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Negotiating Ethnicity and Religiosity: Chinese Muslim Identities in Post-New Order Indonesia

Hew, Wai Weng
March 2011
Acknowledgements

Many people have assisted me in various ways in the completion of this thesis, and I would like to express my gratitude here. First and foremost, my deepest thanks are to the members of my supervisory panel, each of whom has made a crucial and unique contribution. Without their guidance, this thesis could not have been completed successfully. I am especially indebted to my supervisor, Dr Greg Fealy for his enduring support, invaluable advice and constructive comment. My thanks go also to my advisors, Amrith Widodo providing me with excellent suggestions about relevant theoretical references, and Dr Edward Aspinall giving me helpful criticism to refine my arguments. Moreover, I am grateful to Dr Sumit Mandal, who supervised my MPhil thesis in UKM (Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia) and encouraged me to pursue my studies.

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This thesis would not have been possible without the generous help of my informants, who gave generously of their time, shared their experiences, explained their views and challenged my perceptions. There are too many people to name here, but I particularly want to thank Bambang Sujanto, Budi Setyagraha, Edwin Suryalaksana, Hadi Bun, Syarif Tanujaja and Willy Pangestu. They have been very helpful, not only cordially connecting me to many other Chinese Muslims, but also warmly welcoming me to participate in various activities of the Indonesian Chinese Muslim Association (PITI, Persatuan Islam Tionghoa Indonesia), the Karim Oei Foundation (Yayasan Karim Oei) and the Chinese Muslim and Families (MUSTIKA, Muslim Tionghoa dan Keluarga). Moreover, I am grateful to the staff in PITI Jakarta and Surabaya, including Hidayah, Riri, Ayu and Alip for their assistance. Special thanks also extended to leaders of various Chinese and Muslim organisations who have shared with me their insights and opinions.

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Last but not least, it would be difficult for me to survive the whole process of writing without the support and encouragement of my friends and family members back home in Malaysia. My deepest thanks are to my parents and brothers for their understanding, and I feel sorry for not giving them enough time in the last four years. To all my good friends in Australia, Indonesia and Malaysia, your kindness and support has given me strength to finish my PhD journey.
Abstract

This thesis describes and analyses the emergence of Chinese Muslim cultural identities in post-New Order Indonesia. I investigate how and under what conditions, Chinese Muslims construct and negotiate their ethnicity and religiosity, both individually and collectively, in their public and everyday lives, though I do not treat them as a bounded ethno-religious group. Recently, Chinese Muslim cultures in Indonesia have been objectified in symbols (e.g. Chinese-style mosques), embodied in organisations (e.g. Indonesian Chinese Muslim Association, PITI), represented in popular media (e.g. Chinese preachers), and performed in rituals (e.g. celebration of Chinese New Year). Chinese Muslim leaders promote their unique identities in contemporary Indonesia through rearticulation of their histories and cultivation of ties to Muslims in China. Their motivations for projecting these images include the fostering of ethnic intermingling (pembauran) and the facilitating of religious preaching (dakwah). Yet, there is often a distinction between their public performances and everyday practices, as their open displays of Chinese culture and Islamic piety may not always be replicated in the home. Also, the intentional mixing of Chineseness and Islam does not reflect all aspects of the multilayered and multifaceted identities of Chinese Muslims.

Despite the relatively small number of Chinese Muslims, studying their identities helps us to better understand the ‘Islamic resurgence’ and ‘Chinese euphoria’ in Indonesia today. It also gives us insights into the possibilities and limitations of ethnic and religious cosmopolitanism. First, the rise of Chinese Muslim cultures reflects the acceptance of Chinese culture in Indonesian society, and the tolerance of Islam towards different cultural expressions. Second, although encompassed by ethnic stereotypes and religious conservatism, Chinese Muslim cultures embrace a limited kind of inclusive Chineseness and cosmopolitan Islam, in which the assertion of Chinese identity and Islamic religiosity does not necessarily imply racial segregation and religious exclusion. Third, Chinese Muslim cultures reconcile the perceived incompatibility between Islam and Chineseness, as well as open up more space for identity contestation, but do not necessarily pluralise Islamic discourses. Paradoxically, while there is an increasing acceptance of cultural and religious diversity among many Muslim leaders, there is also a rising intolerance of religious intermingling and intra-religious differences within some sections of Indonesian Muslim society. Last of all, I use the notion of flexible piety to
examine fluid Islamic religiosity, and the concept of multiple identifications to reveal the shifting ethnicity among Chinese Muslim converts according to their living contexts.
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<tr>
<td>abangan</td>
<td>nominal or less observant Muslims</td>
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<tr>
<td>adat</td>
<td>customary practice or laws</td>
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<tr>
<td>agama</td>
<td>religion</td>
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<tr>
<td>aqidah</td>
<td>articles of faith, religious belief, theology</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ahmadiyah</td>
<td>a controversial minority Muslim sect, which was deemed ‘deviant’ by some Muslims and partially banned in Indonesia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AKKBB</td>
<td>Aliansi Kebangsaan untuk Kebebasan Beragama dan Berkeyakinan (National Alliance for Freedom of Religion and Faith), a coalition that promotes religious freedom and sympathises with Ahmadiyah</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Al-Arqam</td>
<td>a Islamic religious movement, originating in Malaysia</td>
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<tr>
<td>angpao</td>
<td>red envelope with money, a present during Chinese New Year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>asimilasi</td>
<td>assimilation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>aurat</td>
<td>the parts of the body that should be covered in public according to Islamic principles</td>
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<tr>
<td>azan</td>
<td>call to prayer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bahasa</td>
<td>language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bahasa gaul</td>
<td>social talk, the slang used by Indonesian youth</td>
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<tr>
<td>bedug</td>
<td>a drum for call to prayer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bhinneka Tunggal Ika</td>
<td>Unity in Diversity; the official national motto of Indonesia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>barongsai</td>
<td>Chinese lion dance</td>
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<tr>
<td>bid'ah</td>
<td>‘improper’ innovations</td>
</tr>
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<td>bupati</td>
<td>district head</td>
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<td>budaya</td>
<td>culture</td>
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<tr>
<td>caleg</td>
<td>calon legislatif (legislative candidates)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ceng Beng</td>
<td>Grave-sweeping day, a festival for ethnic Chinese to pay respect to their ancestors by visiting the cemetery</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cina</td>
<td>official term for Chinese in New Order Indonesia, considered as insulting by many Chinese Indonesians</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dai</td>
<td>preacher, agent of the call to faith</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dakwah</td>
<td>invitation to faith, religious preaching, Islamic outreach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>doa</td>
<td>recital of prayers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DPD</td>
<td>Dewan Perwakilan Daerah (Council of Regional Representatives)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abbreviation</td>
<td>Full Form</td>
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<tr>
<td>DPR</td>
<td>Dewan Perwakilan Rakyat (People’s Representative Council, the national parliament)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DPRD</td>
<td>Dewan Perwakilan Rakyat Daerah (Regional People’s Representative Council)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dulur Tuwa</td>
<td>elder sibling; title of a song</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ESQ</td>
<td>Emotional-Spiritual Quotient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fatwa</td>
<td>religious opinion given by Islamic scholars and authorities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fengshui</td>
<td>Chinese geomantic omen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fiqh</td>
<td>Islamic jurisprudence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FKUB</td>
<td>Forum Kerukunan Umat Beragama (Inter-religious Harmony Forum)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FPI</td>
<td>Front Pembela Islam (Islamic Defenders’ Front)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FORGAPP</td>
<td>Forum Gerakan Anti Pronografi dan Pornoaksi (Forum for the Anti Pornography and Porno-action Movement)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gamelan</td>
<td>a Javanese musical ensemble employing mainly gong-chimes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GANDI</td>
<td>Gerakan Perjuangan Anti Diskriminasi Indonesia (Indonesian Anti-Discrimination Movement)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gereja</td>
<td>church</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GOLKAR</td>
<td>Golongan Karya; the state political party during the New Order, and one of the major post-New Order parties</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hadith</td>
<td>account of the words and deeds of the Prophet Muhammad transmitted through a chain of narrators</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Haji</td>
<td>title for Muslim who has completed the <em>hajj</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hajj</td>
<td>the annual pilgrimage to Mecca</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hokkien</td>
<td>a Chinese dialect originated from the Fujian province in China</td>
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<tr>
<td>halal</td>
<td>lawful or ‘permitted’ according to Islamic principles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>halal-bihalal</td>
<td>a gathering for mutual forgiveness to celebrate <em>Idul Fitri</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>haram</td>
<td>unlawful or ‘prohibited’ according to Islamic principles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hidayah</td>
<td>God’s guidance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HMI</td>
<td>Himpunan Mahasiswa Islam (Islamic Tertiary Student Association)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HTI</td>
<td>Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia (Indonesian Liberation Party); the Indonesian branch of the transnational Islamist group, Hizbut Tahrir</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IAIN</td>
<td>Institut Agama Islam Negeri (State Islamic Institute)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Term</td>
<td>Description</td>
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<tr>
<td>ibadah</td>
<td>religious observance, religious duties</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICBC</td>
<td>Indonesia China Business Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICM!</td>
<td>Ikatan Cendekiawan Muslim Indonesia (Indonesian Association of Muslim Intellectuals)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Idul Adha</td>
<td>religious festival celebrated during the hajj to commemorate Abraham’s willingness to sacrifice his son to God</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Idul Fitri</td>
<td>religious festival marking the end of the fasting month</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ijtihad</td>
<td>independent judgement based on recognised sources of Islam, on a legal or theological question</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ikhwan</td>
<td>brother, comrade</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>imam</td>
<td>‘model’; the religious leader of a Muslim community, often the leader of prayers in a mosque</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Islamism/ Islamist</td>
<td>Islamic movements that view Islam as a political ideology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imlek</td>
<td>Hokkien term for Chinese New Year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INTI</td>
<td>Perhimpunan Tionghoa Indonesia (Chinese Indonesian Association)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>jemaah</td>
<td>community of followers, congregation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JI</td>
<td>Jemaah Islamiyah, a militant group in Southeast Asia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JT</td>
<td>Jemaah Tabligh (Tablighi Jamaat)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JTM</td>
<td>Jaringan Tionghoa Muda (Chinese Youth Network)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>jihad</td>
<td>‘to strive’, ‘to fight’; meaning can range from the struggle to create a just society to the participation in holy war</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JIL</td>
<td>Jaringan Islam Liberal (Liberal Islamic Network)</td>
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<tr>
<td>JIMM</td>
<td>Jaringan Intelektual Muhammadiyah Muda (Muhammadiyah Young Intellectual Network)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>juz</td>
<td>section of the Qur’an</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>juz amma</td>
<td>most commonly referred or memorised sections of the Qur’an</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IKDI</td>
<td>Ikatan Keluarga Dayak Islam (The Union of Dayak Muslim Families)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>jilbab</td>
<td>head covering, headscarf</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>jubah</td>
<td>long and loose dress, which hides the whole body shape</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kabah</td>
<td>cubicle shrine in the Great Mosque of Mecca, representing the direction to which Muslims turn in praying</td>
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<tr>
<td>kabupaten</td>
<td>district</td>
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<tr>
<td>kafir</td>
<td>‘non-believer’ (in Islam)</td>
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</table>
kantor kecamatan  sub-district office
kantor kelurahan village office
kapitan the leader of Chinese, Arabs and other ethnic groups under Dutch colonial rule
kejawen mystical beliefs emphasising Javanese ethical and spiritual values
kerudung a loose headscarf, which loosely covers the hair and neck
KH Kiai Haji (see kiai, Haji)
khitanan circumcision for Muslims
ki a Javanese title of respect for learned person
kiai ‘noble’, title for a religious scholar or leader
klienteng Chinese temple
koko Hokkien term for older brother
koko shirt a collarless shirt, commonly worn by male Indonesian Muslims
Komnas Perempuan Komisi National Anti Kekerasan Terhadap Perempuan (National Commission on Violence against Women)
Komnas HAM Komisi National Hak Asasi Manusia (National Commission on Human Rights)
KOMTAK Komunitas Tionghoa Anti Korupsi (Chinese Community for Anti Corruption)
Komunitas Community; name for a magazine published by East Java PIT
kota municipality, city
KTP kartu tanda penduduk (identity card)
KUA Kantor Urusan Agama (Religious Affairs Office)
Lampion Chinese lantern; name for a Chinese nasyid group
Laskar Jihad Holy War Fighters; a paramilitary force in Indonesia
LBH Lembaga Bantuan Hukum (Legal Aid Institute)
lebaran Indonesian term for Idul Fitri, the celebration of the end of the fasting month
LIPIA Lembaga Ilmu Pengetahuan Islam and Arab (Institute for Islamic and Arabic Studies)
LKIS Lembaga Kajian Islam dan Sosial (The Institute for Islamic and Social Studies)
majelis taklim Islamic study forums
maksiat immoral act, vice
Masalah Cina ‘The Chinese Problem’
masjid  mosque
MATAKIN  Majelis Tinggi Agama Khonghucu Indonesia (The Supreme Council for Confucian Religion in Indonesia)
Maulid  Celebration of the Birthday of Prophet Muhammad
mbah  Javanese title for respectful person
mimbar  a pulpit used by a Muslim preacher to deliver a sermon
MONAS  Monumen Nasional (National Monument)
mualaf  one who interested in learning Islam; recent Muslim convert
mubaligh  preacher
Muhammadiyah  a modernist Muslim organisation
MUI  Majelis Ulama Indonesia (Indonesia Council of Ulama)
MUSTIKA  Muslim Tionghoa dan Keluarga (Chinese Muslim and Families)
MSQ  Management-Spiritual Quotient
nasyid  Islamic music
New Order  Suharto regime, 1966-1998
NGO  non-government organisation
non-pribumi  non-indigenous, commonly understood as ethnic Chinese
NU  Nahdlatul Ulama; a traditionalist Muslim organisation
nyai  respectful term of address to older or learned women; wife or daughter of kiai
PAN  Partai Amanat Nasional (National Mandate Party)
Pancasila  the five guiding principles of the Indonesian state (belief in God, humanitarianism, nationalism, democracy and social justice)
patkwa  Chinese eight-sided diagram, symbolising luck and prosperity
PBB  Partai Bulan Bintang (Crescent and Star Party)
PD  Partai Demokrat (Democratic Party)
PDI-P  Partai Demokrasi Indonesia- Perjuangan (Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle)
PPIB  Partai Perjuangan Indonesia Baru (Party of Struggle for New Indonesia)
peci  rimless cap, commonly worn by male Indonesian Muslims
pembauran  intermingling, blending
pengajian  Islamic study session
pendopo  a Javanese-style hall or veranda
Peranakan  locally born or mixed blood; acculturated Chinese Indonesians
Persis  Persatuan Islam (Islamic Association)

pesantren  Islamic boarding school

PINTI  Perempuan PINTI (Women’s Division of INTI)
PITI  Persatuan Islam Tionghoa Indonesia (Indonesian Chinese Muslim Association)

PKB  Partai Kebangkitan Bangsa (National Awakening Party)
PKI  Partai Komunis Indonesia (Indonesian Communist Party)
PKS  Partai Keadilan Sejahtera (Prosperous Justice Party)
PPIM  Pusat Pengkajian Islam dan Masyarakat (Centre for the Study of Islam and Society)

PPP  Partai Persatuan Pembangunan (United Development Party)

preman  thug, gangster

pribumi  son of the soil; indigenous Indonesian

pribumisasi  indigenisation

PSMTI  Paguyuban Sosial Marga Tionghoa Indonesia (Indonesian Chinese Clan Association)

qigong  Chinese breathing exercise

Qur’an  God’s word revealed to the Prophet Muhammad and the supreme source of Islam

RAHIMA  a Muslim NGO promoting rights of women in Islam

rakaat  prostrations during prayer

Ramadan  Islamic fasting month

reformasi  reformation

Salaf  the ‘pious ancestors’ (the Prophet Muhammad, his companions and their followers of the first three generations)

Salafi  Muslim who seek to emulate practices of pious ancestors (Salaf)

Salafist/ Salafism  reform movements that seek to restore the ‘true’ faith, hostile to ‘improper’ traditionalist Muslims practise and ‘corrupted’ modern Western influences; attitudes and approaches associated with those movements

santri  student at traditional Muslim school, pious Muslim

SARA  Suku, Agama, Ras, Antar Golongan (issues related to ethnicity, religion, race and inter-group relations)

saresehan  discussion, meeting
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sarekat Islam</td>
<td>Islamic Union; the successor of Sarekat Dagang Islam (Islamic Trade Union)</td>
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<td>SDI</td>
<td>Sarekat Dagang Islam (Islamic Trade Union)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sesat</td>
<td>deviant, misguided</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sholat</td>
<td>ritual prayers performed five times daily</td>
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<tr>
<td>shalawat</td>
<td>prayers for the God</td>
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<td>sharia</td>
<td>Islamic law; the Islamic way of life</td>
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<td>silaturahim</td>
<td>friendship, good relationship</td>
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<tr>
<td>sinetron</td>
<td>soap operas</td>
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<tr>
<td>slametan</td>
<td>communal feast to observe occasions of ritual importance</td>
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<tr>
<td>SNB</td>
<td>Solidaritas Nusa Bangsa (Solidarity for Nation)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STEI</td>
<td>Sekolah Tinggi Ekonomi Islam (College of Islamic Economy)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sufi</td>
<td>one who follows Islamic mysticism</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sufism</td>
<td>Islamic mysticism</td>
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<tr>
<td>sujud syukur</td>
<td>a prayer to express gratitude to God</td>
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<tr>
<td>syahadat</td>
<td>the profession of Islamic faith: 'There is no God but Allah and Muhammad is God's messenger'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>syiar</td>
<td>preaching</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>syirik</td>
<td>idolatry, polytheism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tahliitan</td>
<td>the reciting of Qur'anic verses to mark life crises, in particular</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>the death of family members and respected figures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>takbiran</td>
<td>recitation of 'God is great'; night of the last day of fasting month</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>taklid</td>
<td>strict following of traditional Islamic interpretations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tangzhuan</td>
<td>traditional Chinese male clothing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>taraweh</td>
<td>non-obligatory evening prayers during fasting month</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tauhid</td>
<td>the doctrine of the unity of God</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TMII</td>
<td>Taman Mini Indonesia Indah (Beautiful Indonesia Miniature Park)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totok</td>
<td>pure blood; Chinese Indonesians who practise Chinese culture and can speak Mandarin or any Chinese dialect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tradisi</td>
<td>tradition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuhan</td>
<td>God</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UGM</td>
<td>Universitas Gadjah Mada (The University of Gadjah Mada)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UI</td>
<td>Universitas Indonesia (The University of Indonesia)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Term</td>
<td>Definition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UIN</td>
<td>Universitas Islam Negeri (State Islamic University)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ulama</td>
<td>Islamic scholars</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ummah</td>
<td>the Islamic community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>umrah</td>
<td>the lesser pilgrimage to Mecca</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ustaz</td>
<td>religious teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ustazah</td>
<td>female religious teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vihara</td>
<td>Buddhist temple</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Walisongo</td>
<td>the nine saints popularly credited for spreading Islam in Java</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wali kota</td>
<td>mayor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WALUBI</td>
<td>Perwakilan Umat Buddha Indonesia (The Indonesian Buddhist Council Association)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wayang kulit</td>
<td>shadow puppet show</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wisata religi</td>
<td>religious tourist site</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WNI</td>
<td>Warga Negara Indonesia (Indonesian Citizen), but commonly refers to ethnic Chinese minority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>yayasan</td>
<td>foundation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>YHMCHI</td>
<td>Yayasan Haji Muhammad Cheng Hoo Indonesia (Muhammad Cheng Hoo Foundation)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yayasan Karim Oei</td>
<td>Karim Oei Foundation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>zakat</td>
<td>almsgiving, one of the five pillars of Islam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ziarah</td>
<td>visiting sacred places, such as tombs of Muslim saints, for prayer and worship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>zikir</td>
<td>Islamic mystical chanting</td>
</tr>
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</table>
Chapter 1

Introduction: The Emergence of Chinese Muslim Cultural Identities

Prologue: Crossing Boundaries

The politics of ethnicity and religion have always concerned me since I was an undergraduate. During Malaysia's reformasi (reformation) period in 1998, I was involved in various causes, advocating a more democratic and just society. Like other reform-minded Malaysians, I faced not only the repression of state-controlled media and authoritarian laws, but also the challenges of racialised and religious politics. While supporting the efforts of Chinese educational groups to demand equal rights, I was rather uncomfortable with their essentialist notions of Chineseness. While admiring the courage of Muslim activists to fight against injustice, I was rather apprehensive about some of their conservative attitudes. While there was growing cooperation between Chinese and Muslim activists, the boundaries between them remained. I found myself having to bridge 'inter and intra' religious and ethnic divides, as well as confront questions such as: How does one fight ethnic discrimination, without falling into racialised discourses promoted by ruling parties? How can Islam play a role in mobilising Muslims to call for clean government, without underscoring intolerant religious attitudes? How can the assertion of ethnic and religious identities empower minorities, without increasing social exclusivity? In other words, what are the possibilities and challenges for ethnic and religious cosmopolitanism in multi-ethnic and multi-religious societies? Such questions have always intrigued me and in some ways led me to this PhD research.

In 2002, when I was a journalist in a Mandarin-language daily, I met a Chinese Muslim leader at an inter-faith dialogue. That encounter led to a feature report and later an MPhil thesis about Chinese Muslim identities in Malaysia. One chapter was about Chinese Muslim efforts to build Chinese-style mosques. Generally speaking in Malaysia, the state-controlled and ethnicised Islamic bureaucracy, which equates Malays with Muslims, discouraged Chinese-style mosque proposals, if not outright rejected them. In 2005, I came across an article about the Surabaya Cheng Hoo Mosque, a Chinese-style mosque in Indonesia. Why are Chinese-style mosques possible in Indonesia but not Malaysia? Influenced by negative media reporting about Indonesia, from 'anti-Chinese' riots to
terrorist attacks, many Malaysians, including myself at that time, were unaware of the many positive developments in Indonesia, such as abolishing the distinction between *pribumi* (native) and *non-pribumi* (non-native) citizens, and the flourishing progressive Islamic discourses. All these differences raised my curiosity and triggered the idea of comparative research project on Chinese Muslims in Malaysia and Indonesia. Although this study is primarily about Indonesia, I will nonetheless make some references to Malaysia.

As I will illustrate later, my informants, Chinese Muslims in Indonesia, are constantly crossing boundaries. I too, by doing this study, found myself crossing various boundaries, including national, ethnic and religious ones. I set foot in Indonesia for the first time in 2007 and spent a year doing research in a place where the culture and politics seemed familiar, yet different, to me. A non-Muslim, I spent most of my time with Muslims, attending mosque activities and following religious discussions. I encountered converts with diverse religiosities, from puritanical salafis to ‘unobservant’ beer-drinking Muslims. A Chinese-speaking person, I found myself with fewer opportunities to speak Mandarin and most of the time, conversed in Indonesian. All these experiences prompted me to appreciate the diversity between and within various ethnic and religious groups, as well as the criss-crossing and mixing of different cultures.

**Stabilising the Unstable: Whither Chinese Muslim Cultural Identities?**

‘Prophet Muhammad urges Muslims to seek knowledge even as far as China. Since many ethnic Chinese reside in Indonesia, Indonesian Muslims are lucky enough that we can learn from them without travelling to mainland China’ (Field note, 16 October 2008). Tan Mei Hwa, a popular female Chinese Muslim preacher, delivered this message to her audience of mostly Javanese Muslims during a *halal-bihalal* (a meeting for mutual forgiveness) in Surabaya in 2008. Dressed in stylish Islamic dress, she also claimed that some of the Walisongo (Muslims saints popularly credited with bringing Islam to Java), were of Chinese descent. She said this to reassure her audience of her credentials as a Chinese preacher, and to promote a better relationship between Chinese and non-Chinese Indonesians.¹ Also in 2008, at a breaking of the fast function during Ramadan, another

¹ In this thesis, most of the time, I use the terms ‘Chinese Indonesians’ and ‘ethnic Chinese in Indonesia’ interchangeably for those Indonesians of a Chinese descent. It is also important to distinguish the usage of ‘Chinese Muslims’ and ‘Muslims in China’ in this thesis. I will use ‘Chinese Muslims’ for those who are
Chinese preacher, Syaukanie Ong, wearing red traditional Chinese dress, spoke in front of Muslims crowded into the compound of the Muhammad Cheng Hoo Mosque, a Chinese-style mosque in Surabaya. These two events combine Chinese cultural symbols and Islamic messages, as well as bring together Chinese preachers and Muslim audiences, to challenge the widely held perception by both Chinese and Muslim Indonesians that ‘Chineseness’ and Islam are incompatible.

During the New Order period, Chinese Indonesians who converted to Islam had always been assumed to have lost their Chineseness, and assimilated themselves into various local ethnic majorities. Today, there are increasing numbers of Chinese Muslims who are publicly performing their Chinese ethnicity along with Islamic religiosity, exemplified by the popularity of Chinese preachers, the establishment of Chinese-style mosques, the celebrations of Chinese New Year in mosques, and the engagement of Chinese converts in various Islamic activist movements. Chinese Muslim leaders-cum-businessmen and preachers are the main forces behind this manifestation of ethno-religious identity. They do so for at least two different, but not necessarily contradictory, reasons: the first is ethnic empowerment and the second is religious preaching. Let me make five inter-related points regarding the resurgence of Chinese Muslim cultural identities. Here, I only provide a few brief snapshots, and will discuss these developments in more detail later in this thesis.

First, the emergence of Chinese Muslim cultural identities is a reflection of the post-1998 cultural diversity in Indonesia. It demonstrates the return of Chinese cultural symbols in Indonesian public spaces, and underscores the tolerance of Indonesian Islam towards different cultural expressions. The appreciation of Chinese Muslim cultures, to a certain extent, shows the commitment of the Indonesian government, civil society and

Muslims and happen to be ethnically Chinese in Indonesia, while ‘Muslims in China’ to refer to Muslims reside in Mainland China who are mostly ethnic Hui. For more discussion of Muslims in China and the complex meanings of ‘Hui’, see Gladney (1991) and Gillette (2000).

2 Cheng Ho is a Hokkien pronunciation for Zheng He (as pronounced in Mandarin). Given that most Chinese in Java are Hokkien, Cheng Ho is more commonly used to refer to the prominent Chinese Muslim admiral. Cheng Ho is often spelt with one ‘o’. However, the mosque in Surabaya is called ‘Masjid Muhammad Cheng Hoo’ (Muhammad Cheng Hoo Mosque), which spelt with two ‘o’. In this thesis, I use ‘Cheng Ho’ to refer to the Chinese Muslim figure, while ‘Cheng Hoo Mosque’ refers to the Chinese-style mosque in Surabaya.

3 The differentiation betwee Chinese Indonesians and the local ‘native’ population has been always illustrated by the terms the ‘pribumi’ (literally meaning ‘sons of the soil’), used to refer to non-Chinese natives, and ‘non-pribumi’, used mainly to refer to ethnic Chinese. Although the two terms have been officially abolished following the installation of the Presidential Instruction No.25/1998, both Chinese and non-Chinese alike still often colloquially use the terms today. In this thesis, I avoid using these terms not only because of political correctness, but also of my belief that all people born in Indonesia are equally ‘natives’. I will use ‘non-Chinese’ and sometimes ‘local ethnic majority’ to refer to Indonesians who are not Chinese. I will also use the specific ethnic labels, such as ‘Javanese’ and ‘Arab Indonesians’ if I refer to this ethnicity in particular. The term ‘pribumi’ and ‘non-pribumi’ are only used if I refer to literature and conversations that use such terminologies.
ordinary people to foster and celebrate ethnic and religious pluralism. Among Chinese Muslim leaders, there is also a shift from the dominant discourse of 'assimilation of Chinese Indonesians through Islam' (asimilasi lewat Islam) during the New Order period to 'preaching Islam through Chinese cultural approaches' (dakwah pendekatan budaya) in the past decade.

Second, there is a distinction between the public performance and everyday living identities of Chinese Muslim leaders and preachers. As I will illustrate in chapter 4, some Chinese preachers consciously use Chinese cultural symbols, such as traditional clothing and names to attract audiences. Yet, many of these preachers have no Chinese language ability and do not practise Chinese culture in their daily life. Similarly, some Chinese businessmen, dressed in Muslim attire, frequently attend the Friday prayers in the Surabaya Cheng Hoo Mosque, yet this does not necessarily mean they also observe Islam at home. In other words, they present their Chineseness and Islamic religiosity in public, but do not necessarily practise such identities in private.

Third, the manifestation of Chinese Muslim cultural identities does not symbolise an existing ethno-religious reality, but rather brings a new reality into being. It does not reflect the heterogeneity of cultural interactions and religious practices of many ordinary Chinese Muslims. While some Chinese preachers parade their Chineseness, there are Chinese Muslims who reject being labelled 'Chinese Muslim' and claim to be 'biologically Chinese, culturally Javanese'. While some Chinese Muslim leaders celebrate Chinese New Year in mosques, there are also a few Chinese Muslims who insist that Chinese New Year celebrations are haram (prohibited according to Islamic law). Most Chinese Muslims are in between these two ends of the spectrum. Also, their ethnic identifications are always shifting, while their flexible religiosities are a negotiation between religious doctrines and everyday living conditions.

Fourth, in general, Chinese Muslim culture is well received by many local Muslims, as most followers of Chinese preachers and congregation members at Chinese-style mosques are non-Chinese Muslims. Although not breaking down ethnic stereotypes, such phenomena help in creating a better image of Chinese Indonesians among the broader Indonesian population. I would argue that, to a certain extent, the popularity of Chinese preachers and Chinese-style mosques is a commendable example of the celebration of inclusive Chinese cultural expression in Indonesia today, in which
Chineseness is no longer a sign of exclusivity, but a common heritage shared by all Indonesians, and a symbolic commodity in the ‘pop Islam’ industry.

Fifth, despite objections from some ultra-puritan Muslims, many Muslims leaders endorse the expression of Chinese Muslim cultural identities, seeing it as a form of *dakwah* and a reassertion of plural Islamic traditions in Indonesia. For instance, although not contributing to a critical understanding of Islam, Chinese preachers creatively colour Islamic appearances and subtly promote the universality of Islam. Also, both the inclusive architectural design and socio-religious activities in the Surabaya Cheng Hoo Mosque show that the assertion of Islamic identity among Chinese converts does not affect their relations with non-Muslims. As I will discuss in chapter 3, the mosque is arguably is a local cosmopolitan space allowing Muslim and non-Muslims from different ethnic groups to interact with each other.

The five arguments laid out above are all related to the research focus of my thesis, which is analysing the emergence of Chinese Muslim cultural identities in post-New Order Indonesia, without treating Chinese Muslims as a bounded ethno-religious group. Departing from previous works on Chinese Muslims that focus on their histories, conversions and organisations, this thesis investigates how and under what conditions, Chinese Muslims construct and negotiate their ethnicity and religiosity, both individually and collectively, both in their public and private life. Using Chinese Muslim identities as a case study, this thesis will also examine the possibilities and limitations of ethnic and religious cosmopolitanism in contemporary Indonesia. I hope this study contributes to the academic debate on ethnicity, religiosity and cultural interactions.

**Islamic Resurgence, Chinese Euphoria and Chinese Muslims in Indonesia**

Before discussing Chinese Muslim identities in more detail, it is important to provide some brief information on Chinese and Islamic identities in Indonesia. All around the world, in the last few decades, there have been various attempts to create various social movements based on common identities (Eriksen 2002; Castells 1998). Indeed, we have witnessed the rise of religious ‘fundamentalisms’, the spread of nationalist movements, and the redefinitions of claims to race and ethnicity in many parts of the world. Indonesia is no exception. The political openness after the fall of Suharto allowed a
range of ethnic, religious and cultural groups to express their identities in the public domain more freely. For example, the ‘resurgence’ of nationalist separatist movements, such as those in Aceh and Papua; the ‘revitalisation’ of ethnic identities, such as Chinese and Dayak; and the ‘rise’ of globalised religiosity, such as the Pentecostal-charismatic Christianity and transnational Islamism.

Keys to my research are the phenomena of ‘Chinese euphoria’ and ‘Islamic resurgence’, which refer to the rising assertion of Chinese and Islamic identities in Indonesia today. Indeed, the emergence of Chinese Muslim cultures is an outcome of several interrelated processes that occurred in Indonesia and abroad from the 1990s. Such events include the China’s growing economic and diplomatic power; improving relations between China and Indonesia after the Cold war; Indonesia’s expanding democratic space; the recognition of Chinese cultures after the fall of the New Order regime; the rise and diversification of Islamic consumer markets; as well as the divergent progressive and conservative tendencies of Indonesian Islam. There has been considerable research done in post-New Order Indonesia on both Muslim (e.g. Salim & Azra 2003; Bruinessen 2002; Fox 2004; Hefner 2000; Fealy 2008) and Chinese identities (e.g. Budianta 2007; Heryanto 2008; Hoon 2008; Purdey 2003; Suryadinata 2001). Drawing from these studies, I will briefly review four phenomena which link to both Chinese and Muslim identities in Indonesia today to locate my research topic in its broader context.

The first development is democratisation in Indonesia and the emergence of identity politics. During the Suharto period, the introduction of the SARA (Suku, Agama, Ras, dan Antar-golongan) concept restricted Indonesians from discussing matters related to ethnic, religious, racial and inter-group differences in public spaces.4 Both cultural and political expression of Chinese and Islamic identities in public life were controlled and contained. The New Order regime systematically suppressed any expression of Chinese cultural and religious identities; and at the same time, marginalised ethnic Chinese in all social, educational and political arenas. Meanwhile, although most Indonesians were Muslim, the expression of Islam, especially political Islam, was restricted especially during the early periods of Suharto’s regime. The collapse of the authoritarian regime in 1998 dramatically changed political dynamics. Post-Suharto governments revoked the official ban on Chinese language, media, religion and culture in public spaces; as well as

4 ‘SARA’ is an acronym that summarises the ‘sensitive’ issues of ethnicity (suku), religion (agama), race (ras) and inter-group (antar golongan) differences.
abolishing almost all discriminatory laws towards Chinese Indonesians. At the same time, Islam regained its momentum as a cultural resource for political mobilisation.

Both Chinese and Muslim leaders used the political openness of the post-Suharto period to express their identity through political parties and social organisations (see chapter 5). Some ethnic Chinese have formed organisations to promote Chinese culture and liberate their long-suppressed identity, as well as fight against discrimination. Many Chinese Indonesians have also become candidates, some successful in elections, not only as legislators at both local and national levels, but also as bupati (district head) and high-profile ministers. Meanwhile, some Muslims have formed Islamic parties and NGOs to promote different versions of Islamic interpretation, from liberal to radical, from progressive to conservative. Although the performance of Islamic parties in electoral politics is rather poor, Islam is playing a greater role in Indonesian politics today. Almost all major political parties in some way uphold Islamic causes, including some nationalist or secular parties which have adopted Islamic agendas in their party organisations and slogans (Fealy 2008). Also, in certain regions, local political authorities have implemented sharia-inspired by-laws and regulations.

This resurgence of different forms of identity politics, on the one hand, is celebrated as a reflection of political openness in democratising Indonesia and empowerment for marginalised groups; on the other hand, it is criticised for escalating ethnic differences and increasing religious intolerance. As a few scholars (Budianta 2007; Heryanto 2004; Hoon 2009) have pointed out, there are concerns that the exuberant public celebration of Chineseness might promote social exclusivity, reinforce ethnic stereotypes, and deepen prejudice against ethnic Chinese among the broader Indonesian population. Similarly, there are concerns that the affirmation of Islamic piety might generate political tensions, intensify religious conservatism, undermine women’s rights and threaten local cultural traditions (Beatty 1999; Hefner 2005; Robinson 2008). Nevertheless, Kahn (2008) has reminded us that there is no necessary contradiction between cosmopolitan sensibilities and identity assertions. Is it possible to have inclusive Chineseness and cosmopolitan Islam in Indonesia? My research will shed some light on these puzzles.

The second reality is an increase in identity contestation and different manifestations in everyday practices. There is no single Chinese or Islamic identity in Indonesia. Both identities are remarkably diverse, spanning a wide array of cultural orientations, religious
affiliations, socio-economic classes, political involvement and regional variances (see chapter 6 and 7). Conventionally, scholars divide Chinese Indonesians into two main groups, the Chinese-cultured Totok (China-born, pure blood) and the acculturated Peranakan (local-born, mixed blood). Generally speaking, a Totok refers to those who still practise Chinese culture and speak Mandarin or one of the Chinese dialects. By contrast, a Peranakan refers to those who cannot speak Chinese and use Indonesian or a local language in their daily lives. During the Suharto period, largely as a result of the state’s assimilation policy, Totok Chinese were rapidly ‘peranakanised’ (Suryadinata 1978). After the collapse of the New Order regime, however, there has been a euphoric celebration of ‘Chineseness’, including the ‘rediscovery’ of Chinese identity among those who had previously assimilated. Yet, not all Indonesians of Chinese descent were keen to reclaim their Chineseness; some preferred to erase the marks of difference (Hoon 2008). In between these two attitudes, the majority of Chinese are relaxed and flexible about their ethnicity. Thus, the Totok and Peranakan distinction is insufficient to capture the heterogeneity and fluidity of their ethnic identifications and cultural orientations in Indonesia today (Thjin 2002).

Similarly, scholars have used various terminologies to analyse Muslim religiosity in Indonesia, such as abangan (nominal) and santri (observant Muslims), modernist and traditionalist (Geertz 1960), radical-conservative and progressive-liberal (Anwar 2009), scripturalist and substantialist (Liddle 1996), and on the list goes. Such labels allow us to examine different Muslim practices and attitudes, but fail to capture the complexity and nuances of everyday religiosity. Furthermore, the post-1998 democratisation, together with the influences of consumer culture, urbanisation, social mobility and transnational flows have made Muslim religiosities more diverse, and the dichotomies mentioned above do not allow accurate analysis of reality. Instead, some recent studies have proposed that Muslim religiosities are a negotiation between normative and non-normative Islam; (Beatty 1999); an ambivalent relationship between Islamic resurgents and ‘ordinary’ Muslims (Peletz 1997); or a spontaneous social reality (Alam 2007).

Indeed, in contemporary Indonesia, the reality of Islam on the ground, as Ricklefs (2008:133) concludes, is ‘complex, confused and confusing’. On the one hand, there is an increase in Islam that is puritan, inflexible, intolerant of other faiths, rejecting local culture, politically oriented and even willing to use violence. On the other hand, there is an increasing promotion of Islam that is liberal, supportive of multiculturalism, valuing
local culture, politically disinterested and peaceful in approach. In between these two extremes are multiple combinations and permutations (Ricklefs 2008). The divergence of these two tendencies can be seen in the MONAS incident in June 2008, in which members of FPI (Front Pembela Islam, Islamic Defenders' Front) attacked members of the National Alliance for Freedom of Religion and Faith (AKKBB, Aliansi Kebangsaan Untuk Kebebasan Beragama dan Berkeyakinan) who rallied in opposition to a partial government ban of Ahmadiyah. FPI urged the Indonesian government to crack down Ahmadiyah activities, which they considered as 'deviant' sect, while AKKBB supported the religious freedom of Ahmadiyah followers.

The third trend is the growing of popular culture and identity consumption. There has been a rise in consumerism and new media in Indonesia over the last decade, leading to both the strategic adoption of cultural elements in the marketing of commodities and the prevalence of cultural consumption, especially among the urban middle classes. Chineseness and Islam are arguably the two most commodified and visible identities in Indonesian markets today. For Chinese, Chinese-language news and drama programs are screened on TV, and transnational Chinese popular culture is well received. During Chinese New Year, lion dance performances and red lantern decorations are commonly found in most of the major shopping centres to attract consumers (Budianta 2007; Hoon 2009). In some places, Chinese cultural sites are repackaged as tourist attractions, such as Cheng Ho Temple (Sam Poo Kong) in Semarang and ‘Chinatown’ (Pecinan) in Surabaya. Remarkably, ‘Chineseness’ is not only consumed or practised by the ethnic Chinese, but also by many non-Chinese Indonesians.

For Muslims, Islamic media, banking, insurance, tourism, entertainment and fashion are blossoming among middle class Muslims (Fealy 2008; Heryanto 2010). These trends demonstrate that the rising religiosity does not necessarily contradict the growing consumer culture, but can compliment it. Indeed, the popularity of Muslim celebrity preachers, Islamic-themed movies and Islamic-packaged financial products, show the increasing levels of commercialisation of Islam, and at the same time, also the ‘Islamisation’ of the market. Interestingly, ‘Islamic markets’ are not limited to Muslims and many non-Muslims are also the consumers of ‘Islamic products’. For instance, the popular Islamic-themed movie, ‘Verses of Love’ (Ayat-ayat Cinta), is not only watched by Muslim audiences, but also viewed by some non-Muslims. What is the relationship
between cultural consumption and identity practice? Does cultural consumption contribute to greater pluralism? I will further engage with such questions in chapter 4.

And the last phenomenon is transnational flows and local dynamics. Both Chinese and Muslim identities have transnational dimensions, respectively connected to the ‘Chinese diaspora’ (in Malaysia, China, Hong Kong, Taiwan and so on) and ‘Islamic ummah’ (in Malaysia, Middle East and so on), as well as regional variations (Chinese in Jakarta vis-à-vis Chinese in Medan, Muslim in Surabaya vis-à-vis Muslim in Aceh, for example). The interplay of global flows, particularly the rise of China and global Islamism; and local politics, such as the expanded democracy and regional autonomy in the post-New Order era, shapes contexts as well as integral forces in the dynamics of their identity formations. Besides spatial configurations, the rearticulation of histories is also crucial in the reclaiming of identities in Indonesia today, as I will illustrate in chapter 2.

Globalised Islam, as Roy (2004) has argued, is often hostile to the preservation of local cultural tradition. Meanwhile transnational Muslim politics has been always in favour of ummah (Islamic community) and linked to the Middle East (Mandaville 2001). In Indonesia, there are contestations between Muslims who are in favour of ‘purification’ or ‘Arabisation’ of Islam (Ghoshal 2010; Rahim 2006), and Muslims who support ‘indigenisation’ (Wahid 2007) or the ‘Indonesianness’ (Madjid 1987) of Islam. The former tends to embrace a ‘generic transnational Islamic identity’ (Bubalo & Fealy 2005: viii), reject local customs and adopt Arabic-influenced expressions of Islam. The latter aims to challenge the ‘purification’ of Islam, advocate religious pluralism and promote ‘vernacular’ Islam that is grounded in local contexts (Rahmat 2003). The discussion of Chinese-style mosques in chapter 3 adds another scenario: the transnational connection with Muslims in China and the manifestation of Chineseness through such linkages.

The discussion above shows there are identical features for expressions and negotiations of both Chinese and Muslim identities in contemporary Indonesia. As the post-New Order Indonesian state has lesser control on identity matters, various social movements, transnational flows, media representation, market forces and local politics, along with social experiences and personal choices, play more important roles in the formation and contestation of Chinese and Muslim identities. Informed by these larger contexts, I believe that, Chinese Muslims in Indonesia, despite their small population, are worth studying, as a microcosm which helps us better understand the dynamics of ‘Islamic
resurgence' and 'Chinese euphoria'. In addition, Chinese Muslims have a few unique qualities that make their identities deserve close examination and could offer us different analytical perspectives. First, Chinese Muslims are not locally bounded ethno-religious group (such as Javanese Muslims, Acehnese Muslims) but dispersed minorities in Indonesia. Second, they are mostly converts. Third, they are a religious minority among Chinese Indonesians. Last, but not least, Chinese Muslims are in some ways, constituting a 'contact zone' (Pratt 1991), where Chinese cultures, Indonesian local customs and Islamic practices interact and mix. Therefore, the study of their identity adoptions provides us with vital clues of ethnic interaction and religious hybridisation in contemporary societies.

Studying Chinese Muslims: Research Gaps, Propositions and Questions

Having reviewed both Chinese and Islamic identities, now I return to my research focus: Chinese Muslims. In this section, I will first briefly summarise the literature on Chinese Muslims, and explain my own research contribution. Then, I will conceptualise Chinese Muslims into four categories to clarify my research propositions: Chinese Muslims as a double minority, as a contact zone, as a complex reality and as an analytical category. Towards the end, I reiterate the questions, scope and significance of my research.

Chinese Muslims in Previous Research

There are very few scholarly works on Chinese Muslims in Indonesia, especially regarding their identity contestations in the post-New Order period. Chinese Muslims have been studied previously under three major themes: (1) Chinese Muslim histories in Indonesia; (2) Islam and assimilation; and (3) Islam and conversions.

For the first category, there are several books and articles which examine the Chinese Muslims' historical existence in Indonesia, especially in Java from as early as the 15th and 16th centuries, and their role in Islamic propagation. Among them are: Al-Qurtuby (2003); Ali (2007); Budiman (1979); de Graaf and Pigeaud (1984); Kong (2000); Lombard & Salmon (2001); Muljana (2005); Tan (2009) and Zhuang (2011). The two most contentious issues are: first, how significant was the role of the Admiral Cheng Ho
and his followers in preaching Islam; and second, how many of the Walisongo (nine saints), who spread Islam across Java, are of Chinese descent. Most of these works, especially Al-Qurtuby and Tan use various contentious historical documents and oral evidence to argue for Chinese Muslims being important in the dissemination of Islam in Java. However, Lombard & Salmon, Ali and Zhuang paint a more complex picture of Chinese Muslim histories. I will discuss further the debate of Chinese Muslim histories in the following chapter.

The second category, Islam and assimilation, is mostly composed of sociological studies of Chinese Muslims and their social blending, especially during New Order Indonesia. Prominent authors on these topics include: Jacobsen (2005); Jahja (1985, 1988a, 1999); Riyanto (1997); The (1986, 1990, 1993) and Tan (2008). Jahja has consistently promoted the conversion to Islam and thus total assimilation among Chinese Indonesians, as a way to escape social discrimination. However, The, Tan and Jacobsen investigate the limitations of this conversion movement and its implications. The (1986) also suggests that Islamic conversion should not be driven by religious interest and the best way to reduce prejudice towards ethnic Chinese is reducing the economic gaps in Indonesia. Meanwhile by stating that some Chinese Muslim shop owners were not spared from being looted during the 1998 violence, Tan indirectly questions the workability of Jahya’s assimilationist approach. A more detailed discussion of the idea of assimilation will be presented in the next chapter.

The third category, Islam and conversion, is mostly composed of religious studies which focus on the conversion experience of Chinese Muslims and the difficulties faced by them after entering the faith. Most of the writings are unpublished theses written by graduate students in Islamic universities or institutes, such as Siregar (1972); Ibnuudaud (1979); Rubaidi (1999) and Elizabeth (2003). These studies discuss the various conversion factors of Chinese Muslims and their religious experience, as well as problems they encountered, such as rejection by their family and difficulties in practising Islamic teachings in their daily lives. In chapter 7, I will investigate Islamic conversions and religiosity of Chinese Muslims based on my research findings.

My research on Chinese Muslims differs from these three categories of scholarship, in two main ways: the period of the study and the analytical perspective. I will focus on the identity negotiation of Chinese Muslims in the post-New Order period. There have been
few writings on Chinese Muslims in contemporary Indonesia. Some of them are rather brief articles, such as Marijan (2008) which discussed the role of Chinese Muslims in Surabaya, and Suryadinata (2008a) which described the conditions of Chinese Muslims throughout different historical periods. Others are rich with empirical data, but lack in-depth analysis, such as Perdana (2008) which considered the role of PITI Yogyakarta in promoting social integration, and Ong (2007) which discussed the practice of Chinese traditions among converts.

Closer to my research theme, Chiou (2007, 2010), Muzakki (2009a, 2010) and Dickson (2008, 2009) have discussed the construction of Chinese Muslim identity in post-1998 Indonesia. Their papers mostly centre on the Indonesian Chinese Muslim Association (PITI, Persatuan Islam Tionghoa Indonesia) and the Cheng Hoo Mosque in Surabaya. Chiou focuses on the transnational connection of the mosque to China and Chinese Muslim leaderships; Muzakki emphasises its local configuration and the Chinese Muslim leaders’ efforts to fight discrimination through their religious affinity; while Dickson suggests the mosque as a manifestation of ‘Islamic Chineseness’.

In general, I do not disagree with the findings and analysis of these authors, yet I believe they focused mainly on the leaders of Chinese Muslim organisations and neglected the voices of ordinary Chinese Muslims. The above studies tend to see Chinese Muslim as a rather stable ethno-religious group, thus fail to explore the motivations, contestations and contradictions that lay behind the emergence of Chinese Muslim cultural identities. They also do not capture and explain the distinction between public manifestation and private enactment, the disjuncture between symbolic unity and everyday diversity of Chinese Muslim identities. Furthermore, previous studies paid little attention to other aspects of identity formation, such as media representation, market consumption, cultural practices, religious rituals and everyday living strategies. My thesis will fill these gaps, by providing a more nuanced understanding and sophisticated analysis. I will also examine how various market forces, local politics, transnational flows, religious movements along with social experience and personal choice, have shaped the negotiation of Chinese Muslim identities. By doing this, I seek to critically engage with both the scholarly discussions of Islam and Chinese identities in Indonesia, as well as the theoretical debates about identity formation and cultural interaction.
Chinese Muslims as a Double Minority

All Indonesians have to register themselves as following one of the six official religions - Islam, Protestantism, Catholicism, Hinduism, Buddhism and Confucianism - on their identity cards (KTP) in order to receive government services. In 2000, census data from the Central Bureau of Statistics reports that 88 percent of Indonesians classify themselves as Muslim, 5.9 percent as Protestant, 3.1 percent as Catholic, 1.8 percent as Hindu and 0.2 percent as ‘other’ (Suryadinata, Arifin & Ananta 2003).

There are more than 1000 ethnic and sub-ethnic groups coded in the 2000 Indonesian census, in which the Javanese (41.7 percent) and Sundanese (15.41 percent) are two of the largest ethnic groups. According to the census, there are only about 2 million, or 1 percent of the population who are ethnic Chinese, but this figure is problematic because of under-reporting. The assimilation policies of the Suharto government and the fear of identifying as Chinese after the traumatic events of May 1998 meant that many Indonesians of Chinese descents identified themselves as belonging to other ethnic groups in the 2000 census (Suryadinata 2003). According to Mackie (2005), it is more realistic to assume the population of Chinese is about 5-6 million (2-3 percent), even though this figure may not be much more than a ‘well-informed guess’.

There is no specific information in the census on the breakdown of religious adherents for each ethnic group. However, calculated from the raw data, Ananta, Arifin & Bakhtiar (2008) estimated the distribution of religious followers among Chinese, Arab and Indian Indonesians. According to their calculations, more than half Chinese Indonesians are Buddhists (53.82 percent), followed by 35.09 percent Christians, 5.41 percent Muslims, 1.77 percent Hindu, and 3.91 percent others. While this figure reflects the common perception that the majority Chinese are non-Muslims, I do not find the number for Chinese Muslims convincing. The percentage of Chinese Muslims is over-estimated, and

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2 Confucianism was de-recognised by the Suharto regime from 1979, and currently restored as a recognised religion by President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono in 2006 (Pausacker 2007). For more detail on the development of Confucianism in Indonesia, see Coppel (2002) and Suryadinata (1998).

6 The ‘Muslim’ figure in the census included those who follow ‘unrecognised’ beliefs, such as Javanese mysticism, or those who are nominally Muslim. Meanwhile given that Confucianism was not recognised when the census was taken, most Confucians would identify themselves as Buddhist or maybe Christian in the census.

7 I would suggest that we should have a careful reading of the census numbers regarding ethnic and religious affiliations, given the consideration of ethnic and religious identification when someone is interviewed for official purposes. I am referring to these numbers only to give a general idea of the minority position of Chinese Muslims in Indonesia.

8 According to Ananta, Arifin & Bakhtiar (2008), there were 87,066 Arab Indonesians, forming 0.043 percent of the Indonesian population. Not surprisingly, they estimate 98.27 percent of Arab Indonesians are Muslims. It is also assumed that most non-Chinese Indonesians, especially Javanese and Sundanese are Muslims.
some of my informants share my opinion. According to a Chinese Muslim leader, Junus Jahya, there are about 30,000 to 50,000 Chinese Muslims across Indonesia (Jahya 2005). This means Chinese Muslims make up only 0.5-1.0 percent of the total Chinese population and a very tiny proportion of the total Muslim population in Indonesia.

Therefore, Chinese Muslims can be seen as a double minority: a minority within Chinese Indonesians, as well as a minority within Muslim Indonesians. However, by converting to Islam, a Chinese could also escape his or her as a member of an ethnic minority and becoming as a part of a religious majority in Indonesia.

**Chinese Muslims as a Contact Zone**

Chinese Muslims can be seen as constituting a ‘contact zone’ (Pratt 1991) for social interaction, cultural mixing and identity contestation, between and within three sources of identity: Indonesian, Chinese and Muslim. As I will discuss in chapter 2, the relations between Indonesian, Chinese and Islamic identities went through different dynamics at different historical periods: from a hybrid Sino-Javanese Muslim culture in the 15th and 16th centuries to its decline during the Dutch colonial period, from organising Chinese Muslim associations in the early independence period to the notion of ‘assimilation through Islamic conversion’ during the New Order regime; and recently the re-emergence of Chinese Muslim cultural expression. Generally speaking, in post-1998 Indonesia, by mixing Chinese cultural symbols and Islamic messages, there are various attempts to reconcile the perceived incompatibility between Islam and Chinese identity.

Nevertheless, in reality, there are various outcomes of intersections between Chinese ethnicity and Islamic religiosity. At least, four categories of Chinese Muslims can be identified, based on their attitudes towards Chinese traditions and Islamic practices. The first category is those who are observant Muslims yet have culturally assimilated into the local ethnic majority. This includes many Chinese Muslim activists and religious teachers. The second category is those who are practising Muslims and ‘perform’ their

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9 This figure is highly contested for at least two reasons. First, since many Chinese Muslims intermarried with non-Chinese and assimilated into the local ethnic majority, some of them would not regard themselves as Chinese. Second, some of them convert for practical reasons, such as to marry and for business consideration, thus they do not necessarily practice Islam and involve themselves in the Chinese Muslim circles.

10 Based on my personal observation during fieldwork, I speculate about 2-3% of Chinese Indonesians are Muslims. Yet, given that ethnic and religious identities are complex and cannot be easily quantified, instead of being obsessed with numbers, my research focuses on the cultural politics of Chinese Muslim identities.
Chineseness in public, perhaps best represented by a number of popular Chinese preachers. The third category is those who are nominal Muslims and do not practise Chinese culture. This includes many Chinese Muslims who work in government departments and universities. The last category is those who are nominal Muslims yet observe Chinese culture, as exemplified by some Chinese Muslim businessmen.

The above-mentioned classifications indicate the heterogeneity of Chinese Muslim attitudes and behaviours, yet fail to address questions such as: Since both Islam and Chinese are plural realities with multiple meanings, which strain of Islam do they follow and which aspect of Chinese cultures do they practise? Given that identity positioning can be strategic and flexible, can Chinese Muslims downplay or emphasise their Chinese and Islamic identities depending on conditions? Do their public manifestations of identity reflect their everyday practices? Therefore, my analysis will go beyond this typology to investigate the multifarious processes and divergent results of the encounters between and within Islam and Chinese identities among Chinese Muslims.

**Chinese Muslims as a Complex Reality**

The term 'Chinese Muslim' generally refers to a Muslim of Chinese descent in Indonesia. Yet, this definition is problematic and contestable depending on who uses it and why. I would like to suggest that there are at least three different levels of definition: official, organisational and individual. The 'official' Chinese Muslims refers to Indonesians who identify themselves as a 'Chinese' in the census and as a 'Muslim' on their identity cards. The 'organisational' Chinese Muslim refers to their collective identities represented by various Chinese Muslim associations. The 'individual' Chinese Muslims refers to those who self-identify or are identified by others as 'Chinese Muslim' in everyday life.

Chinese Muslims as a subject to study are also problematic due to three major historical-generational differences: ‘the lost Chinese Muslims’, ‘second-generation Chinese Muslims’ and ‘new converts’. ‘The lost Chinese Muslims’ refer to Chinese Muslims in Indonesia back to the 15th century, as well as Chinese who converted to Islam since then. Their subsequently generations are difficult to trace since most of them have been assimilated. ‘Second-generation Chinese Muslim’ refers to those who are the next generation of Chinese Muslim families, meaning either both parents are Chinese
Muslims or intermarriage between Chinese Muslims and non-Chinese, including those who no longer self-identify as Chinese. Meanwhile, 'new converts' refer to Chinese who are not born as Muslim, but converted later in life. Most Chinese Muslims today are converts, and are referred to as 'mualaf’ in Indonesia. There are various reasons for conversion, including political strategy, business consideration, religious interest and intermarriage. Conversion factors, together with religious experiences, economic statuses, social networks and localities influence the identity negotiation of different Chinese converts, within the broader historical and political contexts (see chapter 7).

Some Chinese converts, especially those who have married non-Chinese Muslims, would not regard themselves as Chinese anymore. Similarly, those who convert for practical reasons, such as for political and economic purposes, might not practise Islam despite stating ‘Muslim’ on their identity cards. Although focusing on first-generation Chinese converts and self-identified Chinese Muslims, who are easier to access, my study will also cover some second-generation and ‘non-self-identified’ Chinese Muslims to examine their identity dynamics. In this thesis, I use ‘Chinese Muslim’ in an inclusive way to refer to any Muslim, who has Chinese descent in Indonesia, regardless of their cultural orientation or religious understanding. Meanwhile, I use ‘Chinese Muslim cultural identity’ or ‘Chinese Muslim culture’ to refer to their identity expressions that combine both Islamic religiosity and Chinese ethnicity.

**Chinese Muslims as an Analytical Category**

Chinese Muslims, who are engaging with two sets of competing identities in Indonesia, are extremely diverse. Thus, there is a dilemma here: how can we understand and make sense of these multifarious identities? Is there a distinctive Chinese Muslim culture in Indonesia? To answer these questions, I follow the approach of Brubaker (2004) that the study of ethnicity, race and nationalism should go beyond ‘groupism’, a tendency to reify ‘ethnic groups’ as ‘internally homogenous, externally bounded groups, even unitary collective actors with common purposes’ (Brubaker 2004:8). He advocates studying the way ethnicity works in social and political life without treating ‘ethnic groups’ as

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11 'Mualaf’ is an Arabic term which literally refers to those who are interested in learning Islam. This term is used in Indonesia to refer to Muslim converts. In Malaysia, some converts have rejected the use of such a term as it implies the convert has little knowledge of Islam, while others propose that they are ‘reverts’ instead of ‘converts’. There is less controversy about the use of this term in Indonesia.
substantial entities, or even taking such groups as units of analysis at all. I borrow Brubaker's concept of 'ethnicity without group' to analyse Chinese Muslims, by analysing their complex identities without treating them as a bounded community. This analytical approach allows me to examine both the demarcation of Chinese Muslim cultural identity by community organisations and leaders, as well as the contestation of everyday identities among ordinary Chinese Muslims.

In this thesis, I treat Chinese Muslim cultural identities in Indonesia today as 'culture beyond group'. On the one hand, we cannot deny the emergence of Chinese Muslim cultures, as exemplified by the Chinese-style mosques and the popularity of Chinese preachers; on the other hand, Chinese Muslims are not a unified ethno-religious group. Furthermore, Chinese Muslim cultures do not necessarily bind to Chinese Muslim individuals. Indeed, Chinese Muslim cultures could be shared by non-Chinese. For example, most of those who pray at Chinese-style mosques and listen to Chinese preachers are non-Chinese Muslims. At the same time, not all Muslims who have Chinese descent endorse and practise Chinese Muslim cultures.

In other words, this research does not reify Chinese Muslims as a fixed ethno-religious community, but as an 'analytical category' to examine their multifaceted ethnicity and religiosity. By doing so, my study is not only affirming that there are divergent identifications among Chinese Muslims, but also to a certain extent, pinpointing the 'instability' of such ethno-religious grouping without discrediting the emergence of Chinese Muslim cultural identities in contemporary Indonesia. This way of conceptualising Chinese Muslim identities might suggest the cosmopolitan possibilities of their cultural expressions. To some extent, the celebration of Chinese Muslim cultural identities without reifying them as a stable entity allows us to acknowledge identity expression that is voluntary and inclusive, in which a Muslim who has Chinese descent can say no to 'Chineseness', while a non-Chinese Muslim can embrace Chinese culture if he or she wants to do so.

**Chinese Muslims in this Research**

Focusing on the post-New Order period, this thesis analyses the changing expressions and diverse practices of Chinese Muslim identities in Indonesia. There are two main
questions that guide this research. First, how, under what conditions and for what reasons, does the construction and negotiation of Chinese Muslim identities take place? Second, does the emergence of Chinese Muslim cultural identities contribute to greater ethnic and religious pluralism in Indonesia?

To answer the first question, I combine both the political economy of identity formation and the cultural politics of identity negotiation to study the multilayered and multifarious nature of Chinese Muslim identities, by asking questions such as ‘who constructs or imagines such identities? Why were they constructed or imagined, and why did such constructions take the form that they did?’ (Kahn 2006:3). I will look into how and why their identities are constrained by political situations, constructed by community organisations, represented in public media and negotiated in everyday life, by exploring six sites of identity contestation: historical memories, mosque architecture, preaching strategies, social participation, cultural celebration and religious practices.

To deal with the second question, I engage with the debate on the possibilities of ‘vernacular cosmopolitanism’ (Werbner 2006, 2008), suggesting there is not necessarily a contradiction between cosmopolitan vision and identity claims. I will investigate how Chinese Muslims engage with and contribute to the political discourses and cultural representations of Islam and Chineseness, as well as explore the interaction, mixing and contestation between the two sources of identity. By examining the responses and impacts of Chinese Muslim cultural identities, I review the possibilities of inclusive Chineseness and cosmopolitan Islam, whether the reassertion of Chinese ethnicity and Islamic religiosity enhance or obstruct cultural freedom and religious pluralism.

I do not claim this thesis as a detailed historiography, or a comprehensive ethnography of Chinese Muslims, although aspects of both are important parts of my analysis. As already noted, this thesis focuses on both public representation and everyday negotiation of Chinese Muslims’ identities. Some aspects of Chinese Muslims’ lives are beyond the scope of this research, such as their conversion to Islam and religious education, their challenges in observing Islam, their intermarriage practices and the experience of Chinese Muslims outside urban centres in Java. I will incorporate those issues in my discussion when relevant, but they are not an integral part of this thesis. Despite these limitations, I believe this thesis helps us to better understand both the resurgence of Chinese and Islamic identities; as well as the dynamics of cultural mixing, religious
pluralism and ethnic diversity in Indonesia. My research also seeks to engage with and contribute to the broader academic debates of identity formation and cultural interaction in contemporary societies, as well as of the possibilities of ethnic and religious cosmopolitanism in a globalising world.

Debating Identity Formation, Cultural Diversity and Religious Cosmopolitanism

Most current studies of identity formation do not follow a narrow range of theoretical and methodological approaches, but prefer interdisciplinary and multi-dimensional styles of inquiry (Brubaker 2009). Informed by recent debates from various academic disciplines, especially anthropology, sociology, history, cultural studies and political science, this research can be conceived as a theoretically informed case study and as an empirically grounded analysis of Chinese Muslim identities in Indonesia. Historical and political perspectives help me to contextualise my findings; ethnographic studies guide me to investigate everyday identities; while cultural analyses allow me to examine the complexity of identity representation; and each of them compliments on the others.

There are three main theoretical propositions that direct my research analysis. First, I do not see ‘Chinese Muslim’ as a fixed ethno-religious group, but rather view both Chineseness and Islamic religiosity as ‘open signifier[s] and seek to celebrate their complex representations’ (Gilroy 1993:32). Second, I combine both the political economy of identity formation and cultural politics of identity contestation to investigate under what conditions and how Chinese Muslims negotiate their identities. Third, I am inspired by the notion of ‘vernacular cosmopolitanism’ (Werbner 2006), that there is not necessarily a contradiction between identity assertion and cosmopolitan sensibility. By analysing the intersections between and within Islam and Chineseness, I explore the possibilities of inclusive Chineseness and cosmopolitan Islam in Indonesia.

Before further discussion, I would like to make three clarifications here. Firstly, given that there is a large body of debate related to identity formation, I do not intend to provide an all-encompassing review of these, but will instead focus on examining certain concepts that will guide my analysis. Secondly, a more detailed discussion of some aspects of identities will be incorporated in other chapters. Thirdly, I am aware that some terminologies I use, such as ‘hybridity’, ‘cosmopolitan’ and ‘translocal’ are highly
contested and there are ongoing debates on how such terms should be used. In this thesis, despite acknowledging such complexities and specificities, I use these terms in a broader sense and in a more inclusive way. Instead of abstract theorising, I critically engage with these terms when analysing my findings and hope this academic exercise could contribute to a more grounded understanding and reflexive theorising of such concepts.

**Contexts, Sites and Forces of Identity Formation**

Since ‘identity’ has been criticised for becoming an ‘over-used’ and ‘ill-defined’ concept (Brubaker 2004), I would like to begin this discussion by making a couple of clarifications about the use of this term. Given that this research covers both ethnicity and religiosity, ‘identity’ is strategically deployed to capture both sets of identities: Chinese and Islamic. Following Karner (2007:4), my framework for understanding identity revolves around three interrelated perspectives: ‘first, identity as a set of structures that simultaneously constrain and enable social action’; ‘second, identity as a cognitive way of interpreting, or making sense of, the world’; and ‘third, identity as a biographically grounded, emotionally charged way of living, experiencing, perceiving and remembering (everyday) life situations’.

Conventional discourses on identity may be characterised as essentialist, assuming identity is guaranteed in nature, rooted in deep historical and emotional bonds, given, uniform and fixed. More recent and critical accounts, however, have tended to adopt an anti-essentialist position, and to emphasise the socially constructed status of identities. Identities are therefore, seen as invented, imagined, contested, performative, fluid, multiple, flexible and strategic (Anderson 1991; Bhabha 1996b; Butler 1990; Hall 1987; Ong 1993; Storey 2003). As Hall (1996b:4) reminds us, identities are the product of institutional sites and historical development, constructed within the play of power and exclusion, characterised by change and transformation. Thus, instead of being treated as ‘natural’ and ‘essentialist’, identities should be reconceptualised as a continual process of ‘identification’ (Hall 1987:130). Since identities are constituted within, not outside representations, instead of reflecting ‘who we are’ or ‘where we come from’, identities better describe ‘how we might become’, ‘how we have been represented’ and ‘how we might represent ourselves’ (Hall 1996b:4). This process enables us to recognise and appreciate the importance of ‘routes’ rather than ‘roots’ in identity formation.
Nevertheless, essentialist invocations of racial and religious identities remain common in both public and everyday discourses throughout the world. No matter how convinced we are, theoretically, that identities are constructed and invented, on the ground, identities are generally expressed and politically mobilised because they feel natural and essential (Ang 2000). Since the 1990s, following the end of the cold war, there have been an increasing number of identity movements aimed at restoring rooted traditions, religious fervour and commitment to ethnic or national identities (Eriksen 2002). Defenders of identity politics suggest it can empower the weak and minorities, while critics say it may generate political tension, eliminate internal differences and divert class struggles.

Indeed, the growing role of identities in contemporary societies in some ways shows that construction theory fails to grapple with the real and present-day reasons why essentialist identities continue to be invoked (Calhoun 1994). Some studies suggest recasting both positions (essentialist and constructionist), to see them as complementary rather than mutually exclusive. For example, Haraway (1991) suggests that we deconstruct the opposition between essentialism and constructionism that reinforce a nature-culture division, and explore a field of possible strategies and combined approaches for confronting issues of identity. Meanwhile, Werbner (1997b:229) advocates a critical differentiation between essentialism as ‘objectification’, a positive type of collective self-identification, and essentialism as ‘reification’, which distorts and silences difference. Although rejecting essentialism, Spivak (1990) states that it is impossible to be completely non-essentialist and coined the term ‘strategic essentialism’ which refers to a sort of temporary solidarity for the purpose of social movement to reclaim power based on a certain collective identity.

Perhaps, political economy analysis can complement the limitations of social construction theory, by linking ‘the question of how identities are constructed’ to ‘the inquiry of why identities are constructed’. Termed the ‘political economy of meaning’, Roff (1987) proposes linking of ‘symbolic or cultural analysis of what is said and done’ with ‘analysis of the material and other conditions in which the saying and doing occur’ to understand how Muslims ‘discourse’ about their lives. In the study of South Africa, MacDonald (2004) uses the term ‘the political economy of identity politics’ to analyse the different usage of racial nationalism: mobilizing resistance for ethnic equality under apartheid, but legitimizing political patronage for wealth accumulation in the post-apartheid period. In other words, no identity is, per se, progressive or regressive outside
its social context. Therefore, the critics of identity politics should take into account the political conditions in which such identity claims take place; while the promoters of identity movements should recognise the multiple meanings of such identities.

Yet, the relationship between political economy (focus on structural constraint) and cultural politics (focus on social interaction) is dialectic, whereby personal strategies for constructing identities are constrained by larger social contexts, but the latter are also primarily the products of individual thought and action. In resonance with Bourdieu's influential work (1990) on intertwining relations between structure and agency, I agree with the idea that identity formation is the outcome of the strategic action of individuals operating within a constraining, but not determining, social context. Similarly, Song (2003) has argued that while significant constraints surround the exercising of ethnic options, there are always ways in which individuals and groups contest and assert particular meanings and representations associated with their ethnic identities.

Thus, identity studies should go beyond 'identity' per se and be situated in the 'sites' where 'identity' works. Cornell and Hartman (1998) outline six construction sites of identity: politics, labour markets, residential space, social institutions, cultures and daily experience. Meanwhile, Brubaker (2004:27) proposes that we frame our analysis not in terms of 'ethnic group', but rather in terms of 'practical categories, situated actions, cultural idioms, cognitive schemas, commonsense knowledge, organisational routines and resources, discursive frames, institutionalised forms, political projects, contingent events and variable groupness'. Also, identity development is a two-way process between 'authority-defined' and 'everyday-defined' (Shamsul 1996), or between 'the narrative of the self' and 'the narrative of the self by significant others' (Storey 2003).

