emphasizing the connection between Islamic morals and business knowledge, and advocating an "economic jihad" for eliminating poverty. He says:

> Economic issues are the most important Jihad in Islam. Why? We cannot do anything for Islam without publications, ink, and money. We cannot send out assistance to Aceh, for instance. This has to be understood by new Muslims. We have to strengthen our economy. The Quran encourages Muslims to be prosperous. To be rich and intelligent is better than to be poor and passionate. I plan to write a book about how to bring the spirit of Islam into management… but you have to enter the market and activate the market… you have to activate the market with your value; you have to change your value with your religious norms. That's our Jihad. So, instead of picking up knives and weapons, our jihad is about bringing Islamic values into the market place (interview with author in 2005).

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[347] You who have believed, when [the adhan] is called for the prayer on the day of Jumu'ah [Friday], then proceed to the remembrance of Allah and leave trade. That is better for you, if you only knew (62:9).

[348] "And when the prayer has been concluded, disperse within the land and seek from the bounty of Allah, and remember Allah often that you may succeed." (62:10).

[349] This book won the Best Islamic Book Prize, awarded by the Islamic Book Fair (IBF), and the IDB Prize (offered by the Islamic Development Bank on the nomination by the Minster of Finance of Indonesia) in 2009.

Antonio (2008a, 1-14) considers the greatest problem in the world nowadays to be a role-model crisis. This is because of the absence of leaders who are visionary, competent, and of high integrity. This problem is equally present in Muslim countries, including Indonesia, which he sees as facing severe moral problems, including authorities at all levels colluding with drug dealers. Indonesia is also facing worse corruption problems than it had during the New Order, when corruption only happened within governmental departments. Nowadays, it occurs at all levels of society. Therefore he believes that Indonesia clearly needs good role models who can encourage each and every Indonesian to be more ethical and moral. According to Antonio, Indonesia is lacking role models who can provide guidance for living "in the world" and also for the after-life (*akhirat*). Syafii argues that that kind of leadership is actually presented by the Prophet Muhammad, because he was a holistic, accepted, and proven leader. He reminds his readers to avoid the distortions of the Prophet's teachings made by Western orientalists and artists. He also points out that Muslims usually focus on the Prophet's religious life rather than his life as a whole, which includes social, political, military, educational, and economic dimensions, all of which can be used to formulate a model which can be easily understood. Muslims often enshrine him very high up in the sky, similar to a god, so that they do not feel close to him. This attitude even becomes apologetic, taking the Prophet out of the mosque and *mushalla*, as if the Prophet's life has nothing to do with secular issues.

Instead of that kind of apologetic attitude, Antonio (2008a, 15-32) shows how religious ideas can contribute to business management. Because almost all aspects of religion require money, inadequate economic conditions deter the development of religion. The absence of religion in business causes continuous dissatisfaction and confusion of values. Antonio adopts several popular management and leadership theories to categorize the prophet's leadership style.[350] This new application of popular management theory has resulted in a new genre of Islamic studies. After identifying the prophet's leadership style, Antonio discusses how to apply the Prophet's example to moral intelligence to enhance business performance. By doing so, he highlights three popular concepts, IQ (Intelligence Quotient), EQ (Emotional Quotient), and SQ (Social Quotient). In his view, the way the prophet overcame difficult situations makes him a superb role model for business people.

Antonio emphasizes that most Muslims pay little attention to combining religion

[350] Antonio quotes Stephen Covey's book *The 8th Habit: From Effectiveness to Greatness*, which has been translated into Indonesian and has become a best seller. Covey's theory emphasizes four roles that a leader should take up: path-finding (how the leader understands and fulfils the needs of the stakeholders); aligning (how the leader synchronizes the system in the organization and company); empowering (how the leader empowers everyone in the company to be their best); and modeling (how the leader can be a model or give examples to its followers). In addition, Antonio also cites Warren Bennis's *On Becoming a Leader* (1994) and Burt Nanus's *The Leader's Edge: The Seven Keys to Leadership in a Turbulent World* (1989).

and business, ignoring that the Prophet launched his business career when he was still a child. Muhammad was born as an orphan, because his father passed away when he was still in his mother's womb. His mother passed away when he was six years old, and he was taken care by his grandfather, and then by his uncle, Abu Thalib. Because of his uncle's economic difficulties, Muhammad had to help by doing whatever jobs he could do. Muhammad's entrepreneurial skill developed over a long time, and it all started when he was still a boy. For example, he was once a shepherd, a job which requires good management and leadership skills, since a shepherd has to be able to direct the animals to a fertile meadow and control the animals so none will be lost.

Muhammad's first experience in entrepreneurship was when he accompanied his uncle on a business trip to Syria when he was 12 years old. As a member of the Quraisy tribe, who were mostly entrepreneurs, young Muhammad was expected to go into business. He started his first business with a loan from Khadijah, who later became his first wife, buying goods in Mecca and selling them elsewhere. Later, Muhammad started to use a system based on risk and profit sharing to run the businesses of rich widows and orphans who needed a manager. His business prospered and many people wanted to work together with him because of his honesty. He engaged in business for about 28 years in Yemen, Syria, Busra, Iraq, Bahrain, and elsewhere.

But Islamic theology rarely explores the implications of the Prophet's business career for Muslims and their economic lives. Antonio carefully introduces the Prophet's business experience and divides his growth process into a number of stages. At the age of 12, Mohammed began an apprenticeship which lasted five years. When he was 25 years old, he started his own business using borrowed capital, so we could call him a business manager. At 37, he became an investment manager, because he managed money and businesses for others. When he was in his mid-30s, he became an investor and gained a kind of "financial freedom" which gave him more time to think about society. At this point in time, he started to spend time alone in the cave of Hira, and it was here that he received his first divine revelation. Antonio points out that the Prophet avoided making riba from his business and also encouraged people to start their own businesses.

Antonio points out that although the Prophet was a rich man, he was not greedy, and considered his wealth as a gift from God to help him fulfill his destiny as a prophet. Therefore, Antonio presents two main principles that Muslims can learn from the Prophet. First, "money is not the most important capital in business; trust is most important" (2008a, 96). Second, competence and technical skills are imperative to success in business. Antonio believes that the Prophet's business acumen has become

i ncreasingly clear as modern theories on economics and management develop.[351]

After publishing *The Prophet Muhammad*, Antonio formulated his Islamic prosperity theology based on the Asmaul Husna (Allah's ninety-nine names), which is about the ninety-nine characteristics of God. As Antonio points out (2009), in Islam, it is very important to know, understand, and believe in the Asmaul Husna. Since knowledge of them is part of *tauhid* (The Islamic doctrine of the Oneness of God), they should be studied without *tahrif* (changing the real meaning), *ta'til* (denying part or all of Allah's characteristics), *takyif* (asking about the physical appearance of Allah), and *tamtsil* (comparing Allah with His creatures). Moreover, there are *kaidah* (rules) for knowing and understanding Allah's names, and the Asmaul Husna is often a part of Sufi *dikir* practice. It is also a popular literary genre in Indonesia. Antonio emphasizes that good character is crucial to success in business, and he offers his exegesis to each name, explaining the original meaning and highlighting how God's characteristics can be emulated by Muslims in their social and economic lives. He sees Asmaul Husna as not merely religo-social doctrines for Muslims to read, understand, and adopt for self-improvement, but something to be performed as a doa (supplication) and a formula for praying for success in life and business (2008b). An example is "(Strategy + Competence + Action) × Doa = Great Success." He further argues that Asmaul Husna can be adopted to organize one's life and improve productivity in business and corporate management.[352] Based on his books on Asmaul Husna, Antonio has developed a series of lectures entitled "Success, Wealth, and Happiness with Asmaul Husna and the Prophet Muhammad," first given at the Al Hamra Mosque in the Andalusian Islamic Centre, Sentul City, Bogor.

