HOMELAND, IDENTITY AND MEDIA:
A STUDY OF INDONESIAN TRANSNATIONAL MUSLIMS
IN NEW YORK CITY

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This dissertation entitled

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This dissertation describes an attempt to understand the complex process of how Indonesian Muslims in New York City negotiate their cultural identities. This dissertation gravitates around the concept of transnationalism, which perceives that contemporary immigrants form and maintain multi-stranded social and cultural transnational links to the societies of the country of origin, chiefly thanks to advancement of media, communication and transportation technologies. Applying the non-obvious multi-sited ethnography approach (Marcus, 1999), I explore the dynamic process of how the deterritorialized Indonesians strive to reterritorialize their culture in the new cultural context, such as manifested in the establishment of the Indonesian mosque with its various Islamic activities and the reenactment of Indonesian cultural practices. Subsequently I explain how various forms of media are produced, circulated, and consumed in the Indonesian Muslim community.

The study concludes with several important points. First, media (ranging from the printed to electronic media to the Internet) have not played a central role, largely due to the small number of Indonesian Muslim community members. The negotiation of identity and transnational ties preservation take place in various forms of “smaller media,” such as personal videos and cassettes, photographs, the public gatherings of ethnic and religious associations. Second, instead of using Habermas’ (1989) unitary and singular public sphere, it is more useful to describe the sphere created by media and other venues
as, following Gittlin (1989), multiple and fragmented public sphericules, in which the transnationals find their voice, maintain connection with the homelands, and express the struggle against marginalization. Third, the strength of the centripetal force of Indonesian and ethnic identities lead to my questioning of the heuristic ability of the widely used notion of hybridity. Lastly, I conclude that despite the centrality of *ummah* (the community of believers transcending nation-states and ethnicities) concept, currently it does not translate to a unified and solid sense of community among Muslims. Therefore I suggest that the possibility of the formation American Muslim identity depends on subsequent generations of Muslims.

Approved:

Drew McDaniel

Professor of Telecommunications
To

Elin, Faikar, Hanum and Ranti
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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION: MAPPING THE TERRAIN

This dissertation describes an attempt to understand the complex process of how Indonesian Muslims in New York City negotiate multiple and overlapping cultural discourses which are exposed to their cultural identity. I explore the dynamic process how these deterritorialized Indonesians (dislodged from their home country) strive to express and insert their culture in the new cultural context in the reterritorialization process. As such, this dissertation gravitates around the concept of transnationalism, which perceives that contemporary immigrants, in living their transnational lives, form and maintain multi-stranded social and cultural transnational links to the societies of the country of origin, thanks chiefly to advancement of media, communication and transportation technologies. These relations are manifested in many forms: familial, economic, social, organizational, religious and political.

I will discuss how this struggle is reflected in their efforts in institution building where Indonesians who come from every corner of the country can regroup in a foreign land and how the negotiation of identity is manifested in ways such as the establishment of the Indonesian mosque and the establishment of ethnic associations. Furthermore, the dissertation project seeks to answer how identity negotiation through the processes of deterritorialization and reterritorialization is revealed in the both consumption and production of media. Indeed, while globalization may be discursively placed in terms of broad political, economic and cultural trends, media use is one of the essential activities of the global-local nexus. It is through media that globality is most pervasively,
consistently, and immediately experienced on a daily basis. Therefore, this dissertation seeks to understand how Indonesian Muslims in New York City utilize media to communicate among themselves to strengthen the sense of community as well as to maintain transnational links with the homeland. I also examine how the Indonesian Muslim migrant community is positioning itself in relation to the transnational Muslim ummah (the Islamic concept of transnational community that transcends territory), their homeland, and the larger society in which they find themselves.

The Personal Odyssey

My topic is an inseparable part of the personal odyssey I have been making through at least in the last two decades. As a Muslim, I have been in some sort of continuous “soul-searching” within myself on how Islam is located and how Muslims locate themselves in, for lack of a better term, the age of modernity. My interest in knowing more about Islam increased in the early 1980s, which were my high-school years. I had close friends who were raised in religious families and knew Islam much better than I did. However, my deep involvement with Islamic activities happened when I studied at the Institut Teknologi Bandung (ITB), the most prominent science and technology school in Indonesia, in its Department of Physics Engineering. I was involved in the extra-curricular activities in Salman Mosque, which was located in the vicinity of ITB.

Indeed, in the late 1970s and especially in the 1980s Indonesians witnessed very dynamic and vibrant activities of Muslim students emerging from the campus mosques,
most notably at the “secular” universities, such as Salman (ITB), Arief Rahman Hakim (University of Indonesia), Al-Ghiffari (Bogor Institute of Agriculture), and Jamaah Shalahuddin (Gadjah Mada University, Yogyakarta). The intensity, creativity, and number of Muslim students’ activities at the campus mosques were quite unprecedented in Indonesian Islam. It was in this period that I was involved in Islamic activities as a student. In my view, several factors propelled this phenomenon. First, new economic and educational opportunities enabled the upward mobility of Muslims, since the majority of Indonesian population is Muslim. Second, the depoliticization of Indonesian campuses following the student demonstrations in late 1970s had caused many students to shift their energy to the campus mosques, focusing on social, cultural, and educational activities. Third, in the larger context of Indonesian politics, the depoliticization of Islam by the government of President Suharto had suppressed the articulation of political Islam in Indonesia. This politically detached Islam enabled Muslims’ resources to be devoted to non-political activities. The result was a growth of interest in Islam among the middle class and urban society (Ali-Fauzi and Bagir, 1989; Hefner 1993), as well as among people in the rural areas (Hefner, 1987). Fourth, there was a hope for the revival of Islamic civilization as Muslims entered the 15th century Hijrah (Islamic calendar), which was started in 1980 of the Gregorian calendar. With the Muslim world having been underdeveloped and colonized for centuries, the new century brought hopes for a kind of Renaissance in the Muslim ummah (global community of believers) around the world. The economic growth experienced by the Muslim countries, especially resulting from the oil boom in 1970s, had brought enthusiasm for a bright future of Islamic civilization,
regaining what Muslims had accomplished in the Middle Ages. Finally, many Muslims felt that the success of the Islamic revolution in Iran in toppling the West-supported Reza Pahlevi regime in 1979 proved that the West was not “unbeatable.” Pictures of the Iranian leader Ayatollah Khomeini were posted in many students’ apartments, including mine, as the symbol of resistance to Western hegemony. All these factors, I believe, contributed to the \textit{zeitgeist} of Indonesian Muslim student activists at that time.

Among the campus mosques in Indonesia, Salman stood out because of its activist creativity and dynamism. Scholars (e.g. Djamal, 1989; Fox, 2004; Hefner, 1993; van Bruinessen, 2002) pointed out that activities developed in Salman became the model for other campus mosques in Indonesia, and therefore it was sometimes called “\textit{gerakan} Salman” (the Salman movement). The best-known model was the mental training developed in the 1970s by Imaddudin Abdulrahim, in which participants were encouraged to increase their personal piety as Muslims. V. S. Naipaul, the winner of the Noble Prize for Literature in 2001, witnessed one such mental training session at Salman mosque and wrote about it in his book \textit{Among the Believers} (1981). Indeed, “\textit{gerakan} Salman” is pointed to as the precursor, or one of the precursors, of current political Islam in Indonesia (Fox, 2004; van Bruinessen, 2002).

However, I took a different path of activism at Salman. I was active in a student publication called (what else?) \textit{Salman}, of which I eventually became the editor-in-chief and chairman. Previously, \textit{Salman} was a publication discussing general issues faced by Muslims both in Indonesia and worldwide. We decided to shift the focus to the topics about which we believed we had a distinctive “expertise” compared to other publications
in Indonesia, because we believed we would thereby be able to contribute significantly to the Islamic discourse. These issues were related to science and technology in their cultural, social, and philosophical contexts. Therefore, we published articles on the possibility of Islamic (and other religions’) science paradigms and “Islamic technologies,” the Islamic-inspired environment ethics, bio-technology and bio-engineering and the consequent moral dilemma, the encounter of quantum physics and Eastern mysticisms as promoted by the New Age movement, etc. I was quite consumed with this extra-curricular activity because it satisfied my intellectual thirst to find out what Muslims could offer to the World. So consumed I was with my activity with this publication, that many times I joked that I studied at Salman, and had extra-curricular activities at the Physics Engineering Department. After seven years (and thanks to my parents’ patience seeing their son did not study well in school), I graduated after doing a lab experiment and writing a thesis that were clearly off-topic from my interests, i.e. about how to measure the velocity of a fluid flowing in a pipe using ultrasonic waves.

The next phase was my personal and direct encounter with the West. My aunt, who married a British citizen, invited me to stay in England for about six months. My sojourn in England, indeed, was my initial direct contact with the West. For the first time, I was, using Roy’s (2004) terminology, a deterritorialized Muslim. For the first three months, they sent me to an English school. For another three months, I traveled about in England and tried, without success, to find a scholarship to enable me to study there. Both my aunt and uncle knew that I was a Muslim activist. I remember on the first Friday I was there, I asked the location of a mosque I could go for the mandatory Friday prayer.
They gave the address and told me how to get there. It was a mosque established by South Asian migrants. However, they also politely admonished me not to be too involved and active in the mosque because the Muslims there were perceived as more or less extremists. I was never involved in the mosque’s activities while I stayed with them, partly because I followed their admonition, but primarily because I wanted to explore what England had to offer to me. Nevertheless, the admonition intrigued my identity as a Muslim, because I believed that it might not be true and it might come from a perception influenced by the media.

As a Muslim in England I lost what I took for granted as a Muslim in Indonesia. For instance, in Indonesia it was easy to do the mandatory prayers while traveling, because mosques were everywhere. I couldn’t do this in England. Certainly a Muslim is allowed to pray at any place, as long as it is clean. But sometimes I was too shy to pray in public because it involved physical movements that would attract people’s attention. Therefore, sometimes I performed the prayers while I was sitting on a chair or while riding the underground train, discreetly performing the prayer according to Islamic teachings how to pray in such conditions.

Furthermore, the news from the so-called Islamic world (and it always “bad” news) often stirred my identity as well. I remember watching the news on television with my aunt and uncle, when the news was broadcast about Muslim guerillas in Algeria who had allegedly cruelly killed many people in a village. Although the news indicated that the identity of the real perpetrators was questionable, because those who carried out the
attack dressed like military people, it did not really appease me. I felt awkward, and felt somewhat associated with the perpetrators of the horrendous attack.

Soon after my return to Indonesia in 1991, I worked for Survey Research Indonesia (SRI) as a Market Research Executive. SRI was the biggest market research company in Indonesia, and was recently acquired by AC Nielsen (one of the biggest research market companies in the world) and renamed AC Nielsen Indonesia. My main responsibility at SRI was to oversee the data collection of television program ratings and to maintain customer relations with the subscribers of these services (e.g. advertising agencies, newspaper and magazine publishers, television stations, and consumer product producers). In addition, I assisted with other market research programs of the company, such as print media readership, radio listenership, and advertising expenditure. This job strengthened the interest in media that I started nurturing in my college years when I was involved in the student magazine publication. It also broadened my knowledge and experience with business and economics, as well as cultural and social aspects of media in Indonesia. Meanwhile, I still maintained my interest in Islamic discourse by translating Islamic books published by my next employer, Mizan Publishing.

I started working at Mizan in 1993 as the General Manager of Editorial and Production. In 1998, I was promoted to the position of Managing Director with responsibilities to oversee the operation of the whole company on daily basis. Mizan, founded in 1983, was one among several newly established book publishers to respond the needs of the new generation of Muslim students of the 1980s I described above, and to the growth of Indonesian middle-class Muslims. I developed my intellectual interest in
Islam together with books published by the new generation of Islamic publishers in Indonesia such as Mizan. Therefore, it was a pleasant surprise when I was offered the chance to join Mizan—an offer I could not reject. Mizan has been a successful publisher and can be considered one of the most important Islamic publishers in Indonesia. Moreover, Watson (2005) rightly noted that: “[Mizan] was very much a progressive Muslim publishing house from its inception, and several of its ventures attracted criticism from older conservative Muslims—of the generation preceding the 1960s radicals” (p. 184). In his conclusion, Peeters (1998) maintains that:

Mizan represents a shift towards global networks of Islamic publishing, replacing local centres of intellectual production. Thus far from constituting an isolated traditional force, publishers like Mizan are illustrative of the ongoing Islamic media discourse, and should therefore be at the centre of the debate on Islam and globalization. (p. 220)

It is in my capacity at Mizan that I continued being involved in the Islamic discourse in Indonesia. Meanwhile, my interest in the role of the media in the larger society (media studies) was increasing while I was involved in the publishing industry and I wanted to study more about it.

My application for a Fulbright scholarship and admission to the School of Telecommunications at Ohio University was accepted. I came to the United States in late August, 2001, with my family. Little did I know that soon thereafter there would be a major event that would influence the subsequent world’s history. I was in the waiting room of the International Student and Faculty Services (ISFS) office of Ohio University
that morning of September 11, 2001. I had to do some paperwork there as a new student. Like every other person in the room, I was glued to the television set in the waiting room, watching in disbelief how the second plane struck the tower and how the twin towers collapsed. I remember hoping that the perpetrators were not Muslims or associated with Islam. I really did hope that the perpetrators were people like Timothy McVeigh, who bombed a federal building in Oklahoma at the cost of hundreds of lives. When I got back to my apartment, which is a complex where most students from the Middle East lived, I found it eerily quiet. My wife told me she saw mothers and fathers from the Middle East suddenly and hurriedly bringing home their children who were playing outside or studying in the Islamic school in the apartment rented for this purpose. A few days later, a friend of mine, who has Arabic blood, told me he felt very scared when he saw a car with a big American flag coming toward him.

Indeed, the September 11 attacks, and events that followed, have made me think how Muslim migrants live in a non-Muslim environment. The fact that the perpetrators of the September 11 attacks were deterritorialized Muslims (Roy, 2004) who lived and even were educated in the Western countries has puzzled me ever since. Of course I knew previously, from my stay in England in 1990 and several overseas travels, that there has been a radicalization among Muslims in Europe, but I did not expect that it would lead to such catastrophic attacks. Since then, there have been other major events involving transnational Muslims that have bolstered my interest in this issue. Among these events were: the Madrid train bombings on March 11, 2004; the London Bombings on July 7,
2005; civil unrest in France in October and November of 2005 involving many second
generation Muslims; and the Danish cartoon controversy in 2006.

Hence, my dissertation project stems from my long interest how Muslims locate
themselves in the context of global interactions and how Islam can inspire such
interactions. Certainly, the interactions were directly felt on a daily basis by Muslim
communities who live in the United States or Europe. Naturally, my focus is the
Indonesian Muslim community, because they have the cultural contexts with which I am
familiar. The research offers me a better understanding not only about Indonesian
Muslims who live abroad, but also about other immigrant Muslims. Furthermore, studies
of transnationalism, including this one, are conducted in order to understand both sides of
the equation—the transnational peoples and the hostland communities. Not only is the
study of transnationals be important to understanding their cultural dynamics, but it also,
as Morley (2000) succinctly put it, “necessitates a reconceptualisation of how these
metropolitan centres are now to conceive of themselves and their borders” (p. 209).

Overview

This research also responds to the need for better understanding of Muslim
minorities in the West, especially in the wake of the September 11 attacks. It has been
estimated that there are at least 5.7 million Muslims living in the United States (Ba Yunus
& Kone, 2004). Meanwhile, there are about 15 million Muslims in the European Union
countries, where about two million live in each Germany (mainly from Turkey) and
Britain (mostly from the Indian subcontinent) and six million in France (mostly from
North Africa) (Goody, 2004). In the United States, Islam is the fastest-growing religion; and in Europe it is the second largest religion. Deterritorialized from their own home cultures, their common defining factor as Muslims is the mere fact that they are Muslims. Therefore, Islam as the source of identity articulation is growing in prominence, especially among young Muslims who are born in “foreign lands.” Discourse on Muslim identity, the position of the ummah (the Islamic transnational community that transcends territory), and its relationships with “host cultures,” such as the United States, have become crucial issues. This research broadens our understanding of how Muslim communities live their lives in the West, in a time when relationships between Islam and the West are strained.

This study concentrates on Indonesian transnational Muslims. As an Indonesian Muslim who has been living in the United States for more than five years, I have become interested in how my compatriots who have been living here longer have dealt with the questions I mentioned above. Indonesian Muslims in the United States are few in number compared to other transnational Muslims from other regions (e.g. the Arab world, South Asia, etc.). However, they come from a country frequently mentioned as the biggest Islamic country in the world in regard to population. Moreover, there has been a growing interest in Islam and Muslims living outside its “centers” (Arabian countries, the Persian Gulf, North Africa, and South Asia regions), and living on the “periphery” (Central Asia, China, and Southeast Asia, including Indonesia). Indeed, studies on the diversity of Muslims have become increasingly more important to better understand Islam and
Muslims in a global context. Finally, Indonesian Muslims are considered to be more moderate as they live in a more or less democratic country.

Furthermore, although studies on pan-ethnic Asians in the United States (e.g. Danico & Ng, 2004; Fong, 2002) are important, equally important is treating separate ethnic group closely to understand its internal dynamics. The diversity in historical experiences, cultural backgrounds, and the growing number of Asian Americans has rendered them too diverse to simply lump into a single all-encompassing ethnic group. Indeed, there have been burgeoning studies on many aspects of Asian ethnic groups, especially the larger ones such as Indians, Chinese, Japanese, Filipinos, Koreans and Vietnamese (e.g.: Ang, 2001; Chuh & Shimakawa, 2001; Cunningham & Sinclair, 2000; Espiritu, 2003; Ghymn, 2000; Lee & Zhou, 2004; Manalansan IV, 2000; Min, 2006; Yu, 2001). I have not found a single study on Indonesians in the United States, and therefore this study, focusing on Indonesian Muslims in New York City, will contribute as well to the literature on post-panethnicity perspectives on Asian-Americans.

Possibly because of the small number of Indonesians migrating abroad, there are only few studies on this topic. Most of the works on Indonesians living abroad are about migrant workers in Malaysia (e. g.: Jones, 2000; Mantra, 1999; Spaan, van Naerssen, & Kohl, 2002) or in the Middle East (Silvey, 2004). Some Indonesian scholars (e. g.: Budiman, 1991; Jassin, 1997, Mulyana, 1991) who studied in the United States have written about various aspects of their sojourns in this country, but these books are primarily descriptions and anecdotes of what they have experienced. In the literary field, the late Indonesian historian Kuntowijoyo wrote a novel entitled Impian Amerika
(American Dreams) (1998) on the lives of Indonesians in New York City, based on his experience while he was studying at Columbia University. Furthermore, some Indonesian poets published their poems about places or their experience in America in an anthology (McGlynn, 1990). In the wake of the September 11 attacks, some of the poems about New York in the anthology, and with some newer essays added, were published in another anthology (McGlynn, 2001).

Other Indonesian scholars have written their observations about Islam and Muslims during their stay in the United States (Ali, 1990; Mudzhar, 1991; Mulyana, 1988). The roles of “Indonesian transnationals” in the Islamic reformism of the 17th and 18th centuries in Southeast Asia have been discussed by Azra (2004) in explaining the networks of ‘ulama (scholars of Islam) between this region and those who were in the Middle East. Meanwhile, in more recent times, Indonesians in the Middle East have attracted excellent studies by Laffan (2003) and Abaza (1993, 1994, 2003). Laffan shows that Indonesians residing in Cairo in the early 20th Century became one of the sources of Indonesian nationalism. Abaza discusses the linkage between Indonesian students in Al-Azhar University in Cairo with the dynamics of Islam in Indonesia in the 1970s and 1980s. Moreover, a study of Indonesian students residing in the Netherlands in the 1920s shows that they became ardent supporters of Indonesian nationalism despite being far away from their homeland (Ingleson, 1975). The issue of ethnic identity of Indonesians living in Australia has been studied by Mulyana (1995). Although these works are helpful in giving a glimpse of the interaction between Indonesians, especially Indonesian
Muslims, and the host culture and their homeland, they are inadequate to fulfill what this
dissertation intends to accomplish.

New York City was chosen as the research location because it is the quintessential
transnational city, in which, according to the 2000 US census, 35.9 percent of its
inhabitants were foreign-born (Foner, 2005). Unlike most other cities in the United
States, New York City has immigrants from just about every ethnicity. There are about
600,000 Muslims and more then 100 mosques New York City alone (Dodds and Grazda,
2002). The Indonesian Islamic Center is located in Queens, one of the boroughs that
make up New York City, which is ethnically much more diverse than the other four
boroughs. Within reasonable walking distance of the Center are four Bengali mosques,
two Arab mosques, one Bosnian mosque, one Pakistani mosque, and two Islamic primary
schools (D’Agostino, 2003). Ethnically diverse exposure, albeit belonging to the same
religion, will make this particular neighborhood interesting to be observed in regard to its
inhabitants’ negotiation and expression of identity.

Indonesians in the United States: Demographic Status

In the beginning of 1960s, there was a fundamental shift in the immigration
pattern to the U.S., in what Forner (2000) calls the new wave of immigration. No longer
did the majority of immigrants come from Europe; they came instead from Latin
America, the Caribbean, and Asia (including Indonesia). The U.S. Census 2000 showed
that around 4.2 percent (or 11.9 million) of the United States population (281.4 million)
was Asian. Table 1 shows the number of population of some ethnic backgrounds. Of the
11.9 million Asians, 10.2 million reported only Asian and 1.7 million reported Asian as well as one or more other races (Barnes & Bennet, 2002). The Asian population in the United States grew rapidly, especially after the liberalization of U.S. immigration law under what is commonly called the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965, which brought to an end the discriminatory immigration policies based on national origin (Fong, 2002; Min, 2006). Although Asians are frequently lumped into one race category, they are, as shown in Table 1, very diverse.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Origin</th>
<th>Population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chinese, except Taiwanese</td>
<td>2,300,219</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Filipino</td>
<td>1,864,120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian Indian</td>
<td>1,645,510</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vietnamese</td>
<td>1,110,207</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Korean</td>
<td>1,072,682</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japanese</td>
<td>795,051</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cambodian</td>
<td>178,043</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hmong</td>
<td>170,049</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laotian</td>
<td>167,792</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pakistani</td>
<td>155,909</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taiwanese</td>
<td>122,751</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thai</td>
<td>110,851</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bangladeshi</td>
<td>41,428</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indonesian</td>
<td>37,167</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sri Lankan</td>
<td>19,078</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malaysian</td>
<td>10,711</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Two major states where the Asian population lives are California (10.2 million) and New York (3.7 million). This pattern is followed by Indonesians, as shown by Table 2.

Table 2. Some States Where Indonesians Live
(Based on the 2000 census)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>California</td>
<td>16,388</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New York</td>
<td>2,433</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Texas</td>
<td>1,771</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Washington, D.C.</td>
<td>1,242</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maryland</td>
<td>1,108</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Virginia</td>
<td>1,095</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ohio</td>
<td>1,061</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Jersey</td>
<td>1,020</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The 2000 U.S. census shows that 82.8 percent of Indonesians in the United States were not born in this country. Moreover, fewer Indonesians have become naturalized citizens compared to the all-Asian population in the United States. The proportion of Indonesians who finished college is 46.6 percent, which is higher than the respective proportion of the whole population in the U.S. (24.4 percent) (Garoogian, 2005). This proportion, as well as the proportion of Asians who completed college (44.06 percent) is also higher than Hispanic-origin immigrants (10.4 percent) (Ramirez, 2000). With regards to the economic conditions, although the median income of Asian families ($51,908) is over $9,000 higher than the median for all families, the median of Indonesian families is $39,338, slightly lower than that of all families. However, this median household income is higher than the median household income of the Hispanic population ($34,397) (Ramirez, 2000).

The 2000 U.S. census also shows that 1,816 Indonesians live in New York City (Garoogian, 2005). This number is far below the estimation made by a high-ranking official from the General Consulate of the Republic Indonesia in New York. According Harbangan Napitupulu, the then Acting Consul General, it is estimated that there are around ten thousand Indonesians in the 15 states covered by the Indonesian General Consulate in New York. However, Indonesians are concentrated in only a few places, namely Philadelpia and New Jersey (each with about 3000 people), and New York City and New Hampshire (each with about 2000 people). Napitupulu said the estimation is based on the number of Indonesians, about 4000, who have registered with the General
Consulate office. Most of them register because they have to renew their expiring passports. Moreover, more than 95 percent of them are undocumented immigrants, or, in more derogatory words, illegal aliens. In regards to ethnicity, Napitupulu estimates that around 50 percent of those ten thousand Indonesians are Indonesian-Chinese, followed by Minahasan (people from the northern part of the island of Sulawesi), who make up about 35 percent. The remaining 15 percent come from various different ethnicities in Indonesia, i.e. Javanese, Acehnese, Batak, Minangkabau, Bugis, etc. In terms of religion, it is estimated that 60 percent of them are Christian, with Buddhists and Muslims each at 20 percent. Moreover, more than 90 percent of Indonesians have blue-collar jobs, such as restaurant work, construction contractors, and other minimum wage jobs. Some Indonesians, certainly, have been successful economically compared to their compatriots. The Indonesian section of the Voice of America, in conjunction with the 16th anniversary of Indonesian independence in August, 2005, broadcast a series featuring some of these successful Indonesians (“Wajah Rantau,” 2005).

The numbers from the General Consulate, of course, constitute a rough estimate. The estimations of ethnicity or religion proportions, as Napitupulu acknowledged in my interview, are more difficult because data of this kind are deliberately not collected. However, the estimation of the number of Indonesians makes sense, since it is based on the number of people who have registered with the General Consulate office. The discrepancy can be explained by the issue pertaining to the census in the U.S., i.e. the problem of census undercounts which affects mainly minority groups and undocumented immigrants. In the 1990 and 2000 censuses, the undercount was 4.0 million and 3.3
million people, respectively (Ericksen, 2001). Skerry (2000) has identified several causes of the undercount, with which illegal aliens can be associated. For example, many illegal aliens and minorities live in “irregular housing,” such as makeshift division of apartments or houses inhabited by overcrowded tenants. Consequently, there was a difficulty in defining housing units for the census purpose. Furthermore, it is understandable that illegal aliens avoid, as much as they can, intrusive questions from census takers or any other people they associate with the government. Their underground economic activities and their immigration status have made them reluctant to deal with any officials. I was also told that most Indonesian illegal aliens even try to make contact with the Indonesian consulate as minimal as possible. One very telling example happened when one of my informants received a phone call while I was interviewing him. He was told that the night before an Indonesian was beaten unconscious by several unknown people while he was waiting for a bus. He was taken to the hospital, but when he regained consciousness he was not able to identify the attackers when questioned by the police. My informant later said that the victim just wanted to get away from the incident without having to deal with the police too much. When he was well enough, he went to work as if nothing had happened. With this kind of mind-set, it is not surprising that illegal aliens are undercounted in the census.
Indonesians in New York City: From General Patton’s Cook to

Tonny Bennet’s Favorite Limousine Driver

Don’t try to propose to this city
all you’ll get is a laugh

But if you insist in trying your luck
try seduction
who knows, you may succeed
but never consider tying her down

She has a thousand lovers
from all over the world

—Ikranagara (in McGlynn, 2001, p.8),
an Indonesian poet, in his poem titled
Manhattan.

It is unknown when exactly Indonesians started coming to New York. However, some of them definitely came to this country before World War II. Mohamad Bondan, the secretary of Cenkim (the Central Committee of Indonesian Independence) which was established in September 22, 1945, in Australia, indicated that there were Indonesians who came to the U.S. in 1925 (Bondan, 1971). According to Bondan, who maintained communications with such organizations established in several big cities around the world, Indonesian independence organizations were established in New York, San Francisco, and Los Angeles. The one in New York was led by Charles Bedien, an Acehnese who had been in the United States for 20 years. Most probably this name was adopted after Mr. Bedien settled in the U.S., since it is an unusual for an Acehnese since they always have Islamic (Arabic) names.
From a picture taken in 1938 and printed in *Illustrations of the Revolution, 1945-1950* (Sudjarwo, 1954), published by the Ministry of Information, Republic of Indonesia, it can be guessed that there were more than 50 Indonesians in New York City at that time. The picture was taken when Indonesians associated with an organization called the Indonesian Committee for Democracy (Incodem), gave a party in honor of the Indonesian delegation—Sunito, Maruto Darusman, and Herawati Latip—who attended the World Youth Congress. Sunito and Maruto Darusman were studying in the Netherlands and Herawati Latip was in living New York studying at Columbia University. (Much later, in conjunction with the celebration of the 250th anniversary of Columbia University in 2004, *The Columbia Spectator*, Columbia University’s newspaper, identified Herawati Latip, now known as Herawati Diah, as number 83 out of the 250 greatest Columbia alumni (“The 250 Greatest,” 2004)). One year later, in 1939, she refused to assist at the Dutch Indies pavilion at the World’s Fair, because “my nationalist sentiments were already sufficiently strong enough for me to refuse” (Diah, 2005, p. 19). She was the first Indonesian woman to earn a degree in the United States. She is better known as Herawati Diah, one of the most prominent Indonesian journalists as well as the publisher of the nationalist newspaper *Merdeka* (the Independence). Her autobiography (Diah, 2005), unfortunately, does not say much about her time in New York and the life of Indonesians there.

When the Voice of America started broadcasting in February 1942, the Office of War Information soon recruited some Indonesian youths, who had been sent by the Dutch colonial government in the Netherlands Indies to the Royal Netherlands Military Flying
School at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas ("Sejarah Siaran," 2002). These men were members of the Voluntary Pilots Corps sponsored by the colonial government. They moved to New York City, where they translated the news from English into Indonesian and forwarded it to the VOA studio in San Francisco. One of them was Sudjono, who returned to Indonesia in the mid-1940s to join the revolution. He made a career of the Indonesian Air Force and retired as an Air Marshall. He also served as the Vice Speaker of the Indonesian Parliament in 1977-1982.

In May 1943, the Office of War Information formed the Malay Languages Section in San Francisco, and recruited six Indonesians living in the U.S. to be the announcers. They were Imam Pamoedjo, Mansarudin Bogok, Eddy Koestoer, Machmud Raksapermana, Eddy Tirayoh, and William W. Siwy ("Sejarah Siaran," 2002). They broadcast in two languages, Indonesian and Javanese. Imam Pamoedjo, who had joined the U.S. military in order to become an American citizen, later moved to New York, and was the honorary consul for Indonesia for a short time after the Indonesian independence ("Sejarah Siaran," 2002; Zimmerman & Zimmerman, n.d.). Most of the earliest Indonesians who came to the U.S. were sailors who jumped ship, including Pamoedjo. I was told that some of the Indonesians who came before or during World War II joined the U.S. army in order to become citizens and were sent to fight in Europe. One of them spoke of being a cook for General Patton (Pratomo, personal communication).

The Indonesian sailors who jumped ship made up the great majority of Indonesians who came to New York City before the 1960s. On May 21, 1948, Indonesians in New York established an organization called Persatuan Bangsa Indonesia
(the Indonesian People Association, PBI). To support the Indonesian diplomatic struggle to gain wide international recognition to oppose the Netherlands’ effort to recolonize Indonesia, this organization arranged public demonstrations in front of the United Nations headquarters, then located in Lake Success, New York. The organization owned a club in lower Manhattan, where the members could hang out and socialize. The club was also frequently used by Indonesian sailors who just jumped ship as a temporary home before they found a place to stay and work. Using club dues, the PBI also bought cemetery plots to be used by the members. In 1983, the club was closed, mostly due to its financial conditions (Kusna, personal communication).

After the 1960s, there were other avenues by which Indonesians came to New York. Along with the increase in the foreign relations, some Indonesian banks and export-import companies set up representative offices in the U.S., some in New York. These offices were staffed mostly by Indonesians, including the lower ranks. Many higher officials brought their families with them, and frequently also brought their housemaids and/or one or two members of their extended families. The Indonesian diplomats working for the Indonesian Permanent Mission to the United Nations or the Consulate General office in New York also did the same thing. Many Indonesians who came in this way stayed behind in New York when the diplomats or corporate officials were called back or assigned other places. Furthermore, New York still had Indonesians sailors who jumped ship, lured by everything this quintessential immigrant city had to offer. After the 1980s, however, more Indonesians came with tourist visas in their
passports, then overstayed as undocumented immigrants (Pratomo; Karma, personal communications).

The Indonesians who came to the United States were from diverse ethnic and religious groups. As a result, Indonesians in the U.S., including those in New York City, are not entirely monolithic. Along religious lines, for instance, the Indonesian Muslims find their attachment to Masjid Al-Hikmah, while the Indonesian Christians have an umbrella organization called Perwakrin (the Association of Indonesian Christians in New York and Its Surrounding Area). Currently, there are 25 churches from different denominations in New York City and New Jersey associated with Perwakrin. One of the organization’s regular activities is coordinating Christmas celebration for Indonesian Christians, although each denomination also has its own celebration. Furthermore, there are several associations along ethnic lines, such as Maesa (Minahasan association), Minang Maimbau (Minangkabaus), Cakra (Javanese), Keluarga Pasundan (Sundanese), Iman (Ikatan Masyarakat Aceh New York), KKSS (Kerukunan Keluarga Sulawesi Selatan, South Sulawesi), etc. Although most of them do not have regular activities, such associations are the manifestation of social networks which are crucially important in immigrants’ lives. Not only do they provide support systems among the members, as Meyer (2001) has shown his study, they also give new and potential immigrants information, job prospects, financial support and emotional solidarity which substantially diminishes the risks and costs of migration.

In New York City, most Indonesians, especially the undocumented, join with other immigrants from around the globe to be involved in the informal economy of the
city. As Sassen (2001) showed in her research, the prevalence of service economy in
global cities (such as New York, London, and Tokyo), ironically encourages informal
economies and casual labor markets to support those cities. The issues of immigrants,
race and identity should be put in this context. In New York City, hard working
immigrants fill low-income jobs to support the city’s life, in restaurants, construction, etc.
Each immigrant group, thanks to its network of personal relationships, tends to fill certain
jobs (Foner, 2000). Indonesians, for example, tend to work in restaurants and small
construction companies. Meanwhile, taxi driver positions are dominated by the
immigrants from South Asia (India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh) who constitute 60 percent
of taxi drivers in New York City (Mitra, 2003). However, I met at least three people, all
Acehnese, who drive and own limousines, although they have to join with larger
limousine services in order to get customers. One of my key informants formally owned
and drove a limousine, after many years of driving a Yellow Cab. He retired after being
disabled in a car accident. One day, while walking slowly with his cane, he was greeted
joyfully by an old customer he hadn’t seen for several years. This customer frequently
requested him at the limousine service while in the town. My informant was very proud
to have the costumer recognize and approach him, wondering why he didn’t drive
anymore. The customer was Tony Bennett, the Tony Bennett, famous for hit songs like “I
Left My Heart in San Francisco.”
New York: The Quintessential Immigrants City

If I can make it there, I’ll make it anywhere.
It’s up to you—New York, New York.


New York City has been an exceptional immigrant city since its foundation. Therefore, Foner (2005) maintains that: “[W]ith a long history of ethnic succession and immigrant inclusion, New York, in many ways, offers an optimistic scenario about the future intergroup relations for the nation” (p. 184). In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, New York, with its famous Ellis Island, was the entry port for millions of European immigrants in what Foner (2000) called the first wave of immigration. The second wave of immigration has taken place since the passage of the 1965 Immigration Reformation Act which opened the opportunity for many non-Europeans to enter America.

New York City has undergone significant demographic change. Previously it was a largely white and native-born city (Smith, Cordero-Guzmán, & Grosfoguel, 2001). According to the 2000 U.S. census non-Hispanic whites constituted 35 percent of New York’s population, while non-Hispanic blacks were 24.5 percent, Hispanics were 27 percent, and Asians were 9.8 percent (“Demographic characteristics,” 2004). Although new immigrants are still arriving from Europe, the majority of new immigrants came from Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean. During the 20th Century, the number of foreign-born New York residents was always greater than 20 percent, and the 2000 U.S. census revealed that figure to be 36 percent (Foner, 2005).
Although there are many cities in the U.S., such as Los Angeles, Houston, and Miami, which have large concentrations of new immigrants, New York City is still exceptional. First of all, unlike those cities, New York City has immigrants from just about every ethnicity and nationality, hence it is much more diverse. According to Lipsit (2003), there are more than 140 languages and 200 countries represented in New York’s public schools. Because these immigrants have come from so many different countries, Foner (2005) pointed out that no one nation dominates other nations in terms of number. Although there are a large number of Latinos, there is no dominant Latino nationality in New York City, unlike the Cubans and Mexicans who dominate Miami and cities in Southern California, respectively. With regards to the Southeast Asian population, however, cities on the West Coast, including Los Angeles, have more than does in New York City. Foner informs us that there are several small cities in the Los Angeles and San Francisco Bay area that have an Asian majority or near majority.

Because of its diversity, also as the result of its historic role as the main entry for previous immigration, New York City’s politics are more pro-immigrant than is found in other cities. Nevertheless, Foner (2005) reminded us that New York City is not necessarily “a racial paradise, . . . and tension and conflict between racial and ethnic groups are far from eliminated” (p. 195). Examples of these issues include the boycotts of Korean-owned stores by African-Americans in the 1990s; the distancing strategies by the African-Caribbeans from African-Americans (Foner, 2005); the social distance of Asians from Latinos and Blacks (Smith et al., 2001). Nevertheless, political institutions and population dynamics have evolved for accommodating the diversity and therefore have
compelled greater collaboration among ethnic groups. The large number of community-based organizations serving or associating with the immigrants is also a different character of the immigration issue in New York City (Smith et al., 2001), which reduces the salience of the tension when compared with other cities.

What is also interesting is to see how ethnic and racial dynamics will play out in the future when the current 1.5- and second generation of immigrants come of age. The term 1.5-generation refers to the children of immigrants who were born in their parents’ country and were brought to the United States when very young, between six to ten years of age. Meanwhile, the term second-generation refers to those who were born and grew up in the United States. Nowadays, 62.4 percent of New Yorkers under 18 years of age are 1.5- or second generation immigrants (Kasinitz, Mollenkopf, & Waters, 2004) who interact with each other at playgrounds, schools, colleges, and work-places. In the context of contemporary New York City, the actual cultural contacts on a daily basis of the children of immigrants happen among them rather than with the “mainstream” Americans. Therefore, for Kasinitz et al. (2004a), “the children of immigrants are creating a new kind of multiculturalism—not balkanized groups huddled within their own enclaves but of hybrids and fluid exchanges across group boundaries” (p. 16). Foner (2005) calls it “creative multiculturalism” (p. 201). However, as Foner reminded us again, this does not mean that as an ethnic group the children of immigrants are not aware of and do not experience inter-ethnic tension and competition, spend time with friends of their own ethnic group. Despite that, Foner argues that “New York might not be a perfect
model of inclusion for the rest of the country, but it does offer many optimistic signs” (p. 203).

Outline of the Dissertation

Chapter I serves as the introduction to the dissertation. In this chapter I delineate briefly the lacuna in the academic field that this dissertation will fill. I also explain how this dissertation project is a continuation of my intellectual and personal odyssey in searching for the answer to how Muslims and Islam locate themselves in this increasingly globalized world. This chapter also provides background information on transnational Indonesians in the United States. Lastly, I briefly describe the exceptionality of New York City as historically quintessential migrants’ city, hence an excellence site for transnational studies such as this dissertation.

Chapter II provides the theoretical framework of this dissertation based on the literature review. First I discuss transnationalism and the growing body of knowledge of transnational studies, and disentangle the use of some related terminology: diaspora. The issue of identities in transnational studies is discussed as well. This is followed by the elaboration of the convergence of transnational studies and media studies with the issue of identities as the glue of the two previously separated bodies of knowledge. Subsequently I discuss transnationalism and Islam, and the quandary of Muslim societies living in the West.

Chapter III presents the historical context of Indonesian transnationalism, which I call loosely “Indonesian proto-transnationalism.” Then the chapter describes some
communities of Indonesian origin in several countries by underscoring the issue of identity and their interconnection with the “homeland.” Finally, I briefly explain a largely forgotten historical fact dating back to the 17th Century connecting two islands separated by half the globe, the Island of Manhattan and the Island of Run in Maluku, Indonesia. The English gave up claim of the Island of Run and acknowledged the domination of the Dutch over the Spice Islands. In return, the Dutch relinquished claim to the Island of Manhattan to the English. While the Island of Run was once part of the center of spice producers, the fuel of the world economy in the 16th and 17th centuries, the Island of Manhattan is the capital of today’s world economy.

Chapter IV discusses the research methodology and the politics of research of this dissertation. Several arguments are proposed to justify the applicability of multi-sited ethnography in this research, distinguishing it from “conventional ethnography” which is bound to a single location. Other issues are discussed, such as what is so-called native ethnography and the issue of field and time of research in ethnography, as well as narrative ethnography. The second part of the chapter describes how I conducted the research, my experience and self-reflexivity while doing the field research.

Chapter V explores the presence of Indonesian Muslims in New York City by examining the role of their mosque, Masjid Al-Hikmah, as the cultural and spiritual mooring of the community. The first section traces the brief history of Masjid Al-Hikmah and relates it with the larger context of how Muslims establish their presence in the American landscape. My purpose in describing the activities of Masjid Al-Hikmah is to see whether deterritorialized Islam (Roy, 2004) is operating in the Indonesian Muslim
community. Furthermore, I would like to see how the fundamental Islamic concept of ummah, the global community of believers, is exerted by Indonesian Muslims, as well as other transnational Muslims. Then I introduce Syamsi Ali, an Indonesian who has became one of the important figures among Muslims in New York City, and who transformed his understanding of Islam to the context of multicultural and transnational New York City.

Chapter VI explicates the dual and inseparable processes of deterritorialization and reterritorialization practices among Indonesian transnational Muslims. First, I explain some cultural practices in relation of Indonesians’ rites of passage (birth, marriage, and death) and the correlation with their identity inquiry in the deterritorialization and reterritorialization processes. This chapter also presents such processes among Indonesian women (countering the masculine emphasis on nation/nationalism discourse and transnational studies) and the 1.5- and second-generation of Indonesians in New York City. Although the double movement of deterritorialization and reterritorialization are a particularly salient phenomenon among first generation transnational people for the very obvious reason that they used to live in a milieu where they were immersed in the culture of the origin land, this reterritorialization has also become the quotidian experience of the 1.5- and second-generation because their parents certainly also exercise this process at home.

Chapter VII describes how both production and consumption of various media and the use of communication technologies have become a part of the deterritorialization and reterritorialization processes of Indonesian transnational Muslims in New York City.
Ranging from printed to electronic media to the Internet, these media are produced, circulated, and consumed in the transnational environments in relation to the issue of identities. In this chapter, the use the media and communication technologies by the 1.5- and second-generation Indonesians is discussed separately to recognize the inter-generational difference in this regard. The recurring theme throughout this chapter is the notion of the public sphericule in the transnational context. I agree with Gitlin (1998) that the concept of public sphere (Habermas, 1989) (where all ideas and representations have equal position in the sphere, and everybody in the sphere has equal access to those ideas and representations), has been fading with the fragmentation of the public, as shown by the fragmentation of media and the development of narrowcasting. Consequently, we find many public sphericules. In this chapter, I show that despite the smaller size of the public sphere, these public sphericules have been meaningful for, and a crucial part of, Indonesian Muslims’ transnational lives.

Chapter VIII offers the conclusion I draw from the research as well as the elaboration of what I think are the implications of this study. First, I argue the importance of political-economy aspects of studies of media in the transnational context. Second, I further discuss the notion of public sphericules in relation to the larger public spheres. In this context I also argue that despite the pressure from transnationalism from below and above, the states will still play important roles. Third, I delineate my reservation about the concept of hybridity, a concept that become crucial in cultural studies and also has been widely applied in transnational studies. Fourth, I discuss the problem of ummah
(Muslim global identity transcending nation-states and ethnicities) in the context of fragmented Muslims in the United States.
CHAPTER II

TRANSNATIONALISM, MEDIA AND RELIGION:

A THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This chapter provides the theoretical framework of this dissertation based on the literature review. In the first section, I will discuss the emergence of transnational studies and the debate around its significance and the necessity of this new paradigm in migration research. In this section, I will also explicate the double movement of deterritorialization and reterritorialization as what I think of as the essential strategy of transnational lives pertaining to the issue of identities. The second section will delineate the convergence of transnational studies and media studies with the issue of identities as the glue of the two previously separated bodies of knowledge. In the last section, I will discuss transnational Muslims, a topic that has become more crucial in the post-September 11 era.

The Logic of Deterritorialization and Reterritorialization and the Issue of Identity in Transnationalism

The concept of transnationalism has become fashionable in the study of the migration phenomenon since the early 1990s. In 1990, the cultural anthropologists trio, Nina Glick-Schiller, Linda Basch, and Christina Szanton-Blanc, organized a conference on transnationalism. Two years later, they published the conference papers in *Towards a Transnational Perspective on Migration* (Glick-Schiller, Basch, & Szanton-Blanc, 1992). In 1994, they published another book, *Nation Unbounds* (Basch, Glick-Schiller, &
Szanton-Blanc, 1994), containing their research on transnational communities from St. Vincent, Grenada, Haiti and the Philippines. These two publications became the first theoretical articulations of the transnationalism paradigm in the study of present-day migration (Kivisto, 2001). Basch, Glick-Schiller, & Szanton-Blanc (1994) define “transnationalism”:

. . . as the process by which immigrants forge and sustain multi-stranded social relations that link together their societies of origin and settlement. We call these processes transnationalism to emphasize that many immigrants today build social fields that cross geographic, cultural, and political borders. (p. 7)

The multi-stranded relations are manifested in many forms: familial, economic, social, organizational, religious and political. They called the immigrants who maintain and develop such relationships “transmigrants,” a terminology that was not taken up, and even rejected, by the academic circle (Kivisto, 2001; Portes, 2001; Portes, Guarnizo, & Landolt, 1999). Basch et al (1994) argued that the transnationalism perspective is needed because the previous approach is not adequate to approach the contemporary international migration. Previously, the common image of immigrants is a group of people who experienced permanent ruptures from the previous countries of origin, learnt the new language, and adopted and pledged allegiance. This perspective had been the paradigm of most research on international migration from the 1920s until the 1980s (Smith, 2006).

Basch et al. (1994) put forward four theoretical premises of transnationalism. First, transnational migration cannot be separated from the phenomenon of global
capitalism and should be viewed in the light of global relations of capital and labor. Therefore, according to them, besides the presence of advanced transportation and communication technologies transnationalism is a product of the “increased and more pervasive global penetration of capital” (p. 2). Second, the process of transnationalism is experienced by immigrants in their daily lives in which social, political and economic relations are formed across national borders. Therefore, by focusing on the immigrants’ way of life and daily practices, research on transnationalism is engaged in a somewhat different effort compared to that of cultural studies which is more focused on theoretical and evocative analysis by producing such terms as hybridization, creolization, etc. Third, the phenomenon of transnationalism cannot be fully explained by previous geographically bounded concepts (ethnic group, race, and nation) in social sciences. Previously seen as relatively fixed and stable, these concepts are challenged by the increasingly interconnected world in which identities are now seen as fluid, multiple and contextual. Fourth, the transnational immigrants are engaged in and confronted with the nation-building processes of both host and home nations. For instance, the discourse of race and “what constitutes Americans” collide with comparable issues in the host countries, creating a struggle of identities among transnationals.

Nevertheless, the transnationalism perspective has been criticized because of its strong assertion that it is a novel phenomenon, hence the need of a new paradigm in the study of migration. Kivisto (2001) and Portes (2001), for example, pointed out the abundance of previous research showing that multi-stranded relations were also forged by previous immigrants in the early 20th Century. For instance, the immigrants from Poland
and Czechoslovakia actively supported the independence of their countries. Likewise, remittances are not entirely new, because previous immigrants similarly practiced this. Foner (2005) reminds us that early 20th Century Russian Jews and Italians immigrants in New York often forged and maintained familial, cultural and economic relations with their home societies while establishing connections with their new home. On the other hand, Portes (2001) further criticizes the transnational perspective because it assumes that every immigrant is going transnational. He cited some research showing that only a small number of immigrants were involved in politics and civic associations, as well as economic activities of their hometown.

Despite his criticisms, Portes (2001) argues that the transnational phenomenon is significance in three ways. First, although the number of immigrants involved in transnational activities is currently limited, it is expected to continue growing in the future. The advancement of communication technologies and the growth of immigrant populations in the world’s metropolises and towns will greatly intensify the cross-border contacts and activities. Secondly, transnationalism influences the integration process of both the first- and second-generations of immigrants. For instance, a successful business owned by transnational parents would enable the family to move up socially and economically, and therefore tend to be absorbed by the mainstream middle class of the host society. The transnationalism of the first generation of immigrants certainly would affect how the subsequent generations integrate to the host society. Transnational activities such as sending children back home for an extensive period of time, the language used and the food served at home clearly prolong the integration. Thirdly,
Transnationalism would have influences for the sending countries and communities. There are towns and cities, and the number is growing, with a significant number of their inhabitants are living abroad. Such towns and cities are more affluent and have better infrastructure than other cities.

Although it is not entirely new phenomenon, present day transnationalism has novel characteristics if it is compared to the immigration of a century ago, i.e. the advancement of transportation and communication technologies (Foner, 2005; Guarnizo & Smith, 1998; Portes et al., 1999; Vertovec, 1999, 2001). Portes et al. (1999) argues that the previous transnationals “lacked the elements of regularity, routine involvement, and critical mass characterizing contemporary examples of transnationalism” (p. 225). The improvement of communication channels and transportation systems, according to Vertovec (1999), has added the feature of intensity and simultaneity of the cross-border and long-distance activities. For Foner (2005), “the more frequent, immediate, and closer contacts with their home societies, in a real sense, have changed the very nature of transnational connections” (p. 70). Indeed, the relatively inexpensive airplane tickets enable immigrants to fly home more frequently (once a year, for example) or to go for emergencies (such as funerals or visiting ailing parents) and celebrations (such as weddings). Likewise, inexpensive international calls (Vertovec [2004] dubs it the social glue of transnationalism) and the proliferation of telephones in the sending countries allow the immigrants to talk to their families regularly and even to participate in family discussion on important issues.
Transnationalism has been quickly adopted by anthropologists, sociologists, political scientists, geographers and other scholars. However, Guarnizo & Smith (1998) warned that sudden prominence could lead also to increasing ambiguity of the concept, so that transnationalism was in danger of becoming “an empty conceptual vessel” (p. 4). Transnationalism has been used in various studies in a wide variety of topics such as communities, NGOs, social movements, capital flows, identities, politics, and corporations. Many phenomena tackled under the rubric of transnationalism have very different natures, and therefore “there is not surprisingly much conceptual muddling (Vertovec, 1999). To clarify the concept, Guarnizo & Smith (1998) divides transnationalism into two categories: “transnationalism from above” and “transnationalism from below.” The former refers to the cross-border activities conducted by governments, corporations, and supra-national political and financial institutions. On the other hand, the latter refers to the relations maintained and activities performed by immigrants and the grassroots. The authors argued that study of transnationalism should focus on the transnationalism from below.

Unsatisfied with this categorization, Portes (2001) offered his more elaborate typology which differentiated international, multinational, and transnational. The term international refer to cross-borders political, and economic as well as socio-cultural activities conducted by states or organizations affiliated to states. For instance, the establishment of embassies, export promotion by trade organizations of a country, and student exchanges under government to government (G-to-G) arrangements. Meanwhile, the term multinational is assigned to transcending border activities conducted by non-
state institutions. This term includes, for example, the production and marketing activities of global companies, as well as programs espoused by the Roman Catholic Church in multiple countries. Finally, transnational activities are maintained by non-institutional actors, “be they organized groups or networks of individuals across national borders” (p. 186). An example of political transnational activity would be immigrants’ participation in political campaigns and elections in their countries of origin. The establishment of enterprises to import goods from their country to fulfill the needs of fellow immigrants would be an example of transnational economic activity. In the social-cultural aspect, it could be manifested in the election of beauty queens to take part in the hometown festivals. Such activities are “oriented towards the reinforcement of a national identity abroad or the collective enjoyment of cultural events and goods” (Portes et al., 1999, p. 221). It is on the third category of cross-border activities that transnationalism studies should focus. Nevertheless, Portes (2001) proposes the categorization with a caveat, stating that the three categories of activities are not mutually exclusive and interact with each other.

To develop further the transnationalism perspective in migration studies, Levitt & Glick-Schiller (2004) propose the implementation of a social field approach. Such an approach abandons the concept of society commonly held in social theories, in which the society is defined as geographically bounded (ethnicities, race and nations). On the contrary, social field emphasizes the networks of social relationships through which ideas, practices, and resources are distributed and shared. In the context of transnationalism, such networks link actors through direct and indirect cross-border
relations, and people could be embedded in transnational social fields with various
degrees and forms of direct and indirect contact with those who do not migrate in the
home country. Some individuals might not have intensive and active cross-border ties,
but because they are part of the same transnational social field as others who more
actively and intensively maintain such ties, they keep informed and connected. In
transnational lives, such individuals are no less important than those who have intensive
and active actual connections with the homeland. Therefore:

In one sense, all are local in that near and distant connections penetrate the daily
lives of individuals lived within a locale. But within this locale, a person may
participate in personal networks or receive ideas and information that connect
them to others in a nation-state, across the borders of a nation-state, or globally,
without ever having migrated. (Levitt & Glick-Schiller, 2004, p. 1010).

Said otherwise, there is no clear-cut division of relations into local, national and global.

I think the social field approach in transnationalism has two important
implications. First, the inclusion of immigrants who are not active in actual and intensive
contact in the transnational social field expands the arena of transnational lives. Despite
their fewer connections, they are involved and engaged in the daily life of transnational
communities, exposed to the goods, ideas, information, and imageries circulating in the
community. Furthermore, most of those who are less active in actual transnational
connections are constrained by some factors, such as financial limitations and legal
problem. For instance, it is almost impossible for illegal immigrants to visit their
homeland because it will be very difficult to re-enter the host country. The second
implication of the social field approach is that it considers the people in the home country connected by transnational ties to be in the transnational social field as well. Hence, the community back home could also be the site of transnational studies. Such studies could examine the reciprocal influence of goods, ideas, information, and imageries circulation in both home and abroad communities flowing through the transnational connections.

**Transnationalism ≠ Diaspora?**

The term diaspora was revived by scholars, especially cultural studies scholars, around the same time that the term transnationalism started being frequently used in migration studies. Both terms have been used to describe populations who live outside of their origins. Diaspora is an ancient Greek word literally meaning “a scattering or sowing of seeds.” Safran (1991) maintained that the concept of diaspora could be applied to “expatriate minority communities” (p. 83) whose members meet some characteristics: (1) they have been dispersed from the original “centers” to at least two “peripheral” regions; (2) they maintain “a collective memory, vision, or myth about their original homeland”; (3) they believe that they are partly alienated from the host society; (4) they consider the origin homeland as a place of final return; (5) they are committed to the maintenance and restoration of the homeland; and (6) “their ethnommunal consciousness and solidarity are importantly defined by the existence of such relationship” (p. 83-84). By applying these characteristics, Safran argued that some expatriate communities such as Armenian, Palestinian, and Polish were diasporas, “although none of them fully conforms to the ‘ideal type’ of the Jewish diaspora” (p. 84).
Meanwhile, Gilroy (1994) stated that diasporas are produced by push factors that force the community to disperse reluctantly. For Gilroy, Slavery, pogroms, indenture, genocide and other unnameable terrors have all figured in the constitution of diasporas and the reproduction of diaspora-consciousness, in which identity is focused less on common territory and more on memory, or, more accurately, on the social dynamics of remembrance and commemoration. (p. 207)

Furthermore, unlike Safran’s (1991) definition of the term, Gilroy maintained that not all diaspora communities held the desire to return to the ancestral land. Stuart Hall (1990) sees diaspora as a form of identity, and calls the sacred homeland orientation as a backward-looking notion of diaspora. Hall maintains that the diaspora experience: is defined, not by essence or purity, but by the recognition of a necessary heterogeneity and diversity; by a conception of ‘identity’ which lives through, not despite, difference; by *hybridity*. Diaspora identities are those which are constantly producing and reproducing themselves anew, through transformation and difference. (p. 235, italics in original)

Clifford (1997) also criticized Safran’s definition of diaspora by pointing out that the desire for the final return and strong attachment to a homeland was not necessarily a dominating issue in the course of Jewish history. He suggests assigning the term diaspora to the recent immigrants because they also share “diasporic forms of longing and memory” (p. 247), hence putting aside the assumption that the diaspora phenomenon refers to displacement that has happened for several generations. These newly dispersed
people, according to Clifford, are able to maintain cross-border relations thanks to the modern technologies of transportation and communication—a similar argument proposed by the transnational perspective.