According to Hall (1996a), identities are negotiable and contestable, since it is about questions of using the resources of history, language and culture in the process of becoming rather than being. Moreover, identities are produced through representation, which involve the use of language, signs and images (Hall 1997); constructed through the remembering of the past (Halbwachs 1980); circulated through cultural consumption (Storey 1999); invented through reappropriation of traditions (Hobsbawn 1983); and imagined through mass media (Anderson 1991). Therefore, the exploration of the 'site of memories' (Nora 1989), popular culture, festivity and mass media, is important to study identity formation.
Furthermore, cultural fragmentation and modernist homogenisation, as well as local variations and global uniformity, are not two opposing tendencies, but two constitutive trends in identity formation. Friedman (1994) argues that the interplay between local and global processes, between consumption and cultural strategies, is part of one attempt to discover the logics involved in identity construction. In other words, identity formation is not only situated within boundaries of a territorial space, but also configured across and in-between such spaces (Gupta & Ferguson 1992). To examine such dynamic processes, Appadurai (1996) proposes five dimensions of global cultural flows: ethnoscapes, mediascapes, technoscapes, financescape and ideoscapes.

The identity expression in a global culture of consumerism can be seen as a form of ‘lifestyle nationalism’ in which identity presentation is not linked to belonging and ethics, but appearances and emblems (Ditchev 2006), or ‘symbolic ethnicity’, in which ‘ethnics do not need either ethnic cultures or organisations; instead, they resort to the use of ethnic symbols’ (Gans 1979:1). Yet, the manifestation of cultural symbols is not just an empty signifier, since identity is also a performative discourse and action (Bourdieu 1991; Butler 1990), in which by performing ethnic symbols, people can ‘contribute to producing what they apparently describe or designate’ (Bourdieu 1991: 220) or reinvent themselves through ‘acting’ in public life (Butler 1990). As Bourdieu (1991) proposes, through objectified representation in things and acts, self-interest strategies of symbolic manipulation can influence both the self identification and the perception by others.

Identity is not only a social construction, but also an everyday life experience. Given that everyday life is an arena where the self performs in a number of different ways, individuals can shift their identification depending on the situation. Distinctions such as ‘front stage-backstage’ (Goffman 1959) and ‘detached-embedded identity’ (Tilly 2002) have been used to study the distinction between one’s public and private identities. Similarly, Ong and Nonini (1997:3-4) examine the flexibility of Chinese identities, arguing that ‘Chineseness’ is no longer ‘a property or essence of a person calculated by that person’s having more or fewer ‘Chinese values’ or norms’, instead it should be understood as ‘the multiplicity of ways in which ‘being Chinese’ is an inscribed relation of persons and groups associated with global capitalism and its modernities [as well as local politics and everyday negotiation]’. At the same time, there are also growing efforts to study Muslim religiosities by combining analysis of sacred texts, social contexts, religious institutions and everyday practices (Asad 1986; Alam 2007; Marranci 2008;
Peletz 1997). This thesis is not a theological study of Islam; instead it focuses on examining Muslim religiosity of Chinese converts: how they learn, experience and observe Islam; how they deal with their Islamic identities in public and everyday life.

In short, as with other kinds of identities, Chinese Muslims in Indonesia, are an incremental and dialogic construction of lived identities (Ang 2000), which oscillate between self-constructed narratives and those constructed by significant others; between public performance and private enactment; between structural constraint and personal negotiation; between collective construction and individual identification; between social discourses and everyday practices; between global imaginations and local variances; between being and becoming.

Cultural Hybridity and Vernacular Cosmopolitanism

Recently, embodying 'middle-path alternatives between ethnocentric nationalism and particularistic multiculturalism' (Vertovec & Cohen 2002:1), the notion of cosmopolitanism, despite being highly contested, has been deployed by many scholars to examine, theorise and sometimes promote the ideal of living together among people from different ethnicities and religions in this globalising world. Cosmopolitanism can refer to both social conditions and ethical projects (Bayat 2008). The first one signifies the diversity and interactions of cultures and lifestyles. The second one denotes a vision to challenge ethnic communalism, cultural superiority and religious exclusivity.12

Cosmopolitan vision is different from the ‘multiculturalist’ or ‘pluralist’ paradigm of cultural diversity. Although multiculturalism calls for the equal existence of different cultures, it is still preoccupied with ethnic and religious boundaries; whereas cosmopolitanism promotes intense interaction, mixing and sharing, that tend to blur communal boundaries, generating hybrid identities and ‘impure’ cultural practices (Bayat 2008; Hollinger 1995). In the past, cosmopolitanism has always been associated with the notion of universalism, identical to mobility and confined to elite groups; yet recent scholarship, under the genre of ‘new cosmopolitanism’ or ‘vernacular cosmopolitanism’ have challenged such perceptions, arguing that cosmopolitanism can be grounded in specific culture, rooted in a certain locality and shared by ordinary people.

The term ‘vernacular cosmopolitanism’, possibly first coined by Bhabha (1996a:195), to refer to ‘cosmopolitan community envisaged in a marginality’, is now ‘an apparent oxymoron that seems to join contradictory notions of local specificity and universal enlightenment’ (Werbner 2008:14). Other terms that share similar concepts include: working-class cosmopolitanism (Werbner 1999), cosmopolitan patriotism (Appiah 1998), rooted cosmopolitanism (Cohen 1992) and cosmopolitan ethnicity (Werbner 2002). 13

Speaking of grounded cosmopolitanism, Kahn (2008:268) suggests that not only is there no necessary contradiction between cosmopolitan sensibilities and cultural particularism, but that in fact many cosmopolitan practices may always be grounded in the experiences of particular cultural group. Likewise, Appiah (1998) uses ‘cosmopolitan patriotism’, proposing that cosmopolitanism always begins from membership in morally and emotionally significant communities, such as families and ethnic groups; while advocating notions of tolerance, the transcendence of ethnic differences, as well as moral responsibility for others. Similarly, Bayat (2008:5) terms ‘everyday cosmopolitanism’ to describe ‘the ways in which the ordinary members of different ethno-religious and cultural groupings mix, mingle, intensely interact, and share in values and practices’.

Cosmopolitanism is always linked to cultural hybridity, and perceived as contradicting the search for authenticity. While many scholars have celebrated the potential of cultural hybridity in developing cosmopolitan attitudes and transforming binary positions into new syntheses, such tendencies are not without criticism. As Kahn (2006:166) points out, ‘essentialism does not always imply exclusion. Neither does cultural hybridity guarantee genuine cosmopolitanism’. Nonetheless, Kahn (2008:269) reminds us that grounded cosmopolitanism of certain cultural forms is not only about their tolerance of cultural difference, but also their ‘openness to other’ and ‘willingness to transform their own culture’. In other words, cosmopolitan practices are ‘both grounded and particularistic in origin, but universalising and culture-transforming in aspiration and effect’ (Kahn 2008:271). Such sophisticated theoretical propositions, as I would suggest, enable us to have a more nuanced perspective in exploring cosmopolitan possibilities, as well as limitations, inherent in existing processes of identity formation and cultural interaction: How and under what circumstances, do the contestation and reconciliation between identity claims and cosmopolitan visions take place? Who supports/undermines ‘vernacular cosmopolitanism’ and why do they do so?

13 For a discussion of various ‘vernacular cosmopolitanism’ in contemporary societies, see Werbner (2008).
'Hybridity', an analogy of biology, is one of the key concepts in contemporary cultural criticism and has been celebrated as the antidote to essentialist notions of identity. The term entails cultural mixing and the emergence of ambiguous identities, which reject rigid boundaries.¹⁴ Theoretically speaking, essentialism and hybridity are two opposing concepts: one emphasizing continuity, collective identities, territoriality and boundaries; with the other highlighting change, individual strategies, de-territorialisation and openness. However, in practice, social realities are less tidy than this contrast may indicate because identity formation can at the same time embrace both openness and closure, both ‘rootedness’ and change, both the mixing of culture and the search for authenticity (Eriksen 2002: 153). As Knauf (1996) suggests, we should have dialogic understanding between cultural essentialism and relativism, although seem contradictory, they can be viewed as complementary to one another.

According to Friedman (1994:208; 2000:83), all cultures are in fact, in various ways, hybrid; therefore any analysis which tries to understand hybridity as the convergence of ‘distinct’ cultures is engaging in a form of ‘confused essentialism’. In other words, for assertions of cultural ‘hybridity’, one might have to assume that an ‘authentic’ form has to be posited first. The same applies to religious ‘syncretism’ which presupposes conceptual distinction between ‘pure’ and ‘impure’ practices (Asad 1993; Yeoh 2009).¹⁵ Therefore, Rosaldo (1995: xv) suggests we understand hybridity as ‘ongoing conditions of all human cultures, which contain no zones of purity because they undergo continuous processes of transculturation (two-way borrowing and lending between culture)’. Given that all cultures are hybrid in practice, it is important for us to explain how and why the notions of cultural purity are still prevalent. Instead of seeing hybridity as an outcome, I would suggest that it is more insightful to analyse cultural and religious hybridisation as contested processes between cultural understandings, religious interpretations, social contexts and everyday practices.

Also, the distinction between unconscious ‘organic hybridity’ and conscious ‘intentional hybridity’ is crucial for us to distinguish hybridity as everyday practice and symbolic strategy (Bakhtin 1981). As Werbner (1997a:4-5) differentiates, ‘organic hybridity’ is a feature of historical evolution of all cultures through unconscious exchanges and everyday adaptation; while ‘intentional hybridity’ is a conscious effort to create a double

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¹⁴ For a scholarly debate of cultural hybridity, see Werbner & Modood (1997) and Broh & Coombes (2000).
¹⁵ For a discussion of religious syncretism and everyday religiosity in Asia, see Goh (2009).
consciousness, a 'collision between differing points of views on the world' (Bakhtin 1981, cited in Werbner 1997a:5). In other words, organic or everyday hybridity leads towards fusion and blurs the cultural boundaries; while intentional hybridity tends to draw a new cultural border zone that is ‘double-voiced’ in which it generates ‘a conversation between mixed but competing voices whose result is not fusion but ongoing mutual illumination of their differences’ (Kaup and Rosenthal 2002:xxii).

To contextualise my discussion, I will illustrate how some scholars have deployed analytical concepts discussed above to examine Islamic religiosity and Chinese ethnicity in Indonesia. As an alternative to navigate between outright secularism, bland traditionalism and literalist interpretations of Islam, Kersten (2009) discusses how some Muslim intellectuals create hybrid Islamic discourses to develop cosmopolitan attitudes. In particular, she examines the adaptation of Islam to the specific Indonesian settings, which called ‘Indonesianness’ (keindonesiasta) by Madjid (1987) or ‘indigenisation’ (pribumisasi) by Wahid (2007). According to Kersten (2009), both Nurcholish Madjid (prominent Muslim thinker) and Abdurrahman Wahid (former NU leader) are cosmopolitan Muslim intellectuals who not only promote Islamic teachings that are pluralist and tolerant to local cultures, but also form alliances with non-Muslims.

However, such progressive ideas are not uncontested and have been the subject of attacks by some ‘counter cosmopolitans’ (Appiah 2006, Robinson 2008:124; for similar discussion of ‘civil’ and ‘uncivil’ Islam, see Hefner 2000, 2003, 2005).16 Such ‘counter-cosmopolitan’ Muslims include groups who are scriptural in religious interpretation, conservative in social attitude and sometimes radical in action. They are hostile towards non-Muslims, as well as ‘impure’ and ‘deviant’ Muslim practices. Meanwhile, Kahn (2008) explores the possibilities and limitations of cosmopolitanism among revivalist Muslims in Malaysia. On the one hand, revivalist Islam might have positive implications for its advocacy of social justice and its opposition to racial politics. On the other hand, it might be a suppressive force, which limits artistic, intellectual, personal, religious and sexual freedoms (Kahn 2008:265-266).

Studying the complexity of Chinese identities in post-1998 Indonesia, Hoon (2006, 2008) suggests hybridity, a concept that values cross-cultural mixing and borrowing, as an

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16 During my fieldwork, I met many Chinese Muslims who praised Abdurrahman Wahid for his tolerant attitude towards Chinese Indonesians. Yet, I also encountered a couple of informants, who claimed he was a ‘Western agent’ and not a ‘true’ Muslim.
alternative to both the discourse of assimilation projected by the New Order regime, and the essentialised version of Chineseness promoted by Chinese cultural gatekeeper. Hoon (2008) also notices that although the everyday living realities of many Chinese Indonesians are more or less hybrid, the ethnic boundary between Chinese and non-Chinese in Indonesia is still maintained due to ‘racial, class, religious and educational factors’. While he unmistakably criticises the identity assertions of some Chinese leaders for re-enforcing ethnic stereotypes, he does not explore the potential inclusivity of such identity practices. On another note, Jacobsen (2007) urges us to reframe Chinese entrepreneurship in Southeast Asia from diasporic networking to grounded cosmopolitanism, in which their business exercise is mostly influenced by local political and social circumstances, and their connections with China do not undermine their national belongings. Although Jacobsen (2007) clearly illustrates that such entrepreneur practice is grounded in locality, he does not explain the cosmopolitan side of it.

In an interview discussing his latest book on the Chinese-Indonesian journalist Kwee Thiam Tjing, Benedict Anderson suggests that ‘the contrast between cosmopolitanism and nationalism is a mistake; as they are actually conjoined’ (Foo 2009:21). Anderson also describes the cultural negotiations demonstrated in Kwee’s multilingual writings as ‘cosmopolitanism from below’: the idea of being cosmopolitan without needing to travel. Such cultural intermingling and cosmopolitan practices, according to Anderson, are not peculiar to Kwee, but shared by many colonial and post-colonial subjects in different localities, especially among the minorities. Indeed, cosmopolitan practice is not a new phenomenon in Indonesia. For instance, Lombard and Salmon (2001) view the cultural interactions of Chinese and local Muslims in the 15th and 16th century Java, exemplified in mosque architecture, as a form of ‘cosmopolitan sacred union’, combining positive contributions of Islamic ideology and Chinese techniques.

I would like to conclude my discussion here with a few points. Firstly, cultural diversity is a site of political struggle (Knauft 1996), and so to speak of the possibilities of cosmopolitanism, we have to place identity practices in their historical and political settings. Secondly, instead of dichotomies, I view boundary making and crossing, essentialism and hybridity, authenticity and syncretism, particularism and cosmopolitanism as dialectics: they are not necessarily contradicting, but sometimes are two sides of the same coin. Third, concepts such as hybridity and cosmopolitanism as I have indicated above are highly contested. In this thesis, most of the time, I use such
terms in a broader sense. For example, hybrid is deployed to imply cultural mixing, while cosmopolitanism is used to indicate openness to difference. While I use the term 'hybrid' to describe certain Chinese Muslim cultural idioms, I do not mean that there is an 'authentic' Chineseness and a 'pure' Islamic religiosity, since both Chinese cultures and Islamic traditions in Indonesia and elsewhere are more or less hybrid. I also distinguish the intentional hybridity of Chinese Muslim cultural expression from their everyday hybridity: the former implies the conscious mixing of both Chinese and Islamic elements to manifest a unique identity, while the latter refers to the unconscious mixing and crossing of cultures in everyday life. And finally, identity expressions and practices can be empowering and repressing, inclusive and exclusive, cosmopolitan and 'counter cosmopolitan'. Hence, this thesis will examine to what extent, Chinese Muslim cultural identities in contemporary Indonesia embrace inclusive Chineseness and promote cosmopolitan Islam.

Research Methodology and Fieldwork Reflections

This thesis encompasses historical research, ethnographic fieldwork, as well as discourse analysis of media reports (such as newspapers and the internet) and cultural signifiers (such as mosque architecture, clothing and naming), to investigate Chinese Muslim identities. Not only does this research cross various disciplinary boundaries, it also traverses a range of boundaries, including national, ethnic and religious borders. In this section, I will describe my research sites, timeframes and methods, then share some challenges I faced and reflections I made on my fieldwork.

Research Sites, Timeframes and Methods

In total, I spent about thirteen months in Indonesia for this research. In early 2007, I spent a month in Java for a pre-fieldwork trip to collect preliminary research materials and establish contacts. Then, I spent another year (2008-2009) in Indonesia, including 7 months in Jakarta, 4 months in Surabaya in Surabaya, and about a week respectively in Madura, Central Java, and Palembang, South Sumatra. Jakarta and Surabaya were my main fieldwork sites, while a short trip to Palembang gave me some idea of Chinese
Muslims outside the Java. I am aware that my selection of locations might be criticised for being 'Java-centric', however, the voices of Chinese Muslims from other parts of Indonesia are not totally excluded, given that almost one-third of my informants in Jakarta were originally from other cities outside of Java, such as Medan, Bangka, Makassar and Pontianak.

As mentioned earlier, Chinese Muslims are dispersed minorities and do not form a locally bounded ethno-religious community. My fieldwork, therefore, did not centre on a single locality. Yet, I was aware of the risk of conducting multi-sited ethnography for its lack of in-depth investigation. Thus, my decision to focus on two major cities with a few short visits to other places was an eclectic one, to overcome the limitations of both multi-sited fieldwork and geographically bounded ethnography. My lengthy periods in Jakarta and Surabaya gave me enough time to have deeper engagement with my informants and gather detailed accounts from the field. While my short trips to other places, such as Palembang allowed me to explore the mobility, interconnectivity and dynamics of Chinese Muslims in different localities. This solution in some ways enabled me to 'compare people, places and problems in a sensible and reasonable way' and helped to avoid thinness and superficiality (Welz 1998:188).

My fieldwork research consists of semi-structured formal interviews, spontaneous informal conversation, and participant observation. I have good contacts in three major Chinese Muslim associations: PITI, the Karim Oei Foundation (Yayasan Karim Oei) and the Chinese Muslims and Families (MUSTIKA, Muslim Tionghoa dan Keluarga); as well as with many Chinese Muslim individuals. Their generosity allowed me to attend various events of Chinese Muslims, including religious talks, Islamic study sessions (pengajian), Friday prayer sessions, conversion ceremonies, breaking of the fast, cultural celebrations, political events, social gatherings, conferences, and many other activities. All those engagements not only allowed me to get closer to my informants, but also helped me observe their everyday identity negotiation and examine whether 'what they

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17 Jakarta and Surabaya are chosen as the main fieldwork sites, given that both of them are big cities in Indonesia with relatively high Chinese populations. Jakarta is not only the capital city where major political and economy decisions are made, but also a hub for Chinese from different parts of Indonesia and Muslims from different religious affiliations. Surabaya is an important site to study Chinese Muslim identities, because PITI Surabaya is the most active branch in Indonesia and the first Chinese-style mosque in post-New Order period was built there. Yogyakarta is chosen because it is a stronghold for Muhammadiyah, as compared to Surabaya, the base for Nahdlatul Ulama. Meanwhile, I visited Palembang because a Chinese-style mosque was built there and it was the first one outside of Java after the collapse of Suharto's regime.

18 For debates on multi-sited fieldworks, see Marcus (1995); Welz (1998) and Hannerz (2003).
said' is consistent with 'what they did'. Among aspects of their identities that I observed were attire, languages, their adopted names and religious practices.

I conducted 95 recorded semi-structured interviews (not including informal chatting), about one-third of them were with women. I expanded my sources from Chinese Muslim associations to broader Islamic organisations, Chinese associations, universities and personal contacts. My interviewees went beyond Chinese Muslim leaders who were mainly businessmen to include ordinary Chinese Muslims who were non-organisation based, and from various backgrounds (both men and women, of different ages, generations, occupations and socio-economic statuses) to gain more balanced views and to allow different voices to be heard. In addition, I talked to some non-Muslim Chinese and non-Chinese Muslims to gain their opinions towards Chinese Muslims.

My interviews ranged from 30 minutes to three hours (the average being one hour). The interview questions included: Islamic conversion and religion education; personal biographies and identifications; marriage and intercultural practices; their Chinese cultural understandings and practices; Islamic understandings and observances; and experiences as Chinese Muslims. However, there was a lot of flexibility in the interview process, depending on the information I would like to get from certain interviewees and the topics they were interested in. It was also not uncommon for me to talk to the same informant for more than one time. Most of the interviews were conducted in Indonesian, sometimes Mandarin, and occasionally English.

Besides making observations and conducting interviews, I also collected various primary and secondary source documents during fieldwork. I have visited a few research institutes and universities to access unpublished theses and academic writings related to my research. With the help of the staff in Chinese Muslim organisations, I managed to collect some of their historical documents, minutes of meetings, bulletins, brochures,

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19 In Jakarta, I attended Lautze Mosque every Friday for its afternoon prayer sessions and Sunday for its Islamic study sessions; visited PITI office on Saturday for its Islamic study sessions; and joined activities organised by MUSTIKA in various locations. In Surabaya, I based my fieldwork in Cheng Hoo Mosque, attending both their social and religious activities. The first month of my fieldwork in Surabaya coincided with Ramadan, the fasting month for Muslims, allowing me to join the breaking of fast events almost everyday in the mosque. In addition, I occasionally attended various activities, seminars and discussions of Chinese and Muslim Indonesians.

20 See Appendix 1 for the list of my informants and their details.

21 As a Malaysian, I took some time to pick up Indonesian terms and spoke Indonesian with a slightly different accent. Most of the time, I did not have major language and communication problems.

22 Many young Chinese Indonesians do not speak Chinese. Therefore, those who I interviewed in Mandarin and sometimes in Hakka dialects were mainly older Chinese Muslims.
media reports and video recordings. I also looked into the conversion narratives of Chinese Muslim, both in printed magazines and online media. In this age of information technology, many Chinese Muslim organisations and preachers also have their websites, blogs or facebooks, providing me with a lot of interesting material for analysis.  

Fieldwork Challenges and Reflections

Some fieldwork experiences deserve mention because they might had an impact on my findings. The first and the most challenging question was how to identify Chinese Muslims in Indonesia, and how to gain access to Chinese Muslims who did not want their identities revealed. This further lead to another dilemma: how to avoid cultural 'essentialisation' when searching for Chinese Muslim informants? Eriksen (2002) reminds researchers that ethnicity is not only created by the people we study but also by ourselves as observers. He says, 'if a researcher looks for ethnicity, he or she will find it - possibly at the cost of missing out on other kinds of relationship which are also 'there'’ (Eriksen 2002:161). Therefore, to study ethnicity without inadvertently contributing to its reproduction, we should not overlook contexts ‘which are not ethnic’. Informed by such a proposition, I remind myself not to impose the label of ‘Chinese Muslim’ on my informants, rather allow them to reveal their diverse subjectivities and identifications.

As already noted, some Indonesians of Chinese descent do not consider themselves as Chinese after converting to Islam. Some were officially Muslim but did not practise Islam, thus they preferred to keep a low profile. During my fieldwork, I also encountered a few informants, who were hesitant to talk to me because they thought they were not ‘Chinese Muslim’, worrying that they were not ‘good Muslims’ or ‘authentic Chinese’. To solve this problem, I explained to them that my research was not only concerned with their identities per se, but also their life stories and social experiences. More importantly, I did not take their Chineseness and Islamic religiosity for granted.

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24 See bibliography for a list of websites related to Chinese Muslims in Indonesia.
25 According to my conversation with Nana, who researched female Chinese Muslims, many of her informants talked to her because they were friends and knew each other before. They were reluctant to meet other researchers, either because they wanted to conceal their Chineseness; or they did not want their religiosity to be scrutinised.
26 Let me cite a few reasons why some ‘Chinese Muslims’ were hesitant to talk to me - ‘I am just a small figure and also I am not a good Muslim’, ‘I am a new convert and do not know many things about Islam yet’, ‘Although I look Chinese, I am culturally Javanese, are you sure you want to interview me’?, ‘I am not really a Chinese. My father is a Chinese and my mother is a Javanese. I grew up as a Javanese. I do not qualify as a Chinese Muslim’.
For example, at the end of the interview, a few of them told me that they did not see themselves as ‘Chinese Muslim’ despite having Chinese descent or appearance.

Despite the limitations mentioned above, most people I met were helpful and cooperative. It was not uncommon for some converts to approach me to be interviewed, so that their stories could be heard, some also see this as a way of preaching Islam. Except some businessmen, many Chinese Muslims eagerly shared their conversion experiences and religious opinions. While a few interviewees preferred to remain anonymous, many did not mind if I used their real names. Some informants, who were initially willing to use their real names, mentioned that they did not want to be quoted on a certain controversial statement they had made. Therefore, this thesis uses both real names and pseudonyms.27

To maintain the integrity of this study, I use real names to refer to my informants as long as they permitted me to do so and especially if they were public figures, such as organisation leaders, businessmen, politicians and preachers. I use pseudonyms when an informant preferred to remain unknown and to protect my informants from possible repercussions from their ‘sensitive’ statements.28

Another potential influence on my fieldwork was my own identities. As a non-Muslim Chinese from Malaysia, I was both an ‘outsider’ to them because of my different nationality and religion, and an ‘insider’ because of sharing same ethnicity.29 As a non-Indonesian, I needed some time to get familiar with Indonesian languages, and to gain trust from my informants. Yet, as a non-local, I also had a certain advantage compared to Indonesian researchers. Some informants felt more ‘secure’ to share their opinions with me on ‘sensitive’ issues, such as their negative perceptions of non-Chinese, their experiences of discrimination, their ‘un-Islamic’ practices and criticisms of Indonesian authorities.

With few exceptions,30 as a non-Muslim,31 my attendance in Chinese Muslim circles was

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27 In all but chapter 7, most of the names I use in this thesis are real.

28 Examples of ‘sensitive’ statements are Chinese Muslims who said they eat pork at home, gamble at casinos or are involved in certain radical religious group.

29 As a male researcher, I have both advantages and disadvantages to access female informants. Some female converts, especially those who are religiously conservative, were reserved about talking to me. While other female respondents accepted my invitation to interview warmly, treating me as their ‘younger brother’ or ‘son’.

30 These exceptions include, a Chinese convert who was worried I was a spy from the Australian government, and another informant who questioned my research aims, by saying, ‘You are here everyday and ask us a lot of questions. But are you really interested in Islam or are you just treating us as your research objects, then you will forget us and Islam after you have finished your thesis?’

31 I have been often asked by my informants about my religious status, and most of time, I said I was a Buddhist or a Confucian, although I do not observe those religions.
Many tried to convert me to Islam, both verbally and by example, both directly and indirectly, yet they were not insistent or impolite. There were at least three forms of *dakwah* (preaching) that I encountered: ‘direct invitation’, ‘indirect persuasion’ and ‘non-verbal preaching’. ‘Direct invitation’ included those who inviting me to observe Islamic practices, such as fasting and praying, or to recite *syahadat*, a testimony of Islamic conversion. Instead of ‘direct invitation’, many Chinese Muslims adopted ‘indirect persuasion’, by promoting positive images of Islam, sharing their benefits of being a Muslim, and comparing Islam with their previous religions. Their *dakwah* went beyond verbal expression, but also through their generosity, offering me various forms of assistance. As one of my informants told me, ‘It is a form of *dakwah*. By acting as a good Muslim and showing our friendliness to non-Muslim, we hope you will get the *hidayah* (God’s guidance), or at least, you will have better perception of Islam’. In short, being a non-Muslim, to some extent, facilitated rather than obstructed my research.

In addition, my Chinese background and ability to speak Mandarin enabled me to form close connections with some Chinese Muslims and to gather information not available to non-Chinese researchers. Speaking to me in Mandarin, a couple of informants revealed their ‘real’ motives for Islamic conversions and their ‘un-Islamic’ practices, such as eating pork at home. Other informants shared their experience of being a minority and how they coped with it. Yet, my Chinese ethnicity also sometimes influenced how my informants responded to me, and how they acted in my presence. Some of them intentionally emphasised their Chinese identity to me as a form of *dakwah*, to show that Islam and Chineseness was not incompatible. For example, a female convert asked me to address her in her Chinese name, while others called her in her Indonesian name. Acknowledging the influence of my identity during fieldwork does not make this study less convincing; instead it is in some ways, consistent with my proposition that Chinese Muslim identities are not fixed but situational.

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32 I was not only welcomed to their religious activities, some informants also bought me lunch, invited me to their home for dinner, took me for sightseeing and even tried to match make me.
33 Most of the time, I did not reject their invitation to Islam, but kept smiling or replied with *IstyaAllah* (God willing) or *mauth manggu hidayah* (waiting for the God’s guidance). There were also a few occasions in which I pretended to be a Muslim convert. One of those occasions was when I visited a convicted Bali bomber, Anofiz's family at Lamongan with Antonio Medan, a Chinese Muslim preacher.
34 Besides such ‘Islamic’ encounters, I also went through some ‘un-Islamic’ experience in the field. For example, I interviewed a Chinese Muslim girl in a pub; a Muslim businessman offered me wine; a female convert invited me to gamble; and a Muslim man suggested I visit Dolly, a red-light district in Surabaya.
Chapter Outline

This thesis consists of eight chapters. This introduction has located the study of Chinese Muslim identities in a broader social context, as well as presented my research questions and core arguments along with theoretical debates and methodological considerations. The following chapters (chapter 2 to 7) analyse the construction and negotiations of Chinese Muslim identities, from six different but interrelated aspects, namely, historical memories, mosque architecture, preaching strategies, social participation, cultural celebration and everyday religiosity.

Chapter 2 is a temporal journey. It begins with a brief historical survey of the continuities and changes of Chinese Muslim identities throughout different periods. It further discusses the rearticulation of their historical memories in Indonesia today: who imagines the histories, which parts of histories are rearticulated, how the histories have been represented and for what reasons. I argue that, by promoting the role of Cheng Ho in spreading Islam and claiming that some of the Walisongo have Chinese descent, Chinese Muslims seek to redefine their minority position, to preach Islam to non-Muslims, and to improve the image of Chinese Indonesians.

Built around a discussion of Cheng Hoo Mosques, chapter 3 explores the spatial formation of Chinese Muslim identities. I suggest that Chinese-style mosques are a form of negotiation between transnational imaginations and local dynamics to manifest a unique Chinese Muslim identity. I also argue the Chinese Muslim leaders' efforts in mixing Islam and Chineseness, do not reflect the heterogeneous identity adoption of many ordinary Chinese Muslims. By demonstrating the inclusive architectural design and social activities of Cheng Hoo Mosque, I describe it as a local cosmopolitan space allowing Muslims and non-Muslims from various ethnic groups to get together.

Chapter 4 describes and analyses the popularity of Chinese Muslim preachers. By illustrating the public performance of Chinese preachers, I distinguish between 'essentialistic Chineseness' as a preaching strategy and 'everyday Chineseness' as a living identity. In addition, the popularity of Chinese preachers reflects the paradox of identity consumption, that the diversity of styles is not always accompanied by a plurality of discourses. As I will describe, while Chinese preachers help to promote a
positive image of ethnic Chinese and diversify cultural expression of Islam, it does not necessarily break down ethnic stereotypes and pluralise the substance of religion.

In Chapter 5, I examine the identity politics of Chinese Muslims in democratising Indonesia. Firstly, I review the strategic solidarity and internal dynamics of Chinese Muslim organisations, such as PITI and Karim Oei Foundation. Secondly, I explore Chinese Muslims’ social and religious participation beyond such organisations. Thirdly, I examine the engagement of Chinese Muslims in electoral politics. Despite attempts to stabilise Chinese Muslims as a distinctive group, I argue that there are competing identity mobilisations amongst them for different reasons, including Islamic preaching, ethnic empowerment and personal political or economic interests.

Through the celebration of Chinese New Year (Imlek) in mosques, chapter 6 studies how Chinese Muslims accommodate cultural elements in Islamic preaching, a practice they call ‘dakwah pendekatan budaya’ (preaching through cultural approaches). Such an event is not without controversy, as it raises debates about whether Imlek is halal or haram (permitted or prohibited according to Islamic law). I therefore examine how and under what conditions Muslim leaders make their fatwa (religious opinion), and how Chinese Muslims respond to such debates. I propose that religious hybridisation is a contested process, between the interaction of religious texts, social contexts and everyday practices.

Focusing on naming practices, female veiling experiences and life stories, Chapter 7 examines both the political economies of religious conversion and shifting ethnicity, as well as the cultural politics of flexible piety and multiple identifications. I investigate the multiple ways of being ‘Chinese Muslim’ and reveal a range of subjectivities, self-expression and identity negotiations in their everyday lives. I also unfold multiple, selective and sometimes, inconsistent Islamic piety among converts according to their various living conditions and religious understanding. This affirms that Muslim religiosities do not only rely on their interpretation of Islam, but also from the contingent political, social and economic circumstances of their understanding of Islamic teachings.

This thesis concludes by summarising the main features of Chinese Muslim identities in Indonesia and their broader implications. I recapitulate a few paradoxes of their identities: the distinction between public performance and living practice, the disjuncture between
intentional hybridity and everyday hybridity, and the relation between identity assertion and cosmopolitan sensibilities. Pulling together main arguments from each chapter, and locating them in a broader context, I examine the possibilities and limitations of cosmopolitan Islam and inclusive Chineseness in Indonesia. In the end, I propose a few comparative researches for deeper understanding and further theorisation about the intersections between religiosity and ethnicity in contemporary societies.
Chapter 2

Remembering the Past for the Present:
Rearticulating Chinese Muslim Histories

‘Sunan Ampel, Sunan Drajad, Sunan Muria, and Sunan Bonang are Chinese Muslims, including myself. Therefore, we as Chinese Muslims should not ashamed to be called Chinese, since our ancestors spread Islam in Java and Sumatra, followed by most residents.’

Former Indonesian President and past NU Chairman, Abdurrahman Wahid or Gus Dur, reiterated that he himself had Chinese ancestry, in an international seminar entitled – Cheng Ho, Walisongo dan Muslim Tionghoa Indonesia Di Masa Lalu, Kini dan Esok (Cheng Ho, Walisongo and Chinese Muslims in Indonesia: Past, Present and Future), which was held in Surabaya on 26-27 April 2008, by Cheng Hoo Foundation (YHMCHI, Yayasan Haji Muhammad Cheng Hoo Indonesia).

Gus Dur’s statement on his Chinese heritage has been quoted by some Chinese Muslim leaders to show that their identity is not a new phenomenon. By promoting Cheng Ho’s Islamic identity and Walisongo’s Chineseness, Chinese Muslim leaders want to emphasise the Chinese Muslims’ contribution to preaching Islam and their role in bridging ethnic differences in Indonesia. Many non-Muslim Chinese leaders and non-...

1 This phrase is quoted from a report – ‘Cheng Ho dan Walisongo dalam Sejarah Bangsa Diseminarkan’ in Komunitas, edition 40, April 2008. The original Indonesian text is – ‘Sunan Ampel, Sunan Drajad, Sunan Muria, dan Sunan Bonang adalah Muslim Tionghoa, termasuk saya sendiri. Maka kita sebagai kaum Tionghoa tidak boleh malu dikatakan Tionghoa. Karena nenek moyang kita sudah yang menyebarkan agama Islam di tanah Jawa dan Sumatera yang dianut mayoritas penduduknya.’ I myself also witness the speech of Gusdur during the seminar in Surabaya. In various locations, Gus Dur has openly stated that he had Chinese heritage. Abdurrahman Wahid claimed that he is a descendant of Tan Kim Han or Sheikh Abdul al-Shin Qiadr, a Chinese Muslim who has helped Raden Patah seize power from the Majapahit kingdom and founded the Islamic Kingdom of Demak (Al-Qurtuby 2003:125). However, Gus Dur downplays his Chinese descent when interviewed by me personally. Instead of claiming he has Chinese blood, he told me that most Indonesians, including himself has mixed blood (Interview, Abdurrahman Wahid, 10 January 2009). In other occasions, Gusdur also said he has Arabic, as well as European descent.

2 Admiral Cheng Ho (1371-1433), or Zheng He, was also known as SamPo in Indonesia. He is a Hui Muslim mariner, explorer, diplomat and fleet admiral, who made the expeditions (1405-1433) to Southeast Asia, South Asia and East Africa during the Ming Dynasty. For further information about Cheng Ho and his expeditions to Southeast Asia, see ‘Admiral Zheng He & Southeast Asia’ (Suryadinata 2005), ‘Zheng He and the Treasure Fleet 1405-1433’ (Rozarol 2005), ‘Cheng Ho and Islam in Southeast Asia’ (Tan 2009) and ‘Muslim Tionghoa Cheng Ho: Misteri Perjalanan Murahah di Nusantara’ (Kong 2000). Meanwhile, Walisongo, referred to the nine saints who are mythologised as the first persons to spread Islam in Java. ‘Sembilan Wali & Siti Jenar’, by Ajidanna (2008) is an interesting photographic and historical book about the nine saints. The nine saints are Raden Patah, Sunan Ngampel Denta, Sunan Giri, Sunan Bonang, Sunan Kudus, Sunan Kaliaga, Suna Gutung Jati, Sunan Muria and Sunan Drajat.
Chinese Muslims also endorse these claims. The former do so to emphasise the participation of ethnic Chinese in the Indonesian nation, while the latter do so to reassure the inclusivity and plurality of Indonesian Islam.

This chapter consists of two main parts—‘Chinese Muslims as historical construct’ and ‘the historical rearticulation of Chinese Muslims’. The first part provides a historical survey of Chinese Muslims, while the second examines how they represent their histories in contemporary Indonesia. To contextualise the formation of Chinese Muslim identities in a longer timeframe, I begin this chapter with a brief historical account of the change and continuity of their identities throughout different periods in Indonesia. There have been many writings on Chinese Muslim histories and their roles in disseminating Islam (Ali 2007; Al-Qurtuby 2003; de Graaf & Pigeaud 1984; Kong 2000; Lombard & Salmon 2001; Muljana 2005; and Tanggok 2006). Therefore, instead of discussing the histories in detail, this chapter will focus on exploring the construction of historical memory of Chinese Muslims in today Indonesia—who imagines the histories, which part of histories are rearticulated, how the histories have been represented and for what reasons.

As I will argue, such selected remembering of history is not to resurrect a ‘pure’ past, but to give meaning to the present. Indeed, identities are always imagined through remembering (Halbwachs 1980), which memory can be potentially political—‘the power to manage the past to order the present’ (Storey 2003:85). Therefore, although describing the efforts of Chinese Muslim leaders in promoting their version of historical memory, I do not necessarily regard their claims as historically accurate. The frequent interaction between Chineseness and Islam in the past is undeniable, as exemplified by the Chinese influences in some old mosques in Indonesia, yet the contribution of Chinese Muslims in spreading Islam has always been contested, if not disputed.

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3 Although most of the historical writings I refer to in this chapter support the Chinese role in Islamisation, it does not mean that I totally endorse their claims. There is less dispute that Cheng Ho is a Muslim, but his contribution to Islamisation in Indonesia is highly contested. Although there is more recognition that some Walsongo might had Chinese heritage, how many and to what extent is debatable. However, I will not go into these debates. Instead of searching for historical truth, this chapter is focus on how histories are constructed for present purposes.

4 It is generally agreed by many scholars that Islam came to Indonesia through Arabs and Indian Muslims, but there is no consensus among historians about the contribution of Chinese Muslims due to the lack of convincing evidence. For discussion of the coming of Islam to Indonesia, see Ricklefs (1979, 1981).
History, Identity and Politics

Studies of identity formation need to be historically contextualised, given that culture identities come from somewhere, and have histories. According to Hall (1993:394), cultural identities are subject to the continuous ‘play’ of history, culture and power, as they undergo constant transformation and are far from being eternally fixed in some essentialised past. Furthermore, the remembering of the past can be political and selective, since the past can be reinterpreted for political purposes (Boyarin 1994) and the memories can be revised to suit current identities (Gillis 1994). Indeed, as argued by Friedman (1994:118), making history is a way of producing identity as it produces a relation that has supposedly occurred in the past and the present state of affairs.

Halbwachs (1980) further argued that remembering is always a practice of reconstruction, in which what significant is not the ‘facts’, but how the ‘facts’ are interpreted to make meaning in the present. Such historical narratives are always embodied in mnemonic artifacts, forms of commemorations, museums, textbooks and so on, what historian Pierra Nora (1989:7) calls ‘sites of memory’. Similarly, Storey (2003:84) coined the term ‘memory industries’ to refer to cultural industries concerned with articulating the past – not limited to heritage sites, but also mass media and popular culture. As he pointed out, ‘the memory industries produce representation (‘cultural memories’) with which we are invited to think, feel and recognise the past’ (Storey 2003:83).

As with other identities, Chineseness in Indonesia is also a product of history, as it is often shaped by government policies and past traumatic events. Budianta (2007:172) pointed out that, ‘to write that history - be it in a critical, alternative way - is to participate in the creation of Chineseness. One can confront it, challenge it, redefine it, but it will always haunt.’ Using Appadurai’s concept of ‘imagined nostalgia’ (1996:77), Dawis (2009) showed how some Chinese Indonesians experience their sense of belonging, which was suppressed by the New Order regime; and imagine some sort of cultural connection to the ‘mythic homeland’ - mainland China, to which they have never been, through the consumption of transnational Chinese films. After the downfall of Suharto in 1998, some Chinese leaders have strived by various means to reclaim their displaced Chineseness, such as through the building of Chinese Indonesian Cultural Park in the ‘Beautiful Indonesia Miniature Park’ (TMII, Taman Mini Indonesian Indah).
In this chapter, I will describe and analyse how Chinese Muslim leaders rearticulate their histories for present purposes through various 'sites of memory' (mosques, libraries and so on), popular culture (songs, drama serials, preaching etc), mass media (newspapers, publications and other outlets) and seminars. Such efforts show their creativity in engaging history for their present interests, albeit sometimes at the expense of historical fact. In other words, on the one hand, such rearticulation of history could empower the minority through selective memory; yet on the other hand, it might simplify their complex past. Before examining such memory construction in post-New Order Indonesia, I begin this chapter with a brief historical contour of Chinese Muslim identities.

**Chinese Muslims as an Historical Construct**

Chinese Muslim identities have had different dynamics through different periods of history. In this section, I will discuss five transformations - from a hybrid Sino-Javanese Muslim culture in the 15th and 16th centuries to its decline during the Dutch colonial period, from organising Chinese Muslim associations during the early independence period to the erasing of Chineseness under the New Order regime; and recently the re-emergence of Chinese Muslim cultural expression in post-1999 Indonesia. This survey might not capture all the complexities of Chinese Muslim histories, yet is important to locate the recent manifestation of their identities in a broader view and to understand that encounters between the Chinese and Muslims in Indonesia have long historical roots.

**The Pre-Colonial Period: Chinese Muslims as Hybrid Culture**

Chinese Muslims are not new to Indonesia. There is some evidence of Chinese Muslims existence in Java from as early as the 15th century; and their engagements in Islamic preaching from that time (Al-Qurtuby 2003; Ali 2007). According to historians Lombard and Salmon (2001), the interaction of Chinese and local culture at that time was reflected in the mosque architecture. Termed as ‘Peranakan Muslim subculture’, they see such interaction as a form of cosmopolitan ‘sacred union’, which combined positive contributions of Islamic ideology and Chinese techniques.
There are a few historical texts which have mentioned the existence of Chinese Muslims in Indonesia before the Dutch colonial period. A Chinese Muslim, Ma Huan, who accompanied Admiral Cheng Ho on his series of expeditions to the South Seas (1405-1433), reported in his book, *Ying-yai Sheng-lan: The Overall Survey of the Ocean’s Shores (1433)* (Ma 1970), that there were already ethnic Chinese in Java at that time and some of them were Muslims. Yet, the report did not mention about the preaching of Islam by Cheng Ho at that time. Nevertheless, using local histories and other sources, Budiman (1979), Kong (2005) and Tan (2009) argued that Cheng Ho and his followers had either directly or indirectly disseminated Islam in Java.

Also, a controversial text, *The Malay Annals of Semarang and Cirebon*, is often cited to support the role of Chinese Muslims spreading Islam in Java. The Annals was first edited by M.O Parlindungan as an appendix to his book on Sumatran legends, *Tuanku Rao* (Parlindungan 2007). The title of this appendix is *Peranan orang-orang Tionghoa/Islam/Hanafi di dalam Perkembangan Agama Islam di Pulau Jawa, 1411-1564* [The Role Played by Hanafi Muslim Chinese in the Flourishing of Islam in Java]. This text was reproduced, translated into English and commented upon in a book by de Graaf and Pigeaud (1984). M.C Ricklefs who edited the book, although recognising the efforts of both authors, questioned the authenticity of the Malay Annals.5

By referring to the Malay Annals, and other local historical texts, such as *Babat Tanah Jawi and Serat Kanda*, Slamet Muljana, a Javanese historian, in his controversial book, entitled *Runtuhiya Kerajaan Hindu-Jawa dan Timbulnya Negara-negara Islam di Nusantara* [The Decline of Hindu-Javanese Kingdom and The Rise of Islamic State in Archipelago] also suggested that Chinese Muslims were important in the establishment of Islamic kingdoms in Java, and some of the Muslim saints in Java, Walisongo, were of Chinese origin (Muljana 2007). His controversial book, published in 1968, was withdrawn from circulation in 1971 by Indonesian authorities, but was recently republished by The Institute for Islamic and Social Studies (LKIS, Lemhaga Kajian Islam dan Sosial) in 2005. Another controversial Javanese text, called *Serat Dermagandul*, also considered some of the Walisongo to be of Chinese Origin (Ali 2007).

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5 According to Parlindungan, he received the text of the Annals from a Dutchman, Poortman. Poortman claimed that the annals were found in the temples in Semarang and Cirebon. However, serious efforts by Dutch scholars to identify this person, have come to nothing. Therefore, Ricklefs wonders whether this Poortman might not be just a creature or Parlindungan’s imagination, or perhaps an elaborate whimsy. Some historians, like Denys Lombard and Santono Kartodirdjo also doubt the existence of these documents in the two temples in Semarang and Cirebon, and therefore rejected the idea that most of the saints were Chinese *Peranakan* (Ali 2007). Meanwhile, according to Berg (1989), most of the saints were of Arab Hadrami descent.
Although the reliability of these local records should be scrutinised as to whether they are ‘historical fact’ or ‘legend’, Leo (2005:91) proposed that they should not be ignored since they are part of the collective memory of the people, which are important in providing clues to the relationship between Chinese and Muslims in the past.

Al-Qurtuby (2003) in his book, *Arus Cina-Islam Java* [Chinese-Islam-Javanese Flows] has attempted to gather more sources to support the case for the contribution of Chinese Muslims in Islamisation. According to him, the existence of Chinese Muslims in the early propagation of Islam is proven by Western scholars, Chinese sources, local Javanese texts and oral traditions as discussed above, but also by the strong Chinese influence on the architectural designs of old mosques and tombs in Java, such as the tombs of Sunan Giri in Gresik, the design of Cirebon palace and the architecture of Demak mosque in Central Java (Al-Qurtuby 2003). Two related examples in Jakarta are Angke Mosque and Kebon Jeruk Mosque. Angke Mosque has some Chinese ornaments on its gate and ropes like that of a Chinese temple; while there is a Muslim tombstone in Kebon Jeruk Mosque that has Chinese and Arabic scripts.

Supported by these historical sources and religious sites, Al-Qurtuby (2003) argued that there was a ‘Sino-Javanese Muslim culture’ across Java, as a result of the interaction between Cheng Ho and other Chinese Muslims with local Javanese. Also, Kong (2000) has noted that some Chinese religious sites might have linkages to Admiral Cheng Ho, such the Ancol Temple in Jakarta and Sam Po Kong (Cheng Ho Temple, also known as Gedung Batu) in Semarang. Some even suggest that such temples once functioned as mosques (Tanggok 2006). In addition, Tan (2009) describes cultural contacts between China and Indonesia, as well as the development of Islam in China during the 13th to 15th century to support his claim about the close relations between Cheng Ho’s expedition and Islam in Southeast Asia. In my opinion, all these sources have convincingly suggested that there is a close interaction between Chineseness and Islam in Indonesia, especially Java in the past, yet still fall short of proving the significant role of Chinese Muslims in the preaching of Islam at that time. In other words, such sources, to a certain extent, might have exaggerated the Chinese influence on the development of Islam in Java.

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6 According to Ali (2007), the question of whether or not some or most of the nine saints in Java were of being Chinese origin is a controversial one, thus such claims need to be further supported by more evidence before accepted as ‘historical facts’. What has been less controversial, however, is the argument that one saint, Raden Fatah, the founder of Demak Kingdom was a son of a Javanese Prabu Brawijaya and a Chinese wife (Ali 2007:19).
According to The (1993), before the arrival of the Dutch, there were also many Chinese who converted to Islam as a way of integrating themselves into Javanese society, by marrying locals and adopting Javanese names so as to be able to move up the social and political ladder. It is also not uncommon for them to assimilate into the local majority group. However, with political developments accompanying Dutch colonialism, this form of cultural interaction between Chinese and Muslims went into decline. Therefore, future generations of Chinese Muslims are difficult to trace since most of them eventually assimilated, and there was a breakdown of the ‘Sino-Javanese’ Muslim culture. There were many factors causing this changing situation, including - a) the increased power of Dutch colonial regime, b) the changing politics in China, c) the more orthodox turn of Islam, and d) the increasingly arrival of Chinese women and the rise of Chinese nationalism. The breakdown of ‘Sino-Javanese’ Muslim culture meant that the ethnic Chinese were then mostly non-Muslim and were perceived by some indigenous Indonesians as significant ‘others’ and unassimilated ‘foreigners’.

The Dutch Colonial Period: The Decline of Sino-Javanese Muslim Culture

The divide and rule policies of the Dutch led to the drawing of stricter boundaries between Chinese and native Indonesians, as well as, reducing the number of conversions of ethnic Chinese to Islam. Benedict Anderson argued that it was the Dutch colonial policy which artificially created a ‘Chinese minority’ in the then Netherlands East Indies (noted in Ang 2001b:3). In terms of civil status, the Dutch created three racial categories, each with different legal rights and privileges: the Europeans were at the top, Foreign Orientals (mainly Chinese, but also Arabs and Indians) were in the middle and Natives were at the bottom. This special status gave the ethnic Chinese the impression that the social status of the ‘indigenous’ Indonesian was inferior. Since Islam was commonly associated with the ‘indigenous’ Indonesians, many ethnic Chinese considered converting to Islam would downgrade their social status (Skinner 1996). At the same time, Dutch policies preferred to keep the ethnic Chinese from intermingling with locals and converting to Islam. As a result of these policies, the ethnic Chinese became an intermediary class who were mainly involved in economic activities and resided in certain districts. At the same time, ‘indigenous’ Indonesians increasingly held negative perceptions towards Chinese Indonesia, such as being exclusive from majority Indonesians and exploiting Indonesian resources.
Despite the Dutch policy, there were still some ethnic Chinese who converted to Islam, mainly for security and economic considerations. After the mass killings of Chinese by Dutch troops and local soldiers in Jakarta in 1740, many converted to Islam to avoid becoming victims. Others converted for economic reasons, so that they would be considered ‘natives’ and thus be liable to lower taxes. This led the Dutch to take further action to prevent religious conversion of ethnic Chinese, as it had produced large losses for the colonial administration (Lombard and Salmon, 2003:22). For example, in 1745, Chinese converts were prohibited from assimilating with local Muslims and obliged to pay higher taxes. The Dutch colony also worried that close interaction of ethnic Chinese and the locals could destabilise the reign of the Dutch colonial power. In order to segregate converts from local Muslims, the Dutch appointed a special kapitan to lead Chinese Muslims and built a mosque, Krukut Mosque specifically for converts (Lombard and Salmon, 2003:23).

During my fieldwork, many Chinese Muslim leaders blamed Dutch colonial rule for fewer Chinese converting to Islam. Some of them saw the Dutch colonial era as the darkest period in the history of Chinese Indonesians in general and Chinese Muslims in particular (Interview, Syarif Tanujaya, 9 Jun 2008). Therefore, for them, it is important to emphasise the history of Chinese Muslims before the arrival of Dutch as a means of repositioning themselves in contemporary Indonesia and of preaching Islam to ethnic Chinese. I will discuss in more detail, how Chinese Muslims rearticulate their historic memories in the second part of this chapter. It is also important to note that there are other reasons contributing to the decrease in Chinese conversions to Islam, such as the increasing orthodoxy of Islam and the rise of Chinese nationalism after the 19th century (Jacobsen 2005). The growing assertive form of Islam which requires Muslims to observe their religion more rigidly, such as not eating pork and abandoning deity worship might have further discouraged Chinese Indonesians from becoming Muslims.

The relationship between ethnic Chinese and local Muslims also worsened after the Java War (1825-1830) and the attacks of Sarekat Islam (1912). During the height of the Java War, Diponegoro, a Javanese leader took an uncompromising attitude toward ethnic Chinese. He was said to have promulgated an edict ordering the Chinese in certain districts to convert or face the death penalty (Lombard and Salmon, 2001:197). He also

7 Kapitan, refer to the leader of Chinese, Arabs and other ethnic groups under Dutch colonial rule.
8 For details about Dutch’s attitudes towards Chinese Muslims, see Lombard and Salmon (2003:22-23)
required an immediate circumcision for those declaring to be Muslim. While in 1905, Sarekat Dagang Islam (SDI, Islamic Trade Union) was founded by some native Muslim businessmen to protect their business interests against better-established Chinese merchants. In 1912, SDI reorganised under the name of Sarekat Islam (SI). In the same year, it launched a boycott of Chinese dealers that turned into riots against Chinese in few days later, around Surakarta and Central Java (Shiraishi 1990; Azra 1994). Such events reinforced negative stereotypes among Indonesians. For many Chinese Indonesians, Islam was perceived as incompatible with Chineseness and even ‘anti-Chinese’. Meanwhile, for Muslim Indonesians, the Chinese were associated with the social exclusivity and economic dominance. The New Order regime manipulated these stereotypes and they still persist in Indonesian society today.

*From the 1900s to Independence: Grouping Chinese Muslims*

Despite the tensions mentioned earlier, Islamic conversion among Chinese Indonesians did not stop and some Chinese Muslims became involved in various local anti-colonial and religious movements (Ali 2007). In the early 1930s, there was increasing of Islamic proselytising by Chinese Muslims to convert non-Muslim Chinese (Lombard and Salmon, 2001). In Sulawesi, Ong Kie Ho founded the Islamic Party (Partai Islam) and was later deported to Java in 1932. Despite the arrest of Ong Kie Ho, the movement continued in Makassar, where in around 1933 the Indonesian Muslim Chinese Party (Partai Tionghoa Islam Indonesia) was established, which aimed to increase the status of ethnic Chinese through Islamic conversion. Meanwhile in Medan, a Chinese Muslim Association (PIT, Persatuan Islam Tionghoa) was established by Yap A Siong or Haji Abdussomad, with a few companions in 1936. Through such organisations, they tried to express both their Islamic and Chinese identity at the same time.

After Indonesia gained independence, the Chinese Muslim Association, PIT moved its headquarters from Medan to Jakarta, under the leadership of Abdul Karim Oei Tjang Hien. In 1961, PIT merged with Bengkulu-based Muslim Chinese Association (PTI,

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9 Despite these tensions, drawing from various sources, Muhammad Ali (2007) suggested that there is a fair number of Chinese Muslims involved in local anti-colonial wars and nationalist movements, including Johan Muhammad Chai, a Chinese Muslim who signed The Youth Oath (Sumpah Pemuda) in 1928. Discussing the religiosity of a few Chinese Muslims, Muhammad Ali (2007) also suggested that, by the early 20th century, there had been different religious orientations among them, ranging from syncretic, orthodox to political Islam. Such diversity in religiosity indicates that Chinese Muslims have integrated into local cultures in various ways.
Persatuan Tionghoa Islam) led by Kho Goan Tjin, which became the Indonesian Chinese Muslim Association (PITI, Persatuan Islam Tionghoa Indonesia). PITI aimed to convert Chinese to Islam, as well as promote better relations between Chinese and Muslim Indonesians. During its earlier period, almost all of the PITI board members were ethnic Chinese and there was a momentum expressing Chinese Muslim identity. However, the change in Indonesian politics after 1965 forced PITI to downplay its Chinese identity.

Abdul Karim Oei (1905-1982), the co-founder and the leader of PITI was one of the most significant and prominent Chinese Muslims during this period. He was also a successful Chinese Muslim businessman, politician and preacher. Born in Padang as a Christian, he converted to Islam in 1931, aged 26. From that time, he was actively involved in Muslim circles and developed close relationships with local Muslims. He had also formed a close relationship with Indonesian President Sukarno and Muslim leader Buya Hamka. He was described by Junus Jahya as a role model for Chinese Muslims in Indonesia because he had '3 in 1 quality' (Jahja 2005), which is 'Indonesian Nationalist, Faithful Muslim and Successful Entrepreneur' (Nasionalist Indonesia, Muslim Taat dan Pengusaha Sukses). He was once a branch leader of Muhammadiyah, the head of its economic council (1964-1973) and a member of the Masyumi Party Council (1957-60). He was also a Masyumi member for the House of Representatives representing ethnic Chinese (1956-1959).

During Sukarno’s presidency, the Indonesian cabinet had several Chinese Muslims as high-ranking ministers, such as Lee Kiat Teng/ Ali Mohammad who was minister of health from 1953 to 1955, Tan Kiem Liong/ Haji Mohammad Hassan who was minister of finance in 1964 (Suryadinata 1995), and even Mao Tse Fung / Tengku Nurdin who was the district head (bupati) in East Aceh (Lombard and Salmon, 2001). The political roles of ethnic Chinese in general and Chinese Muslims in particular decreased after the establishment of the New Order Regime in 1966.

The New Order Period: Assimilation and Chinese Muslims as Transitional Identities

The momentum of expressing Chinese Muslim identities during the early independence period came to a halt when Suharto assumed power in 1966. The allegations that Chinese

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10 For more details about Abdul Karim Oei, see his autobiography (Oei 1982) and Suryadinata (1993).
Indonesians were linked to the People’s Republic of China and their involvement in the September 1965 abortive coup determined the fate of Chinese in New Order Indonesia. ‘Chineseness’ was perceived by Suharto regime as a ‘domestic’ issue, known as the ‘Chinese Problem’ or ‘Masalah Cina’. Chinese Indonesians were accused of undermining the nation’s solidarity, due to their perceived economic domination and social exclusivity. In order to ‘solve’ the ‘problem’, the regime systematically repressed any expression of Chinese ethnic, cultural and religious identities; and at the same time, marginalised ethnic Chinese in all social, educational and political arenas. Thus, except for economic activities, Chinese Indonesians had limited space for cultural expression and political involvement. Chinese schools, newspapers, organisations were all banned and ethnic Chinese were forced to adopt ‘Indonesian’ names (Suryadinata 1997). Yet, in contradiction, discrimination against the Chinese continued to exist in most all aspects of public live, while some businessmen enjoyed economic privileges through their connections to the Suharto regime. Such policies, as argued by Hoon (2008), were to maintain Chinese Indonesians as ethnic ‘others’ as compared to the ‘indigenous’ citizens, and further reinforced perceptions that Chinese Indonesians are socially exclusive and economically better-off.

The New Order government also actively promoted religious affiliation in order to prevent the re-emergence of communism. Every Indonesian was required to declare a religious belief, choosing one of the six religions recognised by the regime. In 1965, Confucianism was officially recognised as a religion together with Islam, Catholicism, Protestantism, Buddhism and Hinduism, but in 1979, the Ministry of Religion declared Confucianism not a religion.11 In order to escape accusations of being communist or exclusivist, many ethnic Chinese converted to religions that were also observed by majority Indonesians. Most became Christians, but some also became Muslims. Conversion to Islam was seen by some assimilation advocates as the finishing touch to assimilation (pembauran secara tuntas), in which Chinese could liberate themselves from the status of non-indigenous and escape social discrimination (The 1990).

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11 President Abdurrahman Wahid (Gus Dur) in 2000, abrogated Suharto’s 1967 Presidential Instruction, which banned open celebration of Chinese religion, belief and customary practices. In 2006, under the government of Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, Confucianism was again officially recognised as one of the formal religions of Indonesia (Pausacker 2007). For more detail on the development of Confucianism in Indonesia, see Coppel (2002) and Suryadinata (1998).
At the same time, the Suharto regime endorsed a military-backed ‘Assimilation Program’ (‘Program Pembauran’), which suggested the idea of the eventual disappearance of the ethnic Chinese as a cultural community and the absorption into local cultural groups. Such ‘assimilationist’ policies also had an impact on the Indonesian Chinese Muslim Association, PITI. After 1965, there was a change in the structure and membership of the board. In order to get broader official support, many military leaders were included as advisors for PITI and the composition of its board became more ethnically mixed. Among the new board members were Letjen H. Sudirman, a counsellor and Buya Hamka, an advisor. In order to be able to preach Islam to ethnic Chinese who still read and speak Mandarin, PITI requested permission from the Ministry of Religious Affairs on April 1972 to print the Qur’an and publish a dakwah magazine in Chinese. This request was denied by the then Minister then H.A. Mukti Ali, due to the government’s assimilation policy which held that the use of Chinese language strengthens ethnic separateness.

Later, in the same year, the Prosecutor General prohibited the use of ‘Tionghoa’ in the name of the PITI, as it could be an indication of ‘exclusivity’. Ten days later, the organisation changed its name to Pembina Iman Tauhid Islam (Islamic Faith Cultivator Association, the abbreviation remained PITI). Some Chinese Muslims I met have described New Order Period as the dark period of PITI, in which its leadership was controlled by Indonesian military leaders and the preaching of Islam by using Chinese cultural elements was not allowed (Interview, Muliawan, 11 August 2008). Chinese elements in Indonesian Islam were also being abandoned by the Ministry of Religion which rejected the proposition that the Chinese contributed to the Islamisation of Indonesia (Taylor 2005). One of the best examples is the ban of Slamet Muljana’s book in 1971 which suggested most of the Walisongo were of Chinese descent.

In this period, some Chinese leaders suggested conversion to Islam as a solution to the prejudice against Chinese Indonesians since the majority of Indonesians were Muslims.

12 ‘Pembauran’ is a contested term. It can imply different meanings. In general, it means mixing or blending, but during the New Order, it implied assimilation of ethnic Chinese into local communities. However, the ‘pembauran’ program in the Suharto period is contradictory: on the one hand, it aims to erase Chineseness; but on the other hand, it remains official discrimination of ethnic Chinese, including Peranakans who have more or less assimilated. In post-New Order Indonesia, ‘pembauran’ is sometimes still used by some Chinese Muslims, but in different way, as one of my informants says, one can ‘membaur’ or blending well with local community without losing his or her Chinese cultural identity. In other words, ‘pembauran’ used by Chinese Muslim leaders today have similar connotations to the ‘integration’ concept, which demands the Chinese to be accepted as an ethnic group under the nationalist principles of ‘Unity in Diversity’. For further discussion of assimilation and integration debates among Chinese Indonesians, see Purdey (2003).
Junus Jahya became the leader of the movement to convert ethnic Chinese to Islam and suggested it was the best and only way to resolve the ‘Chinese Problem’, as by embracing the religion of the majority of the population, the difference between ethnic Chinese and indigenous Indonesians would disappear (Riyanto 1997; Tan 1998). Junus Jahya, was born as Lauw Chuan Tho, in 1927 in Jakarta. He has always been a promoter of assimilation, even as a student when he studied economics in The Netherlands. There in 1952, he initiated the abolition of an ethnic Chinese organisation, called Chung Hua Hui, as he saw it as an exclusive organisation. When he returned to Indonesia, he actively engaged with the assimilation movement. In 1979, he converted to Islam and a year later married a Sundanese woman. Besides leading several convert organisations, he was also a member of Muhammadiyah, a board member of MUI (Majelis Ulama Indonesia, Indonesia Council of Ulama) and an advisory member of ICMI (Ikatan Cendekiawan Muslim Indonesia, Indonesian Association of Muslim Intellectuals).13 As quoted by Suryadinata (1979:170), Junus Jahaya once said,

‘By embracing Islam, young ethnic Chinese experienced that immediately they are fully accepted as fellow Muslims and compatriots by the people at large who are 90 percent Muslim. All kinds of hostility and controversy as an inheritance of the past disappear. They are heartily welcomed now and totally integrated within the community. So they have at last a permanent ‘place in the sun’. This is exactly what ethnic Chinese are so looking and longing for.’14

Although promoting full assimilation, Junus Jahya’s stand towards his Chinese identity after being a Muslim was both contradictory and strategic: the more he wanted to escape his Chineseness, the more he was trapped by the notion of Chineseness defined by the New Order regime. He first stopped using his Chinese name after conversion, yet still saw himself as ‘a Muslim, an Indonesian, and of Chinese descent’. Later, he proposed that the Muslim community of Chinese descent in Indonesia would ultimately become just a ‘Muslim community’ and not ‘a separate Chinese community with a mosque’ (The 1986:67). Thus the label of ‘Chinese Muslims’ was problematic since they were assumed to lose their ‘Chineseness’ in the end. In other words, the Chinese Muslim identity was

13 For a compilation of Jahya’s articles and comments on his ideas, see Riyanto (1997).
14 The concept of assimilation fell from favour in post-Suharto Indonesia, yet Junus Jahya defended Islamic conversion as one of the best options for Chinese Indonesians to escape ethnic prejudice. In an interview, he told me that, ‘I did not ask all Chinese to convert to Islam, but I provide an alternative way for us to survive, especially during the New Order period. By sharing religious affinity with the majority indigenous Indonesians, it shows that not all of us are exclusive.’ (Interview, Junus Jahya, 25 December 2008).
only ‘transitional’ as a step on the way to full assimilation into ‘indigenous Indonesians’. However, as I will discuss later, he established Lautze Mosque in 1994 to show that there are Chinese Indonesians who are Muslims.

There is no doubt from his writings, that the 1980s and the early 1990s were the most active years for his involvement in religious conversion and assimilation advocacy. He had edited and written a number of books to promote his ideas, including *Dakwah dan Asimilasi* [Preaching and Assimilation] (1979), *Kisah-kisah Saudara Baru* [Stories of New Converts] (1988b), and *WNI Beragama Islam* [WNI Muslims] (1991). Through various foundations, such as Yayasan Ukhuwah Islamiyah (The Foundation of Muslim Brotherhood), he converted many ethnic Chinese, especially those who were educated, middle class and younger. Some of the prominent Chinese converts are academic Muhamad Budyanta, female badminton national player Verawati Fajrin and businessman Yusof Hamka. Junus Jahya believes that the number of Chinese Muslims is gradually increasing and, compared to before, there are more converts from middle and upper classes. In 2005, he estimated that there were about 50,000 Chinese Muslims, including some 50 Chinese preachers and several hundred converts who have undertaken the pilgrimage to Mecca (Jahja 2005).

However, in reality, the response of ethnic Chinese towards Islamic conversion was tepid. Many Chinese Indonesians hesitated to convert to Islam due to various social, historical and religious reasons. It was not uncommon for Chinese parents to tell their children, ‘You can convert to any religion, but not Islam’. For those who converted to Islam, they often face objections from their family members, and sometimes rejections from their Chinese colleagues and friends. As discussed earlier, since the Dutch colonial period, Chinese Indonesians began to have a negative perceptions of Islam and some of these suspicions still persist today, such as ‘Islam is religion for native people’, ‘Islam is a backward and low status religion’, ‘Islam is a violent and anti-Chinese religion’, ‘Islam is a conservative and rigid religion’, ‘Islam is incompatible with Chinese culture’, ‘Islam allows polygamy’ and so on. Junus Jahya was aware of these difficulties in his preaching of Islam and he once wrote that ‘In the view of many Chinese Indonesians, Muslims are hypocrites, untrustworthy, can have many wives and are anti-Chinese’ (Jahja, 1993:9). As I will further discuss in other chapters, many Chinese Muslim leaders and preachers seek to challenge these negative perceptions of Islam in different ways.

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Although the notion of assimilation through Islamic conversion was dominant during this period, not all Chinese converted to Islam for that reason. Conversion reasons are far more diverse, including intermarriage, business, influence of friends and also religious interest. Some of them have converted to Islam for security reasons. They became Muslims because they wanted to be safe from tensions caused by the hostility of some local Muslims towards ethnic Chinese. For example, some Chinese converted to Islam, after the anti-Chinese riots in Surakarta which spread through several towns in 1980 (Ali 2007). After the implementation of the 1974 Marriage Law that prohibited the inter-religious marriage, some Chinese Indonesians also converted to Islam in order to marry Muslim Indonesians. For them, conversion to Islam thus became a precondition for intermarriage rather than a voluntary action. I will further discuss the diverse conversion motives of Chinese Indonesians in chapter 7.

Apart from Junus Jahya, there were other prominent Chinese Muslims during the New Order period. One of them is Masagung or Tjio Wie Tay, the founder of the large publishing company Gunung Agung. He converted from Hinduism to Islam in 1981. He then established the Clear Path Foundation (Yayasan Jalan Terang) aimed at financing the construction of mosques, a hospital and a museum for the Walisongo. Later, he also founded Yayasan Masagung (Masagung Foundation) that offered religious activities for converts.\(^{15}\) Rubaidi (1999) contrasted the different religious thoughts and preaching strategies between Junus Jahja and Masagung. He argued that Junus Jahja’s religious viewpoint is closer to a ‘scripturalist’ Muslim,\(^{16}\) as he is a member of Muhammadiyah and his ambition to convert non-Muslim Chinese to Islam is similar to the dakwah movement on campus which aims to Islamise Indonesian society. In contrast, Masagung’s religious viewpoint is closer to a ‘substantialist’ Muslim, as he practised Sufistic religious spirituality and preached Islam through everyday life practice (dakwah bi al-Hal) and publications. However, in my opinion, Junus Jahya is not a ‘scripturalist’ Muslim. Different from the dakwah movement on campus, his promotion of Islamic conversion amongst Chinese aimed to place them in a better position, rather than cultivating Islamic piety. Hasan Widjaya, who supported his notion of assimilation through Islam, viewed Jahya’s attempt to combine both Islam and Indonesian

\(^{15}\) For details about Masagung, see “Haji Masagung Dalam Kenangan” (Yayasan Idanya, 1990a; 1990b).