7.5.3.3 Implementing Shari'a in Corporate Management and Government Economic Policy

To integrate what Muslims learn from the Quran and the Sunna on economic life, Antonio applies the principle of shari'a to the formulation and implementation of institutional innovation. He states that historically Islamic economics have not been confined to issues of money and banking. Islamic economics also includes social activity, production, marketing, finance, and banking. Antonio is optimistic that

[351] In 2009 Syafii expanded his book *The Prophet Muhammad: Super Leader, Super Manager* into an expensive eight-volume encyclopedia, *The Encyclopedia of Leadership and Management According to the Prophet Muhammad*.

[352] On his official website there appears a list showing how to apply Asmaul Husna to corporate culture. See "Asmaul Husna dalam Lingkup Korporat" at http://syafiiantonio.com/index.php?content=isi&&id=79&&nid=23.

Islamic law can be applied to the formulation of commercial ethics in Indonesia, but only if individuals, academic circles, ulama, and the government cooperate. He also promotes the establishment of a SOP (Standard Operating Process) according to Islamic law to achieve good governance in corporate management. Antonio highlights his main idea as follows:

> Islamic banking activities are not limited to money, but also concern the mentality of society. Islamic banking will grow if we make a living through the Islamic way. An Islamic economy depends on how far we want to Islamicize our lives. The more people are aware of *halal* products, the more Islamic financial services will grow. Similarly, if we save money in the bank it will boost the Islamic shari'a economy. Women wearing Muslim dress or using *halal* cosmetics also affects the Islamic economy.[353]

In addition, he argues that ulama should encourage their followers to consume *halal* goods and serve as consultants or supervisors of Shari'a in business activities. That would be better than staying in an ivory tower. He says:

> I see an interface between ulama and business. So we should invite ulama to observe and supervise our business activities… to give evaluations and guidance to our commercial organizations. They are the censors and watchdogs who make sure that our activities are in line with religious norms and don't contradict religious values, rather like my position in a number of Islamic banks (interview with the researcher in 2005).

Antonio's idea of Islamic economics is not completely apolitical, since he is also concerned with how to establish an efficient, legal, and independent Muslim economy. Such a Shari'a-compliant Muslim economy must be supported by good governance and should establish close relations with the Middle East's OIC (Organization of the Islamic Conference). Moreover, he even suggests that Islamic banks in ASEAN countries should consider creating a single currency, such as the dinar, in order to secure liquidity among Islamic banks.[354] His ambition is not merely to sustain the financial system of Islamic banks, and he also suggests that Arab countries should return to the "Islamic gold dinar" as a single currency, on which he states:

> The current paper money system opened the door to the fraudulent acts that have

[353] See "Bank Syariah tidak Sebatas Masalah Uang" at: http://www.ekonomisyariah.net/index.php?page=Berita:ViewDetailPage&id=128&pp=Front:IndexPage

[354] The Jakarta Post, May 26, 2009.

> brought down giant financial institutions on Wall Street… By the power of gold we can stabilize the currency. After this crisis, we have to ask ourselves, what went wrong? We have to return to the gold standard, where currencies are backed up by gold, and a tightened monitoring system… Today, you own money, but it is not real money, it is paper. Money should be pegged to some commodity like gold. Otherwise it is not real money… Muslims have used the gold dinar in business transactions since the days of the Prophet Muhammad, up until Western powers invaded the Muslim world… I hope that every Muslim country again adopts a dinar made of gold to avoid the problems triggered by paper money, which is a product of capitalism.[355]

He is aware that this agenda carries with it criticism of the hegemony of the American dollar, and that this has caused some worry and suspicion in the West.[356]

7.5.3.4 Economics of Ibada: Ramadan and Hajj

Antonio sheds an alternative light on the economic implications of two of the Five Pillars, fasting and the Meccan pilgrimage,, reflecting his experience in operating a travel agency specializing in hajj.

During Ramadan, more currency is circulated by government and enterprises in Muslim countries than in any other month, and people get more allowances and bonuses, increasing their purchasing power and increasing the consumption of commodities. Moreover, donations to charity increase several times compared to what is collected at other times. But Antonio asks why most of the commodities consumed during Ramadan are made in non-Muslim countries. Therefore he emphasizes that Indonesian Muslims should be aware that there is an imbalance of trade between Indonesia and the oil-rich countries in the Gulf and the countries which export high-tech products.[357]

Antonio lists eleven industries related to hajj, including logistics, finance and insurance, telecommunications, the textile and tent industry, and the souvenir industry, and asks what niche Indonesia might be able to fill. He points out that the Quran

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[355] See "Arab Nations Need to Revert to the Gold Dinar," Gulf Times, June 14, 2009, at http://www.gulf-times.com/site/topics/article.asp?cu_no=2&item_no=297072&version=1&template_id=48&parent_id=28.

[356] In his interview with Hidayatullah, Antonio explained that "the concern is reasonable, because in essence we are now competing. Who has the currency, he will master the economy. Who controls the economy, he will conquer the world. Politics is governed by economics." See "Pakar: Amerika Takut dengan Hegemoni Dinar," 16 June, 2010, at: http://www.hidayatullah.com/search_hitcom.php

[357] See "Ekonomi Ramadhan" at http://syafiiantonio.com/index.php?content=isi&&id=79&&nid=19.

considers hajj to be both a spiritual and material pilgrimage, and specifies how much should be spent on hajj. He observes that many international hotel chains have built hotels in Mecca and Medina. He also suggests that some important local commodities such as rice be exported by Indonesia for consumption by Muslims making hajj. He also discusses the advance deposit of funds which cannot be completely managed by Indonesian banks, and suggests that the Department of Religious Affairs should help deal with the problem. If these hajj funds can be collected by Indonesian banks for investments, that would benefit the Indonesian economy.

7.5.3.5 New Santri and New Muslim Wealth: The Tazkia Islamic Business College and the Indonesian Al-Andalus

When working on the establishment of Bank Muamalat, Antonio found that the human resources for developing Islamic banking are seriously insufficient in Indonesia. The Bank of Indonesia came up against this problem in 1998 and asked Tazkia, Antonio's Islamic financing consulting agency, to organize a training program. Many of the trainees later became the backbone of Islamic banking. Antonio and his Tazkia colleagues gradually came to feel that it is not enough to only offer training programs, so in 2001 they decided to found the College of Islamic Economics Tazkia (STEI).[358] On the other hand, he explains that STEI demonstrates the close link between economic jihad and da'wa:

> When you make a profit, you are able to sustain the mosque; when you make a profit, you are able to sustain the madrasa; otherwise you cannot [do anything]. This is da'wa. That's why I established the Islamic business school Tazkia. (interview with author in 2005)

STEI Tazkia offers three undergraduate programs: Islamic business management, Islamic accounting and finance, and Islamic economics. The curriculum includes Arabic, English, information technology, Islamic law,[359] mathematics, accounting, business management, economics, and finance. Its official mission is to educate students in the theory and practice of Islamic economics, conduct research in Islamic economics, and generate models of community development and environmental conservation.[360] STEI Tazkia hosts three hundred students, no less than 25% of whom

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[358] It received government recognition in 2002.
[359] The course of Islamic law includes *fiqh muamalah, usul al fiqh, hadith and tafsir ahkam*.
[360] See the official website at http://tazkia.ac.id/index.php?content=isi&&id=124#isi.

receive scholarships offered by various banks, enterprises, foundations, individuals, and zakat foundations.[361] The entrance fee is not fixed; the higher the student's grade's, the lower their entrance fee. In one interview, when the interviewer mentioned that many employees in Islamic banking still do not understand Islamic economics very well, Antonio replied that his college pushes students to study hard and sometimes expels students who are not qualified:

> Garbage in, garbage out. It really depends on the educational institutions selecting people who have serious intentions and are dedicated to Islamic economics. I am among those who believe that nobody is stupid, but some people are lazy and not serious about what they are doing. The spirit of such people needs to be aroused. STEI Tazkia expels students every year. Why? Because Tazkia has high standards.[362]

After hearing some students' parents complain about their children facing high pressure in the competition for scholarships, Antonio explained:

> We need to educate our students to deal with stress, because stress in the world of education is nothing in comparison with the stress they will have to face when they plunge into the workplace. Tazkia has a slogan that goes: "If you cannot bear the weight of study, then you should be ready to suffer."[363]

STEI Tazkia requires that its first year students take matriculation courses and board at the college for one year. Antonio is proud of this matriculation education and argues that it is a core part of their moral education. He emphasizes that the Tahajjud prayer (mid-night prayer after Isya prayer) is mandatory. Their idea is to push the students to get up and perform salat in order to make them more disciplined. Confident about the school's educational policies, he points out that STEI Tazkia uses the best textbooks, teaches students Arabic and English, and keeps close connections with Islamic businesses.[364]

STEI Tazkia is building a permanent campus near the Andalusia Islamic Centre in the Jakartan suburb Sentul City, where there is an Islamic cultural park. The name of the Islamic center, Andalusia, refers to the region of the Iberian Peninsula which was under Muslim control from 711-1491. In that period, Andalusia was the center of

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[361] The college also helps excellent students and young lecturers study aboard for a master's and doctoral degrees.
[362] See "Syafii Antonio: Meneladani Rosul, Kunci Sukses Keluar Krisis" at: http://nafiuddinmuhammad.wordpress.com/category/ekonomi/.
[363] Ibid.
[364] Ibid.

the cultural confluence of Muslims, Christians, and Berbers (Lapidus 2005). Andalusia signifies, on one the hand, Islamic power in a Christian Europe, and, on the other, extraordinary economic prosperity, brilliant farming and irrigation techniques, Islamic medicine, philosophy, science, and technology. It inherited Greek and Latin traditions and generated a hybrid Hispanic-Arabic civilization. By demonstrating its vision of being "an oasis of spiritual and intellectual enlightenment in Islam," the Andalusia Islamic Centre aims to spread Islam as a "cool, peaceful, friendly, progressive, non-judgmental, easy, and beautiful" religion that "encourages business and economic development as part of worship."[365] The Andalusia Islamic Centre has built a new mosque, Al-Hamra, which mainly serves Muslims in Greater Jakarta and has a mission to promote the economic empowerment of the people around Bogor.

The Andalusia Islamic Centre combines Islamic economics with multi-functional construction projects through three approaches. First, Andalusia plans to become a training center providing educational programs in Islamic economics, Islamic management, and the *fiqh* of Ramadan and zakat. Second, in cooperation with Tazkia Micro Finance, Andalusia offers loans to 1,200 families in Bogor. Third, it offers charity to orphans under the program MAYD TAZKIA (*Madrasah Anak Yatim dan Dhuafa*, Fatherless/Motherless and Unfortunate Islamic Boarding School Pupils). With the assistance of the students of STEI Tazkia, this program has offered charity to over five hundred children in the Bogor region.[366]

It is interesting that STEI Tazkia and Andalusia are located in Sentul City, a large upper-class area which aims to build an environmentally-friendly town with a highly comprehensive infrastructure. Arai Kenichiro (2001) noticed a property boom in Jabotabek (greater Jakarta, Jakarta-Bogor-Depok-Tangerang-Bekasi) in the late New Order. Such new, large-scale urban development by the private sector reflects the government's inability to solve the rapidly increasing over-crowding in greater Jakarta, and the demands of the newly rich for a better environment and lifestyle. Sentul City began to be developed in 1993, and has its own golf course, one of the most important symbols of the social status of its residents. It also has educational facilities, medical services, recreational facilities, and shopping centers. The Sentul City Islamic Center Complex is one of the educational and religious facilities under the management of several foundations, but Sentul City seems to be the main sponsor.

As Kenichiro (2001, 508) argues, these high-class residences highlight the inequality between the rich and the poor: "As the upper social strata becomes increasingly engrossed with conspicuous consumption, the people of the lower strata

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[365] See "*Syariah Economist Syafii Antonio Builds Spiritual Oasis*", *Kompas*, January 18, 2009.

[366] Tazkia also operates "Lentera 165," an economic support program for the underprivileged, in cooperation with other Muslim institutes, including the famous ESQ.

grow increasingly alienated."[367] In locating an Islamic center with a magnificent mosque and a professional business colleague in Sentul City, Antonio is eager to show that his Islamic center is located in a community where Muslim elites live. The challenge for Antonio is how to implement his mission in balance, on the one hand offering worship services for the elite residents of Sentul City, and training professionals in Islamic financing; and on the other hand assisting the poor in Bogor by way of Islamic charity and microfinance.

7.6 An Overview on the Leadership of PITI by Chinese-Indonesian Businessmen

Since 2000 Chinese-Indonesian businessmen have played a significant role in the leadership of PITI.[368] For instance, the ex-general chairperson of PITI (2000-2005), Yos Sutomo, is a top man in the logging industry of Kalimantan. The branch leaders in Central and East Java also manage Islamic banks. The PITI branch of East Java has twenty local representatives, all of whom are merchants. In addition, in my interviews with several Chinese-Indonesian Muslims, I found that many of them have their own businesses. In the following discussion, I present a general picture of PITI in different locations, and highlight three significant characteristics.

When I joined a welcoming meeting at PITI headquarters in Jakarta in 2005, I found two interesting things. During the meeting, all the ethnic-Chinese preachers sat in the second row, behind the PITI board, most of who are businessmen, an arrangement which displayed the PITI hierarchy. After the meeting, we had a dinner of Japanese hot pot. Because there is a Japanese restaurant in the PITI office building, I asked one of the PITI staff whether the food was ordered from the Japanese restaurant located on the upper floor of the same building. She told me that it was prepared by the Japanese restaurant, but it wasn't purchased. I did not understand, and then she explained that because the Japanese restaurant belongs to the general chairperson, it is not open to the public, but only for his private parties or PITI

[367] A similar problem is discussed by Rangi Faridha Asiz (2008) in his master's thesis *Fenomena Gated Community di Perkotaan*.

[368] During New Order period, influenced by the repression of ethnic Chinese, PITI invited a number of pribumi generals, scholars, and professionals to be board members, and some even became chairpersons. The presence of generals among the pribumi board members indicates that PITI is protected by the army. During the anti-Chinese riot in 1998, an ethnic Chinese friend of mine had to hire several military men to stand before his house to keep it safe. Apparently the change in the political situation has encouraged ethnic-Chinese Muslim entrepreneurs to return to the leadership of PITI. In Jakarta and Surabaya, undoubtedly ethnic Chinese are the main players in the management of PITI.

meetings. I then realized that the PITI office with its Japanese restaurant upstairs really looks like a private business club rather than the office of a Muslim organization.

The construction of the PITIJT (PITI branch of East Java) building complex at Surabaya also carries an interesting message. In the building behind their Cheng Ho (Zheng He) mosque, they opened a kindergarten on the ground floor and a badminton court on the first floor. The prayer hall of the mosque is small, but there is a tennis court in front of the mosque, and every Friday the tennis court is used as a prayer space. A PITI member told me that the multi-purpose building was attached to the mosque to raise money for their foundation. They also opened a simple food and beverage stand. Since the mosque has become a landmark and attracts many visitors, they also sell souvenirs, such as hats with the PITI logo, and visitors can have their photos placed on a pin with the mosque as a background. The revenue, including the rent and tuition, is collected by the PITI foundation of East Java. The PITI building has become a community activity center frequented by Muslims, both indigenous and ethnic-Chinese. Furthermore, the PITI center of East Java has become a social center where indigenous Muslims and non-Muslim Chinese-Indonesians come together for certain events. If you visit the mosque outside of the scheduled prayer times, the relaxed atmosphere makes it seem more like a community activity center than a mosque. This demonstrates that ethnic-Chinese Muslims have alternative views about managing a mosque. The PITIJT has become a bridge between ethnic Chinese and indigenous Indonesians, introducing Chinese culture (through a monthly magazine and the annual Imlek celebration), offering religious services, and providing social services to the local indigenous Muslim community (Chiou 2007).