In any case, besides transnationalism, the term diaspora has been appropriated in many studies of people residing outside their country of origin. Mitchell (1997) points out the popularity of diaspora among cultural theorists because it provides the notion of in-betweenness, ambivalence, subversion and ambiguity vis-à-vis the perspective of stability and essentialism of modernism. Consequently, the meaning has been stretched and has resulted in what Brubaker (2005) calls “diaspora” “a dispersion of the meanings of the term in semantic, conceptual, and disciplinary space” (p. 1). In addition to the use in humanities and social sciences, the term diaspora has also been used widely in media and popular culture. Currently, as Töloölyan (1991) informs us: “The term that once described Jewish, Greek and Armenian dispersion now shares meaning with a larger semantic domain that includes words like immigrant, expatriate, refugee, guest-worker, exile community, overseas community, ethnic community. This is the vocabulary of transnationalism” (p. 4-5). Indeed, Töloölyan uses the terms diaspora and transnationalism interchangeably.

Nevertheless, some proponents of transnational perspective (e.g.: Basch et al., 1994; Faist, 2000) have distinguished transnational communities from diasporas. Basch et al. (1994), for example, argue that “To see oneself in a diaspora is to imagine oneself as being outside a territory, part of a population exiled from a homeland” (p. 269). On the contrary, the see one of the consequences of transnationalism to be the phenomenon they
call deterritorialization of nation-states, in which the sending nation-states claim their dispersed populations as “citizens” because of their transnational activities (cultural, political, and economic) might be significant for the home states’ survival. These dispersed populations, reciprocally, consider themselves as the part of their home states. In other words, people may reside outside of the home country but still not live outside the state. Thus, according to Basch et al., “by this logic, there is no longer a diaspora because wherever its people go, their state goes too” (p. 269).

Similar to Gilroy (1994), Faist (2000) underscores the characteristic of the forced dispersal of diaspora. Diasporas also maintain ties with a homeland, which may be manifested in concrete or symbolic social ties. In addition to the traumatic experience of dispersal and the memory preservation of homeland, diasporas often suffer from a rejection by the receiving society. The new transnational communities do not undergo traumatic experiences, and therefore they are not diasporas. To qualify as transnational communities, Faist states a diaspora needs also to develop “some significant social and symbolic ties to the receiving country” (p. 197). Hence, the diaspora maintains their “presence” in both countries similar to other transnational communities.

In this dissertation I use transnationalism instead of diaspora as a working definition, because I think it describes better the Indonesian community in New York City. Diaspora, to me, connotes long-time dispersal, a multi-generation phenomenon, and yearning for the ancestral homeland. However, in many studies the terms diaspora and transnationalism are both used to describe transnational phenomenon. Therefore, when the term diaspora is used in this dissertation, it is because I refer to studies which employ
(inaccurately, in my view) that term. In addition, the prefix *trans* in transnationalism connotes cross movements and activities between two or more node points, hence is more accurate to designate the cross-border, transcending nation-states, activities and phenomena.

**Deterritorialization and Reterritorialization:**

**The Double Movement in Transnational Lives**

Basch et al. (1994) argued that contemporary transnationalism is inextricably linked with global capitalism. Therefore, in this section I intend to elaborate transnationalism in the context of globalization and culture discourse. Globalization, as Tomlinson (1999) puts it, “fundamentally transforms the relationship between the places we inhabit and our cultural practices, experiences and identities” (p. 106, italics in original). Appadurai (1996) proposes five dimensions of global cultural flows to explore this phenomenon: ethnoscape, mediascape, technoscape, financescape, and ideoscape. Ethnoscape denotes the flow of people from one part of the world to another, creating more complex and intricate networks of communities, kinship, friendship, work and leisure. Tehnoscape refers to the globality of technology, both in its configuration and its flow across porous national borders. Financescape symbolizes the movement of capital, which is increasingly quick and vast. The last two, ideoscape and mediascape, are closely interrelated. Ideoscape refers to the flow of “political” ideas, such as rights, freedom, welfare, sovereignty, democracy, and equality. Finally, mediascape denotes the flow of information, messages and images enveloping the globe.
Under the dynamic relationship between the five scapes, for the transnational people cultural identity is something that is constantly negotiated and exposed to different cultures. According to Vertovec (2001),

Transnationalism and identity are concepts that inherently call for juxtaposition. This is so because, on the one hand, many peoples’ transnational networks are grounded upon the perception that they share some form of common identity, often based upon a place of origin and the cultural and linguistic traits associated with it. . . . On the other hand, among certain sets of contemporary migrants, the identities of specific individuals and groups of people are negotiated within social worlds that span more than one place. (p. 573)

In this regard, I will employ the concept of deterritorialization and reterritorialization to describe transnational people in their daily lives. As we will see theoretically in this section, and empirically in particular in Chapter 6, transnational people, both individually and collectively, are in constant “tension” between deterritorialization and reterritorialization practices. Displaced from the homeland (deterritorialized), transnational people strive to “re-place” their culture and identities (reterritorialization) in their host culture. These dialectical practices are manifested in many ways, such as rhetorical strategies, cultural performances, artifact selections for the home, uses of technologies, and media consumption preferences. There have been some terms and neologisms proposed to encapsulate this phenomenon, such as deterritorialization and reterritorialization (García Canclini, 1995; Tomlinson, 1999), de/territorialization (Inda & Rosaldo (2002), traveling-in-dwelling and dwelling-in-traveling (Clifford, 1997),
disembedding and reembedding (Giddens, 1990), and uprootings/regroundings (Ahmed, Castaneda, Fortier & Schiller, 2003). I shall discuss some of them below.

With regard to the cultural dynamics of globalization, García Canclini (1995) has succinctly formulated the tension of deterritorialization and reterritorialization as follows: “The loss of the ‘natural’ relation of culture the geographical and social territories and, at the same time, certain relative, partial relocalizations of old and new symbolic productions” (p. 229). Hence, “It is important to stress that deterritorialization is not a linear, one-way process, but characterized by the same push-and-pull globalization itself. Where there is deterritorialization there is also reterritorialization” (Tomlinson, 1999, p. 148). Likewise, Inda & Rosaldo (2002) maintain that “cultural flows do not just float ethereally across the globe but are always reinscribed (however partially or fleetingly) in specific cultural environments” (p. 7). To capture this phenomenon, they offer the neologism de/territorialization. For Inda & Rosaldo,

The key to the meaning of this term is the slash. It allows us to separate “de” from “territorialization,” thus calling attention to the fact that deterritorialization always contains territorialization within itself. . . . There is no dislodging of everyday meanings from their moorings in particular localities without their simultaneous reinsertion in fresh environments. (p. 12)

In the context of migration, it means that we should not deal with “home” and “migration” as separate and distinct conditions. Ahmed et al. (2003) propose an “uprootings/regroundings” framework to discuss migration issues. According to them,
[U]prootings/regroundings makes it possible to consider home and migration in terms of plurality experiences, histories and constituencies. The task is therefore not to categorize “home” as a condition distinct from “migration,” or to order them in terms of their relative value or cultural salience, but to ask how uprootings and regroundings are enacted—affectively, materially and symbolically—in relation to one another. It is not possible, . . ., to even define or describe the nature of homing and migrating as either separate or combined processes through which homes are made, lost, rejected or revisited, or migrations are undertaken, forced or forbidden. (p. 2)

Meanwhile, Clifford (1997) sees that diasporic and migrant communities belong to traveling cultures, with “everyone more or less permanently in transit . . . Not so much ‘where are you from?’ but ‘where are you between?’” (p. 109). For him, traveling cultures produce a wide range materials of everyday cultural expression, such as stories, music, books, diaries, traditions, etc. Therefore, culture can be rethought as the site of “everyday practices of dwelling and travel: traveling-in-dwelling, dwelling-in-traveling” (p. 108, italics in original). It seems that it is a paradox; nevertheless we can see that although a migrant, for example, is traveling away from the original culture, he or she dwells and finds a home in a different culture. On the other hand, although dwelling in a different culture, in fact the immigrant is traveling away from his or her home.

As we have seen above, despite the difference in naming and some ramifications of the concept proposed, they agree on the basic argument that the processes of deterritorialization and reterritorialization are intertwined and inseparable.
**The Durability of Transnational Lives and the Issue of Assimilation**

The question of the durability of transnational lives and the intensity of the reterritorialization process arises when we consider the subsequent generations of immigrants (Foner, 2000; Smith, 2004). In the past, connection of the children of immigrants with their parents’ homelands became sharply attenuated. For instance, the assimilation process of Jewish and Italian immigrants who came to the U.S. in the late 19th and early 20th Centuries—through schools and other public institutions as well as settlement patterns, etc.—happened quickly. In addition, there were few new incoming Jews and Italian immigrants, thus cutting the transnational connection of the second generation because of the lack of fresh memories of the homeland. Today, transnationalism lasts longer than it did in the past (Foner, 2000). The children of immigrants in many ways maintain their attachment with their home countries, although certainly the nature of their connections is different than that of their parents. Their parents’ regular contacts with the homeland (thanks to the availability and relative affordability of communication and transportation technologies) and reterritorialization in the home (through food, language spoken, home decoration and other artifacts, etc.) produce constant, albeit banal, reminders of their “ancestral land.” One must not forget that the parents’ transnational networks and reterritorialization process create a transnational social field (Basch, Glick-Schiller & Szanton-Blanc, 1994; Levitt & Glick-Schiller, 2004). Despite rarer actual contacts with the homeland, it is in this transnational social field that the identity of the second generation is staged and forged. In this transnational social field, the children of immigrants return to visit the ancestral home,
not in a literal but in a symbolical sense—in their minds and imaginations. On the other
hand, these children experience the forces of integration into the local society on a daily
basis as well. They go to public schools, speak English with their parents and friends, and
eventually enter the job market.

Consequently, the next question is whether the new immigrants, including
Muslims from various nationalities, will assimilate into the melting pot of America. First
of all, the metaphor of melting pot, in which the incoming immigrants are expected to
embrace mainstream America and abandon their forebears’ identity and culture, has been
challenged by many scholars. In the famous book *Beyond the Melting Pot*, published in
1963, Glazer & Moynihan (1970) argued that the Jews, Italians, Irish, African-
Americans, and Puerto Ricans in New York City had not dissolved into a homogeneous
society but rather had formed separate ethnic groups. Although the culture and language
of the countries of origin had been largely lost in the second generation, these groups
were still identifiable as distinct groups. The initial differences among these groups had
caused the “assimilating power” of American society to be experienced differently.
Although the children of immigrants have become American after three generations,
according to Glazer & Moynihan, “[they] were still, in many essential ways, as different
from one another as their grandfathers had been” (p. 14). They predicted that four distinct
four groups would emerge—“Catholics, Jews, white Protestants, and Negroes” (p. 314)—
asserting that religion and race would define the grouping.

More than four decades later, New York City has still been receiving immigrants
from many different countries. Although not exactly as Glazer & Moynihan (1970)
foresaw, I think race and religion are still important in defining social groups among the contemporary immigrants. Currently, the people of European descent have assimilated, forming the “mainstream” White American. And, “for them, ethnicity became optional, voluntary, enjoyable, and ultimately less about social distinction than about individual identities, lifestyle choices, family histories, and group rituals” (Kasinitz, Mollenkopf & Waters, 2004a, p. 394). Meanwhile, the nonwhite groups are seen as different categories. Facing this issue, Glazer (2004) proposes that what we call assimilation needs to be revised. According to him, assimilation should not refer to external measures (such as English capability, education, residential separation, intermarriage, etc.); but instead, it should refer to “subjective sense of identity: how one conceives of oneself and one’s national community” (p. 73). Glazer points out the situation of African-Americans as an example. By some external measures, they are clearly not fully assimilated with the mainstream. Nevertheless, they see themselves as fundamentally American and there is no question that they are “deeply and integrally American” (p. 72). Therefore, the redefined assimilation accepts multiple identities and even more than one loyalty.

In this sense, Glazer (2004) argues, the descendants of contemporary immigrants will, like previous immigrants, eventually become Americans, although it may take several generations. Certainly, whether big ethnic categories, such as Asian, Hispanic, and Caribbean (each with its current enormous diversity) will emerge in addition to the current African-American is uncertain. Also it remains to be seen whether an American Muslim identity (transcending ethnicity, be it Arabic, Pakistani, Indonesian, or African-American), as promoted by Rauf (2000), will become a distinct social group. Moreover,
Kasinitz et al. (2004b) show that there are more interactions (from intermarriage, schoolmates, business partners to daily contacts in grocery stores, subways, etc.) between 1.5- and second-generation immigrants from different ethnicities than with the “mainstream” Americans. Therefore, the assimilation process might not lead to mainstream, white America.

Indeed, the issue of new immigrants and their integration into American society has become a contentious issue recently. Unlike in the past, in which there was no dominating ethnic group, Hispanics are dominating contemporary immigrants in terms of numbers. In the political realm, there are two competing bills proposed by the House of Representatives and the U.S. Senate, reflecting that Americans are divided on this particular issue (Campo-Flores, 2006). Meanwhile, Huntington (2004) argues that the American national identity based on Anglo-Protestant culture is being eroded by not only the large number of Hispanic immigrants but also by the popularity of such concepts as bilingualism and multiculturalism. Indeed, like many other nations in the world, Americans are continuously compelled to answer the question “Who are we?” to which there is no final answer. Apparently, this is why Glazer & Moynihan (1970) ended their book Beyond the Melting Pot four decades ago with these sentences:

Religion and race define the next stage in the evolution of the American peoples.

But the American nationality is still forming: its processes are mysterious, and the final form, if there is ever to be a final form, is as yet unknown. (p. 315)
Transnationalism, Media and Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs)

Those who wish to move, those who have moved, those who wish to return, and those who chose to stay rarely formulate their plans outside the sphere of radio and television, cassettes and videos, newsprint and telephone. For migrants, both the politics of adaptation to new environments and the stimulus to move or return are deeply affected by a mass-mediated imaginary that frequently transcends national space.


Much has been written about the coupling of people’s mobility across state borders and the advancement of communication technologies that have characterized this global social phenomenon, and how these phenomena affect the people’s identity. They have intensified and extended the contact between cultures and evokes the question of essentialist perspectives of cultural identities. In Appadurai’s (1996) words, the media and migration, or mediation and motion, are “a constitutive feature of modern subjectivity” (p. 3). Meanwhile, for Hanners (1996) the contemporary rules of the game of cultural organization are “the mobility of human beings themselves, and the mobility of meanings and meaningful forms through the media” (p. 19). New media (the Internet, television, video players, VCD/DVD players, etc.) are the arena where cultural forms are embodied in the forms of symbolic representations, which then are disseminated and distributed for interaction with other cultural forms. Meanwhile, the migration of the people has deterritorialized them from their origins, causing cultural disruptions as well as adaptations. In the new homes, the deterritorialized peoples attempt to re-establish
their cultural memories in the process of reterritorialization by creating a new cultural presence in the foreign lands. According to Lull (2000), “Widespread, affordable, point-to-point consumer communication technologies facilitate mediated interpersonal communication that is to construct hybrid satellite cultures in new locations and maintain ties to cultural homelands” (p. 255). Global communication and relatively cheap telecommunication facilitate the interaction of the reterritorialized cultures with the homeland cultures. People use these messages and images not only to represent themselves but also to construct “the other” in what Appadurai (1996) calls ethnoscapes.

Unsurprisingly, the role of media in the context of migrant people has currently attracted some scholars to study this cutting-edge field (e.g. Cunningham, 2001; Cunningham & Sinclair, 2000; Dayan, 1999; Gillespie, 2003; Karim, 2003b; Morley, 2000; Naficy, 1993; Ogan, 2001). The overriding theme that comes up in all the mentioned works is that media—both big and small—have played a crucial role in the identity formation dynamics of the transnational peoples under study.

Gillespie (2003), in her study of the Indian community in Southall, England, shows that the TV epics of Ramayana and Mahabharata (which were viewed on local cable TV and/or video) have been used “to foster a Hindu world-view more generally, and to catalyse familial debates about issues of cultural continuity and change” (p. 153). Naficy (1993) also demonstrates the importance of Iranian television in forming the idea of identity, nation and nationalism among Iranians in Los Angeles. Despite the internal diversity of Iranians (Muslim, Jewish, Baha’i, and Armenian), the shared Persian language has led to the television production almost entirely in that language. According
to Naficy (1993), language and popular culture based on television “have been put in the service of creating an imaginary ‘national’ Iranian identity for all the Iranians, regardless their religio-ethno-linguistic affiliations” (p. 29). Meanwhile, Cunningham (2001) describes the importance of music videos (compared to other media) to connect dispersed transnational Vietnamese communities around the globe. These music videos are produced by transnational Vietnamese producers and artists. It is in these music videos that the struggle of identity is contested: “maintain pre-revolutionary Vietnamese heritage and traditions; find a negotiated place in a more mainstreamed culture, or engage in the formation of distinct hybrid identities around the appropriation of dominant western popular cultural forms” (Cunningham, 2001, p. 139).

Furthermore, instead of being mere consumers of media, as in the case of print and broadcasting, which are produced mainly by large and capital-intensive corporations, new affordable communication technologies (such as the Internet and camcorders) have enabled people to articulate their cultural expressions, making them the sites of negotiation and interaction with their host culture. Individual transnationals are able to form their own communication networks. In Morley’s (2000) words,

These networks, which link personal, individual choices to grander, diasporic narratives of identity, are often sustained through a complex mixture of physical mobility (pilgrimages, back and forth traveling, family visits) and symbolic communications through a variety of “small media” such as exchanges of letters, phone-calls, photographs, and videos. (p. 126).
Surprisingly, though, Morley fails to mention newer technology, such as the Internet and some of its features including emails, list-servs, chatrooms, and weblogs, that definitely have also been used, if not extensively, by the transnational communities (see e.g. Bernal, 2006; Cooks, 2002; Franklin, 2003; Hiller & Franz, 2004; Ignacio, 2000; McMenemy & Poulter, 2005; Mitra, 2001; Parham, 2004; Qiu, 2003; Tyner & Kuhlke, 2000).

**Taxonomy of Media in a Transnational Context**

There have been some suggestions on the taxonomy of the linkage of media and migration, and therefore the sites of the conjunction of media studies and migration studies (e.g. Naficy, 1993, 2003; Tyner & Kuhlke, 2000; Wood & King, 2001). Although the taxonomy proposed by Naficy (1993, 2003) was meant specifically for his study on Iranian and Middle Eastern diasporic television in Los Angeles, it could be applied to other media in general. Naficy divided what he called “minority television” into three categories: ethnic, transnational, and exilic. For him, “ethnic television refers to television programs primarily produced in the host country by long-established indigenous minorities” (1993, p. 62). Examples of this category are the Black Entertainment Television (BET) and many Spanish-language programs. The programs focus on the lives in the host country, not in the homeland; and therefore the spirit of these programs is “here and now, not over there and then” (1993, p. 62). Transnational television, the second category, involves programs imported from the immigrants’ homeland or produced by multinational media companies. For instance, Korean language programs in the United States, which are produced by Korean Television Enterprise.
Spanish-language networks in the US, such as Univision and Telemundo, are primarily transnational and partly ethnic. Naficy (1993) maintained that “these programs locate their homeland outside the United States and they push to the background the drama of acculturation and resistance” (p. 62). Lastly, exilic television, the third category, is produced by the exiles in the host country “as a response to and in parallel with their own transitional and provisional status. . . . They tend to encode and foreground collective and individual struggles for authenticity and identity, deterritorialization and reterritorialization” (p. 63). These kinds of programs usually are produced by individual producers instead of big media companies.

Wood & King (2001) see that there are three ways in which media might influence individual and collective experience in migration. First of all, global media (films, advertisements, television programs, etc.) have served as the sources of images for the would-be immigrants. Second, the representations of immigrants in the host-country media reflect the general attitude towards the immigrants, and therefore influence the acceptance or rejection of the host-society. Third, the various media from the countries of origin play important roles in the cultural identity formation and the politics of identity of the diasporic communities.

I think Tyner & Kuhlke (2000) offer a better taxonomy, which not only is more comprehensive but also emphasizes the transnational connections and includes the media initiatives of transnational communities. They analyzed 54 Filipino diasporic websites, and put them into four non-mutually exclusive categories: intra-diasporic, inter-diasporic, diaspora-host, and diaspora-homeland websites. As with Naficy’s (1993, 2003)
categorization on televisions which I mentioned above, Tyner and Kuhlke’s website categorization could be expanded to other forms of media. Intra-diasporic media are meant to serve the needs of a transnational community in a certain place. The content of such media could be information about the surrounding community, community meetings, local festivals, wedding announcements, etc. Inter-diasporic media, on the other hand, strive to bring closer otherwise spatially separated transnational communities (for instance, those who live in the U.S. and Europe) which originated from the same homeland. Thus the functions of such media extend beyond the needs of a localized transnational community. Diaspora-host media assume the roles of bridging and fostering the interaction between transnational communities and host-societies. Such media promote cultural exchanges on both sides. Lastly, diasporic-homeland media endeavor to strengthen the bonds of transnational communities with the homelands. Certainly in practice any transnational media could fall into more than one category, or could emphasize one category without neglecting other categories in its content. In Tyner and Kuhlke’s (2000) words, “[It] is context specific, in that the saliency of any particular linkage is predicated on the particular task at hand” (p. 246).

Media and Transnational Public Sphericules

Habermas’ idea of the public sphere in his The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere (1989) has been very influential in various disciplines, including media studies. In this book Habermas argued that the public sphere is a necessary element of a genuinely democratic participation. He explicated the historical origins of the bourgeois
public sphere in late 18th and 19th century Europe, and its deterioration in the 20th Century. The public sphere was the public arena in which social and political discussion took place, such as pubs, coffee houses, salons, and meeting halls. In addition, information apparatus, such as newspapers and magazines, in which social and political debates could be undertaken, played important roles in the public sphere. In this robust public sphere, the public stood on equal footing with the state. Such a public sphere enabled individuals and groups, through their direct expression and exchanges of ideas and deliberation, to shape public opinion and influence the politics. According to Habermas, such idealistic public sphere decayed in the 20th Century along with the rise of capitalism and big corporations. The public sphere was seized by the states and big business, including media establishments. This structural transformation left the citizens as consumers and subjects of states and big business.

Despite Habermas’ (1989) argument about its decay, the public sphere has become a widely used paradigm in social sciences and humanities. Indeed, studies of the role of media and ICTs in migration contexts are not the exception. Based on his study of Indian diasporic websites, Mitra (2001), for instance, argued that while traditional media have been captured by the dominant, “the internet presents the potential of seizing and re-aligning the cultural and speaking capital as well as the public sphere within which the speaking occurs” (p. 45). Extending this argument, media and ICTs could be utilized by the marginalized transnational communities to participate in the public sphere of the host countries. Meanwhile, Appadurai (1996) asserts that electronic mediation has enabled individual attachments, interests and aspirations transcending the nation-state
boundaries—creating “the public spheres that . . . are no longer small, marginal, or exceptional” (p. 10). In other words, media have been used by transnational communities to form their border-transcending transnational public spheres, connecting communities from the same origin but dispersed in many places as well as those communities in the homeland (e.g. Cooks, 2002; Parham, 2004; Yang, 2003). Mandaville (2001, 2003) extends the notion further by suggesting that media (CDs, books, magazines, internet websites, etc) produced both by diasporic Muslims in the West as well as by Muslims in their own lands (such as Qatar-based satellite television Al-Jazeera) have nurtured a public sphere which comprises diasporic Muslims regardless their countries of origin.

At this point, I think it is important to revisit Habermas’ idea of the public sphere and then relate it to the context of transnationalism. As I mentioned briefly above, Habermas (1989) idealized the public sphere (where every idea and representation has the same position in the sphere, and everybody in the sphere has equal access to the sphere) formed in the 18th and 19th centuries in Europe, and bemoaned its decay in the 20th Century. Kellner (2000) effectively summarized the criticism of Habermas’ idealization of the public sphere. The major criticism is that Habermas’ public sphere did not reflect equality in the society, because it was dominated (as the title of the book actually suggests) by white, property-owning males. Meanwhile, “working class, plebeian, and women's public spheres developed alongside of the bourgeois public sphere to represent voices and interests excluded in this forum” (Kellner, 2000, p. 267). As Kellner reminded us, some critics pointed out that the period Habermas regarded as the time of public sphere deterioration in fact coincided with the proliferation of women’s voices in public.
In his later work, Habermas (1992) underestimated the significance of oppositional and non-bourgeois public spheres and acknowledged that the conflict “does not merely involve a competition among various parties of loosely associated private people; from the beginning a dominant bourgeois public collided with a plebeian one” (p. 430).

Therefore, Kellner (2000) rightly argues that it is better to envisage the public sphere in its multiple forms, rather than as a singular and unitary public sphere. According to him:

Rather than conceiving of one liberal or democratic public sphere, it is more productive to theorize a multiplicity of public spheres, sometimes overlapping but also conflicting. These include public spheres of excluded groups, as well as more mainstream configurations. (p. 267)

Nevertheless, Gitlin (1989) lamented the degradation of such a unitary public sphere, because for him it meant the impoverishment of democracy. While Habermas (1989) saw the degradation of the public sphere as caused by capitalism, Gitlin (1989) blamed the fragmentation of media, such as the development of narrowcasting that serves a certain part of a community in the supposedly larger public sphere. The fragmentation of media leads to the fragmentation of the public, so that instead of one public sphere we find many public sphericules. Conversely, Kellner (2000) argues that the new communication concepts (such as low-power television, community radio, etc) and technologies (such as the Internet) create new avenues for public debates and deliberations, hence new public spheres.
In the context of studies on transnational communities, some scholars have used modified terminology to refer to the non-unitary and non-singular public spheres, such as (following Gitlin [1989]) public sphericules (Cunningham, 2001; Karim, 2002), micro public sphere (Dayan, 1999), embryonic public sphere (Gillespie, 2003), and multi-ethnic public sphere (Husband, 2000; Morley, 2000). However, I argue that public sphericule is a better metaphor because it refers to the “size” of the sphere itself, whereas other terminologies only append an adjective to the disputable idea of public sphere. Therefore, I will employ it in the analysis of this dissertation. Nevertheless, a clarification is in order: I use this term not in the sense of what Gitlin (1989) means by public sphericules, which is a rather pessimistic one. As I mentioned previously, Gitlin laments that the public sphere is increasingly fragmented along with the fragmentation of media, creating fragmented smaller public spheres, and hence the deterioration of the idealistic Habermasian public sphere and the impoverishment of democracy. However, I will use the term public sphericules in a more positive perspective, as it has also been used by, for instance, Cunningham (2001) and Karim (2002). In this point of view, despite the size of the spheres, public sphericules become an essential part of transnationals’ lives in which transnational people reterritorialize themselves in the foreign cultures. Indeed, in the public sphericules the transnationals exert and negotiate their identities, struggle for their survival and seek recognition. It is in these public sphericules that they maintain their ties with the homeland through the circulation of words, voices, imageries, and memories.
Imagined Communities and Banal Reminders?

Karim (2003a) points out that diasporic communities are frequently portrayed as “imagined communities,” a often-quoted metaphor coined by Benedict Anderson (1991). Anderson argued that print capitalism was responsible for the origin and spread of nationalism. He states that: “The nation is imagined as limited because even the largest of them, encompassing perhaps a billion living human beings, has finite, if elastic, boundaries, beyond which lie other nations” (p. 7). A nation is also imagined because its members will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them or even hear of them, yet in their minds each lives the ideal of their communion. Nations, in other words, are built by the population on the basis of a collective imagination that they are members of a larger social web, which constitutes many more individuals than the individuals in their tribe, clan, or family living nearby. Print technology is the vehicle of the collective imagination. Via print and paper, speakers from the diverse variety (dialects) of the same language-field—English, French, Spanish, etc.—also become capable of understanding each other, which would be difficult in oral communication. They are aware that there are millions of people who belong to their language-field, but, at the same time, they also become aware that it is only those millions who belong to their language-field. In other words, they are aware that they belong to one group of people, and they are aware that there are other groups of people.

Around three decades before Anderson’s book was published, however, similar arguments had been put forward by the influential media scholar Marshall McLuhan (1964). For McLuhan, print culture is the architect of modern nationalism—one of main
sources of identity. Printing has turned vernaculars into extensive mass media, creating
political unification of population by means of vernacular and language groupings—
something unthinkable before the emergence of print culture. The uniformity and
repeatability of printed pages have “forced” the standardization and implementation of
“correct” spelling, syntax, and pronunciation.

The advancement of communication technology and the new mobility of people
across the globe have resulted in different environments from those McLuhan (1964) and
Anderson (1991) envisaged from the beginning when they talked about media and
identity. Nationalism as a source of identity is no longer peculiar to the people who live
within the territory of a country but is also felt by their compatriots living abroad who
necessarily no longer hold the citizenship of their homeland country, hence the
appropriation of imagined communities to describe transnational communities (Karim,
2003a). Indeed, it is an extension of what Anderson (1991) meant by the term, which is
actually limited to community bounded by a geographical border to form a nation.
Anderson (1998) himself later calls the nationalism sentiment sensed in diasporic and
immigrant settings as “long-distance nationalism.”

As I indicated above, McLuhan (1964) and Anderson (1991) showed how media
helped to instigate the sense of nationalism and the formation of nation-states. They did
not explain how media help to preserve and reproduce the sense of nationalism. In order
to understand how nationalism is produced in daily lives, Billig (1995) proposes what he
calls banal nationalism. In his groundbreaking book, Banal Nationalism (1995), he
objects to the conventional conceptualization of nationalism that tends to focus on its
extreme manifestations and that emerges only under certain extraordinary conditions. Far from being an intermittent mood in established nations, according to Billig, nationalism is an endemic condition. The central thesis of Billig’s study is that there are daily-routine-unnoticed-constant reminders of nationhood, through many avenues in the nation’s daily life, which make the daily reproduction of nation possible.

Billig (1995) starts with a criticism of the accepted use of the word nationalism, which is always associated with those who struggle to create new states or with extreme right-wing politics. Nationalism is always associated with powerful passion, showing surplus and extraordinary emotions. It is considered only as a temporary mood and only manifests itself under special occasions, such as the September 11 attacks on America. When the normal conditions are restored, nationalism evaporates. In Billig’s words, “the flags are rolled up; and, then, it is business as usual” (p. 5). Billig calls this “hot” nationalism, which arises in times of social disruption and which is often reflected in social movements.

Nevertheless, between these special occasions, nation-states continue to exist and are reproduced as nations and their citizenry as nationals. The reproduction must be in a banal way, and is not removed from everyday life. In many ways, the nations are indicated daily; making nationalism actually an endemic condition, far from being an intermittent mood in established nations. That is banal nationalism, which enables the established nations to be reproduced. According to Billig (1995), “The metonymic image of banal nationalism is not a flag which is being waved with fervent passion; it is a flag hanging unnoticed on the public building” (p. 8). Therefore, even in the peaceful
situation, there is a continual reminding, or “flagging” in Billig’s word, of nationhood. In so many little ways, the people are reminded daily of their nation and its place in a world of nations. The flagging is so familiar, so continual, that it is not consciously regarded as reminding—it is a mindless remembering. The flags, bank notes and coins, and other signs of nationhood act as reminders. All these remembrances are naturalized to the extent that people forget that they are being constantly reminded of their nationhood. This continual remembering does not allow people to forget their homeland, thereby, according to Billig, “. . . preventing the danger of collective amnesia” (p. 58)

The notion of banal nationalism then, we can see, is very different from the conventional notion of nationalism—where nationalism is expressed in times of social disruption and reflected in intense social movement, or, as Billig (1995) puts it, “hot nationalism.” Once in a while a certain degree of hot nationalism rises up, and daily routines are suspended when, for example, the state celebrates its independence day or other national days, or when the nation’s sports team plays other country’s team in a tournament, then flags are waved consciously. One will argue that these special occasions are sufficient to flag nationhood, so that it can be remembered for the rest of the year and serves as a nationalism sentiment reservoir throughout the routine of daily life. But, for Billig, the reproduction of nationalism occurs in a more banal way of life in the nation-state, and nation does not disappear between the days of the collective celebration.

In the banal nationalism paradigm mass media have a very different role in nationalism. According to Billig (1995), mass media continuously and daily bring the flag home to the citizens, by employing, among other things, a routine deixis, or pointing
words (for example: “we,” “this,” “here,” “the”), which is continually pointing to the national homeland for the audience. The deixis words continually refer to the nation beyond awareness of the audience and make the world of nations familiar. The news on political debates, sports, and even entertainment sends the deixis words to the people everyday without their being noticed. The presentations and the titles of the news, weather forecast sections, and illustration send unconscious messages about the nation.

In the media, it is not necessary to mention the name of “our country” in the news. It is sufficient, for example, that “we” refers to “we the people of such and such country,” not “we” the editors of the newspaper, and not ”we” the readers of the newspaper. The homeland is made both present and unnoticeable by being presented as the context, so that it subconsciously reminds the readers that they belong to a country. Billig (1995: 109) states, “In this way, national identity is a routine way of talking and listening; it is a form of life, which habitually closes the front door, and seals the borders.” The media, in other words, play a remarkable part in the daily reproduction of nationhood.

Billig (1995), however, concentrates on mass media, and does not discuss the possibility of banal nationalism reproduction by ordinary people. With the advancement of less expensive forms of communication technology, especially the Internet, ordinary people are also producers of information. In the context of transnational communities, this technology will be important in reproducing banal long-distance nationalism. Furthermore, Billig has not gone further to expand his idea of reminder banality to other cultural identities, such as religion, ethnicity, gender, etc. In the studies of transnational communities, the notion of media as banal reminders has not been commonly applied.
Nevertheless, Aksoy & Robins (2003) have started using it to analyze Turkish television in London.

Transnationalism and Islam: An Oxymoronic Amalgamation?

There should be an Islam that is rooted in the Western cultural universe, just as there is an Islam rooted in African and Asian tradition.


Islamism (the building of an Islamic state) has little appeal for many Muslims who have no desire to be involved in such a project because they are uprooted migrants and/or living in a minority [in the West]. These Muslims experience the deterritorialisation of Islam


Ebaugh (2004) and Levitt & Glick-Schiller (2004) have reminded us that while scholars have recognized the transnational practices in the economic, social and political lives of immigrants, only recently have they paid attention to the connections between international migration and religion. Certainly, similar to the phenomenon of transnationalism, such connections are not entirely new. For instance, the majority of Protestants who founded the colonies migrated to America in part because they wanted to avoid the religious tyranny in their original homelands (Gillis, 2003; Hirschman, 2004). The early history of the Catholics who came after the Protestants in the United States was akin to the issue of transnationalism and religion of contemporary immigrants. Gillis (2003) points out that in the period of colonial America, the minority Catholics found it difficult to practice their faith and to integrate with the larger communities. This was
partly because “their allegiance to a foreign power, Rome, created distrust and cast suspicion on their loyalty to their adopted homeland” (p. 36). The division with the already-established Protestant population was exacerbated because most of the Catholic immigrants who arrived between the late 19\textsuperscript{th} and early 20\textsuperscript{th} centuries came to America as blue-collar workers. The unfriendly environment urged them to form a Catholic subculture, indicated by the flourishing of, \textit{inter alia}, writers and publishers, professional organizations and educational institutions. The issue of being a Catholic and at the same time being an American was perhaps best exemplified by the assertion put forward by John F. Kennedy in his campaign for the presidency. He stated that his duties would not be interfered with by his Catholicism. However, the Catholic subculture declined as Catholics became wealthier, better educated and more geographically dispersed, and therefore increasingly assimilated (Gillis, 2004). The position of resistance to assimilation, however, currently has been taken by some Latino Catholic churches (Dias-Stevens, 2003).

Like Catholicism, Judaism in America also struggled as a minority community seeking to assimilate with the Protestant majority. As stated by Neusner (2003), the third wave of Jewish immigrants (from Eastern Europe) at the turn of the 20\textsuperscript{th} Century coped with more formidable challenges compared with the first wave (from Western Europe) in the mid-17\textsuperscript{th} Century and the second wave (from Germany and central Europe) in the mid-19\textsuperscript{th} Century. Anti-Semitism forced many Jewish immigrants to give up their Jewishness and Judaism. As Neusner put it: “The opposites—Jewish and American—yielded no space for compromise or, rather, defined change as compromise with de-
Judaization” (p. 111). The children of these immigrants, the second generation,
repudiated the foreignness of their parents, going to schools “that prepared them for life
in Christian America by teaching them Christmas carols and utterly ignoring whatever
religious and cultural heritage the children brought from home” (p. 111). However, in the
1950s, the third generation of Jewish immigrants reenergized what its predecessors tried
to forget, the religion of Judaism. Furthermore, the institutional system of Judaism was
transformed to emulate the major Protestant churches, with features such as the
institutional structure, the sisterhoods, junior congregations, etc. By the mid-20th Century,
“American Jews, like American Catholics, were now in the position to establish their
Jewishness not apart from or in spite of their Americanness, but precisely in and through
it” (Rauf, 2004, pp. 227-228). Thus, America is known as the land of three great
religions: Protestantism, Catholicism, and Judaism.

In any case, contemporary international immigration might present similar stories
for other religions in the United States in the future. As Hirschman (2004) points out:
“The diversity of sects of Islam and Buddhism, which often appear to be
incomprehensible to outsiders, resembles the myriad versions of folk Catholicism
brought by earlier waves of immigrants” (p. 1227). Rauf (2004), for instance, suggests
that “Jewish and Catholic experiences in America have paved the way for Muslims to
have their religious needs recognized in American society and law . . .” (p. 230). Hence,
we shall turn our attention now to the transnational Muslims in the United States for a
general background for our discussion on Indonesian Muslims in the next chapters.
**Muslims in the United States**

The mobility of contemporary transnational Muslims, in general, can be seen as part of the global socio-cultural transformation. Many Muslims are moving to Europe and North America, and consequently Islam is now the fastest growing religion on both sides of the Atlantic. According to Esposito (1998):

There are, for example, more Muslims in America than in Kuwait, Qatar, and Libya. It has been common to speak of Islam and the West, but today any consideration of that topic must include Islam in the West. Islam is the second largest religion in France, the third in Britain, Germany, and North America. Even if Muslims’ immigration and the rate of conversion were not to grow, birth rate alone ensures that in the first part of twenty-first century, Islam will replace Judaism as the second largest religion in the United States. (p. 3, italics in original)

There are different patterns of migration to those two destinations. For example, the first generation of Muslims in Europe was mostly from the working class, while those who came to America usually were more educated and better off (Roy, 2004). In America, the Muslims are far outnumbered by Hispanics—whose growth, according to Huntington (2004), will challenge the American identity—while in Europe they constitute the biggest number of immigrants. Nonetheless, Islam is the fastest-growing religion in the United States, and the Muslim’s visibility in the eyes of the US public and media is increasing, especially since the September 11 attacks.
Skerry (2006), a professor of political science at Boston College, points out several other differences between Muslims in the United States and those in Europe. In percentage, Muslims in the United States is only less than 1 percent of total population (or just under 2 percent if we use Ba Yunus & Kone’s [2004] estimation). Meanwhile, Muslims constitute about 8 percent to 9 percent in France, 5.6 percent in the Netherlands, 3.6 percent Germany, and 3 percent in Britain. One other crucial difference is the religious liberty environment in the United States. Wearing the headscarf and establishing Islamic schools (about 250 full-time schools in the United States, while there are only about a half of that many in Britain and only a handful in France) are not problems for the Muslims in the U.S. Furthermore, Muslim political advocacies in the United States are more vibrant than those in Europe.

There have been several estimations of the number of Muslims in the United States, ranging from 1.9 to seven million people, as well as the ethnic composition of the Muslim community. However, perhaps the most accurate number was proposed by Ba Yunus and Kone (2004) who estimated that there are at least 5.7 million Muslims living in the United States, of which 69 percent were born as American citizens and 23 percent are legal immigrants. The rest are foreign students and Muslims with business and professional visas. The largest ethnic group is the Arab population, which is 32 percent, or 1.8 million, followed by the African-Americans with 29 percent or 1.7 million. The Muslims from South Asian countries (Pakistan, India, Bangladesh, Ceylon, Afghanistan and Maldives) rank third with 28.9 percent or 1.6 million people. They are followed by
the Turks (5 percent, or 290 thousand), Iranians and Bosnians (each 2 percent, or 115 thousand people). The rest are Malays, Indonesians, Kosovars and others.

Bukhari, Nyang, Ahmad & Esposito (2004) divide the history of Islam in America into five phases. The first is the pre-Columbian period. They pointed out the studies by Ivan van Sertima and Leo Wiener which, based on ancient Arabic sources and ethnolinguistic analysis of certain peoples of the West African coast and native Americans living on the Gulf of Mexico, respectively, suggest that Muslims had reached America hundreds years before Columbus. The second phase is the Columbian period, in which some evidence indicates the involvement of Muslims in the exploration of the Americas. More studies are needed, however, to investigate these first two phases further. The arrival of Muslims in the third phase, which spans the period from slavery up to the end of World War II, is better documented. It is estimated that no less than 30 percent and possibly as high as 50 percent of the African slaves originated from Muslim backgrounds (Ansari, 2004). The latter period of the third phase was indicated by the immigration of Muslims from Arab countries, India, and the Balkans, as well as Central Asia.

The fourth phase is the Muslims’ arrival in larger numbers after World War II up to September 11, 2001 (Bukhari et al., 2004). There were certain factors that caused it to happen, such as the loosening of the U.S. immigration law that attracted thousands of new Muslims immigrant and the granting of scholarships to a large number of students from developing countries, including from many Muslim countries. This period was also indicated by the development of Islamic institutions and organizations in the U.S.
(Nyang, 1999). During the same period, there was a development in the African-American community in which some of them embraced Islam as a part of reclaiming their original identity (Ansari, 2004; Khan, 2002; Leonard, 2003). In Leonard’s (2003) words: “African American Muslims, driven by a history of slavery and oppression in the U.S., chose Islam as an alternative to Christianity and to white America” (p. 150).

The fifth phase is the development of Islam in the post-September 11 era. The War on Terror launched by the U.S. government has redefined the relationship between the U.S government and the American people in general with Islam and the Muslims. The security measures exercised by the U.S. government towards Muslims in the U.S. have created an uncomfortable feeling among American Muslims, who at the same time feel required to assert their Americanness (Bukhari et al., 2004).

Despite the significant proportion of Muslim slaves from Africa, at the turn of the 20th Century Islam was reduced to insignificance among the African-American population (Ansari, 2004). Persecutions because of being Muslims, the destruction of families because of the interstate slave trade that separated children from their parents, and the impossibility to establish religious institutions (such as mosques) which would enable slaves to sustain their religion deprived them of upholding Islamic beliefs and practices over generations. The wave of immigrants in the late 19th Century and the early 20th Century brought a small number of Muslims (including those from Poland, Russia, and Lithuania) who then established some organizations. Meanwhile, the African-American movement in search of identity in the early 20th Century led to two of the most influential African-American institutions that arose in the name of Islam: the Moorish
Science Temple and the Nation of Islam (NOI), led by Nobel Drew Ali and Elijah Muhammad, respectively (Ansari, 2004). Ali, for instance, had a book he called “Holy Koran,” which was different from the Muslims’ Quran and claimed himself a prophet and the reincarnation of Muhammad. Meanwhile, the NOI believed that its founder, Fard Muhammad, was God-in-Person. The NOI under the subsequent leader, Elijah Muhammad, also developed teachings on deity and prophethood that deviated from the original Islamic teachings. In the course of time, however, orthodox Islam gained influence among African-Americans with the most significant development coming after Warith Deen Muhammad became the leader of NOI in 1975 and steered the organization towards mainstream Islam.

Nevertheless, the relationships between immigrant Muslims and African-American Muslims are not always smooth. The new immigrant Muslims who arrived in the 1960s begun to move upward socially, and “had moved into a position of political, economic, and intellectual dominance” (Jackson, 2004, p. 216). Therefore, for African-American Muslims, the immigrants “have laid out what Islam is and have offered their definition to indigenous Muslims without recognizing that [African] American Muslims whose families have converted to Islam also think they have a definition of Islam” (McCloud, 2003, p. 172).

One vivid example of the contentiousness between the two communities was the political choice of each community. Initially, the immigrant Muslims were not really interested in being involved in American politics, and focused their concerns around issues outside the U.S., such those of Palestine and Kashmir (Leonard, 2003; McCloud,
However, in the early 1990s the community was challenged with “the basic issue of how to politically define and defend its identity, interests, and values” (Saeed, 2002, p. 49). Eventually some Muslim organizations reached a consensus that Muslims should concentrate their clout in the presidential elections, because only there could the Muslim population combine their votes to achieve common goals. In the 1996 presidential election these organizations came close to endorsing Bob Dole although this support did not materialize because the Dole campaign refused to publicize it (Saeed, 2002). In the 2000 presidential election, the coalition of several Muslim organizations endorsed Governor George W. Bush (Abdelkarim & Abdelkarim, 2001; Findley, 2001; Hanley, 2000; Khan, 2002; Saeed, 2002). The endorsement was partly because there was a perception at that time that “both Bill Clinton and Al Gore were too heavily invested with the Israeli lobby” (Khan, 2002, p. 39). They were upset over Gore’s attachment to Israel, particularly his explicit acceptance of Jerusalem as Israel’s exclusive capital, and his lack of concern for the predicament of Palestinians (Findley, 2001; Hanley, 2000). African-American Muslims (who like other general African-Americans were more associated with the Democratic Party) regretted this endorsement, because they preferred to endorse Al Gore. Consequently, they saw the endorsement as an abandonment of African-American Muslims’ concerns and welfare (Khan, 2002; McCloud, 2003).

In any case, Muslim leaders claimed that the endorsement proved to be very effective in courting Muslim voters, since 72 percent of Muslim voters voted for George Bush (Abdelkarim & Abdelkarim, 2001; Findley, 2001). It was claimed also that Muslim voters played a significant role, although this is generally overlooked, in the critical state
of Florida. As many as 90 percent of Florida Muslims, out of 60,000 Muslim voters, voted for George Bush—a very substantial amount in an election that was determined by several hundred ballots (Abdelkarim & Abdelkarim, 2001). However, both domestic policies and foreign policies undertaken by the Bush administration in the wake of the September 11 attacks unsurprisingly disappointed the Muslims, thus support for President Bush evaporated. Indeed, the umbrella organization of 11 Islamic organizations in the U.S. called on Muslims nationwide to cast a protest vote for Senator John Kerry (CAIR, 2004c). The exit poll conducted by the Council of American-Islamic Relations (CAIR) on Election Day showed that 93 percent of Muslims voted for John Kerry, five percent for Ralph Nader, and one percent for George W. Bush (CAIR, 2004a).

In spite of the differences between the immigrant and African-American Muslims communities, there have been some significant changes occurring. McCloud (2003) argues that second- and third-generation immigrant Muslims increasingly find their identity as Americans, and the ties with their forebears’ homelands are weakening. Therefore, the necessity to define a common American Islam transcending ethnicities, and “both immigrant and indigenous youth provide bright lights on the horizon of this emerging American Islam” (p. 174). Furthermore, African-American Muslims have also produced their cohort of intellectuals to articulate and formulate what American Islam is (Jackson, 2004).
Deterritorialized Islam and the Emergence of New Muslim Identities

There have been some studies on Muslims residing in Europe (e.g. Allievi & Nielsen, 2003; Vertovec and Rogers, 1998; Werbner, 2002) and the United States (e.g. Bukhari et al, 2004; Cessari, 2004; Haddad & Smith, 2002; Khan, 2002; Leonard, 2003; Moore, 1995; Nyang, 1999; Verbrugge, 2005). However, as I mentioned briefly in Chapter I, there are some lacunas in the existing studies of transnational Muslims. First, when transnational Muslims are mentioned in the works mentioned above, they mostly are referred to as the Muslims who originated from the Middle East, North Africa, and the Indian sub-continent. The Muslims who originated from the Malay world, a region which is inhabited by approximately 20 percent of the world’s Muslim population and have different characteristics in practicing Islam, have been overlooked. Certainly, the number of migrants from the Malay region is far fewer than the transnationals who originated from the other areas. Nevertheless, studies on transnational Muslims originating from outside the regions commonly associated with the Islamic world will undoubtedly give us a broader understanding on this issue and the dynamic relationships between Muslims and the West in general.

Despite the slightly different formulation, Bowen (2004) and Grillo (2004) proposed that there are three dimensions when we discuss transnational Islam. The first is transnational Islam as an ordinary transnational demographic movement, wherein Muslims migrate and maintain ties across their national borders. In other words, these Muslims are involved in broader “transnational circuits” (Grillo, 2004) in precisely the same way as are, for example, Mexicans who move to North America. Therefore, as
Bowen puts it, “There is nothing necessarily ‘Islamic’ about these attachments and returns, although they may define or create trajectories along which religious ideas or forms are carried and changed” (p. 880, italics in original).

The second dimension is the transnational religious institutions which “either promote cross-national movement as part of their religious practice, or encompass and promote cross-national communication within their religious hierarchy” (Bowen, 2004, p. 881). Such organizations as the transnational Sufi orders (Islamic mysticism) which have membership in several countries, including Muslims who are involved in international migration, fall in this dimension. Other examples are: the ties between Islamic organizations in Germany and Turkish political parties; an organization called Tablighi Jama’at which through Islamic da’wah (propagation) encourages Muslims residing elsewhere to become better Muslims (Bowen, 2004; Metcalf, 2001); an organization called Hizb al-Tahrir based in London which strives to re-establish the worldwide Islamic caliphate (Mandaville, 2001).

The third dimension of transnational Islam is the discourse of umma (the community of believers), or, as Grillo (2004) puts it, the transethnicization of Islamic population, “covering all strands of Islam from the point of view of religious doctrine and practice, and national and ethnic origin. ‘Muslim’ thus becomes a kind of ‘supertribal’ category” (p. 866). This discourse is signified by the emergence of the identification of, or at the least the effort to formulate the identity of, “British Muslim,” “American Muslim,” “musulman français,” etc. Indeed, some Islamic religious practices infuse among ordinary Muslims a sense of a global community such as: the annual pilgrimage to
Mecca; the Muslims’ five-time obligatory prayers that should be done facing in to the direction of Mecca; the standardization of the Qur’an; etc.

The identity attachment to a global community of believers complicates the transnational Muslims identity struggle in which the foreign land, their homeland and even ethnicity demand a certain identity allegiance. Therefore, the discourse of umma also deals with the issue of two opposing positions for Muslims with regards to their relationship with the larger communities where they live. On one hand, are Muslims who resist being involved in the larger community, and, on the other hand, are other Muslims who are willing to participate in the community. Khan (2003) calls the first group “Muslim isolationists” and the latter “Muslim democrats.” Furthermore, Khan maintains that Muslim democrats “have transformed American Muslims from a marginal, inward-looking immigrant community to a reasonably well-organized and coordinated interest group” (p. 191). Tariq Ramadan (2004) points out that what he calls “a veritable silent revolution” is happening among intellectuals and young Muslims in the West to embrace their host societies. According to him:

French, English, German, Canadian, and American Muslims, women as well as men, are constructing a “Muslim personality” that will soon surprise many of their fellow citizens. Far from media attention, going through the risks of a process of maturation that is necessarily slow, they are drawing the shape of European and American Islam: faithful to the principle of Islam, dressed in European and American cultures, and definitively rooted in Western societies. (p. 4)
Imam Feisal Abdul Rauf (2004) echoes it by stressing that “America is substantively an ‘Islamic’ country, . . . a country whose systems remarkably embody the principles that Islamic law requires of a government” (p. 80). Both Ramadan (2004) and Rauf (2004) painstakingly explain their arguments by proposing new interpretations of some Islamic laws or pointing out the laws that have been overlooked to show that there is an avenue in which a Muslim could be a genuine citizen of the Western countries. The lengthy discussions on the Islamic basic tenets and legal matters are beyond the scope of this dissertation. However, suffice it to say that, after long deliberation, Ramadan and Rauf argue that Muslims living in Europe and America should integrate with, and give their civil allegiance to, their host societies without losing their identity as Muslims. In Ramadan’s words, “There is no longer a place of origin from which Muslims are ‘exiled’ or ‘distanced,’ and ‘naturalized,’ ‘converted’ Muslims—‘Western Muslims’—are at home, and should not only say so but feel so” (p. 53).

Therefore, according to Ramadan (2004), immigrant Muslims need to separate the elements of identity that are based on religious principles from the cultural expression and adaptation of Islam that vary from one place to another. This adaptation has lead to shades of difference of Islam as expressed by Egyptians, Indonesians, Indians, Chinese Hui, etc., albeit “not in the theology but in the sociology and laws that flowed from the different preexisting customs of each society” (Rauf, 2004, p. 258). To build a Western Muslim (Ramadan, 2004) or American Muslim (Rauf, 2004) identity, immigrant Muslims in the West need to forego their cultural-based identity of Islam. In Ramadan’s (2004) point of view,
...our purpose and aim consist in discerning and abstracting the incidentals of Arab and/or Asian culture, tradition, and dress in order to arrive at a conception of the universal principles to which Muslims in the West must hold if they are to remain faithful and then to dress them in that culture. At the end of the process, the means of becoming a European or American Muslim will emerge. (p. 78-79)

In other words, Islam needs to be de-linked from the culture of origin of the immigrant Muslims—hence, deterritorialised Islam—to open the possibility of the emergence of the new identity.

**Another Side of Deterritorialized Islam**

Roy (2004) agrees with Ramadan (2004) and Rauf (2004) that deterritorialized Islam is the avenue for immigrant Muslims to embrace, if not to assimilate to, Western society. Nonetheless, he argues that the reformulation of Islam in its passage to the West can also lead to another possibility: the Islamic radicalization and neofundamentalism with its best manifestation in the September 11 attacks. Neofundamentalism is particularly attractive for the second- and third-generation immigrant Muslims because it transforms their cultural alienation—both from their forebears’ and host country cultures—into a justification to form a universal Islam free from customs and tradition. Hence, neofundamentalism is hostile both to the culture of Islamic societies from which their forebears originated (charged with superstitions, folklore and non-Islamic sources) and Western societies. This movement campaigns for an imaginary transnational umma not rooted in a specific locale, and therefore it
addresses the yearning of young Muslims who cannot identify themselves with any specific nations. Thus, instead of representing a traditional Islamic community, these militants break with it and become radicalized together with their uprooted fellows. Roy states that “most radical militants are engaged in action as individuals, cutting links with their ‘natural’ community (family, ethnic group and nation) to fight beyond the sphere of any real collective identity” (p. 42). Moreover, “They lived separate from society and rarely integrated with a new community, except around some radical mosques. They were cultural outcast, in their home countries and their host countries” (p. 302). These young Muslims are Western-educated, instead of products of the traditional Islamic education system. Roy reminds us that all of the September 11 terrorists and their accomplices (except the Saudis on the planes) were born-again Muslims who had studied abroad. While most immigrant Muslims have found or are trying to find a way to reconcile their faith with their host environment (Ramadan, 2004; Rauf 2004), these radicals take a different path.

Furthermore, Roy (2004) points out the interesting fact that there are conjunctions between radicalization among some young Muslims in the West and ultra-left, anti-imperialism movements. History tells us of various violent actions committed by socially excluded groups. In Europe, in the not-too distant past (1970s and 1980s), violent protest against the established order (bombings, kidnappings, murders, and robberies) were committed by ultra-left terrorist organizations such as the Red Army Faction (Baader-Meinhof Gang) in Germany, Red Brigades in Italy, and Action Directe in France. These groups also attacked U.S. interests in Europe. The Red Army Faction, for example,
bombed the Headquarters of the U.S. Army Supreme European Command in Heidelberg in 1972 (Varon, 2004). Roy (2004), however, does not mention a similarly infamous revolutionary group from the U.S.: The Weathermen. This group, for example, launched bombing attacks, against high-profile targets such as the Pentagon, the U.S. Capitol, and multinational company offices (Varon, 2004). Bill Ayer, a prominent member of the Weathermen and now a professor of education, wrote in his memoir (which was published in 2001) of the day he became a fugitive. In relation to this publication, The New York Times featured him in an article (in pure coincidence with the major attacks on that day, of course) on September 11, 2001, in which he said, "I don't regret setting bombs. . . . I feel we didn't do enough" (Smith, 2001).