\(^{16}\) As noted in Rubaidi (1999:103), he borrowed such typology of Indonesian Islamic thought from Liddle (1996). 'Scripturalist' Muslims refer to those who read the religious texts literally and tend to be 'sharia-minded'. Meanwhile, 'Substantialist' Muslims refer to those who engage with contextualised interpretations of the holy books and tend to reject the idea of 'Islamic state'. As I will discuss in chapter 7, such dichotomy is rather simplified and does not reflect the complex religiosity of many Muslim Indonesians, especially the converts.
nationalism as a form of “patriotic Islamisation” (Widjaya 1989). During my fieldwork, one of my informants even told me that Junus Jahya did not encourage female Chinese converts to wear Islamic clothing. This shows that despite his close relationship with Muhammadiyah and ICMI, Jahya’s religious viewpoint is far from being ‘scripturalist’.

Chinese Muslim leaders, Bambang Sujanto in Surabaya and Budi Setyagraha in Yogyakarta, also offer interesting comparisons to Junus Jahya. Both of them have different views on ‘pembauran’. While they agree that conversion to Islam could promote better relationships between ethnic Chinese and local Muslims, they reject the idea of ‘total assimilation’ as one can ‘membaur’ or mix well with local community without losing his or her Chinese cultural identity (Interview, Bambang Sujanto, 27 November 2008; Budi Setyagraha, 12 February 2009). It is interesting to note that even Junus Jahya himself has slightly modified his stand on assimilation later. In 1991, he founded Karim Oei Foundation to facilitate rapprochement between Chinese and Muslim, and attract new converts. Lautze Mosque which is painted in red and decorated with Chinese calligraphy was established in 1994. According to Junus Jahya, it was decided to use this Chinese name for the mosque on purpose to make clear that ‘there are ethnic Chinese who are Muslims’ (noted in Tan 2008:82). He justified the establishment of the mosque that focused on preaching among ethnic Chinese, by saying that most converts prefer to go along and learn Islam together with their fellow converts first, but in the end, most of them will mix well with the majority Muslims (Jahya 1999).

The establishment of Lautze Mosque would not be successful without the support of ICMI and other Muslim organisations, such as NU and Muhammadiyah. Furthermore, after the end of the Cold War and the decline of communism, the last decade of the New Order administration softened its stand towards Chinese cultural expression. At the end of the Suharto presidency, Mohammad (Bob) Hassan, a Chinese Muslim businessman, was chosen as the Minister of Industry and Trade. He is in fact, the only ethnic Chinese in any New Order cabinet. The collapse of New Order regime in 1998, again opened a new chapter for Chinese Muslims in Indonesia.
The Post-New Order Period: Resurgence of Chinese Muslim Culture

From the 13-15 May 1998, at the climax of Reformasi movement that was spurred by the economic crisis of 1997, Jakarta exploded in a fury of looting, burning and rape, directed mostly at the business and residential areas where ethnic Chinese were concentrated. The consequences of the May 1998 ‘anti-Chinese’ riots made many Chinese Indonesians convinced that the Suharto’s assimilation project had failed.17 With regard to Chinese Muslims, some of whom were convinced that being Muslims, they would be treated fully as part of the Indonesian ethnic majority, the impact of events was remarkable. Many people put up signs on front of their shops reading ‘Milik Pribumi’ (Native property), ‘Milik Muslim’ (Muslim property) to avoid their property from being looted or burned. Yet, some Chinese Muslims store owners said that they were not spared, even though they mentioned that they were Muslims. Apparently, there were then still asked whether they were ‘pribumi’ or ‘non-pribumi’ Muslim. According to Tan (2008: 88), Junus Jahya was shocked when he heard that some Chinese Muslims were among the victims of the riots.

While in Surabaya, a few Chinese Muslim leaders told me that PITA had played an important role in minimising the riots in the capital city of East Java. They said their close relations with local Muslim organisations and military officers had helped to keep Surabaya rather peaceful compared to Jakarta (Interview, Abdul Chalim, 3 October 2008; Bambang Sujanto, 27 November 2008). They rejected the idea of ‘total assimilation through Islamic conversion’ and argued that they could only effectively bridge the divide between local Muslims and ethnic Chinese, by maintaining their Chinese ethnicity with their Islamic identity. By sharing their ethnicity with the Chinese minority and religion with the Muslim majority, they see themselves as ‘cultural mediators’ and ‘bridge builders’, as I will further discuss in chapter 5. In general, the approach of assimilation has been contested, if not rejected by many Chinese Muslims today. Many of them feel that they can retain their Chinese cultural practices as long as those practices are not incompatible with Islamic teachings. In other words, by converting to Islam, ethnic Chinese can be ‘more Indonesian, but no less Chinese’.

17 For detailed analysis of the May 1998 ‘anti-Chinese’ riots, see Purdey (2006). Some has been argued that such riots were systematically instigated by the regime to divert mass’ anger away from Suharto and his cronies to the Chinese (Heryanto 1999). For critical accounts of changing Chinese identities after the event, see Hoon (2008).
This shifting meaning of being a ‘Chinese Muslim’ has been further triggered by the changing attitude of successive governments towards Chinese ethnicity. In order to distance themselves from old authoritarian ideology and to show their commitments to reform agenda, post-New Order governments adopted the policy of multiculturalism, and amended almost all of the discriminatory policies against the Chinese. Chinese Indonesians today enjoy the freedom to express their cultural and religious identities, as well as participate in various political and social organisations. This resurgence of Chinese identity also needs to be put in the wider context of the recent economic rise and diplomatic power of China and its ramifications for the ethnic Chinese in South East Asia, as well as the better relationship between China and Indonesia after the end of Cold War. Furthermore, in democratising Indonesia, mainstream Muslim organisations, such as NU and Muhammadiyah also cultivate better relations with Chinese Indonesians to show their commitments to pluralism and to win over support from Chinese Indonesians, both financially and politically. The ‘moderation race’ of Muslim groups, especially after 9/11 and Bali Bombings, also led many Muslim leaders to endorse the expression of Chinese Muslim culture identity to reemphasise the tolerance and inclusivity of Indonesian Islam.

In these contexts, the commemoration of Cheng Ho’s histories, the establishment of Chinese-style mosques and the celebrations of Chinese New Year in mosques were all made possible in contemporary Indonesia. In parallel with the emergence of both Islamic and Chinese NGOs, PITI also gained momentum and revived its activities. In addition, as a result of modernisation and globalisation, we also witness the rising of ‘market Islam’ and ‘print Islam’, alongside ‘political Islam’, among Indonesian Muslims today. Media, market and consumption began to have a bigger role in the construction of Islamic identities, and the same also applies to Chinese identities. Meanwhile, there has been growing conversion to Islam amongst middle and upper class Chinese for religious and other reasons rather than political considerations. The popularity of Chinese Muslim preachers and Chinese nasyid (Islamic music) group in Indonesia today should also be read in these wider contexts.

Such resurgence of the expression of Chinese Muslim cultural identities reminds us of the ‘Peranakan Muslim subculture’ (Lombard and Salmon 2001) during the pre-colonial period in Java. However, whether the expression of Chinese Muslim identity in post-New Order Indonesia is a revival of hybrid Sino-Javanese Muslim culture, a reverse
identity strategy as compared to the New Order period, a form of ‘double consciousness’ (emphasis on both ‘Chineseness’ and Islam) or ‘strategic essentialisation’ is open for discussion. If ‘the Islamisation of Indonesia’ or ‘the indigenisation of Islam’ is a continuing debate amongst Muslim Indonesians in general, then ‘the Sinification of Islam’ or ‘the Islamisation of Chinese’ or ‘the Indonesiation of Chinese’ is the ongoing processes among Chinese Muslims in Indonesia.

The Rearticulation of Chinese Muslim Histories

Having reviewed the historical account of Chinese Muslim identities, it is now important to look at how and under what conditions, they rearticulate their histories in contemporary Indonesia. In the following sections, I will discuss in particular, the ‘memory industries’ (Storey 2003:85) which promote Cheng Ho’s role in the Islamisation and perception of Chinese descent of Walisongo. I begin by exploring the representation of Cheng Ho and Walisongo through popular culture, preaching, celebration and mosques. It will then be followed by an examination of the discourses of Cheng Ho and Walisongo in books and seminars. Such commemorations of Cheng Ho in post-1998 Indonesia, as I will discuss, are for various reasons, which include reconstructing identity, preaching Islam, promoting religious pluralism, establishing business networks and improving ethnic relations.

Representing Cheng Ho and Walisongo

‘Before the Dutch period, Sam Poo Tay Jin (Cheng Ho) from China had arrived in Java for business and preaching Islam, as well as building relations between China and Java’. This is a part of the lyric from a song, entitled Dulur Tuwa (Elder Sibling), written and sung by Mbah Pringis or So Khing Hok, a Chinese Muslim in Semarang. This song, which is recited in Javanese and arranged with traditional Chinese musical instruments, is one of the ten songs in Mbah Pringis’s album, Tembang Dulur Tuwa.

19 Mbah Pringis is a nickname for this amateur musician and fulltime fortune teller. Mbah is a Javanese title for respectful person, while Pringis means ‘grin’ to reflect his personality to make people laugh. His Chinese name is So Khing Hok, and Indonesian name is Haryanto Hadi Sukendro.
Song by Elder Sibling, released in 2007. According to Mbah Pringis, this song is written to illustrate the journey of Admiral Cheng Ho from China in spreading Islam in Java, which has promoted good relationships between the ethnic Chinese and the Javanese. He said, ‘Dulur Tuwa (Elder Sibling) in this song refers to Cheng Ho. Through this song, I hope the interaction between Chinese and Javanese could return to the era before Dutch colonial period.’

Mbah Pringis who used to own a printing business, sees himself as a amateur musician and guitarist. He is now also a fortune teller, combining both Javanese astrology and Chinese fengshui. Most of the songs in his album, such as Jaran Sam Poo (Horse of Sam Poo), Beduk China (Drum from China) and Warak Ngendhog (Rhinoceros Lays Egg), illustrate the everyday events of ethnic Chinese and Javanese, as well as their interactions and friendships. Although all the songs have Islamic messages, he said he does not intend to convert everyone to Islam, but to promote the spirit of Islam adhered to Cheng Ho as a unifying force for multicultural Indonesia. As he told me, ‘Your religion is yours, my religion is mine. I am not going to convert you to Islam.’ (Interview, Mbah Pringis, 18 February 2009). In fact, his wife and two of his children are Chinese Catholic. Therefore, his album which aims to promote the spirit of togetherness is different from the Islamic-themed album by a Chinese Muslim nasyid (Islamic music) group, Lampion (Lantern), which focuses on preaching Islam (see chapter 4).

His album is supported and sponsored by a local non-Muslim Chinese businessman, Harjanto Halim, in the hope of reminding both Chinese and Javanese of the existence of Chinese Muslims in Indonesia who help to bridge the divide between the two ethnic groups. Harjanto, who is also the chairperson for Kopi Semawis (Komunitas Pecinan Semarang untuk Pariwisata, Semarang Chinatown Community for Tourism), said he was touched by the ‘spirit of multiculturalism’ of the album that combines Javanese lyrics, Islamic messages and Chinese musical instruments (Permana 2007). Mbah Pring’s ‘Tembang Dulur Tuwa’ was launched in 2007 in Semarang during a Chinese New Year celebration, Pasar Inlek Semawis and a few hundred complimentary copies of the album have been distributed to locals.

Mbah Pringis’s album, Tembang Dulur Tuwa is part of the ‘memory industry’ in contemporary Indonesia striving to retell and recognise the contribution of ethnic

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Chinese in spreading Islam. The contribution of Chinese Muslims in Islamisation was once a taboo subject, discussion of it emerged again in various media in post-1998 Indonesia. Chinese Muslim preachers, such as Tan Mei Hwa, also always highlight the role of Cheng Ho in spreading Islam, and emphasise that some of the revered Walisongo in Java were of Chinese descent. During a preaching in Surabaya in 2008, she says,

‘Among those who first brought Islam to Java is Admiral Cheng Ho. Cheng Ho was requested to go back to China, yet some of his followers stayed in Java. One of them is Bun Sui Ho. Both of his son and grandson, Sunan Bonang and Sunan Ampel are respected Walisongo who spread Islam across Java. Sunan Bonang’s original name is Bun An, but Javanese pronounce it as Bonang. This is a historical fact that can’t be denied.’ (Field note, 16 October 2008)

Although not all of her mostly Javanese Muslim audiences accept fully such arguments, they do not hesitate to applaud her. She then urged audiences, not to hold negative perceptions of Chinese Indonesians in general and converts in particular, as an indirect way of establishing her credentials as a Chinese preacher. Meanwhile, another Chinese Muslim preacher, Syaukanie Ong believes that referring to Cheng Ho and Walisongo in preaching is a form of *dakwah* to non-Muslim Chinese, to show that ‘Islam and Chineseness are not incompatible’ and ‘Islam is not anti-Chinese and foreign religion’ (Interview, Syaukanie Ong, 19 November 2008).

Apart from songs and preaching, Cheng Ho is also remembered through the building of mosques and libraries by Chinese Muslim leaders and businessmen. At least, two mosques have been built in Chinese architectural design and named after Cheng Ho, respectively in Surabaya and Palembang, two cities that Cheng Ho visited during his voyage. Meanwhile, a Cheng Ho library has been built in the compound of Indonesian Chinese Cultural Park in ‘Beautiful Indonesia Miniature Park’ (TMII, Taman Mini Indonesia Indah), Jakarta, in order to remember the contribution of Cheng Ho and to promote his spirit of togetherness. Jos Soetomo, a Chinese Muslim businessman who sponsored the library said,

‘The voyage of Cheng Ho to Indonesia was not for colonising or conquering, but for peace, togetherness, and progress. He came here for business and preaching Islam. He promoted better relations between Chinese and Muslims, as well as
respected his followers of voyage who were mostly non-Muslims. Indonesians should learn from his spirit that emphasise peace and kindness, which are also recommended by Islamic teachings' (Interview, Jos Soetomo, 24 October 2008).

The remembering of Cheng Ho goes beyond Chinese Muslims, as non-Muslim Chinese and non-Chinese Muslims also participate in the ‘memory industries’ of Cheng Ho. This is best exemplified in the commemoration of the 600th anniversary in 2005 of Cheng Ho’s visit to Semarang in 2005, which is organised by the temple committee of Sam Poo Kong (Cheng Ho Temple), with the support of the Central Java’s regional government. The anniversary was billed as a ‘contribution to inter-racial life and harmony’ of Indonesia. According to Hooker (2005:7), this celebration is an example of how Semarang draws on the legends and symbolism surrounding a 15th century Chinese Muslim admiral to fashion its own 21st century image as a lively centre of regional commerce, as well as an example of religious and ethnic tolerance. A serial drama, ‘Laksamana Cheng Ho’ (Admiral Cheng Ho), has also been made and screened Metro TV in 2008. Interestingly, the role of Cheng Ho in the drama is played by a non-Chinese Muslim, Yusril Ihza Mahendra, who is a former Justice Minister and Chairman of the Islamist party, Crescent and Star Party (PBB, Partai Bulan Bintang).

In addition, a Javanese Muslim comedian in Surabaya, Muhammad Cheng Ho Djadi Galajapo even adopts ‘Cheng Ho’ as his ‘Islamic’ name after he performed pilgrimage in Mecca. He said, ‘There are many Chinese Indonesians who adopt Javanese names, but very few Javanese use Chinese names. Therefore, I decided to adopt the Chinese Muslim name to show my commitment on ‘pembauran’ (blending). This is a true blending. Javanese uses Chinese names and Chinese uses Javanese names.’ (Muhammad & Nabonenar 2008:88). There might be also economic considerations lay behind the celebration of Cheng Ho. During my interview with a Chinese Muslim businesswoman in Jakarta in 2008 (Interview, Sias Saputra, 9 April 2008), I had a chance to talk to a Javanese television producer. He was approaching Chinese Muslims to sponsor his production of a documentary film for Idul Fitri television broadcasting, which narrated the histories and contributions of Chinese Muslims in Indonesia. He told me that it was the best topic to get sponsorship from Chinese Muslims and even non-Muslim Chinese businessman to support the production of an Islamic-theme television program.
To summarise, such representations of Cheng Ho have been ‘reproduced’ to rearticulate the contribution of ethnic Chinese in Indonesian Islamisation, as a way of constructing Chinese Muslim cultural identities, to improve the image of Chinese Indonesians among non-Chinese and to preach Islam among Chinese Indonesians. Next, I will discuss how Cheng Ho and Walisongo have been portrayed through books and seminars.

Discourses of Cheng Ho and Walisongo

‘Not many people are aware that, according to historical note, eight of the nine saints that spread Islam in Indonesia are ethnic Chinese and their original Chinese names are: Sunan Ampel alias Bong Swie Ho; Sunan Drajet alias Bong Tak Keng, Sunan Bonang alias Bong Tak Ang; Sunan Kalijaga alias Gan Si Cang; Sunan Gunung Jati alias Du Anbo - Toh A Bo; Sunan Kudus alias Zha Dexu - Ja Tik Su; Sunan Giri was the grandson of Bong Swie Ho; Sunan Muria Maulana Malik Ibrahim alias Chen Yinghua or Tan Eng Hoat’ (INTI, 2007:15).

A short article in the Suara Baru (New Voice), a bi-monthly magazine of Chinese Indonesian Association (INTI, Perhimpunan Indonesia Tionghoa), which entitled 8 dari 9 Walisongo adalah Tionghoa? (Eight from the nine saints are Chinese?), suggested that most of the Muslim saints in Java were of Chinese descent. In 2009, Suara Baru also featured a special edition highlighting the contributions of Chinese Muslims in Indonesia (INTI 2009). This promotion of the Chinese role in Indonesian Islamisation can be seen as a part of the effort of Chinese organisations and leaders to emphasise the participation, if not the contribution of Chinese Indonesians to the Indonesian nation.

Although there has been no hostile reaction or government intervention in questioning such claims, which would have happened during the New Order period, their arguments are not without controversy and have generated discussions online. Many have criticised such claims as exaggerating the Chinese influence and lacking of convincing evidence.21 Meanwhile, some Muslims also question the motivation for over- emphasising Chinese

identity. During my fieldwork, referring to former Indonesian president Abdurrahman Wahid, one of the Muslim staff in a PITI office told me,

‘I do not understand why people like him want to claim that he has Chinese descent, even though he has been assimilated. Why can’t we just say that we are Indonesians? Maybe I have Chinese blood, but it should not be raised as an issue. If there should not be a difference between pribumi and non-pribumi, why we should emphasize the difference between Chinese and non-Chinese?’ (Field note, 26 November 2008)

Indeed, to a certain extent, what she said reflected the paradox of reclaiming ‘Chineseness’ in Indonesia today – the resurgence of ‘Chineseness’ today is a reaction to the suppression of Chinese cultural expression of the past; yet the more some Chinese Indonesians intend to reclaim their displacement during New Order period, the more they are trapped by the racial discourse of the regime that they opposed.

Despite these controversies, driven by various motivations, be it ethnic, religious, economic or personal interests, many Chinese Muslim leaders today enthusiastically involve in the ‘memory industries’ of Cheng Ho. Based on the controversial texts, such as The Malay Annals of Semarang and Cerbon, they reproduce narratives that link Cheng Ho to Walisongo and Islamisation in Indonesia. However, in general, such narratives have been seen as ‘legends’, rather than ‘historical facts’. As the secretary of PITI, Willy Pangestu told me, such narratives are not yet written in Indonesian historical textbooks. Therefore, it is important for PITI to publish books and organise seminars to “mensosialisasikan” (socialise) the Chinese Muslims’ influence in Islamic propagation among a wider population of Indonesians (Interview, Willy Pangestu, 6 November 2008).

In 2008, Muslim leaders and Chinese scholars, both from China (mainly Beijing and Yunnan) and Indonesia were invited to speak and participated in a conference, entitled Cheng Ho, Walisongo dan Muslim Tionghoa Indonesia Di Masa Lalu, Kini dan Esok (Cheng Ho, Walisongo and Chinese Muslim in Indonesia: Past, Present and Future), which was held in Surabaya, by Cheng Hoo Foundation and PITI, East Java. The keynote speaker of the conference is Abdurrahman Wahid or Gus Dur. His attendance was greeted with ‘Hidup Gus Dur’ (Long Live Gus Dur) and whenever he mentioned about the role of Chinese Muslims in Indonesian Islamisation, there was applause from the floor (Field note, 26 April 2008). Other invited prominent speakers included Lin
Song, a Muslim scholar from mainland China; Kong Yuan Zhi, a Chinese specialist on Cheng Ho from Beijing University; Leo Suryadinata, an Indonesianist based in Singapore, specialising on Chinese Indonesians; Tan Ta Sen, Director of Cheng Ho Museum in Malaysia; Azyumardi Azra, a Muslim scholar from the Syarif Hidayatullah State Islamic University (absent); Djoko Suryo, a historian from the University of Gadjah Mada, and Kacung Marijan, a social scientist from the Airlangga University. This conference was also supported and attended by local government officers, members from Islamic organisations, such as NU and Muhammadiyah, as well as leaders from local Chinese organisations.

Through the commemoration of Cheng Ho and Walisongo, the conference aimed to celebrate Chinese participation, if not contribution to disseminating Islam in Indonesia. Many speakers in the conference emphasised, either directly or indirectly, the role of Cheng Ho in propagating Islam or the Chinese background of Walisongo. Through these selective memories of the past and connections to mainland China, Chinese Muslim leaders want to prove that Chinese Muslim identity is not a new phenomenon, but a continuity of long historical processes in Indonesia. By acknowledging the contribution of the Chinese Muslim in promoting ethnic interactions, they try to place themselves in a better position in contemporary Indonesia, from a marginalised minority to an intermediate community between Chinese and Muslim Indonesians.

Some Chinese Muslim leaders also suggested such celebration of Cheng Ho has political meaning, as it could help to reduce the ‘anti-Chinese’ sentiment and prevent inter-ethnic conflict. Referring to Arab Indonesians, one Chinese Muslim leader argued that,

‘Ethnic Arabs are also foreigners, rich and exclusive, but the indigenous people do not hold the same prejudice for them, because ethnic Arabs claim that they have a significant role in spreading Islam in Indonesia. Using this parallel, Chinese Muslims should uphold their ethnic heritage and inform indigenous Indonesians that ethnic Chinese have a role in the process of Islamisation too. We should promote the contribution of Cheng Ho. We should emphasise that part of the Walisongo have Chinese blood. We should tell them that Islam came to China earlier than it did to Indonesia. By promoting Chinese contribution in Islamisation, indigenous people will have a better perception of ethnic Chinese, including non-Muslim Chinese.’ (Interview, Bambang Sujanto, 27 November 2008)
Many non-Muslim Chinese Indonesians endorse such proposition. Given that majority of the Indonesians are Muslims, some of them suggested that by emphasising that ‘Chinese is one group of the Indonesian Muslim ancestors’, it will help to improve Chinese Indonesians’ image among local Muslims. To some extent, the promotion of Cheng Ho by Chinese Indonesians is more or less driven by their traumatic past. By spreading Cheng Ho’s message of peaceful co-existence, they hope ‘anti-Chinese’ riots would never happen again. A non-Muslim Chinese retired journalist explained why he supported the efforts of Bambang Sujanto,

‘I have witnessed a few anti-Chinese violent incidents in Indonesia. There are always attempts to separate Chinese Indonesians from the pribumi to create disunity. I think we need a role model to bridge the difference. Such model has to be accepted not only by Chinese, but also local Muslims. I think Cheng Ho is the best option. By emphasising his Islamic piety and his peaceful approach, local Muslims might be less hostile towards us.’ (Field note, 22 November 2009)

Also in 2008, The China Islamic Association, Indonesia Marketing Organisation (IMA) and NU co-organised a seminar, entitled Seminar Internasional Budaya Islam Nusantara-Tiongkok (International Seminar on Islamic Cultures in Indonesia and China) in Surabaya and Jakarta. According to the chair of organising committee, M. Paiman, the seminar aimed to understand the Islamic cultures in Indonesia and China, as well as improve the relationship between both countries. Meanwhile, NU stated that this seminar is important to acknowledge the richness and diversity of Indonesian Islamic cultures. In his speech, Y.W. Junardy, the President of Indonesia Marketing Association, emphasised that both Indonesia and China have large Muslim populations, thus there is great potential for mutual cooperation and development between both countries in the economic, social and cultural spheres. The speakers in the seminar include Amir Zhang Guanglin and Esa Gao Zhanfu from the China Islamic Institute of mainland China, and, Ikhsan Tanggok and Komaruddin Hidayat from Syarif Hidayatullah State Islamic University in Jakarta. Among the topics presented is Islam Masuk Ke Indonesia Juga Dibawa oleh Orang China Dari Negeri China (The Role of Chinese Communities to the Spread of Islam in Indonesia) by Ikhsan Tanggok (Field note, 28 May 2008).
As this seminar is sponsored by the Indonesian Marketing Association (IMA), it is reasonable to speculate about the economic considerations that lay behind it. Indeed, Junardy, the president of IMA, openly stated in his speech that cultural sharing is crucial in generating better economic co-operation. Therefore, by promoting the Islamic cultural connections between China and Indonesia, it provides cultural niches for better economic relations between both countries. Chinese Muslims have a strategic position in this situation and some of them use it for their business interests. Furthermore, by endorsing such events organised by Chinese businessmen, NU and its leaders might be given funding for their activities, mosques and boarding schools. In a private conversation, a Chinese Muslim businessman told me that, he has provided business training for NU members, funded a couple of Islamic boarding schools (pesantren) and collected donations from Chinese businessmen to build mosques. In return, NU leaders provide him with business networks and religious credibility in the Muslim community (Field note, 27 November 2008).

Beyond seminars and conferences, after 1998, a few books have also been published or republished, interestingly mostly written in Bahasa Indonesia by non-Chinese Muslims, to acknowledge the contribution of Chinese Muslims in Indonesian Islamisation. The most provocative one is Arus Cina-Islam-Jawa: Bongkar Sejarah atas Peranan Tionghoa dalam Penyebaran Agama Islam di Nusantara Abad XV & XVI [Chinese-Islam-Java Flow: Reveal the History of the Chinese Role in Spreading Islam in Archipelago during 15th and 16th Century] by Sumanto Al-Qurtuby, who is an activist in NU’s Institute for Human Resources Studies (Lakspesdam NU) and Liberal Islam Network (JIL, Jaringan Islam Liberal). Without discrediting the contribution of Arabs and Indian Muslims, Al-Qurtuby, is the strongest advocate of the theory that the ethnic Chinese played an important role in the spread of Islam in Indonesia, and especially to Java. As I mentioned earlier, in his book, he strengthens his argument using four types of historical sources: Western records; Chinese sources; local Javanese written texts and oral traditions; and an examination of the historical monuments found in Java (Al-Qurtuby 2003). To further promote his thesis, he has proposed a documentary film, which entitled Jejak Budaya Tionghoa & Islam Nusantara [Trail of Chinese Culture and Archipelago Islam] (Al-Qurtuby 2005).

Responding to his critics who claim that he has undermined the fact that Islam came from the Middle East or India, Al-Qurtuby argues that his promotion of Chinese
contribution does not dismiss such influences, but strives to illustrate the another side of Islamic histories previously covered up by the New Order regime. He said, "I do not reject the contribution of Arab Muslims in Indonesian Islamisation. What I reject is the opinion that it is only the Arab and Middle Eastern Muslims who have played such roles." (Matraji 2007) 'Arus Cina-Islam-Java' was published in 2003 with the cooperation of INTI. The chairman of INTI then, Eddie Lembong, a non-Muslim Chinese businessman, recommended and supported the publication of the book, because he echoed the view of Al-Qurtuby that 'by showing the contribution ethnic Chinese had on Islamisation, it can strengthen the emotional interaction and spiritual solidarity between Javanese Muslims and ethnic Chinese, because Chinese have been always seen as identical to Buddhism and Confucianism' (Al-Qurtuby 2003:22). The book also contained a preface written by prominent Muslim scholar, Nurcholish Madjid, in which he stated the hope that the book can help to reduce the social stigma towards ethnic Chinese in Indonesia.

Also, Slamet Muljana's book which was banned during the New Order period was republished by LKiS in 2005. This controversial book argued that Chinese Muslims played an important role in the fall of Hinduism and the rise of the Islamic Kingdom in Java. According to the book's editorial foreword, the reprint aims to emphasise that Islamisation processes in Java are not only based on an 'authentic' and 'puritan' form of Islam from the Arabs, but also various kinds of hybrid and plural Islam (Muljana 2005:v-vii). Apart from the Dutch colonial policy which broke down the harmonious interaction between Chinese and Javanese, the foreword suggested that the ideology of Islamic authenticity which is often 'Arab-centric' has also contributed to 'memiskinkan' (the impoverishment of) the richness and diversity of Islamic experiences in Indonesia.

It is important to note that JIL, the organisation which Al-Qurtuby is involved in, is a Muslim network that promotes the liberal interpretations of religious texts; while LKiS is a publishing house active in translating work on indigenised understandings of Islam (Muzakki 2009b). Their promotions of Chinese participation in Indonesian Islam fits well with their agendas to advocate liberal and indigenised Islam, as a response to the rising 'Arabisation' or 'purification' of Islamic expression in Indonesia. As another NU activist suggests, the manifestation of Chinese Muslim cultural identities is an endorsement of the 'vernacular Islam' that is flexible and accommodative to ethnic traditions, and an antidote to the 'puritan Islam' that is 'keras' (stern) and hostile to non-Islamic cultures (Interview, Rubaidi, 15 November 2008). In the last few years, there
have been a few publications that emphasised the indigenised histories of Indonesian Islam, such as *Islam Pesisir* [Coastal Islam] (Syam 2006), *Islam Pribumi: Mendialogkan Agama, Membaca Realitas* [Indigenous Islam: Dialoguing Religion, Reading Realities] (Rahmat 2003), *Sembilan Wali & Siti Jenar* [Nine Saints & Siti Jenar] (Ajidarma 2008), and *Menjadi Indonesia: 13 Abad Eksistensi Islam di Bumi Nusantara* [Becoming Indonesia: 13 Centuries Existence of Islam in Archipelago] (Hidayat & Gaus 2006). In short, for some Muslim leaders and scholars, their support for rearticulating Chinese Muslim histories is to reassure the localised nature, inclusivity and plurality of Indonesian Islam.

In addition, some books which were written in English or Chinese languages were also translated into Bahasa Indonesia and made available in Indonesian bookshops recently, such as *Laksamana Cheng Ho dan Asia Tenggara* [Cheng Ho Admiral and Southeast Asia] (Suryadinata, 2007) and *Muslim Tionghoa Cheng Ho: Misteri Perjalanan Muhibah di Nusantara* [Chinese Muslim Cheng Ho: Mystery of Goodwill Journey in Archipelago] (Kong, 2005). Beyond academic publications, there are also some historical fiction and comics which illustrate the journey of Cheng Ho to Indonesia (Kwartanada 2009). In 2008, there was also an exhibition, entitled ‘Chinese Muslims in Indonesia’ held in Surabaya, showcasing the photographs of Chinese Muslims’ life and histories, taken by Zhuang Wubin, a Singaporean photographer and writer.

From the discussion above, the remembering of Cheng Ho have diverse meanings for different Chinese Muslims, non-Muslim Chinese and Muslims in Indonesia today. Among them, ‘Cheng Ho fever’ is most prevalent among Chinese Muslims, in which some of them see Cheng Ho as a role model for their identity in Indonesia. The commemoration of Cheng Ho is also needed to put in a wider international context of the rise of China’s economic and diplomatic power, in which Cheng Ho has been strategically promoted by the Chinese government to reassure other nations that its rise will be a peaceful one and not a threat. In addition, Cheng Ho has also been promoted by both leaders and scholars in Indonesia and China to symbolise the good relationship between both countries, which was dated back to 15th century. In the Indonesian context, the endorsement of the Cheng Ho’s commemoration is an important gesture showing the
post- New Order government's commitment to multiculturalism and tolerance toward ethnic minorities, as well as to attract investment from mainland China.22

**Remembering Past for Present; Imagining There for Here**

Having illustrated the re-articulation of Chinese Muslim histories in detail, here I will conclude with a broader discussion of their historical memory and identity formation. According to the Palembang Al-Islam Muhammad Cheng Hoo brochure (PITI Palembang 2009), the naming of the mosque after Cheng Ho is a way of 'straightening the history' (*pelurusan sejarah*), in order to commemorate the Chinese admiral who visited Palembang during 15th century and has contributed to the spread of Islam in Sumatra. While the religiosity of Cheng Ho as a pious Muslim and his visiting in many parts of Indonesia has been less disputed, his exact contribution to Islamisation is questionable, given that most of his activities were political and diplomacy, and not all of his followers were Muslims. In this sense, the remembering of Cheng Ho and his role in preaching Islam is less about 'straightening the history', but more about 'rearticulating the history' to place Chinese Muslims in a better position in contemporary Indonesia.

In this remembering of the past, Chinese Muslim leaders have mostly focused on the journey of Cheng Ho and the Chinese ethnicity of Waisongo to emphasise the close relationship between Muslims and Chinese before the Dutch colonial period. At the same time, Dutch colonial power has been criticised as the main reason for the break down of such interaction, while the New Order Regime was seen as a dark period for the expression of Chinese Muslim identity. These historical memories are not only selective, but also imaginary, given that mostly Chinese Muslims today are new converts and have no direct biological linkage to the Chinese Muslims of the past. Furthermore, during the pre-colonial period, many Chinese Muslims might have intermarried with non-Chinese and chosen to assimilate into the local Muslim majority, thus did not see themselves as 'Chinese'. It can be seen as a form of 'imagined nostalgia' (Appadurai 2000:77), in which various forms of representation and discourse were used to creates shared experience of loss and longing for things not directly connected to them.

Identity construction of Chinese Muslims is not only limited to the imagination of the

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22 Beyond Indonesia, the remembering of Cheng Ho is also prevalent in mainland China and Malaysia, the former is to promote peaceful resurgence of China's diplomatic power, while the latter is to symbolise harmonious relations between China and Malaysia.
past, but also sometimes to the imagination of ‘homeland’, through their cultivation of ties to Hui Muslims in China. However, as I will discuss in next chapter, their strategic transnational linkages are not forms of desire for return to China, but part of their efforts to empower their social position in Indonesia. In contemporary settings, such linkages with mainland China among Chinese Indonesians are also perceived by the government as possible economic opportunities, instead of political threats to Indonesia.

**Rearticulated Histories: Essentialising or Empowering?**

As Storey (2003:84) suggests, ‘our identities may seem grounded in the past, but they are also about becoming who we want to be or being who we think we should be in particular contexts’. Therefore, although memory plays an important role in identity formation, ‘the profound interaction between memory and identity formation does not necessarily depend on the truth, but what is remembered’ (Storey 2003:83). Indeed, historical memories of Chinese Muslims are not necessarily veridical reports of past events, but are outcomes of their interpretations of the past. Through various ‘sites of memory’ and ‘memory industries’, Chinese Muslim leaders are not only ‘consuming’ the past, but also ‘producing’ historical memories to give meaning to the present. By promoting the role of Cheng Ho in spreading Islam and claiming that parts of Walisongo have Chinese descent, Chinese Muslims reconstruct their identity through an imagined past to redefine their minority position, to preach Islam to non-Muslims, and to improve the image of Chinese Indonesians.

This rearticulation of the past has to be put in a wider context in post-Suharto Indonesia, as there are various efforts to rearticulate and ‘straighten’ (meluruskan) the histories by different groups whom voices were suppressed during New Order period. Various historical facts and figures have been approached with more or less questionable agendas, hopes and expectations. While some Muslims are arguing the role of Muslim activists in Indonesian nationalist movement in early 20th century was important, some Chinese leaders are proposing that ethnic Chinese figures, such as John Lie, a high-ranking navy commander during the Indonesian National Revolution, as one of the ‘national heroes’ (pahlawan nasional) of Indonesia. At the same time, a Chinese organisation, PSMTI is building a Chinese Indonesian Cultural Park (Taman Budaya Tionghoa Indonesia) at the Beautiful Indonesia Miniature Park (TMII, Taman Mini Indonesia Indah) to position the
ethnic Chinese as one of the many legitimatised ethnic groups in the Indonesian archipelago (Kitamura 2007).

After 35 years of restricted expression and disrupted identity, Chinese Indonesians are in the process of searching for their identity and one way of doing that is by approaching their histories and historical figures. These efforts give voice to formerly suppressed Chinese ethnicity and manifest their contribution in Indonesian nation-building, yet they might essentialise their complex histories and solidify their fluid identities. Also, their rearticulation of histories is not without contestation. For example, which Chinese Indonesians should be nominated as ‘national hero’? Does the hero see himself as ethnic Chinese or is it merely a labelling of identity by others? Which Chineseness should be represented in the cultural park? Does the representation reflect the diversity of Chinese Indonesian cultures? These same questions can be directed to the Chinese Muslim leaders who claim that parts of the Wallisongo have Chinese descent. If the nine saints really have Chinese heritage, do they perceive themselves as ‘Chinese Muslim’, as most of them has mixed parentage? If most Chinese Muslims during the pre-colonial period chosen to assimilate with local ethnic groups, is it fair to label them as ‘ethnic Chinese’? To a certain extent, these representations of the identities are caught by the state essentialising of the content of Chineseness during the New Order Period, as they are reclaiming what have been considered ‘Chinese elements’ and thus needed to be erased by the regime. In other words, to a certain extent, ‘the more ethnic Chinese want to escape from the displacement by Suharto regime, the more they sustained their own ‘racialisation’’ (Tsai 2009).

However, I argue that the rearticulation of histories among Chinese Muslims in particular and ethnic Chinese in general in post-1998 Indonesia, is a self strategic essentialising which should be differentiated from the identity essentialisation and control by the state. This self essentialising could be culturally and politically empowering. Furthermore, this essentialisation is rather voluntary, symbolic and situational; and does not silence differences within the group. Chinese Muslims from all walks of life could choose how they want to interpret the past, and whether they want to ‘revive’, maintain or escape Chineseness. In the following chapters, I will discuss the contested plurality and complicated dynamics of their identities in Indonesia today.
Inclusive Chineseness, Cosmopolitan Islam and Translocal Imagination: Chinese-style Mosques

As Khan (2008:52) has pointed out, 'the mosque is Islam’s most emblematic building, as well as an expression of collective identity'. Through Chinese-style mosques, Chinese Muslim leaders in Indonesia declare that there can be a Chinese way of being Muslim and that converting to Islam does not mean giving up Chinese cultural traditions. After the collapse of the Suharto regime, at least five Chinese-style mosques have been built across Indonesia, reflecting the return of Chinese cultural symbols into public spaces, as well as the reassertion of tolerance of Indonesian Islam. Such mosques always adopt the architecture of mosques in mainland China, yet are reconfigured within local contexts in Indonesia. Thus, it can be seen as a form of negotiation between transnational imagination and local configuration to create a unique ‘Indonesian Chinese Muslim’ cultural expression. In the study of Cheng Hoo Mosque, Surabaya, Chiou (2007) focused on the transnational imagination of the mosque, while Muzakki (2009a, 2010) emphasised its local configuration, and Dickson (2008) argued the mosque was a manifestation of ‘Islamic Chineseness’ in post-New Order Indonesia.

In this chapter, by using the concept of space, identity and politics, I will discuss both the symbolic and operational dimensions of Chinese-style mosques in Indonesia, with special focus on the Cheng Hoo mosques in Surabaya and Palembang, and then argue that such mosques are a form of ethno-religious expression, and a local cosmopolitan space. For symbolic function, Chinese-style mosques can be seen as a place for representation of distinctive Chinese Muslim identity in Indonesia. It is an effort to construct a unique image of Chinese Muslims by combining both Chinese and Islamic elements. This is arguably a form of intentional hybridity that emphasises symbolic unity.
and promotes a fixed image of Chinese Muslims in Indonesia.\textsuperscript{24} Given that Chinese Muslims are dispersed across the archipelago, the effort to replicate Cheng Hoo Mosque, Surabaya in other cities in Indonesia helps to forge a translocal imagination of Chinese Muslim cultural identity in contemporary Indonesia. This is a rather new translocal ethno-religious phenomenon,\textsuperscript{25} in contrast to other ethno-local Islamic traditions (e.g. Java Islam, Bugis Islam) in Indonesia.

For operational function, Chinese-style mosques are spaces for contestation of multiple Chinese Muslim identities in Indonesia. In the mosque, Chinese Muslims from all walks of life negotiate themselves between not only Islam and Chinese identities, but also diversified Islamic and Chinese traditions. This is arguably a form of everyday hybridisation that emphasises the organic diversity and implies fluid identities among Chinese Muslims. Both inclusive architectural designs and socio-religious activities show the Cheng Hoo Mosque as both a sacred and social space shared by all ethnic and religious groups. For example, during a Ramadan night in 2008, while Muslims (both Chinese and non-Chinese) were performing their evening taraweh (non-obligatory evening prayers during fasting month) prayers in the mosque, non-Muslims (mostly Chinese) were practising qigong (Chinese breathing exercise) at the corridor of the PITI’s office in the mosque compound. To a certain extent, the mosque can be seen as a local cosmopolitan space where diverse cultures converge and mingle.

\textbf{Space, Identity and Politics}

To understand architecture, Knobler (1980) states that there are three principle functions which any building serves: the operational, the environmental and the symbolic function. A building’s operational function relates to the purpose it is supposed to serve: residence, education or commerce, for example. Its environmental function refers to the

\textsuperscript{24} As I have discussed in chapter 1, I use ‘hybridity’ to describe and analyse cultural mixing in a broader sense. I use ‘intentional hybridity’ and ‘organic hybridity’ to distinguish hybridity as symbolic strategic and as everyday practice. Organic hybridity refers to unconscious exchanges and everyday adaptation of cultures, meanwhile intentional hybridity is a conscious effort to create a double consciousness of one’s identity (Wernher 1997, Bakhtin 1981). For further discussion, see chapter 1.

\textsuperscript{25} I am aware that in many works, ‘translocal’ usually has ‘transnational’ connotation, which refers to the linkages, connections and imaginations between places, beyond nation states. However, for analytical purposes, in this chapter, I use such terms to imply different spatial relations. ‘Transnational’ refers to the connection with places outside of Indonesian state, such as mainland China and Middle East. Meanwhile, ‘translocal’ refers to linkage between places within Indonesian archipelago, such as Palembang in South Sumatra, Salatiga in Central Java and Pontianak in West Kalimantan.
psychological response of the human occupants to the environment created by the building. The symbolic function, relates to what the building ‘says’ and ‘declares’, hence ‘a building may indicate wealth, power, modernity, tradition, ambition, or repose’ (Knobler 1980:219). The architectural place is not just any physical volume, as it did not occur in nature, but was built, that is, they was humanly conceived, designed and constructed. Hence, the architecture has social and political meanings - it ‘says’ something about those who inspired, built, arranged and used it (Goodsell, 1988:8).

Distinguishing place and space, de Certeau (1988) contrasts place as the embodied experience of particular locales, and space as the practised place. Social space is a creation of movement and reflection, as well as a site for identity construction, contestation and representation. As stressed by Hetherington (1998:17), identity formation as a process of identification is a spatially situated process. Spaces serve the purpose of providing a distinctive place in which social structures and cultural identities are shaped, negotiated or challenged by the community and individual. This chapter is inspired by these two assumptions about spaces, politics and identities. First, is that all social and spatial formations emerge through contestation; they involve relations of power – they have a ‘politics’. There is a ‘politics’ to architecture and the ‘cultures’ that produce it. Second, social space is not merely an outcome of existing cultural and political processes. Rather, it plays an active role – it performs something – in ongoing social transformation and identity construction.

Seeing mosques as both architectural place and social space, this chapter examines the symbolic and operational functions of Chinese-style mosques in Indonesia, as well as investigating the spatial relations of such mosques. As argued by Appadurai (1996) and Gupta & Ferguson (1992), identity formation in contemporary society is not only situated within boundaries of a territorial space, but also configured across and in-between spaces. It is both informed by the interaction between locally specific practices of selfhood and the dynamics of global positioning (Friedman 1994). Studying the Pakistani Muslims in Manchester, Werbner (2002) examines the complex and interconnected relations between transnational flows and local forces; and suggests that there are multiple transnational orientations within such local communities. In this chapter, I explore the spatial dynamics of Chinese Muslim identity practices through three dimensions. First, is the transnational connection to Muslims in mainland China and in the Middle East. Second, is the translocal linkage of Chinese Muslims from
different parts in Indonesia. Third, is the local adaption of their identities. To a certain extent, through Chinese-style mosques, Chinese Muslim leaders have creatively expressed and claimed their connections to the 'diasporic Chinese', 'Islamic ummah' and Indonesian society, to manifest a unique representation of Chinese Muslim cultural identity in contemporary Indonesia.

Changing Mosque Architecture

The word 'mosque' is derived from the Arabic masjid, meaning literally 'place of prostrations'. It serves both as a house of worship and as a symbol of Islam. Mosque architecture can take various forms, taking into account local building materials, climactic factors and craft skills, as well as major political and historical events, in which the mosque serves as an important visible representation of Muslim identity and values (Frishman and Khan, 2002:14). The shape of old mosques in Indonesia and Malaysia has different forms to the mosques in the rest of the world. Most of the old mosques, such as those in Demak, Banten and Kudus do not have domes and minarets, but tiered roofs and often equipped with a bedug (large drum inside the mosque to summon to prayer). These mosques were mostly built before colonial period and were highly influenced by local cultures (Malay/ Javanese/ Chinese) and religions (Buddhism/ Hinduism), rather than the architectural styles in the Middle East (Nasir 2004; Heuken 2003).

The first dome-shaped mosque in Indonesia dates from 1881, introduced by Dutch colonial government. It is the Baiturrahman Mosque of Banda Aceh. Over time, domes and minarets became the dominant features of mosques. After independence, such mosques were regarded as a marker of progress and modernity, as shown by the Istiqlal Mosque in Jakarta, built between 1961 and 1978. Rising modernist and puritan Islam; as well as the funding from the Middle East, especially Saudi Arabia, also led to the emergence of ‘pan-Islamic models’ of mosques in Indonesia. At the same time, in order to promote the rather 'secular' state ideology, Pancasila, and to suppress political Islam, the New Order regime promoted the establishment of traditional tiered-roof mosques through Pancasila Muslim Charity Foundation (Yayasan Amal Bakti Muslim Pancasila) which was established in 1982 (O’Neill 1992). Instead of the traditional

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26 The five guiding principles of the Indonesian state are belief in God, humanitarianism, nationalism, democracy and social justice.
crescent and star, the ornament on the roof is a reproduction of the word ‘Allah’ in Arabic script within a five-sided frame, a visual expression of the supremacy of the Pancasila ideology.

After the fall of Suharto in 1998, domes and minarets regained their popularity. This change can be seen in the fate of the Bandung Great Mosque. In the 1950s, it received a dome which was then replaced in 1970 with a traditional roof. Between February 2001 and June 2003, the mosque once again underwent a transformation. The renovated mosque now has two small domes and one large one, and two 810-metre high minarets (Dijk 2009). Although Middle-Eastern inspired mosque architecture is prevalent, other competing architectures are not absent in Indonesia. One of the contrasting forms is the multipurpose and hybrid-design mosques, such as the Grand Mosque of Central Java in Semarang, which was completed in 2006 (Wirymartono 2009). It is not only a building for worship, but also a place for cultural, business and leisure activities. In terms of architecture, it is eclectic, adopting various styles, forms and decorative motifs, attempting to blend indigenous Javanese, European and Middle Eastern building traditions. Another interesting phenomenon in post-1998 Indonesia is the establishment of Chinese-style mosques, which I will discuss later. These diverse mosque architectures, to some extent, reflect the plurality of Islamic practices, as well the ongoing debates about the ‘Arabisation’, modernisation and localisation of Indonesian Islam.

Chinese-influenced Mosques

Although Chinese-style mosques are commonly seen as a new phenomenon, Chinese involvement in building mosques and Chinese influence on mosque design in Indonesia has existed for a long time. For example, there is Chinese influence on the architecture of old mosques and tombs in Java, such as the tombs of Sunan Giri in Gresik, the design of the Cirebon palaces and the architecture of Demak mosque in Central Java (Lombard & Salmon 2001; Al-Qurtuby 2003). Some mosques are also designed and built by Chinese Muslims, such as Kebun Jeruk Mosque in Jakarta and Sumenep Mosque in Madura. Yet over the times, many of these mosques lost their Chinese features and managed by non-Chinese Muslims. There are also some who argue that some of the Chinese temples in Indonesia today were originally mosques built by Chinese Muslims in the 15th and 16th centuries, such as Ancol Temple in Jakarta, Sampokong Temple in Semarang and Mbah
Ratu Temple in Surabaya (Tanggok 2006). Another possible influence of Chinese culture in Indonesian mosques is the usage of bedug, a big drum to call for prayers.\(^\text{27}\)

These Chinese influences on Indonesian mosques declined since the Dutch colonial rule, in which Chineseness and Islam has been seen as incompatible and sometimes conflicting. During the height of New Order Period, conversion to Islam was seen as a way of total assimilation and the influence of Chinese culture on Islam was a taboo. Only during the late New Order period, did Chinese Muslims begin to find a niche for their expression of identities. With the support of various Muslim organisations, Lautze Mosque was established by Karim Oei Foundation in Jakarta in 1994. Lautze Mosque is named after the street where the mosque is located. Lautze was a Chinese philosopher who taught Taoism, and had been seen by some Indonesian Muslims as a Chinese 'prophet' (along with Confucius). The aim of the Lautze Mosque was to promote Islam among Chinese Indonesians.

As the mosque was originally a shop and residence-turned-prayer house, the Chinese influence on Lautze Mosque is rather modest and implicit, reflected in its red-colour entrance door and walls inside in the mosque, as well as in multiple Chinese-style Arabic calligraphy artworks hanging on the wall. Mosque Lautze II in Bandung resembled the design of his predecessor. The first explicit and indeed trend-setting Chinese-designed mosque was the Cheng Hoo Mosque in Surabaya and followed by another one in Palembang, both I will discuss in the following sections. It can be argued that the changing history of Chinese influence on mosques reflects the status of Chinese cultural expression, as well as the interaction between Chinese and Muslims in Indonesia.

**Symbolic Unity: Identity Manifestation through the Cheng Hoo Mosque**

Through Cheng Hoo Mosque in Surabaya, some Chinese Muslim leaders strategically use the political openness of the post-New Order period to celebrate and promote their distinct identity. Cheng Hoo Mosque was established by East Java PITI through its

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\(^{27}\) It is important to note that the influence of Chinese culture on Islam during such historical periods always blends with the local Javanese and other traditions. Also, over time, many of these old mosques have somehow lost their Chinese features. For example, the Kebun Jeruk Mosque in central Jakarta which was built by a Chinese Muslim in 1972 has now become a base for Jemaah Tabligh activities. There is a tomb in the mosque with Chinese and Arabic scripts, and Chinese ornaments, but it was ignored and covered by grasses. I was denied entry into the compound of the tomb by the management of the mosque when I tried to visit it in 2008.
Muhammad Cheng Hoo Foundation (YHMCHI, Yayasan Haji Muhammad Cheng Hoo Indonesia). Its construction began in 2001 and completed a year later. It was formally opened in 2003 by the Minister of Religion then, Said Agil Husain Al-Munawar. The mosque architecture has been inspired by the Niu Jie (Ox Street) Mosque in Beijing, which has more than a thousand years of history. The modification of architectural design had been done by Aziz Johan, a member of PITI from Bojonegoro, East Java, and supported by a technical team, consisting of Chinese Muslim leaders in PITI.

Willy Pangestu, one of the Chinese Muslim leaders in the mosque design team said: ‘We wanted to build a mosque that can vividly show Chinese character. We studied a few mosques in mainland China and we decided to use the historical Niu Jie Mosque in Beijing as our blueprint’ (Interview, Willy Pangestu, 6 November 2008). The temple-like design provoked some disagreement among Chinese Muslims in PITI. As Willy told me, some worried such a design might violate Islamic teachings, alienate local Muslims and promote exclusivity. There were also some concerns that the contribution of non-Muslims to the mosque might be not halal (permitted under Islamic law). However, with the endorsement of Muslim organisations and local government, he managed to convince those opposed that the Chinese-style mosques are not only acceptable under Islam, but also desirable as a manifestation of cultural pluralism and religious tolerance in Surabaya. Indeed, since its establishment, Surabaya Cheng Hoo Mosque, Surabaya, has been regularly featured in various media, visited by many prominent Muslims and listed as a site for religious tourism.

Arguably, there are at least, two different, yet not contradictory motivations, behind the establishment of the Chinese-style mosque: the first is ethnic empowerment (mostly promoted by businessmen and intellectuals) and the second is religious preaching (mostly promoted by religious teachers and preachers). For ethnic empowerment, Cheng Hoo mosque acknowledges the contribution of ethnic Chinese in the spread of Islam, in the hope that ‘anti-Chinese’ sentiments among Muslims will be reduced. This notion is supported by some non-Muslim Chinese businessmen, as most of the funds for building the mosque came from them. Challenging the dominant discourse of ‘assimilation through Islam’ during the New Order period, they built a Chinese-style mosque to promote the idea of ‘blending through Islam’, that being a Muslim makes ethnic Chinese closer to non-Chinese Indonesians who are majority Muslims, but not at the expense of losing their Chinese cultural identity. Although there are some Chinese-influenced old
mosques and prominent local Chinese Muslim figures in Indonesia, PITI did not draw on them in building their Surabaya mosque, but adopted mosque architecture from China and named the mosque after a famous Muslim admiral from mainland China, Cheng Ho.

According to Bambang Sujanto, the chairperson of the Cheng Hoo Foundation and a successful businessman, naming the mosque 'Cheng Hoo' is to commemorate the contributions of the legendary admiral in disseminating Islam and improving inter-ethnic relationship. Bambang, who probably first initiated the idea of Cheng Hoo Mosque said:

'The idea of ‘assimilation through Islam’ did not work. During the 1998 riots, some shops owned by Chinese Muslims in Jakarta were looted. No matter how Islamic and Indonesian you are, you are still seen as Chinese because of your physical appearance. We can only maximise our potential to promote a better image of Chinese Indonesians by maintaining our cultural identity along with Islamic piety. We have to show that ethnic Chinese also play a role in spreading Islam both in the past and present, so that the indigenous people will respect us. The Chinese-style mosque is a good attempt in doing so, and so far, we have received good responses.' (Interview, Bambang Sujanto, 27 November 2008)

Meanwhile, many Chinese Muslim preachers and religious teachers supported the establishment of the Chinese-style mosque but for different reasons. They believed that the strategic use of Chinese cultural symbols could show Islam as a universal religion and not a religion for ‘indigenous’ Indonesians only. One of the Chinese Muslim preachers, Syaukanie Ong, said,

'Some Chinese are not interested in Islam because they are afraid they will lose their Chinese heritage after conversion to Islam. Chinese-style mosques help to eliminate this misperception, as it shows that Chinese culture is not incompatible with Islamic teachings. Furthermore, some new Chinese converts might feel insecure to visit other mosques, but find a Chinese-style mosque a more comfortable place for them to learn Islam.' (Interview, Syaukanie Ong, 19 November 2008)

In fact, most of the Indonesian Islamic organisations, including NU and Muhammadiyah, endorse the establishment of Chinese-style mosques as a form to dakwah (preaching) to
Chinese Indonesians. As stated by former chairperson of NU East Java, Ali Maschan, ‘the construction of Chinese-style mosques will help the development of the dakwah movement in Indonesia, especially among ethnic Chinese, who will potentially convert to Islam. Even though they do not convert to Islam, at least, the mosque will reduce their prejudice toward Islam.’ (Interview, Ali Maschan, 27 November 2008)

Mixing Chineseness and Islam

In this section, through a discussion of Cheng Hoo Mosque’s architectural design, I argue that the mosque is both representational and aspirational, as it ‘says’ and ‘declares’ something, which in some ways, indicates social interactions, ethnic identities and religious discourses in Indonesia. The architectural design of Cheng Hoo Mosque ‘says’ that Islam and ‘Chineseness’ can get along together, ‘declares’ that one can be an authentic Chinese and truly Indonesian, as well as ‘promote’ inclusive and tolerant Islam.

Indeed, Cheng Hoo mosque, a mixing of Chinese, Islamic and also local Javanese cultures, is a clear statement that Chinese, Islamic and Indonesian identities are compatible. According to the mosque handbook (YHMCHI 2008), its outlook resembles the architecture of k lenteng (Chinese temple) and is intended to display the Chineseness of Chinese Muslims in Indonesia, as well as ‘to remind Chinese their Buddhist forefathers’. Different from Chinese temples, the roof of the pagoda-like building is carved with the word ‘Allah’. Decorations, such as animal-like ornaments were omitted because they might be seen as un-Islamic by puritan Muslims. The building is dominated by three colours: red, green and yellow (see Appendix 3). The green refers to the Islamic tradition; while the dominant red to Chinese cultural traditions, symbolising the spirits of luck, fortune and prosperity. To emphasise inclusiveness, the handbook about the mosque is published in 4 languages: Indonesian, English, Chinese and Arabic.

The main hall of the mosque is large 11X9 meters with an eight-sided roof (pat-kwa). The length of 11 meters symbolises the measurement of k abah (cubicle shrine in Great Mosque of Mecca), demonstrating the commitment to Islamic faith. The length of 9 meters represents the number of Walisongo (nine Muslim saints in Java), showing an appreciation of local Javanese traditions. Meanwhile, the design of eight-sided roof (pat-kwa) not only characterises the philosophy of luck and prosperity shared by the ethnic
Chinese, but also indicates Islam as a religion of peace. The usage of pat-kwa design suggests that the acceptance of Islamic and Javanese tradition does not necessarily mean the fading of Chinese cultural identity (see Appendix 4).

Through the interior design of Cheng Hoo Mosque, Chinese Muslim leaders would like to send a message that the Mosque belongs to all Muslim groups and is a site of interaction between diverse Muslim organisations, especially Nahdiatul Ulama (NU) and Muhammadiyah. By installing bedug (a drum for summoning to prayer) and podium (a pulpit used by an imam or preacher to deliver a sermon) in the mosque, they appropriate both the traditions of NU and Muhammadiyah to show that the mosque is a prayer hall for all Muslims regardless of their religious affiliations. A bedug was placed on the side of the mosque, which is common for NU followers, as well as Muslims in China. Meanwhile, the podium is specially designed to suit Muhammadiyah practices, as its front is closed rather than open. Not only being inclusive of diverse Islamic groups, Cheng Hoo mosque also tries to show that Islam is tolerant of other religions, especially Christianity. In the front of the main building, there is a space which is used by the imam to lead prayers and deliver sermons. According to the handbook of the mosque (YHMCHI 2008), such part of the mosque was constructed like a church’s door (resembling Romanesque arch), which means Islam acknowledges Jesus Christ as one of God’s messengers, as well as striving for peace and respecting other religions.

On the right side of the Mosque, there is a relief of Muhammad Cheng Ho and his fleet, which illustrates his journey from China to Indonesia in the 15th and 16th century. The commemoration of Cheng Ho through the relief and the naming of the mosque have different meanings for different audiences. For Chinese Muslims, it delivers a message that being a Chinese Muslim has long precedent, as 600 years ago, there was a Chinese admiral who was a pious Muslim. For non-Chinese Muslims, it promotes the contribution of Cheng Ho to the spread of Islam in Indonesia. For non-Muslim Chinese, it proves that being a Muslim does not mean he or she has to discard one’s ‘Chineseness’.

38 Relating the eight-sided roof to the peacefulness of Islam, the handbook about Cheng Hoo Mosque (YHMCHI 2008:12) tells the following story: ‘During the flight of Mohammad SAW from Mecca to Medina, he had been chased by the infidels of Qurashi and hid in the Tsur cave. When he tried to enter the cave, he saw spider web in eight forms. Even Mohammad had been tortured by the infidels, he tried not to harm the spider web, then he prayed to Allah to protect and keep him in safe due to the infidels... By the will of Allah SWT, Mohammad could enter the Tsur cave without breaking the spider web. When the situation was saved, he came out off the Tsur cave and continued his journey to spread God’s revelation among Muslims at Medina. During his hiding at Tsur cave, Allah gave protection to pass through the spider web in peace way without breaking and disturbing animal’s life. This is to show that Islam, which had been inspired by Allah to Mohammed, is a [peace-loving] religion’. 
The strategic architectural design of the Cheng Hoo mosque does not symbolise an existing ethno-religious reality but rather seeks to bring a new reality into being. As I will discuss in chapter 7, Chinese Muslim identities in contemporary Indonesia are fluid and different individuals have different attitudes towards their religious practice and cultural orientation. Through the mosque, some Chinese Muslim leaders try to promote a distinctive Chinese Muslim identity through the co-existence of Islamic and Chinese identity. Indeed, the materiality and tangibility of the mosque makes Chinese Muslim cultural identity unequivocally ‘real’ and therefore essential in their identity construction. As the founder of the mosque, Bambang Sujanto said,

‘The population of Chinese Muslims is small, diverse and scattered. As happened in the past, our identity will easily disappear or be assimilated into the Muslim majority. Thus, we need a physical space – a mosque that can project and uphold our identity. The structure of mosque could stand for long time, and sustain our uniqueness over a few generations. Converting to Islam does not mean giving up our Chinese cultural identity. There can be a Chinese way of being Muslim’.

(Interview, Bambang Sujanto, 27 November 2008)

Not only the architectural design, the intentional mixing of Chinese, Islam and local cultural elements are also reflected in the activities of the mosque (see Appendix 5). As I observed during the *halal-bihalal* (mutual forgiving event) and 6th anniversary celebration of Cheng Hoo Mosque in October 2008, the strategic intercultural mixing can be seen from the food, entertainment program, prayers and invited guest. The event began with dinner that serves both *halal* Chinese and Indonesian cuisines. Various entertainment programs, including Chinese traditional music performance, and traditional dances from Java and Southern Kalimantan were then staged. The celebration was hosted by Priyo, a presenter from JTV, a local television station, mostly in Indonesian language and sprinkled with some Javanese. The *doa* (prayer) for the event was recited by Gunawan Hidayat, a Chinese Muslim religious teacher, and then translated in both Indonesian and Mandarin. Interestingly, the Indonesian translation was read by Wang Zhan, a Hui Muslim student from China who studied at the State Islamic Institute (IAIN, Institut Agama Islam Negeri) Surabaya; while the Mandarin translation was read by Dion Sultan, a Javanese Muslim who did his undergraduate study in mainland China. Among the prominent invited guests of the celebration were former governor of East Java Muhammad Noer, leading Chinese entrepreneur Alim Markus,
chairperson of Surabaya Chinese Association (Paguyuban Tionghoa Surabaya) Lin Ou Yen, and many local religious scholars. The chairperson of NU then, Hasyim Muzadi was supposed to give a religious talk, but he could not make it and was replaced by Muiziddin, a Chinese preacher. All these show the deliberate efforts of Chinese Muslim leaders to promote cultural diversity and religious inclusivity. Next, I will investigate the spatial dynamics of Cheng Hoo Mosque.

Transnational Connections and Local Configurations of the Cheng Hoo Mosque

The monthly magazine of the East Java PIT, Komunitas (Community), creatively displays both the images of Niu Jie Mosque in Beijing and Cheng Hoo Mosque in Surabaya, on the cover of its edition during Idul Fitri 2008. Through the Cheng Hoo Mosque, Chinese Muslim leaders in Surabaya draw on both the architectural design of old mosques in China and the religious symbols of two major local Muslim organisations, NU and Muhammadiyah, to produce a distinctive image of Chinese Muslim identity in Indonesia today. This practice of identity through mosque is both a process of consumption and self-production, as well as an outcome of interplay between transnational imagination and local configurations.

Chinese Muslims in Indonesia are mostly converts and ethnically different from Hui Muslim in China, thus there are no direct historical relations between them. Although there might have been some Hui Muslims in Java during 15th and 16th century, most of them had been assimilated. Most recent migrants are majority non-Muslim Han and almost all Chinese Muslim leaders in PIT are converted Han. Furthermore, in terms of mosque styles, there is a tendency to ‘Arabisation’ among Hui Muslims in Xi An, China, as shown by the shifting style of mosque architecture - some new mosques built by Hui communities now adopt Arabic style, while the traditional Chinese style had been questioned as not sufficiently ‘Islamic’ (Gillette 2000). Despite the difference between Hui and Han, and the diversity and changing of Hui Islamic expression in China, many PIT leaders still construct their own Islamic tradition through imagined linkage with Muslims in China by promoting the history of Cheng Ho and building a Chinese-style

29 The difference between Hui and Han is problematic and contested, as discussed in Gillette (2000). Hui is not a homogenous group and has different meanings in different historical periods. Their identities are also expressed diversely in different local contexts in China. For further discussion of the complexity of Hui, see Gladney (1991).
mosque, because Islam in China is seen as more culturally authentic and historically rooted, compared to Chinese Muslims in Indonesia.

By referencing Muslim tradition in China which they think has longer histories than Islam in Indonesia, Chinese Muslims in Indonesia claim their religious credentials and reappropriate their cultural identities, as being Muslim and Chinese at the same time is not improper and not new. As stated by one of the mosque design team members, the adoption of mosque architecture in China is ‘a means of showing that Islam is one of the ancient religions in mainland China. Islam is not a new religion for ethnic Chinese as perceived by many Chinese and Muslim Indonesians.’ (Interview, Willy Pangestu, 6 November 2008) To some extent, the Hui Muslim culture in China is their Islamic ‘imaginary homeland’ (Rushdie 1992), in which they find inspiration for identity formation in their ‘living homeland’, Indonesia.

Some Chinese Muslim leaders, especially those in the Muhammad Cheng Hoo Foundation are also keen to develop transnational Chinese Muslim networks, by paying visits to Hui Muslim communities in China and inviting Hui Muslim leaders to visit Indonesia. For many of them, the cultivation of ties with Muslims in China do not undermine their national belonging, but allow them to promote better relationships between ethnic Chinese and non-Chinese in Indonesia through their cooperation with local Muslim organisations. For example, in 2008, with the support of the Surabaya Chinese Association, the Cheng Hoo Foundation organised a trip for local NU and Muhammadiyah Muslim leaders to visit Muslim organisations and observe Muslim life in mainland China. Among the places they visited in mainland China are Huai Sheng Mosque in Guangdong, the hometown of Cheng Ho and a garden named after him in Yunnan, as well as Beijing University and Niu Jie Mosque in Beijing (Tjahjono 2008). Bambang Sujanto who led the trip, believed the trip would not only deepen the understanding of Muslim leaders of Islam in China, but also improve the perception of local Muslims towards ethnic Chinese in Indonesia. He said,

‘By witnessing Muslim life in China themselves, the religious leaders will acknowledge that Islam has long existed in China and that Islamic practices are still alive today. We hope they will share this information with their followers in religious classes or talk. This will improve the perception of ordinary local
Muslims towards Chinese Indonesians. We are not all non-believers. We are not just 'economic animals'. (Interview, Bambang Sujanto, 27 November 2008)

It is quite clear that for many Chinese Muslim leaders in Indonesia, the strategic transnational connection with Muslims in mainland China is not a form of desire for return or attachment to mainland China, but an effort to manifest their identity and to redefine their minority position. The transnational linkage does not imply disloyalty or lack of patriotism, and sometimes, it helps promote better relations between Indonesia and China, as well as between local Muslims and ethnic Chinese. This transnational linkage is driven by local purposes and is not for shaping politics on mainland China. Thus, it is not a form of 'long-distance nationalism' (Anderson, 1992). To a certain extent, the transnational imagination of Chinese Muslims is similar to the diasporic action of Pakistani Muslims in Britain (Werbner 2002:130), in which ‘buying in’ to a diaspora today includes buying into local citizenship and fighting for citizenship rights. It is important to note that the transnational linkages of Chinese Muslims in Indonesia are not only limited to Muslims in China, but also Muslims in other part of the world, such as those in Palestine, as well as various transnational Islamic movements, such as the Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia (see chapter 7).

Furthermore, their transnational imaginations and linkages have been locally configured through Chinese Muslims' connection with media networks, government officers, military leaders, religious groups and Chinese organisations. PITI especially has established a good relationship with both NU and Muhammadiyah in Surabaya. The provincial leaders of both Islamic organisations are named as advisers for Cheng Hoo Mosques. In advance of the construction of the mosque, PITI leaders asked NU and MU leaders to endorse the mosque design. Despite some objections from the more hardline Muslim groups, both NU and Muhammadiyah leaders supported the design. NU and Muhammadiyah leaders and preachers have been frequently invited to give sermons during Friday prayers and Islamic study sessions in the mosque. One reason why the first Chinese-style mosque was built in Surabaya is because East Java is the stronghold of NU, which generally has more flexible attitudes towards various cultural expressions of Islam. In terms of language, Indonesian is the main functional language in the mosque. Most of the preaching, religious study sessions and meetings are conducted in Indonesian. At the

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30 Given that the Qur'anic text does not mention and regulate mosque architecture, there are less controversies or religious debates about the Chinese style mosque, as compared to the celebration of Chinese New Year, as I will discuss in chapter 5.
same time, Javanese, Mandarin and Hokkien are also spoken during interpersonal conversations.

The establishment of Cheng Hoo Mosque will not be a success without support from the non-Muslim Chinese too. Given that the mosque is situated in a majority non-Muslim neighbourhood, PITI consulted local residents and gained their support for the mosque. To ensure non-Muslim Chinese residents are not disturbed, the mosque does not use a loud speaker when calling for the morning praying session (azan subuh). Besides, most of the donors to the mosque are non-Muslim Chinese, who have contributed about 70 percent of the total construction fee. There is a board in the compound of the mosque which lists the names of donators and the amount of their contributions. Besides Chinese Muslim businessmen and Muslim leaders (such as former PAN chairman Amien Rais, and former East Java Governor Mohammad Noer), many of the donors are non-Muslim Chinese businessmen and their companies. Among them are the well-established Chinese-owned business groups, such as Salim Group (200 million rupiah), Maspion Group (100 million rupiah) and Gudang Garam (100 million rupiah). As some Chinese Muslim leaders told me, the non-Muslim Chinese have supported the construction of Cheng Hoo Mosque, because they acknowledged the role of PITI in protecting them from possible ‘anti-Chinese’ riots, as well as bridging the divide between Chinese and Muslims in Surabaya. Non-Muslim Chinese businessmen also sponsor some activities in the mosque, such as, the distribution of goods to orphanages during Ramadan.