The business experience of one of the main leaders, Bambang Sujanto (b. 1947), may partially explain why PITIJT can be managed with a relaxed atmosphere, serving for people's various needs. Sujanto has been one of the most important players in the development of PITIJT since the 1990s. He has worked hard since he was a teenager and faced many challenges before he became a successful entrepreneur. He converted to Islam in 1980 when he was thirty-three years old. He claims that before his conversion, he was a playboy, who was debauched and even wanted to kill people, but later on his Muslim friends saved him from doing so.[369] Sujanto runs a manufacturing company, a hotel, and a local Islamic bank (Amin Bank). In 1995, he established the Cheng Hoo Foundation, which is an important financial support for PITIJT, and he later played a leading role in the building of the Cheng Hoo Mosque. In 2007, he decided to retire from the management of PITIJT, but it seems that his retirement is nominal, because he is still involved in some of its affairs. In his talks Sujanto always

[369] See Komunitas, June 2002, 5.

has a rugged, steady, and straightforward attitude. He explains his accommodative strategy of giving advice to new Chinese converts who sometimes overemphasize that their religious practice must be strictly based in Islamic law. He thinks that it is important not to be overly strict at the cost of strained family relations. For instance, one young ethnic-Chinese Muslim was so insistent on his religious practices that he became very disrespectful towards his parents. Sujanto suggested the he take a more flexible approach with his parents, rather than becoming self-righteous over minor points of Islamic law. I find that Sujanto's attitude generally represents the typical mentality of ethnic-Chinese Muslims, in which the Chinese muallaf strives to be a good Muslim, but not at the cost of family conflicts. This is very similar to the attitude of Syarif Siangan Tanudjaja (See Chapter 6).

PITI has been getting increasing news coverage for its religious charity work in the Muslim community. As with other Indonesian Muslim organizations, its religious charity usually includes breakfast everyday and zakat during Ramadan, meat sharing in Idul Adha, and charity to poor communities on normal days. I did not have a chance to observe PITI's charity activities, but a member of the PITIJT mentioned one thing that impressed me. He told me that their financial support for charity is not completely donated by Chinese-Indonesian Muslims, since non-Muslim Chinese also contribute because they have faith in PITI's mission. Without the help of PITI, non-Muslim Chinese have difficulty conducting philanthropy in Muslim villages, because the local Muslim community would be suspicious of their motivation and of the origins of the money. I think Chinese-Indonesian Muslims' charitable activities have shown some interesting symbols in terms of the meaning of zakat. Therefore PITI has become an agent; in addition to their own charitable work, PITI is commissioned by non-Muslim Chinese to distribute money and donations in Muslim villages. Generally speaking, PITI's Islamic charity is almost the same as that of other indigenous Indonesian Muslims. But, if we examine the Quran, a muallaf (new convert) is eligible to receive zalat. Most PITI members are new converts, but they act as donors because their charity is mainly for other Muslim communities in need of donations. Also, zakat is a financial worship intended to purify a Muslim's income or wealth and "return" some money to the poor. Thus the donations from non-Muslim Chinese that are redistributed by PITI are symbolically purified by the Chinese-Muslim organization, and "returned" to the indigenous Muslims.

Many businessmen members of PITI are new converts who do not necessarily try to convert their families. An ex-secretary of PITIJT, who manages a gold and jewelry store, said they are mainly interested in the worship services and charity to the local Muslim community. In other words, interethnic communication is more important than preaching. Converting ethnic Chinese is not their priority, because their aim is to

bring Islam to all people who are interested, rather than just ethnic Chinese.[370] He made an interesting comparison of himself before and after his conversion to Islam. During the New Order era, before he became a Muslim, he was a Catholic who participated in an organization for ethnic communication. However, he feels that what he is doing in PITI is similar to what he did before he converted to Islam. He still worships God, but now in a mosque rather than in a church.

He also made some interesting remarks on ulama and NU. In his view, many ulama are knowledgeable about Islam, but their experience is limited to religious affairs. The PITIJT has an ethnic-Chinese ustad, and also appoints other ustads to help them conduct worship services. He commented that the difference between NU and PITI is similar to the different attitudes towards Islam of pribumi ulama and Chinese-Muslim businessmen.[371] That is, PITI is more flexible and pragmatic, rather than being concerned only with religious issues.

It seems that PITIJT is more interested in managing religious affairs as a form of communal and interethnic communication. The PITI board members frequently visit many Muslim and local organizations and vice versa. Establishing good relations with other communities is clearly a priority, but how to explore inner faith or improve religious knowledge seems to get less concern. In PITIJT's official magazine, most of the Islamic knowledge it introduces is very basic. There is no concern about theological issues or debates of Islamic law in the magazine. As a matter of fact, the magazine uses most of its space to introduce Islam in China, Chinese customs and festivals, and even Chinese religions in Indonesia. It looks very different than other official magazines of Indonesian Muslim associations.

However when engaging in interethnic communication, PITI's businessmen sometimes take the risk of involving themselves in an ethno-cultural tension. While bridging the ethnic gap, Chinese-Indonesian Muslims sometimes come into conflict with Islamic law, as happened when they celebrated Chinese New Year by performing prayers at a historic mosque in Yogyakarta. On February 13, 2003, a Chinese-Indonesian member of parliament from DIY Yogyakarta (Yogyakarta Special Region), Budi Setyagraha (alias Huang Ren Cong), who was also the chairperson of the Yogyakarta PITI (1999-2004),[372] organized an Imlek (Chinese New Year) celebration at the Syuhada Mosque,[373] one of the most famous old mosques in

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[370] This comment shows PITI's attitude towards da'wa for ethnic Chinese that I mentioned in my discussion in the da'wa chapter. PITI cares more about interethnic communication than preaching Islam to ethnic Chinese.

[371] I once a similar comparison heard from a Chinese-Muslim merchant. He told me that he performs salat in a mosque and quickly goes back to his business, unlike many pribumi Muslims, who spend lots of time on religious matters but forget how to take care of making a living.

[372] Setyagraha is a member of a legislative body in DIY Yogyakarta and also a famous businessman in the region, managing a local Islamic bank.

[373] The Syuhada mosque is the most important "reformist" mosque in Yogyakarta.

Yogyakarta. Around 100 Chinese-Indonesian Muslims gathered on the second floor of the Mosque and performed salat and *doa* (an informal and voluntary prayer) to express their thanksgiving to God. Before the Yogyakarta PITI carried out the celebration, some indigenous Muslim organizations expressed their opposition. Their main concerns were whether Imlek is a Confucian (Agama Khonghucu) festival or not, and why ethnic Chinese who have converted to Islam would want to hold this cerebration in a mosque. The controversy lasted until the Yogyakarta PITI held two seminars in which scholars and ulama clarified that since Imlek is an ethnic festival having nothing to do with Chinese religion, its celebration in a mosque does not violate Islamic law. Thus it can be seen that Setyagraha's strategy is to borrow the Muslim majority's fundamental Islamic prayer to perform his ethnic Chinese identity (Chiou 2011).