By the 1990s, these groups, both in Europe and the U.S. ceased to exist. However, according to Roy:

The only networks of radical protest are Islamic, but they recruit from among the same social categories (outcasts from the educated middle class and dropouts from the working class), carry the same hatred for ‘bourgeois’ values and attitudes, have the same targets (imperialism) and often the same pet guerillas (Palestine), claim to be internationalist (ummah instead of the international working class), and are built on the same generation gap (rationalized in terms of returning to the fundamentals to oppose the cultural and political alienation of the preceding generation. . . . [Therefore], Al Qaeda did not attack Saint Peter’s Basilica in Rome, but the World Trade Center and the Pentagon. It targeted
modern imperialism, as the ultra-lefts of the late 1960s and 1970s did with less success. (p. 46)

Several attacks after September 11 seem to confirm Roy’s argument, since they were directed at symbols of Western domination such as public transportation (London and Madrid), hotels (Jakarta), and restaurants (Bali). Therefore, as Roy implies, probably *jihad* is “closer to Marx than to the Koran” (p. 41), and “the deterritorialisation of Islam is also a result of globalisation and has nothing to do with Islam as such, even if it concerns million of Muslims” (p. 18). Roy also reminds us that most of the techniques of terror currently attributed to Muslim radicals have been used previously by other groups: suicide bombing was popularized by Hindu Tamil Tigers in Sri Lanka; simultaneous airplane hijacking was initiated by secular Palestinians with the assistance of the Baader-Meinhof Gang; and it was the Japanese Red Army who launched the first suicide attack in Israel in 1972. Fukuyama (2006) agrees with Roy, and points out that radical Islam must be seen “as a manifestation of modern identity politics rather than as an assertion of traditional Muslim culture” (p. 9-10).

**Conclusion**

In this chapter, I have discussed three main sections serving as the theoretical framework of this dissertation: the transnationalism paradigm in the research of international migration; the role of media and information and communication technologies (ICTs) in transnationalism; and the transnationalism among immigrant Muslims, especially those who live in Europe and the U.S. In the first section, I discussed
the significance of the transnationalism approach in the international migration research. Although contemporary migration in many ways resembles previous migration, the advancement of communication and transportation technologies has enabled the contemporary immigrants to maintain strong and regular ties with the societies and families they left behind. This certainly influences the dialectic of deterritorialization and reterritorialization as well as the politics of identity of the contemporary immigrants. Naturally, the importance of media and communication technologies in transnationalism have attracted scholars to investigate and the result is a convergence between transnational studies and media studies. I discussed this subject in the second section of this chapter, where I delineated some taxonomy of such studies that have been put forward by scholars. Furthermore, I also explained why the expectation that the widespread media and the sophisticated communication technologies will create a Habermasian public sphere for transnationals is erroneous. Instead, they will create public sphericules which are, regardless “the size” of the sphere, fundamental for the lives of the transnationals in their host countries. These media and communication technologies help to create a sense of the imagined communities, but more importantly serve as banal reminders of homeland, ethnic and national identities.

In the last section, I discussed several issues pertaining to Islam, Muslims and transnationalism. I started by pointing out the obstacles experienced by two religious groups, Catholics and Jews, to assimilate with the dominant Protestant community in the United States. Subsequently, I discussed the growing presence Muslims, both immigrant Muslims and African-American Muslims, in the U.S. since the 1960s. Finally, I
explained how the same phenomenon of deterritorialized Islam, in which Islam is de-linked and dis-associated from a certain local and national culture, could lead to two completely different possible outcomes. On one hand, it leads to advocacy for transnational Muslims to embrace the new identity and consider themselves as genuine members of their host society, as proposed by Ramadan (2004) and Rauf (2004). On the other hand, deterritorialized Islam meets with deterritorialized Muslims, especially among some of Muslim youths who are culturally outcast from both their forebears’ and host country cultures, creating radical and violent Muslims who are ready to give up their lives for their global and imaginary identity of *ummah*. These groups, according to Roy (2004), bear some resemblances in their membership structure, technique of operations, and most importantly their anti-imperialism agenda to the previous ultra-left terrorist organizations which were active in the 1960s and 1970s.
NOTES

Both Tariq Ramadan and Imam Feisal Abdul Rauf have interesting backgrounds. Ramadan is the grandson of Hassan Al-Banna, the founder of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, an influential Islamic revival movement that among other things advocated the creation of Islamic government. Because of his involvement in the movement, Ramadan’s father, Said Ramadan, the family was exiled by President Gamal Abdul Nasser and moved to Switzerland. Tariq Ramadan was born in 1962. Ramadan has a doctorate in Islamic Studies from University of Geneva, and was a professor of Islamic studies at the University of Fribourg, Switzerland. His advocacy for the European-Islam identity where Muslims consider Europe as their own home for some is considered as a double talk since he is considered to be part of militant Islam (Sciolino, 2003). In 2004, he accepted a tenured position from Notre Dame University, but then resigned because his visa was revoked by the U.S. government without explanation, except citing only the terms of the USA Patriot Act. Currently, Ramadan is a visiting fellow at the University of Oxford, UK (Labi, 2005).

Feisal Abdul Rauf is the imam (leader) of Masjid Al-Farah, a mosque which is twelve blocks from the Ground Zero, New York City. He grew up in many cultures. His parents were Egyptians. His father, who directed Islamic centers in several places (Malaysia, Kuwait, New York, and Washington), had degrees from Cambridge University and a doctorate from the University of London. Rauf studied physics at Columbia University. The September 11 attacks changed his role from teaching the
theological, spiritual and jurisprudential sides of Islam to the speaker of Islam. He leads the Cordoba Initiative, which is "a blueprint to mend the relationship between the U.S. and the Muslim world" (Hedges, 2004, p. 2).
CHAPTER III

INDONESIAN PROTO-TRANSNATIONALISM:

THE HISTORY AND THE CONTEXT

Di mana bumi dipijak, di situ langit dijunjung.
On whatever soil we stand, that is where we carry the
weight of the sky.

—An Indonesian proverb.

This chapter will be divided into three sections. In the first section, I will elucidate
what I call Indonesian proto-transnationalism, which started in the 17th Century. I also
will upon touch how the early 20th Century proto-transnationalism contributed to the
formation of Indonesia as a nation. In the second section, I will discuss some
contemporary communities of Indonesian origin in several countries with regards to the
issue of identity and their relation to the “homeland.” Most of these communities are the
descendants of people who migrated, forcibly or voluntarily, to a foreign land even
before Indonesia existed as a nation and a political entity. Lastly, I will briefly describe
an obscure historical fact about the relationship between the Island of Manhattan and the
Island of Run in Maluku, Indonesia, dating back to the 17th Century. This was a part of
the rivalry between two powers—the Dutch and the British—to secure their access to the
most valuable commodities of the age: spices.

This chapter aims to put subsequent discussion on transnational Indonesian-
Muslims in New York City in the larger, historical context. I will show that despite the
absence of the sophisticated communication and transportation technologies of our time,
which are essential factors of contemporary transnationalism, identity and the connection
with the “ancestral land” have been recurring issues throughout the ages. This even includes, as we will see, a community that has been separated for a thousand years—such as the Merinas in Madagascar, who are trying to reestablish connection with the ancestral land.

**The Historical Perspective of Indonesian Trasnationalism**

Exile is the nursery of nationality.

—Acton (1907, p. 286).

Accustomed to modern transportation and telecommunication, we are always astonished to learn that our ancestors also moved to far away lands. Their migration to the different places, of course, did not happen in one straight journey, but, instead, took a long period of time over many generations, and produced long, slow long expansion. For instance, based on archeological evidence, scholars believe that most people who are living in present Southeast Asia are descendants of people from southern China who migrated through sea routes. Around 5,000 years ago they left for Taiwan. Their descendants then moved southward and reached the Philippines by 3000 B.C.E; the island of Borneo by around 2000 B.C.E; and New Guinea, Java and Sumatra between 1500 and 1000 B.C.E. (Taylor, 2003). From what we know today as the Indonesian archipelago, some of them moved westward and some went eastward.

Between 300 and 500 A.D, the westward voyage in twin-hulled outriggers, started from central Kalimantan (Borneo) in Indonesia, eventually reached the Island of Madagascar. (Although some Europeans had spotted the island in the late 15th Century,
none landed there until 1500.) Indeed, the present language of the descendants of these voyagers is close to that of an ethnic group in present-day Kalimantan. These long-ago travelers probably went through southern India and reached and settled in present-day Kenya and Tanzania by the first century A.D. Their settlements then probably spread inland as far as the eastern Congo. They progressed through the Comoros, and finally landed on the virgin island of Madagascar, more than four thousands miles from Borneo. Along the way, they introduced their technology, especially their outrigger canoes, and brought their food plants, such as coconuts, bananas, and breadfruit. In Madagascar, these seafarers settled and became the forebears of the Merina (Brown, 1979), the largest ethnic group on the island today, with around 4.7 million people, or about 26 percent of 18 million Malagasy (“The World Fact Book,” n.d.). The practice of endogamy has made the Merina the “most Asian” Malagasy in physical appearance. Another group of Malay-Indonesian traders, as well as Arab and African traders, settled in Madagascar after the 14th Century, and now constitute 3.4 percent of Malagasy. In the second half of the 19th Century, the Merina Kingdom included a large part of Madagascar, after overpowering other kingdoms. After defeating the kingdom in 1895, the French colonial government abolished the Merina monarchy in 1897 (Brown, 1979).

The voyage of the first settlers might not have ended in Madagascar. Recently, Dick-Read (2005) in his book *The Phantom Voyagers: Evidence of Indonesian Settlement in Africa in Ancient Times* has argued that these seafarers had even gone around the Cape of Good Hope to reach the west coast of Africa and left a major impact on the people of the Niger Valley. He even proposed a controversial and much earlier timeline of
migration, suggesting the seafarers reached the Niger Valley as early as 450 B.C. Ellis (2005), in his review of Dick-Read’s book, suggests that some of the author’s claims in the work left many questions unanswered since they were poorly supported by strong evidence. However, Ellis proposed that rather than ignoring these claims, scholars needed to consider their validity by pursuing evidence from other sources such as documents, linguistic analysis, archeology and DNA research.

However, the seeds of Indonesian transnationalism, or what I call Indonesian proto-transnationalism, might be traced back as far the 17th Century. Certainly, there are two anachronisms in labeling a 17th century phenomenon as Indonesian proto-transnationalism. Firstly, the term “Indonesia” wasn’t in use until a British ethnologist, G.W. Earl, introduced it in 1850 to refer the inhabitants of the “Indian Archipelago or Malayan Archipelago.” However, the term Indonesia became increasingly popular, especially in academic circles, after Adolf Bastian used the title Indonesian, oder, Die Inseln des Malayischen Archipel (1884-1894). In this five-volume work, Bastian discussed areas in the archipelago that comprise today’s Indonesia: Maluku, Timor, Sumatra, Kalimantan, Sulawesi, and Java. Even the famous Snouck Hurgronje used it in his book on Aceh, which was published in 1894. Later, this apolitical terminology was embraced by the Indonesian nationalists as a mark of the struggle for independence (van der Kroef, 1951). The second anachronism is the use of “transnationalism,” which indicates the notion of “beyond nation.” Again, the concept of nation and nationalism is quite modern. As Smith (2001) pointed out, the word “nationalism” in the social and political sense was used in Europe for the first time only at the end of the 19th Century.
However, I will use the Indonesian proto-transnationalism terminology loosely to indicate transnational phenomena I have discussed in the previous chapter, except these phenomena happened in the era of pre-nation states. Moreover, one transnational characteristic remains significant in this proto-transnationalism, i.e. the reciprocal flow of people, imagination, ideas, and cultural artifacts. The transportation and communication technologies available at that time certainly produced less intensive and extensive reciprocal flows compared to what we know today. Nevertheless, we must remember that they were using advanced technologies of their time. Furthermore, the proto-transnationalism I will discuss later impacted the area, or part of the area, of today’s Indonesia, hence justifying the use of the terminology of Indonesian proto-transnationalism.

The first proto-transnationalism I will touch briefly is the network of ‘ulama (Islamic scholars) between the Middle East and the Malay-Indonesia Archipelago in the 17th and 18th centuries. These period were the time when Islamic political entities was weakening along with the growing of European colonialism. Nevertheless, Azra (2004) argued that the 17th and 18th centuries constitute was one of the most dynamic periods of Islamic social-intellectual history. The nexus of the dynamics was the network of the ‘ulama, the centers of which were in Mecca and Medina, the two Islamic holy cities in the Arabian Peninsula. Thanks to the international trade in the region,² and the efforts of the Ottoman Empire to improve the security of the pilgrimage routes, the prosperity of Islamic kingdoms in the Malay-Indonesian Archipelago enabled certain segments of the society to travel to the Arabian Peninsula. Not only did they go to perform the hajji, many
of them stayed there for many years to pursue knowledge of Islam, stopping at the centers of Islamic knowledge along the *hajj* route. (The *hajj* is the performance of pilgrimage to Mecca in Arabia, which is one of the pillars of Islam. A Muslim is requested to perform *hajj* at least once in his or her life, if personal means and health allow.) Upon returning to the homeland, these pilgrims transmitted reform ideas to Muslims in the archipelago. Some of them, such as Nur Al-Din Ar-Raniri (d. 1658), ‘Abd Al-Ra’uf Al-Sinkili (1615-93), and Muhammad Yusuf Al-Maqassari (1627-99), later became important figures in the development of Islam in the Malay-Indonesian Archipelago, and held high-ranking positions in the sultanates of Aceh and Banten (Azra, 2004).

Yusuf Al-Maqassari is a particularly interesting figure in relation to transnationalism, since he left a mark that can be felt until today. Upon his return from the *hajj*, he made a career in the court of the Sultanate of Banten, located on the western island of Java. He became involved in politics, including the military campaigns against the expanding Dutch power in the archipelago. He took over the leadership when the Sultan was captured, and held power until he himself was arrested in 1683. Fearing that he still could exert influence, the Dutch exiled him, together with his family, to Sri Lanka. This exile, however, failed to cut off his contacts with Muslims in the Malay-Indonesian Archipelago. His books, written in exile, were brought to the archipelago by the pilgrims who stopped over in Sri Lanka on their way to or from Mecca, as well as by Muslim traders. He was also able to nurture the small Muslim community in Sri Lanka. The Dutch were suspicious of these activities, and suspected that Al-Maqassari was building a network of Muslim rulers in the Archipelago through these pilgrims. Thus,
they feared simultaneous and large scale attacks would be launched against the Dutch. Al-Maqassari, then, was transported much further west, to South Africa, in 1693. After being captured by the Dutch in 1652, the Cape had been the place for the Dutch to exile important figures from the Malay-Indonesian Archipelago, in addition to Sri Lanka. Besides the exiles, the Dutch also brought slaves from the Archipelago to become laborers on their plantations. These exiles and slaves were the nucleus of a Muslim community in South Africa that known as Cape Malays (Azra, 2004). However, Islam in South Africa was declining between 1700 and 1850, at the time Dutch control waned, and therefore contact with the Malay-Indonesian Archipelago was also weakening. Islam was revived when the Cape Malays started to reconnect themselves with the broader Islamic world by going on the hajj. They brought home a religious passion and the determination to reclaim Islam (Mandivenga, 2000). Today, there are about 166,000 people in South Africa who can be described as Cape Malays (Vaheed & Jeppie, 2005).

Meanwhile, Sri Lanka received another influx of people from the Indonesian Archipelago. They were mostly soldiers under the Dutch command and were said to have been involved in the wars against the Portuguese and the Kandyan Kingdom to control the area. By the end of the 17th Century, there were about 2,200 soldiers in the Dutch army. They were absorbed by the British military when they took control of Sri Lanka in 1796. During the brief rule of the British over Java, they recruited over 400 Madurese and 200 Javanese soldiers, along with their families, between 1813 and 1816. After the Dutch took over Java in 1816, the British sought another source of recruits, and were only able to get seven Malays from the Malay Peninsula (Hussein, n.d.).
The Holy City of Mecca continued to be an important places for Indonesians. The Dutch colonial government saw that many of the uprisings in Indonesian villages in the late 19th Century were led by the ‘ulamas, most of whom were returning pilgrims. Therefore there was a proposal to ban the pilgrimage (Suminto, 1985). However, based on his one-year stay in Arabia in 1884-1885, including about six months in Mecca,3 Hurgronje (1970) came to the conclusion that the thousands of pilgrims who came only to perform the hajj and then went back to Indonesia were not a real threat. Instead, the hundreds of Jawi, a term used for the people from the Indonesian Archipelago who stayed in Mecca, posed the real danger for the Dutch. He asserted that the continual communication of the Jawi with their homeland, as reflected in the inquiries of fatwas (religious opinions) from the ‘ulamas at home on many different matters and the speed with which books written by the Jawi Islamic scholars reached the Archipelago, was the problem faced by the Dutch-Indies government. Therefore, when he was appointed as the official advisor for the Dutch government on colonial affairs between 1891 and 1904, he recommended that the government should watch the Jawi colony closely. This was, according to Hurgronje, particularly important to deter the spread of Pan-Islamism in the Archipelago (Suminto, 1985).

Laffan (2003), however, showed the role of the ‘ulama and their students who made frequent travels between the Arabian Peninsula and the Malay-Indonesian Archipelago in constructing Islamic nationhood in Indonesia during the 19th Century. According to him, the act of travel itself is significant to construct what home is. Although the Islamic pilgrimage might overwhelm one with a sense of the vastness of the
Islamic world, the meeting with his or her fellows, be it in the ship to and from Arabia or in other places in Mecca, might activate the Jawi local particularism and ecumene. Laffan maintained that their designation as Jawi, despite coming from different ethnic groups (Javanese, Minangkabau, Sumbawan, Bugis, etc.), caused them to be seen as a unitary community—an imagined notion of the Malay-Indonesian Archipelago as a category. Indeed, it was precisely the Jawi ecumenism that was expressed by Ahmad Lampung, an 'ulama from Sumatra, when he told Hurgronje his wish to see the Jawi fight in unison to expel the Dutch so that millions of people would form a strong Muslim empire in the Archipelago (Laffan, 2003).

Nevertheless, the transnational influence of Mecca on the Archipelago was later rivaled, if not surpassed, by Cairo, Egypt. There were only a few Jawi in Cairo in the late 19th Century, but some Mecca-based Jawi scholars had used the printing shops in the city to print their books (Laffan, 2004). The number of Jawi was increasing in the early 20th Century, more than 200 people in 1925 (Roff, 1970). They could afford to publish a journal called Seruan Azhar (Call of Azhar) in 1925, after the short-lived first effort in 1910 (Laffan, 2004). The name, of course, referred to Al-Azhar University, the oldest Islamic University (and also one of the oldest universities in the world), which was inaugurated by Sultan al Gahwar from the Fatimid dynasty in 972. The purpose of the publication was encapsulated by its editor, Mahmud Yunus (1899-1982), as follows, “Like the dawn, this journal arises in the East in order to give light to the homeland, to convey an understanding of the world to come and some lessons that will bring great development [kemajuan] to the homeland” (quoted in Laffan, 2004, p. 6). A rival journal,
*Pilihan Timour* (Choice of the East), was published in 1927. Although both journals were banned by the Dutch Indies colonial government, they were circulated clandestinely in the Archipelago (Abaza, 1994).

By thoroughly discussing the dynamic interaction of the Indonesians in Mecca and Cairo between the mid-19th and early 20th centuries, Laffan (2003) argued that “Indonesian nationhood had deeper roots in an Islamic ecumenism within archipelagic Southeast Asia made more tangible through contact with both other Muslims beyond that world and non-Muslims within it” (p. 3). In other words, the secular Andersonian imagined community, for Indonesian Muslims involved in the transnational interactions, was replaced by the pilgrimages and Islamic aspirations. However, Laffan also saw that Anderson’s (1991) print-capitalism mechanisms as the vehicle of community imagination also played a crucial role in Indonesian nationhood. Firstly, the Jawi identity was formed in Mecca and Medina as the result of interaction with an Islamic global community. Then, in the early 20th century, Cairo played a more important role as the number of Jawi increased. They were exposed to the ideas of Islamic reformism from such figures as Muhammad Abduh, Jamaluddin al-Afghani, as well as to the ideas of nationhood. These ideas then were brought back to the homeland, and competed with the more secular Indonesian nationhood. Many of these students became leaders in Islamic organizations and were involved in the efforts to define what Indonesia is (Laffan, 2003).

Laffan (2003) stated that by pointing out the role of Islam in the early stages of Indonesian nationalism he challenged the dominant view of the development of that nationalism as the result of mutual endeavors of *pribumi* (indigenous) Dutch educated
elites in the East Indies and Indonesian students educated in the Netherlands. Indeed, in more or less the same period, Indonesian students in the Netherlands nurtured Indonesian consciousness, as primarily shown by the existence of the Perhimpunan Indonesia (Indonesian Association) in the 1920s. PI was preceded by the establishment of Indische Vereneeging (Indies Association) in 1908, a social organization the members of which could get together and keep abreast of the news from home.

The arrival of a new generation of Indonesian students brought a new political spirit to the organization. Ingleson (1975) pointed out that the amalgamation of feeling uprooted from their home and the equality in law and society in Europe made these young students, most in their late teens or early twenties, searched for their personal identities in parallel with the search for Indonesian identity. Over the years, the students became more radical and changed the name of their publication from Hindia Poetra (Sons of the Indies) to Indonesia Merdeka (Free Indonesia) in 1924. The name of the organization was also changed from Indische Vereneeging to Perhimpunan Indonesia in 1925. These closely knit students, coming from many different parts of Indonesia, believed strongly in the role of the youth to achieve a united, independent Indonesia. Meanwhile, Indonesia Merdeka was widely distributed among political activists, and became the topic of discussion in student circles in Indonesian cities. The most prominent leader of Perhimpunan Indonesia, Mohammad Hatta, later became the first Vice President of Indonesia, signed the Indonesian Proclamation statement together with Sukarno, the first President, who was educated in Indonesia.
After the Indonesian independence proclamation on August 17, 1945, Indonesians residing abroad consolidated to support the new state. In Australia, for example, thousands of Indonesians who had previously worked for the Royal Netherlands Indies government as soldiers, civil servants, merchant seamen, shipping company clerks, etc. rebelled and went on strike. Among them also were hundreds of Indonesian political exiles from the notorious concentration camp Tanah Merah Digul who had been transported to Australia when Indonesia fell to Japan in 1942. The Indonesian seamen boycotts, which were in many cases joined by their counterparts in Australia, delayed the return of the Dutch Indies government to Indonesia, creating time and opportunity for the government of Indonesia to defend itself from being reconquered (Lockwood, 1970).

Meanwhile, in Mecca, the pilgrims stranded because of the Pacific War raised money and had public demonstrations to support to the new state (Scholte, 1995). Similar efforts were made by Indonesians in many cities around the world such as New York City, San Francisco, Tokyo, Colombo (Sri Lanka), Paramaribo (Suriname), numerous cities in Australia, and Bangkok (Bajunid, 1986; Bondan, 1971; Sudjarwo, 1954). These spontaneous efforts indicate what Anderson (1998) has called long-distance nationalism, i.e. when expatriates exert their identity with their homeland while they are abroad.

The Dutch government, after its unsuccessful attempt to reoccupy its former colony, eventually recognized Indonesia as an independent country on December 28, 1949. One of the repercussions of the recognition was that the Dutch had to transport about 12,500 people to the Netherlands. These included 3,578 former soldiers from the Royal Netherlands East Indies Army (Koninklijk Nederlandsch Indisch Leger, KNIL).
with their families. Although the officers of the KNIL were Dutch, the soldiers were recruited locally and most were from Ambon and its surrounding islands in Maluku. After the recognition of Indonesian independence, the native soldiers, numbering some 62,000, had to be discharged or join with the Indonesian army as a part of the decolonization process. As late as October 1950, about 8,000 still refused to be discharged and many of them wanted to join the separatist movement in South Maluku which had declared independence as the Republik Maluku Selatan (Republic of South Maluku, RMS). The Indonesian government, naturally, prohibited these soldiers from being transported to Maluku. They could not be discharged in the territory of Indonesia, because under Dutch law the Dutch were forbidden to discharge its army in foreign territories. Facing this impasse, the Dutch government had no choice but to transfer the last 3,758 soldiers, with their families, to the Netherlands. They were discharged on arrival, and expected to be repatriated later. With plans for only a short stay in the Netherlands, these soldiers were placed in several camps in the country. They were not allowed to work and were not really welcomed by the Dutch society. The diminishing prospect of repatriation and the failure to be integrated into Dutch society nurtured radicalization among the youth. In the 1970s, some of them then took violent actions and hijacked trains. In the beginning, their anger was directed at Indonesian interests in the Netherlands, but later the Dutch people also became victims (van Amersfoort, 2004; Verkuyten, van de Calseijde, & de Leur, 1999).

I will conclude this section by discussing briefly another phase of proto-transnationalism of Indonesians who migrated to Suriname, the Dutch colony in South
America, between 1875 and 1940. In order to increase Suriname’s population to support the growth of plantations, the Dutch colonial authorities permitted the recruitment of indentured laborers beginning in 1890. When emigration was terminated in 1939, more than 32,000 Javanese, including women and children, had migrated to Suriname. After finishing the indenture contracts, only around 23.3 percent of them returned to the homeland between 1896 and 1939 (Hoefte, 1998). In 1947, two years after Indonesian independence, about 700 people returned to Indonesia (Ismael, 1955). In *Illustration of Revolution, 1945-1950* (Sudjarwo, 1955), a picture dated 1947 shows President Sukarno receiving Indonesians who returned from Suriname to Jogjakarta, then the capital city of Indonesia. Then in 1953, another 300 or so families (around 1,200 people) returned to Indonesia, and were relocated in West Sumatra province. In other words, most of the immigrants decided to stay in Suriname, willingly or unwillingly. Koesoebojono (2000) estimated that between 20,000 and 25,000 Javanese-Surinamese migrated to the Netherlands in 1970s, an experience of double migration. This estimation was probably too high, since, according to the latest data there are around 10,000 Javanese Surinamese in the Netherlands (Dessing, 2001). Currently, the Javanese in Suriname number more than 65,000 people, or 15 percent of the total Suriname population (“The World Fact Book,” n. d.).

In addition to Suriname, however, Javanese labors also were recruited to work in British Malaya and French New Caledonia in Melanesia (Lockard, 1971). The Javanese started to arrive in New Caledonia in 1902, and in 1945 there were 7,249 of them. After the war, the Javanese were repatriated, except about 3,000 people who decided to stay. In
1987, there was an estimated 6,750 Javanese in New Caledonia, about 4.5 percent of the total population.

In Malaysia, although the Javanese had migrated there even before the colonial time, the flow increased in the 19th Century. Although the Javanese were not the major portion of the foreign labor force, which was dominated by the Indians and Chinese, the 1947 Javanese population was 187,755 (Lockard, 1971). Their descendants now are referred to as “Javanese-Malays,” i.e. “Malaysian with Malay-Malaysian legal status but have retained a strong consciousness with their Javanese origin” (Miyazaki, 2000, pp. 76-77). There were, however, some ethnic groups, from other parts of today’s Indonesia, most notably the Minangkabaus from West Sumatra and the Bugis from South Sulawesi, who came to Malaysia long before the Javanese. The Minangkabau had already crossed the Strait of Malacca and settled near Melaka in the early 15th Century. Later, after intermarriage with the locals and as well as members of the royal court, Minangkabu princes became part of the royal court itself, especially of Negeri Sembilan. Meanwhile, the Bugis migration began in the last quarter of the 17th Century when some princes and noble men led their followers westward, fleeing from the civil wars in their homeland, in which the Dutch Indies Company was also involved. Renowned as formidable warriors, the Bugis were involved in the political competition of local rulers. In the 18th Century, the Bugis ruled Johor and, across the Strait of Malacca, Riau (Andaya & Andaya, 2001).

What I have described above shows that recent Indonesian transnationalism has an earlier history. Furthermore, my purpose is to illustrate that, despite our short-memory predisposition and our amazement at the latest telecommunication and transportation
technologies, we need to realize that mobility and interconnection of people to and from other far away places are not completely novel.

**Some Indonesian Transnationals, Today**

The presence of communities of Indonesian origin in several countries has attracted some scholars to do research on them. Nevertheless, it is worth noting also that Indonesia, like other places in the world, was also a destination for migration. Indonesia has three major “foreign” ethnic groups who have now become part of 240 million Indonesians, i.e. the Chinese, Arabs, and Indians. During the early years of Indonesian nationalism, they were also in a struggle to define their identity, and there was tension between the first and second generations, whether to embrace the Indonesian nationalism or their homeland (see Suryadinata, 2005, for the Chinese; Mandal, 1994, Mobinikheseh, 1999, for the Arabs). Among these three, the Indonesian Chinese currently have been a research subject by scholars with regards to its diasporic status and the question of identity (see, for example, Ang, 2001; Coppel, 2002; Ong, 2003). As for the Indians, Mani (1993a, 1993b) has discussed their social-cultural life in Jakarta and North Sumatra, while Bachtiar (1993) tackled the issue of the Indians and their integration to the larger Indonesian society.

In what follows, I shall delineate some communities of Indonesian origin which have been in their “host” countries for a number of years. By selecting some such communities described below, I expect to show the discourse on identity, culture, and homeland in each community, and to shed lights on my later discussion of the Indonesian
community in New York City. Therefore, I will not dwell at length the on Indonesians who temporarily reside abroad, such as migrant laborers or students. Suffice it to say here that such issues have been discussed by other authors. For example, Abaza (2003) and Laffan (2004) discussed Indonesian students in Cairo. The issue pertaining to the large numbers of Indonesian migrant labors in several countries such as the Middle East (Robinson, 2000; Silvey, 2004), Malaysia (Kassim, 2000), Taiwan (Loveband, 2004) and Hong Kong (Ford, 2004) also have been discussed.

**South Africa: Reinventing the Nexus**

Let’s start our journey in South Africa. According to Vaheed & Jeppie (2005), there has been reassertion of Malay identity in post-apartheid South Africa. The concept of a rainbow nation proposed by former president Nelson Mandela has encouraged people to search out their identities. The identity shifting of Cape Malays is exemplified by Achmat Davids, a popular radio presenter, preferring the term Cape Malay, which he previously saw as racial bigotry, to Cape Muslim. He also wore Malaysian headgear and visited Indonesia in 1994. Indeed, since the early 1990s, there were some efforts, including seminars and visits to and fro on both sides, to reconnect the Cape Malays with Indonesia and Malaysia. Some Indonesians, such as the famous poet Taufiq Ismail (1994), visited South Africa for several events. Articles on Cape Malays were published in the Indonesian media. Books about and written by Syeikh Yusuf Al-Maqassari were printed for Indonesian audience (see, for example, Hamid, 1994; Lubis, 1997). However, it was the Malaysian government that was most active in reconnecting Cape Malays with
the broader Malay world (Jeppie, 1996). For instance, there was a “Three Hundred Years of Islam in South Africa” commemoration in 1994, three centuries after Al-Maqassari set foot in South Africa. The Malaysian Defense Minister, who led the Malaysian delegation, gave a speech welcoming South African Muslims to the Malay world and received thunderous applause, surpassing even the response to Nelson Mandela’s speech. As Jeppie (1996) observed, the leading member of the organization responsible for the Tricentenary “appeared in unmistakably Malaysian outfits, . . . [He wore] Malaysian iconic half sarong . . . and distinctive songkok headgear” (p. 80), similar to the visiting Malaysian dignitaries. Indonesian delegates, representing Al-Maqassari’s origin, appeared less prominent. Furthermore, in accordance with the commemoration, which received generous monetary support from the Muslim Malaysian business community, there were reciprocal visits of businesspeople, students, professors, and semi-official delegations between Kuala Lumpur and Cape Town. The term “Malay diaspora,” the idea that the Malay people, like the Chinese and Indians, were scattered around the world, gained currency at that time in Malaysia.

I argue that the Malaysian eagerness to embrace the Malay diaspora as a new reconstructed identity is an expansion of the Malay identity which was promoted by the then the Prime Minister Mahathir Mohammad. Under his formidable leadership, the economy had been growing strongly, much better than that of its neighbor Indonesia. His government also emphasized affirmative policies to improve the economy of Malays so that they, in turn, could be competitive globally. Therefore, there was a need to consolidate, economically and culturally, Malays throughout the world, including those
in the Indonesian Archipelago. Hence, a new form of identity, the Malay diaspora, was created, contending with the more established identity of Chinese and Indian diasporas. The Malaysian government, for example, set up the International Malay Secretariat in 1996 (Watson, 1996). As with many identity reconstructions, a certain past had to be revived for its foundation. In this regard, Syekh Yusuf Al-Maqassari, virtually forgotten in the national history of Indonesia, let alone in Malaysia, was elevated to be the nexus of the new identity. In Indonesia, although it appeared in some media, the idea of a Malay diaspora was never seriously discussed, let alone made a government policy. With the enthusiasm of the government, and the success of its economy, Malaysia was leading this effort. With regard to the Tercentenary, as Jeppie (1996) stated, “Malaysia, stole the show [from Indonesia] in distant Cape Town” (p. 84). Seemingly to recoup its own past, Syekh Yusuf Al-Maqassari was proclaimed a national hero by the Indonesian government in 1995. A decade later, in 2005, Sheikh Yusuf was awarded the “Order of the Companions of O.R. Tambo” (Gold), an award given to foreign nationals and other foreign dignitaries (“National Order,” 2005) by the government of South Africa.

**Suriname: To What Direction Is the Prayer, West or East?**

*Angin Paramaribo/tansah ngelingake/
aku ora bakal lali karo kowe.*

The wind of Paramaribo/always reminds me/
I will never forget you.

—Didik Kempot, a famous Indonesian singer, in his song titled *Angin Paramaribo* (The Wind of Paramaribo) in the
The overwhelming majority of Javanese in Suriname are Muslims. Using Clifford Geertz’s (1960) categorization of Javanese society, the Javanese Surinamese can be categorized into a small group of *santri* and the larger group of *abangan* (Wengen, 1975). The third category, *priyayi* (the traditional aristocratic or upper class Javanese), is absent, because all the laborers came from the lower class. The *santri* are men who are knowledgeable about the religion and are pious Muslims. The *abangan* are at least nominally Muslims but not necessarily pious, and they mix religion with local culture practices. Mosques, therefore, are easy to be found in Javanese Surinamese area. As in any other mosque, they have a niche in one wall indicating the direction of Mecca toward which Muslims face when they pray. Interestingly, some mosques have the niche in the west wall, while in other villages it is in the east wall. There are also villages that have both types of mosques (Suparlan, 1995; Wengen, 1975). In Indonesia, the niche, of course, is in the west wall, because Mecca is west of Java. Meanwhile, in Suriname and other places in America, if we follow the shortest distance to Mecca, it should be in the east wall. The group that insisted that the niche should be facing west, generally the older generation, called the *madep ngilen* (i.e. direction west) group, argued that Javanese in Suriname ought to uphold the tradition. The *madep ngetan* (i.e. direction east) group argued to the contrary, saying that the religious requirements ought to come first. During the peak of the controversy in the 1950s, it went as far as marriages previously arranged by couples from the opposing groups were broken off, and people refused to honor
invitations from the rival group. Nevertheless, time heals, and the schism has been closed (Wengen, 1975), although there we can still find madep ngilen mosques today, such as Masjid Pemuda Islam (Islamic Youth Mosque) in Paramaribo (Erafson, 2004).

In 1998, Javanese Surinamese numbered almost 70,000 people, or 16 percent of the Suriname total population of 431,303. The other ethnic population breakdown is as follows: the East Indian is 40 percent Creole 27 percent, Maroon (descendants of escaped African slaves) 12 percent, Amerindian 3 percent, Other 2 percent (St-Hilarie, 2001). The Javanese are economically and socially marginalized. Although coming to Suriname, like the Javanese, as indentured laborers, the East Indians (known locally as Hindustani) were able to improve their economic and social status. The Creoles (mixed white and black), considering themselves part of the dominant group, looked down on the Javanese (Suparlan, 1995). The feelings of deprivation and inferiority were internalized in the Javanese inter-ethnic relations and became a crucial factor of their politics of identity. Indeed, despite their deprivation, the Javanese regard themselves a people with a high and refined culture. For example, the Javanese identified themselves as Pandawa, the leading figures and protagonists of the wayang (shadow puppet) story from Mahabarata epic, while “Creoles are identified as buta, the ogre monster, and Hindustani as anuman, the godlike ape of the Ramayana story, famous for being tricky” (p. 620).

Under these circumstances, it is not surprising that the Javanese have strived to maintain their identity, although these efforts did not happen without some internal conflicts. Javanese traditions such as slametan (the ritual gathering with food offerings for special occasions such as births, circumcisions, weddings and deaths), sajen
(offerings for the spirits), mitoni (celebration of the seventh month of pregnancy), jaran kepang (horse dance), and wayang were well-preserved by the community. The santris also have their own forms of art, such as terbang Jawa, which consists of musical instruments of hoop-shaped drums with parchment on one side. The santri’s presence in the typically abangan cultures such as slametan and wayang were highly valued, since they were considered as spiritual leaders (Suparlan, 1995; Wengen, 1975). Some Suriname Javanese, however, feel that their culture is inferior to that of Javanese culture in Java. In regards to language, since the Javanese brought to Suriname were laborers of lower social status, they talked Jawa ngoko (Javanese dialect spoken among people of lower status) rather than Jawa kromo inggil (Javanese dialect of the higher status). While Western names are common as first names, Javanese names are retained for last names. Therefore, we have a name like Paul Somohardjo, the chairman of a political party called Pertjaja Luhur (Exalted Trust), who is also now the Speaker of the Parliament. Pertjaja Luhur has six seats in the Parliament, and therefore is the largest Javanese party in Suriname, outdoing each of the other three Javanese parties (Hendriks, 2005a).

Nevertheless, the Javanese culture and art forms are disintegrating, especially among urban youths (Suparlan, 1995; Wengen, 1975). These younger people were born and raised in Suriname, hence their emotional bonds with the Javanese culture are not as robust as those of the older generation. Another crucial factor is the abundance of other forms of entertainment, such as radio and film. Movie houses, usually owned by Hindustanis, are blossoming in Javanese villages. Furthermore, the desire to be equally
accepted by the larger society, who see Javanese culture as having little importance, has pushed the urban youth to embrace the general Suriname lifestyle.

Despite the decreasing interest, there have been endeavors to preserve the culture and to strengthen the ties between Suriname and Indonesia. Sri Sultan Hamengkubuwono X, King of Yogyakarta Palace and the Governor of Yogyakarta Province, and a symbol of Javanese culture, attended the anniversary of the Javanese arrival in Suriname, held in February 2005 (Hendriks, 2005). One year before, the government of this province donated a complete set of gamelan (Javanese instruments) to the Javanese Surinamese (“Suriname mendapat bantuan,” 2004). At public gatherings, such as the anniversary of Indonesian Independence, the performers of jaran kepang frequently wear red and white, the colors of the Indonesian flag. In 2002, Radio Pertjaja, owned by the Speaker Paul Somodihardjo, held a beauty pageant to select Miss Jawa (Miss Java). The prizes for the winners were, as mentioned in the press release, “a Toyota Escudo car, a scooter made in China, computers, microwaves, and cups” (“Radio Pertjaja,” 2002).

The nostalgia for Java has been capitalized upon by Suriname Javanese businesspeople, who have imported such commodities as Javanese clothing, books, cassette tapes and records of traditional and modern music, and traditional medicines. In turn, these cultural materials influence the Surinamese Javanese culture and are proudly presented to other ethnic groups, so that, in a way they have stabilized Javanese identity (Suparlan, 1995). Among these cultural materials, the most important is the modern music. Indonesian artists, especially keroncong (a hybrid music of Portuguese, Hawaiian, Ambonese, and Sumatra) and Javanese singers as well as modern Javanese mixed pop
music campursari have frequently been invited to perform in Suriname. The records of such music sell well there. The keroncong and Javanese pop singers such as Mus Mulyadi and Waldjinah became household names in Javanese Suriname families. Their names currently are being replaced by the superstar Didik Kempot, who also wrote a hit song titled Angin Paramaribo (The Wind of Paramaribo) (“Narasi,” 2000). Some radio and television stations which provide Javanese language programs—such as Garuda Radio and Television, Bersama Radio, Radio Pertjaja, and Mustika Radio and Television—have became the venue of the cultural links between the Suriname Javanese and faraway Java.

The Netherlands: The Waning Diaspora and the Twice Migration

The Moluccans and Javanese Surinamese have become part of today’s 15 million inhabitants of the Netherlands. It is estimated that there are 40,000 Moluccans and 10,000 Javanese Surinamese (out of 297,000 people of Suriname origin). Other ethnic minorities in the Netherlands are Turkish (299,000 people), Morrocan (252,000), and other smaller groups such as Pakistani (15,600), Egyptian (13,600), Somalia (27,400), Iranian (21,800), and Iraqi (30,000) (Dessing, 2001).

The Moluccans are more visible in the Netherlands society than the Javanese Surinamese for at least two reasons. First, the number of the Moluccans is much greater. Moreover, not only are the Javanese Surinamese there smaller in number, they tend to be included in the broader category: Surinamese. Second, violent actions were perpetrated by Moluccans youths in the 1970s, including train hijackings and hostage killings, to
express their frustration and anger over perceived deprivation and the Dutch government’s broken promises. In what was originally thought to be as a temporary situation, the former KNIL soldiers were moved to the Netherlands and placed in several camps which were more or less isolated from the Dutch populace. Even the labor unions asked the government to exclude them from the labor market. Furthermore, the leaders tended to discourage the Moluccans’ participation in Dutch society, including education, fearing it would diminish their political ideals. Indeed, the discourse about the independence of the Republik Maluku Selatan (RMS) from Indonesia became the main theme of the Moluccans. The diasporic idea of return to the homeland not only impeded their integration, but also encouraged them to revitalize some of their old pre-Christian *adat* (culture). When the possibility of repatriation began to fade, the Dutch government offered them citizenship, which was largely declined by the Moluccans. They saw it as a political ideal betrayal since they considered themselves as RMS citizens. Failure of efforts to solve their problems cast them as enemies to the Dutch as well as to the Indonesian government (van Amersfoort, 2004).

In the course of time, however, more and more Moluccans, true more for the second and third generations, realized that the Netherlands is their future. This perspective was previously vehemently opposed, creating a deep division in the community that led to several violent acts among them. According to van Amersfoort’s (2004) words, the Moluccans’ idea of diaspora is waning along with the dwindling yearning to return to the homeland. As Verkuyten, van de Calseijde, & de Leur (1999) have shown in their study of third-generation of Moluccans, the RMS was a topic that
persistently came up in their interviews. Although some interviewees stated that they fully supported the idea of a Moluccan state, most of them defined their future in the Netherlands. This does not mean, however, that there is no question of identity of what it means to be a Moluccan. The Malay language, for example, is considered as an identity marker. Some “mixed race” Moluccans (e.g. half Moluccan, half Dutch) regret not being able to speak the language, because they feel excluded from the Moluccan community.

Furthermore, in defining themselves vis a vis the Dutch community, the young Moluccans construct discourses of continuities and differences (Verkuyten, et al., 1999). For them, their presence in the Netherlands is a continuation of a long relationship between the two communities that can be traced back to the 17th Century. After fighting on the side of the Dutch in the Indonesian revolution and following the bad treatment of their forebears by the Dutch government after arrival in the Netherlands, the young Moluccans claim that they should have had special treatment, especially in comparison with other minority groups. However, they also criticize some parts of the Dutch culture for not being attuned to the Moluccan identity. Here, the Dutch culture is defined as lacking such aspects of Moluccans culture, as respect for the elderly, a supportive extended family, hospitality, and interpersonal warmth.

The arrival of subsequent immigrants also evoked the Moluccans’ identity (Verkuyten, et al., 1999). The Moluccans lamented that the Dutch society in general placed them in the broad category of foreigners. As such, they have received the same treatment as other foreigners. Because of the late participation in Dutch society, the Mollucans are socially and economically below the latecomer Surinamese immigrants,
although better off than the Turks and the Moroccans. Indeed, when the Moluccans define themselves in relation to other foreigners, the ethnic groups for comparison are the Turks and Moroccans. As such, the Moluccans usually employ two arguments. The first is related to immigration, because they insist that they are not immigrants who come to look for jobs. As they see it, it was the Dutch government that brought them to the Netherlands for political reasons, and therefore they should have different rights. Secondly, the Moluccans claim that they should be seen differently because they are Christians, unlike the Turks and Moroccans who are Muslims. Culturally, they argue, the Moluccans’ culture and identity are more compatible with the Dutch. We can see here the fluidity of culture and identity of the Moluccans, since in several aspects they differentiate themselves culturally from the Dutch, but on another front they highlight their similarities to be juxtaposed against the other “Others.”

Meanwhile, unlike other ethnic minorities in the Netherlands, the Javanese Surinamese seems to be invisible. However, their migration from Suriname presents an interesting case. Like the Hindustanis, the Javanese Suriname migrated in large numbers in the 1970s because of their fear of social unrest in Suriname before and after independence. Also like the Hindustanis, who originally came from India, the Javanese Surinames are experiencing what Ball & Sinha-Kerkhoff (2005) called “twice migration.” Ball & Sinha-Kherkoff showed that in the Netherlands the Muslim Hindustanis from Suriname and the Hindus of Indian origin feel connected with each other based on a shared sense of ethnicity, and therefore the Muslim Hindustanis should be included in the notion of an Indian diaspora. Similarly, if there is such a thing as an
Indonesia diaspora, Dessing’s (2001) study of Muslims culture in the Netherlands showed that the Javanese Surinamese are still connected with Javanese culture, despite the fact that their remittances go to the family back home in Suriname.

Dessing (2001) shows that the Javanese Surinamese brought virtually all of their cultural practices with them from Suriname, such as mitoni, slametan, jaran kepang, etc. Even the division of the madep ngetan (eastward-prayers) and the madep ngulon (westward-prayers) were brought to the Netherlands. However, as in Suriname, the influence of the reformist eastward-prayers also has increased among the Javanese Surinamese in the Netherlands. Therefore, more Javanese Surinamese refrained from cultural practices associated with the syncretist-traditionalist westward-prayers such as slametan and jaran kepang. The different place and space certainly curtail their opportunity to perform their cultural practices. For example, slametans (ritual gatherings with food offerings) are not held in an open space, but are done in small apartments or rented houses. Meanwhile, Javanese pop music and keroncong maintain their popularity among the Javanese Surinamese, and singers such as Didik Kempot and Mus Mulyadi have the Javanese in the Netherlands market in mind when they produce a new record or show (“Narasi,” 2000).

*Sri Lanka: Malay-izing the Ja-minissu?*

Currently there are about 60,000 Malay Muslims in Sri Lanka, which is 0.33 percent of more than 18 million people. They are the descendants of Indonesian exiles, slaves and, most importantly, soldiers brought by the Dutch when they occupied the
island in the 17th and 18th Centuries ("The Virtual Library of Sri Lanka," n.d.). They refer to themselves as orang Jawa (people of Java) and orang Melayu (Malay people) while the majority Sri Lankan Sinhalese call them Ja-minissu (Javanese people). Since the number of exiled women was far fewer than men, many of these exiles married with Sinhala or Moorish women. Therefore, the Ja-minissu’s physical appearance is quite different than that of Southeast Asians. Except Islam and the Malay language, Sri Lankan Malays ought to be “Malay-ized” (dimelayukan) so that they can be more involved in the Malay world.

Iyne (2000), the President of Sri Lanka Malay Association, also mentioned two factors that have enabled the Malays in Sri Lanka preserve their identity: Islam and the Malay language. The majority of the exiles and soldiers are Muslim, which creates a sense of bond among them. The Malay’s Islamic identity is shared with the Muslim Moors who had settled in the island before the arrival of Indonesian exiles and soldiers. As for the language, their Malay language differs somewhat from both standard Indonesian and standard Malaysian. In addition to the hikayats (Malay epic) popular throughout the Malay world, the local Sri Lankan Malays produced their own, such as Hikayat Indera Kuraisy. However, according to Hussein (n.d.), Sinhala is widely spoken among the educated Malay youth today. A different account is offered by Iyne (2000) who maintained that there has been an identity revival among the Malay community in Sri Lanka. The men are encouraged to wear songkok or peci, the Malaysian and Indonesian headgear, at prayer times as well as at public and private gathering. The women wear sarong kebaya or baju kurung instead of the Indian saree. Previously
recited in Arabic and Tamil, the supplications at funerals and weddings are now increasingly in Arabic and Malay. Despite all this, Iyne (2004) maintained that “[Malay] are indeed conscious and proud of being an integral part of the Sri Lankan nation and contributing to its progress and development in almost all spheres of activity” (p. 6).

Madagascar: The Cousins from Beyond the Sea

Apparently, the connections of first settlers in Madagascar with the Malay-Indonesians Archipelago have diminished greatly overtime. Nevertheless, there have been efforts to revive the connection, especially in accordance with the discourse of placing the Malay world culture in the global world. Delegates from Madagascar have been invited to several conferences on this topic, which were held in both Indonesia and Malaysia. Ranaivoson (2000), a delegate at one such conference, after emphasizing the Malay roots of Malagasy, stated that there should be affirmative action to recreate a Malay network, especially among the young Merina. He proposed some practical actions, such as “the teaching of Silat [the traditional martial art], the promotion of Malaysian and Indonesian films, [and the] creation of a Malay Cultural Center.”

Andrianarimanana (2003), the President of Fikambanana Malay, also attended such a conference held in Riau, Indonesia. He stated that Madagascar was the western border of the Malay-Indonesian world, since there were considerable numbers of Malagasy who remained conscious of their Malay-Indonesian roots. He urged that “promoting Malay-Indonesian culture is worth being supported at the international level for the ‘Great Island’ is left apart from its brothers in South East Asia and is more than
ever in need of a constant relation” (p. 65). Many things need to be done, according to
him, to enable cultural exchanges between the “cousins from beyond the seas” (p. 67).
Examples of what he had already done toward bridging the cultural gap were inserting
the teaching of the Malay-Indonesian language in a weekly newspaper and on a radio
station, both of which are under his control. Although the Malagasy language belongs to
the Indonesian/Polynesian language family and shares 90 percent of its basic vocabulary
with Maanyan, which is spoken in southern Kalimantan (Borneo) (Adelaar, 1995), it
differs from the Malay-Indonesian language to the point that neither one can be used as a
lingua franca for the people from the two sides of the Indian Ocean. It seems that time,
historical divergence, and distance, however, have made the connection is but dimly felt.
Whether the connection revival will succeed or not remains to be seen.

Run and Manhattan: The Tale of Two Islands

Awake, O north wind; and come, thou south; blow upon
my garden, that the spices thereof may flow out. Let my
beloved come into his garden, and eat his pleasant fruits.

—Song of Solomon, Chapter 4, verse 16.

Not many people are aware that the Island of Manhattan, the core of New York
City and one of the world financial centers of our day, is historically connected in a
strange way with the Island of Run, Maluku (the Mollucas), which was the origin of
nutmeg, one the world’s hottest commodities between the 16th and 18th centuries. It was
the time when European powers came to the archipelago located between Asia and
Australia, and were involved in what Milton (2000) called a “spice race.” They battled
over control of the trade of the “trinity of spices” (Andaya, 1993)—cloves, nutmeg, and mace—which were indigenous to Maluku, the Spice Islands, part of what is now known as Indonesia. Hoping to find the shorter routes from Europe to these islands than having to round Africa, expeditions were launched to find a passage to the Pacific Ocean through the North Pole seas (Milton, 2000). It is fascinating to know that the source of commotion in Europe at that time was trees that grew only on a few small islands. The clove tree (*Eugenia aromatica*, Kuntze) is native to islands in northern Maluku, while the nutmeg tree (*Myristica fragrans*, Linn.) is from the Banda Islands in southern Maluku. Unlike other islands which are located near each other, the Island of Run, about 1.5 miles long and a half mile broad, is about ten miles from the main island. It was densely forested with nutmeg trees. Although it was always expensive as an exotic ingredient, its price soared when physicians in London in the 16th Century claimed that their nutmeg powder could cure a deadly plague. It was also believed that nutmeg was a great aphrodisiac. At its peak, the price of nutmeg in London was 60,000 percent of the price in the Banda Islands (Milton, 2000).

In the early 17th Century, the Dutch, through the powerful Dutch East India Company (known as the VOC, *Vereenidge Oost-Indische Compagnie*), had largely controlled the trade of spices in Maluku. However, on December 23, 1616, a ship on a mission ordered by King James I himself—a mission so secret none of the crew, except Captain Nathaniel Courthope, were told about the destination—reached Run. The islanders welcomed the English, as they had tired of their endless struggle against the Dutch. Courthope told the Dutch that now Run was under England’s sovereignty. After
defending itself from constant attacks of the much stronger Dutch power, Run surrendered in October, 1620 (Milton, 2000). The English-Dutch conflict became worse after what is known as the Amboyna Massacre in 1623, when the Dutch governor at Amboyna, Maluku, detained, tortured, and then executed several English merchants under the allegation of conspiracy. The case was one of the pretexts of the first and second Anglo-Dutch Wars in 1654 and 1665, respectively, for control over the seas and trade routes (Masselman, 1963). After this incident, England emphasized its power in other part of Asia, mainly on the Indian Subcontinent, though never giving up its claim of sovereignty over the Island of Run, which it even recaptured for a short time in the mid-1660s.

Meanwhile, the Dutch also sent an expedition to find the north passage through the Arctic to the Spice Islands. One particularly important expedition was led by Henry Hudson in 1609. The VOC hired him, because this English explorer had made two journeys to the north and had a theory about how to reach the Pacific through the north passage. However, due to a rebellious crews and bad weather, Hudson decided to give up the search of the polar passage and sailed across the Atlantic hoping to find an alternative passage through the north of America, based on information he acquired from a navigator who explored the eastern coastline of America. This navigator had reached a body of water that he thought might lead to the Pacific Ocean. After six months of sailing, Hudson reached the estuary with a large island at its entry. He continued upstream, only to find that there was no way through to the Pacific. After Hudson sailed back and reported the richness of the island, later to be called Manhattan, the Dutch started a
settlement on the southern tip, and within a decade had established a new town called New Amsterdam (Milton, 2000).

The King of England also sent an expedition to find the passage to the Spice Islands through America. When his men found that the Dutch were settling around Manhattan the King was furious, because England had claimed sovereignty of the American coastline after English sailors had set foot in the area a century earlier. Besides, he did not want England to be defeated again in the spice race. The Island of Manhattan, like the Island of Run, therefore, became a source of squabble between these two countries. The English launched a decisive attack in September, 1664, the Dutch surrendered without a fight, and the settlement changed its name to New York. The Dutch fervently protested the attack, only to have the King of England reply that the Dutch had done the same thing in the Island of Run. The stand-off led to the second Anglo-Dutch War with the battles raging for two years on the high seas without either side gaining victory. Finally, after lengthy negotiations, the both countries signed the Treaty of Breda, which, among other things, stipulated that the English would own Manhattan, and the Dutch would own the much smaller island of Run (Milton, 2000). In 1667, fewer than one thousand people were living in the small trading center of Manhattan. However, as Milton pointed out, although England lost her nutmegs, she acquired “the biggest of apples” (p. 365). While the Island of Manhattan has now become New York, the capital city of the world, the Island of Run is virtually unknown and can only be accessed by twin-engined powerboat from Banda Neira.
After driving the English out of the lucrative Spice Islands, the VOC was able to broaden its power and influence in other parts of the Indonesian Archipelago and remained prosperous company for another century. It was officially dissolved in 1800 due to financial trouble, scandals and mismanagement, and its territorial possessions were taken over by the Netherlands government (Ricklefs, 1993). This colonial government continued to expand its power until the early 20th Century. When Indonesia declared its independence on August 17, 1945, it claimed all the territory once occupied by the Dutch colonial government.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have tried to put the Indonesian-transnational Muslims in the larger context. The discussion of Indonesian proto-transnationalism and some communities of Indonesian origin in several countries has revealed that two recurring issues that persistently appear in the case studies, regardless of the dissimilarity of the community histories, i.e. the issues of identity and connection to the ancestral land. Undoubtedly the degree of identity closeness and connection varies, but these two issues have become the terrain of struggle. In the latter part of the chapter, where I discuss the obscure historical connection between the Island of Run and the Island of Manhattan, we are reminded that global competition to secure access to precious commodities is not a new phenomenon.
NOTES

1 There is a slightly different time line of this migration. These people left Taiwan on 5,500 BP (Before Present), and reached the Philippines in 5,300 BP. From the Philippines, some groups migrated further south and west to Kalimantan, Java, and Sumatra. Other groups migrated east as far as the edge of western Polynesia, such as Easter Island and Hawai’i (1,500 BP). This rapid expansion—taking 2,100 years for a distance of 10,000 kilometers—is supported by linguistic and archeological evidence (e.g. Bellwood, 1979; Gray & Jordan, 2000). A prominent writer, Jared Diamond (1998), gave this expansion the fanciful name, “express train to Polynesia.”