In short, Chinese Muslim leaders-cum-businessmen, and their well-connected networks were crucial in success of Cheng Hoo Mosque. On one hand, they have business operations with non-Muslim Chinese businessmen. On the other hand, they have established close relation with Muslim organisations, especially NU through religious affinity. Their relationship with NU goes beyond the religious domain, as some of them provide business training to NU members, while others are actively involved in PKB, a political party closely linked to NU. Besides a close relationship with local government officials and military leaders, PITI also has a good media network, especially through Java Pos and several local Chinese newspapers. Activities in Cheng Hoo mosque have

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31 According to the mosque handbook (YMHCHI 2008), the first phase of its construction cost 500 million rupiah, collected through selling trilingual ‘Saudara Baru/ Juz Amma’ (‘New Convert/ Selected Verses from Qur’anic texts’). Meanwhile the total construction fee was 3,300 million rupiah and most of it came from public donations.

32 I also have been informed that, about 20-30 percent of the construction fee of Masjid Agung Al-Akbar, the biggest mosque in East Java was contributed by non-Muslim Chinese.
been frequently reported in local newspapers, as well as radio and TV stations. In addition, PITI in East Java publish a monthly magazine called *Komunitas* (Community), which contains articles about PITI's recent activities, the activities of other Chinese organisations, Muslim life in China, various aspects of Islam and Chinese culture, as well as stories about converts, with no lack of business advertisements, most of them are placed by Chinese Muslim merchants.

Cheng Hoo Mosque thus plays a role in promoting good relationships between different groups of Indonesian society, including both Chinese and Muslims. In fact, fostering these relationships is a central aim of PITI. According to Chiou (2007), under the banner of Islam, PITI shares the same religious beliefs as other Indonesian Muslims by which they are able to provide social assistance for the local Muslims and create a niche for more interaction with local government. Meanwhile, Muzakki (2010) argues that Chinese Muslims in PITI have worked closely with religious organisations, especially NU in order to guarantee social security and fight against discrimination. Therefore, the Cheng Hoo Mosque can be said to exercise both 'bonding' and 'bridging' of social capital (Putnam 2000) which respectively refers to the building of cohesion within a group and to the building of mutual understanding between groups. On the one hand, it contributes to symbolic cohesion among Chinese Muslim as a group. On the other hand, it has played a significant role in bridging different groups in Indonesia.

**Translocal Ethno-religious Imaginations of Chinese-style Mosques**

Following the success of the Cheng Hoo Mosque in Surabaya, many Chinese Muslims in other parts in Indonesia sought to replicate the Chinese-style mosque and, in some cases, adopted the Cheng Hoo name. Many PITI branches from Sumatra to Sulawesi, from Java to Kalimantan, announced their intention to build Chinese-style mosques, though, so far, only one in Palembang has been completed. Chinese Muslim individuals such as Anton Medan and Iskandar Abdurrahman have also established Chinese-style mosques in Bogor and Salatiga respectively in the compounds of their Islamic boarding schools. In Pandaan, Pasuruan, East Java, even non-Chinese Muslims have built a mosque, resembling the architectural design of the Surabaya Cheng Hoo Mosque, to support social blending (*pembauran*) and promote religious tourism (Muzakki 2009a:201).
Mosque Al Islam Muhammad Cheng Hoo in Palembang, which was completed in August 2008 is the second Chinese-style mosque in Indonesia named after Admiral Cheng Ho. This mosque was initiated by PITI South Sumatra, after branch’s leaders visited theirs counterparts in Surabaya and were inspired by the architectural design of Cheng Hoo Mosque there. However, instead of mimicking the design of Niu Jie Mosque in Beijing, the Palembang mosque reappropriates the pan-Islamic features of mosque architecture with Chinese and Palembang-Malay cultural influences. The mosque shared similar aims to its counterpart in Surabaya, include uniting Chinese Muslims, preaching Islam, as well as showing that Islam and Chineseness can co-exist harmoniously. The naming of the mosque after Cheng Ho was seen as ‘setting history straight’ (pelurusan sejarah), in order to commemorate the Chinese admiral who visited Palembang during 15th century and contributed to the spread of Islam in Sumatra (PITI Palembang, 2009).

Painted in green and red, this mosque combined Chinese, Palembang and pan-Islamic architectural features. It has a dome with a crescent and star, and two minarets which resemble the design of Chinese pagodas (see Appendix 3). Both minarets have five floors and a height of 17 meters symbolising the five daily prayers with 17 rakaat (prostrations during prayer), with ornaments in the shape of a goat’s horn, which is a Palembang features. According to the mosque handout (PITI Palembang, 2009), its design reflects the similarities between Chinese and Palembang-Malay cultures. The handout also states that the establishment of Palembang Cheng Hoo Mosque is a response to the socio-cultural development of Islam among Chinese Muslims, resembling the cultural accumulation of Islamic practices among other Muslims in Indonesia, such as the combination of Minang culture with Islamic teachings and Javanese custom with Islamic traditions. It is indeed an important argument, as it is suggesting the imagination of ‘Chinese Islam’ as another form of ethno-religious identity in Indonesia, along side ‘Javanese Islam’ and ‘Minang Islam’.

Given that Chinese Muslims are dispersed across the archipelago, PITI efforts to replicate the Surabaya Cheng Hoo Mosque in Palembang and in other cities shows their attempts to forge a ‘translocal’ Chinese Muslim cultural identity. This is a rather new ethno-religious phenomenon, in contrast to Islamic traditions, such as ‘Javanese Islam’ and ‘Bugis Islam’ which are based on specific geographically bounded locations. As it

12 It is important to note that such ethno-religious traditions are not static, as many of them have undergone various changes as result of interactions with other cultures, as well as, influences of various translocal and transnational flows. For accounts of the dynamics of Javanese Islam, see Beatty (1999) and Ricklefs (2008).
mentioned before, I use ‘translocal’ in this chapter to refer to the linkages between places within the Indonesian archipelago, as contrast to, ‘transnational’ which means connection with places outside of Indonesian state. Given that Chinese Muslims from Medan to Makasar are extremely diverse, mosque architecture that adopts Chinese features can be seen as a symbolic unifying form for them. In the past and also now, as I will discuss in chapter 7, the religious practice of Chinese Muslims in various parts of Indonesia are influenced by the localities in which they are situated and many of them are eventually culturally absorbed into the local Muslim majority. Therefore, the Chinese-style mosques do not reflect an existing ethno-religious reality, but rather are constructing a new imagination of translocal Chinese Muslim identity within Indonesia.

PITI branches across the Indonesia, from Sumatra (Medan), Java (Semarang, Jakarta), Bali (Denpasar), Sulawesi (Makasar) to Kalimantan (Pontianak) intend to establish similar Chinese-style mosques, and the realisation of their plan will decide how far this translocal imagination can go.

This ‘translocality’ of Chinese Muslim identities, on the one hand, challenges ‘ethnolocality’ (Boellstorff 2002) that associate ethnicity with locality in Indonesia; on the other hand, it connects them to the linkage with their ‘imaginary homeland’ in China. Indonesian nationalism, in large part, allows different ethnic groups which are mostly geographically bounded to imagine their claim to the nation, and to recognise each other as equal constituents of the nation. For example, one can be both Javanese and Indonesian simultaneously. This ‘ethnolocality’, that draws together ethnicity and locality, is best exemplified in ‘Beautiful Indonesia Miniature Park’ (TMII, Taman Mini Indonesia Indah), which consists of different ethnic ‘houses’, respectively representing Javanese tradition in Java, Balinese custom in Bali, Madurese culture in Madura and so on. Chinese Indonesians, who do not constitute a specific locality and could not claim aboriginality in any part of Indonesia, were denied a representation of their identity in the park during the New Order period.

In post-Suharto Indonesia, a Chinese organisation, PSMTI is building a Chinese Indonesian Cultural Park (Taman Budaya Tionghoa Indonesia) at TMII to position ethnic Chinese as one of the many legitimatised ethnic groups in Indonesia. Instead of manifesting localised Chinese culture, such as Peranakan traditions, the cultural park draws heavily on the designs of ancient buildings in mainland China (Kitamura 2007). To some extent, PSMTI is caught by the concept of ‘ethnolocality’, in which they only
can claim their aboriginality and geographically bounded identity through linkages with their ‘imaginary homeland’ in mainland China. Chinese Muslims face the same dilemma. In order to build translocal connections among them within Indonesian nation, they have to refer to mosque architecture in mainland China to bind them together. However, their transnational linkages do not undermine their national belongings, as I have discussed earlier. Furthermore, their translocal imaginations are not socially exclusive and always locally grounded, as reflected in the adoption of Palembang culture in the Palembang Cheng Hoo Mosque and Javanese tradition in the Surabaya Cheng Hoo Mosque.

Besides PITI, individual Chinese Muslims, such as Anton Medan and Iskandar Abdurrahman have also engaged in the construction of Chinese Muslim imaginations through building Chinese-style mosques. In the compound of his Islamic boarding school in Bogor, Anton Medan, a Chinese gangster-turn-preacher built a mosque that resembles the architectural design of the Chinese palace in Qing Dynasty, Mosque Tan Kok Liong, after his Chinese name (see Appendix 3). Besides the mosque, Anton Medan also prepared himself an Islamic grave that resembles the design of a pendopo, a Javanese-style hall. Similarly, Iskandar Abdurrahman or Chang I Pao, a mix Chinese-Javanese parentage Muslim activist, is building an ‘Arwana’ mosque, which is an acronym for Arab, Jawa (Java) and China, as part of his Islamic school in Salatiga. As Iskandar said, ‘the Chinese design of the mosque is not a sign of exclusivity, but to promote the multiculturalism of Islam, as well as to manifest the harmonious co-existence of Islam, Chinese and Javanese cultures in Salatiga.’ (Interview, Iskandar Abdurrahman, 13 February 2009)

However, not all Chinese Muslims share enthusiasm for building Chinese-style mosques. For example, Syafii Antonio, a prominent Chinese Muslim intellectual, who is active in promoting an Islamic economy, avoided a Chinese architectural design for the mosque in his Andalusia Islamic Centre near Jakarta, using instead a Moorish design from Spain. He said it was his attempt to ‘revive’ the famously tolerant period of Islamic civilisation. He told me that there were already a few Chinese-style mosques in Indonesia, and instead of following this trend, he hoped his Islamic centre will be more open for all Muslims regardless their ethnicity (Interview, Syafii Antonio, 11 January 2009).
Operational Diversity: Identity Contestations in the Cheng Hoo Mosque

In the preceding sections, I discussed Chinese-style mosques as forms of intentional hybridity that emphasise symbolic unity and promote translocal imagination of Chinese Muslim identity. Despite promoting a fixed image of Chinese Muslims, I will here argue that Chinese-style mosques are also a space for contestation of diverse and multiple Chinese Muslim identities, for example, between Chinese-cultured and non-Chinese cultured, between first-generation converts and second-generation Muslims, between NU and Muhammadiyah followers, between upper and lower class, male and female, leaders and ordinary members, merchants and preachers, the sharia-minded and the secular-oriented. In the mosque, Chinese Muslims from all walks of life negotiate their positions between not only Islamic and Chinese identities, but also diversified Islamic and Chinese traditions in Indonesia. This is arguably a form of everyday hybridisation that emphasises organic diversity and implies fluid identities among Chinese Muslims. Here, I will provide a few snapshots of such diversified identities as I have observed in the Surabaya Cheng Hoo Mosque during my fieldwork. More details on their shifting ethnicity and complex religiosity will be discussed in chapter 7.

Contestation of Religious Affiliations and Practices

During Idul Fitri 2008, after morning prayers in the Surabaya Cheng Hoo Mosque, Dr Fuad Amsyari, vice chairman of advisory board for Indonesian Religious Scholar Council (MUI, Majelis Ulama Indonesia), gave a sermon in front of a thousand Muslims from various ethnic backgrounds. Ironically, although he was speaking in a mosque that promotes diversity and tolerance, his sermon emphasised the importance of sharia implementation, not only at the personal and family level, but also at the societal and state arenas. He also reiterated the 2005 MUI fatwa denouncing secularism, pluralism and liberalism. While during the celebration of Maulid 2008 (celebration of the birth of Prophet Muhammad), hardliner Habib Rizieq Shihab, leader of Islamic Defenders’ Front (FPI, Front Pembela Islam) delivered a fiery religious speech in the Palembang Cheng Hoo Mosque. This occasional presence of conservative or hardliner preachers in Cheng Hoo mosques both reflects the neutrality of the mosque (in term of religious affiliation), and the diversity of religious practices in the mosque.
Most religious speeches and sermons in the mosque are rather moderate and tolerant, however. For example, during Idul Adha 2008, in his sermon, KH Abdurshomad Buchori, Chairman of MUI East Java criticised both Islamic fundamentalism and terrorism in Indonesia and abroad. During a talk before the breaking of fast in Ramadan, Syaukanie Ong, a Chinese preacher, urged the non-Chinese majority crowd to embrace cultural diversity and eliminate their negative stereotype of Chinese Indonesians. According to the Friday sermon schedule of the Surabaya Cheng Hoo Mosque, the invited preachers or religious teachers came from all religious backgrounds, including local leaders from NU and Muhammadiyah, lecturers from Islamic institutions and public universities, as well as Chinese Muslim preachers. This is a conscious decision of the mosque to get along with various Muslim groups in Indonesia.

The Surabaya Cheng Hoo Mosque is committed to Indonesian state ideology—Pancasila, and neutral in term of religious and political affiliations (YHMCHI 2007). Some Chinese Muslim leaders even claim PITI played a significant role in bringing NU and Muhammadiyah together in the early 1990s when interaction between both major religious organisations were rather rare and tense. At a personal level, members in PITI could freely participate in any religious organisations and political parties. Many of them remain neutral and do not have specific religious affiliations, and those who do have stronger affiliations often opted not to talk about them publicly. Given that Surabaya is the stronghold of NU, it is not surprising that many Chinese Muslim leaders and businessmen are affiliated to NU. Some of them have close relationships with local kiai to establish business networks and to ensure protection, while some favour NU because of its more flexible attitude towards religious practices. For middle-ranked leaders, religious teachers and ordinary members in PITI, their religious affiliations are more diverse. A few of them are members of Muhammadiyah and other Muslim organisations.

The differences of religious affiliations among members of the mosque community do not generate serious tensions or conflicts. The only major incident that I heard of during my fieldwork was the replacement of the mosque committee chairman, from a Muhammadiyah-inclined to an NU-affiliated ustaz (religious teacher). One of my informants told me that the relatively rigid and conservative Muhammadiyah-inclined ustaz, Burhadi was not favoured by some Chinese Muslim leaders because he often criticised ‘un-Islamic’ practices, such as people not wearing ‘proper’ Islamic dress in the compound of the mosque. Hariyono Ong, who trained in an NU Islamic boarding school
replaced Burhadi in early 2008 and is said to be more flexible in religious practices, willing to attend non-Muslim Chinese’s funeral ceremonies, for example.

During my fieldwork, both NU and Muhammadiyah-affiliated religious teachers active in the mosque said they were tolerant of each others’ activities (Interview, Hariyono Ong, 30 September 2008; Lukman Tjoe, 2 November 2008). Hariyono Ong, the imam of the mosque, organised Islamic study and chanting (zikir) sessions every 10 days in the mosque during the Ramadan. The sessions began with NU-affiliated kiai delivering religious messages, followed by Hariyono leading the zikir (Islamic chanting) practice before the breaking of the fast. Meanwhile Lukman Tjoe, a Surabaya PITI ustaz, organised weekly Islamic study sessions on Sunday morning (pengajian minggu), of which most speakers came from Muhammadiyah. There were also Islamic guidance classes for new converts every weekend, facilitated by ustaz Gunawan who did not have strong a religious affiliation. Apart from different religious affiliations, a broad spectrum of religiosity and Islamic pieties exist within Cheng Hoo Mosque. When the female candidate for East Java governor, Khofifah Indah Parawansa led the takbiran (recitation of ‘God is great’) during the last night of Ramadan 2008 in the mosque, some conservative-inclined Chinese Muslims condemned her arguing that women were not supposed to lead men in rituals. At the opposite ends of the spectrum, there was a Chinese Muslim man who said he was still drinking beer and eating pork at home, and a Chinese Muslim woman who privately told me that she is a supporter of Abu Bakar Basyir, the former leader of terrorist group, Jemaah Islamiyah.

**Generational Differences and Ethnic Identifications**

Here, I will closely explore the dynamics of generations, languages and ethnicity among Chinese Muslims, based on some of my fieldwork observations. Some older Chinese Muslim businessmen, who often speak to me in Mandarin, told me that they were disappointed with most of the young Chinese converts who cannot speak Mandarin or any Chinese dialect. They said most of the young Chinese Muslims have lost their ‘roots’ and had become ‘indigenous’ after their conversion, abandoning Chinese cultural practices and even forgetting their Chinese surnames. Indeed, age is one of the major indicators that shape differences in the mosque community. In general, but not always, elder Chinese Muslims who are mostly businessmen and leaders of the Cheng Hoo
mosque can speak Mandarin and still practise Chinese culture. Their conversion is usually politically or economically driven. They are proud of their ‘Chineseness’ and see themselves as middle persons bridging Chinese and non-Chinese. For example, a Chinese businessman, told me that he converted to Islam to ‘intermingle with the local’ and he hardly practises any Islamic rituals except Friday prayers in the mosque.

However, younger Chinese Muslims are both male and female converts, who mostly became Muslims for reasons of marriage or religious motivation. Most of them cannot speak any Chinese, and know very little about Chinese cultural traditions. They have less concern about their Chinese heritage and often see themselves as ‘Indonesian’, ‘Muslim’ or even ‘Javanese’, rather than ‘Chinese’. They do not see a great need to play a ‘bridging’ role as they already mixed well with local Muslims. For those who are more religiously pious, they see their Islamic identity as more important than their ethnicity. For example, a young convert told me that he is unhappy with Chinese Muslim leaders who put more emphasises on personal business and ethnic integration, than religious preaching and education. Meanwhile an officer in the mosque, whose father is a Chinese convert and mother is a Javanese Muslim, told me that she just sees herself as an ‘Indonesian’ and Chinese ethnicity does not mean anything for her. She refused to be interviewed as one of my informants, as she did not see herself as a ‘Chinese Muslim’.

There are also some converts who are only conditionally or symbolically Chinese. For example, Hariyono Ong, the imam of the mosque, who married a Javanese woman, purposely use his Chinese surname during preaching to show the compatibility between Chineseness and Islam. Interestingly, there were also some cases in which a few Muslims approached me and claimed that he or she is a Chinese or half Chinese, although they did not look like an ethnic Chinese or of Chinese descent. Some said they were *Peranakan* Chinese (mixed Chinese), and others claimed they were HITACHI (*Hitam tapi Cina*, literally means ‘black but a Chinese’). On the other hand, there are also cases where I mistook a non-Chinese Muslim as Chinese due to his or her fair skin.

**Class and Gender**

What are the class dynamics in the Surabaya Cheng Hoo Mosque community? A couple of informal conversations with Javanese staff working for the mosque gave me deeper
insight into the interaction between class, religiosity and ethnic identification in the mosque. To illustrate such dynamic, a Javanese Muslim clerk contrasted two cases of a rich Chinese businessman and a middle-income religious teacher. She said,

‘The rich Chinese businessman converted to Islam for economic interest, in order to obtain a license to open a factory. He always talked about ‘pembauran’ (blending) to bridge the differences between indigenous and non-indigenous Indonesia. In reality, he has only ‘membaur’ (socialised) with the government officials and Muslim elites to establish his business network. He seldom mixed with ‘small people’ like us. By contrast, the modest Chinese ustaz is sincere in his conversion. He has never mentioned ‘pembauran’, but he talked to us and treated us equally. He is still living in a small ‘gang’ (lane) where the residents are mostly Javanese and mixing well with them. He also organises Islamic study sessions in which most followers are indigenous people. It is the real ‘pembauran’, not just talking.’ (Field note, 26 November 2008)

Another Javanese staff member also shared similar opinions. She advised me not to interview most of the rich Chinese businessmen and their followers, because they were not pious or sincere Muslims. She said many of them seldom followed the Islamic study sessions and only participated Friday prayer sessions and other major events attended by Muslim elites and covered by the media. She suggested that I interview Chinese Muslim religious teachers, small shop-owners and other ordinary Chinese Muslims. It is important to note that both non-Chinese staff did not ‘racialise’ their boss-staff relationship with Chinese Muslim leaders, but pointed out the difference between classes within Chinese Muslims themselves. A couple of poorer Chinese Muslims I met also expressed their dissatisfaction towards their richer counterparts. A middle-aged Chinese convert from Pontianak who was looking employment claimed that he had been ignored by the rich Chinese Muslim leaders who refused to talk to him. He complained that the leaders were only keen to help poor local Muslims, but forgot the plight of the poor converts. However, it is unfair to suggest that all Chinese Muslim businessmen and leaders were exclusive and not religious, while religious teachers and preachers were more integrative and pious. As I observed, there were a few Chinese Muslim businessmen practising Islam frequently and mixing well with ordinary Muslims. There were also some religious teachers preaching for money instead of for religious purposes.
In addition to class, gender also plays an important role in characterising interactions of the mosque. Most of the mosque committee members are older businessmen; only a couple of them are female. As compared to their male counterparts, fewer female Chinese converted to Islam for political and business reasons. Most of them became Muslim to marry and others for religious purposes. Despite gender segregation during prayers, female and male Muslims in the mosque intermingled with each other quite freely. Most Chinese Muslim females wear Islamic dresses with veiling (jilbab) while attending religious functions; yet do not necessarily wear it outside religious circles. In addition, more than half of followers of the Islamic study and chanting sessions in the mosque were female Muslims, and most of them were non-Chinese.

The Cheng Hoo Mosque as a Discursive Cosmopolitan Space

Since its establishment, Surabaya Cheng Hoo Mosque has been frequently featured in various media and visited by many prominent figures. What make this mosque stand out? I would suggest that the significance of Cheng Hoo Mosque has to be examined in a larger Indonesian context from 1998 onwards. After the 'anti-Chinese' riots of 1998, post-New Order governments abolished various laws that discriminated against Chinese Indonesians to ensure Indonesia as an inclusive nation (Hoon 2008). Post-1998 Indonesia was also marked by events like the conflicts between Christians and Muslims in Maluku, the terrorist attacks in Bali and Jakarta, and more recently the attacks against Ahmadiyah followers. At the same time, mainstream Muslim organisations, such as Muhammadiyah and NU, despite internal factions, have continued to promote Islamic moderation and religious tolerance (Hefner 2005; Robinson 2008).

Within such contexts, Cheng Hoo Mosque is welcomed by many Indonesians as a symbolic marker of the acceptance of Chinese culture, as well as a clear statement of the inclusive face of Indonesian Islam. Thus, it is no surprise that such mosque has gained much media attention, in which it can be seen as a form of a discursive cosmopolitanism, deployed to manifest cultural diversity and religious pluralism in contemporary Indonesia.34 In other words, the inclusivity of Chinese-style mosques is the antidote to

34 Among the many news article and comments about Cheng Hoo Mosque, are 'Chinese-style Mosque a symbol of Indonesian Diversity' (Arifin 2010); 'Masjid Cheng Hoo, Suara Pesan Kedamaian' [Cheng Hoo Mosque, Message of Peace] (Ghufron 2009); and 'Pagoda di Atap Masjid Cheng Hoo' [Pagoda on the roof of Cheng Hoo Mosque] (Dariyanto 2009).
the rising puritan and radicalisation of Islamic doctrines among some section of Indonesian Muslim society. Indeed, as I indicated earlier, to project the cosmopolitan image of Islam, Chinese Muslims leaders have quoted Qur’anic texts to show Islam is a religion of ‘rahmatan lil’alamin’ (blessing for all) that emphasise ‘hablum minalloohi wa hablum minannaas’ (a good relationship with god and among humankind) (YHMCHI 2008). Here, based on personal interviews and articles, I will discuss Muslim leaders’ public discourses of the Cheng Hoo Mosque as a mosque that promotes peaceful, vernacular and ‘touristic’ Islam.

First, it is a peaceful mosque. Syafiq Mughni, East Java Muhammadiyah Chairperson does not see any problem with the establishment of a mosque which adopts Chinese architectural design, because the Qur’an does not have any verses that regulate mosque architecture (Interview, Syafiq Mughni, 18 September 2008). He welcomed the Chinese-style Mosque because it reflects the universality of Islam and helps preaching Islam to non-Muslim Chinese. He also suggested that the usage of Cheng Ho for the name of the mosque is timely, as Indonesian Islam is facing challenges from terrorism abroad and fundamentalism at home. According to him, Indonesian Muslims should have learned from the spirit of Cheng Ho which emphasises peace and inclusivity.

Second, it is a vernacular mosque. For Rubaidi, East Java NU Secretary, the Cheng Hoo Mosque is a fine example showing that Islam has no hesitate to adopt ethnic cultural symbols, practices and rituals (Interview, Rubaidi, 15 November 2008). As a proponent of indigenisation of Islam, he sees the mosque as a form of resistance against the ‘Arabisation’ of mosque architecture in Indonesia. Instead of merely adopting pan-Islamic designs, he supports the diversity of mosque architecture which reflects the various local and ethnic manifestations of Islam in Indonesia. He also praised the Cheng Hoo Mosque for preaching Islam through cultural approaches and in a tolerant way.

Third, the Cheng Hoo Mosque is touristic mosque. Since its establishment, the mosque has been visited by many prominent national leaders, including Yusuf Kalla, Amien Rais, Abdurrahman Wahid and Wiranto, as well as numerous local religious, military, business and political elites. The mosque is not only a place of worship, but also a tourist spot that attracts many Muslim and non-Muslims visitors from other cities in Indonesia and overseas. Many Muslim organisations and Islamic schools organised tours from other cities to visit this ‘exotic’ mosques. Along with the recently built pan-Islamic-
design Al-Akbar Great Mosque and historical Javanese-style Sunan Ampel Mosque, the Cheng Hoo Mosque has been promoted as one of the religious tourist spots (wisata religi) by the Surabaya Tourism Board. It has also been given an award from Indonesian Museum Record (Museum Rekor Indonesia).

The Cheng Hoo Mosque as a Living Cosmopolitan Space

Having reviewed the public discourses of the mosque as a cosmopolitan space, it is now important to look also at the sociological reality of its cosmopolitanism. By illustrating a few activities in the Surabaya Cheng Hoo Mosque, I argue the mosque in some ways, embraces ‘everyday cosmopolitanism’, in which ‘the ordinary members of different ethno-religious and cultural grouping mix, mingle, intensely interact, and share in values and practices’ (Bayat 2008:5). It is a place where Chinese and non-Chinese, Muslims and non-Muslims, upper classes and lower classes, males and females converge; as well as a space where religious, social and economy activities co-exist. As the former imam of the mosque, Burhadi said, ‘We wish this mosque be like a supermarket to fulfil the aspirations of all people’ (Harahap 2007).

The busiest time of the week is in Friday, when hundreds of men of various ethnic backgrounds come to the mosque for afternoon prayers. Sometimes, conversion testimonies are held after the prayers. The mosque can only accommodate about 200-300 people, so every Friday, a temporary shelter is set up to cater for another 1,000 people. With the exception of a few Chinese Muslim leaders, almost all Muslims who perform Friday prayers at the mosque are non-Chinese who are either working or residing nearby. Instead of travelling all the way to Cheng Hoo Mosque, most Chinese Muslims perform their prayers at the closest mosque. Indeed, location is more important than mosque architecture for them. The busiest time of the year is in the fasting month, when hundreds of Muslims, mostly non-Chinese Muslims gather for praying and breaking their fast. As some of them told me, they came to the mosque mainly because it is situated closely to where they live or work and there is free food, while others visited the mosque for its unique appearance. For the evening tarawih prayer, the mosque organised two versions, one with 11 rakaat and another one with 23 rakaat to accommodate the needs of Muslims from both NU and Muhammadiyah.

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In addition, the mosque committee also exercise their inclusivity through collaboration with other socio-religious groups. For instance, PITI has organised a mass *khitanan* (circumcision) at the mosque for poor Muslims in Surabaya in cooperation with Al·Irsyad, an Arab Muslim organisation. PITI also extended their cooperation with non-Muslim organisations, in activities such as donating goods for flood victims, with a Buddhist organisation, *Tsu Chi*. Indeed, charity events are frequently held in the mosque. A few Chinese Muslim leaders see themselves as middle persons facilitating the distribution of donations from better-off Chinese individuals and organisations to needy Muslims, given that some Muslims might worry that the donations may not be *halal*, and some Chinese organisations do not have direct connections with Muslim organisations.36

In an evening, the noise of a bouncing basketball and the sound of Islamic chanting (*zikir*) run through the mosque compound. Inside the mosque, a few Muslims, mostly non-Chinese recite Qur’anic texts, led by a Chinese Muslim *ustaz*. Outside of the mosque, Muslim and non-Muslims youth play basketball. They stop playing for a while during the prayer session, so that the Muslims can perform their prayers undisturbed. This illustrates that mosque has fulfilled both the religious and social purposes of a mosque (Mortada, 2003:87), being a sacred place for worship, and a social space for Muslims and non-Muslims to get together. Also parts of the mosque compound are PITI’s offices, a few multipurpose rooms, a kindergarten, a canteen, an acupuncture clinic and badminton courts. Mandarin classes, *qigong* practice and dancing courses are also held in the complex. Like other mosques, the Cheng Hoo Mosque is not lack of economic activities. The mosque committee earns money from renting the sports facilities (badminton and basketball courts) and wedding functions had in the mosque. Some Chinese Muslims conduct informal business in the mosque, such as selling biscuits, slimming products and Islamic insurance. The mosque also operates as a business network for Chinese Muslims involved in large-scale industries (banks, factories), as well as small and medium-size enterprise (restaurants, grocery shops).

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36 This kind of donation, on the one hand, may demonstrate ethnic Chinese’s concern towards local Indonesians who are mostly Muslims; on the other hand, may reimpose the stereotypical dichotomy that Chinese Indonesians are rich and the *prabumi* are often left behind in the economic sphere.
Conclusion

Simple dichotomies cannot capture the dynamic nature of identity formation in the real world. I therefore conclude by discussing three sets of paradoxes in the study of Cheng Hoo Mosque: transnational imaginations and local configurations; intentional hybridity and everyday hybridity; cultural particularism and grounded cosmopolitanism. First, through Cheng Hoo Mosques, some Chinese Muslim leaders construct their Islamic tradition by adopting mosque design from China; yet reconfigure it in local contexts. Their strategic transnational connection with Muslims in China is not a form of desire for return to mainland China, but an effort to manifest their identity and empower their social position in Indonesia. There are also efforts to build Chinese-style mosques in other cities, which might contribute to the emergence of a rather new translocal ethnoreligious imagination within Indonesia. However, these translocal imaginations have been always grounded and influenced by local cultures in which Chinese Muslims reside.

Second, as I have argued, the mosque does not symbolise an existing ethno-religious reality but rather brings a new reality into being, by reinventing traditions to promote a sense of shared experience that can unify Chinese Muslims. The strategic combination of Chinese architectural design and local Islamic traditions can be seen as a form of intentional mixing to emphasise the 'Chineseness' of Muslim house of worship. This fixity of identity through mosques does not reflect the complexity of cultural interaction and identity adoption of Chinese Muslims. The everyday hybridity of Chinese Muslim identities can only be observed through their daily involvement and activities in the mosque, where they are constantly cross boundaries, not only between Islam and Chinese identities, but also diversified Islamic and Chinese traditions. In other words, the mosque is both representative place and a contested space, the former promoting the symbolic unity of Chinese Muslims, while the latter reflecting the diverse negotiations of their identities.

Third, the establishment of Chinese-style mosques could 'universalise' Islam to demonstrate Islam is compatible with Chinese culture, but at the same time, might also 'essentialise' Chinese in Indonesia to a stereotypical image. Yet this cultural essentialism does not always imply exclusion (Kahn 2006:166). Indeed, the Cheng Hoo Mosque is a prime example of the celebration of inclusive Chinese cultural expression. Although the mosque was built in a Chinese style and managed by Chinese Muslims, it is a multi-
ethnic religious space allowing both Muslims and non-Muslims from different ethnic groups to interact with each other. In fact, most of the followers of the mosque are non-Chinese Muslims, while many Chinese converts attend mosques close to where they live. We may call it 'inclusive Chineseness', in which the practice of Chinese culture is no longer a sign of ethnic exclusivity but rather a common heritage shared by all, and one can have the freedom to abandon his or her Chineseness without social pressure.

In addition, by appropriating features from both NU and Muhammadiyah traditions, as well as the external design of Chinese temple and internal structure of Romanic church, the mosque design shows Islam as a cosmopolitan religion that celebrates differences within and between religions. Avoiding the use of loud speakers to broadcast morning azan, and the cooperation of activities with Chinese organisations, shows that assertion of Islamic identity does not affect the relations between Chinese Muslims and their non-Muslim counterparts. This shows that Islamic cosmopolitanism is not only found in Islamic texts, historical encounters and cultural syncretism with local traditions in Indonesia, but also in everyday life strategies of minority groups. Cheng Hoo Mosque can be seen as a 'cosmopolitan [space] envisaged in marginality' (Bhabha 1996a: 195) whereby minority Chinese Muslims empower themselves by playing a significant role promoting ethnic and religious harmony. Its inclusive architectural designs and social activities can be seen as a form of 'grounded' vernacular cosmopolitanism, in which there is no necessary contradiction between cosmopolitan sensibilities and identity assertion, and such cosmopolitan practices are 'rooted' in the experiences of particular ethno-religious groups (Kahn 2008; also Appiah 1998; Werbner 2002; Werbner 2006).37

In short, to a certain extent, Cheng Hoo Mosque is a local, socio-religious space that embraces both inclusive Chineseness and cosmopolitan Islam. However, this inclusivity does not guarantee the decline of class differences, racial inequality and religious conservatism in the mosque. Also, such cosmopolitan practices are not new, but can traced back to the interactions between Islam, Chinese and local cultures back to the pre-colonial and colonial period, as I discussed in the previous chapter.

37 For more details of 'vernacular cosmopolitanism', see chapter 1. I will also discuss further this issue in my concluding chapter.
Chapter 4

Expressing Chineseness, Marketing Islam:
Hybrid Performance of Chinese Muslim Preachers

In post-1998 Indonesia, Chinese Muslim preachers have a surprisingly high profile. Preachers such as Anton Medan, Koko Liem and Tan Mei Hwa are popular, not only among Chinese converts, but also with non-Chinese Muslim Indonesians. They appear regularly on religious television programs and hold public talks that attract large crowds. There are two important settings that explain the recent rise in Chinese preachers: the return of Chinese culture to the Indonesian public space since the collapse of the New Order regime, and the popularity of Muslim celebrity preachers.

As a result of a rising consumer culture, many successful preachers in contemporary Indonesia are also media celebrities, skilled at tailoring their messages and fashioning their appearance to a media audience. Chinese preachers appear to have a special marketing pull, because of their ethnicity and their status as converts. Their Chinese appearances stand out as exotic trademarks in the crowded preaching market. In addition, most Indonesians are born into the Muslim faith, so the personal biographies of converts arouse curiosity under any circumstances, but especially when they are Chinese. Some Muslims are concerned with what they see as a process of ‘Christianisation’ in Indonesia, and so they view the conversion to Islam of Chinese Indonesians – a community that is almost forty per cent Christian – as a welcome phenomenon. At the same time, many Muslims think the spiritual journey toward piety that these converts-turned-preachers underwent, provides a positive role model for non-practising Muslims.

Many Chinese Muslim preachers are aware of their distinctive nature and strategically use their differences to establish popularity. Yet, Chinese preachers are not a singular entity. Their preaching takes varying forms and they each have different messages, reflecting their varying socio-economic backgrounds, cultural outlooks, conversion experiences and religious education. Some of them utilise their ‘Chineseness’ to

distinguish themselves from other preachers; some emphasise the theological difference between their former religion (in most cases, Christianity) and Islam; some share their experience in transforming themselves from being an ‘immoral’ person to a good Muslim; yet others discuss the ‘rationality’ of Islam in public life. It might be said that Chinese preachers are as diverse as Indonesian Islam itself.

In this chapter, by highlighting five case studies of popular Chinese Muslim preachers and a Chinese nasyid (Islamic music) group, I will examine how Chinese culture and Islamic knowledge are ‘learned’ by the preachers, ‘reproduced’ in their preaching, and then ‘consumed’ by the audience. And last, by positioning Chineseness and Islam as ‘symbolic commodities’ (Bolin 2002; Muzakki 2007), I examine identity consumption, ethnic interaction and religious pluralism in contemporary Indonesia. As demonstrated by the preaching of Chinese Muslims, I argue that the commodification of identities has paradoxical outcomes – the diversity of appearances is not necessarily followed by a plurality of discourses. As I will discuss later, Chinese preachers promote the universality of Islam, yet some of their religious messages tend to be conservative; they cross the boundaries between Chinese and non-Chinese Indonesians, but reinforce ethnic stereotype at the same time.

Consumption, Performance and Identity

In recent decades, the increase in consumer culture and the spread of new media have made an enormous impact on consumption practices and identity expressions in Indonesia and elsewhere. Consumption increasingly serves as a venue of identity expression that has both economic and political significance. As argued by Storey (1999), cultural consumption provides us with a script for identity performance, and is perhaps the most visible way we perform our sense of self. Since we manifest our identities through what we consume, ‘consumption is therefore also a form of production’ (Storey: 2003:78). Friedman (1994) further suggests that, through examining the practice of cultural consumption and production, we can gain some insight into the relations between local structures of desire and identity; as well as the political and economic contexts that enable or constrain such practices.
As Ditchev (2006) suggested, 21st century nationalism is different from its earlier incarnations: it is not necessarily linked to solidarity or belonging, but to appearances and emblems. Referring to the trends of nationalism in Bulgaria, he coined the term ‘lifestyle nationalism’ to refer to the growing expression of national identity, by using simple and clear-cut emblems in the age of global consumer culture. In many cases, one does not live the identity, but have it. The same trends can also be observed in the expression of ethnic and religious identities in contemporary societies. For example, we might use ‘lifestyle Islam’ and ‘lifestyle Chineseness’ to describe the rising of identity consumption in Indonesia today. As reflected in some of the preachers I discuss later, Islamic appearance is more important than substance in the preaching market; while cultural symbols are more important than language ability in the manifestation of their Chinese identities. In other words, identity expression is more or less a performative action. Through performance, one can reinvent oneself through ‘acting’ in public life, a process by which one becomes someone, or accurately, become what one chooses to be (Butler 1990). Yet, the usage of cultural symbols is not just an empty signifier, as argued by Bourdieu (1991), through objectified representation in things and acts; self-interested strategies of symbolic performance can influence both self-identification and the perception of others.

In contemporary consumer societies, cultural symbols and religious appearances have emblematic exchange values that can generate financial incentives (Muzakki 2007). In Indonesia, in the last decade, there has been a growing Islamic consumerism especially among the urban middle class Muslims, as reflected by the mushrooming of various religious-themed products and services, such as Islamic popular culture, banking, tourism, literature and fashion. At the same time, since the collapse of the New Order regime, Chineseness has been absorbed into the market and became a part of urban lifestyle (Budianta 2007:174). For example, during Chinese New Year, lion dance performances and red lantern decorations are commonly found in most of the major shopping centres in big cities to attract consumers. To a certain extent, both Islam and Chineseness can be seen as ‘symbolic commodities’ (Bolin 2002; Muzakki 2007) that attract the attention of consumers and generate profits for vendors.

Yet, the rise in consumer culture does not necessarily contradict the rise in religious piety. Or in other words, the commodification of religion does not undermine, but transforms religious faith and practice. For example, as pointed out by Miller (2004:7),
Religious leaders might lose traditional power and authority, yet they gain media celebrity. Meanwhile, Eickelman and Anderson (2003) suggest that new media such as internet and television have expanded the public sphere of Islam as a marketplace of ideas, identities and discourse. As elsewhere, the commodification of Islam in Indonesia is also producing a spectrum of Islamic expressions that is more diverse and subject to rapid change. As Fealy (2008) has pointed out, given that markets need to appeal to the widest possible audience by using pluralist messages, Islamic consumerism seems to result in greater pluralism and does not undermine the moderate nature of Indonesian Islam (Fealy 2008). Similarly, referring to the popularity of the Islamic-themed Indonesian film, *Ayat-ayat Cinta* (The Verses of Love), Heryanto (2010) suggests that ‘pop Islam’ is hybrid in substance and style, and offers an attractive image of Indonesian Islam. Located in these broader contexts, this chapter examines whether Chinese Muslim preachers promote greater diversity of Islamic expression and discourse in Indonesia.

**Converts-turned-Preachers: A New Force in Indonesian Islamic Markets**

In contemporary Indonesia, Islamic preaching is not only a medium for transmitting Islamic knowledge to the public, but also a means of accumulating wealth and improving social status (Fealy 2008; Muzakki 2007). Coping with the rise of a consumer culture and media industry, the popular *dai* (Muslim preacher) today not only has to manage Islamic knowledge, but also needs to equip him or herself with communication skills and media-friendly appearances. In other words, form and appearance, instead of knowledge and substance, are part and parcel of the growing Islamic preaching market.

This phenomenon of Islamic preaching in Indonesia has been well studied (Abaza 2004; Hoesterey 2008; Howell 2008; Millie 2008; Muzakki 2007). While there are many writings about born-Muslim and born-again Muslim preachers, such as Abdullah Gymnastiar (Aa Gym), Arifin Ilham and Jefri Al-Buchori (Uje), the recent popularity of converts-turned-preachers has received little scholarly attention. In the past, minority and mualaf (new-convert) status of Chinese Muslims might provide obstacles for them to become successful preachers, today their smaller numbers and recent Islamic conversions are advantages. In the crowded world of celebrity preachers, one needs a unique feature or trademark to attract attention. While preachers of Arab Hadrami
descent carry an authenticating stamp or origin, Chinese preachers stand out for their
erceptional and exotic outlooks in non-Chinese dominated preaching markets.

Drawing upon the success of other preachers, Chinese Muslim preachers are not ‘passive
consumers’ in the Indonesian Islamic market, but creative in carving out a niche by
performing their Chinese identity and narrating their personal biographies (from converts
to pious Muslims) to win adherents. Many Chinese preachers are aware of their unique
positions: as ‘a part of an ethnic minority, but also a part of a majority Muslim ummah’.
Some of them use their uniqueness to establish their preaching careers. For example, Tan
Mei Hwa and Koko Liem are two interesting figures, as they use their Chinese names
(without any Islamic/Javanese name attached) in their preaching. Koko Liem also wears
traditional Chinese clothing when preaching. They use Chinese cultural symbols not
only to prove that Chineseness and Islam are compatible, but also as an ‘authentic selling
point’ that differentiates them from other preachers, who are non-Chinese and mostly
born Muslim. Knowing that Chinese Muslims are exceptional, and thus deserving more
attention, their choice of Chinese names and attire in preaching successfully attracts the
attention of local Muslims who find the stories and experience of converts fascinating.

As I have mentioned earlier, “Christianisation” amongst Muslims has been a major
anxiety for some Islamic organisations and leaders, particularly the possibility of non-
practising Muslims converting to Christianity through inter-religious marriages and the
influence of the Christian education system. Therefore, although most Islamic
organisations do not have systematic propagation efforts among Chinese Indonesians,
the conversion of Chinese (especially those who were Christians) has always been
welcomed as a reversal of the widely held fear. Therefore, the circulation of converts’
stories always constitutes one part of the preaching agenda, especially towards non-
observant indigenous Muslims. Most of the Islamic magazines, for example, Hidayah
and al-Kisah, have a section on the experience of new converts.

For some Muslim activists, the spiritual journey from non-Muslim to pious Muslim can
be seen as a role model for non-practising ‘indigenous’ Muslim Indonesians. As
illustrated by a Javanese Muslim I met during my field research,

‘There are a lot of identity-card Muslims among indigenous Indonesians. They do
not go to the mosque for Friday prayer. Or fast during Ramadan. Yet, our Chinese
converts are different. They choose to become Muslim and learn their religion seriously. We should be ashamed, because we are born Muslims and learned religion for years, but we do not practise it properly. Therefore, Chinese dai should play an important role in the dakwah movement.

Felix Siaw, a young activist in Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia (HTI), told me that he is frequently invited to lead pengajian (Islamic study sessions) organised by HTI in various locations, because many Muslims think that 'if a Muslim convert can be a pious Muslim, it will set a good example for the born Muslim'. He says, 'Although my knowledge of Islam is probably not as deep as others, many Muslims are more interested in listening to me, because I am the only Chinese and a new convert to HTI' (Interview, Felix Siaw, 10 January 2008). His experience is shared by many other Chinese ustaz (religious teachers) and dai (preachers), who stated that their Chineseness and their status as converts have contributed to the popularity of their preaching.

In the following sections, I discuss in detail five high-profile Chinese preachers and a nasyid group in contemporary Indonesia. There are two clarifications need to be made in advance. First, my use of the term 'marketing' in this chapter is not intended as a value judgment of preachers, nor do I seek to downplay the presence of genuine religious or cultural motivations among them. Rather my aim is to examine the relationship between preaching, marketing and identity. Second, I do not overlook the existence of Chinese Muslim preachers in the New Order period, but they were less visible. Many of them downplayed their Chineseness, as the public expression of Chinese identity was not allowed during the Suharto regime.

Tan Mei Hwa: Singing, Dancing, Preaching

Tan Mei Hwa or Ida Astuti, born 1968, is both a preacher and a performer. Her Chinese identity and entertaining preaching style have made her one of the most popular preachers in Surabaya, East Java. She has speaking engagements nearly every day, not only in East Java, but also in other provinces. During Ramadan, she hosted a religious program on the biggest local television station in East Java, JTV. She is known as Bu

\(^2\) The expression, identity-card Muslims, or Islam KTP (Kartu Tanda Penduduk), is commonly used to refer to non-practising Muslims in Indonesia. All Indonesian citizens have to state their religion on an identity card, yet not all of those who identify as Muslims practice Islam in daily life, especially in Java.
Nyai Tan Mei Hwa, 'nyai' being a prestigious title for a female religious scholar in the Javanese tradition.

Always dressed in fashionable and colourful Muslim attire with jilbab (headscarf), her easily digested religious messages and down-to-earth preaching style are welcomed by many ordinary Muslims, especially women and girls (see Appendix 6). She intersperses her message with singing, plenty of jokes and sometimes even dancing. As described by a journalist, she conveys her speech in 'Surabaya' style, by using lots of Javanese words and speaking in a direct way: interactive, blunt, and entertaining at the same time (Roosilawati 2008). She also makes extensive use of 'social talk' (bahasa gaul), the slang used by Indonesian youth to interact with her audiences.

What makes her most striking, however, is her expression of Chineseness. First, although she is not a fluent Mandarin speaker, she often sprinkles a little Mandarin in her talk. Second, she always highlights the role of Chinese Muslims in promoting early Islamisation in Java. Third, she tries to present a positive image of Chinese Indonesians to the Muslim crowd by saying that not all Chinese are rich or exclusive. Fourth, she uses her Chinese name, Tan Mei Hwa, in order to differentiate herself from other preachers who have Islamic or Indonesian names. As she told me, 'According to Islamic teaching, there is no requirement to adapt certain type of name. Mei Hwa is also my Islamic name, because it has good meaning. It means - beautiful flower.' (Interview, Tan Mei Hwa, 23 November 2010). Indeed, ‘Tan Mei Hwa’ in some ways, has been an exotic hallmark for her preaching.

Trained in law, Tan Mei Hwa worked in multilevel marketing before she became a full-time preacher. Like many Chinese Indonesians around her age in Java, she speaks fluent Indonesian and Javanese, yet has only mastered a few Mandarin and Hokkien phrases. She converted to Islam when she was 18 due to the influence of her Muslim friends and her marriage to a Javanese man from Solo. She learnt about Islam from her Muslim friends, her husband and through readings. She never undertook formal Islamic education, yet this was not an obstacle for her in the preaching market. Not only a successful preacher, she is also the director of Az Zahra, a religious training and consultation institute (Lembaga Training, Konsultasi & Majelis Dzikir) and has an interest in developing MSQ – Management Spiritual Quotation, mimicking the popular Ary Ginanjar’s Emotional-Spiritual Quotient (ESQ). ESQ is an Islamic corporate
management and motivational service, focusing on improving one’s general and professional success through spiritual awareness and commitment.

She says good communication skills, which she has from her former involvement in multilevel marketing, are crucial to preaching. Different from other preachers who mostly refer to religious texts, she told me that she reads a lot of non-religious books, especially books related to management, leadership and philosophy, so she can convey Islamic messages connected to everyday practice, such as time management, human interaction and work ethics. As she said, ‘Islam is a not difficult religion. Islam is a practical guide for everyday life.’

To appeal to broader audiences, Tan Mei Hwa avoids theological debates and controversial subjects in her preaching. Although she occasionally employs Arabic citations from Islam’s normative sources, she emphasises the universal values of Islam and how to apply these in everyday life. She rarely talks about her former religion (Chinese traditional beliefs) and her conversion experience. She says her preaching is not only for Muslims, but also non-Muslims, as she always states ‘Islam is religion that is a blessing for all (rahamatan lil ‘alamin).’ She does not intend to convert other Chinese to Islam, because she says religious conversion is a personal choice. Although she has been invited to give talks in support of political campaigns during elections, she refuses to affiliate with any political party or religious organisation. She says, as a preacher, it is important for her to be neutral, so that her messages will be accepted by all Muslims. In short, the image of Islam she tries to portray is ‘simple, inclusive and fun’.

Like other celebrity preachers, Tan Mei Hwa is an astute entrepreneur who tailors her preaching style and messages to audiences carefully and creatively. I first met her in 2008 in a fast breaking event during Ramadan in Surabaya. The event was also part of a gubernatorial election campaign, with the attendance of the candidate for the deputy governor of East Java, Saifulllah Yusuf, who was also known as Gus Ipul. Except from urging the audience to vote for Gus Ipul and his running mate, she did not talk much about political issues and focused on other themes such as Islamic solidarity and poverty eradication. When I asked one of the organisers why Tan Mei Hwa was invited, he responded, ‘Because she is popular. Her message is simple and her style entertaining. She can attract a large audience, especially female.’ (Field note, 24 September 2008)
Indeed, accompanied by singing, flamboyant gestures and sometimes dancing, she can hold her audience’s attention for a full hour and a half of preaching. In the fast breaking function, dressed in fashionable pink, besides reciting *shalawat* (prayers for the God), she sang the popular ‘*SurgaMu*’ (Your Heaven), a religious-themed pop-rock song by the band UNGU. She asked her audience to sing along and most of them did. She joked too, drawing stories from her ethnicity and personal experience. For example, she said, ‘I am a Chinese. How come my Javanese is more fluent than my Chinese language?’, ‘Although I have slanted eyes, I have a broad viewpoint’ (Field note, 24 September 2008), and so on. She often repeated similar stylised performances in other public talks. Yet, she also changes her preaching persona and content according to the audience, function and location. When conducting a monthly Islamic study session with Muslim women in a Muhammadiyah mosque close to her house, she avoids singing and dancing because such activities disapproved by the modernist Muslims. She always begins such sessions with a brief talk, followed by interactive Q&A session. She also conducts smaller *zikir* sessions (Islamic mystical chanting) every Sunday at her house and occasionally offers training that combines both the skill of business management and religious spirituality.

I described earlier how Tan Mei Hwa uses her Chineseness to attract audiences and here, I discuss how she builds up her credentials as a Chinese preacher, by referring to religious texts. In another public talk in connection with *halal-bihalal* (mutual forgiving event) in Surabaya in 2008, she urged the crowd, who were mostly non-Chinese Muslims, to acknowledge and respect difference. She began her talk by stating that she converted to Islam because she was interested in the concept of ‘rahmatan lil ‘alamin’ in Islamic teachings. Later, she recounted a short conversation between two Muslim girls in which one had refused to go to a *pengajian* (Islamic study session) because it was being led by a Chinese preacher. She then cited Qur’anic texts and told her audience,

‘I was born as Tan Mei Hwa. Can I choose to not be Chinese? Is it a sin to be Chinese? There is no Qur’anic text that obliges someone to be ethnic Chinese or not. God creates us in different shapes and colours. Some have slanted eyes, and some have broader eyes. Some have darker skin, and some have fairer skin. We are

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2 The Qur’anic verse she quoted is from Chapter Al-Hujurat (49:13). The verse can be translated as ‘People, We created you all from a single man and a single woman, and made you into races and tribes so that you should recognize one another. In God’s eyes, the most honoured of you are ones most mindful of Him: God is all knowing, all aware’ (Abdel Haleem, 2005).
all brother and sisters. We should respect each other' (Field note, 16 October 2008).

Most of the audience applaud her, as a sign of support. She continued her talk by referring to a Hadith (accounts of the words of Prophet Muhammad): 'The Prophet Muhammad urges us Muslims to seek knowledge even as far as China. Since there are many ethnic Chinese in Indonesia, we are lucky enough that we can learn from them without travelling to mainland China' (Field note, 16 October 2008). Such messages help promote a better image of Chinese Indonesian and bolster her credentials as a Chinese preacher. To show that Chinese preaching is not new, she also links back to Cheng Ho and Walisongo. By quoting former NU leader, Abdurrahman Wahid, she claims that some of the revered Walisongo, were of Chinese descent.

However, her preaching is not without controversy. Some Muslims have criticised her for being 'just an entertainer' rather than a true preacher. As one of my informants said, 'She does not have a strong religious education background and the content of her speeches is superficial' (Field note, 24 September 2008). Other Muslims also accuse her of being materialistic, profiting from selling the word of God (menjualkan ayat), as there are rumours that she charges up to five million rupiah for a preaching session. She responds by saying that in a practical sense, she could not perform without charging a fee. She explains by reminding her critics that she is often invited to perform but receives insufficient remuneration to cover her travelling expenses, let alone other costs. She denies charging a fixed fee, maintaining the fee is negotiable between her and the host depending on the location and the nature of the event. Besides charging a fee, she also sets a few requirements for her host, such as the quality of the sound system, the size of the auditorium and the seating arrangements, in which females should be seated at the front.

Another controversial aspect of Tan Mei Hwa's preaching is her singing and dancing. Some ultra-conservative Muslims argue that women singing and performing in public is not acceptable because the female voice is aurat (a part of the body that must be covered and not to be exposed in public). She disagrees and believes that such a 'stern' (keras) view is not shared by a majority of Indonesian Muslims. She defends, 'as long as I wear Islamic clothing, practise an Islamic lifestyle and spread the message of Islam, what's wrong with a female becoming a preacher?' Furthermore, she continues, 'Most of my audience is female.' She also explains why she chose to wear a colourful dress when
preaching. 'I want to portray Islam as a beautiful religion, and an attractive appearance is very important' (Interview, Tan Mei Hwa, 23 November 2008). Yet, this does not mean that she has a progressive stand on gender issues. As I observed, in an Islamic study session, she once told her female audience that ‘women are not suited to become leaders because they are emotional’ and ‘women should put family first and career second’ (Field note, 23 November 2008). Such statements, however, have to be put into context, because she was addressing a more socially conservative crowd in a Muhammadiyah mosque. Furthermore, in 2008, she had been invited to speak for the East Java gubernatorial election campaigns of Soekarwo and Saifullah Yusuf (both males), of whom one of their challengers was female.4 This might explains why she told her audience that ‘women are not suited to become leaders’

Koko Liem: Chinese Package, Islamic Message

‘An ustaz (religious teacher), but he has slanted eyes, yellow skin and always wears Chinese attire. He is known as Koko Liem. Originating from a Chinese Buddhist family in Dumai, Sumatra, he converted to Islam because he believed that the religion has universal and tolerant teachings’.

This is how a young Chinese preacher, Koko Liem, has been introduced on television in Indonesia. Indeed, Chinese name, Chinese appearance and convert background are the three main characteristics that make Koko Liem popular among Muslim audiences. Born 1979, as Liem Hai Thai, Koko Liem adopted a Muslim name, Muhammad Usman Ansori, when he converted to Islam. This is something many converts do. However, he prefers to be called Koko Liem when he preaches, because, he says, it is more ‘down-to-earth’. It also differentiates him from other preachers. Koko means ‘brother’ in the Hokkien dialect, while Liem is a clan name that is very common among Indonesians of Chinese descent. Like Tan Mei Hwa, it is a name that marks him as indisputably Chinese.

Besides his name, Koko Liem’s other preaching trademark is his traditional Chinese

4 In 2008, there were two pairs of candidates for the second round of the East Java gubernatorial election. The first duo Soekarwo- Saifullah Yusuf, was supported by Democrat Party (PD) and National Mandate Party (PAN). While the second pair was Khofifah Indah Parawansa- Mudjan, was supported by United Development Party (PPP) and Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle (PDIP). Tan Mei Hwa was invited by the Soekarwo team to speak in their election campaign. Khofifah is a female leader in NU and was a minister in Abdurrahman Wahid’s cabinet.
clothing with a Chinese skullcap. He says he wears this outfit because it looks interesting and is different from what other preachers wear. As he told me, ‘Preachers don’t have to wear a jubah with turban, or a baju koko with peci. I am a Chinese preacher. That is why I dress in Chinese clothing’ (Interview, Koko Liem, 26 April 2008). He explained that it was a preaching strategy to show that Islam is a universal religion and not incompatible with Chinese cultural traditions. To further illustrate the close relationship between Islam and Chineseness, he added that baju koko, popular Muslim male attire in Indonesia, has its origin in China and modified from traditional Chinese costumes. He also pointed out that the Islamic teachings share many similarities with Confucian values, such as respect for elders, modesty and cooperation.

Like Tan Mei Hwa, Koko Liem’s use of his Chinese name and clothing is a preaching image, and does not reflect his daily cultural practice. He can only speak a little Hokkien, but is fluent in Arabic and Indonesian, and is married to a Javanese woman. His minimal knowledge of Chinese language and culture left him with fewer ways of presenting his Chinese identity in the public. In other words, only through name and appearance, can he authenticate his Chineseness to attract media attention.

Yet, different from Tan Mei Hwa, Koko Liem is well-trained in Islamic studies. As he told me, his interest in Islam began when his father once told him that, ‘you can convert to any religion, but not Islam’, giving no reason. At the same time, he was sceptical of idol worshipping in the Buddhist temple. Therefore, in order to learn about Islam, he took Islamic classes in his primary school, although he was a Buddhist. Since then, he has been interested in Islamic teaching, following various religious events and he finally converted to Islam when he was 14. His conversion was rejected by his father, which made him chose to leave home and move to Java. In Java, he trained in a NU pesantren (Islamic boarding school), and then continued his Islamic studies in a teaching institute of Qur’anic knowledge (PTIQ, Institut Perguruan Tinggi Ilmu Al-Qur’an). He is best

5 The Chinese clothing which Koko Liem always wears is Tangzhuang, or Tang suit. Tangzhuang refers to the Chinese jacket that originated at the end of the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911). It evolved from Magua, a Manchurian clothing, which was, in turn, adopted by the Han Chinese during Qing Dynasty. Today, tangzhuang is one of the main formal clothing for Chinese men in many occasions. At the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation summit in Shanghai, China in November 2001, the host presented its silk tangzhuang jacket as the Chinese traditional national costume. Since then, some Chinese overseas have also worn the tangzhuang, either as a fashion statement or for cultural expression.

6 Jubah is long flowing robe, identical to Arabic garments. Meanwhile, peci is rimless cap and baju koko is collarless shirt which is one of the most common clothing styles of male Indonesian Muslims. Some Indonesians have suggested the koko shirt has Chinese roots. According to historian JJ Rizal, such collarless long or short-sleeve shirts are modified from a tui-khim shirt, which was commonly worn by male Chinese in Indonesia until the early 20th century (Isnaeni 2010).
known for his ability to memorise all the verses in the Qur'an.

Indeed, his conversion experience, his struggles to learn Islam, his ability to recite Qur'anic texts and comparing Islam with Buddhism or Chinese traditional beliefs, are some of the main themes of his preaching. He said if a Chinese becomes a Muslim and understands the religion, he or she will be respected by many local Muslims. Therefore, his sharing of his story and religious experience is a form of *dakwah*, to remind ordinary Muslims to observe their religion. He told me that the common response from his audiences is, ‘He is a convert, but his religious knowledge is greater than ours. He can lecture on religion. He can memorise the Qur’an. But what can we do?’ (Interview, Koko Liem, 26 April 2008).

Like other celebrity preachers, Koko Liem is ‘media-savvy’. Besides his charming appearance, he has good communication skills and engages in ‘social talk’ (*bahasa gaul*), the slang used by Indonesian urban youth. He was one of the finalists on *Mimbar Dai*, a reality show on TPI (Televisi Pendidikan Indonesia or Indonesian Education Television) in which one of the competitors is awarded the title of ‘best preacher’. Since then, his preaching career has become more successful. Now, not only does he host several religious programs on various Indonesian television channels, he is also involved in acting and advertising. He has acted as a ‘*kiai*’ (religious scholar) in a religious *sinetron* (serial drama) — ‘Kiamat Sudah Dekat 3’ (‘The Judgement Day is Coming 3’).

He is one of the most creative Chinese preachers, whose Islamic business career goes beyond public preaching to include *umrah* and *haj* pilgrimage travel, a religious SMS service, and a religious school for new converts. He has a personal website (www.kokoliem.com) featuring reports and video clips of his public preaching engagements, as well as stories of new converts, consulting services and Islamic articles. He is affiliated with the UJE Centre, owned by a popular celebrity-preacher, Jefri al-Buchori, best known as Uje. He holds monthly Islamic study sessions for new converts and occasionally speaks at the popular ‘I like Monday’ Islamic study sessions at the UJE Centre. Indeed, Koko Liem’s preaching and marketing strategies are generally in line with his associate, Jefri al-Buchori, who is a multimedia artist and preacher.

In his latest SMS religiously themed service, *Lampion Hati* (A Lantern for the Heart), which offers Islamic-based advice, teaching and ring tones to subscribers, Koko Liem
combines Chinese cultural symbols with Islamic messages to attract customers (see Appendix 6). Against a red background decorated with pictures of Chinese lanterns and the silhouette of a mosque, Koko Liem features in a posture of prayer, wearing green (the colour of Islam) traditional Chinese clothing. The advertisement for his SMS service declares his goal to be ‘illuminating your heart and faith with Islamic advice’ (Terangi hati dan inanmu dengan tausiyah-tausiyah Islami). Also provided in his SMS services are guidance for new converts, tips for Islamic family harmony and suggestions for Islamic match-making. This combination of Chinese cultural symbols and Islamic messages gives Koko Liem his uniqueness and makes him especially popular among Muslim Indonesians.

However, his creative preaching does not lead him to a more progressive or liberal understanding of religious and social issues. Like other celebrity preachers in Indonesia, Koko Liem tends to embrace a socially conservative Islam, albeit with a light touch (Howell 2008:59). For example, he has written an article, arguing that Muslim youths should not celebrate Valentine’s Day. According to his opinion, Valentine’s Day is a Christian festival and does not fit with Islamic lifestyle because it promotes ‘free sex’ which is banned by Islamic teaching (Koko Liem 2009).

Irena Handono: From Church Activist to Islamic Preacher

Not all Chinese preachers present a television-friendly face and use their Chineseness. Irena Handono, or Han Hoo Lie, a former student at Atmajaya Catholic University in Jakarta, was a church activist and nun before she converted to Islam in 1983 at Al-Falah Mosque in Surabaya. Unlike Tan Mei Hwa and Koko Liem, Irena Handono, born 1954, does not position herself as a ‘Chinese’ preacher. Although some of her Muslim admirers know about her Chinese identity, her distinguishing feature as a preacher is her background as a Catholic nun.

Despite sharing a similar profile to Tan Mei Hwa, as a Chinese female convert-turned-preacher, Irena Handono’s preaching style and content is very different. She eschews much of the entertainment-focused approach, concentrating instead on smaller-scale preaching tours and Islamic activism. She is active in numerous Islamic organisations, most of which are conservatively inclined, including Forum for the Anti Pornography
and Porno-action Movement (FORGAPP, Forum Gerakan Anti Pornografi dan Pornoaksi). She also established Irena Centre to educate Muslims and prevent Muslims from apostasy. She is well-known in more conservative circles and a couple of Chinese Muslims I met described her as a ‘fundamentalist’ preacher.

Whenever she preaches, Irena emphasises her experience of conversion to Islam. She makes lengthy and detailed theological comparisons between Christianity and Islam which always end up demonstrating Islam’s superiority. According to Irena, Islam is the only true religion recognised by God, and the Christian concept of the ‘trinity’ is false. She has given a few presentations, themed ‘Bongkar Kristian’ (Exposing Christian), which focused on ‘weaknesses’ in Christianity. The introduction to her talks says, ‘She was a Christian preacher, and now turns into an Islamic one. She tries to reveal the weaknesses of Christian teachings, which 99 percent of Christians do not know because they were concealed by priests.’ Video-clips of her talks were once uploaded on Youtube, but now have been withdrawn. She has also written two books - *Menyingkap Fitnah dan Teror* [Unveil the Slander and Terror] and *Islam Dihujat* [Blasphemed Islam] to challenge the western stereotypical negative images of Islam and reveal the constant threat of Christian missionaries. To some extent, her *dakwah* is not focus on converting non-Muslims to Islam, but preventing Muslims from converting to Christianity.

Like other sharia-minded Muslim preachers, she often criticises non-practising Muslims for not using the Qur’an to guide every aspect of their lives. She supports the implementation of the controversial Anti-Pornography Bill to regulate the morality of Muslim Indonesians and proposes stern action to prevent apostasy among Muslims. She also attacks prominent Muslims who have promoted pluralistic ideas, such as the well-known religious scholar Syafii Maarif, who suggested that not only Muslims, but also Christians and Jews have a place in heaven. Her controversial preaching material means she has rarely been invited to host religious programs on TV. Her messages draw criticism from Christians and moderate Muslim leaders. They worry that her effort to rid Christianity of ‘weaknesses’ after having found the ‘Islamic truth’ will worsen inter-religious relationships in Indonesia. Some Chinese Muslim leaders also disassociate themselves from her and criticise the content of her sermons. For them, conversion is a personal choice, and it is not appropriate for a Muslim convert to publicly criticise his or her former religion.
Yet, hardline Muslim groups especially those worried about the threat of Christian missionaries among Muslim Indonesians welcome her talks. Islamic magazines and newspapers such as *Sabili* and *Republika*, interview Irena frequently. In 2009, in a *Republika* interview, she described her conversion experience and religious journey in the following terms:

"When studying at the Institute of Theological Philosophy, Irena took a comparative religion course. After that, she studied Islam. Her lecturer started his class by saying, 'If you want to learn about Islam, you just need to look at Muslims in Indonesia. Islam is identical with poverty, backwardness, terrorism and all negative things.' However, Irena did not agree and asserted, 'We can't simply judge a religion by looking at its followers, and this can apply to Christians and Catholics. If we refer to the Philippines and Mexico, the robbers, the thieves and the poor are mainly Catholics, not Muslims.'... One day, Irena asked her lecturer for permission to learn Islam from the primary source, the Qur'an. Her lecturer allowed her to read the Qur'an, to find the 'weaknesses' of Islam. After reading the Qur'anic texts, Irena was convinced that there is only one God and the concept of the holy trinity in Christianity is false. She debated the concept of God with her lecturer. Finally, she concluded that Jesus is not a God, but only a person who has been perceived as a God...Although faced by many challenges after conversion, Irena feels her life is more complete with the guidance of the Qur'an..."  

In short, Chinese ethnicity is not crucial for Irena Handoko's life or preaching career. Her conversion experience and the psycho-religious elements of her religious transformation have larger impacts on her preaching style and content. To some extent, the next example, Syafii Antonio, shares the same trajectory, where religious experience is more crucial than ethnicity as a guide to daily life and preaching. To that we now turn.

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7 *Most of the interviews have been uploaded on Irena's personal blog, http://irena-handono.blogspot.com. For example, in December 2008, Sabili published an interview with Irena Handono, entitled 'Kenapa Pada Diam' ('Why keep quiet'), emphasizing Irena's concern with the rise of Christian missionaries in Indonesia and the lack of efforts by Muslim leaders to counter such a trend."

8 *This interview, entitled 'Irena Handono: Hidup Indah Dengan Islam' ('Life is more beautiful with Islam') is available on Irena's blog. See, http://irena-handono.blogspot.com/2009_02_01_archive.html (Accessed on 18 August 2010).*
Syafii Antonio: Promoting an Islamic Economy

Muhammad Syafii Antonio (Nio Gwan Chung), born 1967, is one of the most respected Chinese Muslim intellectuals and a leading figure in the promotion of an Islamic economy in Indonesia. Since the 1990s, using a Malaysian model, he has been engaged in helping to build an Islamic banking system in Indonesia. Today, he is a member of the expert committee of Bank Indonesia and the Sharia Advisory Council, Central Bank of Malaysia, as well as a sharia consultant for various banks and financial institutions in Indonesia. He is also one of the leaders in Yayasan Karim Oei (a Chinese convert foundation), as well as a member in the Division of Economy of ICMII and the National Sharia Board of MUI.

Born into a Confucian family, he first converted to Christianity during primary school and later to Islam when he was 17. He emphasised that his conversion was based on rational consideration because he had studiously compared religions before determining Islam the best. After converting to Islam, he studied Arabic in an NU pesantren and attended Muhammadiyah High School at the same time. He continued his undergraduate studies in the University of Jordan (Islamic law) and his master degree in the International Islamic University, Malaysia (Islamic economy), before completing his PhD on Islamic economic and banking systems at the University of Melbourne, Australia.