The other story is told by an ethnic-Chinese Muslim businessman who is a member of PITI in Semarang, and who also belongs to several other Muslim organizations, including an Islamic political party. He recalled that an ethnic conflict arose when the local city government granted a parcel of land to be a mosque's *waqf* (religious endowment), but the land was privately sold to other buyers. Because one of the buyers was an ethnic Chinese, the Muslim community attached to the mosque was very angry and gathered for a protest and threatened to attack the Chinese community. When he heard the news, he immediately called on other PITI members and indigenous Muslim elders to help avoid a possible conflict. When I asked him why he joined other Muslim organizations which most ethnic Chinese have no interest in, he replied that ethnic Chinese are a minority and know the ethnic problem is there. If he does not have more channels to communicate with his indigenous Muslim brothers, it is risky and also would have a negative impact on his business. Thus his Muslim identity helps him to prevent ethnic conflicts and extend his other social network beyond the limits of the ethnic-Chinese community.

7.7 The Religious Orientation and Economic Practices of Ethnic-Chinese Muslim Businessmen

7.7.1 A Comparison

Karim Oei, Masagung, Syafii Antonio, and PITI present four different patterns of religious orientation amongst Chinese-Indonesian businessmen. Oei was a member of Muhammadiyah and Masyumi, and his religious orientation tended to be more

reformist, political, and anti-colonial. His friendship and interaction with Sukarno, provides much important information about the regional development of Muhammadiyah in Sumatra and Sukarno's private life and participation in Muhammadiyah. His close relation with Sukarno became an important shield for his business. Oei's most important legacy for Chinese-Indonesian Muslims was to establish PITI, and even Jahja's foundation is named after Karim Oei. Compared with Oei, Masagung shows less interest in political activities. He neither had any plan to join PITI nor focus on converting Chinese in his da'wa agenda. Though Masagung's education was not that high, his enthusiasm for culture, da'wa, and publishing was amazing. It brought him beyond the limits of his educational background, and many ustads and writers remember his legacy. Influenced by his personal religious interests in Javanese kejawen, Masagung was more fascinated by mysticism and Javanese Islam. Although he later reverted to orthodox Islam, he was able to treat patients through spiritual healing. He did not join PITI to convert ethnic Chinese, but his devotion to publishing Islamic books and plans to build an Islamic cultural park were quite ambitious. Unlike Oei, he did not join any political party, but it would definitely be incorrect to consider him an apolitical person. He built his relations with Sukarno later than Oei, but Masagung is similar to Oei in that he was careful to sustain his private and business relations with politicians. On the other hand, Masagung even showed his strong sympathy to Sukarno. In his autobiography Oei does not say anything about when Sukarno was placed under house arrest during the New Order, but Masagung tried to set up a foundation and publish a book on Sukarno's legacy and even defended freedom of publication. Moreover, Masagung served as a channel to pass Sukarno's messages to the government.

Antonio and PITI faced a different religio-political situation in the transition from the New Order to the Reformation era. Antonio converted to Islam when he was still young. He has a background in local pesantren and a high level of education. At the same time, he has a multiple identity; in addition to being an entrepreneur, he is a scholar, leads a modern Islamic business college, and explains Islamic economics as an ulama. He occupies a double niche in the post-Suharto Muslim society and is eager for the further development of Islamic economics. He never hides his Chinese-Muslim identity and participates in the Lautze Mosque.[374] But according to Junus Jahja, he is not particularly keen to preach Islam to ethnic Chinese. Antonio's plan of combining Islamic economics, charity, and da'wa is more cosmopolitan and international. He is a national celebrity with a high profile, serves as an advisor in the current Indonesian government, and works almost like a spokesman for Islamic financial institutions. It is interesting that, if we compare him with Masagung, they

[374] He was proud to tell me that being a Chinese-Indonesian Muslim is a special asset in Indonesia.

share some similarities. In a sense, his Islamic center carries out an ideal vision that Masagung never had a chance to materialize. Antonio also has his own publishing company, though it focuses on publishing books on Islamic economics and management, unlike Masagung's, which published books of more general interest. In 1990, a decade after Masagung converted to orthodox Islam, he addressed some ideas of Islamic business ethics. Although he was not a knowledgeable ulama, his ideas have shown that his thinking on Islamic business ethics was deeply associated with his commercial experience. His ideas are preliminary when compared to the Islamic economics that have become popular during the Reformation era, but he was at the forefront of Islamic economics in Indonesia almost two decades in advance. Almost two decades later, Antonio looks like he is continuing Masagung's unfinished legacy by promoting a more sophisticated and comprehensive Islamic economics and building a similar Islamic center in Bogor, where Masagung's plan never materialized.

Since 2000, PITI has emphasized Chineseness under the banner of Islam. It cares less to offer a systematic presentation of Islamic thought and Islamic law than how to place ethnic identity at the cultural confluence of Islam and Chineseness. The platform of interethnic communication, so far, has kept the leadership of PITI in the hand of ethnic-Chinese Muslims, in particular, Muslim businessmen, but they have successfully avoided enclosing themselves in an ethnic ghetto. The significant share of leadership in PITI assumed by Chinese-Muslim businessmen has shown their social mobility by way of conversion to Islam.

7.7.2 Articulating Islamic Ethics and Capitalist Practice: Rethinking the Weberian Thesis

Syafii Antonio's promotion of Islamic economics is not a unique case among the many discourses of Islamic finance, management, work ethics, and so on. One of the significant aspects in this development of discourses of Islamic economic modernity is identified as "market Islam," "emphasizing its articulation with Islamically tinged consumism and its connection to neo-liberal, globally integrated economic development"[375] (Howell 2008, 43). It emphasizes how Islamic ethics is "a combination of religious practice and business management knowledge" that is "designed to merge Muslim religious practice and capital ethics" for creating a

[375] "Market Islam" is originally addressed by French scholar Patrick Haenni. Here I quote from Julia Day Howell. This concept has been further elaborated by Daromir Rudnyckyj's article "Market Islam in Indonesia" (2009).

Muslim as "a self-regulating subject" who is able to achieve the goals of "enhancing productivity in an increasing global market" (Rudnyckyj 2009).[376] It is easy to assume that Antonio's view of Islamic ethics works like the Protestant work ethic and then apply the Weberian thesis to analyze how Islamic ethics would contribute to the development of capitalism. It cannot be denied that Islamic ethics may offer spiritual resources for facilitating economic development in a certain socio-historical context. But, by comparing Antonio Syafii and Anton Medan, who was discussed in Chapter 6, we see some interesting contrasts between their ideas and ways of practicing Islamic economics that reminds us to not mechanically apply Max Weber's thesis, without considering the limitations of cultural essentialism.

Anton Medan was a businessman of sorts before he becomes a famous preacher. In addition to being a preacher, he manages his occupational training program for ex-offenders, and he is proud of his double career as a preacher and businessman. In addition, he claims that the idea of Islamic economics has been applied to the curriculum of his pesantren. Antonio and Medan both hold similar ideas on how to apply Islamic work ethics to business to get practical results. Antonio is applying Islamic economics to building the Islamic banking system and new Islamic business schools, and propagates Islamic economics and management to the umma. He pays attention to educating Muslim business elites, focusing on transforming the new subjectivity of new white-collar Muslims who should be able to spur the further development of an Islamic economy and society. By contrast, Medan focuses on the grassroots Muslim community, including ex-offenders. His method is simple: give them a job and ask them to work by learning some low-level skills in order to cultivate Muslim work ethics, occupational skills, and labor discipline. Antonio's education program is implemented in a modern business college, and his Islamic center is actually another training institute; both proclaim to cultivate a modern pious Muslim who capable of making a contribution to business. Medan claims that Islamic teachings are the basis of the job training provided for his ex-offender workers, but the suspicion is there that it may be a type of exploitation. He is a famous but controversial kyai, who even suggests that Indonesia should establish casinos managed in such a way as to not oppose Islamic law. Antonio promotes Islamic economics and expands his business domain at the same time. For him, no anxiety or doubt should be caused by the coexistence of business and religion, because the more wealth Muslims have, the more willing they will be to contribute to charity and the preaching of Islam. When Muslims are prosperous, Islam will have an image that will attract more people to it. Why, then, are their educational programs so different, if both are based on the same principle of Islamic work discipline?