2 Southeast Asia had been a busy place with international trade in the 15th Century. For a fuller discussion of the “age of commerce” in 16th and 17th century Southeast Asia, see the two-volume corpus written by Anthony Reid (1988).

3 The Holy Cities of Islam, Mecca and Medina, were, and still are, forbidden for non-Muslims. Hurgronje converted to Islam and assumed the Muslim name Abd al-Ghaﬀar when he was in Arabia. His research was funded by the Colonial Institute and the Dutch government (van Koingsweld, 1988, quoted in Laffan, 2003).

4 The previous source of laborers was British-Indians. For many reasons, the recruitment process in India was increasingly difficult; therefore the Surinam colonial government looked for other labor resources. At more or less the same period of time, British-Indian laborers were also exported to work on the Caribbean plantations. Approximately 500,000 British-Indians migrated from 1835 to 1917 (Hoefte, 1998).
There has been some estimation on the number of Chinese, Arabs, and Indians in Indonesia. The Indonesian-Chinese is the largest minority with a population of 7.3 million people, which is 20 percent of overseas Chinese in the world (Poston, Jr., Mao & Yu, 1994). The Arab population in Indonesia is estimated at around five million people (Shahab, 2003). The number of Indians is estimated around fifty thousand people (“Note on Indian Community,” n.d.).

Geertz’s categorization, although it is very influential, has been criticized, because it is not an apples-to-apples comparison. Santri and abangan are religious categories, while priyayi is a social-cultural category. See for example Cruikshank (1972).

I met briefly with two young Surinamers during my fieldwork in New York City. It was at a Javanese gathering, to which we had all been invited. We conversed in Javanese. It was the first time I had ever spoken with Surinameses.
CHAPTER IV

NOTES ON THE METHODOLOGY

No text can do everything at once. The perfect ethnography cannot be written.

—Denzin (1997, p. 287)

Ethnographic truths are thus inherently partial—committed and incomplete.

—Clifford (1986, p. 7)

Malinowksi (1961), who is considered the pioneer of fieldwork in anthropology, offered his account about of the first day he landed in the Trobriand Islands:

Imagine yourself suddenly set down surrounded by all your gear, alone on a tropical beach close to a native village while the launch or dinghy which has brought you sails away out of sight. Since you take up your abode in the compound of some neighboring white men, trader or missionary, you have nothing to do but to start at once on your ethnographic work. Imagine further that you are a beginner, without previous experience, with nothing to guide you and no one to help you. For the white man is temporarily absent, or else unable or unwilling to waste any of his time on you. This exactly describes my first initiation into field work on the south coast of New Guinea. (p. 4)

I quoted Malinowski’s first day experience in the field to contrast with what I experienced in the field, as well as to highlight the nature of research and ethnography itself. Indeed, more that eight decades after Malinowski landed on the tropical beach of the Trobriand Islands, some fundamental changes have occurred in ethnography, which I
shall describe in this chapter to justify methods employed in this project. In doing so, I hope to attest to my “ethnographic authority,” which, as Wellman (1995) has argued, rather than being taken for granted and assumed, needs to be established.

To begin with, “the classical Malinowskian image of fieldwork (the lone, white, male fieldworker living for a year or more among the native villagers) functions as an archetype for normal anthropological practice” (Gupta & Ferguson, 1997, p. 11). While Malinowski, a Pole who immigrated to England was, of course, not a Trobriander, I am an Indonesian, who has an interest in studying my compatriots. In this context, the issues of so-called “native ethnography,” in which an ethnographer researches his or her own people and culture, arises, as we shall see later.

The Trobrianders, although they had regular contacts with their neighbors and through colonialism with the outer world, were virtually a spatially bound community—a more or less typical site for the next “wannabe” anthropologists to work and do research. On the other hand, Indonesians in New York City are people who are not residing in their own culture, and who are experiencing intensive contacts and connections with another culture. And while Malinowski reached the Trobriand Islands by a boat, I landed at La Guardia Airport, New York City, after flying for about two hours on an Embraer plane operated by US Airways, as one among more than 77 thousand people who arrived on average in one day in that airport (The Port Authority of NY and NJ, 2005). Malinowski came from Europe, the center, to the Trobriand Islands, the periphery, I came from Indonesia, detoured through Athens, Ohio, a small college town inhabited by around 22 thousand people, to New York City, inhabited by nearly eight million people, and dubbed
“the capital of the world.” After setting up his tent near the Trobrianders chief’s house, every morning, Malinowski (1961) described:

I would get out from under my mosquito net, to find around me the village life beginning to stir, . . . As I went on my morning walk through the village, I could see intimate details of family life, of toilet, cooking, taking of meals. (p. 7)

Meanwhile, I stayed in Queens, New York City, and needed to take the subway to meet my “villagers” who did not live in one particular neighborhood, but were scattered around Queens and Brooklyn. The nature of what constituted the field or site of my research, therefore, is different from, if not diametrically opposed to, Malinowski’s.

Another contrast is the time spent in the field. Malinowski lived in a tent among the Trobrianders for two years, although perhaps inadvertently because “he had to sit out World War I because of his Polish ancestry” (Jeffrey & Troman, 2004). For anthropology students, one and a half to two years of fieldwork has become an unofficial standard. I spent ten weeks in New York City, sharing the basement of a house with a friend, with a wireless broadband internet connection ready to use, trying very hard to avoid the traps of what Rist (1980) has called blietzkrieg ethnography, a very witty label to describe short-term ethnography.

The first part of this chapter will discuss the issues I mentioned above, i.e. issues of media ethnography, field, nativeness, multi-sited, time, and the style of writing in ethnography. The second part will deal with several aspects of my experience in the field, which will offer my self-reflexivity in doing this research.
Establishing Ethnographic Authority

**Media Ethnography:**

*Cannot Be Everywhere but Must Write from Somewhere*

This study falls into what Alasuutari (1999) calls the tradition of the third generation of cultural audience studies, which “conceives of the media and media messages in a broader sense than just as an encoded text to be then decoded by a particular ‘interpretive community’” (p. 7). To put it in context, a discussion of the history of media audience studies is in order. Unlike other paradigms of research in media (such as “effect” model, content analysis, uses and gratifications, etc.), the cultural media (or audience) research, also known as “media studies,” holds a basic assumption that the audience has polysemic power in consuming and interpreting media. The first generation of cultural media research foundation was articulated by Hall (1973) with his influential article on encoding and decoding. By asserting that audiences have several possibilities to decode (i.e. hegemonic, resistance, or negotiated decoding) the message, Hall showed the fact that the interaction between media and audiences was not simple and unidirectional. Media scholars used this paradigm in their research, by basically analyzing the messages or content of—for example, a particular television program or serial—and how audiences dealt with the message. Because in many cases it involved semiotic analysis, sometimes it is referred as a semiotic or linguistic turn in audience studies.

The second generation of cultural audience research emphasizes the application of an ethnographic method in the research (Alasuutari, 1999), hence the ethnographic turn in
audience studies. In this tradition, media scholars study everyday life of a group of people and how a particular program or medium is used or related to those people. This tradition produces classic qualitative audience studies, such as the ones conducted by Ang (1985) on the television serial *Dallas* and Radway (1984) on romance novels.

The third generation was started when scholars (such as Allor, 1988; Bird, 1992; Dortner, 1994; Grossberg, 1988; Radway, 1988) began to question the notion of audience in cultural media studies. The criticism emphasizes that there actually is no such thing as “the audience” out there, except in the perception of scholars or media producers. In Allor’s (1988) words, “The audience exists nowhere; it inhabits no real space, only positions within analytic discourse” (p. 288). For Grossberg (1988), “media audiences are shifting constellations, located within varying multiple discourse which are never entirely outside of the media discourse themselves” (p. 386). Furthermore, in a self-evaluation tone of her own study, Radway (1988) argues that audience studies is based on . . . the notion of a circuit neatly bounded and therefore identifiable, locatable, and open to observation. Users are cordoned off for study and therefore defined as particular kinds of subjects by virtue of their use not only of a single medium but of a single genre as well. (p. 363).

In the same vein, Bird (1992) points out that:

“The audience” for, say, a television show, a type of newspaper, or any other media product is not an objective mass, sitting in one place waiting to be studied. Most people play many roles in their lives, and “being an audience” is only one (probably not that important) role.” (p. 250)
This reexamination is perhaps best captured in the catchphrases they employ to describe the notion of audience: nomadic and dispersed audience (Radway, 1988), wandering audience (Grossberg, 1988), and impossible audience (Bird, 1992). Therefore, the third generation approach espouses a broadened framework in conceiving media and media use in the daily lives beyond analyzing a genre or a show. The objective of this approach is to understand the role of media (not a text, a genre, or a show) in everyday life. With the emphasis directly on the media, Alasuutari (1999) underscores that “the third generation brings media back to media studies” (p. 6). However, he reminds us that it does not mean that case studies of audiences or analysis of a program needs to be discarded, but the focus is not how the program is interpreted by a particular audience. Instead, it focuses it to contextualize and seek connections between media, audience, and the larger culture. We can sense that McLuhan’s (1964) famous aphorism “the medium is the message” resonates in this approach.

Despite the differences in the focus of study, both the second and third generations of audience research rely on ethnography as the research methodology. Realizing the complexity of a dispersed audience, Radway (1988), for example, proposes that a media research project would not be conducted by a single scholar, “but rather by a team whose members would fan out across a range of sites” (p. 369). Since the complexity could be extended infinitely, she proposes that scholars could concentrate on a few crucial sites, such as homes and schools. Meanwhile, while acknowledging that ethnography is not an objective enterprise, Bird (1992) also stresses that scholars need not see it as entirely subjective: “We must accept the limitations of ethnography and that
we cannot speak for everybody. But we must avoid the paralysis that sets in when a task appears impossible” (p. 257).

I think the suggestion of using ethnography in media studies to deal with the problem of audience is best articulated by Ang (1996). Although she relates the problem of audience more with television, I contend that her arguments can be extended to other media. First of all, Ang argues that television’s meaning of audiences—textual, technological, psychological, and social—is contingent and contextual, depending on any specific situation in which the people consume the television. Therefore, “as a result of this contingency meaning, the range of potential variety in audience practices and experiences becomes exponentially multiplied, indefinite, indeed, if not infinite” (p. 251). Ang calls this perspective “radical contextualism.” In this context, ethnography as a mode of inquiry has gained currency, because its ability to reveal the detail of everyday contacts of media and the people. However, since radical contextualism implies the infinite contextuality of the meanings in media consumption, it also implies that in order to fully grasp the meanings the researchers need to posit themselves “everywhere,” and be “ceaselessly trying to capture a relentlessly expanding field of contextuality over determined, particular realities” (p. 254). Such a position, of course, is impossible, since there would be no research, no matter how ethnographic, which could totally capture real life. Ang suggests that the solution is to admit that “the ethnographer cannot be ‘everywhere’ but must always speak and write from ‘somewhere’” (p. 254). In other words,
. . . the middle ground can be held by doing the thinking with the radical contextualist horizon always in mind, but at the same time translating out limitations (i.e., our incapability to be everywhere at the same time) into an opportunity and a responsibility to make political choices for which position to take, which contextual frameworks to take on board in our forays into the world of media audiences. (p. 257, italics in original)

Therefore, within the radical contextualism framework the ethnographers exert their political choice of which context to be presented or left unexplored, while keeping in mind that the ethnographic story is always partial, provisional in nature. Said otherwise, “Such stories cannot be comprehensive, but they can at least make us comprehend” (p. 259).

By and large, I support Ang’s (1996) notion of radical contextualism and the partiality of ethnography. However, while the above discussion focuses on the consumption of mass media, my research, to a great extent, presents the production of media by ordinary people. Despite the multiplied complexity, since the “audience” now is both consumer and producer, I think the notion of radical contextualism and the provisional nature of ethnography become even more relevant. Moreover, as we will see later, I extend this perspective further on the notion field in ethnography and what is called “native ethnography.”
Issues on Native Ethnography

Thus, the whole value of the insider researcher is not that his data or insights into the social situation are better—but they are different.

In the introduction of the very influential book *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography*, Clifford (1986, p. 9) pointed out that “A new figure has entered the scene, the ‘indigenous ethnographers’ . . . Insiders studying their own cultures offer new angles of vision and depths of understanding. Their accounts are empowered and restricted in unique ways.” Clifford was writing, of course, in the spirit of elucidating the seismic changes in ethnography in response to the current post-modern condition, in which the presence of indigenous ethnographers has, among other things, unsettled one of the foundations of anthropology: the issue of “Othering.” However, we must remember that the phenomenon of scholars studying their own culture is not entirely new. Francis La Flesche (1857-1932), considered as the first Native American ethnologist, had done several ethnographic records of the Osage and his Omaha tribes (e.g., La Flesche, 1900, 1939). From another continent, Jomo Kenyatta (1893-1978), who was a student of Malinowski and later became the founding father and the President of Kenya, wrote a treatise on his people, the Gikuyu (Kenyatta, 1938).

However, interest in studying one’s own culture increased from 1960s onwards, in both the newly independent countries of the Third World, where the scholars started participating in the production of knowledge, and in North America (Altorki & Fawzi El-Solh, 1988). This growth reached a critical point in the late 1970s and early 1980s when
scholars started thinking about inherent issues pertaining to indigenous ethnography, such as the advantages and disadvantages of being closely intimate with the culture under study, representations (Who are the “natives”?), or even if there is such a thing. In 1978, for example, an international symposium held in Burg Wartenstein, Austria, on indigenous anthropology in non-Western countries, attended mostly by developing countries scholars, published its proceedings in a book titled, *Indigenous Anthropology in Non-Western Countries* (Fahim, 1982). A similar question was also raised by North American scholars researching parts of North American society (Messerschmidt, 1981a), although the terminology used, “anthropology at home,” was different (Messerschmidt, 1981b, p. 13). Meanwhile, six Arab female social scientists discussed “the issue of being female and the issue of being indigenous in Arab society, which—among other things—is characterized by a pervasive segregation of the sexes” (Altorki & Fawzi El-Solh, 1988b, p. 1) in a book titled *Arab Women in the Field* (Altorki & Fawzi El-Solh, 1988a). And Balzer (1995b) presented non-Russian anthropologists from the Russian Federation—from the European parts of Russia to the North Caucasus, to Siberia and to the Far East—as native anthropologists. Indeed, issues of one studying one’s own culture still exist in the social sciences and could be found in many publications until very recently (see for example, Acosta-Alzuru, 2005; Jacobs-Huey, 2002; Kuwayama, 2004; Ryang, 2005; Võ, 2000).

The growth of interest on this issue is also reflected in a matter which Messerschmidt (1981b) pointed out earlier, a plethora of names used by scholars to label their research: insider research, autoethnography, indigenous anthropology, native
research, introspective research, endogenous research, incultural research, and peer-group research. Looking carefully at the use of the names, Messerschmidt (1981b) said, “I see a slight tendency for North American anthropologists at home to favor the term *insider anthropology*, whereas that subset of ethnic and minority anthropologists who study their own people tend to call what they do *native anthropology*” (italics in original) (p. 13). This standpoint was clearly echoed by what Jones (1970) said a decade earlier, that native anthropology was “a set of theories based on non-Western precepts and assumptions in the same sense that modern anthropology is based on and has supported Western beliefs and values” (p. 251). Indeed, although the terms “indigenous” and “native” are used interchangeably (Balzer, 1995a), as are “indigenous” and “insider” (Altorki & Fawzi El-Solh, 1988b), the term “native” is more frequently used in the recent literature. This is understandable, since the term “native” is widely utilized in ethnography, as in the oft-used phrase “going native”—the root of which can be traced back to Malinowski (1961) when he suggested that “to grasp the native’s point of view, his relationship to life, to realize his vision of his world” (p. 290), an anthropologist should “go native.”

However, the term “native” as an adjective of anthropology or ethnography is not unproblematic, especially in the historical context of power and knowledge. It has a deep root in colonialism when the colonized people referred to as natives (Asad, 2002). Therefore, as Appadurai (1988) puts it, the word “native” has tended to be used for people who are “distant from the metropolitan West. . . . Natives are in one place, a place to which explorers, administrators, missionaries, and eventually anthropologists, come. . . . The natives are immobilized by their belonging to a place” (pp. 36-37).
(1997) words, “If one is not born an anthropologist, neither is one born a native. Natives are produced as the object of study that ethnographers make for themselves” (p. 166). Nevertheless, some scholars have deliberately decided to use the word native to describe themselves or their methodology. Balzer (1995a), without making further issue of the colonial roots of the word, feels relatively comfortable with the word, and is willing to describe herself as a “native anthropologist.” On the other hand, Kuwayama (2004) has deliberately used the term “native anthropology” for three reasons,

First, it testifies to the “colonial roots” of anthropology. Second, it draws attention to the ‘intrusion’ into the academic space of former colonial powers by their subjects. And third, this intrusion signals the radical change taking place in the structure of anthropological knowledge. (p. 3)

Meanwhile, Kraidy (1996) uses the term “native” instead of “indigenous” for the reasons unrelated to the issue of colonialism. Contrary to what Appadurai has suggested about the immobility of natives, Kraidy argues that “The word ‘native,’ although it denotes authenticity and localism, connotatively englobes a spatial movement, a certain displacement” (p. 66). He illustrates the use of the word “native” by pointing out that someone who is away from his or her own homeland would likely be described as a native of that homeland. For example, a Lebanese like him, residing in the U.S. and studying the Maronites of Lebanon, will be referred as a native, instead of an indigenous Lebanese. Therefore, the label “native ethnography” is more suitable than indigenous ethnography.
In this research, I will adopt the term “native ethnography,” seconding what Kuwayama (2004) and Kraidy (1996) have laid out. Previously, I have also considered taking up to describe myself a neologism proposed by Abu-Lughod (1991), i.e. “halfies”—“people whose national or cultural identity is mixed by virtue of migration, overseas education, or parentage” (p. 138). Abu-Lughod implies that the halfies are conceptually closely related to the indigenous anthropologists. However, I would suggest that the term “halfies” tends to be used more suitable for someone who is culturally mixed due to migration or, especially, from a mixed parentage. Abu-Lughod herself is the daughter of a Palestinian/American couple (see Abu-Lughod, 1988). Narayan (1997), who with a German mother and Indian father, is more comfortable to be designated among the halfies, because she feels she is not “clearly ‘native’ or ‘non-native’” (p. 673). In my case, born from of two Indonesian parents and residing temporarily in the U.S. for study and not by virtue of migration, such a term does not fit. Therefore, “native ethnography,” for me, more appropriate to designate the nature of this research.

After adopting Kuwayama (2004) and Kraidy (1996) in using the term “native ethnography,” I shall make several further points pertaining to this issue. First of all, sharing the same geographic, ethnic and national background with the people being studied does not automatically make an ethnographer native. Taking the designation native overlooks the possibility of differences—in terms of gender, class, education, etc.—between the ethnographers and the people being studied that might hinder the ability of the researchers to immerse themselves in the culture they are studying. Koentjaraningrat (1982), an Indonesian anthropologist who participated in the Burg
Wartenstein Symposium mentioned above, has informed us how he was quite easily accepted by the Javanese youths in the villages he was studying. On the other hand, although himself a Javanese, he had had some difficulties in approaching the older people, because they saw him similar to and in the same category as government officials. In another cases, he was studying Indonesian Papuan sago gatherers. Although he could converse with them in the eastern dialect version of Indonesian, he felt an atmosphere of suspicion, probably because “. . . I was considered not only a genuine stranger but one who belonged to another nation of colonizers, similar to the Dutch or Japanese” (p. 180). Being an unmarried woman, Altorki (1988) was restricted in her access to men, although she could work with women, when she was studying in her native city, Jiddah, Saudi Arabia. Abu-Lughod (1988) acknowledges that her identities of being a female and a partial insider “critically shaped not my fieldwork but my analysis of Bedouin life” (p. 158). Vô (2000) faced similar problems when she was studying Asian Americans in San Diego. Therefore, Narayan (1993) rightly points out that “The fact that we are often distanced—by factors as varied as education, class or emigration—from the societies we are supposed to represent tends to be underplayed” (p. 677). In this sense, “native” is a fluid category, and its meaning is dependent upon the social context (Acosta-Alzuru, 2005; Aguilar, 1981; Jacobs-Huey, 2002; Kuwayama, 2004; Ryang, 2005).

This fluidity, however, does not mean that native ethnographers have no differences from, say, non-native ethnographers. In fact there are claims and counterclaims about the advantages of being one, and what are seen as advantages by
proponents of native ethnography are at the same time considered to be disadvantages by its critics (Aguilar, 1981; Altorki & Fwazi El-Solh, 1988b; Fahim & Helmer, 1982; Jones, 1970; Jacobs-Huey, 2002; Zavella, 1993). The most often mentioned claim is that a native ethnographer will have relatively closer distance to the societies he or she is about to represent than will the non-native ethnographer by virtue of shared cultural roots and languages. As such, preexisting experiences offer the possibility for the ethnographer to be able to more quickly uncover and attach meaning to patterns encountered in that society faster—since the ethnographer is able to understand “a social reality on the basis of minimal clues” (Altorki & Fwazi El-Solh, 1988b, pp. 7-8). Also, it is held that native status ensures access to all information and cultural patterns in the society without altering the social settings, given the fact that native ethnographers are able to blend into situations more smoothly. In other words, if non-native ethnographers are going out to a field, native ethnographers are returning to a field (Clifford, 1997).

Nevertheless, it is their very familiarity with the culture that is criticized as possibly causing the ethnographers fail to notice important cultural evidences. Being already immersed in the culture, they may take the clues for granted. Conversely, being a stranger in the culture, the non-native ethnographer is more readily aware of any clues. In this sense, to produce good research, ethnographers need to be able to perform what Aguilar (1981) has put succinctly: “Thus, the outsider must to some extent get into the natives’ heads, skins, or shoes, whereas the insider must get out his or her own” (pp. 23-24). Being aware of the possible disadvantages of being a native, I myself tried to bear in mind this issue throughout the research. I have constantly tried to see things from an
outsider’s perspective by asking myself why such and such happened in particular way. While I might not always be successful in my vigilance to maintain an outsider’s perspective, I believe my awareness has led me, to a large degree, to make the familiar strange.

Furthermore, because of diversity in the society being studied, even the most native ethnographer cannot know everything about his or her own society (Aguilar, 1981). Not only are the groups’ cultural identities diverse, the ethnographer also assumes “multiplex identity” (Narayan, 1993). At this point, I shall discuss briefly the issue of identity to support a non-essentializing perspective in ethnography, which differs from previous ethnography that tended to see the people being studied, as well as the ethnographers themselves, as having a fixed and unitary identity. Giddens (1991) argues that identity is a mode of thinking about ourselves: “We are not what we are, but what we make of ourselves” (p. 75). Since what we think about ourselves changes from circumstance to circumstance in time and space, identity is something we create continuously—it is a long life process. However, Giddens only emphasizes one half of identity, and overlooks the possibility that identity is also about how others see (construct) us. In Barker’s (2000) words, “To explore identity is to enquire: how do we see ourselves and how do others see us” (p. 165). According to Hall (1992) “identity arises not so much from the fullness of identity which is already inside us as individuals, but from lack of wholeness which is filled from outside us, by the ways we imagine ourselves to be seen by others” (p. 287). Therefore, since identity is constantly negotiated, Hall argues that persons actually have multiple identities (based on ethnic,
class, religion, gender, geographical origins, etc.), and even sometimes contradictory identities, instead of a coherent and unitary identity. Thus, identities are never fixed as the essentialists argue, but are formed at the intersection or crossing of many identities, and this intersection or crossing is never stable and fixed. Therefore, according to Laclau (in Hall, 1992), the articulation of identities is always partial: The structure of identity of individual and society, then, remains open. In the context of ethnography, I espouse Narayan (1993) when she asserts that “Given the multiplex nature of identity, there will inevitably be certain facets of self that join us up with the people we study, other facets that emphasize our difference” (p.680). Therefore, in this sense, it is natural that, as Clifford (1986) has asserted in the epigraph of this chapter, “Ethnographic truths are thus inherently partial—committed and incomplete” (italic in original) (p. 7).

Another strong criticism leveled at native research is that it is inherently biased, because the scholars are too closely associated with the culture they study (Abu-Lughod, 1991; Aguilar, 1981; Fahim & Helmer, 1982; Kuwayama, 2004). Researchers from ethnic minority groups have been accused of serving as the representatives of the political interest of those groups, and Third World native scholars are criticized for their alleged attempts, due to their nationalistic fervor, to re-write their history and propose their partisan interpretations of their own culture. The interesting point is, as Kuwayama (2004) has appropriately highlighted, “Given, however, the wide recognition today of subjectivity of all cultural representation, we may ask why natives of the West are so often exempted from this criticism” (p. 20). Moreover, according to Aguilar (1981), significant discrepancies in the works of celebrated and competent fieldworkers such as
Fortune and Mead (on the Arapesh), Goodenough and Fischer (on the Trukese), and Lewis and Redfield (on Tepoztlán), “should dampen excessive enthusiasm about the objectivity inherent in the outsider’s position” (p. 23).

Indeed, for some native researchers, choosing the location and the society they study is a political decision. Altorki (1988), for example, argued that she, as a female indigenous anthropologist, “can play a major role in providing a more balanced analysis of the role of women in Arab politics and society” (p. 49). By implication, she believed that existing studies on Arab women had not been balanced and needed to be straightened. And for Võ (2000, p. 20), “Realizing that ethnic histories of Asian Americans are ignored, devalued, or exoticized, I wanted to capture the voices and actions of activists in one community and to dispel the common conception that Asians are passive and apolitical.” Feminist anthropology literature, naturally, is rife with examples of similar expressions (Schepe-Hughes, 1983; Zavella, 1993).

**On Fields: Exoticizing New York City?**

In an earlier chapter, I described aspects of globalization and transnationalism which serve as theoretical a framework of this study. In a nutshell, the intensification of global interconnectedness has brought profound changes in every society in the world, indicated by the escalation of linkages, contacts, and interaction among cultures—although in many cases in an asymmetrical fashion. The cultural borders which once separated one from another have become increasingly porous, allowing the mobility of commodities, images, and sound, as well as people. Unavoidably, this state presents
challenges to ethnography which traditionally dealt with much more geographically bounded fields more or less secluded from cultural interactions beyond their borders (remember Malinowski’s Trobriand Islanders?). As the flow of migration increases, according to Appadurai (1996),

. . . the *ethno* in ethnography takes on a slippery, nonlocalized quality, to which the descriptive practices of anthropology will have to respond. The landscapes of group identity—the ethnoscapes—around the world are no longer familiar anthropological objects, insofar as groups are no longer tightly territorialized, spatially bounded, historically unselfconscious, or culturally homogenous. . . .

[T]he task of ethnography now becomes the unraveling of a conundrum: what is the nature of locality as a lived experience in a globalized, deterritorialized world? (p. 48, 52)

Therefore, one of the challenges confronting ethnography is the notion of field, a notion that has been taken for granted for so long that it has been largely overlooked in the discourse of current anthropology and ethnography. As Gupta & Ferguson (1997) put it, the notion of field “has been left to common sense, beyond and below the threshold of reflexivity” (p. 2).

Historically, the introduction of the notions of field and fieldwork in anthropology was inspired by the development of natural sciences (such as zoology, botany, and geology) in the late 19th and early 20th centuries (Kuklick, 1997). Therefore, following the natural sciences, the more “natural” the field the more it is desirable as a site of
research. This leads to what Gupta & Ferguson (1997) have called the *hierarchy of purity of field sites*, in which some places are more “field-like” than others.

All ethnographic research is thus done “in the field,” but some “fields” are more equal than others—specifically, those that are understood to be distant, exotic, and strange. . . . [I]t remains evident that what many would deny in theory continues to be in practice: some places are much more “anthropological” than others (e.g. Africa more than Europe, southern Europe more than northern Europe, villages more than cities) according to the degree of Otherness from archetypal anthropological “home.” (p. 13)

In this sense, New York City as a field site for a graduate student from a Third World country studying in a university located in a small town in southeastern Ohio is an oxymoron. It does not fit with the archetypal anthropological home.

Fortunately, as Gupta & Ferguson (1997) show, there have been efforts to rethink the idea of field by *decentering* and rejecting the hierarchy of field sites. Decentering of field sites acknowledges “different forms of knowledge available from different social and political locations” (p. 37). Thus, production of ethnography should not only be based on the commitment to location and the presence of the ethnographer, but should also acknowledge different forms of knowledge, such as archives, mass media, public discourse, and novels. For example, a study of a community that receives heavy media coverage will require the ethnographer to examine the content of the media about the community besides the traditional fieldwork. It is possible that the members of such a community represent themselves according how media have represented them. In other
words, an ethnographer needs to consider various “forms of knowledge” in the community he or she is studying in addition to the traditional observation and participation.

Meanwhile, rejecting the hierarchy of purity of field sites does not mean rejecting the notion of field altogether. There are still places that can be fields for ethnographers to travel to, because if the field is everywhere, then it is nowhere. Clifford (1997) maintains that there are three anthropological legacies of what constitute of fieldwork: the role of travel, physical displacement, and temporary dwelling away from home. As Clifford has stated, “. . . some form of travel, of disciplined displacement in and out of one’s ‘community’ (seldom a single place, in any event), will probably remain the norm. . . . Travel, redefined and broadened, will remain constitutive of fieldwork, at least in the near term” (p. 89). My travel to New York City, then, is still travel to a field. Moreover, although I might be returning as a native ethnographer to the field, New York City, of course, is not my original habitat, nor is it that of my Indonesians compatriots there. Hence the Big Apple provides me a large degree of Otherness. As for displacement, my experience was not as dramatic as Malinowski’s (1966) arrival on the Trobriand Island beach which I quoted earlier. Although I had been to New York three times before, this time was different. Two of my previous visits were for conferences, and I went by car. The third visit, again by car, was with my entire family for a vacation—we went to the Masjid Al-Hikmah, met and talked with several people, two of whom later became my informants. Now, for my fieldwork, I was “dwelling” in my “tent,” the basement of house with an Internet broadband connection, for ten weeks, away from my family.
Gupta & Ferguson’s (1997) rejection of the hierarchy of purity of field sites and Clifford’s (1997) assertion of the three anthropological legacies (the role of travel, physical displacement, and temporary dwelling away from home) that constitute fieldwork justify ethnographical research in which metropolitan New York City is the field site and I, the student from a developing country, am the researcher. In this context, I remember what I told an Indonesian friend, who is doing his Ph.D. study in anthropology at Harvard University and was visiting me in New York City. After having dinner in a full-packed steak restaurant on 2nd Avenue in Manhattan, we were walking to Union Square on that gorgeous night and I said to him half-jokingly, “Now, I am ‘exoticizing’ and ‘othering’ New York City. Take that!” It seems that my subaltern psyche felt some kind of fulfillment that day.

**Multi-sited Ethnography for Transnationalism Studies**

The conception of multi-site fieldwork—being there . . . and there . . . and there!

—Hannerz (2003, p. 202)

In responding to the challenges posed by globalization and transnationalism, some scholars have proposed ways in which ethnography can be utilized in the research. These proposals come in different terminologies, such as multi-sited ethnography (Marcus, 1995, 1999, 2002), globography (Hendry, 2003), global ethnography (Buroway, 2000; Gille & Riain, 2002), ethnography in the third timespace (Lavie & Swendenburg, 1996), and translocal ethnography (Kraidy & Murphy, 2003). In many different ways and emphases, all these approaches have tried to respond to the question which Kraidy &
Murphy (2003) have succinctly summarized: “For how else can ethnography, with its fundamentally local ethos, illuminate the experience of globalization, albeit manifested at the local level?” (p. 299).

Of the many proposals around, I consider that of Marcus (1995, 1999, 2002) to be the most thorough, systematic and suitable for a study transnationalism such as mine. His 1995 article, titled *Ethnography in/of the World System: The Emergence of Multi-sited Ethnography*, first appeared in the *Annual Review of Anthropology* in 1995 and is frequently cited by other scholars. A quick search using Google Scholar (www.scholar.google.com) showed that the article has been cited in more than 120 scholarly works. Although the term “multi-sited ethnography” has became popular to identify this mode of research after Marcus coined it, he acknowledged that the practice of doing this mode had emerged in some interdisciplinary body of knowledge, such as media studies, science and technology studies, migration studies, and development studies.

According to Marcus (1995), multi-sited ethnography considers global forces as integral parts of the daily life of the people. These forces were embedded in the connections among sites which are spatially separated or different with regards to the forms of sites. Therefore, for Marcus,

Multi-sited research is designed around chains, paths, threads, conjunctions, or juxtapositions of locations in which the ethnographer establishes some form of literal, physical presence, with an explicit, posited logic of association or
connection among sites that in fact defines the argument of the ethnography. (p. 105)

Thus Marcus (1995) identified six possible techniques for multi-sited ethnography, which might be seen as the initial springboard to launch the research with the expectation that it will be malleable and contingent upon the progress of research. The first, follow the people, occurs where ethnographers follow and stay with the movement of the subject from one site to another. Second, follow the thing, has ethnographers follow the circulation objects of study (such as commodities, gifts, works of art, etc.) through different contexts. Third, follow the metaphor, happens when ethnographers trace something within the realm of discourse (signs, symbols, and metaphors), such as the multi-sited research on AIDS. In the fourth, follow the plot, story, or allegory, ethnographers trace stories or narratives in different locales. At the time of writing (1995), this technique had not been fully explored; although, it had started to be used in so-called “social memory” research. Five, follow the life or biography, is where ethnographers design the research around the life history of a particular individual. Finally with six, follow the conflict, ethnographers deal with parties who are in conflict, a technique that can be used in the context of anthropology of law.

Later, Marcus (1999) distinguished two approaches in practicing multi-sited ethnography, i.e. obvious and non-obvious paradigms. When an ethnographer visits different locations to track the movement of migrants or the circulation of cultural objects, to study the relationship of dispersed communities and their networks, or to follow the allegory or conflict, he or she is conducting an obvious multi-sited
ethnography, since the relation of the sites is clear and obvious. However, there are cases where the relationship and connections between sites are not physical, direct, and clear—in terms of space, time, or social category as well. This issue is dealt with by the non-obvious paradigm of multi-sited ethnography, which I found very suitable to my research. This is possible, according to Marcus (1999), if we consider “the multi-sited ethnography as more a matter of contextualizing multi-sited ethnographic imaginary rather than literally an ethnography which covers many sites and threatens to be overwhelmed by them” (p.11). In other words, a multi-sited research does not have to be conducted in several different physical sites. It also possible to do such research by considering several forms of sites that are related to the community under study. With this approach, it is possible for an ethnographer to conduct research on religious fundamentalism in a community through the religious institutions and various media they produce. As I have discussed previously, Gupta & Ferguson (1997) proposed a similar strategy which they call “decentering the field site.” Despite the fact that there might be few actual contacts between the sites, in the ethnographer’s mind what happens in one of the sites depends on the imagining of what is going on at the other sites. For Marcus (1999), “Multi-sited research involves innovative ways of bounding potentially unbounded” (p. 9).

In this dissertation project I did not conduct obvious multi-sited ethnography, in the sense visiting different locations, such as their hometowns in Indonesia to track the migration, in addition to the fieldwork in New York City. I considered the non-obvious paradigm of multi-sited ethnography suitable, due to financial and time limitations of the study. First of all, although the majority of Indonesians in New York City live in Queens
and Brooklyn, they are not concentrated in one neighborhood. For instance, only two families live a short walking distance from Masjid Al-Hikmah, the Indonesian mosque. Thus, unlike the Malinowskian site, where members of the community were concentrated in a spatially bound area, my physical field sites, where I conducted my interviews and conversations with, observations of, and participation in events with, the Indonesian transnationals, were various and scattered: Masjid Al-Hikmah, private homes, public gatherings, Indonesian restaurants, ethnic groceries, etc. Furthermore, the non-obvious multi-sited approach also considers, as Marcus (1999) stated, different forms of sites. In this sense, I examined the media, such as printed media and the Internet (in which then I became a member of two electronic mailing lists of the Indonesian community).

On the other hand, the non-obvious multi-sited approach allowed me to take into accounts other places and sites with which my informants were unlikely associated. For instance, I attended the musical performance of the Buginese epic *I La Galigo* at the Lincoln Center and watched the screening of a documentary about an aging mask-dancer from Cirebon, West Java, at the Asia Society. Although attended by Indonesians, such performances were, for the most part, not attended by the social strata of my informants. Certainly, Indonesians who attended such elitist performances were the elites also, such as diplomats, students, and corporate employees. A non-obvious multi-sited approach also enabled me to consider my visits to the Mediterranean restaurant Hummus Place with a friend (a professor at the New School of Social Research) or the Strand Book Store (which claims to have 18 miles of used books), both located in Lower Manhattan, as visiting field sites. After all, these seemingly unrelated site visits showed to me what New
York City has to offer her inhabitants. In other words, these field sites in different ways facilitated my immersion in New York City. Therefore, during the time I was in such places, I did not consider myself to have left the field. In the words of Passaro (1997), who also did an ethnography project in New York City, “I did not enter and reenter the field every day” (p. 153). For me, what my informants might not experience could be, or rather should be, taken into account in this ethnography project. In this sense, I think we can better understand such issues as marginalized migrants and what Guarnizo & Smith (1998) have called transnationalism from below (as discussed in Chapter II).

**Narrative Ethnography and Self-Reflexivity**

Ethnography is a very personal and imaginative vehicle.
—Marcus & Fischer (1986, p. 21)

With regard to the politics of ethnographic writing, I will adopt what Goddal, Jr. (2004) and Tedlock (1991) have called “narrative ethnography.” My preference stems from the belief that ethnographers can no longer claim their authority over the “Others” and the totality of culture they try to represent in their writings. One of the main underlying paradigms, although frequently unspoken explicitly, of the traditional ethnography is that the “primitive,” the “others,” the “natives” were unable to speak for themselves. It was assumed that the task of ethnographers was to reveal the natives’ cultures and to present them as fully as possible to the “civilized” readers. In the 1980s, however, these ideas were challenged and under serious critique in what Marcus & Fischer (1986) have called “a crisis of representation of in the human sciences,” although
the first tremors of change could be felt in the 1970s (Nash & Wintrob, 1972). The postmodern paradigm has undermined the nature of ethnographic writings by asserting that they could no longer claim the “transparency of representation and immediacy of experience” (Clifford & Marcus, 1986, p. 2), and therefore they are the invention, rather than the representation, of culture. Moreover, another phenomenon which challenged the complete separation of ethnographers’ Self and the Others, the observer and the observed, is the emergence of native ethnographers (Clifford, 1986; Nash & Wintrob, 1972; Tedlock, 1991). In Tedlock’s words,

To them, theory is not a transparent, culture-free zone, not a duty-free intellectual market place hovering between cultures, lacking all connections to embodied lived experience. They believe that both knowledge and experience from outside fieldwork should be brought into our narratives and we should demonstrate how ideas matter to us. (p. 80, italics added)

The growing number of “native” people who are able to “talk back and gaze back” (Jacobs-Huey, 2002), mainly by virtue of mass education as well as Western education, has also made “the assured viewpoints of the heyday of Western colonialism began to disintegrate” (Nash & Wintrob, 1972, p. 531). Furthermore, discrepancies of observation among scholars who researched the same culture, as I mentioned above, have also disastrously undermined the reliability of taken-for-granted objectivity and representations of ethnographic works.

Undoubtedly, the issue of self and fieldwork experiences had also been encountered by ethnographers in the past. However, instead of incorporating this dialectic
of self in the field, it was common for ethnographers simply not to mention them in their ethnographic writing. Therefore, rarely did ethnographers from the 1930s, 1940s, and early 1950s write their experiences in the field. The trend was increasingly stronger in the 1960s and became much stronger in the 1980s (Clifford, 1986; Nash & Wintrob, 1972; Tedlock, 1991). As a result of this process of self-examination, including other ethnographers’ selves, in Tedlock’s words, “the eye shifted from the *ethnos* in ethnography to the *graphia*—the process of writing” (p. 79). The fashion of writing a memoir of the field experience separated from the ethnographic writing has largely been superseded by narrative ethnography writings, in which the ethnographer deliberately takes up a secondary character in the story, by using personal an active voice among others. It is in this sense also that I am referring to what Clifford (1986) calls the rejection of “visualism” of traditional ethnography, in which culture is prefigured visually as objects or texts which need to be described from a distant standpoint. Clifford maintains that through this rejection, “[It] becomes possible to think of cultural poetics that is an interplay of voices, of positioned utterances. In a discursive rather than visual paradigm, the dominant metaphors for ethnography shift away from the observing eye and toward expressive speech (and gesture)” (Clifford, 1986, p. 12).

In narrative ethnography, according to Tedlock (1991), the participant observation becomes the observation of participation, in which ethnographers blend their experience in the field, ethnographic data, epistemological reflections and cultural analysis. Therefore,
the world, in a narrative ethnography, is re-presented as perceived by a situated narrator, who is also present as a character in the story that reveals his own personality. This enables the reader to identify the consciousness which has selected and shaped the experiences within the text. (p. 77-78).

Goddal (2004), a leading narrative ethnographer in the field of applied communication, formulates narrative ethnography in similar way:

Narrative ethnography is a cross-disciplinary communication project aimed at re-establishing the centrality of personal experience and identity in the social construction of knowledge. . . . We write or perform personal narratives as ways of explaining things, and our explanations reunite what we call the literature in a field. . . . You could say also that narrative ethnography is holistic. It is about work and it is about life, and it is about the interplays of work in our lives and our lives at work. (p. 187-188)

Avoiding the Curse of Blitzkrieg Ethnography?

Time alone cannot guarantee ethnographic accomplishment. —Wolcott (1999, p. 198)

Malinowski lived among the Trobrianders for two years during World War I, a period of time that then became a kind of convention, especially for doctoral students in anthropology, in doing their fieldwork. Later, one year of fieldwork become a norm as well, assuming that living one year with the “natives” would enable anthropologists, again especially doctoral students, to observe one full cycle of activities (Jeffery &
Troman, 2004). I stayed 11 weeks in New York City, so can I call mine an ethnographic study? Is my research one of what Rits (1980) has called pejoratively “blitzkrieg ethnography”?

Actually, what Rits (1980) criticized when writing the article was primarily the practice of his colleagues’ educational researchers who had used ethnography as a mantle for works that were “shoddy, poorly conducted, and ill-conceived” (p. 8), and rather ignored the epistemological underpinnings of ethnography. The same criticisms, however, were also put forward by Wolcott (1999) to the what so called “rapid assessment procedures,” used to label quick ethnographic research social-impact assessments, such as forestry, animal husbandry, AIDS, etc. Rits indicated that there had been a shift in federal-funding educational research towards qualitative research which attracted researchers to apply ethnography in their works. Rits, apparently a trained anthropologist, lamented that ethnography was no longer practiced as it used to be: no traditional “rite of passage” when a novice anthropologist must go to the field for an extended time, become enmeshed in the life of the site. Instead, Rits argued, ethnographic research had been conducted by scholars who had not had experience in doing so.

Jeffrey & Troman (2004) proposed what they called “a compressed time mode” ethnography to avoid blitzkrieg ethnography, a designation for the intense ethnographic research in which researchers inhabit the site “almost permanently for anything from a few days to a month” (p. 538). At the site, researchers must do a lot of hanging around, absorbing as much as they can of every tiny detail of daily routines, and observation becomes the spearhead of the research. I am not comfortable with this phrase, or with
similar phrases such as “focused ethnographic study” and “rapid ethnographic procedures” (Wolcott, 1996), since they indicate that ethnographic research conducted in about three months, for example, is not ethnographic in its own right, but instead some kind of “lesser ethnography.”

At this point, I think Hannerz’s (2003) discussion of his multi-site ethnography research on news media foreign correspondents is useful. To begin with, he points out that especially in a transnational community, people are less dependent on the annual cycle of seasons—“on planting and harvesting, or on moving herds to greener pastures” (p. 209). Furthermore, he argues that even the sites of the multi-sited research might be short-lived phenomena, as was his colleague’s study which relied on international conferences, workshops, and exhibits attendees. I would add here the work of Clifford (1997) on museum exhibitions. In some cases, even the “natives” are ephemeral, as shown by Couldry’s (2003) research on the Granada Studio Tour in Manchester, England, (which included the set of Coronation Street) a tourist destination similar to the NBC Studios Tour in New York. He believes that the studio was worth studying because it shows how people interact with media and live in a mediated world. The traditional ethnography model surely will not work in such research, since “people come together on a temporary basis, often without knowledge of each other’s full context for being there” (p. 51). He conducted a participant observation and a large number of open-ended interviews with the visitors, but no follow-up interviews at home, because only one person was willing to do that. The approach was to engage with as much as context was available for the passing visitors and the reflections they made on navigating the
mediated world they were experiencing. Therefore, “The result is a passing’ ethnography,’ but one no less serious for that. It represents a serious commitment to engage with the texture of our dispersed but mediated lives” (p. 53). These examples show that if a group of people or a site is considered to be worth studying ethnographically, and the extended time of fieldwork is difficult to maintain because of the nature of the people and the site itself, then the extended time could be a non-factor in the research.

Furthermore, there are circumstances when, as Wolcott (1999) puts it, “maybe the ethnographer, rather than ethnographic research, that needs to be speeded up” (p. 198)—since even a research project that takes years and years “might also end up with no ethnography at all” (p. 198). Wolcott advises that since all ethnographic research, no matter what, must end with a written report, “the amount of time that can be devoted to fieldwork should be calculated not as the first priority but as a residual” (p. 199, italics in original). In other words, the length of fieldwork time is limited by the time that, out of the total time allocated for the project, will be allowed for organizing and writing the data. In order to speed up the ethnographer, so that more time can be devoted to the fieldwork, Wolcott offered some tips on writing up the report, which is, basically, write as early as possible. However, I would argue that the fact of being a native, with his or her preexisting knowledge and experience, is also a factor that can speed up the ethnographer. As Jacobs-Huey (2002) stated, language and discourse knowledge are useful in understanding the culture quicker than can be done by outsiders.
The “native-ness” of ethnographers is also mentioned by Marcus (1998) as one of the issues when he replied to the criticisms that multi-sited ethnography, by its nature, had undermined the “depth” or substance of fieldworks. In the traditional Malinowskian fieldwork model, depth could be attained only by living several years in the fieldwork in order for the ethnographers to discover how the society functioned around such topics as kinship, rituals, social institutions and structures, etc. According to Marcus, since the 1980s self-critiques in anthropology and the results of the emphasis on reflexivity in the design and construction of ethnographic research have required that the notion of depth be reexamined. The question of identity, which is related to the researcher’s preexisting extent of relationship and connection to the community under study, has become important. Ethnic affiliation becomes advantageous. Marcus maintains:

There is control of language and a well of life experience that are great assets for achieving the sort of depth that anthropologists have always hoped from one- to two-year fieldwork projects, especially when the analytic categories of cultural analysis are much more now about the nature of experience across cultures than about the functioning of institutions.

Indeed, very few people are recruited now from Kansas, for example, to work in the Middle East or South Asia. Such students, unless extraordinarily gifted, are at a comparative disadvantage in relation, say, to diasporic South Asian from Canada who wish to develop fieldwork in India. It is not so much that the former “natives” are now becoming anthropologists, but rather the demography of anthropologists themselves is far more cosmopolitan than ever before. And this
fact is combined with the trend in which objects of study are becoming more transcultural such that the demands on the fieldworker for depth and breadth are much greater than ever before. In some ways, only cosmopolitan fieldworkers with fluency in more than one language and who are at home, or at least familiar, with several culturally distinct places through their autobiographies can meet the challenge of developing sense of [current] ethnography. (p. 246-247)

Indeed, this “native-ness” has been utilized by some doctoral students who conducted their ethnographic fieldwork in their respective cultures for about three months (see for example: Akindes, 1999; Algan, 2003; Benitez, 2005; Kraidy, 1996; Ziyati, 1995). In this line, I argue that my “double-nativeness,” as an Indonesian and a Muslim, has provided me with cultural capital necessary for fieldwork.

**Experiencing the Field**

One thing about which I was nervous before doing my fieldwork was whether I would be able to establish rapport with the Indonesian Muslim community and my prospective informants. Although I realized that, as an Indonesian and a Muslim, I had many things in common with Indonesian Muslims in New York City, I was still anxious about the possibility of not being able to “go native.” What if they were somehow reluctant to be interviewed, or did not allow me to observe and participate in their lives for the brief time of my fieldwork? I was anxious about what kind of events I call the “Geertzian moment” that awaited me, some extraordinary, decisive moment that would serve as the key to open the hearts and minds of the community. Indeed, the story of how
Clifford Geertz and his wife did their fieldwork in a village in Bali, Indonesia, in 1958, haunted me. For the first ten days or so, the villagers ignored them as if they were not there. As Geertz (1973) recollected, “For them, and to a degree for ourselves, we were nonpersons, specters, invisible men” (p. 412). The decisive moment came when they watched a cockfight, which was an illegal activity, with the villagers. A truck filled with policemen appeared during the third match, making the spectators, including the Geertzes, run away in all directions. After running for sometime, they rushed into the home of another fugitive, whom they did not know previously, and sat down at a table, pretending to have been there, having a conversation and tea, for some time. One policeman came to the house, asking what the Geertzes were doing there. The host defended the anthropologists, and explained that they had been talking about cultural matters and knew nothing about the cockfight. The police could do nothing and retreated. The raid and the escape changed everything. As Geertz recalled:

The next morning the village was a completely different world for us. Not only were we no longer invisible, we were suddenly the center of all attention, the object of a great outpouring of warmth, interest, and, most especially, amusement. . . . It led to a sudden and unusually complete acceptance into a society extremely difficult for outsiders to penetrate. (p. 416)

Certainly, not every researcher needs to run into such events to be accepted into a society. However, some have reported such incidents as crucial for the study. For Murphy (1996), research on television audiences and popular culture in Central Mexico, the Geertzian moment happened when he was involved in a car accident.
Despite my prior anxieties, I was fortunate that I did not need a Geertzian moment. The first day of my fieldwork was on Friday, the day when Muslims gathered in the mosque for the weekly congregation. I came to Masjid Al-Hikmah with a friend, a professor at the New School for Social Science and a former member of the Board of Directors of the mosque. He introduced me to several Indonesians before and after the prayer, some of whom became my key informants. Conversations about the hometown proved to be important, since that was one thing that made it easy for me to develop rapport. The result was I was invited to join in the regular meeting of some first-generation Indonesians (who have been in New York City for decades) held every Friday after the prayer, the so-called “The Friday Club” (Notosusanto, 2005).

Indeed, the commonality with the informants related to the homeland proved to be a key to establishing rapport. When I informed them that I grew up in a small town near Solo (Central Java), a nostalgic conversation about the place ensued between me and an informant who loves Solo as one of the centers of Javanese culture. When an informant told me that his hometown was Blitar (East Java), I could mention that I had a relative in the same town. And I could point out that my wife’s Minangkabau (from West Sumatra) ethnicity to my Minangkabau informants. Furthermore, the topic about families is a common starter in conversations between Indonesians, especially the older ones. I was lucky to have pictures of my wife and children in my cell-phone, which I could share when this topic came up. “Bring your family here next time” was the common phrase I heard from the first-generation Indonesians. In the end, I conducted 35 interviews with both first- and second-generation Indonesian Muslims. Most of the interviews, especially
with the first generation, were held in their homes. In addition to the interviews there were plentiful casual conversations on other occasions: in the mosque, public gatherings, weddings, etc. I tried to do the interviews in their homes so that I could observe, for example, what Indonesian cultural artifacts or media (DVDs, books, etc) they had. The interviews could be developed around these observations. However, there is a “side-effect” in doing this. In Indonesia, a guest usually is not allowed to leave the house until he or she accepts the host’s invitation to have a meal. Since declining such an offer is impolite, and excuses of having just had a meal or of being full were not good enough, my visits usually ended with a meal. While enjoying real Indonesian food, there was the added bonus that conversations in the more relaxed atmosphere over a meal revealed valuable information.

However, I also learnt from my mistakes also during fieldwork. The first example happened in one of my first interviews, when I talked to a potential informant after Friday prayers. I started with general questions about the condition of Indonesians in New York City. In one of the questions, I used the term “illegal” to describe Indonesians who had overstayed their visa. I noticed an apparent discomfort of the informant in the particular word, reflected in his facial expression. There was a brief awkward silent, before he said that it was true that most Indonesians were, in his words, “tidak punya surat” (literally means “do not have the papers”). I felt for the use of phrase that might be offending, but regained my confidence by mentioning that it was the first time that I knew that phrase was used to describe this situation. He told me that another phrase that was frequently used was “suratnya tidak lengkap” (literally means “the papers are not complete”).
Indeed, I encountered these two phrases, with some variations, in many conversations and interviews thereafter. Avoidance of the word “illegal,” of course, stems from its connotation, which concerns outlaws, the law-breakers. Since the word is too strong, the euphemism (tidak punya surat or suratnya tidak lengkap) has been devised to soothe any insecurity caused by their immigration status.

The second instance happened when my informant and I talked, among other things, about the Saturday School, the religious educational program provided by the Indonesian mosque Masjid Al-Hikmah. He was one of the first generation Indonesians who has lived in New York City more than thirty years, during which time he was involved in Indonesian Muslim activities from the beginning. He mentioned that some of the early 2nd generation Indonesians who attended the school several years earlier had become teachers or assistant teachers for the school, passing their knowledge to younger children. While telling the story, he expressed a sense of accomplishment because he had taken part in preserving religious education for subsequent generation of Indonesians. When I asked whether his children also participated in the Saturday School, I think he tried to avoid answering it. I instantly regretted my question, because I had previously learnt that his wife was not Muslim and I had guessed that their children were not Muslims either. I felt that I had crossed the line by probing a topic he deemed too personal. We quickly changed the topic and continued the conversation.

As I developed relationships with my informants, I encountered the common problem in participant-observation research: How far can a researcher interact with his or her informants before creating an impact on the data being gathered. In ethnographic
research, there is a common convention that participant-observers, although participating in the community under study, should keep their distance and be as unobtrusive as possible in the field. Wolcott (1999) has labeled this approach non-participant participant observer, in which researchers “make no effort to hide what they are doing or to deny their presence, but neither are they able fully to avail themselves of the potential afforded by participant observation to take a more active or interactive role” (p. 48, italic in original). However, after some hesitations, I finally decided to be more active on some occasions.

One instance was when one of my conversations with an informant about Javanese culture led me to inform him of a well-known serial novel called *Nagasasra Sabuk Inten* written by S. H. Mintardja (1966). The novel is frequently adapted by Javanese traditional theater *kethoprak* for their performance. It became very popular among common people, so much so that the fictitious protagonist character, Mahesa Djenar, was almost seen as a historic figure. When my informant said that he was interested in reading these old books, I said that I would try to get them for him. I checked WorldCat, the world’s largest bibliographic database, which showed that there were eleven libraries worldwide keeping the books in their collection, including Columbia University, in New York City. I called an Indonesian friend who is studying there and asked his help in borrowing the book. After reading some first episodes of the book, my informant sometimes talked to me about the story, which was related to the Javanese culture and values.
The second example, which was a more obtrusive one, came when I informed one of my informants, Singgih, about blog features on the Internet. Singgih has used the Internet quite extensively as the part of his transnational life. In one interview, he showed me his wiki website, where he put his poems and short stories. In the next interview in his home, I decided to tell him about blogs, which are easier to manage and have much more space compared to wiki sites. I showed him an example of blogs and how to set up an account at Blogger.com on his computer. The following Friday when we met he told me and other people in the Friday Club that he had made three blogs for his poems and short stories, his paintings, and his pictures.