Syafii Antonio started to preach in public at very young age when he was still studying in an Islamic boarding school. He was asked to replace his religious teacher to talk in a pengajian when his teacher fell ill. Since then, his excellent religious knowledge, convincing public speaking, his Chinese look and convert status have contributed to his growing popularity among Muslim audiences. Not only is he invited to give public sermons, he has also hosted religious programs on radio and television. However, his dakwah approach changed after he completed his postgraduate studies and is different from other Chinese preachers. He is less active in preaching now, and focuses on developing an Islamic economy through business, consultation, seminars, education and writings. As he said, ‘instead of picking up knives and weapons, my jihad is bringing Islamic values into the market place’ (Interview, Syafii Antonio, 11 January 2009).

As of 2010, he was the chairman of the Takzia College of Islamic Economy (STEI, Sekolah Tinggi Ekonomi Islam Takzia), the founder of the Andalusia Islamic Centre, as
well as the author of several books on Islamic economics. He believes that an Islamic economy is the solution to the three problems faced by Indonesian Muslims — poverty, backwardness and low moral. He suggested that Muslims should not only confine their faith to religious rituals and practices, but also engage in banking, business, insurance and other economic matters. Therefore, with the slogan of 'shape the future with Islamic economics', his college offers courses that combine modern language and business skills with Islamic law.

Through his latest books, *Muhammad SAW: The Super Leader, Super Manager* (Antonio 2007) and *Sukses Besar dengan Intervensi Allah: The Power of Doa with Asmaul Husna for success in Business in Life* (Antonio 2008), he promotes the idea that Islamic spirituality can inspire economic enhancement and business development, as proved in the earlier Islamic texts. According to Syafii Antonio, the Prophet Muhammad was not only a religious leader, but also a successful businessman. He argued that even before Max Weber wrote 'The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism', Prophet Muhammad has discussed the relationship between business activities and religious values. Many Muslims have overlooked the economic dimension of the Prophet Muhammad's teaching, driving Antonio to write books about Islam and business. For Antonio, economic achievement is also a form of *dakwah*, giving a good image of Islam. Referring to his own experience:

'My parents, like many other Chinese Indonesians held negative perceptions of Islam. For them, Islam is associated with backwardness and poverty. That is why when I converted to Islam, they rejected me and I had to leave home. However, after I finished my doctoral degree and launched a successful career, my family members accepted my decision. Now, even my brother is consulting me about business skills. Although they have not converted, they have a better perception of Islam.' (Interview, Syafii Antonio, 11 January 2009).

Syafii Antonio's strong religious education, high academic achievement and remarkable business success make him well respected among Chinese Muslims and non-Chinese Muslims. He has been approached by several Islamic parties (including PKS, Prosperous Justice Party) to contest in the national elections. However, he refuses to affiliate himself with any party or religious organisation, saying, 'I don't want to put myself in a box, and Islam should not be divided into boxes' (Interview, Syafii Antonio, 11 January 2009).
His openness to all religious groups in Indonesia not only reflects his sophisticated religious background, but also is an attempt to maximise his efforts in promoting an Islamic economy. For him, an Islamic economy is not exclusively for Muslims, because non-Muslims can also invest in an Islamic market or consume Islamic products. However, this inclusiveness does not mean he is completely open. As he said,

'I agree with the MUI fatwa that Muslims should not wish ‘Merry Christmas’ to Christians. This does not mean I am exclusive or anti-Christian. I have a lot of non-Muslim friends. I just want to protect my faith. If I say ‘Merry Christmas’, it means I accept the birth of Jesus as the son of God or the trinity concept in Christianity. This is contradicting with my belief in tauhid (the oneness of God).'

(Interview, Syafii Antonio, 11 January 2009).

Married to a woman from Padang, Syafii Antonio does not speak any Chinese or practise Chinese culture in his daily life. Focusing on the rationality of Islamic teaching, he hardly uses any cultural symbols in his preaching. Instead of a Chinese architectural design, he adopted a Moorish style for the mosque in his Andalusia Islamic Centre. Some of his friends in Malaysia did not know that he was Chinese, until he put his Chinese name in his latest book. He explains, ‘Ali Karim (the Chairman of Karim Oei Foundation) told me that I should put my Chinese name on my books, not only to show that being Muslim and Chinese are not incompatible, but also to acknowledge that my Chinese identity has helped me in my religious career’ (Interview, Syafii Antonio, 11 January 2009).

Like other Chinese preachers, he admits that being a convert is one of the factors contributing to his popularity in the early stage. He said that being Chinese is a ‘surplus marketing point’ catching the attention of ordinary Muslims. However, he suggested that Chinese Muslim preachers should go beyond that and have more substance, because people will get bored listening to the same conversion’s stories. According to him, Islamic preaching should not only be a ‘spiritual meal’ for Muslim audiences, but also improve socio-economic conditions for Indonesian Muslims.
Anton Medan: From Gangster to Preacher

Anton Medan, or Tan Kok Liong, born 1957, is a controversial character, not because he is Chinese, but because in an earlier life he was a preman, or gangster. Now a popular dakwah figure, his involvement in murder, robbery, drugs and illegal gambling led him to spend 18 years in prison. He has also been accused of helping create chaos in Jakarta in 1998, a charge he strongly denies. After converting to Islam in 1992 and adopting an Islamic name, Muhammad Ramadan Effendi, he started his preaching career among prisoners and prostitutes, before becoming popular with a wider public and on television. His personal transformation from immoral hoodlum to pious preacher is his preaching hallmark.

Since 1996, he has workshops training former prisoners and gangsters to become skilled workers with religious knowledge. In 2005, he has also established an Islamic boarding school, Pondok Pesantren Terpadu At-Taibin in Bogor that promotes entrepreneurship alongside religious education and where Chinese language and business skills are compulsory subjects. Occupational training is included in his boarding school, in which male students learn woodworking and female students learn tailoring. Some of their products are sold and the revenue used to support the operational costs of the school.

In the same compound of the boarding school, there is a Chinese-style mosque, Masjid Tan Kok Liong, which resembles the architectural design of a traditional Chinese palace. Anton Medan says this building is part of an effort to preach Islam to Chinese Indonesians, and to promote pembauran (blending) between Chinese and non-Chinese Indonesians. He does not see a contradiction between being a Muslim and Chinese, and claims that he has the strength of both, or as he puts it, 'Akal Cina, Hati Muslim'; 'Chinese mind', by which he means a business orientation, and 'Muslim heart', denoting an emphasis on spirituality and morality. He explains, 'A good Muslim is a Muslim who not only can open the holy text, but is also able to conduct business (bukan hanya bisa membuka kitab tetapi juga bisa membuka cek)'.

Contrasting himself from other Chinese preachers, such as Koko Liem, he said, 'I do not preach for money. I do not rely on preaching to make ends meet and I am free to say anything in my mind.' Indeed, preaching is not the main source of Anton's income, as he also runs various business ventures from garment manufacturing, election-materials
support, hardware to indoor soccer. For Anton, economic achievement is very important for his *dakwah*. First, with sufficient funds, he can build religious schools and give free preaching to marginalised groups, such as prisoners and prostitutes. Second, he can prove to non-Muslims that ‘the backwardness of Indonesian Muslims is not because of Islam’ (Interview, Anton Medan, 7 November 2008).

Despite religious differences, Anton Medan, who speaks fluent Hokkien and a little Mandarin, maintains good relationships with many non-Muslim Chinese. He sees himself as a bridge between ethnic Chinese and Muslim Indonesians. He occasionally is involved in inter-faith activities and helps some non-Muslim Chinese solve their conflict with Islamic leaders. Indeed, during my visit to his boarding school, a couple of Chinese women from Medan were asking for his help in dealing with some Muslim leaders who opposed the building of a Chinese temple in Medan, Sumatra (Field note, 9 January 2009). Anton Medan also told me that he supports the idea of having a casino in Indonesia, with strict conditions that it is only for non-Muslims, for two reasons – to reduce illegal gambling, and to boost Indonesian economic growth (instead of going to Malaysia or Singapore to gamble).

However, such viewpoints do not mean he is a Muslim with liberal and critical mindsets. Instead, the media has sometimes highlighted Anton Medan’s conservative side. For example, his visits to the families of convicted Bali bombers Amrozi and Imam amudra before the two men were executed for terrorism, were widely reported in the national press. I had the opportunity of following him to Amrozi’s family in Lamongan, East Java (see Appendix 6). Despite the short stay, he was warmly welcomed by Amrozi’s family members and friends. He told me that he met Amrozi and Samudra when he preached in jails. He said, ‘Many Muslim leaders are afraid of visiting their families. But as Muslims, what is wrong with sending condolences? This does not mean I support their terror attacks’ (Interview, Anton Medan, 7 November 2008).

He also claims to be an advisor to the Islamic Defenders’ Front (FPI, Front Pembela Islam) and regrets that the FPI Chief, Rizieq Shihab has been sentenced for two years, after his involvement in the MONAS incident, involving a clash between the hardline Muslim group and an alliance of organisations that support the freedom of faith.\(^7\) In 2008, the 

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\(^7\) MONAS incident was an FPI attack on members of the National Alliance for Freedom of Religion and Faith (AKKBB, Aliansi Kebangsaan Untuk Kebebasan Beragama dan Berkeyakinan) who rallied in the National Monument, MONAS in June 2008. AKKBB is a progressive social and religious coalition that promotes religious
at an Islamic study session in Cirebon to celebrate the Islamic New Year, he openly
criticised the well-known liberal-minded NU leader, KH Maman Imanulhaq, a speaker at
the same event. Claiming to be a friend of another leader of FPI, Munarman, he blamed
Maman Imanulhaq for supporting AKKBB (Alliance for Freedom of Religion and Faith)
and urged the latter to repent ('tobat'). He even suggested the audience disperse and not
listen to Maman Imanulhaq (Wahid Institute 2009:1). While in the 2009 elections,
endorsing the struggle for an Islamic state, he associated himself with the Crescent Star
Party (PBB, Partai Bulan Bintang), a conservative Islamic party.

It can be argued that as a reformed criminal with little religious education background,
his affiliation with conservative Islamic organisations is a way of legitimising his Islamic
identity among the broader Muslim community. By proclaiming conservative Islamic
viewpoints and criticizing progressive Muslims, Anton Medan is trying to prove his
sincerity as a pious Muslim and demonstrate his credentials as a preacher. However, as I
have discussed before, Anton Medan also has his inclusive and tolerant side — he
involves in inter-faith activities and supports the establishment of a casino in Indonesian
to reduce illegal gambling. Such complex and situational religiosity is not an exceptional
case, but shared by many Muslims, especially Chinese converts. As I will argue in
chapter 7, the inconsistent religiosity of converts does not imply hypocrisy, but reflects
their flexible piety, in which a convert can manifest different aspects of their religiosities
when dealing with different situations and interacting with different audiences.

**Lampion: The Sound of Chinese Muslims**

The preaching of Chinese Muslims goes beyond public presentations and television
shows to the use of singing. Lampion, literally means Chinese lantern, is the first and
only Chinese Muslim *nasyid* (Islamic music) group in Indonesia.\(^{10}\) Like other *nasyid*
groups in Southeast Asia, Lampion adapts global trends in popular music and uses new
technology, media, and marketing strategies; while engaging with Islamic identities,
through musical texts, musical elements, video imagery, and costumes (Tan 2007).
Mimicking the successful Malaysian *nasyid* group, Raihan, some of Lampion's songs also feature Malay frame drums such as *rebana*, which are traditionally used to accompany some Islamic genres of music. What makes Lampion different is its use of Chinese cultural elements in its name, appearance and lyrics. If *pop nasyid* is for younger Muslims to reconcile their religious beliefs with modernity and *pop* music (Tan 2007), Lampion use it to show that Islamic religiosity and Chinese ethnicity are not mutually exclusive.

Lampion was established in 1997 by a group of young males in Lautze Mosque and consists of eleven members. The majority of them were Chinese Muslims. Lampion set up independently from Lautze Mosque in 2000 and launched their first album, *Baiknya Tuhan* (*The Goodness of God*) in 2005. Members of Lampion have changed over time, except three siblings who form the backbone of the group. There are Adrian Agatha, Andrew Irfan and Kelvin Ikhwan, who were born into a Chinese convert's family. Their father, Syarif Tanudjaja is a prominent leader of MUSTIKA and PITI in Jakarta. The eldest brother, Adrian Agatha, passed away in 2007 through illness. However, his younger brothers kept Lampion alive and in 2010, there were 5 members in the group.

According to Kelvin Ikhwan, born 1979, the key figure in the group, Lampion seeks to provide a new variant into Indonesian Islamic arts and culture, through its Chineseness. As Kelvin puts in, 'We chose Lampion or Chinese lantern as our group's name to manifest our Chinese identity. Furthermore, we hope our songs can play the role of a lantern, guiding the path to Allah. Through *nasyid*, we hope we can bring our audiences closer to the God' (Interview, Kelvin Ikhwan, 9 June 2008). Kelvin added, this did not mean Lampion was exclusive because it has non-Chinese members and many of its audiences are non-Chinese Muslim Indonesians.

Besides its name, Lampion also expresses its Chinese identity through other means. On the cover of Lampion's first album *Baiknya Tuhan* (2005 edition), against a background of an old pagoda-like mosque in Mainland China, its members (including the non-Chinese) are wearing traditional Chinese dress with Chinese skullcap (see Appendix 6 for the cover of its 2010 edition). One of Lampion's video clips also portrays the image of Cheng Hoo Mosque in Surabaya. Although none of its members speak Mandarin, there are two Mandarin songs in the album - *Islam Te Chin Can* (*Islam is growing*) and *Yong Ai* (*Great Love*), the other songs are sung in Indonesian. Kelvin told me that the
idea of singing Mandarin songs was inspired by Raihan.11 He said, 'We asked our
Chinese friend to translate the lyrics from Indonesia to Mandarin. We sing the songs
based on pinyin (Romanised Chinese pronunciation).12 Indeed, like Koko Liem and Tan
Mei Hwa, the Chineseness of Lampion is largely symbolic—it manifests not in everyday
practices but in the Chinese expression it presents to the public.

Compared to its symbolic Chineseness, for the members of Lampion, Islamic practices
are part of their daily life and Islamic piety is an ultimate aim. Recently rebranded
‘Chinese Muslim edutainment’, Lampion emphasises its difference from other popular
singers and musical groups in contemporary Indonesia, who have recorded Islamic-
themed albums, such as UNGU and Opick. As Kelvin put it,

'We position ourselves as preachers, not celebrities. Some people use Islam to seek
popularity and material gain. But, we use music to spread Islamic messages. Through
music, we bring our audiences and ourselves closer to Allah and the
Prophet Muhammad. We also want to show that Islam is Chinese-friendly. We
cooperate with Chinese Muslim organisations, such as PITI to preach Islam among
Chinese Indonesians’ (Interview, Kelvin Ikhwan, 9 June 2008).

Besides being involved in Lampion, Kelvin is also a freelance designer and illustrator for
a few Islamic children’s magazines. Meanwhile his brother, Andrew, runs a restaurant
that serves halal Chinese food. Both of them are activists in Al-Arqam and most of the
Lampion’s musical texts are derived from the writings or speeches of the founder of Al-
Arqam, A Shaari Muhammad.13 In other words, for Lampion, Islamic preaching is the
priority, while Chineseness is the public image and music is the medium of dakwah.
These subtle forms of dakwah are called ‘cultural approaches’ (pendekatan budaya) by
Lampion and some other Chinese Muslim leaders.

11 Raihan is a popular Malay-Muslim nasyid group in Malaysia. Raihan’s 2003 album, Gema Alam (Echces for
the World) included a Mandarin song, Ching Ai Ching Ai (Love for God). According to Raihan, it has supporters
among Muslims in China and Chinese converts in Malaysia (Hew 2005).
12 The Chinese pronunciation of Lampion is not clear and as a Mandarin speaker, I have difficulty understanding
what they were singing in Mandarin. I find myself more comfortable listening to their Indonesian songs.
13 Al-Arqam is an Islamic religious movement, originating in Malaysia. The movement was banned by the
Malaysian federal government on 1994 and its leader A Shaari Muhammad was arrested under the Internal
Security Act (ISA). Al-Arqam has been renamed Rifaqa and then Global Ikhwan. It has a school and activity
complex in Sentul, in the outskirts of Jakarta. Its founder A Shaari Muhammad passed away in May 2010.
According to Nagata (2004), Al-Arqam was inspired by a rare mix of global Sufi and strict sharia traditions,
many of whose members were organized into residential communes and institutions promoting economic
independence, mutual support, social service and extensive mission.
Despite rejecting fame as celebrities, Lampion is one of the popular nasyid groups in contemporary Indonesia. Lampion performs, not only in Jakarta, but also in other cities in Indonesia. Lampion is frequently invited to sing at events such as wedding ceremonies, Islamic celebrations, musical concerts, television programs and public seminars. In their performances, they are wearing either Chinese traditional clothing with Chinese skullcap or koko shirt with peci. Paradoxically, although Lampion aims to spread Islamic message to Chinese Indonesian, most of its audience are non-Chinese Muslims. Next, I will locate the popularity of Chinese preachers in the broader discussion of ethnic interaction and religious pluralism in Indonesia today.

From Taboo to Commodity: Celebrating Inclusive Chineseness?

During the long years of Suharto’s New Order regime, Chinese culture was taboo. The government even banned the Mandarin translation of the Qur’an. However, in contemporary democratising Indonesia, Chinese culture has become a marketable commodity, as the country faces both globalisation and the demands for internal cultural diversity (Budianta 2007). Chinese lion and dragon dances have become fashionable entertainment, oriental appearance is desirable in Indonesian serial dramas, and Mandarin courses have sprung up anticipating China as the emerging economic force in the region. Interestingly, Chineseness is not only consumed by ethnic Chinese themselves, but also by non-Chinese Indonesians. For example, about eighty percent of the members of lion dance groups in Surabaya are either Javanese or Madurese (Field note, 12 September 2008), and Taiwanese popular culture (such as F4’s Meteor Garden) is popular among non-Chinese youth (Ida 2008).

The popularity of Chinese preachers among non-Chinese Muslims is a further illustration of this appeal. Today, Chinese Muslim preachers are desirable and recognised by many non-Chinese Muslims. In fact, most of the congregation of Chinese Muslim preachers are non-Chinese Muslims, given the small number of Chinese Muslims in Indonesia. Not only receiving religious messages and spiritual advice, many non-Chinese Muslims are in certain ways, also ‘consuming’ preachers’ Chinese appearance and cultural symbols, their experiences of conversion, and their creative preaching styles. During the New Order period, to some Chinese Indonesians, Chineseness represents a ‘curse’ rather than
a ‘blessing’ (Thung, 2000:183). Today, for some Chinese preachers, their Chineseness is a ‘blessing’, not a ‘burden of identity’ or a ‘curse’.

The new celebrity status of Chinese preachers may help to improve the image of Chinese Indonesians among the broader Indonesian population, and shows that Chinese and Muslim Indonesians need not be mutually exclusive. When hundreds of Javanese Muslims listen to the sermon of a Chinese preacher, they are crossing ethnic boundaries in some sense. At the same time, Chinese identity is also given a more complex representation – Chinese Indonesians are not just ‘economic animals’, but can also be religious teachers. Some of the preachers also use Islamic texts to promote cultural diversity and inter-ethnic tolerance.

Chinese Indonesians are often accused of being ‘exclusive’ and of refusing to mix. These feelings have traditionally been strongest in devout Muslim circles, and in Muslim organisations – right back to the early years of the twentieth century when Indonesia’s first truly mass organisation, Sarekat Islam (Islamic Union), was set up to campaign against the influence of Chinese businesses (Arya 1994; Mackie 2008:191). Now, as I will discuss in the next chapter, not only moderate Muslim organisations (such as NU and Muhammadiyah), but also conservative groups (like the Islamic Defenders’ Front, FPI, and the Prosperous Justice Party, PKS) are enthusiastic about recruiting Chinese Muslims, both as members and leaders. They do so to prove that they practise ‘multiculturalism’, and also to hold up Chinese converts as models of devout behaviour to non-practising Muslims.

However, as Hoon (2009) observed, the increase in consumption of Chinese culture by non-Chinese should not be naively read as a full acceptance of ethnic Chinese, just as one can enjoy food at McDonald’s yet still disapprove of the United States. It would be also too simplistic to suggest that the popularity of Chinese preachers among non-Chinese Muslims can lead to the erosion of ethnic boundaries and suspicions. On the contrary, some Chinese Muslim preachers strategically use stereotypes and symbols of Chinese culture (for example, Koko Liem’s traditional Chinese attire and Anton Medan’s Chinese-style mosque) to attract audiences and promote the universality of Islam. To a certain extent, this stereotypical representation of Chinese Indonesians might imply that Chinese culture is always attached to the ethnic Chinese, no matter how far
they go to adapt to the Muslim mainstream, and that the distinction between ‘Chinese’ and ‘indigenous’ Indonesians is something that cannot be totally erased.

As indicated by Heryanto (2004, 2008), the symbolic celebration of Chineseness has a strong tendency to ‘essentialise’ Chineseness as a set of fixed characteristics and traditions; therefore does not reflect the complex realities of life for many Chinese Indonesians. Indeed, many Chinese preachers I have described have little or no Chinese language ability and do not practise Chinese culture in daily life. Yet, they use visible markers of Chinese identity to catch media attention. This takes the form of wearing certain types of dress, using Chinese names, emphasising the role of Cheng Ho and so on. These acts then become the markers by which Chineseness is identified among non-Chinese audiences. In doing so, I would argue that a Chinese stereotype, albeit not a negative one, is re-consolidated.

Yet, cultural essentialism does not always necessarily imply social exclusivity (Kahn 2006:166). Indeed, together with the establishment of Chinese-style mosques, such as the Surabaya Cheng Hoo Mosque, the popularity of Chinese preachers is another example suggests that the celebration of Chinese cultural expression does not equal to the promotion of social exclusivity. As I have discussed in preceding chapter, although the mosque was built in a Chinese style and managed by Chinese Muslims, it is an inclusive socio-religious space where both Muslims and non-Muslims from different ethnic groups get together. We may call it ‘inclusive Chineseness’, in which the expression of Chinese culture is no longer a sign of ethnic exclusivity, instead it can be a common heritage shared by all Indonesians, as well as a part of the ‘pop Islam’ industry.

Besides, not all Chinese Muslim preachers utilise Chinese cultural symbols for their preaching. For Irena Handoko and Syafii Antonio, who respectively focus on Islam-Christianity religious comparison and Islamic economy, their Chinese identities do not constitute a crucial element in their religious careers. In addition, the popularity of Chinese Muslim preachers is not by any means, a new phenomenon in Indonesia. Some have even traced the existence of Chinese preachers back to the early period of Java’s Islamisation and claims that parts of the Walisongo have Chinese descent. During the New Order regime, although not using Chinese cultural symbols in preaching, a few Chinese Muslim preachers still became popular (Syukur 1996), because of their status as new converts. To that we now turn.
From Mualaf to Mubaligh: Pluralising the Islamic Market?

Among the preaching themes in the fasting month, topics such as ‘Why I chose Islam’ (Kenapa Aku Memilih Islam) are always popular. Indeed, stories of conversion and religious experience are important elements of many Chinese Muslims’ preaching contents. Always dominated by indigenous and Arabic-descent Muslims, the *dakwah* activities of Chinese diversify the Indonesian Islamic market, not only the preachers themselves, but also the audiences - the attempt to reach out the non-Muslim Chinese (although is not very significant). *Dakwah*, for Chinese preachers, has two aims. First, it means to make a Muslim, especially the nominal one, a better Muslim. Second, it tries to spread Islamic messages to non-Muslims with the hope they will convert to Islam.

For many Chinese Muslim preachers, propagating Islam to non-Muslim Chinese is not an easy task. Instead of converting Chinese to Islam, most of them focus on ‘preaching through example’ to eliminate negative perceptions of ethnic Chinese towards Islam. The acknowledgement of Chinese identity and the using of Chinese cultural symbols among well-regarded Chinese-descent Muslims show that Islamic teaching is not contradictory with Chinese culture. Meanwhile, their achievement in religious business proves that Islam is not identical with backwardness or economic disadvantage. As some Chinese preachers put it, ‘blame the followers, not Islam’. Their messages to non-Muslim Chinese are clear and simple –‘Islam is a universal Islam, rather than a religion for the native Indonesians. Islam is a modern and tolerant religion, instead of a backward and radical religion.’

As well as preaching the universality of Islam, Chinese preachers offer an attractive, alternative image of Islam in Indonesia. Muslims use not only Arabic names and Indonesian names, but also Chinese names. Muslim preachers wear not only *peci* with *baju koko*, or long robe with turban, but also Chinese clothing with Chinese skullcap. To a certain extent, this hybrid form of Islamic expression is an antidote to rising puritanism that is hostile to local cultural traditions. It also shows that rising Islamic religiosity does not necessarily undermine cultural and ethnic diversity in Indonesia.

Islamic thought and organisations in broader Indonesian Muslim society influence most Chinese preachers. Conversion experience, religious education, social participation and local settings vary the impact of such Islamic influence. However, most preachers play
down their affiliation to any particular Islamic group in their preaching, so that they can reach out to wider Muslim crowds, regardless their religious affiliations and orientations. For example, Anton Medan argues that he tries to combine the characteristics of different religious groups in order to be a better Muslim. He put it this way, ‘I will get lessons on interpersonal relationships from NU, structural organisation skills from Muhammadiyah and the purer understanding of Islam from Persis (Persatuan Islam, Islamic Association)’ (Interview, Anton Medan, 7 November 2008).

Yet, the using of cultural symbols and the attempt to approach broader audiences do not lead Chinese preachers to contribute greater diversity to Islamic discourses. As shown in the previous case studies, the preaching of Chinese Muslims takes varying forms, and has different audiences and messages. However, these plural forms of preaching strategies do not necessarily contribute to a more critical understanding of Islam. Instead of challenging some widely conservative viewpoints, many preachers choose to conform to them to avoid controversy. In other words, Chinese Muslim preachers may diversify the appearance of preaching – simply because they look Chinese – but they do not necessarily add greater pluralism to the substance of religious belief and practice.

Indeed, many Chinese Muslim preachers are rather conservative on religious and social matters, especially when preaching in public.14 Irena Handono is the extreme case: her constant criticism of Christianity in her preaching not only alarms non-Muslims, but also alienates her from moderate Muslim audiences. Meanwhile, Anton Medan has shown his support for the implementation of sharia in Indonesia. Other Chinese Muslim preachers avoid controversial issues, and focus on how best to apply Islamic values in daily life. They are moderate and tolerant in their preaching, yet sometimes restrict themselves to certain orthodox interpretations of Islamic teaching. Like other celebrity preachers in contemporary Indonesia, many Chinese preachers tend to embrace ‘a socially conservative Islam, albeit with a light touch’ and do not ‘provide the tools for critical thinking and nuanced religious interpretation’ (Howell 2008:59). For example, Syafii Antonio, Tan Mei Hwa and Koko Liem respectively once told their audiences that ‘Muslims should avoid wishing ‘Merry Christmas’ to their Christian friends’; that

14 I do aware the convenient dichotomy between conservative and progressive Muslim is highly problematic and inadequate to capture the complexity of Muslim religiosity in contemporary societies. I use such terms here not to judge the religiosity of the preachers, but to describe their attitudes on certain social and religious issues. It is also important to note that while I mention a preacher hold certain ‘conservative’ viewpoint, it does not mean I see him or her as a ‘conservative’ preacher. Indeed, a preacher can have ‘conservative’ view on one issue, but hold ‘progressive’ stand on another matter.
women are not suited to become leaders'; and that 'Muslims cannot celebrate Valentine's Day'. For converts, subscribing to a rather conservative understanding of Islam is not surprising, as this is a way of proving the sincerity of one's conversion, and demonstrating one's credentials as a preacher.

The Paradox of Hybrid Performance

The diverse styles and content of preaching among Chinese Muslim preachers make comprehensive analysis almost impossible. With no intention of simplifying such complex realities, I end this chapter with a few general points regarding the identity consumption and performance of Chinese preachers in Indonesia today. First, there is a little correlation between their 'commodified' identity performances in public and their everyday practised identities, in which some preachers 'sell Chineseness, but do not live Chineseness'. As I have illustrated, the three preachers discussed in this chapter, Tan Mei Hwa, Koko Liem and Anton Medan, are consciously using both their Chinese ethnicity and Islamic religiosity to attract audiences and media attention. The combination of Chinese and Islamic elements as preaching and marketing strategies can be seen as a form of 'hybrid performance'. Such intentional mixing does not necessarily reflect the everyday living identities of Chinese preachers. In other words, instead of performing who they are, they perform to create a public persona.

In order to establish their preaching credentials, some Chinese preachers studied in this chapter had to present themselves as 'more Muslim than other Muslim Indonesians', and 'more Chinese than non-Muslim Chinese Indonesians'. For example, Koko Liem who does not observe Chinese culture in his daily life wears Chinese traditional attire to signal his Chineseness. Similarly, Tan Mei Hwa who does not usually wear Islamic attire put on an Islamic headscarf after she started preaching. In other words, Chinese clothing authenticates Koko Liem's Chinese identity and Islamic dress gives Tan Mei Hwa religious credibility. Indeed, they are learning to appear as 'authentic Chinese' and 'pious Muslim'. This search for authenticity often leads to the essentialisation of Chinese cultural identity and the subscription to an uncritical understanding of Islam. Furthermore, such hybrid performances do not reflect the flexible and fluid identities of many ordinary Chinese Muslims.
Creatively, the hybrid performance of Chinese Muslim preachers brings the perceived incompatible elements (Islam and Chineseness) together and makes Islamic expression more colourful. But, at the same time, it is rather encompassed by ethnic stereotype and religious conservatism. To a certain extent, the popularity of Chinese preachers reflects a paradox of commodification of Chineseness and Islam in contemporary Indonesia. Diversity of styles is not always accompanied by a plurality of discourses. Thus, while the appearance of a Chinese preacher in Chinese traditional costume in a religious program on television may help to promote a positive image of ethnic Chinese among non-Chinese audiences and diversify the face of Islamic preaching, it does not necessarily break down ethnic stereotypes and pluralise the substance of religion.
Chapter 5

Strategic Solidarity, Internal Dynamics and Diverse Participation:
The Social and Political Involvement of Chinese Muslims

In general, Chinese Muslims in Indonesia are linked to PITI or the Indonesian Chinese Muslim Association (Persatuan Islam Tionghoa Indonesia). For many Indonesians, both Chinese and Muslims, PITI is synonymous with Chinese Muslims, and Chinese Muslims equal PITI. Although only a few Chinese Muslims are members of PITI, many Indonesians assume PITI represents the majority of Chinese Muslims in Indonesia. Many studies on Chinese Muslims in Indonesia have focused on PITI and its leaders (Dickson 2008; Muzakki 2009a; Perdana 2008; Rubadi 1999); often the voices of Chinese Muslims outside PITI have been overlooked. Yet, like many other ethnic and religious groups, 'Chinese Muslim' is not a homogenous, bounded entity. Therefore, in order to provide a more balanced view, the study of Chinese Muslim identities should go beyond PITI and give more attention to the strategic solidarity, internal dynamics and diverse social participation of Chinese Muslims.

This chapter examines Chinese Muslims' diverse social and political involvement, including in PITI, but importantly going beyond that association to others in contemporary Indonesia. It begins with a brief discussion of democratisation and the political opportunities for various identity groups to emerge in post-New Order Indonesia. The resurgence of both Islamic and Chinese identities has given the opportunity for some Chinese Muslims to organise and mobilise their hybrid identities. I then discuss the histories, objectives, activities and membership of four Chinese Muslim associations to explore their identity formation and contestation. These four organisations are: the Indonesian Chinese Muslim Association (PITI); the Karim Oei Foundation (Yayasan Karim Oei); the Chinese Muslim and Families (MUSTIKA, Muslim Tionghoa dan Keluarga) and the Cheng Hoo Foundation (YMHCHI, Yayasan Haji Muhammad Cheng Hoo Indonesia).

Despite their focus on Chinese Muslims, none of these organisations is exclusive in terms of their membership and activities. While the leaders of these organisations share the aim of manifesting a unique image of Chinese Muslim identity, they do so for
different reasons and in different ways. Some of them focus on preaching (*dakwah*-oriented); some emphasise empowering ethnic Chinese through social intermingling (*pembauran*-oriented); others pursue their personal political or economic interests. In spite of these diverse motivations, I will argue that the dominant discourse among Chinese Muslim leaders today is "spreading Islam by using cultural approaches" (*dakwah pendekatan budaya*). This is a significant change from "assimilation of ethnic Chinese through Islam" (*asimilasi fewat Islam*) that prevailed during the New Order period.

Leaders of these Chinese Muslim associations pronounce on behalf of all Chinese Muslims in the public; however, they do not represent the diverse backgrounds and experiences of their larger communities. Indeed, not all Chinese Muslims identify themselves with these specific organisations. Therefore, in the third part of this chapter, I discuss their activism beyond Chinese-Muslim realms. By illustrating various case studies, I also explore the dialectical interaction between identity formation and social participation among Chinese Muslims. On one hand, the identity of an individual Chinese Muslim influences his or her religious and social participation; on the other hand, social involvement can change the identification of a Chinese Muslim. Lastly, I examine the engagements of some Chinese Muslims in electoral politics in post-1998 Indonesia, which are mainly influenced by their religious affiliations and understanding, as well as the dynamics of local Muslim politics.

**Identity, Politics and Groups**

Identity politics generates debates in academic circles, between its defenders and its critics (Calhoun 1994; Eriksen 2002; Fraser 2000; MacDonald 2004). The former see the political mobilisations of ethnic, cultural, and religious identities as a form of empowerment for the weak and powerless, while the latter view it as a form of exclusivity and possible suppression of internal differences. Instead of seeing identity politics as good or bad political action, scholars have recently explored how and in what

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1 *Dakwah* is an Arabic term, literally meaning "call" or "invitation". It has broader meaning than proselytizing. *Dakwah* can aim at both Muslims and non-Muslims, which can involve consolidating the faith of Muslims, as well as, inviting non-Muslims to Islam. For many Chinese Muslim organisations, their *dakwah* is preaching Islamic messages to non-Muslim Chinese Indonesians and strengthening the Islamic commitment of converts.

2 *Pembauran* is an Indonesian term. In general, it means intermingling or blending. In the context of Chinese Indonesians, it means their mixing with other local ethnic groups. During the New Order, *pembauran* implied assimilation of the ethnic Chinese into local communities. In post-New Order Indonesia, *pembauran* is still used by some Chinese Muslims, but in different way, as one of my informants says, one can *pembaur* or blend well with local community without losing his or her Chinese cultural identity.
conditions, identity politics can co-exist with democratic participation and social inclusivity (Gutmann 2003). According to Castells (1997), there are three different forms of identity building: legitimising identity, resistance identity and project identity; and no identity is, per se, progressive or regressive, outside its historical and political contexts. Therefore, I would suggest that the critics of identity politics should take greater account into the historical context and local conditions in which identity claims take place; while the proponents of identity movements should acknowledge the importance of providing space for appreciating the multiple and flexible meanings of such identities.

As Bhabha (1994, 1996b) points out, identity affiliation is ambivalent; solidarity is strategic; and commonality is often negotiated through the ‘contingency’ of social interests and political claims. Indeed, identity groupings are a product of contingency, rather than a long-term destiny. Furthermore, it is not only identity awareness that creates identity-based movements, but the movement itself also creates identity consciousness. By reifying groups and treating them as substantial entities, ethno-political entrepreneurs can, as Bourdieu notes, ‘contribute to producing what they apparently describe or designate’ (Bourdieu 1991:220). Many of these grouping projects also promote identity solidarity that ‘disguises their composite multiplicity under a semblance of unity... [in order to] transcend internal cultural, political and gendered differences’ (Werbner 1997b:238).

Meanwhile, Brubaker (2004, 2009) suggested we study how ethnicity works in political and social life without automatically taking ethnic groups as the unit of analysis. As he proposed, the study of ethnicity should go beyond ‘groupism’ and shift towards a focus on ‘practical categories, situated actions, cultural idioms, commonsense knowledge, organisational routines and resources, discursive frames, institutionalised forms, political projects, contingent events and variable groupness’ (Brubaker 2004:27). Inspired by Brubaker’s approach, this chapter examines how identity works in Chinese Muslims’ political and social lives, by exploring their contingent solidarity, organisational dynamics and different forms of social participation.
Emergence of ‘New’ Ethno-religious Groups in Democratising Indonesia

As I discussed in chapter 1, the broadening of democratic space after the fall of President Suharto allowed various ethnic, religious, gender and cultural groups to have much more freedom to express their identities in the public domain. These emergences of identity politics, on the one hand, are celebrated as a reflection of political openness in democratising Indonesia and an empowerment for marginalised groups, but on the other hand, are criticised for promoting social exclusivity and generating political tension. Central to my research are the phenomena of ‘Chinese euphoria’ and ‘Islamic resurgence’, which refer to the rising of Chinese and Islamic identities in Indonesia today. Both the Chinese and Muslims have used the political openness of the post-Suharto period to express their identity through various political parties and social organisations.

Ethnic Chinese have formed various organisations, to promote Chinese culture and liberate their long-suppressed identity, and fight against discrimination (Budianta 2007; Giblin 2003; Hoon 2008; Suryadinata 2001). The Indonesian Chinese Clan Association (PSMTI, Paguyuban Sosial Marga Tionghoa Indonesia) and the Chinese Indonesian Association (INTI, Perhimpunan Indonesia Keturunan Tionghoa) are the two biggest Chinese organisations established in the post-Suharto period, dominated by older Chinese businessmen, who aim to promote Chinese cultural identities, as well as solidarity between Chinese and non-Chinese Indonesians. At the same time, younger Chinese Indonesians have involved themselves in more politically inclined organisations to fight against discrimination. These organisations are mostly non-ethnic based and integrated into broader Indonesia reform activities, including the Indonesian Anti-Discrimination Movement (GANDI, Gerakan Perjuangan Anti Diskriminasi Indonesia) and the Solidarity for Nation (SNB, Solidaritas Nusa Bangsa). The unity of ethnic Chinese under PSMTI and INTI is also challenged by various kinds of smaller Chinese organisations that represent different localities, religious affiliations and dialect.

Concurrently, Muslims have formed Islamic parties and NGOs to promote different variants of Islam, from liberal to radical; and in certain regions, local political authorities

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3 Among social organisations, which promote the rights of minorities are women’s organisations (see Budianta 2003) and gay activist groups (see Oetomo 2001).
4 For discussions of identity politics and conflicts in post-1998 Indonesia, see Bertrand (2004), Nordholt (2008) and Sidel (2006).

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have implemented sharia-influenced by-laws and regulations (Bruinessen 2002; Bubalo & Fealy 2005; Fox 2004; Hefner 2005). After the downfall of the Suharto regime in 1998, many Islamic parties of both Islamist and non-Islamist Islamic persuasion were formed, and contested the 1999 general elections. The major non-Islamist Islamic parties were the National Revival Party (PKB, Partai Kebangkitan Bangsa) and the National Mandate Party (PAN, Partai Amanat Nasional). Meanwhile the major Islamist parties, committed to greater implementation of sharia, were the Prosperous Justice Party (PKS, Partai Keadilan Sejahtera) and the United Development Party (PPP, Partai Persatuan Pembangunan). With regard to social organisations, while Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) and Muhammadiyah continue as mass organisations that respectively represent traditionalist and modernist Muslims, many smaller groups were established to promote different interpretations of Islam. Some of these Muslim groups were considered by many to be 'radical-conservative', such as the Islamic Defenders' Front (FPI, Front Pembela Islam) and Laskar Jihad (Jihad Fighters), while some are considered 'liberal-progressive', such as the Liberal Islam Network (JIL, Jaringan Islam Liberal) and the Muhammadiyah Young Intellectual Network (JIMM, Jaringan Intelektual Muhammadiyah Muda).

In addition to ethnic and religious groupings, there are also the intersecting identity groupings. These intersecting identities can be a combination of ethnic, religion, gender, sexual, class and ideological identities, such as Chinese Muslim, Dayak Islam, liberal Islam, leftist Islam and feminist Muslim groups. These intersected groupings always consist of two sets of identities that are conventionally viewed as incompatible and thus aim to challenge those notions. For example, feminist Muslim groups, such as RAHIMA, challenge the notion that Islamic piety is incompatible with gender equality and promote women rights within an Islamic framework (Robinson 2008). In relation to Chinese Muslims, let me contrast two quotes to illustrate the re-emergence of their identity grouping in post-1998 Indonesia.

'I am a Muslim, an Indonesian, and of Chinese descent. But a person of Chinese descent and a Muslim born in Indonesia is an Indonesian. The Muslim community of Chinese descent would ultimately become just a 'Muslim community', and not a separate Chinese community with a mosque.' (Junus Jahja, cited in The 1986:67)

Islamism is used to describe a variety of movements that conceive Islam as an ideology. It mostly refers to political Islam, in which political activism is informed by Islamic principles. In Indonesia, most Islamists are inspired by ideas of Muslim brotherhood. In general, they aim to see a greater implementation of sharia in Indonesian society. For more discussion of Islamism in Indonesia, see Bubalo and Fealy (2005:74-79).
'Some Chinese Muslims do not regard themselves as ‘Chinese’ after conversion. But I am different, I publicly say that I am a Chinese and I am a Muslim. By asserting my Chinese identity, I have the capacity to resolve the ‘Chinese problem’, by playing a role as a bridge between indigenous Indonesians and Chinese Indonesians. As I share the same religion with the majority Muslim population, I can convey and fight for the interest of ethnic Chinese more effectively.' (Interview, Budi Setyagraha, 12 February 2009)

Junus Jahja, is a founder of the Karim Oei Foundation and a board member of ICMI. During the New Order period, he was a proponent of the idea of ‘assimilation through Islam’. He was convinced that the best way to resolve the so-called ‘Chinese Problem’, was by embracing the religion of the majority of the Indonesian population, and that by such actions, the differences between Chinese and non-Chinese Indonesians would diminish. In his view, Chinese Muslims should ultimately assimilate into the larger Indonesian Muslim population. Meanwhile, Budi Setyagraha is a Chinese Muslim businessman, a former chairperson of the PITI Yogyakarta’s division and a former PAN representative member in the Yogyakarta Provincial Legislative Assembly (DPRD, Dewan Perwakilan Rakyat Daerah). In my interview with him, he echoed Junus Jahja’s view that conversion to Islam provided a solution to the ‘Chinese Problem’. But he rejected the notion of ‘total assimilation’ and suggested that Chinese Muslims should maintain their ‘Chineseness’, so that they can become ‘middle persons’ between non-Chinese and Chinese Indonesians. I would argue that for him, after conversion to Islam, a Chinese become ‘more Indonesian, but no less Chinese’.

Individual socio-economic backgrounds may shape these different viewpoints, but the collapse of the New Order regime and the openness of post-1998 governments towards the expression of Chineseness have been the major political changes switching the discourse from one of ‘assimilation’ to one of ‘integration’ among Chinese Muslims in particular, but also among Chinese Indonesians in general. Some Chinese Muslim leaders used this political openness to revive PITI, which had previously been stripped of

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6 After Indonesian independence, there were two major approaches among Chinese Indonesian for dealing with their citizenship and status in Indonesia. The integrationists advocated that the Chinese minority should retain their cultural traditions, and that Indonesian should be a multicultural society in which the human rights of Chinese Indonesians should be protected. In contrast, the assimilationists proposed that Chinese Indonesian give up their ethnic identity and completely assimilate to the local majority. During the New Order period, ‘assimilation’ became the dominant approach; while today, ‘integration’ or ‘multiculturalism’ is the more favoured discourse. For further discussion about assimilation and integration debates among Chinese Indonesians, see Purdey (2003).
its Chinese characteristic during the Suharto period. They renamed the organisation, took key executive positions and established new branches across Indonesia.

This change of identity expression through grouping is not peculiar to Chinese Muslims, but has also been found in other minority Muslim communities in Indonesia. For example, before 1998, in West Kalimantan, ethnic ‘Dayak’ (mostly animist or Christian) who converted to Islam always self identified themselves and also considered by others, as ethnic ‘Malay’. However, after the downfall of Suharto, the implementation of regional autonomy has empowered Dayak political identity. As a result, more and more Dayaks who are Muslims identified themselves ‘Dayak Muslims’, rather than ‘Malay’ (Pasti 2003). In 1998, some Dayak Muslim leaders established The Union of Dayak Muslim Families (IKDI, Ikatan Keluarga Dayak Islam) to promote Dayak Muslim identity and challenge the perception that ‘a Dayak will turn into a Malay after converting to Islam’. As one of the Dayak Muslim leaders put it, ‘Changing a religion would not change your ethnicity, as Dayak blood still exists in your body’.

**Strategic Solidarity: Chinese Muslim Organisations and Identity Formation**

As I have discussed elsewhere in this thesis, ‘Chinese Muslim’ is not a fixed ethno-religious group. Some within this ‘group’ do not even see themselves as ‘Chinese Muslim’, while many others intermarry with non-Chinese and lose their Chinese identity after more than one generation. Chinese Muslim organisations, therefore, play an important role in ‘stabilising’ this unstable identity category, for different reasons. Here, I will discuss briefly the histories, objectives, activities and membership of four Chinese Muslim associations in Indonesia today. They are the Indonesian Chinese Muslim Association (PITI), the Karim Oei Foundation, the Chinese Muslim and Families (MUSTIKA) and the Cheng Hoo Foundation (YMHCHI).

**Persatuan Islam Tionghoa Indonesia (PITI)**

PITI was established in Jakarta on 14 April 1961, co-founded by Abdul Karim Oei, Abdusomad Yap A Siong and Kho Goan Tjin. PITI was probably the first nationwide association of Chinese Muslims in Indonesia. Its establishment was supported by the
then Muhammadiyah Chairman Ibrahim, because according to him, 'the preaching of Islam among ethnic Chinese should be done by Chinese Muslims themselves' (Tanudjaja 2008). According to an introductory article about PITI written by Syarif Tanudjaja, the Chairman of Jakarta PITI (2008-2013), the organisation's vision is to promote Islam as a religion that blesses all (rahmatan lii alamin), in accordance with its effort to diminish negative perceptions of Islam among Chinese Indonesians that 'Islam is identical with backwardness, laziness, stupidity, dirtiness, intolerance and violence' (Tanudjaja 2008). PITI's mission is ambitious, as it not only aims to unite Chinese Muslims in Indonesia, but also to bridge the divide between Chinese and Muslim Indonesians. PITI asserts that a person can be an Indonesian, Muslim and Chinese at the same time; and sees itself as playing a role in promoting national unity in Indonesia. PITI is also a social-religious preaching organisation which program is to preach Islam among ethnic Chinese, as well as provide religious guidance and social support to new converts.

As I discussed in chapter 2, PITI underwent a 'dark period' during the New Order period, because of the regime's intervention in its leadership and pressure to downplay its Chineseess. In 1972, the government prohibited the use of 'Tionghoa' (Chinese) in the name of the PITI, as it could be perceived as a marker of 'exclusivity'. Therefore, the organisation changed its name to Pembina Iman Tauhid Islam (Islamic Faith Cultivator Association, the acronym remained PITI). At the same time, the request by some PITI leaders for the publication and distribution of the Qur'an in Mandarin was not approved. PITI was forced to have ethnically mixed leadership and was dominated by non-Chinese Muslim military officers. However, some PITI branches outside Jakarta, such as those in Yogyakarta and Surabaya, experienced less interference and operated relatively freely, especially during the late New Order period.

The collapse of the Suharto regime has broadened the democratic space for various Chinese organisations to re-emerge. Chinese Muslim leaders in Jakarta regained control of PITI's leadership from New Order appointed military leaders, reclaimed its Chinese identity and revived its branches throughout the archipelago. Yet, there were some debates around the usage of its name in Indonesian language, whether PITI should revert to 'Persatuan Islam Tionghoa Indonesia' or remain 'Pembina Iman Tauhid Islam'. Some objected the usage of 'Tionghoa' as it may have implied exclusivity; others preferred keeping 'Tionghoa' as it reflected PITI's unique identity. As one said, 'we do not need to be ashamed (malu-malu) and should be proud of our unique Chinese Muslim identity'
(Field note, 16 July 2008). At its national meeting in 2005, PITI leadership came to a compromise decision by accommodating both names, ‘Pembina Iman Tauhid Islam d/h (formerly) Persatuan Islam Tionghoa Indonesia’.

Some Chinese Muslim leaders have tried to reconcile these divergent views, maintaining that manifestation of ‘Chineseness’ is a preaching strategy and does not necessarily imply exclusivity. Syarif Tanudjaja, for example, insists that the membership and leadership of PITI was never intended to be exclusively for Chinese Muslims, but rather a mixture including non-Chinese Muslims. He uses the metaphor of a human body for PITI, which has a ‘face that is a Chinese Muslim, yet other parts are Muslim Indonesian’ (Tanudjaja 2008). He suggests however, that the main leaders of PITI should be ethnic Chinese to build a connecting point (‘benang merah’) with non-Muslim Chinese Indonesians. In fact, many leaders from Muslim organisations are in favour of PITI being led by Chinese Muslims. According to them, it is more effective for Chinese Muslims to preach Islamic messages among ethnic Chinese as they share similar cultural backgrounds and religious experiences (Interview, Rubaidi, 15 November 2008; Syafiq Mughni, 18 September 2008). Nowadays, most the top-ranking leaders of PITI are older Chinese businessmen, with some mid-ranked leaders who are Chinese preachers, religious teachers and activists. Very few younger, female and lower-class Chinese Muslims are involved in the leadership of PITI.

Although identifying itself as a preaching organisation, PITI is more than a religious association. It also offers opportunities for social integration, ethnic empowerment, political advancement, business networking and even match-making. Since Chinese Muslims share religion with most Indonesians, PITI views itself as having extra capacity to promote social integration and unity between ethnic Chinese and Muslim Indonesians. A few PITI leaders converted to Islam and used their religious affiliation to fight discrimination and prejudice towards ethnic Chinese. Although PITI does not align itself with any political party, some of its leaders are actively involved in politics. Also, many suspect some Chinese businessmen became Muslims and joined PITI for economic reasons, such as establishing closer relationships with government officials for licenses, building business networks with Islamic organisations and ensuring the security of their properties. Nevertheless, Syarif Tanudjaja, the current Chairman of PITI Jakarta does not see these diverse reasons for joining PITI as a major problem. He says, ‘It is normal for people to join PITI for certain purposes. Yet, the important thing is after he or she
becomes a PITI member, his or her intention should be corrected with Islamic education 
(diluruskan dengan Tarbiya)' (Interview, Syarif Tanudjaja, 9 June 2008).

Today, PITI has branches in at least 17 provinces in Indonesia, from North Sumatra to 
South Sulawesi. Although PITI is a nationwide association, its leadership and activities 
are localised and personalised. Some are more active; others exist in name only, most 
depend on the initiative of leaders who are often the combination of local Chinese 
Muslim businessmen (sometimes politicians too) and religious teachers. Unlike other 
Muslim organisation, such as NU and Muhammadiyah in which religious scholars 
constitute the leadership, in most PITI branches, businessmen occupy higher positions 
than religious teachers. In terms of activities, besides holding weekly or monthly Islamic 
study sessions and celebrating Islamic events, many PITI branches are involved in 
charity. Some local PITI offices, such as those in Surabaya and Yogyakarta, hold 
Chinese New Year celebrations.

Despite focusing on Chinese Muslims, PITI has close relationships with many other 
Muslim associations through organisational and individual connections. This includes 
NU, Muhammadiyah, ICMI, MUI and various Islamic parties. As I observed, PITI 
always has closer affiliations with influential local Muslim organisations. It is not 
surprising that PITI leaders in Semarang and Surabaya are closer to NU, while those in 
Jakarta and Yogyakarta are closer to Muhammadiyah. In addition, many PITI branches 
also interact with Chinese organisations, such as INTI, PSMTI and various local Chinese 
associations. In terms of political affiliation, PITI chose to be neutral. As one leader says, 
‘PITI should be in everywhere, yet PITI should not affiliate itself to any particular group 
[PITI harus berada di mana-mana, PITI jangan diajak ke mana-manaj’ (Interview, 
Abdul Chalim, 3 October 2008). It means PITI as an organisation, should have good 
relationships with various social organisations and political parties, but not directly 
involve itself in real politics. Nevertheless, PITI members and leaders could become 
involved in political parties on their own. Indeed, quite a few PITI leaders, including 
Abdul Chalim himself, have contested elections for different political parties.

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7 Except in Surabaya, there is no formal figure for the membership numbers of PITI. As estimated by informants, 
there are about 100 members in Yogyakarta, 200 in Palembang, 300 in Jakarta and 600 in Surabaya. Not all PITI 
members are Chinese Muslims. For example, about one third of PITI members in Surabaya are non-Chinese.
Yayasan Karim Oei

Yayasan Karim Oei or the Karim Oei Foundation was established in 1991 by Junus Jahya and other Chinese Muslim leaders, with the support of various Muslim organisations and leaders. The foundation honours the memory of Abdul Karim Oei, who was a model Chinese convert and described by Jahja (2005) as a ‘3 in 1’ figure – ‘Indonesian Nationalist, Faithful Muslim and Successful Entrepreneur’ (*Nasionalist Indonesia, Muslim Taat dan Pengusaha Sakti*). Despite being a successful businessman, Karim Oei was also a Muhammadiyah leader, a Masyumi Member of Parliament and a co-founder of PITI.

The Karim Oei Foundation has three visions, two of which are derived from Qur’anic verses and another one based on a statement by Karim Oei. Qur’anic texts are quoted to promote interaction between ethnic groups and brotherhood among Muslims, while Karim Oei’s words are – ‘a true Muslim should love their motherland and native people’ (*Orang yang benar-benar Muslim harus cinta tanah air dan cinta pribumi*). These visions are in line with Junus Jahya’s view, that converting to Islam is a way of intermingling and promoting better relations with indigenous Indonesians during the New Order period. However, there is a reverse trend today, in which some Chinese Muslim activists in the Karim Oei foundation use ‘cultural’ approaches (i.e. the use of Chinese cultural practices and symbols) to preach Islam among Chinese Indonesians.

Although key leaders are Chinese, the leadership of the Karim Oei Foundation is ethnically mixed. While the foundation focuses on assisting ethnic Chinese gather information on Islam, its activities are open for all Muslims. The foundation also identifies itself as an Islamic centre for ethnic Chinese that facilitates conversion ceremonies, organises religious classes and provides social support for converts. Although the foundation has branches in other cities such as Bandung and Surabaya, Jakarta remains the most active. Its mosque, Lautze Mosque, despite small in size, has always been referred to as a home for Chinese Muslims in Jakarta. The open social space of a mosque and the less hierarchical structure of the foundation have made its activities more attractive to Chinese converts in Jakarta, compared to PITI Jakarta.

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8 The quoted verses are ‘People, We created you all from a single man and a single woman, and made you into races and tribes so that you should recognise one another. In God’s eyes, the most honoured of you are ones most mindful of Him: God is all knowing, all aware’ (Chapter Al-Hujurat verse 13); and ‘The believers are brothers, so make peace between two brothers and be mindful of God, so that you may be given mercy’ (Chapter Al-Hujurat verse 10). This translation is based on Abdel Haleem 2005.)
The busiest days in Lautze Mosque are every Friday and Sunday. Hundreds of Muslims who work in the centre of town come to the mosque to perform Friday prayer sessions, yet very few of them are Chinese Muslims, because most Chinese Muslims associated with the foundation live and work outside of Central Jakarta. Most preachers or religious teachers who lead Friday prayers and give sermons are non-Chinese Muslims from various Islamic affiliations, only a few are Chinese Muslims. Most Chinese Muslims come to the mosque on Sunday for religious classes and social gatherings. During my fieldwork, most Sunday mornings, there were Qur'anic study sessions led by Chinese Muslim ustaz and mostly attended by non-Chinese Muslim women living nearby. After lunch, there are religious guidance classes for new converts, facilitated by a Javanese Muslim who is also a PKS activist. Sometimes, conversion and wedding ceremonies are also held. In addition, there are informal discussions among Chinese converts on religious interpretation, Islamic practice and current affairs. It provides an opportunity for converts to share their experiences and family problems, as well as seek religious guidance and social support. Lautze Mosque is also a place for match-making, where some Chinese Muslims go to find a partner who shares the same religion and ethnicity. Indeed, there are quite a few Chinese Muslim couples, who met each other through mosque activities. In front of the mosque, there is a noodle stall run by a Chinese Muslim. Some also conduct business activities, such as selling clothes and books.

Although the main leaders of the foundation are Muhammadiyah members and some PKS sympathisers, the foundation remains neutral and maintains good relationships with all other major Muslim organisations. The chairman of the foundation, Ali Kaream Oei even claimed that the mosque is one of the few 'neutral' (neither affiliated to NU nor Muhammadiyah) mosques in Jakarta. He says, 'this has been acknowledged by the visit of Indonesian President, Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono in 2006 to resolve a conflict between different Muslim organisations in Jakarta' (Interview, Ali Karim Oei, 22 December 2008). Nevertheless, despite its professed neutrality, the mosque is a space of contestation of Islamic interpretations, in which some Chinese Muslims who are active in other religious organisations try to promote their religious understandings. Compared to PITI, Chinese converts in Lautze Mosque are more evenly distributed in terms of gender, ages and social classes, including a few of converts in their 20s and 30s who are not businessmen. Their religiosities are extremely diverse, ranging from NU members,
Muhammadiyah followers, PKS supporters, a Jemaah Tabligh follower, to a salafist proponent. The only commonality that bonds them together is their Chinese heritage.

Muslim Tionghoa dan Keluarga (MUSTIKA)

Muslim Tionghoa dan Keluarga (MUSTIKA, Chinese Muslim and Families) was established in 1997 by Syarif Tanudjaja’s family and other Chinese Muslims. Its activities are mostly based in Jakarta and surroundings. Syarif Tanudjaja is a notary and a Chinese Muslim activist. His religious background is impressive in its breadth; he is a follower of NU traditions, a Muhammadiyah member, a former Justice Party (PK, Partai Keadilan) election candidate, a former leader of the Karim Oei Foundation, and currently also the chairman for PITI Jakarta, while his sons are activists in Al-Arqam.

As stated on its website, MUSTIKA is an education and friendship space (wadah pendidikan dan silaturahim) for Chinese Muslims and their family members. Its website header proclaims “Islam is beautiful and easy, I am proud to be a Muslim” (Islam itu indah dan mudah, aku bangga menjadi Muslim). According to Syarif Tanudjaja, MUSTIKA is more like a religious gathering and study group (majelis taklim), rather than a formal organisation. Thus, ‘MUSTIKA does not overlap, but supplements the role of PITI’ (Interview, Syarif Tanudjaja, 9 June 2008). As he explains, MUSTIKA is a more relaxed space for ordinary Chinese Muslims than the more formal PITI.

Compared to PITI and the Karim Oei Foundation, MUSTIKA’s mission is less ambitious and focused on social support and religious education for Chinese Muslims. MUSTIKA provides consultation for new converts and their non-Muslim families, as well as guidance and cultivation of Islamic knowledge among converts. It is also a place where Chinese converts can share their problems, such as family disputes, workplace

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9 Like other Islamic movements and thought, salafism is also a diverse current. In general, it preaches a return to the practices of the Prophet and his companions (salaf means ancestor in Arabic). In Indonesia, salafists use the Qur’an and Hadith to justify their rejection of many traditionalist Muslim practices associated with localised Muslim cultures, and supposedly corrupting modern Western influences. For details about Salafist groups in Indonesia, see Bubalo and Fealy (2005:74-79).


11 As I observed, one of the reasons why Syarif Tanudjaja established MUSTIKA was his dissatisfaction with the PITI leaders in Jakarta then who were mostly businessmen and had less initiative to run religious activities and Islamic study groups. In 2008, Syarif Tanudjaja was elected as the chairman of PITI Jakarta and since then, he has put a lot of efforts into reviving PITI Jakarta. Syarif Tanudjaja is arguably, the most prominent Chinese Muslim activists in Jakarta concerned about cultivating Islamic religiosity among new converts. He is also often interviewed by various media regarding issues of Chinese Muslims.
problems and religious challenges after conversion. MUSTIKA activities include a weekly Islamic study group, MUSTIKA KIDS (playgroup and Islamic studies for kids of Chinese Muslims), spiritual retreat (wisata rohani) and Islamic consultations.

According to Syarif Tanudjaja, the usage of ‘Chinese Muslim’ by members of the foundation is to facilitate communication with ethnic Chinese. Many Chinese Muslims involved in MUSTIKA are intermarried and have mixed-ethnic children. Although not against intermarriage, he prefers his own sons to marry Chinese Muslims and build a Chinese Muslim family to sustain their identity to demonstrate that Chineseness and Islam can co-exist harmoniously (Interview, Syarif Tanudjaja, 9 June 2008). Syarif Tanudjaja’s other outreach tactics are establishing a Chinese halal restaurant, called Lezat and a Chinese nasyid group, called Lampion. As I noted, Syarif Tanudjaja’s family do not speak Mandarin or Chinese dialects in their everyday lives. They mix well with broader Muslim communities. Therefore, it can be argued that the cultivation of Islamic faith is the essence of MUSTIKA, while the expression of Chinese cultural identity is more a symbolic strategy to ease the spread of Islam among Chinese Indonesians.

**Yayasan Haji Muhammad Cheng Hoo Indonesia (YHMCHI)**

Yayasan Haji Muhammad Cheng Hoo Indonesia (YHMCHI, Muhammad Cheng Hoo Foundation) was established in 1995 by Bambang Sujanto, with other Chinese Muslim leaders, who are mostly businessmen and some preachers. Its major purpose is collect funds to support PITI activities, especially in East Java and Surabaya. Bambang Sujanto is a prominent Chinese Muslim businessman and PITI leader in Surabaya. YHMCHI played a crucial role in the establishment of the Surabaya Cheng Hoo Mosque, through the sales of Juz Amma (a convert guidance, with most commonly referred sections of the Qur’an), personal contributions of Chinese Muslim leaders and public donations. It is understood that more than half of the fund came from non-Muslim Chinese businessmen, as they believe their contribution will guarantee better security. YHMCHI also earns money through renting space in the mosque compound for sports and weddings. Apart from coordination of activities and fund raising, the foundation leaves most of the operational activities in the Cheng Hoo Mosque to its committee and PITI Surabaya.
There are 85 committee members of YHMCHI, according to a booklet about the Surabaya Cheng Hoo Mosque (YHMCHI 2008). Most members are listed by their Indonesian or Muslim names, followed by their Chinese names, as an indication of their Chinese ethnicity. In addition, a few prominent Muslim leaders (such as the chairman of NU and Muhammadiyah in East Java) and non-Muslim Chinese businessmen have been listed as advisors. Also, the foundation is well connected to local Chinese social organisations, religious scholars, military leaders and government officials.

Bambang Sujanto, one of the founders of YHMCHI, rejects hearsay in the mosque that he converted to Islam for economic reasons, though he concedes that his Muslim identity has helped his business. He claims that his involvement in the foundation and PITI is '99 percent for Allah and 1 percent for the ethnic Chinese' (Interview, Bambang Sujanto, 27 November 2008); yet in reality, he and fellow YHMCHI businessmen seem to have spent more time on the achievement of the '1 percent' target than on the preaching. As I have discussed in previous chapters, various efforts have been made by YHMCHI to promote the role of the Chinese in Islamisation, such as publishing books, organising conferences and sponsoring local Muslim leaders to visit Muslim communities in mainland China. Some YHMCHI leaders are 'nominal' converts, which means they do not practice Islam everyday, except to attend Friday prayers in the mosque. Therefore, it can be argued that in contrast to MUSTIKA, a group that focuses on Islamic faith cultivation; YHMCHI concerns itself with improvements for Chinese Indonesians, while their Islamic conversion is a strategy to get further recognition from Muslim Indonesians.

Internal Dynamics: Chinese Muslim Organisations and Identity Contestation

What are the contestations within and between the Chinese Muslim organisations that I have discussed? As indicated earlier, such organisations share commonality in manifesting Chinese Muslim identities in Indonesia, yet they do it for different reasons and in different ways. The two main concerns of such organisations are dakwah (Islamic preaching) and pembauran (ethnic intermingling). It is quite clear that MUSTIKA in Jakarta is more 'dakwah-oriented' and YHMCHI based in Surabaya is more 'pembauran-oriented'. Generally speaking, PITI and Karim Oei Foundation see both Islamic preaching and ethnic intermingling as equally important and not mutually exclusive; though the priority might vary depending on the location, historical period and
individuals. PITI and Karim Oei Foundation are also more dynamic and complex because of their larger membership and longer history. Based on fieldwork in Jakarta and Surabaya, I would like to compare these two major Chinese Muslim organisations.

Businessmen and Preachers: Unitig Space, Diverse Intentions

On the one hand, Chinese Muslim organisations, such as PITI, help in forging a united identity. On the other hand, this solidarity is contingent and there are competing interests and internal diversity among those who participate in the organisations. As I mentioned earlier, businessmen and preachers lead many branches of PITI. In general, businessmen tend to more be 'pembauran-oriented', while preachers tend to be more 'dakwah-oriented'. Yet, this simplified dichotomy excludes some businessmen who are also pious Muslim and preachers who preach for financial not spiritual reasons. While many Chinese Muslims see no contradiction between pembauran and dakwah, there are always debates between those who want PITI to focus on Islamic education and those who those who wish ethnic intermingling emphasised.

Sometimes too, preachers criticise businessmen for their lack of religious commitment, while businessmen criticise some religious teachers for their conservative outlooks. Nevertheless, such differences of opinion do not generate major tensions between them. In fact, in terms of the overall effect, they complement each other - preachers need money to run their activities, while businessmen need preachers to provide religious credentials to PITI. Meanwhile, many ordinary Chinese Muslims in PITI see it as a space where they can meet converts who share similar religious experience, cultural background and social problems. For some younger converts, it is also a place for match-making. Besides, some lower class converts also come to PITI for financial support.

From Pembauran to Dakwah: Preaching Islam via Cultural Approaches

Chinese Muslim organisations' dominant discourse during the New Order era was 'intermingling' (pembauran) with the local majority. After Suharto's demise, however, the focus of these organisations shifted from 'pembauran' to 'dakwah'. This change is obvious in the Karim Oei Foundation in Jakarta. During the Suharto regime, when Junus
Jahya formed the foundation, he put more effort in promoting assimilation through Islam, rather than increasing religiosity among converts. One informant told me that Junus Jahya even discouraged female converts wearing the Islamic headscarf. He said Junus Jahya contributed to a better relationship between Chinese and Muslim Indonesians, but not towards cultivating Islamic piety among the converts (Field note, 9 June 2008). But recent fieldwork observations reveal a change: most activists in the foundation are less concerned with ‘assimilation’ given that most of the younger converts have already been more or less ‘integrated’, if not ‘assimilated’ into the larger Indonesian society.

In contrast, parallel with the rising religiosity of Indonesian Muslims, many Chinese Muslim activists in Karim Oei Foundation put more focus on strengthening the Islamic commitment of new converts. Some of them also use Chinese cultural symbols as a means to convey Islamic messages. Such approaches, however, as I will discuss in the next chapter are not without controversy; a few more puritanical converts argue that practising Chinese traditions is violating Islamic teaching. Generally speaking, the dominating discourse among many Chinese Muslim activists has changed from ‘assimilation through Islam’ (asimilasi lewat Islam) to ‘preaching Islam through cultural approaches’ (dakwah pendekatan budaya). In other words, during the New Order period, conversion to Islam was a way for some Chinese to assimilate with mainstream Indonesians; while in contemporary Indonesia, usage of Chineseness is a strategy to preach Islam among ethnic Chinese.

**Comparing Jakarta with Surabaya: Translocal Connections, Local Dynamics**

Although Chinese Muslim organisations, especially PITI are nationwide, having branches throughout the archipelago, their leadership and activities are localised. The translocal connection is manifest in the effort of various PITI branches to replicate Cheng Hoo Mosque in other cities. Meanwhile, we can examine the localised dynamics of PITI through their organisational focus, activities and interactions with other organisations. PITI in Surabaya and Jakarta make an interesting comparison. PITI in Jakarta is less active, as it has been burdened by the interference of the Suharto regime. It also suffered from the conflicting opinions among its leaders, ranging from religious interpretations, political affiliations, ethnic identifications and personal interests.
In contrast, East Java PITI is a more active branch, followed by PITI Yogyakarta and Palembang. East Java PITI's office is located in Surabaya and has been active since its establishment in the 1980s under the leadership of a few Chinese Muslim businessmen willing to contribute financial support. Among the reasons that contribute to the success of PITI East Java are: its distance from Jakarta which meant that it was less under the control of the state, especially during the New Order regime; its location in smaller city that make communication easier; its close relationship with Nahdlatul Ulama that favours the preservation of cultural traditions and its Chinese-speaking leaders who prefer keeping Chinese identity. The Chinese-cultured and NU-inclined background of such leadership also explain why the first Chinese-style mosque in Indonesia was established in Surabaya, and not Jakarta.

**Becoming Chinese Muslim and Multiple Affiliations**

It is not only that identity awareness leads to the creation of identity grouping, but social involvement itself also creates identity consciousness. Indeed, for some Chinese Muslims, it is not their sense of ethnic belonging that draws them to PITI, but their participation in PITI that makes them feel being ethnic Chinese. For example, a Chinese *ustaz* said that despite his Chinese appearance, he did not practise Chinese culture or speak any Chinese language. He joined PITI as a way of preaching Islam. After joining PITI, though, he began to study some Chinese words and philosophical texts to incorporate in his preaching. He was in fact, learning to be an ethnic Chinese after conversion to Islam (Interview, Sholihin Sani, 11 January 2009). This case shows not only that the identity of an individual Chinese Muslim can influence his or her social participation; but also that social involvement can shift ethnic identification. Such changes in identifications are not uncommon and not limited to ethnicity. Another example is a female convert who previously did not wear a headscarf, but began to don the veil after she joined religious study sessions in PITI (Field note, 16 November 2008).