[376] Hereby I quote from (Rudnyckyj 2009, 183, 185, 195, and 197).

In *The Religion of China* (1968), Max Weber argues that the value system of Confucianism would deter the development of modern Western capitalism in China. But the Weberian thesis of Protestant Ethics has been modified to argue that Confucian ethics may be equivalent to Protestant ethics in promoting the development of capitalism in East Asia. The idea of Confucian capitalism has been promoted since the 1980s, and is earlier than the idea of Islamic capitalism, which in particular has been promoted for economic development in Muslim Southeast Asia since the 1990s. The Weberian thesis is an important inspiration of culturalist perspectives. It is so easily appropriated by some scholars who promote Islamic economics and management that we have to carefully examine what it lacks.

When applying Islamic ethics to explaining so-called Islamic capitalist practice, including work ethics/labor discipline, Islamic banking and finance, Islamic corporate governance, and so on, we should be careful about a politics of theoretical knowledge. The thesis of cultural/religious values and Asian modernization is an example. Adapted from the modernization theories of such scholars as Geertz and Peacock, it has recently been repackaged as the "spiritual capital" thesis by Peter Berger and Gordon Redding (2010) that is applied to the case of Indonesia by Robert Hefner (2010). Nobody can deny that religious ethics offers spiritual resources as a positive momentum to nourish civil society or the public sphere, but later I shall show that such thinking easily overlooks the complexity and manipulation of religious values that need to be addressed with a dialectic of social critique. By doing so, we need to examine the "elective affinity" between religious ethics (values) and the "spirit of capitalism" to understand how Islamic economic ethics are selectively applied and articulated by such men as Medan and Antonio. E. P. Thompson (1966) has criticized Weber for only considering how Protestant ethics was transformed as a capitalist entrepreneurial mentality, while ignoring how the same religious ethics worked on English proletarians in a different way:

> Puritanism contributes to the psychic energy and social coherence of middle-class groups which felt themselves to be 'called' or 'elected' and which were engaged (with some success) in acquisitive pursuits. How can then should such a religion appeal to the forming proletariat in a period of exceptional hardship, whose experiences at work and in their communities favoured collectivist rather than individualistic values, and whose frugality, discipline or acquisitive virtues brought profit to their masters rather than success to themselves? (Thompson 1966, 356)

Thompson argues that Methodism had successfully developed an ideological tool to subdue the "lazy and non-disciplined" English proletariat into the industrious

workers ready for the needs of industrial capitalism. The proletarians of the Industrial Revolution were full of passion, self-abuse, and suffering, in contrast to the middle-class Protestants. Thompson questions why Methodism led to a double effect on two classes during the Industrial Revolution.[377]

Therefore, in examining the relationship between religio-cultural values and economic development, I suggest we take Stuart Hall's "articulation" to re-interpret Weber's concept of "selective affinity," critically examining how religious values are linked, motivated, or manipulated to construct a believer's subjectivity in a certain socio-historical context.

Stuart Hall finds that Weber's argument of The Protestant Ethic can be an important extension of the Marxist theory of ideology. He tries to apply his concept of articulation to illuminate a complex historical relationship of "elective affinity" between Puritan ideas (ideology) and "the structure of the rationalization of capital accumulation necessary to the development of capitalism" (S. Hall 1979, 17).[378] In his earlier argument, he says that in the logic connecting ideologies and economic forces, "ideologies have their own, complex, internal articulation whose specialty must be accounted for" (S. Hall 1979, 17). His vague idea of articulation is further clarified later on by adding a few points related to my main concerns. He considers articulation as a process of a subject interpolating a certain discourse or ideology, in which the linkage "is not necessary, determined, absolute and essential all the time." Instead of asking such a question, he suggests exploring "under what circumstances can a connection be forged or made." Thus he asserts that his idea is "both a way of understanding how ideological elements come, understand certain conditions, to cohere together, within a discourse, and a way of asking how they do or do not become articulated, at specific conjunctures, to certain political subjects" (Hall 1986, 53). For instance, taking religion as an example, Hall explains how religion is able to articulate subjects or other social instances:

> It (religion) exists historically in a particular formation, anchored very directly in relation to a number of different forces. Nevertheless, it has no necessary, intrinsic, trans-historical belongingness. Its meaning—political and ideological—comes precisely from its position within a formation. It comes with what else it is articulated to. Since those articulations are not inevitable, not necessary, they can potentially be transformed, so that religion can be articulated in more than one way" (Hall 1986, 54).

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[377] I benefit from Matti Peltonen's discussion of the different approaches between Weber and Thompson (Peltonen 2008, 92-94).

[378] In his earlier view, he considers that "elective affinity" can avoid a mechanic economic determinism but still attach to how ideas can be generated in a class without falling into an individual psychologism.

Therefore, in illuminating Weber's methodological concept of "elective affinity" in view of Hall's articulation, we can take a more flexible and critical attitude to examining Islamic economics, reflecting how Islamic ethics is "contingently" applied and re-interpreted for various purposes to articulate different Muslims. On the one hand, it is important to be aware of multiple linkages between Islamic economic discursive practice and agendas of building Muslims' new capitalist working subjectivities. On the other hand, simultaneously, we can explore the "historically accumulated forces" of how and why the discourses of Islamic economic modernity are created and promoted to respond to macro economic developments in Indonesia. As F. Osella and C. Osella suggest, "articulations between economic and religious practices remain contingent and contextual and any possible outcomes (including 'rationalization') are unpredictable" (2009, 215).

However, if we confine the Weberian thesis to the elective affinity between values and actions, we cannot help but explore the meaning of social mobility in a Chinese-Indonesian businessman's conversion. Through their conversion to Islam, the Chinese-Indonesian Muslim businessmen and the two preachers have traversed the commercial and religious spheres. What is the sociological meaning of their social mobility and religious conversion in the transformation of Indonesian Muslim society?

In spite of their wealth and social status, they cannot completely avoid other people's suspicion about their motivation for converting to Islam, for when Chinese businessmen convert to Islam, the problems associated with their conversion may not be the same as those faced by common middle-lower class ethnic-Chinese Muslims. Not only that, they know how to make good use of their wealth. If we take the Weberian thesis to examine how Islamic ethics influence their capitalist mentality and business practice, or try to apply Daromir Rudnyckyj's concept of "spiritual economies" to find how Chinese-Indonesian Muslim businessmen "reconfigure work as a form of worship and religious duty," taking Islamic virtues "as a site of management and intervention," or "inculcating ethics of individual accountability that are deemed commensurable with norms of transparency, productivity, and rationalization for purposes of profits," there would be some problems for two reasons. First, except for Antonio, Medan, and Masagung, who are keen to apply or promote Islamic economics in their business or Islamic education, most Chinese Muslim businessmen have been successful in business before they became Muslims. I wonder, whether there exists any causal effect, such as an affinity between a PITI businessman's business practice and a preference for Islamic virtues. Second, if only limited to this approach, we cannot go further to examine the dynamic process of a Chinese Muslim's conversion that helps them to shuttle between the economic and

religious spheres. Weber's other paradigm of the sociology of religion for dealing with power and the domination of salvation goods was later transformed by Pierre Bourdieu. In addition to these concepts, Bourdieu's "conversion," which he uses for discussing how "the convertibility of different types of capital," becomes "the basis of the strategies aimed at enduring the position occupied in social space" (Bourdieu 1986).