In both instances, I felt some prior hesitation. I was afraid that I might unconsciously be being driven by my agenda to find what I wanted to find in the research. Notwithstanding, I decided to assume a more active role. Moreover, I had considered my stay in New York City as not merely doing field research, in which I would be detached from the people I wanted to understand. I considered myself as a member of the community, where friends support each other and pass along information which might be useful to others. Besides, I believed that by doing so I would be able to discover more data than would otherwise have been the case. It is in this sense that I agree with Harrington (2002), who wrote that “if researchers accept that most participant-observers are obtrusive to some degree, unavoidably altering the data by their very presence, it might be constructive to consider how to maximize the potential inherent in the situation” (p. 61).
Naturally, I have enjoyed varied degrees of relationships with my informants. I developed closer ties with members of the Friday Club because they were the most accessible to me. The fact that most members of the Club were retired, had been living in New York City more three decades, and had a regular meeting, provided me a wealth of information about the community. They also provided me with ample of time for interviews at home, because they did not have to go to work. Since I went frequently to Masjid Al-Hikmah at timed other than the Friday prayers, I also had more frequent chance to meet several informants who often came to the mosque for prayers. I had many casual conversations with them. On the other hand, some other important informants attended mosque less frequently and had less time for me because they had to work. For such informants, I tried to interview them at least twice in their homes and talked with them whenever encountered them on other occasions, such as in the mosque or in public meetings.

Building good rapport with the 1.5- and second-generation was more challenging for me. With the first-generation Indonesians, who grew up in Indonesia, I shared many things in common: the language, stories and imagery and history of the homeland. Except for one second-generation who attended mosque regularly for evening prayers (see Chapter VI), I met with my informants of this generations in more “formal” conversations and more structured group discussions. Whenever I saw them in public meetings, I tried to open some conversations with them. However, their relatively more mobile lives made it more difficult to follow them closely. In addition, although they were raised in Indonesian families, they grew up in New York City, and therefore
culturally they had more dissimilarities with me than their parents. Therefore, I believe if it had been possible to stay in New York City for the fieldwork longer, I would have given more time to study the 1.5- and second-generation Indonesians.
CHAPTER V

A MOSQUE OF THEIR OWN:
TRANSNATIONAL INDONESIAN MUSLIMS AND
THEIR CULTURAL-SPIRITUAL MOORING

Etymology: Middle French mosquee, from Old Italian moschea, from Old Spanish mezquita, from Arabic masjid temple, from sajada to prostrate oneself, worship.
: a building used for public worship by Muslims.

The earth has been made for me [and for my followers] a “masjid,” and a means of purification. Therefore, my followers can pray wherever the time of a prayer is due.

The aim of this chapter is to explore the presence of Indonesian Muslims in New York City and to put it in the larger context of Muslims there and the U.S. in general. The first section describes the brief history of Masjid Al-Hikmah and put it in the contexts of how Muslims establish their presence in the American landscape. Like most mosques in New York City, Masjid Al-Hikmah, which was converted from a warehouse, is not a custom-built mosque. Converted mosques make an effort to identify themselves in the urban landscape by using visual forms, both decorative and architectural, attached to the original building. I also discuss the challenge faced by Masjid Al-Hikmah in the future considering the demographic of Indonesian Muslims in New York City. In the second part, I shall describe the activities Masjid Al-Hikmah provides for the Indonesian community as well as for other Muslims. In describing the activities of Masjid Al-
Hikmah, among other things, I intend to see whether deterritorialized Islam (Roy, 2004) as I discussed in Chapter II, is operating in the Indonesian Muslim community. In a subsequent part, I shall introduce Syamsi Ali, an Indonesian who has become one of important figures among Muslims in New York City. His journey from Pakistan (where he got his undergraduate and graduate education) to Manhattan (where he became the deputy Imam at the Islamic Cultural Center of New York) has not been only a physical journey across space, but also, in a sense, a transformation in understanding Islam from a narrowed view to the multicultural and transnational New York. Finally, I shall conclude this chapter with a discussion of the issues of a deterritorialized Islam and umma (Muslim’s global community transcending nation and ethnic groups). I argue that Roy’s (2004) association of deterritorialized Muslims with deterritorialized Islam does not occur, or at least is not salient, in the case of Indonesian Muslims in New York City. Furthermore, although the conception of umma is very much alive in the imagination of Indonesian Muslims in New York City, as well as of many other Muslims from different groups, there has only been a few active discourses to materialize it, in the sense of the creation of a new Pan-Islamic American-Muslim identity. This is in accordance with what D’Agostino (2003) has found, that despite the effort of the elites and community leaders to bridge the communication gaps among different ethnic groups of Muslims, they are still fragmented. In other words, a sense of being a part of global umma does not translate into a similar connection within the same territory of New York.
Masjid Al-Hikmah:

Calling Mankind unto the Sustainer’s Path with Wisdom

August 17, 1995 is a historic date for the Indonesian Muslim community in New York City. On that day, which was coincident with the celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of Indonesian independence, the community bought what had previously been a chemical material warehouse at 48-01 31st Avenue, Long Island City, Queens, New York (see Figure 1). The six-thousand-square-foot building on ten thousand square feet of land, and only one block from the 46th Street subway station, was the place where they were going to have their mosque, later named Masjid Al-Hikmah. Achmad Padang, the Indonesian community leader who serves as the Chairman of the Board of Directors of the mosque, said that the day of purchase was chosen for a reason. He stated, “We picked that particular date, in order to have a more historical value” (personal communication, August 1, 2005). The purchase was the culmination of previous efforts of Indonesian Muslims in New York City to have their own house of prayer.

The exact number of Indonesian Muslims in New York is not known. The Masjid Al-Hikmah database has over four hundred addresses, and therefore it might be quite safe to estimate that the number of Indonesian Muslims is well over two thousand people. The number of people who attend the Idul Fitr prayer, the main holiday for Muslims to celebrate the end of the fasting month of Ramadhan, could be a good indicator of the Indonesian Muslims population in New York. In Indonesia, as in many other Muslim countries in the world, the Idul Fitr is the time when people return to their hometown to see and gather with their families who are otherwise scattered in different places. Far
from their homeland, Indonesian Muslims have used Masjid Al-Hikmah as a focal point where they can meet each other and celebrate the Idul Fitri. On that particular day, the main prayer rooms and basement, as well as the parking lot, are full of people. The prayer itself must be done two, and sometimes three, times, to accommodate all the people. It is estimated that at least two thousand Indonesians attend every Idul Fitr celebration (see also “Masjid Indonesia,” 2004). This small number, however, has contributed to the diversity of a New York City Muslim population of around 600,000 (Cristillo & Minnite, 2002).
The effort to consolidate the Indonesian Muslim community was started many years earlier. In the early 1980s some Indonesians started having what in Indonesia is called pengajian, a gathering at which Islam is discussed. A pengajian usually starts with the recitation from the Qur’an, followed by a talk on Islam by a person who is appointed to that duty, and then a question and answer session. The pengajian was informally called the Keluarga Pengajian Indonesia di New York City (the Family of Indonesian Pengajian in New York City). In the beginning, this monthly pengajian was held by turn in Indonesians’ apartments or houses. After a while, the number of participants increased, so that no house or apartment could accommodate them anymore. Therefore, they asked permission to use one of the rooms in the Indonesian consulate office in New York city, where then they had their monthly pangajian until the community had their own mosque.

In addition, some other Indonesian Islamic activities were conducted by people who regularly attended the monthly pengajian. For example, some Indonesian students gathered weekly in a separate pengajian to study Islam more intensively. Meanwhile, in the early 1990s, some families had an initiative to teach their children about Islam, so they gathered every Saturday to learn especially to read Arabic as well as Islamic prayers. Again, after some years of being held in turn in these private apartments and houses, they had to move to the Indonesian Consulate office in the mid-1990s.

Naturally, the aspiration of having their own mosque where they could have their Islamic activities was running high. A money box was circulated in the pengajian for small donations, and different kinds of voluntary donations were pledged. Realizing that it would take forever to collect enough money to purchase a property, the community
founded the Indonesian Muslim Community, Inc. (IMCI), a tax-exempt organization, on December 22, 1989). This time, Indonesian government officials were involved. The Indonesian ambassador to the United States, the ambassador of the Permanent Mission of Indonesia to the United Nations, and Achmad Padang, who represented the community, served as the Honorary Chairmen. Serving as the President of IMCI was Prang Sakirman. He was helped by, among others, Ibrahim Zarkasyi, then the head of Bank of Indonesia branch office in New York, serving as the Director of Fundraising. The IMCI organized a number of fundraising programs over several years. With its high profile figures, the IMCI was able to draw some large donations, some from businessmen in Indonesia. In the mid-1990s, the IMCI finally had enough money to purchase the building for $385,000. Achmad Padang recalled that after the purchase, “The atmosphere was very moving when many Indonesians went together to do some cleaning and painting” (personal communication, August 1, 2005). After spending around $125,000 for the initial renovation, the former warehouse was used as a mosque for the first time about a month and a half after it was purchased. In October 1995, the IMCI delegation met with and presented their plan for developing the mosque to Indonesian President Suharto, who was visiting New York City for a summit meeting at the United Nations headquarters. President Suharto, as the Chairman of Yayasan Amalbakti Muslim Pancasila, a foundation that had been building hundreds of mosques around Indonesia, donated $150,000 on behalf of the foundation (Achmad Padang and Prang Sakirman, personal communication, July 27, 2005). Some members of the Indonesian delegation, including
business magnates Aburizal Bakri and Sudwikatmono, also gave significant donations (Pak Harto, 1995).

The mosque is named Masjid Al-Hikmah, which literally means The Wisdom Mosque in English. The name, according to Achmad Padang, the Chairman of the Board of Directors, refers to a passage in the Qur’an 16:125, which translates as “Call thou (mankind) unto thy Sustainer’s path with wisdom (hikmah) and goodly exhortation.” He said that there were several alternative names had been proposed, including Istqlal (which means independence), similar to the name of the main mosque in Jakarta.

Today, Masjid Al-Hikmah is one of about one hundred mosques in New York City. The Muslims in New York City Project, which canvassed nearly every neighborhood from May, 1998 to June, 1999, found some 1,780 Muslim establishments, both religious and secular (Cristillo & Minnite, 2002). The Project “found 28 mosques in Queens, 27 in Brooklyn, close to 20 each in Manhattan and the Bronx, and at least 8 in Staten Island” (Dodds & Grazda, 2002, p. 24). However, of these more than one hundred mosques in New York, no more than a half dozen were built from the ground up. The rest (including Masjid Al-Hikmah) were stores, warehouses, apartments, lofts, basements, etc., which were converted to mosques. According to Lotfi (2001), close to 90 percent of mosques and Islamic centers in the U.S. have been modified from previous buildings, not custom-built mosques, brand-new from the ground up. Lotfi (2001) and Slyomovic (1996) call these converted mosques storefront mosques.

The outer architecture of Masjid Al-Hikmah was not changed from the previous warehouse, except to have a simple green half-sphere dome and minaret added. Both the
dome and the minaret are adorned with Arabic calligraphies in Kufi style (Figure 2). Green is the color associated with Islam, because it is said that green was the Prophet Muhammad’s favorite color, and that he wore a green cloak and turban. This color has recently been adopted by most storefront mosques across the country (Lotfi, 2001). Therefore, if the building did not have the dome, minaret, and, of course, the name plate, one would not recognize it as a mosque. The name plate on the wall under the dome reads “Masjid Al-Hikmah, Indonesian Muslim Community.” From the parking lot, there are two entrances to the mosque, each with a green half-sphere canopy dome-like above it, asserting the visual imagery of the building as a mosque (Figure 3). Besides the color green, a dome of any kind has been used as an identity marker on storefront mosques, which might otherwise be mistaken for warehouses or stores (Dodds & Grazda, 2002).
Figure 2. Front view of Masjid Al-Hikmah

Figure 3. Back view of Masjid Al-Hikmah
The Masjid Al-Hikmah prayer room can accommodate as many as 450 people. Other, smaller, rooms are used for the office, meeting room, kitchen, caretaker’s room, and, of course, the place to take the wudhu (ablution). In the hallway, there are always thermos bottles so that the visitors can help themselves to hot coffee or tea. The basement is a general purpose room, where food is served on special occasions such as pengajian, weddings, and other social gatherings. While there has been little change on the exterior except the dome and minaret, the interior of the mosque, especially the prayer room, is the place where the “purifications of space” have taken place. On the right wall of the main prayer room is a poster of the whole of the Qur’an in fine print—so fine that it can only be read by using a magnifying glass, which hangs next to the poster. Above the mihrab (the niche in mosques that indicates the direction of prayer), there is a woodcut of Ayat al-Kursi (The Throne Verse), one of the most popular verses among Muslims, from the Qur’an 2: 255, flanked by Arabic calligraphies in the thuluth style which read Allah and Muhammad. Posters of the Ninety-Nine Names of God (Al-Asma Al- Husna) are posted in several places. The green carpet augments the religious ambience of the room. Indeed, a spatial separation between internal-religious and external-secular space can be strongly felt (see Figure 4).
Naturally, there is a plan to develop the mosque further. An architectural drawing and a scale model have been made, this time with distinctive characteristics of mosque architecture (Figure 5). Achmad Padang states, however, they do not know yet when they will have enough money to build the mosque in its final form. With regard to the current look of the mosque, he says “We thank God that we have a mosque now. And it is a relatively big mosque. Many mosques owned by other communities in New York City are smaller. As for the architecture, we don’t really concern about it. The most important thing is we have a place to pray” (personal communication, August 1, 2005).
Therefore, whether Masjid Al-Hikmah will be renovated to the form as shown on the scale model and artist’s rendering—i.e. a two-floor mosque with completely different architecture—still remains a big question. Slymovics (1996) has described the pattern of mosque developments,

the movement . . . begins with interior space gutted, transformed and even acoustically reconfigured to Muslim sacred space, then expands outward according to the increased membership and prosperity of the community, and finally triumphantly rewrites US locales . . . permanently, as in the case of the new Manhattan All-Muslim mosque [the Islamic Cultural Center of New York]. (p. 214).

The choice of the future Masjid Al-Hikmah architectural design is also particularly interesting. Khalidi (2000) and Lotfī (2001) have reminded us that there are three basic
themes of custom-built mosque architecture in the U.S., i.e.: idealizing traditional design (for example Islamic Centers in Washington, D.C. and Toledo, OH); reshaping tradition design (e.g. Islamic Cultural Center of New York); and new innovative design (e.g. the Islamic Center of Albuquerque, N.M.). The appropriation of architectural elements associated with mosques—dome, minaret, and arch—give Masjid Al-Hikmah its mosque-like look, and yet they are combined with modern design. However, it should be noted that the traditions Masjid Al-Hikmah architecture will reshape are not Indonesian traditions. Although the dome and minaret have become favored expressions of new-built mosques internationally (Dodds & Grazda, 2002), in Indonesia there have been some different mosque architectural expressions, based on the local traditions (Kusno, 2003). In a sense, such domes and minarets indicate the acceptance of some kind of Pan-Islamic visual signifier over those of national and ethnic tradition.

With its current, as well as likely future, demographical constraints, however, it is not clear whether the Indonesian Muslim community and Masjid Al-Hikmah will rewrite the neighborhood skyline. Indeed, one issue faced by the Indonesian Muslim community is the number of Indonesians in New York City, which certainly affect the number of people involved in the community activities. It also affects to Masjid Al-Hikmah financially, because the mosque has relied on community donations to support its activities. The number of Indonesians in New York is unlikely to increase due to stricter visa requirement at the U.S. embassy. Of the future of the Indonesian Muslim community in New York and Masjid Al-Hikmah, Achmad Padang states,
It really depends on the demography of Indonesians in New York in the future. As for our current second generation, when they grew up they might not live in New York because they may find jobs somewhere else. Moreover, the number of new Indonesians does not increase significantly. Most new Indonesians in the U.S. prefer to go to the West Coast, because there are more job opportunities there. Also, the weather is friendlier there. In New York, you have to do a lot of adjustment, and struggle. That’s why Sinatra is right when he sings, “If you can make here, you can make in anywhere.” (personal communication, August 1, 2005, my translation from Indonesian).

For the time being, with all its activities, Masjid Al-Hikmah has served as a spiritual and cultural mooring for Indonesian Muslims in New York City.

**Activities at Masjid Al-Hikmah:**

**Looking for Signs of Deterritorialized Islam**

From the beginning, Masjid Al-Hikmah has been engaged in community services, although in general the social services are aimed at Muslims, particularly Indonesian Muslims, in New York City and its surrounding area. This is in line with what Bagby (2004) found in his study of the relationships of American mosques to the American public when he surveyed the attitudes and activities of mosques with regards to their community involvement in general American society. Bagby found that with immigrant mosques, although the vast majority of its leaders endorse and desire community involvement, only a few of them are actually greatly involved in their general local
communities. This is quite a contrast to most African American mosques, which have more activities directed to their local communities. In proportion, African-American mosques have served non-Muslims more than have immigrant mosques with programs such as economic assistance, counseling, prison visits, child care, social advocacy (anti-drug programs), etc. Likewise, African-American mosques (71 percent) have been more active in outreach activities than immigrant mosques have been (51 percent). Apparently, the different milieu and challenges faced by the newcomers and African-American communities have produced different emphasis with regards to general community involvement. Furthermore, Bagby pointed out that most immigrant mosque leaders and imams are trained overseas and serve in their traditional role simply as prayer leader with little prior experience with community involvement activities. It is in this context of mosque participation in the general community that I will describe the activities and programs that Masjid Al-Hikmah has offered to its constituents.

Ritual Activities

First and foremost, a mosque is a place for praying, and Masjid Al-Hikmah is not exception. Until the end of 2004, however, Masjid Al-Hikmah did not have a paid, full-time imam, so it was not open regularly at the time of prayer. It would open if somebody from the community, especially those who were active members, happened to be in the mosque, either because they wanted to be there or they needed to do some mosque-related errands, or both. This way, there were no regular jamaah (praying together in group) for the five-times-a-day obligatory prayers. Muslims are encouraged to perform
the obligatory prayers in a *jamaah*, because this gives more rewards from God for the congregants, and it is strongly encouraged that the prayers be performed in mosques.

Having recruited its paid, full-time imam, an Acehnese who holds a Ph.D in Islamic History from Arkansas University, and whose main duty is to lead the *jamaah* prayer, Masjid Al-Hikmah is now open for each and every *jamaah* prayer, for the *Fajr* (dawn) prayer, and then from about one hour before *Zuhr* (noon) until after the last obligatory prayer of the day, *Isha*, in the evening. During my fieldwork, I frequently attended the *jamaah* prayer, especially the *Maghrib* (sunset) and *Isha* prayers. A couple of times I also attended the dawn prayer. The most interesting fact was that there were not many Indonesians among the 15 to 20 congregants. In most cases there were only two or three Indonesians besides the imam. This is due to the fact that Indonesians in New York City do not live in a clustered area, but instead are scattered in various places, mostly in Queens and Brooklyn. Indeed, there are only two Indonesian families living within walking distance of Masjid Al-Hikmah. Therefore, in a typical *jamaah* prayer, the Indonesians are outnumbered by Muslims from other countries, such as Algeria, Jordan, and Yemen, as well as African-American Muslims who live nearby.

The proportion of Indonesians is better at the Friday prayers, which are compulsory for every male Muslim and must be done in the mosques. Around 30 percent of about 400 congregants are Indonesians, and many see it as the place and opportunity where they can see other Indonesians. The *khutba* (sermon) is delivered in English. The common topic of the sermon is more about how Muslims can improve their *iman* (faith) and *taqwa* (piety) than anything else. The larger and more complex issues—such as the
development of Islamic intellectual thoughts, the discourse on “Pan-Islam” America beyond ethnicities, etc.—are rarely touched upon. The donation boxes are circulated during the sermon, and typically Masjid Al-Hikmah receives around $800 in donations.

**Pengajian Activities**

Masjid Al-Hikmah is a home for several *pengajian* (gatherings in which Islamic teachings are discussed). The first is the monthly *pengajian*, held on the second Saturday of each month and usually attended by about 50 Indonesians. This *pengajian* is the continuation of the monthly *pengajian* that used to be held at the Indonesian Consulate office before Masjid Al-Hikmah was established. Masjid Al-Hikmah also offers its weekly *pengajian*, which is attended by a smaller number of Indonesians. While the monthly *pengajian* discusses general topics on how to improve the Muslims’ faith and piety, the weekly one is more focused on learning and interpreting the Qur’an. Masjid Al-Hikmah is also used by some Indonesian Muslim students who are studying in New York City for their own weekly *pengajian*, which is called *Pengajian Ulil Albab*, on Friday evening. The word *ulil albab* is mentioned 16 times in the Qu’ran and literally means a thoughtful person who can balance his intellectuality and spirituality. In this *pengajian*, which is attended by five to ten people, only a couple of whom are the second generation Indonesian migrants, they learn, among other things, how to read the Qur’an, followed by the interpretation of the verses. All of the *pengajian* above are delivered in Bahasa Indonesia, because the addressed audience is Indonesians.
Additionally, starting in the summer of 2005, the imam of Masjid Al-Hikmah initiated a *halaqa* (circle) after the *Isha* (evening) prayer from Monday to Thursday. In this *halaqa*, participants will listen to a short ten to fifteen minutes talk from appointed congregants or the imam about various aspects of Islam. The talk is in English, since most attendees are not Indonesians. Between five to ten people, out of the 15 to 20 attending the *Isha* prayers, remain to participate in the *halaqa*.

**Education Activities**

One of the programs commonly launched once a mosque is established, regardless its size, is to provide some sort of Islamic education for children and the younger generation. Islamic education has been seen as one of the very important last bastions for maintaining Islamic identity. Many bigger and more financially strong Islamic communities have established full-time Islamic private schools, so that in 2001 there were more than 170 such schools in the United States, of which about 20 are located in New York (Nimer, 2002). Other mosques and Islamic centers, due to financial and other constraints, provide the community with a more limited Islamic education. Masjid Al-Hikmah, for example, offers the Saturday School, where elementary and middle school children can learn about Islam. As mentioned previously, the Saturday School was started even before Masjid Al-Hikmah was established, and stemmed from some parents’ concern about the lack of Islamic teachings and values in their children’s education. Currently, with about 100 students, about 15 of whom are non-Indonesians, the Saturday School can be regarded as the spearhead of Masjid Al-Hikmah’s community services.
Achmad Padang states that, “Indeed, we thank God that in such a society as New York, where the pull factors to other directions are strong, we manage to have Saturday School, and to amass the human resources to do that” (personal communication, August 19, 2005).

**Other Social Services**

When the tsunami struck at the end of 2004, the Indonesian province of Aceh was hit the worst compared to other affected area, with more than 170,000 people killed. The effect of the disaster was also felt in New York City, where no fewer than 15 Indonesian families lost hundreds of relatives back home (Eisenberg, 2005). For a couple months after the tsunami, Masjid Al-Hikmah was the focal point of relief efforts and received a large amount of money donations as well as other necessities such as clothes and medicines. This disaster relief came from many sources besides Indonesians themselves, such as churches, other Muslim communities, schoolchildren, etc. Volunteers, Indonesians and non-Indonesians, Muslims and non-Muslims alike, flocked to the mosque to sort clothes and other items. According to Imat Badrudin, the coordinator of the relief effort, Masjid Al-Hikmah received monetary donations of as much as $250,000 and three containers of supplies. Just in scale alone the tsunami disaster called for widespread attention. However, in times of smaller disasters, such as the landslide in Central Java Province, Masjid Al-Hikmah also collected donations from Indonesians to be sent to Indonesia.
Masjid Al-Hikmah is also the place where Indonesian families remember their relatives who have just passed away. During my fieldwork, for example, there were at least three *ghaib* prayers for those who have died in distant places. Masjid Al-Hikmah has frequently been used for *tahlilan*, a gathering organized to remember the dead, in which the attendees read the Qur’an, especially Chapter Yaa Sin. Interestingly, in Indonesia such a gathering is held in the home of the person who just passed away, and it is uncommon for it to be held by other family members in distant places.

Another important Masjid Al-Hikmah community service is as a venue for weddings. Not only do some Indonesians have their *walima* (the wedding reception given to friends and family after the formal Islamic marriage contract has been finished) in Masjid Al-Hikmah, but also other Muslim immigrants do as well. During my fieldwork, there were three Indonesian and one Bosnian wedding. Furthermore, Achmad Padang has been licensed to declare a couple married. That way, couples who want to get married can be better served, because they can do the marriage contract according to Islamic teachings and then hold the wedding ceremony in the basement of the mosque.

Another well-attended program at Masjid Al-Hikmah is the bazaars, which are usually held in the summer on the parking lot. I observed two bazaars that were held during my fieldwork. Masjid Al-Hikmah provided around 20 tables for the participants for $50 each. One of the tables sold CDs of contemporary and oldies-but-goodies Indonesian music and DVDs of Indonesian movies. However, most of the participants sold traditional foods from various parts of Indonesia, such as *mpek-mpek* Palembang (South Sumatra), *sate* Padang (West Sumatra), *soto* Betawi (Jakarta), *coto* Makassar.
(South Sulawesi), *cendol* and *es campur*. In short, on that particular day Indonesians are gastronomic tourists on a piece of land in New York City, while meeting with old and new friends.

*Interfaith Activities*

On the first day I went to Masjid Al-Hikmah, I was struck by an inspiring mural on the wall of a carpet store on the corner of Broadway Avenue and 48th Street, Queens, one block from Masjid Al-Hikmah. Exiting the 46th Street subway station, and then walking to the mosque, nobody, especially a newcomer like me, could fail to notice this mural. The stripes of the American flag dominated half of the wall. Interestingly, there were no stars on the blue field of the flag. Instead, they have been replaced by some different images, i.e. among other things, the Star of David, a cross, the crescent and moon, the Omkar, a sculpture of Buddha, and other religious images with which I am not familiar. On the bottom left, the artist had tried his or her best to draw faces of people from different races. On the stripes of the flag, is imposing writing saying “We Stand United” (Figure 6). The mural indicates the necessity of interfaith and interethnic harmony in the diverse New York City.
Masjid Al-Hikmah, however, does not have a systematic and proactive interfaith program. When I questioned Achmad Padang on this matter, he replied, “Much of our energy is devoted to the internal community services, because no matter what we are still a small community with limited resources” (personal communication, August 19, 2005). Nevertheless, this does not mean that Masjid Al-Hikmah is not involved in such programs. In the first years of its establishment, for example, the mosque hosted several meetings with Indonesian Christian representatives to share information and opinions. Achmad Padang asserted that meetings of this kind should be the responsibility of the Consulate General Office, since this deals with the Indonesian community in general. Nonetheless, Masjid Al-Hikmah has been host to Christian organizations several times.
During my fieldwork, at least three such delegations visited Masjid Al-Hikmah, where the Imam or Achmad Padang introduced Islam to them.

Masjid Al-Hikmah’s experience is in accordance with what Bagby (2004) found in his study on American mosques. He found that 65 percent of the mosques had participated in various sorts of interfaith dialog, which was high compared to all religious congregations in his study that found only six percent of these congregations participated in any interfaith programs. However, the great majority of the mosques’ interfaith participations were passive, which is basically in response to, for example, invitations from churches or interfaith organizations to speak on Islam, or to host people of other faiths as well as school visits. Such opportunities were increasing especially in the wake of the September 11 attacks. Indeed, only a few mosques take the initiative in arranging interfaith activities.

**Syamsi Ali and His Journey from Pakistan to Manhattan**

Despite the lack of organized interfaith initiatives, Masjid Al-Hikmah used to be known as quite active in such programs, especially through the personal involvement of Syamsi Ali. He was born in Indonesia’s South Sulawesi province, and earned his undergraduate degree in the Qur’an exegesis and a masters in comparative religions from the International Islamic University, Pakistan. Starting in early 1995, he taught at the Islamic Education Foundation in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. His door to New York City was opened when he gave a talk about Islam at the Indonesian Consulate General Office at Jeddah in the pilgrimage season of 1996, which was attended by government officials.
Among these officials was Nugroho Wisnumurti, then the ambassador at the Permanent Mission of Indonesia to the United Nations, who was also involved in the Indonesian Muslim community in New York City. According to Syamsi Ali, after his talk on Islam, Wisnumurti offered Ali a position on the local staff of the permanent mission office with the additional task of serving the community, especially with regards to the Muslim community and Masjid Al-Hikmah. With this arrangement, Syamsi Ali came to New York in late 1996. He quickly became heavily involved in Masjid Al-Hikmah activities. He was the coordinator of the education department from 1996 to 1998, as well as the speaker in the *pengajian*. His latest position in Masjid Al-Hikmah was as the Vice Chairman of the Board of Trustees, which he held until 2004. In the time of my fieldwork, he was less involved directly in Masjid Al-Hikmah’s activities, and is more active with his new position as one of the imams at the Islamic Cultural Center of New York and, starting in early Summer of 2005, he has been the Director of the Jamaica Muslim Center which was founded by South Asian immigrants, mainly from Bangladesh.

Following his arrival in New York City, Syamsi Ali was eager to widen his networks, so that soon he was also involved in interfaith activities and made contacts with other Islamic community leaders in the city. An interfaith NGO called the Inter-Religious Federation for World Peace (IWRP) appointed him Ambassadors for Peace on October, 2002, for his works in the Muslim World Day Parade and other interfaith activities (Pohan, 2004). In May, 2006, Syamsi Ali was included in the religion category of the 2006 “The Influentials” of *New York Magazine* (which lists “the people whose ideas, power, and sheer will are changing New York”) (Heilemann, 2006). On more than
one occasion, he was the organizing committee chairman of the Muslim World Day Parade, which has been held in New York City in the third week of September since 1986, emulating other famous civic parades such as the St. Patrick’s Day Parade (see Sylmovics, 1996).

Indeed, it was the New York atmosphere that actually opened his eyes to the importance of interfaith dialog. He said,

When I was in Pakistan and Saudi Arabia, my perception of other people of faith was quite different with what I have now. My field experience in New York opened my eyes that we unavoidably have to interact with different peoples. Many of us were influenced by old conceptions towards Christians, especially that we see them as colonialists. We are overworried that they will Christianize us, so we tend to be overprotective of ourselves. When I got here, the facts spoke differently. I realized that establishing relationships will result in many positive things. Indeed, for *da’wah* (the propagation) of Islam, it will give more benefits. Besides, if we trace this to Islamic theological roots, we will find that the foundations to build mutually respectful relationships are very strong in Islam. The Qur’an has mentioned in several places that we need to invite people onto the same platform, the common ground. This is a much better way to introduce Islam and to avoid misunderstanding. So I see interfaith dialog and activities as urgent for us. (personal communication, August 8, 2005; my translation from Indonesian)
Furthermore, he used the September 11 attacks as an opportunity for Muslims to come forward. On September 13, 2001, the Interfaith Center of New York held a press conference, participated in by community leaders of various religions, including Syamsi Ali, to respond to the attacks.\textsuperscript{5} Several days later, on September 23, Syamsi Ali was one of those who took the stage representing Muslims in the interfaith services called “A Prayer for America” which was held in Yankee Stadium, in which he read some passages of the Qur’an in Arabic. The service was sponsored by the city, and was attended by around 20,000 people, including such important figures as Mayor Rudi Gulliani, Governor George Pataki, Oprah Winfrey, Placido Domingo, etc. (McFadden, 2001).

Moreover, he was invited many times to speak at churches (one was The Cathedral of St. John the Divine, New York, the biggest cathedral in the world), to city officials, to city police, and to other communities. One of his duties as an imam of the Islamic Cultural Center is dealing with interfaith programs. For example, he leads a program called “Islamic Forum for non-Muslims.” I went to one of the meetings and saw some ten people attending, half of whom, I was told, were non-Muslims, along with lifelong Muslims and new converts. One of Syamsi Ali’s main points that afternoon was God’s forgiving nature, even for people who have committed grave sins.

Coincidentally, through an arrangement by a Christian Filipino who had attended the forum for the last two months, Syamsi Ali was invited to talk about Islam to a group of Christian Filipinos after the forum. I went with him to the home of one of the Filipinos, where the meeting to be held. Syamsi Ali told me that he had been invited for such meetings several times by other groups as well. When we got there, eight people
were waiting for us. After introductions and some chatting, the meeting was started. We stood up and one of our hosts led us in prayer, basically thanking God for the opportunity to have a meeting to improve understanding of each other. Then it was Syamsi Ali’s turn to speak, and he started by saying that internally we humans have something in common. All humans came from the same origin, and although formally we are different, he said, we worship the same God, despite the fact that God is referred differently in various religions. When he started talking about Islamic concept of *hablumminallah* (the relationship between human and God) and *hablumminannas* (the relationships between humans), I sensed that the audience was attracted by this topic. Syamsi Ali mentioned that these two kinds of relationships are of the same importance—you cannot have a good relationship with God unless you have good relationships with other people. Apparently, this concept resonated with them, since, according one of them in the Q&A session, this was strikingly similar to what Jesus taught.

Several days earlier, I had interviewed Syamsi Ali on how he did his interfaith activities. He asserted that it had to start from common ground, such as the fact that Muslims believed in Jesus as one of the main prophets in Islam, religious tolerance in Islamic history, etc. Many of the interfaith programs in which he participated or managed were possible due to his interests and networks than the official programs of Masjid Al-Hikmah. Therefore, since he is more involved in his current position as an imam at the Islamic Cultural Center and the director of the Jamaica Muslim Center, Masjid Al-Hikmah’s involvement in interfaith activities has declined considerably. Syamsi Ali acknowledged that much energy needs to be devoted to the consolidation of the
Indonesian Muslim community, which is still in its early development and small in number compared to other established communities. However, he asserted that to a great extent the relationships with other communities, both Muslims and non-Muslims, need to be cultivated, considering the diversity of New York.

**Conclusion**

In the previous discussion, I have shown that the Indonesian Muslim community in New York City has concentrated their activities primarily to fulfill the needs of Indonesian Muslims, and as well as those of other Muslims who live near the mosque. In other words, the mosque activities are directed towards its closest constituencies. Minimal attention and activities have been devoted to participation in the larger context of American Muslims, such as, for example, interfaith dialog, and network building with other Muslim communities or Muslim interest groups and NGOs. As Achmad Padang maintains, “Most of resources are spent to keep the internal activities and the mosque running. Not only do we lack of human resources, but also financial resources” (personal communication, August 19, 2005). Although Syamsi Ali has emerged from the Indonesian community as one of Muslim leaders in New York City with his activities in the broader Muslim communities and involvement in many interfaith programs, it stems more from his personal concerns than from purposeful or systematic programs fostered by Masjid Al-Hikmah.

However, I think Masjid Al-Hikmah is serving Indonesians differently from most mosques in Indonesia or in other Muslim countries in which mosques become community
centers. As I have described above, the Indonesian Muslims in attendance at the five daily prayers and the Friday prayer are outnumbered by congregants from various other ethnic and national origins. Since Indonesian Muslims live scattered around Queens, Masjid Al-Hikmah is attended by Muslims from many nationalities who live nearby. Consequently, the question of whether Indonesian Muslims in New York City have formed a community centered, as in other Muslim communities, in the mosque is justifiably raised.

In this regard, I will draw on the social network perspective on community proposed by sociologist Barry Wellman (1999). He argues that we need to reconsider our identification of community with neighborhood. While the essence of community is social relationship, neighborhood is about boundaries and locality. While in the past communities were confined to the neighborhood, today’s transportation and communication technologies have transformed communities to social networks. Being in a different neighborhood than other people in his or her social network does not hinder a person from developing intimate, social, and supportive relationships. However, Wellman asserts that “communities have not totally lost their domestic roots” (p. 27). I would argue that Masjid Al-Hikmah is the Indonesian Muslims’ domestic root, where they can reterritorialize their sense of community in the yearly Idul Fitir prayer, Friday prayer, monthly pengajian, breaking of the fast together in the month of Ramadan, yasinan and tahlilan for the dead in the community, wedding ceremonies, or when a disaster such as the tsunami strike the homeland. I come to this understanding from conversations I had or overheard. Many Indonesians who I had never or rarely met in the
mosque during my fieldwork kept mentioning Masjid Al-Hikmah as “our mosque,” or the “Indonesian mosque,” in the conversations. Indeed, with all its activities, Masjid Al-Hikmah has served the Indonesian Muslim community in fulfilling their “homing desire.” Transnational communities do not necessarily hold an unbearable desire to return to the homeland, and instead create avenues in many modes by which they can pay a visit to re-experience their original homes (Brah, 1996). One Indonesian commented, “Whenever I am here in the mosque, I do not feel that I am in America. New York has become my own village.” I think Masjid Al-Hikmah has become ingrained in the consciousness of Indonesian Muslims in New York City as a cultural and spiritual mooring in their social networks where they can return when the time comes.

It is in this sense that Espiritu (2003) differentiates between literal and symbolic transnationalism. While the first is exhibited in the form of home visits, remittances, telephone calls, etc., the latter is constituted in the transnationals’ quotidian lives in the form of cultural practice reenactments and shared memories. Espiritu argues that in symbolic transnationalism, “all immigrants—regardless of class—can and do ‘return home’ through the imagination” (p. 11). While not many immigrants are able to return home frequently, because of financial constraints or their undocumented status, all of them make countless such journeys in their minds and imaginations. The distinction between literal and symbolic transnationalism, however, does not fully explain the role of Masjid Al-Hikmah—a physical space in a foreign land which resulted from the manifestation of the desire to return home in the minds and imaginations of Indonesian Muslims. For them going to Masjid Al-Hikmah is visiting a physical space, a “surrogate
homeland,” but at the same time their minds and imaginations make it an imaginary visit to the real homeland.

As I have discussed in Chapter II, Roy (2004) argues that in many Muslim immigrant communities, primarily those in Europe where he conducted most of his study, a kind of transnational identity has emerged—especially among young Muslims. This identity is based on a deterritorialized Islam, in which Islam is delinked from the cultures in which Muslim communities originate. Transnational Muslims from various countries are forged in Islam, in which Islam is treated as a “mere” religion that does not have cultural locality attachments and insists on a universal Islam free of local cultures. While it is true that some transnational Muslim fundamentalist groups hold a deterritorialized Islam, and has attracted deterritorialized Muslim youths, Roy has overlooked the parallel logic of reterritorialization. My description of Masjid Al-Hikmah activities shows how contesting identities—Islam, homeland, ethnicity, and “host cultures”—are negotiated in transnational lives of Indonesian Muslims in New York City. The reterritorialized 
yasinan and 
tahlilan for the deceased, for example, are local Islamic cultural practices in Indonesia, which are regarded as un-Islamic by some Muslims because they were not exemplified by the Prophet himself. In conclusion, the deterritorialized Islam is absent in the current Indonesian Muslims in New York City, although they are deterritorialized Muslims.
NOTES

1 Yayasan Amalbakti Muslim Pancasila, was established on February 17, 1982, by former President Suharto when he was still in power. The foundation was controversial because it collects donation by automatic deduction from the monthly salaries of civil servants and members of the Indonesian Armed Forces. Although the deduction is relatively small, its mandatory aspect raised some grumblings. The money is used to fund Muslims’ interest, such building mosques (more than 900 mosques have been built), to partially fund the development of Islamic hospitals, and other Islamic projects. For further information, see the organization’s official website: http://www.yamp.or.id/.

2 Achmad Padang is one among the few successful Indonesians in New York. He came to the U.S. in 1956 and did his Ph.D. in international relations at Columbia University. He did not finish his Ph.D. because he worked at the United Nations headquarters, and reached the highest professional position as the Director of the Center for Science and Technology Development. He retired in 1989, but then was assigned as one of governors in Cambodia as a part of the UN peace mission to restore the country devastated by civil war and the notorious Khmer Rouge regime.

3 This verse is widely memorized and displayed by Muslims. Muslims believe that if they recite this verse repeatedly they will be protected by God from any calamities and Satan’s seduction.
4 The Islamic Cultural Center of New York, located at the intersection of 96th Street and 3rd Avenue, is a multinational $20 million purpose-built mosque, officially opened in September, 1991. The Center was funded by the governments of several Islamic countries, mainly from the Middle East, through their permanent missions to the United Nations. With its contemporary mosque architecture, the Center now becomes one of New York’s architecture landmarks (see Khalidi, 1998; Lotfi, 2001).

5 Visit http://www.interfaithcenter.org/muslimsrespond.shtml to listen to the statements made by the participants. Syamsi Ali, among other things, mentioned that more than 200 million Indonesian Muslims’ hearts, minds, and prayers went to American families, condemned the atrocity, underlined the diversity of the people in the United States, and thanked the US government that had differentiated between the terrorists and the religion of Islam.
CHAPTER VI
THE DIALECTIC OF
DETERRITORIALIZATION AND RETERRITORIALISATION OF
TRANSNATIONAL LIVES

Setinggi-tinggi bangau terbang, hinggapnya ke kubangan juga.
No matter how high the heron flies, it will return to its mud puddle.
—An Indonesian proverb

How could movements of deterritorialization and process of reterritorialization not be relative, always connected, caught up in one another? The orchid deterritorializes by forming an image, a tracing of a wasp; but the wasp reterritorializes on that image. The wasp is nevertheless deterritorialized, becoming a piece in the orchid’s reproductive apparatus. But it reterritorializes the orchid by transporting its pollen.

In this chapter I will describe the transnational lives of Indonesian Muslims in New York City. The central axis of discussion in this chapter is the ways in which Indonesian Muslims locate themselves in the social spaces of the quintessential immigrant city. As I explained in Chapter II, transnational people, both individually and collectively, are in a constant dialectical situation between deterritorialization and reterritorialization practices. These dialectical practices are manifested in many ways, such as rhetorical strategies, cultural performances, artifact selections, uses of technologies, and media consumption preferences.

This chapter will be divided into three sections. I will first discuss some of cultural practices in relation of Indonesians’ rites of passage (birth, marriage, and death) and the correlation with their identity inquiry. The subsequent section will deal with the
gender aspects of Indonesian transnationalism. DeLaet (1999) points out that transnationalism is often seen as a male phenomenon where women’s involvement is overlooked. Only recently has the issue of gender in transnationalism gained currency (e.g. DeLaet, 1999; Gardner & Grillo, 2002; Salih, 2003). Therefore, I devote one section to gender and Indonesian transnationalism to consider this previously overlooked discourse. The 1.5- and second-generation of Indonesians Muslims will be discussed in the last section. Growing up in the U.S. has given them experiences different those of from their parents, as expressed in their cultural expressions, negotiation of identity, and view of the homeland.

Performing Identities and Cultural Practices

Identity arises not so much from the fullness of identity which is already inside us as individuals, but from lack of wholeness which is filled from outside us, by the ways we imagine ourselves to be seen by others.


On my second day in New York City, I was struck by what I saw on a fruit store on 63rd Drive, Rego Park, Queens. National flags of more than a dozen countries in the world were hoisted on short poles on the roof (Figure 7). Later, I found a similar thing in several locations in New York, especially in Queens. Billig (1995) has reminded us that national flags hanging unobtrusively outside schools and other public buildings are banal reminders of nationhood. In Billig’s catchy words, “the flags are ‘flagging’ the nation unflaggingly” (p. 41). Now, in the context of New York, the flags of several countries
serve a different purpose: they are banal reminders of how diverse Queens and New York City are. Indeed, these banal reminders are ubiquitous, especially in Queens. Take the billboard of a restaurant complex in Elmhurst offering Thai, Indian, Vietnamese, and pizza restaurants next each other. Or take the Broadway Café on the corner of Broadway and 63rd Streets, which offers, as the billboard says, “Egyptian food & dessert, Filipino & Hispanic cuisines,” and is adorned with an Egyptian flag and the Arabic phrase *ahlan wa sahlan* (Welcome!).

![Figure 7. Flags of several countries on the roof of a fruit store](image)

It is in this atmosphere that Indonesians and people from various other countries live their transnational lives. How they see themselves and others, and how they are seen, or believe themselves to be seen, by others influence how they construct, reconstruct, and
contest their identities. All migrants have their own cultural baggage when they set foot in America. Moreover, every nationality has its own diversity and multilayer identities which, in turn, multiply the identity complexion in New York.

*Ethnic Associations as a Transnational Lives Support System*

As I mentioned in Chapter III, there are several associations which were founded along ethnic lines by the Indonesian community in New York City. It has to be mentioned, however, that the boundaries between these associations are loose and permeable. The associations are best perceived as clusterings of Indonesians based on ethnic group or region of origin. Most of the associations do not have regular activities. Under certain circumstances, such as a death, a wedding, and birthday celebrations, the members would gather and mobilize financial aid, if necessary. I talked to several leading figures of such associations, who basically described the similar purposes of such associations, i.e. augmenting the *silaturahmi* (ties of friendship), helping each other in good and bad times, etc. When I was doing my fieldwork, the Javanese association Cokro was being established. I went to the gathering when it was set up, as well as one of its monthly meetings. About 100 people attended, and the atmosphere made me feel transported to similar gatherings in Java. The sounds, the food, the familiar faces—all reminded me of gatherings in Indonesia. Perhaps it was because I had never before seen such a big gathering of Indonesians of all ages in the U.S. Only the architecture of the house where we met, the street, and the passing cars reminded me that I was in Queens, in New York City, on another side of the globe from my hometown. After the meeting
though, some ladies sang using a karaoke—they picked *Bajing Luncat* and *Es Lilin*, which are Sundanese, not Javanese, songs.

Several days after the meeting, I talked with Mucharor, the chairman of the association, about the purpose of Cokro. His explanation was quite similar with what I heard from other ethnic associations.

Most Indonesians are *tidak punya surat lengkap* [meaning literally without necessary papers], so they sometimes need a time to meet and talk to each other. We can help each other to find jobs, for instance. They believe that the *paguyuban* [association] is needed, because we are *hidup di rantau* [living abroad]. For example, say one member is arrested. Of course we cannot win against the immigration. But we can collect money to help the family if the person is deported. With the *paguyuban*, we can share the burden. The association is for the time of happiness and of sadness. The time of happiness is when we have a new baby in the community, a wedding, or a birthday party. The time of sadness is when there is a death, and we can contribute some money. Hence our motto, *rukun agawe santosa, crah agawe bubrah* [a Javanese proverb, literally “Togetherness brings prosperity, fighting brings misfortune”]. (My translation from Indonesian)

From a social network perspective, I think ethnic associations could serve as an institutionalization of social networks. In addition, the establishing of such associations is also part of reterritorialization endeavors of Indonesians in their transnational lives. The ethnic association’s gathering, for example, is the place where they can be together in the
same time and space with their fellow ethnics who speak the same language, know the region they come from, and probably were children at the same time.

The Devil of Comparisons

One thing that struck me from the early days of my conversations with Indonesians in New York City was that they made many comparisons of things or experience with equivalent things in Indonesia. Even a small thing could evoke a comparison. Most of the time, Indonesia fared badly in such comparisons. For instance, when I walked to a subway station with an Indonesian who had been living in New York for more than 20 years, we saw a kitchen-stove on the side of the street, waiting to be picked up by the garbage truck. He said, “In Indonesia, it would have been stolen before it was picked up.” In another instance I talked with some Indonesians on the sidewalk in the front of a Brooklyn apartment building where we had gathered to pray for our host’s mother who had recently passed away. They talked about the neighborhood and the quality of the buildings there which had been built in the early 20th Century. Mucharor commented about the red brick walls of the apartment which were still in good condition. He said, “The bricks were processed so much so they can last for a long time.” Another Indonesian replied, “Yea, while bricks in Indonesia will crumble faster. They will crumble by a sparrow’s peck.” One of my respondents had been living in New York for more than 40 years. When we talked about media use, he mentioned that he has had the same television set for 20 years. Almost in the same breath, he said,
Here, you can have old stuff without being embarrassed. In Indonesia, when you have new things or your neighbor has a new thing, then people start being envious or jealous, or you feel embarrassed if you do not have a new model of something. In America, you know that somebody has worked hard to get what he deserves: going to work early in the morning, and coming back from work late at night. In Indonesia you have people going to work in the late morning, and going home before the office is closed, but you see his house becoming more and more luxurious, and him buying a lot of new name-brand things. Where does the money come from except from corruption? (My translation from Indonesian)

I noticed the tendency of comparison years before among my Indonesian friends in Athens, OH, the home of Ohio University, where I am pursuing my degree. I thought their attitude was understandable because most of them are students temporarily living abroad and therefore with strong memories of Indonesia. Overwhelmed by their new experiences, I thought, it was logical for them to draw parallels or contrasts to Indonesia as the point of reference. I did not take my observation seriously until I learned that this was the rhetorical strategy of people who had been living in New York City for many years.

Initially, I suspected that they expressed themselves this way only when they talked to me, someone doing a research on Indonesians, and that fact somehow provoked them to draw comparisons. I soon found that this strategy was also applied when they talked among themselves. At several public meetings, when I did not have to introduce myself as a researcher and I could mingle freely, I overheard or witnessed such types of
conversation. For instance, someone who just made a trip within the U.S., told us about the good condition of the roads and bridges. Suddenly, he said “In Indonesia, you will have makeshift huts under the bridges made by the homeless people and beggars.” In another instance, I was in a car with two Indonesians after the Friday prayer. When we passed a street with shady trees on both sides, one of them asked if we knew how many trees there are in New York City. Getting no answer, he said “Five million trees, Bung. And you know what, they are taken care of by the city government. They are trimmed regularly. On the other hand, in Jakarta trees were cut down, so you have a barren city instead.”

We might call this the indomitable “devil of comparison”—taken from *Noli Me Tangere*, an important novel written by the Philippines national hero, Jose Rizal (1996), first published 1887. In the novel, which was instrumental in establishing Filipino nationalism, Ibarra (the hero of the novel) had just returned to the Philippines after sojourning many years in Europe. When he saw the botanical garden from his carriage, “the devil of comparison placed him before the botanical gardens of Europe, in the countries where much effort and much gold are needed to make a leaf bloom and a bud open” (p. 51). Benedict Anderson (1998) has taken the metaphor from the novel, using “specter” instead of “devil,” to describe his approach in Southeast Asian studies, i.e. making “formal comparison within the frame of Southeast Asia” (p. 25). But here I use the phrase as Rizal used it to describe a transnational experience, albeit with an important distinction: while Rizal used it for a mestizo who just returned from the foreign lands, I use it for people who are living in the foreign lands. I would argue as well that this devil
of comparison is a reterritorialization strategy. Instead of manifesting the reterritorialization in cultural practices or artifacts, it is manifested in the quotidian discourse, albeit in a strange way because most of the time Indonesia as the point of reference is seen as the bad side of the coin.

There is another comparison that I frequently found in conversation, which is the comparison of Indonesians social-economic conditions vis-a-vis those of other Asian immigrants. The sentiment that Indonesians are not as successful as other Asian immigrants, especially the Chinese, Indians, and Pakistani are prevalent. I heard this many times, in the conversations I overheard and my own conversations ranging from high-ranking officials in the Indonesian General Consulate to construction workers. However, I rarely heard a similar comparison with African-Americans and Latinos. As an illustration of this comparison tendency, I was with Rurun and Singgih who wanted to drop by a distributor for 90-cents stores (discount stores that sell everything at 90 cents), because Singgih had an idea to open such a store in his neighborhood. Both men talked about their admiration of how the Chinese networks have dominated this market. Indeed, in general, Indonesians see other Asian migrants as more united in pursuing their social and economic improvement. As one local staff member of the Indonesian General Consulate told me at a Javanese association gathering, which I paraphrase here:

Unlike them, we are not helping each other. Maybe it is because Indonesia is too diverse. You have one kind of Bangladeshi or Indian. But we have Javanese, Sundanese, Batak, Minahasa, and many other ethnic groups. Indonesians cannot bear to see their compatriots successful, and they kasak-kusuk [spread rumors]
when they see somebody start to be successful. Whenever Indonesians have business partnerships, they don’t last long. When there is a sign of success, they - are *cakar-cakaran* [at each other’s throat]. (My translation from Indonesian)

Indeed, there have been cases of business collaboration that ended in a bitter split.

For instance, Mucharor told me his version of the setting up with other Indonesians of an Indonesian restaurant in Manhattan. The partnership eventually broke up. Another bitter split happened in February 2005 in a restaurant located in Elmhurst, Queens, called Padang Raya. In the summer 2005, when I was in New York for my fieldwork, the story was becoming interesting because many Indonesians knew the leaving partner would open a new restaurant just four doors away from Padang Raya. In such a small community as that of Indonesians in New York City, the Padang Raya saga was circulated and widely known. When the new restaurant, Minang Asli, launched its grand opening, I went there with Syamsi Ali on our way to a meeting with a group of Christian Filipinos who wanted to learn more about Islam. The owner of Minang Asli had invited guests to a free meal. Little did I know back then that this rivalry would make its way into an article in the City section of the *New York Times* many months later (see Ellick, 2006). The article stated that the new restaurant “prompted many in the community to reveal their personal and culinary loyalties” (p. 4).

Therefore, I would argue that while reterritorialization—the case of Padang Raya vs. Minang Asli is a case of culinary reterritorialization—creates new business opportunities, it also might create competition, friction and feuds. I suspect that it does not happen only in Indonesian communities. Furthermore, the monolithic perception of
other migrants is certainly not entirely accurate, because there are divisions within people from the same national origins. As Nimer (2002) shows, there are several smaller organizations based on ancestral villages or regions of the homeland. The Indonesians’ devil of comparisons prevents them from seeing possibility of fragmentation of other immigrant groups.

**Rites of Passage in Transnational Lives**

Every culture has its own ways to mark important moments in the cycle of life, such as childbirth, puberty, weddings, and death. Ceremonies with prescribed rites, most of them culturally inherited from generation to generation, surround those events. Members of the community gather for such ceremonies, when culture is deliberately performed, and the memory of ancient traditions is restored. Not only have the performance of the rites been preserved over generations, much of the material used in the ceremonies (for food, for example) originated from the ancestral areas themselves. In other words, rites of passage are culturally and geographically bound—they are territorialized. Loaded with symbolism, they are conscious and deliberate reproductions of culture and reaffirmation of the worldview. For those who live in the culture to which they belong, rites of passage are taken for granted. Nevertheless, for deterritorialized transnational people, whose homeland is far away and who live in different cultures, reenacting rites of passage can be deliberate projects of identity expression.
Childbirth

When his first child was born around two decades ago, Rurun had the opportunity to carry out a Javanese culture in treating the placenta. In Javanese culture is considered as the brother or sister of the baby, and as such needs to be treated respectfully.

Before she was born, I asked if they would give me the placenta. “You are not going to eat it, are you?” they asked. I said, “No, we are going to process it according to our culture.” So they put it in a plastic bag next to the baby. I called my mother [in Indonesia] to ask the *ubo rampe* [ritual accessories] needed for treating the placenta. Then I bought the accessories as much as they were available here. I washed the placenta, and buried it in the corner of the backyard of my apartment. Since there was no *lampu teplok* [Indonesian style of kerosene lamp] here, I used a hurricane lamp. I kept the light for seven days and nights. So *alhamdulillah* [praise to God], I could do it for my first child. For my second child, I couldn’t do it. I was told that there was a law prohibiting the hospital from giving the placenta. Maybe for health reasons, like HIV. (My translation from Indonesian)

However, the more common ceremony welcoming for a newborn is *aqiqah*, in which the new parents invite friends and relatives to their house to have meal and pray for the newborn. In *aqiqah*, the name of the baby is formally announced and his or her hair is shaved.
Wedding

The wedding ceremony, another big moment in life in every culture, is also where cultural identity is negotiated and constituted in transnational lives (see, for example Gardner & Grillo, 2002; Salih, 2003). Mucharor brought me to such a simple wedding ceremony, which was held in a small apartment. Neither the bride nor the groom wore the complete traditional wedding costume. The bride, an Indonesian, wore a kebaya (a long-sleeved blouse worn over the skirt wrapping), and the groom, a South Asian, wore Indonesian batik. About 30 people attended, some of them non-Indonesians, most of them in casual dress. Indonesian foods, such as bakso (meat-balls and noodle soup) and gado-gado (vegetables, tofu, and soybean cake, served with peanut sauce) were served. This kind of reenactment of an Indonesian wedding was even more limited in the case of the wedding of Pratomo’s son. Pratomo’s marriage with an American woman and his success in his profession has exposed his children more to middle-class mainstream America than to Indonesian culture. However, when his second son was planning a Western-style wedding ceremony, he asked Pratomo to pick two or three gendhing gamelan (Javanese musical orchestra) songs to be played at the wedding. “He wants to show the attendees that Javanese culture is a part of his culture,” Pratomo told me.