In addition, many Chinese Muslims have multiple social or religious affiliations. For example, a PITI leader can be a Muhammadiyah member and a PKS supporter at the same time. In the Karim Oei foundation, most followers have other religious affiliations, ranging from NU, Muhammadiyah, PKS, Jemaah Tabligh to FPI. Some of them have bigger commitments to those Islamic groups and their involvement in Chinese Muslim
organisations is to preach their religious understandings among new converts. This shows that the solidarity of Chinese Muslims in PITI and the Karim Oei Foundation is contingent and strategic.

Beyond PITI: Diverse Social and Religious Participation

Having reviewed the contingent solidarity and internal dynamics of Chinese Muslim organisations, now I turn to look at the social and religious participation of Chinese Muslims beyond such organisations. Indeed, many Chinese Muslims engage with broader Chinese and Islamic groups; some prefer to join non-identity-based activities; while others do not relate themselves to any organisation. In the following parts of this chapter, I categorise their social participation into Chinese organisations; Islamic aktivisms; and affiliations beyond those groups. By exploring a few cases, I discuss the interaction between ethnic identification, religious orientation, cultural experience, personal interest and social involvement of Chinese Muslims in Indonesia today.

Involvement in Chinese Organisations

After the collapse of the New Order regime, together with their non-Muslim counterparts, some prominent Chinese Muslims took part in the regrouping of Chinese identity politics in Indonesia. A few of them became committee members of nationwide Chinese organisations, such as INTI and PSMTI, while others joined various local Chinese organisations, such as Paguyuban Bhakti Putra (Putra Charity Association) in Yogyakarta, Paguyuban Tionghoa Surabaya (Surabaya Chinese Association), and Perkumpulan Masyarakat Surakarta (Surakarta Social Assembly). Most of the Chinese Muslims who are active in Chinese organisations are older businessmen who can speak Mandarin, as well as ‘pembauran-oriented’ PITI leaders who see their Islamic identity as a niche to promote the interests of Chinese Indonesians. The involvement of younger and female Chinese Muslims in Chinese-related associations is very limited.

One of the prominent Chinese Muslims who is involved in Chinese organisations is Jos Soetomo, the owner of Sumber Mas Group that runs businesses related to timbers and hotels in Kalimantan and Java. Born into a Chinese Buddhist family in East Kalimantan
in 1945, Jos Soetomo converted to Islam in 1972. He is a multilingual speaker, as he can converse in Mandarin, Hokkien, Hakka, Indonesian, Javanese and Banjar. He was the chairman of PITI and the co-founder for Yayasan Cheng Hoo Surabaya. He was also the co-founder of PSMTI and currently is the chairman for the organisation’s branch in East Java. He said his involvement in Chinese organisations is not a form of social exclusivity, but a means of showing his commitment to Indonesian nationalism. Through Chinese organisations, he believes he can promote better ethnic relationships, and encourage more Chinese Indonesians to contribute to Indonesian development beyond simply providing financial support.

In 2008, Jos Soetomo built a library that contains collections of artefact and books about Admiral Cheng Ho. This library, named the Cheng Ho Library is located in the Chinese Indonesian Cultural Park at the compound of TMII (Beautiful Indonesia Miniature Park) in Jakarta. He supported the establishment of the Chinese Indonesian Cultural Park, by saying, ‘Different from other ethnic groups such as Javanese and Madurese, there is no special locality for ethnic Chinese in Indonesia. Therefore, we need to build an ‘island’ for Chinese Indonesians in TTMI to show that the we are one of the recognised ethnic groups in Indonesia’ (Interview, Jos Soetomo, 24 October 2008). He also claims to be a follower of the spirit of Cheng Ho who emphasises tolerance and inclusivity. He does not force his children to convert to Islam and gives them freedom to choose their religion. Only four of his twelve children are Muslims. It is quite fair to say that promoting Chinese interests is a more important priority for him, compared to spreading Islam.

Involvement in Muslim Activism

While ‘pembauran-oriented’ Chinese Muslim leaders tend to have close relations with Chinese organisations, many ‘religious-focused’ Chinese Muslims involve themselves in broader Muslim circles. Some of them share the agenda of certain religious groups; while many others join Islamic organisations to search for a sense of belonging because they have been sidelined by their families and friends since conversion. At the same time, many Muslim organisations are enthusiastic about recruiting Chinese Muslims, both as members and leaders. These organisations wish to demonstrate their commitment to cultural diversity, and to hold up Chinese converts as models of devout behaviour to non-practising Muslims.
Locality, religious experience and Islamic understanding determine Chinese Muslims’ affiliation to Muslim organisations. Not surprisingly, many Chinese Muslims in Jakarta and Yogyakarta join Muhammadiyah members, and those in Surabaya and Semarang join NU. Conversion experiences, religious education and social encounters with religious teachers, Muslim families and friends also shape the converts’ Islamic understanding and determine the Muslim organisation to which they will later affiliate. Chinese Muslim involvement in Islamic organisations goes beyond the mainstream NU and Muhammadiyah. During fieldwork, I encountered some Chinese Muslims who are members or supporters of FPI, HTI (Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia), Persis (Persatuan Islam, Islamic Association), Al-Arqam, Jemaah Tabligh and also JIL. In addition to these diverse religious affiliations, some Chinese Muslim preachers or religious teachers have established their own smaller Islamic institutions, for example, Anton Medan Center (Anton Medan), Irena Center (Irena Handoko), Takzia Islamic School (Syafii Antonio) and Az Zahra Islamic chanting group (Tan Mei Hwa).

Here, I will illustrate the participation of two Chinese Muslims, Abdul Chalim Lee who joined NU and Sholihin Sani in FPI. Abdul Chalim Lee (1946-2010), was born into a Chinese Confucian family in Surabaya and converted into Islam at age 28, was a businessman, a champion wrestler, a PITI leader and a PKB election candidate. He can speak Mandarin, Indonesian and Javanese. Since he converted to Islam, he has been involved in NU and followed the practices of the traditionalist Muslim organisation. He had also served as vice chairman of the economy bureau of NU and a leader of PKB, a political party closely linked to NU. He had a close relationship with former NU chairman, Abdurrahman Wahid (Gus Dur) and has served as his bodyguard. He said he was the one who recommended that Gus Dur include a lion dance performance to celebrate the launching of PKB in 1999 and claimed that was the first public performance of lion dance in Indonesia since the downfall of Suharto.

When asked whether ethnic intermingling or Islamic preaching is a higher priority for him, using the example of Cheng Hoo Mosque in Surabaya, he said, ‘Pembauran and dakwah are two sides of a coin. There is no contradiction between them. The mosque is a place where Chinese and non-Chinese get together. It also preaches Islamic messages to non-Muslims’ (Interview, Abdul Chalim, 3 October 2008). During Idul Fitri 2008, he organised an open house at his home, called ‘Lebaran bernuansa budaya Tionghoa’
(Celebration of Idul Fitri with Chinese cultural features). He contends that the inclusion of Chinese cultural elements is important in the Islamic outreach.

In contrast to Abdul Chalim, Sholilin Sani who is a FPI supporter suggests that many Chinese cultural practices, such as Chinese New Year celebration and ancestor worship are un-Islamic and should be avoided. Nevertheless, he has adopted some Chinese idioms and philosophical texts in his preaching to show the commonality between Islamic teaching and Chinese philosophy. Sholilin Sani, born 1952 who converted to Islam after high school, is a marketing director and a part-time religious teacher. He speaks fluent Indonesian and Arabic, but has very little literacy in Mandarin. He is a religious teacher in Islamic study sessions organised by PITI and gives lessons on Islam in various religious organisations and private companies.

Sholilin Sani is also a co-founder and a former leader of a local branch of PKS (Prosperous Justice Party) in Jakarta. Like many other PKS members, he supports the greater implementation of sharia in Indonesia. Different from Abdul Chalim who is a close ally of Gus Dur, Sholilin Sani accused Gus Dur for being ‘too liberal and pro-Western’. Sholilin Sani is a supporter for FPI (the Islamic Defenders’ Front). According to him, FPI is the only ‘genuine’ Islamic group, brave enough to fight for Muslims’ interests. However, he disagrees with the widespread perceptions that FPI is a radical, violent and ‘anti-Chinese’ group. On the contrary, he claims FPI is a ‘tolerant’ and ‘multi-ethnic’ organisation, because it welcomes Chinese Muslims as members. He also told me a story of FPI helping non-Muslim Chinese,

‘A few years ago, a non-Muslim Chinese woman asked FPI for help closing down an illegal gambling centre in Central Jakarta. The women said she has been worried about her son who has frequently visited the gambling spot. She has reported this illegal centre to the police several times, but no action has been taken. Therefore, she reported to FPI and FPI acted against the illegal gambling centre. Violence is the last resort for FPI. We have to crack down the venue because the police were corrupt.’ (Interview, Sholihin Sani, 11 January 2009)."
Involvement Beyond Chinese and Muslim Organisations

Not all Chinese Muslims feel comfortable affiliating with Chinese or Muslim organisations. Some Chinese Muslims, especially those who are younger, non-Chinese speaking, non-upper class and more flexible in their religious practices prefer to join non-ethnic and non-religious groups, such as human rights organisations and neighbourhood associations. Some of them view Chinese Muslim organisations, such as PITI, as dominated by rich businessmen or conservative religious teachers which they dislike. They are more preoccupied with broader issues, such as gender rights, poverty, political freedom and anti-discrimination. One of them is Andy Yentriyani, who is a researcher and activist in KOMNAS Perempuan (Komisi National Perempuan, Indonesian National Commission for Women).

Andy Yentriyani, born 1978, into a mixed-religious family in Pontianak, West Kalimantan and recorded as a Muslim on her identity card, is a graduate in International Relations from the University of Indonesia. She cannot speak Mandarin and rarely practises Chinese culture in her everyday life, yet she is aware that she will always be treated as an ethnic Chinese because of her appearance. She noted, the 1998 'anti-Chinese' incident in Jakarta escalated her identity as a female Chinese. She was a volunteer in helping the victims of rape and since then began her activism in various gender organisations to fight discrimination against women and minority groups. In terms of religiosity, she has sufficient Islamic knowledge as she went through Islamic classes during high school, yet she does not see herself as a 'pious' Muslim, as she does not pray five times a day, does not wear an Islamic headscarf and sometimes drinks alcohol. Nevertheless, she has no intention of changing her religion, as she still has a belief in Islamic principles. Andy also views her Islamic identity as a strategic positioning in her daily life and social activism, especially when she has to deal with Muslims. She shared a work experience with me: when she was chairing a discussion regarding women and conflicts in Indonesia, some participants questioned her credentials being an ethnic Chinese and a woman. However, after she quoted Qur'anic verses and revealed that she was a Muslim, she felt respected by most participants who were Muslims (Interview, Andy Yentriyani, 19 June 2008). This shows Andy has creatively negotiated her Chinese, Islamic and gender identities in her activism.
Another young Chinese Muslim, Muhammad Gatot, born 1978, is currently a researcher in Legal Aid Institute (LBH, Lembaga Bantuan Hukum). Like Andy Yentriyani, he disassociates himself from Chinese Muslim organisations, such as PITI and Karim Oei Foundation, as he views the former as led by rich and conservative businessmen, while the latter as full of 'fanatical' young Muslim converts. He is also a member of a young Chinese Indonesians network, called Jaringan Tionghoa Muda (JTM). Gatot said he has no interest in joining Chinese organisations that are mostly dominated by elderly businessmen, but is keen to be a part of the loose network that discusses various issues related to Chinese Indonesians. Given that most of the members in JTM are not Muslim, he said he may be able to contribute different opinions to the group discussion (Interview, Muhammad Gatot, 4 April 2008).

Chinese Muslims Politicians: Identity, Interests and Political Involvement

Departing from social organisations, this section focuses on the participation of Chinese Muslims in electoral politics. After the collapse of the New Order regime, many Chinese Indonesians stood as candidates in the elections. Some were successful, not only as legislative members at both local and national level, but also as regency heads (bupati) and high-profile ministers. At the same time, many political parties, including Islamic parties expressed their interest in having ethnic Chinese as party leaders and election candidates. They do so to show their commitment to multiculturalism, as well as to attract Chinese votes and financial support from Chinese businessmen. PKS, for instance, has fielded a couple of Chinese Muslims as election candidates to show its inclusivity and establish connections with ethnic Chinese. Non-Islamist Muslim based parties such as PKB and PAN have even fielded some non-Muslim Chinese as candidates. For example, Alvin Lee who was a legislative member in national parliament for PAN, was always mistaken as a Muslim convert, whereas he is a Christian.

Within such contexts, a few Chinese Muslims find themselves an opportunity to involve in politics. Some of them have contested both national and local elections, for seats in the DPR (Dewan Perwakilan Rakyat, People’s Representative Council or the national parliament) or the DPRD (Dewan Perwakilan Rakyat Daerah, Regional People’s Representative Council), mostly representing Islamic and Islamist parties, and some with nationalist parties. There have been some successful candidates, mostly elected as
representative members in regional assemblies on behalf of PKB or PAN, such as Gautama Setiadi in DPRD Semarang, Central Java (PKB, 1999-2004), Eddy Susanto in DPRD Mojokerto, East Java (PKB, 2009-2014) and Budi Setyagraha in DPRD Yogyakarta (PAN, 1999-2004). These local Chinese Muslim politicians have something in common - they are businessmen and PITI leaders. In addition, they are members of the Muslim organisation dominant in their localities (NU for those in East Java and Central Java; Muhammadiyah for those in Yogyakarta) and joined the parties which represent their affiliated organisations (PKB for NU and PAN for Muhammadiyah).

Besides PAN and PKB, some Chinese Muslims have also stood as candidates in elections under the banner of the Islamist party, PKS, such as Iskandar Abdurrahman (DPRD candidate in Salatiga, 2004), Syarif Tanudjaja (DPR candidate for Jakarta, 1999) and Surya Madya (DPR candidate for East Kalimantan, 2004), but none has been elected. As I have learnt, during the 2009 elections, PKS has tried to establish good relations with both Chinese Muslim organisations and individual; for example, appointing the chairman of Karim Oei Foundation, Ali Karim Oei as one of its advisors, visiting the PITI office and approaching prominent Chinese Muslim, Syafii Antonio to stand as a election candidate (he turned down the offer).

In general, local Muslim politics influence the involvement of Chinese Muslims in political parties, thus it stands to reason that most Chinese Muslim politicians are PKS members in Jakarta, PAN members in Yogyakarta and PKB members in Surabaya and Semarang. As an ethnic minority, Chinese Muslim affiliations with mainstream political players not only guarantee their social security, but also give them greater political opportunities. Religious background and understanding also play an important role in Chinese Muslims’ political participation. As expected, those more secular-minded see themselves more comfortable in nationalist parties or non-Islamist Islamic parties, while a Chinese Muslim who supports the Islamic causes is most likely to become involved in Islamist parties, such as PKS. Next, I will illustrate the interplay of identity, interest and political involvement of three Chinese Muslims in Indonesia today.
**Anda Hakim in PIB, a Nationalist Party**

Anda Hakim, who was born into a Chinese Buddhist family in Medan in 1960 and converted to Islam in 1994, is a practising lawyer and the former chairman of PITI, Jakarta. He is a multilingual speaker, and can converse in Mandarin, Cantonese, Indonesian, Javanese and some Arabic. Besides being a member in the advisory council for MUI and ICMI, he is actively involved in many Chinese-related organisations in Jakarta. To name a few, he is a vice chairman of PSMTI, a co-founder of KOMTAK (Komunitas Tionghoa Anti Korupsi, Chinese Community for Anti-Corruption), the Chairman of the law bureau for ICBC (Indonesia China Business Council), and even an advisor for the Indonesian Tao Council (Majelis Tao Indonesia).

Anda Hakim grew up in a politically-active family. His father, Lukmanul Hakim was a Golkar DPRD member for Jakarta during the New Order period. Anda Hakim is currently the chairperson of PIB (Partai Perjuangan Indonesia Baru, Party of Struggle for New Indonesia), a small secular-nationalist party in Jakarta. He promotes the concept of 'New Indonesia', which according to him, is a fight for justice, democracy and pluralism. He said, 'In the past, Chinese Indonesians have been seen as 'economic animals' that exploit the richness of this nation. By participating in politics and promoting social improvement for all Indonesians, I would like to diminish this perception' (Interview, Anda Hakim, 7 January 2009). As a Muslim, he said he has a niche to establish closer connections with religious leaders and government officials despite maintaining good relations with non-Muslim Chinese. Yet, he has a flexible attitude toward Islamic practices and does not endorse an Islamic agenda in Indonesian politics. His 'secular-inclined' religious viewpoints have been criticised by some activists in PITI.

**Budi Setyagraha in PAN, a Muslim-based Party**

Budi Setyagraha, born in Solo in 1943, converted to Islam in Yogyakarta in 1983 and is a former chairman of PITI, Yogyakarta. He speaks fluent Mandarin, Indonesian and Javanese. He is a successful businessman who owns a hardware store, a local taxi service company and a few sharia credit finance programs. He says his conversion to Islam was not driven by economic considerations, but does not deny that his Muslim identity has helped his business grow faster. For example, according to Budi, after the 2006
earthquake in Yogyakarta, the Islamic universities bought equipment from his shop, instead of other Chinese-owned hardware shops, because he shares their religion and has close relationships with them. After conversion to Islam, he has been involved in many Islam-related social activities. He is a leader of PITH, and a member of Muhammadiyah.

When Amien Rais created PAN in 1998, Budi Setyagraha joined the party’s local branch, ran in the 1999 election as a PAN candidate and was elected as a member for the DPRD Yogyakarta. In 2009, he participated in the election again as a PAN candidate for the national parliament. Although he gained enough votes to be elected, he failed to make it to parliament due to the electoral threshold. Budi told me that one of his motivations to be a legislative member was to represent the interests of ethnic Chinese. Seeing himself as a bridge between ethnic Chinese and Muslim Indonesians, he said ‘As I share the same religion with the majority Muslim population, I can convey and fight for the interests of ethnic Chinese more effectively’ (Interview, Budi Setyagraha, 12 February 2009). For example, given that ethnic Chinese are not allowed to own land in Yogyakarta, Budi claimed that he was fighting for land ownership’s rights for ethnic Chinese in the special district in Java. However, an informant revealed another story to me: An officer had approved Budi’s purchase of a piece of land because he was Muslim, however, after Budi paid for the land, another officer claimed that Pak Budi could not own the land because he is Chinese. To challenge the decision, he brought a law suit to the district and central court (Field note, 15 February 2009). This means that his intention to ‘defend ethnic Chinese rights’ is in fact also a concern stemming from personal interest.

Although Budi used Islamic symbols in election campaigns, such as wearing peci in his poster and using Islamic greetings in his speech, he did not endorse the Islamist agenda in Indonesian politics. His election motto is rather nationalistic – ‘Selamatkan Indonesia’ (Save Indonesia) and his election leaflets focus on his commitment to improve social welfare in Indonesia. Although he has contributed to the establishment of local mosques and Islamic credit finance, instead of an ‘Islamic state’, he suggested that ‘Pancasila’ ideology is more suitable for multi-ethnic and multi-religious Indonesia.

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12 On 5 March, the special region of Yogyakarta promulgated a Governor’s Instruction (No.K898/IA/1975) on the policy of granting land rights to non-indigenous Indonesians. According to the decree, the Yogyakarta regional government does not grant land ownership rights to non-indigenous Indonesians. For a detailed discussion of this issue, see Susanto (2008: 136-143).
Surya Madya in PKS, an Islamist Parties

Surya Madya, born 1963 in Samarinda, East Kalimantan, is a manager of a fertilizer company. He speaks fluent Indonesian, Javanese and Banjar, but rarely converses in Mandarin or any other Chinese dialects. Despite his oriental appearance, he does not practise Chinese culture in daily life and views himself more as an ‘Indonesian Muslim’ than a ‘Chinese Muslim’. Married to a Javanese Muslim, he said he had little interaction with Chinese Indonesians until he became involved in the Karim Oei Foundation. He is a Muhammadiyah member and was a leader of PBB before he joined PKS in 2004. He was an active PKS member and has participated in the party cadre training programs. He told me, he was impressed with the strict discipline, uncorrupted practices and Islamic commitment of the party cadres. Although he is less active in PKS now because of his busy schedule, he is still a loyal supporter of the Islamist party. Surya Madya supports the further Islamisation of Indonesian society, yet he contends that the Islamic agenda should be implemented in the democratic and non-violent way.

Surya Madya is also the founder and the leader of a non-Chinese based convert organisation, Amma Foundation (Yayasan Amma). According to him, there are some Muslim organisations that focus on ethnic Chinese, yet very few associations that provide specific help to non-Chinese converts. In addition, Chinese converts have been more easily identified in the mosque because of their physical appearance. He said, ‘If I visit a mosque, although I have been a convert for 20 years, some Muslims will come and greet me, express their welcome and offer guidance to me. But non-Chinese converts, such as Javanese and Batak Muslims do not receive such attention’ (Interview, Surya Madya, 7 January 2009). Therefore, he initiated the Amma Foundation to run Islamic study sessions for new Muslims from various ethnic groups. This engagement shows his commitment to preach Islam through religious activism and education.

Conclusion

‘Identity politics’ of certain groups has been variously criticised for being exclusive, eliminating internal differences, and sometimes generating conflict. Yet, as shown by this study of the identity construction of Chinese Muslims in contemporary Indonesia, it can also be inclusive and accommodate internal diversity. Although trying to stabilise
the unstable Chinese Muslim identities and manifest a unique image of their identity, Chinese Muslim organisations are not exclusive and demanding of conformity, as they allow multiple affiliations, internal diversity and tolerance of both inter and intra-group differences. Furthermore, individuals enjoy freedom to engage in Chinese Muslim organisations for many different reasons, or participate in other organisations. Such contingent solidarity gives voice to the minority without reducing it to a fixed entity and does not undermine the multiplicity of individual identities.

To conclude this chapter, let me restate three inter-related main arguments on the strategic solidarity, organisational dynamics and diverse social participation of Chinese Muslims in contemporary Indonesia. First, the grouping of 'Chinese Muslim' forms a strategic solidarity through the contingency of social interests and political claims. Businessmen and religious leaders lead most Chinese Muslim organisations. They share the aim of promoting Chinese Muslim identity, yet for different reasons - the former focus on ethnic intermingling (pembauran), while the latter focus on Islamic preaching (dakwah). The debate over which is more important: pembauran or dakwah is an ongoing one, and varies depending on historical period, location and individual leaders. While the notion of 'assimilation through Islam' is no longer popular, many Chinese Muslim leaders, especially those in PITI still find their Islamic affinity gives them a niche in promoting better relations between Chinese and Muslim Indonesians. In other organisations, such as the Karim Oei Foundation, there is a shift of focus from 'intermingling through Islam' to 'preaching using cultural approaches', in which Islamic preaching is the priority and Chinese expression is the strategy.

Second, Chinese Muslim organisations are inclusive and allow internal diversity. Both their membership and activities are open to all Muslims regardless of ethnic background. In addition, there are diverse religious orientations and cultural outlooks among Chinese Muslim leaders themselves. Some argue for more religious lessons for new converts to consolidate their beliefs, others are more flexible in their religious observance; some are enthusiastic in organising Chinese cultural activities, others worry if such events violate Islamic teachings. Finally, many of them have multiple affiliations beyond Chinese Muslim organisations; while some prefer to join organisations that are not limited to converts. Some Chinese Muslims also participate in different social and political spheres. Such involvement reflects and influences their ethnic identifications and religious understandings, which are often interwoven with personal interest and social concerns.
Chapter 6

Cultural Dakwah, Religious Debates and Everyday Practices:
Chinese New Year Celebrations

'I visit the Chinese temple in Glodok, Jakarta with my non-Muslim Chinese friends during Chinese New Year. It is just an ethnic tradition. I want to show respect to my ancestor's culture. Those who claim that visiting temple is *haram* are either intolerant or have insufficient knowledge of Chinese culture and Islamic teachings. For me, to be a good Muslim does not mean one has to be less of a Chinese.' (Interview, Kimman, 23 March 2008).

'As Muslims, we can only celebrate two festivals - Idul Fitri and Idul Adha. Chinese New Year is not mentioned in the Qur'anic text, therefore it is *haram* and I avoid celebrating it. In fact, some traditional rituals practised by Indonesian Muslims, such as *ziarah*, *slametan* and *tahlilan*, are also improper inventions. I am not a fanatic. I just want to distance myself from un-Islamic practices' (Interview, Kapao, 24 October 2008).

Kimman, born 1979 in Palembang, converted to Islam during high school and learnt Islam from an NU religious teacher. Since 2003, he works in Jakarta and visits Lautze Mosque on Sundays. He disagrees with some Chinese Muslim activists in the mosque who propose that visiting Chinese temples is *haram*. According to Kimman, Islam is a religion that appreciates ethnic traditions. Kapao, born 1966 in Surabaya, makes an interesting contrast with Kimman. In 2004, Kapao converted from Christianity to Islam after marrying a Javanese Muslim, yet in the beginning, he still went to church and persuaded his wife to become a Christian. Recently, a business failure and life crisis changed his religious views. He became a practising Muslim and studied Islam in a mosque nearby his neighbourhood. A religious teacher in the mosque told Kapao that Chinese New Year celebrations and some other local Muslims practise were *haram*. 
The two cases above show the different attitudes of Chinese Muslims towards the celebration of Chinese New Year (also known as ‘Imlek’ in Indonesia). This chapter examines how and under what conditions, Chinese Muslims understand, practise and give meaning to Chinese New Year celebrations; and then relate those to the broader issues of religious pluralism in Indonesia today. I will first illustrate Chinese Muslims’ Chinese New Year celebrations in mosques and the media; and how they re-appropriate such celebrations according to Islamic teachings. By distinguishing culture (Chinese) from religion (Islam), some Chinese Muslim leaders justify using Chinese cultural traditions as a means of spreading Islamic messages among ethnic Chinese, a practice they call ‘dakwah pendekatan budaya’ (preaching using cultural approaches).

Secondly, I will examine the religious debate over whether Chinese New Year is halal or haram (permitted or prohibited according to Islamic principles) – how Muslim leaders make their fatwa (religious opinion) by referring to religious texts and what social contexts support their decision-making. In general, be it a commitment of embracing cultural diversity and religious pluralism, or a strategy of attracting Chinese political and financial support in post-1998 Indonesia, many Muslim leaders suggest Chinese New Year celebrations are halal, as long as, they do not involve customary rituals such as deity worship and the consumption of haram food, such as pork. Lastly, I will discuss the everyday practices of Chinese cultural traditions among Chinese Muslims, which reflect their religiosity, ethnicity and experiences. Through this examination of Chinese New Year celebrations among Chinese Muslims in Indonesia, I end this chapter by suggesting that religious hybridisation is a contested process between the interactions of religious texts, social contexts and everyday practices.

**Islam and Religious Hybridisation**

Like many other world religions, Islamic practices often have local manifestations, either blended with or influenced by various local cultural traditions and religious beliefs.

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1 Imlek, is a Hokkien term (Yǐnli, in Mandarin), which means Chinese lunar calendar. In Indonesia, it also used to refer to Chinese New Year. I will use Imlek and Chinese New Year interchangeably in this chapter.

2 Fatwas are not legally binding in Indonesia, and it is possible to have many fatwas on one issue. MUI, NU and Muhammadiyah are three main Muslim organisations that often issue fatwas; yet different organisations might have different fatwas, and sometimes, even different branches of each organisation could issue different fatwas covering one case. For more discussion of fatwas in Indonesia, see Hosen (2003).
Concepts such as ‘religious syncretism’ (Cople 1997; Geertz 1960; Stewart & Shaw 1994) have been used to analyse such religious mixings, and sometimes to defend contentious religious practices. Yet, the concept of ‘religious syncretism’ is problematic, as it often implies the mixing is harmonious and overlooks the challenges of religious orthodoxy (Robinson 2009). Furthermore, for charges of ‘religious syncretism’, one might have to assume that there is a ‘pure’ and ‘authentic’ form of religion (Yeoh 2009). Also, the concept of syncretism does not take into account some emerging factors such as the influence of mass media and religious commodification (Kitiarasa 2005). Therefore, this chapter will use ‘religious hybridisation’ (Kitiarasa 2005) instead of ‘syncretism’ to examine the interactions across cultural and religious boundaries, as an ongoing and contested process, rather than a harmonious outcome.3

As Roy (2004) points out, globalised Islam is often hostile to the preservation of ethnic cultural traditions. This phenomenon is especially obvious among the second and third generation of Muslim immigrants in the West. Many ‘neo-fundamentalist’ Muslims who see cultural expression as an innovation that could distort the true tenets of Islam share this disassociation of Islam from ethnic cultures, called ‘deculturation’ (Roy 2004:258). For Roy (2004:232), ‘neo-fundamentalism’ is ‘not a structural movement articulated around a coherent doctrine, but to a form of religiosity that has spread among different milieus’, and shared by various Muslim groups, including salafists,4 Tablighis,5 and Hizbut Tahrir.6 Neo-fundamentalists, as Roy (2004) suggests, hold a strict and literalist reading of the Qur’an and the Hadith. They stress the absolute unity of God (tauhid), and oppose any sort of innovation (bid’ah), polytheism (syirik) and strict following of classical Islamic practices (taklidi).

2 For more discussion and criticism of religious syncretism in Asian contexts and its critics, see Goh 2009.
4 Like other Islamic movement and thought, salafism is also a diverse current. In general, it preaches a return to the practices of the Prophet and his companions (sahaf means ancestor in Arabic). Salafists often use the Qur'an and hadith to justify their rejection of many traditionalist Muslim practices associated with localised Muslim cultures, and supposedly corrupting modern Western influences. While some of the salafists, such as those in Laskar Jihad involved in violence action, many Indonesian salafists focus on peaceful religiosity and missionary activities. For details about Salafist groups in Indonesia, see Buhalo and Fealy (2005:74-79) and Hasan (2007). Meanwhile, Islamism is used to describe a variety of movements that conceive Islam as a political ideology. It mostly refers to political Islam, in which political activism is informed by Islamic principles. In general, they aim to see a greater implementation of sharia in Muslim society. Like salafists, many Islamists tend to be religiously conservative and less tolerant of ‘impure’ religious practices. Yet, different from salafists, Islamists in general engage with Western political ideas and education, as well as, participate in election processes. For more discussion of Islamism in Indonesia, see Buhalo and Fealy (2005:66-74).
5 Tablighi Jamaat (Jemaah Tabligh, JT) is a transnational religious movement which was founded in 1926 by Muhammad Ilyas in India. The movement primarily aims to bring Muslims closer to the practices of Prophet Muhammad. For discussions about Tabligh movement in Southeast Asia in general and Indonesia in particular, see Noor (2007, 2009).
6 Hizbut Tahrir (HT, literally means Party of Liberation) is a transnational Islamic organisation which goal is for all Muslim countries to unify as an Islamic state or caliphate ruled by Islamic law and with a caliph head of state elected by Muslims. For discussions of HT in Indonesia, see Mohamed Osman (2010) and Burhanuddin (2009).
In Indonesia, Muslim practices generally accommodate local customs. Nevertheless, the purification movement is not new. In the past, tensions between localised Islam and puritan Islam were seen as the conflicts between *adat* (customary law and culture) and Islam (Ellen 1983; Taufik Abdullah 1966). Today, such polarisations are between Muslims who are in favour of 'purification' or 'Arabisation' (Ghoshal 2010; Fakhraie 2008; Rahim 2006) of Islam and Muslims who support 'indigenisation' (*pribumisasi*) (Wahid 2007; Rahmat 2003) or the 'Indonesianess' (*keindonesiaan*) (Madjid 1987, 2003) of Islam. The former tends to embrace a 'generic transnational Islamic identity' (Bubalo & Fealy 2005: viii), reject local customs and adopt Arabic-influenced expressions of Islam. The latter aims to challenge the 'purification' of Islam, advocate religious pluralism and promote 'vernacular' Islam that is grounded in local contexts (Rahmat 2003).

As noted by many scholars (Bowen 2003; Fox 2004; Ricklefs 2008), Indonesian Islam is not a singular entity, but involves debates over proper practices. Different Muslim organisations, scholars and individuals have different opinions of the role of local customs in everyday Muslim practices. These differences in general can be reflected in the divergent religious viewpoints of traditionalist, modernist and salafist Muslims. Traditionalist Muslims accept local traditions and cultures as long as they do not harm the essence of Islam. The intermingling of Islamic practices, based on their interpretation of Islamic texts in particular way, is to preserve ethnic cultures and cultivate Islamic religiosity at the same time. They suggest that it is common for Muslims to communicate their religious teachings with their own cultural traditions. Meanwhile, the modernist movement aims to purify Islam from any external cultural and religious influences, and fight against any changes, *bid'ah* (innovation) and heretic practices. Salafist groups are a highly puritanical version of modernist Islam. They strive to replicate the Islamic practices of the time of the Prophet. They also reject local rituals and other traditions, which according to them do not have roots in Islam, such as Maulid (the birthday celebration of Prophet), *slametan* (communal feast), *tahillan* (Qur'anic recitation for a dead body) and *ziarah* (visiting tombs of Muslim saints).

In the past, such contestation was represented by NU (traditionalist) and Muhammadiyah (modernist). Yet, over the years, many Muhammadiyah leaders in general have more relaxed attitudes in accommodating local cultural traditions when attempting to reform
religious practices (Daniels 2009; Hadi 2007; Hidayat 2005). There are also crossings, interactions and competitions of religious views between and within NU and Muhammadiyah. Post-1998 democratisation, together with the influences of consumer culture, urbanisation, social mobility, transnational flows and local dynamics, have made Muslim religiosities more diverse and the dichotomy between modernist and traditionalist Muslims no longer reflects this increasingly complex reality. At the same time, there is also a growing influence of transnational ‘neo-fundamentalist’ Islamic movement among Indonesian Muslims. Generally speaking, compared to NU and Muhammadiyah, transnational Islamic groups such as Tablighi Jamaat and Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia (HTI) are more hostile towards local manifestations of Islam.

However, various Muslim practices and beliefs are not clearly separable and cannot be analysed along the lines of organisational affiliations only. Indeed, varying by different political economies and social contexts, there is a broad spectrum of individual religious opinions that shifts and combines on different issues (Fox 2004; Rickflet 2008). Furthermore, individual Muslims may have different religious affiliations at different phases of their lives, or even at the same time (Ellen 1983). Therefore, it is important in studying ‘ordinary Muslims’ (Peletz 1997), or ‘everyday Islam’ (Alam 2007), to examine the inconsistency and ambivalence of Muslim practices, and to reveal a range of subjectivities and negotiations among them.

According to Geertz (1973:125), the anthropological study of religion should include ‘an analysis of the systems of meaning embodied in the symbols which make up the religion proper’ and ‘the relating of these systems to social-structural and psychological processes’. Similarly, seeing Islam as a discursive tradition, Asad (1986) proposes us to emphasise both the agency of the interpreters within certain material circumstances and the power of religious discourse itself. Informed by such propositions, this chapter considers both textual and contextual spheres in examining the debates of Chinese New Year celebrations among Chinese Muslims. The ‘textual sphere’ refers to the interpretation of the religious texts, while the ‘contextual sphere’ refers to the socio-economic conditions and individual life experiences in which such interpretations take place.
Chinese New Year as a Contested Tradition in Contemporary Indonesia

Before discussing Chinese Muslims' responses to Chinese New Year celebrations, it is important to provide some general information about Imlek (Chinese New Year) in post-1998 Indonesia. During the New Order period, the public celebration of Chinese New Year was not allowed. After the downfall of the Suharto regime, Chinese Indonesians were given the freedom to celebrate Chinese New Year publicly. In January 2001, President Abdurrahman Wahid announced Imlek as an optional holiday and a year later, Megawati government declared Imlek a national holiday. Since then, during Chinese New Year, decorations and ornaments in red, symbolising Chinese-ness, along with Chinese cultural performances, such as lion dances have become popular, not only among ethnic Chinese, but also non-Chinese Indonesians.

The Chinese New Year festivity has different significance in Indonesia today. For post-1998 governments, it reflects their commitment to end discrimination against the Chinese minority. For many politicians, it is a way of accessing Chinese electoral support and funding. For some Muslim leaders, it reaffirms the plurality and inclusivity of Indonesian Islam. For vendors, it is an opportunity to package and promote their products. Meanwhile, for Chinese Indonesians, it gives a sense of belonging, despite having little knowledge of Chinese culture and languages. However, as Hoon (2009) has discussed in detail, the Imlek celebration is not without controversy - whether it is a cultural tradition or a religious festival; whether it promotes Chinese-ness shared by all Indonesians or reinforces the 'exclusivity' of Chinese Indonesians.

7 In 2008, during my fieldwork in Jakarta, I attended two public celebrations of Chinese New Year launched by Indonesian President, Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, one is organised by MATAKIN (Majelis Tinggi Agama Khonghucu Indonesia, The Supreme Council for Confucian Religion in Indonesia) and another is co-organised by WALUBI (Perwakilan Umat Buddha Indonesia, The Indonesian Buddhist Council Association). In 2009, when I was in Palembang during the Chinese New Year period, which was just a couple of months before national parliamentary elections, I saw many election banners sending greetings to ethnic Chinese.

8 It was during the presidency of Abdurrahman Wahid who was also a former NU and PKB leader, Chinese Indonesians were given greater freedom to celebrate Chinese New Year publicly. In addition, former Muhammadiyah and PAN leader Amien Rais during his campaign for presidential election in 2004, appeared on TV in a Chinese outfit in front of a Chinese temple, sending 'Gong Xi Fa Cai' greetings to the audience (Budianta, 2008:174). Since both of them are also politicians, their endorsement of Chinese New Year festivities is not only a way of promoting the tolerance of Islamic teaching, but also a means of gaining Chinese electoral support and funding.

9 A striking example that I observed during fieldwork in 2008 is the promotion package by a mobile telecommunication company, HP Esia. During Chinese New Year, the telecommunication company introduced 'HP Esia Fu (Prosperity)', a phone service that featured fengshui (Chinese geomantic ornament), Chinese horoscope and Chinese calendar. Meanwhile, during Ramadan, HP Esia launched another special package, entitled 'HP Esia Hidayah Syiar and Plus', which include Islamic contents, such as Qur'anic verses, azan (call to prayer) and Islamic advice.
Around the world, ethnic Chinese see Chinese New Year as a cultural celebration, yet, some Chinese Indonesians view it as a religious festival related to Confucianism. Since the early 20th century, Confucianism, which Chinese elsewhere generally understand as an ethical framework or philosophy, has evolved into an institutional religion in Indonesia (Coppel 2002). Consequently, Confucians co-opt Imlek as a religious festival - they claim it is a sacred day commemorating the birth of Confucius, just like Christmas celebrates the birth of Jesus Christ, and Maulid celebrates the birth of Prophet Muhammad. For MATAKIN (Majelis Tinggi Agama Khonghucu Indonesia, The Supreme Council for Confucian Religion in Indonesia), the recognition of Chinese New Year is also closely linked to the recognition of Confucianism as an official religion in post 1998- Indonesia. Furthermore, Imlek was first declared a national holiday in post-New Order Indonesia on the basis of its religious rather than ethnic or cultural character, because only festivals of officially recognised religions can be observed as national holidays in Indonesia (Hoon 2009). Nevertheless, not all Chinese Indonesians endorse the connection between Chinese New Year festival and Confucianism.

Despite the claims of the Confucians, Chinese from other religious backgrounds, such as Buddhists, Christians and even Muslims also celebrate Imlek, either in private or publicly. In these other cases, however, they regard it as an ethnic and cultural festival, and not a religious celebration. For them, Chinese New Year is a festival that welcome a new year based on the Chinese lunar calendar, an event in which they pay respect to their ancestors and get together with families, and a celebration that give them a sense of cultural belonging. By distinguishing religious rituals from cultural traditions, some of them even hold Chinese New Year celebration in churches and mosques, as a way of preserving Chinese traditions and spreading religious messages. As Hoon (2009) noted, in Jakarta, Imlek is celebrated at Sunday mass in a Catholic church with performances of Chinese songs and dances, as well as red decorations. Meanwhile, in Yogyakarta, Chinese Muslims held Imlek prayer sessions in mosques. To that we now turn.

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10 In 1965, Confucianism was officially recognised as a religion together with Islam, Catholicism, Protestantism, Buddhism and Hinduism, yet in 1979, the Ministry of Religion declared Confucianism was not a religion. After the collapse of New Order regime, in 2000, President Abdurrahman Wahid revoked Suharto’s 1967 Presidential Instruction, which banned open celebration of Chinese religion, belief and customary practices. In 2006, under the government of Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, Confucianism was again officially recognised as one of the formal religions of Indonesia (Feusacker 2007). For more detail on the development of Confucianism in Indonesia, see Coppel (2002) and Suryadinata (1998).

11 The claim that Chinese New Year is related to the birth of Confucian is problematic, as it rarely appears among Chinese outside of Indonesia. As a Chinese Malaysian, I have never heard about such linkage in Malaysia. Also, not all Chinese Indonesians agree with such claim. As Hoon (2009) pointed out, for many non-Confucian Chinese Indonesians, Imlek only became a Confucian festival due to strategic consideration in order to be recognised as an official holiday, like other religious holidays in Indonesia; not because it is historically a religious holiday. For more discussion about how Confucians claim Imlek as a religious festival, see Hoon (2009).
Imlek Celebrations in Mosques: Hybrid Islam

Along with Chinese-style mosques and Chinese preachers, the Imlek celebration in mosques, Yogyakarta is another form of identity performance, which combines both Islamic messages and Chinese cultural symbols forging a hybrid Chinese-Muslim identity. It provides a new understanding of the relationship between ethnicity and religion, especially between Chineseness and Islam in Indonesia. The Imlek celebrations in mosques have various meanings. For Muslim Indonesians, it suggests another possibility of hybrid Islam along with other local Muslim streams such as 'Javanese Islam'. For Chinese Indonesians, it shows there is another way of expressing Chineseness, that the celebration of Imlek is not limited to Confucian and Buddhist temples, but also churches and even mosques. For Chinese Muslims, it is a way of spreading Islamic messages by using Chinese cultural expression.

The Imlek celebrations in mosques are not without controversy, as some puritan Muslims see it as un-Islamic. However, by differentiating religious rituals from cultural traditions, PITI Yogyakarta successfully convinced many local Muslim leaders that the celebration of Chinese New Year is not violating Islamic principles. Through enactment of rituals and abandonment of ‘un-Islamic’ practices, Chinese Muslim leaders show that Imlek celebration is not only compatible, but also complementary to Islamic values. During the Imlek ceremony in mosques, Chinese Muslims did not worship deities, burn incense and indulgence in any other rituals related to Chinese folk beliefs. Instead, they undertook Islamic prayers. Chinese Muslim leaders endorsed activities such as visiting family, relatives and friends as a form of 'silaturahim' (maintaining good relationships). At the same time, they retained Chinese cultural symbols such as red decorations and ornaments, but avoided ‘un-Islamic’ practices, such as the consumption of haram food and gambling. Such juxtaposition of Chineseness and Islam, on the one hand, Islamise Chinese cultural traditions; and on the other hand, give Islamic religiosity a touch of Chinese culture.

The Imlek ceremony of Chinese Muslims in Yogyakarta was first held in 2003 and the celebrations became more lively in the following years. In 2003, despite protests from some conservative Muslim individuals and groups, about two hundred Muslims from

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12 Pork is one of the main dishes during Chinese New Year dinner, while gambling is one of the leisure activities for some Chinese during the festival. Yet, for Muslims, both pork consumption and gambling are haram.
Chinese and non-Chinese backgrounds, participated in the inaugural Imlek ceremony in Syuhada Mosque in Yogyakarta. This celebration was organised by Indonesian Chinese Muslim Association (PITI), Yogyakarta and attended by local figures from MUI, NU, Muhammadiyah and the provincial administration. As the main organiser of the event, Budi Setyagraha pointed out, the Imlek celebration in the mosque was modest and its rituals had been modified to suit Islamic teachings, which includes a pengajian (Islamic studies session), sholat hajat (a blessing prayer for a prosperous and healthy year); and sujud syukur (a prayer to express gratitude to God). Fruits, such as apple and Mandarin, which respectively symbolising peace and prosperity in Chinese cultural tradition, were also served during the ceremony. PITI chose the Syuhada Mosque in Kotabaru for this unprecedented event for its historical significance, as a remembrance of the struggle of Yogyakarta Muslims for Indonesian independence (Interview, Budi Setyagraha, 12 February 2009).

Before the inaugural Chinese New Year celebration in the mosque, some conservative Muslims condemned it as bid'ah (improper innovation) and haram, and even threatened to disturb the event. The celebration went off peacefully, after PITI won the support of mainstream Muslim figures and organisations, including a fatwa from MUI Yogyakarta that approved the celebration of Imlek in the mosque. According to a news report, MUI Yogyakarta had studied various materials and books about Imlek and reached the conclusion that the celebration of Imlek is not necessarily associated with Buddhist or Confucian religious rituals. Therefore, Chinese Muslims could observe Chinese New Year as long as festivities do not involve ‘un-Islamic’ practices.

When delivering his sermon during the 2003 Imlek ceremony in Syuhada Mosque, Syafri Sairin, the dean of the school of social science at the University of Gadjah Mada (UGM, Universitas Gadjah Mada), stressed it was a mistake to think Imlek was incompatible with Islam, because Imlek was a cultural rather than religious festival. He argued that if Javanese Muslims can celebrate the Javanese New Year in mosques, there is no reason why Chinese Muslims cannot celebrate their New Year in mosques. Referring to local hybridised Islamic traditions, he supported the Imlek celebration in Syuhada Mosque saying, ‘Javanese Muslims use their cultural attributes and ornaments to celebrate their New Year and Idul Fitri, while those in North Sumatra used candles to

13 See ‘MUI Izinkan Imlek di Masjid’ [MUI allowed Imlek in Mosque], Pikiran Rakyat, 15 February 2003.
mark important events." He continued, 'therefore, local Muslims should not oppose the use of red paper lanterns and other red-coloured ornaments in the mosques. We should adopt multiculturalism in disseminating Islam to all ethnic groups with different cultural backgrounds' (Sudiarno 2003).

Encouraged by the success of the 2003 Chinese New Year celebrations, PITI continued to hold them in the following years. In 2004, PITI organised the Imlek ceremony in the Syuhada Mosque in a more obvious way, with the decoration of red lanterns (Susanto & Sudiarno 2004). The 2004 Imlek celebration began with Iṣya evening prayer led by the chairman of Yogyakarta MUI, Toha Abdurrahman, and followed by an informal discussion (sarasehan) moderated by an anthropologist from UGM, Heddy Shri Ahimsa. During the discussion, Heddy described the 'Islamised' Imlek celebration as a positive and creative cultural innovation reflecting the inclusivity and intellectualism of Islam. Given that non-Chinese Muslims were also actively participating in the Imlek ceremony, he proposed this acculturation as 'Imlek gaya Yogya' (Yogya-style Imlek) which could promote better relationships among Muslims, as well as between Chinese and non-Chinese Indonesians. After the discussion, there were social activities such as the distribution of traditional Chinese New Year Cake (kue keranjang) and the giving of ang pao (money in red envelopes) from older people to younger ones. The celebration ended with sujud syukur, a prayer session for Muslims to express their gratitude to God.14

The 2005 PITI Imlek celebration of PITI was a very lively affair with lion dance performances outside the Syuhada Mosque. While in 2006, the Imlek ceremony moved to An Nadzar Mosque and a special pengajian was conducted to celebrate both Chinese New Year and Islamic New Year (Hijrah) which were very close that year. One of the preachers, Toha Abdurrahman, the Chairman of Yogyakarta MUI, spoke of the similar meanings of Chinese and Islamic New Year; both signifying a positive transformation. Chinese New Year celebrates the changing seasons from winter to spring; while the Islamic New Year signifies the migration of Prophet Muhammad from Mecca to Madina for broader Islamic propagation. He also stated that these similarities strengthened the relationships between Indonesians from different cultural and religious backgrounds (Perdami 2008:66). In 2007 after the earthquake in Yogyakarta, PITI and other local Chinese organisations arranged 'Festival Imlek Bantu! 2007' (2007 Bantu! Imlek festival)

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with the theme ‘Imlek for Bantul recovery’. One of its aims was to promote the localised Imlek celebrations as a cultural attraction in Bantul. The localised Imlek celebrations, according to the brochure, shows the accommodation of both Chinese and Javanese culture, represented by lion dances and shadow puppet shows.

The celebrations of Imlek in mosques would not be successful without the contribution to Budi Setyagraha, who initiated and then implemented the idea. Budi Setyagraha, a prominent Chinese-speaking businessman, is a former chairperson of PITI Yogyakarta (1983-2002) and husband of Lie Sioe Fen, current chairperson of PITI Yogyakarta. As described by Perdana (2008), PITI Yogyakarta has been consistent in preaching Islam through ‘cultural approaches’ and promoting ethnic integration through ‘religious approaches’. Budi Setyagraha is also a member of Muhammadiyah, and a former local legislature member of PAN (1999-2004). His strong connections to MUI, as well as other Muslim figures and organisations, help gain their endorsements of celebrating contentious Imlek ceremony in mosques.

According to Budi Setyagraha, ‘Islamised’ Imlek ceremony aims to preserve Chinese cultural traditions, spread Islamic messages to ethnic Chinese, and show that Chinese Indonesians are not exclusive. He reiterates, ‘Chinese New Year is a cultural festival. It does not belong to any particular religion’. Therefore, he argues, ‘there is nothing wrong with Chinese Muslims praying and expressing their gratitude in welcoming the New Year in mosques’ (Interview, Budi Setyagraha, 12 February 2009). In order to allay the fears of certain Muslim groups, PITI consulted MUI, NU and Muhammadiyah in advance of the celebration for their supports. Budi Setyagraha has given many reference books and articles about Chinese New Year festivity to MUI. In addition, PITI has held a few seminars, inviting university lecturers and Muslim scholars to confirm Imlek is a cultural festival and its celebration does not violate Islamic laws. One of the seminars held in 2003 was entitled, Hari Raya Imlek Dalam Perspektif Budaya, Filsafat Tionghoa dan Syariat Islam (Imlek in Cultural Perspective, Chinese Philosophy and Islamic Law). Among the speakers were Irwan Abdullah, executive director of Religious and Cross-Cultural Studies, and H.Lasiyo, a professor of Chinese Philosophy at the UGM (Susanto & Sudiamo 2004).

Yet, not all Muslims agree that Imlek celebration in mosques is a good idea. Not only did conservative Muslim groups disapprove, some Chinese Muslims did too. Some of
them disapproved of the celebration of Chinese New Year on religious grounds (which I will discuss later), while others questioned the necessity of Chinese Muslims celebrating Imlek in public since they converted to Islam and are supposed to have assimilated into the wider Indonesian community. Junus Jahja, an advocate of assimilation, disagreed with the public celebration of Imlek, by both Muslim and non-Muslim Chinese Indonesians. He worries that the Imlek celebrations stress differences, and might lead to the re-emergence of ‘anti-Chinese sentiments’ among the ‘indigenous’ Indonesians if it is too conspicuous. As he said, ‘I have no problem if we observe Imlek at home, but we should be modest. We should not over celebrate it.’ (Interview, Junus Jahya, 25 December 2008). Most Chinese Muslim leaders I met do not share the concerns of Junus Jahya, but they also think that celebrating Imlek in mosques could be too controversial, as not all Indonesian Muslims agree with it. Instead of holding Imlek ceremony in mosques, Surabaya PITI, for instance, holds a Chinese New Year Gala Dinner in a hotel attended by local Muslim and Chinese leaders; while Chinese Muslim individuals in Jakarta, Solo, Semarang and Palembang join their non-Muslim counterparts in organising various Chinese New Year events.

Media Depictions of Imlek: Symbolic Chineseness

In post-1998 Indonesia, Chinese New Year celebrations have been widely reported in various print and electronic media. How do Chinese Muslims engage with the media coverage on the Imlek festivities? As I observed during fieldwork, some Chinese Muslims in Jakarta, including those who could not speak any Chinese language, had been Christians and previously did not observe Imlek, now publicly endorsed the Chinese New Year celebrations to manifest their Chineseness to media audiences. For them, that is a symbolic gesture to show that a Chinese does not lost his or her cultural heritage after becoming a Muslim. Syarif Tanudjaja, a Chinese Muslim leader, who has been frequently interviewed by journalists regarding Imlek celebrations, argued that media appearances are a form of ‘dakwah’. As he said,

15 Some non-Muslim Chinese leaders share Jahya’s caution about an exuberant celebration of Imlek. For example, in 2004, a prominent Catholic Chinese, Harry Tjan Silalahi, expressed his concern that the celebration of Imlek might have gone ‘over the limit’, as it could ‘disturb’ the feelings of Indonesians living in poverty. For more discussion about these worries, see Hoon (2009).
'I used to observe Chinese New Year when I was a kid, but stopped since my parents passed away and after I became a Christian. Furthermore, my wife is a Dutch-educated Peranakan Chinese. Therefore, I did not observe Imlek at home, and only spent time visiting relatives and catching up with schoolmates. However, since the downfall of Suharto, everyone celebrates Imlek. Even the churches have their Imlek ceremonies. Many journalists ask me if Chinese Muslims could celebrate Imlek. I say that Chinese Muslims can and some of us still celebrate Chinese New Year, as long as we do not eat pork and worship deities. Visiting parents, relatives and friends during the festival is a form of silaturahim encouraged by Islamic teachings. If we want to wear red clothes or give ang pao, why not? Becoming a Muslim does not imply one has to lose his or her family connections and cultural roots' (Interview, Syarif Tanudjaja, 9 June 2009).

In 2008 a week before Chinese New Year, a group of Chinese Muslims led by Syarif Tanudjaja, attended a recording session for an interactive survey television show, PadaMu Negeri. The theme of the show was ‘Menelusuri Jejak Naga di Bumi Nusantara’ (Searching for the Heritage of Dragon in Indonesia) and a few Chinese associations were invited to give their opinions. Besides PITI, other guests included representatives from the Women’s Branch of INTI (PINTI, Perempuan INTI), members from MATAKIN and students (mostly non-Chinese) from the Department of Chinese Literature in University of Indonesia. One of the questions thrown to the floor is whether Chinese New Year is a cultural or religious phenomenon (Adakah Imlek Fenomena Budaya atau Agama?). As expected, the audiences were divided: representatives from MATAKIN and PINTI insisted that Imlek is a Confucian religious festival; while PITI and students from UI viewed Imlek as a cultural tradition (Field note, 31 January 2008).

It is interesting to note the preparation of Chinese Muslims for their appearances in the TV show. Given that it is on a working day, they have difficulties finding Chinese Muslims to join the program. Some new converts who embrace Islam without informing their parents were also reluctant to appear on television. As a solution, a Chinese Muslim proposed that some non-Chinese Muslims who have fairer skin and slanted eyes could participate in the show to substitute the ‘real’ Chinese Muslims. In order to differentiate themselves from non-Muslim Chinese from MATAKIN and PINTI, one of them also suggested they wear Islamic clothing to manifest their Muslim identities, baju koko and peci for male; jilbab or kerudung for female. Also in 2008, some Chinese Muslims from
PITI participated in another Imlek talk show during the Chinese New Year eve. On that occasion, a few female Chinese Muslims dressed in red to show their Chinese-ness to the public. To a certain extent, the media coverage has made the Imlek festival a cultural expression for Chinese Muslims, even though some of them do not observe it personally.

**Imlek as Cultural Dakwah: Distinguishing Religion from Culture**

The celebration of Chinese New Year among Chinese Muslims is contentious practice because many puritan Muslims see it as violating Islamic teachings. I have indicated earlier that some Chinese Muslim leaders defend the Imlek ceremonies in mosques by differentiating Chinese ‘cultural’ traditions from ‘religious’ rituals. Such a notion is not a new one, as Tschacher (2009) noted, it is becoming more common for some Muslims to justify their contentious practices by removing them from the sphere of ‘religion’ to that of ‘culture’. For example, Tamil Muslims in Malaysia and Singapore defend their controversial flag raising ceremony, by pointing out that such practice is simply not religious at all, but ‘cultural’. Since no other religion is involved, there can be no question of polytheism (syirik) or other ‘religious’ sins in such practice (Tschacher 2009: 71). In a similar way, Chinese Muslims argue that their Imlek ceremonies held in mosques are not *haram*. They see Chinese New Year celebrations as a form of ‘*budaya*’ (culture), and sometimes, ‘*adat*’ (custom) or ‘*tradisi*’ (tradition), not a religious festival. Furthermore, they have removed the Chinese customary rituals, and replaced them with Islamic prayers to welcome a new year.

Statements such as, ‘*Imlek is not a religious practice. It is a Chinese custom*’ (Interview, Rudiansyah, 16 February 2009); ‘*Imlek does not belong to any religion. It is a cultural event shared by all Chinese*’ (Interview, Merry Effendi, 8 February 2009); and so on; are commonly used by my informants to justify their celebrations of Chinese New Year. In an Imlek TV program in 2008, the secretary of PITI, Willy Pangestu elaborates in detail,

‘The celebration of Imlek is a cultural tradition to welcome a new year and the changing of seasons from winter to spring. Over the years, its celebration has included some Chinese customary rituals, such as deity worship; yet such rituals are not essential parts of Imlek. Today, Chinese Indonesians from different religions backgrounds celebrate Imlek in different ways. Confucians visit *klenteng* (Chinese
temple) and Buddhists visit vihara (Buddhist temple) to pray and express their gratitude to Tian (God). In Jakarta, some Catholic churches organised special mass to thank God during Chinese New Year. In Yogyakarta, Chinese Muslims have Islamic prayers in mosques to welcome Imlek. In short, Imlek itself has no religious connotation.’ (Field note, 31 January 2008).

Seeing no contradiction between Chinese culture and Islamic religiosity, some Chinese Muslims active in accommodating Chinese cultural elements in their Islamic preaching, call it ‘dakwah pendekatan budaya’ (dakwah through cultural approaches). Such a notion is quite similar to ‘cultural dakwah’ (dakwah kultural), a concept that emerged within Muhammadiyah circles over the last few years, as a change in the way of the modernist organisation reaches non-practising Muslims (Daniels 2009:107). In the past, Muhammadiyah has distanced itself from local cultural traditions. Yet, under the notion of ‘cultural dakwah’, some Muhammadiyah activists strive to accommodate local traditions, when attempting to reform religious practices. As noted by Daniels (2009:108), such stances do not mean that they are going to accept practices that contradict their understandings of Islam, but rather that they are going to increase their involvement in cultural activities, often with the intention of ‘Islamising’ them.\(^{16}\) In this chapter, I use ‘cultural dakwah’ in a broad sense, referring to the efforts of Islamic outreach using Chinese cultural symbols. The ‘cultural dakwah’ of Chinese Muslims is not only about giving Chinese traditions an Islamic meaning, as exemplified in the Imlek ceremony in mosques; but also giving Islamic celebrations a touch of Chineseness.

For example, during Idul Fitri 2008, a Chinese Muslim leader in Surabaya, Abdul Chalim Lee, organised an open house, called ‘Lebaran bermuansa budaya Tionghoa’ (Celebration of Idul Fitri with Chinese cultural features). He decorated his home with red Chinese lanterns, ornaments and calligraphy. As well as Indonesian cuisine, he also served both halal Chinese food, such as mee sua (long noodle, symbolises long life) and Arabic dates, to suggest that Islamic teachings and Chinese culture are compatible. Beyond the festivities, Chinese-style mosques, Chinese nasyid group and Chinese halal restaurants, that combine both Chinese cultural symbols with Islamic messages, are other creative forms of ‘cultural dakwah’.

\(^{16}\) Discussions of ‘cultural dakwah’ began in Muhammadiyah’s congress in 1995, but it was in meeting in 2002 and 2003 that it was debated and shaped as a discourse within the Muhammadiyah movement. Yet, such notion is not without contestation. For more discussion, see Daniels (2009: 107-113), Hadi (2007) and Syamsul (2005).
In Yogyakarta, PIT! under the leadership of Budi Setyagraha and his wife, Lie Sioe Fen, has been consistent in preaching Islam through ‘cultural approaches’. Perdana (2008:61) notes two cases of Budi Setyagraha accommodating Chinese cultural traditions in the spread of Islam. The first one was to do with the burial of a Chinese convert, Sutanto, who passed away after recently converting to Islam. There was a dispute whether he should be buried in a Chinese cemetery or a Muslim graveyard. Budi helped to resolve this problem by consulting the opinions of religious scholars. Ulama (religious scholars) from Muhammadiyah and NU had different viewpoints, with the former arguing Sutanto should be buried in an Islamic grave; meanwhile the latter approved burial in a Chinese cemetery using Islamic rituals. PIT! Yogyakarta chose the NU solution thinking it would reduce the worries of ethnic Chinese to convert to Islam. The other case was of a Chinese woman, Nurhayati who was interested in Islam but was reluctant to convert after hearing that Islam prohibited mourning for a loved one according to Chinese traditions. PIT! explained to her that there was no such prohibition in Islam and Budi himself practised mourning when his parents passed away.

Appreciation of ethnic cultural practices is not new to Indonesian Islam. In fact, the ‘cultural dakwah’ of Chinese Muslims is reminiscent of the early efforts of Muslim saints who appropriated the Javanese traditions to disseminate Islamic messages (Dijk 1998; Woodward 1989). Today, not only the traditionalist NU, but also modernist Muhammadiyah has a more relaxed attitude towards local cultural traditions (Daniels 2009; Syamsul 2005). Yet, the different cultural manifestations of Islam are not without critics, as many ‘neo-fundamentalist’ and salafist Muslims see such practices as improper innovations, thus un-Islamic. Meanwhile, less puritanical Indonesian Muslims welcome Imlek celebrations in mosques as promoting Islamic pluralism, and reasserting the religious diversity that has existed in Indonesia for centuries.

As I illustrated earlier, the ‘Islamised’ Imlek ceremony in mosques reveals how some Chinese Muslim leaders differentiate ‘ethnic practices’ from ‘religious ritual’ to preserve their cultural traditions, but not at the expense of Islamic principles. However, such ‘culture-religion’ distinction has limitations and can be problematic, especially when it comes to defending contentious practices (Tschacher 2009). First, in some cases, the difference between ‘culture’ and ‘religion’ is not clear-cut, given that how to define a practice as being aspects of ‘culture’ or ‘religion’ is always open to debate. For example, Harnish (2006) described such ambiguity in his observations of a festival in Lombok.
The festival, in which both Hindu Balinese and Muslim Sasak participate, is perceived as a ‘religious’ affair by the Balinese, yet as a ‘cultural’ tradition by the Sasak, who justify their participation on different grounds (Harnish 2006:6-7). This resembled the case of Imlek celebrations in Indonesia, in which Confucians claim it as their religious festival, while Muslims and Christians celebrate it as a cultural event. Second, the ‘culture-religion’ distinction discourages Muslims from defending their controversial practices through progressive interpretations of Islamic scriptures and legal traditions. The ‘culture-religion’ distinction, to a certain extent, also caught in the notion of religious purification because it still rejects practices, be they cultural or religious, that contradict Islamic understandings of orthodox Muslims. Furthermore, it falls short of addressing the interactions between Islam and other religions, as well as the different opinions within Islam. The notion of a ‘culture-religion’ distinction might be convincing enough to justify the Chinese New Year ‘cultural’ celebration, yet it is inadequate to defend Muslims wishing a ‘Merry Christmas’ to Christians, and to protect Muslims who follow ‘deviance’ sects, such as those in Ahmadiyah. I will return to these issues when I discuss the possibilities and limitations of Islamic pluralism in contemporary Indonesia later.

Imlek as Religious Debate: Halal or Haram

Having discussed how some Chinese Muslims employ the ‘culture-religion’ distinction to justify their Chinese New Year celebrations, it is now important to look at how Muslims, both Chinese and non-Chinese, debate Imlek by referring to religious texts. I begin this section with part of a dialogue between two Chinese Muslims, Syarif Tanudjaja, a PIT! leader and Hadi Tham, a convert, which I noted during a MUSTIKA Islamic study session in a mosque in Serpong, Tangerang. This conversation happened a week before the Chinese New Year in 2008 (Field note, 3 February 2008). During the pengajian, a Betawi Muslim ustaz, Ahmad, reminds attendants that converts should not practise their former religious traditions, because those practices are violating Islamic principles.

Hadi Tham then raises a question,

‘Can a Chinese Muslim celebrate Imlek?’

When Ahmad tries to explain, Syarif Tanudjaja interrupts and says,
‘Let me explain Imlek celebration, as non-Chinese always have misperceptions of it. Imlek is a cultural festival that signifies a new year according to Chinese lunar calendar. Yet sometimes, Imlek celebrations involve customary rituals and un-Islamic practices, such as gambling. Therefore, a Chinese Muslim should avoid Imlek. It does not mean that we want to forget our traditions, but I worry we might infringe Islamic teachings. Even some Christians do not celebrate Imlek. And for Muslims, local traditions such as slametan and tahlian are not essential.’

Hadi asked,
‘Does that mean we can’t visit our family members during Imlek?’

Using various Islamic terminologies, Syarif Tanudjaja explains,
‘When I said I discourage the celebration of Imlek, I did not mean that it is haram. But it is also not wajib (compulsory). If a Chinese Muslim wants to celebrate Imlek with families, silakan (please do so), as long as, you do not follow the rituals and eat pork. We can celebrate it in Islamic ways. It also depends on niat (intention). For example, if we celebrate Imlek for syiar (preaching), that is fine. If we visit our relatives for silaturahim, that is good too.’

Hadi asks another question,
‘I have heard that MUI prohibits Muslims wishing Christians ‘Merry Christmas’, how about ‘Gong Xi Fa Cai’?’

Syarif Tanudjaja replies,
‘We have to understand the meaning of such greetings. ‘Merry Christmas’ means the appreciation of the birth of Jesus Christ, who is understood as the son of God according to Christianity. If we wish Christians ‘Merry Christmas’, that implies that we agree with the concept of trinity which is incompatible with our belief in tauhid. ‘Gong Xi Fa Cai’ wishes prosperity and has no religious meaning, therefore it is allowed. We can also give or receive angpao (money in a red envelope). Islam is a religion that values cultural diversity.’

It is noted that Syarif Tanudjaja has been consistent with his opinion that Imlek is allowed (diperbolehkan) with conditions, yet he has different emphasises for different occasions. On TV, he says that Chinese Muslims are allowed to celebrate Imlek, as a
way of Islamic outreach. However, during *pengajian*, he discourages Chinese converts to celebrate Imlek, as a means to cultivate their faiths and to avoid them from observing 'un-Islamic' practices. The audiences on Metro TV are mostly non-Muslim Chinese, while the *pengajian* are addressing both Chinese converts and non-Chinese Muslims.

How do Indonesian Muslim scholars view Imlek celebrations? Is Imlek ceremony religiously permitted or not? To answer this question, it is important to locate it within the broader religious debates regarding the role of local or ethnic cultural traditions in everyday Muslim practices. In terms of theology, the acceptance of non-Islamic cultural and religious practices among Muslims is based on their interpretations towards *fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence) and Hadith (Prophetic Traditions). Islamic jurisprudence places all human actions within five categories: *wajib* (obligatory acts like daily prayer and fasting), *mandub* (commendable but not required acts like performing extra prayers), *mubah* (acts towards which Islam is indifferent, like eating foods that are not forbidden), *makruh* (reprehensible but not forbidden acts like divorce) and *haram* (forbidden acts like adultery and theft). Meanwhile according to Prophetic Traditions, 'innovation' (*bid'ah*, refer to practices not mentioned in Islamic texts) can be classified as good (*hasana*) and praiseworthy (*mahmuda*) or bad (*sayyia*) and blameworthy (*madhmuma*) (Vikor 2005). Both frameworks provide space for debate on contentious practices in Muslim societies. Traditionalist and liberal Muslims tend to view 'innovation' neutrally or positively, thinking such practices at least do not violate, indeed may complement Islamic teachings; while modernist and salafist Muslims tend to see 'innovation' negatively, thinking such practices could undermine their faith and lead them to un-Islamic behaviours.

Similarly, there are divergent religious viewpoints over whether Chinese New Year celebration is *halal* or *haram*. I will contrast two different opinions of Imlek among Muslims in Indonesia. First, is that of the national MUI *Fatwa* and second, is in an article, written by a HTI activist. Both of them refer to Qur'anic texts for their reasoning, yet end with different viewpoints; the former argues that Imlek celebration is not *haram* and the latter strongly condemns it. I will also discuss a response of a Chinese Muslim activist in Lautze Mosque, who takes a middle position.

As I have mentioned before, MUI Yogyakarta issued a *fatwa*, allowing the celebration of Chinese New Year in mosques in 2003. According to a feature report by *Nurani*...
magazine in 2008, entitled ‘Fatwa MUI: Boleh Rayakan Imlek di Masjid’ [MUI Fatwa: Can Celebrate Imlek in Mosque], the national board of MUI (Majelis Ulama Indonesia, Indonesian Council of Ulama) has also issued a Fatwa that the Imlek celebration is permissible (diperbolehkan) as long as it does not contain customary rituals. According to Makruf Amin, Head of the MUI Fatwa Commission, the fatwa decision was based on Qur’anic texts. To support his argument that Islam acknowledges cultural and ethnic differences, Makruf Amin first quoted a Qur’anic Verse from Chapter Al-Hujurat, ‘People, We created you all from a single man and a single woman, and made you into races and tribes so that you should recognise one another. In God’s eyes, the most honoured of you are ones most mindful of Him: God is all knowing, all aware’. He then describes Qur’anic verses 26-30 from Chapter Al-Zukhruf, which state that Islam strongly prohibits idolatry and polytheism (syirik), associating God with other human inventions. According to Makruf Amin, the Chinese New Year tradition is not a religious ideology, but a social and cultural tradition; therefore there is nothing wrong with Chinese Muslims celebrating Imlek in mosques to show their gratitude to Allah and to welcome a new year. He says the Imlek ceremony is only haram if it involves non-Islamic praying rituals, such as deity worship and consumption of forbidden food, such as pork. He further equates Chinese New Year to the Islamic New Year, thus it does not violate sharia. He quotes Qur’anic verses from Chapter Al-Asr supporting the reflection of the passing of time during Chinese New Year as a good tradition that Muslims should appreciate. He stresses that Islam is not hostile to cultural traditions, and views cultural expression of Islam as a form of syiar.