7.7.3 Conversion between two Forms of Capital: Shifting between the Economic and Religious Fields

Non-Muslim Chinese-Indonesian entrepreneurs and indigenous Indonesian ulama occupy two opposing positions in the social space of Indonesian Muslim society. The indigenous Indonesian ulama own the most legitimate position in the umma in terms of Islamic knowledge, while Chinese-Indonesian entrepreneurs have economic power, but they are "*kafirs*". The latter have a great volume of economic capital, but lack religious capital in terms of Islamic knowledge; by contrast, the former own huge volumes of religious capital, but know less about how to manage a business. A Chinese-Indonesian businessman's conversion to Islam is, in a sense, a conversion of capital. He converts to Islam and donates his wealth to obtain the leadership of a Muslim organization, and the cultural legitimacy necessary for engaging in Muslim affairs. His conversion is a conversion of capital, by which he converts his economic capital into other types of capital, creating a new social space.

Traditionally, ulama are supposed to guide the Muslim community based on their religious knowledge and piety, which implies that ulama should keep far away from any commercial activities which would contaminate Islam. However, Antonio, Jahja, and Madan, hope that the ulama will take on a new role by preaching about commercial activities; preachers and ulama are encouraged to have their own businesses and guide commercial organizations. Jahja hopes that ulama can have their own businesses, and emphasizes that Muslims should not be afraid that business activities will weaken Islam. Medan thinks that if a preacher has a business, that can improve his autonomy in preaching. Antonio suggests that ulama can supervise commercial organizations and activities in line with Islamic law; in other words, ulama should contribute their knowledge to the commercial field.

Chinese-Indonesian businessmen are often regarded as engaging in crony capitalism, typically in cooperation with the generals and politicians. This stereotype is based on ethnic-Chinese businessmen who are supposed to be the most distanced economically and religiously from the Muslim grassroots. This has lead Jahja to

advocate conversion to Islam for Chinese-Indonesians, reasoning that only by doing so can they become closer to indigenous Muslims. But conversion to Islam does not necessitate that Chinese-Indonesians eliminate their Chineseness; on the contrary, at least for those Chinese-Indonesian businessmen in PITI, they can express their Chinese identity through Islamic symbols. Their conversion has led them to create a new social space in which they are more confident in expressing their ideas. At the same time, they donate money to sustain PITI and collect outside donations to implement charity. Chinese-Indonesian Muslim businessmen dominate the PITI leadership not based on their religious qualifications, but rather because of their financial support and management abilities. Through their conversion to Islam, these Chinese-Indonesian Muslim businessmen and preachers have also entered into new religious spheres. What is the sociological significance of their conversions and social mobility in Indonesian Muslim society?

Pierre Bourdieu has introduced the concept of "types of capital" to analyze how various types of capital (economic capital, cultural capital, social capital, etc.) are accumulated, circulated, and reproduced by classes and groups in the struggle for social recognition and the reproduction of power in different fields (life-style, arts, science, politics, religion, academia, law, etc.). In other words, social actors having strategies of converting the volume and composition of the capital, according to the dominant logic of practice in social institutions, distinguish themselves and consolidate their dominant position in the process of social transformation and reproduction. In the religious field, he elaborates Max Weber's idea of goods and interests, and addresses how religious discourse and interest are produced in a system of religious beliefs and practices by different religious specialists, such as the sorcerer, the prophet, and the priest, "competing for monopoly over the administration of the goods of salvation and of the different classes interested in their service" (Bourdieu 1991, 4) that constitutes a religious field in which various individuals, groups, and institutes mobilize their religious capital, including "practical mastery" (Bourdieu 1991, 10) of religious teaching and obligation acquired by common people and "knowledgeable mastery" (Bourdieu 1991, 10) of religious knowledge held by religious authorities to legitimate their material and symbolic superiority.

Bradford Verter (2004) borrows Bourdieu's idea on the three forms of cultural capital, as existing in the embodied state, the objectified state, and the institutionalized state, to identify three form of spiritual capital[379] that can help to elaborate the subtle transformations which take place during the conversion process of

[379] However, I prefer to keep using religious capital instead of spiritual capital for two reasons. "Spiritual" indicates a more individual religiosity which fits Western secular society. In Indonesian Muslim society, Islam is an "agama" (religion), which has its social and obligational dimensions. It is better to not simply consider Islamic faith as a private matter of "rohani" (spirit).

Chinese Muslims. In the embodied state, religious capital is a disposition of religious capability, knowledge, and orientation that "an individual has amassed in the field of religion, and in the outcome of explicit education or unconscious process of socialization" (Verter 2004, 159). Embodied religious capital is the same as habitus, "the socially structured mode of apprehending and acting in the world" (Verter 2004, 159). The objectified form of religious capital has material and symbolic articles, including "votive objects, exegetical texts, and ritual vestments, as well as theologies, ideologies, and theodicies" (Verter 2004, 159). Objectified forms of religious capital emphasize how it is produced or consumed by believers based on their embodied religious capital. The religious capital which appears in the institutionalized state means "religious organizations exercise to legitimate an arbitrary array of religious goods, promote the demand for these goods, and feed the supply by bestowing qualifications on a select group of authorized processers" (Verter 2004, 160).

For Chinese muallafs who do not have any religious inheritance from a Muslim family, once they convert to Islam they have to start learning ritual practices, fundamental doctrines, basic Arabic for reciting the Quran, and Islamic law. This initiation is similar to the primitive accumulation of religious capital. When learning how to perform salat and read the Quran, it takes time to master the ritual and religious doctrines. After that, if the Chinese muallaf gains sufficient knowledge, s/he may be able to read religious books, recite the Quran, or appreciate Islamic art as objectified capital.[380] Furthermore, new converts may even eventually become talented preachers or ulama such as Syafii Antonio, who used religious capital to set up an Islamic business school. Roger Finke (2003) describes this process in the Christian experience:

> The "mastery of" refers to the knowledge and familiarity needed to appreciate a religion. To participate fully in any religion requires a mastery of how and when to make the sign of the cross, whether and when to shout Amen, the words to liturgies, blessings, and prayers, passages of scripture, stories and history, music, even jokes. But to fully appreciate a religion requires emotional attachments and experiences that become intrinsic to one's biography. Religious activities such as prayers, rituals, miracles, and mystical experiences, build up over a lifetime, not only increasing confidence in the truth of a religion, but strengthening emotional ties to a specific religion. Together these emotional attachments and the mastering of a religion become investments that build up over time and constitute religious capital. This capital helps to explain the religious activity and satisfaction of individuals.

[380] Masagung's collecting of Islamic art and his interest in founding a museum of Islamic civilization shows his ability to appreciate such "objectified capital."

Although Chinese Muslim businessmen are new converts, they make best use of converting their economic capital and business management talent to help them master the logic of practice in the religious field. Becoming a Muslim is to get a ticket for legitimately entering Indonesian Muslim society as a religious field, and by using their religious capital they create a new niche in a new social space. By doing so, they must know the logic of Islamic law and what would be appreciated by the umma. For instance, although Imlek salat is a new invention, it should be debated in a seminar according to Islamic law and the ambiguous space of adat/budaya (customs/cultures). This creates new possibilities, but it would be better not to transgress the bottom line of the *haram*.

Therefore, I consider the conversion of Chinese-Indonesian businessmen to Islam as a kind of conversion of forms of capital, from economic capital to religious capital. Through becoming members of the umma, they get entrance tickets to move into Muslim society, where they learn how to follow the logic of practice according to Islamic law so that they become qualified to offer worship service, organize zakat, and even preach Islam. By doing so, they find the best niche for accumulating religious capital and learning how to bargain in Muslim society. In addition to managing the affairs of Muslim organizations, they may go further and express their Chineseness, get involved in political activities, establish Islamic publication businesses, and even create new Islamic knowledge and theological discourses.