Masjid Al-Hikmah has been used many times for wedding ceremonies, both for the ijab-qabul (a formal offer and acceptance of marriage) and the walima (wedding-feast following the consummation of the marriage). I attended one of them during my fieldwork, together with about 20 people. Both the bride and the groom were Indonesians who had been living in New York City for some years. A small table covered with a
white cloth was placed in the middle of the main prayer room. The bride and groom sat side by side on one side of the table. The marriage ceremony was conducted according to Islamic procedure. The imam of Masjid Al-Hikmah led the *ijab-qabul* and *akad nikah* (the signing of marriage contract) in Indonesian. Then Achmad Padang, the Chairman of the Masjid Al-Hikmah Board of Directors, addressed the assembly with a *khutbah nikah* (marriage sermon) to solemnize the marriage. Padang delivered his sermon in English, inviting the newlyweds and the guests to a life of piety, close to God. He closed by leading the prayers, which were in Arabic, basically asking God’s blessing and protection for the newlyweds. Afterward, Padang told the assembly that the *sharia* (Islamic law) part was done, and therefore we could continue with the traditions. The bride and groom then performed *sungkem*, kneeling before their parents to ask their prayers and blessings. The *walima* (wedding feast) was held elsewhere in Manhattan, so the guests were invited to attend and join with another, larger gathering.

Most Indonesian Muslim weddings in New York City were done on a much smaller scale—both in the elaboratness of the ceremony and the number of guests—compared to a similar wedding in Indonesia. However, the weddings of two of the children of Mucharor and his wife, Wati, were exceptions. Mucharor’s first son, Rizki (also my 1.5-generation informant), married an Indonesian woman, while Veta, the second daughter, married the son of Dominican immigrants. He had embraced Islam a couple of months prior to the wedding. Mucharor and Wati (who is also one of my female informants) showed me the pictures and video of the weddings which were conducted in the usual manner of quite elaborate Javanese weddings, including, for
example, *siraman* (ritual bathing before the wedding), *lempar sirih* (the bride and groom throw betel leaves at each other) and *injak telur* (in which the groom breaks an egg with his foot and then the bride washes the foot). These wedding feasts were conducted after the formal Islamic marriage procedure at Masjid Al-Hikmah. One of the pictures (Figure 8) shows Rizki and his wife, in the elegant traditional wedding dress. In this picture Brooklyn Bridge and the skyline of Manhattan are the background of the reterritorialization of Indonesian culture. It redefines the otherwise familiar scene with the cultural identity expression coming from the other side of the globe.

Figure 8. Javanese bridal couple with Brooklyn Bridge and the skyline of Manhattan on the background (Source: Mucharor’s photo album)
What follows is Mucharor’s account of the weddings of his children, while showing me the wedding pictures:

*Alhamdulillah,* my wife and I could undertake these elaborate wedding ceremonies for our children. I also wanted to show to the people here the way one of an Indonesian ethnic group performs a wedding feast. We had many non-Indonesian guests. We had *gambyong* dance from Central Java for Rizki’s wedding, and Banyuwangi [East Java] and Minang [Sumatra] dances for Veta’s. *Gambyong* dance was chosen because Rizki married an Indonesian woman. But this dance is too slow and calm for those who came for Veta’s wedding, because her husband is not an Indonesian, so we picked more dynamic dances. One of the dancers was an American. The dance group used to practice in the Consulate General office here. The *cucuk lampah* [usher] of Rizki’s wedding was an Indonesian, while Veta’s was an Indian. We had also a band playing, contributed by group of Javanese-Surinamese in New York. Since Veta’s parents-in-law do not speak English, one of our Spanish friends acted as a translator for them.

We had the traditional dress of the bride and groom, parents, *cucuk lampah,* people in the receiving line, some of whom were our children’s White-American friends, made in Indonesia. My wife measured these people, and then went to Indonesia, taking the measurements with her. She also bought some other things needed for the ceremony. For Veta’s wedding, we only had the dress for the bride and groom made in Indonesia, and reused the dresses from Rizki’s
wedding for other people involved in the wedding. (My translation from Indonesian)

Muchaor’s wife, Wati, offered her account too:

Yes, it also came from our strong will to show and promote our culture here.

Fortunately, I used to work as a bridegroom make-up artist, so I did all the make-up for the bridegroom. I know also how to measure people. So I asked my son-in-law’s parents to come here so I could measure them. I went to Indonesia for several weeks to prepare the weddings and order the dress. We made other accessories ourselves. For Veta’s wedding, I was a little bit mad at the tailor [in Indonesia], though. Veta’s husband is so tall, and the tailor made his dress a little bit too short. The tailor probably thought that I measured wrong. He must never have sewn such a big wedding dress for an Indonesian. So, on his own initiative he made the dress shorter [laughter]. Well, it was okay eventually. (My translation from Indonesian)

Death

Islam has its own death rituals which are done by the family and other members of the community. First of all, Muslims strive to bury the departed as soon as possible after death. The corpse should be washed and then shrouded with a clean white cloth. The deceased is then brought to the site of shalat janazah (funeral prayers). This site is usually a bigger room in the house or in a mosque. After the prayer, the body is taken to the cemetery for burial. The deceased is laid in the grave on his or her right side, facing
Mecca. This requires Muslims’ graves to be in a specific direction which not all cemeteries can provide. Washington Memorial Park in Long Island, NY, has specific plots for Muslims, where some Indonesian Muslims are also buried. Furthermore, since, unlike in Indonesia, keeping the deceased at home is illegal in New York (Cox, 2005), the body washing needs to be done in the funeral home. In New York City, several mosques, not including Masjid Al-Hikmah, are licensed to take care the deceased and process the funeral. Therefore, following an Indonesian Muslim death, the washing is usually performed in one of these mosques, as are the funeral prayers. However, in the early summer of 2005, Masjid Al-Hikmah, for the first time, became the place for the funeral prayer of one of its congregants. Since then, several funeral prayers have taken place there. One of them was performed while I was doing my fieldwork, when a departed Indonesian Muslim from New Hampshire was brought there before being taken to the cemetery in Long Island.

As in the home country, the Indonesian Muslim community in New York has several people who frequently volunteer to perform washing of the dead. Mucharor is one of them. When an Indonesian Muslim dies, Masjid Al-Hikmah is usually contacted or word is spread among friends. Since not many people know the details of the washing ritual, including the supplications uttered in the process, volunteers like Mucharor assume this communal task. Mucharor told me that there are many non-observant Indonesian Muslims families who want their loved ones to be taken care of according to Islamic rituals. One day when I went to his house for an interview appointment, he was not home because he had to perform the washing of an Indonesian married to a Filipina. Several
days later, friends of the departed arranged at Masjid Al-Hikmah a *tahlilan* (public gathering in which the Qur’an is read and the assembly pray for deceased). The son of the deceased gave a little speech to the assembly and thanked them for taking care of his father, after mentioning that it was the first time ever for the son to enter a mosque.

While Masjid Al-Hikmah has been the venue for *tahlilan* of departed Indonesian Muslims in New York, more often these are arranged for the death of a family member in Indonesia. During my fieldwork, at least three such *tahlilans* were conducted at Masjid Al-Hikmah. The *tahlilan* for the departed who had been living elsewhere is not common in Indonesia, and it usually done in the house of the deceased. Unable to go home to see the loved ones for the last time, the transnational Indonesians use *tahlilans* to fulfill the familial duties for the ones in New York City. For the community, it serves to reestablish and strengthen communal solidarity in the foreign land. Another ritual usually performed in such cases is *shalat al-ghaib*, the funeral prayer for those who have died in a distant place, which is usually performed after the Friday prayer. I participated in such a prayer three times during my fieldwork there.

**Return Migration, or Return to the Ultimate Home**

When I asked Rurun where he wants to spend his old age, he offered me the following answer:

I have been in America for 28 years. I am planning to retire in six years, and to go back to Indonesia. I was born in a place that is ideal for me, in the mountainous area of northern Bandung, West Java. When I was young, I liked going camping,
from one mountain to another. Since I came to America, I couldn’t do it again, but I really want to. I don’t think my children want to live in Indonesia later, so maybe my wife and I will come here once in a year to see them. My oldest daughter is now in college, so in six years time she will be able to support herself, will have found a job and made a career, or gotten married. The younger child will probably be in the final years of college, so we can leave him after his graduation. I have told my mother that I will live with her again [laughter]. You know, we just need simple food: rice, krupuk (cracker), sambal (chilli), ikan asin (salted fish), and lalap (vegetables) from our own garden. We don’t need bread and cheese. So our cost of living will not be high. Well, we’ve been used to it [the Indonesian simple food] since we were young, right?

Maybe I am too nostalgic, because we know that being retired in Indonesia is not all that easy, especially since we have become accustomed to the living standard in America. For example, certainly our health will not be as good as it is now, and Indonesia does not provide free or reduced-cost healthcare. So we are still in transition in making a decision on this, especially about the timing. Ultimately, however, we will go back to Indonesia. That’s why in recent years I’ve gone back to Indonesia almost once a year, to set up a business. Also I have bought properties for my life there later. (My translation from Indonesian)

Likewise, although Mucharor has bought some properties in Indonesia, the possibility of return migration presents him with a dilemma. He has made yearly return
visits since obtaining his permanent resident status in 2002. “One thing that I really wanted to do, once I got my green card, was to see my mother, since I had not seen her for 14 years. Therefore, as long as I have my jimat [Javanese language, literally means the talisman], who is my mother, I will go to Indonesia as frequently as my financial condition can support.” Concerning the final return to Indonesia, here is what he says,

This is a dilemma for me. Of course I want to live in Indonesia. I have not made a fixed decision yet. If I go back and live in Indonesia, I will probably be okay financially. We can hire a housemaid and things like that. If my pension is not enough, I can sell my house so that I will have some money to bring to Indonesia. But, I don’t know how I will feel if I live far from my children and grandchildren. I will miss them. But if I live here, my pension might be enough only for the daily expenses. So whether I will live relatively comfortably in Indonesia but far from my children and grandchildren or live here where I will have to struggle to survive, that is the dilemma. I don’t want to bother my children if, for example, I cannot pay my bills, or suddenly become ill. (My translation from Indonesian)

While it seems that Rurun’s final return will serve him as his reterritorialization par excellence, Mucharor ponders it as a new form of deterritorialization where he feel uprooted from his offspring.

Mucharor’s and Rurun’s stories show us how familials factor become crucial in considering the final return. However, it is this familial factor also that closes the possibility Singgih’s final return:
Of course, I have a desire to go back, but I know that it is difficult for me to do so. My wife is an Indonesian-Chinese, a Catholic, and she has been in America since the age of ten. She grew up here. She will not be *kerasan* [feel at home] in Indonesia. Also, she might not be accepted fully by the family there. I do not want to sacrifice my 20 years of marriage; I do not want to be selfish. Maybe we can come to a degree of compromise, like I could be three months in Indonesia, and nine months here.

For me, it is the same whether I am buried here or there. If you are buried in Indonesia, the angles of grave would be no softer compared to being buried here [laughter]. So, I think this is what I will do. If the compensation money [from the insurance company, following a car accident] comes, I really want to buy a property in my home-village Narawita, complete with a fish pond and a *saung* [a hut]. You know, a typical Sundanese [West Java] house. And then it will be managed by cooperative whose members are the extended family from the same grandparents. (My translation from Bahasa Indonesia)

However, not every migrant wishes to return to Indonesia. Zaini is one of them.

I am not on a pension yet, so I will think about it later. *Rezeki* [fortune], *jodoh* [marriage partner], and death are God’s secrets [a saying of the Prophet Muhammad]. So we have to accept that. Do not have a will that says you have to be buried in a certain place. Probably some people miss their home villages too much. I don’t. Because I have been in *perantauan* [abroad] too long, almost 35 years old. I don’t miss my village. (My translation from Indonesian)
The stories above show the complexity of reasons surrounding the final return as the reterritorialization par excellence. If Rurun and Mucharor do finally go back to Indonesia and resettle there, returning to the ultimate home, they perform what Gmelch (1980) calls the return migration (see also Duval 2004). There have been a number of terms to describe return migration—such as reflux migration, homeward migration, remigration, second-time migration, repatriation, and retromigration (Gmelch, 1980)—all of which emphasize the direction and the process of migration. Whatever the term, the final return might be seen as the reterritorialization par excellence, i.e. the return of the deterritorialized person to his or her primal home, to fulfill the desire to fit the self into primeval-habitual territories. For the time being, Rurun and Mucharor make some short visits, or return visits, to reaffirm their transnational social ties as well as to prepare their adaptive mechanism for their anticipated social life (Duval 2004; Gmelch, 1980).

Meanwhile, if Singgih’s plan, living three months in Indonesia and nine months in America, materializes, he is a circular migrant who moves frequently back and forth between different cultures (Gmelch, 1980; Lull, 2000). While circular migrants from Latin America export back to their reterritorialized homes the cultures they develop in America (especially popular music) (Lull, 2000), and Indian diaspora youths have developed *banghra* (a fusion of reggae, rap, and disco) which is also popular in India (Maira, 2002), as far as I know no such Indonesian’s reterritorialized cultural products have been exported back to Indonesia. I believe this is because the number of Indonesian transnationals has not yet reached the critical mass necessary to produce original cultural products.
Gendered Transnational Experiences:

Indonesian Women in New York City

Women are often constructed as the cultural symbols of collectivity, of its boundaries, as carriers of the collectivity’s ’honour’ and as its intergenerational reproducers of culture.


DeLaet (1999) has reminded us that there is much less attention given to women in the scholarship of international migration, despite the fact that they also migrate across nation-state borders in numbers not much below these of men. Therefore, transnationalism is often seen as a male phenomenon where women’s involvement is overlooked. Moreover, when women migrants are acknowledged, the discussion tends to focus on issues of the low-paid sector of the global economy. However, similar to the growing scholarship on women and nationalism which challenge this perspective (e.g. Yuval-Davis, 1997), the issue of gender in transnationalism has gained currency (e.g. DeLaet, 1999; Gardner & Grillo, 2002; Salih, 2003). The implicit assumptions that women migrate only to reunite with their husbands and, once reunited, they tend to play the domestic role are challenged by pointing out the variety of complex reasons of female migration and the dynamics of the roles women assume in the transnational contexts. For instance, Salih (2003) reminds us from her research on Moroccan women in Italy, “migrant women could be playing the role of mediators and negotiators of cultural meanings between countries and contributing to bringing a sense of one place into another” (p. 160).
Their Own Stories

In what follows I would like to present the experiences of some Indonesian women in living through their transnational lives. I will do this via life histories told to me in interviews and informal conversations. I will use their words as much as possible, although I will have to shorten their stories. As in any informal conversation, the flow was not neat and orderly, but I will try to set their stories down in an orderly fashion to make them easy to follow, while being cautious not to put my words in their mouths.

Upi

Upi Jaya is my favorite Indonesian restaurant in New York City. I was introduced to the owner on the first Friday prayer in which I participated at Masjid Al-Hikmah. Most of the time, I ordered sate Padang (described in the menu list as “Beef marinated kabab with red chilli pepper over the chef’s special sauce made with rice flour. Served with Indonesian rice cake”), one of my favorite foods. When The Village Voice ranked Upi Jaya in 18th place among the 100 “unbelievably cheap but very good restaurant in New York City in 2005,” Sietsema (2005) wrote that the satay and “a version of rendang so dense and luscious it constitutes a new definition of beef” (p. 35). The restaurant is owned by a husband and wife, Zamrial and Upi. They are relative newcomers to the Indonesian community in New York City. Zamrial came first, and worked in several restaurants and later as a local staff member of a Middle East country’s permanent mission to the United Nations. Upi and the two children came to New York in 1997 to reunite with Zamrial in 1997. They opened the restaurant on October 3, 2004, one of the
few Indonesian migrants who are able to open their own business. The couple does all the work: shopping, cooking, serving, etc. With only one day off a week, with the restaurant opens 11 a.m. to 10 p.m., and considering the errands that need to be done before and after hours, they clearly work very hard. Monday, the one day off, is usually used for shopping for food materials.

I interviewed them on one of my visits to the restaurant. Upi’s story shows that although her contribution is that commonly associated with women’s domestic roles, i.e. cooking, her role in the success or failure of the family’s transnational life is decisive. It also shows the commercial opportunities of re-territorialization process of transnationalism. What follows is Upi’s story.

I came to New York in 1997, after being separated from my husband for four years. Initially I only came to visit him, because I also had a business in Jakarta. Having plenty of time on my hands, I cooked and accepted meal orders. Initially I had ten or 11 customers. I cooked and my husband delivered the food in the afternoon. Then we provided a buffet of Indonesian food at my house once a week, so people could come and eat there. Word spread so that more and more people came, even some from out of town. We decided to look for a kitchen, because our house was now too small. We saw this place, which coincidentally used to be a restaurant. So we decided to open a restaurant, instead of just using the kitchen. We sought financial support from a bank, which asked us to get licensed first. My husband also took a training program in restaurant management. Now around 65 percent of our visitors are American, especially on
the weekends. I am glad because I also contribute in *mengangkat nama bangsa* (making the nation [Indonesia] well-known) in America. Since 1997, I haven’t been able to go back to Indonesia. Yes, I miss my family there very much. Of course I plan to visit them, but we have to keep this restaurant running first. (My translation from Indonesian)

Wati

In 1988, Wati, together with her children (eight, six, and four years old) came to New York. Wati’s husband, Mucharor, who had been in New York for a year, picked them up in Indonesia. Mucharor was a chef in a newly established Indonesian restaurant in Manhattan. The initial experience of her transnational life was a painful one, but got better after she was able to establish concrete transnational connections, buying jewelry, for example, for her mother, to achieve a sense of accomplishment in being abroad:

The first years were difficult for me. I have a big family in Indonesia, I have 13 siblings. I kept asking myself why I came here. In Indonesia, each of my children had his or her own nanny. Somebody did our laundry. So I just managed the household by directing them. Here, even when I was sick I had to cook. My husband got home around midnight, six days a week. In the first year I often cried, especially when I listened to Indonesian tapes I brought. The house was always messy, understandably so because we had three small children, but I wanted to have a tidy home. My husband said, it was okay, because we didn’t have guests anyway. I felt better after that, and did not want to be enslaved by the
errands. Initially, the kids were confused at school, because they didn’t speak the language. My daughter cried a lot at first. But they adapted fast. The youngest stayed at home with me, because he was too young to go to school.

After my youngest son went to school, I had free time. I worked part-time as a kitchen helper in the restaurant where my husband was working. The first money I received was $300. I was so glad, that I called my mother in Indonesia and asked for her prayers. I wanted to make a surprise for her. I called my sister too, telling her that I would send this first money to her to buy jewelry for my mother. So my sister brought my mother to a jewelry shop, and asked her to pick what she liked. Later, my sister told her that the money was from me. I called my mother after that, asking whether she liked the jewelry. My mother said that she was not only happy, but also felt alive again because there was a daughter who cared for her. (My translation from Bahasa Indonesia)

Wati also talked about her ways of raising children in a foreign land. She did not work outside the home a lot, and, therefore, spent more time with the children, hence transnationalizing her domestic roles. She assumed her role as the guardian of tradition by infusing Indonesian culture and Islam into her children:

There is not much difference in raising children here in America. In Indonesia it might even be more difficult. Drug problems, for example. You know, ecstasy and shabu-shabu pills destroy our young generation. You find it here also, but the situation is not that bad. So I am not really worried about my
children. My principle is that I have to be able to implant religion into my children. When I was young, I learnt how to read the Qu’ran everyday. So I want my children to uphold our religion, even if we live in this kafir [unbelievers] country. That’s why I paid Indonesians who could read the Qur’an to come to my house every Saturday to teach my children. I wanted to see with my own eyes that they were learning, I didn’t want them to be kafir and unable to read the Qur’an. I am stricter on insisting that the kids learn than my husband is. Some Indonesian children from other families also joined. I did not mind cooking for them, as long as they were learning. Alhamdulillah [praise to Allah], my children can read the Quran and are able to perform the prayers.

I feel sorry to the families and children who neglected the religious education. Children are rejeki [good fortunes] from Allah. We are entrusted by Allah to raise them. We will be called to account for how we raised them on the Day of Judgment. Also, some families didn’t teach the children how to speak Indonesian. I speak it with my kids, because they will be able to pick up English anyway. Indonesia is our own nation, why should we forget it? I don’t want my children to forget Indonesia, just because they live here. I told them, “You have to understand Indonesian, and since you are Muslims you have to be able to read the Qur’an and know how to perform shalat [prayer].” So, alhamdulillah. My friend in Indonesia is surprised because my kids can speak Indonesian. Her children even couldn’t read the Qur’an. So I am proud of my children.
From the beginning, my first son wanted to marry an Indonesian woman, because he likes having *sambal terasi*, *ikan goreng*, and *sayur asam* [all Indonesian food]. He said, no American woman can cook using *terasi* [made from shrimp paste]. But my daughter is married to a Dominican who was born here. I have told her to marry an Indonesian Muslim if possible. Even if the man were not very religious, at least we could communicate, and there would be no problem with food. My daughter knew that she couldn’t marry a non-Muslim. She told her boyfriend that she couldn’t marry him, but he said then he wanted to become a Muslim. So we asked her to have him to come to see us. He was working in Arizona. When he came, my husband told him our principles, so it would be better to avoid the relationship and that our daughter understood our position. My husband said that he didn’t want to push Islam, but gave him books on Islam and the Qur’an to study. Three months later, he came and said that he wanted to embrace Islam. Four months later, they were married. I told to my daughter, it was now her big responsibility. She had to teach him about Islam. She said, “I know, Mom.” She said that he also prays. (My translation from Indonesian)

**Ipah**

Ipah, now 76 years old, came to New York City in 1970, when a daughter of a former high-ranking Indonesian military man who lived there needed domestic help. Therefore, she left her children with her parents when she left for America. Now she has eleven grandchildren and six great grandchildren. Ipah is a talkative, likeable person and
has a good sense of humor. She shares an apartment with Kusna, an Indonesian woman, and the two of them have worked together for more than two decades as nannies and domestic help for a wealthy American family. She said that the family lived on a very big estate. “I can’t explain it to you, it is just very big,” she said. My interview with her was conducted in her small apartment in Brooklyn. There were some small wayang (Javanese shadow puppets) in the display case in the living room. The picture of the former Indonesian president Megawati Sukarnoputri, which Ipah bought when she went back to Indonesia, was hung on one wall. “That’s only for a memento,” she said. On the other wall, she hung her tasbih (rosary beads) rather low, “So that I can easily reach it when I want to perform dhikr [remembrance of God].” On the refrigerator door, she had posted a picture of her grandson’s wedding ceremony, and some baby pictures of her great-grandchildren. She performed hajj together with other Indonesians in 2003.

Ipah has been the main financial resource for her family in Indonesia: she paid for the education of her children who her mother raised, for the initial capital of her son’s business, and for renovating the house. Here is her story:

After working as a domestic helper in an Indonesian family, I worked some part-time jobs. In 1983, I got married, but it was a kawin surat [literally a document marriage], to an old Indonesian man who held a green card, but I did not live with him. Fifteen days after the marriage, I got my green card [and therefore became a legal permanent resident]. He has passed away. I used to go to his place when I had a break on the weekend, helping him to clean up the house and to do errands. He liked tempe (soybean cake), so I brought him some. That’s
all, you know, both of us were worn out with age already. I worked hard, to earn as much money as possible to be brought back to Indonesia. I sent money regularly to my mother for the kids’ education. I went back to Indonesia for the first time in 1986. I wanted to make a surprise, so I didn’t tell them I was coming. When I got to my hometown, I couldn’t recognize it. The neighborhood had changed a lot. When my mother saw me, she couldn’t say a word. My children had already gotten married, and had children already. My mother took care all of these marriages.

I started working for this rich family in 1983, until I retired two years ago. Kusna invited me to join her—she had been working there for four years. I took care of one of the kids, while Kusna took care of the other one. They are like family to us. We frequently traveled with the family and spent some time abroad: Belgium, Germany, Switzerland, France, Italy, and England. They have a big house, and had about 15 people working for them. When the kids grew up, we worked more for the family in the house. They sent me to a cooking course. Since my employer is a businessman, there was always many parties and guests coming. There were also a fundraising party for the Democratic Party there [Ipah showed me a picture of her and her co-workers with President Clinton, signed by the President himself]. Our employer is very kind to us, you can’t find a man as kind as him anywhere. When my mother was sickly, I went home two or three times a year, and our boss had the secretary buy the airplane ticket for me.
With the money I sent home, I could enlarge and renovate my mother’s house. I bought cars to rent out, managed by one of my children who know car mechanics. I helped the other child with the initial capital for a catering business, and now it supplies food for 1,500 people in a factory. I helped my youngest child with initial capital when he started a chicken-breeding business. Unfortunately, the bird flu has made this business difficult. I also helped to build the mosque there. I asked one of my children to take care of two indigent people in the neighborhood. They are given food, and brought to the doctor regularly.

When Kusna and I retired, they gave us $20,000 each in severance pay. Then they gave us almost $10,000 in three installments in the following years. Kusna and I now are sometimes called to come to help if they need us. Every Christmas, we get money from them as a present, so we can use it to go to Indonesia. It is not just the price of the ticket, but it is also enough for pocket money to be shared with the family there. Since my mother passed away in 1999, I go back less frequently, maybe every other year. I was back home several days prior to my mother’s death. I had asked her to go to a doctor, but she didn’t want to go. You know, people from the older generation were scared of the doctors. I was about to extend my stay for another week, but my mother insisted that I go back. “You can’t leave your job too long,” she said. Two days after I got here, she passed away. I wanted to go back, but I couldn’t get an airplane ticket. All were booked. I had a chance to call her the night before she died, and she was watching the inauguration of [President] Megawati on the television. She said, “Megawati
looked just like her father Bung Karno [the first Indonesian president]. (My translation from Indonesian)

Sulas

Sulas is a religious woman. Whenever she talks, Islamic utterances, such as *masha Allah* (Allah has willed it), *insha Allah* (Allah willing), *alhamdulillah* (praise to Allah), *subhanallah* (Allah is pure—used to express strong feelings of joy or relief) adorn her speech. She serves as the treasurer of Masjid Al-Hikmah. Her apartment is a short walking distance from the mosque, enabling her to go there almost every day, usually on the way home from work, to do mosque-related errands. She came to New York in 1977, reuniting with the husband she had married two years earlier in Indonesia. “It was an arranged marriage,” she said. She has been working in a beauty salon since 1980 as a general assistant, in which some of her co-workers are gay. She performed *hajj* with some other Indonesians in 2003. Sulas and her husband have no children, and therefore adopted a child in Indonesia. They plan to bring him to the U.S., but according to the law they can do so only after either the parents have lived together with the child for two years. Therefore, Sulas’ husband took an early retirement so that he can live in Indonesia. Sulas became more devout after living in New York. She rediscovered her Muslim identity in her reterritorialization process.

I call the time when I was in Indonesia and my early days here as my *zaman jahiliyiah* [the time of ignorance, usually used to describe the period in Arab society before the coming of Islam]. Of course I prayed, but I was not like I
am now, *alhamdulillah*. I soon was involved in the weekly *pengajian* with other Indonesian youths. I can’t speak for everybody, but for me, I learn and practice Islam better here than in Indonesia. In Indonesia, probably I didn’t dare to read the Qur’an in a public transportation, for example. We would be seen as showing off. Here, nobody cares. I also can make a timetable of what I will do for the day. I can plan my time. In Indonesia, for example, you can’t be certain at what time you will need to ride a bus to work. Here, if I happen to have nothing to do in the working hours, I used to read Islamic books or the Quran. I don’t know, but for some reason, I am sorry I have to say, if I am in Indonesia for more than month I start having headaches. I say, “Oh this is not my country, I have to go back home.” (My translation from Indonesian)

Furthermore, it is interesting to see how Sulae, as a Muslim woman who works outside her home, negotiates her identity in the workplace, including among her colleagues who are gays.

*Subhanallah, alhamdulillah,* the customers, my co-workers and boss do not have any problem with me as a Muslim. My boss lets me to do the prayers when the time comes. However, I can’t wear *jilbab* [the Muslim women headscarf] when working. My boss said, “Sulas, we advertise hair in a beauty salon.” So I wear *jilbab* in all other times. One day after the 9-11 attacks, we had a customer who talked about it and was angry about the attacks. He said, “I wanna kill all the Muslims.” All of my co-workers were apprehensive, looking at me.
When the customer went to the second floor, everybody hugged me. “Don’t listen to him. Don’t worry, we love you,” they said. I cried, and said “Thank you. I understand. Maybe he lost his loved ones there.”

I keep two copies of the Qur’an in my desk at the office, in English and in Indonesian, so that I can read it when I have free time. So far I am comfortable with my work there, especially because I can pray and read the Qur’an. Sometime when my boss has free time, he said “Sulas can you read it for me?” [laughter]. So, it depends on us to carry out Islam. My co-workers say, “I don’t understand, I look at you and then all the terrorists. If all Muslims were like you, peace would be on earth.” Sometimes I have difficulty trying to explain it. I say this not to praise myself, astaghfirullah (I ask God's forgiveness.). Really, we are the ones who have to carry Islam properly, so people will see it correctly. They will respect us. I used to have a close co-worker who was a devout Christian. So sometimes when we had free time, I read the Qur’an and she read the Bible. One day I gave her Chapter Mary in the Qur’an to read. She said, “Oh my God, we even don’t have this in our Bible.” Sometime when we talked, I would ask her whether she was talking from the Bible or the Quran, because her reference sounded like they came from the Qur’an. Conversely, she sometimes asked me whether I was quoting from the Bible. She said that was the same in the Bible. We got along very well.

My co-workers who are gay also ask me questions about what Islam says about being gay. I told them that if you asked how Islam sees it, it is against the
religion. I said, “But personally I have no right to judge people. I don’t pass judgment on people. So if you ask me what is according to my religion, I say it is prohibited. You commit sin. But if you ask my opinion, I have no right to judge you. Who am I, judging other people?” So, that is their own business with their God, if they have one. They seem okay with my answer. So they jokingly said, “Kill all the Muslims, except Sulas.” I said, “Wait a minute, my husband is a Muslim, too.” “O yeah, okay, okay, except your husband, too,” they replied jokingly. (My translation from Indonesian)

Sulas has no intention to make a final return to Indonesia, because of her strong attachment to the Indonesian Muslim transnationals in New York City. She is at home now. On the other hand, she does not want to be an American citizen either, and wants to keep her Indonesian citizenship.

When I retire, I will live here. My husband is now a U.S. citizen, with the hope that this status can ease the immigration process to bring our adopted child here. I keep my green card [permanent resident] status, though. I don’t want to be an American citizen. Anyway, there is no difference between holding a green card and being a citizen, except that we can’t be elected president. There is no way I can be the president of America, anyway [laughter]. For some reasons, I like to live here. I feel wanted here, or maybe more correctly I want to work for the mosque. When I was in Indonesia, I told my husband that I missed the mosque. We are like family here in the mosque. Especially when there is a marriage or
death in the community, we get together. It’s probably because I have been living here for so long. So, I don’t mind if I’ll be buried here when I die. The Prophet Muhammad was also buried where he died, anyway. (My translation from Indonesian)

**Transnationalization of Women’s Domestic Roles?**

Without claiming that the stories above have fully exemplified the transnational lives experienced by all Indonesian women in New York City, they provide us with the diversity in the roles of women beyond domestic roles. The stories tell us that what Salih (2003) calls the “transnational sphere of reproductive and care activities” to describe the transnational lives of some Moroccan women migrants in Italy does not really fit with our figures above. Although Upi, Wati, and Sulas came to New York to reunite the family, they assumed different roles beyond mere domestic ones. Because she does not have a regular and full-time job, probably Wati’s role is one that can be described as the transnationalization of the domestic roles. However, by being tough with her children with regards to learning to read the Qur’an and to perform prayer, she posited herself as the guardian of tradition. Although Upi’s work, cooking, is commonly associated with the domestic sphere, she is a decisive and equal partner in the success or failure of the restaurant. Without her, Sietsema (2005) probably would not have a culinary experience of a “new definition of beef” to help rank Upi Jaya in the 18th on the 2005 list of 100 cheap but good restaurants in New York City. Meanwhile, Ipah had assumed the role of main financial resource for her family back in Indonesia with her remittances through
outsourced domestic jobs—as a nanny and later as a house maid—for a wealthy family. Lastly, Sulas has become very attached to Masjid Al-Hikmah and spends much of her non-working time in mosque activities. In a way, she has helped glue together the small Indonesian community in New York City. Furthermore, at least in her workplace, without really intending to do so, she has become a kind of emissary of Islam to the West. In her own way, she has challenged the Huntingtonian prophecy of “the clash of civilization” (Huntington, 1996).

Furthermore, by providing Indonesian cuisine in New York City, Upi has taken part in the global trend of deterritorialization of food. Tomlinson (1999) has pointed out that one of the deterritorialized cultural elements is food: Mexican tacos, Indian curries, Italian ciabatta, and so forth. For the affluent West, the availability of these foods has increased the consumer choice. However, while Upi Jaya’s non-Indonesian guests enjoy the deterritorialized Indonesian cuisines, for me and my compatriots dining there it is a reterritorialization action—probably after being tired of consuming deterritorialized foods from other cultures or global foods such McDonalds and Domino Pizza.

Wati’s insistence on using Indonesian at home with the children shows her reterritorialization strategy. Her family spending on two of the most elaborate and costly Javanese wedding customs in New York City for her children, as she said, was their effort to have traditional, home country wedding ceremonies despite not being in their home culture. Her repeated statements that she does not want to have children who ignore their religion, despite living in a kafir country, underscore her wish to maintain her roots. Meanwhile, Ipah’s reterritorializations are manifested in several ways, for example for
her regular phone calls and remittances, as well as her fondness for listening to Javanese wayang and traditional plays on tape. Meanwhile, Sulas is reterritorializing herself through her active community involvements and through religion. In short, all of our heroines here are involved in the dialectic of deterritorialization and reterritorialization, albeit the different strategies and various daily practices.

Dwelling in the House of Tomorrow:

The 1.5- and Second-Generation of Indonesian New Yorkers

Your children are not your children.
They are the sons and daughters of Life's longing for itself.
They come through you but not from you,
And though they are with you, yet they belong not to you.
You may give them your love but not your thoughts.
For they have their own thoughts.
You may house their bodies but not their souls,
For their souls dwell in the house of tomorrow, which you cannot visit, not even in your dreams.


As I mentioned in Chapter II, one of the main issues in transnationalism studies is whether the transnational lives will last over generations. Unlike their parents, who have been culturally centered by their homeland, the 1.5- and second-generations grow up in different cultures. While the first-generation understandably maintains their ties with the homeland, later generations potentially have a different mode of adaptation with the host cultures. Therefore, this section will deal with the issue of how their deterritorialized parents’ reterritorializing efforts in living their lives in a foreign land affect the 1.5- and
second-generations of Indonesian Muslims New Yorkers. Together with other 1.5- and second-generations from other ethnicities, they are undoubtedly experiencing the diversity of New York as the quintessential city of migrants. As many as 29 percent of 18- to 32-year-old New Yorkers are 1.5- and second-generation. Another 29 percent of this age group are the immigrants who arrived after the age of twelve. Meanwhile, in this age group, 13.1 percent are African-American and 6.6 percent Puerto Rican. More astoundingly, 62.4 percent of New Yorkers under 18 are 1.5- or second-generation immigrants (Kasinitz, Mollenkopf, & Waters, 2004b).

Out of my conversations with several 1.5- and second-generation Indonesians, I singled out five to be interviewed. I interviewed them at least twice, in addition to several casual conversations whenever I met them socially. I also sat in a sort of focus group discussion with the girls. Kelly and Anne, both 1.5-generations, are sisters and are now in college. Both of their parents are Minangkabaus. Fiyona, a second-generation, is also in college. She wears a Muslim women’s scarf (jilbab) every day and is a regular attendee at Pengajian Ulil Albab every Friday evening at Masjid Al-Hikmah. Fiyona, Kelly, and Anne were products of, and now are teachers at, the Saturday School at Masjid Al-Hikmah.

Zaki, also second-generation, is the son of Indonesian Arab parents. He is majoring in business at a college now, and is working for a copy center. He is the most religious person among my 1.5- and second-generations informants. I saw him almost every time I went to Masjid Al-Hikmah for evening prayer. Meanwhile, Rizki is Mucharor’s and Wati’s first son, and is married to an Indonesian woman. He works as an
avionic engineer for a cargo airline, and is setting up a company with his colleague providing flight recorder analysis service. He has a three-year-old son. Although Rizki and his wife do not live in Manhattan, they insisted on going to a birth clinic there in order for their son to have “New York, New York” as the place of birth on his birth certificate. Since Rizki’s own company is now seeking cooperation with Bandung Institute of Technology, one of the most prestigious universities in Indonesia, to develop sophisticated equipment to put in airplanes, he visits Indonesia rather frequently.

When I asked these five informants whether they experienced any sort of discrimination or any problems just because they were Indonesians, they said that they did not. Most of their classmates were also immigrant children, and they had only a few, if any, white classmates. Indeed, more than 140 languages and 200 countries are represented in New York’s public schools—and as many as 13.2 percent of the city’s 1.1 million students are learning English as a second language (Lipsit, 2003). They acknowledged that their teachers and classmates know little about Islam, and unlike what Ahmad & Szapra (2003) found, they said they never felt systematically discriminated against or stereotyped. In addition, my respondents said that most of their friends do not know about Indonesia. As Fiyona mentioned,

They thought we were Filipino, Thai, Vietnamese, Chinese—everything except Indonesian. They don’t think we are Muslims, they do not believe that we are Muslims. They think that Muslims are Indians, Arabs, Bangladeshi or Pakistani. We are “Chinese” so we can’t be Muslims [laughter].
Due to their small numbers, Indonesian youths in the U.S., let alone in New York City, have not formed their own distinct subculture. For instance, while Indian-diaspora youth around the world, including those in New York, embrace bhangra (a fusion of Hindi music with American rap, reggae, disco, and techno) (Maira, 2002) to reterritorialize themselves, there is no such thing for Indonesian youth. However, some of them form clusters of Indonesian friends, especially those who grew up together. Anne, Kelly and Fiyona, for example, have belonged to a group since they were kids. The group hangs out almost weekly, visiting each other’s houses. Although they have some non-Indonesian friends, most of their friends are Indonesians. Kelly said, “But I am much more comfortable with these people, because they have known us so long, since we were kids. We act like brothers and sisters. We don’t care if we blurb in front of them. With other people you have to watch yourself, you know.” Anne’s boyfriend is one of the members of this group, as well. They used to be members of Permias (the Association of Indonesian Students in the U.S.), joining Indonesians who come to New York for studying, and learned more Indonesian out of it. Kelly, Anne, Fiyona and Rizki have been involved in some cultural performances when they were active in Permias. They were all once also the members of a flag-hoisting unit in the Indonesian Independence Day celebration.

Food and language are two among many cultural representations that reterritorialize the 1.5- and second-generation Indonesians. I contend that they serve also as banal reminders that they are somehow tied to Indonesian culture. Food, from a cultural perspective, is not only a part of the daily routine, but it is also a boundary
marker, a medium of emotional bonding, and even a place where identity and politics is contested (McDonagh & Prothero, 2005). This is even more true in the transnational settings, where the availability of food material and the “foodscape” are different than those in the homeland (Oum, 2005). When I asked my respondents what they had for everyday meals, they unanimously told me that their families stick with rice. “Everyday,” said Anne. “I love it. I love anything my mom makes. She makes rendang, she makes sate, everything…,” said Zaki. As for Rizki, my only respondent who is married, food is one of the main reasons he married his Indonesian wife. He said, “That’s very important to me. My taste is for Indonesian food. My tongue is an Indonesian tongue. I have to have rice, and I like sambel terasi and fried fish. You know, no American women can stand the smell when you cook sambel terasi.”

As Heller (1987) has reminded us, language becomes an ethnic marker as well as its and indicator of “authenticity.” My respondents told me that their parents address them in Indonesian, or even in their ethnic language. Fiyona’s parents, for example, use the Minangkabau language at home: “They talk to me in Minang, and then we answer in English. My parents never speak Indonesian. Whenever my dad speaks Indonesian, he sounds funny.” She said that she picked up Indonesian from friends and music. Kelly’s and Anne’s parents, on the other hand, speak Indonesian and Minang. However, they speak English with their Indonesian friends, because they are more comfortable with it. Anne said, “For example, I say something that I think is not rude, but for other people it is rude. We laugh at each other when we speak Indonesian, because we sound bad.” Rizki probably is the most fluent, and my interviews and conversations with him were
conducted basically in Indonesian. Only when he had difficulty in expressing his mind, did he speak English, which was quite seldom. He speaks Indonesian at home with his wife, and even with his two-year-old son, “I want him to get used to me speaking Indonesian, you know. Like us, he will automatically be able to speak English later. So it would be regrettable if he doesn’t speak Indonesian. That’s why my wife and I speak Indonesian at home.”

Growing up in the New York milieu has given these young people a different way to see Indonesia as well as America. Everybody said that for their parents America is to make a living, to grab the opportunity, to work, to support a family. One thing that came out when I asked how their parents support the family was their admiration and appreciation of their parents. It is not unusual for the parents to have double jobs. For instance, Rizki said, “I am the oldest child, and I saw my dad struggling, you know, to earn an honest living. That’s why maybe I have my entrepreneur spirit now from seeing how hard my dad was working.”

These respondents were also fully aware that their parents want to spend their old age in Indonesia, once the kids are established—getting married and finishing school. For them, America is their life—they were raised here. Indonesia is not the place for them to return to. Kelly said, “For us Indonesia is to have fun and here is to live our life. That’s what we do. We go to Indonesia for vacation.” Fiyona said that she wants to live Indonesia. When I asked why, Kelly interjected, “Because somebody is there now…” Fiyona laughed, and continued, “Well actually six months here and six months there.
During the winter we are there, and during the summer we are here. Yeah, I want to live in Indonesia, but when I have kids, I will come back here for their education. That’s my plan.”

Indeed, Fiyona has developed stronger ties with Indonesia and Islam recently. For example, she listens to Indonesian music all the time and knows the latest hit songs. When I saw her in the Indonesian Independence Day celebration at the General Consulate office, she was wearing a red inner headscarf and white outer headscarf, and red shirt and white long skirt. She looked great. Red and white are, of course, the colors of the Indonesian flag. I said, “Fiyona, red and white.” She proudly replied, “Of course!” It was also her visit to Indonesia that led her to the decision to wear jilbab. Here is her story:

I started to wear the Muslim scarf last year. Nothing, no bad comments from the people I knew. Only, “Oh you look better with the jilbab!” That’s it, but nothing bad. Even from my American friends. [It started when] I came back from Indonesia. I met with my dad’s brothers. They are not fanatics, but their religion is very strong. They gave my dad a book for me to read. I read an article in it; it was about the tortures women will get in the Hell. It’s scary [laughter]. Well, it is not only about jilbab. It is also about other bad deeds like backbiting, gossiping, and stuff like that. Yes, I was scared, but I wear this for other reasons, though. And I feel more confidence now. I like it. I like it very much. Well, back then nobody knew that we were Muslims. But after September 11, I feel more pride in
being Muslim. I want to show everybody that I am a Muslim. Because Muslims aren’t what American people think. My friends never said bad things about Islam.

As I mentioned above, Fiyona is the only second-generation Indonesians that I saw regularly attending Pengajian Ulil Albab, an Islamic study group held by the Indonesian Student Association. In the middle of the interview, she kept glancing the clock on the wall. I thought she was bored with the interview, until she asked whether she could leave the interview for five minutes because she did not want to miss the evening prayer which was almost over.

Interestingly, Fiyona was not the only one to find Indonesia as a place that ignites religious fervor. Zaki, after a short retreat to Indonesia, found his religious thrust that has led him to a decisive turn of his life—at least until now.

“No, I Am Not a Born-Again Muslim, but Maybe More Devout”:

Zaki and His Realization

Whenever I went to Masjid Al-Hikmah for the evening prayers, I usually saw Zaki there. He said that he had been visiting the mosque almost every night for a month. Among my 1.5- and second generation respondents, only he was into religion. He has gone to Tegal, his parents’ hometown in Indonesia, six times. His last visit, in 2004, made him realize that he needed to devote more time to religion, and as a consequence to abandon his ambition to be a rap artist. A couple weeks earlier, he decided to leave the group with which he had been involved for many years so that he would have more time
for religious study. When I met Zaki’s father at a gathering, we talked about him. His father talked about him very proudly, holding his chest, and was thankful to God for Zaki’s change in direction. I had been told previously that Zaki’s father knows most of the Qur’an by heart. He told me how Zaki spent a lot of his own money on CDs and books on Islam, including a set of the Qur’an exegesis by the classical interpreter Ibn Kathir, which is quite expensive. Zaki credited his parents with teaching him the fundamental teachings of Islam. He told me,

Most of basic knowledge I got from them, from my parents. They taught us how to pray, the letters of the Qur’an, but nothing really deep, you know, just the basic stuff, the fundamentals. They paved the platform for me. When I was in elementary school, they taught me to read the Qur’an everyday, yeah. So, every evening after *maghrib* [evening] prayer, we all sat together.

But it was his visit to his parents’ hometown in Central Java that he had time to ponder about his life, which awakened his interest in learning more about Islam. Then, the advancements of media technology enabled him to find an alternative avenue to study religion, instead of going to traditional clerics or seeking formal religious education.

Putut (P): You told me that now you feel an urge to study. When did you feel that strongly for the first time?

Zaki (Z): I think when I came back from Tegal in the summer of 2004. It was just like, . . . not an awakening; it was more like little things that, you know, kept bringing me closer to that direction. And finally like, I have this urge, I finally want to dedicate my life to the religion. It was not just one thing, it was like a series of things. Basically I came back from Tegal with a realization . The realization that is the way I want to go in my life. You know that sometimes people have ambitions to be rich, to be like the most successful. I realized it was not really my ambition. That’s like this is it, this is where I want to go.
P: What did you do after that realization?

Z: I didn’t act upon it yet, because I didn’t really know how to act upon it. I bought some books, CDs, and started learning.

With his new urge, Zaki devotes his time to studying Islam, discarding his—and his friends’—dream to be a successful rap musician. In order to reclaim his identity, Zaki felt it was necessary to discard another identity that he thought was contradictory. Furthermore, the fact that there was no White in his rap group reflects the experience of the second-generation immigrant in New York City, where these youths interact more with other children of immigrants. Consequently, it is not into the mainstream White America that these children will assimilate. Zaki, for example, was about ready to enter the hip hop subculture.

P: You said before that you like music. What kind of music?

Z: I make rap music. Before I went to Indonesia, that was what I wanted to do. I wanted to be…, like, I wanted to make rap music. I wanted to make money, you know. Back then, I was quite persistent about it, you know. I have a lot of friends, and we do the same things, and we all work together. Yeah, with a circle of people, five of us, that I work together with, and maybe for good, for a lot of years. It’s called the Crown City. That had been my focus [laughter]. We made a record.

P: Are they Indonesians?

Z: No, most of them are Spanish, and one is Black.

P: So you are into religion now.

Z: Now, the urge I have now is for religion, I had the urge like that for music. I like music, you know. I guess because I grew up in that environment. You know, it was my passion, my ambition, something that I wanted to do. And I realized Is this the way a Muslim should be? You know, would this be right? And I always had a doubt, you know, nothing strong, I mean just a little bit, that it might be wrong. You know, my passion was bigger than my doubt. Back then, my passion
defeated my doubt. Yeah, I liked music, I liked it. I liked what I was doing, it was fun. And I met a lot of people. They liked my talent, you know, they liked my music. And it was something I devoted myself to. But you know, I always had that doubt.

So, I guess when I went to Tegal, I took a break from everything, like I was really away for the first time for a long time. And I was away for about three weeks, and you know you reflect when you are not distracted so much by your routine. I guess I had a lot of time to reflect, so when I came back the doubt grew bigger than the passion [laughter]. But I still have the passion, you know.

But a month a go, I came to the conclusion that this is not what I want to do. And I informed all the members of the circle about it. I said, “This is not me.” I told them, my life is going this way, and it is not going that way. And I told them, “I am telling you now, before, you know, we’re famous. Before it’s too late, you know, before I am knee deep. You know when you are knee deep you can’t turn back. So I am doing it now.” Because I feel it strong, like the doubt is stronger, and my passion for the religion is stronger than it was. And I know, the more I learn the more I am gonna go this way. So, I told them. It got to the point where I knew, that was when I had to tell my friends. I can’t hide from anybody. Because it wouldn’t be right for me and so for anyone else, you know.

P: And what was their reaction?

Z: A few were surprised. Because they noticed, like, little by little I come here [the mosque] a lot more, and they noticed that. So they had an idea. And, you know, we are friends. I am glad we were friends before, so they respect my decision. But I told them if you need me I am here to support you. Because what I do I is edit the music. I don’t want to betray them. I said that I still want to help, and I am still your friend. I still want to help you to fulfill your dream, you know. And I just hope you respect me and my goals.

P: So you still write music.

Z: I still write, but not that much. It’s dwindling [laughter].

Zaki thinks that what he is doing is not something entirely new. He is reasserting what he has had all along, which was temporarily buried under something else that later he considers as not him. He refused to use the term “born-again Muslim” to describe his situation.
P: Did you tell you parents about your decision?

Z: You know, my parents love it very much. You know, now I realize they’ve been great parents. They never judged me [doing the music]. They never said don’t do that, even though probably they knew that it was probably not halal [lawful according to Islamic law] or something [laughter]. They knew it. My mom told me here and there, but my dad supported me. I was surprised, he was supportive.

P: How did he support you?

Z: He said, “Why don’t you go perform, why don’t you go to MTV.” I said I was not there yet [laughter]. But it was coming from a real religious person, that was shocking to me. This is when I was real persistent. He was not saying don’t do that or something. Actually he gave a push, you know. It means a lot, and now when I look back it means a lot. Even though it may not be the way he wanted it.

P: Okay, you have told your friends, your mom, your dad, so do you think that you will have a new life?

Z: I hope so. I hope so. I keep praying to God to guide me, to keep me going this way. I don’t wanna go the different way. But who knows, you know. But insha Allah [God willing] I wanna go this way.

P: Can you consider yourself as a born-again Muslim?

Z: Emm… I am not….. I don’t wanna say that. I always prayed, I never doubted the importance of prayer, because it was brought up since I was young. So praying is always embedded in me. So I don’t think I am a born again, but maybe more devout [laughters].

I singled out my rather lengthy interview with Zaki to be presented here to show the fluidity of identity. Above all, Zaki’s story is not typical of 1.5- or second generation Indonesians. “He is probably one out of a million,” a Masjid Al-Hikmah activist commented about Zaki. Putting aside the issue of generalization, Zaki’s story shows us the complexity of terrain the 1.5- and second-generation immigrant children in New York City are facing, as well as the complexity of their response.
Growing up Transnational, Growing Pains?

The stories above may be deceptive, as if the lives of 1.5- and second generation Indonesians are always as smooth as my respondents’. Kelly, Anne and their mother told me that some Indonesians just couldn’t stand their parents, and couldn’t wait until they were eighteen-years-old, the age at which they can legally live separate from their parents. The main problems, unsurprisingly, are the culture clash, the pressure to succeed, and the barrier of communication. “Their parents were too strict. They got mad. They want to be free,” said Anne. Intergenerational disharmonies have been noted by some studies, showing that the process of incorporating the second-generation into the larger society is not necessarily linear. It even leads to the suicide ideation among the second-generation. For example, a random survey of San Diego public schools found that 45.6 percent of Filipina females and 29.4 percent of Filipino males said they had seriously considered suicide (suicidal ideation). Moreover, about a half of those numbers (23.3 percent and 12 percent for females and males, respectively) actually attempted suicide at least once in the preceding year (Espiritu & Wolf, 2001).

In this regard, I think three modes of second-generation segmented assimilation proposed by Portes and Rumbaut (2001) are useful. They argue that assimilation into American society certainly takes place, “but the key question is to what sectors of the society and in what conditions does this occur” (p. 302, italics in original). They identify three possible assimilation paths, depending on the situation: assimilating into “mainstream” white America, obstructed at times by discrimination; assimilation combined with biculturalism and ethnic networks; and embracing oppositional and
antisocial culture. The last is manifested in, among other things, drug and gang culture, which lead to what they call downward assimilation. The first two, on the other hand, lead to upward assimilation and social mobility, producing generally positive outcomes for the second generation. I would say that the 1.5- and second-generation Indonesian Muslims I met in New York City are now taking the second path, upward assimilation combined with biculturalism and ethnic networks. All of my respondents are college students, with the exception of Rizki who has graduated from college and has even started his own high-tech company. As I have described above, their first generation parents’ reterritorialization strategies have maintained their bonds in many ways with Indonesia and Islam.

Furthermore, Kasinitz et al. (2004b) noticed that the children of New York immigrants use the term “American” in two different ways. My Indonesian respondents, I found, were not exceptions. First, they use it to refer the homogeneous America, probably White America. For example, as I quoted above, Fiyona wanted to show that Islam is not what “American people are thinking.” Second, they use it in relation to their cultures, values, and behaviors that frequently are juxtaposed with their parents’. Zaki, for example, said,

I was born here. So I am an American, and I am born to this society, so anything that my parents might see as wrong, I might not see it as wrong. Like homosexuality, they might say something about it, but I see it this is America. You know, it’s free. The point of view is different, you know what I mean.
Also important is the fact that, as Kasinitz et al. (2004b) show, particularly in New York City, many 1.5- and second-generation immigrants from different ethnicities interact with each other more than with “mainstream Americans.” They note that “the children of immigrants are creating a new kind of multiculturalism—not balkanized groups huddled within their own enclaves but of hybrids and fluid exchanges across group boundaries” (p. 16). Therefore, at least in the context of contemporary New York City, the actual cultural contacts on a day-to-day basis of the children of immigrants happen between them rather than with mainstream homogenous America. Zaki’s friends in the rap group are Latinos and Black. Kelly’s boyfriend is an Indian Muslim from Trinidad parents. The Indonesian groups to which Kelly, Anne, and Fiyona belong, they have a Latino friend who hangs out with them. Rizki’s sister’s husband is a Dominican who converted to Islam, while the co-founder of his company is an African-American Muslim who married an Indonesian woman.

To conclude, the reterritorialization strategies of newcomer immigrants, made possible by the advancement of communication and transportation technologies, have produced modes of interaction with the larger society different from what the previous immigrants have experienced. In exactly what kind of the successive generations will live in the future, we don’t know yet now. We do not know for sure, because, as Gibran said, it is their “house of tomorrow”.
Conclusion

In this chapter, I have shown the inseparable process of deterritorialization and reterritorialization of Indonesian Muslims in New York City. It can be seen as an answer to Delueze and Guattrari’s (1987) rhetorical question quoted in the epigraph at the beginning of this chapter, “How could movements of deterritorialization and process of reterritorialization not be relative, always connected, caught up in one another?” (p. 10). This chapter suggests that although the connection between place and culture may be waning, thanks to the process of deterritorialization, it does not mean that culture-place connection disappears altogether. The deterritorialized people keep striving to reinsert and negotiate their culture into the new spatial context so that the culture does not necessarily belong to a particular place. The context of New York City is diverse, and therefore each group of deterritorialized people is experiencing multiple fronts of cultural encounters. The need to reinscribe the cultural identity is even more exigent as groups see each other as partners as well as competitors of migration (e.g. Lessinger, 2001). Indeed, Hall (1992) has reminded us that “Identity arises not so much from the fullness of identity which is already inside us as individuals, but from lack of wholeness which is filled from outside us, by the ways we imagine ourselves to be seen by others” (p. 287).

The double movement of deterritorialization and reterritorialization, of course, is a particularly salient phenomenon among first generation transnational people for a very obvious reason: They used to live in a milieu where they were immersed in the culture in their land of origin. With respect to Indonesian transnationals, I have shown in this chapter that reterritorialization has been manifested in many efforts, such as the creation
of ethnic associations, the rhetorical strategy of comparison, and the identity performance in the rites of passage. However, these reterritorialization efforts have also become the quotidian experience of the 1.5- and second-generations because their parents certainly also exercise this process at home, in the language spoken at home, the food, and the cultural artifacts adorning the house.
CHAPTER VII
IDENTITIES AND PUBLIC SPHERICULES:
MEDIA AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGIES IN THE
TRANSNATIONAL MILIEUS

The role of media in the construction of contemporary cultural identities which assumes the existence of a unified and sedentary population occupying a unitary public sphere, within the secure boundaries of a given geographical territory, is unlikely to be adequate in understanding significant aspects of our contemporary situation.


Does it not look as though the public sphere, in failing, has shattered into a scatter of globules, like mercury?