Ikhwan Syam, the secretary of MUI, who was also interviewed in the same report, echoes Makruf Amin’s viewpoint. He contends that Islam allows cultural practices that are not idolatrous and polytheist. For him, Chinese New Year is a cultural festival and does not necessarily contain religious elements. He explains his endorsement for Imlek celebration in mosques, by arguing that mosques are preaching centres of Islam. He contends, the Imlek ceremony in mosques is Islamic as it includes prayers for gratitude, Islamic chanting, Islamic study sessions and contributions to orphans, all of which are

17 See ‘Rayakan Imlek di masjid, why not?’ [Celebrating Imlek in mosque, why not?], Nurani, February 2008
18 The Indonesian translation, quoted in Nurani’s report is ‘Allah menciptakan Manusia dari seorang laki-laki dan perempuan, dan menjadikan manusia berbangsa-bangsa dan bersuku-suku supaya kamu saling mengenal. Sesungguhnya yang paling mulia di sisi Allah adalah manusia yang bertakwa’. The English translation I used here is quoted from Abdel Haleem (2005).
19 See ‘Perayaan Imlek Boleh di Masjid’ [Imlek Celebration is Allowed in Mosque], Nurani, February 2008
encouraged by Islamic teachings. He concludes by promoting Islam as a religion that blesses all (*rahmat lil-alamin*), including non-Muslims.

Although MUI justifies the celebration of Chinese New Year in terms of Qur'anic texts, the 'culture-religion' distinction is the main reason MUI gives the green light to Imlek celebrations in mosques. The input of Chinese Muslim leaders is crucial in such *fatwa*-making. Leaders, such as Budi Setyagraha in Yogyakarta and Syarif Tanudjaja have close relations with religious scholars in MUI and Muslim leaders in NU and Muhammadiyah. Syarif Tanudjaja himself is also an advisory member of MUI. By sharing information and lobbying, Chinese Muslim leaders have convinced Muslim scholars that Imlek is not a religious festival.

In general, MUI's viewpoint on Imlek is shared by many mainstream Muslim leaders from both NU and Muhammadiyah. It is not a surprise that former NU leader Abdurrahman Wahid who endorsed religious pluralism and sometimes claimed himself have Chinese descent, throws his support behind these Imlek celebrations among Chinese Muslims (Interview, Abdurrahman Wahid, 10 January 2009). During his campaign for president in 2004, former Muhammadiyah leader Amien Rais sent 'Gong Xi Fa Cai' greetings to Chinese Indonesians on a TV program (Budianta, 2008:174). A few Muslim leaders from both organisations, who I met during fieldwork, also thought Imlek celebrations are not *haram*.

Yet, not all Muslims agree with the MUI *fatwa* and those who are salafist-inclined even argue that Chinese New Year celebration is *haram*. Such opinion is well represented in an article entitled, 'Imlek adalah hari raya agama kafir bukan sekedar tradisi Tionghoa: Haram atas Muslim turut merayakannya' [Imlek is not only a Chinese tradition, but also a non-believer religious festival: Muslims are not allowed to celebrate it], written by a HTI activist, M. Shiddiq Al-Jawi (2007). Referring to a book, entitled 'Mengenal Hari Raya Konfusiani' [Understanding Confucian Festival] (Winarso 2003), Al-Jawi concludes that the Chinese New Year is an integral part of Confucian teachings and therefore is not only cultural. He cites Winarso’s book which argues Imlek signifies the birth of Confucian and is an important day to pray for *Tian* (God), to support his opinion that Chinese New Year festival has religious connotation.
Al-Jawi (2007) also quotes Qur’anic verses to disapprove of Imlek celebrations. Insisting that the Qur'an and the Hadith are the only true standard references for Muslims, he rejects the ‘culture-religion’ distinction in determining the permission of a contentious practice. He uses the example of ‘free sex’ to repudiate the logic of ‘culture-religion’ distinction: he claims that ‘free sex’ is a ‘western tradition’ and not a part of Christianity; then he says Muslims cannot practice ‘free sex’, even though it is a ‘culture’ and not a ‘religion’. Therefore, quoting Qur’anic verses from Chapter Al-A’raaf and Chapter Al-Baqarah, he contends that the reason a practice is permitted or not for Muslims, is not based on whether the practice is a cultural tradition or a religious ritual, but on whether it is stated in the religious scriptures or not. Like other neo-fundamentalist Muslims, he views practices not mentioned in the texts as improper innovations. Thus, according to him, the Chinese New Year celebration is violating Islamic principles, even though it does not involve ‘un-Islamic’ rituals. The HTI activist even goes so far as to propose that sending ‘Gong Xi Fa Cai’ greetings, using red paper lanterns as decoration and lion dances are all haram. Compare with mainstream NU and Muhammadiyah, HTI is a small organisation in Indonesia. Except from ultra-puritan sections, majority Muslims in Indonesia do not endorse Al-Jawi’s viewpoint.

Which religious opinions do Chinese Muslims prefer? Overall, except those who are highly puritanical, most Chinese Muslims support the MUI fatwa, that Imlek celebrations are not haram as long as they do not involve non-Islamic rituals. I will illustrate more Chinese Muslims’ responses and their everyday practices in the second last section of this chapter. Here, I discuss the view of a young Chinese Muslim activist, Nugroho Laison, who suggested that Imlek was not haram, but should be avoided, because its celebrations often lead to ‘un-Islamic’ practices.

Nugroho Laison, educated in a Muhammadiyah high school in Jakarta, has written a long and comprehensive article, entitled ‘Imlek: antara Budaya dan Aqidah’ [Imlek: between Culture and Faith] on his blog to discuss whether a Chinese convert should celebrate Chinese New Year (Laison 2008). He shares similar viewpoints of Syarif Tanudjaja, which I have discussed earlier. He agrees that Imlek was merely a cultural tradition in beginning, yet over time, its celebrations have been mixed with mystical beliefs and

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20 Among the Qur’anic verses that he quoted are ‘Follow what has been sent down to you from your Lord; do not follow other masters beside Him. How seldom you take heed!’ from Chapter Al-A’raaf (verse 3); and ‘You who believe, enter wholeheartedly into submission to God and do not follow Satan’s footsteps, for he is your sworn enemy’ from Chapter Al-Baqara (verse 208).
superstitious rituals, such as incense burning, which according to him, are ‘un-Islamic’. While approving practices such mutual visiting and angpau giving that are compatible to Islamic values, he worries celebrating Imlek might lead a convert to practise habits such as eating pork, drinking alcohol, following horoscope and gambling; all *haram* activities.

In order to distance converts from such ‘un-Islamic’ activities, in another article, ‘*Muallaf menyikapi tradisi*’ [Convert responding to tradition], Laison (2009) proposes Chinese Muslims if possible, should avoid Imlek celebrations; or only celebrate it with a good intentions, such as to preach Islam and to express gratitude to God. He emphasises that religion is more important than ethnicity, therefore ‘a Muslim should not place culture in front of Islam’. He stresses if a convert chose to observe Chinese New Year, he or she should celebrate with activities that are Islamic and stay away from all suspicious practices. He also defends the MUI *Fatwa* on Christmas celebrations and claims that the prohibition of wishing ‘Merry Christmas’ does not mean to exclude Muslims from Christians, but to preserve Muslims’ belief in *tauhid* (the oneness of God), especially among new converts.

By examining the debate over Imlek celebration among Muslims, I do not mean that there is no controversy about Imlek celebration among the followers of other religions. Some Christian groups and individuals in Indonesia also discourage Chinese Christians from celebrating Chinese New Year. For instance, a protestant pastor in Jakarta, Rev. Markus Tan’s book, entitled ‘Imlek dan Al-Kitab’ (Imlek and the Bible) questions Chinese customary rituals observed during Imlek celebrations and expresses worry that Chinese Christians may return to their syncretised religious belief if celebrating Imlek (Tan 2008). In contrast to Protestantism, Catholicism in Indonesia has a more flexible attitude towards external practices and traditions. For example, there are Chinese New Year masses in Catholic churches in Jakarta, Yogyakarta and Pontianak (Hoon 2009). Not surprisingly, some of my informants equalises Catholic to NU; and Protestant to Muhammadiyah in Indonesia.

**Contextualising Fatwa: The Possibilities and Limitations of Islamic Pluralism**

In the previous section, I discussed MUI *fatwa* on Chinese New Year celebration and here I will locate the discussion in the larger debate on Islamic pluralism in Indonesia.
The MUI fatwa that allowed the celebration of Imlek was a surprise for some people, as the conservative-inclined council had previously issued fatwas against religious pluralism. For example, in 1981, MUI issued a fatwa proposing it was haram for Muslims to attend the celebrations of Christmas, and some Muslim leaders even argued that Muslims should avoid wishing ‘Merry Christmas’ to Christians. In 2005, MUI issued a fatwa suggesting that pluralism, secularism and liberalism are ‘un-Islamic’ (Gillespie 2007). In 2009, West Java MUI issued another fatwa that prohibited Muslims from celebrating Valentine’s Day.21 Makruf Amin, Head of the MUI Fatwa Commission, who thinks Imlek celebrations are not haram, also told Muslims that they should avoid celebrating Valentine’s Day.22 For sure, not all Muslim leaders and scholars agree with MUI fatwas on the above-mentioned matters. Here, I will not discuss those debates in detail, but focus on examining the reasons behind the divergent MUI’s fatwa regarding the celebration of Christmas and Chinese New Year.

The ‘culture-religion’ distinction is one of the major reasons why MUI have different attitudes toward Chinese New Year and Christmas. MUI views Imlek as a cultural tradition, but treats Christmas as a religious celebration that incompatible with Islamic theology. Some Muslim leaders argue that the prohibition of wishing ‘Merry Christmas’ is not to imply religious exclusivity, but to protect their faith in Islam. They contend that by using the greeting ‘Merry Christmas’, they are agreeing that the birth of Jesus as son of God, and accepting the trinity concept in Christianity, which is violating their belief in ‘tauhid’ (the oneness of God). A similar argument is made by MUI to declare that celebration of Valentine’s Day as forbidden according to Islam. Amidhan, Head of MUI said, ‘We have to ban Valentine’s Day because we are celebrating another religion’s holiday. Santo Valentine was a Christian, therefore Valentine’s Day is not allowed in Islam. People who celebrate Valentine’s Day are in fact, spreading Christian beliefs.’23

To summarise the stand of Muslims towards both Imlek and Christmas, at least there are four possible outcomes:

1. Both Imlek and Christmas celebration are haram
2. Imlek celebration is halal with conditions, but Christmas celebration is haram

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21 See ‘MUI Jabar Harapkan Peringatan Valentine Day’ [MUI West Java Disapprove Valentine’s Celebration], Kompas, 14 February 2009.
3. Both Imlek and Christmas celebration are *halal* with conditions
4. Both Imlek and Christmas celebration are *halal*

The first viewpoint is shared by most salafist and neo-fundamentalist Muslims, who insist that Muslims can only celebrate Idul Fitri and Idul Adha. Many of them even reject the Maulid celebration and local Muslim rituals such as *tahlilan* and *slametan*, as they view those practices as improper innovations. Most Indonesian Muslims adhere themselves to the second or third viewpoints. Muslims who are puritan-inclined allow the practice of cultural traditions in Islamic ways, but prohibit the celebration of other religious festivals for Muslims. Meanwhile Muslims who are less orthodox see no problem with Muslims celebrating Chinese New Year and wishing Christians a ‘Merry Christmas’ as long as no religious rituals are involved. The fourth stand held by Muslims who think that their visiting to temples or churches for celebrations will not affect their belief in Islam. Of course, such generalisations are rather simplified and used only for analytical purposes, and do not reflect the complexity and fluidity of Muslim religiosities, which I will discuss in the next chapter.

Although interpretations of religious texts are important in accepting or rejecting contentious practices, one should not overlook the social contexts that constrain the religious debates. For example, Gillispie (2007) and Hosen (2003) have demonstrated how political situations and government policies influenced *fatwa*-making in Indonesia. Indeed, in analysing the issue of certain *fatwa*, both textual and contextual spheres have to be considered. Textual spheres refer to the interpretation of religious scriptures, while contextual spheres refer to the socio-economic and political situations in which the interpretation takes place. I have previously discussed how religious interpretation influenced the *fatwa*-making on Imlek, and now I examine the social contexts backgrounding the *fatwa*-making.

First, the MUI approval of Imlek celebration is a reflection of cultural openness in post-1998 Indonesia. The issue of whether Imlek was *halal* or *haram* would not be raised during New Order period, as the public expression of Chinese cultural identity is prohibited. In the past, some Muslim leaders were seen as ‘anti-Chinese’; today many of them are ‘Chinese-friendly’ to show their commitment to cultural diversity and to manifest the tolerant face of Indonesian Islam. Given that many Muslim scholars in Indonesia are involved in politics directly or indirectly (Hosen, 2003:170), we might also
speculate that one of the reasons Muslim scholars chose to allow Imlek celebrations is to get on the good side of Chinese Indonesians and obtain their electoral support and funding. In addition, the MUI Fatwa allowing Imlek celebrations would not have been possible without the lobbying of Chinese Muslim leaders and their involvement in the board of MUI. As I mentioned earlier, their clarifications that Imlek is a cultural tradition is crucial to influencing the fatwa-making of MUI. It is also likely for some Muslim scholars in MUI who are less orthodox to endorse the Imlek fatwa, as a reaction against the anti-pluralism fatwa, a bulwark against narrow Islamism, and a moderation of the 'conservative' image of MUI public.

At the same time, the MUI prohibition of the 'Merry Christmas' greeting also should be analysed beyond its theological argument, as it reflects the worries some Muslims have about the 'Christianisation' of Muslims, and their suspicions of Christian missionaries in Indonesia. Generally speaking, relations between Islam and Christianity are more troublesome in Indonesia, compared to those between Islam and Confucian or Buddhism. There have been conflicts between Muslims and Christians in Maluku and Poso; and more recently, the burning of churches in West Java. Besides being interwoven with anti-colonial and anti-western sentiments, some conservative Muslim scholars also justify their prohibition of Christian-related festival such as Christmas and Valentine's Day on moral ground, as they think such celebrations encourage 'immoral' Western lifestyles and lead to 'un-Islamic' behaviours, such as 'free sex', night clubbing and alcohol consumption.24

I would like to argue that, to a certain extent, the MUI fatwa allowing Imlek but prohibiting Christmas celebrations among Muslims reflects the possibilities and limitations of religious pluralism in contemporary Indonesia. Paradoxically, while there is an increasing acceptance of cultural diversity among Muslim leaders, there is also a rising intolerance towards religious intermingling and intra-religion differences within some sections of Indonesian Muslim society. To support such argument, let me compare the responses of Indonesian Muslims towards different issues. As I noted, while most

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24 Not directly related to the focus of this chapter, I would like to suggest that contextualised interpretation of religious texts does not necessarily lead to a more progressive and inclusive viewpoint, as many would assume. For example, some Muslim scholars disapprove the celebration of Christmas, not based on religious grounds, but in a context that such celebration might lead to immoral behaviour. In Malaysia, recently, there has been a controversy over whether non-Muslims could use the term 'Allah' to refer to their God. Some Malay Muslims who read religious scriptures literally approve the usage of 'Allah' by non-Muslims, claiming that there is no Qur'anic verse prohibits it; while those who disapprove the usage of 'Allah' by non-Muslims, justify their positions by saying that it could cause confusion among Muslims and might lead to apostasy. In this case, ironically, those Muslim who are 'literalist' seem to be more tolerant than those who are 'contextualist.'
Indonesian Muslim leaders do not have problems with the establishment of Chinese-style mosques, some hesitate to endorse Chinese New Year ceremonies in mosques. Many Muslims, including the conservatively-inclined MUI allow the celebration of Chinese New Year if it does not involve non-Islamic rituals, yet keep themselves always from Christmas celebrations. When it comes to Ahmadiyah, fewer Muslim scholars lend their support to the minority Muslim sect which was deemed ‘deviant’ according to MUI fatwa. Even the government does not take firm actions to protect Ahmadiyah’s followers from being attacked by conservative-radical Muslim groups.  

Generally speaking, Chinese Muslims share the religious viewpoints of their Muslim counterparts. For example, Chinese preachers, such as Anton Medan and Syafii Antonio, do not mind giving angpao during Chinese New Year, but hesitate to visit Chinese temples and burn incenses; they are happy to wish ‘Gong Xi Fa Cai’, yet reluctant to greet ‘Merry Christmas’ (Interview, Anton Medan, 7 November 2008; Interview, Syafii Antonio, 11 January 2009). In other words, many Muslim scholars accept the cultural diversity and expression of Islam. Yet, their attitudes different in the realm of religion; they hesitate to cross religious boundaries, observe non-Islamic rituals and endorse alternative interpretations of Islam.

Chinese New Year Celebration as Everyday Practice

How do ordinary Chinese Muslims respond to the religious debate of Chinese New Year celebration? How do they view and practise Chinese cultural traditions in their daily lives? In general, there are three responses towards Imlek celebration: haram, not haram with conditions, and not haram even if involve customary rituals. Most Chinese Muslims consider Imlek celebration is not haram, as long as it does not involves rituals such as burning incense; some insist that Imlek celebration in all forms should not be observed; and others continue the practice of customary rituals to show respect to their ancestors. These diverse viewpoints reflect their Islamic affiliations and understandings, as well as their social experience, familial interaction and cultural upbringing.

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Ahmadiyah is a controversial Muslim sect, founded in India near the end of the 19th century, has existed in Indonesia since the 1920s. In the last few years, Ahmadiyah’s followers in Indonesia have experienced increasing tension and hostility from conservative Islamic groups. For some Muslims, the Ahmadiyya movement is considered against Islamic beliefs especially due to its teaching that its founder, Mirza Ghulam Ahmad is a Prophet. For more discussion of Ahmadiyah in Indonesia, see Alfittri (2008) and Budiwanti (2009).
In terms of cultural upbringing, as expected, Chinese converts who speak Mandarin or Chinese dialects and have closer relations with non-Muslim family members tend to take Chinese New Year festival seriously, while those who have assimilated seldom relate to this Chinese tradition. Others see Imlek as a social and family event during which they visit their parents and relatives, wear new clothes and eat nice foods. Regarding religiosity, Chinese Muslims who went through Islamic education and have religious affiliations tend to have stronger viewpoints on the celebrations of Imlek. During fieldwork, I have encountered a few Chinese Muslims who strongly oppose the Imlek celebration and other Chinese traditional practices: two of them claim to be salafis, and another one is a Tablighi Jamaat follower. For them, there are only two recognised celebrations in Islam (Idul Fitri and Idul Adha), while other celebrations including Maulid (the birthday celebration of Prophet) are improper innovation.

On the other hand, there are some Chinese Muslims, especially those who are NU-inclined, who still practise customary rituals at home or visit temples to celebrate Imlek. One of them is Syamsul Ariffin, a part-time practitioner of Chinese medicine in Surabaya. He told me that he not only observes Chinese and Islamic festivals, but also follows Javanese traditional rituals, *kejawan*. According to Syamsul, his observance of various traditions does not make him feel less a Muslim. He claims, ‘I am a Chinese, a Muslim, and perhaps, I am also a Javanese.’ (Interview, Syamsul Ariffin, 30 October 2008). Meanwhile, Chinese Muslims who are close to Muhammadiyah and PKS are in the middle of the spectrum: they think Imlek is not *wajib*, but is also not *haram*, as long as no ‘un-Islamic’ elements are involved. Most of them celebrate Imlek by visiting family members and friends to strengthen relationships (*silaturahim*). At the same time, they reject food that is not *halal*, and avoid rituals such as deity worship. Some of them are more cautious. For instance, Nugroho Laison proposes Chinese Muslims avoid Imlek celebrations to prevent themselves from practising ‘un-Islamic’ rituals and habits.

Beyond religious considerations, some Chinese Muslims practise contentious rituals during Chinese festivals for familial reasons. Quite often, they justify such practices by comparing Chinese traditional values to Islamic teachings, and suggest that some rituals although seen as ‘un-Islamic’ by puritan Muslims, are in fact complementary to universal Islamic principles. For example, in 2008, Marlina who is married to Nugroho Laison, went back to her hometown in Bangka Island to celebrate Imlek with her parents. She followed rituals such as burning incense and offering food for ancestors and deities.
Despite knowing that these practices are contentious, she observed them because she did not want to hurt her parents’ feelings. She says her actions could be justified in Islam, because Qur’anic texts teach Muslims to respect their parents and to maintain good relationships with family members (Interview, Marlina, 2 March 2008). Also in 2008, a Chinese Muslim couple, Hadi Tham and Julie who attended pengajian frequently, invited me to their home in Jakarta during Imlek. They served me various halal Chinese foods, including mee sua (long noodle that symbolises long life) and Mandarin oranges. I noticed they had a praying altar with incense and food for one of their parents who had passed away. Hadi Tham explains that they are sharing house with non-Muslim relatives and they keep the ancestor’s altar to show respect. Like Marlina, he says Islam teaches him to live harmoniously with non-Muslims and to express filial piety to elders (Field note, 18 February 2008).

Some Chinese Muslims who still observe the rituals of Ceng Beng (Grave-Sweeping Day), a festival for ethnic Chinese to pay respect to their ancestors by visiting the cemetery and praying with incense and food, state it is to do with Islamic teachings: living harmoniously and respecting elders. One of them, Alex Tjiu says he accompanies his mother to his father’s tomb every year during Ceng Beng. He understands to make an offering based on Chinese tradition is an expression of filial piety (Interview, Alex Tjiu, 6 September 2008). Comparing traditional Chinese beliefs and Islamic principles, he argues that maintaining the Chinese virtue of remembering the ancestors is complementary to Islamic teachings that urge Muslims to respect elders. Meanwhile, Chinese Muslims who are more puritan say they appreciate the values of Ceng Beng, but insist that they should distance themselves from observing non-Islamic rituals. Therefore, they visit the cemetery and pray in an Islamic way, without burning incense and offering food. As I will further discuss in the following chapter, despite the disapprovals of orthodox Muslims, some Chinese Muslims continue to observe various controversial practices in everyday lives, such as Ida’s involvement in slametan rituals, Shamsul’s participation in kejawen rituals, and Mary’s worshipping Buddha at home.

These everyday practices show that Islamic religiosities are not only constrained by the religious texts and their interpretations, but also depend on social interactions and living experiences of Muslims. In this sphere of ‘everyday Islam’ (Alam 2007), or ‘practical Islam’ (Beatty 1999), many Muslims can spontaneously negotiate themselves between religious doctrines and social contexts in observing contentious practices. In some cases,
as I have discussed, they are aware that such rituals might be considered 'un-Islamic' by puritan Muslims, yet they also defend their practices by referring to more universal Islamic values. In short, like other Muslims, Chinese Muslims creatively reconcile their contentious practices with religious doctrines, by referring to Islamic values.

**Religious Hybridisation: Texts, Contexts and Everyday Practices**

I began this chapter describing Imlek ceremonies in mosques and I end it here with a *slametan* (communal feast) ritual in a Chinese temple. Ikhsan Tanggok (2005) in his description of a *slametan* in *klenteng* Sam Poo Kong (Cheng Ho Temple) in Semarang, noted that the *slametan* is co-celebrated by Javanese and Chinese Indonesians, to strengthen their relationships and to ask for temple protection. As he illustrated, the *slametan* prayer in the temple is a mixture of Qur’anic verses and Javanese *kejawen* texts, and observed by both Javanese Muslims and Chinese Confucians, to ask for blessing from *dewa Sam Poo Kong* (Cheng Hoo deity). This shows that hybridised religious practices continue to exist in Muslims’ everyday lives, despite the rise of Islamic ‘purification’. It is not also uncommon for Chinese businessmen to observe *slametan* before the beginning of a new business, by inviting Javanese Muslim scholars to pray for blessing reciting Qur’anic texts. Likewise, there are some Muslim students involved in Chinese temple processions in Jakarta streets in 2009 (Chan 2010). Together with Imlek ceremonies in mosques, such practices offer opportunities for inter-religious cooperation and inter-ethnic solidarity, as well as provide space to reclaim religious pluralism in Indonesia challenged by some orthodox Muslim groups.

Religious syncretism has been used to analyse and to defend contentious Muslims’ practices, yet it is problematic. For charges of religious ‘syncretism’, one might have to assume that there is an ‘authentic’ form. Similarly, the usage of the ‘religion-culture’ distinction to defend contentious practices is also often caught in the notion of religious purification, because it still rejects practices that do not fit with the Islamic understandings of puritan Muslims. As I have mentioned, such distinction might be convincing enough to justify ‘cultural’ celebrations like Chinese New Year, yet inadequate to address the rising intolerance towards religious intermingling and inter-religion differences among certain sections of Indonesian Muslim society. What are the alternative ways of analysing the encounters of Islam with other cultural and religious
practices? Instead of a harmonious outcome, I would like to suggest that it is more useful to view religious hybridisation as a contested process, between the interactions of text interpretations, social conditions and everyday practices.

On the issues of Imlek in mosques, both proponents and opponents have referred to Qur'anic texts to justify their stands, which show that individuals and groups with diverse interests and orientations may find their own, often conflicting, truths in the very same scriptures. While different cultural upbringings and religious experiences influence Chinese Muslims' individual receptions to their ethnic traditions; the return of Chinese culture in the post-1998 Indonesian public space and the efforts of moderate Muslim groups to promote inclusive Islam amidst the rise of religious conservatism, form a broader canvas backgrounding the debates of Imlek celebrations among Chinese Muslims. However, beyond religious considerations, whether ordinary Chinese Muslims celebrate Imlek or not and how they observe it is depends on their life experiences, family influences and other everyday practical considerations. Some of them also creatively justify their controversial customary practices by referring to more universal Islamic values.
Conversion to Islam, Flexible Piety and Multiple Identifications

'I have three names. My official Indonesian name on my identity card is 'Julia Vitha'. Most people I know from schools and workplaces call me 'Vitha'. While my parents and family members in Bangka call me 'Lee Woon'. After conversion to Islam, I adapted an Islamic name, 'Raihanah'. When I attend religious activities, my Muslim friends use my Islamic name. Since you are a Chinese person, you can address me in my Chinese name' (Interview, 10 June 2008).

The case of Vitna's multiple names is not exceptional, as many Chinese Muslims have more than one name, and sometimes even three names - Indonesian, Chinese and Islamic, which allow them to emphasise different dimensions of their identities at different times. Such naming practices show not only that different Chinese Muslims have different cultural orientations and religious affiliations, but also that an individual Chinese Muslim can situationally shift and variously stress their manifold identifications.

In the previous chapters, I have analysed the emergence of Chinese Muslim cultural identities in post-1998 Indonesia, without treating Chinese Muslims as a bounded ethnic-religious group. I have also hinted at their multifaceted and multilayered identities. Focusing on naming practices, female veiling experiences and life stories, this chapter further investigates the multiple ways of being 'Chinese Muslim' (and sometimes, also escaping from being labelled as 'Chinese Muslim') and reveals a range of subjectivities, self-expressions and identity negotiations in everyday lives.

Drawing on Bourdieu's work (1990) on intertwining relations between structure and agency, this chapter argues that identity practices are the outcome of strategic action of individuals operating within a constraining, but not determining social context. In other words, while being constrained by historical contexts and influenced by social forces, we should not overlook the role of personal living strategies in shaping people's identities.

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1 In previous chapters, in most cases, I use real names for my informants. However, in this chapter, for two reasons, most names used are pseudonyms. First, my informants do not want their names to be quoted when they comment on certain contentious issues and 'sensitive' topics. Second, I want to protect the privacy of my informants, especially when I discuss their 'un-Islamic' habits, such as gambling and drinking alcohol.
As Karner (2007:4) suggests, identity is not only a social construction, but also a biographically grounded, emotionally charged way of experiencing everyday life situations. While for Goffman (1959), everyday life is an arena where the self performs in a number of different ways dependent upon time, place, and audience.

To study the everyday religiosity of Muslims, scholars have deployed terms, such as ‘practical Islam’ (Beatty 1999) and ‘everyday Islam’ (Alam 2007) to examine Muslim religiosity as a negotiation between the areas of normative and non-normative Islam, between religious doctrines and everyday living conditions. Also, Peletz (1997:266) proposes that the study of Muslim identities should ‘devote greater attention to the cultural psychology of ambivalence and its various refractions in different political economies and the myriad social contexts they comprise.’ Thus, this chapter analyses the cultural politics of Chinese Muslims’ everyday ethnicity and religiosity, without neglecting the importance of socio-economic conditions that constrain their choices.

I begin this chapter with a brief review of conversion reasons among Chinese Muslims. I propose the importance of differentiating conversion motives from conversion narratives - while conversion motives are personal and private affairs; conversion narratives are public stories tailored to suit audiences, therefore, such narratives do not necessarily reflect the ‘real’ conversion reasons. Second, I discuss the ‘official’ conversion processes and ‘spiritual’ experiences of Chinese Muslims. Becoming ‘officially’ Muslim does not automatically mean someone is also becoming a ‘religiously’ practising Muslim. Furthermore, Islamic conversion, especially ‘genuine’ ones, often implies not only the adoption of a new religious identity, but also transformation of personal practices, cultural orientations, social networks and political views.

Following the discussion of converts’ diverse and shifting religiosity, the third part of this chapter will consider the flexible piety or everyday religiosity of Chinese Muslims. The life experiences and stories of my informants, show that instead of openly supporting or resisting the rising of assertive Islam in Indonesia, many converts adjust or accommodate their understandings and practices of Islam according to their living contexts, which quite often result in an inconsistency of Islamic religiosity, which I call ‘flexible piety’. Although such inconsistent religiosity is more prevalent among converts, it can also be applied to many other Muslims in contemporary societies.

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2 For a more theoretical discussion of identity formation and negotiation, see chapter 1.
Fourthly, I provide a brief overview of the shifting and diverse ethnic identifications among Chinese Muslims after Islamic conversion. By discussing the naming practices of a few who switched religion, I demonstrate that a Chinese convert can emphasise or downplay his or her Chinese identity depending on conditions. I conclude this chapter by reiterating that both the political economies of religious conversion and shifting ethnicity, as well as cultural politics of flexible piety and multiple identification, are important to study Chinese Muslim identities, and also Chinese and Muslim identities in general.

Conversion Reasons and Narratives

Most Chinese Muslims in Indonesia are not born Muslim, but convert to Islam. These new converts are often referred as 'mualaf' in Indonesia. There are various conversion factors, including political (escaping from discrimination), economic (seeking business opportunities), religious (seeking spiritual truth and meaning in life), as well as cultural (intermingling or intermarriage with Muslim Indonesians). Different conversion motivations mean that Islam has different meanings for different converts. The motivation for conversion is also one of the major factors that determine how seriously a Chinese convert learns and observes their new religion, thus influencing the formation of their religious identities.

In the past, the conversions of Chinese to Islam were mainly 'strategic conversions', meaning the adoption of Islam is a response to political and economic incentives, as well as for the purpose of intermarriage. Although such perceptions still persists today, the increase in both the public displays (such as Chinese-style mosques) and personal observances of the faith (such as Chinese religious teachers) indicate that there are an increasing number of 'genuine conversions' among Chinese Indonesians in which they take their new religion seriously. I will briefly discuss four types of conversion among Chinese Indonesians. It must be clarified that these classifications are rather simplified and do not fully capture the complex reality. I use the classifications for the analytical purpose and do not indicate value judgment.
Economic Considerations

Chinese businessmen are quite often accused of converting to Islam for their business careers, in order to get a license from the government, to build networks with security officers, to gain support from Islamic leaders and to attract Muslim customers. However, very few Chinese business converts openly admit their 'real' motivations. Many of these conversions do not involve their spouses and children. While some of them are involved in social and religious activities, others take a low profile. A few Chinese Muslim businessmen have also performed pilgrimage to Mecca and obtained the title of 'Haji' which is respected among Muslims, arguably more as a sign of socio-economic status, than a reflection of religious commitment. Some poor Chinese Indonesians also see Islamic conversion as a way of gaining economic mobility. During fieldwork, I met several Chinese Muslims who converted to Islam to gain financial assistance (e.g. zakat or Islamic alms) and employment opportunities from Muslim organisations.

Political Strategies

Politically driven conversion to Islam is not a new phenomenon, as documented in the conversion of low-caste people in India and African Americans who see Islam as a way out of discrimination and oppression (McCloud 1995; Simmons 2006). As I have discussed in chapter 2, during the New Order period, some Chinese leaders, such as Junus Jahya, suggested that conversion to Islam provides an escape from discrimination, as according to them, by embracing the religion of majority population, the difference between ethnic Chinese and indigenous Indonesians may diminish. Not all Chinese Muslim leaders agree with this notion of 'assimilation through conversion' and the idea is no longer popular in post-1998 Indonesia. Some argue that conversion is a personal religious choice and should not be politically motivated; while others suggest that conversion would only promote better relationships between Chinese and non-Chinese Indonesians, if converts maintain their 'Chineseness'. There are also some Chinese business people, especially those living in Muslim-majority areas who convert to Islam

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1 Some Chinese Muslim businessmen were cautious when they talked to me. They were happy to discuss with me general topics and public issues. Yet, they were reluctant to share with me their personal conversion experiences and religious journeys. Some of their typical answers were 'religion is a personal matter' and 'I prefer to discuss Islam in a general sense'.
to seek security or reduce the possible hostility of local Muslims towards them. Such conversions are motivated by both economic and political interest.

**Interruption and Intermingling**

As observed during my field research, most Chinese converts (70-80%) practise 'marital conversion'; that is, they convert to Islam because of intermarriage. If politically and economic driven converts are mostly older Chinese men, those who convert to intermarry are mainly younger Chinese, both male and female. Since the enactment of the 1974 Marriage Law, which tightened the conditions for legal marriage, many Chinese Indonesians become Muslim or at least officially register themselves as 'Muslim' on their identity cards, in order to marry Muslim Indonesians. Conversion to Islam means a Chinese will have greater interaction with Muslim Indonesians, but frequent interaction with local Muslims also leads some Chinese to convert. It is not uncommon for many Chinese Indonesians to have close interaction with local Muslims especially if they live, work or study in Muslim majority neighbourhoods, workplaces or schools. Greater exposure to Islamic practices and teachings has inspired some of Chinese to learn more about the religion and finally convert to Islam, as well as marry a non-Chinese Muslim. The religiosity of these converts is greatly influenced by their Muslim spouse, relatives and friends. Some of them remain nominal Muslims; some practise Islam seriously; while others see Islam as a form of cultural attachment in which they follow localised Islamic traditions, and some see themselves being a 'Javanese' more than being a 'Muslim'.

**Religious Interests**

Mystical experiences (e.g. receiving religious messages in a dream), religious encounter (e.g. being touched by the call for prayers or *azan* or inspired by the Qur'anic verses on a television program), religious comparison (often of Islam and Christianity), and life crises (e.g. search for meanings or encountering a turning point in life) bring some Chinese closer to Islam. Compared to the three reasons above, in which conversion is a means to an end, these converts have volitionally chosen to acquire a new belief and religious identity. Some of them were once Christians and converted to Islam after
seriously comparing both religions. They think Islam is more attractive because 'the absence of the concept of Trinity makes Islam more logical' and 'Islam is a complete religion as it does not separate religion from daily lives'. Such converts are often emotionally bounded with the new religion, see it as a way of life and are enthusiastic about practising every detail of Islamic precepts. Some also treat Islam as an ideology, especially those who are involved in Islamic activism; while others practise Islam according to their way of living.

**Conversion Narratives and Motives**

I have earlier indicated that there are limitations to the categorisation of conversion factors above and here I would like to make three related points. First, in general, as is perhaps not surprising, those who convert for religious and cultural reasons are more serious about learning and observing Islam than those who convert for political and economic purposes. However, there are always exceptions - a serious convert can become disappointed by his or her new religion and stop practising it. Meanwhile, a 'utilitarian' convert can become a pious Muslim after being influenced by their Muslim friends or as a result of a life crisis.

Second, in some cases, there are multiple reasons for a conversion, involving any combination of the conversion factors I discussed above. For example, a Chinese person who has been interested in Islam for a long time might convert after marrying a Muslim, a student in a Muslim-majority university might begin to practise Islam both due to the social influence of Muslim friends and the religious calling, or a businessman might convert to Islam to build up his business network and at the same time promote better relationship between Chinese and non-Chinese. And the lists go on.

Third, and perhaps most important, is the difference between conversion narratives and conversion motives, or between 'official' and 'real' conversion reasons. For example, a Chinese Muslim man in Surabaya once revealed to me that he converted to Islam because he wanted to be 'blending with the mainstream (Muslim) society' (Field note, 6 October 2008), but when he was interviewed on a religious program on TV, he claimed that he was interested in Islam because he was touched by the *azan* or call for prayer. It is also not unusual for a Chinese Indonesian who converted to Islam for marriage or
economic purposes to tell the Muslim crowd during a conversion ceremony that his or her conversion is genuinely religious motivated. When a convert turns a personal and private conversion into a public story, the narrative, whether in verbal or written form, might not reflect his or her ‘real’ conversion motives, but be tailored to suit the audience. Therefore, instead of investigating the ‘real’ conversion reasons of converts, this chapter focused on examining under what conditions and how Chinese Muslims narrate their conversions, as well as learn and practise Islam. I am not here to judge whether a Chinese Muslim is a ‘genuine’ convert, but rather how he or she engages with diverse religious discourses and practices in Indonesia.

As I discussed in Chapter 4, the circulation of convert narratives always constitutes one part of Muslims’ preaching agenda, towards both non-Muslim and non-practising Muslims. A comparison between dominating conversion narratives during New Order period and post-1998 period is interesting. In 1988, Usman Effendy, a Chinese Muslim journalist, edited a book entitled ‘AMOI: Aku Menjadi Orang Indonesia’ [I am Becoming Indonesian] (Effendy 1988). As its title indicates, the book consists of various conversion stories that share a similar theme: pembauran (intermingling). While, in 2008, Dyayadi, a Muslim writer edited a book entitled ‘Mengapa Etnis Tionghoa Memilih Islam’ [Why Ethnic Chinese Choose Islam] (Dyayadi 2008). The book is a compilation of articles about conversion experiences and religious journeys of Chinese Muslims, in which many of them describe their challenges in practising Islam and the benefits they gain after become a Muslim. Generally speaking, during the New Order period, conversion narratives aim to manifest Chinese Muslims’ commitment to being part of Indonesian majorities through Islamic conversion; while today, conversion narratives focus on highlighting Chinese Muslims’ religious commitment and illustrate their Islamic piety as a role model for born Muslims. This resembles the shifting of the dominating discourse, from ‘pembauran’ to ‘dakwah’, among Chinese Muslim leaders in Indonesia (discussed in chapter 2 and 5).

Conversion Processes: Becoming Officially Muslim

In the previous section, I discussed why Chinese Indonesians convert to Islam. Now, I will describe the official process of becoming a Muslim. To be a Muslim, religiously speaking, is rather simple: one only needs to proclaim syahadat (witness or testimony);
that is ‘There is no God but Allah and Muhammad is God’s messenger’. However, conversion to Islam is not merely a personal and private affair in Indonesia. It is also a bureaucratic procedure, as official conversion involves visiting government offices and changing the stated religion on one’s identity card.4

Let me describe a ‘typical’ conversion in Indonesia. A person who is interested in converting to Islam, first visits a mosque and talks to the ustaz (religious teacher) or other staff in the mosque. Sometimes, religious guidance and courses, either in the form of individual consultation or group discussion, will be provided in the mosque before or after the conversion. The ustaz will arrange a simple ceremony, usually in the mosque, which has to be witnessed by two Muslims. Sometimes, the ustaz also suggests that the convert adopts an Islamic name. After the ceremony, the convert will be issued with a certificate of conversion. With the letter as the proof, the convert can then change their religious status at the sub-district office (kantor kecamatan) or village office (kantor kelurahan) through the help of the neighbourhood community organisations (Rukun Tetangga, RT or Rukun Wilayah, RW), then he or she will be officially a Muslim. For a convert who is planning to marry, he or she will then go to the Religious Affairs Office (Kantor Urusan Agama, KUA) to register the marriage. According to 1974 Indonesian Marriage Law, a marriage will be only recognised by the state if both partners share the same religion. However, a convert has the choice of leaving the religion after marriage, provided he or she gains permission from their sub-district offices.

Unlike the process in Malaysia, ‘official’ conversion to, or renouncement of Islam in Indonesia is conducted by ‘secular’ officers and is not regulated by religious authorities. Furthermore, the matters of religious conversion (as well as renouncement) are not strictly legalised in Indonesia. Thus, there is always some flexibility in the process. For an example, a certificate of conversion from the mosque is recommended, but not compulsory for changing religion on an identity card. I have encountered a few cases, in which converts directly went to the neighbourhood community without a certificate to ask for the change in their religious status, because they have a close relationship with

4 However, in comparison to Malaysia, Islamic conversion in Indonesia is more flexible. Conversion to Islam in Malaysia is highly controlled by the state. It changes a person’s official identity to a Muslim who is bounded by Islamic laws. Converts need to go through a bureaucratic procedure at the Religious Affairs Department, including a change of name (adoption of an Islamic name), which is not required by law but always advised by the authorities. In some states in Malaysia, converts have to take religious lessons and pass a test before being issued an ‘Islamic card’ (Hew 2005). Once converted to Islam, given the implementation of strict Islamic laws, he or she has difficulty in leaving the religion officially. Meanwhile in Indonesia, conversion to Islam is less bureaucratic, the adoption of an Islamic name is optional and a convert can change his or her religious status on identity card more easily.
the officers or were accompanied by local religious figures, such as a *kiai* or an *ustaz*. One of my informants did not even change the religious status on his identity card, yet was able to register his marriage with a Muslim girl in the KUA, as he convinced the KUA official that he was a Muslim by showing his religious knowledge. There are also some cases in which converts change their religious information, from Islam back to their original religion after marriage. The renouncement of Islam may raise social pressure from some Muslims, but is not prohibited by law in Indonesia.

**Piety in the Making: Becoming Spiritually Muslim**

Having reviewed the 'official' conversion procedure, let us tum to the religious experiences of Chinese Muslims. As mentioned earlier, conversion reasons are important in determining the religious piety of converts. However, religious education after conversion, together with other factors such as social encounters and localities also play significant roles in shaping one's religiosity. Unlike in Malaysia, there are no state religious authorities that offer standard courses for converts and no test is required to be recognised officially as a Muslim in Indonesia. Given that Muslim practises and discourses in Indonesia are diverse, it is not surprising that Chinese Muslims go through different religious journeys and have divergent understandings of their new religion.

Many converts learn about Islam from mosques. Some mosques offer special religious guidance and classes for new converts. Otherwise, converts can learn about their new religion from general Islamic study sessions at mosques. Converts also learn about Islamic practices from their Muslim spouses, relatives, neighbours and friends. To deepen their understanding of Islam, some read books on Islam; listen to cassettes; watch religious programs on television; attend Islamic preaching; join Friday sermons; learn to read Al-Qur'an; follow a religious teacher; study in a religious school or take course in an Islamic university. Given the plurality of Islamic religiosity in Indonesia, which strain of Islam do most Chinese Indonesians convert to? I would like to highlight three inter-related features of Chinese converts religiosity here – first, there is no singular, locally bounded ‘Chinese Islam’ identity in Indonesia; second, Chinese converts’ religiosity is not stable; and third, their religiosity is highly diverse.
Not a Singular ‘Chinese Islam’ Identity

Although there are some public manifestations of a ‘Chinese Islam’ identity through mosques and preaching styles, there is hardly any unique ‘Chinese Islam’ religious practice and understanding in Indonesia. Different from varieties of locally bounded Muslim communities in Indonesia, such as Javanese Muslims, Bugis Muslims, Acehnese Muslims and Sasak Muslims, Chinese Muslims are not regionally concentrated and village-based, but dispersed individuals who are mainly urban dwellers. Given that they are dispersed minorities and do not constitute a majority in any locality, they do not form a specific ethno-local Islamic tradition; therefore ‘Chinese Islam’ is a problematic concept. Chinese Muslims from Sumatra to Sulawesi follow religious practices that are dominant in different localities rather than share a common ‘Chinese Islam’ practice. Put in other words, the Islam Chinese Muslims practise has less to do with their ‘Chineseness’, and more to do with their situated localities, together with their conversion motivations, religious experiences and what kind of Islam they are exposed to from their Muslims spouses and friends.

Let me demonstrate the plurality of Chinese Muslim identities by discussing their local religious affiliations and transnational religious connections. Regarding local religious organisations, some might suggest Chinese Muslims would have preferred the traditionalist NU, since NU is in general more tolerant towards local culture and ethnic customs. Furthermore, NU’s former leader, Abdurrahman Wahid, was well respected by Chinese Indonesians for his tolerance and supports of multiculturalism. Indeed, some converts who prefer to keep their Chinese traditions say they are more comfortable with traditionalist Islam that allows them to pray for their ancestors. However, there are also some converts who think that the Islamic practice of Muhammadiyah is more logical, simple (involving less rituals than NU) and ‘time-saving’ (shorter prayer sessions for taraweh). They also suggest that the urban-based modernist Muslims have more similarities to Chinese converts, who are mostly urban-dwellers and business people. Beyond NU and Muhammadiyah, Chinese Muslims are also involved in other Muslim...

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5 It is important to state that ‘local Islam’ in Indonesia, such as ‘Javanese Islam’, is not monolithic either and can also be a problematic concept. I only see Javanese Muslims as a locally bounded Muslim community in a comparative sense, contrasting Chinese Muslims who are dispersed minorities and do not constitute a majority in any locality in Indonesia. In terms of religious practices and understandings, influenced by various transnational flows and local dynamics, Islam in Java is also a complex reality, rather than a monolithic tradition. For more discussion of Islam in Java, see Beatty 1999; Bowen 2003; Daniels 2009; Hefner 2000; Gretz 1960; and Woodward 1989.
groups, ranging from the ‘progressive’ JIL, the ‘Islamist’ PKS, to the ‘radical’ FPI. As I mentioned in chapter 5, Chinese Muslim religious affiliations are mostly influenced by local Islamic currents. For example, most Chinese Muslims are Muhammadiyah members in Yogyakarta, NU members in Surabaya and PKS supporters in Jakarta.

Conversion to Islam is also often followed by the change of one’s world view and transnational subjectivity. Many begin to see themselves as a part of an Islamic ummah and hope to join the pilgrimage to Mecca; share the plight of suffering Muslims across the world, such as those in Palestine, and sometimes the ideology of transnational Islamic movements, such as Hizbut Tahrir and the Muslim Brotherhood. As an example, on a Friday afternoon in January 2009, following the Israeli bombardment that killed hundreds of Palestinians, a Chinese Muslim ustaz could not stop himself from crying when he was delivering a Friday sermon at a mosque in Jakarta. He urged Indonesian Muslims to share the suffering of their Muslim counterparts in Palestine, support their struggles and pray for better livelihoods for them. On the same day, thousands of PKS supporters clogged the main streets in Central Jakarta after Friday prayers in a show of solidarity for Palestinians. A few Chinese Muslims also participated in the rally to show their support (Field note, 2 January 2009). The transnational connections of Chinese Muslims go beyond Muslims in the Middle East, as some of them also associate themselves with the plight of Muslims in mainland China. During the riots involving Han Chinese and Uighur Muslims in 2009, a Chinese Muslim in Indonesia, who claimed himself to be a spokesperson of PITI, criticised China’s brutality towards the Uighur Muslims, and regretted the silence of Muslim nations on the discrimination and persecution of the Uighurs. As I discussed in chapter 3, some Chinese Muslim leaders also established transnational linkages with Hui Muslims in China, by building Chinese-style mosques and having mutual-visits.

Shifting Religiosity

Generally speaking, there are two common assumptions about religious conversion. The first, is that new converts tend to be ‘fundamentalist’ or ‘fanatic’, meaning they are more likely to subscribe to puritanical and conservative forms of religious understanding as a way of asserting their commitment to their newly found ‘true’ religion (Roy 2004).

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a See ‘Muslin Nations Told To Help Uighurs’, The Jakarta Post, 10 July 2009.
Second, is the assumption of stages of conversion, mainly from a more rigid observance to a more flexible one; in which many converts tend to be ‘fundamentalist’ after embracing a new religious ‘truth’, then become disappointed with born Muslim behaviour and ideas, before being able to locate their religious understanding in everyday life (Nieuwkerk 2006). My study of Chinese Muslim religiosity provides more nuances, if not challenges to both these conventional assumptions. Chinese Muslim religiosities are divergent and dynamic: not all of them convert to Islam for religious purposes and take their new religion seriously; while some of them who are only ‘official’ Muslims in the beginning transform into ‘practising’ Muslims.

As I indicated earlier, there are some non-observant Chinese Muslims who are only officially Muslim (mostly for the purpose of marrying a Muslim). During my interviews, some of my informants told me that they have friends and family members who have converted to Islam, but did not practise Islam and still eat pork, for instance. Most non-practising Muslims remain low profile and do not involve themselves in public religious activities. Therefore, many of my informants are practising Muslims, or at least partly-practising Muslims, yet with a wide range of religious orientations.

As expected, religiously driven converts and ‘born-again’ Chinese Muslims tend to be more serious in observing Islam, and some even more ‘rigid’ than the born Muslims. They are enthusiastic about practising every detail of Islamic precepts. Some of them even eschew their cultural practices, such as praying for ancestors, which they see as violating Islamic principles and criticise traditionalist Muslims practices, such as *tahtilan*, as un-Islamic. Reborn Chinese Muslims can be divided into two groups. The first one is second-generation Chinese Muslims, who are mostly the offspring of inter-marriage between Chinese converts and non-Chinese Muslims. In my research, I found a couple of Chinese Muslim women whose parents were nominal Muslims, yet they became aware of their ‘religious duty’, such as putting on the veil, after encountering Islamic activists from HTI and PKS in universities. The second group are those who initially converted for practical reasons, but took their religion seriously later.

Indeed, some life stories I collected from fieldwork show that religiosity is not fixed and can change in different stages of life. One of my informants, Gunawan, a shopkeeper, tells me that he initially became a Muslim for the purpose of *pembauran* (inter-mingling) and did not practise Islam in daily life. A few years after his conversion, his business
went bankrupt and this led him to question the direction of his life. He began to study Islam seriously and, according to him, he finally found peace and truth in Islam. He is now a devout Muslim and a religious activist in a mosque. He also expresses his disappointment, that some Chinese Muslim businessmen only practise Islam in public, but do not observe the religion at home (Interview, 18 October 2008). Kapao, another Chinese Muslim man had a similar religious journey to Gunawan. Kapao, who runs a small printing business, officially converted from Christianity to Islam for intermarriage, yet in the beginning, he still went to the church and even persuaded his wife to join Christianity. According to Kapao, a life crisis made him question his belief in Christianity. He read and compared both the Bible and the Qur'an, which led him to conclude that Islam is a better religion for him. He says he not only transformed himself into a pious Muslim, but convinced his wife to be more 'Islamic' by wearing headscarf and abandoning 'un-Islamic' Javanese traditions, such as slametan (Interview, 24 October 2008). To a certain extent, both Gunawan and Kapao, converted to Islam twice: first, they converted to be ‘official’ Muslims, and later they converted to be ‘rigid’ and ‘practising’ Muslims.

While Gunawan and Kapao’s religious routes are from less pious to more devout, Surya and Edi went through the reverse trajectory: they converted to Islam because of religious interests, first they were emotionally bounded to their new religion and enthusiastic to practise it rigidly, yet later they developed more flexible attitudes towards Islamic teachings. Surya converted to Islam from Christianity after seriously comparing both religions. He said, ‘In the beginning, I was a ‘fanatical’ Muslim and held conservative religious viewpoints. But after engaging with different discourses on Islam, I became a ‘liberal’ Muslim’ (Interview, 4 April 2008). Once a Muslim student activist, Surya is now a human rights campaigner. Meanwhile, Edi, a curator, converted to Islam in high school because he was attracted to the philosophy of Islam. However, after he entered a local university, his interest in Islam declined as he felt himself alienated by the dogmatic and conservative viewpoints of the Muslim activists on the campus. Now, he sees himself as a nominal Muslim (as recorded in his identity card) and is married to a Christian woman. When I met him in 2009, he told me that he was a supporter of JIL, the Liberal Islamic Network and campaigned against the passing of the Anti-Pornography Bill (Interview, 7 January 2009).
Diverse Religiosity

Chinese Muslims in Indonesia come from all walks of life: big businessmen, shopkeepers, barbers, make-up artists, Islamic preachers, religious teachers, fortune tellers, lawyers, lecturers, activists, politicians, public servants, housewives, students and so on. Chinese Muslim religiosities also have at least three different aspects compared to other Muslims in Indonesia. First, as I discussed earlier, Chinese Muslims are not locally bounded ethno-religious group but dispersed minorities. Second, Chinese Muslims are mostly converts. And last, Chinese Muslims are a religious minority within the Chinese ‘community’. After conversion to Islam, they might face opposition from their non-Muslim family members and friends. They also have to meet the expectations of their Muslim counterparts; and need to negotiate daily practices between former Chinese cultural traditions (if they still observe these) and their new acquired Islamic practices. Therefore, their religiosities are more diverse, if not as diverse as other Muslims in Indonesia. At the extreme end of each spectrum, I have met a Chinese Muslim man who said he is still drinking beer and eating pork at home, while another Chinese Muslim woman privately told me that she supports Abu Bakar Basyir, the former leader of terrorist group, Jemaah Islamiyah. However, most Chinese Muslims are in between of both extremes.

For Chinese Indonesians, Islamic conversion is both a religious experience, as well as an ongoing process of social transformation and cultural negotiation. Conversion to Islam implies not only the subjective embracing of an alternative set of beliefs, but is also likely to involve the changing of personal practices and appearance, such as in diet, dress, social networks, cultural identification, political affiliations and the like. In other words, Chinese Muslims religiosities go beyond the domain of religious interpretations and practices, such as the five daily prayers and fasting during Ramadan. There are many other indicators of their diverse religiosities, such as naming practices (the adoption of an Islamic name), eating and drinking behaviour (the consumption of halal food), bodily practices (dress code and appearance), social networks (relations with family members, Chinese and non-Chinese), worldviews and political ideologies (transnational connections and viewpoints on the implementation of sharia), economy (the usage of Islamic banking), education (school choice for their children) as well as attitudes towards Chinese cultural practices, their former religions and local Muslims practices. I have discussed some of these aspects in earlier parts of this chapter, as well as in other
chapters in this thesis. In the following sections, I will examine the female veiling practice, everyday life stories and naming practices of Chinese converts.

**Everyday Religiosity and Flexible Piety**

Many scholars have expressed concern about the rising Islamic conservatism in Indonesia; that localised, hybrid and peaceful Islam is giving way to globalised, puritan and sometimes radical Islam; while flexible religiosity is being replaced by assertive religiosity (Beatty 1999; Bruinessen 2002; Hefner 2005; Salim 2007). Yet, ‘Islamisation’ in contemporary Indonesia is a multifaceted phenomenon. It involves not only religious and political sphere, but also economic activities (Juoro 2008; Sakai 2008) and popular culture (Fealy 2008; Heryanto 2010). Therefore, for many ordinary Muslims, their support of ‘Islamisation’ varies and the perceived meanings of ‘Islamisation’ are multifarious. As an example, one may support the ‘Islamisation’ of consumer culture, yet disapprove the implementation of Islamic laws in Indonesia.

How do Chinese converts situate themselves and respond to ‘Islamisation’? Some of them contribute directly or indirectly to ‘Islamisation’ in Indonesia, such as those who are involved in Islamic activism, banking and preaching (see chapter 4 and 5). There are also a few Chinese Muslims who resist, if not reject ‘Islamisation’. Instead of criticising ‘Islamisation’ publicly, they choose to react quietly in different ways, either refusing to adhere to the ‘puritan Islam’ or continuing their daily practices which might be seen as ‘un-Islamic’. Some, if possible, hide their Muslim identities in public; while many others still embrace Islam as a part of their identities, but distance themselves from ‘political Islam’. Between promoting and refusing ‘Islamisation’, most Chinese Muslims are in the middle - accommodating Islamic practices according to their living contexts; and also adjusting their daily habits according to their religious understandings. To a certain extent, their religiosities have less to do with their interpretations of religious texts, but are more influenced by the contingent political, social, cultural and economic circumstances of their understanding of Islam. Their religiosities are the outcome of ongoing negotiations between expectations of other Muslims and self-identifications, as well as accommodations between normative Islam and their everyday struggle. Therefore, their religiosities can be selective, inconsistent, ambivalent and fluid.
During my fieldwork, I came across a few Chinese converts, who seem to have contradicting religiosities, but managed to reconcile, justify or at least contain such inconsistencies. Examples of the contradicting cases I encountered include: a self-professed salafist Muslim who criticised traditionalist Muslim practices, yet he himself was an activist in a Chinese-style mosque; a FPI supporter who condemned Ahmadiyah as ‘deviant’, but was active in mediating possible conflicts between non-Muslims and Muslims; a part-time preacher who wore jilbab when giving religious talks in Indonesia, but took off her headscarf when gambling in a casino in Malaysia; a businessman who delivered a speech in a religious function in morning, yet drank beer in a social gathering at night in the same day; a Mandarin-language teacher who first told me that interfaith marriage should be avoided, but later confessed that his wife was a Chinese Christian; and on the list goes.

Such inconsistent religiosities of Chinese converts challenge the simplified dichotomies of Muslim religiosity: between abangan (nominal) and santri (observant Muslims), modernist and traditionalist (Geertz 1960), radical-conservative and progressive-liberal (Anwar 2009), scripturalist and substantialist (Liddle 1996), literal and liberal (Rahim 2006); for overlooking the complex realities of Islamic identities in contemporary societies. These familiar and convenient typologies fail to capture the everyday religiosity of many ordinary Muslims, especially the converts. Therefore, I support the propositions that Muslim religiosities are a negotiation between normative and non-normative Islam; a zone of compromise, inconsistency and ambivalence (Beatty 1999); an ambivalent relationship between Islamic resurgents and ‘ordinary’ Muslims (Peletz 1997); or a spontaneous social reality (Alam 2007). To these, I now turn to the example being the veiling practices of female converts.

**Female Veilings and Everyday Islam**

The practice of female veiling, which in Indonesia usually means wearing the jilbab, has grown rapidly among Muslim women since the 1990s (Brenner 1996). After the collapse of the New Order regime, some schools have even made the wearing of jilbab compulsory (Parker 2005); while some regional governments have issued regulations requiring women to wear the veil in public (Bush 2008; Setyawati 2009; White 

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Recently, there has been a growing Muslim fashion industry that produces fashionable ‘Islamic dresses’ and stylish jilbabs (Amrullah 2008; Jones 2007). Informed by these broader contexts, I will look into female Chinese Muslims and their attitudes toward the *jilbab* (wearing or not wearing, why and when). Generally speaking, there are three attitudes: donning *jilbab* all the time, donning it occasionally and not donning it at all.

Female Chinese Muslims who convert for religious reasons and are active in Islamic organisations are more likely to wear the *jilbab* consistently. They don the *jilbab* for various reasons: to inform others of their new religious identity, to show their commitment to practising Islam, and to ‘regulate’ themselves as ‘devout’ female Muslims. Ritha, born in 1976, converted to Islam when she was 20, after she recovered from a serious illness. When she was ill, she questioned the meaning of life and she found her answers in Islam. After marrying into a pious Chinese Muslim family in Jakarta, she is now an account clerk in an office owned by a Chinese Muslim businessman and is also an activist in MUSTIKA. Wearing a *jilbab* is akin to wearing a new identity, she says, ‘I wore the *jilbab* immediately after I converted. I wanted to show others that I am Muslim now. So they will treat me as a Muslim. They will not serve me food that is *haram* or ask me to go to the Chinese temple.’ After wearing the *jilbab*, her parents repelled her and she lost her job in a Chinese business company. She recalls the tough time and says, ‘These are the challenges of God. With my strong belief, and thanks to God, I overcame such difficulties’ (Interview, 10 June 2008).

For Ritha, Islamic dress is not only about wearing *jilbab*, but also wearing clothes that hide the female body shape. As I observed, she always wore a *jilbab* with loose-fitting clothes in plain colours, even at her home and when she swims. She says, ‘I have to wear the *jilbab* consistently, because I want to follow Islam fully. Wearing Islamic dress will remind me of my identity as a female Muslim and that I have to act modestly.’ In other words, veiling is not only an act of strengthening her faith and forging her sense of being a Muslim woman, but also a form of self-regulation to ‘discipline’ herself according to her understanding of Islam. It was not a surprise that she supported the implementation

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7 In Indonesia, *kerudung* and *jilbab* both used to refer to women’s head coverings. *Kerudung* is an easily-removable headscarf that covers the head loosely, which still can expose part of one’s hair and neck. Meanwhile, *jilbab* is a longer piece of headscarf that covers hair, neck and ears, but not the face of a female Muslim.
of the controversial anti-Pornography Bill and other regulations that control Muslims’ morality in public.8

Liliana was born in 1973. She is a nurse and converted to Islam from Christianity and is married to a Muslim of Arab descent. Like Ritha, the jilbab is both symbolically and religiously important for Liliana. Liliana, once a church activist, says, ‘By wearing a jilbab, no one will ask me to go to church again. In the church, males and females mix freely; but in the mosque, there is a clear moral boundary between genders’. For her, ‘both gender segregation and female veiling is not a form of discrimination, but a protection for women’ (Interview, 15 November 2008). Jilbab wearing is also important for ‘born-again’ second generation Chinese Muslims to assert their religious piety, distinguishing themselves from their parents who are nominal converts. Yani, a HTI activist, who born into a mixed Javanese-Chinese family, is one of them. She tells me,

‘My Chinese mother does not wear a jilbab because she converted to Islam to marry my father, while my Javanese father is a nominal Muslim. Although I was born a Muslim, I was never taught to be a good Muslim in my family. I learnt Islam in school and I began to put on the veil after I followed Islamic study sessions with my Muslim friends. After I first wore the jilbab, I felt that I was a ‘real’ Muslim. I also feel peace of mind. I will never take it off again. I hope my mother will wear jilbab one day too’ (Interview, 29 November 2008).

Siew Hwa, a make-up artist and Sandy, a women’s rights activist hold different attitudes towards veiling. Siew Hwa, born in 1980, converted to Islam due to the influence of Muslim friends in high school. I first met Siew Hwa at a religious function in the PITI office in Jakarta. She stood out because, compared to other female Muslims, she did not wear a jilbab or kerudung. Dressed fashionably with coloured and trendy hair-style, she clarifies, ‘I have just come from my workplace. I am a make-up artist. I have to dress up. It is impractical for me to wear a jilbab because I have to interact with people from different backgrounds for my job, including westerners’ (Field note, 10 January 2009).

8 In late September 2005, a draft anti-pornography bill, that covered both pornography and pornographic activities or obscene acts (pornografi), was handed to Indonesian parliament for review. The initial bill not only proposed to regulate the production and distribution of pornography, but also prohibit pornographic acts the scope of which was potentially broad, encompassing such things as traditional ethnic dances and the wearing of ‘improper’ clothing. It came under heavy criticism because of fears that it would undermine local cultural traditions, artistic expression and women’s rights. After undergoing changes, the bill was passed in late 2008. The controversial ‘pornographic activities’ section was eliminated and provisions banning ethnic dress in the original were omitted from the revised bill. Nevertheless, oppositions to the bill remain, especially among human rights and women’s rights activists. See Allen (2007, 2009) and Salim (2007).
When I met her for a short interview in a shopping mall, she told me that some of her Muslim friends ask her to veil, but she does not follow their advice. She explains, ‘I am not ready yet. Veiling cannot be forced. It has to come from the heart. Furthermore, with the jilbab, it also come the responsibility, I have to be very careful with my behavior. People will have higher moral expectations of me.’ (Interview, 16 January 2009). Nevertheless, according to her, not donning the jilbab does not make her less of a Muslim. She says, ‘I try to observe Islam in daily life. I pray if my work is not too busy. I fast during Ramadan if I am not travelling. With God’s will, I hope I can put on the jilbab if I have a new job or after I get married.’

Sandy, born into a mixed religious family, grew up as a Muslim and now is a women’s rights activist. She shares the opinion of many other liberal-minded Muslims that female veiling is not compulsory, but a personal choice. She strongly criticises the anti-Pornography Bill and some regional regulations that make female veiling obligatory in public. Sandy explains why she resists donning the jilbab, ‘It will place me under the scrutiny of other Muslims. My belief in Islam is my own relationship with God. I do not want to be judged by others whether I am a good Muslim or not.’ She also tells me an experience that her ‘Chinese-looking’ appearance has saved her from being caught by the religious police in Aceh, a province in Indonesia where strict Islamic laws are implemented (which includes punishment for Muslim women not wearing a jilbab). She says wryly, ‘When I was in Aceh for work early this year, no one bothered whether I was wearing jilbab or not. That is because I look ‘Chinese’ and people assume that I am not a Muslim. This might be one of the few situations in which I feel that being a Chinese woman is a blessing’ (Interview, 19 June 2008).

Departing from two contrasting veiling practices discussed above, most female Chinese Muslims I met during fieldwork are in the middle position, in which ‘sometimes they put a jilbab on, other times they take it off’. Many of them don a jilbab during religious functions and when meeting Muslims, while putting it aside when interacting with non-Muslims. Lai Ting, a middle-aged housewife, who converted to Islam to marry, and is one of those female converts who are flexible in wearing ‘Islamic clothing’. I first met Lai Ting donning the jilbab in the Surabaya Cheng Hoo Mosque during an Islamic study session. When I met her for second time at her home, she was in t-shirt and long trousers, without a headscarf. She says, ‘I just come back from gym with my Chinese friends. Islam teaches me about moderation. I am not going to don jilbab while doing exercise,
right? Similarly, I will not wear mini-skirt if I visit mosque’ (Interview, 16 November 2008).

Balancing religious observance and occupational reality, it is also not uncommon for younger female Chinese converts to don a jilbab while attending mosque activities, but to take it off while working to avoid discrimination, especially for those who work in the non-Muslim majority workplaces. Mariana is an English teacher in a primary school, in which most teachers and students are non-Muslim Chinese Indonesians. She tells me, ‘I wear jilbab most of the time, except during work and visiting my parents.’ She explains, ‘In the school, I do not want to be treated differently because of my religion. At my parents’ home, I do not want to make them angry. Islam teaches us to maintain good relationships with our family members and friends’ (Interview, 2 March 2008). Ella, a Chinese Muslim businesswoman, shares similar experience to those of Mariana. She owns a computer shop in Mangga Dua Plaza, Jakarta, in which most shops are owned by Chinese. I met her a few times during Islamic study sessions and she often wears a jilbab. When I talked to Ella at her shop, she says, ‘For the first few years of being a Muslim, I did not wear jilbab in my shop. Most of my Chinese friends did not know that I was a Muslim. I worried that I might lose my customers. Yet, a month ago, I had a dream that I would die soon, although I am not ill. I realised that I should wear jilbab more consistently. Thus, I decided to wear jilbab to my shop. I wear colourful and trendy jilbab, so people do not suspect me of being a Muslim. Indeed, for the first few days, instead of asking me why I converted to Islam, many customers asked me if I am going for a party after work. After a week or so, most of them realised that I was a Muslim. Surprisingly, business is going on as usual. Customers are pragmatic. If I provide good service, they still come to my shop. They do not really care about my religion.’ (Interview, 12 January 2009).

The cases above illustrate the flexibility and pragmatism of Chinese converts’ everyday Islamic religiosity. Islam is an important, but not a totalising factor that determines their daily behaviour. Various practical reasons also inform and constrain how a female convert practices Islam. In other words, converts’ understanding of Islam definitely will influence their everyday social lives, but their cultural background, working environment and social networks may also influence how they view and practice their new religion.
Life Stories and Flexible Piety

In the earlier part of this chapter, I discussed the shifting religiosities of some converts across different stages of their lives. I have also indicated that a convert can simultaneously manifest different aspects of their religiosities when dealing with different situations and interacting with different audiences. Here, I will analyse more life stories of Chinese converts that reflect their multifaceted religiosities. My aim is not to judge how pious they are or investigate what is their ‘true’ religious standpoint, but to explore how and under what conditions, they adjust and justify their somewhat inconsistent religiosities. I argue that their rather flexible attitudes towards Islam do not necessarily mean they are hypocritical or not serious about their new religion, but rather that they have to accommodate their religious practices in their everyday struggles. I see these ambiguous commitments to religion as a form of ‘flexible piety’, that acknowledges the possibilities of disjuncture between one’s understanding of, feeling about and practice of Islam, as well as the inconsistency of one’s religious opinions and practices. Flexible piety, I would suggest, is prevalent, but not limited to converts; as many Indonesian Muslims have to respond to the rise of assertive Islam and, in some provinces, the implementation of sharia-inspired laws that aim to control the public morality of Muslims. As I observed, while many Muslims, including converts, would like to live a more religious life, they do not want their religiosities to be regulated by the state law and authorities.

Ibrahim was born in 1949. He is a notary and a Chinese Muslim activist in Jakarta. Ibrahim has an impressive religious profile: he is a follower of NU traditions, a Muhammadiyah member and a PKS supporter. He sees his multiple religious affiliations as complementary, not contradiction, ‘I follow zikir (Islamic chanting) to feel closer with God, I support PKS to implement Islamic principles in society. Islam is a religion that combines both the spiritual and social dimensions of life.’ He continues, ‘Good relations with different Muslim groups also maximises my dakwah efforts’ (Interview, 9 June 2008). Like Ibrahim, Halim adapts to different religious views and practices. Once a barber and a part-time baker, Halim is now a religious teacher in the Surabaya Cheng Hoo Mosque. Growing up in a Javanese neighbourhood, he speaks fluent Javanese and can perform Gamelan and traditional Javanese dance. However, he abandoned Javanese cultural practices after he became a Muslim and was influenced by the modernist Muhammadiyah. He explains, ‘I am not fanatic. It is not about haram or halal. I just feel
that cultivating Islamic faith is more important.' Although a modernist Muslim himself, Halim tells me, he has no problem with other religious teachers in the mosque who follow traditionalist Muslim practices, such as slametan. He says, 'After all, we are all Muslims. We share the same goal, which is dakwah.' (Interview, 2 November 2008).