Conversion of capital is not one-way social mobility. Religious capital in some situations can to be converted into economic capital. Medan and Antonio have exhibited a different direction in their social trajectory. They built schools and businesses in line with Islamic virtues, by which they successfully converted their religious capital into economic capital, and simultaneously retained their religious prestige, because their businesses are in line with Islamic ethics. Da'wa, hajj, and knowledge of Islamic banking may become a profitable business.[381]

7.8 Concluding Remarks

Chinese-Indonesian Muslim businessmen play an important role. They are not only active in ethnic-Chinese Muslim affairs, but also make best use of their business skills and economic power to propagate Islam and get involved in Muslim activities in

[381] For instance, if people want to study Islamic economics with Syafii Antonio, they do not need to be present in the classroom. They can participate in an on-line course which is more convenient and much cheaper, but not free. Another interesting case is his encyclopedia of the Prophet Muhammad. This encyclopedia is not really cheap; its price is roughly equal to a white-color worker's monthly salary.

general. This chapter demonstrates the social mobility of ethnic-Chinese Muslim businessmen between the economic and religious spheres, but it is clear that their contribution to the development of Islam has not been examined very well.

This chapter examines two issues. First, I use an historical lens to reflect the trajectories of pribumi Muslim businessmen from the colonial period to the Reformation era, showing why contemporary Muslim businessmen get less attention in studies of the development of Indonesian Islam. I also indicate that one of the main reasons making Islamic economics so marginal among the intellectual discourses of contemporary Muslims were the government economic policies from the colonial era to the New Order. These economic policies promoted the economic status of Chinese businessmen while repressing pribumi businessmen. The issue of Islamic economics and the significance of the Muslim business class has been addressed since the 1990s and has attracted more concern and discussion since the end of the New Order.

I also explained why Chinese businessmen are seen through racial and ethical stereotypes, even though they enjoy a higher economic status than the pribumi Muslim majority. I also examined the historical significance of Junus Jahja in relation to da'wa and business, highlighting how he foresees their potential to contribute to da'wa and the resolution of ethnic conflicts. Through introducing several ethnic-Chinese Muslim entrepreneurs and providing an overview of PITI's Muslim businessmen, I argue that they have tried to go beyond these religio-ethnic limits. By converting to Islam, they successfully involve themselves in Muslim affairs and participate in other political, cultural, and economic spheres which traditionally closed to ethnic Chinese.

In terms of social theory, this chapter makes two contributions. First, by comparing Medan's and Antonio's approaches to applying Islamic economic ethnics to their educational programs and business management, I take Stuart Hall's concept of articulation to illuminate Max Weber's elective affinity in examining the causal mechanism between ethic/religious values and economic discourse/practice. I propose that how various contingent and historically accumulated social forces that articulate the discursive practice of Islamic economics as well as a Muslim's multiple, modern, capitalist subjectivities have to be dialectically considered.

Second, Pierre Bourdieu's conversion of capital has enriched our theoretical imagination for challenging previous sociological studies of religious conversion. Yet it does not explain how social mobility and crossing economic and religious spheres is engendered by the religious conversion of ethnic Chinese, but sees their conversion process as an accumulation of cultural, religious, and symbolic capital. Such an accumulation and conversion of capital legitimates their qualifications and increases their bargaining power when struggling for position in the emerging religious field of post-1998 Indonesian Muslim society.

Epilogue

1. Overview

This study deals with the conversion to Islam by Chinese-Indonesians, how they represent their historical legacy and how they express their culture in the Muslim nation of Indonesia. The end of Suharto's New Order opened a new era in Indonesia's democratization, facilitating Islamic revival and the ethnic empowerment of Chinese-Indonesians. These two socio-historical currents have come together in Chinese-Indonesian Muslims who are more willing to increase their public visibility and make public conversion narratives. However, due to the racial, religious, and economic tensions which date back to the Dutch colonial period, many ethnic Chinese tend to regard Islam as an inferior religion. On the other hand, *pribumi* Muslims consider Chinese to be a money-grabbing and irreligious minority. Therefore, conversion to Islam for the Chinese is not merely a personal matter, since it tends to raise suspicion in both the Chinese and Muslim communities. In this research I examine how lower-middle class Chinese-Muslim men and women suffer as a result of conversion. Still, this does not mean that such new converts always find themselves in a disadvantaged position. I regard Chinese-Muslim preachers and businessmen as two types of social carriers (or religious agencies), since they show how some Chinese Muslims make the most of their advantages to assume leadership roles in a Muslim society. The conversion of Chinese-Indonesians to Islam represents only a minor phenomenon of Indonesian Islam, but it has shown its historical particularity in view of micro and macro processes of Islamization in Indonesia. On the other hand, in terms of ethnic empowerment, conversion is not necessarily at the cost of erasing one's Chinese identity. By contrast, they have created a hybrid Islamic-Chineseness in

which they are able to contribute to inter-ethnic communication and help non-Muslim Chinese live in harmony with *pribumi* Muslims.

This study is an interdisciplinary subject examining case studies of Muslims in Indonesia and Chinese-Indonesians. I explore Chinese-Indonesian Muslims' historical legacies, conversion experiences, and their new identities. I also discuss several issues related to the study of Muslim society, including ritual performance and discursive debates, spatial and bodily cultural expressions, historical discourses on Islamization in Indonesia, conversion studies, Muslim women, preachers' strategies of da'wa (preaching), and Muslim businessmen. I address several theoretical reflections, including those that see the conversion of a Chinese-Indonesian as "entering the Islamic religious field." I apply Boudrdieu's concepts of disposition, habitus, and accumulation and conversion of capital to a discussion of the leadership and social mobility of Muslim preachers and businessmen. I then go further to argue that Bourdieu's theoretical framework is useful not only for understanding Chinese-Indonesian Muslims; it can also be expanded and adapted to explore the social changes which occurred in Muslim society during the Post-Suharto era. In each chapter, I consider all the topics as responses to the problems of Islamic studies with regard to their theoretical aspects.

2. Towards a Comprehensive Study of Chinese-Indonesians

As a conclusion, I reflect here on certain issues in the study of Chinese-Indonesians. I have found relatively few studies on the religious lives of Chinese-Indonesians, Chinese-Indonesian women, and Chinese-Indonesian interracial marriages. This raises another question of why many studies on Chinese-Indonesian only concern ethnic politics.

The study of Chinese-Indonesians has attracted more academic interest since the end of the New Order. There has been interesting research on this subject in recent years. Studies by Hoon (2008) and Chua (2008) are two important representative works pointing to new approaches to Chinese-Indonesian studies. In spite of that, in my research and participation at conferences, I have found that there is a huge gap for us to fill. First, compared with studies of the religious lives of Chinese-Malaysians, the experiences of Chinese-Indonesians have been ignored for quite a considerable period. This is mainly because the political repression of Suharto's New Order forced the religious activities of Chinese to become privatized, indirectly discouraging people to conduct research on related issues.

Second, as mentioned in my reflections, Chinese-Indonesian studies had always been tied to ethnic studies. However, Hoon's deconstructive stance brought a more dynamic and critical approach to exploring the hybrid complexity of the construction of Chineseness. Similarly, Chua's study of Chinese businessmen as a ruling class represented a marked change in the research on Chinese-Indonesians. Instead of adopting the approach of ethnicity, Chua was more oriented towards class-analysis.

Third, it is a little strange that Chinese-Indonesian women seem to have become a political issue after the anti-Chinese riots of 1998, but in reality, the topic is very underdeveloped. My case study of Chinese-Indonesian Muslim women may not be fully representative of the subject, but I have found interracial marriage to be an important issue in the exploration of Chinese-Indonesian women's family lives and marriages. In addition to the three issues mentioned, I believe that more sociological insights should be brought into Chinese-Indonesian studies. In this regard, the findings in Asian-American studies have shed much light on the subject.

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