This chapter describes how both the production and consumption of media have become a part of the deterritorialization and reterritorialization process of Indonesian transnational Muslims in New York City. I will elucidate how various forms of media (ranging from the printed word to electronic media to the Internet) are produced, circulated, and consumed in the transnational environments in relation to the issue of identity. Transnational television and radio (except Internet radio) are not discussed because they do not yet exist in the context of Indonesian transantiornals. Furthermore, I will discuss the media use of the 1.5- and second-generation Indonesians separately, because I think it is important to recognize the inter-generational difference in this regard. As I have shown in the previous chapter, that the first- and the subsequent generations experience their transnational lives differently, albeit not separately.
Besides the logic of deterritorialization and reterritorialization issue, another underlying theme throughout this chapter is the notion of the public sphericule in the transnational context. As I discussed in Chapter 2, Habermas’ (1989) notion of the public sphere (where all ideas and representations have the same position, and everybody in the sphere has equal access to them) has been criticized as too idealistic. Gitlin (1989) lamented that such a unitary public sphere has been fading with the fragmentation of the public, as shown by fragmentation of the media and the development of narrowcasting. Instead of the public sphere, we find many public sphericules. It has been argued also that transnational media have helped the formation of transnational public spheres for migrants. Here, based on Gitlin’s notion, I side with Cunningham (2001) in using the term “public sphericules” instead of public sphere because it is more appropriate with the reality. However, it should be noted that Gitlin’s notion on public sphericules is quite pessimistic because for him it means the deteriorating of democracy. In the context of transnational lives, to the contrary, the public sphericules are an important part of the transnationals’ lives in which they reterritorialize themselves in the foreign cultures. It is in the public sphericules that the transnationals exert and negotiate their identity as well as maintain their ties with the homeland through the circulation of words, voices, imageries, and memories.

The Friday Club and the Public Sphericules

After almost every Friday prayer in Masjid Al-Hikmah, some first generation elderly Indonesians go to a café to have lunch or snacks. Notosusanto (2005), in her
documentary video on Indonesians in New York City, with interviews with some of them, calls this small gathering the Friday Club. I went with them almost every Friday during my fieldwork and was involved in their conversation. Three of my male first-generation Indonesians were members of this “Club.” Because of the regular meeting, the Club has been very important for my understanding of the lives of Indonesian transnationals in New York City. We used to go to a café located in Elmhurst, Queens, which serves a variety of food, from shusi to cakes to chicken soup. All the waiters are Chinese, with customers from many ethnic backgrounds. We sat around two tables and the conversations were free-flowing. One minute everybody was talking about the same topic and in the next minute the dynamics might change with the group breaking up into several smaller groups of two or three people discussing either topics relevant with main topics or even completely different ones.

For two or three hours they would discuss many things—commenting on the sermon they had just heard in the mosque to fragments of Indonesian history, the news circulating within the Indonesian communities, or comparing what they could recall about the roads and buildings in Bandung, West Java. One day, for instance, responding to the London Bombing (in which a series of coordinated suicide bombings attacked London’s public transport system on July 7, 2005), we talked about how Muslims were always divided. Another day, there was a passionate discussion about Bahasa Indonesia, the Indonesian national language. Based on his involvement in many electronic mailing lists, Singgih lamented that many Indonesian youths use the Jakartan dialect of Indonesian so much that it might not be understood by Indonesians in the outer islands.
He then commented that had Indonesians not decided to abandon Dutch as part of the independence struggle, they might have had advantages in accessing science and technology as well as world literature. Pratomo fervently rejected this statement, saying that the decision to appropriate Indonesian as the national language was one of the ways in which the founding fathers united Indonesia. In his opinion Indonesian was not meant to eliminate local languages, and that was why he maintained his ability to speak Javanese. He proudly told us that many people were impressed by his fluency in high-level Javanese.

The regular meeting of the Club was apparently known to other people, so that occasionally non-members popped in. For example, one day an Indonesian who just came back from Indonesia joined the meeting. He informed the Club about what he saw in Indonesia. Since all of the members were somehow associated with Bandung, this guest talked a lot about the latest situation in this city: the new landmark bridge and malls, and a new popular satay restaurant. We talked about it for the whole meeting, with everybody trying to remember which road or part of Bandung the guest was talking about, or asking whether the buildings they remembered were still there. (One of the members said, “The girls of the school on this street were well-known for their beauty. Is the school still there?”) Rudimentary maps were drawn on napkins to jog the memories of people who had been away from Bandung for decades. I, myself, was quite excited because the guest had stayed in his relative’s house in Arcamanik, the part of Bandung where I live, so he could update me about the area.
The Friday Club members claimed their own territory in a public space of a café where they could reterritorialize themselves by being involved in conversations about the homeland and their transnational lives. Habermas (1989) informed us of the importance of rational debates that occurred in coffee houses for the cultivation of the public sphere of the bourgeoisies of 18th Century-England. The public sphere enabled the development of public discourse vis-a-vis the discourse promoted by the state and eventually it nurtured the parliamentary democracy system. I think the nature and the content of debates and conversations of the Friday Club would be equivalent to those that took place in Habermas’ coffee houses. However, as I mentioned above, I prefer to see it as one of many public sphericules where the members of the Club express and negotiate their identities as well as preserve their ties with the homeland. It is in their long-time and warm friendships and weekly face-to-face meetings that they conserve the sense of kinship in a foreign culture.

The Minuscule Print Capitalism and Print Media as Transnational Banal Reminders

According to Benedict Anderson (1991) in his oft-cited book, *Imagined Communities*, the development of “print capitalism” (the printing press under the system of capitalism) brought about national consciousness as imagined communities. He stated that print capitalism created a united field of communication and standardized the language. While Anderson described the emergence of this nationalism in Europe, he pointed out that a similar process was also experienced by colonized nations such as
Indonesia. He gave the example of a story written by the young Indonesian communist-nationalist Mas Marco Kartodikromo published serially in a newspaper in 1924. Anderson’s work has been so influential that I think many people are unaware that the renowned media scholar McLuhan (1962, 1964) had proposed the same argument about two decades earlier, dubbing the printed word the architect of nationalism. Both McLuhan (1962; 1964) and Anderson (1991) discussed the role of printed media in a certain geographical entity. Printing has turned vernaculars into extensive mass media, creating political unification of populations by means of vernacular and language groupings—something unthinkable before the emergence of print culture. Uniformity and repeatability of the printed page have “forced” standardized and “correct” spelling, syntax, and pronunciation. The diversity of dialects is reduced in the print media, creating a standard language that is more widely spoken and understood, and which, in turn, becomes the basic foundation of a nation. In his latter work, Anderson (1998) argued the same technology served to be the nexus of the homeland and the people who live abroad, nurturing what he called long-distance nationalism.

Against this backdrop, I shall discuss the printed media available for Indonesian transnationals in New York City. The first category is the transnational-homeland media, in which media from the homeland (e.g. news magazines *Tempo* and *Gatra*, as well as women’s magazines *Femina* and *Kartini*) are physically transported to the US. These magazines are sold in some grocery stores and Indonesian restaurants. In Padang Raya restaurant, for example, these magazines were displayed behind the cashier’s desk. The average price is $6, much higher than the price in Indonesia which is Rp. 15,000 (around
Edo Silalahi, the owner of Esindo International which distributes the magazines (as well as music and movie CDs from Indonesia), informed me that he had several outlets in New York City. According to him, although there are more Indonesians in New York City than they were five or four or five years earlier, the revenue from the magazines has plummeted to about 70 percent of the previous revenue. Besides the use of the Internet, he suggested that the drop might be caused by the availability of other media such as Indonesian karaoke, music and movie CDs, the sales of which have been growing in the past years. One of my respondents confirmed this by saying that he could get the news from the Internet. Besides, none of my respondents went to ethnic grocery stores and Indonesian restaurants frequently. One first-generation Indonesian woman told me that she used to subscribe to one of the news magazines but let her subscription lapse because it became too expensive. Besides, according to Wati, another first-generation woman, “We can still follow the news Indonesia through our phone conversations with our family there, right?” (my translation from Indonesian).

The second category is the intra-transnational media, which are published by and intended for the transnational people. In this category, I found two types of Indonesian intra-transnational media: commercial and non-commercial. The commercial media are distributed freely and rely on advertising for revenue. Examples of such media are *Topik Indonesia, Voice of Indonesia, Actual Indonesian News, Indonesian Journal, Indonesia Media,* and *Karisma* (California) (Figure 9). During my fieldwork, I frequently found the current issues of weekly *Topik Indonesia* (published in Philadelphia) in Upi Jaya and
Padang Raya restaurants. Meanwhile, media published in California (such as *Actual Indonesian News*, *Indonesian Journal*, *Indonesia Media*, and *Karisma*) were found only in the General Consulate Office. The only media published in New York City, *Voice of Indonesia*, discontinued publication several months prior to my fieldwork.

Figure 9. Some commercial Indonesian intra-transnational media

The advertisements printed in these media are diverse, ranging from law offices offering their immigration services, real estate brokers, travel agencies, restaurants, grocery stores, and beauty salons, to church events. Most of the content is news about Indonesia with the majority printed in Indonesian ("cut and pasted" from Indonesian media), though some is in English (taken from other foreign news media). Only a few articles or news items are produced in-house by the staff or reporters of these media.
According to Richardus T.H., the former editor of the *Voice of Indonesia*, most such media have not become cash cows for their founders. Although business-wise these media are profitable, they are not big enough to operate as full-fledged media companies with sizeable full-time staffs and reporters. Indeed, the capital involved and market size are still minuscule (hence the “minuscule print capitalism”) compared to the much bigger migrant communities who have a bigger media industry such as the Latino (e.g. Benitez, 2005; Levine, 2001) and Chinese (Zhou & Chai, 2002) communities.

None of my respondents said that they habitually or frequently read these Indonesian intra-transnational media. Singgih said that since he checked regularly the news on Indonesia on the Internet, the news in printed media was outdated for him. Another respondent felt that these media were not really intended for her or other Muslims. She particularly mentioned the advertisements of church events and services (the Mass schedule, visit of popular church singers or preachers from Indonesia visiting New York City, etc.). Although published quite regularly, these media are not eagerly awaited by Indonesians to be read regularly as part of their reterritorialization strategy, without which they would become detached from the news from home. When I asked an Indonesian I saw reading *Topik Indonesia* whether he read regularly, he said: “No, I sometimes take it. I read it just to pass the time, while my wife is doing shopping in there.”

Non-commercial offerings are another type of Indonesian intra-transnational media. An example of this type is *Berita Bulanan Al-Hikmah* (the monthly newsletter of Al-Hikmah). This is usually sent out to the people on the Masjid Al-Hikmah data base
together with the announcements of monthly gatherings and Cakra (the monthly bulletin of Cakra) which is distributed in the Javanese association’s monthly meeting (Figure 10). Previously, Berita Bulanan Al-Hikmah was published in the form of a booklet, but due to a limited budget it currently is in pamphlet form. It prints the news about the activities of Masjid Al-Hikmah and its community (e.g. births and deaths in the families). Meanwhile, Cakra is published in booklet form, and even it has a color cover on its April-May 2006 issue. In addition to news about the association’s activities, Cakra also prints some articles. For instance, in the third issue (April-May 2006) we can find articles on the Javanese in Suriname and New Caledonia, Javanese shadow puppets, and jokes in the Javanese language.

Figure 10. Non-commercial Indonesian intra-transnational media. The Masjid Al-Hikmah newsletter was originally done as a booklet (second from the left), but now appears as a pamphlet (far left).
After examining the contents and the media consumption pattern of Indonesian Muslims, I argue neither the commercial nor non-commercial intra-transnational media is the major arena where its consumption and production involve the identity issue at stake. However, I maintain that these media do undoubtedly function among the many banal reminders of Indonesian transnationals. Using Billig’s (1995) metaphor, these media serve like the flags on the public buildings in the homeland—they are unnoticed, yet continuously and banally remind people of the existence of the nation, and hence banally reproduce the nation. In Billig’s catchy words, “These reminders are so banal, so familiar, so that the remembering, not being remembered as remembering, is forgotten” (p. 38).

In addition to transnational-homeland and intra-transnational media, there is one inter-transnational media available free to the congregants of Masjid Al-Hikmah. Every Friday, around 20 copies of *Muslims Weekly* newspaper (published in Queens, NY) are placed in the hallway of the mosque. The articles and news in the newspaper are both about the Islamic world (such issues as the war in Iraq, the plight of the Palestinians, Muslims in Europe, and Islam in Pakistan and India, etc) and Muslims in America (the issues of anti-Muslim sentiment, the growth of Hispanic Muslims, etc). After the Friday prayer I noticed few Indonesians picking up this newspaper, most issues were taken by non-Indonesian congregants. Sometimes several copies remained. I think this reflects the detachment of the congregants about what are considered the issues of worldwide *ummah* and “Pan-American Islam” which unite all American Muslims in similar concerns. It augments what I have described on the earlier chapter about the fragmented *umma*—the
fragmentation of Muslims in the U.S., despite the importance of the concept of *umma*, the worldwide community of believers, in Islamic teaching.

**From Puppet Shows to Religious Sermons:**

**The Electronic Media That Bind**

At a bazaar held in the parking lot of Masjid Al-Hikmah, I saw one vendor selling CDs and DVDs of Indonesian music and movies. When I talked to him, he told me this was his side business while his permanent job is as the chef of an Indonesian restaurant in Lower Manhattan. He did not have an outlet for his products, so he sold them through the gatherings such as bazaars or sold them person-to-person. He is one of two distributors of Indonesian CDs and DVDs in New York City. The other is Esindo International which distributed the magazines I mentioned previously. Apparently a more established venture, Esindo International has several outlets in New York City. For instance, it has a display in a grocery store, in the aisle dedicated to products from Indonesia like shrimp crackers, instant noodles, and other ingredients (Figure 11). Both informed me that contemporary pop and rock music and movies sold better than the “oldies-but-goodies” records. According to them, this is because of the number of relative newcomers compared to the Indonesians who came much earlier.
A person like Ipah, a first-generation Indonesian female, had her own way to get the products that fit with her taste. She enthusiastically showed me her VCD collection when we talked about wayang and dhagelan (Javanese traditional puppet show and comedy, respectively). After being retired, she had plenty of time to enjoy her favorite eccentric puppeteer Ki Joko Edan (literally Joko “Crazy) and the comedy group Kirun and Friends. “When I feel homesick and do not have to go out, I could stay all day long watching these VCDs. Often times after I finish one story, I watch them again from the beginning,” she said (in Indonesian) and laughed. She bought most of the VCDs when she went to Indonesia, or asked somebody coming from there to bring them for her. Wati brought a box of records of some Indonesian artists when she came with her children to rejoin with her husband in 1988. For the difficult first year, the records consoled her
whenever she felt homesick. Now she keeps karaoke VCDs of *dangdut* music and Indonesian traditional songs in her collection, and puts them on when there is a gathering in her house. For example, after the first meeting of the Javanese association Cakra I saw some women singing *Bajing Luncat* (a Sundanese traditional song) on the karaoke. VCDs and records have helped Ipah and Wati, as well as many other Indonesians, to mitigate their homesickness for the homeland. They reterritorialize their presence abroad by inserting their own cultural expressions into a foreign environment.

Wati also had several VCDs of Islamic sermons delivered by a widely popular Indonesian preacher, Abdullah Gymnastiar, commonly known as Aa Gym (see Sipress, 2004). “His language is very good, and when he leads the prayer I could cry, because it’s so moving,” she said (in Indonesian). Indeed, Aa Gym is quite popular among Indonesian Muslims in New York City, despite the fact that he has never visited the Big Apple. When I asked Karma about Aa Gym upon seeing several VCDs of his sermon in his house, he replied, “He talks about our daily life, not complicated things. He also walks the talk. And his Sundanese accent resonates with me” (my translation from Indonesian). Even Anne, a 1.5-generation Indonesian, recognized his name and told me that her mother listened to his sermons as well. My respondents, however, were not aware of either the popular Muslim preachers working in the U.S. who originated from the Middle East and South Asia or the “home-grown” American Muslim.

Levitt (2004) pointed out that transnational religious practices are ways in which immigrants stay connected to their homeland. One example she put forward is the Catholic Mass of Brazilian immigrants in Boston, which are recorded and then sent to
Brazil to be aired by local television stations there. For those who stay at home, this broadcast gives them a chance to spot their relatives and to catch a glimpse of their lives in the foreign land. Although Indonesian Muslims in New York City have not reached the point of the Brazilians, they have already expanded the global role of religion in transnational lives. As Levitt (2004) puts it, they “extend and deepen their cross-border ties by transnationalizing everyday religious practices” (Levitt, 2004, p. 2).

The Separation, the Marginalization, and the Internet

I mentioned in Chapter II that there are two intertwined issues discussed in considering the use of the Internet in the context of transnationalism, i.e. for maintaining transnational ties and for the arena in which the transnational people express their identity and voice their marginality. This section will deal with these two issues, and will be divided into four parts. First, I will discuss whether the Internet has become the social glue (Vertovec, 2004) of transnationalism. I then will describe the efforts to build virtual homes that have been done by the community to use the Internet in their transnational lives, and the failure of such efforts. The use of electronic mailing lists (using Yahoo! Group free services) will be discussed next. Being aware of the dynamic and diversity of the appropriation of the Internet in the transnational lives, I also will describe how an aged person uses it in his daily life. Finally, I will present my conclusion of this section, showing the less influential role of the Internet in the lives of Indonesian transnationals.
**The Internet as the Social Glue of Transnationalism?**

Most of my first-generation respondents have an Internet connection at home and most of them share the connection with their children. They use the Internet to keep abreast with the news from the homeland. Not only do they check the news in the national newspapers available online, they also follow the news in the regional newspapers from where they came from. Thus, besides online versions of national newspapers such as *Kompas Cyber Media* and *Republika Online*, Zaini would visit *Serambi* (Aceh) and *Waspada* (North Sumatra), Karma and Singgih would check *Pikiran Rakyat* (West Java), and Mucharor would read *Jawa Pos* (East Java). Mucharor read the more specific section of *Jawa Pos*:

I read it because it has the *Radar Tulungagung* section [with news of the city of Tulungagung and other cities nearby], so that I can follow the news about Blitar [Mucharor’s home town]. So I follow the news about the head of the Blitar regency being charged with corruption, tried and then jailed. (my translation from Indonesian)

Before the Internet age, it was difficult (and costly) to follow such news, because people had to rely on the news magazines and newspapers. These media came late because they had to be physically transported from Indonesia.

Following Anderson (1991), we would see these first-generations belonging to an imagined community called “Indonesia,” due not only the news from the homeland (and the home town) they acquired from checking the online newspapers, but also to their efforts to maintain themselves as the members of the imagined community. They shared
the feeling of simultaneity (proposed by Anderson as the primal genesis of awareness of nations as imagined communities) of experience instigated by the media. By consuming similar news, they share the same experience as their compatriots in Indonesia, so that although the members of the imagined community “will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion” (p. 6). Anderson’s focus was the historical roots of nationalism genesis, and therefore he pointed out the role of “print capitalism” in the construction of imagined communities. With the advancement of electronic communications, including the Internet, other forms of electronic capitalism have emerged, which as Appadurai (1996) has pointed out “can have similar, and even more powerful effects, for they do not work only at the level of the nation-state” (p. 8). Appadurai proposed different terminology, i.e. “community of sentiment,” to describe a group of people that “begins to imagine and feel things together” (p. 8).

Another Internet feature that can potentially be utilized by transnational communities to maintain their bonds to the homeland are electronic mail (e-mail), electronic group discussion (such as available from Yahoo! Groups), and instant messaging (Internet chatting). Using these features, the deterritorialized transnational people can be in touch with their kin frequently. In this sense, many features of the Internet can serve as what Vertovec (2004) called social glue. However, I found that all of my respondents prefer to use prepaid phone cards to the Internet for maintaining regular contacts with their families back home. My conversations with them reveal three
intertwined reasons why prepaid phone cards are more desirable. First of all is the obvious issue of the digital divide. As Singgih told me,

The Internet access might not be a problem for us. But it might for them; they have to go to the warnet (warung internet, or Internet café) for that. The Internet is easy and cheap on my end. My cousins asked me to send a letter instead, whenever I want to send them news. (My translation from Indonesian)

Secondly, the asynchronous Internet communication also impedes the transnational migrants’ use of such Internet features as e-mail. Wati pointed out:

If you send an email, you have to wait for their reply, which might come tomorrow, or days after that. If you use the phone, you can communicate at once. Besides, you can hear them talking, you can hear their voices, you can interact directly. (My translation from Indonesian)

Therefore, the asynchronicity of e-mail communications fosters a lack of intimacy with the person on the other end. The intimacy of immediate communication, naturally, is something that the transnational people highly value.

The third reason is the availability and affordability of prepaid phone cards. Such cards can be found easily in the ethnic groceries and general stores in Queens or other places in immigrant neighborhoods. At Topline, an ethnic grocery store which has one aisle filled with products from Indonesia, one of the phone cards was advertised in Indonesian (Figure 12).
Indeed, the availability and affordability of phone cards were mentioned as the primary reasons why they are popular. One respondent recalled that before the time of phone cards, in order to make cheap calls to Indonesia, some people (like immigrants from other countries) took the risk of buying an illegal access code for five dollar. One place where such transactions happened was the Port Authority Bus Station in mid-town Manhattan. They could talk for hours with the code, but they were advised to use a public phone when making a call. She said (in Indonesian): “I don’t know how they got the numbers, but I think they got it from insiders in the telephone company.” It is the affordability of such cards that enables Fiyona, a second-generation Indonesian, to call her boyfried in Indonesia three times a day. That was in addition to the three or so Internet chats a week. She said smilingly: “When I go to work, I call him. When I have
lunch, I call him. And then before I go to sleep. . . . One week, I spent $40, so a month, about $160."

For Vertovec (2004), the importance of prepaid phone cards has become the social glue of transnational migrants, despite the development of such other technologies as the Internet and satellite television. The introduction of such technologies as fibre optics and low-orbiting satellites has increased the supply of telephone connections which in turn leads to a competitive market, pushing the price down. Vertovec shows that migrants have increasingly used the international call by examining the telephone traffic of migrant-sending and migrant-receiving countries. From her research on the migrants in Australia, Wilding (2006) showed that although the Internet has contributed to some changes in the ways the migrants communicate, it did not entirely supersede communication by letters and telephone. In the context of Indonesian transnationals, I agree with Vertovec’s (2004) suggestion that:

For many of today’s migrants, transnational connectivity through cheap telephone calls is at the heart of their lives. . . . [I]nternational telephone calls join migrants and their significant others in ways that are deeply meaningful to people on both ends of the line. (p. 223)

Indeed, prepaid telephone cards have been used to reproduce and reaffirm transnational bonds by transnational people. Although it has to be noted that the frequent calls do not mean that the distance across the ocean is eliminated (e.g., Wilding, 2006). In fact, especially in a time of crisis the distance and separation are reemphasized and reaffirmed
by the cheap international calls. One striking example is Ipah’s story in the previous chapter about her mother’s death. She was in Indonesia and wanted to stay longer to take care of her mother, but her mother insisted she go back to New York. Two days after she got New York City, her mother passed away. Ipah had a chance to call her the night before. She tried to go back to Indonesia, but all airline seats were booked. However, she was at least able to keep calling to follow and to participate in arranging the burial process.

**Dormancy in the Cyberspace, or the Fate of Indonesian Websites**

Seizing the Internet’s potency to advance the voice of a small community and to maintain the bonds with the homeland, the Indonesian community has attempted to establish home pages as their virtual homes. However, the enthusiasm in the setting up and the initial phase of the virtual homes did not translate into sustainability. The home pages, Masjidalhikmah.org (the official site of Masjid Al-Hikmah) and Kameldiny.com (of which most members are Muslims) are now dormant. The third home page, the Voice of Jakarta, which I will discuss briefly, stopped operating when its activists left New York City for Indonesia for good.

**Masjidalhikmah.org**

As its name suggests, masjidalhikmah.org is Masjid Al-Hikmah’s official website and was launched in 2000. The language used was Indonesian, and therefore the intended audience was Indonesian Muslims (especially in those in New York City). In his
introduction, Achmad Padang (the Chairman of the Board of Directors) wrote that the purpose of the website was for the development of the propagation of Islam (*dakwah Islamiyah*) and for maintaining the Islamic brotherhood (*ukhuwah Islamiyah*). The editor added the importance of having such websites in the current situations in which limitless resources on the Internet give us both useful and *mudarat* (disbenefit) information. Thus, the purpose of the website was to filter the information and present items useful for Muslims. Furthermore, the website could also be a substitute for the mosque’s newsletter, *Buletin Al-Hikmah*, publication of which had ceased some time earlier. According to Imat Badruddin, the webmaster and the person behind this effort, some initial plans were to have online Qur’an recitations and lectures, so Muslims in New York City could enjoy the recitations and learn about Islam in their homes and at the time of their choosing.

Badruddin told me that the initial response of the community was encouraging. About 30 volunteers came to the meetings at which the tasks to write and to provide information for the website were distributed. However, the number of people involved and the enthusiasm gradually dwindled to the point that no more articles were produced. Furthermore, Badruddin stated an obstacle to producing the contents was presented in relation to some ritual aspects of Islam. These included some variations in practicing the rituals, which caused a delay in posting an article because it needed to be discussed internally until it was approved. Nevertheless, about a hundred articles had been posted on the website before it was dormant. According to Badruddin, the website received up to 8,000 visitors in the first several months, including many from Indonesia.
Some of these visitors left messages asking information on how to find jobs in New York City.

Although the content is no longer updated, Badruddin has made same changes in the features, navigation system and tools of the website (see Figure 13).

For example, he set up the schedule of prayers for the Queens area to be automatically fed by the IslamicFinder.com (one of the most prominent Islamic websites in the United States), making this schedule the only part of the website that is up-to-date. Original
plans were for the website to have quite a variety features, so that if they had all been completed it would need a great deal effort to maintain it.

The website has sections intended for information about and activities at Masjid Al-Hikmah. On the left, a feature called *Islam untuk Anda* (Islam for You) comprises two sections: *Kajian Dasar Islam* (Islamic Basic Studies) and *Khazanah Islam* (Treasure of Islam). These two sections are, in turn, divided into sub-sections. In *Kajian Dasar Islam* are of *Aqidah* (Islamic Creeds), *Fiqh* (Islamic Jurisprudence), *Akhlq* (Practice of Virtue), *Sirah Nabawiyah* (History of the Prophet), *Al-Qur’an* and *Hadits* (Tradition of the Prophet). *Khazanah Islam* contains *Artikel Islam* (Islamic Articles), *Ilmuwan Muslim* (Muslim Scientists), *Buku & Publikasi Islam* (Islamic Books and Publications), *Seni, Budaya & Sastra* (Arts, Culture and Literature), and *Fenomena Alam* (Natural Phenomena). Another section, *Pelayanan* (Services), is intended for information on issues such as legal laws and immigration, housing and apartments, jobs, travel agencies, finance and banking. Indeed, as I mentioned earlier, if only the features had been filled with articles and relevant information, the website would have been the first place for Indonesians to seek both Islamic and general information.

Apart from the language, the website does not have design elements that signify Indonesia. Nor does it have elements usually associated with Islam, such as Arabesque elements and calligraphy, except for the picture of a mosque on the front page. Since it is neither a picture of Masjid Al-Hikmah nor of a mosque in Indonesia. I asked Badruddin why he used such picture. He said:
That is only a symbol. In essence I just wanted to use the dome image, so I took the picture of a well-known mosque. I did not use a picture of Al-Hikmah [on the front page]. We are in an international community, and because we are in New York City, people naturally expect us to have an exquisite mosque. So I didn’t want to disappoint them. My intention was to give a better image to the ummah [laughter]. (My translation from Indonesian)

The picture is actually the Sultan Ahmed Mosque, known in English as the Blue Mosque, in Istanbul, Turkey, with its six sleek and grand minarets. It was built in the early 17th Century. Dodds & Grazda (2002) have reminded us that domes and minarets have been used as identity markers of mosques worldwide, from the beautiful domes on newly built mosques to the plywood cuts or paintings depicting domes and minarets at storefront mosques. While the brick and mortar Masjid Al-Hikmah (as I have shown in Chapter 5) has had only a simple green half-sphere dome and a minaret on top to soften its warehouse look, its website is an opportunity to present the beauty of a grand mosque—signifying that it is a website of a mosque.

Kameldiny.com

Kameldiny stands for Keluarga Melayu di New York (the Malay Family in New York), and was set up in May, 2003. It is an informal association of which the majority of members are first-generation Indonesians in New York City. Kameldiny has a loose and cross-ethnicity membership, although most are Muslims (both those who are active in the mosque and non-observant Muslims). According to Rurun Karma, the leader of
Kameldiny (also the Head of the Development Section of Masjid Al-Hikmah’s executive committee), the objective of the association is to be an established social organization with two main activities. The first deals with social activities in Indonesia, such as making regular donations to schools, orphanages, etc. The second deals with the lives of Indonesian transnationals in New York City. There is a plan to make Kameldiny a legal organization, so that it will have access to such City programs as food programs that can be distributed to poor and retired Indonesians. Kameldiny can also manage the nursing problems for the elderly. In other words, the two-fold Kameldiny aspirations are intended to both maintain transnational ties and to affirm transnationalism by acknowledging the possibility of residing in New York City for the rest of their lives.

Such programs are a long shot, as Karma acknowledged. For the time being, Kameldiny has made some sporadic efforts in those two-fold programs. For instance, one on-going project is to help an “open middle school” in Cisasawi, a poor village northn of Bandung, in which students can get free education. In addition, Kameldiny has an electronic mailing list at Yahoo! Group (to be discussed later) and a website, Kameldiny.com (Figure 14).
First of all, notice that this association uses the word “Melayu” (Malays, in English), instead of Indonesian, in its name. In colloquial conversation, the term Melayu refers to Indonesians in general, not to the ethnic Malays. One common use is perut Melayu, which literally means Malays’ stomach. This is in reference to how “fanatic” Indonesians are with regard to what they eat daily, which is rice for breakfast, lunch, and dinner. They feel that they have not had a meal until they have rice, although they most certainly have eaten other foods. When I asked one of my respondents why they have rice most of the time, she replied: “Our stomach is perut Melayu, isn’t it?”
The language used on Kameldiny.com is English. The header graphic has the letter of Kameldiny supersimposed on a collage of pictures of Javanese shadow puppets and Balinese dancers. The “About Us” section tells (in English) the purpose of Kameldiny:

Established and launched in May 2003, Kameldiny is intended to reach and expose Indonesian community in New York in particular, and United States in general. Whatever interests it might be, we invite you to join our online community where everyone could interact and communicate with each other to exchange information, business proposals, personal interests, event announcements, legal advice, Immigration, and many more topics yet to come.

In addition, it is intended also as the place for Indonesians’ transnational communication, as mentioned on the front page of the website: “For fellows Indonesians back home who want to get in touch with their family members or relatives abroad, Kameldiny is the right place to visit by joining and becoming our community member. Check our Forum.” Only three sections of the website (Home, About Us, and Music) have contents, while other sections (Arts, Links, Charities, Commerce, Forum, and Chatroom) are “Under Construction.” The Music section has a breadth of genres (Pop/Ballad, Rock, Freestyle/Club Dance, New Age, Easy Listening, Ambient, Indonesian, Malay, Techno, Hindi, Latin, Arabic, Javanese, and Sundanese), albeit there are only one to five songs in each genre, and even no songs at all in the Javanese and Sundanese genre. Therefore, the visitors have cosmopolitan choices from Jennifer Lopez’s Could This be Love to Kitaro’s
Wing, from Enya’s Only Time to the Hindi song Kuch Kuch Hota Hai, and from the Indonesian pop song Rinduku dan Hasratku to a Latin song Dentro Esta to Voz.

Karma told me that the development of Kameldiny.com is restricted by time constraints on him and other persons in charge.

With regard to the eclectic music available on the Kameldiny.com website, he said it was intended to indicate the global lives of Indonesian immigrants. Some of Kameldiny’s members, however, asked Karma about the possibility of putting up more old Indonesian and traditional music. He told them that space limitations made it difficult. In the same year, however, a New York-based Internet radio station called the Voice of Jakarta (now defunct) was set up by the husband and wife team Abang Edwin SA and Inggita Notosusanto (she was studying at the New School of Social Research). They suggested that Karma and Singgih, a active member of Kameldiny, use the free Internet radio program at Shoutcast.com. Using their own computers as the servers, Karma became the DJ for Kameldiny-1 channel, and Singgih was in charge for Kameldiny-2. Kameldiny-1 broadcast Indonesian “oldies-but-goodies” songs, while Kameldiny-2 present traditional music (Sundanese degung and Javanese gamelan), and other Indonesian music genres such as keroncong and ndangdut. The front page of the Voice of Jakarta then put up the links to these two channels, in addition to its own contemporary Indonesian pop music radio. Karma was able to broadcast 24/7 for two years until his computer broke down in January 2006. Singgih, with a less robust computer than Karma’s, was “on air” (or in cyberspace, to be more precise) for seven to eight hours a day. Karma told me that he wanted to resume broadcasting but was waiting
until he had money to assemble another computer by himself. According to him, there were five visitors a day on average for each channel before he stopped broadcasting. At its peak, the radio was visited by 20 visitors, most of whose IP numbers indicated they were from outside Indonesia—the United States, Europe, and Australia.

**The Voice of Jakarta (Now Defunct)**

The Voice of Jakarta (VOJ) was founded by the husband-and-wife team of Abang Edwin SA and Inggita Notosusanto, in mid-2003. Notosusanto was studying for her masters in media studies at the New School, New York City. VOJ’s main feature was the Internet radio, broadcasting mainly contemporary Indonesian pop-music. In addition, it also had news and articles on Indonesian events and culture performances in the United States, especially in New York City. With two computers and broadband-connection donations from the community, VOJ was a non-commercial operation. According to Edwin, VOJ was doing well, with as many as 400 visitors per month. Then Notosusanto finished her degree in mid-2005. Before returning to Indonesia, they tried to find volunteers to continue the VOJ operation, but unfortunately, this effort failed, and the VOJ stopped broadcasting on the Internet. Edwin and Notosusanto said that it was too difficult to continue the VOJ operation in Indonesia, mainly because the broadband connection is expensive.
Electronic Mailing Lists and the Inscription of Identity

With the ability to distribute content widely and easily, electronic mailing lists have been used by transnational communities as a means of communication. Scholars have regarded one of these Internet features as an arena in which identities are inscribed and negotiated, and transnational communities and ties are constituted (e.g. Cooks, 2002; Ignacio, 2000; McMenemy & Poulter, 2005). In this context, I will discuss three transnational Indonesian email lists, namely Imany (stands for the Indonesian Muslim Association of New York), Kameldiny (Keluarga Melayu di New York), and Cakra (the association of Javanese in New York). These three email lists use the free service provided by Yahoo! Groups. I have been a member of the Imany and Kameldiny email lists since I did my fieldwork in the summer of 2005. Imany’s membership is by invitation, while Kameldiny’s requires the approval of the moderator, so the content of the lists are not open to non-members. Cakra’s membership setting, however, is more open, so that non-members are able to read the messages. Since I receive the emails and read these lists regularly, I have the opportunity to observe the topics posted. What follows is my observations on the email lists since my fieldwork until around May, 2006. Though I am a member, I have not actively participated by posting emails; I am what is called a lurker in these email lists.

Indeed, the majority of members of these email lists are lurkers who have sent few if any emails. It should be added here that the phenomenon of lurking in email lists is very common. Based on some studies of lurkers, Preece, Nonnecke & Andrews (2004) have informed us that the number of such people is the majority of most email lists,
ranging from 45 percent to 99 percent. Their survey showed that the posters (the people who contributed to the list) have a greater sense of belonging to, and feel they get more from, the community than do the lurkers. I think the silence of the lurkers has made it difficult to assess the impact on them of the discourses discussed in the email lists.

Therefore the studies on email lists in the transnational context (e.g. Cooks, 2002; Ignacio, 2000; McMenemy & Poulter, 2005) focus more on the salient discourse developed by the few active members. In this sense, email lists can be seen as a smaller public sphericule of an already small sphere of the transnational community. With regard to gender, only a handful of female members have posted messages on the email lists we are discussing here. Indeed, none of the five top posters is a woman. In other words, these email lists are a gendered arena, though I think Indonesian men and women have equal access to the Internet, because all of my respondents have computers and Internet access subscription at home. Therefore, this gap results more from the difference in the scope and frequency of use of the Internet (see Wasserman & Richmond-Abbot, 2005).

**Imany**

The Imany email list was started on November 3, 2001, and as of May, 2006 it had 88 members. This list was initiated by one active member of Masjid Al-Hikmah, and the members are Indonesian Muslims in New York City. Imany is not an official program of the executive committee of Masjid Al-Hikmah, although in practice it is used by the *jamaah* (congregants) of the mosque. Between July, 2005 (the time I joined the list) and June, 2006, there were more than 1,200 emails posted to the list. Postings are in
Indonesia. A quick count revealed that only about 30 of 88 members had sent messages to
the list. Furthermore, around 75 percent of all emails were sent by just five members
(including Karma and Singgih).

Member posts mainly consist of news and information postings from Indonesian
and non-Indonesian (mainly U.S.) newspapers both related to Islam and general topics,
political and social commentaries, news of the community (for instance, announcements
of Indonesians who are hospitalized or of a death in an Indonesian’s family back home),
and local events. There were also some postings regarding the bill dealing with
immigration reform in the U.S. and the events pertaining to it which became a major
story in the media in April and May, 2005. However, previously there were many fewer
postings and discussions of Islamic teachings. Only after the Imam of Masjid Al-Hikmah
became rather active in posting his religious commentary (such as what kind of person
qualifies to go to Paradise or to Hell) and taking questions from other members, did the
Imany email list have a significant discussion thread focusing on Islamic teachings.
Furthermore, only a few postings generated discussions or were responded to by the
members. For the most part, the Imany email list has functioned as the vehicle for its
members, especially for the active members, to convey their interests and expressions.
Syamsi Ali, for example, quite frequently posted or forwarded emails on new Muslim
converts and issues and information related to American Muslims in general. His
postings underscored his undertaking and involvement (as described in Chapter 6) in the
formation of an American Muslim identity transcending ethnicities as well as interfaith
dialogue activities. As for the other email list members, both the lurkers and the active
ones, Ali’s postings informed them of the developing discourses and agendas they rarely encountered at Masjid Al-Hikmah. Meanwhile, another list member, who is also the member of the Friday Club, posted his political commentaries and comments on current events by composing poems on these subjects. Karma forwarded many emails containing links to the news that sparked his interests, with short critical comments. His postings included, for example, news and articles critical of the U.S. foreign policies and the War on Terror, as well as a series of postings on his recollections of his childhood in Bandung.

One particular issue related to the global umma that generated response from some active posters of the Imany email list was the controversy of the cartoon depicting the Prophet Muhammad as a terrorist which was published (initially) by a Danish newspaper. The cartoon sparked much Muslim anger around the world and led to many violent demonstrations in the streets in some Islamic countries in February, 2006 (see e.g. Ratnesar, 2006). Some active members of the list forwarded news on this subject, and added short comments. Commenting on some violent demonstrations, Karma, for instance, wrote: “This is an opportunity for dakwah [Islamic propagation] instead of burning things. Better to boycott [Danish products] than destroy. The victim is global Islam” (My translation from Indonesian). This topic even drew at least two lurker members to post their emails, one of them about the online petition against the Danish newspaper.

The victory in the Palestinian general election of Hamas (considered a terrorist organization by the U.S. government) and the devastating earthquake in Pakistan were other events which drew Muslim world attention and about which there were several
email forwardings and commentaries on the Imany list. Indeed, it was in these sorts of special occasions that Imany email list posters overtly identified and associated themselves with the global umma, with the sense of global Islamic brotherhood. Other than that, the discourse of global umma transcending national borders was virtually absent in the Imany email list.

Kameldiny

The Kameldiny email list was founded on August 12, 2002 and had 91 members as of May, 2006. While Imany’s front page does not have any image, Kameldiny’s shows the picture of a winding road in the Puncak area between Bandung and Jakarta with a green tea plantation on both sides of the road. More than 1,800 messages had been posted to the list by about 30 members between July, 2005 and June, 2006. Seven members (including Karma and Singgih) had contributed about 89 percent of these messages, with one very active member who sent about 41 percent of them. Like Imany, the Kameldiny email list is also a gendered arena, since the number of male posters overshadows the number of female posters, and none of the top posters is a woman. Some active members of the Kameldiny list are also members of Imany, and so there were some cross-postings between the lists. One member forwarded on a daily basis emails he received from other email lists to which he belonged, as well as regularly posting his poems. Karma forwarded news from online media he read, and wrote his social and political commentaries. His postings included news ranging from Venezeulan President Hugo Chaves’ policies against the U.S. to news about the Indonesian carrier Garuda being the
worst airline in Asia. Another member frequently composed emails containing links to
the headlines of Indonesian online news sources, adding witty and humorous one-liner
criticisms or comments to each headline. When he went to Indonesia during the
summer of 2005, he sent a series of emails to the list to comment upon what he saw and
experienced there. Many other members replied and thanked him for sharing his stories.
Since most Kameldiny email list members are elderly and first-generation Indonesians,
many postings contained recollections of the past, both personal memories and historical
perspectives on what is happening in Indonesia now. Many postings were extremely
thoughtful and well-informed.

Although not many postings eventually developed into serious and significant
discussion threads, there were a considerable number of postings responding to other
members’ postings, although they were short comments or humorous responses.
Certainly, at least for its members who have been actively posting their emails, the
Kameldiny email list has become a place where old friends can exchange analysis, news,
jokes, stories and poems, and occasionally discuss serious matters.

One interesting discussion thread concerned *keroncong*, an Indonesian music
amalgamating the influence of Portuguese and Hawaiian music as well as music of
Ambon and Sumatra. In the 1930s, *keroncong* became popular in the Netherland Indies
and was associated with the lower class and immorality (Frederick, 1997). Now,
*keroncong* is associated with the elder generation of Indonesians, and is unpopular among
MTV-generation Indonesian youth. The discussion thread was started by a member who
posted his notes about the types of *keroncong*. He argued that *keroncong* actually came
indirectly from Arabia through the Moors who ruled the Iberian Peninsula from the 8th to 15th Century. He also explained how Sukarno, the first Indonesian President, used to be a judge for keroncong competitions, and how a keroncong song was used to criticize the Japanese occupation. This posting sparked the memories of some members who then responded. One of them composed a poem in English about how he liked keroncong very much, but felt a little bit awkward because of its colonial heritage. In the end, he wrote:

    Are these colonial silver linings,
    Which, these days, I am enjoying?
    Sorry if . . . [I] may condone past history
    But kroncong is truly heavenly.

Another member replied that he was unaware of the Portuguese influence, and wondered how it could be, because the Portuguese only had a few trading forts some 250 to 300 years ago. According to him, keroncong music should be an amalgamation of music influences from more than one origin, as shown by the use of the Hawaiian ukulele in keroncong bands. Some emails then were posted containing information and old memories about keroncong, so that this thread lasted about a week.

    Another passionate discussion took place related to the diplomatic tension between Indonesia and Australia in March and April, 2006. The Australian government granted temporary visas to 42 boat people from Papua (the most eastern part of Indonesia and closest to Australia). There has long been a feeling of deep discontent amongst many Papians towards the Indonesian central government. Furthermore, the Australian government had been unpopular among many Indonesians who felt stabbed in the back
on the issue of East Timor independence, because Indonesian annexation of East Timor was previously supported by Australia and the U.S. The discussion on the Kameldiny email list lasted a couple of weeks, with the basic premise that Indonesia is now under pressure from the Western countries such as the U.S. and Australia to relinquish its economic sovereignty. Karma, for instance, wrote:

It reminds us how greedy the imperialists and the capitalists are . . . They have been given the concession to mine gold and copper [in Papua], they are now demanding the whole island by using its inhabitants with the pretext of separatism, economic injustice, and unpopular central government. Australia is merely the U.S.’ servant.

The main problem the RI [Republic of Indonesia] is facing is its military weakness and the development that concentrates too much in the western part of Indonesia. It should be shifted to the eastern part because the potency it offers to improve the military and the economy of the area, while at the same time hindering the expansion of Australia, the U.S., and China into the South Pacific. (My translation from Indonesian)

Others did not fail to point out that Australia had treated its native people, the Aborigines, worse than Indonesia treated the Papuans. Despite all the rage, it seems everybody agreed that Indonesian’s misfortune (its military weakness, economic difficulties, powerlessness before the foreign powers) is mainly caused by internal factors: rampant corruption, mismanagement, etc. Hence the glory of the past, such as the domination of the kingdoms
of Sriwijaya in the 10th Century and Majapahit in the 14th Century over what we know now as the Indonesian Archipelago, were retrieved by one poster.

Why was Majapahit’s ability to unite Nusantara [the Indonesian Archipelago] and Sriwijaya so dominating? They explored the universe. In the past we had few people [in the kingdoms]. Though few in number they were able to do it, now we are many so we have to be able to do it again. We deserve to rule the world. In conclusion, this is because of the mistakes of the people who manage Indonesia (kesalahan yang mengatur). They place most importance on own their pockets.

(My translation from Indonesian)

Cakra

The Cakra email list was founded on August 13, 2005, and, as its name suggests is owned by the Javanese association (see Chapter 6 for the brief discussion on this association). Unlike Imany and Kameldiny, Cakra email list has a quite detailed description in its front page. It says:

CAKRA: The Javanese Families Association (Paguyuban). This paguyuban was founded by the younger generation of Javanese and their families in New York, with the purpose of nurturing the feeling of unity and brotherhood among the members, to help each other in social matters and to understand the Javanese culture which is inherited from the forebears. The paguyuban is not based on ethnicity and religion. (My translation from Indonesian)
The list has only 16 members, and from its inception until June, 2006 only about 350 messages have been posted. Twelve of the members have sent messages, and four of these members contributed 85 percent of all the messages (with one person sending about 44 percent of all them). Karma was also quite active on this email list. For instance, he forwarded many jokes in Javanese which I found hilarious.

However, the most active member (who is also one of the most active members of the Kameldiy email list) is one the oldest Indonesians in New York. He frequently forwarded emails from other lists of which he is a member and posted his comments on Javanese culture and literature as well as his recollections of his childhood. His posting containing his elementary school age memories in the time of Japanese occupation invoked another member’s recollection who wrote:

We are thankful and moved because as a Javanese who has been in America for such a long time you still remember your childhood. My own childhood memory was when we bathed in Bengawan Solo [Solo River]. At that time Bengawan Solo still had plenty of water. Even in the dry season the deep spots of the river still had plenty of water. We swam there, spent a lot of time there, so that our mother reprimanded us when we got home. (My translation from Indonesian)

Nevertheless, such an exchange was rare on the Cakra email list, because most of the postings did not instigate further discussion. In this context, postings of the most active member became monologues on his interest in Javanese culture and its aspects.

Informed and influenced by the promise of the Internet proposed by previous studies (e.g. Cooks, 2002; Ignacio, 2000; McMenemy & Poulter, 2005), I had expected
that the email list would become an arena where some identities were contested and constituted (e.g., Javanese, Indonesian, and Muslim). My observations of the use of email lists and websites in the context of the Indonesian transnationals’ lives showed that the Internet has not become an indispensable communication technology at the community level. For some individuals, however, it has become the fabric of their transnational lives where their contesting identities are constituted, as shown by the following vignette,

*The Old Man and the Internet*

At 65, Singgih is an unlikely ardent Internet user, spending six to eight hours per day in the front of his computer. He is one among a few people who challenge the notion of a generational digital divide in which older generations lack the opportunity to access the Internet and other new technologies. Moreover, I will show that Singgih has created his own transnational communication arena to express his cultural identity. Singgih is a member of about 15 electronic mailing lists on Yahoo! Groups and a moderator of one such a list. He maintains five weblogs, and is the DJ of an Internet radio program specializing in Indonesian traditional music (especially Sundanese and Javanese). He told me that he checked the news from the online versions of Indonesian newspapers (such as *Republika Online, Pikiran Rakyat Online*) on a daily basis. His Internet browsing also supports his hobbies of painting, writing poems and short stories.

“God has blessed me with the Internet. It is a therapy for me, otherwise I might go insane,” he told me, half jokingly. Or perhaps he was not joking. He was involved in a car accident on December 26, 2002 in which an 18-wheeler sideswiped his car at an
intersection. He was unconscious for four hours, had a mild stroke and suffered some nervous system damage on the right side of his body. Being a disabled person (he now uses a cane), and suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder (nightmares of a truck speeding toward him), and afraid to drive, he is unable to return to his previous work as a limousine driver. A year after the accident, his story about it, his economic difficulties in the aftermath, and the Christian charity which had been helping his family financially made its way to the Metropolitan section of the *New York Times* (see Bahney, 2003).

With a plenty of time at home alone, since his wife and daughter now take jobs to support the family, he uses the Internet to keep himself busy and to fill the day.

Singgih is a talkative person with a good sense of humor. I visited him at home four times, and met him every Friday at Masjid Al-Hikmah and we went together to the Friday Club. He told me that for the first six months of recovery he spent much time of in bed. One television program that he watched with great interest at that time was *Joy of Painting* with Bob Ross on WLIW (a public television station in Long Island, New York City) which taught painting and its techniques to beginners. He tried painting, and discovered a hidden talent. Now much of the wall space of apartment is hung with his paintings. When I asked him his own favorite, Singgih pointed to one depicting a tea plantation. He stated, “It reminds me of when I was very young, five or six years old. It was a tea plantation in Pengalengan. I still remember that scenery in my mind, now I can put it in a painting.” I know the place, since I have been in Pengalengan (an area south of my home town of Bandung, West Java) many times—and therefore the painting evokes
nostalgia in me as well. We spent about 15 to 20 minutes talking about the scenic beauty of the area.

Besides painting, writing poems and short stories has become a great interest of Singgih’s. All these activities were suggested by his friends who were aware that he needed something to kill the time. He showed me a folder with some of his short stories and poems. He writes about human relationships, love, and, certainly, Indonesia. His poetry includes a haiku on how Indonesia, despite its independence, is still under economic colonialization, and a tribute to an Indonesian immigrant who was involved in the demonstrations in the front of the United Nations headquarters in the late 1940s in support of the Indonesian independence and who had just passed away.

Now, when he wants to show his works to people he asks them to visit his weblogs, where he has uploaded his poems, stories, and paintings. Before going blogging, Singgih had had a small free space in Wiki, where he was only able to put a few poems and short stories, and could not post his paintings. I visited his Wiki site, and found, among other things, three poems in three languages (English, Indonesian, and Sundanese). I told him about weblogs, and briefly showed him how to make one at Blogger.com, a free blogging service provider. He seemed very interested, and when we met in the mosque the following week he told me he had created four weblogs, one each for his paintings, poems, short stories, and photos. The design of his weblogs is simple and basically uses the templates provided by Blogger.com. There are no other features that are commonly found at the more sophisticated blogs, such as a southbox (in which
people can leave short messages on the blog) or RSS feeds which provide links to other newly updated websites or blogs.

The language Singgih uses in his blogs is mostly Indonesian, except for the blog for the painting he wrote: “While my other blogs are intended for Indonesians, my painting blog could be enjoyed by non-Indonesians because it uses a universal visual language. I also want to show the sceneries of Indonesia, especially that of tatar Sunda [the West Java area] where I spent my childhood.” (Figure 15).

Figure 15. Singgih’s painting blog. The text accompanying the painting (entitled “The Village Pond”) says: “Water color. A scene in the remote village of West Java (Tatar Sunda). Have not change much in the last centuries. Clear air, clear sky, easy living.”
However, the poetry blog also presents his poems in English, in which he has written about the 2004 tsunami disaster that struck the Province of Aceh and in the Sundanese language. One poem in Sundanese describes his longing to go back to Indonesia while at the same time shows his doubt about whether he could do that. However, most of his poems are in Indonesian. In addition to the painting and poetry blogs, Singgih’s presentation of self (Goffman, 1959) in cyberspace is completed by his blog of short stories, which he describes:

Here I would try to tell my stories about my daily life. The life experiences of my pengembaraan [literally, wandering] in Uncle Sam’s country for 45 years. I have done many jobs: janitor, clerk of a shipping company, dish washer in a restaurant, personal driver of the CEO of a blue chip company on Wall Street, taxi driver, and limousine driver. (My translation from Indonesian)

It is interesting to note that after 45 years in the U.S., interrupted only by a short return to Indonesia in 1975, Singgih describes his life as pengembaraan, as if it were a temporary situation out of the homeland.

Meanwhile, his photo blog is actually his means of transnational communication, because it is intended for Indonesians who have left New York City and gone back to Indonesia. Singgih says:

Trying to post photos how life is in NYC and other places. It can give pictures how NYC is since you left. It can be used for topics of conversation when you get together. This way our tali silaturahmi [brotherhood ties] remain intact. If you
want a picture of a specific place, just send me an email. (My translation from Indonesian)

This project, however, has not been successful. There has been no email coming. Singgih’s limited mobility has restricted him, so that he has only managed to take a few pictures by himself. Most of pictures he puts in this blog were taken from other online sources he found while browsing the Internet. Moreover, not all of the photos are about New York City.

Several months after my fieldwork, I visited New York City again for a couple of days. As sat together for the ritual Friday Club, Singgih told me that he had created a new blog dedicated to his big family of Natadikarta. In the blog description, he writes:

This is for a communication avenue of the Big Family of Haji Pandil Natadikarta, former village head of Narawita, Cicalengka [an area south of Bandung, West Java], from the 1900s to the 1950s. His offspring are scattered all over the country as well as abroad. Hopefully this blog could strengthen our brotherhood.

Remember, we are family, and as it is said *duduluran mah buruk-buruk papan jati* [a Sundanese proverb, literally meaning whatever happens we are still a family].

(My translation from Indonesian)

The blog was set up so that other members of the big family can post messages themselves; indeed, it is intended for a transnational familial communication. So far only Singgih has posted messages on the blog, although he has given a detailed instruction on how to do it. Instead, some members of family sent him emails and pictures, which Singgih has posted with his comments. The language used in this blog is Sundanese. One
of the latest posts was the picture of his youngest brother and his wife. Singgih wrote that on that day his brother turned to 56 years old. His personal recollection of when they were kids followed. In the older posting, Singgih talked about the big family’s next project to renovate their parents’ tomb. He does not update his weblogs very frequently: sometimes every other week, sometimes just once a month.

As I mentioned previously, Singgih is also a member of a lot of electronic mailing lists. I counted them when he showed me the list on his computer and there were about 15! He is one of the people who posts on the Kameldiny list frequently. He is a member of some literature lists, such as Penyair (Poets), Pengarang (Writers) and Apresiasi-Sastra (Literature Appreciation). Singgih sends his works, comments to other members’ works, and discusses the Indonesian literary world. His short story, “Veggie,” written under the pen-name Joe Ragan (2005), was posted on Apresiasi-Sastra and Singgih was asked if it could be reprinted in AKSARA, a newly established literary magazine in Indonesia. Moreover, he is also a member of some lists for Sundanese people (such as Ki Sunda and Urang Sunda), and is even the moderator of US di US (stands for Urang Sunda di United States, or Sundanese in the United States) (See Figure 16).
According to him:

My purpose is to maintain my Sundanese language, and also to help maintain the Sundanese culture. I frequently write in Sundanese about the situation here in. I was very proud when I was told I still could write well in Sundanese despite being abroad for more than 40 years. (My translation from Indonesian)

Singgih’s cyberspace transnational connection once was materialized when he donated books through a foundation set up by one of these online communities. Knowing that I
work for a publisher in Indonesia, he asked me to arrange the purchase the books. I was able to ask my colleagues to give him an especially hefty discount.

Singgih is also a DJ of an Internet radio station specializing in Indonesian traditional music (such as *gamelan*, *degung*, and *keroncong*). He uses a free-streaming service offered by SHOUTcast with a capacity of 32 simultaneous listeners. Although initially he broadcast everyday for about eight hours, now he is “on-air” only on Saturday and Sunday from eight to noon because the number of listeners is small. He showed me his music collection stored in his computer hardisk, and dragged it in to his existing playlist in SHOUTcast. Then he pressed a button to broadcast, and I recognized the first song instantly: *Indonesia Raya*, the Indonesian national anthem. “I always start with *Indonesia Raya*, because it praises, and reminds me too, of our homeland,” Singgih told me. The radio was still on while I was interviewing him. In the middle of the interview, he noticed that one listener tuned in, but unfortunately, only for 17 seconds.