Kamal Lee, born in 1973, an official in a private company, has to deal with a more contrasting religious standpoint. Although rejecting violence, Kamal Lee is a self-professed salafi and holds a puritan and conservative Islamic understanding. For example, he criticises Gus Dur for being a 'western agent', disapproves of local Muslim practices such as tahlilan and views Ahmadiyah as 'deviant'. He also keeps his beard to demonstrate his commitment to Islam, as the Prophet Muhammad did. Yet, he is an activist in Lautze Mosque in Jakarta. He says, 'As a Muslim, Islam is my priority, Chinese or not is not important. I practise Islam according to the Qur’an and Hadith. I do not follow Chinese cultural traditions that are haram, such as ancestor worship.' Then, he explains, 'But, I have to compromise. I join the Chinese mosque, so that I can spread my understanding of Islam to new converts. If I am not here, Chinese converts might still burn incense. I have to rectify such behaviour.' (Interview, 28 March 2008).

Asri, a young male convert, shares Kamal Lee's experience. Asri graduated in Islamic laws from salafist-oriented LIPIA (Lembaga Ilmu Pengetahuan Islam dan Arab, Institute for Islamic and Arabic Studies) in Jakarta in 2008. Without giving up his aims to promote sharia and to purify Muslims practices, he tells me, he joined PITI, learnt to speak Mandarin and observes Chinese New Year celebrations as strategies to preach 'true' Islam to Chinese converts and non-Muslims (Interview, 27 December 2008).

While Halim, Kamal and Asri still strongly believe in religious orthodoxy, Ida and Mary do not confine their everyday practices to the rigid understandings of Islam. Ida was born in 1952. She is an astrologist and a part-time preacher. Married to a Javanese Catholic, Ida tells me her husband and she converted to Islam after they met Masagung, a prominent Chinese Muslim in 1984 and were convinced by him that Islam is a beautiful religion. Ida inherited her grandfather's knowledge of fortune-telling that combines Chinese fengshui, Islamic calendar and Javanese astrology. She also offers the service of slametan for businessmen and other Javanese rituals at a mystical site, Gunung Kawi in East Java. When I met Ida at her home, I noticed there was an altar with burning incense for her grandfather. She comments, 'Who says Muslims cannot pray for ancestors? According to my understanding, Islam teaches us about filial piety.' She then
surprisingly reveals to me, 'I have just returned from the casino in Genting Highlands, Malaysia, a few days ago. I went with my Javanese friends and I helped them to gamble with my mystical knowledge. We do not wear the jilbab. No one in the casino knows that we are a Muslim.' However, when she preaches, she wears the jilbab. She tells me frankly, 'I only speak in public occasionally. My Islamic knowledge is not deep. What I can do is quote a few Qur'anic verses and give general moral advice'. Towards the end of interview, I was confused by her religious attitudes. She senses it and tells me before I leave, 'I am a Muslim, but I am also a normal human being. Muslims also need to have fun, right?' (Interview, 2 November 2008).

Ida's life story is not exceptional, as a few Chinese converts I met share similar experiences. Mary, a middle-aged convert, who became a Muslim to marry, is another interesting example. Mary trained in law and is now a businesswoman. She is also a committee member for PITI and a Muslim representative in FKUB (Forum Kerukunan Umat Beragama, Inter-religious Harmony Forum), East Java. When I first met her at a PITI function, she covered her head with a kerudung, a loose headscarf. When I met her at her home for an interview, she was dressed in Western-style office suit without any headscarf. She tells me, 'I have just come back from meeting a customer from Japan. It is not practical to wear headscarf when I do business. Furthermore, Surabaya is very hot and sweaty.' Her living room is decorated with a few Javanese shadow puppets and two huge Chinese vases. On the wall, there is Islamic calligraphy, a poster of a popular Muslim preacher, Aa Gym and a poster of Sai Baba, a popular Indian spiritual figure. She says, 'I use to like Aa Gym a lot, but now no more, because he practises polygamy.' With regard to Sai Baba, she explains, 'When I was a teenager, I went through a serious illness. At that time, I was not yet a Muslim. With the blessing of Sai Baba, Buddha and other Chinese deities, I recovered.' Then, she took me to a small room at the upper floor of her house. I was a bit shocked that there were many Buddha statues and Chinese deities with candles and incenses inside the room. She defends her deities worship, which would be seen as polytheism by orthodox Muslims, 'I know some ustaz will tell me that it is un-Islamic. But Islam also teaches us to be grateful. I think that is nothing wrong for me to show appreciation to my former religion that helped me a lot when I was sick.' She also tells me that she sends her son to a Catholic School, so he can interact with people from different religious backgrounds. She adds, 'After school time, we hire an ustaz to teach him Islam' (Interview, 17 November 2008).
A more extreme case is that of a Chinese Muslim businessman, who manifested contrasting facets of his religiosity within the same day, at two different events. Wijaya is a successful businessman and also a haji, who has performed pilgrimage to Mecca. One morning in 2008, to celebrate the Islamic New Year, Wijaya organised an Islamic study sessions at his company. He delivered a sermon in Bahasa Indonesia in front of a Muslim-majority crowd one of whom was a former religious minister. He discussed the meaning of Islamic New Year and the similarities between Islamic teachings and Chinese philosophies. In the evening the same day, I joined him to for a birthday dinner at a Chinese restaurant, at which most attendants were Chinese Indonesians. It was not surprising that he spoke in Chinese, but he also ate pork and drank beer. One of his friends asked, ‘Mr Haji, are you sure you can drink beer?’ He responded, ‘Just once in a while, that is fine.’ (Field note, 22 March 2008).

In contrast to Wijaya, Afat is a relatively poor Chinese convert. Afat was born in 1956. He converted to Islam to marry a Muslim. He makes his living by selling koko clothes at mosques and during religious functions. He often attends Islamic study sessions at PITI, not to learn about Islam, but to seek financial help from richer Chinese Muslims and to sell koko clothes. During the 2009 elections, he also campaigned for a Chinese Muslim candidate in an Islamist party, PPP, to earn money. Without explaining his reasons, he tells me, that he does not have an identity card. Instead, he always carries along with him, a certificate of conversion, issued by the Istiqlal Mosque. For instance, when he visits government offices, he will show the officials his certificate of conversion. He says, ‘Once they know that I am a Muslim, everything becomes easier. Unlike other Chinese Indonesians, I do not have to pay extra money.’ (Interview, 20 December 2008).

Various life experiences I have illustrated above show that Chinese converts from all walks of life, be it male or female, upper class or lower class, secular-minded or sharia-minded, can creatively negotiate their religiosities in everyday lives according to different conditions. As mentioned earlier, such complexity and flexibility of one’s religiosity problematises the often simplified categorisation of Muslim behaviours used by many scholars and journalists.
Ethnicity in Flux: Shifting Belongings and Multiple Identifications

Departing from religiosity, now I turn to another dimension of Chinese Muslim identities: ethnicity. The conversion of a Chinese Indonesian to Islam, is not only embracing a new religious identity, but also negotiating a new set of ethnic identities, given that the major ethnic groups in Indonesian are mostly Muslim. As I have indicated elsewhere in this thesis, many Chinese Muslims do not retain their Chinese identity after more than one generation, and the act of their conversion often intensifies the adoption of other non-religious aspects of non-Chinese identity, such as the use of Indonesian (and also Javanese for many of my informants) language, names, rituals and other lifestyle aspects. I address two main aspects of ethnic identification of Chinese Muslims: first, their shifting sense of belongings and diverse attitudes towards their Chinese identity; and second, their naming practices and multiple identifications in everyday lives.

Varieties of Chineseness among Chinese Muslims

During the New Order regime, some Chinese leaders saw Islamic conversion as an attempt of assimilation and to overcome discrimination. However, as I discussed in chapter 2, such notions of assimilation are no longer popular today. In general, Chinese Muslim leaders agree that conversion to Islam will lead to closer relationships between Chinese and non-Chinese. But they do not advocate losing their Chineseness in the process. They feel that Chinese Muslims can keep their Chinese cultural traditions as long as those practices are not violating Islamic teachings.

However, in everyday reality, responses to the reassertion of Chineseness are diverse and complex, mainly influenced by their situated localities, cultural upbringing, economic statuses, social interaction and religious understanding. Some Chinese Muslims are proud to be Chinese and prefer to have a Muslim partner from the same ethnic background. They join Chinese Muslim organisations and visit Chinese-style mosques not only for religious purposes, but also for match-making. Meanwhile, most Chinese Muslims, especially those who live in Muslim-majority neighbourhoods and those who study in state-owned schools, have frequent interactions with non-Chinese Muslims and many intermarry, so the mixing of culture is unavoidable. In this sense, Chinese culture can be altered, Indonesianised, Islamised, or sometimes discarded. At another extreme,
there are also some Chinese Muslims who do not want to be seen as a Chinese anymore after conversion to Islam, and some say they are ‘biologically Chinese, but culturally Javanese’ (Field note, 25 September 2008).

In fact, as I have discussed in the methodology section, one of my fieldwork limitations is that most of my informants are those who still see themselves as ‘Chinese’ or ‘partly Chinese’ Muslims, however defined. Therefore many assimilated Muslims of Chinese descent are left out. Although the openness of post-New Order Indonesia has motivated some Chinese Muslim leaders, activists and preachers to reclaim their Chineseness (see chapters 4 and 5), many ordinary Muslims, who have Chinese background do not really care about their Chinese identity and have integrated if not assimilated into non-Chinese Muslim majority. I have also encountered a few second-generation ‘Chinese Muslims’ who have Chinese and non-Chinese mixed parentage. When asked about their ethnic identifications, many of them do not see themselves as a ‘Chinese person’, and say they are ‘just Indonesian’ (orang Indonesia sahaja), ‘becoming Javanese’ (menjadi Jawa) or ‘mixed’ (campuran).

However, this self identification is not always consistent with how other people may identify them. Some Chinese Muslims cannot ‘escape’ their Chineseness because of their physical appearance: they have fairer skin and slanted eyes, distinguishing themselves from many other Indonesians. From such physical attributes, preconceived notions of how each group behaves might have been already internalised before any kind of interactions occur. For example, a mixed Chinese-Malay-Dayak born-Muslim woman who does not see herself as a Chinese person, always has been seen as a new convert and been treated as a Chinese person by others because she is ‘Chinese looking’ (Field note, 29 April 2008). Meanwhile another Chinese Muslim tells me, ‘Every time I visit the mosque, I attract special attention, although I have been a Muslim for more than twenty years.’ He continues, ‘While non-Chinese converts, such as Batak Muslims are ignored. They cannot be easily identified because they share similar facial features and skin colour as the Javanese’ (Field note, 7 January 2009). ‘Chinese-looking’ can be both a ‘curse’ and a ‘blessing’. Some informants told me that although being a Muslim, they continue to face discrimination, especially at government offices, because of their Chinese appearance. While, for some Chinese preachers, as discussed in chapter 4, ‘Chinese-looking’ and other Chinese markers are their trademarks. Yet, there is little
correlation between their public performances and their everyday living identities, in which many of the preachers ‘sell Chineseness, but do not live Chineseness’.

Here, I will list the various attitudes towards Chinese identity among Chinese Muslims or Indonesian Muslims of Chinese descent: a) practise Chinese culture and proud to declare themselves as a Chinese person; b) do not practise Chinese culture, but self identify as an ethnic Chinese; c) have Chinese appearance, but do not see themselves as Chinese person; d) strategically or conditionally emphasise their Chineseness; e) hide their Chinese identity to avoid discrimination; f) do not look Chinese, but claim themselves as Chinese person; g) indifference or do not care (biasa-biasa saja, tidak peduli) and so on. This list is not a categorisation, but various descriptions of how Chinese Muslims perceive themselves. In reality, people often cannot be grouped easily under just one category; or they might fulfil the criteria of several identifications. I will explore such multiple identities through naming practices later. By doing so, I go beyond the conventional dichotomy of ‘Totok’ (pure blood, which also means Chinese-cultured) and ‘Peranakan’ (mixed blood, also implying intermingled into local cultures), which is insufficient to capture the complexity and fluidity of their ethnic identifications and cultural orientations. During my fieldwork, with the exception of those in Madura, not many Chinese Muslims saw themselves or other converts as either ‘Totok’ or ‘Peranakan’ Chinese.

Apart from cultural upbringing and social interaction, class and gender also play significant roles in determining ethnic identification among Chinese Muslims. Upper and middle class Chinese Muslims may utilise their identities for business and political purposes, yet some Chinese suffer financially after conversion to Islam because their non-Muslim Chinese families do not support and recognise them anymore. It is often,

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Conventionally, scholars divide Chinese Indonesians into two main groups, the Chinese-cultured Totok (China-born, pure blood) and the acculturated Peranakan (local-born, mixed blood). In the twentieth century, Totok was used to refer to the new Chinese migrants to Indonesia who were foreign born. Meanwhile, Peranakan was used to refer to the descendants of mixed marriage, often between Chinese males and Indonesian females. The totok-peranakan distinction based on birthplace became unrealistic after the new migrations of Chinese to Indonesia were banned and after Indonesian independence. Hence, some scholars adopted a socio-cultural account of Totok and Peranakan. In this case, a Totok refers to those who still practice Chinese culture and speak Mandarin or one of the Chinese dialects. Similarly, a Peranakan refers to those who cannot speak Chinese and use Indonesian or a local language in their daily lives. However, during the Soeharto period, Totok Chinese were rapidly “peranakanised”, largely as a result of the state’s assimilation policy. The consequence was a breakdown of the dichotomy between Totok and Peranakan. Today, in post-Soeharto Indonesia, there was an euphoric celebration of Chineseness, including the ‘reclaiming’ of Chinese identity among Chinese Indonesian who have previously assimilated, if not integrated into the majority Indonesian population (see Hoon 2008). In short, as Thjin (2002:8) argues, such categories are confusing, superficial and misleading, that the grand fallacy is to picture Chinese-Indonesian community as divided into these two major groups with distinct differences; while Budianta (2007:186) suggests, ‘the process of negotiating the meaning and construction of Chineseness in Indonesia will not reach a closure’.  

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but not always, richer Chinese Muslims who tend to maintain their Chinese identities, while poorer Chinese Muslims are more likely to be assimilated. In terms of gender, male Chinese Muslims have a higher probability of passing their Chinese identity to next generation by maintaining their family names. In chapter 3, I illustrated the contestations of ethnic identifications, economic classes and generational differences of Chinese Muslims by examining their involvement in the Cheng Hoo Mosque. In the following section, I will focus on names to explore identity negotiations among Chinese Muslims.

**Multiple Names, Multiple identifications**

Many recent studies have pointed out that identities shift in different situations and can be variously stressed (Eriksen 2002; Ong 1993; Song 2003); such multiplication of attachments is especially true for Chinese Muslims in Indonesia who have to deal with different sets of multifarious identities: Indonesian (also Javanese), Chinese and Muslim. Distinctions such as 'front stage-backstage' (Goffman 1959) and 'detached-embedded identity' (Tilly 2002) have been used by scholars to study different enactments of an individual identities in public and private spheres. Yet, the multifaceted character of Chinese Muslim identifications, as I will describe, go beyond the divide between public and private identity. Many Chinese converts engage with more than one public setting; for example, one can emphasise Chineseness to attract audiences to a public sermon, while downplaying Chineseness to escape discrimination when dealing with government officials. Chinese Muslims also often highlight the different dimension of their identities, during their daily interactions with family members, friends and colleagues. For example, they can use a ‘Chinese name’ when talking to a Chinese person, but use an ‘Islamic name’ when talking to a Muslim. Furthermore, quite often, there is no clear distinction between their public and private identities.

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1 I visited Madura for a few days in 2008. The identity adoption of Peranakan Muslims in Madura Island is interesting to review the role of class in identity formation. There are a few Peranakan families in coastal Madura that have been Muslims for a few generations and still maintain their Peranakan identity today. They are mainly businessmen and tend to practice endogamy, in which they married other Peranakan or sometimes, non-Peranakan Chinese to keep their distinct identity and business lineage. While, others especially those who are not involved in business, have intermarried with ethnic Madurese and lost their Peranakan heritage. Interestingly, many Peranakan Muslims also participate in Muhammadiyah, instead of NU which is dominant in the island. This Peranakan experience in Madura shows that organisational affiliations and marriage patterns could help in remaining or altering one’s identity. Zawawi Imron and Abdul Hadi WJ are among the prominent Madurese poets and writers who claim themselves as Peranakan Muslims, however, rarely noticed by the public, because they do not look Chinese and do not have Chinese names.
Personal names play an important role in reflecting and sometimes determining one's identity and cultural affiliation, as well as having broader historical and political meanings within a society (Reid & McDonald 2010; Scott, Tehranian & Mathias 2002). Seeing the use of personal names as a negotiable identity definer, I illustrate the everyday naming practices of Chinese Muslims to reveal their multiple identifications. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, although not compulsory, many Chinese converts adopt an Islamic name. Also, during the New Order period, the regime forced Chinese Indonesians to drop their Chinese names and adopt ‘Indonesian-sounding’ names. Many Chinese Indonesians, therefore, depending on their religion and locality, adopted different types of names, including Western or Christian names, Javanese names, Batak names and sometimes, Islamic names. Some of them also use ‘Indonesianised’ Chinese family names, such as Salim for ‘Lim’, Wijaya for ‘Oei’, Tanujaya for ‘Tan’ and so on. Like many other Chinese Indonesians, Chinese Muslims that I met during fieldwork, adapted a variety of naming forms: be it Javanese (or other local ethnic name), Islamic, Chinese, Western, or even Christian names, or a combination of any two of them. Some even have three names: Javanese, Chinese and Islamic names, which allowed them to use different names to stress different aspects of their identities, depending on situations.

11 For a discussion of Chinese Muslims naming practices and their multiple identifications in Malaysia, see Hew (2010).
12 Islamic names often originate from Arabic personal names (also Turkish and Persian names), which many of them are names of prophets or companions of the Prophet, such as Muhammad, Ibrahim and Yusuf. Yet, the meaning of ‘Islamic name’ is contested, since Islamic texts do not require Muslims to adopt certain kind of names. Moreover, a variety of ‘Muslim names’ evolved to fit various cultural traditions and local settings where Muslims reside. Muhammad (2010) even argued that, the concept of an ‘Islamic name’ has no basis in the Qur’an, and questioned whether the so-called Islamic names, such as Muhammad, Ali and Khadija are merely Arabic names. He adds that the act of changing one’s name does not make someone more a Muslim; rather, it alienates that person from the universality of Islam. During my fieldwork, a couple of Chinese converts do not use an ‘Islamic name’, as one of them says, ‘I convert to be a Muslim, not an ethnic Arab. Many Javanese Muslims also keep their customary name, so why I have to use names such as Muhammad?’ (Field note, 6 November 2008).
13 ‘Indonesian-sounding’ name is a problematic concept, since Indonesians from different ethnic and religious backgrounds adopt different types of naming, including Islamic names, Western or Christian names, Javanese names, Sundanese names, Batak names and so on. Such naming diversity gives Chinese Indonesians a few options to creatively adapt ‘Indonesian-sounding’ names. Some Chinese Indonesians, especially those who are Christians or educated in missionary schools use Western or Christian names as their first names, with Javanese or other local names as their family names, such as Albert Gunawan and Edwin Suryakusuma. Those who prefer to keep their family or business lineages adopt Javanese or other local names based on phonetics that identical with their Chinese surnames. They create ‘Indonesianised’ Chinese family names and sometimes pass it to their children. Chinese businesswomen, Liem Sioe Liong, for example, became Sudono Salim, and his family and corporation retained ‘Salim’ as an inherited family name. Despite using ‘Indonesianised’ names in legal documents, some Chinese Indonesians, especially those who are Chinese-educated also keep giving Chinese names to their next generations and sometimes use their Chinese names at home. There are also a few Chinese Indonesians who choose to keep their Chinese names publicly. For example, Kwok Kian Gee who was finance minister during Megawati presidency, despite his commitment to Indonesian nationalism, refuses to change his name. Meanwhile, those who do not intend to keep their Chinese identity, use fully Javanese or other local names. Interestingly, there are also some Chinese Indonesians, including non-Muslims, who adopt Islamic names on their identity cards, especially those who reside in Sumatra, Sulawesi and Kalimantan, where the local majorities adopt Islamic names. For example, during my fieldwork in Palembang, many Chinese Muslims told me that they used Islamic names before their conversion.
For some Chinese Muslims, their Chinese names are a point of erasure, to avoid discrimination in the workplace, school or government agencies. As an example, Suhandoyo Laison, who born into a Chinese convert family, did not reveal his Chinese ethnicity to his schoolmates in the Islamic school because he was the only ethnic Chinese among them and did not want to be treated differently. Suhandoyo recounted his experience of being bullied by his classmates for his ethnicity, as they kept calling him ‘Cina’ (a derogatory term for Chinese Indonesians) and asking him to give them money, as they perceive that Chinese are economically better off. Since then, he has stopped using his ‘Indonesianised’ Chinese family name, Laison, and tried to darken his skin, by exposing himself to sun more frequently. He says, ‘After I went to high school, no one noticed that I was Chinese because I was known as Suhandoyo only’.

Interestingly, Suhandoyo changed his attitude towards his Chineseness when he was studying in the State Islamic University in Jakarta. As one of the student activists during the reformasi period, in order to challenge the perception that ethnic Chinese are not interested in politics, he reclaimed his Chinese identity by emphasising his Chinese name. He told me, ‘During a discussion group, a few Muslim students said the anti-Chinese violence can be justified as Chinese Indonesians are arrogant and not nationalistic.’ He disputed this saying, ‘Not all Chinese are unpatriotic. Maybe some of you do not aware that I am an ethnic Chinese. My full name is Suhandoyo Laison and Laison is my family name. My Chinese name is Lai Jia Kit. Do you think I am not nationalistic just because I am a Chinese person’! (Interview, 13 April 2008). Indeed, by hiding his Chinese name, Suhandoyo ‘conceals’ his Chineseness; and by revealing it, he ‘reclaims’ his Chinese identity. In other words, name choice reflects how a Chinese Muslim would like to be perceived by others, either to highlight or downplay one’s Chineseness.

Chinese names can also be a feature of attraction, especially in post-1998 Indonesia. As I have discussed in Chapter 4, some Chinese Muslim preachers, such as Tan Mei Hwa and Koko Liem, use their Chinese names to draw media attention. Ahmad Hariyono Ong, a religious teacher in Surabaya, also purposely uses his Chinese surname, Ong during Islamic study sessions, to preach the universality of Islam. He was born during the New Order regime, and thus, given a Javanese name by his parents, Hariyono, on his identity card. His father also gave him a full Chinese name, which he rarely uses and could not even remember. After converting to Islam, he adopted an Islamic name, Ahmad. Over the last few years, after becoming a religious teacher, he put his Chinese surname along
with his Javanese and Islamic name, to show that Chinese ethnicity, Indonesian nationality and Islamic religiosity can co-exist. When I talked to Hariyono in 2008, he had a new-born son, to whom he gave the name ‘Muhammad Relaghtus Al-Fath’. He tells me that the Islamic name was chosen by a prominent local Islamic scholar and he believes the name is both a form of blessing, as well as a reminder to his son to behave according to Islamic teachings. In addition, his son has a full Chinese name, Ong Qiang Lin, given by Hariyono’s father. He says, ‘this is important so my son will not forget his Chinese heritage’ (Interview, 30 September 2008).

Occupation also plays an important role in the naming practices of Chinese Muslims. Ki Budi or Nurul Fajar is an obvious example. He is a paranormal practitioner and a leader of an Islamic chanting group *(majelis zikir)*. He tells me, ‘I am Ki Budi, when I practise alternative medicine and I am ustaz Nurul Fajar, when I lead an Islamic chanting group.’ (Interview, 23 December 2008). Ki is a Javanese title of respect for learned person; Budi is derived from his Javanese name, Budiyono; while Nurul Fajar is his Islamic name.

Siew Hwa, a make-up artist also has more than one name. She says, ‘My name on identity card is Dian Christanto. When I converted to Islam, I was given by an ustaz an Islamic name, Aisyah. I only use it when I attend religious functions.’ In her workplace, Siew Hwa prefers to use her Chinese name. She tells me, ‘Siew Hwa means beautiful flower. It suits the nature of my job. I feel uncomfortable to use my Islamic name at work because I have to interact with a lot of non-Muslims’ (Interview, 16 January 2009).

Like Siew Hwa, Ahmad Naga, a young activist in the Lautze Mosque has three names. Ahmad Naga has listed all his personal names on his business card which he gave to me, when I first met him. His official Indonesian name is Naga Kunadi, while Ahmad is his Islamic name. On the business card, he also lists his Chinese name, both in Romanised pinyin and Chinese characters, Chiou Xue Lung. He tells me, ‘Different people address me by different names. My Muslim friends call me ‘Ahmad’ and non-Muslims call me ‘Naga’. At home, my parents call me Ah Liong.’ (Interview, 11 April 2008). Naga (Indonesia), Lung (Mandarin) and Ah Liong (Hokkien) have the same meaning – dragon.

In short, the multiple names adapted by Chinese Muslims allow them to negotiate their identities creatively; as well as cross various borders.
Conclusion

Reflecting on the various life stories I have unravelled above, I think of the elusive shapes and colours, of being Chinese Muslim in Indonesia: the flexibilities; the inconsistencies and the very different life experiences. These wide ranging and complex identities make neat generalisations and comprehensive analysis almost impossible. Not only is there a diversity of religious affiliation and cultural orientation between different Chinese Muslims, an individual can also stress different dimensions of their identities across time and space. Rather than approaching their everyday lives in the hope of distinguishing between the authentic and the inauthentic self, or investigating which identity is more important for them, this chapter recognises that the Chinese Muslim self is the collection of multiple and sometimes, conflicting attachments. As revealed by their choice of names, many Chinese Muslims can emphasise or downplay their Chineseness depending on conditions. Such multiple identifications are shared by other Chinese Indonesians and as Budianta (2007:176) suggests, ‘provide a space for understanding and appreciating the multiple meanings of Chineseness that are expressed in the ‘Chinese euphoria” of post-1998 Indonesia.

To study Islamic identities, understandings and practices among Chinese Muslims, two dimensions need to be considered: the political economies of shifting religiosities and the cultural politics of flexible piety. Their religiosities not only rely on their interpretation of Qur’anic texts and Islamic teachings, but also on the contingent political, social, culture and economic circumstances of their understandings of Islam. The diverse religiosities reflect the wide range of social and religious interests among Chinese Muslims, as well as their very different conversion motivations and religious experiences. Given that conversion is an ongoing process of religious transformation, the notion of flexible piety implies the multiple, selective and sometimes, inconsistent adaption of Islamic religiosity amongst converts according to their living contexts. They accommodate Islamic practices in the struggles of their daily lives; and also adjust their daily habits according to their religious understandings.

Such flexible piety is prevalent, but not limited to converts; as many ordinary Indonesian Muslims today are in some ways facing the challenges of ‘Islamic resurgence’ that are often associated with legal-formalistic characters and conservative attitudes. Yet, negotiating their religious commitments, diverse Islamic understandings and everyday
life challenges, Muslims' flexibility in the practices and interpretations of Islam persist amid the rise of assertive Islam. Such flexibility is the antithesis of rigid observance of the religious doctrines, reasserting that there are multiple ways of being a Muslim in Indonesia. Let me end this chapter by recounting my conversation with a Javanese Muslim girl, Indah in Surabaya. Indah often wears a colourful and trendy 'Islamic dress' and wishes to run an 'Islamic fashion' boutique. When we go out for dinner one day, she refuses to eat at a noodle stall run by a Chinese person and says, 'I know he uses chicken instead of pork, but I am afraid that he may still use lard when cooking noodles' (Field note, 17 September 2008). On another day, at lunchtime during Ramadan, I visit her office and she is having pizza. She invites me to join her. She says, 'Don't worry. I am hungry and I have to eat so that I can keep doing my jobs.' Refusing to eat noodles that may contain lard, yet eating lunch during fasting hours, she explains, 'Islam is a flexible religion. We can follow Islamic teachings according to our ability.' She then asks me, 'When are you going to convert to Islam?' (Field note, 22 September 2008).
Chapter 8

Conclusion: The Paradoxes of Chinese Muslim Cultural Identities

Reflecting on the discussions of my preceding chapters, I think of the often fluid shapes and elusive colours, of being Chinese Muslim in post-New Order Indonesia: the heterogeneity and multiplicity; the different life experiences; the range of economic, political, social and religious interests. My research has shown how and under what conditions, their ethnicity and religiosity are performed and negotiated in a variety of ways, in the public and private, individually and collectively, unintentionally and intentionally. Given the multifarious motivations, processes and outcomes of their identity negotiation, it is difficult to make a neat conclusion, but easy to set one’s eye on one part, incorrectly believing it to represent the whole. Instead of a simple generalisation, I will therefore, reiterate a few interrelated paradoxes of identity formation and cultural interaction in order to give a broader perspective and more nuanced understanding of Chinese Muslim identities. By analysing their cultural identities, I will explore the possibilities and limitations of Chinese and Islamic cosmopolitanism in contemporary Indonesia. Lastly, I will also point to several considerations that might benefit other studies on ethnicity and religiosity, especially those concerned with the intersection between these two sources of identity.

Hybrid Performance, Multiple Identifications and Flexible Piety

The first paradox is that of collective representation and individual negotiation. As I have noted, Chinese Muslim cultural identities have been objectified in symbols (e.g. Chinese-style mosques), embodied in organisations (e.g. PITI), represented in popular media (e.g. Chinese preaching), and performed in rituals (e.g. the celebration of Chinese New Year) in post-1998 Indonesia. Yet, only a few Chinese Muslims pray at Chinese-style mosques, join PITI, listen to Chinese preachers and observe Chinese New Year traditions. Instead of sharing a common ‘Chinese Islamic’ practice, many Chinese Muslims visit ‘non-Chinese’ mosques nearby their homes, participate in social activities in their neighbourhood, attend religious talks by non-Chinese preachers, and perform various local Muslim rituals. Therefore, I propose that we need to distinguish Chinese
Muslim cultural identities as a form of collective representation, and Chinese Muslims as individual subjects. Inspired by Brubaker's concept of 'ethnicity without group' (2004), this thesis analyses the emergence of Chinese Muslim culture without treating Chinese Muslims as a bounded ethno-religious group. This notion allows me to posit that Chinese Muslim cultures do not necessarily have to be identical with Chinese Muslim individuals, and could be shared by non-Chinese Muslims. In fact, most of those praying at Chinese-style mosques and listening to Chinese preachers are non-Chinese.

The second paradox is both intentional and unintentional hybridity (Bakhtin 1981; Werbner 1997a). The former forges the symbolic unity of Chinese Muslims, while the latter reflects their fluid identities and myriad boundary crossings in everyday lives. I have described the intentional combination of Chinese and Islamic elements as a form of 'hybrid performance' (chapter 4), and argue that it does not reflect the 'multiple identification' and 'flexible piety' of many ordinary Chinese Muslims (chapters 3 and 7). The hybrid performance, which manifested in the design of Chinese-style mosques and the performance of some Chinese preachers, does not symbolise an existing ethno-religious reality, but rather brings a new reality into being, by reappropriating Chinese traditions and Islamic messages to promote a sense of shared experience that can unify Chinese Muslims. The vivid accentuation of their identities is important because Chinese Muslim leaders are afraid that their distinctive cultural identities are in danger of disappearing. This fear of lost uniqueness has less to do with state policies, and more to do with the small and geographically scattered Chinese Muslim population, as well as their fluid identification and intense blending with non-Chinese. Chinese Muslims are constantly crossing boundaries, not only between Islam and Chinese identities, but also diversified Islamic and Chinese traditions. Many of them have frequent interaction with local Muslims, adopt their cultural practices and often intermarry with them, which have made the perpetuation of their identities across generations difficult. Therefore, the construction of Chinese-style mosques is important in manifesting and preserving their cultural identities, as the materiality and tangibility of mosques makes Chinese Muslim culture unequivocally 'real' and 'enduring', at least symbolically.

In Indonesia, most Chinese Muslims are converts. Their Islamic conversions imply not only their embracing of an alternative set of beliefs, but also their negotiation of a new set of ethnic identifications. Not only is there a diversity of religious affiliation and cultural orientation between Chinese Muslims, but an individual can also stress different
dimensions of their identities across time and space. In terms of ethnic identification, some publicly celebrate their Chineseness, some reject the label of being a ‘Chinese Muslim’, while many others are more flexible and can choose to emphasise or downplay their Chineseness, depending on conditions, as exemplified in their choice of names (chapter 7). Such multiple identifications, I believe, are also shared by many other Chinese Indonesians, affirming that there are multiple ways of being a Chinese (and sometimes, also escaping being marked as a ‘Chinese’) in Indonesia.

Regarding religiosity, the Islamic understanding and practices of Chinese Muslims are extremely diverse, ranging from orthodox to heterodox, from sharia-minded to liberal-minded, and from strictly observant to partly-practising, which reflects their very different conversion motivations, social experience and religious education. Given that conversion is an ongoing process of religious transformation, I deploy the notion of flexible piety to analyse the multiple, selective and sometimes, inconsistent adaption of Islamic religiosity among Chinese Muslims according to their living contexts (chapter 7). They accommodate Islamic practices in the struggles of their daily lives, and also adjust their daily habits according to their religious understandings. Although flexible piety is more prevalent among converts, it can also be applied to many other Muslims amid the rise of assertive Islam in Indonesia today.

The third paradox is that of public manifestation and private enactment. Through mosque architecture, social activities and preaching performance, Chinese Muslim businessmen, leaders and preachers publicly manifest their Islamic religiosity and Chinese ethnicity to create a unique image of the Chinese Muslim cultural identity. Nonetheless, their public expression of identity is not necessarily consistent with their private enactment of self. As I discussed in chapter 4, many Chinese preachers have minimal knowledge of Chinese language and culture, leaving them with limited ways of presenting their Chinese identities in the public. Only through explicit cultural symbols, such as name and attire, can they authenticate their Chineseness to attract media attention. Indeed, these attractive and exceptional appearances stand out as the trademark of some Chinese preachers in the crowded Indonesian preaching market. Yet, in everyday life, many Chinese preachers neither speak Chinese nor observe Chinese traditions. Many intermarry with non-Chinese and follow local Muslim practices. Therefore, to a certain extent, they ‘sell Chineseness, but do not live Chineseness’.
Meanwhile, some Chinese businessmen, although they have performed the hajj and regularly wear Muslim attire during Friday prayers in mosques, neglect their Islamic obligations at home. In other words, they perform Islamic religiosity in front of other Muslims, but do not necessarily follow Islamic principles in daily lives. Such identity practices resonate with Ditchev’s notion of ‘lifestyle nationalism’ (2006), in which identity is not necessarily linked to belonging, but to emblems. Yet, the use of cultural symbols, as argued by Bourdieu (1991), can also influence both self-identification and the perception of others. We need more detailed and lengthy research to examine how significant are the influences of public manifestations of Chinese Muslim cultural identities on their everyday practices.

The fourth paradox is the strategic solidarity and internal dynamics. Like many other Indonesians, Chinese Muslims use the political openness of post-Suharto Indonesia to project their identities through organisations, such as PITI. While the leaders of these organisations share the aim of presenting a unique image of Chinese Muslim identity, they do so for different reasons and in different ways. Some of them focus on preaching (dakwah-oriented); some emphasise promoting ethnic intermingling (pembauran-oriented); others pursue their personal political or economic interests. Despite these diverse motivations, I argue that the dominant discourse among Chinese Muslim leaders today is ‘spreading Islam through cultural approaches’ (dakwah pendekatan budaya). This is a significant shift from ‘assimilation of ethnic Chinese through Islam’ (asimilasi lewat Islam) that prevailed during the Suharto regime. In addition, Chinese Muslim organisations, as I mentioned in chapter 5, are not exclusive, as both their membership and activities are open to all Muslims regardless of ethnic background. Also, not all Chinese Muslims affiliate with organisations like PITI; rather they feel more comfortable engaging with broader Chinese and Islamic groups or joining non-identity-based activities. In short, the contingent solidarity of Chinese Muslims gives voice to the minority without reducing it to a fixed entity and does not suppress internal diversity.

The fifth paradox is the historical past and the construction of memory. As I illustrated in chapter 2, Chinese Muslim cultural identities are products of historical development, yet we should not underestimate the active agency of Chinese Muslim leaders in rearticulating their histories too. After the fall of the New Order regime, through various ‘sites of memory’ and ‘memory industries’, such as mosques, libraries and songs, some Chinese Muslim leaders are actively rearticulating their past for various present purposes.
Though highly disputed, these rearticulations proclaim the role of Admiral Cheng Ho in spreading Islam and assert that several of the Walisongo were of Chinese descent, as a way to show not only that Islam and Chineseness can coexist harmoniously, but also that ethnic Chinese had played a significant role in disseminating Islam in Indonesia. As Storey (2003:83) points out, ‘the profound interaction between memory and identity formation does not necessarily depend on the truth, but what is remembered’ (Storey 2003:83). To a certain extent, Chinese Muslim leaders are not only ‘consuming’ the past, but also ‘producing’ historical memories to give meaning to the present. Such rearticulation of history, on the one hand, could empower the minority through selective memory; on the other hand, it might simplify their complex past.

The sixth paradox is the transnational connection and local configuration. Not only ‘remembering the past for the present’, Chinese Muslim leaders are also ‘imagining there for here’, in which they construct their distinctive Islamic tradition through transnational connections with Hui Muslims in mainland China, yet reconfigured to local contexts. The idea of ‘Chinese Muslim diaspora’, albeit premature, adds another scenario to transnational Muslim politics which are often seen as hostile to ethnic culture (Roy 2004) and linked to Middle East (Mandaville 2001). Through the discussion of the Surabaya Cheng Hoo Mosque in chapter 3, I argue that their strategic transnational link with Muslims is not a form of desire for return or attachment to China, but an effort to manifest their identity and to redefine their minority position in Indonesia. Furthermore, there are also efforts by Chinese Muslims to build Chinese-style mosques in other cities in Indonesia, which might contribute to the emergence of a rather new translocal ethno-religious imagination, as compared to other existing locally bounded Muslim communities, such as Javanese Muslims and Acehnese Muslims.

A closer examination, however, reveals that Chinese Muslims’ transnational links are not limited to Muslims in China, but also Muslims in other parts of the world, and their daily Islamic practices have less to do with their translocal imagination, and more to do their situated localities. Indeed, many Chinese Muslims feel themselves to be part of the global Muslim ummah, sharing the hope of performing the pilgrimage to Mecca, sympathising with the plight of suffering Muslims across the world, such as those in Palestine, and sometimes, the ideology of transnational Islamism. Meanwhile, their religious affiliations are mostly influenced by local Islamic currents. For example, many Chinese Muslims are Muhammadiyah members in Yogyakarta, NU members in
Now, let us move to the seventh paradox which I would like to recapitulate in greater detail: identity assertions and cosmopolitan sensibilities. Pulling the main arguments from my chapters, I will seek to address the question I raised in the introduction: whether Chinese Muslim cultural identities embrace inclusive Chineseness and cosmopolitan Islam. Instead of seeing themselves as a ‘double minority’ (an ethnic minority within Muslim Indonesians and a religious minority within Chinese Indonesians), some Chinese Muslim leaders today capitalise their strategic positions as ‘bridge builders’ between non-Muslim Chinese and non-Chinese Muslim Indonesians. They creatively promote the universality of Islam, uphold the inclusivity of Chineseness, and reconcile the widely held incompatibility between Islam and Chineseness in Indonesia.

The diverse responses towards the euphoria of Chinese identities in today Indonesia, as well as the divergent progressive and conservative tendencies of Indonesian Muslims, form a broader canvas for the emergence of Chinese Muslim cultural identities. The public celebration of Chineseness reflects the cultural openness of post-New Order Indonesian governments and empowers the formerly suppressed minority identity. Yet, it was not without criticism and opposition, from both non-Chinese and Chinese Indonesians. Dahana (2000) and Tjhin (2004) have questioned whether the symbolic celebration of Chineseness could address the real problems faced by many Chinese Indonesians, such as the discrimination they face when dealing with officials. Meanwhile, Budianta (2007) and Hoon (2009) have pointed to the worries of some Chinese that the excessive display of Chineseness might reinforce negative stereotypes of Chinese Indonesians as being exclusive and arrogant, as well as deepen the prejudice of non-Chinese towards them, given that there are social jealousies against those who are seen as ‘rich Chinese’. Furthermore, as Heryanto (2004, 2008) indicates, there is a growing tendency to essentialise Chineseness as a given reality, reducing the complexity of Chinese Indonesian living identities to a set of characteristics and traditions, such as speaking Mandarin and wearing Chinese attire. Responding to these critics, many Chinese leaders always incorporate national elements, local traditions and Muslim leaders during their promotions of Chinese culture, as a way of reconciling their
assertion of Chinese identities and their commitments to Indonesian nationalism, while many younger Chinese Indonesians are involved in social advocacy beyond ethnicity, such as promoting human rights and fostering interethnic solidarity.

Islam has played an important role in democratising Indonesia as a moral force for social justice and clean government. Yet, Indonesian Islam in post-1998 has also been marked by negative manifestations, such as the terrorist attacks in Jakarta and Bali, the burning of churches and more recently the killing of Ahmadiyah followers in Banten, which have challenged the general views about the supposedly peaceful, inclusive and tolerant feature of Islam in Indonesia. The conservative turn in Indonesian Islam is also evident in events, such as the issue of a MUI fatwa against ‘secularism, pluralism and liberalism’, the passing of the Anti-pornography Bill and the implementation of sharia-influenced by-laws in some regions. This trend has worried many Muslims and non-Muslims, who see it as undermining Indonesia’s inter-religious harmony and inner-religious diversity.

Human rights, women’s rights and arts activists have also expressed their concerns that Islamic conservatism might suppress personal freedom, gender equality and artistic expression. Nonetheless, amid this growing conservatism, there are various attempts by many Muslim groups and leaders to promote Islam that is liberal in interpretations, supportive of cultural diversity, valuing local culture and peaceful in approach. For example, Islamic feminism has gained momentum in Indonesia, suggesting there is no contradiction between Islamic religiosity and gender equality; supported too by the promotion of women’s rights using an Islamic framework (Robinson 2008).

Situated in these contexts, some Chinese Muslims have found themselves in a strategic position to uphold a Chinese culture that is inclusive and to advocate Islamic religiosity that is tolerant. Generally speaking, many Chinese Indonesians support the expression of Chinese Muslim cultural identities because it helps to redefine their minority position and sketch a better image of ethnic Chinese among local Muslims. Meanwhile, some Muslim leaders endorse such ethno-religious cultural manifestation, as a way of preaching Islam, promoting religious pluralism, as well as gaining political and financial support from Chinese Indonesians. At a first glance, this welcoming of Chinese Muslim culture shows that the expression of Chineseness can be grounded in local sensibility and

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1 For example, in 2008, Surabaya INTI organised a seminar to commemorate the day of Youth Oath (Sumpah Pemuda), an important event for Indonesian nationalism. In 2010, INTI held a Javanesse shadow puppet show (wayang kulit) in Jakarta. Muslim leaders from both NU and Muhammadiyah are also frequently invited by Chinese organisations to participate in their activities.
shared by the local ethnic majority who are mainly Muslims, while Islamic preaching with Chinese cultural symbols indicates that the assertion of Islamic religiosity can be tolerant to cultural diversity and accepted by non-Muslims.

The Chinese-style mosques are perhaps, the most successful and concrete expression of Chinese Muslim culture in Indonesia today. As I argued in chapter 3, the inclusive architectural designs and social activities of the Surabaya Cheng Hoo Mosque is a notable example proposing that the celebration of Chinese cultural expression not equalling the promotion of social exclusivity. Although the mosque was built in a Chinese-style and managed by Chinese Muslims, it is a religious space wherein both Muslims and non-Muslims from different ethnic groups can mix and interact with each other. The explicit expression of Chineseness in the mosque challenges the notion of 'assimilation through Islam' which was prevalent during the New Order and shows that there is a Chinese way of being Muslim, yet this does not necessarily mean the abandonment of the idea of ethnicity as flexible and multiple. Indeed, many Chinese Muslims who are active in the mosque have frequent interaction with non-Chinese and are also involved with religious activities in other mosques. Moreover, most of those who perform Friday prayers and attend Islamic study sessions at the mosque are non-Chinese Muslims. Therefore, the Surabaya Cheng Hoo Mosque in some ways embraced 'inclusive Chineseness', that the practice of Chinese culture is no longer a sign of ethnic exclusivity, but a common heritage that can be shared by all Indonesians.

The Surabaya Cheng Hoo Mosque also promotes Islam as a localised yet universal religion. Its 'temple-like' outlook nudges Indonesian mosques away from their large domes, onion-shaped arches and minarets. Some Muslim leaders who support the localisation of Islam also see it as a form of resistance against the 'Arabisation' of mosque architecture in Indonesia. The adaptation of religious symbols from both modernist and traditionalist Muslim groups, and the incorporation of Muslim preachers from various religious backgrounds, reflects the openness of Chinese Muslims towards various interpretations and practices of Islam. While the avoidance of using loudspeakers to broadcast morning azan and the collaboration of activities with non-Muslim organisations, show that the assertion of Islamic identity does not affect the relation of Chinese Muslims to their non-Muslim counterparts. To project the cosmopolitan image of Islam, the Chinese Muslim leaders have quoted Qur'anic texts to show Islam is a religion of 'rahmatan lil 'alamin' (blessings for the universe) that emphasises 'hablum
minallohi wa hablum minannaas' (the good relationship with God and also among humankind). To some extent, Cheng Hoo Mosque is arguably a ‘cosmopolitan [space] envisaged in marginality’ (Bhabha 1996a), in which minority Chinese Muslims redefine their social position, from a ‘double minority’ to ‘intermediate community’, by playing a significant role in promoting interethnic solidarity and religious harmony.

The inclusivity of the above-mentioned Chinese Muslim cultural practice affirms the notion that there is no necessary contradiction between cosmopolitan visions and identity claims, but in fact many cosmopolitan practices may be ‘grounded’ in the experiences of particular cultural groups (Kahn 2008:268; also Appiah 1998, Werbner 2006). However, a closer examination on the popularity of Chinese Muslim preachers and the debates of Chinese New Year celebrations may caution us about the cosmopolitan potential of their cultural identities. As I concluded in chapter 4, some Chinese preachers strategically use Chinese cultural symbols in their preaching to promote the universality of Islam and to perform a hybridised form of Islam. Instead of koko shirt with peci, or long robe with turban, some Chinese preachers wear traditional Chinese clothing with a Chinese skullcap. Yet, this essentialises the complex and fluid Chineseness into a set of clichéd and fixed cultural markers, such as Chinese names and attire, thus reconsolidating an ethnic Chinese stereotype among broader Indonesian population, albeit not a negative one.

Furthermore, although Chinese preachers create diverse faces of Islam, they do not offer a critical understanding of Islam nor pluralise the religious debates in Indonesia. The messages of the Chinese preachers can be both cosmopolitan and ‘counter-cosmopolitan’ (Appiah 2006), depending on the preachers and their audiences. While Tan Mei Hwa emphasises the inclusivity of Islamic teachings and the applications of Islamic values in everyday life, Irena Handono constantly criticises Christianity and questions various localised Muslim practices. Other Chinese preachers are in general, moderate and tolerant in their preaching, yet sometimes restrict themselves to rather conservative religious viewpoints, for example, Anton Medan’s support of implementation of Islamic laws, Koko Lim’s disapproval of Muslims celebrating Valentine’s Day, and Syaffii Antonio’s disapproval of Muslims wishing Christians a ‘Merry Christmas’. For converts-turned-preachers, affirming an orthodox understanding of Islam is not surprising, as this is a way of proving their commitments to Islam and demonstrating their credentials as a preacher.
The controversies and debates around Chinese New Year ceremonies in Yogyakarta mosques reveal the diverse religious opinions of Indonesian Muslims, including Chinese converts. Some Muslims view Imlek as *halal*, some say *haram* and many think it is permissible, as long its celebrations do not involve 'un-Islamic' elements, such as deity worship and the consumption of *haram* food. In chapter 6, I analysed how Chinese Muslim leaders deploy the 'religion-culture' distinction to defend Imlek celebrations in mosques, by arguing that Imlek is merely a Chinese ‘cultural’ tradition, thus there is no question of polytheism or other ‘religious’ sins in such practice. Some Chinese Muslims also see this accommodation of Chinese cultural elements in mosques as a form of Islamic preaching, part of their ‘*dakwah pendekatan budaya*’ (preaching through cultural approaches). The ‘religion-culture’ distinction might be convincing enough to justify ‘cultural’ celebration, yet it stops short of defending customary practices which might contain ‘religious’ elements. Despite the disapproval of orthodox Muslims, some Chinese Muslims continue to practise ‘non-Islamic’ rituals in everyday life, such as ancestor worship and burning incense. They creatively justify their customary practices by referring to more universal Islamic values, such as filial piety and respecting elders.

By distinguishing the sphere of ‘religion’ from that of ‘culture’, MUI has issued a *fatwa* stating the celebration of Chinese New Year is not *haram*, provided it does not involve ‘non-Islamic’ religious rituals. However, MUI has previously also issued *fatwas* that prohibit Muslims from celebrating Valentine’s Day and Christmas, as well as calling for the banning of the Ahmadiyah, a controversial Muslim sect rejected by many orthodox Islamic groups. I propose that the MUI *fatwas* allowing Imlek but prohibiting Christmas celebrations among Muslims, in some ways, reflect the possibilities and limitations of Islamic cosmopolitanism in contemporary Indonesia. Paradoxically, while there is an increasing acceptance of cultural diversity among Muslim leaders, there is also a rising intolerance towards religious intermingling and intra-religion differences within some sections of Indonesian Muslims. To support this argument, let me compare the responses of Indonesian Muslims towards different issues. While most Muslim scholars do not have problems with the establishment of Chinese-style mosques, some hesitate to endorse Chinese New Year ceremonies in mosques. Many Muslim leaders, including the conservatively inclined MUI, allow the celebration of Chinese New Year, yet disapprove of and avoid Christmas celebrations. When it comes to Ahmadiyah, fewer Muslim scholars lend their support to the Muslim sect which was deemed ‘deviant’ according to MUI fatwa. Even the government fails to protect Ahmadiyah’s followers from being
attacked by radical Muslim groups. In other words, many Muslim scholars accept the cultural diversity, provided it falls within specified ‘orthodox’ boundaries; yet they hesitate to cross religious boundaries, observe non-Islamic rituals and endorse alternative interpretations of Islam. While such Muslim scholars can be seen as ‘pluralists’ for their acceptance of cultural differences, they are far from being ‘cosmopolitans’ because of their unwillingness to cross boundaries.

Nevertheless, despite the self essentialisation of Chineseness and the subscription to conservative religious understanding among some Chinese Muslims, I would propose that Chinese Muslim cultural identities, especially as manifested in their mosques, embrace a limited kind of cosmopolitan Islam and inclusive Chineseness. Without giving up their Chinese ethnicity and Islamic religiosity, Chinese-style mosques provide a model for multi-ethnic and multi-religious coexistence. Being ‘more’ Muslim does not necessarily mean being inward-looking and losing your cultural traditions. Being ‘more’ Chinese does not necessarily mean being exclusive and losing your local affiliations. In other words, one can be ‘more Islamic, but no less Chinese’, as well as ‘more Chinese, but no less Indonesian’. While it is premature to claim that the emergence of Chinese Muslim cultural identities has pluralised the discourses of Chineseness and Islam, it does in some ways provide more complex cultural representations to both Chinese and Islamic identity in Indonesia. Furthermore, Chinese Muslim cultures are shared by both Muslims and non-Muslims, Chinese and non-Chinese; and open up more spaces for social interactions and boundary crossings. Indeed, Chinese Muslim cultural identities are always at risk of disappearance because of the intense interaction and frequent intermarriage between Chinese Muslim and non-Chinese.

Nevertheless, there are three requisites that deserved to be mentioned here. First, the inclusivity of Chinese Muslim culture does not necessarily guarantee the decline of class differences, racial inequality and religious conservatism. Second, while Chinese Muslim cultural identities, in general, embrace cosmopolitan values, not all Chinese Muslims are equally ‘cosmopolitan’; instead some of them are hostile to both their former religions and their cultural traditions. Third, such cosmopolitan practices are not new in Indonesia, but can be traced back to the interaction between Islam, Chinese and local cultures during the pre-colonial and colonial periods (see chapter 2).
Future Research and Comparative Agendas

Given the heterogeneity of both Chinese and Muslim identities, my research does not claim to be a comprehensive ethnography or a detailed historiography of Chinese Muslims in Indonesia. Instead, I investigate how and under what conditions, Chinese Muslims negotiate their ethnicity and religiosity in post-1998 Indonesia. There are a few aspects of their identities that need to be further examined, such as their Islamic conversion and education, their interaction and intermarriage with non-Chinese Muslims, the religiosity of female converts, the identification of the second generation Chinese Muslims, as well as the experience of Chinese Muslims outside major cities in Java. I would also like to suggest a few possibilities for comparative research for deeper understanding and further theorisation of identity formation, cultural diversity and religious pluralism. I will here only outline some brief and modest suggestions, as more serious and in-depth comparisons are needed to compel us to 'see hidden facts, problematise taken-for-granted observations, and ask questions that otherwise we would not raised had we considered only a single case' (Bayat 2001:153).

The first comparison is with other minority Muslim groups in Indonesia. There has been much research on ethnic-majority Muslims in Indonesia, such as Javanese Muslims, yet only a few studies about minority Muslims, such as Dayak Muslims. A comparative analysis between Chinese Muslims and Dayak Muslims could be interesting, as both of them are religious minorities within their ethnic groups, and they also share parallel development in post-1998 Indonesia. In West Kalimantan, prior to 1998, many Dayaks (mainly animists or Christians) who converted to Islam self-identified themselves as 'Malay', yet since the introduction of regional autonomy in post-New Order period, which has empowered Dayak political identity, more and more Dayaks who are Muslims consider themselves as 'Dayak Muslims' instead of 'Malay' (Pasti 2003). The Union of Dayak Muslim Families (IKDI, Ikatan Keluarga Dayak Islam) has also been established to promote Dayak Muslim cultural identities. How do Dayak Muslims reconcile their Dayak ethnicity and Islamic religiosity? How do they interact with non-Muslim Dayaks and Malay Muslims? The answers to such questions might help us draw a bigger picture about the dynamics of various ethno-religious identities in Indonesia.

The second potential comparison is with other religious adherents of Chinese Indonesians, such as Chinese Christians, Chinese Buddhists and Chinese Confucians.
While traditional ‘Chinese religions’ are often associated with Buddhism, Confucianism and various folk beliefs, there are steadily increasing numbers of Chinese Indonesians who follow Christianity (both Protestant and Catholicism) and Islam, the two largest monotheistic world religions. Comparison between Chinese Muslims and Chinese Christians can lead us to better understand the transnational linkages and local dynamics of religious identities, and the relations between ethnic traditions and religious doctrines. On the one hand, there is a rapid growth of transnational Pentecostal-charismatic Christianity among Chinese Indonesians; on the other hand, many Chinese Christians intermingle with other Christian Indonesians, such as Javanese Christians and Batak Christians, in the local schools and churches. While some Catholic churches held Imlek celebrations, a Protestant pastor questioned whether a Christian should practice Chinese traditions (Hoon 2009). These different viewpoints towards celebrating Imlek among Christians are in some ways resemble the divergent attitudes of modernist, traditionalist and salafist Muslims toward local culture and ethnic traditions.

The third useful comparison is with Chinese Muslims in Malaysia. By comparing Chinese Muslims in Indonesia and Malaysia, both Muslim majority countries with sizable Chinese minorities, we can analyse how the cultural politics of Chineseness and Islam in both countries have enabled and constrained the formation of Chinese Muslim cultural identities. While there are lively debates about Islamic expression and discourse in Indonesia; such discussions are to a certain extent regulated by the powerful religious authorities, and distorted by ethnicised Islam in Malaysia, in which Islam is constitutionally, politically and culturally interwoven with ethnic Malay. While there is a continuity of Chinese cultural identities in Malaysia, albeit with state constraints and local adjustment; in Indonesia, Chineseness was suppressed for three decades during the New Order period and now is in the process of ‘rediscovering’ and ‘reinventing’. A comparison between Chinese Muslims in both countries not only could tell us how possibly cosmopolitan practices are negotiated and contested in different social contexts, but might also hint us to the possible translocal connections of Chinese Muslims beyond the state borders.

The fourth comparison is a rather ambitious one, which is with Muslim minorities in non-Muslim majority countries, such as those in China and in the western countries. As Roy (2004) points out, Islam is more and more often becoming disconnected from a specific culture, as evidenced by the growing number of young Muslims in the West who
define their identities primarily or merely as Muslim, instead of identifying themselves according to their ethnic groups. Meanwhile, in certain parts of China, there is also an 'Arabisation' tendency among Hui Muslims, as shown by the shifting style of their mosque architecture, from a traditional Chinese style to a pan-Islamic one (Gillette 2000). Nonetheless, amid this trend of 'deculturation' (Roy 2004), I believe, there are still many Muslims who prefer to maintain their cultural identities. Just like in Indonesia, while transnational Islamism is on the rise (Bubalo & Fealy 2005), there are also growing numbers of visitors to local Islamic pilgrimage sites (Quinn 2008). Indeed, we need more in-depth study to examine the intersection between religiosity and ethnicity, as well as the relations between transnational and localised religiosities in this globalising world.

Also, in the last few years, there have been heated debates in various European countries about the banning of various visible symbols of Islam, such as the minarets in Switzerland and the headscarfs in France. Such prohibitions of Islamic symbols are possibly made with the assumption that the public expression of Islamic religiosity is rather divisive and bigoted; overlooking the possibilities of cosmopolitanism and inclusivity within religious practices. At the same time, we witness contrasting developments in Malaysia and Indonesia. Some Islamic departments in Malaysia insist dome and minarets are essential components of new mosques, while several local governments in Indonesia make female veiling compulsory. The former suppresses the creativity and diversity of Islamic expression, and the latter undermines the personal freedom of female Muslims. I am not here to suggest that we should limit, regulate or enforce Islamic symbols or any kind of identity expressions; instead I strongly believe that we should allow more spaces for expressing diverse identities and fostering the 'cosmopolitan' potential of identity manifestation. This proposition leads us to another important question: how and under what circumstances, can identity claims and cosmopolitan visions coexist? The answer to this question is not only a philosophical one, but also a historical and political one. Therefore, we might not find a standard prescription for these cosmopolitan dilemmas, but instead may have to engage with the cosmopolitan possibilities of particular identity practices within the social and historical settings that constrain and enable them.
## Appendix 1: List of Interviewees

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name/ Gender/ Age (as of Interview date)</th>
<th>Occupation/ Position (as of Interview date)</th>
<th>Interview Date</th>
<th>Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A Hui (M, 51)</td>
<td>Noodle seller</td>
<td>19/12/08</td>
<td>Jakarta</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abdul Chalim Lee (M, 54)</td>
<td>Businessman, politician, former chairman of East Java PITI</td>
<td>03/10/08</td>
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<td>Abdul Hadi, WM (M, 62)</td>
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<td>Palembang</td>
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<td>Shop owner, Treasurer of Surabaya PITI</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ali Karim Oei (M, 52)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ali Muktamar (M, 58)</td>
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<td>Anton Medan (M, 52)</td>
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<td>Enin Supriyanto (M, 47)</td>
<td>Curator, artist</td>
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<td>Jakarta</td>
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<td>Erni Tantajaya (F, 42)</td>
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<td>Position</td>
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<td>Marketing manager, HTI activist</td>
<td>10/01/08</td>
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<td>Muhammad Gato (M, 30)</td>
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<td>Henny Rachmawati (F, 34)</td>
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<td>Herman Halim (M, 55)</td>
<td>Bank Director, leader of Cheng Hoo Foundation</td>
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<td>Herwansyah (M, 39)</td>
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<td>Liv Febriana (F, 25)</td>
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<td>Jos Soetomo (M, 63)</td>
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<td>Kapao (M, 42)</td>
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<td>Karim Hassan (M, 45)</td>
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<td>47</td>
<td>Kelvin Ikhwan (M, 29)</td>
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<td>Koko Liem (M, 29)</td>
<td>Preacher, businessman</td>
<td>26/04/08</td>
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<td>Nurse</td>
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<td>Lily Rosita (F, 50)</td>
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<td>Profession</td>
<td>Date</td>
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<td>Nurul Fajar/ Ki Budi (M,49)</td>
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<td>Trisno Admadjo (M,58)</td>
<td>Trading agent</td>
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<td>Vitha (F,32)</td>
<td>Office clerk, MUSTIKA activist</td>
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<td>Willy Pangesu (M,59)</td>
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<td>Yanto Yang (M,60)</td>
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<td>Yenci (F,35)</td>
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<td>Yuana Vina (F,24)</td>
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<td>Yusof Hikam (M,50)</td>
<td>Treasurer of Surabaya Cheng Hoo Mosque</td>
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<td>95</td>
<td>Zawawi Imron (M,60+)</td>
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</table>

* The list above only consists of informants whom I formally interviewed. It does not include informants whose stories, narratives and opinions that I recorded in my field notes from participation observation and informal conversation.
Appendix 2: Interview Guidelines

INTERVIEW GUIDELINES

(This form is not a questionnaire for the informant, but an interview guideline for researcher’s reference. It outlines the general questions that will guide my interviews in fieldwork. Wording and questions may change according to conditions.)

Interview Information

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<thead>
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<tr>
<td>Interview Time:</td>
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<td>Interview Venue:</td>
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- Information supplied may be attributed to informant's name
- Information supplied may be attributed to the use of a pseudonym

Personal Background

(Informant has the right for not providing information on any item below)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name:</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>Name before conversion:</td>
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<td>Chinese name, if any:</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ethnicity/ dialect:</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Original locality:</td>
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<td>Age:</td>
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<td>Previous religion:</td>
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<td>Conversion's year:</td>
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<td>Income:</td>
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<td>Previous job:</td>
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<td>(Ethnic/religious composition)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Previous housing area:</td>
<td>(before conversion) (Ethnic/religious composition)</td>
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<td>Secondary education:</td>
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<td>Tertiary education:</td>
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<td>Spoken language/ dialects:</td>
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<td>Marital status:</td>
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<td>Ethnicity/ religion of spouse:</td>
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<tr>
<td>Number of Children:</td>
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</table>
Open-ended Questions
[Informant has the right to decline to answer any question below]

1. Conversion Experience

• When did you convert to Islam? Why? Where? How?
• Did you go through any religious organisation or mosque for your conversion?
• How did you learn about Islam before and/or after conversion?
• Did you change your religious information on your identity card after conversion?
• Did you adopt an Islamic name after conversion? What is it? Why?
• Could you share with me the responses (e.g. Chinese, Muslims, family members, friends, colleague, schoolmates, etc) towards your conversion?
• Could you share with me the changes to your lifestyle (e.g. attire, food, language, job, personal attitude, housing area, social interaction, etc) after conversion?
• Do you think you gained or lost anything after conversion to Islam?

2. Identification

• How do you identify yourself (Chinese/ Indonesian/ Javanese/ Sundanese/ Muslim/ Chinese Muslim or others)?
• What is your ethnicity? Why do you say that? What is the role of your ethnicity in your daily life?
• What is the role of your ethnicity in your daily life? In what sense, is Islam important (e.g. social, economic, belief, identity etc)?
• Do you think ethnic identity and religious identity contradict each other? Why?
• Which identity is more important? Why?
• Did your conversion to Islam make you more ‘Indonesian’ and more accepted by non-Chinese Indonesians?
• Do you care about who you are in terms of cultural identity?
• What name do you prefer now? Chinese, Islamic, Indonesian or mixed?

3. Intermarriage

• What do you think about mixed-marriage?
• Have you married?

If married,
• Did you marry before/ after conversion?
• If you converted after marriage, did your spouse and children also convert to Islam?
• Could you tell me about your marriage procedure and wedding ceremony?
• If you have children, are they Muslim? What kind of names did you give them? What kind of school are they attending?
• Could you share with me details of your intermarriage family life (e.g. language, food)?

If not married,
• Do you have a partner? What is his/her ethnicity and religion?
• If no, are ethnicity and religion important factors for you in looking for a partner?
4. Islam: Practice, Experience and Perception

- Are you a member of any other Islamic organisation (e.g. NU, Muhammadiyah)?
- If yes, to which organisation do you belong? Why?
- If not, which Islamic organisation do you think best represents your religious belief/practice?
- Would you consider yourself a pious Muslim? Why? How do you practise Islam?
- Do you consider yourself as a traditionalist, modernist or other type of Muslim?
- Which mosque do you often go for Friday prayer?
- Do you follow any local Muslim custom, such as slametan?
- Who is your favourite Muslim preacher in Indonesia today?
- Do you attend any Islamic study group or religious classes?
- Do you use Islamic banking? Why?
- Do you wear jilbab or koko dress? Since when? Why?
- Have you performed hajj pilgrimage? Do you intend to do so?
- As a Muslim convert, have you ever experienced any incident of prejudice or discrimination?
- Do you think Indonesia is an Islamic state? Should Indonesia be an Islamic state? Why? What should be the role of Islam in Indonesia?
- What do you think about the implementation of Islamic law in Indonesia? Do you support the implementation of the Anti-Pornography Bill?
- What do you think about Ahmadiyah? Do you think it should be banned?
- Do you preach Islam to your friends or families? How do you do so?
- Is there any Muslim leader that you admire?

5. Chinese: Practice, Experience and Perception

- Are you a member of any Chinese organisation (e.g. INTI, PSMTI etc)? If yes, to which organisation do you belong? If not, do you know any of them?
- Would you consider yourself as a Totok, Peranakan or other kind of Chinese?
- Can you trace your generation (as a Chinese) in Indonesia? Are both your parents Chinese? Do they practise any Chinese culture? Do they celebrate Chinese New Year? Can they speak Mandarin or any Chinese dialect?
- Do you practise any Chinese culture? What Chinese culture do you practise? Do you eat Chinese food? Do you celebrate Chinese New Year and Ceng Beng (before and after conversion)? Why?
- Do you have a Chinese name? Can you speak Mandarin or any Chinese dialect? Do you watch any Chinese TV programs or read any Chinese newspapers?
- Can Chinese Muslims practise Chinese culture? Can Chinese Muslims celebrate Chinese New Year? Is it hatal or haram?
- Is Chinese culture incompatible to Islamic teaching? Why?
- As a Chinese Indonesian, have you ever experienced any incident of prejudice or discrimination?
- Do you think there is still any discrimination towards Chinese Indonesians? If yes, how do you think the Chinese should fight discrimination?
- How do you describe the current ethnic relationship between Chinese and non-Chinese Indonesians?
- Do you think Chinese Indonesians should assimilate or maintain their identity?
- Do you follow any Javanese or other local cultural traditions?
6. Chinese Muslim: Practice, Experience and Perception

- Have you heard about Cheng Hoo Mosque? What do you think about it?
- Have you heard about any Chinese Muslim preachers? How do you think them?
- Do you know any other Chinese Muslims?
- Are you a member of about PITI or Karim Oei foundation? If not, have you heard about them and do you intend to join them?
- Can you describe your interaction with non-Muslim Chinese, as well as non-Chinese Indonesians?
- How do you position Chinese Muslims in Indonesia society? What role do you think they can play? How do Chinese Muslims contribute to religious pluralism, cultural diversity or ethnic interactions in Indonesia?
- Have you heard anything about Muslims in China?
- Have you heard anything about the role of Chinese in earlier Islamisation of Java? Do you think some of the Walisongo are of Chinese descent?
- Have you heard about Cheng Ho? What do you think about him?

7. Political and Social Involvement

- Do you belong to any political party?
- If yes, to which party do you belong? Why? What position do you hold?
- If not, which party do you think best represents your interests? Why?
- Are you a member of any social organisation or community activity?
- If yes, to which social organisation do you belong? Why?

Additional Questions (Depend on conditions, if needed)
Appendix 3: Chinese-style Mosques in Post-1998 Indonesia

The Surabaya Cheng Hoo Mosque

The Palembang Cheng Hoo Mosque

The Tan Kok Liong (Anton Medan) Mosque, Bogor
Appendix 4: The Interior Design of the Surabaya Cheng Hoo Mosque

Drum for calling to prayer
(NU’s influence)

Podium for Imam to preach
(Muhammadiyah’s design)

Eight-sided roof (Chinese cultural influence)

A relief of Admiral Cheng Ho, next to the mosque
Appendix 5: Activities in the Surabaya Cheng Hoo Mosque

Idul Fitri prayer                  Conversion ceremony

Traditional Chinese musical performance   Charity work
Appendix 6: Chinese Muslim Preachers

Tan Mei Hwa spoke during an election campaign in Surabaya in 2008. Her preaching style is especially popular among women and girls.

Anton Medan (at the front of the crowd, wearing a black peci cap) visited Amrozi’s family in Lamongan, before Amrozi was executed for terrorism in 2008.
Koko Liem’s religious SMS service (2009)/ http://kokoliem.com

Lampion’s CD cover (edition 2010)/ http://nasyidlampion.blogspot.com
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**Websites of Chinese Muslim Organisations**

- Jakarta PITI (Indonesian Chinese Muslim Organisation)
  http://www.pitijakarta.org/

- East Java PITI (Indonesian Chinese Muslim Organisation)
  http://www.pitijatim.com/

- MUSTIKA (Chinese Muslim and Families)
  http://www.muslimtionghoa.com/

- The Surabaya Cheng Hoo Mosque
  http://www.masjidchenghoo.org/

- The Jakarta Lautze Mosque
  http://www.masjidlautze.blogspot.com/

- Mualaf Center Online
  http://www.mualaf.com/

**Websites of Chinese Muslim Preachers**

- Irena Handono
  http://irena-handono.blogspot.com/

- Koko Liem
  http://www.kokoliem.com/

- Syaffi Antonio
  http://www.syaffiantonio.com/

- Lampion
  http://masyidlampion.blogspot.com/