There have been numerous studies showing the generational gap among Internet users, in which the older generations lag far behind the younger ones (Loges & Jung, 2001; Norris, 2001). Singgih is one of the few older generation who has a high level of what Loges & Jung (2001) called *Internet connectedness*. He defies the stereotype of elders who resist learning how to use the Internet and other new technologies. I think Singgih is similar to the older people who have embraced the new technology described by Riggs (2004) as the “response to a desire not to relinquish their grasp on life” (p. 101). Singgih said to me:
The Internet has given me many things to do as a retired person. I can keep updated with new information, so that I feel comfortable talking with people with high education like you although I did not graduate from high school. It increases my self-esteem. It also enables me to learn about Islam, so that I have the guts to give a talk at the pengajian in Masjid Al-Hikmah, in the front of many people more knowledgeable than me. They might ask themselves from what pesantren [Islamic religious school] I graduated. I would reply, pesantren Internet [laughter]. (My translation from Indonesian)

As I have shown above, the Indonesian Muslim community in New York City has not fully used the Internet, as Mitra (2001) suggested for immigrant communities, “... to voice the unspeakable stories and eventually construct powerful connections that can be labeled as ‘cyber-communities’” (p. 30). Nevertheless, Singgih has utilized the various features of the Internet to create transnational-cyberspace communication of his own. Simultaneously with the fulfillment of his personal purposes (therapy, killing time in retirement, pursuing hobbies, etc.), Singgih has utilized the Internet as a stage to present his self (Goffman, 1959) in the context of daily transnational life. Thus, he has re-negotiated time and space (think of his involvement in donating books for rural libraries in West Java) as well as created a space to express his personal and cultural identity.

A Lukewarm Embrace? The Internet and the Indonesian Transnationals

I mentioned previously that for transnational communities the Internet could be utilized in two types, albeit intertwined, uses: i.e. for maintaining transnational ties and
for an arena in which transnational people can express their identity and voice their marginality. The cheap and many-to-many nature of Internet communications provides a perfect technology for transnationals to reterritorialize themselves in their daily lives. Indeed, the discourse and negotiation of identity is prevalent in the transnationals’ Internet communication of many diasporas, e.g. Eritrean (Bernal, 2006), Panamanian (Cooks, 2002), Polynesian (Franklin, 2003), Filipino (Ignacio, 2000; Tyner & Kuhlke, 2000), Indian (Mitra, 2001), Haitian (Parham, 2004), and Chinese (Qiu, 2003). These studies show how transnational communities have utilized the Internet as the venue where the marginalized voices can be presented in the same virtual space with the dominant discourse. In short, such studies optimistically suggested the efficacy of the Internet as the remedy to the migrants’ plights of separation and marginalization. Therefore, transnational people should be eager to embrace the Internet in their daily lives.

Upon reflecting on Indonesian transnationals’ engagement with the Internet, I have some reservations on the optimism suggested by the many studies of the Internet in the transnational context. First of all, as Mitra (2001) rightly warned us, although the migrants could advance their voices, it does not mean that “the marginal could somehow magically and suddenly realign the relationship between the dominant and the marginal” (p. 46). This is in line with the criticism towards the notion that the Internet might elicit egalitarian discussions between the dominant and the marginal in the same public sphere (Papachirriissi, 2002). Jones (1997) reminded us that the Internet might allow us to “shout more loudly, but whether other fellows listen, beyond the few individuals who may reply,
or the occasional ‘lurker’, is questionable, and whether our words will make a difference is even more in doubt” (p. 30). Nevertheless, I admit that the Internet could expand the space of little-known or marginalized people who previously found it difficult to make their voices readily heard by the greater public. Think of Singgih, the old man *cum* ardent Internet user, for example, with his many online activities. In other words, the Internet has undisputably provided an arena for transnational to express their previously unheard voices and therefore expand their “personal space” (Jones, 1997), although it does not necessarily mean it puts them on a par with the dominant power in the Habermasian public sphere (if such a sphere exists).

The digital divide is another crucial issue frequently overlooked. Many studies emphasize the production of transnational community representation in cyberspace with little attention to the economics and Internet adoption both within the transnational communites and between them and the people in the homeland. As I have shown above, many transnational people opt to use another means of communication (most notably international prepaid phone cards) to overcome the burden of separation. Furthermore, the digital divide of *intra*-transnational communities has impeded the Internet becoming more utilized as the venue of their marginalized voices. This digital divide of this kind comes more from the communication technology preferences than the lack of computers in the homes of the transnationals. Indeed, many Indonesians that I talked to had computers and Internet connections in their homes. Therefore, despite the initial ambitious projects and the eagerness of a handful of proponents, websites such as masjidalhikmah.org and kameldiny.com came to a standstill. In other words, as a
transnational community the Indonesians were not convinced of the efficacy of the Internet, despite its promise (if not its hype) to alleviate the burden of separation and to facilitate their transnational bonds.

Furthermore, analyses of several websites or electronic mailing lists that have shown the successful use of the Internet has frequently been used to imply that these are the experiences of all the members of a particular transnational community. I think the enthusiasm to show the efficacy of the Internet in the context of transnational lives has caused more of its “success stories” to be researched and published than its “failure stories.” One example of a “failure story” was the firstghanasda.org website, associated with the Ghanian Seventh Day Adventists (GSDA) in New York City (Ackah & Newman, 2003). The website had been dormant for almost two years when Ackah & Newman published their articles, and had vanished when I checked it in May, 2006.

**Whither the Simultaneity?**

**The 1.5- and Second-Generations and the Imagined Communities**

In this section I will discuss the use of media by the second- and 1.5 generations of Indonesian Muslims. While the first-generation in one way or another still tries to follow the news from Indonesia, the 1.5- and second-generations are virtually oblivious to what is happening there. When I asked my respondents whether they followed Indonesian news in any way, including probably reading the free Indonesian community newspapers available in Indonesian restaurants and some ethnic groceries, they said no. Rizki encapsulated this by saying (in English), “I am not attached with what is happening
in Indonesia anyway.” If we apply Anderson’s (1991) idea, we would see these 1.5- and second-generations do not belong to an imagined community called “Indonesia.” They have largely lost the feeling of simultaneity (proposed by Anderson as the primal genesis of awareness of nations as imagined communities) of experience instigated by the media. By consuming different media outlets, they do not share the same experience shared by millions in Indonesia. They are on a different communion, outside the imagined community of Indonesia.

Anderson’s (1991) conception has been powerful in explaining the historical origin of nationalism. However, I think his approach is rather technologically deterministic because of over-reliance on communication technologies (print technologies in the form of newspapers and books, in particular) in nurturing the imagined communities. It is the same technology that Anderson (1998) later argued to be the nexus of the homeland and the people who lived abroad to nurture what he called long-distance nationalism. In the context of the 1.5- and second-generations of Indonesian transnationals, I found that their sense of being members of an imagined community called Indonesia, albeit different in the strength of the feeling, was not nurtured through the media they consumed. Instead, it was strongly cultivated by their quotidian lives, especially at home through the food, the language used by their parents, the ethnic artifacts adorning the house (small media), and, of course, the transnational ties their parents have maintained (such as their parents’ frequent calls to Indonesia, visits of family members, etc.).
However, there is still at least one thing left by which Indonesian youth in New York City share simultaneous experience (although as not immediate as consuming news) with their “counterparts” in Indonesia, i.e. through Indonesian pop music. It should be noted that certainly such music genres are not entirely indigenous to Indonesia. Similar to the case of pop music in other part of the globe, Indonesian pop music is basically heavily-influenced Western pop music, except with lyrics in Indonesian. Foreign influences could even be seen in the two “more Indonesian” music genres, i.e. keroncong and dangdut. However, putting aside foreign influences, my respondents consider Indonesian pop music as an Indonesian identity signifier. For them, consuming Indonesian pop music is an act of identity appropriation—a part of their identity claims. My respondents have various degree of keenness towards Indonesian pop music, from those who listened to it very rarely to “I have only Indonesian music in my MP3 player and listen to it everyday.” Zaki, being previously involved in making music himself with his group, is the least familiar with Indonesian music. Kelly and Anne prefer to American music to Indonesian music (Kelly loves Beyonce, and Anne likes Mariah Carey), although they are familiar with contemporary Indonesian artists. Rizki likes hip hop and R & B (and he told me that he was a DJ when he was in the high school), “But I like Indonesian music, too,” he added quickly (in Indonesian). When I asked which Indonesian artists he liked, he mentioned several names (Kris Dayanti, Jana Julio, Gigi, Dewa, etc.) without hesitation. He started enjoying Indonesian music while hanging out with Indonesian students in New York. The biggest fan of Indonesian music is Fiyona, who started listening to it five years earlier. Anne commented (in English) about Fiyona’s
preference, “Before, she never listened to the Indonesian music, she never spoke in Indonesian. Now she is nuts about it.” When I asked her favorite artists, Fiyona said they were Peterpan and Sheila on 7 (both boy bands). She even joined with an electronic mailing list of Sheila on 7’s fans. Fiyona proudly told me (in English) about her co-worker, “She is a Dominican and she can speak Indonesian a little bit now. I listen to the Indonesian music all the time on my MP3 player. She listens to it, too, so she knows how to sing it now.” There are several modes of access to the Indonesian music for these Indonesian youth: they bought the CDs in Indonesia when they visited there, asked somebody who visiting to or from Indonesia to buy CDs for them, bought CDs from various outlets in New York City, or at the infrequent performances of Indonesian artists who toured the U.S.

As I mentioned in the previous chapter, mainly by virtue of their numbers the succeeding generations of Indonesian in the United States have not formed their transnational subculture, including in music. While transnational youths of other, larger communities—such as the Indians with banghra (Maira, 2002), the Moroccans in Europe with raï (Ziyati, 1995), and the Filipino-Americans with hip hop (Gonzalves, 1998)—have developed their transnational subcultures and produced their own transnational artists, Indonesian youths attach themselves to popular music from Indonesia.

Furthermore, they know very little (let alone consumed it) of the existence of Islamic popular culture in the United States, such as nasheeds and Muslim hip hop. Nasheeds are Islamic songs, usually sung a cappella or accompanied by simple background music. This genre has produced some artists known internationally by
Muslim youths, such as Yusuf Islam (formerly known as the pop star Cat Stevens, who converted to Islam in 1977) (Walsh, 2004) and a boy band from Malaysia named Raihan (Harrison, 1999). Meanwhile, Muslim hip hop is more popular among Muslim youths in the U.S., with artists who are mainly African-American Muslims (Aidi, 2004; Alim, 2005; “Muslim Rappers,” 2004), but increasingly are also Arab-Americans (Grieshaber, 2006). The records of *nasheeds* and Muslim hip hop are available through Islamic stores, both offline and online such as Astrolabe.com, Islamicbookstore.com, and Soundvision.com. The website www.muslimhiphop.com, which features discussion forums and music, for example, receives 2,000 visitors a day (“Muslim Rappers,” 2004). Indeed, to a certain extent this development is comparable to the growth of Contemporary Christian Music in which dominant popular culture elements are appropriated and used as its own (Gormly, 2003). Among my respondents, it was only Zaki who was aware of these *nasheeds* and Muslim hip hop, apparently because he himself was previously an aspiring hip hop artist. However, he was not interested in listening to it anymore, let alone performing Islamic hip hop and thought that those artists were not really devout. He said (in English),

> . . . my decision to fall back from the music and pursue religion was because it took a lot of my time. So, like, maybe they can do it. I know I couldn’t. So if my life is for the religion, so I have to sacrifice music because I wouldn’t have time to study my religion. But some, I don’t know, maybe some people can do it. But I know I couldn’t do it. So if I do music, when do I read, when do I come here [to the mosque], you know? It wouldn’t work, so it is either/or.
I think the detachment of Indonesian 1.5- and second-generations from Muslim popular culture has prevented them from sharing experiences with other young Muslims, both in the U.S. and around the world. The Indonesians do not fully share the “simultaneity” (using Anderson’s [1991] term loosely) with other young American Muslims. If we appropriate Anderson’s simultaneity as the starting point for nurturing a sense of imagined community, the young transnational Muslims’ simultaneity could lead to a sense of the American Muslims as an imagined community as well. In this sense, the young Indonesian Muslims have not associated themselves with the imagined community of American Muslims.

Furthermore, my respondents (again, except Zaki) were not aware of the popular American Muslim preachers such as Hamza Yusuf and Imam Anwar Al-Awlaki (based in Los Angeles and Falls Church, VA, respectively). Both preachers have produced recorded sermons which are available through Islamic online stores and other Islamic brick and mortar stores. Zaki, on the other hand, thanks to his urge to religion, has bought CDs of sermons of such preachers, in addition to books on Islam. He transferred all the CDs to his iPod so that he could listen to them more easily. Zaki said (in English),

Yeah, I transferred everything. The iPod is very convenient for me. Like, I am on my way to work, I can listen to my iPod, or on my way to school. It’s handy, it is portable. I don’t have to go to the masjid [mosque] here to listen to khutbahs [sermons]. Now, there are more lectures than music in my iPod [laughter]. I was surprised, and I couldn’t believe that, too. Because, you know, there is a setting in the iPod where you can play randomly, and [it used to be] every other random was
music, now it is like one out of four is music [laughter]. I said, What? I couldn’t believe it!

Eickelman & Anderson (2003) have told us about the emergence of “new public” Muslims which is possible because of the advancement of new media. This new public (produced by mass education and being capable of self-learning) benefits from the new spaces of religious discourse enabled by the new media, hence they have access to knowledge, bypassing the local religious authorities. CDs and video tapes, for example, have been used to extend the time life of ephemeral religious oral lectures, and are used by mobile knowledge-seekers such as Zaki. Religious messages become mobile, moving along with the mobile religious adherents.

What about the Internet? One thing that was common among my respondents was that they did not use it much for maintaining their transnational ties. They rarely used it to communicate with their families in Indonesia. In fact, while the parents maintain intensive communications with their families back home, the 1.5- and second-generations do not have regular contacts with their cousins or other family members in Indonesia. “Only ‘hi, bye,’ not a frequent and regular communication,” Rizki told me (in Bahasa Indonesia). Furthermore, none of my respondents had a personal website or a blog. The girls have Friendster (an Internet social network service) accounts, but do not use them much. Except for Zaki, they told me that they rarely used the Internet to check the news. Zaki checked the websites of the New York Times frequently and Al-Jazeera daily. He stated (in English) that he checked Al-Jazeera (the controversial 24-hour television news
channel based in Qatar, see el-Nawawy & Iskander [2002]) to get the other side of the story:

I don’t like the news here. Sometimes it’s one-sided. *Al Jazeera* [is one-sided], too, but *Al Jazeera* is like our news, you know. Like from the Muslims’ side of things. I mean it sounds biased, but the other side is biased, too [laughter]. This is an example, like on CNN they show you the suicide bombing in Palestine. They show you only that, but they never show you the other side of things. And *Al Jazeera* will give you that, and they let you know.

While there is a difference in the new media usage among my respondents, they have more in common in utilizing room decorations as their banal-identity reminders. All of my respondents told me that they had such decorations written in Arabic. In her room, Kelly had a framed inscription of Ayat al-Kurshi (The Throne Verse, from the Qur’an 2: 255), one of the most widely memorized and displayed verses among Muslims. Her purpose in putting it up was: “To be protected. At least it reminds me.” Indeed, Muslims believe that by reciting this verse repeatedly they will be protected by God from any calamity and from Satan’s seduction. Kelly had asked another Indonesian to bring the inscription for her from Indonesia. On her room door she had an Arabic inscription of the shahada, the first (of the five) pillar of Islam, which is the declaration of belief in the oneness of God and in Muhammad as His messenger. Fiyona put the Arabic inscriptions reading *Allah* and *Muhammad*, as well as a picture of Kaaba in Mecca, on her side of the bedroom. On the other side, her sister put up a poster of Stitch, the cute fictional alien Disney character.
Fiyona also put up on her door an Indonesian flag she had asked a friend to bring from Indonesia. “I am an Indonesian so I put up the flag,” she said (in English). Kelly and Anne mentioned that they had wanted one and had asked for but never gotten it. Zaki also had an Indonesian flag hung on his room wall. When a friend went to Indonesia and asked him what he wanted, Zaki asked for the flag. He told me that he wished he had a Yemeni flag as well, “Because my great grandparents were from Yemen.” Indeed, most Arabs in Indonesia today are descendents of Arab migrants from Yemen (e.g., Mandal, 1994). While the flags of various countries on the roof of a fruit shop in Rego Park provide the banal reminders of New York City’s diversity (as I discussed in the previous chapter), the Indonesian flags in Zaki’s and Fiyona’s rooms do precisely what Billig (1995) told us: They banally remind them about the nation.

In addition to the Indonesian flag, Zaki had an inscription of Ayat al-Kurshi on his wall, as well. He said (in English):

I used to have posters on my wall though, but I took them down in the winter maybe. I had posters of Scarface, The Godfather, my favorite rap albums. Also Michael Jordan, I had a big Michael Jordan poster. They are not representing me as a person anymore. I do not want people to come in and think “Oh you are like that,” so I just left the Ayat Al-Kurshi. It was not me who put it up though. Initially, it was my mother. She did it. She said that “Oh you have all of these [posters] but not this [Ayat Al-Kurshi]. So she put it up.

Thus, in Zaki we see the escalating interest in religion translated into the uses pattern of media (including the shift of his electronic mailing list subscriptions from music lists to
Islamic lists, albeit he was still a passive subscriber [a lurker]) to the purification of his immediate space by taking down non-religious artifacts and leaving the religious one.

I have shown in this section that the use of media by the 1.5- and second-generations of Indonesian Muslims reveal the ways in which they associate themselves with Indonesian imagined communities. Their simultaneity with other compatriots in the imagined community is not based on “print capitalism” (Anderson, 1991), but mainly through different avenues provided by their home environments (the food, language spoken at home, and cultural artifacts). Imagined references are not acquired by the nature of simultaneity of media such as newspapers or news on television. As I mentioned when I discussed about the role of small media, homes have become the last bastion where Indonesian transnationals can exert their control in reclaiming the homeland abroad. Shutting the front door means being transported back to the homeland with its particular ambience, smell of food, family photographs, and other cultural artifacts. For the 1.5- and second-generations, the home space they can control is their bedrooms, hence, that is the arena where they could put their identity markers. Cultural artifacts brought from their parents’ homeland (national flags and framed Ayat al-Kurshi inscriptions) show the importance of the transnational circulation of these cultural references.

**Conclusion**

In this chapter, I have delineated the logic of deterritorialization and reterritorialization of Indonesian transnational Muslims through their production and
consumption of various media, from oral media to the Internet. However, transnational radio and television broadcasts are not analyzed because of the non-existance of such media. I also did not find extensive use of “video letters,” one of the ways in which some transnational ethnic groups originating from the Balkans maintains their transnational ties (Kolar-Panov, 1997). In such videos, parents, relatives, and friends record any sort of message (advice, recipes, family events such as weddings and happenings in the homeland such as traditional festivals, etc.) and then send the videos for the transnationals to remember what they have left.

Furthermore, unlike larger migrant commununites, such as Latinos and Chinese, but like most other migrant communities, Indonesian transnationals have not reached a critical mass where the reterritorialization process opens new markets and opportunities for viable full-fledged print media, let alone the much more costly radio and television stations. Neither print transnational-homeland nor intra-transnational media have become an essential part of the Indonesian transnational lives. Despite the minuscule print capitalism, I argue that the intra-transnational media have served as the banal reminders of the nation and cultural identity.

Furthermore, the widely assumed promises of the Internet as a decentralized and democratic means of communication, should be eagerly embraced by marginalized and deterritorialized migrants, but have not fully materialized among Indonesian transnationals. The efforts to establish a significant presence in cyberspace have been hampered by the digital divide within the Indonesian transnational community as well as between them and their compatriots in the homeland. By presenting failed effort to utilize
the Internet in the transnational context, I challenge the hype of the efficacy of this
technology to alleviate the burden of separation and to present the unheard voice of the
marginalized. Besides the effectiveness of the technology, there are other factors
involved in the adoption of it. On the other hand, the notion of the digital divide also
needs to consider some exceptions, as I have shown how one elderly Indonesian has
embraced and incorporated the Internet in his transnational life.

Indeed, I think the media have not fully functioned as the arena for the
reterritorialization endeavor and the struggle for identity in the context of Indonesian
transnational Muslims in New York City. I argue that the face-to-face meetings in the
mosque and friends’ wedding and birthday parties, reciprocal family visits, telephone
conversations, ethnic association meetings and other forms of local-temporal
engagements have been more essential in their transnational lives. These are principal
modes of reterritorialization in which most Indonesian transnationals strive to maintain
and nurture their sodality.

With respect to the 1.5- and second-generation of Indonesian Muslims, their uses
of media defy the possibility of them to be part of imagined communities called
Indonesia. Nevertheless, I could sense their strong attachment to Indonesia. I argue that
their references to the imagined communities were nurtured more via different avenues,
mainly those provided by their home environment (the food, language spoken at home,
and cultural artifacts). Furthermore, their use of media revealed that they are detached
from other young American Muslims. They did not consume Islamic popular culture (the
nasheeds and Muslim hip hop) in the U.S. I think the popularity of nasheeds and Muslim
hip hop among some quarters of American Muslim youths reflects the possibility of a shared “Pan-Islamic” America identity, what Castells (1997) called project identity. At this time, I think my respondents, like 1.5- and second-generations in other ethnic Muslim groups, have not yet participated in the identity project, showing how strong and inert their ethnic-based identity is.

Throughout this chapter, I have also shown that the notion of a Habermasian public sphere is not accurate in describing the sphere enabled by the various forms of transnational media. Such media certainly have expanded personal and group space by maintaining transnational ties with homeland. This enabled transnational to announce their presence in the host culture. Nevertheless, I argue that the representations are still marginal and largely unseen in the map of the larger public spheres in the host and homeland countries, as well as in the larger transnational communities. The transnational media have created public sphericules for transnational people. However, having said that, I do not mean that such sphericules are of little importance. For the Indonesian migrants, their use of media has been one of the ways in which they live their transnational lives. Using the public sphericules metaphor, Cunningham (2001) also informed us the vibrancy of diasporic media of some ethnic groups in Australia, and the importance of such media as the arena for a struggle for survival, identity and recognition. Furthermore, despite its size, “[the] ethno-specific global mediatized communities display in microcosm elements we would expect to find in ‘the’ public sphere” (Cunningham, 2001, p. 134). Although Gillespie (2003) was talking more about TV programs and video films for South Asian youth in England, she proposed a similar
point that the sphere, “though seemingly trivial and inconsequential, is enacted in a variety of private and public arenas, and in some cases constitutes and embryonic public sphere” (p. 146).
CHAPTER VIII

CONCLUSION

This concluding chapter is divided into two sections. In the first section, my aim is to put this research into a broader perspective by pondering the implications of some important points that surfaced from the fieldwork and analysis process. First, I argue the importance of political-economic aspects of studies of media in a transnational context. Also I suggest that we need more studies on the use of media and communication technologies by smaller and “more invisible” transnational groups. By doing so, we avoid an over-generalization perspective that media should have a crucial role in transnational lives. Second, I further discuss the notion of public sphericules (resulting from the use of transnational media and communication technologies) in relation to the larger public spheres. In this context I argue that despite the pressure from transnationalism from below and above caused by globalization, nation states will still play important roles in the future. Third, I delineate my reservation to the concept of hybridity, a concept that become crucial in cultural studies and which has been widely applied in transnational studies. Before my fieldwork, I had expected that one of my main findings would support the notion of hybridity, but I found that was not the case. In particular, I will employ Bakhtin’s (1981) distinction between on the one hand unintentional, unconscious, and, on the other hand, intentional, conscious hybridization to explain the concomitant existence of both cultural change and resistance to change in transnational communities. Finally, I discuss the issue of ummah (Muslim global identity transcending nation-states and ethnicities) in the context of the fragmented Muslim community in the United States. I
suggest that Muslim community leaders need to put more effort into 1.5-, second- and subsequent generation Muslims in their identity project, borrowing Giddens’ (1991) phrase,

The second section of this chapter offers my personal reflection on the whole project. Despite having finished this research project, I am left with more curiosity about what will happen to the Indonesian Muslim community in New York City in particular, and Muslim immigrants and their children living in the West in general. As a part of my personal intellectual odyssey, it seems to me that intertwining issues on Islam, globalization, identity, nationalism, the use of media and communication technologies and other related issues will “haunt” me for many years to come.

**The Broader Perspectives**

*Media Studies in the Transnational Context*

Appadurai (1996) maintains that media and migration, or mediation and motion, form “a constitutive feature of modern subjectivity” (p. 3). Furthermore, the decision to move, to return to the homeland, or to stay abroad is frequently formulated by taking the availability of media, telecommunication and transportation technologies into consideration. For Hanners (1996) the contemporary rules of the game of cultural organization are “the mobility of human being themselves, and the mobility of meanings and meaningful forms through the media” (p. 19). Based on their study on ethnic media in the United States, Viswanath & Arora (2000) show that such media have become one of the most essential institutions for immigrants (together with cultural and religious
organizations). Indeed, the significant role of media has been accepted as a paradigm in the studies of media in a transnational context. Therefore, most such studies discuss various media forms (print, electronic, the Internet, etc.) which usually are relatively well-established and function at least reasonably well in the transnational communities. In other words, most such studies inform us the “success stories” of media as the arena of cultural identity expression.

Nevertheless, I showed in the previous chapters that, in general, media have not played an essential role in the transnational lives of Indonesian Muslims in New York City. At the level of community, various media initiatives have been launched without great success: from print to the dormancy of Internet radio stations and websites. For instance, Rurun (an Internet radio DJ) told me that he would resume broadcasting if he gets the financial support to build a new server. Even the online store which offers Indonesian magazines, music and movie CDs is a part-time business venture. I concluded in the previous chapter that the lesser centrality of media role among Indonesians in New York City is largely due to the small number of community members. I think Viswanath & Arora (2000) are right in pointing out that the smaller size group of immigrants tends to rely on the primary channels of communication, such as telephone calls, visits, gatherings, etc. When the size of the group increases, the secondary and mediated channels of communication (such as newspapers, movies, radio stations, and television stations) will assume a greater role in the community. In other words, a critical mass is needed to support the existence of such media—and to make the commercialization of the transnational people’s deterritorialization process economically viable. This problem
is exacerbated by the unavailability of accurate data about the number of immigrants due to the undercount issue in the census. As a result, these disadvantaged immigrant groups are unattractive target markets for serious investments by media establishments. This reveals, I think, the importance of a political-economic perspective in the study of media in a transnational context, which so far has been generally overlooked.

On the other hand, this research has also shown that with the dearth of established media, transnationals turn to the various forms of “smaller media” (Dayan, 1999; Morley, 2000)—such as personal videos and cassettes, photographs, the establishment of ethnic and religious associations in which gatherings provide the venue of communication among the transnationals. Therefore, more studies on how smaller, more “invisible” transnational communities use media and communication technologies use in a comparative perspective is needed to better understand the communicative aspects of transnationalism.

**Public Sphericules, Particularism, and the Demise of Nation States?**

I have adopted the term public sphericules (Cunningham, 2001; Gitlin, 1989; Karim, 2002) to describe the sphere created by the smaller media and communication technologies in a transnationalism context, avoiding Habermas’ (1989) much-criticized concept of an idealistic, unitary public sphere. Some other terms have been proposed to capture such a sphere, e.g. micro public sphere (Dayan, 1999), embryonic public sphere (Gillespie, 2003), and multi-ethnic public sphere (Husband, 2000; Morley, 2000). I think there are two issues related to public sphericules that need to be elaborated further: first,
the issue associated with how the public sphericules will relate to each other, as well as with larger and dominant public spheres; and second the issue of the erosion of nation-states as the result of the expanding transnational public sphericules.

First of all, transnational public sphericules\(^1\) are the arena where immigrants strive to find their voice, self-represented and inserted in the foreign land, while maintaining connection with the homelands and augmenting the sense of collectivity of the community. These sphericules are efforts to present themselves to counter the representations offered by mainstream media in the dominating public spheres that often portray the minority unfavorably. They also reflect the struggle against marginalization and subordination. Certainly there are some dangers in celebrating such efforts: the public sphericules essentialize\(^2\) the ethnicity of the immigrants and minority groups, and therefore lead to the particularism discourse and ultimately probably their rejection to the larger community where they live. As Sreberny (2005) points out, the danger is that such media “actually work to fix monological minority subcultures without developing channels and genres that cross over ethnic divisions and foster dialogic understanding” (p. 443).

Nevertheless, I did not see the “monological minority subculture” in the New York Indonesian Muslim community’s public sphericules. Their small media and conversations in public gatherings, for instance, offer competing versions of identities rather than essentializing one particular identity (their ethnicities, nationality, or religion). Furthermore, as also shown by Sreberny (2005) in her research on minority ethnic media in Britain, both the media producers and the audience among the Indonesian community
do not want to be limited to or by such media. As a result, the public sphericules will not be completely sealed from the larger sphere and be put in a state of incommunicado with regard to other immigrant groups’ public sphericules. Therefore, I agree with Georgiou (2005) who concludes, from the research of media among transnationals in Europe, that we need to see particularism and universalism in a continuum, instead of in binary opposition. In such a binary opposition perspective, in which ethnic media almost always fall into the particularistic category, some grey areas and contradictions are overlooked and the interdependence of immigrants and the host society is obscured. One main contradiction is that the existence of transnational media, even for the most particularistic ones, depends on universalistic values such as democracy (that protects their right to exist) and capitalism (that enables them to migrate from their poorer countries).

According to Georgiou (2005):

Diasporic media cultures are expressions of the universalisation of particularism as they are expected to form part of the diverse and multicultural media settings. They are expressions of the particularisation of universalism because media are considered and experienced as universal cultural products, references and communication tools. (p. 484)

Hence, transnational communities might consume their media not only for their particular messages, but also for the cultural references of the host society as well as universal and global meanings embedded implicitly and explicitly in such media.

The second issue upon which I want to touch with regards to the transnational public sphericules is its assumed role in eroding the relevancy of nation-states. Indeed,
the nation-state is believed in decline because of two levels of force. First, nation-states are thought to have become less relevant because of the integration of regional and world economies, of which Guarnizo & Smith (1998) call “transnationalism from above.” This perspective is based on the point of view of market capitalism, and is enthusiastically supported, for instance, by business strategist Ohmae (1995). The second force that is thought to erode nation-states is the “transnationalism from below” (Guarnizo & Smith, 1998), in which individuals, immigrants are the principal actors. Appadurai (1996) argues that from the relation of mass mediation and migration emerges a “diasporic public sphere,” which connects those who move and those who stay—both transcending the national borders and outside the control of states. He maintains that diasporic public spheres are the crucibles of what he calls postnational political order. Furthermore, he optimistically argues that: “In the longer run, free of the constraints of the nation form, we may find that cultural freedom and sustainable justice in the world do not presuppose the uniform and general existence of the nation-state” (p. 23).

I am not convinced that the nation-states will disappear altogether, although I tend to believe that their role may be reconfigured or redefined in the future. Sassen (2000), for instance, argues that nation-states are needed precisely to become the grounds for a global economic system or transnationalism from above. The IMF global economic programs, for example, are translated into national economy programs. Meanwhile, we have seen that the presence of immigrants and transnational people incite the possibility of the reinforcement, if not the redefinition, of the importance of nation-states. The current debates on the situation of immigrants in the United States, for example, involve a
proposal to build a physical barrier along the border as well as a policy to ensure the integrity of the supposedly authentic nation. In Europe, the more visible presence and more clustered residential status of Muslim immigrants compared to those in the United States, also incite the question of what constitutes a nation’s identity. The policies to deal with this issue will be carried out at the level of respective states, and/or in the cooperation between the immigrant sending and immigrant receiving states.

Furthermore, the sending states also reconfigure themselves by acknowledging and embracing the force of this transnationalism from below primarily to ensure that their transnationals continue to maintain their long-distance relationships, which in turn will benefit the national economic interest. Countries like Ireland, Brazil, Mexico, Haiti (Levitt & de la Dehesa, 2003), and India (Walton-Roberts, 2004) have official policies for such purposes, albeit varying in the degree of program comprehensiveness. Besides having a set of policies encouraging migrant laborers, the government of the Philippines popularizes the idea of the country’s “new national heroes” (Rodriguez, 2002).

Meanwhile, most informants I talked to about the role of the state complained about the lack of government attention to their struggle. They said that the consulate office did not offer help necessary for Indonesian immigrants. As I mentioned previously, even an Indonesian who was mugged did not feel necessary to report his case to the consulate office, in view of the detachment of the officers from the real life of most immigrants. Unlike its neighboring country the Philippines, Indonesia does not have a conducive and supportive program for its immigrants. However, there was a positive development in this regard when the Indonesian citizenship law was revamped in July,
2006, which, among other things, acknowledged dual citizenship status for a child born outside the country of Indonesian parents.

**Much Ado About Hybridity?**

At the same period of time Basch et al. (1994) conceptualized their transnationalism approach in their oft-cited book, *Nations Unbound*, scholars in cultural studies also explored the issue of migrancy and mobility of people across borders. Focusing more of the discourse on identity, the cultural studies scholars speak in the postmodern lexis—topmost among them is the term hybridity, to describe a new culture resulting from the contact of two or more different cultures. As Papastergiadis (2000) points out, “In the last decade there has barely been a debate on cultural theory or postmodernism subjectivity that does not acknowledge the productive side of hybridity and describe identity as being in some form of hybrid state” (p. 168). Cultural studies scholars celebrate the liberation of identity from the notion of unitary, fixity and stability. Hence, hybridity is celebrated as “powerfully interruptive” (Werbner, 1997, p. 1), because it has been used as a strategy by deterritorialized people in dealing with both their home and host cultures. Furthermore, wide acceptance of the term hybridity has inverted the previous use of the term with negative and racist connotations. In the 19th Century, for example, the superiority claims of races bolstered pro-slavery ideology and saw “the hybrid was either a monstrous or a debased offspring, and would be weaker and less fertile than either parent” (Papastergiadis, 2000, p. 171)
Equipped with some knowledge of cultural studies, I had expected that I would find evidence of hybridity, cultural expressions eagerly embraced by the Indonesian Muslim community in New York City. Since cultures must interact with other cultures in many ways, I had thought that hybridity was a truism. After all, “Every culture is hybrid” has become a maxim. I found during my fieldwork, however, how resilient the origin identities of my respondents were. For instance, Pratomo said to me,

Although I have lived in New York for so many years, most of my attitudes, my thinking, are pretty much Javanese. I am still even able to speak *kromo inggil* [high level] Javanese language better than most of my relatives in Indonesia. (My translation from Indonesian).

Indeed, the self-assertion that they are Indonesians, Muslims, Javanese, Minangkabau, or any other ethnicity in Indonesia, repeatedly came up in my conversation with them. Although they infuse their daily lives with some elements of American culture, I argue that it does not emerge from a fervent enthusiasm to embrace the mixed cultural forms of hybridity. Salih (2003) finds a similar resilience in her study of Moroccan women migrants in Italy, and demonstrates that even when they buy Western consumer goods, “yet in so doing they enact a strategy to counteract their assimilation into an Italian cultural frame” (p. 162). Especially for the first generation, I see such fusion more as a survival strategy in their transnational lives; they strive to retain as much as they can of their cultural identity. In doing so, they also sometimes make reference to their “Others”—for instance by expressing that they currently live in a *kafir* (unbelievers) environment or by having a certain racial prejudice towards African-Americans. This
racial prejudice, however, is not unique to Indonesians. Iganatiev (1997) in his book, *How the Irish Became White*, argues that the Irish, previously discriminated against and placed in the same social class with the Blacks (both groups competed for the manual labor jobs) in 19th Century America, finally became a part of the White social class by embracing racism and distancing themselves from the Blacks. The difference is that while the Irish associated themselves with the mainstream WASPs at that time, the Indonesians (and I suspect the other contemporary immigrant groups, as well) return to their primal identity as much as they can.

As for my 1.5- and second-generation Indonesian respondents, naturally the cultural fusion is more salient. The parents told me that their children are not really Indonesians anymore, and should not be treated as Indonesians parents treat children in Indonesia. My 1.5- and second-generation informants themselves are aware that they are different from young people their age in Indonesia. However, their cultural expressions— influenced very much by their parents’ deterritorialization process—are more associated with their parents’ culture than with mainstream Americans. The centripetal force of “Indonesian-ness” is quite strong in them.

Therefore, I started questioning the heuristic ability of hybridity to deal with the cultural identity expression of transnational communities in general and the Indonesian Muslim community in particular. I later found, through Werbner (1997), that the distinction which Bakhtin (1981) proposes between two types of linguistic hybridization—i.e. unintentional, unconscious and intentional, conscious—is useful in explaining the simultaneous coexistence of both cultural change and resistance to change
in migrant communities. Bakhtin (1981) argues that unintentional, unconscious hybridization is one of “the most important modes in the historical life and evolution of all languages” (p. 358). Such hybridization happens when new words and expressions are integrated into the language naturally and unconsciously. If we extend the application to culture and society, we could say that cultures evolve through unintentional, unconscious borrowings, exchanges and appropriations of other cultures. Such process creates foundations for future social and cultural changes. In the context of the study of transnationalism, it is through this process that transnational people unconsciously pave the way for future changes. While undertaking this process the conscious and intentional challenges to the primary cultural identity are felt to be threatening (Werbner, 1997) — hence the resistance of the transnationals’ culture identity.

Therefore, in this regard I argue that the notion of hybridity in cultural studies needs to be examined critically. I think that this notion has been used too loosely and freely to describe the experience of immigrants. I extend the criticism of van der Veer (1997) that cultural studies relies on the art and literature texts as the evidence of hybridity, and therefore it is mostly the part of the middle class and even bourgeois culture. Being freed from the subsistence of daily life, this class of society has the luxury to experience the wider and more extensive—following Bakhtin’s words—unintentional, unconsciousness hybridization. It is in this context that Hutnyk (1997) charged that hybridity favors the success stories of the middle class over the urgency of anti-racist politics discussion. However, as much as the criticisms are true, my objection to these critics of hybridity is that they overlook the obvious fact that lower class immigrants also
experience a certain amount of unintentional, unconsciousness hybridization. Such a process is unavoidable since these immigrants are continually exposed to the host culture on a daily basis. I argue that the difference is that the extent of unintentional hybridity of the lower class is narrower compared to that of the middle class.

Once in a while, these two results of hybridization collide and create tension. I think the best example of this collision is in what is called the “Rushdie Affair,” in the wake of the publication of Salman Rushdie’s novel, *The Satanic Verses*. The novel provoked protests from Muslims around the world, but I want to focus on the protest launched by immigrant Muslims to understand the complexity of the issue of hybridity. The novel narrative itself involved Indian-Pakistani migrants in England, and their issue of identity. The book spurred protests from Muslims because they considered it blasphemous and that it lampooned the Prophet and his wives (who were pictured as prostitutes). Bhaba (1994) analyzed the novel in terms of its “in-between-ness,” reflecting the hybridity situation of the protagonist. Salman Rushdie, himself, of course, is a perfect example of hybrid upper class migrants. Both the elitist hybridity of the novel and the author collided with the “survival” hybridity of the rank and file immigrants.

*The Fragmented Ummah and the New Muslim Identities*

The absence of deterritorialized Islam among the Indonesian Muslim community brings us to the larger issue of immigrant Muslims in the West: the issue of the *ummah* and the possibility of the emergence of the Western Muslim, the American Muslim, or the European Muslim as new identities of Muslim immigrants. Indeed, Muslims always
associate and identify themselves with the *ummah*, referring to the phrase *ummah wahida* (the one community) from the Chapter Al-Baqarah: 213 in the Qur’an. Furthermore, the Prophet Muhammad has frequently been quoted as saying that "You see the believers as regards their being merciful among themselves and showing love among themselves and being kind, resembling one body, so that, if any part of the body is not well then the whole body shares the sleeplessness (insomnia) and fever with it."³ The solidarity with the plight of the Palestinians, for example, is based on the argument that they are Muslims needing help from their Muslim brothers and sisters around the world.⁴

However, although the conception of *ummah* is very much alive in the imagination of Muslims, including those in New York City (D’Agostino, 2003), in their daily lives ordinary Muslims are more associated with and identify with their own ethnic groups or nationalities. When I asked Achmad Padang, the Chairman of the Board of Directors of Masjid Al-Hikmah, about the involvement the Indonesian mosque in the Muslim community building in New York City, he replied, “We have participated sporadically in such efforts. We have not been involved that much. Basically, we are still concentrating on our internal activities” (personal communication, August 1, 2005). In this regard, Hathout (in Haddad, 2000) criticizes the development of ethnic mosques and ethnic-based Islamic Centers because, according to him, they are not built for driving and guiding American Muslims in the future. He argues, “. . . these were not built for America after all. They are built so that I do not feel lonely. I am scared out there and I need my buddies to come together the way we used to huddle back home” (quoted in Haddad, 2000). Moreover, he states that while such mosques provide comfort for the
immigrant parents, they are an alienating experience for the children who are being raised in America. Consequently, the mosques are considered to be hindering the process of Muslims, both the first and the subsequent generations, in integration into the general American society.

However, we must not to forget that the manifestation of ethnicity in religion is not exclusive to Muslims. In the 19\textsuperscript{th} and early 20\textsuperscript{th} centuries, for example, Catholic immigrants from various European ethnic groups established their own churches, some of which preceded the formal existence of the nation-states in the homelands. There were, for example, Irish, Armenian, Polish, and Greek churches even before the existence of Ireland, Armenia, Poland, and Greece as political-formal entities (Hirschman, 2004). For contemporary immigrants, the book edited by Ebaugh & Chafetz (2000), *Religion and the New Immigrants*, illustrates that nationality and ethnicity are manifested in ethnic religious centers and houses of worship, such as the Center for Vietnamese Buddhism, the Korean Ethnic Church, the Indian Hindu Temple, the Chinese Gospel Church, the Chinese Buddhist Temple, and many Latino churches. Then and now, on the one hand religious centers have been providing comfort for the immigrants to overcome the strain of separation, and by doing so they reproduce their ethnicities; on the other hand, they also provide the venue for their members to enter the larger society, by providing social services (such as English lessons), serving as an information hub for job vacancies, tips to survive, etc.

In Masjid Al-Hikmah, for instance, this particularism is also reflected in the *khutbah* (sermons) during Friday prayers. The topics of most *khutbah* during my
fieldwork were about the improvement of personal pieties. Only one khutbah, which was delivered by an African-American Muslim, addressed the congregants about the issue faced by American-Muslims in general in the U.S. My conversations with many first-generation Indonesian Muslims revealed that they know of famous Muslim preachers in Indonesia, such as Abdullah Gymnastiar, but they do not know well-known American Muslim preachers, such as Hamzah Yusuf. That was also case also with my respondents from 1.5- and second-generation Indonesian Muslims, with one exception. In this regard, my observation has confirmed what D’Agostino (2003) and Mohammad-Arif (2002) have found, which is that despite the efforts of the elites and community leaders to build the ties among different ethnic groups of Muslims, they are still fragmented. Nationality and ethnicity attachments, apparently, are stronger than the sense of united Muslims. The sense of being part of global ummah does not translate into a similar connection even within the same territory of New York City, let alone in the larger territory of the United States. Indeed, it is a fragmented ummah.

The fragmentation can be seen also in the situation of Muslim media in the U.S. In addition to the efforts of some media (such as Islamic Horizons and Muslim Journal) to reach a broad-based Muslim audience, there are many ethnic media to satisfy the needs of the Muslim immigrant population. Despite some investments from international Muslim backers in media ventures to tap the North America Muslim audience, “only community-based media have persisted over time” (Nimer, 2002, p. 118).

Nevertheless, the fragmented ummah is one of the factors that make Muslims in the U.S. much less prone to radicalization compared to those in Europe. Unlike in
Europe, Muslims in the U.S. are, in general, not concentrated in highly visible enclaves. Furthermore, Muslims in European countries tend to originate from specific regions (South Asia in Britain, Turkey in Germany, and North Africa in France and the Netherlands), and therefore their cultural identities are more visible and solid. Meanwhile, the Muslim population in the U.S. is tremendously diverse, “hailing from many parts of the globe, speaking numerous languages and practicing several different versions of Islam. This makes it less likely that any one group will dominate and more likely that each subgroup will adapt to its new surroundings” (Skerry, 2006, p. 30).

This brings us to the second issue: the possibility of the formation of a new Muslim identity, be it American Muslim, European Muslim, or even more encompassing Western Muslim, as a part of one’s mosaic of identities. For instance, there have been some efforts to create a “Pan-Islamic” American-Muslim identity among Muslims in New York City. This is exemplified vividly in the annual Muslim World Day Parade in Manhattan, which Syamsi Ali has been very active in organizing. The participants of this parade, held for the first time in 1986, are Muslims from different ethnic groups in New York City with their banners, signs and floats, accompanied by an Irish Band (Mohammad-Arif, 2002; Slyomovics 1995, 1996). When asked why a parade, one of the organizers stated, “New York City is the city of parades. We saw other parades show their communities’ strength, so we thought we have to do this too” (quoted in Slyomovics, 1995, p. 160). Nevertheless, according to Mohammad-Arif (2002), the number of participants is dropping year by year, indicating that the desire to demonstrate Islamic solidarity does not suffice to mobilize New York Muslims.5
Indeed, the main challenge to forming such an encompassing identity of American Muslims is the fact that immigrant Muslims in America are far from homogeneous in their ethnic, racial, and national group composition, as well as in their attitude and religious practices (Esposito, 2000; Haddad, 2000; Smith, 1999). Besides the immigrants, African-American Muslims, who have a different historical experience and therefore a different agenda and interests, also need to express their identity. Esposito (2000) encapsulates the situation succinctly: “The majority of Americans have yet to realize that Muslims are ‘us,’ but many Muslims have not solved the problem of the relationship of their faith to national identity either: will they remain Muslims in America or become American Muslims?” (p. 3). This indecisiveness is particularly true among the first generation, whose attachment to the homeland is more strongly felt, than it is to their fellow Muslims in the foreign land. Attachment to the global ummah emerges sporadically when extraordinary events happen, such as the tsunami in Southeast Asia, the big earthquake in Pakistan, and the Danish cartoon controversy. I think cultures and languages of diverse Muslim groups have created a barrier for the construction of an encompassing American Muslim identity—at least for now.

Indeed, there have been some efforts—such as conducting activities (the Muslim World Day Parade is one example), conferences (Haddad, 2000) and finding theological justifications (e.g. Rauf, 2004)—in searching for what it means to be American Muslims. This issue will be even more urgent for of Muslim youth who will be representing Islam and the new leaders of the community. Although growing up in transnational families in which the parents’ attachment to the ethnic identity and preservation of the ties with the
homeland are strong and constituted in daily life in their homes, these children of immigrants are not “carbon copies” of their parents. Certainly, they have parts of their parents’ cultural identity in their parcel of identities. On the other hand, they went through different rites of passages to grow up, and interacted with the larger American society (both the mainstream and other immigrant communities), creating a new type of identity within them. One thing certain that I found from my conversations with 1.5- and second-generation Indonesian Muslims is that they will spend their lives in the United States. I suspect that that will be the case also for their peers from other ethnicities.

Therefore, despite the fragmentation of Muslims in the United States, the prospect of nurturing an American Muslim identity lies with the next generations. Muslim community leaders in the United States, I think, need to be more focused and active in facilitating cross-ethnic contacts among Muslims youth which can be undertaken in many forms: conferences, regular meetings, sport competitions, art and culture performances, etc. In this regard, I draw on Gidden’s (1991) and Castell’s (2003) to discuss the issue of identity. According to Giddens (1991), self-identity needs to be perceived as a project, in which individuals strive to construct a convincing identity narrative by forming “a trajectory of development from the past to an anticipated future” (p. 75). In other words, for Giddens, identity is more about what we think about ourselves than distinctive traits that we have. Depending on the circumstances, time and space, what we think we are could also change—hence, identity as a project. I argue that self-identity as project could be expanded the social identity as a project. After all, individuals live in social relationships with others.
Meanwhile, Castells (2003) divides the forms and origins of identity building into three categories: legitimizing identity, resistance identity, and project identity. Legitimizing identity is introduced by the dominant power in the society. Meanwhile, resistance identity is a strategy engendered by social groups who are under pressure from a dominant social or cultural power. It could be manifested by the self-exclusions of those “oppressed” social groups, or by active opposition to the dominant power. Meanwhile, project identity is: “When social actors, on the basis of whatever cultural materials are available to them, build a new identity that redefines their position in society and, by so doing, seek transformation of overall social structure” (p. 8). Project identity, again according to Castells, emerges from a development of resistance identities. In the context of transnational Islam in the U.S., the resistance identity strategy against political and cultural pressure has been carried out by the Muslims through their rather exclusive movement.

We can see that Gidden’s (1991) “identity as a project” and Castells’ (2003) “identity project” emphasize identity as a continuous process. The challenge for the Muslims in the U.S., I believe, is how to create a conducive environment for such a process in which the younger generations of Muslims are able to construct their shared identity narrative. One project that can be launched is the establishment of media appealing to Muslim youths regardless their ethnicity to strengthen the American Muslims’ imagined communities, as well as banal reminders to reproduce the identity as American Muslims. Furthermore, Islamic popular culture (such as the nasheeds and Muslim hip hop) can be used as vehicles for identity as a project. The popularity of such
cultures among many succeeding generations of immigrants, transcending ethnic origins, will provide the potency of shared experiences and cultural references and the identity formation of American Muslims.

Coda: I ♥ NY

The I ♥ NY logo is everywhere in New York City. It is usually placed on a white background (T-shirts, mugs, refrigerator magnets, etc.), and the ♥ is in a striking red. It has become one of the most recognized, most oft-imitated logos. Milton Glaser designed it in 1976 for the Department of Economic Development of the State of New York for the marketing campaign of New York City (Vartanian, 2003). It is this Big Apple that has left many things in me that I am sure I will recollect countless times in the future. Probably the exact things will be evocative to the New Yorkers themselves, because they have taken them for granted. But for a person who has spent most of his time in the United States in a small but beautiful college town, I found many extraordinary things during my almost three months New York City doing my fieldwork. In some ways, I must admit, I ♥ NY.

My visits to Ellis Island and its Immigration Museum gave me a glimpse of what it was like to be an immigrant in the early 20th Century. I went to the Statue of Liberty to see for myself how this statue has become a symbol of hope, even now (think of the Goddess of Democracy statue erected by demonstrators in Tiananmen Square, Beijing, in 1989, which resembled the Statue of Liberty, for example). Looking at Ground Zero made me ponder on the full collision of radical Muslims and this chief metropolis of the
West. Reflecting on the diversity of Muslims in New York City, I went to Malcolm Shabazz Mosque in Harlem and Masjid Al-Mamoor (Jamaican Muslim Center) founded by mostly South-Asian immigrants in Queens to feel the sense of being in other “ethnic mosques.” I also visited the elegant mosque of the Islamic Cultural Center of New York, built by a consortium of Islamic countries. And the diversity of New Yorkers is represented perfectly by the eating places it offers. Therefore my gastronomic experiences in New York City were rewarding: the Mediterranean restaurant Hummus Place; the Afghan and Malaysian restaurant in Queens; a cup of coffee in a coffee shop in Little Italy after a dinner in a Malaysian restaurant; a cheap pizza parlor near Union Square; and, of course, five Indonesian restaurants.

I certainly can claim that I have a much better understanding of the transnational lives of Indonesian Muslims in New York City, which I have tried to present as accurately as possible in this dissertation. However, in accordance with ethnographic practices I have described in Chapter IV, I accept that my understanding is tentative and fractional. Two epigraphs I quoted in Chapter IV represent very well my own thinking about this: “No text can do everything at once. The perfect ethnography cannot be written” (Denzin, 1997, p. 287) and “Ethnographic truths are thus inherently partial—committed and incomplete” (Clifford, 1986, p. 7). Although considering myself as a native ethnographer (by virtue of shared ethnicity and national background with my informants), I realize that this status does not obliterate differences that might influence relationships with informants. My status as an elite (a Ph.D. student who, in some degree, is involved in the Islamic discourse in Indonesia, for example) and gender difference may
very well have influenced the way informants reveal themselves to me. I remember the story offered by Koentjaraningrat (1982), an Indonesian senior anthropologist, comparing his research in Java and Papua. Although he himself is a Javanese, he had found it easier to approach younger people than older people because the latter thought him to be a government official. Meanwhile, while he was studying Papuans, he noted a feeling of suspicion from them probably because he was considered as the part of the oppressive central government. Likewise, my closer relationship with older first-generation Indonesians, especially the members of the Friday Club, who are all males, critically shaped not only my fieldwork but also my analysis on the transnational lives of Indonesians in New York City. Therefore, I subscribe to the notion that “native” is a fluid category, and its meaning is dependent upon the social context (cf. Acosta-Alzuru, 2005; Aguilar, 1981; Jacobs-Huey, 2002; Kuwayama, 2004; Ryang, 2005).

Notwithstanding, of course, I will value my relationship with my informants in New York City, whom occasionally I call or email just to say hello. I feel that even as I finish my dissertation, it’s not a closure. I believe that many matters will keep coming back to my mind in the future. It stems from my long-time personal and intellectual quests related to Islam and modernity, which lead to such questions as: How do Muslims live their lives in this center of the West or How can the strained relationship between Islam and the West be healed; or, conversely, Will home-grown Muslim cells in the U.S. commit a terrorism attack? I will also remember how I felt “out of place” when I discussed Muslims in the West with Syamsi Ali in the car along the Franklin D. Roosevelt Drive with the East River separating Manhattan and Queens on one side and
skyscrapers of Manhattan with their glittering lights on the other side. It reminded me one of my favorite Indonesian short-stories called *Seribu Kunang-Kunang di Manhattan* (One-thousand Fireflies in Manhattan) by Umar Kayam (Kayam, 1972).

Furthermore, some more personal curiosities, I believe, will also keep coming back to my mind in the future: Will Masjid Al-Hikmah and the tranquility it offers serve in the lives of the coming Indonesian generations the community as it has done in the past?; What will my first-generation Indonesian friends will think about Indonesia, the United States, and Islam when they are getting older? Will they finally return to Indonesia, a hope expressed so keenly by some of them?; How will my 1.5- and second-generation Indonesian informants handle the future? What kind of jobs they will have? Whom will they marry? Etc, etc., etc.

That’s why, perhaps, that despite the anticipation and excitement over being reunited with my family in Ohio, I felt I was losing something when the plane took off that morning in late August 2005. It went up smoothly, and from the window I could quite clearly see Manhattan from above several minutes later. Certainly, I recognized Central Park, because its green was really compelling in the midst of the concrete jungle. At the Columbus International Airport, my son and my daughter and a friend of mine were waiting to pick me up. We drove to Athens directly. As we neared Lancaster, my cell phone rang. It was one of my informants, who is also the mother of my 1.5-generation informant. She was having a gathering of her daughter’s Indonesian friends in her house, and forgetting that I had left New York City, she wanted invite me to join the party. I told her that I was in Ohio and on the way home. I apologized for not being able
to come. Then she asked me to say hello to my wife. I really wished I could have stayed longer in New York City.
NOTES

1 Meanwhile, some scholars use the term “transnational public sphere” in a different sense. Guidry, Kennedy & Zald (2000) in their discussion on the globalization and social movements, for instance, use it to label the sphere created by networks of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) transcending national borders. In such spheres, “forms of organization and tactics for collective action can be transmitted across the globe” (p. 7). Thus, transnational public sphere is seen as a force vis-à-vis globalization forces imposed by states as well as market capitalism.

2 In the discourse of identity, essentialism refers to the perspective that identity is fixed and unitary. Meanwhile, anti-essentialism refers to the view of multiplicity of identities, which are never fixed and are influenced by other identities (Barker, 2000).

3 Shahih Bukhari, Volume 8, Book 73, Number 40. Taken from USC-MSA Compendium of Muslim Text Database [n.d].

4 While most Muslims believe that they are one community in the sense of one communion, some transnational radical groups such as Hizb ut-Tahrir (Party of Liberation) strive to make it materialize it in the political realm by trying to establish a global caliphate in which all Muslims are citizen (Mandaville, 2001).

5 Despite the declining number of participants, the parade is significant because it enables Muslims to imprint their presence on the American landscape. The growing significance of Muslims in New York City might be shown by the fact that the parade goes down prestigious Madison Avenue, whereas previously it was held on Lexington
Avenue. According to Sliomovics (1995), there is a type of hierarchy of New York City ethnic parades, in which the most prestigious route, down Fifth Avenue, is designated for older and more powerful groups (such as Irish, Jews, Poles, and Hispanics) by provision of the City Charter. The latecomers are relegated to other routes, such as on Lexington Avenue or even Battery Park at the southern tip of Manhattan.


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